



**FACULTY OF COMMERCE, HUMAN SCIENCES AND EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

**AN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS INVESTIGATION OF LECTURER AND STUDENT  
INTERACTIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATICS AT THE NAMIBIA  
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**BY**

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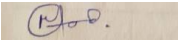
**THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS AT THE NAMIBIA  
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**SUPERVISOR: PROF. HAILELEUL ZELEKE WOLDEMARIAM**

22 July 2022

## DECLARATION

I, Future Mutandi, hereby declare this study, *An interlanguage pragmatics investigation of lecturer and student interactions in the Department of Informatics at Namibia University of Science and Technology*, is a true reflection of my own research and that not any part of this study or its entirety has been submitted at any university or any other institution of higher learning for the awarding of a degree.

Signature:  .....Date: 22 July 2022

## AUTHENTICATION OF THE THESIS

I certify that this student has successfully completed all the research work for this degree and that:

1. the thesis conforms to Namibia University of Science and Technology postgraduate rules as stipulated in the Yearbook 2021 and submission of theses for higher degrees;
2. the study includes a certificate indicating the extent to which the research has been conducted by the student
3. the study is properly presented and is prima facie worthy of submission;
4. occurrences of inadequate presentation were pointed out to the student for correction before the thesis was bound;
5. the student has completed an approved program of study and research as required;
6. an abstract has been included in the thesis;
7. soft copies of the thesis have been submitted to NUST.

Name of supervisor: Prof. Haileleul Zeleke Woldemariam

Signature : *Haileleul Zeleke Woldemariam*

Date : 22 July 2022

## CERTIFICATION PAGE

It is certified that the thesis with the title ***An interlanguage pragmatics investigation of lecturer and student interactions in the Department of Informatics at Namibia University of Science and Technology*** submitted by Future Mutandi towards the partial fulfilment of the Master of English and Applied Linguistics Degree, is true reflection of original work and the investigation was carried out under our guidance. The thesis conforms to Namibia University of Science and Technology postgraduate degree rules as stipulated in the Yearbook 2021. The study has not been submitted at any other university or institution of higher learning for the awarding of a degree.

Name of supervisor: Prof. Haileleul Zeleke Woldemariam

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Date : 22 July 2022

## **DEDICATION**

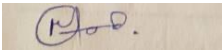
Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for giving me strength and divine wisdom to undertake this study and completing it. Moreover, I would also like to dedicate this study to my beautiful wife Tineyi Jowana, my three children, Memory, Gerald and Jayden for being there for me. Without their support and motivation, I could have realized some shortcomings along the journey to accomplish the great work.

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## RETENTION AND USE OF THESIS

I, Future Mutandi, being a candidate for the Master of English and Applied Linguistics Degree, accept the requirements of the Namibia University of Science and Technology relating to the retention and use of mini-thesis deposited in the library. In terms of these conditions, I agree that the original of my mini-thesis be deposited in the library will be accessible for purposes of study and research, in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Librarian for the care, loan or reproduction of this mini-thesis.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Requests and refusals are the most frequent speech acts in communication and is the reason why so much study has been focused on them in different contexts. In interlanguage pragmatics study, requests and refusals remain a great focus of attention as they have a bearing on the success or failure in cross-cultural communicative processes. The present study sought to analyse the strategies utilised by the students when formulating requests and refusals as they engaged with their lecturers at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) using the interlanguage pragmatics theoretical framework. Of utmost importance, the study sought to dig deeper and accentuate adverse conditions for interlanguage pragmatics competence. Two Written Discourse Completion Tests (WDCTs) were administered to a study sample of 63 second year students from the Department of Informatics at NUST to elicit for data relating to strategies utilised by the students in the production of requests and refusals. A comprehensive questionnaire was also administered to the 63 second year students to collect data on the adverse conditions to interlanguage pragmatics competence. The study sample of 63 second year students was obtained by utilizing the Systematic Random Selection to a study population of 75 students. The elicited data revealed that interlanguage pragmatics' failure or miscommunication is happening in the Department of Informatics at NUST due to the utilisation of direct requests. Students also apply blunt and negation of proposal to refusals when they engage with their supervisors. Moreover, the questionnaire establishes that the transfer concept and limitation to effective input environment could be contributing to interlanguage pragmatic competence problems to the students. Cultural concerns could also be linked to the limitations in pragmatic-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge in the students.



## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
WDCT	Written Discourse Completion Test
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English Second Language
NNSE	Non-Native Speakers of English
NSE	Native Speakers of English

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Namibia is a multicultural country that is characterised by a diverse number of languages. Some of the widely spoken languages are Oshiwambo, Khoekhoegowab, Afrikaans, Otjiherero, Rukwangali and Silozi. On the backdrop of this multilingualism nature of the country, the government of Namibia after attaining independence in 1990 elevated English to the position of official language. This was a move aimed at uniting the different speaking tribes under one common official language. Along the same lines, the Ministry of Education adopted English as the medium of instruction in schools from Grade 4 to Grade 12, although the mother tongue language can be taught as a subject in secondary school. The Language Policy for Schools in Namibia (2003, p. 5) states that, "Learners should be sensitised to appreciate the multicultural and multilingual character of Namibia". This accentuates the weight that is allocated to the English language despite the fact that only a small percentage of the population of Namibia can effectively converse in the English language. The teachers that teach the English language are not knowledgeable on the methodology and techniques to impart the crucial knowhow and relevant skills to the students. Chavez (2016, p. 193) posits that, "...an investigative examination at a school in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, revealed that 22, 4% of the students in grade 8 were not functionally literate in English..." In spite of all these multidimensional challenges, after Grade 12, learners enrol at NUST for different courses where the medium of instruction is English. Furthermore, NUST as an institution of higher learning comprises of lecturers from different cultural backgrounds.

The student-lecturer cross-cultural interactions in pedagogical processes become an area of great interest taking into consideration the issue of English language. It is fundamental to understand whether the students adequately and effectively apply linguistic forms, units and skills in their engagement with the lecturers. The thrust is placed on checking whether the students know what to say, how to say it in addressing their issues and concerns in general to the lecturers. Empirical analysis and insight is needed to check whether the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic

knowledge of the students enables them to communicate with the lecturers in a successful manner. Moreover, it is crucial to understand the techniques that the lecturers have put in place to facilitate the communicative action between them and the students. Students need to communicate to the lecturers all the time regarding various issues such as requests for extension of deadlines to submit their work, requests for assistance, complains relating to their studies and permission to carry out some projects within their areas of study. All this require the students to make certain linguistic choices available in the English language which are appropriate and acceptable. Thus, this study will investigate the interlanguage pragmatics interactions between lecturer and student at NUST.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Namibia is a multicultural and multilingual country. The diverse characteristic in languages and cultures aids in the sharing and communication of ideas, but, it also poses a great challenge in the case of a shared common language. In the case of Namibia, the shared common language is English as it the official language and medium of instruction in pedagogical processes. The fundamental and philosophical question is whether interlanguage pragmatics miscommunication does not pose a challenge to the interactions that take place specifically in tertiary institutions. This is on the backdrop that interlanguage pragmatics knowledge and competence has a bearing on the success or failure of communication interactions, be it verbal or written, or between individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This aptly asserts the value of understanding the pragmatics of language for purposeful and desirable outcomes in communicative actions, Leech (1983).

Thus, this study investigated the interlanguage pragmatics interactions between lecturers and students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), specifically in the Department of Informatics. The researcher sought to get to the bottom of analysis on whether the request and refusal speech act (interlanguage pragmatics) has had any effect (positive or negative) on the interactions that take place between lecturers and the students in matters relating to studies. Moreover, the factors that could be of great bearing to pragmatic failure in this regard are closely analysed and accentuated. The study went on to dig deeper on the

techniques (strategies) that have been implemented by the students to mitigate cross-cultural miscommunication and realize successful communicative actions. Moreover, the study analysed the adverse factors to interlanguage pragmatics competence awareness and development.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the interlanguage pragmatics interactions between lecturer and students at NUST and specifically the research objectives are to:

- a) explore the development of the request speech act in the students' speech patterns
- b) analyse the refusal speech act strategies in the students' speech patterns
- c) investigate the adverse factors to interlanguage pragmatic competence in the students.

### **1.4 Significance of study**

This study is essential as it contributes greatly to the body of knowledge that already exists in English Second Language studies. It is a highly valuable undertaking as it engaged the most fundamental issue of communicative success or failure in interactions between students and their lecturers at tertiary level. It fills the gap that provided crucial information to the curriculum planners and tertiary institutions instructors. Furthermore, an elimination of communication barriers related to interlanguage pragmatics ensures the most desirable conducive environment to achieve set goals for both lecturers and the students. Miscommunication between lecturers and students is unwanted as the repercussions may be detrimental to the attainment of the target objectives in many facets. Thus, the results of this study are crucial to the university as they accentuated the source of problems linked to the communication breakdown between the lecturers and the students. Lin (2007) emphasized on the need to understand other users of language and the effects their use of language might have on the other participants in communicative actions.

### **1.5 Delimitation of study**

There are limitations to the study which are beyond the control of the researcher. The study only focused on the sample and participants from the Department of Informatics only. The analysis of the data from this sample, however, cannot be the true reflection of all the departments of the

Namibia University of Science and Technology. Moreover, the use of questionnaires and the Written Discourse Completion Test limit the participants in what they could have offered in responses had it been an oral undertaking. In oral engagements, one can deliberate linking their opinions with supportive statements. Kim (2007) reiterates the argument pointing at problems such as feasibility of the speech situations, the quantity of variables that could be imbedded in given speech situations, the wording of the situation given to the respondent.

### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

The study did not utilize varying data collecting methods to allow for triangulation. The study's findings are based on the data elicited from the Written Discourse Completion Tests and the questionnaire only. Triangulation could have been possible if the study had made use of other data collecting methods like role play. The utilization of other data collecting methods could have provided the study with different results. This is on the argument that the strategies applied in real life situation could be different from the answers presented in writing by the participants (Wojtaszek, 2016). Secondly, the study did not take into consideration some sociolinguistic elements like bilingual, monolingual or gender concerns in collecting the data. The gender variable could be influential in the formulation of requests and refusals (Tajeddin & Malmir, 2014). It would be interesting to carry out the same study utilizing a study sample of female or male participants only and compare the results to the findings of this study.

### **1.7 Definition of key terms**

#### **Pragma-linguistic competence**

This is a term which refers to the study of illocution in a language. This kind of knowledge and competence is crucial in the production of appropriate speech acts. It provides the basis for the formulation of strategies taking into consideration the necessary and relevant forms and units in the communicative act. Mirzaei, Roohani and Esmaeili (2012) stress the importance of speakers in a communicative process to mapping their socio-pragmatic skills to pragma-linguistic strategies and forms in order to minimize any constraints. Successful communication takes into consideration socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic elements (McNamara & Roever 2006, Roever 2004)

### **Sociolinguistic competence**

This is a fundamental concept in communicative actions. It relates to the competence which is related to the ability to select and use language that is appropriate and suitable to social context and situation. It is imperative to note that the term social context refers to culture-specific context. This resonates with the concept of cross-cultural linguistics in interlanguage studies. Crystal (as cited in Etawe 2017, p. 88) comments on socio-pragmatics stating that, "the way conditions on language use derive from the social situation".

### **Interlanguage pragmatics**

This is a field of inquiry that has set tenets and basic assumptions on understanding the pragmatic and social concerns of second language acquisition. Moreover, the thrust is placed on the non-native speakers' use of linguistic units and forms in a target language or second language. This entails that for a non-native speaker to be proficient in a target language, there are some pre-requisites such as knowledge of pronunciation, syntax vocabulary and the ability of knowing how to use it in an appropriate way. Languages differ in the application of speech acts so it is imperative to have socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge of a target language. Kasper and Dahl (1991, p. 216) defined interlanguage pragmatics as, "referring to non-native speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and how that L2-related knowledge is acquired".

### **Speech Acts**

These are verbal actions that accomplish something in communicative action. Speech acts can be realised as representatives (statements and claims), commissives (promises and pledges), directives (commands and requests), expressives (greetings and apologies) and verdictives (appraising and assessments). Studying speech acts help understand how people communicate, the force that can be realised in language, for example, locution (referential value), illocutionary (performative function) and perlocutionary (perceived effect). Bachman (as cited in Bayat 2013, p. 214) points out that, "speech acts in communication cases are associated with the functional dimensions". Drid (2018, p. 12) supports the viewpoint stating that, "Speech act theory addresses

an important dimension of language, that is, language as a means of communication. The value of its insights lies in the fact that the meanings of utterances are accounted for not in terms of the linguistic system alone". This demonstrates the broader context upon which language is analysed in speech acts. The context through conventionalization of illocutionary usages is highly valued.

### **Interlanguage pragmatics competence**

The ability to select the right linguistic forms and units, coupled with the awareness of social environment in cross-cultural communicative processes is crucial to the success or failure in the engagement. Interlanguage pragmatics competence is an interdisciplinary area that is concerned with how the learners of English foreign language or English second language learners display the comprehension abilities and development in pragmatic knowledge. The knowledge to use linguistic forms and meanings in a social context is a pre-requisite to interlanguage pragmatics competence.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Any research does not take place in a vacuum. There is always a link in what researchers do in order to arrive at different conclusions. This study focused on investigating the interlanguage pragmatics interactions between students and lecturers at Namibia University of Science and Technology. It is crucial to outline that some research conclusions and findings initiate further research. It is in this regard, that literature review was upheld as a valuable exercise in this research as it gave an idea on what has been attempted so far in the concerned area of study. Furthermore, it enhanced the researcher's ability to synthesise, interpret and critically evaluate the previous findings and observations in the quest to reach to a new broader conclusion.

#### **2.2 Realization and formulation of requests**

##### **2.2.1 Interlanguage pragmatics**

Interlanguage pragmatics is a field that digs deeper into the issues that arise when the adults or children acquire and develop the pragmatic system of the target language. This is the reason why researchers have placed the study of interlanguage pragmatics at the intersection second language acquisition and pragmatics. The thrust in interlanguage pragmatics is the development of communicative action in the second language (SL). The most difficult undertaking and psychological process is the ability to understand forms and meanings in a target language or second language. Huang (2010) points out that,

As a new interdisciplinary branch of study based on the theories of pragmatics and second language acquisition, interlanguage pragmatics is very practical for foreign language teaching, so theoretical model of interlanguage pragmatics will bring about a lot of enlightenment for foreign language teaching. (p. 684)

The study by Huang was carried out to highlight the implications of interlanguage pragmatics on foreign students. The connection to the current research emanated from the idea that an interlanguage pragmatics study was tested on the non-speakers of the English language, in other

words second language learners. This resonated with the underlying philosophy of this study as the context of Namibia is characterised by non-native speakers of the English language. The study concluded that the combination of theory and practical engagement brings about the desired outcome in terms of interlanguage competence. In other words, interlanguage pragmatics awareness and acquisition in the English language is a multifaceted approach. It entails the utilization of instruction (pedagogy) and experience with an environment where an individual picks up the relevant and necessary skills to demonstrate the internalization of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic skills. Kasper and Schmidt (1996, p. 165) point out that, "In addition to the proposed processing perspectives, focus should be given to the complexities of changes in learners' sociocultural perceptions over time and the impact of such altered perceptions on their strategies of linguistic action". The argument being presented is in support of the perspective that the second language learner's interlanguage development is dependent on other factors intrinsic, such as the sociocultural perception. This implies that interlanguage pragmatics competence is a culmination of many aspects relating to internalization of the most effective ways in communication by second language learners. Moreover, Kasper and Schmidt (ibid) present two crucial aspects connected to interlanguage pragmatics development and awareness, these are society and its cultural component. According to their supposition, the development of interlanguage awareness in cross-cultural communication takes place gradually as the second language learners alter their perceptions and their linguistic strategies in performative actions. Their analysis and supposition puts it through that interlanguage pragmatics development in the second language learners is a process which unfolds as new perceptions build in them linguistically.

A study conducted by Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018) on the impact of instruction on the pragmatic comprehension of speech acts of apology, request, and refusal among Iranian intermediate EFL learners; crucial variables were presented in the findings. The study was conducted on a sample of 69 participants which is quite commendable. The sample was a mixture of 27 males and 42 females. Technologically, the study utilized video-driven vignettes. To lessen the compromise of the collected data, the sample used in the study was a homogenous group. Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018, p. 90) posit that, "Based on the findings of our study, it was



shown that instruction had a positive impact on the pragmatic comprehension of apologies, requests, and refusals reiterating that interlanguage pragmatics is teachable drawing on different approaches of language teaching". The notion points out that the learners of English second language can develop their interlanguage pragmatics skills and awareness through effective instruction. What they need to do is to pay great attention to forms and units of language coupled with socio-cultural aspects that affect the form in a given context. Moreover, a further analysis of the notion highlights that mere exposure to effective instruction is not sufficient, the ability to identify forms and socio-pragmatic elements is crucial in interlanguage pragmatics teaching. A study conducted by Mazandarani and Derakhshan (2020) on 54 published peer reviewed articles between the period 2000 and 2020 produced some fascinating conclusions and findings. The study focused on the analysis of instructed second language English pragmatics in the Iranian context. "...the results of the present synthesis corroborate that pragmatic features are indeed teachable, and comparing different interventional methods, explicit instruction has proved to be more effective", Mazandarani & Derakhshan (2020, p. 239).

However, Kasper (as cited in Derakhshan & Arabmofrad 2018, p. 76) highlights another viewpoint stating that; "...learners have little chance to get engaged in authentic communication to get sufficient pragmatic knowledge in the foreign language contexts". The perspective brings in a crucial variable in interlanguage pragmatics taking into consideration the background and exposure of the non-native learners of the English language. This variable resonated with the context of the Namibian students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology in relation to the development and realisation of interlanguage pragmatics skills. According to Kasper, the environment in which the second language learner finds themselves plays a crucial role on the development of awareness and production (formulation) of interlanguage pragmatics skills in communicative processes. Moreover, Kasper mentioned the variable of practical exposure to the native English speaking environment as a crucial factor in interlanguage pragmatics awareness. This presents the concept of interlanguage pragmatics as a complex phenomenon as the opportunities for non-native speakers of English to mix and mingle with native speakers may be limited due to a number of factors.

### **2.2.2 Pragma-linguistic knowledge versus interlanguage pragmatic competence**

Studies have been conducted to validate whether pragma-linguistic knowledge has a bearing on the development and production of request skills. Altasan (2016) states that,

The outcomes of this study suggest that even at advanced levels of proficiency, non-native speakers' pragmatic performance may present deviations from that of native speakers. This leads us to conclude that the linguistic competence does not guarantee a corresponding level of pragmatic competence. (p. 356)

It is imperative to note that the study was undertaken to assess the pragma-linguistic competence in requests by observing only a small sample of three participants. This delimitation, however, could have led to the realisation of incorrect results due to the sample size. The study was conducted on two participants and that greatly compromised its quality in terms of collected data. Although the data collection tool which was utilized is relevant, Written Discourse Completion Test, sample size is a key determinant in the realisation of dependable, reliable findings and conclusions. The fundamental outcome in the study was that non-native speakers of English language do not reach the desirable point of pragmatic competence despite the exposure and level of pragma-linguistic competence. Altasan's (2016) conclusions allude to the point that linguistic proficiency and competence does not guarantee a corresponding level of interlanguage pragmatics competence. In other words, the point being put through is that despite the level of pragma-linguistic awareness in non-native speakers of the English language during cross-cultural communicative processes, native speakers of the English language would still identify, observe and perceive some inappropriateness and impoliteness. The observation ignites a serious debate and prolonged interest in proving these facts. The Namibian context in the tertiary institutions could be faced with this challenge and investigations need to be carried out to get to the bottom of this phenomenon. This is on the backdrop that the students are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and have to perform tasks in the English language taking cognisance of the cross-cultural element. Moreover, if the level of pragma-linguistic knowledge does not guarantee a corresponding interlanguage pragmatics competence, it leaves

a gap for research on the communicative engagements between the lecturers and the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

A study by Mills (1993) on Russian and English Pragma-linguistic Request Strategies was centred on answering fundamental questions such as,

How does one learn to sufficiently apprise the request environment and tailor the text to the particular speech participant and event? To what extent are universal notions of politeness and deference expressed in the similarity of syntactic forms in each language, as compared to their antithetical structures or perceptions? (p. 92)

The outcome of the study revealed very important information as specific cases of interference (non-transference) became a barrier to the attainment of true pragmatic competence by the informants. According to the investigation, this stemmed from the English specific concept of appropriate politeness (positive), proportionally mixed with (in) direct measure of the selected linguistic forms. That bias in English prevents second language users from finding and selecting the appropriate fit or match form to use in mapping their request in the target language. The argument raised a crucial point in a subtle manner; the deep rooted cultural values ideologies of tact in a native language might hinder the development and selection of the appropriate request competence in a target language. Thomas (as cited in Harlow 1990, p. 329) states that, “pragma-linguistic error occurs when the pragmatic force of a linguistic structure is different from that normally assigned to it by a native speaker.” Both Mills and Thomas raised crucial debatable viewpoints relating to the development of awareness in interlanguage pragmatics. They point at differences in linguistic structure which is a complex concept in interlanguage pragmatics study. It racks in the socio-cultural differences perspective to the debate. They present the second language English learner as overwhelmed with the difficult task of understanding both linguistic structures in two given languages, and are able to select the appropriate and relevant linguistic units to ensure a successful interlanguage pragmatics communicative process.

This kind of comparison between native and non-speakers of the English language is an unbalanced affair according to their analysis. Cenoz and Gorter (as cited in Krulatz 2016) point out that,

...the communicative skills of multilingual speakers have traditionally been measured from a monolingual perspective against the yardstick of the ideal native speaker of each of the languages involved. However, in contrast to monolingual language users, bilingual or multilingual speakers use languages available to them in different contexts and for different purposes. (p. 41)

The argument presented by Cenoz and Gorter resonated with the underlying investigation to be conducted, that is, the interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes between students and lecturers at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. Namibia is characterised by a multicultural and multilingual environment as pointed out above.

Pablos-Ortega (2020) in a study on the English and Spanish film-speak conducted on 24 films, observed that the English films contained a variety of indirect forms of DSAs as compared to the Spanish directness strategy. This accentuates a unique corpus in the native English speakers which may be different if contrasted to the non-speakers of English corpora. The conclusions and the findings can be attributed to the fact that finding some discrepancies related to directness and indirectness in the native speakers of English would not be an easy task as non-native speakers themselves struggle to produce indirect strategies in requests and refusals. The study debatably compares native speakers of the English language with the non-native speakers which kind of presents an unbalanced yardstick in the undertaking. In other words, the study utilized an approach whereby they compared a monolingual set up or environment to a bilingual one in terms of their characteristics on socio-pragmatics and pragma-linguistics attributes.

### **2.2.3 Socio-pragmatic concerns**

The social constraints on language in use and its structure contribute to the growth and development of request competence. Referring to socio-pragmatic knowledge, Harlow (1990, p. 328) states that it, “refers to the ability to vary speech act strategies according to the situational or social variables present in the act of communication”. The notion implies that competence in socio-pragmatics entail awareness of appropriateness, knowledge of situation, interlocutor elements, social conventions and taboos. Harlow (1990) raises a fundamental point by mentioning that the major problem of pragmatic failure is miscommunication. This has serious

implications to cross-cultural communicative engagements that the non-native speaker of English language finds themselves in. According to Harlow, lack of knowledge on the situation in which one is involved, coupled with disregarding the social position of the interlocutor and context, may result in the learner of the English second language selecting the inappropriate linguistic forms and units in a communicative process. That could lead to interlanguage pragmatics communication breakdown.

In a review of published articles between 2009 and 2018, looking at speech acts and their underlying strategies by EFL learners and non-learners: a systematic literature review, Sharqawi & Antony (2019, p. 488) assert on the emphasis relating to communicative competence by stating that, "Since speech act strategies can be directed to test the interlocutors' ability to communicate properly, thus, researchers should investigate the speech acts competence rather than the linguistic one in order to survey their effectiveness in communication". The data collection methods and analysis techniques that were applied in the study are effective although a bigger sample could have been utilised to critically look at the variables. The study concluded that the quantitative and mixed methods of analysis were utilized in most of the research undertakings in cross-cultural communication. However, the mixed methods approach is used lesser as compared to the quantitative approach. This gave the researcher great insight on the selection of the mixed methods approach utilized in the study. The qualitative approach was utilized looking at the concept of perception of language by the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. On the contrary, the quantitative approach was used to analyse the production of refusal and request speech acts by the students.

#### **2.2.4 Request speech act**

Iragui (1996) undertook a study to compare requests and apologies by native and non-native speakers. The sample of 62 non-native and 34 native speakers of English was utilised. The sample was inclusive of both male and female counterparts. This was crucial for the validation of the research outcome. Iragui (1996, 58) points out that, "The native speakers' use of alerters and intensifiers confirms most studies on interlanguage pragmatics that have reported that native speakers of English use more politeness markers than non-native speakers, who tend to be more

direct". It is imperative to take note of the conclusions and the findings of the study that non-native speakers of English do not apply a combination of alerters and intensifiers in their practical use of language. This is crucial evidence to the supposition that by the researchers that non-native speakers performance in speech acts is face threatening. According to the study, non-native performance in cross-cultural communicative processes is direct and could be susceptible to interlanguage pragmatics communication breakdown. The notion by Iragui posit that there could some communicative complex experience encountered in interlanguage pragmatics communicative engagements if politeness, alerters and intensifiers are not accounted for by non-native speakers of English language. Kasper (1992, p. 208) argues that, "directness and indirectness, and a plethora of lexical, syntactic, and prosodic means capable of mitigating and aggravating illocutionary force have been identified cross linguistically as polite marking devices". A further analysis of Iragui's assertion highlights the lack of pragma-linguistic knowledge in the non-native speakers to construct responses with alerters, intensifiers and elements of politeness. Hence, in a subtle way, Iragui puts it through that it is a combination of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge that ensure an appropriate and relevant interlanguage pragmatic communicative process. Tujuba & Woldemariam (2018, p. 32) emphasise on the fact that effective interactions depend on the capabilities of communicating appropriately with others. The position of alerters and their restrictive use can be termed as impolite by the native speakers or pragmatically competent individuals.

The analysis by Tujuba & Woldemariam presents a fascinating term in interlanguage pragmatics, 'communicating appropriately'. The study points indirectly to the assertion that there is what can be termed inappropriate communication or communication breakdown if some variables in socio-pragmatics and pragma-linguistics are not accounted for. Tujuba & Woldemariam (2018, p. 37) assert that, "Since the finding of the study showed poor pragmatic knowledge can lead to poor communication, pragmatic failure has a great impact on the effectiveness of oral communication". The study portrays restrictive use of alerters as a recipe for inappropriate communication. The study by Tujuba & Woldemariam focused on the impact of pragmatic knowledge on the effectiveness of oral communication. The study sample of 33 university English teachers was utilized. This is a commendable sample size to collect reliable data looking at an

institution like a university. The mixed methods approach was used to analyse the collected data. The data collecting tools were diversified; written discourse test, interviews and multiple choice questionnaires.

Stavans & Shafran (2018) undertook an investigation into the pragmatics of requests and refusals in multilingual settings. This is an interesting research since it resonated with the objectives to be achieved in the current research. The sample size of 23 individuals could have been made bigger to broaden the amount of data collected. The research was conducted in Israel and some of the participants were trilingual. They could speak English as a L3 and Arabic as L2. The outcome revealed greater use of direct request and positive association relating to years of exposure to the English language and the use of indirect refusals. Stavans & Shafran proposition points to the variable of environment in terms of exposure as a crucial factor in the development of interlanguage pragmatics skills, awareness and knowledge. Another crucial point raised is that pragmatic competence in a non-native language could be shaped by many variables like the order of acquisition (L2, L3 or L4), the extent of exposure to the target language, attitude and purpose of language use. The study lays the basis of its argument on the cognitive angle. All the variables accentuated by the researchers are linked to cognition and its development in the perception and production of the expected, appropriate and relevant language skills. This ideology resonated with the concerns of this study as Namibia is a multilingual and multicultural society as highlighted.

Moreover, Lenchuk & Ahmed (2019, p. 11) point out that, “Without making any judgements on the values of the speakers of different speech communities, we would like to emphasise the importance of awareness, tolerance and sensitivity towards the communicative styles of the other in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual community”. An analysis of the assertion by Lenchuk & Ahmed highlights some important information about interlanguage pragmatics; different strategies are utilised to communicate in multilingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural environments. In other words, an appreciation of cultural differences as encompassed in language becomes vital to the realisation of successful interlanguage communicative processes. Moreover, Lenchuk & Ahmed highlight issues such as directness or indirectness, context, social

status, social setting, linguistic forms and the choices available, and politeness in a subtle manner. Additionally, all these variables are contained in socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge. The view is upheld by Al-Zubaidi (2020, p. 2) arguing that, "Therefore, communication breakdowns are often liable to occur in cross-cultural interactions when interactants of different linguistic backgrounds are not aware of such variable". The notions by Al-Zubaidi, Lenchuk & Ahmed point to the importance of non-native speakers of the English language to develop awareness on the variables that can affect cross-cultural communicative engagements.

### **2.2.5 Acquisition patterns in pragmatics**

Timpe-Laughlin (2017) conducted a very crucial research in adult learners' acquisitional patterns in L2 pragmatics. The study was based on a process of synthesising 16 published and peer reviewed papers by different scholars. The sample could have been made bigger since it is just a process of comparing and contrasting different methods and strategies applied by other scholars. The researcher also looked at the findings, conclusions and recommendations of each scholar relating to adult learners' acquisitional patterns in L2 pragmatics. This research's outcome gave some insight which could be very useful in realising the link between pragma-linguistics development (awareness) and the generation of appropriate request skills (strategies). The study places emphasis on the relevance of meta-pragmatic awareness as a very crucial concept in the realisation and identification of pragmatic phenomena. According to Timpe-Laughlin, this relates to the recognition of pragma-linguistic forms and their requirements in context. The study also revealed the basis for selection of direct requests rather than the indirect by the non-speakers of the English language in pragmatic communicative processes. This is aligned to the fact that indirect request require more words and heightened complex of morpho-syntax knowledge. For example, the non-native speakers would avoid using the more complex bi-causal structure in higher imposition requests. The study reveals that the production of request skills rests on other variables within the scope of pragma-linguistics.

According to the study, the scope of pragma-linguistics entails the selection of the appropriate linguistic forms and units, placing great insight at the context and socio-cultural determinants.



This findings are be supported by the project undertaken by Ozdemir & Rezvani (2010) on Turkish, Iranian and English native speaking candidates. The study focused on interlanguage pragmatics in action, specifically on the use of gratitude expressions. The project provided valuable information, aptly portraying that the non-native Turkish and Iranian candidates displayed some inadequacies in their production of gratitude speech acts as compared to the native speakers. This is despite being graduate students enrolled at university. A sample of 74 students was utilized in the project. The study sample comprised of 32 Turkish and 32 Persian graduate students enrolled in different departments, and 10 native speakers of English. The Turkish students comprised of 11 female and 21 male students, the Iranian group was made up of 13 female and 19 male students. Finally, the native English speaking group comprised of 3 female and 7 male students. This was quite a commendable sample to produce reliable conclusions and findings. The researchers utilized written discourse completion tasks as data collecting tools. The selection of data collecting tools resonated with this study. The diversity which characterised the study sample gave the researcher great insight on the need look at the criteria of sampling techniques. The study lacks one crucial element, which is clarity on the methodology applied in the analysis of the collected data. That is a crucial element which paints a clear picture on how the researcher arrived to the findings of the study.

On the contrary, in a study conducted by Turki, Hussein & Al-Kubaisy (2020) on a cross-sectional study of refusal speech act used by Iraqi undergraduate students of English in relation to the academic level proved that socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic development could be achieved in EFL learners as they are gradually exposed to effective input. The study sample consisted of 20 second year students and 20 (4<sup>th</sup>) year students. Data was collected through the utilization of Written Discourse Completion Test questionnaires. “The study indicated that the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students were less competent of the appropriate strategies to the context of situation”, Turki, Hussein & Al-Kubaisy (2020, p. 171). This greatly supports the viewpoint that learners of low proficiency might find it difficult to bridge the gap between pragma-linguistic strategies and the appropriate grammatical form of the L2. According to the study, there is a corresponding link between the level exposure to effective input on socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge and the realisation of effective production (formulation) and successful performative

cross-cultural communicative processes. The study aptly portrays that the performance of undergraduate students in cross-cultural communicative processes could be susceptible to interlanguage pragmatics failure as compared to post-graduate students. As deduced from the study, this could be a very pivotal point when analysing the cross-cultural communicative processes between students and lecturers at institutions of higher learning like the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

This is on the backdrop that the study was conducted on undergraduate and post graduate students. Furthermore, the study puts it through in a subtle way that the internalisation and realisation of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge is a continuum process which is complex by nature. It highlights that till the highest levels of receiving input, discrepancies and unwanted traits still exist in the learners of the English second language. Such a revelation by the study, overtly posit that to compare the performance of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge using the native speakers of English as a yardstick could be an undertaking which is not appropriate. This is compounded by the realisation that it takes a longer period than anticipated at times for the non-native speakers of the English language to internalise the accepted, appropriate and effective communicative skills and knowledge in interlanguage pragmatics. Moreover, the study accentuates the link between interlanguage pragmatics competence and awareness and the internalization of pragma-linguistic strategies. Thus, grammatical competence does not necessarily mean pragma-linguistic competent. Pragma-linguistic competence according to the study, takes in variables such as socio-pragmatics, which is a broad set of knowledge on its own. Hence, interlanguage pragmatics competence is a culmination of experiences, understanding, awareness and broader insight into pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic variables.

