

# Pragmatic and Rhetorical Strategies in ELF Courses of Business Negotiation: An Interdisciplinary Approach

*Elisa Turra*

doi: 10.7359/791-2016-turr

*Keywords:* business negotiations, conversation analysis, ELF.

## 1. BACKGROUND AND AIM

In the process of internationalisation and globalisation, many Italian companies are exposed to an increasing number of contacts and interactions across different countries, languages and cultures. This is a typical English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) situation in which participants use the language as a common means of communication. In order to prepare managers and employees to deal with their counterparts in international negotiations, develop their business and make global joint ventures work, universities offer courses of intercultural communication, negotiation and public speaking in English. Lecturers can be native or non-native speakers and are either chosen specifically according to their expertise in the subject or for their language competence. These courses offer an overview of current theories on negotiation according to multiple perspectives and a number of role plays, business cases and simulations, that are often video-recorded and transcribed for research or pedagogic purposes. The analysis and discussion of these role plays is a precious tool that enables researchers to monitor the evolution of negotiation theories and practices. In Bülöw's terms, "Owing to the strategic nature of negotiation discourse, the scholarly approach is often transdisciplinary" (2009, 144). However, as many scholars have pointed out (Bülöw 2009; Schoop et al. 2010) negotiation studies have mainly focused on efficiency and effectiveness (Raiffa 1982) and on the repertoire of macro-strategies (information sharing, sequence of offers, concessions, rejections) used to achieve economic outcomes and

goals, often disregarding the communication process. The approach used in this chapter aims at combining micro-linguistic analysis with a more recent strand of interdisciplinary research inspired by social psychology, which places more emphasis on the communicative nature of negotiation (Muller 2004; Schoop et al. 2010) as a new construct for analysing the negotiation process and the nature of business relationships.

Based on the above considerations, this chapter aims to start from the analysis of micro-linguistic and discursive features, in order to identify whether interactants are oriented to a competitive style based on maximizing individual gains, or to a more cooperative and relationship-centred style.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: NEGOTIATION STUDIES AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVES

The multi-dimensional nature of interests and relationships generate two main approaches to any negotiation situation: distributive and integrative strategies. (Fisher and Ury 2011; Lewicki et al. 2011).

Distributive bargaining is sometimes called competitive, or win-lose. In a distributive bargaining situation, the goals of one party are usually in fundamental and direct conflict with the goals of the other party. Resources are fixed and limited, and both parties want to maximize their share [...]. (Lewicki et al. 2011, 18)

A distributive approach tends to be used when negotiators are not interested in establishing a long-term relationship with the other party. Often this approach tends to cause the negotiating parties to “focus on their differences” and “not to disclose information which could improve the other party’s negotiation power” (Lewicki et al. 2011). On the other hand, an integrative negotiation approach is used when the parties aim at establishing or maintaining a long-term relationship and when there are multiple issues and interests to discuss. In integrative negotiations “negotiators work hard to search for common ground [...], to create a free flow of information, understand the other negotiator’s real needs and objectives and to redefine individual goals through collaborative efforts directed toward a collective goal” (Lewicki et al. 2011, 45-46). Therefore, integrative negotiations place greater emphasis on cooperation and flexibility and tend to occur when people meet on a regular basis and are constantly involved in

relational work. This approach is also used when there are more than two counterparts (multilateral agreement as opposed to bilateral agreement). Integrative negotiations are also called ‘interest based’, as in order to find an agreement, interactants need to uncover the counterparts’ basic interests underlying a declared position. Drawing on social psychology, Fisher and Ury (2011, 32) provide a list of five basic “core concerns” that may emerge during a negotiation:

Many emotions in negotiation are driven by a core set of five interests: autonomy, the desire to make your own choices and control your own fate; appreciation, the desire to be recognized and valued; affiliation, the desire to have a meaningful purpose; and status, the desire to feel fairly seen and acknowledged.

In this perspective, negotiators should consider these five dimensions with a view to managing conflicts and negative emotions and to creating a positive climate and a long-term relationship with the counterpart.

The following chapter will examine how these approaches and dimensions are linguistically realised and the repertoire of micro-linguistic strategies used to detect interactants’ orientation in the different phases of the negotiation process.

### *2.1. Interactional perspectives*

In order to analyse the interplay between interaction and organisational practices, a discourse analytical study was carried out, drawing on a range of analytical tools such as interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis.

