



# NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF COMMERCE, HUMAN SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGES

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF THE TVET WORKFORCE AT THE  
NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ENGLISH  
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BY

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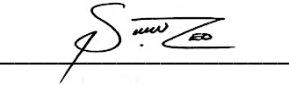
## ABSTRACT

This thesis explored the pragmatic competence of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) workforce at the National Youth Service (NYS) by emphasising the problems of the lack successful communication in a multicultural and multilingual workforce. The study addressed the issue of communication discrepancies, a lack of clarity in instructions, and insufficient feedback mechanisms, which impede workforce performance and reduce organisational efficiency. The study is significant because it emphasised the need for enhanced communication tactics to increase productivity and cooperation in the workplace, hence contributing to the efficiency of NYS training programmes. This is a qualitative study and a semi-structured interview guide. A Pragmatic Competence Discourse Completion Tests were used to collect data, with three primary objectives: analysing pragmatic competence, investigating politeness principles, and measuring the consequences of pragmatic failure. The findings indicate modest levels of pragmatic competence, with politeness methods being helpful in conflict resolution and collaboration. However, the workforce faces considerable hurdles due to communication breakdowns and pragmatic failures, which cause operational disruptions and reduced team cohesion. The findings further reveal that the TVET workforce at the NYS has moderate pragmatic competence, with politeness strategies enhancing collaboration and reducing conflict. However, challenges like unclear instructions and delayed feedback lead to inefficiencies and lowered team cohesion. The study concluded that structured communication and regular feedback are essential to enhance productivity, morale, and teamwork at NYS.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic competence, communication barriers, politeness strategies, feedback mechanisms, TVET workforce, National Youth Service (NYS), operational efficiency

## DECLARATION

I, **Elias Opena Shilemba**, hereby declare that the thesis titled “**An Exploration into the Pragmatic Competence of the TVET Workforce at the National Youth Service**” is my original work. This thesis has not, either in whole or in part, been submitted to any university or other institution of higher learning to obtain an academic degree or qualification.

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated with profound gratitude to my beloved parents. To my mother, whose unending care and guidance have shaped the person I am today, and to my late father, whose memory remains a guiding light and source of strength. Their nurturing, sacrifice, and values laid the foundation for this achievement and have instilled in me a lasting sense of responsibility and perseverance.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

NYS – National Youth Service

ESL – English Second Language

TVET – Technical and Vocational Education and Training



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Communication is critical in creating organisational interactions, particularly in the National Youth Service (NYS) setting. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) workforce is essential in providing young people with the skills and information they need for professional development, thereby contributing to national progress (Jembere et al., 2023). Effective communication is supported by practical language skills that allow people to interact competently in various circumstances. However, issues such as misunderstandings and misinterpretations have been discovered in the TVET industry (Yasak & Alias, 2020). This study aimed to look into the experiences, viewpoints, and issues that TVET professionals in National Youth Service confront to improve language competency and foster a more productive workplace.

On its basis, excellent organisational communication facilitates effective communication, resulting in teams collaborating and achieving goals with little conflict (Smith, 2018). This is especially significant in the NYS, where a qualified and competent TVET workforce is required (Jones, 2020). The TVET workforce is responsible for providing youths with technical skills and information to prepare them for vocational growth and, ultimately, national development (Brown, 2019).

Pragmatic competence, which is essential for communicative competence enables students to utilise language skilfully and properly in many social settings (Thomas, 2017). García (2021) emphasises the importance of context, social dynamics, and human complexity in addition to linguistic ability. The TVET workforce places a high value on pragmatic competence in the context of workplace communication since they communicate with colleagues, supervisors, trainees, and the society at large regularly (Roberts, 2019).

Pragmatic competence, which is essential for communicative competence (Thomas, 2017), enables students to use language skilfully and properly in various social settings. García (2021) emphasises the importance of context, social dynamics, and human complexity alongside linguistic ability. In the context of workplace communication, pragmatic competence is highly valued in the TVET workforce, as professionals must interact regularly with colleagues, supervisors, trainees, and society at large (Roberts, 2019).

It is acknowledged that pragmatic competence is a necessity (Anderson, 2018); nonetheless, there is concern about how it may be applied to National Youth Service. There are challenges considered that

arise from a pragmatic lack in the workforce, which manifests itself through communication problems, resulting in employee misconceptions and misinterpretations of what is communicated to them. Such obstacles may jeopardise not just communication efficacy but also the establishment of pleasant workplace relationships and the achievement of organisational goals (Clark, 2021).

Recognising the importance of effective information sharing and the potential consequences of pragmatic abilities, this study seeks to give insight into the observations, estimations, and problems encountered by NYS personnel in the context of the TVET system. In this way, by explaining how excessive reliance on knowledge about the rules of language use in interaction affects workplace communication (Baker, 2019), the study aimed to identify the virtues that promote effective interaction and the weaknesses that should be avoided to foster professional cooperation (Turner, 2020).

On this account, a qualitative approach was adopted for the study (Smith & Johnson, 2018). The primary justification for employing a qualitative study approach was its effectiveness in eliciting specific information about pragmatic competence within the TVET workforce. The ultimate objective of the research is to make a conceptual contribution to improving workplace communication and building better interpersonal relationships, as well as providing the best outcomes for the TVET workforce in the National Youth Service (Harris, 2021). The analysis of pragmatic competence in this work may contribute to addressing current problems, and the experience of further enhancing efficient communication in the context of the vocationally related working environment, as well as the discourse about the conditions for the development of vocational education and training, could be developed and enriched (Lewis, 2020).

The technical and vocational education and training sector is critical for providing individuals with the practical skills and knowledge required for employment and economic advancement. In this regard, Namibia's National Youth Service is an essential agency in preparing young people to satisfy labour market demands. As part of its goal, the NYS plans to offer comprehensive vocational education that emphasises both technical skills and good workplace communication.

Masduki and Zakaria (2020) state that interaction in vocational training refers to how individuals operate inside and among themselves, as well as how they carry out their obligations. The nature of professional communication influences pragmatic competence, which refers to practical proficiency in using language in various aspects of interpersonal communication, as well as politeness norms that guide language use in the context of respect and mutual consideration (Joo, 2024). These skills are especially important when working in multicultural workplaces like those in the NYS, where trainees and staff may come from many origins and have varied expectations and communication styles.

The relevance of pragmatic competence in improving workplace communication has been recognised worldwide, but there appears to be a dearth of studies on how these abilities are acquired and integrated into NYS TVET. Previous research studies have frequently concentrated on other job settings, ignoring the unique demands of educational and vocational workplace situations (Beer & Mulder 2020; Clarke et al., 2021). Furthermore, no empirical research has particularly examined the nature of speech actions, politeness standards, and pragmatic knowledge among TVET trainees and staff.

In vocational training, the capacity to operate in professional hierarchies, encourage individuals, and have productive alternate modes of communication that relate to the native culture is critical. In this scenario, pragmatic competence allows people to make acceptant requests and apologies, praise and refuse demands without offending others, resulting in efficient partnerships (Bouhanna et al., 2022). Furthermore, politeness principles drawn from notions such as Geoffrey Leech's politeness theory give guidance on how a person might reduce breaches of another's facial niche and improve courteous conduct (Ahmadi & Weisi, 2023).

The current study aimed to fill this research gap by exploring the nature of pragmatic competence as well as politeness standards in workplace communication in NYS. With an end view of identifying the nature of communication that transpires in a Vocational Training environment, the research design of this study, therefore, involved an exploratory research approach to capture the topics under analysis more realistically than is available in other research approaches.

This inquiry is especially pertinent and relevant considering the changing structure of the workforce and the growing focus on soft skills alongside technical ability. Understanding how pragmatic competence may be developed and implemented in the TVET setting can benefit instructors, policymakers, and practitioners looking to enhance communication training and results for vocational trainees.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Concerning the specific context of the National Youth Service Rietfontein and the TVET programmes offered there, one of the striking concerns that emerge is that there would be pragmatic skills deficiencies in workplace communication. The consideration of this environment, distinguished by training programmes aimed at young people and diversified staff, has been welcomed. Cohesion loss seems to occur in the form of misunderstandings, interpersonal relationship problems, or miscommunication, which may impact the organisation. Therefore, the current issue lies in having to assess as well as address the pragmatic competency deficits within the Technical and Vocational

Education and Training force in the National Youth Service (NYS). Communication apprehension and mutual comprehension have become issues such as misunderstandings and issues regarding the relations of the employees. This might dilute the organisation's productivity and efficiency, whose objective is to enhance operational effectiveness (Anderson, 2018).

According to Thomas (2017), pragmatic competence is about how well someone uses language to communicate effectively. It is important for good communication. Anderson (2018) shows that not being good at understanding social cues can make it harder to communicate at work. This can cause people not to understand each other and harm their relationships. This evidence shows that there is a gap in the research, and more investigation is needed to understand how employees in a specific job setting feel and think about practical skills.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

This study aimed to investigate pragmatic competence among the TVET Workforce within the National Youth Service Rietfontein and was guided by the following specific objectives:

This study aimed to:

- analyse the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at NYS Rietfontein.
- examine the relationship between politeness principles and the pragmatics competence of the TVET workforce at NYS Rietfontein.
- assess the consequences of the pragmatic failure of the TVET workforce at NYS Rietfontein.

### **1.4 Significance of the Research**

The study has significant implications for vocational education and training. This study, which investigates the pragmatic competence of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training workforce within the National Youth Service, provides an excellent opportunity to further our understanding of effective communication's critical role in the vocational setting.

The findings of this study show the potential for improving workplace communication dynamics in various ways. First and foremost, it seeks to enhance employee information sharing. Effective communication ensures that instructions are followed correctly, expectations are properly understood, and feedback is appropriately delivered and accepted. This can lead to enhanced efficiency and production at work.

Second, the study contributes to more productive dispute settlement. Conflicts arise in all organisational contexts. However, the ability to overcome these conflicts constructively is a sign of a



well-run business. Employees who understand and enhance their pragmatic competence will be better able to resolve conflicts and misunderstandings, resulting in more harmonious working relationships and a healthier workplace.

Third, the research enhances interpersonal relationships among employees. Strong interpersonal links are essential for team cohesion and cooperation. Effective and respectful communication among employees fosters trust and camaraderie, which is essential for cooperation and collaborative problem-solving.

Furthermore, the study's findings might inform the creation of specialist training programmes to increase the professional competencies of the TVET workforce. These training programmes may include classes on speech acts, civility tactics, and cross-cultural communication, thereby equipping employees with the skills needed to speak successfully in a range of workplace situations. By focusing on these areas, training programmes may help employees develop a comprehensive understanding of communication dynamics and improve their overall practical skills.

Beyond its immediate organisational implications, this study contributes to a broader topic on pragmatic competence in educational settings. It aligns with the National Youth Service's goal of developing skilled and socially capable individuals who will make major contributions to society. The findings can give important insights into how language proficiency influences vocational training and professional development, which can be applied to a variety of educational institutions and contexts. Furthermore, this study provides a starting point for enhancing vocational education procedures. It highlights the need to incorporate soft skills training, such as communication and interpersonal skills, within the vocational curriculum. This holistic approach to vocational education can produce well-rounded graduates who are not only technically proficient but also capable of efficiently managing the social aspects of the job.

In the final analysis, this study expands our understanding of how language competency influences the training landscape. It highlights the significance of a comprehensive approach to vocational education that involves critical communication skills as well as technical abilities. This paves the way for the development of more effective and inclusive training programmes that prepare TVET workers to meet the different needs of the modern workplace.

Overall, the study has the potential to make significant contributions to the area of vocational education and training by giving practical insights and realistic recommendations for improving the professional atmosphere at the National Youth Service and elsewhere.

## 1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses exclusively on Namibia's National Youth Service Reitfontein TVET workforce, specifically examining their workplace communication. The study did not extend to other organisations or industries, making the findings context-specific to NYS.

Additionally, only internal stakeholders including trainers, trainees, and administrative staff were included. External stakeholders such as industry partners, policymakers, and representatives from other institutions were excluded to ensure a focused investigation into internal communication.

The research primarily examined in-person interactions within the workplace. Alternative communication forms like emails, phone calls, and digital messaging were not explored in detail. This approach allowed for a thorough assessment of direct interpersonal interactions.

Furthermore, the study was delimited to the present timeframe and did not analyze historical shifts in workplace communication. Similarly, it was conducted in English as it is the language spoken within NYS, meaning cross-linguistic pragmatic variations in a multilingual setting were not fully explored. Lastly, the study employed a qualitative research design, focusing on participants' experiences and perspectives rather than quantitative statistical analysis.

## 1.6 Limitations of the Study

The findings are not applicable to other TVET institutions or industries beyond NYS due to the specific cultural and organisational context. The study relied on participants' willingness to share experiences, which may limit the depth of responses due to potential concerns about confidentiality or workplace dynamics. Given the fixed research period, long-term changes in communication styles over extended periods were not documented. The study's reliance on qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews and observations, means large-scale surveys or statistical models could not be used for broader generalization.

## 1.7 Definition of Technical Terms

This section defines the terms used in this study.

**Pragmatic Competence:** Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in different social contexts, encompassing the understanding of speech acts, politeness strategies and non-verbal cues to achieve successful communication (Touati & Horr, 2023).

<b>TVET:</b>	Stands for Technical and Vocational Educational Training. It encompasses educational and training Programmes that equip individuals with practical skills, knowledge, and competencies required for specific trades, professions, or industries (Okon, 2019).
<b>Speech Acts:</b>	Speech acts are communicative actions performed through language, such as making requests, giving advice, or offering apologies (Alfgh, & Mohammadzadeh, 2021).
<b>Politeness:</b>	Politeness involves using linguistic and non-verbal strategies to mitigate potential face-threatening situations in communication, ensuring respect, harmony, and appropriate social interaction (Abaya, et al., 2023).
<b>Politeness principles:</b>	These refer to minimising the expression of impolite beliefs and, in the process maximising the expression of polite beliefs (Leech, 1983, p. 81).
<b>Maxim:</b>	This is a strategy of politeness aimed at minimising impolite beliefs to others.

## **1.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter established the study subject, emphasising the need to investigate the link between staff incentive tactics and organisational productivity at the National Youth Service in Namibia. It offered background information, described the problem, detailed the study's goal and objectives, developed enquiries, highlighted the study's relevance, presented assumptions, delimitations, and limits, defined key terms, and outlined the project structure. The next chapter goes deeper into these issues to fully answer the study objectives.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1. Introduction

The current literature review delves into the intricate landscape of pragmatic competence literature review, which serves as a foundation for the discussions of this investigation. The primary objective of this study was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations, research discoveries, and conceptual frameworks that serve as the foundation for the three distinct objectives of this research endeavour. This review provides a theoretical framework for a thorough investigation of the perceptions and experiences of employees for pragmatic competence and civility. The objective of this study was to enhance the overall efficacy of the organisation and enhance workplace communication by utilising existing literature.

#### 2.2. Pragmatic Competence in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

##### 2.2.1 The Concept of Pragmatics

In this study, the pragmatic investigation entailed an exploration of how contextual factors, interpersonal connections, and inferred intentions of speakers influence the perception and transmission of meaning. As Barron (2023) outlines, pragmatics delves into the contextual-dependent qualities of meaning that go beyond the formal structures of syntax and the semantic relationships between signs and objects (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2020). It focuses instead on the dynamic interplay between language users and their interpretations of signals. According to Yang (2022), pragmatics as a discipline examines how these contextual factors shape our understanding of communication (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2020). This investigation involved analysing not only the linguistic competence of both speakers and listeners such as grammar and lexicon but also their ability to navigate and interpret the subtleties of meaning within specific social and situational contexts. Therefore, this study explored how pragmatic competence allows individuals to understand and effectively use language in diverse communicative settings by considering the broader socio-cultural and interpersonal dimensions that influence meaning interpretation.

The discipline of pragmatics aims to clarify the strategies utilised by individuals who use language to effectively navigate and resolve situations when there is perceived ambiguity (Makin, 2021). Makin commences by presenting a conceptualization of pragmatic competence as the aptitude to comprehend the deliberate significance provided by a speaker. Conversely, the formation of pragmatic

awareness is widely recognised as a complex aspect of language learning that requires extensive practice for its cultivation.

When examining the definitions of pragmatics from various perspectives across different fields, several common threads emerge that highlight its essential characteristics. Firstly, pragmatics consistently emphasises the importance of context in shaping the interpretation and meaning of language. As noted by Borer (2018) and Qizi (2020), pragmatic studies delve into how situational contexts, prior knowledge about the participants, and the inferred intentions of speakers significantly influence communication outcomes. This recognition of context underscores pragmatics' focus on understanding language use beyond its structural and grammatical aspects, highlighting its dynamic and interactive nature in real-world settings.

Secondly, all definitions of pragmatics emphasise its interdisciplinary nature. According to Lebeder (2021), the term "pragmatics" is used broadly across different fields, indicating its relevance and application beyond linguistics alone. Pragmatics bridges linguistic analysis with insights from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and communication studies to comprehensively explore how language functions in social interaction. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the study of pragmatics by integrating diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks that contribute to a nuanced understanding of communicative behaviours.

Moreover, a commonality across these definitions is the focus on the relationship between language and its users. Pragmatics, as articulated by Morris, Carnap, and Peirce, and reiterated by contemporary scholars, examines how language users employ and interpret linguistic signals within specific communicative contexts (Lebeder, 2021). This user-centred perspective acknowledges that meaning is co-constructed through interaction, involving both speakers and listeners who negotiate understanding based on shared linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge.

What unites these diverse perspectives on pragmatics is their recognition of context, their interdisciplinary scope, and their emphasis on the interactive nature of language use. Pragmatics emerges as a field dedicated to unravelling the complexities of communication by considering how linguistic expressions are shaped by contextual variables and interpreted through shared cognitive and social frameworks (Broer, 2018). These foundational aspects underscore pragmatics' significance in elucidating the intricacies of human interaction through language.

Investigating both the production of utterances by speakers and the understanding of those utterances by recipients is fundamental in pragmatic analysis for several reasons. Firstly, this approach ensures a comprehensive examination of communication dynamics, recognizing that the intended meaning of a

message may differ from its interpretation due to contextual factors, cultural nuances, and individual perspectives (Lebeder, 2021). By studying how speakers formulate their messages and how recipients interpret them, researchers gain insights into pragmatic competence and how effectively individuals use language to achieve communicative goals in diverse social contexts. This dual perspective not only enriches theoretical understanding but also informs practical applications in fields such as language teaching, where educators can enhance learners' ability to both produce and comprehend language in real-world settings (Lebeder, 2018).

Furthermore, analysing both sides of communication facilitates a nuanced exploration of contextual relevance and adaptation. It enables researchers to delve into how language functions within specific environments, adapting to social norms, power dynamics, and cultural expectations. This understanding is crucial for addressing the complexities of communication across different contexts and domains, from everyday interactions to professional settings (Barron, 2023). Moreover, by uncovering the social and cultural implications of language use, this approach contributes to broader discussions on identity, power relations, and interpersonal dynamics shaped by communication. Ultimately, investigating both production and interpretation in pragmatic analysis not only deepens scholarly inquiry but also enhances practical strategies for effective communication across diverse linguistic and cultural landscapes (Lebeder, 2018).

According to Huang (2017), pragmatics can be conceptualised as an academic discipline that involves the systematic analysis of communicative behaviour and the evaluation of its appropriateness under certain contextual circumstances. This research study focuses on the examination of action research, specifically exploring the conceptualisation of action, the distinction between action and activity, the essential conditions for achieving successful action, and the dynamic relationship between action and its broader contextual factors.

Huang (2017) presented a definition of pragmatics by conducting a comparative investigation of two separate philosophical systems. Anglo-American pragmatics refers to the scholarly exploration of linguistic meaning, with a specific focus on how meaning is constructed and impacted by language usage. The main research domains are implicature, presupposition, speech acts, deixis, reference, and context, alongside pragmatic and semantic cooperation, and competition. In this field of study, the author has effectively delineated the differentiation between the relevance theory and the classical and neo-Gricean pragmatic theories, which serve as two major and divergent theoretical frameworks (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2020). Within the European Continental traditions, the second theoretical framework presents a perspective on pragmatics that emphasises the role of the individual in providing a definition. From this standpoint, pragmatics is defined as a comprehensive functional perspective that incorporates cognitive, social, and cultural elements of linguistic events about their impact on

behavioural manifestations. The current concept asserts that pragmatics develops a functional relationship between all aspects of language behaviour (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 2020).

In the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training at the National Youth Service, assessing pragmatic competence involves understanding how well individuals can apply linguistic rules to achieve effective communication outcomes. Studies by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (2016) highlight the importance of pragmatic competence in professional settings, where effective communication skills are essential for workplace success. Research has shown that pragmatic competence includes not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to interpret and produce language in ways that are contextually and socially appropriate (Rose, 2017). For the TVET workforce at NYS, pragmatic competence is crucial for navigating interactions with colleagues, supervisors, and clients, ensuring clear communication and successful task completion.

### **2.2.2. Understanding Pragmatic Competence**

In the past decade, pragmatic competence has been acknowledged as a vital component of language ability. Before the 1970s, research on language competence mainly focused on learners' ability to produce grammatically correct words and forms. It was not until 1990 when Bachman (1990) proposed the model of language ability, that the concept of pragmatic competence became an essential part of communicative language ability. According to Alharbi (2018), pragmatic competence is separate from grammatical and discourse organisation. It relates to the functional aspect of language, coordinating with the formal aspects of language use to ensure successful communication.

Félix-Brasdefer (2021) defines pragmatic competence as the ability to use language effectively to achieve specific purposes and to understand language in context. This definition is particularly relevant to this research, which explores pragmatic competence within the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service (NYS). By analysing the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at NYS, this study provides insights into how effectively these individuals use language to accomplish their tasks and interact within their professional environment. Furthermore, examining the relationship between politeness principles and pragmatic competence sheds light on the social dynamics and communication strategies employed by the workforce. Additionally, evaluating the consequences of pragmatic failures helps identify areas where communication breakdowns occur, potentially impacting the efficiency and cohesion of the workforce. This research contributes to the understanding of pragmatic competence in professional settings, ultimately enhancing communication and performance within the TVET sector at NYS.

Pragmatic competence is the capacity to utilise language effectively and responsibly in a variety of social situations (Holtgraves, 2016). It entails comprehending and executing speech acts (such as requests, apologies, and suggestions), as well as adapting language usage to the social environment and cultural standards. To effectively employ a language, a comprehensive comprehension of pragmatics is necessary. Pragmatic competence constitutes an integral facet of communication competence. According to Mey (2019), active engagement requires the usage of both linguistic and pragmatic communication skills. According to Chomsky (1981, as cited in Kasper, 2014), pragmatic competence can be characterised as the ability to proficiently locate language within the institutional contexts in which it is utilised, by creating correlations between intentions and goals and the linguistic resources available. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability of individuals to effectively select grammatically suitable statements from a diverse set of feasible choices, considering unique presuppositions, language conventions, and cultural standards enforced by members of a particular speech community.

Laila's (2020) study focused on examining formal request strategies in written form among adult English language learners who are native speakers of Cantonese in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, China, encompassing varying proficiency levels. Although the specific location of the study isn't detailed in the paragraph, it typically involves university settings where English language learning programmes are prevalent, possibly in regions with a significant Cantonese-speaking population such as Hong Kong or parts of Southern China.

In relation to the study, the aim is to investigate pragmatic competence in spoken interactions among English language learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Building upon Laila's (2020) focus on written formal requests, the research seeks to expand this inquiry into spontaneous spoken communication. Specifically, it intends to explore how pragmatic judgment and performance manifest in everyday spoken interactions, examining variables such as politeness, directness, formality, and information quantity. Drawing on methodologies that allow for real-time analysis of conversational data, the study will contribute to understanding how English language learners navigate and develop pragmatic skills in live interactions, potentially revealing similarities or differences compared to written contexts as studied by Laila (2020).

By connecting to Laila's (2020) findings, which suggest a correlation between English proficiency levels and pragmatic competence among Cantonese-speaking learners, the research aims to deepen insights into the broader applicability of these findings across different communicative modalities. This approach not only extends the scope of inquiry but also underscores the relevance of pragmatic competence research in enhancing language teaching methodologies and fostering effective cross-cultural communication.



Borer (2018) posed issues of the language dimension of pragmatics, as well as its contextual factors. The concept of "context" refers to the broader setting in which a discourse event occurs, covering several significant factors such as individuals involved, physical location, cultural influences, and chronological features. The linguistic aspect of a discourse event includes the specific verbal expressions that are generated, comprising both the semantic interpretations of the words utilised and the grammatical or syntactical structures employed.

In his study, Kasper (2014) utilised a mixed methods approach to investigate the impact of studying abroad on the development of pragmatic competence in Thai English learners in Thailand. The focus of this study is to analyse the progression of request speech acts, utilising the politeness theory put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987). A quantitative research study was conducted to investigate six distinct dimensions of requests, encompassing request perspectives, request approaches, internal modifications, request frameworks, vigilance, and supportive measures. The supplementary investigations and semi-structured interviews carried out by the EDCT offer valuable insights into participants' perspectives on the generation of requests and the development of their second language (L2) proficiency.

The findings from the analysis of interview data indicate that students who participate in studying abroad hold a significantly favourable outlook toward the possible influence of this experience on their pragmatic development. The development can be attributed to increased confidence stemming from enhanced exposure to real-world events. The experiences of second language (L2) students from various communities and cultures who complete their studies abroad and subsequently return to their respective countries might serve as a valuable topic for examination, specifically in the context of a case study. Taghizadeh (2017) posits that there exists a contention suggesting that persons who have a high degree of mastery in grammatical structures within a given language may not necessarily possess an equivalent level of expertise in the pragmatic dimensions of communication. The findings suggest that there is a lack of significant association between assessments of grammatical proficiency and the capacity to communicate effectively.

Pragmatic competence (PC) plays a crucial role in enhancing workforce employability and efficiency within the framework of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in several concrete ways (Coffelt & Smith, 2020). Firstly, PC enables individuals to effectively navigate workplace communication, which often involves understanding and appropriately utilizing language functions such as making requests, providing feedback, negotiating tasks, and resolving conflicts. Proficiency in these areas not only fosters clear and efficient communication among colleagues and supervisors but also contributes to a positive work environment conducive to productivity and collaboration (Borer, 2018).

Secondly, PC allows individuals to adapt their language use to different professional contexts and audiences (Ramamurthy et al., 2021). This adaptability is essential in TVET settings where employees interact with diverse stakeholders, including clients, customers, and industry partners. The ability to convey information, demonstrate respect through appropriate language choices, and understand cultural nuances in communication enhances the organisation's reputation and strengthens relationships crucial for business success (Ramamurthy et al., 2021).

Moreover, PC influences employability by demonstrating a candidate's readiness for professional roles that require strong interpersonal and communication skills. Employers increasingly value candidates who can engage effectively in teamwork, resolve conflicts diplomatically, and convey ideas persuasively (Coffelt & Smith, 2020). These skills are directly supported by pragmatic competence, which ensures that employees can contribute meaningfully to organizational goals and adapt to changing workplace demands (Papier, 2021).

In essence, pragmatic competence in TVET settings directly enhances workforce employability and efficiency by facilitating effective communication, promoting adaptability to diverse contexts, and demonstrating readiness for professional responsibilities that rely on strong interpersonal and language skills. This competency not only benefits individual career advancement but also contributes to the overall productivity and success of organizations within technical and vocational sectors (Coffelt & Smith, 2020).

