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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter, chapter one, lays the foundation for the study which is aimed at examining politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers within an ODL environment. Thus, the study focuses on politeness, its ramifications and its impact on the positive emotions, attitudes, academic collaboration and compliance between isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers within higher education (HE). The study approaches the theme of language and politeness from the point of view of teaching and learning, and focuses on the various ways in which isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother speakers show or express politeness within an intercultural environment.

In addition to discussing the aim of the study, this chapter presents other essential aspects such as the background to the study, problem statement, research questions and research objectives.

South Africa is a country in which diverse groups of people with different cultural and language backgrounds live together. Thus, schools and higher education institutions comprise diverse groups of students who bring their own unique ideas on how to perceive others and behave in their company. There is no doubt that culture plays a significant role in this interaction. As individuals become more complex and diverse, the need for cultural awareness and intercultural communication is expanding (Butts, 2007).

Higher education (HE) institutions are often places where people of different cultural backgrounds meet, particularly lecturers and students. Social identity theory argues that a person has a 'multi-identity' that relates to the situation encountered (Ige & De Kadt, 2002). This, then, implies that a particular situation may influence a person to think, act and behave in different ways, especially in places where diverse groups of

people live together. The person's cultural identity may, thus, be lost and a new one adopted. This may also imply that, when we lose our cultural identity, we also lose a certain portion of our language. The diversity of languages and cultures may also contribute to unintentional conflict due to ineffective communication, a poor understanding of a language and/or an uncompromising adherence to differing values and beliefs. ODL institutions are no exception to such conflict and misunderstanding. However, the researcher believes that face-to-face (f-2-f) environments provide better opportunities to avoid or correct, as both students and lecturers are given an opportunity to observe the reason why the other person acts or has acted in a certain manner. A f-2-f institution is an institution where both lecturers and students are always in contact and meet regularly, and where teaching takes place.

The use of technology such as emails and/or tools that may replace a f-2-f contact session in learning is minimal. In an ODL environment, on the other hand, lecturers and students rarely see one another, and their means of communication is, in the main, via technology such as emails, telephones or cellphones, video conferences, tutorial letters and letters. The above is viewed as the "educational pedagogy of the future" (Mahmood, Mahmood & Malik, 2012:129). We may, thus, conclude that, when we talk of an ODL, we are referring to any type of learning method that does not involve that much of contact sessions but, instead, happens through the use of technology as explained above. South Africa is one of the countries that use both types of higher education systems, namely ODL and f-2-f. Hence, the research topic, Investigating politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in a higher education, open distance environment. This implies that the study focuses more on ODL than on f-2-f institutions.

Within higher education (HE) systems, impoliteness is one of the problems faced by both students and lecturers, perhaps as a result of miscommunication and misunderstanding among speakers from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, the understanding of politeness may differ from culture to culture (Mahmood et al., 2012: 129). It is for this reason that, when one talks of politeness, the tendency is to think of interpersonal relationships in society. In spite of the fact that demonstrations of politeness are performed by people, the norms for respectful conduct are built up by society. For a demonstration to be viewed as polite, the gathering concerned must concur on the standard set by society that defines the code of respect. It is essential



that this standard is acceptable to the individuals in a specific audience. Polite or impolite conduct may be communicated both verbally and non-verbally. For example, in traditional societies, it is regarded as respectful for a younger person to give up his/her seat to an elderly individual on a bus/train etc or to a guest. In African society, it is unacceptable for a man to enter another person's home and to sit without having been welcomed, or for a male to enter somebody's house with a cap/hat on his head. The above are examples of non-verbal communication and are regarded as common practices throughout the world.

In the higher education (HE) ODL environment, it would appear that there is a decline in the ordinary traditions of graciousness in correspondence as compared to the more settled composed types of correspondence (Bunz & Campbell, 2002). Several elements may result in people modifying, lessening or discarding certain politeness indicators in their correspondence. Such elements include the direct value-based nature of the message, the relative secrecy of the communication, the use of uninhibited or "joyful" dialect, an inclination to self-revelation and self-introduction and, in addition, the speed with which emails may be composed (Baron, 2001; Ma, 2006). A possible outcome of the decreased politeness in correspondence may result in reduced respect for face-risk administration (Bunz & Campbell, 2002).

As indicated earlier in this section, the face may be characterised as 'the constructive social esteem a man claims for him/herself' (Bunz & Campbell, 2002:21). Face threat administration methodologies are cautious, and the defensive phonetic measures used are intended to spare and bolster an individual's own particular face and the element of the other. Such semantic measures incorporate the general politeness strategies which are in any verbal communication (Watts, 2013). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two types of politeness strategies, namely positive and negative. Positive politeness practices speak to one's certain face or the craving to be enjoyed, acknowledged and understood. Politeness consideration practices incorporate reasonable sentiments and demonstrations of endorsement and liveliness in respect of others.

Negative or undesirable politeness strategies, as per Brown and Levinson (1987), speak to one's negative face or the yearning to be unrestricted and not coerced. Antagonistic actions incorporate statements of remorse for meddling, semantic

concession, support, being unclear, downplaying, signifying and impersonalising instruments; for example, the inactive voice and other softening systems that provide the other individual with a face-sparing getaway opportunity (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Negative politeness strategies may not suit email discourse due partially to the clear, direct style of correspondence and the absence of social setting signals in emails.

The absence of social connection prompts, for example, certain non-verbal communication messages which are evident in f-2-f communication, may constitute a hindrance in electronic correspondence (Holmes, 2004). In up close and personal contact, individuals are able to quickly sense criticism through non-verbal communication signs, word choice and voice tones etcetera, to conform approaches for any essential face-sparing or confrontation over the span of the association. However, in email communication, it is not possible for the writer to conform with the necessary and expected politeness levels in the interaction because of the absence of shared contexts and connections; thus, encountering difficulties in clearing up or repairing breakdowns in correspondence which may have occurred (Baron, 2008). In addition, the decontextualised nature of emails may prevent the author from knowing how to express politeness in the message. It is frequently not evident what types of social modesty are fitting at any given time in intercultural email communications, especially in the ODL environment (Ma, 2006).

There is evidence that, because of the decontextualised nature of emails and the brief nature of many email messages, that politeness indicators are either diminished or overlooked (Bunz & Campbell, 2002; Ma, 2006). At the point at which this happens emails may come to be seen as an information exchange medium instead of a collaboration-based correspondence framework supporting interpersonal relations with emails being used by a few individuals to transmit information only to the recipient as opposed to attempting to build up social connections by the addition of politeness indicators. This investigation has endeavoured to determine how individuals perceive the medium as contributing to interpersonal relations if politeness indicators are used, and also how the degree to which such levels of good manners are socially distinctive to others. The perception underlying the study is that language plays an extremely important role in polite social interactions and communications.

Within the ODL environment, there are various and expansive ramifications to the politeness pointers when they are used for culturally distinctive others and they are often a reflection of the mother tongue. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), all societies have methods for conveying politeness both linguistically and non-linguistically. Such politeness strategies may vary among societies. Semantic techniques of obligingness are affected by three culturally bound factors, namely the power difference between the sender and receiver, the social distance between the sender and receiver, and the weight of the request (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Every culture decodes these components in a distinctive way; thus, the dialect may be formed in an unexpected way (Holtgraves & Yang, 2010). These three factors/variables determine the type and level of the politeness techniques to be utilised if, indeed, any are used by any means during the communication (Scollon & Scollon, 2005).

These three elements also determine the level of risk to face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, cultures may view each variable in an unexpected way, and the appraisal of the face risk in any correspondence may, likewise vary, thus necessitating diverse politeness strategies unique to each social exposition. This is typical of an ODL environment. In addition, societies often vary in the way in which they observe power imbalances among individuals and this would have a corresponding effect on the face strategies used within interaction (Saville-Troike, 2003). In cultures in which an individual orientation is clear, there is considerable emphasis on judgment (Hofstede, 1997). Affability, which has been depicted as the most imperative type of politeness in English culture, is confirmation of the significance of individual rights and needs in this culture (Leech, 1983). On the other hand, other cultures often perceive the use of indirectness in discourse techniques as ensuring extreme politeness, for example, in the utilisation of the inactive voice, unoriginal pronouns and similitudes (Fraser, 2010; Saville-Troike, 2003).

## **1.2 Background to the study**

As alluded to in the introduction, this study has investigated politeness in the ODL teaching and learning environment, and focused on isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers. It is deemed essential to elaborate on the way in which politeness is expressed in the Zulu culture. The common and well-documented Zulu

society's form of politeness is *ukuhlonipha* which is a code of respect. *Ukuhlonipha* has been practised for centuries by the Zulu people to regulate family, nature and clan relationships and also to maintain good relationships among the general members of the Zulu society. It is, therefore, not surprising that there are written works that expound on the different forms of respect, such as *ukuhlonipha kwabafazi* (respect for women) and *ukuhlonipha abaphansi* (respect for the ancestors). It is of paramount importance at this stage to highlight that politeness is inextricably linked to respect.

Furthermore, the Zulu people also believe in the essence of *ukuhlonipha abantu abadala* or *ukuhlonishwa kwabantu abadala* (to respect older people or be polite towards older people). This code of respect is usually directed at anyone who is older, whether living or dead. This is, in fact, the reason why, from a young age, Zulu children are taught not to call their older siblings by their names; for example, in the case of an older brother they must emphasise the age difference by calling him *bhuti* (older brother) and then stating the name – *bhuti Musa* (older brother Musa) – in order to show respect for those older than they are.

In addition, in order to show respect for everyone, such respect is demonstrated by greeting whomever they meet, whether known or unknown, and also offering help to those in need, as older people claim that offering help will ensure a blessing in the future. The above may be said to be linked to the code of Brown and Levinson (De Kadt, 1994) and according to which both the status and age difference between two people may contribute to a person being polite. In Zulu society, differences in age, power and status make a significant contribution to the politeness shown by a person. The researcher feels it would be interesting to ascertain the degree to which such respect or politeness is being practised in the higher education system by focusing on isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers. In view of the fact that the study investigates politeness in the teaching and learning environment, other types of politeness are also highlighted and discussed in the appropriate sections in the thesis.

As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on investigating politeness as shown by isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in a learning environment such as UNISA. As in the case of the students from other universities, there are considerable differences between the type of students studying at UNISA, for example:

- i) those who speak isiZulu fluently and are not able to write anything in isiZulu;
- ii) those who speak and write isiZulu fluently; and
- iii) those who are not able either to speak or write in isiZulu.

For the purposes of this study, when speaking about isiZulu mother tongue speakers, we are referring to the native speakers of the isiZulu language and from a Zulu cultural background while, when we speak of isiZulu non-mother tongue speakers, we are referring to non-native speakers of the isiZulu language. The latter may refer to anyone who does not come from a Zulu background, who can or cannot speak the language and/or who may or may not understand the culture of the Zulu people. The researcher refers to the culture in such a way as to make people aware of the various cultural customs that are followed by Zulu people, such as greeting, not looking older people in the eye and being disciplined by anyone other than own parents.

This study was conducted primarily at UNISA as it was both a higher education and an ODL institution. The participants selected for the study were from the Department of African Languages as the majority of isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers who communicate with their lecturers in isiZulu. However, in view of the module that was chosen – a completely online module – for the purposes of collecting the requisite data, it would have been inappropriate for the researcher to claim that the majority of students at UNISA interact in isiZulu. The study involved one of the important modules in the department and the university, namely AFL 1501. AFL 1501 is a cultural module in which students, lecturers and teaching assistants (TAs) communicate primarily in English and as a subsidiary in isiZulu.

This research aims at investigating issues that relate to language, politeness and email communication in an ODL environment in HE. The study is conducted with the hope that the findings will help readers of the thesis to comprehend the research topic and to assist the lecturers, as pedagogical agents, and the students by developing improved practices in relation to intercultural email communication in teaching and learning.

### **1.3 Statement of the research problem**

In ODL institutions, communication between students and lecturers is primarily non-contact through the use of technology. The majority of the students in these institutions choose emails as their preferred method of communication as it is low in cost compared to other means of communication and also assures them that the lecturers involved will receive their messages (Najeeb, Maros & Nor, 2012). Lecturers who interact with students via social networks such as emails often find that most of the students use inappropriate or impolite language in terms of the Zulu culture. This is the scenario that the researcher intends to influence change. Some students construct sentences in emails that they would not use in a normal classroom. This often creates problems for the supervisors or lecturers involved because certain rules of politeness or etiquette are breached (Najeeb et al., 2012).

Unlike in ODL environments, f-2-f university students are exposed to more contact than non-contact sessions since they meet on a regular basis and, if the need arises, they may make an appointment to meet their lecturers privately. Thus, the students experience few problems in seeing and consulting their lecturers, although, during the process, as Brown and Levinson (1987) point out, people often behave differently; particularly if they want to be accepted by others; thus, they tend to be polite and/or act in a manner that is acceptable to the other. It is indisputable that the norms of politeness in a cross-cultural environment help people to convey their message across without offending anybody from a different culture (Paulston, Kiesling & Rangel, 2012). However, this becomes difficult in an ODL environment as, for a person to conform to someone's culture, he/she must know the other person. In the meetings between a student and a lecturer in an ODL environment, this is not always the case. This study reviews different ways used by isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother speakers of the language to show politeness in an intercultural environment. Although some students may have written in a non-isiZulu language, such as English, the researcher has focused on those elements which are considered by Zulu people to denote politeness in their culture.

