



CNRS/LYON2 PROVISIONAL RESULTS

.....
**LORENZA MONDADA
VICKY MARKAKI
SARA MERLINO
FLORENCE OLOFF
VÉRONIQUE TRAVERSO**

1. INTRODUCTION

Our research task consists in the study of the way in which multilingual resources are mobilized in team work within collaborative activities; how they are exploited in a specific way in order both to enhance collaboration and to respect the specificities of the members' linguistic competences and practices within the team. Central to our analytical work, which is inspired by ethnomethodological conversation analysis, is the relationship between multilingual resources and the situated organization of linguistic uses and of social practices. These two aspects are reflexively articulated, multilingual resources being shaped by the very contexts of their use and activities being constrained and thus structured by the available resources.

2. TYPE OF OBSERVABLES IN RELATION WITH METHODOLOGY

Working in the framework of conversation analysis, we deal with naturalistic data, i.e. with audio and video recordings of actual plurilingual encounters in professional settings, which are ethnographically approached, documented through video corpora, and transcribed.

Two main corpora are being analyzed right now : a) the VAX corpus, recorded in a big multinational company based in France, consisting of several meetings in which participate the top managers of the European branches (30 to 200 persons attending) (45 videorecorded hours) ; b) the HAMMAM corpus, recorded within an international network of experts dealing with sustainable development and cultural heritage in the Mediterranean regions, consisting in several meetings in which participate experts coming from all over Europe (35 audiorecorded hours).

Other side corpora are currently being collected in order to provide for comparative situations : c) the CALL corpus (video recordings in a call centre in France, dealing with French and Spanish speakers), d) the Young EU corpus (video recordings of 3 days of meetings between young people coming from 6 different European countries and preparing socio-economical recommendations for the EU parliament), e) the IDEM corpus (videorecordings of two workshops held by French immunologists collaborating with American colleagues for setting up a big project aiming at discovering a new vaccine). Older corpora are also available (the TC video corpus of clinical discussions

and of surgical operations between medical experts from France, Europe, US and Japan, 40h ; the IC audio corpus of discussions between French, German and Swiss researchers interested in intercultural intellectual influences ; the MOUNTAIN audio corpus of a 3-days meeting between experts in ecology, etc.).

These corpora are currently being transcribed, by taking into consideration two kinds of questions : a) specific questions related to the transcription of mixed languages (where the issue is to avoid the reification and the pre-categorization of the linguistic resources within the transcript representation and to provide for a relevant representation of their mixed and complex form – cf. already Mondada, 2000, Traverso 2002 ; cf. work in progress being done in two meetings held in Lyon about these issues in collaboration with the Paris team) ; b) specific questions related to the transcription of multimodality (gestures, gaze, head movements, body postures, etc.) (cf. Mondada, 2006, 2007, 2008).

3. FINDINGS

3.1. GENERAL TRENDS

The VAX corpus is representative of « glocal » practices observable within big multinational companies based in a non-anglophone country :

- ▶ Even when meetings are held in English, the language of the corporation's headquarters and direction staff is very pervasive : French is regularly spoken, as well as other languages ; not only French speakers speak French, but also participants who are not required to be competent in it ; English can be spoken within 'French ways of doing' (and not only exhibiting a 'French accent').
- ▶ French is not only spoken in side sequences, aiming at supporting the ongoing official interaction in English (improvised translations, word searches, explanations, etc.), not only in parallel informal exchanges (jokes, side comments, inserted informal conversations, etc.), but also within the main official activity. Circumstances of the use of French and detailed characterization of the sequential positions within interaction where it is used are being investigated.
- ▶ English is used in a highly variable and heterogeneous way, inviting for a redefinition of what 'English as a Lingua Franca' is and for a critical revision of the supposed homogeneity entailed by this very label. The relation between these varieties of English and the subjacent L1 language is very important not only for its formal characterization but also for the identity work transpiring from these uses.
- ▶ When the subjacent L1 language is locally and occasionally used as an instrument to translate and/or repair 'English as a Lingua Franca', questions of affiliation, participation and collaboration seem to play an important role within

the main activity – functioning not only as a solution to linguistic discrepancies but also as a place for mutual and possible orientation and convergence.

- ▶ Code-switching and mixed languages have been mainly documented by the existing literature in informal conversation ; although more oriented to the monolingual norms, formal meeting interactions are a setting where different forms of hybrid language are observable and deserve then to be described. In the same way, local translations and searches for words using L1 seem to question the limits between code-switching and these other types of equally complex interactional activities.