Ethnomethodological conversation analysis, as practised by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), has provided the analytical tools to account for the structure or orderliness of talk-in-interaction, focusing in particular on how turns are accomplished, questions are answered and speakers selected. The main tenets of the conversation analytical approach, are that analysis should be based on recorded, naturally occurring talk in interaction, and that conversation is fundamentally a turn-taking activity. Turn taking refers to “the orderly distribution of opportunities to participate in social interaction” (Schegloff 2000, 1). Participants have to be able to work out when it is appropriate to transfer the role of speaker, and to select who the next speaker is to be. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) propose that speakers recognise points of potential speaker change because

speakers talk in units called Turn Constructional Units. Thus, the units of analysis are conceived as sequences of activities that are made up of turns. A turn constructional unit is defined as a complete unit of language such as a sentence, a clause or a phrase, the end of which represents to the interactants a point where a speaker transfer is possible. The organisation of turn taking is a local management system, which works according to the following rules:

1. the current speaker may select the next speaker;
2. if the current speaker does not select the next speaker, then any other party self-selects, first speaker gaining right to the next turn;
3. if the current speaker has not selected next speaker and no other party self-selects, then the current speaker may (but need not) continue.

A turn is therefore an utterance made of one or more words, including non-linguistic vocalisations, such as laughter and back-channelling, by which a speaker holds the floor and a new turn starts when there is a speaker change.

Conversation analysts introduced other important features, which contribute to shaping conversational organisation. These are:

1. adjacency pairs;
2. the preference structure.

*Adjacency pairs* (i.e. question-answer, greeting-greeting, offer-acceptance), are fundamental units of conversational organisation. They are constituted by a first pair part and a second pair part where a particular first part requires a particular second part. For example, a question produced by one speaker requires an answer from another. The requirement that a first part is followed by a particular second part is not seen as a rule, but as specific expectations participants normally have. Not all first parts immediately receive their second parts. It may happen that a question-answer sequence will be delayed by another pair, called 'insertion sequence', which can structure longer stretches of conversation. Second pair parts are divided into 'preferreds' (the structurally expected next act) and 'dispreferreds' (the structurally unexpected next act). For example, if the first part is a request, the preferred second part is acceptance, while the dispreferred second part is refusal. According to Sacks (1995, 685-693), adjacency pairs can be preceded by pre-sequences, which prepare the ground for certain actions, such as pre-invitations or pre-requests. For example, before asking a question, the speaker can pre-signal the question to come by saying "let me ask you a question" (Schegloff 1980). Pre-sequences extend beyond invitations and requests and may be treated as preliminaries to prepare the grounds for further actions, which can last several turns.

Atkinson and Drew's (1979) notion of "turn-type pre-allocation" was used to examine participants' interactional behaviour in the negotiation. The role assigned to the participants in the negotiation, as well as their background knowledge and implicit norms, may determine their expectations and what are considered allowable contributions.

## *2.2. Pragma-linguistic perspectives*

"Constructing agreement on common ground is a central feature in negotiation" (Bülow 2009, 144). Therefore Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies for creating common ground and mitigating face-threatening acts were combined with Locher and Watts' notion of politeness as a discursive and norm-oriented concept (Locher and Watts 2008).

Politeness theory is rooted in Goffman's concept of face, which is defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman 1959, 21). The central role of face in interaction reflects Goffman's notion of individuals as social actors who perform or present a public self in order to create certain social impressions in others. In institutional settings the notion of face is more complex and is the result of the interplay between individual and institutional face wants, as the individual is seen as a representative of broader entities such as the company or the team.

Brown and Levinson (1987) developed Goffman's theory of face, defining two complementary sides of face: positive and negative face. In Brown and Levinson's terms:

Negative face: [is] the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others; positive face: [is] the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. (Brown and Levinson 1987, 62)

In particular, the notion of positive face is seen as reflecting the desire of an individual for social consensus and approval, which are in turn built upon social solidarity.

Speakers can make use of various linguistic strategies, which reflect the extent to which they respect (or disrespect) the hearers' positive or negative face wants. The choice of different strategies depends on sociological variables like power, social distance and ranking of imposition. When speakers disagree, criticise, ask favours or give directives, they perform face-threatening acts. Face-threatening acts are utterances that may threaten either the positive or negative face of an individual. When asking a favour,

for example, a speaker can decide to reduce the degree of imposition by expressing solidarity and involvement or suggesting that the speaker wants the same as the hearer. Positive politeness strategies, in particular, entail participants mutually attending to their positive face needs, their desire to feel valued and appreciated both for their special skills or distinctive expertise and for their contribution as team members.