## **1.4 Hypotheses and research questions**

Based on the introduction and background to the study and the statement of the research problem above, the study has made an assumption that the communication language and politeness of the instructors in an ODL environment improve learning outcomes, and that the effect is amplified in those students who express a preference for indirect feedback. In addition, it is hoped that the study will ascertain the effects on student attitudes and motivation shifts by an analysis of the learning outcomes achieved as a result of the polite agent interface that is, teacher-student Interaction in ODL.

Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

**H i: Politeness strategies used by instructors or lecturers affect the learning outcomes in an ODL environment.**

**H ii: Politeness in language and email communication affects the learning outcomes in an ODL environment.**

**H iii: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents use appropriate politeness strategies, may improve learning outcomes.**

**H iv: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents use appropriate politeness strategies, improve learning outcomes by promoting learner motivation, collaboration and academic compliance.**

In addition, the researcher also investigates the various ways of applying the different approaches to language and politeness by focusing on the social and cultural behaviour of the pedagogical agent (teacher), in particular, and his/her use of politeness strategies. Thus, the main research question includes the following:

**How does politeness in email communication, language strategies and pedagogical agents influence the learning outcomes in an ODL environment?**

## **1.5 Aim and objectives of the research**

The study aims to explore the politeness among students and lecturers' support conversations with the objective of promoting polite interactions between isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in higher education in South Africa.

### **1.5.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the research are:

- i) to investigate the politeness shown in the interactions between students and lecturers in an ODL environment;
- ii) to investigate the way in which politeness is expressed by both students and lecturers, and how it promotes learning in an ODL environment;
- iii) to examine the impact of the politeness, language strategies and email communication of lecturers during tuition and student support;
- iv) to investigate the impact of language and politeness on student motivation and compliance within an ODL learning environment; and
- v) to examine the use of pedagogical agents and how they influence learner motivation and compliance.

## **1.6 Justification for the study**

Firstly, the researcher has decided to conduct this study in view of the problems which lecturers encounter in communicating with their students. More often, lecturers who are involved in an online module at UNISA, receive emails and assignments that are written in a non-academic language, irrespective that students are instructed not to use slang and non-academic language on their welcoming page, but they still do.

This research study aims at investigating the cause of such communication problems in order to determine whether it is either a lack of understanding, ignorance on the part of the students in relation to the way in which they should communicate with their lecturers or a cultural issue.

Secondly, the numerous different and competing conceptualisations of politeness are often complex and difficult to understand. For example, concepts in the literature on politeness such as face threatening acts, softening mechanisms, disambiguation and hedges on the illocutionary force, are not easily understood by people without any



knowledge of the academic field of politeness. Moreover, the language used in these complex concepts is also often complicated. For example, terms such as a face, negative politeness strategy, anoint, redress, off-record, flout, approbation and maxims abound in the literature. Ordinary speakers in the everyday language who have their own intuitive thoughts and perceptions about politeness, including instructors, may not share this complex language and complex conceptualisations. There is evidence to suggest that there is a divergence between these perspectives of politeness and that this divergence appears to be increasing (Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 2013). Allowing a gap to develop between the speakers' knowledge of politeness and the theoretical constructs developed in the literature may create confusion about what is encompassed by the notion of politeness (Haugh, 2013).

As a result, there has been a call for politeness research to take into account the native speakers' assessments of politeness and to make them the basis of a bottom-up approach (Locher & Watts, 2005). Such an approach will reduce the theoretical top-down driven approach to politeness evident in the literature. In addition, it will also redress the divergence between speakers' understanding of politeness and the complex and often abstract theoretical conceptualisations in the literature.

This study adopted a bottom-up approach which considered, as a basis, the perceptions of politeness of the native speakers of isiZulu. It also attempted to take into account and included the non-native speakers' perceptions of politeness. In so doing the study was aiming to reduce some of the complexities inherent in expressing politeness by describing it in a language easily understood by people in the ODL teaching and learning environment with a limited knowledge of linguistic politeness.

The primary target group for this study was isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue students in HE in South Africa and, in particular, in an ODL environment. It was hoped that the study would help teachers to understand the students' expectation in the context of communication and dialogue, notwithstanding the cultural background of their students, and also to determine the role that culture and language play in a person being polite.

## 1.7 Rationale behind the research

With the development of technology and new ways of communication in the past few years, people have changed the way in which they communicate with one another, especially when using technology. Previously people were careful about how they communicated with one another or with those above them. However, nowadays it would appear that people were focusing on their own rights and forgetting about the etiquette of communication (Murphy, 2006).

Since the development of shortcuts, such as abbreviations, students seem to be using such shortcuts in their emails and assignments to their lecturers and tutors, and forget the status difference among them. However, it may also be that these students are not forgetting the status difference but simply lacking a sense of respect (*ukuhlonipha*). It is clear that it is easier for people to act politely toward others in a f-2-f conversation as compared to private emails and/or online discussions. This may be because of what Brown and Levinson (1978,1987:61) had to say about 'face' as something that most people invest in, and which may be lost, maintained or enhanced and, thus, must be attended to. This is exactly what people do in public as they always try to maintain their 'face' to demonstrate all the signs of politeness. Brown and Levinson (op. cit) further highlight two aspects of the face that may be shown in public, namely the 'negative face' and the 'positive face'. They state:

Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition

Positive face: the positive, consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved) claimed by interactants

The above definitions of positive and negative face make clear the claim that, in the main, people tend to care more about what they are showing rather than showing their real feeling. This takes us back to Leech's (1983) principles. In his theory of politeness, Leech makes an important distinction between the speaker's goal and his/her social goal, thus implying that people may conduct polite conversation realistically in either a truthful manner or in an ironic way. He further highlights that the practical framework may be considered as textual and interpersonal rhetoric in which this rhetoric falls within the set of individual principles.

The interpersonal rhetoric consists of three sets of principles, namely Grice's (1989) cooperative principle (cp), politeness principle (pp) and 'irony principle' (ip) (Reiter, 2000:9). The irony principle is the principle that one becomes impolite but pretends to be polite, thus breaking the cooperative principle which states that the purpose of a conversation is to exchange information 'effectively' (Grice, 1989:28). Thus, the irony principle contradicts the politeness principle, the aim of which is to be polite and to show that one is genuinely polite.

Thus, by observing myUnisa conversations between students and lecturers and/or TAs, the researcher wants to ascertain the purpose of students who write their assignments and emails to their lecturers and TAs in what others consider to be impolite or non-academic language. In addition, the research study has also sought to determine the dominant language used by the students in their communication with the lecturers and TAs in order to establish the most commonly used language and whether or not the students are writing or acting in an impolite way on purpose or whether it is merely the result of misunderstanding cultures and language. Furthermore, the researcher also wants to find out if the lecturers and TAs' motivation help students to achieve their academic goals.

### **1.8 Definition of terms**

**AFL 1501:** Language through an African Lens (AFL 1501) is a signature module offered by the Department of African Languages that looks at the study of language usage and culture. As it is a signature module, every student in the College of Human Sciences must take this module in order to graduate. The module accommodates both African mother tongue speakers and non-mother tongue speakers. The challenge in either teaching or doing this module lies in the fact that everyone involved has to communicate in English to accommodate one another. It is a completely online module and thus, all the assignments and communication between the students and lecturers are done online. In addition, the students communicate with one another in discussion forums while communication between the lecturers and students happens via the Question and Answer Tool on myUnisa.

**Communication:** The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2014:243) defines communication as an "...act communicating with people". There are two types of communication, namely verbal and non-verbal. However, whatever the type of communication used, communication is the cornerstone of any type of relationship, good or bad, as it guides how we view and relate to others.

**slang:** Slang is a language that is used by people belonging to the same social group. Some people call it a street language or street jargon. However, the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as a "very informal language that is usually spoken rather than written, used especially by particular groups of people"

**Etiquette:** The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008:415) defines etiquette as "the set of rules or customs which control accepted behaviour in particular social groups or social situations".

**ODL:** Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is a term that is used for institutions that use telecommunications for teaching and learning. This type of learning uses various types of media in delivering instructions, and it is only on rare occasions that a f-2-f meeting with students takes place for tutorial purposes (especially for modules such as science), and learner-to-learner interaction. The advantage of this type of education is that it removes barriers to access education by enabling anyone to take charge of their future anytime, anywhere.

**Pedagogical agents:** The pedagogical agent's effectiveness in human-computer interaction is supported by the social agency theory. According to this theory, the use of verbal and visual cues in the computer-based environment encourages the learners or students to perceive the computer as a partnership. They regard their interaction with the computer as social interaction because the social cues are similar to what they would expect from human-to-human conversations (Atkinson, Mayer & Merrill, 2005).

**Politeness:** According to The Free Dictionary (2014), politeness is "a courteous manner that respects accepted social usage". Different cultures view politeness in different ways.

**UNISA:** The University of South Africa (UNISA) is one of the leading open distance learning institutions in Africa and is more than 140 years old. Its main core business is teaching, research and community engagement.

## **1.9 Scope of the study**

The topic of this study is politeness in a learning environment and how politeness promotes rapport among students, lecturers and tutors. This study consists of five chapters (see shown below). It is anticipated that the study will shed light on politeness among teachers in higher education with the hope of improving and understanding the isiZulu language but, in particular, improving the teaching and learning outcomes within an ODL HE environment.

Chapter 1 presents the overall introduction and background to the study. It discusses the statement of the research problem, research questions, research hypotheses, aim of the study, research objectives as well as the justification for and the scope of the study. In addition, the study presents a summary of the key definitions of the terms used in the study.

Chapter 2 outlines contemporary theory in the relevant body of literature. The chapter also cites the results of recent and relevant empirical research in peripheral fields in order to place the study within an overall context.

Chapter 3 discusses the different methods and approaches used in data collection and data analysis. It outlines the importance of the inductive approach used in this study. The chapter then briefly discusses the research hypotheses and research questions as well as how they have come to form the basis of the two main data collection methods used, namely the questionnaire and interview. The choice of participants and the sampling procedures involved have been explained. The software namely, Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Nvivo version 13, which are used for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, are then discussed. The assumptions underlying the study and the limitations of the study are then outlined as are the problems encountered during the course of the study.

Chapter 4 outlines all the results obtained from the data sources, namely the questionnaires and the interviews. These results have been enumerated according to

the sections of the questionnaire which elicits both quantitative and qualitative data. The results of the data analyses, which have been carried out using the two software packages, SPSS and Nvivo version 13, are discussed. In addition, the chapter explains how these results supplement and complement the researcher's own analyses.

Chapter 5 discusses the participants' views and perceptions on the topic of this study. It outlines important findings from the data obtained from the two data collection instruments, namely the questionnaires and the interviews. The discussion and analysis of the empirical results further clarify the findings. The views and perceptions of the participants are discussed in line with the themes cited in the research questions as derived from the research hypotheses and the research questions. This chapter also summarises and discusses the main findings of this study, and highlights important aspects of the research topic of language and politeness in ODL communication. The future development of key pedagogical strategies in the ODL environment are suggested as well as possible ways to incorporate these instruments in further research. Recommendations for future studies linked to language, politeness and learning within and ODL are then discussed. Finally, the chapter summarises how this study has addressed gaps in the literature as well as the new knowledge and methods of analysis which have emerged.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the research aim, research objectives, rationale behind the study, the principal theory, research design and research methodology used as well as the literature review that has been discovered. The chapter clearly indicates that the purpose of the study has been to explore the issue of politeness between students and lecturers in higher education institutions. It highlights that, in order to obtain the requisite data for the data analysis, a mixed method research design will be used which comprises two stages of data gathering. The first stage involves the administration of a questionnaire to students while, during the second stage, interviews with students are conducted. It has emerged from the literature review that some studies on politeness in institutions and schools have been conducted previously but not on the same topic as mentioned above.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, presents current theories in politeness and communication. It will explore current thinking in conjunction with theory relevant to the research topic of this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter One highlighted the statement of a problem, the aim of the study, the research objectives and scope of the study and defined relevant terms. This was an introductory chapter that explained the study.

Chapter Two contains the literature review. It is deemed important for any study to include a literature review, as a review of relevant literature presents an evaluation of previous and related studies, such as dissertations, conference proceedings, books, scholarly articles etc. that are considered to be important to the study in question. According to Fox and Bayat (2007), a literature review is an important assessment of a range of contemporary literature and publications in a given area. Thus, it provides the researcher with a direction in which his/her research should go. In a literature review, the researcher not only searches for information but also looks for information relevant to his/her study. This is done to ensure that the study in question has not been conducted before or, if such a study has indeed been conducted, to find possible gaps in the previous research study. Furthermore, a literature review helps the researcher to learn from previous studies with a view to adding to the existing understanding and knowledge of a particular field of study (Boote & Beile, 2005).

This study represents a combination of socio-linguistics, African languages, education and communication as well as the interplay of these elements within the ODL environment, particularly in respect of interactions in the teaching and learning process. Thus, it was important to look at topics relevant to this study in those fields. It was for this reason that the researcher decided to divide the literature review into different sub-categories so as to ensure a clear understanding of the scope of the study and to explore relevant scholarly work.