Kentmen et al.'s (2023) research on pragmatic competence was conducted among adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Cyprus, focusing on their proficiency levels categorized as C1 and B2. The study utilised a multiple-choice discourse test (MCDT) and a discourse completion test (DCT) to assess learners' understanding of conversational implicates and their ability to navigate pragmatic elements in communication. Despite the specific location not being explicitly detailed in the paragraph, it's inferred that the research took place within educational institutions or language learning centres in Cyprus, where English language proficiency assessments and research on pragmatics are conducted. With this study, which examines pragmatic competence in a broader context, Kentmen et al.'s (2023) findings underscore the importance of teaching pragmatics in EFL classrooms. Their focus on illocutionary and sociolinguistic competencies aligns with my interest in exploring how these competencies manifest in spontaneous spoken interactions among adult language learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. By investigating similar pragmatic elements such as politeness strategies, formality, and cultural norms in live communication scenarios, the research aims to contribute further insights into how pragmatic competence develops and is applied in real-world settings.

Moreover, the emphasis on gender variations in pragmatic performance by Kentmen et al. (2023) prompts considerations of potential sociocultural influences on language use, which could be a valuable angle to explore in the study. By drawing connections to existing research, particularly in terms of methodology and thematic focus, the study seeks to build upon and expand the understanding of pragmatic competence across different linguistic and cultural contexts, potentially highlighting similarities or contrasts with findings from Cyprus-based research. This comparative approach enhances the applicability and relevance of pragmatic competence studies in diverse educational and professional settings.

The growing demand for soft skills in today's workforce emphasises the importance of pragmatic competence in TVET settings. Employers generally emphasise communication skills, including successful interactions with coworkers, clients, and stakeholders (Coffelt & Smith, 2020). In this perspective, pragmatic competence encompasses not just language accuracy but also the appropriateness and efficacy of communication in real-world professional settings.

According to research, TVET graduates have a lack of pragmatic skills, which might impede their professional success. According to research, while TVET programmes frequently focus on technical abilities, there is less emphasis on building the communication skills required for business interactions (Ramamurthy et al., 2021). Furthermore, Ramamurthy et al.'s (2021) study looked at the requirement for technical communication skills among Malaysian automotive graduates. Five specialists from various backgrounds were interviewed, with the primary focus on graduates' lack of technical communication language abilities. The experts emphasised the need for transferable technical communication skills as well as industry-training institution collaboration in developing pedagogical modules. The report recommends that skill-based colleges cooperate with industry to assess current requirements and educate graduates for the job, ensuring they have the appropriate technical communication skills. Hence the differences can cause misunderstandings, disagreements, and decreased effectiveness in professional situations.

Papier (2021) emphasises the need to include pragmatic competency training within TVET Programmes. Additionally, vocational education and training should use current technology to teach 21st-century skills including digital literacy, self-directed learning, and adaptive learning. These competencies are included in South African TVET policy (Papier, 2021). However, the COVID-19 epidemic pushed TVET colleges into crisis mode, forcing instructors to adjust to technology-dependent instruction (Papier, 2021). A poll of public TVET college trainers found worry, concern for students' well-being, and competing priorities between remote instruction and personal needs (Papier, 2021). The restricted research was exploratory during a period of uncertainty, but it allows us to grasp the

experiences of a vital component of the TVET college sector during an emergency (Papier, 2021). On the other hand, Ariani et al. (2021) their findings imply that specific education and practice in pragmatic skills can considerably improve students' capacity to use language effectively in a variety of circumstances. This includes instruction on how to make polite requests, manage arguments gracefully, and adjust language use to various professional contexts.

Furthermore, the development of pragmatic competence is intimately related to intercultural competence. In a globalised workplace, TVET graduates frequently deal with colleagues and clients from many cultural backgrounds. Understanding communication standards and expectations is critical for successful and courteous relationships (No, 2021). For the National Youth Service's TVET workforce, this implies that training Programmes should include intercultural communication components to prepare graduates for the global market.

### **2.2.3 Enhancing Pragmatic Competence in TVET**

The methods highlighted in the reviewed literature role-playing, simulations, feedback sessions, pragmatic competency assessments, and professional development for educators are highly relevant to improving communication and pragmatic competence within the National Youth Service (NYS) workforce, should this study identify areas for enhancement in these areas.

Firstly, employing role-playing and simulations akin to real-life working environments, as suggested by Telford et al. (2021), could be instrumental at NYS. These activities provide hands-on practice for learners to develop and refine their pragmatic abilities in controlled settings. By simulating scenarios relevant to NYS operations, such as team briefings, client interactions, or project planning meetings, participants can practice effective communication strategies and adapt their language use accordingly. Integrating feedback sessions, as mentioned, allows learners to reflect on their performance and receive constructive criticism. This process is essential for identifying strengths and areas needing improvement in pragmatic competence (Papier, 2021). At NYS, such feedback mechanisms could be crucial in helping participants understand how their communication styles impact teamwork, leadership, and client relations (Sadikov, 2021).

Furthermore, incorporating pragmatic competency assessments into NYS's educational framework aligns with Bachelor's (2022) recommendation tools like discourse completion tasks and pragmatic judgement exams can gauge learners' ability to apply appropriate language in specific contexts. Regular evaluation and feedback based on these assessments would not only help track progress but also guide targeted training interventions tailored to NYS's specific communication challenges.

Lastly, ensuring professional development for TVET educators at NYS, as emphasised by Sadikov (2021), is pivotal. Educators must possess the expertise to teach pragmatic competence effectively. This includes understanding the nuances of pragmatic language use and designing instructional activities that foster pragmatic skills tailored to NYS's operational contexts.

These strategies from the literature review offer practical approaches to enhance communication and pragmatic competence within NYS. The study identifies gaps or areas needing improvement in pragmatic skills among NYS participants, implementing these methods could effectively address those needs, thereby boosting employability and workplace efficiency among TVET graduates. By integrating these insights into NYS's training Programmes and supporting educators' professional development, educational institutions can better prepare learners for the communication demands of their future careers.

#### **2.4. The Relationship Between Politeness Principles and the Pragmatic Competence**

Politeness rules play an important role in pragmatic competence, affecting how people use language to communicate effectively and appropriately in social situations (Barberi-Weil, 2023). Individuals in the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) workforce must understand and adhere to these principles while interacting with varied stakeholders in a variety of professional contexts.

According to Borer's (2018) research, politeness is characterised by a combination of verbal and non-verbal behaviours that demonstrate an individual's concern for the emotional well of others, specifically with appropriate treatment. Politeness, as defined by Félix-Brasdefer (2021), is the act of demonstrating consideration for the physical aspect or demeanour of another individual by attentively acknowledging it. Alharbi (2018) posits that politeness functions as a mechanism for evaluation, requiring the assessment of both the actions and interpersonal dispositions of individuals. It is undeniable that the concept of decorum is of great significance in the establishment and preservation of interpersonal relationships. This phenomenon arises when individuals, following their perception of social norms, exhibit behaviour that is deemed courteous in a particular circumstance. In doing so, they actively endeavour to align themselves with shared societal values, which leads to the elicitation of positive emotive reactions from others.

Consequently, the examination of politeness provides significant perspectives on the overarching norms present within in-groups, society, and culture, which serve as the foundation for individuals' positive and evaluative interpersonal behaviour. Barberi-Weil (2023) posits that civility can be comprehended as a societal phenomenon that incorporates both verbal and nonverbal components. Furthermore, the examination of politeness offers valuable insights into the societal norms that dictate the utilisation of language in interpersonal interactions.

Origie (2015) asserts that numerous studies have been undertaken to examine the significance of civility in interpersonal communication. To maintain a sense of politeness, the speaker must conform to the listener's anticipated norms and employ specific strategies throughout social exchanges. Several of these ways illustrate the relationship between politeness and the utilisation of indirect communication strategies. The effectiveness of communication strategies relies on several factors that impact the style and substance of encounters, including those related to social proximity and closeness (Qizi, 2020).

Alharbi (2018) explored the phenomenon of politeness across different cultures, examining whether there are similarities or differences in the ways other cultures express politeness. According to Mey (2019), the examination of politeness incorporates viewpoints from both pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The influence of politeness theories on multiple areas within linguistic subfields is widely acknowledged. Civility is a concept that relates to the relationship between language and society, with a particular focus on the utilisation of pragmatic language (Mey, 2019).

Dey (2023) defines sociolinguistics as the scholarly investigation of the factors influencing our selection of vocabulary, addressees, temporal considerations, and spatial context. In contrast, pragmatics is concerned with the examination of individuals' intentions when utilising language in routine social interactions. Blitvich and Sifianou (2019) assert that the pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspectives offer significant insights into politeness theory by emphasising the interplay between language and social context in the manifestation of politeness. According to Tinker (2019), the concept of civility in verbal communication undergoes continuous reaffirmation and reassessment, irrespective of temporal or spatial contexts. Various linguists have presented their interpretations of politeness, although Watts contends that they unanimously agree on the importance of the concept of face in the analysis of linguistic politeness. Hence, it is necessary to analyse the succeeding dimensions of civility, including politeness and cultural variations, negative and positive faces, and other significant aspects of language and communication that will be further elaborated upon in the subsequent sections (Lee, 2020).

Politeness can be conceptualised as a social construct that serves multiple purposes, including fostering positive interpersonal connections and adhering to societal norms. The phenomenon in question possesses inherent qualities of being utilitarian and normative (Leech, 2014). Politeness in the context of pragmatics studies is intricately linked to how individuals use language to navigate social interactions and maintain harmonious relationships. It goes beyond mere social etiquette, encompassing linguistic strategies that speakers employ to mitigate potential face threats or maintain positive face in communication (Nguyen & Nguyen (2021). Understanding politeness is vital in

pragmatic analysis because it sheds light on how language users manage social norms, power dynamics, and cultural expectations through their communicative acts.

One of the key reasons to consider politeness in pragmatic analysis is its role in influencing communicative strategies and interpretations. Politeness theories, such as Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, provide frameworks for understanding how speakers choose linguistic forms (e.g., indirect requests, hedges) to achieve specific pragmatic goals while preserving social harmony (Lee, 2020). By examining politeness strategies, researchers can uncover underlying cultural norms and societal expectations that shape language use in diverse contexts (Lee, 2020).

However, pragmatic analysis also reveals complexities and potential ambiguities in politeness phenomena (Qizi, 2020). For instance, what is perceived as polite in one cultural context may be interpreted differently in another. This cultural variability challenges universal assertions about politeness and underscores the need for context-specific analyses. Additionally, pragmatics studies might reveal instances where politeness strategies interact with other pragmatic principles, such as implicature and speech act theory, leading to nuanced interpretations and potential conflicts.

While Leech (2014) views politeness as primarily utilitarian and normative, pragmatic analysis invites scrutiny into whether politeness strategies universally achieve their intended social functions or if they inadvertently lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Such critical examination encourages researchers to question assumptions and explore how politeness norms evolve and adapt in changing linguistic landscapes.

In this study, the aim was to explore these issues by examining how politeness operates within specific communicative contexts among diverse language learners. By conducting pragmatic analyses that consider both linguistic forms and cultural contexts, the study hopes to contribute insights into how politeness influences communication effectiveness and whether existing politeness theories adequately capture the complexities observed in real-world interactions. This approach not only enriches theoretical understanding but also informs practical applications in language teaching and intercultural communication, where awareness of politeness dynamics is crucial for fostering effective and respectful communication across diverse settings.

Leech's primary theoretical framework in the field of politeness phenomena is around the cost-benefit scale, which encompasses several factors on both the speaker and the hearer. Politeness encompasses the social norms and behaviours that individuals employ to demonstrate respect, consideration, and courtesy towards others in various interpersonal interactions (Barberi-Weil, 2023). According to Leech (2007), the 7 maxims hold a comparable significance to Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) and play a

crucial role in explaining the interplay between meaning and intention in human discourse (Barberi-Weil, 2023). The subsequent section presents a detailed account of each instance that offers an analysis of conversational data in which the concept of CP (Conversational Principle) appears to be ineffective or insufficient, as discussed by Brown (2017).

Leech (2014) posits the existence of a politeness principle that exhibits conversational maxims akin to those articulated by Paul Grice. The author enumerates six principles, namely tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy.

The initial and subsequent forms constitute a pair, just as the third and fourth forms do. The variations in maxims across cultures are evident, as what is deemed polite in one culture may be perceived as peculiar or even impolite in another. This highlights the need to minimise costs and maximise benefits for both the speaker and the listener (Leech, 2007). The concept of politeness principles refers to the set of social norms and guidelines that govern appropriate behaviour in interpersonal communication. These principles serve the concepts of politeness and encompass six maxims, which include tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The subsequent section provides a more comprehensive elucidation of these maxims (Barberi-Weil, 2023).

Politeness principles play a pivotal role in shaping pragmatic competence by guiding how individuals manage interpersonal relations through language use. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978) provides a framework for understanding how politeness strategies, such as face-saving acts and redressive actions, influence communication effectiveness. Studies by Holmes (2019) and Culpeper (2021) illustrate how politeness norms vary across cultures and contexts, impacting communication strategies in professional environments. In the TVET context at NYS, examining the relationship between politeness principles and pragmatic competence can reveal how adherence to cultural norms and social expectations enhances or hinders effective communication. Understanding these dynamics helps identify areas where training or support in politeness strategies can improve pragmatic competence among TVET professionals, fostering better workplace relations and service delivery.

#### **2.4.1 Politeness Principles**

Politeness principles in communication have been extensively studied in linguistics and sociolinguistics, primarily influenced by the seminal work of sociolinguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. Their framework, introduced in 1978, outlines several key principles that govern polite behaviour in interactions across cultures (Naceur, 2023). Politeness is an essential component of human interaction, influencing how people manage their social connections via language. According to Naceur (2023), politeness proposes that politeness methods are employed to reduce face-threatening acts



(FTAs), which are activities that might affect the interlocutor's self-esteem (positive face) or autonomy (negative face).

This method is intended to meet the listener's need to be loved and valued (Gumartifa, 2022). It includes demonstrations of companionship, unity, and kindness. Compliments, expressions of curiosity, and inclusive language are all good examples. This method is based on the listener's wish not to be imposed upon (Naceur (2023). To minimise imposition, it uses respect, formality, and indirectness. Hedging, apologising, and asking questions instead of demands are some examples.

Politeness principles form the bedrock of effective interpersonal communication, encompassing theories and frameworks that guide how individuals navigate social interactions while preserving face and harmony (Alghasab & Alvarez-Ayure, 2023). Grounded in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory established foundational concepts such as positive and negative politeness strategies, emphasizing the importance of managing social identity and minimizing face threats (Alghasab & Alvarez-Ayure, 2023). Building on this, scholars like Lakoff and Leech expanded the discourse by exploring linguistic politeness and contextual norms that influence polite discourse. Cultural variability in politeness norms has been extensively studied, highlighting how different cultures shape communication styles and expectations.

Concepts such as facework, introduced by Goffman, further illustrate the strategies individuals employ to maintain face during interactions, balancing between face-saving acts and face-threatening acts (Adam, 2022). These principles find practical application across various domains, from organizational settings where hierarchical relations are negotiated, to cross-cultural exchanges where understanding cultural values mitigates potential misunderstandings. In contemporary contexts, politeness research extends to digital communication, investigating how politeness norms adapt in virtual environments shaped by anonymity and immediacy (Adam, 2022). This review highlights the dynamic interplay of politeness principles in shaping communication behaviours and fostering mutual understanding in diverse social and cultural landscapes.

#### **2.4.2 The Interrelationship between Politeness Principles and Pragmatic Competence**

Politeness principles are essential to pragmatic competence because they help individuals choose language forms that are contextually suitable and socially acceptable. Here are some important features of their relationship:

Understanding politeness rules is necessary for doing proper speech acts. Making a request (an FTA) can be softened by utilising negative politeness tactics, such as "Could you possibly...?" instead of a straight order. This not only expresses the request but also acknowledges the interlocutor's negative

expression (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In addition, Kurbanova et al. (2021) investigate the pragmatic aspects of word sentences in Uzbek, which are separate speech units. These phrases represent communicative purpose and substance from an illocutionary standpoint, and their analysis has shown differences in speech system units. They are classified into four categories: modal verbs, interjections, positive/negative words, and offer-indicative words. Furthermore, pragmatic competency entails choosing language that is appropriate for the social situation. Politeness standards serve as a basis for this choice. For example, at a formal business meeting, negative politeness methods (such as employing titles and formal language) are usually more acceptable than positive politeness strategies, which may be saved for more informal encounters (Kotarpath, 2020).

Politeness principles assist to manage and sustain interpersonal interactions. The effective use of these principles improves pragmatic competence by encouraging good interactions and lowering the likelihood of conflict or misunderstandings. This is especially crucial for TVET employees in terms of cooperation, customer relations, and cross-cultural communication (Kotarpath, 2020). Kotarpath (2020) examined the incorporation of cultural diversity and social capital components into technical and vocational education and training in locations such as Africa, the Middle East, Northern Africa, and North America. The PRISMA statement and a functional, organisational, and political approaches (FOPA) model are used in this review to examine the role of TVET in delivering inclusive and equitable quality education to a diverse community. The research contains 662 papers from 2000 to 2021. The findings indicate a lack of common understanding of the integration of cultural diversity and social capital elements in TVET education, implying that while TVET is aware of the value, it lacks clarity on how to apply it.

Pragmatic competence is inextricably tied to intercultural competence since politeness norms differ among cultures. Understanding and implementing proper politeness practices for various cultural situations is critical. For example, what is considered polite in one culture may be seen as excessively formal or even impolite in another (Xafizovna, 2021). To successfully communicate in a globalised work world, the TVET worker must be aware of these variances. Nevertheless, Xafizovna's (2021) study sought to determine the influence of crucial success determinants on curriculum delivery in TVET colleges in Kenya's North Rift Region. It discovered that crucial success elements such as ISO training and communication had a strong correlation with curriculum delivery. The study also discovered that institutional culture moderated the diversity in curriculum delivery processes. The findings imply that TVET institutions should create instructional cultures that encourage high educational aims and human values, while also developing employee crucial elements and maintaining the curriculum delivery process. The institutional culture should also encourage the use of ISO training and information distribution.

### **2.4.3 Enhancing Pragmatic Competence through Politeness Training**

To improve pragmatic competence in the TVET workforce, specific education and practice using civility norms can be quite effective. This can be accomplished through a variety of methods:

These exercises can help one to gain practical experience with civility tactics in a variety of professional settings. Students, for example, can practice making courteous requests, calmly addressing arguments, and providing constructive comments (Arumugam et al., 2023). Constructive feedback on language usage and reflection on interactions can assist learners in understanding the efficiency of their politeness tactics and identifying areas for development (Lin et al., 2022). Incorporating intercultural communication aspects into training Programmes can assist students in comprehending and handling cultural differences in politeness standards, improving their general pragmatic competence (Alghasab & Alvarez-Ayure, 2023).

Another study looks into oral communication challenges between Sudanese EFL speakers in the UK and their English native interlocutors in casual interactions (Adam, 2022). Sudanese students encounter restricted vocabulary size, technical vocabulary, phrasal vocabulary, accent differences, regional dialects, and perceived speech pace. English native speakers must deal with suprasegmental traits, incorrect word use, and cross-cultural variances. Sudanese learners' pragmatic competency is excellent while completing Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) situations, although English native speakers point out issues such as insufficient explanation and unusual pronunciation. The findings might assist non-native speakers create communication methods and increase socio-pragmatic awareness.

Politeness norms are fundamental to pragmatic competence, leading people to use language that is both contextually appropriate and socially acceptable. Understanding and following these concepts is critical for TVET employees to communicate effectively in a variety of professional situations. Integrating politeness training into TVET programmes allows educational institutions to better prepare their students for the intricacies of workplace interactions, increasing their employability and professional success.

#### **2.4.4. Tact Maxim**

Tact can be defined as a proficient ability to comprehend and navigate interpersonal dynamics and circumstances in a manner that avoids provoking offence. Leech (2007) proposes a division of the tact maxim into two distinct principles: the first principle aims to minimise the cost imposed on others, while the second principle seeks to maximise the benefit provided to others (Leech, 2007). The

fundamental concept of the tact maxim is centred on the notion that communicators should consistently adhere to the principle of minimising their own advantage while simultaneously maximising the advantage of the other party involved in the communication process. According to Leech (2007), there exists a positive correlation between the length of an individual's speech and their inclination to exhibit politeness towards others. Moreover, it is commonly observed that indirect speech tends to exhibit a higher level of politeness compared to direct speaking (Barberi-Weil, 2023). The concept of "minimising cost to others" implies that as the cost increases, the statement becomes more indirect (Adam, 2022). The phrase "Open the door!" can be classified as a form of direct instruction, which is generally perceived as less polite when compared to other expressions such as "Could you please open the door?" or "Would you mind opening the door?" These alternative phrases are considered politer due to their increased level of indirectness and the inclusion of optional elements.

Consequently, the expenditure is minimised, rendering it socially acceptable. Conversely, the principle of "Maximise benefits to others" posits that as the level of benefit increases, the degree of indirectness in the statement decreases (Leech, 2014). In this situation, it is assumed that a direct approach is preferred above an oblique approach when making an offer. Expressions such as "Please have some more cake!" aim to optimise the advantage for the recipient.

Another illustration of the principle of tact maxim can be observed in educational endeavours, specifically in the context of teaching and learning. An instance of this can be found in the instructional practice of encouraging students to actively engage with the material by posing questions such as, "Would you like to attempt to answer the question?" I am willing to aid you. If teachers employ a more pleasant approach when addressing students, it has the potential to alleviate student anxiety and enhance their inclination to engage in classroom activities (Adam, 2022).

#### **2.4.5. Generosity Maxim**

According to Leech (as cited in Kasper, 2014), the concept of generosity maxim refers to the practice of speakers maximising their respect for others while minimising any potential disrespect towards them. The objective of the generosity maxim is to minimise the speaker's profit and maximise the speaker's loss (Kasper, 2014). There is a positive correlation between the virtue of generosity and the trait of tact, which is often associated with a self-centred ethic. According to Leech (as cited in Astia, 2020), it has been suggested that the generosity maxim and tact maxim can operate in conjunction with one another. In the given utterance "*You may borrow my book,*" there exists a penalty for the speaker and a gain for the addressee. A greater degree of politeness can be attained by avoiding the mention of the listener as the recipient. For instance, instead of saying "*May I have tea?*" it is even

more polite to phrase it as "Is there any tea?" where the speaker does not position themselves as the benefit. Furthermore, Alghasab and Alvarez-Ayure (2023) assert that teachers often employ apologetic language as a means of conveying their benevolence toward students.

#### **2.4.6. Approbation Maxim**

According to Leech (as cited in Xafizovna, 2021), the approval maxim entails that every communicator should aim to maximise their loss while minimising their profit. Furthermore, the utilisation of the approval maxim serves as a strategy to refrain from expressing unfavourable remarks towards the recipient (Xafizovna, 2021). In the example, as cited by Kurbanova et al. (2021), pupils possess a strong inclination to seek recognition and acknowledgement from their teachers. Educators ought to employ the principle of approval to acknowledge and foster students' accomplishments. The above text serves as an illustrative sample. "Congratulations on your achievement!" "You demonstrated exceptional performance in the previous examination."

Utilising this term is likely to enhance the level of confidence and active engagement exhibited by students throughout classroom activities.

The principle of the approbation maxim can be applied not just to acknowledge students' achievements but also to handle situations where students provide incorrect answers. In such cases, teachers should utilise this maxim to avoid offending students' feelings. For instance, instead of directly criticising a student, a teacher could say, "*You have demonstrated progress, but I believe you can further improve your understanding by dedicating more effort to your studies.*" The students will likely receive the word with a positive attitude since they see that the teacher holds a high level of respect for them.

#### **2.4.7. Modesty Maxim**

According to Leech (2007), the definition of the modesty maxim might be characterised as "self-centred." This principle necessitates that every communicator should minimise their self-regard. The principle of modesty maxim entails that communicators are anticipated to demonstrate humility by minimising self-praise. In the given instance:

**A:** "*Your vocal abilities are exceptional.*"

**B:** "*Certainly, I possess a highly melodious vocal quality.*"

Person B is perceived as unfriendly due to their tendency to excessively emphasise and prioritise self-praise. Conversely, if the individual responds with gratitude but expresses self-doubt by stating, "*Thank*

*you, but I believe my abilities are not particularly exceptional,"* this is regarded as a more courteous and socially anticipated reply compared to the initial one.

#### **2.4.8. Agreement Maxim**

According to Hardini and Sitohang (2019), the concept of agreement maxim is aimed at maximising the level of compatibility and incompatibility between the speaker and the listener. The agreement maxim places emphasis on the mutual exchange of speech between communicators, ensuring that their communication is suitable and fosters compatibility. In the given instance:

**A:** *"Are you experiencing thermal discomfort in this enclosed space?"*

**B:** *"May I inquire as to the whereabouts of the remote control for the air conditioning unit?"*

In this case, both person A and person B share a common impression that they are experiencing a sensation of heat within the room.

Person B concurs with Person A's statement and inquires, *"May I inquire as to the whereabouts of the AC remote control?"*

#### **2.4.9. Sympathy Maxim**

According to Leech (as cited in Kasper, 2014), the concept of sympathy maxim pertains to the use of assertive and expressive words. This principle necessitates that every communicator strives to enhance empathy and reduce hostility towards the recipient. When the listener discusses happiness, it is expected that the speaker offers congratulations. When a listener expresses distress, tragedy, grief, or condolences towards speakers, it might be seen as a gesture of humility. The subsequent text serves as an illustration:

**A:** *"Finally, the company has decided to hire me."*

**B:** *"Congratulations on your recent employment acquisition. I wish you the best of luck in your new endeavour."*

In the scenario, individual A articulates their achievements and contentment, to which individual B responds by extending their felicitations. The six maxims of the politeness principle are shaped by the differentiation between negative and positive politeness.

Negative politeness refers to the act of reducing impoliteness, whereas positive politeness is the act of increasing politeness. Leech (2007) proposed that speech acts within the politeness principle might be categorised as either "other-centered" or "self-centered," making them bilateral in nature. This

bilateral aspect is evident in the tact and generosity maxim, as well as in the approbation and modesty maxim. The user did not provide any text to rewrite.

Based on these six maxims, it may be argued that not all the maxims hold equal importance. According to Kasper (2007), the influence of the tact maxim on our speech is stronger than that of the generosity maxim. Additionally, the approval maxim is deemed more significant than the modesty maxim. It has been suggested that a speaker can employ multiple maxims simultaneously.

Furthermore, Leech (2014) asserts that the "tact maxim" holds significant importance as a form of civility within English-speaking society.

## **2.5. Politeness Principles and Its Implication in the TVET Workforce**

Human beings engage in communication to transmit information and facilitate social engagement. Language serves as a crucial channel for facilitating social contact among individuals. Language plays a significant function in facilitating communication and conveying messages among individuals. According to Ogwudile (2019), language can be defined as a conventional and arbitrary system of symbolic sounds that is employed by individuals within a given community to facilitate cooperation, interaction, and self-identification. Language is a fundamental tool that individuals employ in their daily interactions for effective communication (Hardini & Sitohang, 2019).

Effective techniques for communication between speakers and hearers are essential in the context of workforce interactions. These tactics play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining successful communication between the two parties involved. An illustration that might be cited is the manifestation of courtesy. The individuals engaged in the act of communication employ a strategic approach to ensure the smooth flow of information exchange. Upon the culmination of the communication process, both the speaker and the hearer acquire a profound impression, specifically characterised by politeness.

The politeness principle can be broadly characterised as the practice of minimising the usage of rude terms in one's utterances (Leech, 2007). Politeness in speech is characterised by using polite language, refraining from direct commands or orders, and demonstrating respect for others.