In Brown and Levinson's terms, positive politeness "anoints the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, the speaker (S) wants what the hearer (H) wants (e.g. by treating him as a member of an in-group, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked)" (1987, 70). As Brown and Levinson suggest, linguistic realisations of positive politeness are used as a social accelerator to extend intimacy, to imply common ground or sharing of goals even between people who do not know one another well, but who perceive themselves as somehow similar for the purpose of the interaction. Fifteen positive politeness strategies are listed, which can be used to presuppose, raise or assert common ground. Small talk, for example, belongs to this set of strategies. The notion of small talk was first introduced in 1923 by Malinowski, who defined "phatic communion as language used in free, aimless, social intercourse" (1923, 149). Several discourse analytic studies have pointed out how institutional discourse often involves a dialectic between institutional frames and socio-relational frames and have examined the interplay between social and transactional goals. According to Coupland (2000, 6), for example, "in professional and commercial domains, small talk needs to be interpreted not only in terms of its relational function, but in terms of how that rapport furthers or contests the instrumental and transactional goals of the institutions". Other studies (Giddens 1991; Fairclough 1995; Sarangi and Slembrouck 1996; Holmes 2000) have underlined "the new and heightened significance of intimate relationships in late modern societies, which lack the stability previously associated with predictable lifespan positions and roles" (Coupland 2000, 11) as well as the blurring of traditional life worlds, e.g. the world of work versus the world of leisure. In Janet Holmes' (2000, 34) terms, "small talk is one means by which we negotiate interpersonal relationships, a crucial function of talk with significant implications for on-going and future interactions". Small talk can therefore either be work-related or focused on personal and social topics and is considered a social glue and a way of building consensus and team spirit.

Gossip is another strategy used to raise common ground. According to Eggins and Slade (1997, 276) "gossip is a form of talk through which interactants can construct solidarity as they explore shared normative

judgements about culturally significant behavioural domains". The primary function of gossip is "to establish and maintain relationships" (Eggs and Slade 1997, 276) as "it functions to establish and reinforce group membership and provides a means of exploring similarity and shared values; this exploration being the mechanism by which people develop social bonds" (ibid., 283). According to these authors the secondary function of gossip is to exert social control (ibidem) as it enables big groups to cohere and control the behaviour of their members.

A further strategy exploited to create common ground within negotiations is humour. As Holmes (2000) and Harris (2003) point out, the role of humour in relation to politeness, particularly in power-laden situations is a complex one, which goes beyond the mere claiming of common ground. According to Norrick (2009, 261), banter, teasing, irony and sarcasm are multi-faceted features of interaction:

Research has shown how joking can work as a strategy for enhancing intimacy, but also for controlling a conversation; an account of humour in conversation highlights the interactional achievement of puns, irony and sarcasm along with personal anecdotes and joke-telling between participants and the mutual construction of identity they accomplish in the process. Conversational joking – especially teasing and sarcasm – has a dual force: because it plays on relational identity, teasing directed at intimates can have the potential to hurt, even as it ratifies the bond between interactants. Still, generally, humour facilitates friendly interaction and helps participants negotiate identity.

The multi-faceted and complex forms and functions of humour are also described by Eggs and Slade (1997, 156-157), who agree on the fact that humour involves at least a duality of meaning, polysemy and often a multiplicity of opposing meanings, being made available within the same text: "Humour functions to expose social differences and conflicts and enacts contradictions and conflicts in the social relations between interactants". In this perspective, humour is a precious analytical tool that can be used to identify a cooperative attitude based on common ground and to uncover conflict sequences, ambiguities and the nature of relational work in the course of interaction.

Holmes's definition of supportive, critical or antagonistic elicitations were of interest to analyse the way question and answer sequences reflect role relations and instances of conflict. Unlike supportive elicitations, critical elicitations "are aimed at clarification though often containing a hint of criticism" (2000, 45). Antagonistic elicitations are even more face threatening as they "generally involve challenging, aggressively critical

assertions, whose function is to attack the speaker position and demonstrate it is wrong” (ibidem).

The notion of boosters was also used to analyse instances of conflict, as they can increase the force of utterances and fuel conflicts:

Boosters do not in themselves express positive politeness and solidarity. Rather they intensify the illocutionary force of any utterance in which they are used. [...] When they are used to intensify a face-threatening act, the result will usually be an increase in social distance and may contribute to the degree of face threat expressed by a disagreement, a criticism or an insult. (Holmes 1995, 77)

As different studies have pointed out (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997; Poncini 2004; Bargiela and Turra 2007), pronominal choices can be indicators of conflict. Bargiela-Chiappini and Turra (2007, 194), for example, carried out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the occurrences of both lexicalised and non-lexicalised pronominal forms in business meetings. They found the existence of two dominant clusters: the “I/ you” and the “we/us” pronominal clusters, as “[t]he personalised nature of many exchanges, culminating with what sounds very much like an altercation, is reflected in the consistent pronominal preference for ‘self’ and ‘you’ singular”. Brown and Levinson (1987, 204) also listed the pluralization of the “you” and “I” pronouns as a negative politeness strategy:

In kinship-based societies in particular, but in all societies where a person’s social status is fundamentally linked to membership in a group, to treat persons as representatives of a group rather than as relatively powerless individuals would be to refer to their social standing and the backing that they derive from their group. [...] In such social settings, persons are always representatives, and the motivation for a plural ‘you’ of deference or distance would be the same as for the plural of the ‘we’ of corporations.