It is deemed important to focus on literature that discusses politeness, what it is and a world overview of politeness, and then to conduct a literature review on the native and non-native speakers of a language. Due to the fact that it is not possible to isolate either language or communication within the culture, it is also important to look at some elements of culture. Lastly, communication within the higher education context is discussed.

## **2.2 Summary of previous work on politeness**

In view of the fact that this study investigated politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in African higher education in South Africa, it was deemed essential to start the literature review by examining previous studies which had been conducted on politeness, as the concept of politeness was the foundation of the study. It was felt that such would ensure a deeper understanding of the concept and issues surrounding politeness than might otherwise have been the case.

### **2.2.1 Exploring the concept of politeness**

This section is an exploration of current and previous thinking and research surrounding politeness from a cultural perspective as well as teaching and learning to a communication of which verbal and non-verbal aspects are touched. This section also treats the discussion in three segments. The first one touches politeness in its whole sense in the world, with particular attention to where more research has been done such as Asia, Europe and North America while the second part touches Africa in general and last, it looks at the South African context.

Grounded in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Chiang (2010) explored the use of politeness strategies in a computer-supported collaborative learning environment. Using discourse analytic approaches, Chiang (2010) examined the use of politeness strategies interrelated with such "...contextual factors as concerns about netiquette, time, modes of online communication, discourse functions, and sense of community" (Chiang, 2010:122). This study brought to the fore an understanding of the relationship between the use of politeness strategies and collaborative learning in the context of an innovative and emerging internet technology within a learning environment.

Besides Chiang (2010), Lee (2010) has examined politeness in written work such as the emails of Chinese adult learners of English. Lee (2010) reveals that it is an integral part of Chinese culture for people to be polite, optimistic and compassionate towards elderly people. They follow the code of *Wenroutunhou*, which means “one should hold a moderate attitude to handling work and other people” (Lee, 2010:60). However, although this may be true, Chinese people may fail to demonstrate such a moderate attitude when speaking a foreign or non-native language. Tanaka (1988) mentions that, although it is within certain cultures to be polite, expressing politeness may not be easy, especially when using a foreign language to communicate. For example, the lack of knowledge of certain situations may result in a non-native speaker sounding either abrupt or arrogant and instead of saying “May I please go now?”, they may say “I want to go now.” However, this could be the result of a lack of language competence (Tanaka, 1988).

Lee (2010) reveals that learners use direct requests during their email communication with their teachers. By so doing they conform to the Chinese cultural norm of an asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between teacher and student. On the other hand, most classes are characterised by an asymmetric relationship in which teachers and lecturers are positioned above the student. The genre convention demands solidarity and empathy between the two parties to offset the imbalance. This may be done by the teachers or lecturers presenting an image of themselves which allows them to act in a balanced manner so as to regulate a social distance (Cros, 2001). It will be interesting to find out whether South African students and lecturers follow the above pattern of being polite.

Lee (2010) is not the only scholar who has conducted research on the emails of students and teachers. Jessmer and Anderson (2001) have conducted similar research but focus on the grammar and how the sender is perceived by the recipient. They examine status, gender and competency. Burgoon and Miller (1985), in Jessmer and Anderson (2001:332), note that language is governed by rules which result in people developing expectations and norms in respect of the way in which language should be used under different circumstances. Thus, the question arises as to how we will react if such norms and expectations are violated, and if the language used in emails and in any formal communicative forum were either ungrammatical or impolite.

In their study, Jessmer and Anderson (2001) point out certain important aspects, such as the suggestion that, when we become less aware of our audience, we tend to become secure in our anonymity and we tend not to follow social norms. For example, in the workplace, when we communicate on a regular basis with our supervisors via email, we tend to lose the sense of their status. This may result in miscommunication and in extreme cases, lead to hostility and flaring (Jessmer & Anderson, 2001). Sherwood (1998) notes that, in this century, the fights or miscommunication between the sender and receiver of an email are often due to the sender not understanding how to adjust his/her communication styles to this new medium; hence, the plethora of different and inappropriate styles of writing emails. Nevertheless, the study of Jessmer and Anderson (2001) notes with interest that people of a higher status tend to show more impoliteness than those of a lower status.

As per Jessmer and Anderson (2001), students tend to use emails primarily for the purpose of social discourse and thus, there is little chance of their receiving emails from individuals with degrees of status and power different to theirs. Hence, this may affect how they conclude that people of a higher status are less polite than those of a lower status (Jessmer & Anderson, 2001). Jessmer and Anderson (2001) further revealed that both people's perceptions and the stereotype of politeness may have played an important role in their findings.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in Jessmer and Anderson's (2001) study, the students who have participated either predicted or assumed that messages that were impolite had been composed by a male and that grammatical messages had been composed by a female. This is partially in agreement with Lakoff's (1973) notion of politeness that views women's language as being, in the main, polite and mild-mannered, while that of men is perceived as ill-mannered and aggressive. Based on what Lakoff (1973) noted, most people would assume that a well-mannered email had been compiled by a female, while those compiled by a male were generally aggressive and impolite, although this was not always the case.

In the academic world, appropriate academic language, whether written or spoken, is promoted. However, it is important to remember that the study conducted by Jessmer and Anderson (2001) has been based on communication between students and lecturers in a f-2-f university using emails, and that this may have caused students to

complain less or not at all about either receiving or not receiving responses from their lecturers than may otherwise have been the case. The reason why the students have either complained less or did not complain at all may have been due to their fear of being found out, as the two parties would always see each other on a regular basis in the classroom.

Jessmer and Anderson (2001) observed that there were few books written that provided guidance on how to communicate within an educational context. Thibodeaux (1991), however, provided some guidance, especially for teachers, on a way in which to communicate effectively in a book entitled "Communication Education: Effective Communication for the Teacher". This book was written specifically for people who were planning to take on a teaching role to equip them on how they should communicate with their students. The book focused on both classroom situations and settings outside of the classroom that teachers needed to know and understand, thus highlighting that the foundation of education was communication. Without the effective communication of ideas, thoughts, and principles, future generations would fail to prevail in a work environment.

Communication defines the type of people we are, where we come from and our intelligence. However, although the book is helpful to some extent, it focuses primarily on lower education institutions. The focus of this study is on higher education institutions. Nevertheless, this book is mentioned so that people may understand that, although there is not much written work that offers guidance on how lecturers and students should communicate, there are even fewer materials that give us some direction on the issues related to communication and/or politeness in higher education.

Despite the fact that politeness among students/ learners and teachers has been studied to some degree by Lee (2010), Jessmer and Anderson (2001), Cook (2006) and Jiang (2010), not one of these researchers focuses on politeness in open distance learning and f-2-f institutions. Most of the research into politeness tends to focus on the communication between students and lecturers but in f-2-f institutions. For example, Hellsten and Prescott (2004) have researched learning at university and specifically among international students. Their study shows that the diversity of most university populations is enhanced by the presence of international students.

However, reports on the students' experiences show that students tend to prefer discussion based on learning that is teacher-centered.

The international students' cultures have often been blamed for their teaching and learning problems, such as poor English language problems, inadequate critical thinking skills, failure to participate in conversations and cultural differences in communication. However, researchers such as Biggs, in Hellsten and Prescott (2004), negate these assumptions, noting that the majority of international students are ranked highly to cultural adjustment, thus implying that they have adjusted well to the learning culture. This highlights the importance of avoiding assumptions about students as well the need to increase cultural understanding in such a way that it reflects the way in which both pedagogy and practice are viewed by students and lecturers. It is for this reason that Hellsten and Prescott (2004) have conducted their study.

The findings of their study reveal that the way in which teachers respond to students affects the quality of student learning. For example, if a teacher speaks in a polite and positive manner, this impacts positively on the students' attitudes. On the other hand, if the teacher speaks in a negative way, this impacts adversely on, among other things, the students' self-esteem and their attitude towards the module in question. Although Hellsten and Prescott (2004) have conducted their study in a f-2-f institution and focus on international students, their results may also be applicable to online learning. In view of the fact that the students and teachers do not see one another, if their communication is positive, this may contribute to the students trying much harder to communicate with their lecturers in a more positive way than may otherwise have been the case. Nevertheless, problems that may arise may be due to a cultural difference; for example, some students addressing their lecturers by their first names instead of addressing them using their last names. This may lead to misunderstandings between the two parties.

The main focus of this study is to understand the issue of politeness in higher education institutions. Thus, it is essential that the literature review includes different studies conducted at higher education institutions to be reviewed. Among other studies, Nakane (2005) has conducted a study entitled "Silence and Politeness in Intercultural Communication in University Seminars". Nakane (2005) is of the belief that silence is an important feature of politeness and that it should be accorded as

much attention as requests and apologies in politeness research. Nakane's assumption is that silence could be a realisation of 'Don't do the FTA' (face-threatening act) if there is a risk that may threaten one's face (Nakane, 2005:1812).

Among other findings, it was no surprise that the silence of Japanese students at Australian universities could be due to a lack of language proficiency. It appeared that avoiding talking in class was as much a function of saving their face against embarrassment as demonstrating politeness to their superiors. This result was contrasted with Australian students studying at the universities and whose face-saving strategies were less prevalent than those of the Japanese students, as they were confident about the language used. The silence of the Japanese students in Australian universities was sometimes perceived negatively. This result demonstrated then that there were many reasons for people behaving in a manner which others considered to be either polite or unintentionally impolite.

It is important to understand the reasons for certain behaviour without making assumptions about the gestures of politeness. Politeness is one of the pillars of intercultural and multilingual communication which promote the encounter of multiple identities, of the "same" and "the other", in as much as advanced by Byram (1988:41) that "language pre-eminently embodies the values and meanings of a culture, refers to cultural artefacts and signals people's cultural identity". Within a teaching and learning environment, failure to do so (an instance of negative transfer) will mean that the non-native speaker/learner may face misunderstandings in real-life communication (in FL / Additional Language) when English is the lingua franca or the international language for communication.

From an e-learning environment, Murphy (2006) brings the view that politeness is a central element of electronic communication such as email language, and that some individuals become unsure and ambiguous on how to use email in a polite manner as per the norm of the receptive culture. Diverse perspectives on the idea of graciousness in email can add to the individual offense and online miscommunication. Online educators and their understudies should know, in addition to other things, of varying developments and elucidations of pleasantness, contrasting email interactional styles, and in addition, approaches to deal with the medium proficiently so they can feel better imparting on the Web. For Murphy (2006), such politeness reflections, nevertheless,

differ from culture to culture, as it was revealed in Australian and Korean studies that demonstrate numerous incongruities.

Regarding native languages, some scholars have studied the concepts of politeness and indirectness in requests formulated by native and non-native speakers around the world. In Africa particularly, Lwanga-Lumu (1999) has investigated the concepts of politeness and indirectness as communicated and expressed in Luganda and the English language articulated by the inherent Luganda speakers. According to Lwanga-Lumu (1999), there are numerous Bantu ethnic languages spoken in Uganda and Luganda is one of them. The author's study has uncovered that the thoughts of unequivocal quality and good manners work distinctively in the two dialects and societies, and demonstrates that indirectness does not unavoidably indicate politeness in Luganda.

Although there are researchers who have contributed to certain aspects of the field of politeness within the African context, it is not possible to compare their input with that of the Asian countries. This may be the reason why there are so few sources that investigate politeness from an African or even a South African perspective. In the South African context, Rawlinson (1999) contributed to the field of the study of politeness. Rawlinson (1999) was interested in politeness among first and second language students as expressed through requests and apologies under different circumstances. Rawlinson (1999) found that the use of utterances for first language students under the three directives, namely conventional, non-conventional and non-conventional indirectness, differed across culture in speech act realisation. Similarly, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) also found that higher frequencies of directness were more prevalent in some situations than in others across cultures.

Furthermore, Rawlinson's (1999) findings demonstrated that speech act behaviour differed from that the past as it reflected the change in socio-political conditions in South Africa. However, there was a contrast found between native speakers of the South African languages and English speakers in that the native speakers did not perceive any awareness of superiority in their utterances. This might have been the result of the freedom from the apartheid regime after 1994. Rawlinson's (1999) study highlighted that the passage of time and certain events might somehow have changed the way in which first and second language speakers perceived their seniors. This

implied that there would be an opportunity for the researcher to also examine some elements that had changed over time, and the role that this change might play in the investigation of politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in higher education in South Africa.

Rawlinson's study (1999) was not the only study of politeness conducted in South Africa and of relevance to this study. Bharuthram (2003) studied the understanding of politeness in relation to the Hindu sector of the South African Indian population who spoke English by focusing predominantly on apologies and requests. Both studies were similar in that they examined the issue of politeness in requests and apologies. However, Rawlinson (1999) focused specifically on first and second language students while Bharuthram (2003) focused on the Hindu sector within the South African Indian population who spoke English.

Bharuthram (2003) notes that politeness within the target group was an expectation of the group as an individual's behaviour is determined by the social norms of the given community. Although the conversational maxim notes that a speaker is a rational individual who is concerned about what he/she says, this is not the case for the community investigated by Bharuthram (2003). The study has revealed that the leader of the Hindu religion dictates how an individual must respond. Thus, although the study has focused on politeness phenomena in the Hindi sector, with politeness as the central focus of the study, Bharuthram (2003) does not agree with all the politeness theory components, such as the conversational maxim, as this maxim is not deemed to be appropriate to an investigation into politeness phenomena in the Hindu sector of the South African Indian English-speaking community.