### **2.3 Formulation of realisation and refusals.**

In learning language, the development and internalization of pragmatic and socio-linguistic rules is of utmost importance in the learners. Anyanwu & Abana (2020, p. 10) states that, “a speech act is an utterance defined in terms of speaker’s intention and the effect it has on the listener”. This is on the backdrop that communicative processes require learners to know what to say and

how to say it to the hearer in order to send the message correctly. Sykes & Cohen (2018) claim that,

As such, the ILP model constitutes a framework within which learners are better able to understand the pragmatics involved in the co-construction of human knowledge. The aim is to enhance learner's ability to determine what to say, when to say it, how to say it, and when to diverge from the norm. (p. 397)

As accentuated in the expression by Sykes & Cohen, the model of interlanguage pragmatics is relevant, effective and appropriate in the modern world where the term global village or globalization is topical. What it means is there has been considerable inter-mixing of individuals from different geographical spheres in the areas of trade, tourism, technology advancement and education. Focusing on education, for the success of pedagogical processes and any cross-cultural communicative engagements between individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, knowledge of interlanguage pragmatics becomes central. It enhances the individuals understanding of the social pre-requisites and variables that affect communication and moreover, the selection of the appropriate linguistic forms and units as determined by the context and situation.

This kind of knowledge of what to say, how to say it and when, is crucial in cross-cultural linguistics where several factors can affect the way message are perceived and interpreted by the hearer (interlocutor). Cross-cultural communication takes a great deal of understanding the finer details of socio-pragmatics and pragma-linguistics. Enyi & Orji (2019, p. 20) emphasise that, "This perfect knowledge of the language is made possible through an internalized system of language rules which enables the ideal speaker-listener to have a perfect capacity in the use of his language". As highlighted in the notion, socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge capacitates language, that is a crucial expression as it points out that any lack of the skills which are mentioned would result in incapacitation of language skills which are relevant in cross-cultural communicative processes. Such an incapacitation according to the study, results in unwanted communicative traits tantamount to interlanguage pragmatics communicative failure.

Enyi & Orji conducted their study focusing on interlanguage pragmatics and the teaching of English in the context of Nigeria (African context). Moreover, the study focused on raising some awareness or consciousness on the relevance and merits of teaching pragmatics and the development of pragmatics awareness in the classrooms. This according to the study, we develop both interlanguage pragmatic competence and grammatical competence as two distinct fundamental concepts in cross-cultural communicative processes. Chomsky (as cited in Enyi & Orji 2019, p. 23) differentiates pragmatic competence and grammatical competence pointing out that, “grammatical competence is limited to the knowledge of form and meaning whereas pragmatic competence is concerned with knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use”. The central focus of the study resonated with the researcher’s underlying ideology to dig for data in order to find for solutions to mitigating interlanguage pragmatics failure.

It is crucial to highlight that there is a great connection between requests and refusals. This is on the backdrop that refusals are a response to requests. In other words, it does not make some sense to formulate refusals in a communicative process if no request has been directed to an individual. Learners that cannot formulate requests in a manner that is expected in a target language or second language are likely to struggle in the formulation of refusals too. This lies on the argument that the pragmatic knowledge and skills applied in requests relate greatly to the formulation of refusals. The development, awareness and internalisation of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge is crucial in the formulation of requests and refusals looking at the context and the situation. Refusal speech act could contribute to the success or failure in communication looking at the different contributory factors and variables. Can & Cengizhan (2015, p. 58) states that, “....refusal is categorised as commissive. This is the case where the speaker expresses his/her reluctance to a request, invitation or suggestion”. It is the manner in which the reluctance is formulated that has some impact on the communicative process. In other words, the response to a request, invitation or suggestion can enhance or breakdown a communicative process by means of affecting the interlocutors feelings. An analysis of Can & Cengizhan assertion puts it through that in cross-cultural communicative processes, the responses to an interlocutor has to be cognisant of the variables that can affect the way the message is perceived and interpreted. That is, interlanguage pragmatic failure is inherent in

cross-cultural communicative engagements when the non-native speakers of the English language engage in the formulation of speech acts (refusals) and not apply the appropriate, relevant and effective linguistic forms and units.

### 2.3.1 Face-threatening act

Refusal speech act is a face-threatening act that requires a satisfactory pragmatic competence since it is probable that it can give some risk to the interlocutor's negative or positive face. "Refusal act essentially is a face-threatening act in which the hearer's expectation(s) is not met so that her/his action freedom is impeded", Campilo, 2009 (as cited in Dewi, Anisa & Aniq 2020, p. 89). As noted in the notion, it is imperative to accentuate that the refusal speech act carries with it the pragmatic competence as a pre-requisite in order for an individual to function properly in cross-cultural communicative processes. That awareness or appropriate functioning is meant to maintain a positive face in the interlocutor as a negative face or threat can result in pragmatic communication breakdown. It is critical and vital at this juncture; to highlight that individuals from all the cultures have a self-image awareness which is termed face. So in communicative processes, it is highly important to take cognizance of face. Moreover, a face-threatening act is one that subjects or exposes an individual to lose face or cause some kind of damage to it. This exposes a possible complicated communicative process when learners of ESL are presented with situations in which they perform refusals in a manner that is appropriate and not face-threatening to the wants of an interlocutor. A manner that is appropriate, relates to a communicative engagement that does not damage the face of the interlocutor by selecting the expected linguistic forms and units, giving awareness to the contextual situation.

Maroti (2016, p. 77) states that, "When choosing an appropriate method for expressing refusal, the issue of social standing-the distance according to rank or relationship that exists between given speech partners-plays an important role in determining our selection". Maroti's assertion is in a study conducted on refusal of offers. The notion highlights crucial elements that are associated with the performance of refusals. The sociological point of view has been pointed out as a determinant in addition to the pragma-linguistic perspective. The understanding of forms and meanings cannot be separated from the context in which a communicative process takes

place. That is, Maroti singles out socio-pragmatic knowledge as vital to a successful formulation and maintenance of positive face in a communicative process. Saud (2019, p. 97) states that, "Refusals occur in all but not in the same way; what may be appropriate in one culture may not be so in another". This resonates with cross-cultural communication lens that students using a second language or target language might face challenges in the formulation of appropriate and effective refusal strategies. This lies on the backdrop that cultural differences have an impact on the way we comprehend and interpret speech acts like refusals in a second language. Besides the importance of selecting the appropriate linguistic forms and units in a communicative process, Saud raises a crucial variable that falls in the category of socio-pragmatic concerns, which is the cultural perspective.

According to the study, language carries with it culture and the fact that different individuals belong to different cultural backgrounds, it raises some great concerns on whether that will not influence the way refusal are formulated. The native speakers of the English language belong to the English culture, hence, their formulation and the way they perceive refusals lies in the confines of their accepted cultural norms and values. Moreover, the same structure and system could be different from other accepted cultural variables. Hence, this racks in the debate on the comparison in formulation of speech acts between the native speakers of the English language and the non-native speakers of the language. According to Saud, if the concept of culture is one variable in pragmatic competence, then, the non-native speakers of the English language are faced with an overwhelming experience to understand the other culture (English culture) so as to properly function in appropriate ways in communicative processes. The study by Saud was conducted on 150 Saudi EFL undergraduate students. This is quite a commendable study sample too draw up reliable findings and conclusions from. Discourse completion tasks were utilized in the collection of data. Saud (2019, p. 108) concluded that, "As refusal strategies vary from culture to culture, it is crucial for the students to know the cross-cultural techniques of face-threatening acts. By doing this, they could achieve successful communication and avoid violating any social-cultural norms". Saudi applied a broad functional objective in the concluding remarks, "to know". An analysis of the supposition is that some kind of instruction has to be utilized in the quest to raise an awareness of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge in the English second

language learners. Hence, the study proposes and supports the inclusion of intercultural communication in pedagogical processes. In other words, the curriculum in non-native speakers of English should be designed in a way that inculcates the relevant skills necessary for interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. This is a vital recommendation taking into consideration the context in which the study was conducted. It was an environment which closely analysed second language speakers of English and also an environment which is educational by nature, a university.

Chen (as cited in Campillo, Safont-Jorda & Codina-Espurz 2009) points out that,

Refusals are often realised through indirect strategies, which require a high level of pragmatic competence. If refusals are challenging for native speakers as they may involve lengthy negotiation moves, the situation even become more complex in interactions between NSs and non-native speakers. In fact, refusing is a complex task for NNSs since it may be conducive to communication failure. (p. 140)

The notion resonated with the scope and goals of this undertaking. The exposure and limited linguistic proficiency in second language, coupled with limited second language sociocultural knowledge of the English language to the students at Namibia University of Science and Technology, may result in pragmatic inappropriateness in communicative processes. Chen points out that appropriateness in the formulation of refusals in communicative processes that involve non-native speakers lies in the production and utilization of indirect strategies. Such an assertion presents a complex side of refusals as indirect strategies involve the selection and performance of longer linguistic forms and units that save the interlocutors positive face.

Hence, communicative processes in which the non-native speakers of the English are expected to perform indirect strategies could result in anxiety and withdrawal due to fear of humiliation. Chen in a subtle manner presented that non-speakers of the English language are susceptible to the utilization of direct strategies due to lack of appropriate pragma-linguistic knowledge and the awareness. “Consequently, performance of refusals requires selection of appropriate linguistic means and access to extensive cultural knowledge and can thus pose challenges to adult language learners”, Nelson et al, (as cited in Krulatz & Dixon 2020, p. 752). The assertion by

Nelson resonated with the underlying ideology in this study. In other words, if the adult learners of the English second language have to select the appropriate linguistic units in the quest to access extensive and not intensive cultural knowledge, it pointed to the assumption that the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology might be faced with a complex experience in the production and performance of refusals in pragmatic communicative processes. The assertion also reiterates the challenges brought to pragmatic communicative processes by cultural variables.

On the contrary, the study carried out by Krulatz & Dixon (2020) raises a debatable perspective looking at the context of Namibian in general and to the students at Namibia University of Science and Technology in terms of interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. The study was undertaken on first year Korean on Norwegian students by means of an online open discourse completion task. It presents an argument that a multilingual setting enhances the pragmatics awareness and heightened flexibility when it comes to the selection of the appropriate and effective linguistic choices as compared to monolinguals. This presented a paradigm shift to the basic assumptions of this study. It presented a gap for the study to conduct a research and draw reliable conclusions on the Namibian context focusing at the Namibia University of Science and Technology interlanguage communicative engagements between lecturers and the students. Krulatz & Dixon (2020, p. 752) asserts that, "Research suggests that while pragmatic norms vary across languages and cultures, multilingual have enhanced pragmatics awareness and increased flexibility in the selection of appropriate linguistic choices in comparison with monolinguals".

This lies on the backdrop that Namibia is characterised by a multilingual and multicultural setting. Cenoz & Hoffman (as cited in Krulatz & Dixon 2020, p. 753) state that, "However, most research on interlanguage to date has adopted the construct of a native speaker as a point of departure and compared non-native performance to an estimated monolingual speaker native norm". The argument presented calls for divergent research perspectives when it comes to interlanguage pragmatics. The point of view could be valid taking into consideration that the comparisons made in the current interlanguage research are likely to produce the same outcome due the nature of the procedures which have been adopted. The findings of the study proved that interlanguage



pragmatics performance in a multilingual setting is a complex phenomenon as other factors other than the first language culture and pragmatic norms cannot be the sole predictor of performance in the target language.

The viewpoint about multi-linguals and the development of a pragmatic strategies is upheld by Kecskes (2006, p. 374) pointing out that multi-linguals develop, “a pragmatic style that does not exactly match that of either language. Rather this style is a unique synergic mode of communicative behaviour that is the result of conceptual blending”. The notion presents a complex scenario in multi-linguals which needs to be understood in the context of a multicultural and multilingual environment: the second language learners of the English language exhibit and perform diverse pragmatic strategies in the quest to adopt and select linguistic forms and units that ensure a successful pragmatic communicative process. According to the study, it is this flexibility in multilingual environments which need to be considered and upheld when comparisons are conducted between native speakers of the English language and non-speakers of the English language in terms of interlanguage pragmatics awareness in communicative engagements.

Significant conclusions are presented in the study conducted by Zand-Moghadam & Adeh (2020), they investigated the pragmatic competence, meta-pragmatic awareness and speech act strategies among Turkmen-Persian bilingual and Persian monolingual EFL learners: a cross-cultural perspective. 59 Turkmen-Persian bilinguals (44 females) EFL learners and 55 (43 females) Persian monolingual EFL learners were utilized as a sample. The sample was made up of university students who had received the same level of instruction. Written Discourse Completion Task was utilized as a data collecting tool. “...the findings revealed that Turkmen-Persian bilinguals outperformed the monolinguals in terms of pragmatic performance”, Zand-Moghadam & Adeh (2020, p. 32). This finding reveals very interesting phenomena in the bilinguals. It reveals that bilingualism has an advantageous effect on third language learning in general and on the aspect of pragmatics of the third language specifically. Safont Jorda (2003) also found out that bilinguals are more competent as compared to monolinguals concerning the production of pragmatics and meta-pragmatic awareness. The reason given to that effect was the ability of the bilinguals to

adjust and reflect upon linguistic expressions according to the specific context. This is quite an interesting outcome considering the scenario and context of the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The findings resonated with the researcher's philosophy and understanding that bilinguals become more competent in pragmatic production and meta-pragmatic awareness as compared to monolinguals (Safont Jorda, 2003, Thomas, 1992), Cook, 2009, Lambert, 1990, Oskaar, 1990 and Fouser, 1997).

### **2.3.2 Perspectives on Refusals**

Various researchers have come up with different perspectives and perceptions on the concept of refusal speech act. Saud (2019, p. 108) in a study on the refusal strategies of Saudi English Foreign Language undergraduate studies concluded that, "as refusal strategies vary from culture to culture, it is crucial for the students to know the cross-cultural techniques of face-threatening acts. By doing this, they could achieve successful communication and avoid violating any social-cultural norms". This conclusion highlights the impact of refusals in cross cultural communicative engagements. The realisation of cultural differences in the way individuals formulate and produce refusals is crucial in attaining a successful communicative process according to the assertion by Saud.

In other words, the communicative response in refusals and the selection of linguistic forms and units should be aimed at maintaining a positive face in the interlocutor. As students at Namibia University of Science and Technology interact with their lecturers, there is an assumed possibility that this phenomenon could be present in the communicative processes. This assumption lies on the understanding that the students' internalization of the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge of the English language could come into play and have an impact on the interlanguage pragmatics communication processes according to the assertion by Saud. This exposes a gap and some research at the Namibia University of Science and Technology relating to interlanguage pragmatics strategies and techniques utilized by the students when they engage with lecturers.

Eslami (2010, p. 232) posits that, "Learners can be perceived as rude, demanding, and offensive if they don't use this speech act appropriately. Consequently, learner's exposure to the way refusals are realised in different contexts is of utmost importance in ESL/EFL instructional

settings". The outcome in the research indicates the probability of communicative failure if refusals are not formulated taking into consideration socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge is very high. Such a viewpoint by Eslami should be highly upheld as failure to refuse in an appropriate manner can negatively affect the interpersonal relations of the speakers engaged in a pragmatic communicative process. Eslami emphasises on the importance of instruction on developing an awareness relating to the formulation of refusals taking into consideration the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic skills.

This is a clear proposition that pragmatic competence on refusal in an EFL/ESL environment can be achieved through integration into the teaching and learning curriculum. Such a supposition by Eslami accentuates the complexity related to the development of awareness in interlanguage pragmatics knowledge. According to Eslami, it is new knowledge from another culture which has to be internalised and performed according to the standards of the native speakers of the English language. The study overtly reveals the extent at which refusals can affect communicative processes due to the fact that any inappropriate formulation may lead to several interpretations of the speaker's character by the interlocutor as portrayed by Eslami. Such interpretations include rude, demanding and offensive. Such kind of interpretation highlights a breakdown in interlanguage pragmatics communicative engagements. It portrays a negative attitude by the interlocutor to continue with the communicative process, this might be detrimental to the realisation of goals which could have been set before the initiation of the process. The research findings and recommendations leave a gap for the researcher to explore and analyse the actual situation at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

Shishavan & Sharifian (2013, p. 830) states that, "The study extends the scope of refusal studies by considering the gender of the interlocutors as a social factor affecting refusal strategies that has been overlooked in many previous studies". The research highlighted another horizon in an undertaking relating to refusals. Gender concerns are another angle which should be looked upon in drawing up conclusions. According to the study, the gender factor could have an effect on the gathering of data relating to the refusal speech act. The researcher is mindful of such factors in the analysis of collected data to draw up reliable conclusions. An analysis of the

assumptions in the study reveals that there could be an underlying perception that gender is a variable in the speech act of refusals. In research, any variable that affect the outcome must be taken into account if the final product is to be regarded as reliable. In a study on gender concerns in relation to refusal strategies, Liu & Qian (2017) state that,

....it can be concluded that both of male and female students use substantially more indirect strategies in most cases. Although indirect strategies are preferred by these two groups, there still exists difference between male and female subjects in terms of the probability of indirectness. Female students' refusals tend to be more gentle and indirect than those of male students. (p. 296)

The study was conducted on Chinese college students. Online questionnaires were utilized as data collecting instruments. The study sample comprised of 50 male and 50 female students to ensure equitability in the analysis of the collected data. The study sample was diverse in its composition, in other words, it was heterogeneous by nature. The occupations of the respondents differed as well as their experiences too. Such a sample could not present biased data. The data analysis was done utilizing the qualitative and quantitative approach (statistical representations). In other words, the study utilized a mixed methods approach. According to the study, females formulation of refusals tend to be a bit gentle and indirect in most cases, they too prefer to use longer and detailed responses as compared to their male counterparts who are direct, brief and at most blunt. Qian & Liu noted that females avoid the use of a direct 'no' in interlanguage pragmatic communicative processes.

The conclusions by Liu and Qian link to the observations by Robinson (as cited in Eslami 2010, p. 222) in relation to pragmatic transfer in refusals, "it was found out that there was a socio-cultural problem in Japanese speaking women's refusals of requests and invitations since they are brought up not to say no easily and thus the task of refusing was a difficult concept for them". This realisation highlights the cultural influence perspective in some instances on how male and female are conditioned to formulate pragmatic responses to requests. The study put it through that gender concerns in the refusal speech act are crucial variable that researchers need to be aware of when conducting studies.

The study conducted by Samaali & Bayouli (2019) on English native speakers regarding the speech act of refusal on the phone highlights a very interesting point of view in interlanguage pragmatics. The study was conducted to analyse the refusal strategies employed by the native speakers in their communication with some salesmen. Phone conversations, Discourse Completion Test and a questionnaire were utilized in the survey. A study sample of 275 respondents provided significant data in the research. Most of the data was obtained in a recorded form on the switchboard. The researchers applied a mixed methods approach to the analysis of data.

The study concluded that some negative politeness in the refusals formulated by the native English speaking participants to the salespersons was noted due to some underlying reasons. The refusal strategies were formulated in such a manner because the interlocutor felt some kind of intrusion into their privacy by being enticed into communicative processes by the salespersons which they did not desire. This brings in a complicated analysis as most studies tend to point at direct refusals on the part of non-native speakers as lack of interlanguage pragmatic knowledge, notwithstanding the fact that even the native speakers' of English perform direct refusals if the situation calls for such a response, specifically, when their face is threatened. Hence, the application and performance of direct refusals by non-native speakers of English should be closely analysed looking at the context that motivates for such responses. There is certainly a gap for future research in this regard.

The study carried out by Deveci & Hmida (2017) on the use of request speech act by Arab university students in UAE, made a significant discovery relating to application of direct and indirect strategies in emails written to professors by the students. This study greatly resonated with the core objective of this research, to dig for the finer details regarding interlanguage pragmatics interactions between lecturers and students at Namibia University of Science and Technology. The study utilized a total of 105 students in the collection of data, which is quite a commendable sample. The survey utilized a Discourse Completion Task which the researcher implemented too in this study. The study sample for the research was retrieved from the department of Communication which made it very interesting. The study investigated and compared the realisation of the request speech act by Arab university students and the native

speakers of English in email writing. The participants were required to write emails to their professors which required some feedback as a strategy to collect and analyse the data. The data sets from the respective groups exhibited some distinct differences in discourse structure, type of strategy, and the use of modifiers in the formulation of requests. Deveci & Hmida (2017) concluded that,

The comparison of the discourse structures revealed that the NNSEs did not use the required components as frequently as the NSEs. That is, the required discourse structure components, with the exception of thank you notes at the end, were present in virtually all the emails composed by the NSEs. (p. 208)

This highlights the lack in formal conventional traits expected in emails written to professors by the students. An analysis of the observation portrays that, formal lacks in the request discourse could be a great source of miscommunication and can produce undesirable outcomes between professors (lecturers) and their students. The researcher takes language, communication and culture seriously in the study. Moreover, the study exposes that the discourse structure of English non-speakers lacked an awareness of socio-pragmatic variables as the students were writing to their professors. Such awareness greatly aids in the discourse selection as it values the social distance and status of the addressee. In this scenario, the socio-pragmatic knowledge and awareness informs the selection of linguistic forms and units relevant to the structure to be adopted. This is a complex undertaking to the non-speakers of the English language, to organise linguistic forms and units to suit a given interlanguage pragmatics context.

Deveci & Hmida (2017, p. 211) state that, “A request can be face-threatening due to a potential refusal, causing people to opt out. The situation can even be more challenging when the addressor needs to perform this speech act in a foreign language while communicating to someone in a higher position such as a professor”. This challenge is posed as a result of differences in the structure of languages. The way the subject is denoted varies from language to language. This has been proved by studies in contrastive linguistics. Such kinds of differences in languages pose a great challenge to the non-speakers of the English language to properly formulate the appropriate discourse structure in interlanguage pragmatic communicative

processes. The study recommends the utilization of effective pedagogical processes focusing on pragmatic usage in the target language. Deveci & Hmida argue that this would give an opportunity to expose those who can access authentic samples of the target language outside the classroom.

In a study conducted in Turkey on 16 intermediate EFL students by Demirkol (2019), on the production of refusals via DCTs and role-plays, the outcome highlighted an interesting perspective in terms of methodology in interlanguage pragmatics studies. The viewpoint is that Discourse Completion Tests limit the participants and eventually analysis of the exact situation on the ground. The utilization of role-plays and analysing the production and formulation of the refusal speech act produced results that point at fascinating traits in choice of strategies. Role plays were recorded with the consent of participants to allow for ample time to analyse them. The study utilized a mixed methods approach to analyse the collected data. Demirkol (2019, p. 206) posits that, “Overall, this study shows that the participants opted for similar refusal strategies with that of native English speakers reported in relevant literature. It implies that Turkish EFL learners would perform refusals successfully without being identified as a foreigner”. However, the study also pointed at the need for the Turkish EFL learners to grow their linguistic repertoire in formulating refusal. The study recommended for the systematic refurbishment of the EFL curriculum to suit the needs of the learners. This study’s results indicate that the instructional techniques in Turkey EFL are yield positive results. The study’s findings present another angle in interlanguage pragmatics; it is the realisation that it is not always the case that non-native native speakers of the English language face challenges in the formulation and production of appropriate strategies in cross-cultural communicative processes.

However, the study did not highlight the reason for such traits in the Turkish non-native speaking participants. It will be interesting to find out if this observation is linked to the Turkish language or some kind of inherent strategies which the Turkish apply to make it a less challenging and complex phenomenon. The conclusions and findings by Demirkol are greatly linked to the study by Tuncer (2016) conducted on refusal strategies used by Turkish university instructors of English. Tuncer (2016) concludes pointing out that,

This study is aimed at describing the refusal strategies of the Turkish university instructors of English with respect to the type of eliciting speech act, and the status of the interlocutor. Participants used 496 strategies in total, and indirect strategies have the highest percentage 58%....Turkish participants' preference for the indirect strategies might be due to the fact that Turkish people accept directness as a sign of rudeness towards the other. (p. 83)

The notion presents a crucial notion in interlanguage pragmatics awareness in communicative processes. The Turkish people have the concept of indirectness entrenched in the culture of their language which could be a facilitation of positive transfer when they engage the native speakers of the English language in pragmatic communication. Hence, the assertion by Tuncer points at socio-cultural variables as crucial in development and production of interlanguage pragmatics knowledge. According to the study, the social status of the interlocutor is of paramount importance in determining the strategy to be implemented in pragmatic communicative processes. The study was conducted on 20 Turkish instructors of English. The study sample could have been made bigger by adding other instructors from different departments to allow for diversity of responses. Discourse completion test was utilized as a data collecting tool which is relevant and commendable. The discourse completion task comprised of four eliciting speech acts which were three requests, three invitations, three suggestions and three offers. The underlying objective was to analyse the strategies employed by the English instructors in their formulation and performance of the speech acts.

The conclusions derived in the study are closely linked to the findings of Turhan & Tuncer (2019) in a study on refusal strategies of Turkish-pre-service teachers of English. The study focused on the gender and status of the interlocutor too. Written Discourse Completion Tests were utilized as data collecting tools. A sample of 27 students took part in the study. Of these 27 participants, 14 were males and 13 were female. The study utilized a mixed methods approach to the analysis of data. In other words, the collected data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The study concluded that the Turkish pre-service teachers utilized the indirect refusal strategies. The status and distance of the interlocutor determined the length of the strategy which is



synonymous with native English speakers. The female participants' refusals differed a little bit from their male counterparts in the sense that they included negative willingness more in their refusals and avoided directness as noted in males' responses. The findings in Turkish studies on women differ in what Shareef, Qyrrio & Ali (2018) observed in an investigation on refusal strategies as used by Bahdini Kurdish and Syrian Aramaic speakers. The same data collecting tool of Written Discourse Completion Test was utilized.

The study sample was a bit smaller because forty university students took part. In spite of that fact, the study sample was diverse because it included 20 females and 20 males. Half of from each gender represented the Kurdish and Syrian speakers. This ensured a balance in the collected data. The data was done using the mixed methods approach. In other words, the researchers qualitatively and quantitatively analysed the collected data from the study sample. Of great interest in this study was the investigation of strategies in refusals when the participants were faced with interlocutors of the same status. The study concluded that the gender variable had some kind of influence on the formulation of strategies in refusals and offers. Although both men and women utilized the indirect refusal strategies, it was greatly influenced by the socio-cultural variable in communicative processes. Women tended to be a direct in their strategies and they showed negative willingness which is not characteristic of women in most studies in interlanguage studies. That was a noticeable variable which indicates that the gender issue does not always spring on the usual side during the collection of data in interlanguage pragmatics studies. Participants' cultures influenced their selection of refusal strategies. Shareef, Qyrrio & Ali (2018) assert that,

Finally, the culture of the participants of this study had played a vital role in the refusal opted. The notion proves that Kurdish and Syrian cultures have strong characteristics of collectivism, in which a group interest take priority over individual and protecting the harmony among group member is important. The participants adhere to strict, formal rules of behaviour and politeness. (p. 97)

### **2.3.3 Culture and refusals**

Language carries with it cultural traits. This notion points out to a very crucial factor in interlanguage pragmatics. The formulation of refusals could be greatly linked to the culture of the speaker. Chojimah (as cited in Dewi, Tantra, Artini & Ratminingsih 2019, p. 41) posit that, “Even though refusal exists in all languages, not all language culture refuses in the same way. Refusals, like any other speech acts is believed to be universal and culturally distinctive”. This highlights a crucial perspective to the broad concept of interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. The study posits that differences exist in strategies utilized by different individuals owing to socio-cultural and socio-pragmatic variables. The study utilized the descriptive qualitative method to explore refusal strategies used by the students. The study sample comprised of multi-national participants from the Indonesian, Indian, Russian and Japanese background. The weakness in the study was that it did not state the size of the study sample so as to give a clear picture of how the data was collected. Taking into consideration the context of Namibia University of Science and Technology students, they are from different cultural backgrounds and using English as a target language. The influence of culture in their interlanguage pragmatic communicative processes may have some negative or positive impact as alluded to by the study that refusal strategies are not the same in different cultural contexts.

In a study conducted on the English and Russian languages by Iliadi & Larina (2017), the concluding results portrayed significant data relating to the strategies utilized in the concept of speech act in refusals from the perspective of cross-cultural communicative processes. The study accentuated the differences and similarities that might be realised between the two languages withholding greatly to socio-pragmatic variables. The utilized the quantitative and qualitative approaches to highlight the differences that exist in refusal strategies due to culture, culture-specific politeness strategies and pragmatic communicative engagements. Data was collected through the use of discourse completion test which is commendable. The study sample consisted of 50 participants, 20 native speakers of the English language and 30 Russian informants. It is noteworthy to point out that a balanced study sample of 30 informants from each side would have been appropriate.

It is worth noting that the value of distance varies in different cultures. In the British culture distance is a positive value, associated with independence and respect for autonomy of the individual. By contrast, in the Russian culture, distance is often perceived as indifference, Wierzbicka (as cited in Iliadi & Larina 2017, p. 534).

It is imperative to note that this variation in the concept of distance in the two cultures manifest at different levels of language. The manifestation has a bearing in the performance of refusals as concluded by the study. Iliadi & Larina (2017, p. 538) point out that, “Russians tend to say a straight NO followed by gratitude.....in the British culture an explicit NO is avoided, English speakers are more voluble than Russians”. The differences at cultural level contribute to the communicative ethno-styles between the English speakers and the Russians. The concept of distance makes the British more face-oriented in the formulation of refusals as compared to their Russian counterparts who prefer sincerity to tact and are more direct in their formulation of refusals. The study in a subtle way puts it through that there is a complementary connection between socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic awareness which cannot be separated. The selection appropriate linguistic units and forms in pragmatic communicative processes are highly dependent on socio-pragmatic awareness such as distance and the context of the conversation.

Al-Mahrooqi & Al-Aghbari (2016, p. 8) on a study relating to refusal strategies among Omani English Foreign Language stress that, “Most likely, EFL learners’ Arabic cultures played a crucial role in influencing the refusal strategies used. Many of these strategies result in mere transfer of L1 speech norms to L2 causing miscommunication misunderstanding and offense”. The assumption in the study is that culture influences the formulation of refusals despite the fact one might have internalised socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge of the target language. The phenomenon of first language or mother language is brought into the equation as a determinant factor in the formulation of refusals. According to the study, the internalised cultural traits of refusal in the first language (L1) can negatively affect the production and performance of such skills in (L2) interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. The study alludes this complex realisation to the differences in the perception of the variables of distance and social status. The study investigated appropriateness of refusals in different situations in terms of

culture and accuracy in language. This was an investigation of both socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic concerns.

The study noted inappropriateness in the formulation of sentences by the respondents due to mistakes in the structuring. According to the investigation, such mistakes were linked to differences in language structure. Negative transfer was pointed to as the contributor to such a realisation. A study sample of 41 participants was utilized and discourse completion test was used as data collection tool. Interestingly, the collected data was analysed by two professors, a native speaker of the English and a non-native speaker of English language. Surprisingly, the study accentuated a critical point on the perception and analysis of interlanguage pragmatics inappropriateness in communicative processes. Al-Mahrooqi & Al-Aghbari (2016, p. 8) point out that, “the researchers observed that the native speaker rater considered the majority of the learners’ responses to be grammatically and pragmatically acceptable”. As pointed out earlier, these responses may sound acceptable when spoken but not written. However, the non-native speaker, who had formal instruction on the English language, was more meticulous on judging the accuracy of these written responses. Responses lacking the third person singular, and those using wrong verb tenses or those with misplaced prepositions and punctuation were marked wrong by the non-native speaker (Professor).