The study of linguistic politeness is within the domain of pragmatics. According to Levinson (1987), pragmatics can be defined as the comprehensive investigation of various language attitudes. Pragmatics serves as a mediator between the structural aspects of language and its actual usage, facilitating a connection between the two simultaneously. According to Rickard (2021), pragmatics can be defined as the study of meaning within the context of interaction, emphasising the inherent

connection between meaning and communicative exchange. The concept of meaning does not reside solely within the word itself, nor is it alone generated by the speaker, nor is it solely comprehended by the listener. According to Leech (2007), pragmatics is an academic discipline concerned with the examination of how language is employed within specific contexts or situations. According to Leech, Levinson (1987) defined pragmatics as a linguistic discipline that examines the interplay between language and its surrounding context.

One area of inquiry within the field of pragmatics pertains to the study of language politeness. According to Brown (2017), politeness can be defined as a system within interpersonal relationships that is specifically designed to enhance and promote interaction. Leech (2007) proposed a concise definition of politeness, characterising it as a behavioural manifestation that is conveyed in a manner that adheres to moral or ethical standards. Politeness in speech is commonly associated with the use of appropriate language, demonstrating respect towards others, and refraining from imposing one's views or desires.

Leech (2007) proposed a theory of politeness that is often regarded as the most comprehensive, well-established, and thorough in its scope. Hence, the fundamental framework employed in this research is the politeness theory proposed by Leech. Leech (2007) proposed a categorization of the politeness principle, consisting of six distinct maxims. These maxims include the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim.

The fundamental concept behind the maxim of tact is that individuals engaged in speaking should consistently abide by the ideal of minimising their gain while maximising the gain of the other party in the process of communication (Xafizovna, 2022). An individual who adheres to and applies the principle of tact will be perceived as a person who displays politeness. In a similar vein, it can be argued that instructions that are conveyed indirectly tend to possess a higher degree of politeness compared to those that are communicated directly. Hence, the greater the level of indirectness in communication, the higher the degree of politeness exhibited. The given statement "Close the window!" can be considered a form of direct instruction, as illustrated by Levinson (1987) in their work. Consequently, it exhibits a lower level of politeness. The expressions "Could you close the window, please?" or "Would you mind closing the window?" are often regarded as politer forms of requesting someone to close the window.

According to Brown (2017), the generosity maxim aims to minimise profit and maximise loss. In the given discourse, the speaker incurs a disadvantage while the interlocutor gains a profit. A greater degree of politeness can be attained by avoiding the reference of the listener as the provider. For instance, instead of saying "Can I have some sugar?" it is even more courteous to phrase the question



as "Is there some sugar?" while also avoiding the speaker's portrayal as the recipient. The provided examples have been adapted from Kasper's (2014) work.

The concept of the approbation maxim pertains to the endeavour of refraining from expressing unfavourable remarks against individuals, particularly about the recipient of the communication (Brown, 2017). As an illustration, following a musical exhibition, an observer would be deemed courteous if they expressed admiration for the artist's rendition by stating, "Their musical execution was commendable," as opposed to uttering, "That was a vacuous musical performance."

In the context of the modesty maxim, it is anticipated that speech participants will demonstrate humility by minimising the extent of self-praise. An illustration of this can be observed in the subsequent dialogue:

**Trainer 1:** The performance of Trainees' kids is commendable.

**Trainer 2:** Indeed, I am the one in charge.

Employee 2 is perceived as unfriendly due to his tendency to excessively emphasise and seek recognition for his accomplishments. Conversely, if he responds, "Ah, I believe it to be commonplace," it is regarded as more courteous and aligns with the listener's anticipated response, as opposed to the initial statement.

The principle of agreement maxim underscores the importance of participants in a conversation engaging in mutually appropriate speech, hence fostering compatibility and effective communication among them.

**Trainer A:** It appears that this room lacks sufficient illumination, does it not?

**Trainer B:** May I inquire as to the location of the light switch?

In this case, both Trainer A and Trainer B share a common opinion that the room is dimly lit. Trainer B concurs with Trainer A's observation regarding the dimness of the room, inquiring, "Could you kindly indicate the location of the light switch?"

The principle of the sympathy maxim posits that in communicative interactions, it is anticipated that all participants engage in efforts to optimise the expression of sympathy for one another. The expression of negative attitudes towards individuals will be perceived as a breach of social decorum. Individuals who exhibit antipathy towards others and have a cynical attitude towards them are likely to be perceived as unfriendly within societal contexts. Speech activities such as expressions of sorrow and congratulations involve the utilisation of the sympathy maxim. According to the principle of

sympathy, it is customary for the speaker to express congratulations when others achieve success or experience happiness. For example:

**Trainer A:** I intend to complete the task of exam setup by tomorrow.

**Trainer B:** Best wishes for success!

Idemaru et al. (2019) conducted a study in Japan to examine the correlation between politeness and the culture of people in the workplace. This study seeks to evaluate the distinctions in politeness tactics utilised by individuals from Western cultures and those employed by individuals from Japanese culture, employing a survey as the primary research instrument. The findings suggest that variables associated with intrinsic motivation and the attitude of the other individual exert a stronger impact compared to interpersonal and intrapersonal characteristics. The researchers assert that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory applies to non-Western cultures, with a particular emphasis on its relevance to Japanese culture.

The study undertaken by Astia (2020) focuses on the investigation of linguistic politeness within the Indonesian culture in the workforce. Specifically, the research aims to examine, elucidate, and explore the various linguistic forms and elements associated with language politeness in the workforce. The study utilised the ethnomethodology approach, employing discourse analytic techniques that were examined via the lenses of pragmatics, semiotics, and the idea of face-want (Levinson, 1987). The findings demonstrate the manifestation and significance of Siri's role in upholding fundamental ethical standards, linguistic politeness, self-fulfilment, self-perception, bravery, unity, and collaboration within the TVET workforce.

In the context of the current study undertaken, this passage underscores the pivotal role of Siri in shaping and reinforcing crucial ethical standards within the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) workforce. The findings illuminate Siri's impact not only on linguistic politeness but also on broader aspects such as self-fulfilment, self-perception, bravery, unity, and collaboration. This suggests a multifaceted influence of Siri within the educational realm, extending beyond its conventional uses. The study, therefore, delves into the intricate dynamics of how technology, particularly embodied by Siri, contributes to the cultivation of ethical values and various dimensions of professional development within the TVET sector.

The study undertaken by Venuti (2020) utilised the politeness theory of the Face Threatening Act (Levinson, 1987) to investigate how employees employ face work in hypothetical messages while initiating conversations with their co-workers. The researchers employed a mixed methodology in their study and discovered that engaging in discussions about future demands has the potential to

jeopardise one's face. Hence, an examination of conversational strategies employed by adults serves as a crucial initial endeavour in comprehending the factors that contribute to the efficacy and supportiveness of these interactions.

Formal educational institutions, like as schools, play a crucial role in influencing the development of student civility. The efficacy of the educational process inside an educational institution is influenced by various elements. Educators are required to possess a considerable amount of strategic acumen when it comes to instructional practices. The objective of this initiative is to create a conducive and enjoyable learning environment for pupils (Ogwudile, 2019). The application of the politeness principle plays a significant role in determining outcomes, particularly in the interactions between students and teachers, as well as among students and other teachers and among teachers.

Hence, both educators and learners must prioritise the observance of the politeness principle in their communication. According to Brown (2017), it is widely considered that teacher-student contact plays a significant role in fostering the linguistic development of students. Instances of conflicts between educators and students occasionally arise. Educators can experience disillusionment with student behaviour inside the classroom setting, encountering challenges in effectively managing the situation. Brown (2017) conducted an additional study that aimed to investigate the manifestation of politeness within the learning environment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. The study specifically examined the utilisation of the politeness principle by trainees and its potential implications on the teaching and learning process. The researcher incorporated the politeness theory idea presented by Leech (2007) as the theoretical foundation for this study. The results of the qualitative investigation revealed that the trainees employed six maxims derived from the politeness principle when engaging with fellow trainees and their pupils. The findings additionally indicated that the application of the politeness principle fostered a sense of unity between the TVET workforce and the students, resulting in a collaborative interaction between the trainees and students. This collaboration facilitated the development of positive attitudes towards the lesson among the students and enhanced their motivation to actively engage in the learning process.

Politeness principles are recommendations for how people use language to express respect, preserve social peace, and traverse social hierarchies. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, one of the most significant in the area, outlines politeness techniques for dealing with face-threatening acts (FTAs). These tactics seek to protect the speaker's and listener's faces, which represent their public self-images. In a study of 300 students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, researchers identified 30 instances of politeness and face-threatening behaviour using six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy (Onebunne and Ugwumba, 2024). The study

recommends that lecturers use politeness strategies to make what they say more pleasant and acknowledged in the classroom.

Similarly, Aporbo's (2022) study investigates face-threatening behaviour in informal talks among instructors at Compostela Valley State College. It employs discourse analysis and in-depth interviews to examine recorded and transcribed conversations. According to the findings, face-threatening activities that harm the hearer's positive image include insults, complaints, disapproval, rejections, bad news, bragging, inattention, noncooperation, and eliciting unpleasant emotions. Humorous remarks and criticisms are widespread, keeping conversations lively and entertaining. Self-humiliation, accepting accolades, and admissions are all face-threatening activities that undermine the speaker's favourable image. Common face-threatening activities that harm the listener's negative face include recommendations, promises, requests, threats, challenges, dares, reminders, praises, offers, and ideas. Requests are the most typical kind of face-threatening behaviour, whereas negative behaviours include expressing unpleasant feelings, receiving praise, and giving in to the listener's authority.

Contrary, Njuki and Mbaka's (2021) article investigates the employment of positive face-threatening behaviours by Kenya's 12th National Assembly Members of Parliament. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness theory are used to analyse and interpret the obtained data in the study. The study uses purposive sampling to identify utterances with positive face-threatening behaviours, which are subsequently analysed using the content analysis approach. A guiding card was utilised to detect good face-threatening behaviours. The findings are likely to add to the current literature in sociolinguistics and pragmatics by helping to defend the public image and vital members of society. Politeness happens to be communicated both negatively and positively, as highlighted in the study by Sohaib-Sultan and Ashraf (2021).

Their study investigates how male and female students employ civility in classroom debates, considering power and distance. Data is gathered during 30-minute conversations at the National University of Modern Languages. The quantitative technique is utilised to examine the frequency of positive and negative politeness strategies, demonstrating a gender correlation. The data suggest that females employ more negative politeness methods than men, whereas males prefer to utilise positive politeness in first-contact talks. According to the study, guys utilise more positive politeness methods than females. The quantitative technique clarifies the study's conclusions. Again, Chaqmaqchee and Jasim's (2022) study looked at civility methods for disagreement used by Iraqi EFL students in Online Asynchronous Discussions (OADs).

Mosul University collected data from 100 individuals. The study sought to determine the influence of gender on politeness methods and how they may be utilised to prevent disputes while expressing face-

threatening acts (FTAs). Males and females both ignored the faces of others, as well as the authority or social standing of their interlocutors. The findings give significant insights for EFL teachers and curriculum designers in Iraq, as well as practical advice. In a nutshell, these methods are intended to make the listener feel valued and respected. It incorporates praises, displays of interest, and inclusive language emphasising unity and friendliness. This method aims to minimise imposition on the listener while honouring their need for autonomy. It includes formal language, indirectness, hedging, and apologies.

### **2.5.1 Enhancing Communication Effectiveness**

The use of civility principles in the TVET industry has significant consequences for communication, teamwork, and professional relationships. For example, Yusop, Rasul, Mohammad-Yasin and Hashim's (2023) study investigates the categorization and integration of vocational skill areas and indicators for classroom evaluation in Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) courses. It uses the modified Delphi method (MDT) and a literature review to determine occupational skill domains. The study concluded that TVET evaluation should include Industrial Revolution 4.0 general skills, career adaptability skills, and technical skills to build skills and competencies. The survey also discovered that all domains and indicators had strong expert consensus. Effective communication is essential in any professional situation, but especially in TVET settings where clear instructions, feedback, and collaborative conversations are common (Okolie et al., 2023).

According to Maseko (2022) the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in Gauteng, South Africa, has mandated the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to improve Technical Vocational Education and Training college performance. However, no research has confirmed the presence of any TVET college PLCs. A study was done to look at the link between professional collaboration and PLC formation in Gauteng's TVET colleges. The study employed a survey approach, cluster randomised sampling, and a composite instrument, the South African Standard on Principalship (SASP)-RS and the Professional Learning Communities Assessment (PLCA-R SA). The findings recommend that TVET College Campus Managers encourage collaborative environments and apply the Sub-Saharan African PLC implementation methodology. Thus, following politeness standards guarantees that communication is not only clear but also courteous and kind.

Using negative politeness methods, such as hedging and oblique phrasing, can make requests and directions less intimidating (Haryanto et al., 2024). For example, stating "Could you please complete this task by tomorrow?" is more courteous and likely to be taken well than a straight demand. Giving feedback in a manner that respects the recipient's face can increase its acceptance and efficacy.

Pleasant politeness methods, such as beginning with pleasant comments before addressing areas for improvement, can help make feedback sessions more fruitful.

Effective communication is an essential component of professional success, especially in the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) sector. Applying politeness standards may dramatically improve communication efficacy by making conversations transparent, courteous, and helpful (Rababah et al., 2021). This section looks at how politeness concepts may be used in different kinds of communication to enhance results in the TVET environment.

Politeness principles assist in guaranteeing that requests and instructions are given courteously and thoughtfully, taking into account the listener's perspective. This is especially critical in hierarchical or team situations when clarity and respect are essential for sustaining healthy relationships and an effective workflow. Negative politeness methods sometimes include utilising indirect language to make demands less onerous. Instead of asking "Do this task by tomorrow," a more courteous and productive way would be to ask, "Could you please complete this task by tomorrow?" This phrase recognises the listener's liberty and decreases the possibility of resistance or anger (Kramer, 2020). Explaining the basis behind a request might help make it more appealing and clearer. For example, "Could you please finish this task by tomorrow?" "We need it for the afternoon meeting" adds context and urgency to the request, making it more obvious and persuasive (Kramer, 2020).

Giving feedback is an essential part of professional communication in the TVET sector. Effective feedback improves people's performance and develops a culture of continual development. Politeness principles may make feedback sessions more positive and effective. Starting feedback with positive comments might assist in reducing the effect of criticism. For example, "You did an excellent job on the assignment, and I appreciated your attention to detail. The final report's organisation might be improved. This method recognises the recipient's efforts and increases their openness to constructive feedback (London et al., 2023). Using hedging words such as "maybe" or "perhaps," can make recommendations more indirect and appealing. For example, "Perhaps you could consider a different approach to organising the report" is less confrontational and more suggestive than a straight order (London et al., 2023).

Effective communication requires not just speaking but also listening and comprehending the other side. Politeness principles promote active listening and empathy, which are required for meaningful interactions. Nodding, keeping eye contact, and delivering vocal acknowledgements (e.g., "I see," "That's interesting") demonstrate respect and attention. This promotes open communication and creates a supportive environment (Handayani, 2023).

Understanding and appreciating colleagues' feelings and viewpoints might help them communicate more effectively. For example, reacting with empathy to a colleague's worries, "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you; let's see how we can address it together," demonstrates respect for their sentiments and encourages collaborative problem-solving (Sandua, 2023).

Conflict and misconceptions are unavoidable in any business. Applying civility standards can help you better handle and resolve these situations. Negative politeness measures, such as diplomatic language, can help to de-escalate a confrontation. For example, instead of stating "You're wrong," a more courteous response would be, "I see your point, but perhaps we could consider another perspective." This method recognises the other person's point of view while proposing an alternate concept (Sohaib-Sultan & Ashraf, 2021).

Apologies are an important part of etiquette and may help overcome misunderstandings. An effective apology should be honest and recognise the gravity of the transgression. For example, "I apologise for the misunderstanding; I should have communicated more clearly" demonstrates accountability and a desire to make corrections (Chaqmaqchee & Jasim, 2022).

While civility is vital, it is also critical to communicate clearly and precisely to minimise ambiguity and guarantee that messages are interpreted as intended. Finding the correct combination of politeness and directness is critical. Overly indirect language can lead to misunderstandings, whilst overly straightforward language might be perceived as impolite. For example, "Could you please review the report by Friday so we can finalise it?" is both courteous and straightforward (Barberi-Weil, 2023). Ensure that the receiver understands the message accurately to avoid misinterpretation. Phrases like "Just to confirm, you will handle the presentation?" or "Do you have any questions about the task?" might help to explain expectations and ensure comprehension (Barberi-Weil, 2023).

Furthermore, improving communication efficacy through the use of civility standards is critical for TVET professionals. TVET professionals can improve their interactions and contribute to a more harmonious and efficient workplace by making requests and instructions clear and respectful, providing constructive feedback, practising active listening and empathy, diplomatic conflict resolution, and maintaining clarity and precision. Educational Programmes and training should emphasise these qualities to prepare people for successful professional communication.

### **2.5.2 Facilitating Teamwork and Collaboration**

Politeness norms are vital for creating a collaborative and peaceful work atmosphere (Clark et al., 2022). They contribute to the development of trust, dispute resolution, and mutual respect among

team members. Positive politeness tactics, such as expressing concern for colleagues' well-being and recognising their efforts, can improve interpersonal interactions and team cohesiveness (Fitrayatra et al., 2023). According to Okafor (2023), seriocomic communication, which combines seriousness with humour, is a dynamic and diverse kind of conversation. It includes face-threatening behaviour, Hudson's perception of the face, and politeness tactics. Seriocomic communication is an effective method for expressing messages, making relationships, and discussing a variety of issues. Politeness tactics, such as positive, negative, off-the-record, and ironic speech actions, incorporate humour and politeness into the fabric. The study emphasised the significant influence of seriocomic communication on social connections, intercultural encounters, psychological well-being, and ethical issues (Okafor, 2023). The careful balance of humour and politeness has a considerable impact on interpersonal interchange results. Negative politeness methods can aid in the de-escalation of potential disputes. Thus, adopting indirect language and demonstrating respect for opposing viewpoints might lead to more agreeable agreements.

Politeness rules are essential for fostering a productive and pleasant workplace. They help to build trust among team members, resolve disputes, and foster mutual respect. In the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) workforce, where cooperation and collaboration are critical, using politeness principles can significantly increase group dynamics and productivity (Kumlachew, 2022). For example, Ochieng and Ngware's (2022) article investigates the comprehension of soft skills among Technical and Vocational Education and Training students in Kenya. The project, which was done in nine of 47 counties, sought to alleviate high adolescent unemployment rates by providing them with job-related skills. The findings indicate that, while students have a high comprehension of soft skills, insufficient human resources and low awareness among instructors contribute to insufficient learning. The study advocates for a collaborative effort among key education stakeholders to strengthen instructors' and institutions' capacity for a feasible soft-skills result.

Furthermore, positive politeness tactics are very useful for developing rapport among team members. For example, Zhang et al.'s (2021) study investigated the association between politeness techniques among workers, customer membership, perceived co-recovery, and online post-recovery happiness in online service providers. It revealed that perceived co-recovery has a substantial influence on satisfaction, with members choosing positive politeness tactics. The study provides useful tips for increasing online recovery performance. These tactics contribute to the development of camaraderie and mutual respect, both of which are necessary for good cooperation. Taking a genuine interest in colleagues' contributions and well-being may improve interpersonal connections. For example, consistently recognising team members' work with statements such as "I appreciate your input on this project," develops a friendly environment (Dinh et al., 2021). Using inclusive words, such as "we" and



"our," can boost a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Statements like "Let's work together to solve this problem" foster a collaborative mindset (Dinh et al., 2021).

Politeness principles can also help to reduce and resolve conflicts inside teams. For example, Wijayanti and Sawardi's (2022) study looked at the attributes of a good leader based on the speeches and etiquette methods of candidates for the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) commissioner. It employs a naturalistic worldview and a sociopragmatic methodology. The results demonstrate no difference in politeness techniques between male and female applicants, although female candidates employ directive speech actions and negative politeness methods. The study also found that female applicants are more likely to be collaborative and humble, whereas male candidates are more likely to be honest and judgmental. The effective use of these principles contributes to the diplomatic resolution of differences and the maintenance of a pleasant work environment. When disputes arise, using negative politeness practices might help de-escalate potential conflicts. For example, rather than saying, "You're wrong," a more diplomatic approach would be, "I see your point, but might we also consider this alternative?" This technique respects the other person's point of view while offering an alternative perspective (Winer et al., 2024).

Apologies and admission of faults might help to reduce tensions. A genuine apology, such as "I apologise for any confusion my comments may have caused," demonstrates humility and a desire to keep the peace (Winer et al., 2024). Furthermore, Chaudhry, Roomi, Eugien and Chaudhry's (2022) study looks at the link between employee voice and turnover intention in Pakistan's industrial industry. Data was gathered from 300 employees via surveys and analysed using SPSS-21 and AMOS. The findings revealed that employee voice has a negative influence on turnover intention, with top management team disagreements playing a substantial role. Union instrumentality balances the interaction between employee voice and cognitive conflict. The study's shortcomings include a concentration on the industrial sector and a limited sample size. However, it is beneficial for management-level personnel since proper employee voice might lower turnover intention.

Creating an atmosphere in which all team members feel comfortable participating is critical to successful cooperation. Politeness principles can assist in increasing engagement and guarantee that everyone's opinion is heard. Using positive politeness tactics to solicit feedback can help team members feel appreciated and more ready to share their views. For example, Prayitno et al.'s (2021) study investigated directed speech actions and civility methods in the #sahkanRUUPKS comments on social media from 2019 to 2020. The study discovered that Indonesians are open to new policy initiatives through social media. Suggestion, criticism, reminder, appeal, calling, and reminding are all examples of politeness methods.

The public demonstrates social awareness and sensitivity towards government policy plans disseminated via social media coverage. According to the findings, employing positive politeness ways when offering feedback to the government can improve character education and politeness values for students in the school setting. The wisdom maxim established in children is a critical component in developing character education in the age of global communication. Phrases like "What are your thoughts on this?" or "I'd love to hear your perspective" promote open conversation (Chung & Tang, 2022). Recognising and valuing contributions, especially those that deviate from the majority perspective, might promote further engagement. Statements such as, "That's an interesting point, thank you for sharing," affirm the speaker and encourage inclusive conversation (Chung & Tang, 2022).

Team cohesiveness improves when individuals feel appreciated and valued. Politeness principles help to foster an environment in which mutual respect and support are common. Regularly thanking team members for their contributions can boost sentiments of appreciation and belonging. Simply stating, "Thank you for your hard work on this," will dramatically enhance morale (Gusnawaty et al., 2022). Recognising collaborative accomplishments and giving credit to the team can help to build a sense of togetherness and achievement. "We did a great job on this project together," reinforces team cohesiveness (Gusnawaty et al., 2022).

Therefore, facilitating cooperation and collaboration through the use of civility values is critical for TVET employees. Politeness tactics help to create a more successful and harmonious work environment by increasing rapport, decreasing disputes, boosting involvement, and improving team cohesiveness. TVET training programmes should emphasise these characteristics to educate individuals for effective cooperation and collaboration in their professional lives.

### **2.5.3 Navigating Professional Hierarchies**

Understanding and using politeness norms might assist TVET professionals in negotiating professional hierarchies and power dynamics more effectively (Schneider, Reinstorf and Vázquez, 2020). Negative politeness methods, such as utilising formal titles and oblique language, can demonstrate respect for authority while maintaining professional decorum. For example, Santos's (2022) research investigates the use of politeness methods in Filipino language news interviews in television broadcasting, with an emphasis on turn-taking and question structure. It employs conversational analysis (CA) to close the empirical data gap on broadcast texts in Southeast Asian and Filipino settings. The findings suggest that interviewers employ polite identifiers, honorifics, and pluralized address pronouns to demonstrate pseudo-politeness and severe kinds of impoliteness while keeping plain and confrontational language.

The study also revealed double-padded Filipino politeness and two sorts of linguistic padding to reduce the confrontational aspect of interviews. This multilayered indigenous brand of politeness sheds new light on Asian and Filipino politeness. For example, utilising "Mr/Ms" and making courteous requests might indicate respect and professionalism. Pleasant politeness tactics may be especially effective in mentoring and training situations, where encouraging and supporting language can drive trainees and provide a pleasant learning environment (Alhusaiyan, 2024).

Understanding and utilising politeness principles can assist TVET personnel in navigating professional hierarchies and power dynamics efficiently. Politeness techniques promote courteous and productive interactions across organisational levels, which improves communication and professional relationships. Politeness standards are essential while dealing with superiors since they assist preserve respect and professional etiquette. Negative politeness methods, which emphasise formality and reverence, are more successful in these settings.

Addressing superiors with formal titles and employing indirect language can express respect while reducing imposition. For example, "Dr. Smith, could you please review this report when you have time?" is more courteous than an outright request. Another example is, Surjowati's (2021) study looked at the politeness techniques of Language and Science Faculty students at Wijaya Kusuma Surabaya University, with an emphasis on those from diverse regional and multicultural backgrounds. The study included 20 individuals, 10 of whom were non-Javanese and 10 of whom were Javanese.

The data were categorised according to their place of origin, politeness categories, and techniques applied. The findings revealed that both groups utilised negative and positive politeness tactics, with non-Javanese students apologising and being gloomy, and Javanese students apologising, hedging, and showing reverence. Positive politeness tactics included avoiding disagreements, making promises, exaggerating, and seeking cooperation. Maintaining a healthy relationship involves demonstrating reverence via words and behaviour, such as appreciating the superior's competence and authority. "I appreciate your guidance on this matter," for example, demonstrates respect and acknowledgement of the superior's responsibility (Song et al., 2023).

Politeness methods can help to foster a helpful and encouraging environment during mentoring and training. A good example is Chung and Tang's (2022) article that investigates how Hong Kong English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers employ varied degrees of politeness in online learning communities. The study included 174 interactive comments from 24 student instructors and 8 mentors, classified using three discourse functions and 15 types of politeness indicators. Interviews demonstrated that participants' linguistic and cultural backgrounds impacted their use and frequency of politeness signals. Despite their diverse ranks in the hierarchy, individuals used politeness signals in comparable ways, suggesting that their participation in the community influenced the frequency with

which they used these markers. The findings shed light on politeness from the perspectives of culture, language, and online group participation. These tactics assist mentors and trainers in motivating trainees and promoting a pleasant learning environment. Using positive etiquette methods like praise and encouragement can help trainees gain confidence. For example, "You've made great progress on this task; keep up the good work," gives positive reinforcement. Inclusive language emphasising cooperation and shared goals can help trainees feel more engaged and appreciated. "Let's work on improving this together" promotes collaboration (Atkinson et al., 2022).

Effective communication at all levels of an organisation necessitates a sophisticated application of politeness standards that balance clarity, respect, and professional limits. For instance, Ishihara and Lee's (2021) study looks into the negotiation of (im)politeness in radiotelephony (R/T) communications using Aviation English (AE). The study focused on the discursive production of face and (im)politeness across various aircraft situations. Three extracts from various aviation English archives were reviewed, and four pilots were questioned for expert interpretation. The findings illustrate the varied ways in which interactants use facework to meet their transactional and relational demands. The usefulness of relational language is determined by the affordances and restrictions present in each particular aviation environment.