The studies of Bharuthram (2003) and Rawlinson (1999) note that, despite claims that politeness is universal, not all of the components of politeness are universal. This is something the researcher wishes to explore. In an African context, one may conclude that politeness is culture-specific, as individuals tend to act in accordance with their cultural background and beliefs.

De Kadt (1994) made a significant contribution to the study of politeness. Among others, politeness is seen as an important aspect that leads to harmonious living. The researcher also wished to highlight this aspect. De Kadt's study further revealed that Zulu society is built on and structured in a series of hierarchies, authorities and



submissions with age, status difference and gender playing a significant role in the way in which politeness is expressed. It was felt that this finding would assist the researcher with information in relation to the way in which politeness is perceived within Zulu culture, and also allow the researcher to expand upon this by investigating the relations among students and lecturers in higher education in South Africa.

De Kadt (1994) furthered the exploration of politeness by contributing to the existing knowledge on non-verbal politeness strategies (Bouton, 1995). De Kadt (1994) stressed researchers needed to broaden the study of politeness in view of the demand for the expansion of studies within the field of politeness in relation to non-Western languages. De Kadt's (1998) contribution to the Bouton's study focused on the status difference between two participants; for example, a teacher and a student. De Kadt (1998) demonstrated three important aspects of communication that demonstrated aspects of politeness between a teacher and a student, namely posture, gesture and gaze.

However, it must be remembered that it is not possible for politeness to be understood by individuals acting but instead it must be understood from the perspective of the role that a participant plays in relation to a culture. For example, in this study, it centered on a Zulu student asking a teacher for an extension on an assignment. The three elements of posture, gesture and gaze were demonstrated more closely by the students as they were exhibiting a pleading scenario in relation to the teacher. It became clear that, for anyone who was in a position of requesting something, the requestor would in all likelihood demonstrate the elements of politeness. De Kadt's (1998) focus was similar to that of this researcher with the researcher investigating politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in higher education in a South African context. However, the researcher, unlike De Kadt, focused on both isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in f-2-f universities and open distance learning institutions with the aim of elucidating the sociolinguistic aspect of politeness in non-Western language with particular reference to isiZulu – much like the study by De Kadt (1994), as cited in Bouton (1995).

De Kadt (1998) further demonstrated that, although Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of face had been accorded significant attention and recognition, there were some criticisms of the 'face' notion. Some researchers from the Far East, including

Chinese and Japanese researchers, argued that the notion of face was predominantly applicable to Western languages and not suitable to be used in analysing Eastern languages. De Kadt (1998) held a similar view. Brown and Levinson (1987) were of the opinion that the notion of the face was a universal aspect of the concept of politeness with two aspects of desire, namely the 'negative' face and the 'positive' face. However, this is subjected to cultural aspects. According to De Kadt (1998), the debate was whether to consider the notion of 'face' as universal or to take into account the error made by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their interpretation of 'positive' face and 'negative' face. Subsequently, De Kadt (1998) investigated the notion of 'face' in relation to the Southern Bantu language of isiZulu. The doubts about Brown and Levinson's (1987) model arose after an attempt was made to replicate the cross-cultural speech act response investigation in relation to non-Western languages (De Kadt, 1998:175).

In relation to isiZulu, it was noted that the direct form of communication or politeness was more dominant as compared to the indirect form – the notion on which 'face' was based. De Kadt (1998) was aware that Zulu society emphasised positional status with the structure of authority being highlighted as important and in line with the concept that respect or politeness should be shown to those who were older. This show of respect was linked to the *Ubuntu* philosophy of '*umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu*', which is translated as "a person is a person through others and according to which all African societies live". In this context, *ubuntu* does not sound like a way of living but rather like a prescription of life.

Another point made by De Kadt (1998) involves the use of the word Bantu in linguistics and which is closely linked to the classification of languages as a group of the Niger-Congo family. It may, thus, be deduced that, in a linguistic study, it may be confused with other uses if it is not specified as a language group. De Kadt's (1998) study shows that a Zulu person may find himself/herself in a position in which he/she may be bound to follow the *hlonipha* (defined in chapter one) system and its implications, as an individual will often find himself/herself in a lower or higher status position compared to others. If the speaker is of a lower status, he/she must always show politeness. However, within the context of *ukuhlonipha*, there is always the choice to ignore cultural norms. This element of choice is linked to or viewed as a modern way of doing things as older generations did not have such a choice.

This study does not draw a definite conclusion on the use of Brown and Levinson's (1987) 'face' notion in relation to Zulu people, although it notes that it may not be a suitable notion to use, as it does not take the Zulu culture into account. In relation to De Kadt's (1998) study, Grainger, Mills and Sibanda (2010) suggest that recent scholars have debated that the 'face' notion is more suitable to the Eastern collectivist culture than to the Anglo-American culture. Grainger et al. (2010) argue that, although the notion of 'face' may be universal, the way in which it is applied depends on cultural understanding (Grainger et al., 2010:2158). Unlike De Kadt (1998), Grainger et al. (2010) do not doubt that Brown and Levinson's (1987) 'face' notion is universal. However, they do believe that some aspects of the notion are culture-specific. In terms of the work done by Grainger et al., (2010) this researcher has been specifically interested in their discussion and view on politeness within the context of African culture. The African people's group notion of face is similar to that of both the Japanese and Chinese cultures, which focus on both conforming to the norms of the group and the desire to be accepted within a group while individual face focuses on gaining the approval of others.

Other than De Kadt (1998) and Bharuthram (2003), there were researchers who contributed to the field of politeness in the Southern Africa context, such as Dlali (2001) who looked at the notion of politeness but concentrated on requests, apologies and negative politeness within the isiXhosa language. Dlali (2001) looked at the study of politeness in relation to Brown and Levinson's principle. It was established within the study done in 2001 that negative politeness in general cannot be employed in pragmatic functions in isiXhosa which meant the principle of politeness theory and request strategies were not the same for all languages. For example, in an African context, a request is made indirectly as African people avoid imperatives, like when asking for the time. The requestee will sometimes beat about the bush by saying, "Ndizama ukufumanisa ukuba inokuba ngubani ixesha ngoku" (Dlali, 2001:369), when translated is: "I am trying to find out what time it is now" instead of been straight to the point such as "Do you mind telling me the time?"

Dlali (2004) looked at apologies in isiXhosa as per Brown and Levinson's (1987) face-threatening act that there were three factors that could compel one to apologise, namely the social distance, relative power and absolute ranking. All these factors will be discussed further in this study as the author looked at Brown and Levinson's act

into detail under section 2.2.2.4. Dlali (2004) then deduced a conclusion that, depending on the social distance between interlocutors, an apology could be simple or complex. The relevancy between Dlali (2001) and (2004) and the author's study of politeness between isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in a higher education ODL environment is that both the author's study and Dlali's articles discuss the element of requests and apologies. The difference between the studies is that Dlali's articles analyse the request from books such as *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* by AC Jordan, while the current study looks at the politeness from the view of communication among students and lecturers in an ODL environment. The above studies will build a foundation for the author to understand the view of politeness within the South African context.

Ralarala and Dlali (2007) further looked at the study of politeness in the sense of compliments. When looking at the benefits of compliments in conversations, they discussed three types of compliments. These were the appearance based on the look, the ability which was related to the person's action worth praise, and possession which was more about complimenting the new things that the others had. The findings and results suggested that compliments served a certain purpose such as strengthening a friendship and closing gaps that might be generated by possible offenses. The study of Ralarala and Dlali (2007) was based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, which would be a good basis for this study in the sense that during communication between lecturer and student there might be reasons that might create one of them to implement one of the three compliments.

The above section explores politeness looking at different parts of the world and reveals that it is a common denominator when it comes to communication, culture, language, teaching and learning. As more work is done in Asian countries, there is some substantial work on politeness looking at the African context, particularly the South African context. However, looking at higher education, it ushers in an opportunity to explore this aspect further by looking at the native language communication within higher education in an ODL environment. The next section explores current and past thinking around politeness, communication and teaching language.

### 2.2.2 Politeness, communication and the language of teaching

Investigating politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in higher education in South Africa has required the researcher to also consider the issue of communication. In view of the fact that communication is the essential component of education, one may state unequivocally that, without the effective communication of thoughts, ideas, and principles, there can be no teaching and learning (Thibodeaux, 1991). It is true that lecturers and teachers spend most of their time mastering the theories and principles of learning to use during their classes but without proper communication those theories and principles are of no value. This also applies to students. A lack of proper communication with their lecturers and teachers will lead to a communication breakdown between the parties and this may result in the students' failing their courses. In "Intercultural Communication Barriers between Zulu and Chinese students at Selected Higher Education Institutions in Durban" (Zheng, 2009:7) highlights that misunderstanding in communication occurs as a result of cultural differences, as each culture interprets verbal and non-verbal communication differently.

On the other hand, Bovil, Jordan and Watters (2014) are of the opinion that, at times, people use culture as an excuse to resist change. This may be true in the sense of people ignoring other people's culture by claiming they do not know much about the culture in question when, in fact, they may be lying or simply be resistant to change. In order to avoid the notion of hiding behind culture, we need to know the difference between an individual's personality and culture. By doing so, we will be in agreement with Zheng's (2009) conclusion that, before conducting an intercultural study, it is extremely important to understand the culture one is intending to study, as cultures share an understanding of belief systems, values, and norms. This would also help to avoid stereotyping and prejudice.

In Zheng's (2009) study of intercultural communication barriers between Zulu and Chinese students four themes were used to analyse communication:

- i) communication ability of the respondents;
- ii) language problems;
- iii) cultural differences; and
- iv) barriers to intercultural communication.

The findings of the study showed that cultural differences and language problems were the main causes of communication barriers. Zheng's (2009) findings were relevant to this study, as the researcher intended to investigate politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers. It was essential to consider culture as a factor that might affect the way in which mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers viewed politeness at higher education institutions.

In recent years, teaching and learning have taken on different forms, such as the use of online technology, emails, telephone calls, faxes, mail and others as well as contact sessions with students. The use of both technology and direct contact is known as blended learning. Most universities have opted to use blended learning for one reason or another while some have opted to use only one form, either teaching by using technology without contact sessions or through the use of contact sessions. Although the use of technology is considered to be an easy and fast way of communicating with others, both the sender and the receiver of the communication face challenges when technology is used. The researcher has not limited this study to one type of learning method only in view of the fact that, in South Africa, there are different types of universities that use different types of learning. Although the literature review focuses on research into politeness in a f-2-f higher education context, it is deemed wise to also discuss politeness within the context of a different genre to the one mentioned above.

Although guidelines have been drafted in the f-2-f university context on how students should and should not communicate with their lecturers and superiors, there are few guidelines on the way in which to communicate with lecturers through the use of technology. Emailing has been accepted in the academic world as a form of communication. However, it has been reported that the lack of appropriate guidelines has caused problems between students and lecturers as it would appear that students often take the liberty of filling their professors' inboxes with numerous emails (Epstein, 2006). In view of the fact that some of those emails are irrelevant to their academic work, a lecturer in the United States decided to formulate guidelines for students on how to communicate with their professors (Epstein, 2006).

Karim, in Epstein (2006), mentions that students often do not use proper forms of academic communication, such as starting their email with "Dear Professor X or Y".

They tend to use inappropriate language as they regard emails as a casual form of communication. Epstein (2006) demonstrates that, regardless of the type of university, communication between lecturers and students should always be polite and the rules of etiquette should be applied by students, particularly when using emails or any other form of communication.

Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) is one of the researchers who has debated e-politeness or politeness in e-learning. Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) states that, although most people disregard the use of emails to communicate with their superiors, they claim that email communication may not be professional. Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) further notes that, although some people do not edit their work, the email system allows them to plan, edit and revise their messages before sending them. If a work email is sent without being edited one cannot blame the system, as it is the sender of an email who is responsible for the email that has been sent. Subsequently, Hassini (2006) notes that the responders to emails always have sufficient time to think carefully about what they want to say and how to express it, and to think carefully before they respond. This is not a benefit of f-2-f conversations, as spoken words cannot be reversed once spoken.

Although there are several advantages to using emails for educational purposes, there are also disadvantages. These disadvantages include, among others, people misusing the privileges of communicating with their lecturers via emails by abusing this privilege as they bombard their lecturers with emails and also send demanding emails without adhering to the polite ways of communication. The cause of these negative practices may be, as Epstein (2006) mentions, the 'lack of guidelines' for students on how they should communicate with their lecturers in the academic world. The researcher hopes that this study will assist in the formulation of guidelines on how both lecturers and students should communicate, with specific reference to the Zulu culture.

In a study on the development of email literacy, Chen (2007) highlights different types of writing an email. The first type involves writing an email to peers. This is a free-will type of email as there are no rules on how formal or informal the email must be. However, composing emails to people of authority requires a "higher pragmatic competence and critical language awareness of how discourse shapes and reflects power asymmetry in an institutional context" (Chen, 2007:25). This may be

challenging, especially for second language speakers or students as they have limited linguistic knowledge and are from a different culture. Unlike f-2-f conversations, emails lack paralinguistic cues such as vocal inflection, gestures and facial expressions to communicate a level of politeness. This is why it becomes so important to construct an email that will reflect all these paralinguistic cues.