This marked a distinct attitude, level of tolerance on errors, the training, teaching experience, and their linguistic orientations between native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English. The degree of difference portrayed in the data analysis by the professors was not anticipated. This rendered the analysis of the collected data in the study as reliable due to the extinction of bias. However, such an observation in the study painted a picture that the researcher withheld, tolerance in dealing with interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes analysis. An appreciation of the constraints that are faced with the second language learner of English is vital in coming up with insightful conclusions and recommendations in research. This perception and perspective was upheld by the researcher as it highlighted a gap for in depth analysis at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

Fitri, Muslem & Marhaban (2020) conducted a study investigating the strategies of refusal used by Acehese university students in the English department at Syiah Kuala University in Indonesia. The study focused on analysing the socio-pragmatic variables of social status, social distance of the interlocutor in relation to the formulation of refusal strategies. A study sample of 25 students was utilized. Discourse completion test was used to collect data from the informants. A larger sample could have been utilized in the study. The collected data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively (mixed method). The analysis of semantic formula in the strategies employed when formulating refusals greatly aided in the analysis of collected data. It highlighted the complex experience in non-native speakers of the English language to negotiate ways twining linguistic form and units to fulfil an expression, clarification or explanation. Fitri, Muslem & Marhaban (2020) state that,

Thus, having enough knowledge of grammar or various vocabularies cannot guarantee misinterpretation from happening when one does not administer the pragmatic knowledge properly. Therefore, an interlocutor must know when to use the appropriate form and its function. (p. 455)

The assertion paints a bold picture on the difference between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence. In other words, it is the awareness and knowledge of interlanguage pragmatics which facilitates the realisation of a successful communicative engagement rather than the knowledge of grammar alone between two languages. According to the study, there is pertinent socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic determinants to a successful communication when individual from different backgrounds engage. Additionally, misinterpretations that lead to communicative breakdown are motivated by pragmatic perceptions and not by the grammatical concerns. In other words, the study puts it through that it is the perception of meaning on the backdrop of our understanding (socio-cultural determined) that plays a vital role in the maintenance of a positive or negative face in communicative engagements.

A study conducted by Boonsuk & Ambele (2019) on refusals as a social speech act among Thai EFL university students accentuated the influence of culture of the formulation and performance of refusals. Discourse Completion Test was utilized as a data collection. The researcher used the

qualitative method to analyse the collected data. However, the study did not specify the sample size which leaves a lot of information hanging. The study points out that it is difficult to study the refusal speech act in Thailand due to its cultural diversity. The researchers also presented another viewpoint on the use of Discourse Completion Test stating that, “It is important to point out here that this is the most common technique of obtaining information in the speech act of refusal studies in a single language or culture, rather than cross-cultural research”, Hahn, Kasper, Dahl & Nittono (as cited in Boonsuk & Ambele 2019, p. 216). The researchers motivated their assertion by stating that Discourse Completion Test is accurate because the informants provide responses from what they know, not what they believe should be. Boonsuk & Ambele (2019) state that,

All in all, they seem to mean that distinct cultures, based on their contextual experiences, have a very special and distinctive way of stating no in English.....the findings suggest that foreign language teaching may not promote the student’s metalinguistic awareness without this pragmatic focus. (p. 221)

The study puts it through that understanding culture and cultural differences is a pre-determinant if EFL learners if they are to perform speech acts appropriately and effectively. Moreover, the Thailand EFL university students did not face great challenges when performing the refusal speech act in English because the same aspects they observed in their culture were almost similar to the ones expected in the English language, aspects such as distance, age and social standing. This gives insight into the debatable perspective of negative and positive transfer from L1 to L2 in interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. The study stresses in a subtle way that had there been differences in the socio-pragmatic elements between the English language and the Thai language, the students could have produced different data in terms of formulation and production of refusals and the relevant strategies.

#### **2.3.4 Gender viewpoint on refusals.**

The study undertaken by Pourshahian (2019) on a gender based analysis of refusals as a face-threatening act highlighted some fascinating data. The research was conducted using a sample of 100 Iranian EFL learners. This was quite a recommendable sample to draw conclusions from. It was balanced in the sense that the sample comprised of fifty men and fifty women. The study

utilized the written discourse completion test and group discussion as data collection instruments. Pourshahian (2019) concludes that,

The results of the analysis indicated that both male and female students use substantially more indirect strategies than direct strategies in most cases....Female students' refusals tend to be more gentle and indirect than those of male students. Female students like to explain reasons, and they prefer to use detailed and specific response instead of a direct no. (p. 180)

The information from the study is very crucial when looking into the phenomenon of interlanguage pragmatics communication processes and the performance of refusals. The gender concerns can also come into play and influence the outcome of the research according to the study. This stems from the pre-supposition that male and female informants portray different awareness and production of refusal strategies even if they are from the same experiences and pragmatic environment. This conclusion was upheld by the researcher in the process of collecting data. Gender concerns should not be ignored in research as they could have a great impact on the conclusions and recommendations according to the study.

Fraser (as cited in Satic & Ciftci 2018, p. 12) state that, "Speech act of refusals might also be rather problematic and complicated in L2 learners' own first language and home culture...social variables such as gender, age, level of education, occupation, power and social distance, make refusing even more complicated for L2 learners". According to the study, the situation of formality and informality is constantly changing thereby requiring constant adjustment in the formulation and production of refusal strategies. The study also highlights that the concept of refusals isn't only complicated in interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes, but, even the learners L1 settings. The study applies a macro and micro perspective to the analysis of refusal strategies. The study focused on the refusal strategies and perceptions of social factors for refusing on Turkish learners of the English language. 80 Turkish L2 learners participated in the study which was conducted at an English language preparatory program. The study sample consisted of 40 male and 40 female participants. Moreover, the participants were aged between 18-22 years and had been studying the English language for periods ranging between 1-12 years.

Three data collecting instruments were utilized in the study, discourse completion test, retrospective verbal reports and interviews. The sample could have been made bigger since the study took place at a higher learning institution where students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds enrol. The researchers motivated the use and writing of retrospective verbal reports by the Turkish learners so as to analyse how they perceived refusals and the formulation of strategies. Martinez Flor (as cited in Pourmousavi & Zenouzagh 2020, p. 2) in a study on Iranian learners' learning of speech acts pointed out that, "However, comparison of the occurrence of speech act in film data indicated some sociolinguistic features such as gender did not correspond with natural use". The study focused on a comparative approach to the effect of teacher's group and individual feedback on Iranian EFL learners' learning of speech acts in apology letter writing. A convenient sampling was utilized to select a study sample of 32 intermediate participants. A quick placement test was instituted by the researchers to get a homogenous group.

The underlying rationale by the researchers was to compare the effect of speech act uptake from individual feedback and group feedback. The collected data from the T-test was quantified (Descriptive and Inferential statistics) and analysed qualitatively too. The study concluded that individual feedback in pragmatic pedagogical processes is effective in the uptake of speech act knowledge and awareness as compared to group feedback. The researchers came to this conclusion citing the social and cultural characteristics of the target language as a major determinant. The teacher's individual comments to the work produced by the learners were cited as effective in improving the knowledge of interlanguage pragmatics. The study also recommended the production of interlanguage pragmatics related materials in the educational curriculum to enhance the internalisation of strategies in refusals, requests and other speech acts that have a bearing on the success or failure of cross-cultural communicative engagements.

### **2.3.5 Refusal strategies**

Studies have indicated that refusals are formulated applying different strategies (Beebe et al. 1990, Felix-Brasdefer 2008). These strategies could be direct, indirect and adjunct. Okia (2018, p. 333) points at something crucial by stating that, "There is a variety of refusal speech acts as well



as non-verbal refusal strategies that are worthy of exploring and studying". The study was conducted on a sample of 137 random participants analysing on how they refused promotions in a shopping mall. The study concluded that non-verbal refusal was used more than the verbal. Dewi, Anisa & Aniq (2020) posit that,

The refusal strategy divides into direct strategy and indirect strategy. The direct strategy involves bluntness and the negation of the proposition. The indirect strategy includes plain indirect, reason/explanation, regret/apology, alternative (change option or change time), disagreement/dissuasion/criticism, statement of philosophy, and avoidance. Adjuncts to refusals cover positive opinion, willingness, gratitude, agreement, solidarity and empathy. (p. 90)

An analysis of the strategies implies that there could be some communication breakdown inherent if refusals are not formulated appropriately in a communicative process. For example, the utilization of non-verbal refusal strategies in a pragmatic communication event could lead to misinterpretations owing to different cultural perceptions. This perspective is supported by the study conducted by Okia on the distinction between verbal and non-verbal refusal strategies in a communicative context. In a study conducted by Zivkovic (2020), on the variation in refusal strategies produced by English and Serbian speakers, the outcome was that pragmatic failure and communication misinterpretation occurred among the Serbian EFL due to their application of the direct refusal strategy. The Serbian participants applied the direct refusal strategy to subordinates of equal status as compared when they responded to interlocutors of higher status and power.

The study was conducted to investigate the refusal strategies in terms of two sociological variables which are social distance and power. The study sample consisted of 20 Native American English speakers (14 female and 6 male participants, age range 18-35) and 20 Serbian speakers (13 female and 7 male participants). In other words, the study focused on the socio-pragmatic concerns in pragmatic communicative processes. Written discourse completion test was utilised as data collection tool. Moreover, the WDCT had 12 situations in which the participants were supposed to formulate refusal to given requests. An analysis of the scope of the study, the research findings and conclusions, it presents a gap for future research in on the effects of social

distance and power on the content , form and order of refusal strategies in interlanguage pragmatic communicative processes.

The effect of refusal strategies in communicative processes can be detrimental to the success of interlanguage pragmatic engagements. Lenchuk & Ahmed (2019, p. 10) highlights this point of view in a study conducted on requests in Omani EFL context. "...the participants of our study show preference for indirect strategies in their requests. Thus, the participants recognize the right of their interlocutors not to be imposed on and have the right to self-determination". The notion aptly accentuates the significance of refusal strategies as they are used in communication processes. A study sample of 26 undergraduate students was utilized; data collection tools were discourse completion tests, focus group discussions and personal observations. The study utilized a unique approach to strategies used in cross-cultural communicative processes. The researchers analysed the choice of strategies not evaluating them against the norms of the English native speakers but, against scripts proposed in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics to interpret the strategies of EFL learners in formulation and production of requests.

According to the study, such a standpoint was adopted on the backdrop that the concept of native speaker as a yardstick is ideologically problematic in the world that has diversified. Expanding on that viewpoint, the study discovered research findings and conclusion which differed from the other studies which have been undertaken in interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. Lenchuk & Ahmed (2019) point out that,

The study shows that contrary to the claims made in most of the literature on requests in interlanguage pragmatics. EFL learners use indirect strategies. In addition, they use address terms and provide reasons for their requests. These strategies are shaped by cultural scripts that prioritize the values of politeness, strong family and cultural orientation in the Omani society. Findings suggest that awareness of these communication strategies promotes tolerance and sensitivity towards the communication styles of others. (p. 1)

In a study comparative study between Turkish EFL learners' pragmatic competence and to that of native speakers of English on refusal strategies by Can & Cengizhan (2015), it was discovered

that the Turkish EFL learners could not adopt and perform the expected refusal strategies that save the face of the interlocutors in communicative processes. The learners' refusal strategies were characterised by explicitness in semantic formula (the utilization of direct no), this is consistent with their cultural traits. The study highlighted that the Turkish non-speakers of the English language tend to preserve their cultural conventions while uttering speech acts of refusals. Thus, their refusal choices and strategies will not be convenient and appropriate if applied in the English language situational context. The researchers also concluded that the Turkish Foreign English Learners are lack the ability to apply varied semantic formulas of speech acts of refusals as compared to the native speakers of the English language. Hymes (1972, p. 290) emphasises on the fact that socio-pragmatic knowledge is vital for the formulation of appropriate speech act strategies. Such awareness is realised in communicative competence.

As highlighted by the study that lack in production and performance of varied semantic formulas present a complex communicative pragmatic process when they engage in English language usage. The limited selection of linguistic forms and units are likely to result in unwanted misinterpretations by the native speakers of the English language. The study was conducted on 26 Turkish non-speakers of the English language and their strategies were compared to 10 native speakers of the English language. Discourse completion task was utilized as data collecting tool and the qualitative method was implemented in data analysis.

On the contrary, in an interlanguage pragmatic study conducted on Indonesian learners of English regarding the use of requests, the learners demonstrated the use of politeness to soften their refusal strategies. This resonates with concept of indirectness in a communicative process. The study also discovered that the learners were aware of the distance factor between them and the interlocutors in the selection of refusal strategies, Susilo (2015). The study was conducted on forty students in Junior high school. Discourse completion tasks were utilized in the collection of data. The comparison between the findings and conclusions of Can and Cengizhen (2015) and Susilo (2015) suggest that the performance, production, awareness and appropriateness of strategies in refusals to requests, suggestions and invitations, are deeply is deeply rooted and connected to the socio-cultural backgrounds of the non-native speakers of the English language.

The studies posit that if there are great differences in the way these strategies are realised between the two languages (the non-native speaker's language and the English language), interlanguage pragmatics communicative breakdown or misinterpretations in the negative side are likely to be deduced by the native speakers of the English language. Moreover, the study highlighted crucial insight on the formulation of strategies by non-speakers of the English language, it is the realisation that the learners are aware of appropriate strategies in their cultural orientation and experience some limitations in semantic formulas to express them in the expected manner using the English language.

An analysis of the various studies leaves a fascinating gap to study the situation at the Namibia University of Science and Technology as the context of the students and their communicative experiences cannot be pre-determined by just looking at the possible variables. This gave some motivation to the researcher, to get to the bottom of interlanguage pragmatics situation by studying the communicative processes, with great insight to the practical performance, production and formulation of refusal strategies between the students and the lecturers.

## **2.4 Adverse factors for interlanguage pragmatics competence**

### **2.4.1 Pragmatists' assumptions**

The interlanguage pragmatists uphold the basic assumption that the purpose of language is not only to speak but or express ideas and thoughts, but, to achieve certain goals. This brings to light that deed and words matter a lot. The illocutionary force and indirect behaviour in speech must be well understood. If this does not happen, then the communication process is likely to be viewed as ineffective and in instances as inappropriate in a given context. Huang (2010) points out that,

Interlanguage pragmatics theory, the two pillars of the theory of pragmatics and second language acquisition theory are cross-cultural language learning of the study, the institute of interlanguage pragmatics of the pragmatics theory based mainly: Speech Act Theory, Conversational Implicature Theory and Politeness Theory. (p. 682)

#### **2.4.2 Interlanguage pragmatic failure**

Thus, interlanguage failure and the resultant communication barriers emanate from areas that second language learners do not fully develop and manifest in their spoken and written forms. The cooperation principle, the politeness principle and speech act framework provide the basis for failure in the communication process. Dendenne (2016, p7) raises a crucial point by stressing that the identification of instruction areas in learners' interlanguage system and implementation of that input is not always enough. It is important to utilise and include meta-pragmatic information as it cements pragmatic development and awareness. According to the study, the ESL learning material can be judged as superior looking at the quality and quantity of speech acts activities and the meta-pragmatic cues available. Such kind of information places recognition on the importance of linguistic forms and units selection and the influence of sociocultural variables in cross-cultural communicative engagements.

The emphasis is placed on the connection between cross-cultural elements in interlanguage pragmatics studies as the major source of pragmatic failure. The study was conducted focusing primarily on cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics placing insight on enriching content of Algerian EFL textbooks. The study accentuated that cross-cultural and interlanguage studies can offer empirically-based content rather than the intuitively-based one normally realised in textbooks. The thrust is to enhance the enrichment of textbooks with socio-pragmatic, pragma-linguistic and meta-pragmatic levels of knowledge. The study's conclusive remarks pointed at a variable that ignited great interest in the researcher. Dendene emphasised on the importance of the teacher's role in pedagogical processes on the acquisition of the target environment or community sociolinguistics rules, that is, if the teachers themselves have internalised the adequate knowledge and have received sufficient training to achieve the goal (Wolfson 1989).

Kuriscak (2015, p. 302) points out that, "learners' meta-pragmatic assessments of situations and of their own production can encompass aspects of life that an individual considers infringed upon (time, effort, etc.), can be affected by interlocutors' traits, and can have varying effects depending on its operationalization". Kuriscak presents a complex phenomenon in which the non-speaking English learner has to manoeuvre in order to perform and formulate appropriate

strategies in interlanguage pragmatics communication engagements. The study portrays the significance of cognition in interlanguage pragmatics competence since the non-native speaker of English has to perform intrinsic assessment relating what they want to say to the selection of linguist forms and units and looking at the situational context. According to the study, this high level cognitive ability is crucial to the adjustment of performed and formulated strategies in a given context. The context influences the strategies by placing the interlocutor's variables at play; these variables include distance, status and power.

Norouzian & Eslami (2016) carried out some important work on the investigation of critical perspectives on interlanguage pragmatics development. The project undertook to highlight crucial aspects that may hinder the development of interlanguage competence. The issues that play a pivotal role in pragmatic failure were accentuated. The research concluded that interlanguage development acknowledges that results of socio-cultural considerations might come together with cognitive and pedagogical factors.

In this article, we first revisited the fundamental concepts within the domain of interlanguage pragmatics development. Then, we elaborated on the cognitive, social-cultural, psycholinguistic and pedagogical variables and considerations essential to enhancing L2 pragmatics...All communicative competence frameworks overlook significant inter-relationship between pragmatic and grammar competence in addition to other competences, Norouzian and Eslami (2016, p. 40)

This is supported by Na (2016) who points out that,

Interlanguage pragmatic failure is cross-cultural pragmatic rules of positive and negative migration, mainly because of the two sides cannot accurately grasp the discourse of social cultural background, cannot select the correct topic and talking; do not choose different language forms in the face of different occasions. (p. 525)

The notion highlights a fundamental viewpoint for analysing pragmatic failure from a communicative context adaption. The participants have to adapt to certain pre-requisites in order to mitigate the failures. These pre-requisites include adaptation to language, adaptation to

the physical world, adaptation to the psychological world and adapting to the social world. According to the study, pragma-linguistic knowledge will enable the participants select the most appropriate linguistic units from the choices available to a successful and effective communication. Leech (as cited in Luo 2016, p. 568) supports the viewpoint highlighting that pragmatic-language errors are mainly on linguistic and pragmatic failures and the social pragmatic failures are mainly on the interface. The study points out that the underlying implication of pragmatic failure is miscommunication which can be attributed to the native language pragmatic knowledge and pragmatic rules of negative transfer taking an unwanted bearing on the production of the target language. The study by Luo focused on the analysis of pragmatic failure and pragmatic ability formation in English teaching.

In a study on the influence of L2 English acquisition of the request speech act, Sadighi, Chahardahcherik, Delfariyan & Feyzbar (2018) point out that,

It has been determined that the generation of the second language speech act (i.e. the request strategy) is affected by L1. The nature, extent and presence of such L1 modifications depend to a large extent on factors such as age, efficiency, learning, immersion, and the quantity and quality of L1. (p. 31)

According to the study, this is realised when the native language speaker tries to translate their pragmatic knowledge directly into the target language despite of the subtle differences that exist between the two distinct languages in perception of directness, indirectness and speech act variables. The viewpoint resonated with the presupposition by Luo (2016) who pointed at variables like lack of understanding of western values and culture, identity of social status, different cultural norms and different communication strategies, mother tongue pragmatic rules and pragmatic knowledge and thinking code as potential contributory concepts to interlanguage pragmatic failure in communicative processes.

The study by Luo & Gao (2011) is concerned with interlanguage pragmatic failure in second language learning. The study revealed that pragmatic failure could be viewed from the phonetic failure perspective, the lexis and syntax. This underlined the fact that the way different people from different languages pronounce words can have a bearing in the practical pronunciation of

words in the target language. For example the pronunciation of “thank” as “sank” can cause some miscommunication problems in written or spoken forms. The study implied that the choice of lexicon does not have to be literally translated into the target language. The resultant utterance of the sentence might mean the opposite of what it is intended to say. For example, in the Shona language in Zimbabwe, “**Muri** kuendepi?” The subject “muri” can be used for one person, an elder as a sign of cultural respect or referring to a group of people. Directly translated into English language, the sentence will be formulated as, “Where are **they** going?” In English, that kind of cultural or social respect is denoted by terms like Sir, Mr and Your Majesty. This has a great linguistic challenge to the Shona speakers to grasp the certain choices that must be made in the English language but absent in their lexicology.

Such kind of a scenario relating to direct translation of linguistic units into the target language is highlighted in the study by Al-Hamzi, Sartini, Hapsari, Gougui & Al-Nozili (2020). The study looked at the cross-cultural pragmatics study of invitation strategies as produced by Indonesian and Yemeni EFL language learners. 30 Indonesian and 30 Yemeni undergraduate students were utilized as study sample and data was collected using Discourse Completion Test. The methodology and data analysis (quantitative) utilized in the study were effective thereby rendering the outcome as reliable. The study concluded that the learners translated the speech in their indigenous languages directly into the target language oblivious of the differences in sentence patterns and word order that exist between the languages involved.

...we conclude that inexperience to communicate or miscommunication usually exist because of the case that EFL learners may employ the rules of their first language to convey intention in the other cultures without knowing the variations between these two cultures”, Al-Hamzi et al.,(2020, p. 51)

### **2.4.3 Politeness concept**

Lanteigne & Crompton (2011) analysed the use of ‘thanks to you’ in different contexts involving second language speakers of English. This study relates very closely to the politeness theory in pragmatics study. The concerns of the study resonated with the research undertaken. The study revealed that Arabic native speaker’s use of ‘thanks to you’ is evidence of pragmatic failure. The



illocution effect of the statement lacked other contextual linguistic elements to show the other hearers on why the gratitude was said.

We cannot know the speaker's real intention but let us begin by hypothesising that his intention was to express gratitude. In this case, his utterance failed because, in terms of the felicity conditions required for successful performance of the illocutionary act of thanking, the speaker failed to make the hearers aware of the particular act for which he wished to thank them, Lanteigne & Crompton (2011, p. 46).

For example, the statement, 'thanks to you for making my presentation a success', would highlight the linguistic angle from which the lexicon choice emanated from. This is supported by Ziran (as cited in Jingwei 2013, p. 75) saying, "Pragmatic failure does not refer to the general wording and phrasing errors that appear in language use, but rather refers to the failure to reach the expected result". The notion concretises the assumption that it's not the analysis of phrases makes us realise pragmatic failure, but the existence of communication that leaves a gap in the understanding of what is trying to be communicated in written or spoken language.

According to the assertion, if a message is left to speculation on what it is trying to communicate, the illocution is not clear, and then it means pragmatic failure has taken place. The Indonesians utilise the strategy of hedging to minimise this gap in communicative speech acts (Manaf & Ermanto, 2017). However, the study by Manaf & Ermanto does not state the number of participants that took in the research to come up with such conclusions and findings. The analysis of data was carried out qualitatively. Of great interest, the collected data on refusal speech act was not analysed in comparison to the native English speakers' standards as a yardstick. In the study, the fundamental underlying discovery is that speakers fail to utilise and make communicative language dynamically suitable to the varying factors in a pragmatic communicative given context. For example, A says 'Windhoek lager is so tasty' and B says 'Of course'. The use of 'Of course' contextually might mean, 'Yes, I agree' or it is senseless to say such a statement since Windhoek lager is known to be so tasteful.

Shen (2013, p. 135) agrees with the argument stating that, "Pragmatic failure can often lead to misunderstanding or confusion in cross-cultural communication". In other words, failure to get

the message correctly in a context where the individuals are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds might result in the breakdown of communication or unwanted misinterpretations. According to the study, pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic awareness play a crucial role in the realisation and selection of appropriate and effective linguistic lexical choices in cross-cultural communication. Shen's study highlighted fundamental contributory factors to pragmatic factors in the Chinese ELT classrooms. The factors include teacher-centred teaching, lack of authentic input, teaching English without considering the cultural differences, linguistic competence oriented evaluation system.

The study aptly portrayed that interlanguage pragmatic failure could be mitigated through effective input in pedagogical processes. The recommendation of an inclusion in the education system modules which are pragmatic oriented and evaluated is of great value and called for further research. In a study conducted by Deveci & Midraj (2021) on the realization of the refusal speech act with tourists by Emirati speakers, it was concluded that the participants avoided the use of direct "no" in the quest to save the face of the interlocutor. The study was conducted on a sample of 84 university students analysing their communication with tourists. The use of Discourse Completion Tests was utilized in the survey.

Results also show that the refusal speech act produced by Emirati speakers included few linguistic devices as a positive politeness strategy, and these were in the form of modality, intensifiers, and communicative gifts, almost all of which were utilized by female participants only, Deveci & Midraj (2021, p. 83).

The assertion highlights another crucial perspective on the formulation and production of strategies in pragmatic communication, which is the gender concept. Namibia is a multicultural and multilingual country which means failure to attain the desired pragma-linguistic competence levels, will result in pragmatic failure in the English language. It is imperative to note that pragmatic failure may have repercussions like astonishment, puzzlement, frustration, embarrassment or anger.

Ishihara (2016) in an article about intercultural pragmatic failure pointed out at a very crucial issue. A clear cut distinction between pragma-linguistic and socio-linguistic variables was undertaken. The overarching viewpoint was that, Ishihara (2016)

Many researchers and language educators point out that, whereas grammatical errors may be tolerated as innocent language mistakes, interactants' pragmatic violations may be mistaken for a sign of ill intentions or faulty personalities and could even perpetuate die-hard cultural stereotypes. (p. 3)

The notion by Ishihara points out that grammatical competence has less influence on the success or failure of a communication process as compared to pragmatic concerns. This puts the pragmatics of language as pivotal to the success or failure of a communicative engagement. The assertion places socio-cultural considerations and awareness as the key ingredient in the realisation and formulation of linguistic units and forms that aim and the maintenance of a positive face in the interlocutor. The analysis by Ishihara portrays that interlanguage pragmatic failure results in negative interpretations including faulty personality. In other words, the analysis by Ishihara painted a clear picture that when interlanguage pragmatic is realised in a communicative process, the set goals in that engagement will not be achieved.

#### **2.4.4 Pragmatic failure versus grammatical competence**

Idri (2014) conducted a study that focused on the university students in Algeria. Idri's main focus was to explore and investigate the reasons behind pragmatic failure among advanced EFL students in their English oral communication engagements as perceived by the teachers. The study utilized 10 teachers as study sample and used the qualitative method to analyse the collected data. The teachers were interviewed as a means to collect the data. The study revealed that the students had problems interacting with their lecturers due to the evidence of interlanguage pragmatic failure. This meant that the students could not express themselves effectively and appropriately to the lecturers on their needs and the communication breakdown could have had a negative impact on the desired goals to be achieved by the students and the university at large. This study focused only on the oral or verbal constraints of pragmatic failure.

The study could have been broadened to cover the written part to analyse the problem in depth. Students communicate with their tutors in relation to various concerns, and evidence of pragmatic failure whether stemming from socio-pragmatics or pragma-linguistics hinders the realisation of effective and successful communication between the two groups, students and lecturers. Nugrobo & Rekha (2020, p. 2) posit that, “Successful intercultural communication entails the knowledge of grammatical forms and the ability of using language functions appropriately in a real social context”. This is of great consequence taking into consideration the grammatical abilities of non-speakers of English when they engage with lecturers. It exposes a gap which is fascinating in terms of research at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

Of great interest, it is the mentioning of grammatical forms by Nugrobo & Rekha. It contradicts the findings of other researchers like Ishihara on the relevance of grammatical competence in the pragmatic communicative engagements. In other words, it is the awareness and recognition of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic concerns which are proved to be vital for the realisation of target goals in cross-cultural communicative processes. Interestingly, in the study by Nugrobo & Rekha, on forty students studying English at the Surakarta University in Indonesia, it was discovered that the students request strategies were consistent with indirect strategies. Their cultural background influenced their performance in requests.

The students demonstrated great recognition of distance between the interlocutors which is a key variable in the directness or indirectness of requests. Effective data collecting tools were utilized in the research, the students completed questionnaires (Written Discourse Completion Test) and Focus Group Observation was also conducted. These are productive procedures in collecting data in interlanguage studies as mentioned by the researcher in the methods review section. Presenting the participants with practical situations which they encounter in their communicative processes can provide reliable data in research. The data collection tools utilized in the study resonated with the ideology utilized by the researcher.

#### **2.4.5 Mitigating interlanguage pragmatics failure**

Interlanguage pragmatics failure in higher institutions of learning poses a threat to the successful realisation of healthy communication processes. Miscommunication and misinterpretation in

pragmatic situational engagements between students and their tutors can result in very serious repercussions. The perception by the tutors to miscommunication can result in allocation of poor marks, negative response to situations where their assistance is needed and at the highest scenarios, failure by students to move from one level to another in pursuit of their desired qualifications.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) undertook a very influential project to analyse the internal and external mitigation in interlanguage request production. The study focused on the Greek students only in relation to their deviations in the dimensions of internal and external modifications in mitigating interlanguage request production. The deviations in the external and external modifications are then compared to the native speakers of English standards. According to the study, the non-native speakers of the English language pragma-linguistic deviations cover three dimensions which are: choice of request strategy and directness level; choice of internal modification through the addition of mitigating or aggravating modality markers; and choice of external modification by means of supportive moves introductory or subsequent to the head act. Similarly, according the study, the type of modification chosen at socio-pragmatic level depends on social and contextual variables like power and distance.

The researcher reiterated that the study's focal point was to investigate and explore the use of lexical and phrasal modifiers which act as down graders, meant to soften internally the force of the request and on the use of external request modification by means of supportive moves. The study utilized the Discourse Completion Test and semi-structure interviews to obtain data. A study sample of 192 participants was used although the researcher did not specify the procedure followed in coming up with this study sample. The researcher specified that all the participants were undergraduate and post-graduate students studying in the UK higher institutions of learning. The study sample comprised of 100 Greek advanced learners of the English language and 92 native speakers of the English language. Data was analysed using the mixed methods approach (qualitatively and quantitatively). The study's perspective and goals resonates with this study as the concept of request is pivotal to the study. Interlanguage pragmatic failure is evidenced when such crucial communication between students and lecturers takes place.

Miscommunication in that scenario can positively or negatively affect the outcome of the engagement. Internal and external modification of requests by students could be utilised to the benefit of a fruitful communication if their pragma-linguistic knowledge and development comes into play. Pragma-linguistic development keeps on appearing in every discussion because it is central if the non-native speaker is to select the linguistic units to appropriately communicate their ideas and thoughts in a target language. The study concluded that the students underused the lexical/phrasal down graders like 'please' and consultative devices/openers. This is true evidence that pragma-linguistics knowledge ensures a proper communication in the English language. Ignorance of the term 'please' in English makes the request direct and sends a wrong message to the addressee. It might cause anger and frustration to the receiver of the message.

#### **2.4.6 Grammatical competence versus linguistic pragmatic competence**

Interlanguage pragmatics is crucial in the establishment and full utilisation of the interpersonal level in communication. This is so because successful and health relationships are built from a successful engagement in communication. Pragmatic failure results in misinterpretation of messages and thereby affecting communicative processes. The linguistic knowledge and skills of students should comprise of grammatical competence and linguistic pragmatic competence. The combination of such a development ensures communication that fulfils a desired goal in communication engagements. Take note, the pragmatic force of a structure linguistically, should not deviate from the one assigned to it by native speakers. That results in miscommunication and breakdown of intended purposes in messages. Amaya (2008, p. 21) states that, "It goes without saying that we cannot explain to our students all the possible changes taking place between L1 and L2, but we can sensitise them to expect cross-cultural differences and, this way, they will have open minds". The study reveals a very strong statement regarding the mitigation of interlanguage pragmatic failure. It can be rooted out by exposure which means it is teachable. It is a gradual process by which the correct linguistic choices relating to socio-pragmatics and pragma-linguistics can be made eventually. Amaya (2008) asserts that,

However, L2 teachers often overlook pragmatics, due to the difficulty of its teaching, and instead focus on the grammatical aspects of language. The resulting lack of pragmatic

competence on the part of L2 students can lead to pragmatic failure and, more importantly, to a complete communication breakdown. (p. 11)

This methodology is however questionable if it is to be implemented at university level. It is applicable at lower levels of pedagogical processes as at university level, the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge should have developed to engage in successful cross-cultural communicative processes. The study by Amaya focused on teaching culture. The fundamental question to be answered relates to the mitigation processes relating to interlanguage pragmatic failure in tertiary institutions and it resonated with the objective of this study. However, the study conducted by Derakhshan & Arabmofrad in (2018) on the impact of instruction on the pragmatic comprehension of speech acts of apology, request, and refusal among Iranian intermediate EFL learners produced some valuable data. The study utilized a sample of 69 Iranian EFL learners using video-enhanced input. The study sample comprised of 27 males and 42 females. A multi-choice discourse completion test was utilized as a data collection instrument. An Oxford Quick Placement Test was used to divide the sample in four homogenous groups (meta-pragmatic, form-search, interactive translation and control). Derakhshan & Arabmofrad (2018) concluded that,

The results of the present study substantiate that instruction had a positive effect on the learners' pragmatic comprehension from pre-test to post-test. More specifically, the results revealed that the meta-pragmatic group outperformed the other two groups in gaining more pragmatic knowledge. (p. 90)

Generally, the study accentuates the argument that second language aspects of interlanguage pragmatics are acquiescent to effective instruction. Contrary to Amaya's research, the results indicate the value of pedagogical instruction in mitigating some challenging aspects of interlanguage pragmatics in non-native speakers of English. The study also discovered that pragmatic competence is teachable drawing from a diverse techniques and assortment of instructional materials such as videos. The study fell short in terms of supplying the teaching methodology to pragmatic competence despite emphasising and reiterating on the vital role of effective instruction. The study conducted by Hosseini & Pourghasemian (2019) on comparing

the effects of explicit and implicit teaching using literary and non-literary materials on materials on learner's pragmatic comprehension and production supports the notion of effective instruction and strategies. The study was conducted on a sample of 80 undergraduate English-major students focusing on speech acts of refusals, requests and apology. Multiple-Choice Discourse completion Test and Written Discourse Completion Test were utilized in the data collection process.