Similarly, Teitelbaum and Ben-Ze'ev (2023) claim that honouring others' inherent value in social interactions is a difficult endeavour that is governed by societal norms. Polite behaviour may be classified into two types: preventing politeness to avoid offence and promoting politeness to recognise the intrinsic value of others (Teitelbaum & Ben-Ze'ev, 2023). In addition, Lee (2020) argues that the guidelines for preventing civility might be shallow, and focused on material values, but the ultimate goal of politeness is to communicate and demonstrate true respect for others. On the other hand, Teitelbaum and Ben-Ze'ev (2023) added that assessing others' courteous actions necessitates knowing their motivation since impoliteness caused by sincerity or self-interest can be deceptive. Increased mindfulness can improve social relationships because acknowledging our biases allows us to accept others for who they are and transmit this regard via polite behaviour.

Tanduk (2023) explored the pragmatic characteristics of speech acts in Bahasa Indonesia and Malay contexts. Observational field studies reveal a regular use of indirect and respectful language while making requests, apologies, compliments, and refusals. In their apologies, Bahasa Indonesia speakers use forceful professions of sorrow, but Malay speakers are subtler. Compliments differ between the two languages, with Bahasa Indonesia speakers preferring direct shows of praise and Malay speakers preferring more complex terminology. Refusals show significant differences, with Malay speakers using indirect ways and Bahasa Indonesia speakers using directness. The study contributes to the current issue of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural pragmatics.

Tanduk's (2023) research, in my opinion, contributes significantly to the discipline of pragmatics, particularly in terms of comprehending the intricacies of speech actions across languages and cultures. The findings emphasise the significance of cultural context in determining communication techniques, which is critical for successful cross-cultural communication. Different approaches to apologies and refusals, for example, highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptation in intercultural encounters. Furthermore, Tanduk's (2023) study's findings on the different responses to compliments in Bahasa Indonesia and Malay reflect deeply ingrained cultural norms that shape everyday communication. This study not only advances our understanding of language pragmatics, but it also serves as a reminder of the breadth and complexity of human communication. As globalisation continues to bring various cultures closer together, such research is critical for developing mutual respect and understanding in international and multicultural environments.

Zakaria et al.'s (2022) study on politeness and morals in the interaction between santri and kyai/ustadz in Pesantren Salaf Al-Qur'an Sholahul Huda Al-Mujahidin provides valuable insights into the use of politeness strategies in educational settings, which can be applied to the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) environment at the National Youth Service (NYS). This study looked at how pupils (santri) and instructors (kyai/ustadz) use politeness methods, highlighting the impact of social elements like authority and distance, as well as cultural norms founded in Islamic teachings.

In the framework of TVET at NYS, trainees and instructors face comparable power dynamics and social distances. Understanding how these elements impact communication can improve the efficacy of training. The findings of the Pesantren research, which used Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness techniques, emphasise the significance of modifying communication methods to preserve harmony and respect in hierarchical educational environments. The recognition that a culture of akhlak (morality and ethics) based on Islamic principles has a substantial impact on communication methods in Pesantren may be equated with the necessity to build a culture of respect and professionalism in TVET settings.

In my perspective, the parallels between the Pesantren research and the TVET environment highlight the importance of cultural and social elements in creating communication techniques. Just as the Pesantren's akhlak culture encourages peace and polite interactions, the TVET industry may benefit from instilling comparable qualities of respect, professionalism, and ethical behaviour in its communication training programmes. Trainers may create a more inclusive and effective learning environment by recognising and integrating TVET participants' different cultural backgrounds.

Tanduk's (2023) study on the pragmatic aspects of speech actions in Bahasa Indonesia and Malay adds to the body of data supporting the need for cultural sensitivity in communication. Tanduk's findings,

which show disparities in how apologies, praises, and refusals are handled across various languages, imply that pragmatic competence is inextricably linked to cultural norms. Applying this idea in the TVET setting entails acknowledging that trainees and instructors may come from a variety of language and cultural backgrounds, each with their own communication styles and expectations.

This viewpoint emphasises the need of specialised training programmes that not only teach technical skills but also promote the development of pragmatic competence. Such programmes should contain lessons on cross-cultural communication, politeness tactics, and how social hierarchies affect interaction. By doing so, TVET schools like NYS can better educate their workers for the diversified and globalised character of current vocational sectors, ensuring that their graduates are not only technically skilled but also capable of navigating complicated social and cultural environments.

Integrating findings from research on politeness and pragmatic competence in educational settings into the TVET environment emphasises the value of cultural sensitivity and ethical communication. By developing a culture of respect and professionalism, as well as offering training that addresses participants' different language and cultural backgrounds, TVET programmes may improve their efficacy and better equip their workforce for the needs of today.

Malhotra and Pearce (2022) add that clearly stating duties and responsibilities in polite language helps to minimise misunderstandings. For example, "Could you please confirm if this task falls under your responsibilities?" preserves clarity and respect. Inviting input from subordinates or peers while remaining courteous promotes open communication and continual progress. Words such as, "I value your input on this project; could you share your thoughts?" demonstrate respect and openness (Caruso & Salovey, 2019).

Navigating upward communication entails expressing facts or concerns to superiors courteously and productively. Politeness principles can help here by ensuring that the communication is received positively. For instance, Surjowati's (2021) study looks at the politeness methods used by Pidie Regency's last semester Indonesian Language Education students. It employs a qualitative methodology and is a field study. The study has six stages: data collecting, recording talks, transcription, analysis, and calculating the percentage of each politeness method utilised. The findings indicate that students utilise three of the four strategies: no strategy, positive politeness, and negative politeness.

This study gives useful insights into students' communication skills. When one is giving comments or concerns, be polite and helpful. For example, "I have some thoughts on how we could improve this process if you're open to hearing them," demonstrates respect and collaboration (Caruso and Salovey,

2019). Recognising the superior's time and efforts helps improve upward communication. Statements such as "Thank you for considering my suggestion; I appreciate your time," show gratitude and respect (Rovita & Gulo, 2022).

Furthermore, managing professional hierarchies through the use of civility norms is critical for TVET employees. TVET workers may improve their workplace interactions and relationships by employing official titles, indirect language, encouraging and inclusive language in mentoring, and balancing clarity and respect in communication at all levels. Individuals should be prepared for successful communication in hierarchical organisational structures through training programmes that embrace these concepts.

#### **2.5.4 Cultural Sensitivity and Global Competence**

In a globalised workplace, TVET personnel frequently deal with colleagues and clients from many cultural backgrounds (Levitt, 2020). Politeness standards can differ greatly among cultures and knowing them is critical for good cross-cultural communication.

Jakučionytė's (2020) study, which compared creative reactions and politeness schemes in cross-cultural communication between American English and Lithuanian, provides valuable insights that can be applied to the National Youth Service's TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) workforce. The study examines how various cultures communicate politeness and creative replies, revealing major communication gaps between Americans and Lithuanians. Specifically, research demonstrates that Americans prefer to employ more direct professions of thankfulness and apology, whereas Lithuanians are less direct and less frequent in these statements. Additionally, the study finds that gender has a big influence, with females in both cultures often being politer and more inventive in their comments than males.

Understanding cross-cultural disparities in TVET at NYS is critical for improving communication efficacy within a diverse workforce. The TVET setting frequently brings together people from different cultural origins, needing a more sophisticated approach to communication training. The findings of the American Lithuanian research can help to create training programmes that accommodate the unique communication styles and expectations of various ethnic groups in the New York State workforce.

Recognising that American trainees may prefer clear expressions of appreciation and apologies might help instructors modify their comments and interactions to be plainer and more unambiguous. Understanding that Lithuanian trainees may prefer more indirect and less frequent demonstrations of courtesy can help teachers take a more nuanced approach, ensuring that communication is courteous and successful.

In my viewpoint, the findings of this cross-cultural study highlight the need to add cultural sensitivity and knowledge to TVET training programmes. The disparities in how civility and thankfulness are communicated underline the need to have a flexible communication approach that can adapt to trainees' different backgrounds. By including training on cross-cultural communication and pragmatic competence, TVET institutions like NYS can create an environment in which all participants, regardless of cultural background, feel understood and valued.

Furthermore, the study's gender disparities indicate that communication training should take gender dynamics into account. Tailoring communication tactics to meet the differences in how male and female trainees show civility and creativity can improve the efficacy of interactions in the TVET setting. Jakučionytė's (2020) research on politeness and creative reactions in American English and Lithuanian offers valuable lessons for the TVET workforce at NYS. By understanding and addressing cross-cultural and gender differences in communication, TVET Programmes can improve pragmatic competence, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Such an approach not only enhances the quality of vocational training but also prepares trainees for the diverse and globalized nature of modern vocational fields. Integrating these insights into TVET communication training can lead to better outcomes, both in terms of individual trainee success and overall program effectiveness.

Understanding and adjusting to varied cultural politeness norms can help to avoid misunderstandings and create better international relationships. For example, what is deemed courteous in one culture may be interpreted as too formal or even unpleasant in another. Incorporating intercultural communication training into TVET Programmes can help professionals learn the skills required to traverse multiple cultural situations, hence increasing their global competency (Dirgeyasa, 2022).

Overall, politeness principles are integral to effective communication and professional interactions in the TVET workforce. By understanding and applying these principles, TVET workers can enhance their communication effectiveness, facilitate better teamwork, navigate professional hierarchies, and engage more successfully in cross-cultural interactions (Qodirberganovna, 2023). Educational institutions and training Programmes should emphasise the importance of politeness principles to prepare TVET workers for the complexities of the modern workplace.

According to Gyimah (2020), in today's increasingly globalised society, cultural sensitivity and global competency are essential for efficient communication and cooperation, particularly among TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) workers. Politeness principles can help to improve cultural sensitivity and global competency by encouraging respect for cultural differences and facilitating effective cross-cultural interactions (Bennouioua, 2023). Understanding the various cultural norms and values is required for effective communication in a multicultural setting. Therefore,



politeness principles facilitate negotiating these disparities by encouraging courteous and thoughtful interactions.

Understanding cultural differences in communication patterns, such as the use of direct vs indirect language, is critical. For example, certain cultures may emphasise directness, whilst others favour a more indirect approach. Understanding these distinctions might help to avoid misunderstandings and develop mutual respect (Bennouioua, 2023). Adapting communication approaches to different cultural situations exhibits respect and cultural awareness. For example, employing more formal language and titles in cultures that value hierarchy and respect can improve communication efficacy (Voevoda, 2020).

Developing strong cross-cultural relationships is critical for global competency. Politeness principles promote the growth of these connections by promoting courteous and thoughtful behaviour. Positive politeness methods, such as demonstrating interest in others' cultures and customs, can help to establish rapport and enhance relationships. For example, asking about and appreciating a colleague's cultural traditions promotes mutual respect and understanding (Voevoda, 2020). Being aware of and avoiding stereotypes in communication is crucial. Politeness principles empower people to approach others with an open mind and no preconceived assumptions, resulting in real and respectful interactions (Sandua, 2023).

Politeness principles are useful in improving collaboration in culturally varied settings. They foster an inclusive environment in which every team member feels appreciated and respected. Using inclusive language that acknowledges cultural diversity can improve team collaboration. For example, recognising diverse cultural holidays and customs within the team demonstrates respect and tolerance (Culpeper & Tantucci, 2021). Using civility methods during dispute resolution can help to reduce escalation and foster understanding. For example, approaching problems with empathy and a willingness to comprehend diverse cultural viewpoints might result in more effective outcomes (Arghode et al, 2022).

Global competency is defined as the capacity to communicate and interact successfully across cultures (Aririguzoh, 2022). Politeness principles help to promote mutual respect and understanding. Participating in cultural exchange Programmes and training can help you gain global competency. These Programmes allow participants to use politeness concepts in real-world cross-cultural encounters, hence enhancing cultural sensitivity and communication skills (Casañ-Pitarch et al., 2020). Encouraging continual learning about diverse cultures and global concerns can help people develop global competency. Politeness principles emphasise the necessity of exhibiting respect and curiosity in

different cultures, which is consistent with the objective of lifelong learning and cultural awareness (Vu, 2020).

Nonetheless, cultural sensitivity and global competency are essential for the TVET workforce in today's linked globe. Understanding cultural norms, developing cross-cultural connections, improving cross-cultural cooperation, and increasing global competency can help TVET workers manage multicultural contexts more successfully. These ideas should be included in training programmes to equip people for effective cross-cultural communication and collaboration.

## **2.6. The Consequences of the Pragmatic Failure of the Tvet Workforce**

### **2.6.1 Pragmatic Failure**

Pragmatic failure occurs when there is a mismatch between intended meaning and interpreted meaning due to inappropriate or inadequate language use in context. This can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and inefficiencies in workplace communication (Thomas, 2018). In the TVET workforce at NYS, pragmatic failures can have significant consequences, such as breakdowns in teamwork, customer dissatisfaction, and reduced productivity. Research by Kasper (2021) emphasises the importance of addressing pragmatic failures through training in communication skills and awareness of cultural and contextual factors. By evaluating the consequences of pragmatic failure, this review aims to highlight the importance of enhancing pragmatic competence among TVET professionals at NYS through targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Pragmatic failure, characterised by the inability to use language appropriately and effectively in different social contexts (Thomas, 2017), has become a significant concern within the realm of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training workforce. As our world becomes more interconnected, the importance of effective communication skills cannot be overstated. In this context, pragmatic competence is the linchpin that enables individuals to navigate the complex social fabric of the workplace successfully.

Over recent years, there has been a growing recognition that pragmatic competence is not merely a linguistic concern but a pivotal aspect of professional communication within TVET settings. This growing awareness stems from the acknowledgement that communication extends beyond mere language proficiency; it encompasses the ability to comprehend and employ language appropriately within diverse social and professional situations.

As such, this review sought to delve into the body of existing literature to comprehensively understand the consequences of pragmatic failure among employees in the TVET sector. The significance of this

exploration lies in its potential to shed light on the real-world implications of inadequate pragmatic competence and to inform strategies for enhancing communication skills in this critical domain. Pragmatic failure significantly affects workplace communication. Anderson (2018) asserts that when employees in TVET settings struggle with pragmatic competence, misunderstandings become prevalent, leading to communication breakdowns. This impacts the efficiency of teamwork, hinders the flow of information, and potentially delays project timelines (Smith, 2019).

In the TVET context, where collaboration, teamwork, and effective communication are paramount, the ramifications of pragmatic failure are keenly felt in interpersonal relationships. Pragmatic competence, as defined by Thomas (2017), extends beyond mere language proficiency; it encompasses the ability to navigate the subtleties of social interaction with finesse and appropriateness.

One of the most prominent consequences of pragmatic failure is the inadvertent offence it may cause. Employees who lack pragmatic competence may unknowingly use language or expressions that are considered rude, disrespectful, or inappropriate in a professional setting (Nghilinganye, 2023). For instance, a comment intended as constructive feedback might come across as harsh criticism, leading to hurt feelings and resentment.

As these unintentional offences accumulate, they can strain relationships among colleagues, supervisors, and other stakeholders in the TVET setting (Qodirberganovna, 2023). What starts as a simple misunderstanding or miscommunication can evolve into deeper issues of mistrust and discomfort? Colleagues who feel consistently offended or uncomfortable working together are less likely to collaborate effectively.

Pragmatic failure has a direct impact on productivity. Clark (2021) highlights that misunderstandings and conflicts arising from poor pragmatic competence can disrupt work processes and hinder the achievement of organizational goals. Delays caused by miscommunication can be costly in terms of time and resources (Anderson, 2018).

The consequences of pragmatic failure are not limited to individual employees; they also affect the overall effectiveness of the TVET organization. Smith (2019) argues that an organization with a workforce that struggles with pragmatic competence may face decreased efficiency, lower employee morale, and difficulty in achieving its mission and objectives. Pragmatic failure among the TVET workforce has far-reaching consequences, encompassing workplace communication, interpersonal relationships, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. Recognizing the significance of this issue is crucial for addressing the challenges posed by inadequate pragmatic competence in TVET settings.

When there is a mismatch between intended meaning and interpreted meaning in communication, it is typically caused by cultural differences, a lack of contextual knowledge, or the wrong application of politeness tactics (Xiang et al., 2020). Furthermore, Xiang et al.'s (2020) study on how politeness is managed in interpreter-mediated events and how it affects interpreters' pragmatic ability gives important insights for the National Youth Service's TVET workforce. The study focused on the difficulties translators experience in controlling politeness, particularly while interpreting between English and Chinese, as well as the coping methods they use to avoid face-threatening situations. The data show that both professional and student interpreters are impacted by nasty and overly polite comments, with professional interpreters employing more advanced tactics such as syntax correction and omission to effectively address these issues.

Similar issues in maintaining civility and pragmatic competence might develop in TVET at NYS, especially in a multicultural and multilingual workplace. The study's findings on interpreter-mediated communication emphasise the value of pragmatic skills in fostering clear and polite conversations. Understanding how to negotiate politeness in communication is critical for TVET teachers and trainees from varied language backgrounds to ensure effective teaching and learning.

For example, as professional translators employ liberal and deliberate tactics to control politeness, TVET personnel can benefit from training that focuses on flexible communication approaches. These might include learning to modify words to lessen face-threatening consequences or deliberately employing omission to retain the integrity of conversations while avoiding offence. By combining these tactics into communication training, TVET Programmes can improve the efficacy of interactions between trainees and instructors from various cultures.

In my perspective, Xiang et al., 's (2020) study on interpreter-mediated politeness emphasises the need for pragmatic skills in effective communication, which is directly relevant to the TVET context. The capacity to handle civility and face-threatening behaviour is critical not just for translators, but also for educators and trainees in occupational contexts. TVET Programmes should prioritise the development of these abilities so that all participants, regardless of cultural or language background, can communicate effectively and respectfully.

The Xiang et al.'s (2020) study also emphasised the significance of tailoring communication techniques to the audience's demands. For TVET personnel, this involves being aware of the possibility of misunderstanding and having a toolset of techniques to deal with it. TVET institutions, such as NYS, may better prepare their workers for the difficulties of a globalised workplace by creating an atmosphere that prioritises pragmatic competence and offers the appropriate training.

Xiang et al.'s (2020) study on the varied coping methods employed by professional and student interpreters suggests that experience is important in creating successful communication techniques. This emphasises the significance of continuous professional development for TVET teachers, who must always improve their communication skills to fulfil the demands of a varied trainee population.

Xiang et al.'s (2020) study on civility in interpreter-mediated events gives useful insights for improving pragmatic competence in the TVET workforce at NYS. Understanding and tackling the issues of controlling civility in communication allows TVET Programmes to increase interaction quality and build a more inclusive learning environment. Incorporating these concepts into communication training will better educate TVET practitioners to handle the complexity of multicultural and multilingual situations, eventually contributing to vocational education and training success. In the TVET workforce, pragmatic failure can have several negative implications that affect productivity, professional relationships, and general workplace harmony.

### **2.6.2. Miscommunication and Errors**

Miscommunication is one of the most urgent effects of pragmatic failure, and it can lead to serious workplace blunders. Misunderstandings can result from poor language use, imprecise instructions, or cultural misinterpretations (Fiset, Bhavé and Jha, 2024). When instructions or requests are not adequately understood, tasks may be completed erroneously or not at all. For example, a supervisor's indirect request may be misconstrued as voluntary rather than necessary, resulting in incomplete or improperly completed duties (Fiset et al., 2024). In technical and vocational domains, clear communication is crucial to safety. Pragmatic failure can lead to misunderstandings that jeopardise safety standards, resulting in accidents or dangerous circumstances (Psycha, 2022).

Miscommunication and mistakes are some of the most obvious and visible effects of pragmatic failure in the TVET workforce. These problems occur when the intended meaning of a communication is not correctly transmitted or comprehended, resulting in errors that can jeopardise efficiency, production, and safety.

Salvador et al. (2022) argue that task misconceptions arise when instructions are not properly conveyed or correctly comprehended between the trainees and the instructors. This might result in tasks being completed poorly or not at all, which can have serious consequences in technical and vocational contexts. Instructions that are unclear or oblique are easy to misunderstand. For example, if a supervisor says, "It would be great if this could be finished soon," rather than stating a specific deadline, staff may interpret the urgency differently, resulting in delays (Salvador et al., 2015).

Different cultural backgrounds impact how instructions are received and implemented. In high-context settings, where communication is frequently implicit, employees may rely on context and nonverbal signals to grasp instructions. In contrast, low-context cultures value specific and thorough instructions (Psycha, 2022). If this cultural mismatch is not addressed, it might lead to serious misunderstandings. In the technical and vocational sectors, clear communication is essential for upholding safety requirements. Pragmatic failures can pose major safety dangers to both the personnel and the public (Olajiga et al., 2024). If safety instructions are not effectively stated, they might be misread or ignored, resulting in accidents. For example, a broad safety briefing that does not clarify the procedures for handling hazardous items might lead to inappropriate handling and probable damage (Xu et al., 2021). Differences in understanding and applying safety procedures can result from pragmatic shortcomings, especially in diverse workforces. Keeping safety instructions clear and widely understood is critical for preventing accidents and maintaining a safe working environment (Xu et al., 2021).

According to Onwenonye (2023), pragmatic failures can also lead to technical errors, especially in tasks requiring precise and accurate execution. Miscommunication sometimes regarding technical specifications, procedures, or expectations can result in costly and time-consuming errors. Technical errors often occur when there is a lack of clear, detailed instructions. For instance, if a technician misinterprets the specifications for a piece of machinery due to poorly communicated details, it can lead to improper installation or maintenance (Gonyora & Ventura-Medina, 2024). In scenarios requiring troubleshooting and problem-solving, miscommunication can hinder the identification and resolution of issues. Thus clear, concise, and accurate communication is crucial to ensure that problems are correctly diagnosed and addressed (Gonyora & Ventura-Medina, 2024).

Miscommunication interrupts workflows and lowers overall productivity. When duties are misinterpreted or errors occur, it takes more time and resources to fix them, resulting in inefficiency. Misunderstandings frequently need rework, in which activities must be completed correctly. This not only wastes time but also causes project delays and raises operating expenses (Xu et al., 2021). Miscommunication and mistakes can lead to dissatisfaction and low morale among employees. Employee motivation and engagement might suffer when they believe their efforts have been in vain owing to misconceptions.

Miscommunications and errors caused by pragmatic failure can have serious consequences for the TVET workforce. For example, Nghilinganye's (2023) research looked at the practical skills of front-office trainees at Valombola VTC, concentrating on request tactics, politeness principles, and refusal methods. This study is directly related to the wider problem of pragmatic competence within the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) workers at the National Youth Service. The trainees were chosen from the Hospitality Department's 2022 academic year enrollment using rigorous random

sampling. Data was collected using written discourse completion tasks and a questionnaire. The results demonstrated a 30% level of pragmatic competence in the verbal act of rejection, showing a considerable gap in knowledge in these domains. For socialising, the trainees chose to utilise their language, adopting various denial and apology strategies. Misinterpretation of pragmatic implicature, educational background, and restricted English use have all been cited as influences on pragmatic competence.

The findings from Nghilinganye's (2023) study are extremely pertinent to the setting of TVET at NYS. The low level of pragmatic competence, notably in the area of rejection, identifies an important area for development in the training programme. In a varied and multilingual environment like NYS, excellent communication skills are critical for both interpersonal relationships and professional success. The preference for vernacular language among trainees emphasises the importance of language-specific training that bridges the gap between vernacular competency and the practical use of English in professional contexts.

Nghilinganye's (2023) study highlights the necessity of including focused training in pragmatic competence within TVET Programmes. The proposal to create English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses focusing on pragmatic proficiency is very relevant. Such courses can target TVET students' special communication requirements, providing them with the skills required to handle the intricacies of professional relationships in English.

From my perspective, Nghilinganye's (2023) study emphasises an important facet of vocational training that is often overlooked: the necessity for strong pragmatic skills. The findings indicate that trainees' limited exposure to English and dependence on vernacular languages have a substantial influence on their ability to conduct speech actions such as requests and denials successfully. This gap can cause miscommunications and impede professional interactions in the workplace.

Integrating ESP courses that focus on practical skills into the TVET curriculum might provide trainees with the tools they need to communicate more successfully in a professional setting. Such workshops should involve hands-on exercises in common workplace circumstances, emphasising the value of civility strategies, suitable request skills, and successful refusal ways. This allows TVET programmes to better educate their trainees for the demands of today's workplace, where clear and courteous communication is essential for success.

Nghilinganye's (2023) research gives useful insights into TVET trainees' pragmatic ability and emphasises the importance of focused language instruction in vocational education. By addressing the study's highlighted deficiencies, TVET institutions such as NYS can improve their communication

training Programmes, resulting in more effective and professional interactions among their personnel. The suggested focus on English for Specific Purposes, which is customised to the specific needs of TVET students, is an important step towards reaching this aim and assuring the success of vocational education and training results. These difficulties can cause task misconceptions, safety hazards, technological failures, and negative effects on workflow and production. Addressing these issues with better communication tactics and cultural sensitivity training is critical for improving clarity, accuracy, and efficiency in vocational and technical contexts.

### **2.6.3. Reduced Team Cohesion**

Effective cooperation depends significantly on clear and respectful communication. Thus, pragmatic failure has the potential to strain team relationships, limiting cohesiveness and collaboration (Timur et al., 2023). Misunderstandings and perceived disrespect can lead to disagreements and stress among teammates. For example, neglecting to employ proper politeness methods may be perceived as rudeness or insensitivity, resulting in interpersonal conflict (Timur, et al., 2023). Individuals who repeatedly encounter pragmatic failure may feel excluded or marginalised, which reduces their motivation to actively participate in team activities. This isolation can harm team chemistry and productivity (Wong & Copsy-Blake, 2023).

Communication breakdowns may have a significant influence on team cohesion in the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) sector. Effective collaboration necessitates clear, respectful, and culturally appropriate communication. When these components are missing, it can lead to conflict, isolation of team members, and lower effectiveness in teamwork.

Misunderstandings and perceived disrespect as a result of pragmatic failures can lead to friction and stress among teammates. Disparities in communication styles and cultural norms might exacerbate these problems in diverse workplaces (Dover et al., 2020). Pragmatic errors frequently result in a misreading of a speaker's aim. For example, a colleague's direct communication style may be viewed as harsh or hostile by someone from a culture that values indirectness and nuance (Dover, Kaiser and Major, 2020). This can cause interpersonal problems and a breakdown in collaboration (Timur, et al., 2023). Overuse or abuse of negative politeness methods (for example, excessive formality or indirectness) can result in misunderstandings and feelings of estrangement. Team members may interpret these methods as insincerity or lack of openness, which can cause stress and inhibit collaboration (Wong et al., 2023).

Pragmatic failures can make some team members feel excluded or marginalised, lowering their motivation to engage actively in team activities and conversations especially if the pragmatic



communication is not eloquently articulated. When some team members often suffer miscommunication, they may disengage from active involvement to avoid additional misunderstandings. This can lead to valuable contributions being neglected, which weakens team chemistry (Dover et al., 2020). Failure to employ inclusive language and practices might make team members with diverse ethnic or linguistic backgrounds feel excluded. For example, adopting colloquial language or jargon that is not widely understood might alienate non-native speakers and diminish their sense of belonging (Byram, 1997).

Trust is a key component of good cooperation. Pragmatic failures can undermine confidence and collaboration among team members. Miscommunication regularly might give the impression that someone is untrustworthy. If team members cannot rely on their colleagues' clear and accurate communication, trust erodes and collaborative efforts suffer (Horváth et al., 2023). Effective collaboration necessitates open and honest communication. Pragmatic failures can create barriers to open communication since team members may be unwilling to express ideas or provide criticism for fear of being misunderstood or upsetting others (Horváth et al., 2023).