Although second language speakers or students may know how to construct an email to their peers, this does not necessarily mean that they are able to write an effective email to their professors. For example, Chen's (2007) study has demonstrated that most of emails written by international students or second language students tend to be unclear and with a delayed purpose statement. In addition, they tend to include irrelevant information and also fail to demonstrate status-appropriate politeness. This demonstrates a lack of pragmatic knowledge in English. For these students to understand how to write an effective email to their professors, they would have to learn how to act in an academic institution (language appropriateness), understand how politeness is viewed in the culture in question (culture appropriateness) and how emails are used to communicate (medium appropriateness). This again refers to what Epstein (op. cit) mentions, as there is a 'lack of guidelines' in this respect. It is difficult for second language speakers to understand such appropriateness, as the rules are often hidden and it is extremely difficult not only for first language speakers but also for second language speakers to learn them.

Subsequent studies on email communication in higher education have shown similar findings. Smith, Whiteley and Smith (1999) praise the use of emails as one of the best ways of teaching. In their study, "Using Email for Teaching", they report on certain measurable outcomes resulting from replacing f-2-f teaching with emails. Smith et al. (1999) prefer the method of teaching by using email because of the numerous advantages of this method, including:

- i) there may be fewer or no timetabled sessions;
- ii) the lecturer may check if the students read their emails or not, thus preventing students from claiming that they have never received their study material;
- iii) course work does not involve the use of paper;



- iv) the attendance of both students and teachers is not required and students may work at their own pace; and
- v) students may receive feedback in a short period of time (Smith et al., 1999).

The results of this study also show a high degree of satisfaction on the part of the students. The findings of Smith et al., (1999) demonstrate the advantages of email teaching, as it allows people from different backgrounds to receive an equal education regardless of the students' situations – poor, rich, disabled or working – with all the students receiving the same attention from the lecturers. However, the problem that all students face is that of adequate language, grammar and writing skills, especially in a South African context. The study by Parkinson and Crouch (2011) on education, language and identity demonstrates the challenges faced by the majority of black South African students, especially isiZulu students in KwaZulu-Natal. In their study, Parkinson and Crouch (2011) reveal that the main cause of students not being able to speak and articulate clearly at university is because most high school students have been taught in isiZulu. Although the students have attended English medium schools, the majority of their teachers are isiZulu speakers who, at times, mix the languages in the classroom. This may be one of the reasons why many students lose their identity and this, in turn, affects how they act, speak and behave at university.

However, Gee (2000-2001) mentions that our identity changes depending on the context. If this is true, then the way in which university students behave should change when they are surrounded by people who understand how one should behave, write and speak at university level. However, in their gendering politeness study, Ige and De Kadt (2002) have found that a group of isiZulu speakers at the University of Natal (now known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal) have lost their homogeneity and identity due to the increasing number of foreign students at the university. Although Ige and De Kadt's (2002) argument may be true, the researcher feels that no individual is able to change another person unless that person wants to be changed; thus, it is unrealistic for people to blame others and forget about themselves.

Paxton (2009) is in agreement with Gee (2000-2001), as she demonstrates in her article the way in which first-year students' texts are based on their past and present discourse experience. Paxton's article differentiates between a primary and secondary discourse, and establishes that a primary discourse is the one we acquire in the earlier

stages of our lives at home, and that a secondary discourse is the one we acquire from socialising with others outside of our home, including academic discourse and the church. Although the majority of first-year students are expected to use secondary discourse, especially an academic discourse, very few of them have learnt how to master such a secondary discourse. The students appear to believe that the academic literacy contrasts with their prior language and thus, they experience difficulties in accepting and adapting to such academic literacy.

Furthermore, Paxton's (2009) study shows that the students' confusion is created by the contrast between their values, norms and practice and the social practices, values and positions of the university and/or department. It is for this reason that students, at times, shift between discourses. Gee (1996) indicates that if a person has not mastered a secondary discourse, he/she tends to shift back to a primary discourse or another secondary discourse. Paxton's (2009) article creates discourse and ODL awareness, and provides a background to previous studies conducted on learning within the ODL context and why they sometimes shift between languages or discourses. It is clear from the above that, in terms of the primary and secondary discourse, students usually opt to use a secondary discourse, especially when they are unable to move between the discourses. However, when students use the secondary discourse, they are not using the academic secondary discourse but a street discourse or one learned from their friends.

Although it was hoped that this study would be helpful, some aspects were omitted, such as the way in which Zulu people write and that they use a question-and-answer sequence whenever they write, as they take this from their primary discourse and culture. However, these aspects were omitted because the researcher did not feel they were relevant to the study.

The aim of this study was to understand the writing style of students in higher education institutions and the reasons why students chose these styles. In a study on the problems encountered by students, Boughey (2002) discussed the difficulties faced by lecturers and black South African students who came mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds and who were under-prepared for university. Some of the students made it into the system while others did not. In his study, Boughey (2002) focused specifically on the language problems faced by these students, as the majority

were not native English speakers. Boughey (2002) concluded the black students' problems arose mainly due to a lack of proper training from their parents on how to write effectively, as this was not part of their culture.

African people believe and understand oral ways of teaching as opposed to scripts and texts. Many of the students who enter university either have to teach themselves or they are taught by their teachers or lecturers. Most of the academics base their teaching on the syllabus and often ignore the fact that some students are not that equipped to read and write in English, as English is not their native language. This results in the students taking a decision on what and how they will write. As Boughey (2002: 298) further states:

According to this understanding, problems arise not because of students' lack of familiarity with using language to construct thought in new and unfamiliar ways, but because they cannot manipulate the forms of the additional language in a way that will allow them to receive and pass on the thoughts developed in the discipline.

This suggests that, given the opportunity to write in their own language, the students would construct proper sentences. However, universities in South Africa require students and speakers of other languages to study through the medium of English. This also includes studying other languages in English although this defeats the purpose of learning a new language. This study by Boughey (2002) is important, as it provides an understanding of other elements that may contribute to the inadequate writing skills of students, including the lack of a proper educational background with regard to language.

Adler (1993:1) poses the question, "Who is to blame?" It is not useful to blame the parents and the environment, and it is also inappropriate to blame the lecturers, as they are required to teach students who are not prepared enough for the academic world. Scott, in Adler (1993:1), notes that:

Language is a barrier in the educational process because of the stigma attached to it, the lack of respect given to it, and the lack of knowledge about it. All of the above factors have been shown to lead to damaged self-concepts of students, low expectations regarding the educability of students, ineffective instructional methods, and sometimes to inappropriate placement of students (Scott, 1985:64).

Scott (1985) highlights the important fact that people have lost interest in languages as a result of the stigma attached to studying languages. Some students look down on students who are studying African languages, claiming that they are studying the easy subjects. This takes us back to the lack of respect which people have for languages as cited by Scott (1985). Adler (1993) mentions that as long as there is cultural prejudice, those in power or who are viewed as having power in society will continue to disrespect the languages of the minorities. However, the minorities will have to take the lead in implementing changes instead of following the trend set by the people whom they view as the powerhouses. Thus, for any change to occur the people will have to take a stand for their languages.

Although Adler's (1993) theory may be true it is not totally correct. If we apply what Adler has said to the South African context by looking at slang language (see chapter one for a definition of slang language), we may conclude that what she has said is not totally correct, as the language used by slang language users in South Africa is English but with abbreviations and shortcuts. This contradicts Adler's (1993) theory that the languages that are disrespected are those of minority groups. It is the researcher's belief that time contributes to changes in attitude, identity and culture.

### **2.2.3 Politeness and motivation of instructors in the ODL environment**

The findings within ODL have entered a period in which training is viewed as a basic item. The price attached to it is resolved to a limited extent by the coaching that is provided as a critical learner support service in the ODL domain. Morgan and Smith (2011) are of the opinion that a guide in the ODL context provides formative criticism, and may also act as a mentor and coach and affirm to the institution in question that their students have reached the predefined level of the abilities required. Thus, the trainer, by virtue of his/her contribution to the instruction of the ODL course, may also function as an outside companion and analyst of the course material. It is, thus, the mentor's obligation to promote the learning procedure in such a way that the material becomes clearer and is able to meet the needs of the students.

According to Moore (2003:142), offering support to the ODL student is often seen as one of the numerous roles of a coach, stating that "...who might deny that learners or students will welcome an instructor who conveys a mentorship and strong style instead

of one who is not steady?” In support of this statement, Qakisa-Makoe (2005) observes that ODL students, similar to other people, are in need of guidance and support as they experience life, particularly when they are facing the challenging test of distance learning. With the growing interest in access to advanced education, higher education institutions are being challenged to profoundly enhance their understanding of how students learn if they are to create learning services or projects that are steady and receptive to the learners’ needs.

Accordingly, guides on emotionally supportive networks in ODL must demonstrate for whom they are intended and what is required by the students, thus prompting decisions on how requirements may be met within the imperatives of costs, technology and geographical environment. This implies that ODL organisations, through their course originators and designers, must be prepared to their students’ needs by arranging tutor support structures that meet the students’ requirements.

Instructor support in ODL may improve enrolment, diminish attrition and ensure a balanced project (LaPadula, 2013). Thus, excellent instructor support in ODL remains a key issue in current thinking, debate, research and exploration, especially in the twenty-first century. Barker and Crawley (2005) maintain that the interest in and requirement for outstanding guide support in ODL have been confirmed in a variety of past research works, including those of Green (1998), Fletcher (2002) and Macleod (2003). This interest reaffirms the fact that tutor backing is now viewed as a necessary component of valuable ODL encounters (LaPadula, 2013).

As Barker and Crawley (2005:3) contend, “the part of viable instructor backing could be thought to be foremost to the advancement of proper techniques to raise the maintenance and accomplishment rates of learners learning at a separation”. Nemati (2008:31) maintains that an ODL mentor plays a key role in the students’ achievement; thus, it is imperative that the ODL mentor understands his/her students and urges them to focus on their work. Nemati (2008:31) also cites the following as critical qualities of a good ODL guide or mentor:

- i) be agreeable and receptive;
- ii) plan painstakingly around students’ needs, prepare properly and know the subject substance;

- iii) facilitate learning and help students with scholarly and innovative backing in the related course of study;
- iv) mark assignments speedily and provide in-depth criticism to students;
- v) communicate with and guide students consistently in their studies and even in their private issues;
- vi) assist ODL students to develop timely path in their study abilities; and
- vii) Know that students are unique and self-governing learners.

These qualities impose a gigantic obligation on the tutor, requiring that he/she should be exceptionally energetic, organise precisely and train. Similarly, the attributes raise basic issues relevant to the delivery of quality ODL. For example, these attributes may result in the ODL instructor providing knowledge and urging thinking commensurate with building up individuals and the appraisal of the value in separation learning. In addition, new insights into distance learning may arise and give a valuable association to ODL fears.

## **2.2.4 Motivation and learning within ODL**

As indicated by Schunk, Pintrich and Meece (2008), motivation is known as the system whereby objective, composed activity is induced and upheld. It is believed that motivation may affect what we understand, how we learn, and when we learn. Research shows that motivated learners or students are likely to grasp testing activities, to be viably attracted to acknowledge, to develop an effective approach to learning and to show renewed execution, vigour and imaginativeness (Schunk et al., 2008). Contemporary points of view emphasise the connection between individuals' scholarly and passionate methods; for example, consideration, feelings, goals and anxiety, thus masterminding the effective relationship between the learner and the learning environment (Brophy, 2010).

Although there have been a few studies conducted on motivation in an ODL setting, those studies have, for the most part, been constrained in both number and degree (Artino, 2008; Bekele, 2010). Existing studies have tended to demonstrate a limited view of motivation that does not include the versatile qualities and components essential in influencing motivation to learn (Brophy, 2010). Instead, understanding learning situations and circumstances is emphasised (ChanLin, 2009; Keller, 2008).

Nevertheless, motivation has sometimes been seen as an individual component that remains relatively stable across settings and circumstances.

Ponders accepting this model have focused on recognising approaches of properties of effective online students (Wighting, Liu & Rovai, 2008; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007) and demonstrate that inalienable motivation is an average aspect (Shroff, Vogel, Coombes & Lee, 2008; Styler, 2007). While attributed motivation may affect starting engagement and persistence in an online study context, investigations that perceive common and outward motivation as an extreme may present a misrepresented viewpoint of both the significant effects of motivation and of motivation itself.

The perception of motivation solely as an effect of the learning environment or as a learner characteristic does not take into account that individuals may be moved to a more conspicuous or lesser degree of motivation in different courses and in any given association and time (Turner & Patrick, 2008). Examinations of Web-learning environments have focused on the contemporary “individual in setting”, an organised point of view of motivation and have accordingly had limited progress (Shroff et al., 2007:14; Xie, DeBacker & Ferguson, 2006:12). Together, these components point to the need to rethink motivation in respect of learning in the ODL context.

### **2.2.5 Communication and language in the ODL system**

Communication plays a fundamental role in the ODL framework in higher education in view of the method of delivery of the programmes and curricula and, in many incidents, the student support services and administrations. For a distance learner in need of significant information at different stages of his/her study, the information must be made accessible both punctually and with clarity. The absence of appropriate correspondence has been cited as one reason for the attrition in student numbers (Fozdar, Kumar & Kannan, 2006). This highlights the importance of teaching the staff at all levels in both interpersonal abilities and communication skills. The size of prerequisite can be acknowledged, on the off chance that we follow the latest technology and innovation. The distance education institutions have altered the state by offering training on a mass scale. The coming of ICT has, in all likelihood, accelerated the speed of all correspondence and also increased the numbers of

students. In addition, it also requires organisations to change the style and arrangement of their correspondence (Moran & Rumble, 2004).