The collected data was analysed utilising the mixed method, that is, the data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The explicit mode of instruction proved very effective as compared to the implicit mode on the production of speech acts. Explicit instruction enhances interlanguage pragmatics awareness (Nguyen, Pham and Pham, 2012). Hosseini & Pourghasemian (2019, p. 17) emphasise that, "When the learners are exposed to explicit meta-pragmatic instruction on the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic features of the speech acts, accompanied with explicit awareness-raising tasks, probably their meta-pragmatic awareness is raised". The study accentuates the need to develop the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic concerns in the second language speakers of the English language so as to enable them to engage in successful cross-cultural communicative processes. In other words, the pragmatic competence is placed higher as a pre-determinant to the realisation of goals in communication as compared to grammatical competence.

Having pointed several times on the paramount importance of effective instruction as an intervention to pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics awareness, it is crucial too to touch on the input strategy involving EFL learners. A study conducted by Bababayli & Kiziltan (2020) on a comparative socio-pragmatic analysis of the dialogues in Turkish and Azerbaijani B1-B2 EFL textbooks provided great insight into the concept of input. Research was conducted to analyse the inclusion of awareness content into the textbooks since most of the instructional techniques use textbooks alongside for cementing the learnt concepts. The idea behind the study is to encourage the inclusion of interlanguage pragmatics awareness content in textbooks so as to highlight some of the needs and wants in a much simpler way to the second language English learners. Bababayli & Kiziltan (2020) states that,



We aspired to draw textbook writer's attention to such inadequacies elimination of which may result in socio-pragmatically more adequate textbook, and attract second or foreign language teachers and learners' attention on the significance of socio-pragmatic competence for appropriate language use. (p. 1500)

#### **2.4.7 Transfer concept and pragmatic failure**

Bella (2011) carried out a research on mitigation and politeness in Greek invitation refusals. This study looked at various ways in which the pragmatic failure could be mitigated by investigating the politeness strategies and mitigation devices used by native and non-native speakers. The study utilized a sample of 60 participants in the collection of data. 20 of the participants were native Greek speakers, 9 males and 11 females, 40 of the participants were non-native Greek speakers (18 males and 22 females). Role plays were used as data collecting instruments. The mixed method was used in the analysis of data. The outcome could have been broadened by enlarging the sample size. "It was shown that at least in relation to the specific speech act of refusing a friend's invitation, length of residence does not guarantee pragmatic appropriateness and politeness when not combined with sufficient interaction opportunities", Bella (2011, p. 1737).

Interestingly, the study argues that proximity of residence to target language plays a part in the development of pragma-linguistic knowledge. It highlights that exposure to communicative processes is the central factor, not actually the idea of staying in the country where the target language originates. The study leaves some philosophical ideas hanging as it suggest that learners of second language can be exposed to an effective environment where they can pick up the necessary linguistic units and forms required in cross-cultural communication within their environments. In other words, the Namibian learners can be exposed to an environment where they can pick up the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge within their communities. Interaction opportunities as emphasised in the notion could not be of great value unless if the interaction is rich in attaining and internalization of the relevant speech act, socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge. This is highly debatable as the Namibian context could be different from the environment where this study was carried out.

For example, if the study was conducted in Europe, it could produce conclusions and recommendations which do not apply to the context of Namibia in terms of the realisation and awareness of interlanguage pragmatics skills in cross-cultural communication. Eslami (2016, p. 39) argues that, "An awareness-raising approach has also fuelled L2 pragmatic development research from a cognitive angle. Explicit teaching focuses on the either the deductive explanation of rules or inductive rules of language". In other words, Eslami's proposition is that the acquisition of the necessary pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge could also be achieved through the utilization of either deductive or inductive approaches in pedagogical processes. The input method should focus on either developing from the specific to generalizations or the reverse.

This, according to Eslami's proposition could be the development from what the second learner knows in their indigenous language to the specific expected linguistic forms and units in the English language. Eslami's assertion could be because of differences in cultural traits as contained in the different languages. Eslami raised a crucial factor by pointing out that interlanguage pragmatics concept can be approached from the cognitive angle. This according to her, is the pre-supposition that there are some psychological processes that influence the acquisition and internalisation of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge in the learners of English as a second language. This kind of approach and perspective resonated with the assumption that pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence can be achieved through learning. The idea in the whole perspective is to allow the native speaker to navigate the effective ways of terminating pragmatic transfer that might result in pragmatic failure.

Kramsch (as cited in Smaoui 2020, p. 68) argues saying, "...it is neither realistic nor justifiable to ignore and suppress learners own linguistic and cultural identities to meet the standards and norms of the NS myth". The argument by Kramsch is crucial in the way the second language learner of the English language is made to understand the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic concerns of another culture at the expense of their own. In other words, the non-native speakers of the English language have to compromise their own understanding of the socio-cultural values in order to fit into a context and situation where they are expected to perform and formulate

pragmatic strategies appropriate in cross-cultural communicative engagements. According to the assertion, the non-native speaker of the English language is faced with an overwhelming experience to mitigate any transfer concerns from their own perception of strategies to the target language's expected traits in communication events.

Franch (1998, p. 4) states that, "Pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics shall refer to the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information". The notion aptly points at the L1 knowledge as the major contributor to the pragmatic transfer in interlanguage studies. Hence, the argument here is that proficiency in second language does not necessarily mean that the individual is aware of the interlanguage pragmatic information. Yang (2017) emphasises on the fact that a high level of L2 proficiency does not automatically correspond with a high level of interlanguage pragmatics competence. Interestingly, it is also highlighted that a limited proficiency in L2 also limits the interlanguage development. The study by Yang (2017) was conducted on 36 Chinese university students. The aim was to analyse the effects of L2 proficiency on pragmatics instruction. Discourse Completion Test and Chinese Proficiency Test were used to collect data.

The collected data was quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. The methodology used in the study resonated with the researcher's research design. The study concluded that higher level L2 proficient learners benefited more from the web-based instruction as compared to lower-level proficient learners proving that proficiency in L2 is a crucial variable in attaining interlanguage pragmatics awareness. The study on the effectiveness of instruction in interlanguage studies has great a link to the project undertaken by Farashaiyan, Sahragard, Muthusamy & Muniandy (2020), on the questionnaire development and validation on interlanguage pragmatic instructional approaches and techniques in EFL contexts. The recommendation of a questionnaire as an effective data collection tool if designed appropriately is upheld by this study.

The study also concludes that suitable conditions for pragmatic tuition to take place consciously should entail pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic information to be acquired. Qi and Lai (2017) conducted a study to ascertain the effects of deductive and inductive instruction on learners'

development of pragmatic competence in the teaching of Chinese as a second language; their outcome is a great source and addition of ideas to the already existing body of knowledge in interlanguage pragmatics. The study concluded that an explicit inductive instruction is effective to learners' pragmatic development on requests. The same applies to refusals since the two concepts are interconnected.

This conclusion resonated with the constructivists' ideology of active engagement and problem solving in learning. The fundamental assumption is that non-native speakers of English language exposure to pragma-linguistic and sociolinguistic differences and similarities between their language and the target language might reduce the negative outcomes of pragmatic transfer in the target language. This is supported by the research conducted by Roever (as cited in Eskin 2017, p. 64) points out that, "Logically, pragmatically competent language users need both socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge. They need to map the two systems on each other, and they need to be able to activate their knowledge within the time constraints of a communicative situation". Of great interest is the mentioning of time constraints in a communicative engagement. It implies that the thinking capacity or speed should develop to meet the needs in practical communication. Going mute thinking about the lexicon selection does not formulate a healthy communicative act.

This poses a great challenge to the non-native speakers of English as they think and select words in their native language and translate them into the target language accordingly applying the pragma-linguistic knowledge. This process entails the application of great cognitive skills. The study was conducted focusing on interlanguage pragmatic development and L2 request behaviour. Eskin analysed the findings and conclusions of different studies relating to the speech act of requests. The underlying motivating factor was to unearth the strategies and development of awareness in the skills required in cross-cultural communication engagements. Ren (2016, p. 10) raises a crucial perspective pointing out that, "Although native speakers understand the potential for miscommunication with non-native speakers, they either underestimate the extent of the problems or lack of pragmatic strategies that they need to effectively accommodate". The

implication is that at times pragmatic failure is as a result of lack of adjustments needed to understand the message as coded by the non-native speakers.

This could be applicable to the context of student and lecturer communicative processes. The Interlanguage failure could be reduced if all the interlocutors are closely analysed to get to the bottom of meaning realisation. In a survey conducted by Derakhshan, Shakki, & Sarani (2020) on the effect of dynamic and non-dynamic assessment on the comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speech acts of apology and request, significant findings were raised and resonated with the researcher's perspectives on mitigation of interlanguage pragmatics challenges.

Considering the results of the present study, it is suggested that harmonizing the instruction and testing provides opportunities for the learners, and learning should be individualized in order to have better outcomes. To put it in a nutshell, giving students contextually appropriate input has been a pivotal factor to increase learners' pragmatic ability while understanding and performing the speech acts. (Derakhshan, Shakki, & Sarani (2020, p. 607).

Jie (2010) undertook a critical study on pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication. Insightful conclusions were highlighted. The study placed its thrust on the ways to eliminate pragmatic failure by teaching the non-native speakers the culture of the target language, to highlight the cultural differences, to help non-native speakers transcend their own culture and view things as individuals of the target language and to put emphasis on the inseparability between language and culture. This is quite a strong argument and brings to realisation the difficulties associated eliminating pragmatic failure. Bagherkazemi (2016, p. 47) stresses the complications that face the non-native speakers in their quest to attain pragmatic competence. These are choice of speech act, semantic formula, specific content and form. A myriad of studies have been undertaken in interlanguage studies and the same constraints have come out. The study focused on interlanguage pragmatics as a compendium of theory and practice.

A study by Solodka, Perea & Romanchuk (2019) provides some great insight into dealing with pragmatic failure. The study focused on interlanguage development of English complimenting

speech acts: strategies of performance. The central point was to analyse how the Ukrainian semi-fluent and fluent speakers of the English language performed compliments as speech acts. The study utilized a survey in collecting data on 157 Ukrainian participants. Their performance was rated against the US native speakers of English. The study concluded that the performance of the Ukrainian participants was not satisfactory and measures could be taken by looking at the pedagogical instruction as an intervention to the challenges faced. Solodka, Perea & Romanchuk (2019, p. 29) emphasise on the fact viewpoint that, “.....we can see the importance of understanding the syntactical formulas in English and the IL as the means to teach compliments at the university and avoiding pragma-linguistic failure”. The researchers placed their thrust on the teaching of interlanguage pragmatics effectively as a means to mitigate the problems faced in the formulation of compliments by the Ukrainian and Russian students.

The study by Meznah (2018) on the negative impact of pragmatic transfer on the acquisition of English pragmatics as perceived by L2 learners presented significant information. The previously mentioned factors such as lack of grammatical competence, input and instruction were pointed out as crucial in the development of interlanguage pragmatics awareness. Rubai'ey (2016) highlighted that in interlanguage studies pragmatic transfer is caused by the learners understanding and knowledge of their culture and dialects rather than the second language learning. Kim (2007) alludes to the notion adding that pragmatic transfer has greatly aided to the breakdown in cross-cultural communicative processes. The pragmatic transfer could be positive or negative depending on the L1 structures as compared to the L2. Interlanguage pragmatics failure could be caused by phonetic changes and result in unwanted pronunciations in communicative processes. Meznah (2018, p. 23) points out that, “....the most prominent effects of this pragmatic transfer are destructive linguistic mistakes, miscomprehension, miscommunication, underproduction and overproduction”. The study by Meznah place its thrust on the investigation of negative impact of pragmatic transfer on the acquisition of English pragmatic as perceived by second language learners of the English language.

The study was based on a descriptive method since it the researcher undertook the processes of evaluating other previous study's methodology, research design, findings and conclusions.

Another similar study was conducted by Morkus (2021) on the negative pragmatic transfer and language proficiency. The research focused on 20 intermediate and advanced American learners of Arabic. Data was collected using open-ended role-plays focusing on refusals and requests. This is the first study to examine such a scenario, American learners in Arabic situation. The research concluded that pragmatic negative transfer took place from L1 among the American learners of AFL. Morkus (2021, p. 61) posits that, “The study provides partial support for the negative correlation hypothesis, which posits negative correlation between language proficiency and negative pragmatic transfer from L1”. In other words, the study examined the effects of proficiency in the second language or target language with versus the chances of negative pragmatic transfer taking place. Moreover, the study posited that an attainment of proficiency in the target language may correspond with minimised negative pragmatic transfer. However, this assumption is disregarded in some studies including the study by Ishihara (2016).

#### **2.4.8 Interlanguage pragmatic competence constraints**

Non-native speakers are faced with a dilemma of thinking and seeing reality in the realms of another culture. The attitude towards that whole undertaking has a bearing on the pragmatic transfer theory. Where differences and difficulties exist for the non-native speaker, the likelihood is that they align to their thinking and apply it to the target language. That kind of approach is highly susceptible to pragmatic failure in a communicative context. This perspective resonated with the findings by Tazegul, Han & Engin (2016) in a study of pragmatic failure by Turkish students in request emails to their professors. The researcher used a study sample of 34 Turkish students who were studying EFL education.

The study sample of 34 students wrote letters to two non-native foreign professors for a period of two months, the letters were then analysed as a source of crucial data in the study. The letters contained a lot of data on requests and the strategies applied by the Turkish students. The study revealed that the students resorted to direct strategies utilising direct questions and want statements. The application of direct strategies was as a result of avoiding complexities in selecting linguistic units to be applied in indirect strategies. The extent of internal and external

modification in the formulation was limited as a result of limitations related to pragma-linguistics knowledge in the English language.

The study inherently revealed a limitation in the sense that the study sample only consisted of the non-native speakers of the English language and thereby lacking a yardstick to compare the production and formulation of strategies by the study sample. Jing (2017, p. 40) states that, "Interpreters should pay more attention to the cultural differences and pragmatic differences among languages for the purpose of avoiding misunderstandings and narrow the gap of these differences". The study highlighted a very crucial point in cross-cultural communicative processes, that is, the assumption that despite the constraints and limitations that are faced by the non-native speaker of English language, their interpretation of lexical units and situational context must align to the experiences and knowledge of the native speakers of the English language. According to the study, tolerance for cultural and pragmatic differences is crucial in realisation of a successful cross-cultural communication.

The study overtly accentuated that cross-cultural communication does not only transfer semantic messages in context but cultural messages too. This is resonated with the philosophical assumptions of the researcher on the backdrop that mismatches in perceptions and perspectives by both the lecturer and student can have adverse effects on both learning and communicative processes (Philips & Borg, 2007; Borg, 2011; Smaoui, 2020). On the contrary, the study conducted by Malmir & Derakhshan (2020) on 40 Iranian learners regarding the socio-pragmatic, lexico-grammatical and cognitive strategies in L2 pragmatic comprehension greatly gives an insight on how some interlanguage pragmatics constraints could be overcome. The study utilized 40 Iranian students as a sample, 20 female and 20 male. The study sample was selected using a stratified random selection technique out of a study population of 90 students.

Three data collecting instruments were used in the study. These included the validated pragmatic test, concurrent verbal think-loud protocols and retrospective think-loud protocols. The descriptive mixed methods were used to analyse the collected data. The study's conclusion emphasises on the pedagogical instruction as a means to impact the L2 learners' interlanguage pragmatics awareness. Emphasis should be placed on sensitizing the learners on the crucial



concepts of socio-pragmatics, lexico-grammatical and cognitive strategies in the comprehension and performance of speech acts in interlanguage pragmatics. The study also revealed that the gender concept or phenomenon did not play any significant influence in the implementation and use of pragmatic comprehension strategies. The conclusion draws on the importance of developing the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge and awareness in L2 learners concerted.

L2 learners are faced with constraints of controlling very complex language interplay and context of language use in interlanguage pragmatics. This is because any failure to comprehend the relationship that exists between an utterance and illocutionary meaning results in interlanguage pragmatic failure (Thomas 1983). The study by Timpe-Laughlin (2017) put great emphasis on finding more on the constraints faced by learners' in interlanguage pragmatics by investigating adult learners' acquisitional patterns in L2 pragmatics. The study closely linked its work to Kasper & Rose (2002) pragmatic development in a second language. The thrust is to understand the developmental process in interlanguage pragmatics awareness than to focus on the constraints only. The conclusion pointed out on four crucial stages which are complexification hypothesis, the interconnectedness between grammatical competence and interlanguage pragmatic competence, the influence of the learning environment and the assumption that learners' pragmatic ability is not necessarily accurately reflected in their pragmatic production. The last point resonated with the basic philosophical assumption of the researcher that lack of interlanguage pragmatics awareness may be a point of crucial concern looking at the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

## **2.5 The Namibian context**

The use of the English language in Namibia is an issue which has drawn many debates within language based studies. These debates and studies revolve around the potential problems (challenges) or successes are associated with the use of the English language. Frydman (2011, p. 181) states that, "As a result of this movement and the establishment of English as Namibia's sole official language, its policy became one of official monolingualism. This type of policy has had far reaching, detrimental implications for Namibia's people and its development". The notion

resonated with the aims of this study, to investigate if complications and challenges that arise in the use of the English language pose a situation where the communication between the students and lecturers could be adversely affected. Nkengbeza, Zulu & Shilunga conducted a study on the challenges in using spoken English in Namibia using a sample of 12 grade 6 learners and 5 English teachers. The sample size could have been made bigger to attain varied data. However, their findings were crucial. Nkengbeza, Zulu & Shilunga (2018) point out that,

The researchers came to the conclusion that learners' challenges in speaking English are serious problems that hinder their ability to communicate efficiently with the world and threaten the effectiveness of teaching and learning: Shyness, lack of self-expression due to vocabulary, learners' environment, lack of confidence and not knowing what to say are identified as the most common challenges which the grade six learners at a selected school in Onankali circuit when it comes to speaking English. (p. 24)

This gives great insight into the level of acquisition of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence into the students before they migrate to the secondary schools, hence, transition to tertiary institutions such as NUST. The study highlighted that the learners do not know what to say and how to say it. That closely relates to cross-cultural awareness when using the English language. Hence, when these learners engage in cross-cultural communicative process, the chances are very high that what they say and how they say would be misinterpreted and pose a negative face threat to the interlocutor. As highlighted before in different studies, the mitigation of such inadequacies in pragmatic competence can be dealt with via effective pragmatic instructional techniques that encompass cross-cultural awareness activities in the materials used. It calls for the inclusion in the curriculum pragmatic awareness topics and the inclusion of such topics in the instructional textbooks. Ngololo & Nekongo-Nielsen (2017) state that,

Proficiency of Namibian teachers was carried out. The findings of the two studies revealed that the teachers are not fluent in the language and the school environment is not conducive for learning English. Recent research continues to discover that teachers are not confident to teach in English, thereby affecting learners' performance negatively. (p. 156)

It is likely that if the performance of the learners is affected in pragmatic competence, their realization and awareness of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge could also be compromised thereby raising the possibility of interlanguage pragmatics communicative failure when they engage other individuals using the English language. As cited above, studies are recommending the implementation of explicit instruction to the development of awareness in socio-cultural concerns and pragma-linguistic skills, if the learners of English second language are exposed to ineffective instruction by the teachers; it corresponds with their performance and formulation of pragmatic strategies in cross-cultural communicative processes. Shankule & Woldemariam (2015, p. 56) point out that, "...English is mainly used in the classroom and EFL learners thus have significantly fewer opportunities to engage in English based communications outside the classroom. Therefore, the English classroom becomes the central place for their development of pragmatic competence". Ngololo & Nekongo-Nielsen highlight important factors in the development of the necessary socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic skills, which are the environment in which the students find themselves and the effect of pedagogical instruction. These are crucial elements to keep in sight when analysing the Namibian context in relation to cross-cultural awareness and performance in communication. A closer analysis of their supposition, gives great introspection into the reasons for adverse development of interlanguage pragmatics awareness and performance in cross-cultural communication. By relating Ngololo & Nekongo-Nielsen's notion to the Namibian context, what they mean could be that students fail to grasp the necessary linguistic forms and units together with socio-pragmatic knowledge in interlanguage pragmatics because they are exposed to an environment where they do not pick up the correct skills and compounded by the fact that they receive pedagogical instruction from teachers who are also not knowledgeable with the teaching of the English language pre-requisites in successful interlanguage pragmatics communication.

In an interlanguage study conducted by Chiravate (2019, p. 126), it was concluded that, ".....Levels of exposure to the target language had a significant effect on the type and complexity of strategies used by the learners". This conclusion resonated with the research philosophy and research paradigm in this study. Notwithstanding the viewpoint, Lu (2019) in study on pragmatic

failure in interpretation and the development of students' pragmatic competence in interpreting puts it through that,

....the present study also establishes the curriculum-textbook-teacher-teaching scheme to develop students' interlanguage pragmatic competence. This is based on the belief that students' who have good pragmatic competence in interpreting will be alert to the fine shades of differences between languages and cultures, and can ultimately avoid pragmatic failures in interpretation. (p. 43)

Povey (as cited in Haimbodi & Woldemariam 2019, p. 120) argues that, "literature will increase all language skills because literature will increase linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax" The linguistic knowledge attained by engagement with a diverse range of literature material could be useful in the addition and internalisation of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic skills as emphasised in the notion. This insight could be greatly linked to the idea of finding ways of mitigating interlanguage pragmatics failure in communicative processes between the native speakers of the English language and the learners or speakers of English as a second language. According to Povey (1972), the utilisation and incorporation of literature studies in the curriculum could be a great source of internalisation of the subtle skills necessary in the realisation of successful interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes.

The assertion from the study raised a great need to conduct further research into interlanguage pragmatics. This is necessitated by the realisation that students enrol at tertiary institutions for higher undertakings in terms of academics on the backdrop of a poor background in the spoken and written English language and as well as the cross-cultural dynamics involved. Under such a background, the fundamental philosophical question relates to the interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes between the students and their lecturers. Chavez (2016, p. 194) points out that, "The native languages in Namibia are an integral part of the culture of the individuals who speak them". Li in a study on pragmatic transfer and development (2018, p. 277) concluded that, "....learners will translate their own cultural norms into the target language, how this may lead to intercultural misunderstandings and how L2 development is influencing this process". The

assertion by Chavez puts through a critical viewpoint, it points to how cultivated the first language socio-cultural traits are in the learners, although they are expected to recognise and understand the pragmatic system of the English language to be deemed appropriate when they engage in cross-cultural communication. The assertion inherently pointed at the importance of tolerance when the non-speakers of the English language engage with the native speakers of the English language. In other words, to apply the native speakers' of English standards as a yardstick to measure the non-speakers' of English language in terms of the performance and production of strategies in pragmatic engagements would be an inappropriate and unfair undertaking.

This brings another dimension or paradigm which resonated with the aims of this study. It is the perspective that deals directly with cross-cultural linguistics. Philosophically, it questions whether an individual's native language linguistic choices would not completely differ with the choices available in English language. Hamakali & Mbenzi (2016, p. 45) say, "Contrastive Analysis hypothesis also attribute some of the second language learners' learning difficulties to their first language influence on the target language, in this case English". If that happens, there is a philosophical argument that some misunderstandings and communication breakdown may occur due to socio-cultural differences inherent in languages. It is evident that Namibia is a multicultural and multilingual country that has implemented one common official language English. Simataa & Simataa (2017, p. 35) assert that, "For that reason, our submission is that language is an epitome of culture, consequently; culture can be well understood in one's language".

Cross cultural linguistics questions whether the students of the various languages like Oshivambo, Damara and Herero are able to use the English language effectively in communication processes and applying the appropriate linguistic choices in speech acts and the creation of new social relations in cultural context. This is critical as these individuals would want to maintain their identity despite the prevailing environment where they have to use the English language in an accepted and appropriate manner, that is, demonstrating an understanding of the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic variables in a pragmatic communicative process.

In a study conducted by Witbeen & Woldemariam (2020) on multiculturalism and communication at the Namibia University of Science and Technology, the conclusions and findings of the undertaking left a gap for further research in interlanguage pragmatics. The study utilized a study sample of 40 respondents of which 10 of them were lecturers, and a mixed group of foreign and local first year students. The researchers utilized a mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) research design and analysed the collected data statistically. Moreover, the collected data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to ensure a holistic kind of approach to the analysing of the collected data. Witbeen & Woldemariam (2020) posit that,

During the study, communication barriers such as stereotypes/generalisations, anxiety, poor listening skills, non-verbal gestures, and language, were identified as communication barriers. However, this paper concludes that most of these communication barriers are not directly related to cultural differences, but rather to the issue of language. (p. 38)

Analyses of the concluding remarks or philosophy by the researchers point to language inherent traits as the major factor of communication failure or breakdown amongst the respondents. Moreover, the study highlighted the use of the English language as the major contributor to the communicative complex engagement between the lecturers and the students. Witbeen & Woldemariam (2020, p. 38) point out that, “This is because the respondents felt that they could not express their thoughts and opinion freely” if the target language gives the learners such limitations in expressing themselves freely, that is a sign that the students demonstrated lack of awareness and knowledge on socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic concerns in the English language. Such a realisation in the study points at a potential pragmatic communication breakdown in the communication between the lecturers and the students. That pointed to a research gap in interlanguage pragmatics study at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

The study by Mahmutoglu & Kicir (2013) on the use of mother tongue in EFL classrooms highlights a fascinating analysis on the issue of language. As previously highlighted, Namibia is a multicultural and multilingual country but characterised by the use of the English language as the official language. Phillipson (as cited in Mahmutoglu & Kicir 2013, p. 51) posit that , “English is

the best taught mono-lingual, the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker, the earlier English is taught, the better the result, the more English is taught, the better the result, if other languages are used too much, standards of English will drop". This presents a critical analysis into play looking at the context of the Namibia. As highlighted above, the teaching of English should only begin at grade 4 according to the Namibian Language Policy for Schools. The elementary grades 1-3 should be taught in their mother language. Moreover, the teachers of English language are trained locally at the University of Namibia by qualified Namibian lecturers.

This presents a fascinating insight into the teaching and learning of the English language critical skills that will mitigate interlanguage pragmatics skills. Phillipson accentuated that English language is best taught by the native speaker of English which contrary to the Namibian context. Moreover, Phillipson highlighted that the more other languages are used in the classroom; it lowers the acquisition of important knowledge in the performance and competence of English language. The ideas posed by Phillipson resonated with the underlying investigations of the study. To dig deep into the root causes of interlanguage pragmatics communicative failure or interlanguage communication breakdown between students and lecturers at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

The students at Namibia University of Science and Technology are characterised by the use of their indigenous languages inside and outside the classroom. They mostly engage in the use of the English language during the delivery of lectures and when they engage with their lecturers in pedagogical processes. According to the pre-suppositions of Phillipson, that compromises the internalization of critical socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge relevant to the realisation of successful interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. The argument by Phillipson directly points to the supposition that the internalisation of key socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge can be mitigated by effective and appropriate implementation of pedagogical processes. Teaching and learning is vital to ensuring successful interlanguage pragmatics communicative engagements between lecturers and the students.

The context of Namibia as a multicultural, multilingual country as heightened above, looking at the use of the English as the official language, brings with it a lot of fascinating scenarios relating to

interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes between lecturers and the students. The study carried out by Akdemir (2016) on the willingness to communicate in L2 highlights crucial elements that are directly linked to interlanguage pragmatics communicative engagements. Critical issues relating to socio-cultural factors, oral skills and motivation were central in the discussion. The study revealed that, “Americans were more willing to communicate cross-culturally than Chinese. The longer participants stay in a different culture, the more they are willing to communicate cross-culturally”, (Akdemir 2016, p. 841).

What this entails is that immersion and exposure into the target language enhances the internalisation of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge in the English language learners. Furthermore, it highly develops their oral communicative skills and provides a basis for motivation in cross-cultural communicative engagements. On the contrary, the Namibian context portrays a different picture as being flashed by Akdemir. Exposure to the native speaking English speaking environment is limited and the opportunity to stay in countries where English language is the native language is limited. The geographical position of Namibia and the countries that use English as a native language complicates such kind of exposure. The conclusions and findings of Akdemir pose a great philosophical insight into the Namibian context in terms of interlanguage pragmatics experiences in communicative engagements between lecturers and students. There is a gap to find evidence if there is willingness and sufficient motivation to communicate in cross-cultural situations in the students.

Zadeh & Temizel (2010, p. 419) posit that, “Teachers in this specific research topic (motivational strategies in EFL classrooms) have the biggest effect on learners’ autonomy and self-motivation which seems to be becoming neglected in foreign language classrooms....” The notion puts it through that that learners are more likely to learn if they appreciate the value of motivation in the instruction and believe that they will succeed by putting in some recognisable effort. So by modelling the expected communication expectations and stimulating the interest in the learners, they are likely to acquire some fundamental socio-linguistic and pragma-linguistic skills which are valuable in interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. Zadeh & Temizel proposition highlighted the complex nature of interlanguage pragmatics awareness in English second



language learners. It is a process which is linked to the cognitive angle as it touches on the crucial element of motivation and inductive/deductive instruction.

The insight provided by Zadeh & Temizel opens a huge gap for future research in interlanguage pragmatics looking at the cognitive angle. It is imperative to dig deeper into integrative and instrumental kinds of motivation strategies as emphasised by Zadeh & Temizel (2010) so as to understand the value of motivation and internalization of skills in cross-cultural communication in the students. If they are willing to do so, there is need to check on the knowledge and skills that they demonstrate in socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic skills in performative processes. The propositions by Zadeh & Temizel painted a broader clearer picture on the critical concept of interlanguage pragmatics communicative engagements.

## **2.6 Research gap**

Interlanguage pragmatics is still a developing field of study in the African context. Researchers are engaging the study to evaluate its effectiveness in second language learning. However, many studies have been carried out to highlight the concerns of interlanguage pragmatics in the attainment of effective and appropriate communicative processes. These concerns are more prevalent in environments where non-native speakers of English language are expected to reach a certain level of proficiency in the use of English language for successful interlanguage pragmatic communication actions. Related studies have pointed out at various challenges and problems which emanate from such environments such pragmatic failure. It is on the backdrop of this understanding that the researcher noted that a gap still exists to study the interlanguage pragmatics interactions between lecturers and students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The study of this gap will accentuate very crucial information on whether interlanguage pragmatics study is a valuable and applicable theory to evaluate the context of Namibia University of Science and Technology. Moreover, studying this gap will assist in the realisation of communicative breakdowns that could have been taking place between lecturers and students due to interlanguage pragmatic failure.

## 2.7 Theoretical framework

This study utilises the interlanguage pragmatics theoretical framework. Adom, Hussein & Agyem (2018, p. 438) describe a theoretical framework proposing that,

it serves as a foundation upon which research is constructed...should resonate with every aspect of the research process from the definition of the problem, literature survey, methodology, presentation and discussion of the findings as well as the conclusions that are drawn. (p. 438)

Interlanguage pragmatics study was developed in the 1980s. Scholars prominent in the theory are Blum-Kulka and Kasper. The theory was developed from Gass Selinker's theory interlanguage concept. Selinker's interlanguage theory was limited to the development of the grammar system and more insight into the concept of context was needed.