Pronominal choices are therefore one of the keys to interpreting the dynamics of multi-party interaction such as negotiations and corporate meetings. Linguistic choices operated consistently by speakers are tools for identifying the membership or exclusion of a participant in a particular group, the construction and negotiation of relations and instances of conflict.

Although Brown and Levinson consider disagreement as a dispreferred act and list a series of strategies aimed at mitigating its impact (e.g. indirectness, hedges, apologies, impersonal forms, implicatures, proverbs, understatement, pluralizations, nominalizations, rhetorical questions,

hints, ellipsis, irony and metaphors), in some contexts disagreement has been viewed as a preferred act (Tannen 2002). This is the case of situations involving problem-solving and highly task-oriented situations. Locher and Watts (2005, 256) reinforce this view by introducing the notion of politic behaviour, which “is equaled with appropriateness in lay people’s perception. It indexes a wide variety of forms of social behavior that include both non-polite and polite behavior”. This revisited version of politeness has been used to show that relational work goes beyond the mitigation of FTAs and that direct speech acts may be interpreted as appropriate (politic) behaviour which is context-based and depends on the judgements, norms and expectations of interactants.

### 2.3. *ELF perspectives*

Finally, the literature on the use of ELF for international communication in domain-specific contexts was also examined, drawing on diverse theoretical and practical perspectives. A specific strand of research identified more than one ELF (Candlin and Gotti 2004; Cortese and Duszak 2005) and was based on the tenet that the features of ELF differ from Standard English norms of usage and grammar, therefore accounting for register deviations and interlanguage errors. According to Guido and Seidlhofer (2014, II):

ENL cannot represent the parameter against which the cognitive-semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and generic variations used by non-native speakers have to be assessed insofar as the acknowledged tenet is that ELF variations develop from L1-L2 transfer processes.

In this perspective, ELF is not to be considered a ‘defective version’ of the native language and ELF speakers can interact effectively without necessarily adhering to the forms of Standard English and its norms of usage.

The study described here embraces Guido and Seidlhofer’s approach, according to which ELF speakers bring to the interaction assumptions based on the norms of usage and communicative behaviour of their L1 and exploit all the resources available to get their ideas across and strategically resolve potential communicative problems. These strategies include the use of direct disagreement, often attributed to the lower competence of ELF speakers, utterance completion, self-repetition and “let it pass” strategies (Firth 1996) which are aimed at reducing unnecessary interruptions and facilitating the interaction flow. In order to identify the wide array of

strategies used by ELF speakers, the analysis also draws on Gotti's (2014) study on cooperative meaning making strategies in ELF courses. In the analysis, attention will therefore be devoted to aspects related to facilitating strategies aimed at checking comprehension (i.e. direct questions and non-verbal features), explaining concepts (rephrasing, code-switching) and self-repair, "which occurs when words or expressions previously formulated are proposed in a different way by the same person to facilitate the listener's comprehension" (Gotti 2014, 18).

### 3. DATASET, COMPANY AND PARTICIPANTS

The research findings refer to a single simulation, which was selected from a corpus of 40 role plays and negotiations simulated during the courses on the basis of its representative nature in terms of size, participants' experience in international business negotiations and linguistic strategies deployed. The role play under analysis was video-recorded during a course of business negotiation taught by the author in 2011 at *Fine Tools*<sup>1</sup>, a company based in Northern Italy. The company was founded in 1929 and is now considered a well-known manufacturer and supplier of mechanical products for the metal cutting industry, pumps, cutting tools and associated equipment used in different sectors such as aerospace, oil&gas, energy, automotive, general engineering and the medical industry. The products are supported by a range of complementary services that help customers optimise their manufacturing processes and improve cost-efficiency. *Fine Tools* has a total of 4,500 employees, 40 wholly-owned subsidiaries and a large number of agents and distributors with operations in more than 50 countries around the world. Course participants are seven top managers with considerable language and communicative competence in English. They know each other well and are used to working together on a regular basis (*Tab. 1*).