The cumulative effect of these difficulties can have a major impact on team morale and productivity. A united team is more likely to be motivated, productive, and creative. Persistent communication challenges can cause irritation and unhappiness among team members. When team members believe their efforts are hampered by continual misunderstanding, it can have a detrimental impact on their morale and engagement (Caruso & Salovey, 2019). Misunderstandings, and the subsequent need for clarifications and corrections, can slow down work processes. Teams that spend more time resolving communication challenges have less time and energy to dedicate to productive activities, resulting in decreased overall efficiency (Horváth et al., 2023).

Reduced team cohesiveness is a serious consequence of pragmatic failures in the TVET workforce. Ineffective communication can lead to conflict and stress, team member isolation, diminished trust and collaboration, and poorer morale and productivity. Addressing these issues via increased communication training and establishing an inclusive and respectful culture will help to improve team cohesiveness and overall workplace harmony.

#### **2.6.4. Decreased Professional Credibility**

The pragmatic competence is inextricably linked to professional reputation. Frequent pragmatic failures can harm a person's reputation and perceived skill in their career. Inappropriate or poor communication can be viewed as unprofessional, eroding trust and respect among coworkers and superiors (Monehin & Diers-Lawson, 2022). This can affect job progress and possibilities (Brown &

Levinson, 1987). Individuals who suffer from pragmatic competence may lose confidence in their communication skills, aggravating the problem and negatively impacting their overall performance (Caruso & Salovey, 2019).

Frequent pragmatic failures, such as using incorrect language, misunderstanding cultural norms, or misinterpreting social cues, can be seen as unprofessional conduct. Using incorrect vocabulary or tone in professional contexts might be perceived as impolite or insensitive. For example, a lack of civility or formality in emails or verbal contact may be perceived as disrespectful, leading to a bad view of professionalism (Horváth et al., 2023). In a multicultural workforce, failing to adjust communication techniques to cultural norms might be interpreted as a lack of cultural competency. This can harm professional relationships and the individual's reputation among diverse teams (Monehin & Diers-Lawson, 2022).

Trust and respect are essential for professional credibility is another thing on one hand. On the other, pragmatic failures can weaken these critical characteristics, making it harder for individuals to establish themselves as trustworthy and capable professionals (Schmied, 2021). Inconsistent or confusing communication might result in a loss of confidence among coworkers and supervisors. When others cannot rely on someone to communicate successfully, they may doubt that person's general dependability and competency (Monehin et al., 2022). Lack of awareness and respect for professional boundaries is a common cause of pragmatic failures. For example, being excessively casual with superiors or using inappropriate humour can erode respect and harm work relationships (Horváth et al., 2023).

Professional credibility is strongly linked to one's reputation inside the organisation and industry. Pragmatic failures can ruin this reputation, with long-term detrimental implications. Consistently poor communication skills might lead to a reputation as difficult to deal with or untrustworthy. This can have an impact on collaborative opportunities, project leadership, and professional promotion (Caruso and Salovey, 2019). When pragmatic failures cause misconceptions or blunders, it can lead to a perception of ineptitude. Colleagues and superiors may question an individual's capacity to conduct their work efficiently, affecting their career advancement (Monehin et al., 2022).

Effective communication is an important factor for promotions and leadership positions. Pragmatic failures can be substantial impediments to job progress since they undermine an individual's capacity to be perceived as a prospective leader (Monehin et al., 2022). Leaders should communicate simply and efficiently. Individuals who fail to communicate effectively are less likely to be chosen for leadership positions (Gao, 2019). Networking and connecting with the larger professional community are common components of ongoing professional development. Pragmatic competence is required for

establishing favourable impressions and developing beneficial professional connections, both of which are vital for career progression.

The pragmatic failures can result in professional isolation, in which individuals are excluded from critical conversations and opportunities owing to a perceived incapacity to communicate effectively. This is particularly true when trainees from VET institutions look for jobs. Individuals who are considered poor communicators may be removed from important initiatives or decision-making processes, reducing their opportunity to exhibit their abilities and expertise (Rafay and Ozbutun, 2023). Professional networking is crucial for job advancement. Pragmatic failures can impede an individual's capacity to establish and maintain professional networks, limiting their exposure to new prospects and industry advancements (Haugh & Kádár, 2017).

Reduced professional credibility is a key outcome of pragmatic failures in the TVET workforce. Ineffective communication causes important concerns such as perceived unprofessionalism, loss of trust and respect, bad reputational consequences, impediments to career progress, and professional isolation. Addressing these issues via focused communication training and cultivating a culture of tolerance and respect is critical to preserving and strengthening professional reputation.

#### **2.6.5. Client and Stakeholder Relations**

For TVET workers who work with clients, consumers, or external stakeholders, pragmatic failure can have serious consequences for their relationships and the organization's image (Haugh and Kádár, 2017). Miscommunication with clients or stakeholders can result in unhappiness, misconceptions regarding services or goods, and, eventually, loss of business (Holmes, 2015). Therefore, clear, culturally appropriate communication is critical to sustaining healthy client relationships. Persistent challenges with pragmatic competence can harm the organization's reputation, making it harder to acquire and maintain customers or partners. This can have long-term detrimental consequences for the organization's success and growth (Haugh & Kádár, 2017).

Effective communication is essential for establishing healthy connections with clients and stakeholders in the TVET industry. Failures in communication can have a tremendous influence on these relationships, resulting in misunderstandings, unhappiness, and potential company loss (Xu et al., 2021). Here are some important ways that pragmatic competence influences client and stakeholder relationships:

Miscommunication can cause client unhappiness, harming the organization's reputation and profits. When communication with customers is confusing or ambiguous, it can lead to misconceptions

regarding project objectives, timeframes, and deliverables. For example, a customer may anticipate a project to be finished sooner than is possible owing ambiguous or too optimistic communication from TVET personnel (Holmes, 2015). Pragmatic failures can result in a misunderstanding of the client's demands and preferences. If TVET workers fail to properly listen to and handle customer issues, clients may feel devalued and prefer to do business elsewhere (Marwala, 2022).

Consistent communication errors may harm an organization's reputation, making it harder to acquire and maintain customers and stakeholders. Clients and stakeholders want consistent, professional communication. Frequent misunderstandings or communication failures might create views of dependability, harming the organization's reputation (Murphy, 2020). Dissatisfied customers are more inclined to communicate their unpleasant experiences with others, which can have a domino effect, resulting in a larger poor view of the organisation. This is especially important in businesses where word-of-mouth and reputation play substantial roles in customer acquisition (Gao, 2019).

Effective communication is critical to acquiring and sustaining commercial prospects. Pragmatic failures can result in missed opportunities and lost money. Pragmatic errors during negotiations can lead to misconceptions regarding terms and conditions, resulting in unfavourable agreements or the loss of potential business. Clear and effective communication is critical for successful negotiations and collaborations (Haugh & Kádár, 2017). Failure to follow up with clients and stakeholders following first encounters can lead to missed opportunities. Understanding the value of timely and culturally appropriate follow-up communications in maintaining and nurturing professional relationships is part of pragmatic competence (Gao, 2019).

Cultural awareness is critical for good client and stakeholder engagement in today's globalised marketplace. Lack of cultural competency frequently causes pragmatic failures, resulting in misunderstandings and crimes. Clients and stakeholders from various cultural origins may be offended by inappropriate language use or the inability to follow cultural norms. For example, using casual language or failing to follow cultural conventions in communication might be interpreted as disrespectful (Haugh & Kádár, 2017). Different cultures have different expectations about communication methods, such as directness vs indirectness. To minimise misunderstandings and create healthy connections, TVET professionals must modify their communication methods to match their customers' and stakeholders' cultural expectations (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Practical ability is essential for sustaining solid customer and stakeholder relationships in the TVET industry. Miscommunication and cultural misunderstandings can cause client discontent, harm an organization's brand, result in missed commercial opportunities, and create hurdles in worldwide

relationships. Addressing these issues via good communication training and cultural awareness can assist in maintaining healthy and productive client and stakeholder relationships.

#### **2.6.6. Barriers to Career Advancement**

Individuals who struggle with pragmatic competence may experience hurdles to job progression, as excellent communication skills are frequently required for promotions and leadership positions (Ting et al., 2017). Strong communication skills, as well as the capacity to traverse complicated interpersonal and cultural issues, are necessary for effective leadership. Pragmatic failure can hinder an individual's capacity to be perceived as a prospective leader (van Stralen et al., 2020). Networking and connecting with the larger professional community are common components of ongoing professional development. Making a good first impression and developing beneficial professional partnerships requires pragmatic skills.

Communication failures can pose substantial impediments to professional progression in the TVET industry. Effective communication skills are essential for professional development, leadership positions, and overall career success. Here is how pragmatic ineptitude might impede job advancement:

Leadership positions require a high level of communication skills. Individuals who fail to perform pragmatically may not be considered viable candidates for these roles. Leaders must explain visions, give clear directions, and motivate their staff. Pragmatic shortcomings, such as utilising incorrect speech actions or failing to recognise social cues, can impair a leader's capacity to successfully motivate and manage their team (Caruso & Salovey, 2019). Effective leaders must be skilled at dispute resolution. Misunderstanding intentions or using inappropriate language might intensify tensions, resulting in pragmatic failures rather than resolutions (Haugh & Kádár, 2017).

Networking is critical for job progress, whereas pragmatic competence is required for developing and sustaining professional connections. Pragmatic errors can lead to misconceptions about networking etiquette and conventions. For example, too formal or casual communication may alienate potential contacts (Gao, 2019). Successful networking requires the ability to establish rapport quickly. Pragmatic incompetence can impede the development of mutual understanding and trust, reducing prospects for professional relationships and mentorship (Caruso & Salovey, 2019).

Pragmatic failures can have a negative influence on performance assessments, which are important for professional progression. The failure to adequately explain one's accomplishments might lead to undervaluation by managers. During performance assessments, it is critical to promote oneself clearly and strategically. Failure to appropriately read and respond to feedback might impede professional

advancement. Understanding and employing indirect feedback constructively is a component of pragmatic competence (Caruso & Salovey, 2019).

Communication skills are frequently used to assess professional competence. Pragmatic failures can create views of unprofessionalism, limiting job development. Inappropriate communication styles, such as being too casual or forgetting to use proper titles and honorifics, might be seen as unprofessional (Abdullah et al., 2021). Lack of cultural knowledge in communication can result in misunderstandings and crimes, jeopardising professional relationships and reputations (Kešetović et al., 2014).

Collaboration is critical in the TVET industry, and pragmatic mistakes can jeopardise collaborative efforts. Albashiry's (2015) research sought to improve curriculum design approaches in developing countries' Technical Vocational Education and Training academic departments. This research consisted of two rounds of professional development agreements (PDAs), which included training, coaching, example materials, and hands-on curriculum renewal activities. The study found that Heads of Departments (HoDs) respected the PDA's design, content, and relevance to their duties as middle academic managers. The PDA increased their perceptions of systematic and relational curriculum design, curricular leadership, and collaborative curriculum design. Furthermore, the study discovered that the issues faced by HoDs differed depending on factors such as devotion, management ability, curriculum design understanding, and department atmosphere. The study revealed that TVET department heads in developing countries highly value professional development Programmes that help them strengthen their curriculum leadership competencies.

Albashiry's (2015) study is consistent with the National Youth Service's efforts to improve pragmatic competence among TVET workers. The focus on enhancing curriculum design methodologies and professional development in TVET emphasises the need for systematic training in accomplishing educational and professional goals. While Albashiry's (2015) research focuses on curriculum leadership, the fundamental ideas of professional development and systematic training apply directly to developing pragmatic competence among TVET learners and teachers.

Albashiry's (2015) research indicates the value of organised professional development Programmes in improving curricular leadership. This strategy may be used to enhance pragmatic competence in TVET settings. TVET students and teachers, like HoDs, can benefit from tailored training Programmes that focus on practical skills such as civility methods, effective communication approaches, and cultural awareness.

Albashiry's (2015) highlighted concerns, such as different levels of devotion, management abilities, and curriculum design expertise, which are similar to the obstacles encountered in improving pragmatic competence. Because of their various educational backgrounds and little exposure to English, trainees may demonstrate varying degrees of pragmatic skill mastery. Addressing these issues through systematic and relational training Programmes can result in considerable gains in communication abilities.

According to the researcher, Albashiry's (2015) study emphasises the need for ongoing professional development and personalised training programmes to obtain targeted educational outcomes. Applying this approach to the context of pragmatic competence in TVET, it is clear that organised and thorough training Programmes are required. These programmes should incorporate practical exercises, real-world scenarios, and interactive activities aimed at improving pragmatic abilities.

In my perspective, the ideas described in Albashiry's (2015) study provide an important foundation for improving pragmatic competency in TVET contexts. The effectiveness of professional development agreements in strengthening curricular leadership shows that comparable techniques might be extremely effective in building practical skills. Institutions may create a more inclusive and successful learning environment by including training modules that target TVET trainees' specialised communication needs.

The study's results on the various issues encountered by HoDs underscore the importance of customised training Programmes that address the specific requirements of diverse segments within the TVET workforce. For example, trainees with weak English abilities may need more intense language training, whereas individuals with greater language abilities may benefit from advanced courses on cross-cultural communication and civility methods.

Albashiry's (2015) research on improving curriculum design approaches in TVET gives useful insights that may be used to improve pragmatic competence across NYS TVET staff. TVET institutions may satisfy their students' and instructors' different communication demands by implementing an organised and comprehensive training strategy, resulting in superior educational and professional outcomes. The connection of professional development concepts with pragmatic competence training indicates the potential for major gains in communication skills, resulting in a more effective and inclusive vocational education setting.

Misunderstandings and communication breakdowns can limit collaboration efficiency by making it difficult for team members to develop mutual understanding. Individuals who are seen to be poor communicators may be removed from significant initiatives, restricting their exposure to valuable learning and networking opportunities (van Stralen et al., 2020).

Pragmatic failures provide significant impediments to professional progression in the TVET industry. Ineffective leadership communication, restricted networking possibilities, bad performance evaluations, perceived unprofessionalism, and decreased cooperation are all major challenges caused by inadequate pragmatic competence. Addressing these problems via focused communication training and creating a culture of continuous improvement will help TVET workers progress in their careers. Pragmatic failure in the TVET business can have a wide range of negative consequences, including miscommunication and decreased team cohesiveness, as well as diminished professional reputation and barriers to career advancement. Addressing these difficulties through targeted training and awareness initiatives may help to promote pragmatic competence, resulting in improved communication and a more pleasant and productive workplace.

## **2.7. Research Gap(s)**

Despite the rising importance of pragmatic competence in efficient workplace communication, there is a significant study deficit in the context of the (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) workforce at the National Youth Service. Prior research has generally focused on pragmatic competence in general working contexts, sometimes disregarding the specific dynamics and communication complexities that exist in vocational education institutions. Furthermore, there is little investigation into the complex interaction between speech actions, politeness, and pragmatic competence in the TVET environment.

### **2.7.1 Context-Specific Dynamics**

Existing research generally generalises findings from larger workplace contexts without addressing the unique problems and communication demands of the TVET workforce. The vocational training setting has different characteristics, such as a diversified population of students and instructors, a variety of cultural backgrounds, and specialised technical terminology. These issues need a specialised analysis of pragmatic competency that considers the specific setting of TVET at NYS (Nunan, 2018).

### **2.7.2 Speech Acts and Politeness**

The link between speech actions and civility in TVET remains unexplored. Because vocational training is hands-on and directional, speech actions such as requests, instructions, and apologies are essential. Understanding how these speech acts are seen and processed in a culturally varied situation is critical to effective communication (Thomas, 2013). Additionally, Leech's Politeness Theory, which points out the balance between tact, generosity, approbation, and modesty maxims, has not been heavily



adapted to the TVET context, where the circumstances of teacher-student and interactions among peers differ from those in traditional workplaces (Leech, 2014).

### **2.7.3 Methodological Limitations**

The majority of current research has used quantitative methodologies, which give useful information on the prevalence of pragmatic competence concerns but lack the depth required to comprehend the varied experiences and viewpoints of TVET employees. Quantitative techniques sometimes neglect the subtleties of interpersonal communication and the contextual aspects that influence pragmatic ability. There is an urgent need for in-depth qualitative research into the lived experiences of TVET professionals, capturing the nuances of their communication practices and issues (Holliday, 2016).

### **2.7.4 Lived Experiences and Perspectives**

Exploring TVET employees' lived experiences and perspectives on pragmatic competence can give valuable insights into daily communication practices in the vocational training context. Qualitative research approaches, such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic studies, can reveal the underlying causes of communication successes and failures, providing a more comprehensive knowledge of pragmatic competence in this setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). This proposed study seeks to fill these research gaps by performing a qualitative investigation of pragmatic competence, speech actions, and Geoffrey Leech's Politeness Theory in the TVET workforce at NYS. By concentrating on the unique communication practices and obstacles in this vocational environment, the study hopes to shed light on the complex communication methods required for success. Such a study can guide targeted interventions and training Programmes to improve TVET practitioners' pragmatic competence, resulting in more effective vocational education and training results.

## **2.8. Theoretical Framework**

Geoffrey Leech's politeness theoretical framework can be an appropriate choice to underpin the research study titled "An Exploration into the Pragmatic Competence of the TVET Workforce at the National Youth Service." Leech's politeness theory, a prominent component of his pragmatic framework, can provide valuable insights into the complexities of pragmatic competence in workplace communication (Mao & He, 2021).

### **2.8.1. Focus on Politeness Theory**

Politeness Theory, primarily developed by sociolinguists Erving Goffman (1967) and later expanded by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987), offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate dynamics of communication in social interactions (Wąsik, 2019). The theory investigates

how individuals strategically manage their own and others' public images through language and behaviour, aiming to maintain positive social relationships (Dmytriyev et al., 2021). It holds particular relevance across diverse contexts, spanning educational settings to professional environments, where effective communication is paramount.

According to Chen (2023), Politeness Theory asserts that individuals navigate interactions by balancing personal needs and desires with the societal norms of politeness. This delicate balance involves employing various politeness strategies to mitigate potential threats to one's face, or social identity, and to foster a harmonious atmosphere during communication. Strategies such as politeness markers, indirect speech acts, and expressions of solidarity are integral to this process, facilitating smoother interactions and minimizing conflict.

In educational settings, Politeness Theory informs teaching practices by emphasizing respectful communication between educators and students, thereby fostering a positive learning environment (Smith, 2020). Similarly, in professional environments, understanding and applying politeness strategies are crucial for enhancing teamwork, client relations, and overall organizational culture (Hsieh & Hsu, 2022).

Moreover, the theory acknowledges cultural and contextual variations in politeness norms, highlighting how societal expectations shape communicative behaviours differently across cultures (Yamamoto, 2018). This cultural sensitivity is essential for effective cross-cultural communication, where awareness of politeness conventions can prevent misunderstandings and promote mutual understanding.

Politeness Theory provides a robust framework for analysing and improving interpersonal communication in diverse social contexts. By exploring how individuals manage to face and navigate social expectations through linguistic and behavioural strategies, the theory enriches our understanding of how politeness functions as a fundamental aspect of human interaction. Its application extends beyond theoretical discourse to practical implications in education, professions, and intercultural communication, fostering respectful and effective communication practices worldwide.

### **2.8.2 Key components of Politeness Theory include**

The idea of "face" relates to an individual's positive social value and self-esteem, which may be endangered or strengthened via communication (Alabdali, 2019). This concept is critical to comprehending the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Within this perspective, "positive face" refers to the need for external acceptance and praise, whereas "negative face" refers to the demand

for autonomy and freedom of action (Alabdali). Maintaining a happy and negative attitude is essential, and etiquette methods play an important part in this process. Politeness solutions include a variety of verbal and nonverbal tactics for dealing with face-threatening behaviours. These methods include using politeness signals, hedges, and indirect language to reduce possible risks to an individual's face (Alabdali). Face-threatening activities, or FTAs, are actions or comments that have the potential to hurt someone's positive, negative, or both faces, demanding the cautious use of politeness methods to maintain social peace and respect (Alabdali).

In an educational context, understanding and applying Politeness Theory can be instrumental in fostering a positive and respectful learning environment. For instance, teachers can use politeness strategies to provide feedback, manage classroom discussions, and navigate interactions with students and colleagues (Yrisarry et al., 2019).

## **2.9. Relevance To Workplace Communication**

Leech's framework delves into the intricate balance between positive politeness strategies (to show friendliness and solidarity) and negative politeness strategies (to show deference and respect) in communication. Geoffrey Leech's Politeness Theory, detailed in his work "Principles of Pragmatics" (1983), provides a comprehensive framework that enriches our understanding of how language is utilized to navigate social interactions and express politeness. Leech builds upon the foundational concepts of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory and extends them, offering a more nuanced perspective.

Here are specific ways in which Leech's Politeness Theory contributes to this understanding:

1. **Politeness as a Principle of Pragmatics:** Leech situates politeness as a fundamental aspect of pragmatics, the study of language use in context (Dewi et al., 2021). By integrating politeness into the broader field of pragmatics, he emphasises its importance in effective communication.
2. **Politeness Strategies:** Leech categorises politeness strategies into three main types: positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness. Positive politeness involves emphasizing closeness and friendliness, negative politeness focuses on minimizing imposition and respecting the other's autonomy, and off-record politeness employs indirect or ambiguous language to convey a message without explicit imposition (Syarifuddin, 2022). This categorisation offers a structured way to analyse how individuals employ diverse strategies based on situational demands.

3. **Face-threatening Acts (FTAs):** Leech expands the concept of face-threatening acts, incorporating a spectrum of degrees ranging from bald on-record acts (least polite) to fully off-record acts (politest). This nuanced approach enables a finer analysis of how individuals balance assertiveness and politeness in communication.
4. **The Politeness Maxims:** Leech introduces six politeness maxims: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. These maxims provide a systematic framework for understanding how speakers use language to fulfil politeness goals in different social contexts.
5. **Social Variables:** Leech acknowledges the influence of social variables such as power, distance, and social ranking on politeness strategies. This recognition underscores the dynamic nature of politeness, showing that it is context-dependent and influenced by various sociocultural factors. In a professional setting like the TVET workforce, understanding and employing these strategies appropriately is vital for effective communication. Leech's politeness theory can offer insights into how pragmatic competence influences the choice of politeness strategies in workplace communication among TVET employees.

#### **2.10. Consideration Of Context And Culture**

Leech's framework recognises that politeness and pragmatic competence are context-dependent and influenced by cultural norms (Lebbal, 2019). In the context of the TVET workforce, which may comprise individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, understanding how cultural factors interact with pragmatic competence is crucial. Leech's framework allows for an exploration of how cultural nuances and variations affect pragmatic competence and politeness strategies within the TVET context (Mareka, 2020).

#### **2.11. Practical Implications**

Leech's politeness theory, as highlighted by Henghono (2023), offers valuable practical guidelines for enhancing communication effectiveness across diverse contexts. By understanding the intricate relationship between pragmatic competence and politeness, organisations, such as those in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), can develop targeted training Programmes and interventions aimed at improving communication skills among their employees. Leech's framework not only facilitates a thorough analysis of pragmatic competence issues but also provides actionable recommendations for fostering clearer and more respectful workplace interactions within TVET settings (Nghilinganye, 2023).

Furthermore, Geoffrey Leech's politeness theory serves as a robust theoretical foundation for investigating the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service (NYS). This framework offers nuanced insights into how pragmatic competence influences the application of politeness strategies in workplace communication contexts. It acknowledges the impact of cultural and contextual factors on communication dynamics, thereby guiding the development of strategies that resonate with the specific vocational environment of NYS.

By leveraging Leech's politeness theory, researchers and practitioners can better understand the complexities of communication within TVET settings, identifying key areas for improvement and tailoring interventions to enhance both pragmatic competence and interpersonal effectiveness. This approach not only supports the professional development of TVET employees but also contributes to the overall efficiency and cohesion of vocational training Programmes at institutions like the National Youth Service. Thus, integrating Leech's theoretical framework into practical applications ensures that efforts to optimize communication within TVET contexts are grounded in robust theoretical underpinnings and aligned with the specific needs and challenges of the workforce.

## **2.12. Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the foundational research areas in pragmatics, which form the cornerstone for understanding pragmatic competence and the concept of politeness. Pragmatics, as explored in this review, delves into the intricate dynamics of language use beyond literal meaning, encompassing how individuals effectively navigate social contexts through language. Central to this exploration is the concept of pragmatic competence, which refers to the ability to apply linguistic knowledge appropriately in various communicative situations, ensuring clarity and effectiveness of communication (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1996). The discussion also highlights the role of politeness, rooted in theories such as Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978), which elucidates how individuals manage interpersonal relations through strategies like face-saving and deference.

Moreover, this review stressed the significance of pragmatics in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, particularly at institutions like the National Youth Service (NYS). It examines how pragmatic competence among TVET professionals is pivotal for fostering productive workplace interactions, enhancing service delivery, and cultivating positive relationships with colleagues and clients alike. The exploration of politeness principles further illustrates their impact on communication within TVET settings, emphasising the importance of cultural sensitivity and context-specific communication strategies.

Additionally, the review delves into the consequences of pragmatic failure, where miscommunications or misunderstandings arise due to inadequate pragmatic competence. These failures can lead to inefficiencies, conflicts, and diminished outcomes in vocational training contexts, underscoring the practical implications of developing robust pragmatic skills among TVET professionals. By integrating insights from theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, this review not only enhances our understanding of pragmatics but also underscores its practical application in enhancing communication effectiveness and organizational success within the TVET sector.

Moving forward, future research should continue to explore effective strategies for enhancing pragmatic competence and promoting culturally responsive communication practices within vocational training environments. By addressing these areas, stakeholders in the TVET sector can better equip professionals with the necessary skills to navigate diverse communication challenges, thereby improving overall educational outcomes and contributing to the broader goals of workforce development and professional success.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This segment of the thesis outlined the research methodology employed to investigate pragmatic competence and politeness within the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service. It covers the research goals, clarifies the selected research design, paradigm, and approach, and provides details on the study setting, population, and sampling methods. Additionally, it describes the strategies for data collection and analysis. Together, these components form a clear framework, guiding readers through the study's structure. Such a thorough approach is crucial for maintaining the research's rigour and credibility.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Akhtar (2016), a research design represents the core framework of a study, acting as the essential "glue" that binds all elements into a unified plan. This study utilised a case study design with an exploratory focus, well-suited for examining the less-studied dimensions of pragmatic competence and politeness principles among the Technical and Vocational Education and Training workforce at the National Youth Service.

Exploratory research was ideal for collecting qualitative insights, providing an initial framework for understanding the phenomena under study. This approach enabled a closer examination of the complexities of pragmatic competence and the application of politeness principles in workplace interactions, yielding a detailed and well-rounded perspective.

The exploratory approach selected for this study was well-suited to examining the complex dynamics of pragmatic competence and civility norms in workplace communication at NYS. This method allowed for a deep dive into communication practices within a particular organisational context, uncovering nuanced details and complexities that might remain hidden with more structured, qualitative approaches.

Examining workplace communication within the specific institutional setting of NYS provided a unique case study opportunity. By concentrating on this single context, the study can delve deeply into communication patterns, assessing how these practices are influenced by the organisational culture, the roles and duties of the workforce, and larger social and cultural factors.

In this case study, employing an exploratory approach allowed the researcher to thoroughly examine multiple aspects of pragmatic competence and politeness, providing meaningful insights into communication practices within the TVET workforce at NYS.

### **3.3 Research Paradigm**

The constructivist research paradigm served as the theoretical bedrock for this investigation, providing a framework that aligns with the qualitative nature of the study. At its core, this paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals within the TVET workforce at NYS. Within the constructivist paradigm, reality is perceived as socially constructed, meaning that individuals actively contribute to the creation and understanding of reality through their interactions and interpretations (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022).