Huang (2010, p. 682) says, "Therefore the study of interlanguage was only limited from speech phonemes, lexical, syntactic to semantic". Interlanguage study came about as a combination of pragmatics research and interlanguage study. The thrust on combining pragmatics research and interlanguage study was to give answers related to the fundamental problem of context. This highlights the pivotal role played by pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics concerns in interlanguage pragmatics. Bardovi-Harlig (2010, p. 219) "pragmatics bridges the gap between the system of language and the use side, and relates both of them at the same time. Interlanguage pragmatics brings the study of acquisition to this mix of structure and use".

Interlanguage pragmatics upholds that context and circumstance determine our way of speaking. Pragma-linguistic knowledge determines the appropriate linguistic forms and strategies to be applied in a communicative action whereas the socio-pragmatic determines the discourse in relationship to the context. Pragma-linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge are the two layers of pragmatic competence. Thomas (as cited in Stukan 2018) point out that,

Pragma-linguistic failure occurs when a pragmatic force placed on an utterance by S differs from the force usually assigned to it by the native speakers, or when speech act strategies

are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2, Socio-pragmatic failure as social conditions placed on language in use. (p. 28)

An incomplete mastery of these key determinants in interlanguage pragmatics can result in pragmatic failure or miscommunication. Pragmatic failure has serious consequences to the communicative processes. Norouzian and Eslami (2016, p. 25) “The primary focus of ILP is on speech acts, conversational routines and implicature”

Thus, the interlanguage pragmatics theoretical framework suits the study since the main focus is to dig for data that enables the researcher to analyse the communicative actions (interactions) between the lecturers and students at tertiary level. These are students from a multicultural and multilingual background that are not native speakers of the English language. Lin (2007, p. 91) states that, “For avoiding miscommunication caused by cultural difference, being familiar with diverse cultures and pragmatics is essential. Studies of pragmatics emphasise the appropriateness of intercultural discourses”. Moreover, the students engage with lecturers at a level where they are expected to perform the relevant speech act of requests and refusals appropriately and effectively. This requires great mastery of pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics development.

Kasper & Schmidt (1996) highlight the tenets of the interlanguage pragmatics theory asserting that,

Interlanguage pragmatics, the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by non-native speakers, has a peculiar status in second language research. The great majority of studies in ILP have not been developmental. Rather, focus is given to the ways NNSs’ pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge differs from that of native speakers (NSs) and among learners with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. (p. 149)

According to the assertion by Kasper and Schmidt, it is overt that interlanguage pragmatics theory deviates from second language acquisition focus to empirical pragmatics and giving great insight to cross-cultural pragmatics (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper 1989). Moreover, Kasper and Schmidt (ibid) stress on the thrust placed in interlanguage pragmatics theory to investigate the influence

of learner's native language and culture on their production and comprehension of L2 speech acts placing great insight on the concept of pragmatic transfer.

To explore and evaluate the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic development of the students and the implications that might be encountered, the researcher utilized the Written Discourse Completion Tests where the students were presented with real life communicative situations in which they should complete by giving some independent responses. The WDCTs were implemented as data collecting tools for objective number one and objective number two in the study. This technique exposed some subtle crucial concepts such as grammatical competence. Aufa (2012, p. 25) stresses the importance and effectiveness of WDCT as a practical assessment tool. Ejaz (2016, p. 73) supports the use of WDCT stating that they offer, "A better understanding of communication in such a constructed context may help us gain a better understanding of authentic communication".

The researcher, within the framework of interlanguage pragmatics, formulated a questionnaire with 20 items for completion by the 63 Systematic Randomly selected students from a study population of 75 second year students in the department of Informatics at Namibia University of Science and Technology. The questionnaire was designed to collect data focusing on objective number three in the study. Objective number three in the study seeks to dig for crucial data that accentuates the adverse factors to interlanguage pragmatics competence. Mathers, Fox & Hunn (2009, p. 11) says, "To obtain a random (or probability) sample, the first step is to define the population from which it is to be drawn". "Questionnaires are popular and fundamental tools for acquiring information on public knowledge and perception", Bird (2009, p. 1307).

The analyses of the data qualitatively and quantitatively (mixed methods) was able to provide the researcher with important information regarding interlanguage pragmatics interactions between the students and their lecturers at Namibia University of Science and Technology. The researcher utilized the convergent parallel mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). The study implemented the mixed methods research design due to its complementarity nature, completeness, development, expansion characteristic, corroborative, compensation and diversity (Tashakkori & Newman (as cited by Hafsa 2019, p. 47). However, Sunindjio & Dainty (2014) pointed at some demerits like

need for more time, resource access and energy to the selection and implementation of the mixed methods research design.

### 2.7.1 Application of the Interlanguage pragmatics theory to the study

The analyses on the production of requests by the students in the Written Discourse Completion Tests were carried out following the Trosborg's taxonomy (1995). The analyses of these requests strategies by the students were conducted qualitatively and quantitatively examining the appropriateness and linguistic formulae making use of the interactional model in interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. Trosborg's taxonomy has been reformulated and used effectively in the studies conducted by Olshtain (1984), House & Kasper (1981), Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) and Safont (2001a). The taxonomy of request by Trosborg is divided into strategies of conventionally indirect requests (either hearer oriented or speaker based), indirect requests and direct requests.

For the purposes of an in-depth analysis, the study added other types of strategies in the formulation of requests in case they might occur. These extra types of strategies are adopted from Trosborg's taxonomy of internal and external modifications. These modifications are realised in the formulation of requests in situations where the speaker sought to decrease the face threatening nature and sound more polite to the interlocutor. This highlights the importance of the mitigators in the formulation of requests.

**Table 1:** Trosborg's taxonomy of request realisation strategies (adapted from Trosborg, 1995, p. 205)

Type	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Indirect	Hints	Statement
<b>Conventionally Indirect (hearer oriented)</b>	Ability	Could you...?
		Can you...?
	Willingness	Would you...?

	Permission	May I .....?
	Suggestory formulate	How about...?
<b>Conventionally indirect (Speaker based)</b>	Wishes	I would like.....
	Desires/needs	I want/need you to...
	Obligation	You must.....  You have to.....
<b>Direct</b>	Perfomatives	I ask you to....
	Imperatives	Lend me your car.
	Elliptical phrase	Your car

**Table 2:** Trosborg's (1995, p. 209-219) taxonomy of request modification items

TYPE	SUBTYPE	EXAMPLE
Internal modification	Syntactic downgraders	I wonder if you would be able to pass me the bread
	Lexical/phrasal downgraders	Could you pass me the bread, please?
	Upgraders	I'd be very grateful if you'd pass me the bread
	Preparators	Are you busy right now? I need that you pass

External modification	me the bread
	Disarmers      I'm sorry to trouble you, but could you pass me the bread?
	Supportive reasons      Could you pass me the bread? I cannot reach it.

The analyses of the refusal strategies were carried out adopting and utilizing the taxonomy developed by Campillo et al. (2009). The taxonomy has been used in most studies and has proved effective in the analysis of socio-pragmatic description and pragma-linguistic account (Kasper, 2006; Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Ghahraman, 2006; Al-Eryani, 2007; Kondo, 2001 & 2008). The taxonomy accounts for most refusal strategies utilized by non-native speakers of the English language from a discourse point of view. The taxonomy divides refusals into direct, indirect and adjuncts to refusals. It is within these three broad perspectives that the study analysed the refusals produced by the students in the department of Informatics at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The thrusts was placed on closely analysing the semantic expressions, to dig for the implementation of any mitigators to save the face of the interlocutor or whether the context and selection of linguistic units in the formulation of requests account for such concerns as social distance and appropriateness. The analysis of the refusal strategies by the students were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to paint an informative outcome relating to the situation at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

*Table 3: Campillo et al. (2009) Taxonomy of refusals*

<b>REFUSALS</b>
<b>Direct strategies</b>

1 Bluntness	No/I refuse
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>	
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't
1 Alternative:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change option</li> <li>Change time (postponement)</li> </ul>	<p>I would join you if you choose another restaurant</p> <p>I can't go right now, but I could next week</p>
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a raise right now!
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs
7 Avoidance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)</li> <li>Verbal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hedging</li> <li>✓ Change topic</li> <li>✓ Joking</li> <li>✓ Sarcasm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Well, I'll see if I can
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>	
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....



3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....

The interlanguage pragmatics theoretical framework is utilised to give answers and great insight into the adverse conditions to interlanguage pragmatics competence in the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The interlanguage pragmatics theory is relevant to this effect as such kind of an approach has been utilised by researchers like Meznah (2018), to the identification of these unfavourable conditions. Interlanguage pragmatics as a theory recognises the importance of language acquisition, its use in practical situations taking into consideration cultural concerns, pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic issues (Amaya, 2008). Therefore, the items in the questionnaire helped the researcher dig for information relating to the adverse conditions for interlanguage pragmatics holding on closely to the tenets of interlanguage pragmatics theory. The questionnaire dug for background information of the respondents, that is, their cultural beliefs, their exposure to the native speakers of the English language, their experience with the effective input in interlanguage pragmatics, their perspectives on studying and understanding the culture of the English language and whether their native languages has an bearing on the way they produce and perceive the English language.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **2.1 Research design**

This study follows the descriptive design since the main focus is to investigate a problem with an underlying motivating factor that this phenomenon of interlanguage pragmatics has not been fully explored at the Namibia University of Science and Technology and in Namibia at large. It is on that backdrop that this study sought to dig deeper for data and come up with objective and comprehensive information to better understand the problem of interlanguage pragmatics interactions between students and lecturers at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The descriptive approach was appropriate as variables in the study are not controlled and some quantifiable information which can be statistically analysed will be collected. Nassaji (2015) stresses that,

The goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. In such research the data may be collected qualitatively, but it is often analysed quantitatively, using frequencies, percentages, averages, or other statistical analyses to determine relationships. (p. 129)

The assertion by Nassaji greatly resonated with perspective of the study to analyse the collected data qualitatively and quantitatively. The collected data from objective one and two of the research presented similarities and differences in some instances. The analysis of those differences and similarities in approaches or strategies used by the non-native speakers of the English language in pragmatic communicative processes greatly relates to qualitative analysis. The efforts by the researcher in trying to explain the perception of language is a qualitative undertaking. The quantitative approach to the data analysis involved the representation of the collected data from the Written Completion Discourse Tests and the questionnaire statistically (diagrammatic representations)

### 3.2 Research paradigm

This study took great link to positivism paradigm. The researcher held some common beliefs on the broad concept of interlanguage pragmatics in general and the complex experiences in interlanguage pragmatic communicative engagements (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Schwandt, 2001). Nguyen (2019, p. 2) supports the viewpoint stating that, "Through this conceptual lens, the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used, and how the data will be analysed". The positivism paradigm suited the study due to the nature of the problem to be investigated. Kivunja & Kuyini (2017, p. 26) point out that, "a research paradigm inherently reflects the researcher's beliefs about the world that s/he lives in and wants to in".

The focus was on investigating a problem which the researcher had a basic assumption about what actually happens in a multilingual and multicultural environment relating to the internalization of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge of a target language. The researcher looked at all the basic elements that are encompassed and informed a research paradigm which were ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology to understand the nature of the problem at hand and how to go about it. In other words, the consideration of basic elements that are encompassed in the research paradigm painted a clear picture on the positionality of the researcher. Hence, positionality reflects an informed position that the researcher has adopted in the study.

Footnote & Bartell, 2011, Savin-Baden & Major, 2013 and Rowe, 2014 (as cited in Holmes 2020, p. 1) state that, "The term positionality both describes an individual's world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context". In this case, the problem at hand was the investigation of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge in the students at NUST. The underlying hypothesis is that some kind of miscommunication or misunderstandings should be taking place between lecturers and students due to interlanguage pragmatics failure. The research objectives, the selection of the participants or study sample, the data collection instruments and data collection as well as the analysis of data was led by taking great insight into

the research paradigm. The challenges emanating from these communicative actions were analysed and described objectively.

### **3.3 Research approach**

This study utilized the mixed methods due to its nature. The collected data was analysed quantitatively applying some statistics methodology and also interpreted qualitatively to attain a complete overview of interlanguage pragmatics concept at Namibia University of Science and Technology. Regnault, Willgoss & Barbic (2018) states that,

MMR allows a research question to be studied from different perspectives. For example, one can combine the rich, subjective insights on complex realities from qualitative inquiry, with the standardized, generalizable data generated through quantitative research. When applied, MMR allows respective strengths and weaknesses of each approach to complement each other. (p. 1)

Khalidi (2017, p. 22) posits that, “The added advantage of the mixed method is the possibility it offers the research for the triangulation of the data”. The assertions from the scholars cemented the researcher overview in the selection of the mixed methods approach to the study. The mixed methods approach offered the researcher a strong platform to analyse the data collected from different angles (qualitative and quantitative) enhancing the description and understanding of the interlanguage pragmatics situation at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The complementary nature of qualitative and quantitative analysis of the collected data allowed for the in-depth comparisons and verification of collected data looking at the variables and objectives of the research, in other words, there is flexibility and allowance for triangulation. This kind of undertaking validated the research findings and conclusions. The general triangulation of the data rendered the research information bias free and reliable. Honorene (2017, p. 91) assert that, “Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources”. In other words, utilization of qualitative and quantitative techniques elucidate complementary aspects of the same phenomenon, in this case, it is the interlanguage pragmatics phenomenon at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

The data obtained from the questionnaires and the written discourse completion test offer the researcher the flexibility to apply the quantitative and the quantitative techniques to the analyses of the variables.

### **3.4 Research setting**

The study setting is a crucial component in research undertakings. There researcher had to come up with a carefully designed and analysed criteria before selecting the study's setting. In other words, the researcher looked at crucial variables like the nature of the study, the nature and characteristics of the environment, and the logistical concerns to select the appropriate research setting. The researcher looked at all the key determinants of a research setting in order to safeguard the ethical concerns related to the success and reliability of the study from a scholarly point of view. In other words, failure to link the research setting to concerns of ethics in research compromises the acceptability and reliability of the study in academic circles. This is on the backdrop that research undertaking, are highly regarded as a source of crucial information for developmental purposes in economic, educational, cultural and social areas. Hence, the structure, the layout and organisational characteristics of the study setting become a foundation for the rationale to select an effective, relevant, appropriate study environment to obtain uncompromised data for research analysis.

Majid (2018, p. 3) supports the viewpoints stating that, "Keep in mind that that a protocol's discussion on the study setting has to be coherent with other parts of the research protocol". The assertion aptly accentuated the value of study setting selection in the study. The researcher's selection of the Namibia University of Science and Technology was greatly informed by the problem to be studied, the objectives of study and ethical considerations. Hence, the study setting was selected to realise a coercive unit of interlinked chapters and subheadings right from the beginning step of the study till the collection of data and its analysis. The study clearly presented the characteristic setting of Namibia as a multicultural and multi-linguistic in the background to the study. The problem statement accentuated the interlanguage pragmatics in this kind of environment by placing great insight on the pragmatic interactions that take place at the Namibia University of Science and Technology between the students and their lecturers. This

greatly informed the study setting as greatly suited to the study in terms of ethical considerations, logistical concerns and reliability of the environment for collecting appropriate data for analysis.

This study was carried out at the Namibia University of Science and Technology in Windhoek. Specifically, the researcher conducted the project in the Department of Informatics utilizing a study sample of 63 students selected using the Systematic Random sampling technique out of study population of 75 second year students.

### **3.5 Study population**

The researcher undertook the research study with an underlying ideology of the units on which the research findings can be applied. In other words, the researcher took this group of units as the study population under which the research findings and conclusions could be generalised. The study population was clearly accentuated in the research title, the problem statement and the broad objective of the study. Moreover, the research design kept on referring to the objectives of the study greatly taking insight to the study population. The researcher selected the study population from the Namibia University of Science and Technology after having carefully considered it as a group of individuals that had common characteristics and of great interest to the researcher in relation to the problem under investigation. The researcher took it upon to utilize certain parameters (exclusion and inclusion criteria) like level of study to select the study population; this resonated with the ethical demands in the study. Kazerooni (2001, p. 994) states that, “study population is subset of target population that can be studied. Samples are subsets of study population”. The research population in the study comprised of 75 students derived from the second year students in the Department of Informatics, at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

#### **3.5.1 Sample procedure and sample size**

A sample is the representative part of the study population (Majid, 2018). The researcher utilized the Systematic Random Selection procedure to the study population of 75 second year students in the department of Informatics at the Namibia University of Science and Technology to come with a study sample of 63 students in order to have a statistical representation of the population to answer the research objectives. Systematic Random Selection procedure gave the researcher

the flexibility to draw up generalizations about the sample. In other words, the Systematic Random Sampling procedure was utilized by the researcher looking at characteristics of the population of interest, the significance and power levels and the research objectives. The systematic sampling procedure is not biased, Taherdoost (2016, p. 21) point out that, “The advantage of this sampling technique is its simplicity”. Bhardwaj (2019, p. 160) agrees stating that, “It is easy to create, conduct, analyse the sample, risk factor is minimal as there is even distribution of members to form a sample, systematic sampling is beneficial when there are diverse members of population”.

Majid (2018, p. 5) supports the perspective stating that, “The sample size of a research study should have adequate power and significance, allowing the investigators to be confident that the study findings cannot be attributed to random variations in the population of interest”. In this regard, the researcher deducted major conclusions and recommendations basing on the data extracted from the sample. The characteristic of homogenous resonated with this study as the sample was drawn from students in the same department and same level of study to attain data which was not misleading due to the experiences and educational exposure of the participants. The upholding of this characteristic by the researcher was to ensure that the study findings from the study sample would represent real and actual inferences and associations in the population of interest.

### **3.6 Research instruments/Data collecting tools**

Research instruments are the tools which the researcher utilises to gather data for analyses (Canals, 2017). The selection of these tools must be done critically as any misguided implementation would produce conclusions and recommendations which are unreliable. The selection of tools to collect data should be closely linked to the problem to be investigated, the objectives of the study and informed by the theoretical framework. Thus, reliability and validity are crucial pre-requisites the selection of data collecting instruments in research study, Bastos, Mesa, Duquia, Bonamigo & Gonzalez-Chica (2014). The researcher selected the tools greatly giving insight to primary data. Secondary data was only utilized in the literature review section

when the researcher synthesized and analysed the work that has been undertaken already in the field of interlanguage pragmatics

The study employed three sets of data collecting instruments, which are Written Discourse Completion Tests for the 63 students and a questionnaire for the 63 students selected applying the Systematic Random Sampling procedure. Elicitation of data for objective one and two was done through the use of written discourse completion tests. Collection of data on objective 3 was done utilising a questionnaire comprising of 21 items.

### **3.6.1 Written Discourse Completion Tests (WDCT)**

This research instrument was utilized in the study focusing on the first and second objectives of the study.

The research instrument's selection was on the backdrop of the problem to be investigated. The study focused on interlanguage pragmatics and specifically, on the development of requests skills in the students at NUST. The Written Discourse Completion Test as an instrument was valid and dependable tool as it presented the Systematic Random Selected sample with situations which they faced in their engagements with lecturers and other students. They were expected to demonstrate their interlanguage pragmatics competence and knowledge by giving responses to discourse situations. Moreover, the responses by the selected students gave the researcher a very crucial and insightful analysis on the development of grammar in the students. Woodfield (2008, p. 43) points out that, "Written discourse completion tasks have frequently been employed in pragmatic research as a key research instrument in eliciting the production of speech acts by second language learners". The tool was relevant and effective in cross-sectional studies and useful data can be collected within a short given time. Thus, the researcher selected this tool on merit although some demerits can be levelled against it by some scholars. Cohen & Olshtain (as cited in Woodfield 2008, p. 45) present the argument that, "WDCT is a projective measure of speaking and so the cognitive processes involved in producing utterances in response to this elicitation device may not truly reflect those used when having to speak relatively naturally".



### **3.6.2 Questionnaire for the students focusing on the third objective of the study**

Xeri (2017, p. 66) states that, “A questionnaire is likely to yield a substantial amount of numerical data, which has to be analysed statistically”. This resonates with the methodology utilized in the research. A mixed methods approach was made full use of since the questionnaire provided data which could be analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Moreover, questionnaires are a great and effective way of measuring attitudes, behaviour and intentions. This resonated with the investigations of the study. However, it was imperative for the researcher to design the questionnaire meticulously. The wording should be clear and intelligible; ambiguity should be avoided at all cost, bias free and relevant, reliable and valid to the investigation at hand.

The researcher utilized closed-ended questions to make it easier for quantifying the data and analysing it. The researcher selected this tool as it is fast in obtaining crucial data, cuts on incurring costs and they are highly objective. However, the supply of answers to questions also poses a danger to the collection of data as some participants will just mark off the options without properly comprehending the questions.

The questionnaire for the students was designed in such a way that it collected very crucial data relating to interlanguage pragmatic competence. Specifically, the items in the questionnaire were designed to collect data highlighting the adverse factors to interlanguage pragmatics competence. The questionnaire was designed in a way that presented three different sections to the participants. The first part was focused on the personal information of the participants and some necessary background information. The second and third parts were focused on extraction data relating to the practical usage of English language and pivoted on digging for factors that affect the interlanguage pragmatic competence in the students.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

This study utilized the mixed methods approach. It is imperative to point out the collected data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to come up with validated, reliable and comprehensive conclusions as well as recommendations. Onwuegbuzie & Combs (2011, p. 3) reiterate the viewpoint stating that, “Mixed analysis involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques within the same framework, which is guided either a priori, a

posteriori, or iteratively". Additionally, the analysis of the collected data was concurrent, qualitative and quantitative. The data collected from the questionnaire and the written discourse completion tests was analysed numerically applying statistical methods like graphs and tables. Ibrahim (2015) states that,

The word analysis refers to a closely related operation those are performing with the purpose of summarizing the collected data and organizing in such a manner yielding answer to the question. In simple words, it means studying the data to determine inherent facts. (p. 99)

Qualitative analysis was utilized in the form of textual analysis to some of the responses in the written discourse completion tests. An analysis of how the students perceived language in the written discourse completion tasks was subjected to qualitative analysis. Coding and categorization of data was crucial in the utilization of statistical methods in the study.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The study was given the green light to be conducted by the Committee of Higher Degrees at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The researcher attained a consent form to carry out the study and to engage with the participants for the purposes of research only. This whole process was carried out to obtain the ethical clearance. It clarified the conditions under which the study would be carried out taking into consideration some ethical guidelines. The researcher got permission to extract data from study sample of 63 second year students in the Department of Informatics at NUST. For ethical consideration reasons, the personal information of the respondents or participants was not published and they remain anonymous to the public. Only their data was crucial in the study for the purposes of analysis and reaching out to the bottom of interlanguage pragmatics situation in the department of Informatics at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. Akaranga & Makau (2016) says,

There exist many reasons why ethical norms are maintained while conducting research. First, they promote the main aims of the research which include among others, the acquisition of knowledge, promoting the truth in research by avoiding errors that could

arise due to providing false information, fabricating and misrepresenting information. (p. 8)

Ethical considerations uphold the social and moral values such as not causing harm to the participants or the receivers of the analysed data which is now information. Some of the ethical considerations in the study are confidentiality, anonymity, no harm to the participants and informed consent. Akaranga & Makau (2016) point out that,

It is vital that a researcher must observe appropriate values all the stages while conducting research. If this is not observed, it could result into research misconduct. And, it is within this framework that we discuss ethical issues related to research emphasising on those related to the research itself, research subjects and the research process. (p. 3)

According to the notion, if the study had not attained the ethical clearance to be conducted, it would have subjected the findings and conclusions of the study as not reliable and appropriate in the context of academic undertaking.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The chapter presents the findings of the study logically following the research objectives. The presentation of the findings was conducted following descriptive data analyses generated from the data collecting tools. Moreover, the collected data was also analysed qualitatively. The chapter is divided into four sections. The data from in the first two sections A and B was collected through the utilization of Written Discourse Completion Tests. Section A presents the findings and analysis of data linked to the first objective, that is, the realisation and formulation of request strategies by the students. A total of 10 situations were presented to the participants to formulate requests as their responses. Section B presents the findings linked to the second objective of the study. The second objective analysed the formulation and realisation of refusals by the students. A total of 11 situations were presented to the students as a way of collecting the much needed data. The participants were presented with real life situations that they may encounter in their dealings and engagements with their lecturers at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The situations required them to formulate refusals to given requests. Section C presents the collected data from the questionnaire. The questionnaire collected data linked to the third objective of the study. The third objective of the study sought to gather data accentuating the adverse conditions to interlanguage pragmatics in the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology in the department of Informatics. Section D presents the discussions looking at the findings of the study.

#### **4.2 Formulation and realisation of request strategies**

##### **4.2.1 Procedure**

The Discourse Completion Test was distributed to a sample of 63 participants that was selected applying the Systematic Random Selection. The Discourse Completion Test comprised of ten given situations that required the participants to formulate requests as responses. Procedural, the study analysed the participants' production of requests quantitatively and qualitatively. Qualitative analysis gave great insight into the linguistic formulae employed by the participants

utilizing the Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy of request realisation strategies. Out of the 63 responses expected on each given situation, three Discourse Completion Tests responses by the participants were deemed irrelevant due to the completion errors. The Discourse Completion Tests could not be analysed for the purposes of collecting any meaningful data. Therefore, the requests Discourse Completion Test accrued a total of 600 responses for analysis than the expected 630. This accounted for a deficit of 30 responses. The study presented the findings of the Requests Discourse Completion Test looking at each given situation so as to have an in-depth understanding of the concept and its practical realisation in the students. Therefore, the researcher analysed 60 responses on each situation qualitatively and quantitatively applying descriptive statistics. The tables representing the analysis illustrate the different types of strategies of requests. The column marked "N" refers to the number of occurrences realised on the specific speech act. The last column highlights the "%" of that specific request speech act out of the 60 responses analysed.

#### **Situation 1** (see Appendix)

*You are attending an online class on Microsoft Teams. The network drops down and you miss some crucial points. How do you request the lecturer to repeat again what you might have missed?*

**Table 4**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	37	61.6
Indirect(hearer-		Can you.....?	6	10
Oriented	Willingness	Would you.....?	7	11.6
	Permission	May I .....?		
	Suggestory	How about		
	Formulae			
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....		
Indirect(speaker-	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		

Based	Obligation	You must/You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....	5	8.3
	Imperatives	Lend me your car		
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....		
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?	3	5
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		<i>Are you busy right now?</i>		
Modification		<i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i>	2	3.3
		Could you pass me the		
		bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		

The analysis of the given situation portrayed very interesting data. The frequently employed request linguistic realisation referred to willingness and ability strategies. The ability strategy was divided into two depending on the use of the modal *verb* *can* and *could*. (Could you please repeat the lesson? Can you kindly repeat the concept Sir?) The use of the ability strategy accounted for 71, 6% in total. (Could you, 61, 6+ Can you, 10%=71, 6%). The willingness strategies under the broad concept of conventionally indirect strategies accounted for 11, 6%. The students utilized the expression *would you.....?* in addressing the lecturer. (Would you kindly repeat again Sir? My network just tripped). Direct requests linguistic formulae were realised in 8, 3% of the responses, for example: *repeat again Prof my network tripped*. These responses did not accentuate any form of mitigation in their formulation. Imperativeness was evident in the responses. Internal modification request linguistic formulae were realised by the utilization of lexical/phrasal downgraders in responses like, *Could you repeat the lesson, please? My network tripped during your explanation*. These type of responses accounted for 5%. On the contrary, external modification linguistic formulae (3, 3%) were realised in responses like, *I am sorry to disturb you Sir, but could repeat the explanation*. It is noteworthy to realise that no permission and

suggestory formulae request strategies were utilized by the students. Moreover, the conventionally indirect (speaker-based) request linguistic formulae were not utilized by the students.

### **Situation 2** (See Appendix)

*You have failed to submit an assignment on a date given by the lecturer. What do you say to the lecturer in the quest to be given an opportunity to submit your assignment?*

The situation highlighted diverse requests linguistic realisations formulae as indicated on the table of analysis below. The frequently realised strategies occurred under the broad type of conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented), 66, 6%. The use of the modal verb *could* was realised in most of the request formulations in the quest to ask for permission to submit the assignment after the due date. For example, *Could you kindly grant me permission to submit my assignment? I encountered some problems*. The students also applied some form of mitigation in their expressions to convince the lecturer. The utilization of the ability strategy accounted for 40% of the responses. The permission linguistic formulae under the conventional indirect strategy accounted for 26.6% of the responses. The modal verb *May I....* was evident in these responses. For example, *Professor, may I kindly have amnesty of one day to submit my assignment*. The speaker-based conventionally indirect strategies contributed 10% of the responses by the students. The students formulated their requests to submit assignments on a later date utilizing the wish strategy. The expression *I would like to* was evident in their strategies. For example, *I would like to submit my assignment two after the due date*. Direct request strategies were realised in 11.66% of the responses. For example, *I will submit my assignment tomorrow Sir, My assignment is late but I will submit after two days*. Internal modification was realised in 6.66% of the responses by the students. For example, *Could you kindly allow me to submit my assignment after three days, please Sir?* Furthermore, external modification was accounted for 5% of the responses by the students. For example, *I am sorry to communicate this to you, but could I kindly submit my assignment after three days?* It is noteworthy highlighting that this given situation got responses from all the request strategy types. This presents an interesting scenario in the discussions.

**Table 5**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	24	40
Indirect(hearer- Oriented	Willingness	Can you.....?		
	Permission	Would you.....?		
	Permission	May I .....?	16	26.6
	Suggestory	How about		
	Formulae			
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....	6	10
Indirect(speaker- Based	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
	Obligation	You must/You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....	7	11,66
	Imperatives	Lend me your car		
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....		
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?	4	6.66
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		<i>Are you busy right now?</i>		
Modification		<i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i>	3	5
		Could you pass me the		
		bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		

**Situation 3** (See Appendix)

*You have received a very low mark in an assignment marked by your lecturer. What do you say to your lecturer to convince (request) him/her to remark or have a second look at your assignment?*



**Table 6**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	14	23.33
Indirect (hearer- Oriented	Willingness	Can you.....?	18	30
	Permission	Would you.....?		
	Suggestory	May I .....?		
	Formulae	How about		
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....	6	10
Indirect(speaker- Based	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
	Obligation	You must/You have to	4	6.66
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....	5	8.33
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	7	11.66
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal Modification		I wonder if you.... Could you... <i>please</i> ? I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....	4	6.66
External Modification		<i>Are you busy right now?</i> <i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i> Could you pass me the bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>	2	3.33

The situation presented fascinating request linguistic realisations as responses. This could have been necessitated by the nature of the given situation. It is a practical situation which is experienced by the students in their daily encounter with the lecturers. It is a situation which

invokes emotions and thereby probably triggering diverse types of request strategies. The frequently employed strategies were noted under the broad concept of conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented). The use of the modal verb *could* was evident and it accounted for 23.33% of the responses. For example, *Could you please mark my assignment again? I feel I got a better mark.* Moreover, the students utilized the modal verb *can you...* to formulate their responses. The responses with this kind of modal verb accounted for 30%. For example, *can you kindly mark my assignment again? My mark is too low.* Moving on, 10% of the responses were realised under the wishes strategy which falls to the broad concept of conventionally indirect (speaker-based) type. For example, *I would like you to re-mark my assignment Sir. I feel I got a better mark.* Under the same broad concept, the obligation strategy was realised (6, 66%). Students formulated their strategies using the expression, *you have to..... (You have to take another look at my assignment Sir, I feel I deserve more).* Moreover, under the direct strategy type, the responses accounted 19.99% (Performatives, 8.33% and Imperatives 11.66%). For example, performatives such as, *I ask you to re-mark my assignment* were evident in the responses. Under the concept of imperatives, the following was realised, *mark my assignment again Sir, my mark is too low.* Internal modification strategies (lexical downgraders) were realised in 6, 66% of the responses. For example, *could you mark again my assignment, please? I feel I can get a better mark.* Only 3.33% of the responses portrayed external modification request linguistic formulae (Disarmers). For example, *I am sorry to say this, but can you re-mark my assignment Sir. I feel you missed something.*

#### **Situation 4** (See Appendix)

*You have attended a class on a concept which is difficult to understand. What do you say to the lecturer to convince (request) him/her to repeat the lecture?*

The situation presented extra request linguistic formulae which was not realised in the previous three situations. The students utilized the ability requests strategy as evidenced by the use of the modal verb *could*. The ability request strategy accounted for 16.66% of all the responses. For example, *could you kindly repeat the lecture Prof? The concept is difficult.* 41, 66% of the ability requests strategy had the modal verb *can you* at the beginning. The situation realised a strategy

which had not been used before in the responses, the suggestory formulae request strategy. Only 2 of such responses were identified in the analysis. For example, *How about if* you could repeat the lecture Prof? The lesson was difficult. The conventionally indirect type of request strategies were realised by the utilization of obligation strategy. The obligation strategy was identified by the use of expression like *you must* and *you have to*. The two accounted 16,6% altogether (You must, 10% and you have to, 6.66%). For example, you have to repeat the lecture Sir. I did not understand well. The direct imperative requests strategy was realised too in the analysis. This accounted for 11.66%. For example, *Repeat* the lecture Sir, the work is difficult. Internal modification was realised through the use of please (phrasal downgrader). For example, could you repeat the lecture Sir, *please*? The responses that utilized the lexical downgrader accounted for 5%. Moreover, the external modification responses (5%) were realised through the use of *I am sorry* at the beginning. See table below for the analysis.