Several of the academic organisations of today are striving to achieve a sizable enrollment in ODL; thus, it is incumbent on these establishments to adjust to changing their methods of innovation to offer quality support that caters for the demographics of their students. In the self-financing context, the establishments are being forced to expand the scope of their operations in various ways; for example, a corporate tie-up in exchange for the offer of several executive training programmes. It is conceivable that many of these organisations may initiate cooperative endeavours with foreign higher education institutions for even support staff. The increasing number of delivery models and organisations that are emerging are demanding a significant improvement in the abilities of the staff in distance education institutions. It has become a prerequisite to focus on the upgrade measures in respect of relational abilities as well as written communication skills in order to improve both the quality of the teaching within an ODL environment as well as that of the student support services.

### **2.3 Theories linked to politeness and language**

In the main, people rely on the experience of others who have been to a particular place to understand something about such a place. In isiZulu, there is a proverb that says *indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*. The literal translation of this proverb is “The road is asked from those ahead”. This means that “advice is elicited from those who have the experience”. This is also applicable to the purpose of a literature review. Research is a journey during which the researcher takes into account and investigates previous studies conducted in the field of interest. Thus, a literature review facilitates an examination of new ideas as compared to those articulated in previous studies, and also whether the theory used in the past may help to solve current problems. If not, a different theory would have to be used.

A theory is extremely important to any study, as it helps the researcher in grounding his/her research. In addition, it reduces researcher bias in relation to a study. While the researcher has probably chosen a theory that may be of use, it is also extremely important to examine other theories that may challenge the researcher’s perspective, as this may help the researcher to answer some questions before being asked by



others. Theoretical aspects also help the researcher to understand the data collected. Explaining the theoretical framework to be used also helps readers to understand more of the problem that the researcher is trying to solve (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

It was for the above reasons that it was imperative for the researcher to explain in detail the two theories of speech act and politeness. Although both these theories are more Western-based, this chapter presents both the Western and African view on politeness and speech act theories in the hope of highlighting the way in which different cultures view cross-cultural communication and politeness; thus, to understand that each community and each group of people have their own rules of communication and behaviour. If a problem is to be solved, one needs to look at the root of the problem and find the cause of the problem. Thus, before a theory may be understood it is essential to examine the foundation of that theory.

In respect of both speech act and politeness, the main focus is language usage. Language is one aspect that we use in our everyday lives to send messages and share ideas and opinions. In most cases, we depend on language to explain our views in a way that will create harmonious relationships with others. It is not surprising that the study of language has become the focus of philosophers, such as Austin, who is a pioneer of the speech act theory. Austin's ideas on speech acts have been formulated in the 1930s. After his death, his student, Searle, has elaborated further on Austin's ideas and concepts (Poghosyan, 2015).

### **2.3.1 Speech act theory**

"Speech act theory is built on the foundation laid by Wittgenstein and Austin", and its purpose is to look at the smallest unit of a language that carries information about its meaning (Vanderveken & Kubo, 2001:3). For example, if a visitor remarks that the food smells good, this may imply that the visitor is hungry and asking for an invitation to eat and/or join the family in eating that food. It may also simply mean that the visitor is complimenting the host on his/her cooking skills. There may be several explanations for the above scenario.

Thus, when we talk of speech act theory, it must be clear that we are talking about the study of the units of communication used to express meaning. It may be when greeting, apologising, requesting, arguing or even complaining about something but in

the end the unit of communication must express meaning. This is the reason why it is important for the speaker to explain clearly at times what he/she means. This, in turn, links with the understanding of pragmatics, as it is based on the theory of speech acts; hence, pragmatics is the study of how factors, such as time, place and the social relationship between a speaker and listener, affects how they communicate with each other to come to a certain conclusion (Poghosyan, 2015).

In explaining speech acts, Austin mentions that saying something is actually doing something. Austin's statement takes us to the notion of promise as, when we use a statement such as "I promise I will do this", the sentence is understood as something that will definitely be done. We may, thus, conclude that language may be used to do and assert things. Searle further illustrates that to understand someone's language and speech one must understand that person's intention, as language is an intentional behaviour (Searle, 1969).

During the development of his theory, Austin has introduced basic terms such as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Oshima (2010:9) explains the locutionary act as "...the production of a meaningful linguistic expression". This is shown by the way in which one may answer a question. For example, if Owen asks Linda, "Are you going to the meeting?" and instead of Linda answering the question, she says, "I have a headache". Owen then replies by saying, "I will apologise on your behalf." Linda's way of answering the question by saying that she has a headache is a locutionary act. Oshima's (2010:9) definition of illocution is "the action intended to be performed by a speaker in uttering a linguistic expression, by virtue of conventional force associated with it...". This will then take us to the example of Linda and Owen used above. For Linda to say that she has a headache means that she is either not intending to go to the meeting or she is not going to the meeting – an illocutionary act. Thus, an illocutionary act is a way of passing a message indirectly.

A perlocutionary act is explained as "the bringing about of consequences or effects on the audience through the uttering of a linguistic expression, such consequences or effects being special to the circumstances of the utterance" (Poghosyan, 2015:11). This shows that not only has Linda succeeded in telling Owen that she does not feel well but she also politely requests Owen to report on her behalf that she will not be attending the meeting as she has a headache. The same type of communication and

passing of a message between Linda and Owen may be a challenge to others who do not understand the indirectness of the language used, especially second language speakers. Thus, this illustrates that, for anyone to understand and interpret a speech act in any conversation, they must have knowledge of the language and also understand how the language is used within the culture in question.

In the South African context, the above may be challenging. South Africa has nine provinces and within these provinces there are often people who speak the language spoken in other provinces. Thus, although they may speak the language, their understanding of it is related to where they grew up. This implies that they will not understand the language in the same way as the person who lives in the target language community. In the target language community, the people who do not live there may be considered second language speakers or dialect speakers. This difference will be explained in the next chapter.

Searle has developed Austin's ideas further by examining the five types of functions performed by speech acts, namely declarations, representatives, expressives, directives and commissives (Poghosyan, 2015:7). For example, a declaration involves an attempt to make people do things. However, it is necessary for the speaker to have an institutional role in society, such as a referee telling a player, "You are out" or a boss firing an employee from his company using, "You are fired" or a jury foreman declaring, "We find the defendant guilty".

A representative speech act is a speech act in which the speaker believes such as making a claim about the world. An example may be, "The world is round" or "My car is beautiful" (Rogers, Wall & Murphy, 1973:9). An expressive speech act is a speech act in which the speaker expresses psychological states such as pleasure, pain, like or dislike; for example, "I am so happy you passed" or "Congratulations on your new car" (Rogers et al., 1973:9). The fourth type of speech act is a directive speech act. This type of speech act is a speech act in which the speaker attempts to persuade others to do what he/she wants. It takes the form of requesting, suggesting, ordering or commanding. This expression may be done either indirectly or directly; for example, "Love, what time are we eating?" as a way of asking for food, or "Could you lend me money?" respectively (Rogers et al., 1973:9). The last type is a commissive speech act and occurs when the speaker commits to doing so, such as promising, threatening

or pledging; for example, “I promise that I will return your money” or “I can assure you that my marks will improve” (Rogers et al., 1973:9).

It was felt that the above-mentioned speech acts would facilitate the understanding of the role of politeness among lecturers and students in higher education institutions.

### **2.3.2 Politeness theory**

Kadar and Haugh (2013) highlight the importance of politeness in that it is a key to our relationships while also contributing to who we are and how we want the world to see us. When one talks of politeness, one thinks of the rules imposed on one by one’s parents when one was young, such as how one acts in the presence of others, when and how to apologise, what to do when communicating with an adult of a higher status (especially in the Zulu culture) and how to appreciate things, et cetera. As Kadar and Haugh (2013) note, politeness is more than a conversation act of linguistic etiquette in that it involves interpersonal behaviour which, in turn, involves the way in which we perceive and act on the issue of how others view us.

As is the case with pragmatics, the development of the politeness theory has branched out like a tree. The benchmark is influenced by the earlier development of this theory with the roots as the earlier model, thus providing the history behind the development of politeness. Culpeper denotes this history as first-wave approaches (Kadar & Haugh, 2013). Several theorists have developed the theory based on the work of Grice (1975), Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978).

#### **2.3.2.1 Grice’s (1975) notion of politeness**

Grice (1975) was not interested in the ordinary use of language but rather in the meaning of someone’s statement and the way the listener understood the speaker’s intentions. He noted that statements had numerous meanings as some were pleonastic while some implied something which was different to the actual meaning of the words used (Grice, 1975). When developing his theory, Grice (1975) wanted to explain the processes that either sustained or interrupted a typical spoken conversation (Ho & Swan, 2007). It was for this reason that Grice (1975) mentioned that, in order for anyone to understand any form of communication and information,

the listener had to understand both social goals and direction which were essentially the maxims of cooperative principles (social goals).

Four sets of maxim were outlined that guided conversations between people, namely quantity, quality, relation and manner.

- i) quantity is about making a contribution as informative as required, and also being specific in terms of numbers and logistics;
- ii) quality is about avoiding saying things about which one does not have adequate information and making the contribution that one is sure is truly valid;
- iii) the relation is about remaining relevant to the conversation; and
- iv) manner is about the way in which a message is conveyed – it must be short and straight to the point (Grice, 1975:47).

In an effort to maintain peace among people, Grice (1975) suggested that we understood these entire maxims and followed them. The researcher felt that Grice's (1975) notion would be helpful in this study on politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in higher education in South Africa, as it introduced us to the communication patterns that should be followed to maintain peace. The researcher was of the view that, before analysing politeness, it would be useful to ascertain the extent to which the lecturers and students followed those four maxims.

### **2.3.2.2 Lakoff's (1973) notion of politeness**

In common with the other researchers, Lakoff (1973) developed politeness from the notion of Grice's cooperative principle in the belief that there are two sets of rules of politeness that aim to minimise conflict (be polite and be clear). The most common rule is the rule that guides people on how to act in the proximity of others if they want to be perceived as polite. According to Lakoff (1973), any speaker may express him/herself in a polite way by following the following three subset rules which are a formality, namely, do not impose (rule 1), show deference and give options (rule 2) and show camaraderie – make the listener feel good by being friendly (rule 3).

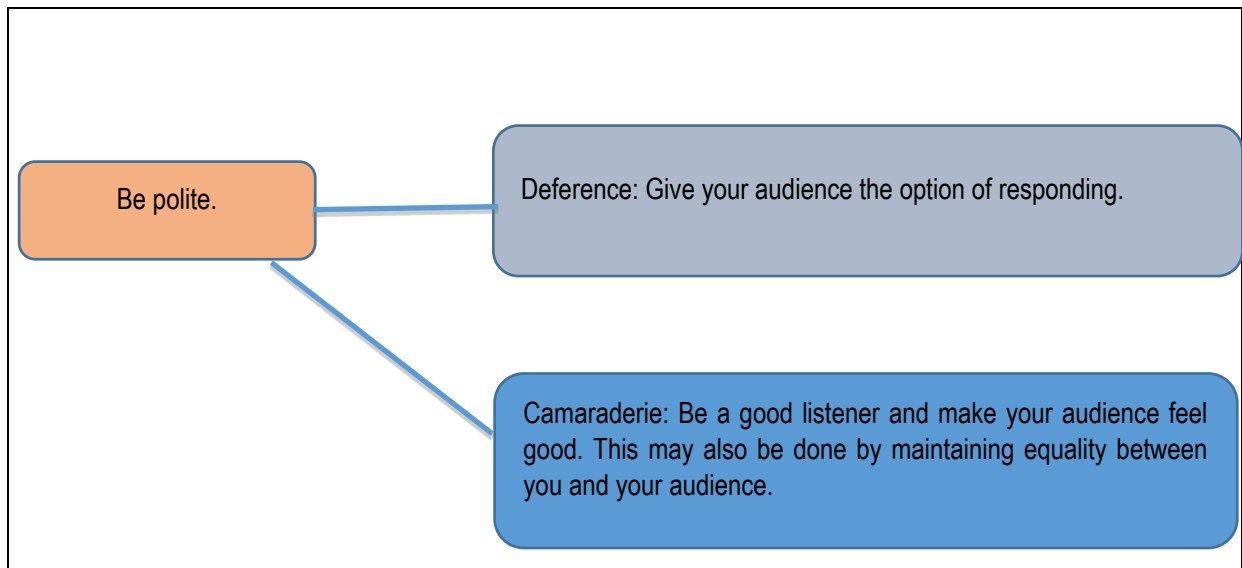


Figure 2.1: Lakoff's notion of politeness rule 1 (Source: Locher & Watts, 2005: 25)

The second set of rules is the set that is based on Grice's cooperative principle maxims that deal with conversation (to be clear). This second set contains four subset rules already discussed above, namely the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relations and the maxim of manner.