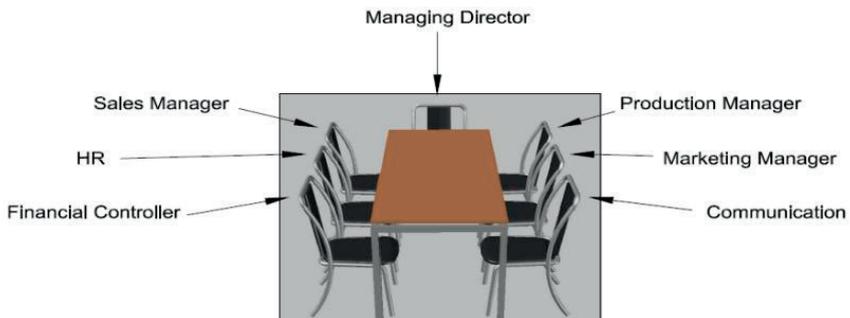
Participants were randomly assigned a role in the simulated negotiation. Their common goal was to find the best strategy to raise the public awareness of a British brand of water pumps for cars. Each participant also had an individual goal and had to consider and choose a given form of investment (sponsorship, ads, etc.) on the basis of a separate set of instructions (*Fig. 1*).

---

<sup>1</sup> Names have been changed to protect individual and corporate identities as requested.

*Table 1. – Profiles of the participants in the course and in the video-recorded negotiation.*

	POSITION	GENDER	NATIONALITY	ASSIGNED ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATION
1	Managing Director	M	Italian	Communications Manager (CM)
2	Marketing Manager	M	Italian	Managing Director (MD)
3	Sales Manager	M	Italian	Financial Controller (FC)
4	Head of Logistics	M	Italian	Production Manager (PM)
5	Chief Technology Officer	M	Italian	Marketing Manager (MM)
6	Chief Operation Officer	M	Italian	Sales Manager (SM)
7	Production Manager	M	Italian	Human Resources (HR)



*Figure 1. – Post and position at the table of participants in the negotiation.*

### 3.1. *Opening*

The negotiation under analysis was chaired by the Managing Director, who started with a formal introduction:

#### Extract 1.

1. **MD:** so we are here today in order to reinforce our image on the market<sup>2</sup> and try to
2. build a name on our XY pumps. The people must to recognize our name as a
3. leader. (...) So we have to find out a good strategy er in order to achieve this. (...)  
So I would like to know your opinions about this topic. (...) So, let's start (...)  
(the chair maintains eye contact with the other participants in order to encourage their participation))
4. **FC:** so what's the real target we should have?
5. **MD:** (...) er
6. **FC:** we need to reinforce the image in which areas?
7. **MD:** the real target is to reinforce the er you the er (.) we have a technical level which is very high,
8. but we have to reinforce the name on the field, so we have maybe to do some marketing er
9. work (...) strong (.) and why not to improve the production and the deliveries
10. **PM:** well, because we produce pumps, engine pumps, maybe we could sponsor some race cars er
11. or power boat races
12. **MD:** interesting ((the chair writes the suggested idea on the flip chart))

The chair quickly explains the goal of the negotiation. No time is devoted to small talk at the beginning, although the choice of the inclusive pronoun “we” and adverbs (here, today) reflect his intention to create common ground and a sense of belonging. He ends his monologue by starting a round-the-table discussion in order to hear the other participants’ opinions on the topic. In line 4, the Financial Controller asks a question aimed at clarification. The question, however, also contains a hint of criticism, which

---

<sup>2</sup> Lines are numbered according to the layout of the original transcript, which for reasons of space cannot be reproduced here.

is reinforced by non-verbal features such as tone and facial expression. His critical elicitation (Holmes 2000, 45) is followed by a pause and hesitation on the part of MD in line 5. Consequently, FC employs the strategy of “self-repair” (Gotti 2014, 18) in order to facilitate the listener’s comprehension by proposing previously formulated expressions in a different way. Even though the participants are aware of their lexical and grammatical inaccuracies, they adopt a very cooperative attitude without having to stop the flow of interaction. In line 8, the chair tries to make his concept clearer by means of self-repetition and reformulates what he has said earlier in lines 1-3. The Production Manager self-selects in line 10 to put forward his proposal of focusing on the sponsorship of car races or power boat races. The chair attends to the hearer’s interests by means of the adjective “interesting” and writes the first proposal on the flip chart. The first proposal triggers a long conflict sequence, started by the Communication Manager in the following extract:

**Extract 2.**

13. **CM:** I do not agree with you because this remains a specific sector. If our target is to make our
14. name known we have to move a bit ahead of this concept in my opinion and we have to be
15. visible all around (...) with something that reaches all the people. Not only people who are
16. interested in this kind of field. ((the chair keeps writing on the flip chart))
17. **PM:** that’s good, but you can sponsor the car race on the television, so that sounds good for me
18. because everyone can watch and see
19. **FC:** yes, but you are talking about a product which is not a consumer product (.) honestly. Because you know
20. we sell 50% of our turnover through OEM and the other 50% is done by sales shops.
21. **HR:** you cannot find it in a supermarket
22. **FC:** yes (.) so how does a housekeeper has the power to choose one of our products then?
23. just simply seeing it on TV or in soccer games?
24. **PM:** with soccer games ((he shakes his head signalling his dissent))
25. **MM:** it’s so difficult