**Table 7**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	10	16.66
Indirect(hearer- Oriented		Can you.....?	25	41,66
	Willingness	Would you.....?		
	Permission	May I .....?		
	Suggestory	How about	2	3.33
	Formulae			
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....		
Indirect(speaker- Based	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
	Obligation	You must	6	10
		You have to	4	6.66

Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....		
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	7	11.66
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....		
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?	3	5
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		<i>Are you busy right now?</i>		
Modification		<i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i>	3	5
		Could you pass me the		
		bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		

#### Situation 5 (See Appendix)

*Lecturer: "Anyone who does not submit their work tomorrow will fail the module!" You are struggling to cope with the pressure in your studies? How do you ask (request) the lecturer for an extension of days to complete your work?*

**Table 8**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	9	15
Indirect(hearer- Oriented		Can you.....?	12	20
	Willingness	Would you.....?		
	Permission	May I .....?	4	6,66
		I kindly	30	50
	Suggestory	How about		
	Formulae			

Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....		
Indirect(speaker-	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
Based	Obligation	You must/You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....		
	Imperatives	Lend me your car		
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....	2	3,33
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?		
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		<i>Are you busy right now?</i>		
Modification		<i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i>	3	5
		Could you pass me the		
		bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		

The situation marked the prevalence of new requests linguistic formulae in formulating strategies. The use of the modal verb *could* and *can* reduced a little bit under the ability request strategy. The responses utilizing the modal verb *could you* accounted for 15%. For example, could you extend the submission date Prof? Furthermore, the use of the modal verb *can you* recorded 20%. For example, *can you* add some more days to the deadline Sir? The permission request strategy recorded the highest responses accounting for 50%. For example, *I kindly* request for an extension of dates to submit my work. The use of the expression *may I* was observed in the request strategies and accounted for 6, 66%. The strategy falls under the permission technique. For example, *May I* kindly request for an extension as I am not done with my work. External modification was realised by the utilization of the expression *excuse me* at the beginning of a request. For example, Excuse me Prof, could you kindly extend the submission date? The technique falls under preparators. The strategy accounted for 5% of the responses. A new request modification item under syntactic downgraders was realised. The use of if you could at the

beginning of an expression, indicated some mitigation effect. For example, *if you could* extent the submission dates Sir, I would be grateful to complete my work. The strategy accounted for 3, 33% of the total responses

#### **Situation 6** (See Appendix)

*Lecturer: During this covid19 period, the face to face contact between students and lecturers should be minimized as much as possible. It can only happen on special conditions. Remote communication should be utilized for all the concerns that students might have. You are struggling to develop the assigned project. You feel you require one on one contact with your supervisor. How do you request for that opportunity?*

The situation presented a variety of request linguistic realisations. Most of the responses by the students fell under the bracket of conventionally indirect strategies (hearer-oriented). The responses were realised by the expression of asking for permission. For example, the project is difficult for me; *may I* visit your office for help? The permission strategy accounted for 28.33% of the total responses. The suggestory formulae under the same broad concept of conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented) type totalled 23, 33%. For example, I am finding the project hard, *how about if I* arrange for an appointment to see you? The mitigation effects were noted in some of the responses under the suggestory formulae strategy. The wishes strategy under the conventionally indirect (speaker-oriented) type accounted for 18, 33%. For example, *I would like to* come and visit you because I am finding the project difficult. The direct requests strategy accounted for 25% of the responses. For example, *I want to* come to your office to discuss the project, I find it hard. The internal modification to request was realised in three responses which accounted for 5% of the total responses received. The internal modification was realised in the form of syntactic downgraders. For example, *I wonder if* I could come to your office Sir, I am finding the project hard. It is noteworthy to mention that no request linguistic formulae aligned to external modification on this situation. Moreover, the use of modal verb *could* and *can* was not visible in the responses. Additionally, some of the strategies used in the previous situations did not appear at all on this situation. See the table below for the presentation of the data for this situation

**Table 9**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?		
Indirect(hearer-		Can you.....?		
Oriented	Willingness	Would you.....?		
	Permission	May I .....?	17	28.33
	Suggestory	How about	14	23.33
	Formulae			
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....	11	18,33
Indirect(speaker-	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
Based	Obligation	You must/ You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....		
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	15	25
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....	3	5
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?		
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		<i>Are you busy right now?</i>		
Modification		<i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i>		
		Could you pass me the		
		bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		

**Situation 7** (See Appendix)

*Your lecturer shared very useful information through a slide presentation in a crucial and difficult concept. You feel you might need further reading and analysis of the slides. How do you request for the lecturers personal saved presentation?*

**Table 10**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	10	16,66
Indirect(hearer-Oriented		Can you.....?	18	30
	Willingness	Would you.....?		
	Permission	May I .....?	8	13,33
	Suggestory	How about		
	Formulae			
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....	7	11,66
Indirect(speaker-Based	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
	Obligation	You must/You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....		
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	10	16,66
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....		
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?	4	6.66
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		<i>Are you busy right now?</i>		
Modification		<i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i>	3	5
		Could you pass me the bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		



The situation presented varying request linguistic formulae. This is a common scenario to the students considering that virtual learning has been implemented at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. Most of the responses were linked to the use of the modal verb *can*. For example, can you share your notes Prof, the slides are very useful. This strategy accounted for 30% of the all the responses. Moreover, still under the conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented) type, the use of the modal verb *could* was realised in the responses. For example, *could you* share your slides Sir, they are very good. The strategy recorded 16, 66% of the responses. The permission strategy was realised by the utilization of the expression *may I*. For example, may I have your slides Prof for further reading? The strategy accounted for 13, 33% of the responses. The students expressed their requests in the form of wish strategy too. For example, *I would like to* ask for your slides Prof. This strategy recorded 11, 66% after the analysis. Interestingly, the students utilised direct imperatives too in their requests to the lecturer. For example, *share* your slides Sir, they are good. The direct strategies recorded 16, 66% of all the responses. The use of the internal modification was realised too at a very low scale as in the previous situations. The internal modifications were realised in the form of lexical downgraders. For example, Can you share your slides Prof, *please*? The strategy was realised in four responses and accounted for 6, 66% of the responses. Moreover, external modifications were realised in three responses only accounting for 5% of the responses by the students.

#### **Situation 8** (See Appendix)

*You are attending a face to face lecture. Unfortunately, you receive a text message inviting your presence somewhere immediately. How do you request the lecturer to be excused out of the lecture for the day?*

The situation presented fascinating data. It is probably because it is the current experience of the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. They are engaging their lecturers via remote learning. Most of the responses utilised the expression *may I* at the beginning, signalling the utilization of the permission strategy. The permission strategy falls under the conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented) type. The permission strategy accounted for 25% of the total responses. Adding on, under the permission strategy, the students utilized the modal verb

*can* in formulating their requests. For example, *can I leave the lecture Sir? I have an emergency.* Some mitigation was evident in the strategy. The use of the modal verb *can* to request for permission accounted for 21.66% of the responses. Interestingly, the students utilized an expression which was not so common in the formulation of requests in the other situations. The request linguistic formulae applying the expression *excuse me* was realised in eleven responses. The use of this expression falls under external modification (preparators). For example, *excuse me Sir, can I leave the meeting? I have an emergency.* The use of the strategy accounted for 18.33%. Moreover, under preparators, the students also utilized another expression; *please excuse me* to formulate their requests. For example, *please excuse me; can I leave the meeting to attend to an urgent matter?* The strategy was realised in three requests which accounted for 5% of the responses. The students also formulated their requests utilizing the direct strategy. For example, *I have received an emergency, I am leaving the lecture Prof. Prof, I am going to attend an important meeting, I will join the lecture tomorrow. Prof, I have an emergency at home, I have to leave the lecture immediately.* The direct strategy was realised in eighteen of the responses and accounted for 30%. See the table below for the analysis.

**Table 11**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?		
Indirect(hearer-		Can you.....?		
Oriented	Willingness	Would you.....?		
	Permission	May I .....?	15	25
		Can I .....?	13	21,66
	Suggestory	How about		
	Formulae			

Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....		
Indirect(speaker-	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
Based	Obligation	You must/You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....		
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	18	30
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....		
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?		
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		Excuse me Sir	11	18,33
Modification		Please excuse me .....	3	5
		Could you pass me the bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		

### Situation 9 (See Appendix)

*You are in a remote teaching lesson with the Professor. You assume that the voice of the Professor is very low. You wish to request him or her to raise their voice. What do you say?*

**Table 12**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	2	3.33
Indirect(hearer-		Can you.....?		
Oriented	Willingness	May you.....?	3	5
	Permission	May I .....?		
	Suggestory	How about	7	11,66

Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....		
Indirect(speaker-	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
Based	Obligation	You must/You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....		
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	39	65
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....		
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?		
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		<i>Are you busy right now?</i>		
Modification		Excuse me	9	15
		Could you pass me the		
		bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>		

The analysis of data presented a fascinating scenario. The underlying idea is that the students experience the problem while they engage with the lecturers via online lessons. The challenge could emanate from network challenges of the Microsoft system itself. When it becomes a challenge to hear the lecturer's voice, students become frustrated and use all sorts of requests to the lecturer to look into the issue. The use of the modal verb *could* was realised in 3, 33% of the total responses by the students. For example, *could* Dr please raise his voice? I cannot hear you. The students also utilized the suggestory strategy applying the expression *may you....* to formulate their requests. For example, *may you* raise your voice Prof? The strategy was realised in 5% of the responses. Moreover, the students mostly applied the direct strategy in formulating their requests. For example, *raise your voice Prof, we cannot hear you. Prof, I can hardly hear you, raise your voice.* The strategy accounted for 65% of the responses. Moving on, the students applied the preparatory expression, *excuse me* in formulating requests. This was evidenced in 15% of the total responses. For example, *excuse me Sir; raise your voice I cannot hear.* Lexical downgraders were realised through the use of *please* in requests. This strategy aligns to internal modification.

It accounted for 11, 66% of the responses. For example, *Raise your voice Prof, I cannot hear you, please.*

#### **Situation 10** (See Appendix)

*You are in a virtual lecture and the supervisor is presenting the material so fast that you feel you are being left behind in the whole process. How do you request your supervisor to change the way of presentation?*

The analysis of data presented widespread requests linguistic formulae. The students utilized varying strategies to formulate their answers. The use of the modal verb *can* you was realised in nine responses (15%) of the total answers. For example, *Can you please slow down?* The modal verb *can* falls under the ability strategy. Moreover, the utilization of the modal verb *could* you was realised in ten responses accounting for 16, 66% of the total responses. For example, *could you reduce your speed, I cannot cope.* The modal verb *could* belong to the same strategy of ability under the broad type of conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented). The students applied the expression *may you* to formulate requests to the supervisor. The use of *May you* in this scenario aligned to the suggestory formulae. For example, *May you kindly reduce your speed if possible for us to cope.* This strategy accounted for 11, 66% of the responses. In the same vein, the students utilized another unfamiliar expression in the form of *do you mind....* to formulate requests to the supervisor. The strategy aligned to the suggestory technique as evidenced in the example, *do you mind slowing down as it will enable us to take down the notes?* The strategy recorded 5% of the total responses by the students. This technique to formulate requests surfaced on this situation only. Most of the responses on this situation were realised under the direct imperatives. The strategy recorded 31, 66% of the responses by the students. For example, *repeat the slide Sir, you are too fast. Change your speed Sir to accommodate all of us. You are too fast for me Prof.* Moving on External modification was realized through the utilization of preparators. The students used the expressions *please* and *excuse me* at the beginning of the specific requests. The use of *please* accounted for 6, 66% and *excuse me*, 13,33%. For example, *excuse me Sir, kindly reduce the speed. Please reduce the speed, you are too fast.* See the table below indicating the distribution of the data collected on the situation.

**Table 13**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	10	16,66
Indirect(hearer- Oriented		Can you.....?	9	15
	Willingness	Would you.....?		
	Permission	May I .....?		
	Suggestory	May you.....?	7	11,66
	Formulae	Do you mind.....?	3	5
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....		
Indirect(speaker- Based	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
	Obligation	You must/You have to		
Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....		
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	19	31,66
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal Modification		I wonder if you....  Could you... <i>please</i> ?  I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External Modification		Excuse me  Please  Could you pass me the  bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>	8  4	13,33  6,66

## 4.3 Formulation and realisation of refusals

### 4.3.1 Procedure

The study analysed refusals formulated by the students qualitatively and quantitatively by means of descriptive statistics. 693 refusals were expected from the study sample of 63 students that were selected applying the systematic random selection sampling technique. After an in-depth scrutiny of the Discourse Completion Test, 3 of the completed tests could not be used for purposes of analysis as they were messed up. This presented the study with 660 responses from the study sample for analysis. The analysis of the findings were presented in the form of tables indicating the type of refusal, hints on the strategy, the number of strategies realised on each refusal type and the percentage of that number looking at the total number of responses on each given situation. In a nutshell, the findings are presented systematically and logically looking at each situation that was presented to the study sample.

#### **Situation 1** (See Appendix)

*You have been given a lot of assignments by different lecturers in your department. On the due date, your professor approaches you with some extra work to compile a list of students in your course and some relevant information. How do you refuse the duty to your professor?*

The analysis of the data on the situation presented interesting findings. Direct refusal strategies accounted for 36, 66% of the responses by the students. No bluntness was realised in the refusals but the utilization of the negation of proposition. For example, *I cannot do it Prof because of time*. Plain indirect refusal strategies were realized in 20% of the responses by the students. For example, *it seems I won't be able to do it Sir. It looks like my time will not permit Prof; I won't be able to do it*. The reason refusal strategy was realised and accounted for 18, 33% of the total responses by the students. For example, *I cannot do it Prof as I have a lot of assignments to complete today. I don't think I will be able to it; I am packed with a lot of work*. The students also utilised the disagreement refusal strategy on this situation. The strategy recorded 10% of the responses. For example, *under the current pressure that I have, I cannot do the assignment. Can I do it tomorrow? I do not think it is the right time for me to get an extra assignment; I have a lot*

of work of to do. Adjuncts to refusal strategies were identified in 6,66 of the responses. For example, *I would have loved to assist Sir, but my time is not enough. I could have completed the task, but I have so much work.* The expressions utilized by the students portray some willingness. The hedging refusal strategy was realised in 8, 33% of the strategies. For example, *I will see if I can do the assignment because my time is limited. I will see Prof if I can do it by time is not enough. I will see but I think you can look for another person because my time is not enough.* The table below presented the findings of the situation number one.

**Table 14**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse		
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	22	36,66
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go	12	20
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	11	18,33
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't		
3 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!	6	10
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		
7 Avoidance			
• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	Well, I'll see if I can		
• Verbal:			
✓ Hedging		5	8,33
✓ Change topic			
✓ Joking			
✓ Sarcasm			



ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....		
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....	4	6,66
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

## Situation 2 (See Appendix)

**Table 15**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	19	31,66
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	14	23,33
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	18	30
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't		
4 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs	9	15

7 Avoidance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)    Well, I'll see if I can</li> <li>• Verbal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hedging</li> <li>✓ Change topic</li> <li>✓ Joking</li> <li>✓ Sarcasm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>	
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....

*A junior first year student comes to you for some assistance with some assignments. The junior students requests for the assignments which you did at their level so as to copy some of your ideas. What do you say to the junior student as a refusal to the request?*

The findings from the situation are fascinating as this is a common situation among students at University level. The blunt refusal strategy was realised in 31, 66% of the responses. Bluntness falls under the direct strategy of refusing. For example; *No, I cannot share with you my assignments. I do not want to give you my work. I refuse to do that, try someone else.* The students also resorted to utilizing the negation of proposition. This accounted for 23, 33% of the responses. Negation of proposition falls under the direct strategies too. For example, *I cannot give you my work. I can't assist you.* A slight difference between bluntness and reason refusal strategy was noted. The reason strategy accounted for 30% of the total refusal responses. For example, *I can't assist you, it is plagiarism. I can't help you in that way; show me your effort first. I can only help you by correcting your own work.* Interestingly, the students utilized the statement of principle in formulating their refusals. This accounted for 15% of the refusals. For example; *it is not allowed to do that, it can get you disqualified. I cannot help you, plagiarism is not allowed. Cheating is not wanted here; I cannot give you my work.*

### Situation 3 (See Appendix)

*You have been given a power point presentation assignment by your lecturer which is due in nine days. On the fifth day, your lecturer calls you over the phone and says, " Could you please submit your power point presentation tomorrow at 8 o'clock in the morning?" Take note, this is three days before the due date. How do you refuse the request?*

The findings on this situation accentuated a slight difference in percentages between direct and indirect refusal strategies produced and formulated by the students. The direct blunt refusal strategies accounted for 26, 66% of the responses. For example; *No, I can't submit my work tomorrow. No, there are more three days to go. I can't submit tomorrow.* The negation of proposition refusal strategy accounted for 20% of the responses by the students. For example; *I can't submit tomorrow my work, I need more time. I don't think I can submit the PowerPoint presentation tomorrow as I need time to finish my work.* The students also utilized the reason or explanation refusal strategy. The strategy accounted for 14% of the responses. For example; *I cannot submit tomorrow as I still have three more days to complete my work. I do not see myself submitting the PowerPoint presentation tomorrow as the due date is still far.* Interestingly, the students utilized the regret or apology refusal strategy on this situation. The strategy accounted for 16, 66% of the responses. For example; *I am sorry Sir, I cannot submit tomorrow. I am sorry to say this but I will submit on the due day.* A disagreement refusal strategy was noted too. The strategy accounted for 13, 33% of the responses by the students. For example; *it is three days before the due date, I cannot submit my PowerPoint presentation tomorrow. You could have changed the submission date Prof; I cannot submit my PowerPoint presentation tomorrow. I need some time.* The table below presented the data collected on the situation.

**Table 16**

REFUSALS	N	%
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<b>Direct strategies</b>		<b>HINTS</b>	
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	16	26,66
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	12	20
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	14	23,33
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	10	16,66
5 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should  not be asking for a rise right now!	8	13,33
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		
7 Avoidance			
• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	Well, I'll see if I can		
• Verbal:			
✓ Hedging			
✓ Change topic			
✓ Joking			
✓ Sarcasm			
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....		
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....		
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

#### Situation 4 (See Appendix)

*Your best friend approaches you to write an assignment for them for a payment. They say, "I am so loaded with work, can you write this assignment for a few dollars?" How do you refuse the offer?*

**Table 17**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>			
	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	13	21,66
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	19	31,66
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	15	25
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	8	13,33
6 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs	5	8,33
7 Avoidance			
• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	Well, I'll see if I can		
• Verbal:			
✓ Hedging			
✓ Change topic			
✓ Joking			
✓ Sarcasm			

ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS	
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....

The situation presented interesting findings as it related to the common practice among students at university level. The direct blunt refusal strategy accounted for 21, 66% of the total responses by the students. For example; *No, I cannot do such a thing! I totally refuse to do that. No, I do not want to do that.* The negation of proposition under direct strategies accounted for 31, 66% of the responses by the students. For example; *I cannot do it. I do not do that to students.* Moreover, the students utilized the reason or explanation refusal strategy in their responses. For example; *I cannot do that as it breaks the rules of the university. I cannot do that as it is cheating. I cannot do that, but I can help you with ideas.* The strategy recorded 25% of the responses. The statement of regret was also evident in the responses by the students. The regret refusal strategy recorded 13, 33% of the total responses. For example; *I am sorry, I cannot do such a thing. I am sorry, try someone else.* The principle refusal strategy was evidenced in five responses and accounted for 8, 33% of the responses. For example; *I cannot do that, it is cheating. I do not do such things; I should help you with ideas.*

#### **Situation 5** (See Appendix)

*You have been selected to speak to all the students regarding discipline at the university. You feel it is too big a task. Your professor says, "You need to prepare your speech for tomorrow's presentation at 10 o'clock". How do you refuse the request?*

The findings on this situation presented a diverse range of refusal strategies. Firstly, blunt refusal strategy accounted for 25% of the total responses. Blunt refusal strategies fall under the direct strategies bracket. For example; *No Prof, I am not able to carry out the assignment. No, I cannot do the presentation Dr. No, find someone to do it Prof.* Moreover, under the direct strategy, the students utilized the negation of proposition strategy. The negation of proposition strategy

accounted for 23, 33% of the responses. For example; *I can't do the presentation Sir. I don't I will be able to present Prof.* The reason or explanation refusal strategy accounted for most of the responses by the students. The strategy accounted for 33, 33%. For example; *I cannot do it Sir, find someone who is confident. i cannot present tomorrow as I am not feeling well.* Interestingly, the students utilized the alternative refusal strategy. It has not been used in the previous situations. The alternative refusal strategy accounted for 8, 33% of the total responses. For example; *I will be able to present if you shift the date to next week. I would present if was one week from now to collect information.* The alternative refusal strategy employed by the students aligns to the change option technique. Moving on, the students also utilized adjuncts to refusals strategy by indicating some willingness in their linguistic formulations. The willingness refusal strategy accounted for 10% of the total responses by the students. For example; *I would like to present tomorrow Prof, but I lack some information. I would love so much to present, but will prefer after one week from now. I really want to present if the date can be shifted to next week.*

The table below presented the data collected on the situation

**Table 18**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	15	25
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	14	23,33
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	20	33,33
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't		
7 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant	5	8,33
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		

5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		
7 Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc) Well, I'll see if I can</li> <li>Verbal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hedging</li> <li>✓ Change topic</li> <li>✓ Joking</li> <li>✓ Sarcasm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....		
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....	6	10
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

### Situation 6 (See Appendix)

*You have been undertaking a research proposal for three months. It is some hours before you submit the proposal for final evaluation. Your professor says, "I have gone through your proposal in depth, some novelty is lacking in the literature review section. Could you look into that?" How do you refuse the suggestion to your professor?*

**Table 19**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	7	11,66
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	24	40
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go	8	13,33



2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	12	20
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't		
8 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		
7 Avoidance			
• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	Well, I'll see if I can	3	5
• Verbal:			
✓ Hedging			
✓ Change topic			
✓ Joking			
✓ Sarcasm			
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....		
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....		
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....	6	10
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

The findings on the situation presented some interesting data as this is a situation which can be faced by students at university level during the assistance and supervision of research study. The student's responses accentuated a percentage of 11, 66% bluntness (direct strategy). For example; *No, there is no enough time to do that Sir. I reject the proposal of looking at my work at this last hour Prof. I will just submit what I have worked on.* Interestingly, the researcher identified some kind of mitigatory measure in some blunt strategies. Most of the responses by the students were classified under the negation of proposition refusal strategy. The negation of proposition strategy accounted for 40% of the responses. Both, the blunt and negation of proposition strategies are classified under the broad concept of direct strategies. For example; *I can't re-look at my work again Prof, the time is not enough. I don't think I will revise the work again Sir because of time. I cannot do that proposal Prof; I feel I have done to submit the final draft.* Moving on, the students utilized new refusal linguistic formulae in the form of plain indirect strategy that falls

under the broad type of indirect strategies. The plain indirect strategy accounted for 13, 33% of the responses by the students. For example; *it looks as if the time will not allow me to take a re-look Prof. It looks like. I will not be able to do that Prof. It looks impossible to do that proposition Sir.* Additionally, three of the refusal responses by the students portrayed the concept and strategy of hedging. The hedging responses accounted for 5%. For example; *I will see if I will be able to do that Prof, but there is no time.* The utilization of adjuncts to refusal was noted by the use of agreement expression followed by giving some reasons. The strategy accounted for 10% of the responses. For example; *it is fine Prof, but the time is not allowing for that kind of proposition. It is ok Sir, but the time is not on my side to do that.*

#### **Situation 7** (See Appendix)

*Your friend approaches you during your free time at the campus after a long day in lectures and says, " Could you teach me the BODMAS concept which you seem to understand so much?" How to you refuse the request?*

The situation presented interesting findings. Most of the refusal strategies realised belonged to the broad type of indirect strategies. Blunt refusal strategies under the broad type of direct strategies accounted for 10%. For example; *No, I am tired at the moment. No, I can do it on another day. No, I can only teach you BODMAS over the weekend.* Direct negation of proposition accounted for 26, 66% of the responses formulated by the students. For example; *I don't think I can teach you today. I can't teach you today.* The indirect strategy of giving a reason or explanation recorded the highest percentage of responses by the students. The strategy recorded 31, 66% of the total responses. For example; *I cannot teach you today, I am feeling tired. I cannot do it today, I need some rest.* Interestingly, the students could also utilize refusal strategies of portraying regret. The regret or apology refusal strategy accounted for 30% of the responses. The use of the expression I am sorry was so widespread on the formulation of regret or apology responses. For example; *I am sorry, I cannot help you today. I am sorry, but I can only help you tomorrow. I am feeling so tired, I am sorry but I only attend to you tomorrow.* The willingness refusal strategy under the adjuncts to refusals was utilized only once, accounting for 1, 66% of the total responses produced and formulated by the students. The willingness in the response

was identified by the use of the expression *I would have. I would have helped you, but I am tired.*  
See table below.

**Table 20**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	6	10
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	16	26,66
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	19	31,66
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	18	30
9 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		
7 Avoidance			
• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	Well, I'll see if I can		
• Verbal:			
✓ Hedging			
✓ Change topic			
✓ Joking			
✓ Sarcasm			

ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....		
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....	1	1,66
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

### Situation 8 (See Appendix)

*Your professor has invited you to partake in faculty research forum to be hosted in the evening at the campus. You stay far from the campus. How would you refuse this invitation?*

**Table 21**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	3	5
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	21	35
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	14	23,33
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	19	31,66
10 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		

7 Avoidance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)    Well, I'll see if I can</li> <li>• Verbal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hedging</li> <li>✓ Change topic</li> <li>✓ Joking</li> <li>✓ Sarcasm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....	3	5
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....		
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

The situation presented widespread refusal linguistic formulae. The indirect refusal strategies had the largest percentage of the responses produced by the students. This situation recorded the least blunt strategies, three out of sixty. This accounted for 5% of the responses. For example; *No, I stay far from the university. No, I cannot come.* The direct negation of proposition had the largest percentage of the responses. It accounted for 35% of the total responses. For example; *I can't come I stay far. I don't think I will come.* The students utilized the strategy of giving reason and explanation to their refusals. Giving a reason or explanation falls under the broad concept of indirect strategies. Giving a reason or explanation accounted for 23, 33% of the responses. For example; *I can't come because I stay far from the campus. I do not think I will come since I stay far.* Interesting enough, the students also formulated and produced refusals applying the regret or apology strategy. The regret strategy (31, 66%) was realised by the use of the expression *I am sorry.* For example; *I am sorry I cannot come, I stay far. My apologies, I won't come because I stay far.* It is noteworthy pointing out that the students utilized the strategy of positive opinion under adjuncts to refusals for the first time in the production and formulation of refusals. Positive opinion strategy accounted for 5% of the total responses. For example; *the workshop is a great initiative, but I stay far. This is really a great opportunity, but I stay far. Brilliant idea, but I cannot attend Prof.* Positive opinion is realised in the opening expression of the refusal.

### Situation 9 (See Appendix)

*It is examination time at the university. Your friend organizes a birthday party and invites you to attend. He calls you and say," I have organized a massive birthday party at my house. You are hereby kindly invited to the function". How do you refuse this invitation?*

The situation presented a wide range of refusal linguistic formulae by the students. The direct blunt refusal accounted for 8, 33% of the total responses. The observance of the expression *no* was clear. For example; *No, I cannot come. No, I am busy with examinations.* The direct negation of proposition accounted for more direct refusal linguistic formulae as 30% of the responses fell under the strategy. For example; *I can't attend. I don't think I will attend.* Three of the total responses indicated plain indirect strategy. This accounted for 5% of all the responses. For example; *it seems I won't be able to attend because of examinations. It looks like I will not attend because of reading.* Moreover, the students utilized the indirect reason or explanation strategy to formulate their refusals. The reason or explanation strategy accounted for 23, 33% of the total responses. For example; *I cannot come because of studying for the examinations. I do not think I will be there due to pressure of work. I am so occupied with books; I will not attend the party.* Moving on, the students also applied the strategy of regret in refusals. Additionally, they utilized the indirect apology strategy. The regret strategy accounted for 26, 66% of all the responses by the students. For example; *I am sorry, I can't make it because of books. I can't make it, I am sorry. I am sorry to tell you this; I cannot attend your party because of the examinations.* The willingness strategy under the adjuncts to refusals was identified too. The students expressed some willingness in their refusals. This accounted for 6, 66% of the total responses on the situation. For example; *I would have liked to attend, but the examinations are on-going and I am busy preparing.* See the table below for the presentation of the results.

**Table 22**

REFUSALS		N	%
Direct strategies	HINTS		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	5	8,33

2	Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	18	30
INDIRECT STRATEGIES				
1	Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go	3	5
2	Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	14	23,33
3	Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	16	26,66
11	Alternative:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Change option</li><li>Change time (postponement)</li></ul>	I would join you if you choose another restaurant I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5	Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should  not be asking for a rise right now!		
6	Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		
7	Avoidance			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)</li><li>Verbal:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Hedging</li><li>✓ Change topic</li><li>✓ Joking</li><li>✓ Sarcasm</li></ul></li></ul>	Well, I'll see if I can		
ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS				
1	Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....		
2	Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....	4	6,66
3	Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4	Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5	Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

### Situation 10 (See Appendix)

*Your professor invites to you demonstrate a concept which you do not understand to the others in class. How do you refuse the invitation to the professor?*

**Table 23**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>			
<b>HINTS</b>			
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	9	15
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	17	28,33
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	18	30
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	12	20
12 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		
7 Avoidance			
• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	Well, I'll see if I can		
• Verbal:			
✓ Hedging			
✓ Change topic			
✓ Joking			
✓ Sarcasm			
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....		
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....	4	6,66
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

The findings on the situation presented varying and widespread refusal linguistic formulae. It was probably because of the nature of the given situation. Direct blunt refusal strategies accounted



for 15% of the total responses. The bluntness in the strategies was marked by the expression *no* at the beginning. For example; *No, I cannot demonstrate the example Sir. No, my knowledge is little. No, I feel less confident.* In the same category of direct strategies, negation of proposition was identified and accounted for 28, 33% of the total responses by the students. For example; *I can't do it Prof. I don't think I can demonstrate Sir. I can't demonstrate Sir, I do not have knowledge.* Moving on, the students utilized the reason or explanation strategy which falls under indirect strategies. The responses accounted for 30% of the total responses. For example; *I cannot do it Sir, I did not understand the lesson. I can't demonstrate to the others, please get some to do it. I can't do it Prof; I do not have the confidence.* Additionally, the responses by the students indicated the utilization of the regret or apology strategy. The use of the expression *I am sorry* was clear. The apology strategy accounted for 20% of the responses. For example; *I am sorry Prof, I cannot do it. I am sorry; the concept is difficult for me. I am sorry to say this; I am able to demonstrate to the class.* A few of the responses by the students indicated willingness strategy under the adjuncts to refusals. The willingness strategy accounted for 6, 66% of the total responses. For example; *I would have demonstrated Sir, but I am kind of confused. I would have liked to demonstrate Prof, but I do not understand the concept. I would have liked to demonstrate if I had understood the concept Sir.*

#### **Situation 11** (See Appendix)

*Your lecturer has suggested that you take some evening classes to enhance your spoken English and confidence. How would you refuse such a suggestion?*

The situation presented diverse refusal linguistic formulae across the board. The direct blunt strategy accounted for 11, 66% of the responses. The students did utilize the use of the expression *no*, but their answers were rated as blunt. For example; *I reject the proposal as I think I am good in English. I will not take up the class.* Negation of proposition under direct strategies was evident in the responses of the students. This accounted for 26, 66%. For example, *I can't take up the class as I stay far. I don't think I will take up the class for English. I can't take your proposal for English class.* Moreover, the students utilized the strategy of giving a reason or apology to their refusal. This aligns to the indirect strategy of refusing a request or offer. 38, 33%

of the responses fell under the strategy of reason or apology. For example, *I cannot take up the English class as I stay far from the university. I do not think I will take English class because of my schedule. I can't take the idea because I do not have enough money.* The regret strategy was noted in 18, 33% of the responses of the students. Some kind of apology linguistic was evident. For example; *I am sorry Sir, I cannot attend the English class due to distance from the university. My apologies Prof, I cannot cope with that due to pressure of work. I am sorry to say this, but I can't attend the English class.* The strategy of positive opinion was identified in two responses which constituted 3, 33% of the total responses. For example; *it is a good suggestion Sir, but I can't attend. The idea is good Prof; it is only that I stay far from the university.* One of the responses accentuated the willingness strategy. This accounted for 1, 66%. For example, *I could have attended Prof, but I stay far.*

**Table 24**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	7	11,66
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	16	26,66
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go		
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	23	38,33
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	11	18,33
13 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant		
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		
5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!		
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs		

7 Avoidance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)    Well, I'll see if I can</li> <li>• Verbal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hedging</li> <li>✓ Change topic</li> <li>✓ Joking</li> <li>✓ Sarcasm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....	2	3,33
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....	1	1,66
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....		
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		

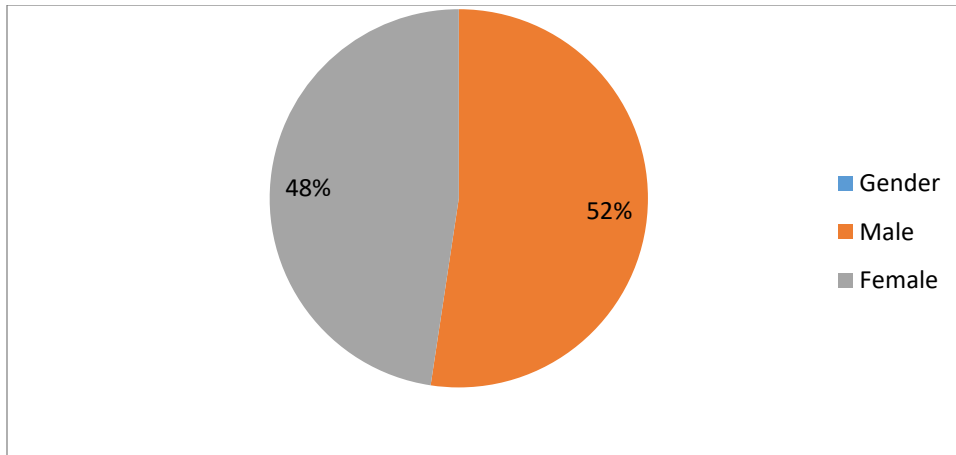
#### 4.4 Adverse factors for interlanguage pragmatics competence

The findings covering the objective were analysed and deduced from the questionnaire that had twenty one items to complete for the participants. All the sixty-three participants selected through the Systematic Random Sampling technique successfully completed the questionnaire. This could have been motivated by the simpler process of selecting the desired answer from the given options. This marks the advantage of using the tool. It enhances maximum participation and interest in the participants (Young, 2016). The findings of the questionnaire are so crucial to the understanding of adverse factors to interlanguage pragmatics competence. In this regard, individual items will be analysed closely checking the statistical representation of the responses by the study participants.