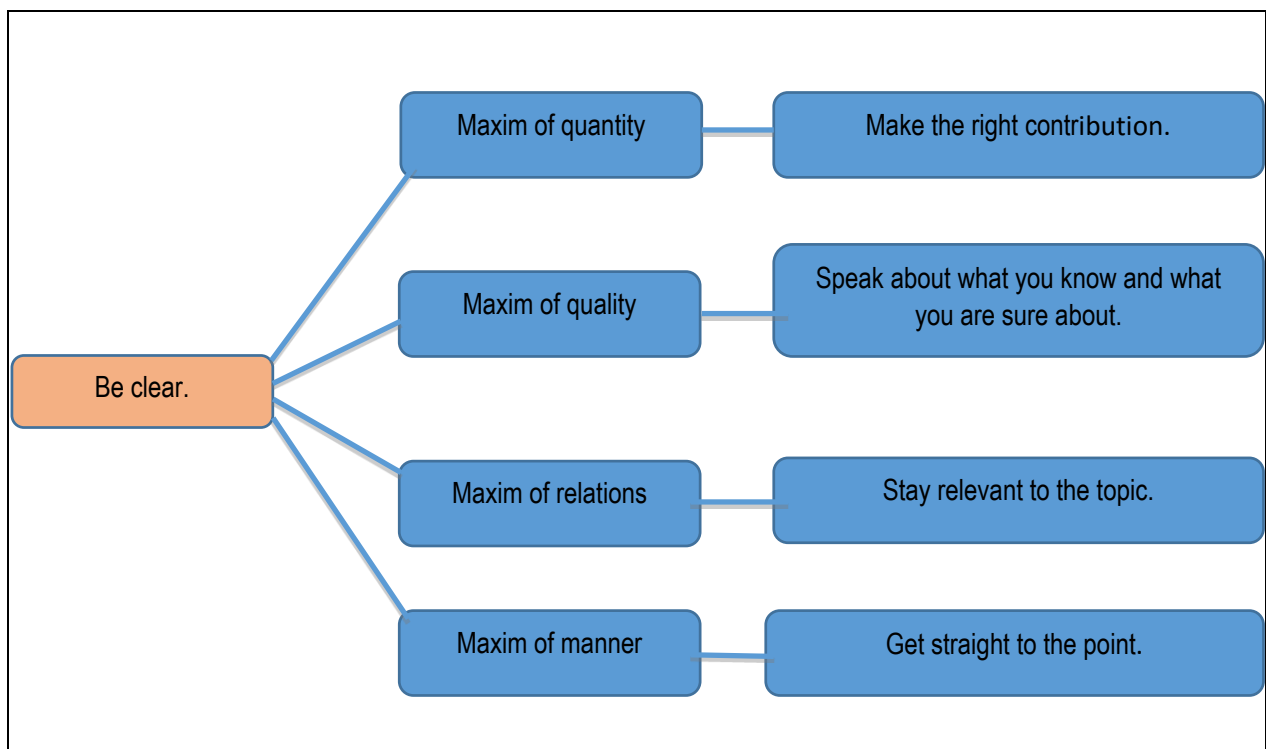


Figure 2.2: Lakoff's notion of politeness rule 2 (Source: Locher & Watts, 2005: 25)

Lakoff (1973), unlike other theorists, postulates that politeness is universal and that the only difference in the universal context is that different cultures place more emphasis on one rule than the other (Kadar & Haugh, 2013). If the above rules are explained in the context of this study, Lakoff's (1973) rules may be relevant to this study.

The first rule is about maintaining a distance as a sign of politeness and remaining aloof, thus not interfering in other people's business. This may be done in terms of expressions of formality. Some people maintain a distance between themselves and others to engender formality and not allow any emotional attachment, thus making it difficult for another individual to confront them and discuss their problem (Reiter, 2000). For example, this may be seen in the lecture rooms. In the majority of cases, it is believed that lecturers or teachers who are friendly to students expose themselves to impoliteness or disrespectful reactions from their students, as the conversations between them constantly fluctuate between the formal and informal. However, this statement is not always true as impoliteness may be subjective (Kadar & Haugh, 2013).

The friendlier the environment in a classroom, the more probable it will be that a free environment will be created, thus prompting students to discuss themes openly. In addition, it creates fairness between the speaker and listener which may establish a closeness between them and may contribute to either politeness or impoliteness.

The third rule emphasises that if there is no status distinction between two individuals, this permits them to talk openly without worrying about whether they are being courteous or not. For example, two partners or two students with the same status will address each other without constraint or apprehension. In addition, circuitous discourse may be used, particularly if the speakers are companions or are informed about the theme being discussed. Lakoff, in Tsuda (1993: 66), further outlines that indirect speech is utilised for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, to conceal any hint of failure face if a conversational commitment is not generally welcomed and secondly, to establish the feeling of compatibility that originates from being understood without having to say what one means. In addition, by requiring the audience or reader to fill in implicit importance, back-handedness adds to a feeling of inclusion through a shared interest.

Despite the fact that there are a few scholars who concur with Lakoff's hypothesis of good manners, there are others who do not. For example, Brown, in Reiter (2000:8), is of the opinion that the issue with Lakoff's hypothesis is that:

She doesn't offer an incorporating hypothesis, which puts her tenets of politeness in "a structure which clarifies their forms as far as social connections and assumptions about people as interactants".

Moreover, scholars, for example, Gazdar, in Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003), have tested Lakoff's standard as well as Grice's co-agent guideline which expresses that everything relies on the individual's way of life while Tsuda (1993) has concluded that, in fact, individuals do not generally follow the co-agent rule. At the point at which the scholars are participating in a discussion, individuals tend to do whatever is necessary not to provide information that will place either themselves or the listener in an awkward position. They do not want to find themselves demonstrating what Brown and Levinson (1978) term "negative face". The researcher is of the opinion that Lakoff's rule of politeness may help him to observe the effect of a status difference between student and lecturer, and whether this contributes to people being either polite or impolite, especially in the Zulu culture.

Lakoff's second rule on deference relates to the way in which the distance or status difference between the two parties may create an imbalance between them. The reason for this is that the individual with more power or status will be accorded more respect than the other person. It is obvious that the teacher will be accorded more respect than a student. It is this assumption that the study was attempting to probe; hence, the research topic of politeness between isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother speakers in higher education in South Africa. The overall view of Lakoff's rule of politeness is that, for a speaker to be considered as someone who is polite, it is incumbent on the speaker to make the listener or hearer feel comfortable in the conversation. This would result in the listener identifying the speaker as someone who is polite. Lakoff's rule of politeness does not differ from Leech's (1983) notion of politeness.



### **2.3.2.3 Leech's (1983) notion of politeness**

Leech's (1983) theory was based on Grice's (1975) notion of politeness. Leech's (1983) principle of politeness was based on how and why people conveyed politeness. In considering this principle, he discussed the fact that, at times, people might pretend to be polite just in order to gain something, thus violating the politeness principle since the aim of this principle was to be polite and to show that one was genuinely polite (Grice, 1975).

Leech's theory further looks at politeness as a way of avoiding conflict. This may be accomplished by decreasing the cost and increasing the benefits for the hearer, which will also mean decreasing the benefit and increasing the cost for the speaker. Politeness, as viewed by Leech (1983), is about the speaker minimising his/her desires and values as the speaker and making the hearer happy. This is similar to Lakoff's (1973) notion of politeness as described above. However, the danger with this theory, as indicated above, is that one may not be able to perceive whether or not the speaker is genuinely polite. Hence, the speaker tries to make his/her participant believe that his/her contribution is acceptable and constructive in order to be seen as someone who is polite.

This principle also hinges on cultures, as various cultures attach more worth to altered aphorisms than do other cultures (Reiter, 2000). However, scholars such as Brown and Levinson (1987) point out that Leech's maxims are so numerous that one tends to wonder how many maxims and principles one needs to account for politeness phenomena. It is possible that Leech's theory may be irrelevant to this study in the sense of measuring his maxims.

### **2.3.2.4 Brown and Levinson's (1978) notion of politeness**

Brown and Levinson's (1978) guideline depends on the face and face-undermining acts. They present the notion of "face", the "negative face" and the "positive face" based on the understanding that a positive face comprises the mental self-view and hunger for endorsement (Kitamura, 2000). As indicated by Reiter (2000), both positive and negative face are controlled by one's way of life and the social congregation in which one is placed.

Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that face is something that should always be checked during discussions as it may be lost, kept up and/or upgraded. Since one's own face may be managed by the activity of others it is imperative to keep up one's own face as well as that of others (Reiter, 2000). In addition, a contrary face is identified with cases of the domain, requests, dangers, proposals, guidance and personal preserves. The above thought is connected with individuals of a higher or privileged class while positive face is, in some way, connected with those of a lower class. Brown and Levinson's (1987) view is contrary to good manners, as many people, when in a discussion, try to ensure that there is no antagonistic intention that may be linked to them while some of them consider what Leech's (1983) hypothesis notes as "imagining" or "any guideline" (IP) (Reiter, 2000: 13). Brown and Levinson's (1978) hypothesis depends on the concept of face and has developed as Lakoff's standard of pleasantness (Locher & Watts, 2005).

Fraser (1990:229-230) outline the following four face-threatening acts as proposed by Brown and Levinson(1987):

- i) acts undermining the listener's negative face; for example, requesting, prompting, debilitating and cautioning;
- ii) acts debilitating to the listener's sure face; for example, grumbling, scrutinising, deviating and raising forbidden points;
- iii) acts debilitating to the speaker's negative face; for example, tolerating an offer, tolerating much, gratifying and promising unwillingly; and
- iv) acts undermining to the speaker's certain face; for example, apologising, tolerating compliments and admitting.

This resembles the proposal of Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978) of a scale design that may evaluate the degree of politeness that one needs to demonstrate in certain situations. They maintain that there are three variables that are universal, namely the social distance (D) between a speaker and a hearer. The second is related to the power (P) between participants while the third variable is related to the ranking (R) of obligation(s) within a certain culture. Thus, the distance and difference in D, P and R may evaluate the degree of face adjustment required in a particular situation. For example, if the D, P and R are minimal, for example, speaking to a classmate of the same D, P and R, the speaker may say: "Would you mind passing

me that pen?” On the other hand, if the D, P and R are maximum, for example, speaking to a person of a higher D, P and R, the speaker would say a totally different sentence such as “I’m sorry to bother you. Would you mind passing me the pen in front of you, please?”

Brown and Levinson, in Kitamura (2000), propose strategies that may be used to deal with face-threatening acts (FTA). The five linguistic strategies below are ranked according to the degree of politeness (Reiter, 2000:14) with the scale of 1 to 5 showing the increase in one’s losing face. The greater the scale, the politer the strategies one employs. It must be noted that, as shown below, there are two types of expressing FTA, namely on-record and off-record. Both strategies are explained in detail below.

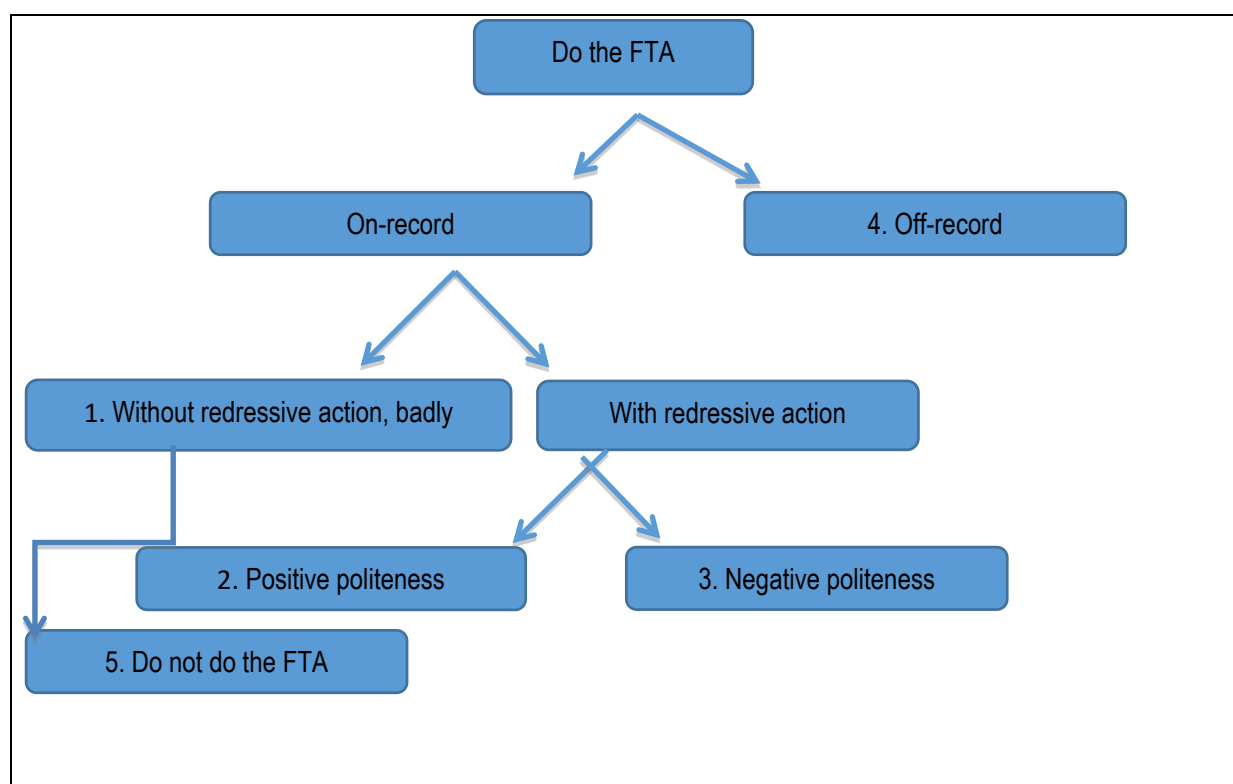


Figure 2.3: Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notion of politeness (Source: Locher & Watts, 2005)

According to Reiter (2000), the first strategy is employed when the speakers know one another well; hence, there is no goal, nor is there any risk of losing face, for example, when making a promise. Brown and Levinson (1987), in Reiter (2000), claim that this strategy means there is no need for redressive action, as the speakers are on familiar

terms with one another. Thus, in all likelihood, the act will be direct and clear in accordance with Grice's (1989) maxim mentioned earlier.