In line 13, CM voices his dissent without mitigation, with an on-record FTA and continues attempting to persuade the others that a new

approach is needed to reach a wider public, explaining why he is in favour of a massive advertising campaign. The chair tries not to take sides and keeps writing every single idea on the flip chart. The Production Manager supports CM's idea, so that an oppositional alliance is formed: CM and PM versus FC and HR. FC disagrees by means of two rhetorical questions that reinforce the disagreement with CM and obtain the consensus of PM and MM. At this point, CM is outnumbered, but does not give in and tries to form new alliances and build consensus for his ideas:

**Extract 3.**

26. **CM:** I do not agree with you (.) we have several examples of this situation (.) we have soccer  
27. teams that are sponsored by insurances or er nothing to do with the soccer  
28. **FC:** yes, but still these are consumer goods  
29. **CM:** yes, but pumps are consumer goods if you look a little bit deeper into the thing. Everybody  
30. has a pump on his car, the problem is that they don't see which is the name of the producer of  
31. the pump. They only see the name of the car producer  
32. **HR:** but the car user don't care about the pump  
33. **CM:** and this is what we have to change. This is what we have to change.  
34. **SM:** and why not going outside this scheme and link our product to something that has to do with  
35. luxury or whatever it is like champagne or perfumes  
36. **CM:** you are right. You are right!

The choice of direct disagreements “I do not agree” (lines 13, 26), “yes, but” (lines 19, 28, 29) or non-verbal features may be due to their lower competence as ELF speakers who find them easier than indirect disagreement strategies. Moreover, in the negotiation under analysis participants use an integrative approach for a number of reasons: a multi-lateral agreement needs to be found in order to account for multiple interests, and the participants meet on a regular basis, so they need to maintain their relationship in a state of equilibrium. Therefore, given the context and the intimacy between participants, direct disagreement is seen as an effective and natural way of exploring different perspectives. CM's exclamation in line 36 is a positive politeness strategy that expresses approval with an exaggerated stress and intonation and signals the intention of finding a

win-win solution, which reinforces participants' orientation to cooperation and the choice of an integrative approach to negotiation.

3.2. *Cooperative meaning making strategies: utterance completion, co-construction of sentences and echoing*

The analysis of the following extract focuses on the processes of pragmatic cooperation and meaning negotiation between the different participants in the simulated negotiation:

**Extract 4.**

1. **CM:** so it's also important that also the people who lives in this area where the factory, does
2. know who produce our brand
3. **SM:** that is another reason why er to go to let's say media where our name or brand
4. can be er
5. **HR:** visible
6. **CM:** fully visible. This is a switch we have to do from the old approach to the new one

In line 1 and 2, the HR Manager uses importance markers to build consensus round the type of investment oriented at the local area where the company is based, rather than on a national-scale investment. The Sales Manager seems to agree that it is necessary to raise public awareness of the company and its products, but he hesitates while searching for the right word. In line 4, the Communication Manager helps SM find the appropriate word by means of an utterance completion, a typical strategy used in the ELF context to facilitate understanding and pragmatically cooperate. At this point HR initiates a turn aimed at supporting CM in line 6, making use of a lexical repetition (echoing). This has the effect of signalling mutual agreement about their common goal. The group, however, still needs to decide the amount of investment, the target and the strategy. This is why HR exploits the moment of consensus to persuade the others about changing the strategy adopted in previous years. He does so by making use of contrasting pairs such as “from the old approach to the new one” and by choosing inclusive pronouns (“we”) to reinforce the sense of belonging and affiliation with the use of in-group identity markers.

In the following extract, participants attempt to build consensus round the concept that it is worth investing money in advertising pumps, even though the average customer rarely pays attention to the brand of pumps installed in the cars they buy. They therefore consider their target in relation to the initiative of sponsoring car races:

**Extract 5.**

1. **MM:** The people who use to watch the race cars are not all the people who use our
2.       pumps
3. **SM:** No, I think there's a very limited number of people
4. **MM:** If you go to repair your car and if you knew the XXX pumps and you know that
5.       this product is very good for you and also with a very good price and quality why not
6.       ask to your (...) (?) garage man
7. **CM:** Garage man hhh
8. **All:** hhh hhh

The Marketing Manager and the Sales Manager in line 1-3 form an alliance, as they support each other on the argument for car races. In line 4-6, the Marketing Manager continues a line of reasoning aimed at persuading the group that it is possible to raise customers' awareness of pumps. In line 6, he hesitates and pauses while trying to find the right word. The videorecording makes it possible to capture visual cues such as facial expressions and hand gestures. His pause and hesitation are followed by an interrogative look and typical Italian hand gestures that make it very clear he is in need of help. Nobody in the group seems to know the appropriate lexical item for this context; consequently a "let it pass" strategy (Firth 1996) is adopted by the Communication Manager in line 7. CM uses laughter to signal he understands his point, even though the lexical choice is not the appropriate one. This is echoed by the laughter of the other participants who are all ready to joke about their lack of accuracy, but at the same time determined not to create unnecessary breaks in the interaction flow. This laughter sequence has the effect of releasing tension and of maintaining common ground by reinforcing their sense of belonging.