##### 4.4.1 Gender representation

The first item looked at the gender of the participants. The study sample comprised of both male and female.

#### *Figure 1*

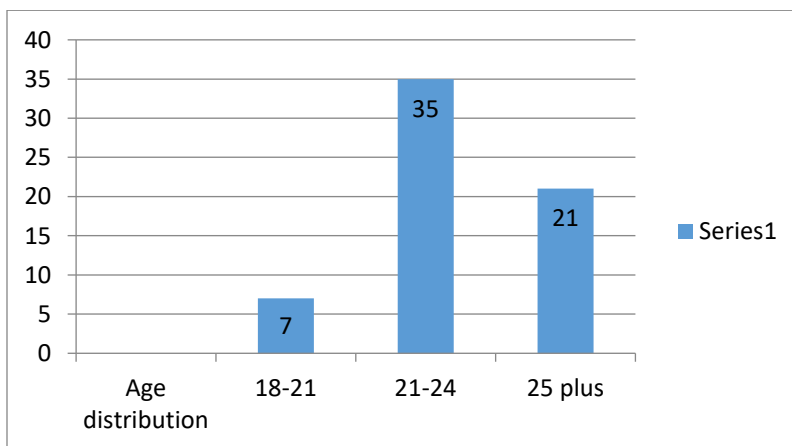


As evidenced by the statistical distribution, 52% of the respondents were men and 48% women.

#### 4.4.2 Age distribution of the participants

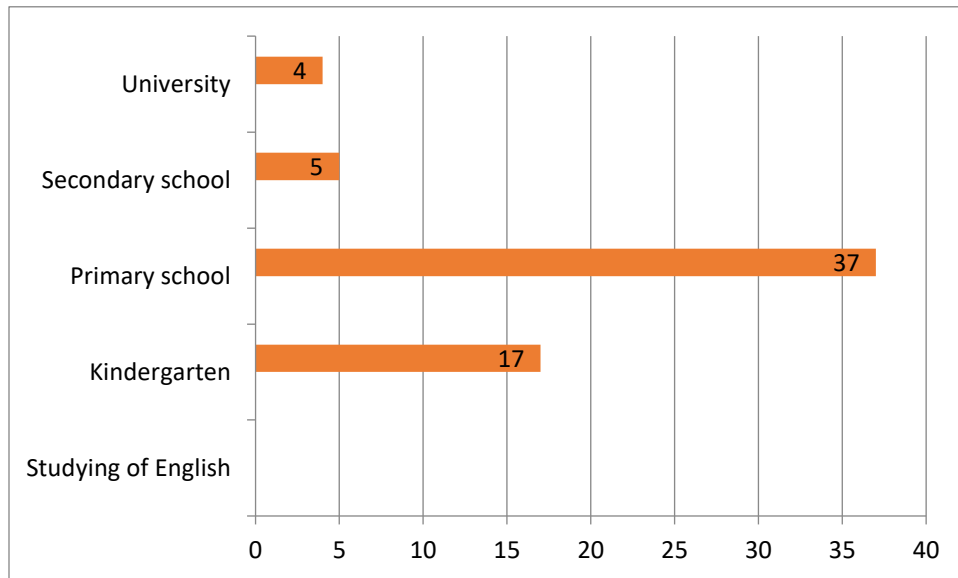
The column chart below indicates that the majority of the participants (35 out of 63) in the study fell under the bracket of 21-24 years. This accounted for 55, 55% of the total sample. The range of 25 years (21 out of 63) plus accounted for 33, 33% of the total participants. The least percentage of 11, 11% was recorded in the age range of 18-21 years (7 out of 63). The age distribution and statistical representation indicates the diverse nature of data which was collected through the use the questionnaire. The age range distribution indicates that the majority of the participants experienced an expected progression from secondary school to the tertiary institution (university level).

**Graph 1**



#### 4.4.3 The studying of the English language

**Graph 2**

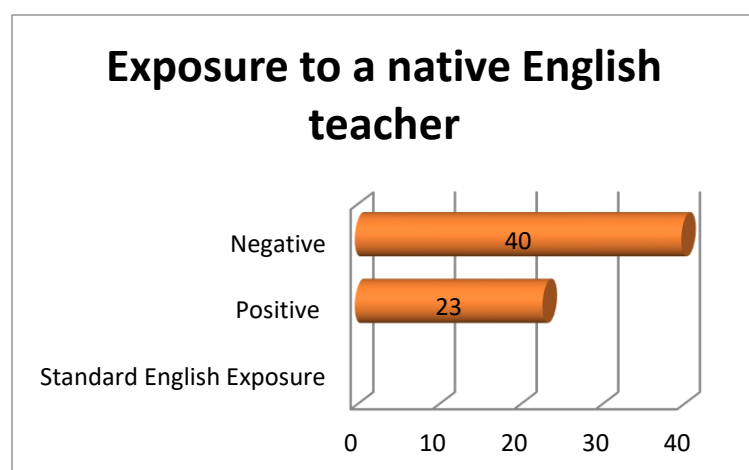


The questionnaire findings revealed that most of the participants started studying the English language at primary school level. The participants in this category (37) accounted for 58,73%. Moving on, 26,98% of the participants (17) indicated that they started studying the English language at the kindergarten level. Interestingly, 7.93% of the participants (5) indicated that they began the studying of the English language at the secondary school level. In the same vein, 6,35% of the study participants (4) indicated that they started studying the English language at the university level. This was an interesting scenario in the quest to get to the bottom of interlanguage pragmatics concerns at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

#### 4.4.4 Contact with native speakers of the English language

The questionnaire sought to dig for data relating to any contacts between the students and the native speakers of the English language in pedagogical processes. 63,49% of the participants (40) indicated that they had never experienced any contact with the native speaker of the English language in teaching and learning situation. On the contrary, 36,51% of the respondents (23) indicated that they had an opportunity to be taught the English language by a native speaker of the English language. The pie chart below presented the findings in this regard.

**Graph 3**



Moving on, the next item on the questionnaire sought to verify the stages at which the participants that experienced an encounter with a native English teacher took place. Twenty-three participants had indicated that they were taught English by a native speaker of the English language at a certain point and level in education. 8, 69% of the participants (2 participants) indicated that they encountered this at kindergarten level. 69, 57% (16 participants) indicated that they had teaching and learning contacts with a native speaker of the language at primary school level. 21, 74% (5 participants) indicated that they were taught the English language by a native speaker of the English language at university level.

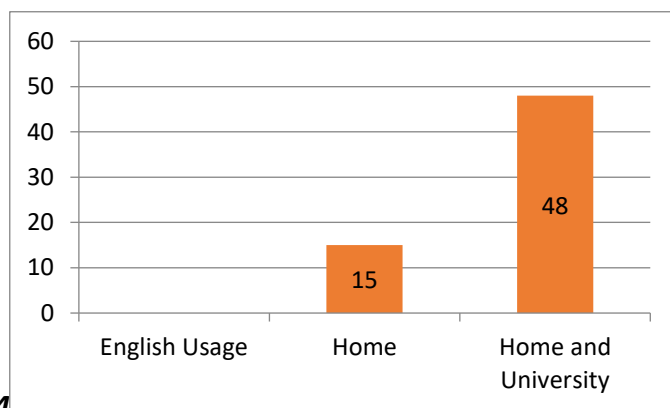
#### **4.4.5 Length of residence in a native English speaking country**

Interestingly, 63, 49% (40 participants) indicated that they never had an opportunity to stay in a country where English is the native. Only 36, 51% of the total participants had the opportunity to stay in a country where English is the native language. Furthermore, the questionnaire indicated that only 43% (10 participants) of those who had an opportunity to stay in a country where English is the native language lasted for a year or so. The rest 57% (13 participants) lasted for less than a year. They were there for days, weeks and for some months. The questionnaire further revealed that only about seven (26%) of those who had the opportunity to stay in a country where the English language is a native language were involved in some kind of studying. 13%

(about 3 participants) were in that country due to work commitments. The rest were on vacation and visiting purposes.

#### 4.4.6 English language usage

The data from the questionnaire indicated that 76% of the participants use the English language at home and at university. This translates to almost 48 of the participants. On the contrary, 24% of the participants highlighted that they use the English language at the university only. This was an indication that 15 of the participants utilize the use of the English language within the borders of the university.



**Graph 4**

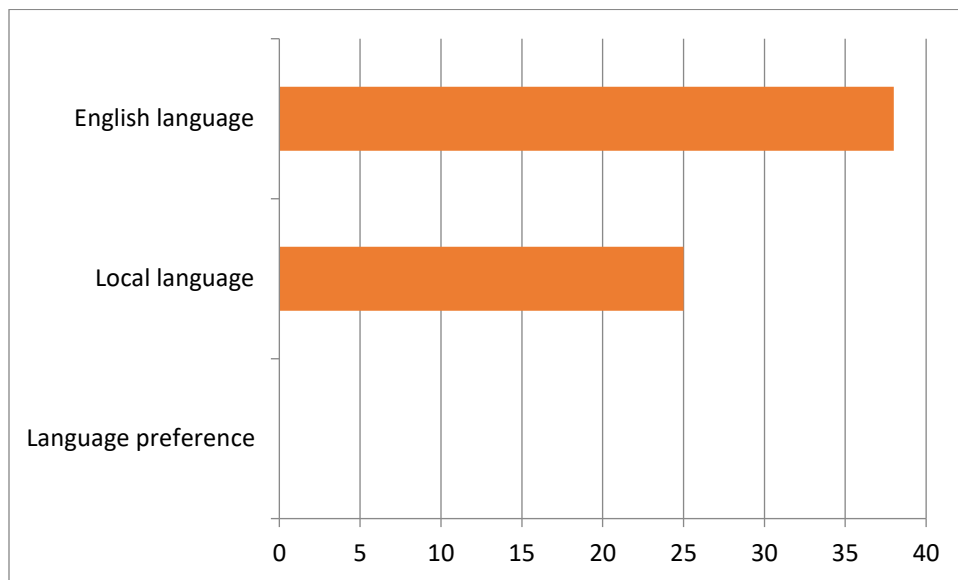
#### 4.4.7 Socialization and language

The questionnaire presented the participants with a scenario on which they had to select the language which they use when they engage with their colleagues outside the teaching and learning environment at the university. Interesting enough, the statistics recorded on the previous question of using the English language at home and university resurfaced again. 74% (48 participants) of the participants indicated that they utilize the English language when they engage with friends. 26% (15 participants) of the total responses indicated that they use the local language when they socialize with their friends.

#### 4.4.8 Language preference to understand explanations and conversations better

The questionnaire presented the participants with a scenario on which they had to select the language which they prefer to understand explanations and conversations better. The statistics presented by the option indicated a paradigm shift regarding the understanding of discussions and crucial concepts in the participants. 60% of the participants indicated that they prefer English to the local language in terms of understanding explanations and discussions in a better manner. The percentage represented almost 38 of the participants. 40% of the participants indicated that they would prefer the local native language to understand discussions and explanations in an improved way. The percentage represented almost 25 participants. The bar chart below presents the statistics relating to the concept of language preference in discussions and explanations.

**Graph 5**

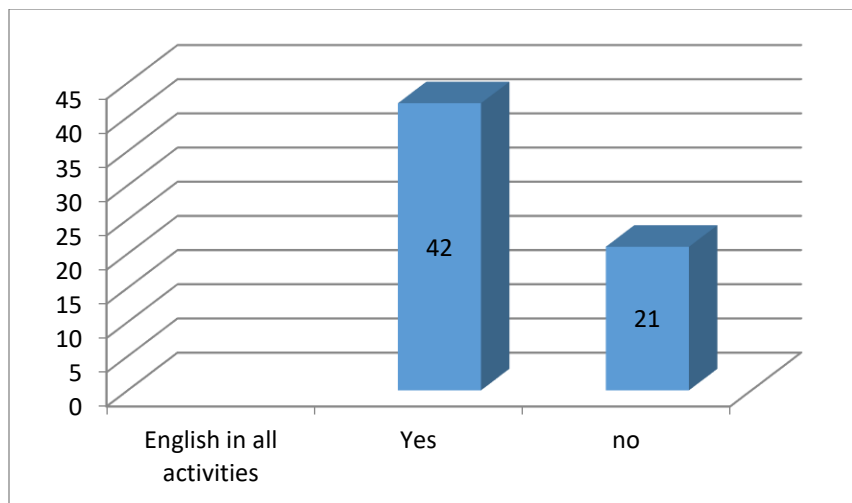


#### **4.4.9 English usage in all facets of life**

The participants were presented with a scenario where they were supposed to indicate whether they are comfortable to use the English language in all their daily activities. See the chart below for results.

**Graph 6**



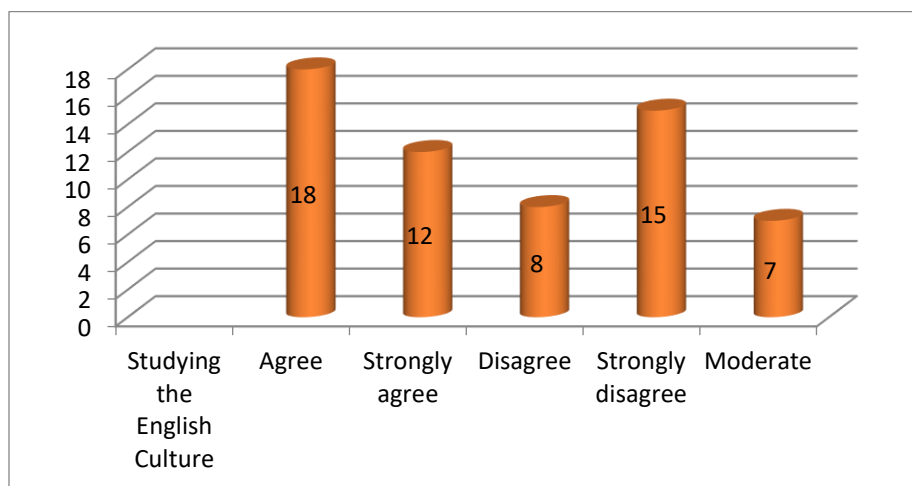


66, 67% of the participants indicated that they are comfortable using the English language in all their daily activities. This represented 42 of the participants. 33, 33% of the participants highlighted that they are not comfortable using the English language in their daily activities.

#### 4.4.10 Cultural perspective

The participants were presented with a fascinating and sensitive scenario in the questionnaire. They were required to indicate whether they would mind studying the culture of the English language. The options were given to them on a Likert scale. See the chart below for results

**Graph 7**

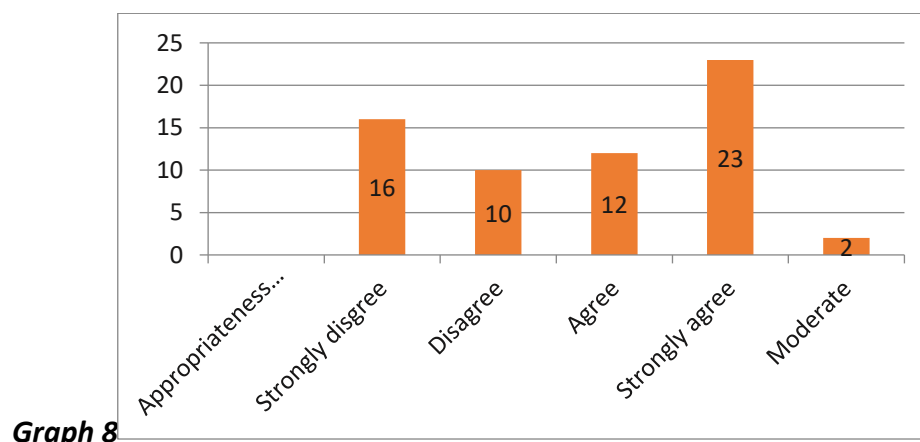


The crucial item presented diverse responses by the participants. 28, 57% (18 participants) indicated that they agreed with the idea of studying the culture of the English language. In the

same vein, 19, 05% (12 participants) accentuated that they strongly agreed with learning the English culture. The two options combined accounted for 47, 62% of the responses. Moving on, 12, 70% of the participants indicated that they disagreed with the perspective of studying the English culture. This represented 8 of the participants. In the same way, 23, 81% of the participants indicated that they strongly disagreed with the idea of studying the culture of the English language. This represented 15 of the participants. Interestingly, 11, 11% of the participants indicated that they were moderate on the issue.

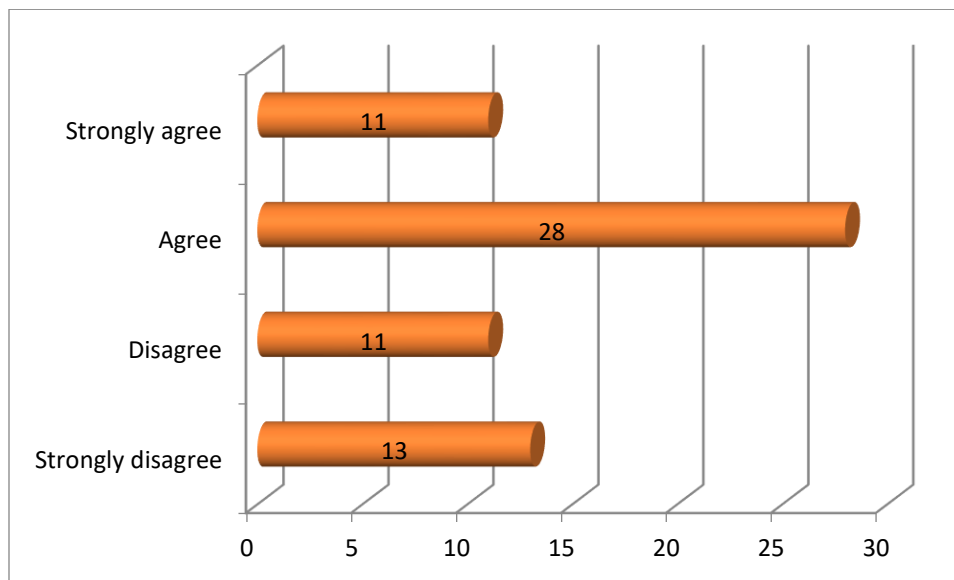
#### 4.4.11 Appropriateness and accurateness in English messages

The item presented fascinating data. 16 of the participants highlighted that they strongly disagreed with the notion of accurateness and appropriateness in conveying messages in the English language. This represented 25, 40% of the participants. 15, 87% of the participants indicated that they disagreed with the proposition of accurateness and appropriateness in messages. This represented 10 of the participants. On the contrary, 12 participants accentuated that they agreed with the notion of appropriateness and accuracy of messages in the English language. This accounted for 19, 05%. Additionally, 36, 51% of the participants responded strongly agreeing to the notion of appropriateness and accurateness of messages in the English language. This represented 23 of the participants. 2 of the participants indicated moderateness of the concept of appropriateness and accurateness when conveying messages using the English language. This accounted for 3, 17%. See the chart below for the presentation of the analysis.



## Context and word choice in English

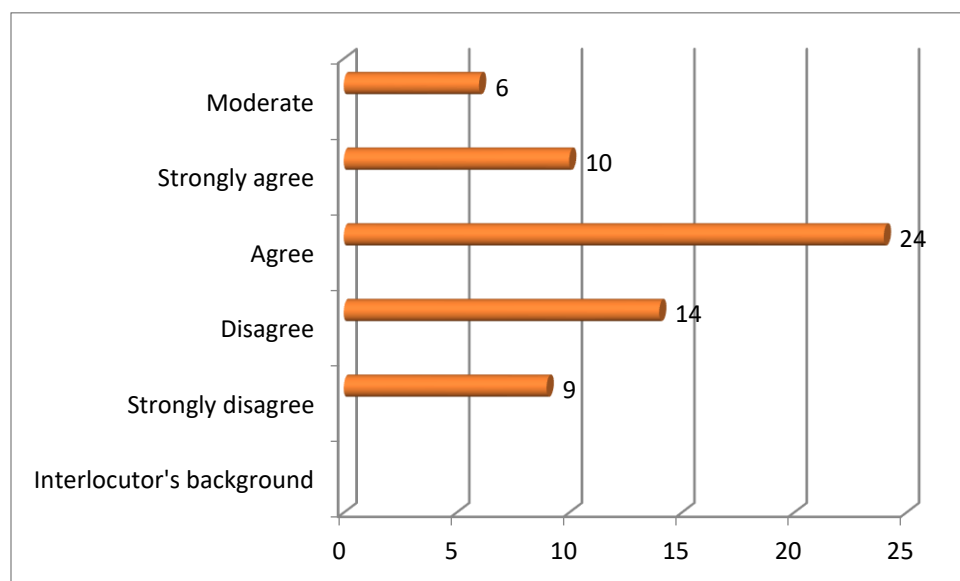
**Graph 9**



The participants highlighted a variety of options relating to whether the concepts of context and word choice are important considerations when using the English language. 13 of the participants indicated that they strongly disagreed with the notion that context and word choice is a prerequisite when using the English language. This accounted for 20, 63% of the responses. 17, 46% of the participants highlighted that they disagreed with the concept context and word choice when using the English language. This represented 11 of the participants. 44, 44% (28 participants) of the respondents agreed that context and word choice are important aspects to consider when using the English language effectively. In the same vein, 17, 46% (11 participants) of the students indicated that they agreed strongly with the consideration of context and word when using the English language.

### 4.4.12 Interlocutor's background

**Graph 10**



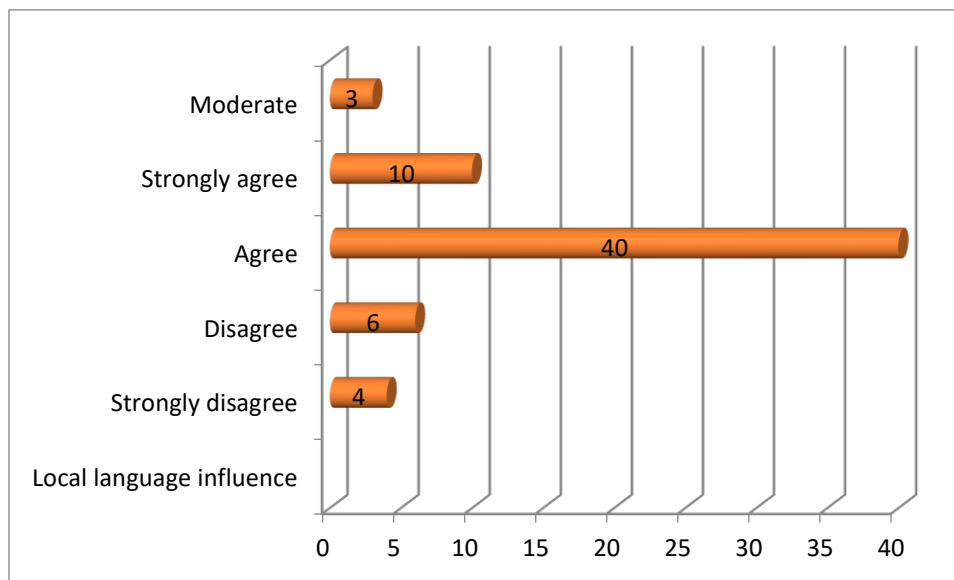
The questionnaire contained an item which was meant to find out the students' views on whether the background of the other person in communication can influence the way requests and refusals are formulated. In other words, the item sought to extract data answering on whether the background of the interlocutor in a communicative process should be considered when requesting or refusing. 14, 29% of the students (9 participants) indicated that they disagreed strongly with the consideration of the interlocutor's background in formulating refusals or requests. Moreover, 14 (22, 22%) of the students selected the option of disagreement to the background consideration when producing refusals or requests. On the contrary, 24 of the students agreed to the notion that background should be considered when formulating requests or refusals in communicative processes. This accounted for 38, 10% of the responses. Additionally, 15, 87% (10 students) of the participants indicated that they agreed strongly with recognition of the interlocutor's background when producing requests and refusals. Interestingly, 6 (7, 52%) of the students indicated that they were moderate on the concept of considering the background of the interlocutor in requests or refusals formulation.

#### 4.4.13 Local/Native language influence on the English language performance

The questionnaire had a sensitive and crucial item which sought to dig for data on whether the local or native language of the participants had an influence on their performance of the English

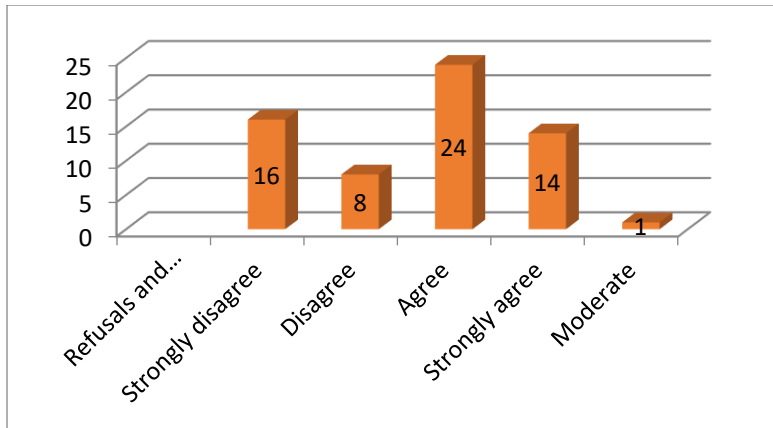
language. 4 of the participants (6, 35%) of the participants disagreed strongly with the assertion that their local language influenced their performance in the English language. Furthermore, 9, 52% (6 students) of the participants indicated that they disagreed with the idea that the local language influenced their use of the English language. Interestingly, 63, 49% of the participants (40 students) agreed to the proposition that their local language influenced their performance in the English language. Adding on, 10 of the participants accounting for 15, 87%, indicated that they agreed strongly with the viewpoint of local language affecting the performance in English language. Moderate participants on the issue accounted for 3, 76%. Only three participants indicated that they were moderate on their view of the local or native language affecting how they performed in the English language. See the bar graph below for the findings.

**Graph 11**



#### 4.4.14 Requests and refusals in communication

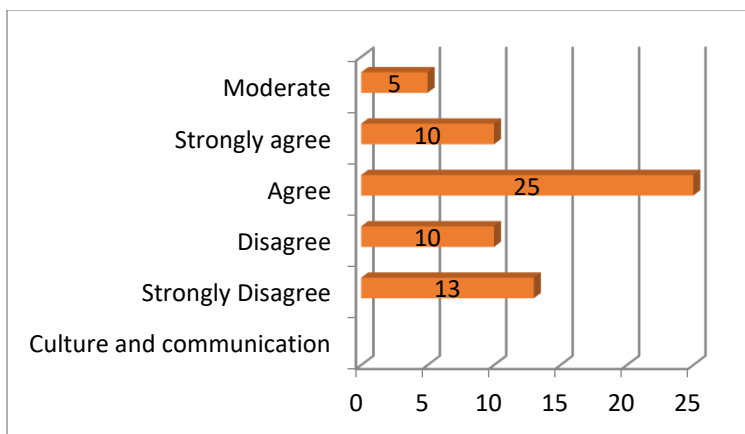
**Graph 12**



The findings on whether requests and refusals could affect communicative processes were very interesting. 16 of the participants indicated that they disagreed strongly with the viewpoint. This represented 25, 40% of the participants. In the same vein, 12, 70% of the participants selected the option of disagreement to the viewpoint. This represented 8 of the participants. On the contrary, 24 participants agreed that requests and refusal could affect communicative engagements. This represented 38, 10% of the participants. Likewise, 22, 22% of the participants agreed strongly that the use and formulation of refusals and requests could affect the outcome of communication processes. This represented 14 of the participants. Moreover, 1 participant selected the moderate option and that accounted for 1, 59% of the total responses by the participants.

#### 4.4.15 Culture and communication

**Graph 13**



The last item on the questionnaire was tricky and a sensitive one. It was meant to dig for crucial data relating to cultural awareness in communicative processes. 20, 63% of the participants disagreed strongly with the idea of considering someone's culture in communication. This represented 13 of the students. Moreover, 15, 87% of the students indicated that they disagreed with the notion of cultural considerations in communicative processes. The percentage represented 10 of the participants. Interestingly, 39, 68% of the participants accentuated that they agreed with the idea of considering one's culture in communication. This accounted for twenty-five of the participants. In the same vein, ten of the participants agreed strongly with the consideration of culture in communication. This accounted for 15, 87% of the participants. Lastly, 7, 94% of the participants (5 students) indicated that they were moderate the cultural consideration in communication engagements. See bar graph above for the findings.

#### **4.5 Discussions**

The section discussed in-depth the findings of the study closely looking at their relevance, importance and implications. The central focus was directed further on explanations and evaluations of the findings. All the crucial discussions were carried out in close connection with the review of literature and the objectives of the study. In order to come up with a comprehensive, systematic and logical presentation of the section, the study followed the objectives.

##### **4.5.1 Realisation and formulation of Requests**

The first objective of the study sought to dig for data relating to the development and knowledge of formulating and production of requests by the study participants. The use of the Discourse Completion Tests proved effective in collecting the data. The study participants were presented with a variety of situations that they encounter occasionally in their engagement with the lecturers. All the ten situations presented to the study participants had to do with formulation and production of requests in response to lecturers or supervisors. The study utilized Trosborg's (1995) Taxonomy of Request realization in analyzing the responses by the participants. The table below presents the summary of findings on requests.