This paradigm is particularly pertinent for this study as it acknowledged that pragmatic competence and civility are influenced by individual perceptions and social contexts. By adopting a constructivist approach, the study aimed to uncover the intricate web of meanings and experiences that shape communication dynamics within the TVET workplace at NYS.

The constructivist paradigm underscored the idea that meanings are not fixed but rather emerge from the interactions and interpretations of individuals within their social environments. In the context of this research, it will enable an exploration of how individuals within the TVET workforce perceive and enact pragmatic competence and politeness principles, considering the diverse social and cultural factors that influence these behaviours.

By using the constructivist paradigm, this study sought to illuminate the complexity of workplace communication within TVET settings, offering insights into how these dynamics are shaped by individual interpretations and the broader social context. This approach not only enriches our understanding of pragmatic competence and civility but also contributes to a deeper appreciation of the role of subjective experiences in shaping organisational communication practices.

### **3.4 Research Approach**

The decision to employ a qualitative research method for this study was deliberate and harmonises well with the nuanced complexities of pragmatic competence and politeness norms in workplace communication within the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service (NYS). By opting for qualitative approaches, such as guided interviews and discourse completion tasks, the researcher positioned themselves to delve deeply into the intricate and context-dependent aspects of the research topic. This



methodological choice facilitated a nuanced understanding of the experiences, viewpoints, and interpretations of TVET staff members at NYS Rietfontein.

Qualitative research, characterised by its inductive reasoning, is particularly fitting for the exploratory nature of this study. It allows the researcher to generate insights directly from the data collected, rather than starting with preconceived hypotheses. This approach is well-suited for exploring the multifaceted dimensions of pragmatic competence and civility in the workplace, enabling the discovery of rich, context-specific insights.

As highlighted by Mbanaso et al. (2023), qualitative methods not only support a thorough examination of the study objectives but also facilitate an exploration of the underlying dynamics that influence pragmatic competence and civility within the TVET setting. This methodological approach ensures that the research captures the intricacies and subtleties of workplace communication practices effectively.

Overall, the strategic use of qualitative research methods, such as focus group interviews, in this study enhanced its ability to uncover the complexities of pragmatic competence and politeness rules in the TVET workforce at NYS, thereby contributing valuable insights to the field of organizational communication and vocational education.

### **3.5 Research Setting**

The research was carried out at the National Youth Service, with a specific focus on the Technical and Vocational Education and Training workforce. The designated site for this study was the NYS Rietfontein campus.

The NYS is a pivotal institution known for its commitment to youth development through various educational and vocational training Programmes. Within this context, the TVET workforce plays a crucial role in imparting specialized skills and knowledge to young individuals, thereby preparing them for future careers in technical fields.

The choice of the NYS Rietfontein campus as the research site offers a concentrated environment to investigate pragmatic competence and politeness principles within the TVET workforce. This campus likely represents a microcosm of the broader NYS institution, focusing specifically on technical and vocational training initiatives. By concentrating on this site, the research aims to capture the unique dynamics of workplace communication, exploring how pragmatic competence and civility manifest in educational and training settings.

Furthermore, selecting the NYS Rietfontein campus allows for a focused study that can delve deeply into the organizational culture, communication practices, and interpersonal dynamics specific to TVET education. This targeted approach enhances the study's ability to provide contextually rich insights into the phenomena under investigation.

In essence, the NYS Rietfontein campus served as an ideal research site within NYS, offering a conducive setting to explore and understand the complexities of pragmatic competence and politeness within the TVET workforce.

### **3.6 Study population, Sampling and Sample size**

The study focuses on a total population of 32 staff members at the National Youth Service Rietfontein Centre, specifically those involved in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). These individuals represent various trades within the TVET setting and contribute diverse expertise and insights.

To align with the research objectives, a census sampling approach was employed, whereby all 32 staff members involved in TVET at the Rietfontein Centre were included in the study. This method ensured comprehensive coverage and allowed for the collection of insights from the entire target population, eliminating sampling bias.

The inclusion of all relevant staff provided a wide range of perspectives on pragmatic competence and politeness in the TVET workplace. Additionally, the breadth and depth of the data collected ensured that the study met data saturation principles, thereby making a meaningful contribution to research in vocational education and organizational communication.

### **3.7 Data Collection Tools**

In this study, the primary data collection tools included an interview guide and a pragmatic competence discourse completion test (DCT). These instruments were carefully designed to elicit in-depth insights into pragmatic competence among TVET workforce members at the National Youth Service Rietfontein. The interview guide, structured with open-ended questions, served as a key instrument for gathering qualitative data. Open-ended questions were deliberately crafted to encourage participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and interpretations freely. This design aligns with the exploratory nature of the research, allowing for the collection of rich and nuanced responses (Jain, 2021).

Additionally, a pragmatic competence discourse completion test (DCT) was employed as a tool to assess participants' ability to use language appropriately in different workplace communication scenarios. This test provided structured prompts requiring participants to respond as they would in real-life professional interactions, thereby generating data on their pragmatic competence.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews and the administration of the DCT. During the interviews, data capture methods included audio or video recording and notetaking to ensure comprehensive documentation of responses, including both verbal and non-verbal cues.

To enhance the reliability and effectiveness of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted. This pilot session helped refine the interview guide by identifying ambiguities and adjusting questions for clarity and relevance. Following data collection, all recorded and written data were securely stored to maintain confidentiality and data integrity. These systematic procedures ensured that the collected data would be readily accessible for thorough analysis and interpretation.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

In the analysis phase of this study, the process began with the pivotal step of transcribing the recorded data from the group interviews. Transcription is essential as it involves converting spoken words from audio or video recordings into written text. As highlighted by Locke et al. (2022), this meticulous process ensures that not only the literal words but also nuances in tone, emphasis, and expression are captured accurately. Verbatim transcription provides a comprehensive dataset that forms the basis for thorough analysis and interpretation.

Following transcription, the data coding process was initiated to systematically organize the qualitative data and uncover patterns and themes within the dataset (Locke et al., 2022). For this research, thematic coding was employed, a methodical approach involving the identification, analysis, and categorization of recurring themes related to pragmatic competence among the TVET workforce. This coding process typically includes stages such as data familiarization, initial code generation, code grouping, data mapping, and data summation, as outlined by Kiger and Varpio (2020). To ensure accuracy and efficiency in transcription, appropriate transcription services or software tools were utilised, adhering to specified formatting guidelines. This approach guarantees that the transcribed data is reliable and ready for detailed coding and analysis (Jain, 2021).

In terms of data interpretation, a specific analytical framework, such as thematic analysis or grounded theory, guided the analysis process. Software tools like NVivo or MAXQDA were employed to facilitate

the management and analysis of large qualitative datasets, aiding in the systematic exploration of themes and sub-themes derived from the coded data. Comparative analysis techniques were employed to compare and contrast themes across different interview sessions, enabling the extraction of meaningful insights and the identification of patterns or divergences within the data (Jain, 2021). To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, triangulation was integrated as a validation strategy. This involved cross verifying the emerging themes and interpretations through multiple researchers or methods, ensuring robustness and reliability in the analysis process (Locke et al., 2022).

Overall, this comprehensive approach to data analysis comprising transcription, thematic coding, and interpretation within a specific framework, software utilization, comparative analysis, and triangulation provided a detailed understanding of pragmatic competence among the TVET staff members at the National Youth Service. It ensures that the findings are grounded in the data collected and systematically analysed, thereby contributing valuable insights to the study of workplace communication dynamics in vocational education settings.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations play a critical role in the conduct of research, particularly when involving human participants, as is the case with interviews conducted for this study. Participants in this research were provided with a comprehensive document detailing the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study before participating in group interviews. This document ensured informed consent, as participants would be fully informed about what their involvement entailed before they agreed to participate. They were required to sign an informed consent form, signifying their voluntary agreement to take part in the study.

Confidentiality is paramount, and participants were assured that their identities would be kept confidential. All responses gathered during interviews were anonymised during the reporting and analysis phases, thus ensuring that individual participants cannot be identified from the data. Careful consideration was given to the selection of interview locations to ensure privacy and comfort for participants during discussions. Moreover, all forms of data collected, including audio and video recordings, interview transcripts, and any identifying information, will be securely stored and accessible only to authorized personnel involved in the research.

To address any concerns or questions participants may have, a post-interview debriefing session was conducted. This session allowed participants to discuss the research objectives, and their contributions, and to raise any thoughts or questions they may have had about their involvement. Contact information was also provided for participants to reach out for further clarification or to voice additional concerns after the interviews. Full transparency was maintained regarding any potential conflicts of interest that

could influence the research process or outcomes. These conflicts would be disclosed in the research report to ensure transparency and integrity in reporting the findings.

Prior to the commencement of data collection, ethical clearance was secured from the Namibia University of Science and Technology. This clearance ensured that the research complied with ethical guidelines and safeguarded the rights and well-being of the participants involved.

Ethical considerations are rigorously upheld throughout the research process, emphasising a commitment to ethical research practices and the protection of participants' rights and welfare. Securing ethical clearance from the Namibia University of Science and Technology demonstrates adherence to established ethical standards and underscore the ethical integrity of the study.

### **3.9.1 Informed Consent**

Informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical research involving human participants, ensuring that individuals enter into studies voluntarily and with full awareness of the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits (Locke et al., 2022). For this study focusing on pragmatic competence and politeness within the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service, participants received a detailed booklet outlining all aspects of the research before engaging in group interviews. This informational document served to empower participants by providing clear and comprehensive information about what their involvement would entail. It covered the specific goals of the research, the methods employed during interviews, any foreseeable risks (such as discomfort or breaches of confidentiality), and potential benefits that may arise from their participation, such as contributing to knowledge in the field.

The informed consent process was crucial for upholding ethical principles in research for several reasons. Firstly, it respects individuals' autonomy by allowing them to make an informed decision about participating based on a thorough understanding of the study's implications. Secondly, it served to protect participants from potential harm by ensuring they were aware of any risks associated with their involvement and providing them with the option to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. Moreover, obtaining informed consent demonstrated a commitment to ethical integrity and transparency in research practices, complying with legal requirements and ethical guidelines. By adhering to these standards, researchers uphold the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings while prioritising the welfare and rights of the individuals who contribute to the research.

### **3.9.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Confidentiality and anonymity are essential ethical principles in research involving human participants, ensuring their personal information and identities are protected throughout the study. Confidentiality

guarantees that any sensitive data shared by participants remains secure and inaccessible to unauthorized individuals (Jain, 2021). This included safeguarding their identities, responses, and any other confidential information disclosed during the research process. By maintaining confidentiality, researchers build trust with participants, encouraging honest and uninhibited participation, particularly in studies involving sensitive topics where participants may feel vulnerable.

Anonymity complements confidentiality by ensuring that participants' identities remain undisclosed in all research outputs. This involves replacing real names with pseudonyms or codes in all documentation and publications resulting from the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Anonymity enabled participants to share their experiences and opinions without fear of being personally identified or associated with their responses. This is crucial in fostering candid responses, especially in research addressing stigmatized issues or personal experiences. In the current study focusing on the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service, strict adherence to confidentiality and anonymity protocols will be upheld. Participants can be assured that all identifiable information was securely stored and accessed only by authorised members of the research team, with no disclosure to external parties without explicit consent or legal obligation. These measures not only protect the privacy and rights of participants but also uphold the integrity and credibility of the research findings.

### **3.9.3 Privacy**

Privacy in the context of this study refers to the careful consideration and selection of interview locations that ensure participants' anonymity and create a comfortable environment conducive to open and honest communication. The term "privacy" encompasses the physical and emotional space where participants feel secure and protected from potential intrusions or disturbances during interviews.

Privacy was crucial in this study as it aimed to foster an environment where participants could freely express their views and experiences regarding the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service. By selecting interview locations that guaranteed anonymity, researchers minimized the risk of participants feeling exposed or vulnerable. This approach helped to establish a sense of safety and confidentiality, encouraging participants to share candid insights without concerns about their surroundings or potential interruptions. In turn, this facilitated more genuine responses and enriched the qualitative data collected during the interviews. Throughout the study, careful attention to privacy considerations ensured that participants' comfort and confidentiality were prioritized, thereby enhancing the overall quality and reliability of the research findings.

### **3.9.4 Data Security**

Data security in this study refers to the comprehensive measures taken to protect all forms of collected data, including audio and video recordings, interview transcripts, and any personally identifiable information (PII). This encompasses both digital and physical data storage methods designed to prevent unauthorized access, maintain confidentiality, and safeguard the integrity of the research findings.

Data security was of paramount importance throughout this study to ensure the protection and confidentiality of participants' sensitive information. By securely storing all data, including digital recordings and transcripts, researchers minimized the risk of unauthorised access or data breaches. Digital materials were encrypted and stored on password-protected devices to prevent unauthorised viewing or tampering. Similarly, physical copies of documents containing PII were stored in locked cabinets accessible only to authorised researchers, thus preventing inadvertent exposure or theft of sensitive information.

These stringent data security measures were essential to upholding ethical standards and maintaining the trust and confidentiality promised to participants. By safeguarding the integrity of the data collected, the study ensured that participants' privacy rights were respected throughout all stages of data handling and analysis. This approach not only protected the participants' personal information but also enhanced the credibility and reliability of the research outcomes.

### **3.9.5 Post-Interview Debriefing**

Post-interview debriefing in this study refers to a structured session conducted after each participant's interview, where they were given the opportunity to reflect on their contributions and engage in discussions about the research objectives. This debriefing session aimed to provide clarity on the study's purpose and methodology, address any concerns participants may have had, and allow them to provide feedback on their interview experience.

Post-interview debriefing sessions were crucial in this study as they served multiple important purposes. Firstly, they helped ensure that participants fully understood the context and goals of the research. By discussing the research objectives and methodology, researchers clarified any uncertainties participants may have had, thereby enhancing the transparency and trustworthiness of the study.

Secondly, these sessions provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their involvement and contributions. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts, ask questions, and provide feedback about their interview experience. This not only empowered participants by acknowledging

their role in the research process but also helped researchers gain valuable insights into how the interviews were perceived and received.

Lastly, post-interview debriefing sessions were essential for maintaining positive rapport with participants. By allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment, researchers demonstrated appreciation for their time and contributions. This approach fostered a collaborative relationship between researchers and participants, promoting continued engagement and cooperation throughout the study. Overall, the post-interview debriefing sessions played a critical role in ensuring participant understanding, fostering mutual respect, and enriching the quality of data collected in the study.

### **3.9.6 Participant Support**

Participant support in this study refers to the provision of contact information for the study team, enabling participants to reach out with any further questions, concerns, or needs they may have during and after the study period. This assistance was aimed at maintaining open lines of communication between participants and researchers, ensuring that participants felt supported and valued throughout their involvement in the research.

Participant support was crucial in this study as it facilitated ongoing engagement and collaboration between researchers and participants. By providing clear contact information, researchers established a mechanism for participants to seek clarification, express concerns, or provide additional insights beyond the formal interview process. This approach not only enhanced participants' understanding of the study but also demonstrated researchers' commitment to addressing any issues promptly and effectively.

Furthermore, participant support contributed to the ethical conduct of the study by prioritising participants' well-being and ensuring their continued comfort and satisfaction with their involvement. By offering support during and after the study, researchers fostered a sense of trust and transparency, which is fundamental to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research findings. Overall, participant support was instrumental in promoting a positive research experience and facilitating meaningful participation from all individuals involved.

### **3.9.7 Conflict of Interest**

Participant support in this study refers to the provision of contact information for the study team, thereby enabling participants to reach out with any further questions, concerns, or needs they may have during and after the study period. This assistance was aimed at maintaining open lines of



communication between participants and researchers, ensuring that participants felt supported and valued throughout their involvement in the research.

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### **3.9.8 Ethical Clearance**

Ethical clearance in this study refers to the formal approval obtained from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) before commencing data collection. This clearance certificate served as an official acknowledgement that the research design, methods, and procedures adhered to established ethical guidelines and standards. It ensured that the rights, dignity, and well-being of the research participants were protected throughout the study.

Obtaining ethical clearance was paramount in this study as it underscored the commitment to conducting research ethically. The clearance process involved a thorough review of the study protocol by an independent ethics committee at NUST, ensuring that potential risks to participants were minimised and ethical principles, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were rigorously upheld.

By obtaining ethical clearance, researchers demonstrated their adherence to ethical norms and guidelines, thereby enhancing the credibility and validity of the study. This step not only safeguarded the rights of participants but also upheld the reputation of the institution and researchers involved in the study. It assured stakeholders, including participants, funding bodies, and the broader academic community, that the research was conducted responsibly and with integrity.

In conclusion, ethical clearance played a pivotal role in laying the foundation for ethical research conduct, ensuring that the study was conducted ethically, transparently, and with utmost respect for the rights and welfare of all individuals involved.

### **3.9.9 Cultural Sensitivity**

Cultural sensitivity in this study refers to the deliberate effort and consideration given to respecting and acknowledging the cultural backgrounds of all participants. It encompasses the awareness and understanding of cultural norms, values, traditions, and practices relevant to the participants' identities and communities. The study aimed to ensure that interactions, communications, and research procedures were conducted in a manner that honoured and respected the diversity of cultural origins represented among the participants.

Cultural sensitivity was of paramount importance in this study as it facilitated meaningful and respectful engagement with participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. By demonstrating awareness and respect for cultural norms and values, researchers created an inclusive environment where participants felt valued and understood. This approach fostered trust and rapport, which are essential for obtaining accurate and insightful data in cross-cultural research contexts.

Moreover, cultural sensitivity enhanced the validity and reliability of the study findings by minimising cultural biases and misunderstandings. It ensured that research procedures, such as interview protocols and data interpretation, were culturally appropriate and relevant to the participants' lived experiences. By incorporating cultural sensitivity into every aspect of the study, researchers not only adhered to ethical principles but also enriched the depth and authenticity of the research outcomes.

In summary, cultural sensitivity played a pivotal role in promoting ethical conduct, enhancing participant engagement, and ensuring the relevance and applicability of the study findings within diverse cultural contexts. By prioritising cultural sensitivity, the study contributed to a more inclusive and respectful research process that honoured the diversity of participants' cultural identities and perspectives.

### **3.9.10 Minimising Harm**

In this study, minimising harm refers to the proactive measures taken to mitigate any potential risks of injury, discomfort, or psychological distress that participants might experience as a result of their involvement in the research. It involves a systematic approach to identifying, addressing, and minimising the impact of potential hazards or adverse effects associated with participation in the study.

Minimising harm was critically important in this study to uphold ethical standards and ensure the well-being of participants. Researchers took steps to communicate clearly and transparently with participants about any potential risks or discomforts associated with their involvement in the research. This included informing participants about the nature of the study, the procedures involved, and any foreseeable risks they might encounter.

Furthermore, researchers actively monitored and responded to any concerns or issues that arose during the study to minimise harm. This proactive approach helped to mitigate risks in real-time and ensure that participants' safety and comfort were prioritised throughout the research process. By taking these measures, researchers aimed to foster a supportive and respectful environment that promoted trust and minimised the likelihood of negative consequences for participants.

Overall, minimising harm was integral to maintaining ethical integrity and conducting responsible research. By addressing potential risks and concerns proactively, researchers upheld their commitment to protecting participants from harm and ensuring that the study was conducted ethically and responsibly. This approach not only safeguarded the participants' well-being but also enhanced the credibility and validity of the study's findings.

### **3.9.11 Feedback and Results Sharing**

In this study, feedback and results sharing refer to the practice of providing participants with a summary of the research findings after their involvement in the study. This summary ensured that participants could understand and appreciate the outcomes of their contributions, gaining insight into how their involvement contributed to the broader research objectives.

Feedback and results sharing were crucial in this study as they promoted transparency, accountability, and respect for participants' contributions. By offering participants access to the research findings, researchers demonstrated a commitment to closing the feedback loop and honouring participants' investment of time and effort in the study. This approach empowered participants by acknowledging their role in the research process and highlighting the significance of their perspectives and experiences.

Moreover, providing feedback and sharing results enhanced the ethical conduct of the study by promoting openness and fairness. It ensured that participants had the opportunity to review and validate the findings derived from their participation, thereby contributing to the credibility and reliability of the research outcomes. This transparency not only upheld ethical standards but also fostered trust and collaboration between researchers and participants, reinforcing mutual respect and engagement.

By embracing these ethical considerations, the study adhered to the highest standards of ethical conduct, prioritising the safety, respect, and well-being of all participants. This approach not only bolstered the credibility and dependability of the research but also enhanced participant satisfaction and willingness to engage in future research endeavours. Overall, feedback and results sharing played a pivotal role in ensuring a comprehensive and ethical research process that benefited both participants and the broader research community.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

The chapter presented a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed throughout the investigation. It encompassed essential components, including the research design, paradigmatic framework, methodological approach, study setting, characteristics of the study population, sampling techniques, determination of sample size, selection of data collection tools, methods of data analysis, and rigorous adherence to ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings gathered through semi-structured interviews and the Pragmatic Competence Discourse Test. The discussion is structured according to the three objectives of the study. This chapter, therefore, presents the research findings and embarks on an elaborate discussion of the results considering the key objectives of the study. Data collection was primarily done through in-depth interviews conducted with participants from the National Youth Service workforce on technical vocational education. In this regard, the participants were assigned different alphabetical labels, from participant A to J, to ensure anonymity and confidentiality as outlined in the methodology section.

The study findings are presented according to the research objectives with some subthemes under each objective finding. First, pragmatic competence, regarding the workforce of TVET, is deliberated upon, and then the communicative abilities of the workforce are appraised and identified in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The second section focuses on politeness principles and pragmatic competence in showing how respect-oriented communication influences interaction in the workplace. Finally, the last section deals with the consequences of pragmatic failure regarding miscommunication and how such miscommunication affects organisational performance.

#### 4.2 The Pragmatic Competence of the TVET Workforce at the NYS

The first objective of this study was to analyse the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at the NYS. Pragmatic competence is the capacity of an individual to use language effectively when communicating in a variety of social settings, including professional settings where appropriate language use is essential for participant interaction (Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer 2020). At the NYS, it is imperative to maintain effective communication to foster a shared understanding, manage conflicts, and maintain a cohesive work environment.

One of the most emphasised issues was related to how timely and effective information was not shared on time, the majority of participants argued that this has been one of the major bottlenecks to the proper execution of tasks and organisational efficiency in general. During the interviews, participants complained of being delayed in receiving needed information while its effect mostly led to poor preparation and inefficiency.

Participants emphasised that the timing of information dissemination was a persistent issue. Most respondents reported that essential updates typically arrive at the last minute, leaving little time for work preparation and that individuals struggle with effective time communication. Participants identified that as an issue. To be specific, Participant A explained that,

*"Information does not reach us on time, and we are always informed at the last minute, leaving no time for preparations."*

This lack of timely communication caused unnecessary stress and reduced the workforce's ability to effectively meet the organization's demands. Kasper and Rose (2018) highlight these concerns, emphasizing the crucial role of clear and efficient communication in organizational success. According to Matsumura (2024), pragmatic competence involves not only using language appropriately but also ensuring that information is conveyed in a manner that allows for proper planning and execution.

Delays and inconsistencies in communication within an organisation often reveal deeper coordination problems that limit the workforce's ability to perform their tasks effectively (Alonso & Corral, 2021). When information is not disseminated promptly, miscommunication and misinterpretation are more likely to occur, leading to operational inefficiencies. This issue at NYS suggests that essential information is either delayed or not acted upon promptly, which points to a breakdown in pragmatic competence. According to Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer (2020), pragmatic competence involves the ability to comprehend and use language appropriately within specific contexts, particularly regarding the timing and relevance of information. In the NYS context, the failure to deliver information on time impairs the workforce's ability to use language to interpret and respond appropriately to organizational directives. Without receiving information at the right moment, employees cannot engage in the necessary communication exchanges to understand or act upon their duties, failing to meet organisational demands. This lack of timely communication is not only a coordination issue but also a reflection of how language is misused or underutilised in facilitating effective communication.

The participants were asked to choose a scenario that could be the best response to a trainee who made a mistake during the practical. All the participants chose:

*"Let's talk about what happened. Mistakes are part of learning".*

This is an indication that staff are aware of the correct and appropriate language that will be better understood and not offend the trainee. For example, Matsumura's (2024) response is indicative of an understanding that corrective feedback should be constructive and that one should promote a positive learning environment. All participants demonstrated pragmatic awareness, and one way to soften any negative emotion a speaker might feel associated with error correction is through the use of normalizing language that views mistakes as part of learning.

The response is consistent with the pragmatic theories underlying the principles of positive reinforcement and collaborative problem-solving in instructional settings. Following Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of Politeness, such a response can be classified as a positive politeness strategy in which the speaker attempts to redress the possible FTA of pointing out an error in supportive terms. The result agrees with what was earlier reviewed: that supportive language creates an engaging context and promotes the self-efficacy of the trainee.

In another question, participants were asked how they would handle a fellow worker who constantly cuts in during team meetings. All Participants indicated that they would,

*"Politely wait until they finish and then continue".*

The fact that all participants chose the above response is an indication that they are aware of the essence of not interfering in a conversation while someone is speaking which may mean colleagues hardly interfere in while others are speaking. The latter response is also illustrative of restraint and maintenance of politeness norms, both critical components of pragmatic competence (Riddiford & Newton, 2021). Waiting for the colleague to finish before continuing to speak was a very indicative function of the respondent's awareness of social etiquette function of respect due to turn-taking in conversation. It also aligns with Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), where communication should be respectful and orderly.

The participants did not see language as a problem in their daily communication at work. It seems like how the message is communicated is what was a problem. For example, all the participants reiterated that there is a lack of good communication at the NYS. This made working very disorganised and frustrating. What participants view as bad communication is how information flows within the organisation which was highly restricted. The key information was kept among a few individuals or groups, while others were not informed and hence could not deliver appropriate services.

Moreover, Participant F echoed these sentiments, emphasizing that the lack of proper communication channels creates a chaotic environment. Stating,

*"There is no proper flow of information; information that should be known by everyone can only be shared among a few members, leaving the majority in a dilemma."*

This selectiveness in sharing information thus led to the erstwhile confusion and frustration among employees. All participants described feeling left out of key information or poorly prepared to perform a task, as in most cases necessary information did not reach them in due time. The workforce was thus

struggling to sustain efficiency and coordination, with many employees finding themselves repeatedly at a loss regarding their role or responsibility concerning certain tasks.

Kim and Ohta (2023) substantiate these concerns by pinpointing the open, unrestricted exchange of information as a critical component of organisational efficiency. Certainly, operational inefficiencies, low morale, and increased frustration are the result of ineffective dissemination of information and inadequate communication channels. Cooperation and trust among employees are impeded by the inadequate distribution of information, which, in turn, diminishes their capacity to perform at their best. Communication researchers have established that an organisation that fails to implement plain, candid, and open communication systems is destined to encounter teamwork breakdowns, miscommunication, and decreased productivity.

#### **4.2.1 Pragmatic Competence in Technical Instructions**

Participants were asked about what communication challenges they encountered in their role at the NYS because of the way language is used. The study revealed that every participant reported having some kind of problem with giving proper technical instructions due to failure to use language appropriately based on the context they find themselves in and the interlocutors. Based on the findings, language barriers sometimes occur as a result of the speakers' educational backgrounds and languages and cultures.