The following extract was preceded by another conflict sequence, where participants all voiced their opinion together, generating confusion,

interruptions and overlaps. For this reason the Marketing Manager temporarily took over the role of the chair:

**Extract 6.**

1. **MM:** I think we have to speak one by one and everybody for his own matter otherwise
2.       it's it's a mess we still take out a lot of ideas and er but we have to analyse er in a good
3.       way (...)
4. **PM:** Can I say two points (...) who normally bring the car in the garage? Man
5.       or female?
6. **MM:** No again
7. **PM:** Just give me the answer
8. **SM:** You mean who destroys the car? hhh
9. **All:** hhh hhh

After this attempt to control the interaction, the Production Manager self-selects and exploits the moment of silence to prove his point, by means of rhetorical strategies. His line of reasoning is based on the evidence that men (not women) are their main target and it is therefore unnecessary to spend money on TV ads to reach a wider public. In his view it is more profitable to focus on men as they are the ones in charge of buying and repairing cars. In line 4, the question “who normally brings the car in the garage” obtains a dispreferred response, in the form of an FTA “no again”, expressed with a very annoyed tone of voice and gaze. At this point PM raises his voice in the attempt to get the desired answer to his question. For some participants answering PM’s question would mean supporting his line of reasoning. In line 8, SM resorts to joking and laughter as a negative politeness strategy to avoid an escalation sequence. His joke “who destroys the car” creates a playful moment, where the seven men are given the opportunity to make fun of women at the wheel. This is an effective way of reinforcing their affiliation. In line 9, the participants laugh together, which has the effect of creating common ground and of defusing tension.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of the macro and micro-analytical strategies converge to suggest that in the negotiation under analysis, interactants adopt a cooperative style and an integrative approach. This orientation is related to the nature of the negotiation, which involves multiple interests and issues. Although the managers involved in this negotiation are competing over the division of resources, the overriding goal is to create mutual understanding and maintain a positive relationship with their colleagues. Their cooperative attitude in the interaction is reflected in the use of question-answer sequences aimed at sharing and exchanging information, as well as positive politeness strategies aimed at creating common ground. The interactants' social and psychological needs (affiliation, appreciation) are linguistically realised through the use of inclusive resources such as a shared lexical repertoire, inclusive pronouns, shared irony, laughter and banter.

The analysis of the selected negotiation also confirms the results of previous studies of ELF data. The fact that the negotiation was carried out by non-native English speakers had an impact on the choice of discourse strategies and on the language used to realise them at a phonological, lexical and grammatical level. As a consequence, speakers were very cooperative and made use of communication-enhancing pragmatic strategies, so that cases of failed comprehension were very limited. In order not to stop the flow of interaction, speakers used utterance completion, "let it pass" strategies (Firth 1996), code-switching, joking and a range of non-verbal features including hand gestures.

Paralinguistic features such as pauses, hesitations, intonation and visual cues played an important role in the analysis of specific question-answer sequences, offers and information sharing, as they made it possible to identify disagreement and anticipate conflict sequences. In the selected extracts, ELF speakers used a range of interactional, rhetorical and pragmatic strategies that are prototypical of authentic negotiations carried out by native speakers. Sentence co-construction and echoing were the interactional strategies used to form oppositional alliances and control the topic. Positive politeness strategies such as inclusive pronouns and lexis were used to claim common ground. Critical elicitation, joking and indirectness were used to mitigate disagreement and FTAs. In some cases, direct and 'yes, but' disagreement were chosen instead of more complex and indirect strategies. The use of contradictory statements as direct disagreement may be due to the lower pragmatic competence of ELF speakers. Disagreement, however may not necessarily be negative, as it is an everyday speech

act which is expected in some interactional practices, which may be the case of integrative negotiations. It is hoped that this initial study will be integrated with the analysis of a larger corpus and combined with interview data, which may shed light on participants' expectations, cultural and social norms as well as their education and training in management and leadership.