#### 4.5.2 Summary analysis of all the given situations

The table below presented the summary analysis for all the strategies utilized by the students in the formulation of requests. Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy of request realization utilized in the current study had five major request strategy types which are conventionally indirect (hearer oriented), conventionally indirect (speaker-based), direct, internal modification and external modification. First and foremost, the participants displayed widespread and diverse responses which could be aligned to most of the broad request type strategies. Most of the request strategies were realized under the indirect conventional (hearer-oriented) strategy. This is a major observation as other studies on requests have produced different results depending on the context in which the studies were carried out. The indirect conventional strategy accounted for 353 responses in total out of the 600 expected responses. This represented a percentage of 58, 83%. This is contrary to the assertion by Iragui in a study on requests. Iragui (1996, p. 58) points out that, "The native speakers' use of alerters and intensifiers confirms most studies on interlanguage pragmatics that have reported that native speakers of English use more politeness markers than non-native speakers, who tend to be more direct". The second greater percentage was recorded on the direct strategy. It accounted for 132 responses out of 600 responses, signaling a 22% of the total responses by the participants. Indirect conventional strategy (speaker-based) accounted for 54 responses in total attributing (9%) of the total responses. 48 responses in total were recorded in the external modification strategy accounting for 8%. The least number of responses in total were recorded in the internal modification strategy, 3, 38% was recorded from 23 responses.

It is imperative to point out that most of the responses were recorded on the ability strategy (Could you), 116 and direct imperative strategy, 115. This is crucial as it accentuates a situation whereby the interlanguage pragmatics communicative engagements between the students and the lecturers could be negatively impacted in some instances.

Altasan (2016, p. 356) states that,

The outcomes of this study suggest that even at advanced levels of proficiency, non-native speakers' pragmatic performance may present deviations from that of native speakers.



This leads us to conclude that the linguistic competence does not guarantee a corresponding level of pragmatic competence.

The conclusions and observations of the study closely link to the current study as the main focus was on pragma-linguistic competence, a comparison of native and non-native speakers. Moreover, the modification of requests by the non-native speakers as observed by Altasan's study, greatly link to the findings of the current study as the researcher concluded that the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology underused the internal and external modifiers in their production and formulation of appropriate request strategies. The statistical representations on the summary are a clear indication that some interlanguage pragmatics miscommunication or communication failure is evident between the students and the lecturers through misappropriate formulation of requests by the students. This is a cause of concern in interlanguage pragmatics. This is highlighted in Ntuli (2012), when people of different cultural backgrounds communicate, misunderstandings may occur. The lecturers at the Namibia University of Science and Technology engage students from not only different cultural backgrounds, but from different linguistic settings too. Lenchuk & Ahmed (2019, p. 11) pointed out that, "Without making any judgements on the values of the speakers of different speech communities, we would like to emphasise the importance of awareness, tolerance and sensitivity towards the communicative styles of the other in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual community". The assertion by the researchers greatly link to the current study as the researcher discovered that the some of the students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology lack the necessary interlanguage pragmatics awareness in their formulation and production of request strategies in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environment. The utilization of direct strategies in the formulation of requests in formal and non-formal interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes highlighted a great cause for concern.

On the contrary, the study by Lenchuk & Ahmed on Omani EFL learners presented another angle different from the current study. The study did not compare the request strategies utilized by the learners to the native speakers' standards. It evaluated its findings basing on the cultural scripts that are valued by the Omani community. The study viewed the terms native and non-native as

problematic if applied to evaluate the concept of requests on non-native English speaking learners as divergence from the standard traits would definitely be inevitable. Furthermore, the study inherently highlights that using the production and formulation of requests by native speakers of the English language as a yardstick to evaluate the non-native speakers of the English language poses a high risk of producing biased findings. The argument gives great insight that given a chance to explain the responses, some of the responses analyzed as direct in terms of the strategies applied, could have been indirect depending on the interpretation of the cultural scripts accepted in different cultural settings. This is where the tolerance, awareness and tolerance of the communication styles of others comes into play. It plays a huge role in the avoidance of misinterpretations that might result in cross-cultural communication breakdown.

See table below for the summary of analysis on requests.

**Table 25**

TYPE	STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	N	%
Indirect	Hints	Statement		
Conventionally	Ability	Could you.....?	116	19,33
Indirect(hearer-		Can you.....?	88	14,66
Oriented	Willingness	Would you.....?	7	1,16
	Permission	May I .....?	60	10
	Suggestory	How about	23	3,88
		Kindly	30	5
		Do you mind	3	0,5
		May you	13	2,16
		Can I	13	2,16
Conventionally	Wishes	I would like....	30	5
Indirect(speaker-	Desires/Needs	I want/need you to		
Based	Obligation	You must/You have to	14	2,33

Direct	Performatives	I ask you to .....	17	2,83
	Imperatives	Lend me your car	115	19,16
	Elliptical phrase	Your car		
Internal		I wonder if you....	5	0,83
Modification		Could you... <i>please</i> ?	18	3
		I'd <i>very</i> grateful if....		
External		Excuse me.....	25	4,16
Modification		<i>I'm sorry to trouble you,</i>	14	2,33
		Could you pass me the bread? <i>I cannot reach it.</i>	2	0,3
		Please excuse me.....	7	1,16
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>600</b>	<b>100%</b>

Moreover, the findings revealed that some of the participants had the conscience required in cross cultural communication. The strategies that they employed were hearer-oriented thereby maintaining a positive face in the interlocutor. On the contrary, 9% of the participants displayed some of communication which does not recognize critical aspects relating to the interlocutor in cross cultural communication. Their strategies were speaker-based thereby carrying a great possibility of causing some discomfort and wrong interpretations in the hearer or receiver of the request. The utilization of *you must/I need you to* and *I would want you to* were common in the requests of the students. The use of the expressions in formulating requests to the lecturers transmits a certain unwanted characteristic in interlanguage pragmatics communication context. It sounds as if the student is demanding the lecturer to perform an action rather than requesting.

The utilization of direct imperative and performative strategies by the some of the participants points to a complex situation in communication that could be taking place in the Department of Informatics at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The utilization of these strategies hinted on the level of knowledge that the participants have on language functions in different contexts. Specifically, in interlanguage pragmatics, the utilization of direct performatives and imperatives as requests signaled some missing crucial knowledge on pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics concerns. Such missing links in cross-cultural communication

posed serious consequences as the request formulations by the participants were classified and interpreted as rude or impolite. Yazdanfar & Bonyati (2016, p. 8) argue that some choices and preferences of direct strategies by users of a language should not be taken as evidence of being impolite. Emphasis is placed on the discretion attached to cultural scripts when analyzing directness and indirectness. Rude or impolite requests could result in communication breakdown or interlanguage pragmatics failure (Thomas, 1983; Blum-Kulka, 1991).

Moreover, the findings verified that the participants utilized the least strategies in internal and external modification strategies. To be specific, only 3, 83% of the responses could be aligned to internal modification. This accentuates a scenario where the students could have struggled in formulating requests applying the appropriate linguistic units. Internal modification demands for use of more relevant linguistic units to formulate a request. It is imperative to highlight that internal and external modification of requests is crucial in modulating the speaker's illocutionary force of their request. This relates to pragma-linguistic knowledge. The study by Hassan & Rangsawmy (2014, p. 62) state that, "Therefore, the positive impact of the L2 context on the learners' performance in these modifiers is also evidenced". The findings of the study provided another viewpoint in interlanguage pragmatics awareness and competence, that is, exposure to the native English speaking environment as a major factor (effective environment to pick up the appropriate and relevant input). The study focused on Iranian students studying abroad focusing on their development on pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic variables.

The researchers proved that the environment is the major factor in equipping non-native speakers of the English language with the appropriate skills necessary for cross-cultural communicative processes. Moreover, the study focused on crucial concepts of internal lexical and syntactic downgraders. An internalization of such skills and awareness is crucial in the formulation and production of acceptable, relevant and appropriate request strategies in the non-native speakers of the English language. However, the context in which the study and the current study were carried out is different as most of the participants in the current study indicated that they had not been exposed to an environment where they experience and engage with the native speakers of the English language only.

Despite being second year students, the study verified that interlanguage pragmatics knowledge is not influenced by grammatical competence. If it was the case, second year students could have produced more of internally and externally modified requests to indicate grammatical competence (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). The linguistic competence of the participants came into question by their failure to modify internally or externally their requests. No participant formulated a request to the lecturer utilizing syntactic upgraders. Supporting devices were realized by chance and the use of the lexical downgrader *please* was just too much. This has been proven too by other studies (Hasall, 2001; Faerch & Kasper, 1989)

The study verified that the use of *can you* and *could you* accentuates some limitations of pragmatic knowledge in the participants. This could be directly linked to instruction that the participants have been exposed to in grammatical teaching. The scenario was observed in requests classified under the indirect conventional strategy and the external modification (supportive reasons). The application of the same strategy and request linguistic formulae was an indicator of a limitation in diversifying request formulation (House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1995; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2000a and 2009). These studies have also argued that non-native speakers of the English language do not modify their requests frequently due to proficiency levels.

#### **4.5.3 Formulation and realization of Refusals**

The study participants were presented with a Discourse Completion Test with eleven situations. The eleven situations required the participants to formulate refusals to requests and suggestions by the lecturers. The study presented the study participants with sensitive and tricky situations that they experienced in their daily engagements with their supervisors or lecturers in pedagogical processes. As a way to check the interlanguage pragmatics knowledge and awareness in the participants, the Discourse Completion Test included situations that required them to formulate refusals to suggestions or requests by participants of equal power or lesser power to them. Four of the situations required responses to an equal member or lesser to the participants, seven of the situations were directly linked to refusal communication with their supervisors. See table below for the summary analysis for the refusal realization strategies.

#### **4.5.4 Summary of the given refusal situations and the strategies utilized**

It is imperative to present an insight on the summary of analyses as revealed by the study. Direct strategy refusals accounted for 44, 39% of the responses. This represented 293 responses out of 660. These responses were realized under two strategies of bluntness and negation of proposition. This accentuates a crucial point relating to the participant's awareness and knowledge regarding the speech act of refusals in interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. Such a proposition is derived from the fact that the participants engaged the lecturers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but still expected to utilize the appropriate linguistic units and formulae in refusals to attenuate the negative effects of direct refusals and mitigate their face-threatening nature. Beebe, Takahashi & Ulib-Weltz as cited in (Boonsuk & Ambele 2019, p. 221) agree to the assertion highlighting that the refusal speech act is, "a significant intercultural sticking point of ESL/EFL learners". Bluntness and negation of proposition strategies in the formulation of refusals could result in intercultural communication breakdown, or cause misinterpretation of messages which might damage the face of the interlocutor.

The analysis of the findings revealed that 50, 91% of the responses aligned to indirect strategies. This accounted for 336 responses in total (600). It is of paramount importance to note that the direct refusal strategy recorded 293 responses from two headings (bluntness and negation of proposition), and indirect strategy recorded 336 responses from 7 headings (plain direct, reason or explanation, regret or apology, alternative, disagreement, statement of principle and avoidance). Considering the number of options that are on indirect strategies, more responses could have been realized under the bracket. This indicated the dominance of direct refusal strategies in the participants.

The study revealed that the participants utilized the Adjuncts to refusal strategy 31 times accounting for 4, 70% of the total responses. The statistics relating to the formulation of adjuncts confirmed that the participants have little knowledge on softening and mitigating the directness or bluntness of refusals in interlanguage pragmatics communicative processes. Moreover, the formulation of adjuncts to refusals requires linguistic competence in selecting the appropriate linguistic units and forms. Such an argument to the performance of the participants brings in the

concept of pragma-linguistic awareness and development into the broader picture. Moreover, when pragma-linguistic concerns are mentioned, socio-pragmatic issues are pulled along. This is because the situations presented to the participants required them to utilize their knowledge of selecting the effective and appropriate linguistic units and forms looking at the socio-cultural variables. The willingness strategy was utilized the most (20 times), followed by positive opinion (5 times), and agreement strategy (6 times). Zand-Moghadam & Adeg (2020, p. 22) supports the viewpoint accentuating the importance of interlanguage pragmatics competence on understanding speech acts, conversational implicature and some sensitive issues related to appropriateness of what non-native speakers of the English language formulate, produce and comprehend L2. This kind of knowledge and skill is crucial and it is heavily imbedded in the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic systems of target language. The avoidance to formulate and produce longer sentences to soften refusals is a clear indication by the students that their level of competence and knowledge relating to pragma-linguistics is at a lower level as compared to their level of study (University level).

**Table 26**

REFUSALS		N	%
<b>Direct strategies</b>	<b>HINTS</b>		
1 Bluntness	No/I refuse	100	15,15
2 Negation of proposition	I can't, I don't think so	193	29,24
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b>			
1 Plain indirect	it looks like I won't be able to go	23	3,48
2 Reason/Explanation	I can't. I have a doctor's appointment	178	26,96
3 Regret/apology	I'm so sorry I can't	94	14,24
14 Alternative:			
• Change option	I would join you if you choose another restaurant	5	0,75
• Change time (postponement)	I can't go right now, but I could next week		

5 Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!	14	2,12
6 Statement of principle/philosophy	I can't. It goes against my beliefs	14	2,12
7 Avoidance			
• Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	Well, I'll see if I can	8	1,21
• Verbal:			
✓ Hedging			
✓ Change topic			
✓ Joking			
✓ Sarcasm			
<b>ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS</b>			
1 Positive opinion	This is a great idea, but.....	5	0,75
2 Willingness	I'd love to go, but.....	20	3,03
3 Gratitude	Thanks so much, but.....		
4 Agreement	Fine! But.....	6	0,90
5 Solidarity/empathy	I'm sure you will understand, but.....		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>660</b>	<b>100</b>

On the contrary, the study revealed that the participants had some kind of socio-pragmatic knowledge and awareness as demonstrated by the refusal strategies and responses formulated in situations when they were responding to interlocutors of the same or lesser power. 110 direct refusal responses out of a possible 240 were identified on the four situations that involved the participants communicating refusals to their colleagues. The term colleague in this instance was applied to a fellow student of lower level or in the same class. The participants formulated responses that were so blunt and direct by nature. Negation of proposition was identified on higher levels and no effort was utilized to soften the refusals or formulate refusals providing longer reasons. In a nutshell, lesser mitigation linguistic formulae were noted as compared to the situations when the participants responded to their supervisors. The study by Tuncer (2016) made the same discovery too, that participants tended to be blunt when formulating refusals to interlocutor's of the same power and status with them.



The findings of the study revealed that the participants tended to utilize the blunt direct strategy to their supervisors when the situation given to them implied some kind of mental pressure on them. This contradicts the above discovery because in these instances, the participants failed to demonstrate the crucial knowledge relating to socio-pragmatic concerns and variables. Communicating with their supervisors refusing a suggestion or request could have not marked a deviation from the expected realization of socio-pragmatic variables such as the distance between the interlocutors, context and the differences in power distribution. This is in contrast to studies that have discovered that interlanguage pragmatics awareness should be higher in multilingual settings like the Namibia University of Science and Technology as compared to monolingual settings. The reason suggested is that multilingual settings enhance the flexibility to select relevant, effective and appropriate linguistic choices (Cenoz & Hoffman, 2003; Kecskes, 2015; Safont-Jorda, 2005).

#### **4.5.5 Adverse conditions for interlanguage pragmatics competence**

The participants were presented with a comprehensive questionnaire that sought to dig for data relating to adverse conditions for interlanguage pragmatic competence. The questionnaire had twenty-one items in total. The first part focused more on the background of the participants before delving deeper into the main focus of the tool.

The study revealed various crucial concerns pointing to the unfavourable conditions to interlanguage pragmatic competence. To start with, most of the participants (37 students) indicated that they started studying the English language at primary school level. Only 17 of the study participants highlighted that they got exposed to the English language at kindergarten stage. Interestingly, 5 participants indicated that they started studying the English language at secondary school level. Likewise, 4 of the participants highlighted that they got exposed to the studying of the English language at university level. This kind of evidence is crucial to the analysis of mastery of skills and knowledge relating to pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics. The length of exposure to the effective teaching of the English language appropriate and expected performance in cross cultural communicative engagements could have an everlasting effect on interlanguage pragmatics competence. With close reference to the argument, 40 of the

participants revealed that they had never encountered or experienced any kind of teaching and learning environment under the guidance of a native speaker of the English language. Only 23 of the participants have encountered face to face teaching and learning environment under the guidance of a native speaker of the English language. This observation had a direct impact on the kind of input or instruction relating to interlanguage pragmatics competence.

If the environment, input and the type of instruction have direct impact on interlanguage pragmatics competence, then revelations of the study could have a huge bearing on the answer. 63, 49% of the participants indicated that they have never had an opportunity to stay in a country where English is the native language. Only 36, 51% of the students have had an opportunity to stay in a country where English is spoken a native language. The study revealed that the length of residence in a country where the English language is a native language was too short for the participants to master the critical skills pre-requisite to interlanguage pragmatics competence.

The study revealed that the mastery of skills to attain interlanguage pragmatics competence was a great challenge after 23 of the participants accentuated that they are not willing to study the culture of the English language. 30 participants indicated that they agreed to the proposal of studying the cultural attributes of the English language. Understanding the culture of the English language could be a very important and bold step to interlanguage pragmatics competence in the students as misunderstandings are mainly caused by lack of understanding of the interlocutor's culture and language in interlanguage pragmatic communicative processes. This is supported by other studies too (Witbeen & Zeleke, 2020; Gitimu, 2005; Axner, 2017). The ignorance or lack of knowledge of the English language could be a great source of a barrier to interlanguage pragmatics competence (Martinez, 2003). 23 participants indicated that the background of the interlocutor is not important in communication compared to the 34 students who thought that it was a crucial element to consider attaining successful cross-cultural communication. The participants demonstrated less awareness and knowledge on issues relating to culture, language and communication. These are crucial elements to interlanguage pragmatics competence.

The study revealed that 48 participants were comfortable using the English language outside the teaching and learning environment with their supervisors, whereas, 15 participants indicated that they opted for their native language to understand explanations and discussions better. This kind of information highlighted the possible perspective of the transfer concept between the participant's native language and the English second language. Franch (1998, p. 14) states that, "The idea seems to be that if the NNS is consciously aware of the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic similarities and differences between his/her native and target language, then negative outcomes of transfer will most probably be inhibited". Some of the participants could have formulated and produced responses by relating much to the strategies that are used in their own culture. This presents a complex phenomenon in interlanguage pragmatics communication. The argument is further supported by the revelation that twenty-one students out of the sixty-three indicated that they were not comfortable using the English language in all the activities of daily life. This is an indication that the participant's native language has a great bearing on their performance of English as a second language. On the contrary, this assertion is refuted by Bu (2012, p. 37) who argues that it is impossible to link L2 proficiency difficulties in non-native speakers of the English language to L1 pragmatic transfer. However, it is imperative to note that the study's findings were realized in a context different from the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The Chinese environment is peculiar as the native language of Mandarin is widely spoken unlike in Namibia where the official language is English. Moreover, fifty of the participants agreed that their native language influenced their production and performance of the English language. Ten of the students disagreed with the idea and three indicated that they were moderate on the issue.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

The main aim of the study was to examine the students' level of interlanguage pragmatics knowledge (awareness) and competence by assessing their production and formulation of requests and refusals in a cross-cultural setting. Furthermore, the study sought to examine the adverse conditions to interlanguage pragmatics in the students. The study utilized Discourse Completion Tests and a questionnaire to collect data. Moreover, the study focused on a study sample from the department of Informatics only at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

##### **5.1.1 Formulation and realisation of requests**

After classifying the request realisation strategies according to Trosborg (1995), the study realised that there was kind of a balance in the production of direct requests and conventional direct request. This was a cause for concern as the prevalence of direct requests on such a magnitude accentuates for some kind of remediation in the students. The impact of direct requests in interlanguage pragmatic communication has deep repercussions as they yield wrong interpretations in the interlocutors that lead to interlanguage pragmatic failure.

Discourse Completion Test showed great evidence that pragmatic failure in interlanguage communication is taking place in the department of Informatics at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. This point is put forward by the idea that in interlanguage pragmatic communication, the speaker should always activate psychological, social and contextual concerns looking at the interlocutor. The presence of direct requests to the supervisors presented a viewpoint that the language performance by the students influenced their formulation and production of requests. Therefore, the interlanguage pragmatic communication between the students and the lecturers is mostly influenced by pragma-linguistics concerns more than cultural background or influences. The challenge to select the appropriate linguistic forms and units in an interlanguage pragmatic communicative process greatly influenced the students' formulation and production of their requests to the supervisors. It is imperative to mention that,

choice of language in interlanguage pragmatic environment must observe the social variables that can affect the outcome in communication engagement.

### **5.1.2 Realisation and formulation of refusals**

The aim of the Discourse Completion test was to investigate the formulation and production of refusals by the students keeping a specific attention on student's interlanguage pragmatic knowledge and interlanguage pragmatics awareness. The refusals were classified according to Campillo et al. (2009) refusal realization taxonomy. The Discourse Completion Test elicited for a single answer or response from the students. The students demonstrated some sensitivity to social variable such as power and distance. This aligns to socio-pragmatic knowledge. They responded bluntly to interlocutors of the same or lower status than they did to their supervisors (Kim, 2004; Lee, 2013).

However, the magnitude at which blunt and negation of proposition refusal strategies were utilized, accentuated the probability of a complex interlanguage pragmatics communication scenario between the lecturers and the students in the department of Informatics at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The utilization of blunt and negation of proposition strategies do not consider the face of the interlocutor and is an unwanted and unexpected phenomenon in an interlanguage pragmatic communicative process. The study concluded that the limitation in pragma-linguistic knowledge, in formulating and production of refusals, was the source of the problem. The study observed that the students utilized the least strategies in internal and external modification due to the length of the sentences required and the knowledge of selecting the appropriate linguistics forms and units. Such a conclusion can be aligned to interlanguage pragmatic transfer. This could stem from the fact that these kinds of strategies may not be available in the native languages of the study participants. The study avoided the term proficiency since no such test was given to ascertain the level of proficiency of the students.

### **5.1.3 Adverse conditions for interlanguage pragmatics competence**

The questionnaire used to collect data focused on retrieving crucial evidence on the conditions that are unfavourable to the development of using the English language appropriately and

effectively in social context (pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence) by the students. The world is now a global village and it is imperative to become an effective intercultural communicator as it will minimize cross-cultural communication misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Interlanguage pragmatics competence enhances the success of communication in different kinds of contexts. The study concluded that the students' awareness on culture being the starting crucial point of communication needs more emphasis. This was revealed by the negative response to the learning or studying of the English language culture. The underlying philosophy is that by learning the culture of the English language, the students would appreciate the interpretation, formulation and production of requests and refusals. Moreover, the students would be exposed to the importance of mitigatory techniques in refusals and requests.

The study concluded that the environment to pick up the appropriate and effective input relating to pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge and awareness was limited. The students portrayed that they have had lesser practical encounters with the environment where they communicate and experience with the native speakers of the English language. the study concluded that the students exposure to the English language mainly happened in the teaching and learning encounters with their supervisors, as they indicated preference to the use of the their local language outside the pedagogical processes. According to Bardovi-Harlig (2001), such a mix up in the local and target language might result in negative transfer leading to phonetic exchange errors, miscomprehension, underproduction and overproduction. Achieving effective interlanguage pragmatics competence in such an environment is a difficult task (Cohen, 1996).

The study concluded that the students focus more on grammatical competence rather than interlanguage pragmatic competence. They indicate highly that accurateness of messages is pivotal in cross-cultural communication. This indicated that the students do not realize that grammaticalness in communication does not remove the misunderstandings and misinterpretations associated with pragmatic concerns (Tanck, 2004; Bardovi-Harlig, 1999).

Just like any other study, the current study is susceptible to some limitations. The triangulation of data was not possible because the study did not utilize other data collecting methods like role

plays. Triangulation of data enhances the consistency of findings and control of any influences. The study also focused on a sample from the one department of Informatics. Diversification of the sample could have brought an interesting insight into the concept of interlanguage pragmatics interactions at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

### **5.2.1 Formulation and realization of requests strategies**

- An introduction of a compulsory English course to all first year students that focuses on developing the vocabulary of the students as a transition from grade 12 to university level. This equips the students with the English vocabulary expected of them when they engage with the lecturers.
- Explicit meta-pragmatic instruction of English language paying attention to language forms and socio-cultural aspects to enhance the students' pragmatic comprehension of requests.

### **5.2.2 Realization and formulation of refusal strategies**

- Lecturers need to appreciate that interlanguage pragmatics competence focusing on refusals is shaped by various factors; self-perception, their location or place in the L2 environment or target language and the learners practical experience and encounters with the native speakers of the English language.
- Explicit instruction of the English language focusing on the speech act of refusals and the socio-cultural elements that determine the formulation and production of strategies in cross-cultural communicative processes

### **5.2.3 Adverse conditions for interlanguage pragmatics competence**

- Lecturers to make use of audiovisual materials as they contain conversational exchanges that enhance interlanguage pragmatic input and communicative practice
- The development of a compulsory study module for first year students that incorporates socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic features of the English language

### **5.3 Implications for future studies**

- The same kind of study could be undertaken, utilizing other data collecting techniques like role play.
- There is great need to carry out the same study at the Namibia University of Science and Technology taking into account the gender factor. The current study utilized a sample containing both male and female participants. It will be great to have a study focusing on male or female participants only and triangulate the findings on requests and refusals
- Further studies can utilize samples from three or four departments at the Namibia University of Science and Technology to get to the bottom of interlanguage pragmatics interactions between lecturers and students focusing on requests and refusals.
- Further study can be done at the Namibia University of Science and Technology utilizing the Output-based Interlanguage Pragmatics model.



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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Request Strategies Discourse Completion Test**

Dear student

As part of my study on Interlanguage Pragmatics, I would like to request your assistance by completing the Request Strategies Discourse Completion Test about your interlanguage pragmatics competence and knowledge in using the English language. The information you are going to provide would be of utmost importance and valuable to my research. Do not write your real name on this questionnaire. All the information you are going to provide will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your assistance in advance.

Read the following communication situations. At the end of each given situation, there is a blank space where you are supposed to write your response. Take each situation so natural as if you are the one involved in the conversation. Do not worry about any grammatical mistakes in writing your responses.

1 You are attending an online class on Microsoft Teams. The network drops down and you miss some crucial points. How do you ask the lecturer to repeat again what you might have missed?

You:.....  
.....

2 You have failed to submit an assignment on a date given by the lecturer. What do you say to the lecturer in the quest to be given an opportunity to submit your assignment?

You:.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3 You have received a very low mark in an assignment marked by your lecturer. What do you say to your lecturer to convince (request) him/her to remark or have a second look at your assignment?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

4 You have attended a class on a concept which is difficult to understand. What do you say to lecturer to convince (request) him/her to repeat the lecture?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

5 Lecturer: "Anyone who does not submit their work tomorrow will fail the module!"

You are struggling to cope with the pressure in your studies? How do you ask (request) the lecturer for an extension of days to complete your work?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

6 Lecturer: During this covid19 period, the face to face contact between students and lecturers should be minimized as much as possible. It can only happen on special conditions. Remote communication should be utilized for all the concerns that students might have.

You are struggling to develop the assigned project. You feel you require one on one contact with your supervisor. How do you request for that opportunity?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

7 Your lecturer shared very useful information through a slide presentation in a crucial and difficult concept. You feel you might need further reading and analysis of the slides. How do you request for the lecturers personal saved presentation?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

8 You are attending a face to face lecture. Unfortunately, you receive a text message inviting your presence somewhere immediately. How do you request the lecturer to be excused out of the lecture for the day?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

9 You are in a remote teaching lesson with the Professor. You assume that the voice of the Professor is very low. You wish to ask him or her to raise their voice. What do you say?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

10 You are in a virtual lecture and the supervisor is presenting the material so fast that you feel you are being left behind in the whole process. How do you request your supervisor to change the way of presentation?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

## **Appendix B**

### **Refusal Strategies Discourse Completion Test**

Dear student

As part of my study on Interlanguage Pragmatics, I would like to request your assistance by completing the Refusal Strategies Discourse Completion Test about your interlanguage pragmatics competence and knowledge in using the English language. The information you are going to provide would be of utmost importance and valuable to my research. Do not write your real name on this questionnaire. All the information you are going to provide will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your assistance in advance.

Read the following communication situations. At the end of each given situation, there is a blank space where you are supposed to write your response. Take each situation so natural as if you are the one involved in the conversation. Do not worry about any grammatical mistakes in writing your responses.

1 You have been given a lot of assignments by different lecturers in your department. On the due date, your professor approaches you with some extra to compile a list of students in your course and some relevant information. How do you refuse the duty to your professor?

.....  
.....  
.....

2 A junior first year student comes to you for some assistance with some assignments. The junior student requests for the assignments which you did at their level so as to copy some of your ideas. What do you say to the junior student as a refusal to the request?

.....  
.....  
.....

3 You have been given power point presentation assignment by your lecturer which is due in nine days. On the fifth day, your lecturer calls your over the phone and says," Could you please submit your power point presentation tomorrow at 8 o'clock in the morning?" Take note, this is three days before the due date. How do you refuse the request?

.....

.....

.....

4 Your best friend approaches you to write an assignment for them for a payment. They say," I am so loaded with work, can you write this assignment for a few dollars?" How do you refuse the offer?

.....

.....

.....

5 You have been selected to speak to all the students regarding discipline at the university. You feel it is too big a task. Your professor says, "You need to prepare your speech for tomorrow's presentation at 10 o'clock". How do you refuse the request?

.....

.....

.....

6 You have been undertaking a research proposal for three months. It is some hours before you submit the proposal for final evaluation. Your professor says, "I have gone through your proposal in depth, some novelty is lacking in the literature review section. Could you look into that?" How do you refuse the suggestion to your professor?

.....

.....

.....

7 Your friend approaches you during your free time at the campus after a long day in lectures and says," Could you teach me the BODMAS concept which you seem to understand so much?" How to you refuse the request?

.....

.....

.....

8 Your professor has invited you to partake in faculty research forum to be hosted in the evening at the campus. You stay far from the campus. How would you refuse this invitation?

.....  
.....

9 It is examination time at the university. Your friend organizes a birthday party and invites you to attend. He calls you and say, " I have organized a massive birthday party at my house. You are hereby kindly invited to the function". How do you refuse this invitation?

.....  
.....

10 Your professor invites to you demonstrate a concept which you do not understand to the others in class. How do you refuse the invitation to the professor?

.....  
.....

11 Your lecturer has suggested that you take some evening classes to enhance your spoken English and confidence. How would you refuse such a suggestion?

.....  
.....



## APPENDIX C

### Questionnaire

Dear participant, may you please tick in the box of your choice and provide some details where it is necessary

#### Part 1: Personal information and background information

1. Gender ☐ male

☐ female

2. Age .....years old

18-21 ☐

21-24 ☐

25 plus ☐

3. At which level of education did you start studying the English Language?

Kindergarten ☐

Primary ☐

Secondary ☐

University ☐

4. Were you ever taught the English language by a native English speaker?

Yes ☐ (If yes, respond to question 5 and 6)

No ☐

5. At which level of study did you experience this?

University ☐

Secondary ☐

Primary ☐

Kindergarten ☐

6. Under which category did the institution fall?

Government ☐

Private ☐

7. Have you ever had the opportunity to live in a country where English is the native language?

Yes ☐ (If your answer is yes, respond to questions 8 and 9)

No ☐

8. For how long did you stay in that country?

Days ☐

Weeks ☐

Months ☐

Years ☐

9. What was the purpose of staying in that country?

Studying ☐

Vacation ☐

Seminar/workshop ☐

Other (Please specify).....

10. For what purposes did you use the English language during your stay in the English speaking country?

Socializing with the native people ☐

Teaching and learning ☐

Exchange of greetings ☐

Other (Please specify).....

11. Which environment do you normally use the English language?

University ☐

Home ☐

Home and University ☐

12. Which language do you use with your colleagues?

Native (local) language ☐

English language ☐

13. What do you normally use the English language for?

Socialization activities ☐

To access information on the internet ☐

Reading the newspaper ☐

During teaching and learning activities ☐

14. Which language do you prefer in order to understand conversations and explanations better?

English ☐

Native (local) language ☐

15. Are you comfortable using English in your daily activities?

Yes ☐

No ☐

16. Interlanguage Pragmatic Awareness in English

Are you comfortable using the English language in your daily activities?

Yes ☐

No ☐

17. Do you mind studying the culture of the English language?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Moderate ☐

18. Do you think the appropriateness and accurateness of messages in the English language is key?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Moderate ☐

19. Is it important to consider context and word choice when communicating using the English language?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Moderate ☐

20. Is background of the other person important when requesting or refusing?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Moderate ☐

21. Does your local language influence your performance in the English second language?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Moderate ☐

22. Can the use of requests and refusals affect the way people communicate?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Moderate ☐

23. Does it matter to consider culture when communicating with another person?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Moderate ☐