To be specific, Participant F explained how challenging it was to communicate technical tasks to trainees with limited English proficiency, stating,

*"It's hard to know if the trainees truly understand, especially when there is a language gap."*

The same sentiment was echoed by Participant E, who noted that,

*"The lack of shared educational experiences between trainers and trainees often resulted in misunderstandings, with trainees struggling to grasp complex instructions".*

Furthermore, Participant C highlighted the consequences of not adapting communication strategies when working with diverse trainees. The participant stated that,

*"Making sure trainees from different backgrounds properly comprehend technical topics is one of the biggest communication issues I have, especially in situations when there is a language barrier."*

As Lantolf and Thorne (2022) explain, these responses indicate that there is an emerging profile of pragmatic failure in that the trainers fail to adapt to divergent needs in different ways during their communication with their trainees. Communication breakdowns in technical and precision-based



training contexts provide a host for mistakes and inefficiency, thus frustrating trainees and trainers alike.

The majority of the participants further explained how inconsistent communication contributed to low performance among trainees, stating that miscommunication leads to some trainees missing out on essential information. For example, participant D noted that,

*"When trainees don't fully understand instructions, their performance drops, and some may even miss important details,"*

This sentiment was also shared by Participant E, who explained that clear and structured communication is essential for conveying complex technical information, noting that,

*"If the instructions are unclear or too complicated, the chances of errors increase, which not only lowers the quality of work but also affects the trainees' confidence."*

As Lantolf and Thorne (2022) assert, pragmatic competence is not concerned with the transfer of information per se, but rather with the adaptation of language, tone, and content to the contextual embeddedness of the listener. Specifically, in technical training, trainers must be cognisant of the trainees' prior knowledge, the linguistic capabilities of the participants, and cultural expectations to effectively communicate ideas. For instance, trainees from regions where the emphasis is not on technical subjects will require orientation in simpler methods, as their capacity to comprehend more intricate instructions may be compromised unless they are simplified or clarified through practical demonstrations. The capacity to adapt to various communication strategies is essential for bridging these divides.

Also, many participants pointed out that there should be clarity and structure regarding how technical instructions are delivered. Most reiterated that complex technical processes had to be broken down into small, manageable steps, considering the diverse trainee background.

As explained by Participant H below:

*"Simplifying instructions and using visual aids or practical demonstrations is the only way to make sure all trainees can follow, especially those who may struggle with English."*

This view was supported by Participant G, who argued that,

*"Interactive techniques will serve better, like hands-on training to provide technical information rather than verbal instructions alone."*

The two findings correspond with the sentiments of Kim and Ohta (2023), who argued that for technical training environments in which comprehension is crucial, a multimodal approach that incorporates verbal, visual, and practical elements works.

Furthermore, it was found that the cultural background of the trainees also plays a significant role in the strategies of communication. Quite a few participants also pointed out that cultural differences influenced the way trainees perceived and followed instructions and interacted with trainers.

Participant H explained,

*"Cultural differences in communication styles often make it difficult to know if trainees understand the instructions or if they are just too shy to ask for clarification."*

This implies that a trainer must establish a non-threatening and suitable environment in which trainees are at liberty to ask enquiries and request additional explanations. In diverse settings such as NYS, pragmatic competence is also about structuring communication spaces in which participants feel free to engage without fear of evaluation, as Kim and Ohta (2023) state.

Participants further noted that pragmatic failures had serious consequences on the training programme. According to Participant I,

*"When trainees keep making the same mistakes because they don't fully understand, it demoralises them, and it takes more time and resources to fix the errors."*

Riddiford and Newton (2021) contend that learners will become demotivated and withdraw from participation as a result of the repetition of the same errors due to a lack of communication, which ultimately results in poor performance. It is further substantiated by Kim and Ohta (2023), who contend that technical miscommunication during training can result in severe delays and inefficiency in the future, as instructors will be required to consume time correcting errors that would have been rendered null and void. Matsumura (2024) also observed that pragmatic failure in instructional contexts is typically accompanied by delays in task completion and decreased training output, which is consistent with Participant J's observation that ineffective communication slows the training process. The additional time devoted to elucidating instructions and rectifying errors detracts from the time that should be allocated to core training objectives, thereby compromising the overall success of the training program. The argument of Riddiford and Newton (2021) is that training programmes are most efficient and effective when clear and systematic communication is maintained. This approach reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings and enables trainees to perform their tasks accurately and confidently for the first time.

#### **4.3 The Relationship between Politeness Principles and Pragmatic Competence**

The second objective of the study was to establish how the politeness principles establish pragmatic competence in the workforce at NYS. Under these objectives, data were analysed to find out how

participants manage their social relationships and interactions through languages to avoid social friction by adhering to politeness maxims. The data are presented under subthemes which were derived from the literature review to show how the NYS staff go beyond conveying information effectively and clearly to reduce social frictions during the conversation which is the main principle of Leech.

#### **4.3.1 Leech's maxims**

This theme was developed based on participants' discussions of the role that respect and politeness play in building positive interactions and minimizing conflict. Respect and consideration were defined by participants collectively as an essential component in developing positive workplace interaction that would enhance overall job satisfaction within the NYS. The majority of participants in the interviews through this research underlined that respect and politeness in everyday interpersonal relations are first-order issues: not only for smooth relationships within the group but also in terms of motivation, morale, and performance. Most of the respect and politeness discussions by participants in workplace interaction can be understood from the perspective of Leech's Maxims of Politeness. These maxims form part of Geoffrey Leech's broader Politeness Principle (1983) and give an idea of how individuals regulate social interaction to maintain harmony and minimize discord. The importance of respect and politeness for positive workplace dynamics, job satisfaction, and good teamwork was summed up collectively by the participants at NYS.

Lee's Tact Maxim (1983) states the belief that one should minimise the imposition on others while one is maximizing his or her benefit. Participant A was trying to drive this home with the elaboration on how polite language should de-escalate and build the work ambience positively. For instance, instead of blunt imperatives, Participant A explained that they might ask politely,

*"Could we consider this approach? I think it might work better for everyone involved."*

This statement minimises imposition by using "could we" and suggesting the approach collaboratively. Rather than directing others, Participant A's language choice promotes inclusivity, therefore, aligning with the Tact Maxim and creating a constructive environment. According to Leech (1983), such polite phrasing ensures that others feel respected and that cooperation is encouraged rather than imposed, making communication smoother and reducing potential friction.

The Generosity Maxim recommends maximising benefits to others while minimising benefits to oneself. Participant B illustrated this in their approach to team collaboration, explaining,

*"Would you like to lead this task? I think you have the perfect skills for it."*

Here, Participant B shows deference to a colleague and promotes the other person's growth, showing confidence in their abilities, since the comment falls under Leech's Generosity Maxim. By turning the attention from the self to the colleague, Participant B is showing respect towards the colleague's contribution and is thus supportive. According to Chen (2023), this kind of approach has been remarked upon as instrumental in constructing mutual respect and engagement within teams since it maximizes the positive reinforcement given to others.

As stated by Leech's Maxim of Tact (1983), a speaker is supposed to minimise the imposition for others and maximise the benefit to them. This was reflected in most participants' comments about the consideration towards colleagues. Thus, Participant A mentioned that respectful communication contributes to reducing tensions and creating a better atmosphere at work. Stating,

*"When we speak to each other with respect, it's easier to get along, and it creates a better atmosphere to work in."*

This also aligns with Leech's (1991) principle of minimizing imposition; thus, showing respect with each utterance minimizes the social imposition or discomfort that could be experienced within workplace communication and, hence, allows easier cooperation among colleagues.

Similarly, a number of the respondents shared ideas similar to those expressed by Leech's (2014 p.124) Maxim of Generality, which states, "Maximise the benefit to other, minimize the benefit to self," such as most participants who elaborated that being polite and considerate make for a helpful work environment. For instance, participant B states that,

*"Being polite and considerate means that everyone feels included, and this encourages teamwork and collaboration."*

The speaker is attending to the Maxim of Generality because it takes the focus off of themselves and places it onto including others and grouping together as a team; this makes others feel wanted and cared for, thus beneficial to the overall atmosphere of the team.

Leech's Approbation Maxim suggests that speakers should minimize criticism of others and maximise their praise. Participant D emphasised this maxim in describing how they offer feedback. Stating,

*"I appreciate the effort you've put in; perhaps we could adjust this part slightly to align with the project goals."*

This approach recognises a person's effort first before suggesting any change, without being directly critical and the tone remains positive. Participant D's wording ensures that there is maximum praise

with minimum criticism, not only to uplift team morale but also to keep the communication constructive and non-confrontational. Leech (1983) notes that the Approbation Maxim works in a positive social environment, making colleagues feel valued and motivated (Chen, 2023). As a result, it reduces stress and promotes job satisfaction.

Moreover, most participants showed that politeness soothes the process of communication and reduces the chances of misunderstandings hence Leech's (1983) maxim of Agreement or minimising disagreement and maximizing agreement. For instance, participant F states that,

*"If people treat each other with respect, it makes the communication process smoother, and there's less room for misunderstandings."*

Here, politeness has been used as one of the strategies to minimise the chance of conflict through creating agreement and understanding which may avoid occurring where it would lead to further misunderstanding or even confrontation on an issue.

The Agreement Maxim suggests minimizing disagreement and maximizing agreement to maintain rapport. Participant F demonstrated this maxim by showing how polite language could reduce misunderstandings. Stating that,

*"I see where you're coming from, and I think that's a good point. Maybe we could also consider this perspective to balance things out."*

In this example, Participant F starts with agreement and then gently introduces an alternative viewpoint, avoiding direct disagreement and fostering collaborative discussion. This strategy prevents the conversation from turning adversarial, allowing both perspectives to be acknowledged without conflict. Following Leech's Agreement Maxim, this approach promotes smoother interactions, as noted by Culpeper and Tantucci (2021), who stress the importance of mutual agreement in professional settings to facilitate teamwork. Leech's (2014) Maxim of Sympathy also appeared in numerous participant statements that considering others leads to more effective collaboration. Participant G states that,

*"When everyone feels respected, it's easier to share ideas and work together without conflict."*

This is in line with the Maxim of Sympathy one would be informed that empathy and respect make for easier collaborations and minimum interpersonal conflict, ensuring that team members will be able to work together without tension.

These observations also support Goffman's (1967) face theory, which states that one's image of dignity has to be well-maintained in social life. Respect and politeness save the positive face of both one and others to develop good relationships and avoid face-threatening acts. Many participants reported that when respect and politeness are headlined in daily life, workplace harmony is developed, and stress is reduced due to open communications being developed.

The theme of politeness was inducted as an important strategy in conflict resolution at work since misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication could easily get out of hand. More often than not, participants consistently emphasised how politeness yielded a de-escalation in tense situations and moved discussions into constructive dialogue. Applying Leech's (1983) Maxims on Politeness, participants further commented on the role of politeness at the National Youth Service, NYS, exploring how language choices in line with these maxims advance harmony and cooperation. Leech's Tact Maxim (2014), which suggests minimizing the imposition on others, was evident in most participants' strategies for resolving conflicts. For example, participant H shared an experience in which politeness helped them defuse a potentially heated situation. Stating,

*"There was a scenario where a colleague was unnecessarily arrogant to me. I had to reclaim my power by remaining calm while processing how to react to her. I controlled my breathing, and after regaining my composure, I gave a polite response. In the end, she apologised."*

Here, politeness alleviated what would have been an imposition that the colleague would have had to endure from being angry and confrontational. According to Chen (2023), this suggests that pragmatic strategies, in this case politeness, are applied to de-escalate interpersonal disputes in order not to escalate the situation. Without blaming or aggression, Participant H showed how politeness under the Tact Maxim works to maintain decorum and result in a positive outcome.

Leech's (1983) generosity Maxim encourages speakers to maximize the benefit to others while minimizing it to self. Indeed, most participants' strategies in handling disagreements manifested this. For example, participant B states that,

*"Being polite even when I disagree with a colleague shows that I respect their opinion, and it helps us work through the issue together."*

Emphasising consideration for the other's opinion, most of the Participants relayed the Generosity Maxim to illustrate how politeness can be used to maximise gains that may result from cooperation. In this case, yielding to a colleague's opinion during disagreement allows cooperative problem-solving rather than escalation of conflict.

Approbation Maxim states that one should minimise criticism and maximize approbation in order not to cause a sense of discomfort. Many participants pointed out how politeness facilitates open communication even when disagreeing. For instance, participant D states that,

*"When you're polite, people are more likely to listen to your point of view, even if they don't agree right away."*

The Approbation Maxim was followed by most participants through minimising direct criticism and maintaining a dialogue that was respectful, leading to decreased further escalation. This follows what Chaqmaqchee and Jasim (2022), describe as politeness, which is where there is maintenance of a positive face by using polite strategies to reduce face-threatening acts to allow both parties to communicate without feeling defensive.

Leech's (1983) Modesty Maxim, which suggests minimizing self-praise and avoiding self-aggrandisement, was most participants as participant C reflected on account of remaining calm in difficult situations.

*"If I stay calm and polite, even in a difficult situation, it makes the other person more likely to calm down too. It's the best way to keep things from getting out of control."*

Here, the participant followed the Modesty Maxim by not insisting on their rightness or position within the argument but, instead, allowing the calming of the other to take precedence, thereby averting further escalation and opening the way to a more productive exchange.

The Agreement Maxim imposes avoiding disagreement wherever possible and seeking agreement as much as possible. Most participants depicted this; for instance, participant G said,

*"If we talk to each other with respect, it's easier to address problems without things getting out of hand."*

Here, politeness supports the attainment of consensus among the parties and does not allow disagreement to turn into conflict. Here, according to Leech's maxim of politeness, the participants employed strategies of politeness to maintain harmony.

The Sympathy Maxim, which encompasses showing empathy and insight, was quite pertinent in such a culturally diverse environment. Most Participants discussed how politeness bridges gaps within cultures, For instance, participant C states that,

*"People from different cultures may interpret things differently. What one person sees as assertive, another may see as rude, so being polite helps bridge that gap."*

As a result, politeness has assumed an empathetic form on this issue, where cultural diversities can be bridged without any misunderstanding creating conflict. This corroborates the arguments by Chung and Tang (2022) that politeness is not just a formality but a mechanism for regulating relationships in workspaces.

The pragmatic test administered to the respondents also produced positive politeness strategies that were in line with Leech's maxims. In response to the question of what they would say to request a report from a junior colleague, all the participants chose,

*"I understand you're busy, but could you prioritize finishing the report?"*

The above response follows Leech's (1991) Tact Maxim - to minimise the imposition upon the colleague while making the request clear. This politeness softening a directive shows the participants have a high level of pragmatic competence, respecting the colleague's workload while insisting upon the importance of the task.

Collectively, the participant's responses depict how Leech's Politeness Maxims of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy are beneficial in the resolution of conflict at NYS. Saying or not saying something at all, participants used a politeness strategy as a resource to minimize conflict and establish respectful and constructive communication. This befits the literature, which states that politeness by Culpeper and Tantucci (2021) allows for efficient communication and controls conflicts in culturally and emotionally varied contexts. By instilling an air of politeness in its workplace, NYS ensures guaranteed collaboration, harmony, productivity, and lessening conflicts within its workforce.

#### **4.3.2 The Impact of Politeness on Teamwork and Collaboration**

The theme of politeness emerged as a key factor influencing teamwork and collaboration within the National Youth Service (NYS). According to participants, politeness as a communicative strategy ensures that respect is maintained among colleagues, fostering an environment of cooperation and inclusivity. As teamwork is essential for practical training and operational success at NYS, politeness plays a central role in creating a supportive work atmosphere. The analysis of these findings will be based on Leech's Politeness Maxims, focusing on how different types of politeness strategies facilitate team collaboration and open communication.

Leech's (1983 p. 144) Tact Maxim states that "minimise the imposition, maximize the benefit". Various participants recognised that politeness creates a respectful atmosphere that leaves team members free to contribute. For example, Participant B elaborated on how they solicit feedback respectfully. Stating,



*"Would you mind sharing your thoughts on this? I'd appreciate your insights."*

This minimises imposition, as this is a polite invitation to contribute rather than a demand for one; this speaks to the Tact Maxim's principle of reduction of pressure. Participant B sets the invitation as "Would you mind" and adds an appreciation in advance; therefore, the participant decreases the social pressure to contribute, conventionally linked with contributing, and invites the valued open contribution of team members.

The Generosity Maxim emphasises focusing on the benefit to others, often by offering help or recognition. Participant D highlighted the positive impact of this approach, saying,

*"If there's anything you need a hand with, just let me know. I'm here to support you."*

According to Leech (1983) this statement, by emphasizing the other person's benefit, conveys cooperation and asserts the speaker's willingness to help. The Generosity Maxim is upheld in this regard to maximize the colleagues' benefit as a means of cultivating mutual support and team spirit in them. It simply keeps the members of the team valued and respected, hence holding the group together.

Leech's (2014) approbation Maxim involves minimising criticism and maximising praise to maintain a positive environment. Participant J shared a common approach to feedback that adheres to this maxim, stating,

*"I can see you've put a lot of effort into this project; maybe we could just tweak a few minor points to align with the guidelines."*

This response exemplifies the Approbation Maxim by acknowledging the effort put in by the colleague and focusing on constructive feedback rather than outright criticism. Such a strategy promotes a culture of positive reinforcement and encourages individuals to continue contributing, knowing their efforts will be recognised and appreciated. This aligns with Culpeper and Tantucci's (2021) findings that praise contributes significantly to positive professional relationships.

This is supported by the fact that most participants pointed out that politeness helps prevent conflicts from blowing out of proportion, which is explained by the Modesty Maxim, meaning showing restraint from self-praise. Participant A states that,

*"Politeness helps keep conflicts from escalating because when you communicate respectfully, people are less likely to feel offended or defensive."*

By minimising self-importance and focusing on others, this approach adheres to the Modesty Maxim. In a team setting, politeness mitigates conflict by avoiding boastfulness and promoting respectful communication, which reduces tension and ensures that disagreements do not escalate into interpersonal conflicts.

Leech's Agreement Maxim, which involves maximising agreement and minimizing disagreement, was central to many participants' experiences. Most participants noted that politeness promotes equality and inclusivity within teams. For instance, participant G highlighted that,

*"When people are polite, it ensures that everyone feels like an equal part of the team, no matter their position or background."*

This is in line with the Agreement Maxim, whereby politeness will maximize consensus in that all in the team remain respected and involved in decision-making. Since politeness reduces the chance of conflict, therefore, making collaboration and agreement even more reachable, this makes the outcomes of teamwork even better.

Especially relating to the expression of sympathy and understanding is Leech's Sympathy Maxim, which was reflected in several participants discussing politeness for creating a safe and supportive work environment. Participant E explained,

*"Politeness creates a safe space where people can share their thoughts without worrying about being ridiculed."*

This agrees with the Sympathy Maxim, whereby the emphasis is on empathy towards colleagues and the interaction should, therefore, always remain respectful and not threatening. In teams, politeness suggests there is psychological safety where all are free to express their opinions without feeling that their views may be shot down, underpinning innovation and problem-solving.

The results of pragmatic tests further supported the participants' use of politeness strategies in supporting teamwork. In one situation, participants were asked how they would respond to a trainee's question when they were in a hurry. All participants selected the response,

*"I'd love to help, but I'm running late. Let's schedule a time to discuss it later."*

This response is representative of both positive and negative politeness strategies combined; the needs of the trainee are taken into consideration by using Leech's (1983) Tact Maxim, which acknowledges the limitation of the speaker's time. The balance within such a variety of politeness is highly indicative

of a high degree of pragmatic competence, as the use of politeness saves face for the request of the trainee without utter rejection and thus keeps collaboration and relationships in the team positive. Collectively, the respondents showed how collectively Leech's Politeness Maxims Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy come into play in teamwork and collaboration at the NYS. Using politeness to avoid friction, include others, and promote open communication should render the members more cooperative and productive in attaining common goals. The experiences of the participants are supported by the literature, where Culpeper and Tantucci (2021), stated that politeness strategies serve to build trust and establish mutual respect in the professional arena. Creating a culture of politeness in communication will ensure that the work population in NYS is better prepared for collaboration, solving problems, and organisational objectives.

#### **4.4 Assess the Consequences of Pragmatic Failure in the TVET Workforce**

The third objective of this study was to determine the effect of pragmatic failure on the workforce in the NYS TVET institutions. According to Sadikov (2021), pragmatic failure is defined as a lack of efficiency or inability to appropriately use language in a context. Pragmatic failure has been blamed for breakdowns in communication, operational inefficiencies, and interpersonal strain. By conducting interviews with the respondents, the effects of communication breaks on individual and organisational performance will not be negligible.

##### **4.4.1 Operational Disruptions Due to Pragmatic Failures in Language Use at NYS**

From the interviews conducted, a critical theme that emerged concerned how language usage errors can lead to misunderstandings at the National Youth Service. The participants jointly shared many instances of how language errors led to misunderstands and disruption of workflow, delayed activities, and demoralization of both the trainers and the trainees.

Participant F shared an example where the pragmatic failure involved ambiguity in instructions given to trainees about a scheduled test, saying,

*"I told the trainees, 'The test is on Tuesday,' but I didn't clarify which Tuesday and many assumed it was the coming Tuesday. They waited in confusion, and I had to rush to clarify."*

The absence of specificity here constitutes a failure in pragmatic clarity that led to a major operational disruption; time was wasted, and trainers and trainees alike were stressed. This also corroborates Sadikov's (2021) observation that pragmatic competence involves anticipating points of possible confusion in language and proactively making sure clarity is achieved. Without such steps, minor misunderstandings can snowball and break up the whole workflow.

The majority of the participants highlighted how vague language in scheduling impacted the broader schedule. Participant A provided a detailed example:

*"The instructions were simply 'prepare for the practical session later in the week,' but without a specific date, trainees and trainers couldn't coordinate, which messed up the entire week's schedule."*

This response epitomises how a lack of precision in contextual language became the building blocks for creating confusion and cascading disruptions. Without an explicit, direct schedule of activities, it was taken up late, and the feeling among trainees was one of being lost in the process vivid illustration of the need for precise language in the scheduling of activities. This is similarly reflected in the work of Roberts (2019), who established that pragmatic competence around scheduling involves the communication not only of what and when but of the specific context within which particular tasks will occur to avoid misalignment and confusion.

The emotional impact of these pragmatic failures was noted by several participants. Participant C described how unclear language led to frustration:

*"I told them, 'We'll cover that soon,' but without specifying when. Trainees kept asking me if it was 'soon enough' or 'later in the week,' creating a lot of stress and anxiety as they prepared unnecessarily every day."*

This case helps to pinpoint the pragmatic failure, as the implied timelines were abstract terms not anchored in any meaningful timeline, leading to heightened anxiety and uncertainty levels among trainees. Sadikov (2021) proceeds to explain that ambiguous language of instruction tends to result in mental fatigue among workers as they try to guess what such expectations mean; this is a source of stress that may lower their interest and overall performance.

Most participants explained that repeated pragmatic failures also had a negative impact on trust among team members. Participant B emphasised the need for transparent communication, stating,

*"When I hear vague phrases like, 'we'll work on that soon,' or 'we're almost ready,' it becomes hard to know when anything will happen. I stop relying on these updates and start feeling less connected to the team."*

In this meaning, loss of trust essentially illustrates how vague usage of language, over time erodes credibility and morale to the point where team members may be eventually very unwilling to take part in activities about the team. As described by Timur et al. (2023), clarity and detail in updates give cause

to believe that this helps in the sustainability of cohesion within a team and prevents alienation from the system within a team.

The pragmatic test administered to participants also revealed their awareness of the importance of specific and respectful language. When given a scenario where a trainee raised an off-topic question during a session, all participants chose to respond,

*"That's a good question, but let's save it for the end of the session so we can stay focused."*

This is a highly pragmatically competent answer since it balances respect for the question of the trainee with the flow of the session. What we observe here by the participants conjoins the theory of Brown and Levinson (1967) on negative politeness, using language to avoid confrontation; thus, respecting the listener is a way to bring the discussion tastefully back on track. In this way, both the session remains orderly, and the trainee remains engaged.

Participants shared that pragmatic competence is essential for team cohesion. For example, Participant D explained how private discussions help maintain respect:

*"When someone is repeatedly late, I say, 'I understand mornings can be tough. Would setting an earlier alarm help?' This way, I'm not blaming them directly but helping them find a solution."*

This response follows Brown and Levinson's (1967) politeness theory and is also in tune with Leech's Sympathy Maxim since it considers the perspective of the colleague sans criticism from one's side. Thus, the language here is used as an instrument to safeguard a positive relationship and the emergence of defensiveness-which again becomes critical for the sake of a collaborative team atmosphere.

Several participants noted that when communication failures occur frequently, employees begin to lose confidence in their colleagues and become hesitant to collaborate. Participant B explained that trust erodes when information is not shared effectively by stating,

*"If I can't trust that I'm getting the right information from my colleagues, it makes me less likely to work with them."*

This view was supported by Participant C, who added that miscommunication leads to disengagement. Stating,

*"People start to feel like their efforts are wasted because they don't have the right information, and that makes them less motivated to work together."*

The shared experience of participants stands as witness that communicational pragmatic failures stand in the way of teamwork, duly reducing both performance and morale.

Literature also supports this observation by Sadikov (2021), stating that trust is an effective way of ensuring team coherence and further ensures organizational performance. Since pragmatic failure creates miscommunication, lack of security in having confidence in one another shocks effective collaboration and reduces overall productivity witnessed in an environment which is sensitive like NYS, where the call for effective teamwork pertains administratively and practically. Participant J even said,

*"Without trust, employees become more focused on individual tasks, and segregation within working groups starts to build."*

Most participants also discussed the emotional toll that the erosion of trust can take on team members. Participant D shared that miscommunication leads to frustration, as employees feel disconnected from their colleagues:

*"When communication breaks down, people start to feel isolated because they don't know what's going on. It makes it harder to trust that others are doing their part."*

This sentiment was echoed by Participant E, who explained that the lack of clear communication creates a sense of uncertainty and anxiety:

*"If I don't know what's happening, I start to doubt whether we're working towards the same goals, and that makes me less confident in the team."*

According to Timur et al. (2023), these responses highlight how pragmatic failures not only disrupt operational flow but also damage the interpersonal relationships that are necessary for effective teamwork.

The pragmatic test also reflected participants' awareness of the importance of maintaining trust and team cohesion. In a scenario where a colleague consistently arrived late to meetings, all participants chose to address the issue privately, with the response. Stating,

*"I would speak to the colleague privately about the impact of their tardiness on team meetings."*

Touati and Horr (2023) assert that this is an example of pragmatic competence as the participants judged that openly attacking the peer publicly would lead to embarrassment, defending, and conflict.

In privacy, the participants have tried to save mutual trust and respect within the team in order not to turn the talk to blame-shifting rather than finding out the solution to the problem.

This is in line with Goffman's (1967) face concept, which postulates that pragmatic failures frequently occur when there is a threat to the "face" or social standing of one of the interlocutors. All participants decided to take the matter private, thereby not threatening their colleague's positive face kept face as a desire to be respected and put him in a context where feedback could be delivered constructively. Participant G emphasised the value of this approach, stating,

*"When you handle things privately, it shows respect and makes the person more likely to listen and make changes."*

Participants collectively agreed that trust and cohesion are fundamental to the success of the teams at NYS, and when communication fails, these elements begin to break down. Participant H explained that pragmatic failures lead to isolation within the team. Stating,

*"When communication isn't working, people stop trusting each other, and that creates division within the team."*

According to Touati and Horr (2023), this reflects the understanding that good communication does not stop at the conveyance of information; it is equally about the maintenance of relations and the fostering of trust that keeps teams operating.

The literature supports this view, and thus, Rickard (2021) followed that pragmatic competence at work not only stops situations of misunderstanding but also creates an environment where communication strengthens rather than undermines relationships. By being sensitive to the choice of issues and treating them with politeness, as witnessed in the response by participants to the pragmatic test scenario, teams protect trust and cohesion at times of challenge.