## REFERENCES

- Atkinson, Maxwell, and Paul Drew. 1979. *Order in Court – The Organisation of Verbal Interaction in Judicial Settings*. London: Macmillan.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, Francesca. 2009. *The Handbook of Business Discourse*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, Francesca, and Elisa Turra. 2007. "Organizational Change from Old to New Economy". In *Discourse, Ideology and Specialised Communication*, edited by Giuliana Garzone and Srikant Sarangi, 181-205. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. 1978/1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bülow, Anne Marie. 2009. "Negotiation Studies". In *The Handbook of Business Discourse*, edited by Francesca Bargiela-Chiappini, 142-154. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Candlin, Christopher, and Maurizio Gotti, eds. 2004. *Intercultural Aspects of Specialized Communication*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Cortese, Giuseppina, and Anna Duszak, eds. 2005. *Identity, Community, Discourse. English in Intercultural Settings*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Coupland, Justine, ed. 2000. *Small Talk*. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Douglas, Mary. 1975. *Implicit Meanings*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Eggs, Susanne, and Diana Slade. 1997. *Analysing Casual Conversation*. London: Cassell.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London - New York: Longman.
- Firth, Alan. 1996. "The Discursive Accomplishment of Normality: On Lingua Franca English and Conversation Analysis". *Journal of Pragmatics* 26: 237-259.
- Fisher, Roger, and William L. Ury. 2011. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving in*, edited by Bruce Patton. New York: Penguin Books (1981<sup>1</sup>).
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society and the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *Forms of Talk*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Gotti, Maurizio. 2014. "Cooperative Meaning-making Strategies in ELF University Courses". In *Perspectives on English as a Lingua Franca*, edited by Maria Grazia Guido and Barbara Seidlhofer, 17-33. Roma: Carocci.
- Guido, Maria Grazia, and Barbara Seidlhofer. 2014. "Introduction. English as a Lingua Franca: Theory and Practice". In *Perspectives on English as a Lingua Franca* (Special Issue), edited by Maria Grazia Guido and Barbara Seidlhofer. *Textus* 1: 7-16. doi: 10.7370/77482.
- Harris, Susan. 2003. "Politeness and Power: Making and Responding to 'Requests' in Institutional Settings". *Text* 23 (1): 27-52.
- Holmes, Janet. 1995. *Women, Men and Politeness*. London: Longman.
- Holmes, Janet. 2000. "Doing Collegiality and Keeping Control at Work: Small Talk in Government Departments". In *Small Talk*, edited by Justine Coupland, 163-182. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Lewicki, Roy, Bruce Barry, David Saunders, and Kevin Tasa. 2011. *Essentials of Negotiation*. New York: McGraw-Hill - Ryerson.
- Locher, Miriam, and Richard Watts. 2005. Politeness Theory and Relational Work. *Journal of Politeness Research* 1: 9-33.
- Locher, Miriam, and Richard Watts. 2008. "Relational Work and Impoliteness: Negotiating Norms of Linguistic Behaviour". In *Impoliteness*, edited by Derek Bousfield and Miriam Locher, 77-99. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1923. "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages". Supplement to Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, 146-152. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Muller, Harald. 2004. "Arguing, Bargaining and All That: Communicative Action, Rationalist Theory and the Logic of Appropriateness". *European Journal of International Relations* 10 (3): 395-435.
- Norricks, Neal. 2009. "A Theory of Humor in Interaction". *JLT Articles* 3 (2): 261-284.
- Poncini, Gina. 2004. *Discursive Strategies in Multicultural Business Meetings*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Raiffa, Howard. 1982. *The Art and Science of Negotiation*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Sacks, Harvey. 1995. *Lectures on Conversation*, edited by Gail Jefferson. Oxford - Cambridge (MA): Blackwell.
- Sacks, Harvey, Emmanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. 1974. "A Simple Systematics for the Organisation of Turn-taking for Conversation". *Language* 50: 696-735.
- Sarangi, Srikant, and Stephen Slembrouk. 1996. *Language, Bureaucracy and Social Control*. London: Longman.
- Schegloff, Emmanuel A. 1980. "Preliminaries to Preliminaries: 'Can I ask you a question?'". *Sociological Inquiry* 50 (3-4): 104-152.

- Schegloff, Emmanuel A. 2000. "Overlapping Talk and the Organization of Turn-taking for Conversation". *Language in Society* 29: 1-63.
- Schoop, Mareike, Frank Koehne, and Katja Ostertag. 2010. "Communication Quality in Business Negotiations". *Group Decision and Negotiation* 19 (2): 193-209. doi: 10.1007/s10726-008-9128-8.
- Spender, John Christopher. 2014. *Managing Uncertainty, Opportunity and Enterprise*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tannen, Deborah. 2002. "Agonism in Academic Discourse". *Journal of Pragmatics* 34 (10-11): 1651-1669.