The HAMMAM corpus illustrates a situation in which 1) participants have very different disciplinary backgrounds (from chemistry to archeology or social sciences); 2) have asymmetrical linguistic competences that go hand in hand with different types of knowledge about the programme topic (hammams), and that are related to the region they come from.

About 50 participants attend these meetings. Some of them are native from Mediterranean Regions (Algeria, Egypt, Marocco, Syria, Turkey), and, in addition to being experts, have "insiders'" knowledge about what hammams are, could or should be. An important part of them, except Egyptians, do not have a good command of English (the working language). The other participants (Austrians, Americans, British, French, Italians) generally have a rather ordinary, functional command of English-as-a working language. Recurrent phenomena are observed due to this specific situation:

- ▶ code-switching from English to French (from participants originating in the Maghreb) and to Arabic (between participants originating from Arabic countries). This phenomenon only appears in small group activities, it is always accompanied with local translation.
- ▶ claims not to speak English are frequent: some Arabic participants refuse to speak English (even if they are able to) and even Arabic, claiming their right to speak French.
- ▶ what could be called strategic uses of "other-than-English" languages are observed: French and/or Arabic are sometimes used in order to make a contribution more complex, to make an issue intriguing and problematic.

3.2. SPECIFIC PHENOMENA

The work done in year 2 has been mainly devoted to the description of specific local phenomena, investigated on the basis of in-depth *single case analyses* as well as of *analyses of collections* (cf. Schegloff, 1988, 1996 ; Clift, 2001 ; Mondada, 2008, in press, Traverso, in press for a characterization of these procedures). Here are some of them :

- ▶ **Laughter.** A specific sequential environment where laughter emerges (for example after a person's name, the name of an institution or a code-switched lexical token) has been investigated, casting some light on the way in which participants display their orientation towards 'foreign', 'exotic', 'different'

linguistic (phonetic, prosodic, morphological, lexical) features by transforming them into a laughable. More general use of laughter have also been identified, displaying the participants stance towards speaking a foreign language.

- ▶ **Proper names.** The manner in which proper names, names of enterprises/ labels/institutions, and acronyms are not only pronounced but also prefaced, introduced and tagged exhibits the way in which speakers display their affiliation, the orientation to their recipients as well as the emic conception of the 'strangeness' or 'localness' of the named entity.
- ▶ **Improvised translations.** In all of the settings where we have done fieldwork, there are no official translators, but translation can be improvised if needed. The circumstances in which translation is improvised, the way in which some participants self-select or are other-selected as translators, the way in which the translation is organized (both orienting to the progressivity of the activity and delaying it with insertions of translated fragments), the way in which translation implements various activities (literal translating, summarizing, commenting on, elaborating and developing, and even criticizing what has been said) and the way in which it restructures participation, choosing a particular format (either embedding or alternating translated and translating fragments), all show the local solutions participants put into practice for dealing with various languages at the same time.
- ▶ **Repair.** Repair is a very pervasive process in our meetings, and is used to achieve various goals. In addition to the classical clarifying-oriented-to process, it is frequently used as a cue to display linguistic insecurity, but also from time to time, when accompanied with local self-translation, to show the specificity of a notion. In this latter case, it underlines the loss due to speaking a foreign language or a language which is not the one in which the notion originates.
- ▶ **The organization of participation** through multilingual, multimodal and sound resources: multilingual resources are intertwined with sound and phonic, as well as, in certain cases, phonetic resources and with multimodal resources for the organization of participation in complex large groups. More particularly, multilingualism is supported by specific multimodal conducts (gazes and head movements for the selection of a recipient, arrangement of bodies in the configuration of a punctual alliance, etc.) in a way that has to be further described.
- ▶ **Metastatements about multilingualism.** Very often, multinational companies do not have an explicit discourse about multilingualism, especially as far as the everyday life of the enterprise is concerned. But our data reveal frequent statements about using several languages which are situatedly produced in various sequential environments, where they frequently work as an *account* for troubles, problems, difficulties or where they locally address a particular contingency of the ongoing interaction.

4. CONCLUSION

Analyses done on particular phenomena can shed some light on the link, between multilingual practices, the local 'bricolage' of linguistic resources and the identity work constantly performed in such practices. The use of those polyglot resources often differs from the discourse "about" those practices as declared by the participants themselves or by the companies' possible official guidelines, revealing the details of what seems to be effectively at stake in those multicultural business settings. In this sense, the conceptual advances planned for the coming year concern this interplay between micro-phenomena and issues generally associated with a macro-analysis, but which can be tackled as constitutively achieved through locally organized linguistic practices.