All participants were unanimous in stating that pragmatic failure of communication should be dealt with erosion of trust among members of the team that will eventually affect cohesion and performance. The tension caused by miscommunication and mistrust reduces the intent to collaborate among employees. The provision of an environment where communication is clear, respectful, and private when needed can help the NYS rebuild its trust and cohesion among team members by being more productive with better morale. These experiences of the participants, as well as evidenced in the literature, show how pragmatic competence maintains communication effectively and thus creates successful teamwork at work.

Several participants emphasised that stress and frustration were common emotional reactions to pragmatic failures at NYS. Participant B explained that constant miscommunication leads to mental fatigue, as employees are forced to spend additional time and effort correcting mistakes. Stating,

*"It's exhausting when you have to keep fixing things because of communication issues. It takes a toll on everyone's energy and motivation."*

Participant C supported this view, stating that the stress caused by communication problems can affect work performance by stating,

*"When communication is bad, you feel stressed and less motivated to do your job well. It just makes everything harder."*

The literature verifies these findings, as Roberts (2019) has noted that a continuous moment of miscommunication leads to an employee's burnout—a condition whereby there is an overwhelming feeling of correctness, comprehension of misunderstanding and dealing with inefficiency brought about by poor communication. This is very relevant to this study because the NYS employees are supposed to function in teams to ensure that the organizational goals are achieved. With increased pragmatic failures, the emotional and psychological burdens on staff also build, sometimes creating a self-reinforcing cycle of poor communication and declining morale.

Participants collectively agreed that addressing the emotional consequences of pragmatic failures is essential for improving both mental well-being and workplace performance. Participant H suggested that better communication strategies would help reduce stress and improve team morale by stating,

*"If communication were clearer and more consistent, it would reduce the stress we feel and make the workplace more positive."*

This view was supported by Participant D, who emphasised the importance of open communication for preventing emotional burnout by stating,

*"When people feel like they're being heard and that communication is working well, they're more motivated and less stressed."*

Such pragmatic failures within NYS hold much sway about the stressful liaison, frustration, and disengagement from work by the employees. The participants shared that when there is miscommunication, it causes isolation and division within teams, which results in a toxic environment. Rickard (2021) confirms this by showing that frequent miscommunication leads to burnout and low employee morale. With improved pragmatic competence, the NYS will reduce the emotional toll on its employees by making communication clear, timely, and precise, thus, providing a better environment.



## **4.5 Discussions**

This section discusses the study's findings with each objective, critically analysing the pragmatic competence, politeness principles, and consequences of pragmatic failure within the National Youth Service (NYS). The findings are discussed alongside the literature to offer a comparative analysis that highlights how these factors impact operational efficiency, collaboration, and workplace morale.

### **4.5.1 Pragmatic Competence of the TVET Workforce at NYS**

This study established pragmatic competence as a foundational element for effective communication and functionality within NYS, resonating with Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer (2020), who describe pragmatic competence as the capacity to understand and convey contextually relevant information in professional interactions. Participants consistently reported that pragmatic failures, such as untimely or unclear communication, negatively affected their ability to complete tasks efficiently. Untimely information sharing led to missed deadlines, disorganised task preparation, and disrupted workflows. This finding aligns with Matsumura (2024), who posits that effective language use requires not only accuracy but also timely delivery to allow for efficient task management within an organisation.

Participants' experiences reveal the consequences of delayed or inconsistent communication, emphasizing the direct relationship between pragmatic competence and operational efficiency. Alonso and Corral (2021) similarly argue that communication failures often contribute to larger organisational coordination issues. This study's findings also parallel Sadikov's (2021) assertion that pragmatic competence involves anticipating areas of potential miscommunication and proactively clarifying ambiguous language. In the context of the NYS, where efficient task execution relies on structured, clear communication, these deficiencies in pragmatic competence highlight significant areas for improvement.

While some participants demonstrated awareness of the importance of pragmatic competence, the lack of structured communication protocols within NYS impeded their ability to consistently apply these skills. Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer (2020) emphasise that pragmatic competence not only requires linguistic accuracy but also the ability to interpret and respond to contextual cues. Without the institutional support to foster clear, timely information-sharing practices, the staff at the NYS is limited in their ability to prevent disruptions caused by miscommunication. This study concludes that pragmatic competence must be institutionally reinforced for optimal communication and workflow within the NYS, affirming the findings of other research that underline the significance of contextual language use in maintaining organizational effectiveness.

#### **4.5.2 The Relationship between Politeness Principles and Pragmatic Competence**

Politeness principles were identified as essential tools in enhancing pragmatic competence and fostering teamwork at the NYS. The findings align with Leech's Politeness Maxims, as participants reported that politeness in communication promoted respect, inclusivity, and collaboration among team members. This is supported by Chen (2023), who notes that Leech's maxims of Tact and Generosity minimize imposition and maximize benefits to others, creating a constructive and respectful atmosphere that is conducive to teamwork. In line with the Tact Maxim, many participants reported using inclusive and polite language, which allowed for productive communication without imposing undue pressure on colleagues. This approach demonstrates an application of Leech's (1983) politeness principles that contribute to an environment where members feel respected and motivated.

Moreover, the study revealed that participants' use of the Generosity Maxim facilitated mutual support and team cohesion, as employees frequently offered help without expecting reciprocation. Culpeper and Tantucci (2021) similarly found that such gestures promote a sense of inclusivity, which is critical in maintaining positive team dynamics. At NYS, where teamwork is essential for practical training and overall success, politeness principles like the Generosity Maxim play a crucial role in creating a supportive work culture. By encouraging collaborative language, employees feel more inclined to support each other, reinforcing the positive feedback loop needed for team success.

Leech's Approbation Maxim, which suggests minimising criticism and maximising praise, was also frequently demonstrated in participant feedback practices. This study found that participants preferred constructive feedback to harsh critique, a finding that aligns with Culpeper and Tantucci (2021), who argue that praise is a key contributor to professional relationships. By maximizing approbation, the NYS staff created an environment where employees felt encouraged and appreciated, promoting team morale and motivation. However, unlike findings by Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer (2020), which suggest that politeness strategies can sometimes hinder direct feedback, this study found that the NYS employees effectively balanced politeness with constructive criticism, enhancing team dynamics without sacrificing feedback quality.

The findings also emphasise the role of politeness in mitigating workplace conflicts. Participants reported using polite language to reduce disagreements and foster equality, particularly in contexts involving diverse perspectives. This resonates with Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer (2020), who highlight the potential of politeness strategies to de-escalate conflicts in multicultural teams. Leech's Agreement and Sympathy Maxims were particularly relevant, as participants sought to minimize disagreement and express empathy, which helped create an inclusive work environment. By applying these maxims, the

NYS employees were able to facilitate open dialogue, manage disagreements constructively, and maintain positive relationships within their teams.

#### **4.5.3 Consequences of Pragmatic Failure in the NYS Workforce**

Pragmatic failures were found to have far-reaching consequences on NYS's operational efficiency and team cohesion. Consistent with Sadikov (2021), who describes pragmatic failure as the inappropriate application of language in context, this study found that miscommunication and ambiguous language often led to operational disruptions and interpersonal tensions. The participants reported that unclear instructions or vague language frequently resulted in confusion, missed deadlines, and frustration among team members, echoing Roberts' (2019) argument that pragmatic failures can create cascading issues within an organization. The study findings demonstrate how a single miscommunication can snowball into broader organizational inefficiencies, reinforcing the need for clarity in language use.

Moreover, the study revealed that pragmatic failure can erode trust within teams, as inconsistent communication made it challenging for participants to rely on their colleagues or management. Timur et al. (2023) highlight the role of clear, context-specific language in building trust, noting that repeated communication errors can create perceptions of neglect or incompetence. This aligns with the current study's findings, as participants expressed those recurring issues with language clarity undermined their confidence in the organisation's ability to communicate effectively, leading to decreased team morale. The study also echoes the findings by Roberts (2019), who states that pragmatic failures undermine employee engagement and foster a culture of distrust, further exacerbating communication breakdowns within the organisation.

Another significant finding was the emotional toll that pragmatic failure takes on employees. Consistent with Sadikov (2021), who links miscommunication with increased employee burnout, the study found that participants often experienced stress, frustration, and disengagement due to constant communication challenges. The need to clarify ambiguous instructions or correct errors repeatedly contributed to mental fatigue and decreased motivation, illustrating the detrimental effects of unclear language on employee well-being. This also aligns with Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer's (2020) view that pragmatic competence is essential not only for operational effectiveness but also for maintaining a supportive and engaging work environment.

The pragmatic test administered as part of this study further revealed the participants' awareness of the importance of contextually appropriate language. When responding to hypothetical scenarios, participants demonstrated an understanding of negative politeness strategies, aligning with Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory. The participants' responses to off-topic questions during a session showed

their pragmatic competence, as they redirected the conversation respectfully while maintaining the session's focus. This aligns with No's (2021) findings on the effectiveness of negative politeness in maintaining control over workplace interactions without compromising interpersonal respect. The study demonstrates that while participants are aware of how to employ pragmatic strategies, the lack of institutional support in fostering a culture of effective communication often hinders their ability to apply these strategies consistently.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, the study findings emphasise the importance of pragmatic competence, politeness principles, and effective language use within the NYS, as these factors significantly impact operational efficiency, team collaboration, and employee well-being. The alignment with existing literature further supports the argument that pragmatic competence and politeness strategies are indispensable for creating a cohesive and efficient work environment, while pragmatic failure poses risks to organizational success and workforce morale.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the analysis of this study's findings and provides recommendations based on each research objective. The conclusions offer a deeper understanding of how pragmatic competence, the application of politeness principles, and the management of pragmatic failures influence communication, collaboration, and organisational effectiveness within NYS. The recommendations provide actionable steps to enhance communication and reduce disruptions, ultimately supporting a more cohesive and efficient workforce. These recommendations consider the contextual needs of NYS as a vocational training institution, aiming to address the specific communication challenges that arise in such a setting.

#### 5.2 Conclusions

##### 5.2.1 The Pragmatic Competence of the TVET Workforce at NYS

The first objective of the study was to explore the Pragmatic Competence of the TVET Workforce at NYS. This study established that pragmatic competence, and well-timed, clear, and context-specific communication is vital to operational efficiency and cohesion at the NYS. The findings revealed key challenges relating to delayed, inconsistent, and unclear communication, which resulted in operational inefficiencies and often led to misunderstandings among team members. This could be partly attributed to a lack of systematic communication arrangements that ensure information reaches all parties in good time and in an effective way. Roberts (2019) argues that besides the accuracy of using language, pragmatic competence necessarily implies the ability to exchange information on time, which is crucial for productivity and effectiveness in any workplace.

In addition, it was also found that pragmatic competence at NYS was an imperative prerequisite for coping with the daily complexity that came from an extremely diverse staff whose members had to comprehend and act under mutual information in particular operative contexts. It was initially found in the course of this research that critical information, whether it be about planning or task instructions, if coming too late or worded vaguely, led to a diminished level of productivity, inefficient task preparation, and lowered feelings related to job satisfaction. For example, last-minute communication disrupted work and increased stress among those employees who were not well prepared. This shortcoming insinuation would describe generally needed training and allocation of resources to support the pragmatic competence of the communicative practices at the NYS.

In line with Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer (2020), such findings emphasise that pragmatic competence is based on clear, accurate, contextually appropriate communication that helps ensure all employees understand and can execute their job responsibilities appropriately. This research finding shows that with insufficient pragmatic competence, the workforce is not able to respond effectively to organizational demands, thus creating inefficiencies in operations that could trickle into NYS's success.

### **5.2.2 The Relationship between Politeness Principles and Pragmatic Competence**

The second objective of the study concerned the relationship between Politeness Principles and Pragmatic Competence, where politeness was found to be at the centre of establishing an affable and cooperative working culture within NYS. It emerged that through the employment of politeness principles, such as tact, generosity, and agreement maxims according to Leech, respect and professionalism were maintained in interactions that were likely to be tricky or even confrontational. Most of the participants underlined that a high level of politeness made much difference in work relations at least because it provided an opportunity to reduce social friction and enhance teams. Indeed, the maxims of politeness introduced by Leech (1983) stand very important for creating communicative events that allow for achieving harmony due to crucial manipulative elements of how people express themselves in face-threatening situations.

As can be gauged from the research findings, the politeness principles enhance pragmatic competence in that they encourage employees to pass on information and respectfully air their opinions, thus contributing to higher levels of job satisfaction and cooperation. The Tact Maxim, among others, seems most helpful for diminishing the imposition upon others and has been mentioned very often as a tool for establishing trust and creating a constructive atmosphere. The participants showed that, when directives were replaced with polite requests, it made it easier for colleagues to collaborate, increasing engagement on a task and group cohesion. Such an approach is reflective of Chen's (2023) findings, where polite language was found to contribute to mutual respect and foster a sense of inclusivity within professional settings.

The findings also suggest that politeness maximizes positive reinforcement, which in turn motivates employees to contribute actively and openly to team efforts. When the communication is dealt with in a way that puts others' feelings and social standing into consideration, then employees feel valued and are more open to full engagement with their tasks. It is in the context of the NYS, which implies the regular necessity to collaborate on practical tasks, that the levels of conflict and thus the degree of successful cooperation can be reduced by applying the principles of politeness. The current research shares the view of Spencer-Oatey (2018) that it is only a respectful and friendly communicative culture

based on the notion of politeness that will make it possible to sustain a high-performing and supportive work environment.

### **5.2.3 The Consequences of Pragmatic Failure in the TVET Workforce**

A third aim was to identify the consequences of pragmatic failure described in this study as an inability to communicate effectively within the contextually specific and often high-stakes environment of NYS. The findings reveal that pragmatic failure results in severe negative consequences for the operations of NYS since such failure leads to miscommunication, loss of trust, operational inefficiency, and interpersonal strain. The participants told how inappropriate timing or inaccuracy in communication resulted in delays, rework mantras, and operational breakdowns at the cost of overall productivity and morale.

This study reported that pragmatic failures in communication created a snowballing effect of disturbances in training sessions and team activities, influencing individual and group performances. Furthermore, it has been observed that repeated breakdowns in communication tend to erode interpersonal trust, hampering efforts toward cooperation amongst team members. As Roberts (2019) explains, accumulating misunderstandings undermines the potential trust that forms the basis of cohesive teamwork, which in turn makes success at the organizational goals hard to attain. In NYS, pragmatic failure occurs with an inability to engage in collaborative learning and to work efficiently.

Another significant effect of pragmatic failure dealt with morale among employees. Participants reported frequently that the outcome of constant miscommunication was frustration, stress, and disengagement. In these cases, when language use was incomplete or contextually unclear, the trainees were confused, which lowered morale and made the individuals not want to engage. In consonance with Sadikov's (2021) argument of pragmatic failure resulting in motivational and emotional breakdown, the study argues that pragmatic competence not only ensures operational efficiency at NYS but also contributes to the emotional well-being of its employees.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

### **5.3.1 Enhancing Pragmatic Competence in Communication Practices**

To address the issues related to pragmatic competence, the NYS should implement structured communication protocols that prioritize clarity, consistency, and timeliness in information dissemination. Practical recommendations include periodic workshops on how best to communicate with clarity regarding context-specific language and the anticipation of misunderstandings. In this regard, training programmes would work toward ensuring that employees are indeed capable of

communicating in an informative, yet contextually relevant, manner, particularly in those situations where time is of the essence.

Also, a formal mechanism for feedback would help the NYS employees evaluate their practice for effective communication. Such feedback should be timely and constructive, pointing out areas of improvement with language application and information dissemination practices. Timely clear communication will make the workforce at the NYS more pragmatically competent, which is supposed to enhance operational efficiency and cut workplace stress.

### **5.3.2 Strengthening Politeness Principles to Support Collaborative Culture**

NYS should integrate politeness maxims by Leech into the professional courses that are given to establish a climate of respect and cooperation. Workshops and training modules will help employees internalise these maxims. Specific examples of polite and respectful language, which also cooperate, have to be given. It's supposed to bring them into practice with a recommendation to employees to make use of Tact and Generality Maxims every day to help set a positive work environment in which every person may feel valued and respected.

The management in the NYS should lead by example and demonstrate politeness during interactions, hence creating a trickle-down effect on the employees to act in the same manner. Normal workplace environment assessments can be carried out routinely to understand the collaborative impact and morale among team members, hence allowing politeness to settle into the organisational culture. By reinforcing the politeness principles, the NYS can establish an inclusive environment which develops job satisfaction and motivation of its employees with high teamwork.

### **5.3.3 Mitigating the Impact of Pragmatic Failure**

To minimise the consequences of pragmatic failure, the NYS should implement more rigorous communication standards that ensure specificity, context, and respect in language use. That is establishing clear lines of communication, particularly for instructions and schedules, so that misunderstandings are at a minimum and that all employees timely receive notice. For example, weekly or fortnightly team debriefing could also be introduced by the NYS where the staff review how well communication has gone and what needs to change.

A feedback loop can be established where all employees can have a say concerning the improvement of the language use practices at the NYS and advance suggestions thereof. Encouraging open discussions regarding how well the communication is going will result in a continuous improvement context where the employees are engaged in improving their pragmatic competence to avoid



misunderstandings. Finally, facilitating the process by which all members of the workforce clear up misunderstandings with the assistance of contact persons for particular queries would reduce the incidence of mistakes and broaden the dedication of an organization to clarity and accuracy of language use.

#### **5.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the conclusions and recommendations based on the study's findings regarding the NYS workforce's pragmatic competence, application of politeness principles, and management of pragmatic failure. Conclusions outlined clarity, contextual appropriateness, and politeness of communication issues very relevant for operational efficiency and employee well-being. Recommendations gave actionable measures: communication training, structured mechanisms of feedback, and politeness principles embedded within the organizational culture of the NYS. These will supposedly enhance teamwork, ensure job satisfaction, and create a much more cohesive and productive work environment aligning with the mission of the NYS in the delivery of effective vocational training and professional development.

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## APPENDICES: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

### APPENDIX A1: DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION  
DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST**

**Pragmatic Competence in National Youth Service TVET (NYS)**

Dear Respondent,

I am Elias Opena Shilemba, a final year Master of English and Applied Linguistics student at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. I am conducting research on pragmatic competence among the TVET workforce, a case study at the National Youth Service. Your participation in this discourse test is crucial, as it aims to examine your perceived proficiency in workplace communication regarding pragmatics. Your responses will be invaluable to this study. Rest assured that all data will remain confidential, stored in a password-protected document, and you have the right to withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Your input is highly appreciated and will significantly contribute to the research findings.

**The discourse test is structured around three primary objectives:**

**General objective:** This study aims to investigate pragmatic competence among the TVET Workforce within the National Youth Service and will be guided by the following specific objectives:

**This study aims to:**

- ✓ analyse the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at NYS
- ✓ examine the relationship between politeness principles and the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at NYS
- ✓ assess the consequences of the pragmatic failure of the TVET workforce at NYS

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Imagine yourself in the following scenarios at NYS. Select the appropriate response or action that aligns with how you would typically communicate in each situation and write the corresponding letter in the box provided.

**OBJECTIVE 1: ANALYSING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE**

**1. You are a Senior Training Officer at NYS, and a new trainee has made a mistake during a practical session. How would you respond?**

- a) "You really messed up. This is unacceptable."
- b) "Let's talk about what happened. Mistakes are part of learning."
- c) "I can't believe you did that. You should know better."

**2. During a team meeting, a colleague repeatedly interrupts others when they are speaking. How would you address this behaviour?**

- a) "Stop interrupting! It's rude."
- b) Politely wait until they finish and then continue your point.
- c) Ignore the interruptions and continue speaking louder.

**3. You observe a trainee struggling to understand a new concept during a training session. How would you assist them?**

- a) "You should know this by now. Try harder."
- b) "I see you're having difficulty. Let's go over it together."
- c) "This isn't difficult. You should be able to figure it out on your own."

**OBJECTIVE 2: EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITENESS PRINCIPLES AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE**

**4. You need a report from a junior colleague by the end of the day, but they seem overwhelmed with their workload. How would you request the report?**

a) "I need that report today. Make it happen."

b) "I understand you're busy, but could you prioritise finishing the report?"

c) "Can you finish that report already? It's overdue."

**5. A new trainee at NYS asks you a question about a topic you covered in a recent lecture. However, you're in a rush to a meeting. How would you respond?**

a) "I'm busy right now. Figure it out yourself."

b) "I'd love to help, but I'm running late. Let's schedule a time to discuss it later."

c) "I already explained that. Pay attention next time."

**6. During a heated discussion in a team meeting, a colleague makes a suggestion that you strongly disagree with. How would you express your disagreement?**

a) "That's a terrible idea. I completely disagree."

b) "I see your point, but I have some concerns about the approach."

c) "Your suggestion won't work. Let's move on."

### **OBJECTIVE 3: ASSESSING THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRAGMATIC FAILURE**

**7. During a training session, a participant asks a question that is off-topic and not relevant to the current discussion. How would you handle this situation?**

a) "That's not related to what we're discussing. Please stay focused."

b) Politely acknowledge their question and gently guide the conversation back to the main topic.

c) Ignore the question and continue with the planned agenda.

**8. You notice a colleague consistently arriving late to team meetings, causing disruptions. How would you address this behaviour?**

a) Publicly call out the colleague for being late in the next meeting.

b) Speak to the colleague privately about the impact of their tardiness on team meetings

c) Ignore the issue and adapt to their late arrivals.

## **CONCLUSION**

Each scenario in this Pragmatic Competence Discourse Test assesses how well respondents understand and apply pragmatic principles in communication within the context of their roles at NYS. The questions also help examine the relationship between politeness principles and pragmatic competence and assess the potential consequences of pragmatic failure.



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION  
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Pragmatic Competence in National Youth Service TVET (NYS)**

Dear Respondent,

I am Elias Opena Shilemba, a final year Master of English and Applied Linguistics student at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. I am conducting research on pragmatic competence among the TVET workforce, a case study at the National Youth Service. Your participation in this interview is crucial, as it aims to examine your perceived proficiency in workplace communication regarding pragmatics. Your responses will be invaluable to this study. Rest assured that all data will remain confidential, stored in a password-protected document, and you have the right to withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Your input is highly appreciated and will significantly contribute to the research findings.

**The interview questionnaire is structured around three primary objectives:**

**General objective:** This study aims to investigate pragmatic competence among the TVET Workforce within the National Youth Service and will be guided by the following specific objectives:

**This study aims to:**

- ✓ analyse the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at NYS
- ✓ examine the relationship between politeness principles and the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at NYS
- ✓ assess the consequences of the pragmatic failure of the TVET workforce at NYS



**INSTRUCTION**

Including your subjective viewpoint holds significant importance within the context of this research. Please base your answer on your personal experience.

**EXPLANATION AND CLARIFICATION**

Throughout the interview, instead of using the term "Pragmatic Competence," the researcher will ask questions that focus on how people communicate effectively, understand each other, and manage interactions in their daily work.

When referring to politeness principles, the researcher will ask about the importance of being respectful, considerate, and understanding cultural differences in communication.

By using straightforward language and contextualising the questions within their daily experiences at NYS, the researcher can ensure that the respondents understand the purpose of each question and provide meaningful insights aligned with your research objectives and theoretical framework.

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department/Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Years of Experience in TVET:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Kindly answer the questions below.**

**1. PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE**

1.1 Can you describe a recent interaction you had with a colleague or trainee at NYS where you had to give feedback or manage a conflict? Please walk me through the scenario and explain how you approached the situation.

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1.2 What communication challenges do you encounter in your role at NYS?

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**2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITENESS PRINCIPLES AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE**

2.1 How important is it, in your opinion, to be respectful and considerate in your daily interactions at NYS? For instance, how do you value actions like listening without interrupting, acknowledging others' opinions, or giving constructive feedback politely?

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2.2 Can you give an example of a situation where maintaining politeness was particularly important in your work at NYS?

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2.3 How do you ensure that your communication is polite and respectful in different contexts at NYS?

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**3. CONSEQUENCES OF PRAGMATIC FAILURE**

3.1 Have there been instances where miscommunications or misunderstandings occurred in your interactions at NYS? How were these resolved?

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3.2 What do you think are the potential consequences when communication breaks down in a team or training environment at NYS?

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3.3 What are your thoughts on the current communication skills within the TVET workforce at NYS? Based on your observations, how might improvements in these skills impact the overall effectiveness of the workforce?

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**4. POLITENESS THEORY**

4.1 Do you believe that cultural differences affect communication styles and practices among colleagues and students at NYS? If so, can you provide examples of how these differences influence interactions?

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4.2 How do you think understanding and applying politeness principles could enhance teamwork and collaboration within the TVET programmes at NYS?

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**5. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

5.1 In your opinion, what specific areas could be improved to enhance workplace communication among TVET employees?

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**Thank you!**

## Ethical Clearance Application (ECA) letter, NUST



NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### SCHOOL OF HUMAN SCIENCE AND EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

#### ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL

Ref: S00S001/2024

Student / Staff no.: 218011393

Issue Date: 30 July 2024

#### RESEARCH TOPIC

**Title: An exploration into the pragmatic competence of the TVET workforce at the National Youth Service**

**Researcher:** Elias Opena Shilemba  
**E-mail:** [eshilemba29135@gmail.com](mailto:eshilemba29135@gmail.com)

**Supervisor:** Prof Haileleul Zeleke Woldemariam  
**E-mail:** [hwoldemariam@nust.na](mailto:hwoldemariam@nust.na)

Dear Elias Opena Shilemba,

The Faculty of Commerce, Human Sciences and Education of the Namibia University of Science and Technology through the School of Human Science and Communication Research Ethics Committee (S-REC) reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.

We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:

- maintain the ethical integrity of your research,
- adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and
- remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the S-REC.

Should any aspect of your research change from the information presented to the S-REC, which could affect the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are obligated to report it immediately to the S-REC as applicable in writing.

We wish you success with your research and trust that it will positively contribute to the quest for knowledge at NUST and in society.

Sincerely,

Dr Theresia Mushaandja  
Acting Head of Department: Communication and Languages  
Tel: +264 61 207 2059  
E-mail: [tmushaandja@nust.na](mailto:tmushaandja@nust.na)





Republic of Namibia

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13 August 2024

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**Mr. Elias O. Shilemba**  
Training Officer: Communication  
Skills Training and Production Unit Department  
NYS Rietfontein Training Centre

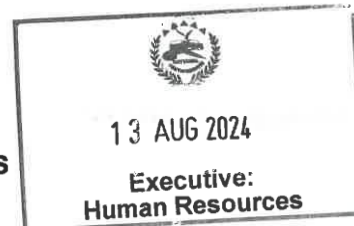
Dear Mr. Shilemba

**RE: CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

1. The above subject matter reference.
2. This document serves to inform you that your request to conduct a research study "**An Exploration into the Pragmatic Competence of the TVET Workforce at National Youth Service**" has been favorably considered.
3. Permission has been granted for you to conduct the above-mentioned research study and we are looking forward to shared recommendations for this research study.
4. We wish you all the best in your academic career.

Your sincerely

Mr. Joas Wahengo  
**EXECUTIVE: HR & ICT SERVICES**



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11 November 2024

To whom it may concern

**LANGUAGE EDITING – ELIAS OPENA SHILEMBA**

This letter serves to confirm that a research project titled *AN EXPLORATION INTO THE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF THE TVET WORKFORCE AT THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE* was submitted to me for language editing.

The research was professionally edited and track changes and suggestions were made in the document. The research content or the author's intentions were not altered during the editing process and the author has the authority to accept or reject my suggestions.

Yours faithfully



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**M.A. in English**  
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