Another example that may be of help to this strategy is that of two siblings talking to each other with one saying, "Make sure that you brush your teeth before breakfast." In terms of this strategy, there is no need to preserve face. Strategies two and three refer to when the speakers are trying to maintain their own face. For example, in strategy two (positive politeness), the speaker attempts to meet the hearer's needs by avoiding any disagreements, using humour, making offers and promises, and invoking equality and feelings of belonging. In strategy three (negative face), the speaker tries to minimise the threat to the other party by dropping hints, hedging, asking questions when asking for something and apologising (Locher & Watts, 2005).

Strategy four relates more to the indirect hint or non-conversational indirectness as compared to the other strategies. This strategy is employed when there is risk of losing face. The communicating language often becomes more ambiguous as the hearer has to try to interpret what the speaker is saying. Consequently, the face is not directly threatened. This strategy may be said to link with Grice's (1989) maxim in terms of which meaning is negotiated by conversational implications (Reiter, 2000).

Strategy five involves the speakers saying nothing to each other, as there is too much risk involved.

The above strategy four is in agreement with what Brown and Levinson (1987) term the "model individual". This model is based on the assumption that everybody has acquired both reasonability and face – the two components of this model. Kwon and Ha (2009:81) clarify that the model individual alludes "...to some degree to perfect people in the public arena who are without a blunder, have a not too bad memory and know the etymological frameworks of their local language". Kwon and Ha's (2009:81) contention is that the model individual is about an individual's capacity to utilise social learning to apply respectfulness; for example, by saying "please" and "thank you" during discussions. Thus, it is about the way in which one uses dialect to communicate. However, none of the above-mentioned notions and principles will work in isolation from the speech act theory.

### 2.3.2.5 Critique on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory

Although Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion has been recommended, the universality view of the theory has received criticism. Their theory is derived from their notion of face but with the difference that Goffman perceives the public as important in the construction of face while Brown and Levinson (1987) regard the individual as an important figure in the construction of face rather than the public.

One of the African researchers into politeness, De Kadt (De Kadt, 1994, 1998) maintains that, although politeness plays a role in maintaining peace within society, not everything said by theorists such as Brown and Levinson (1987) corresponds with the African culture. For example, the understanding of 'face' in an African context is somewhat different to the understanding in the Western context. The researcher is of the view that in Africa "it takes a village to raise a child" (Palmer & Gasman, 2008:60). This view in relation to 'face' implies that 'face' is a public property that needs to be taken care of and be protected by all. This is the reason why, in the amaZulu or Zulu society, there is considerable emphasis on what people term *bazothini abantu* ("what will people say"). It is the duty of everyone in society to defend and uphold the value of society and to care more about what the society says than what they want as individuals (De Kadt, 1998).

However, if a person behaves in a manner that is not acceptable in his/her group, then that individual may lose 'face'. De Kadt (1992) further claims that the issues of directness and politeness may not have been valid to her isiZulu-speaking respondents. Hence, the standard claim of the request in isiZulu of *ngiyacela* (May I, please?) is viewed as the most direct standard. This, however, contradicts Brown and Levinson's (1987) view that status differences may cause a person of a lower status to be more indirect than may otherwise have been the case, which is a sign of politeness as the majority of De Kadt's (1992) respondents have declared that the request *ngiyacela* is the most direct and polite request.

## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the review of literature relevant to the research topic. The literature reviewed included literature on politeness theory, as the aim of the study was to investigate politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue

speakers in the higher education open distance learning environment. This chapter also examined the language usage in the speech act, as both the speech act and politeness were deemed to be of relevance. The aim of investigating the speech act theory was to understand the small unit in communication used to express meaning, for example, when greeting, apologising, requesting, arguing or even complaining.

Searle (1969) mentions that, in order to understand another person's language and speech, one must understand his/her intention. In South Africa with its diverse languages, cultures and provinces, it becomes challenging to understand the other person's intentions, as one has to understand the other person's language and culture in order to understand his/her intentions. Politeness binds us to the understanding that, as diverse as people are, there are certain ways that must be followed to create harmony in society. As Kadar and Haugh (2013) note, politeness is more than just a conversation act of linguistic etiquette in that it also encompasses interpersonal behaviour, namely the way in which we perceive and act on the issue of how others view us. Most of the researchers who have developed the politeness theory base their work on the research of Grice, Lakoff, Leech and Brown and Levinson (1987).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Research method and methodology are significant aspects of any study, as they provide the framework upon which the research procedure is conducted (Creswell, 2010). It was, thus, imperative that the methodology used for the purposes of this study be capable of yielding accurate data to ensure that the stated research goals and research objectives were achieved. This chapter presents the framework upon which the research goals and objectives were realised. Accordingly, it comprises a comprehensive discussion of the research approach and process used in the study, how the requisite data was collected, what the sampling technique and sample size entailed, the data analysis process and the scope of the study.

The choice of the research method was informed by the theoretical underpinnings of the study, the research goals and research objectives as well as the foundation of the research problem to be addressed. The choice of the research method used was based on factors such as the ease of the data analysis and data interpretation as well as the practicability and validity of the study. In particular, the chapter focuses on the data collection methods, as these were important features of this research study. Without proper data gathering research cannot be considered either valid or proper.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm and design**

The research design alludes to the general arrangement and plan for a study, and includes the research methodology, the structure of the study, the subject of who or what was envisaged, and the devices to be used for the data gathering and data analysis. As mentioned above, the study comprises both descriptive qualitative and quantitative research. The research design is applied as a part of the exploration that the researcher undertakes in a study (Manik & Hutagaol, 2015). It was decided that the data required in respect of instructor's politeness, language and pedagogical

standards to students' compliance would best be obtained by applying mixed method research which, in the main, includes focusing on genuine settings, the activities of individuals, the entire picture, the client's own perspective (point of view) and relevant literature.

The purpose of conducting most social science studies is to explore the various methods of learning and understanding human behaviour by focusing on features and behaviours that may not have been considered by other researchers (Nene, 2013). In this study, a mixed method research (MMR) design was used to investigate the different politeness records demonstrated by lecturers and students. In recent years, several writers have found it difficult to define and identify the true meaning of mixed method research (MMR). Some call it "...multi-method research, mixed methods, mixed methodology, mixed research, and integrated research..." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:285). However, although different writers use different terminology, the characteristics they all specify are the same, namely a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007:123) agree with the view that MMR is a type of research that combines both qualitative and quantitative research in one specific study.

The researcher decided that gathering different types of information would ensure a more complete and realistic understanding of the topic under investigation rather than either quantitative or qualitative information only. The chapter started with an expansive overview in order to sum up the outcomes. Then it focused on qualitative, open-ended interviews which were conducted in order to gather the requisite data from the respondents to clarify the underlying quantitative review. In the case of a quantitative data approach, the researcher used theories by indicating thin speculations and then collected information in order either to support or negate the theories. An experimental design was used as a part of which states of mind were evaluated both prior to and after the exploratory action.

In terms of the qualitative methodology, the researcher tried to establish the meaning of certain phenomena; for example, politeness, language and pedagogy by investigating the participants' points of view. In this study, this implied recognising a culture-sharing group, namely isiZulu-speaking and distance learning students, and to concentrate on how this culture-sharing group created shared examples of conduct



over time (i.e., ethnography). The main purpose of gathering the data in this way was to observe the participants' practices amid their engagement in the exercise in question.

However, it must be remembered that the mixing of two methods (qualitative and quantitative) must be suited to the particular study. This method was chosen for the purposes of this study because of the nature of the study. It enabled the researcher to use questionnaires and observations to gather the data.

In quantitative research, it is vital to focus on the statistic rather than other reasons while, on the other hand, qualitative research examines the reasons why certain things happen. Golafshani (2003:297) further highlights that a quantitative research design uses charts, graphs and research language that rhyme along 'variables', 'population' and 'results' as part of the process of conducting quantitative research. On the other hand, a qualitative research design involves understanding phenomena in their natural habitat without the researcher trying to manipulate the phenomena of interest (Golafshani, 2003:297). Thus, using both research methods helps to compensate for the weaknesses of each individual approach.

In view of the fact that this study was conducted in South Africa, it was necessary to understand the students' views and knowledge of politeness, language and pedagogy; hence, a questionnaire was formulated and distributed to the participants. The aim of using this methodology was firstly, that the imperative components of the study depended on existing literature on politeness, language and pedagogy and secondly, that sources had to be investigated to decide on the way in which these three angles influenced or impacted on student compliance within an ODL domain.

The study of ontology involves observations and the study of "beings and the reality of beings". For example, "What is really genuine?", "What is principal?" and "What is subordinate?" (Shawn, 2001). On the other hand, epistemology investigates information and its validity. For example, "On what does learning and comprehension depend and in what capacity would we be able to be sure of what we know?" Axiology is the investigation of qualities. For example, "What values does an individual or gathering hold and why?", "How are qualities identified with interest, yearning, will, experience and unfortunate obligation?" An axiological investigation appeared to be appropriate to this study, as it was felt that it would be a method for enhancing

noteworthy self-understanding and self-learning in respect of the reasons for investigation and in addition, it would ensure clarity about a specific individual or group practice (Shawn, 2001:55).

### **3.3 Data collection**

The researcher used MMR for the data collection. The data collection comprised two phases. Phase one entailed the quantitative method in terms of which a questionnaire was administered while phase two entailed the qualitative approach in terms of which interviews were conducted. This approach was suggested by Zohrabi (2013) who mentioned these methods as the instruments used in MMR. The main quantitative instruments were the open questions and open-ended interviews. This view was supported by Creswell (2010) who maintained that quantitative research design brought in the element of closed-ended questions while qualitative research brought in open-ended questions, interviews and observations.

The benefit of using open-ended questions is the level of discovery in respect of what the respondent really wants to say whereas close-ended questions provide the researcher with quantity and numerical data. It is, however, extremely important that the questionnaires and/or questions are reliable, valid and unambiguous (Zohrabi, 2013).

The fact that, by the time of the study, the researcher had been both a student and a staff member in the UNISA Department of African languages meant that the researcher was in a position to sincerely and objectively portray both sides of ODL language interaction and the learning environment. In particular, as an isiZulu speaker, the researcher was aware of the mother tongue and politeness aspects as both a student as well as a pedagogical agent influencing student compliance. Furthermore, the researcher had been party to huge online feedback from lecturers, teaching assistants (TAs) and students as well as interaction among these parties. The researcher was also keenly interested in how, as a language, the mother tongue might relate to politeness. This became a particularly interesting and stimulating topic as fellow staff members engaged in the discussion. As already mentioned, in terms of the data collection, the researcher was in an ideal position to capture the reflections as both student and lecturer.

### 3.3.1 Questionnaires

As mentioned earlier, during the quantitative phase the data was gathered through closed-ended questions that had been structured in a Likert-scale format. Developed by Likert in approximately 1932, the Likert scale comprises a code in terms of which attitudes may be measured by a researcher engaging with different people and asking them the degree to which they either agree or disagree with several statements about a certain topic “and so tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes” (Creswell, 2010: 21). Furthermore, Creswell (2010) emphasises that a close-ended questionnaire is a type of scale that assumes that the strength/intensity of the “experience is linear, i.e. on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and makes the assumption that attitudes can be measured” (Creswell, 2010: 21).

Accordingly, the respondents in this study have been given a choice of up to seven pre-coded responses to which to respond with the neutral response or point being neither agree nor disagree. Thus, this study used a Likert scale of up to seven points which were used to enable the respondents to express the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with certain statements linked to issues of language, communication, politeness and pedagogical agents.

The researcher visited the campuses of both f-2-f and ODL institutions, identified students who were willing to participate in the study and distributed the questionnaires to the students to fill in the answers. The researcher then collected the completed questionnaires at the agreed-upon time. The information gathered helped the researcher to understand the issues that needed to be addressed during the interviews.

### 3.3.2 Interviews

Conducting interviews in a qualitative investigation may logically be seen as a moral request (Kvale, 1996) and may also be seen as a blended strategy or method of research. It is incumbent on the researcher to consider how the interviews may improve the human condition, to ensure a manner that is appropriate to sensitive interviewees, to avoid any question that may appear offensive to some individuals, to decide how, on a very basic level, the interviewees may tend to be subjective and to

assess the possible consequences of the meetings for the interviewees and the groups to which they may belong.

Stage two in this study involved the qualitative interviews, with the researcher conducting f-2-f interviews with respondents who were willing to participate in the interviews. These interviews comprised primarily unstructured and open-ended inquiries which were intended to elicit the participants' perspectives and suppositions. According to Lee and Lings (2008), interviewing involves a range of various types of conversation of which the main characteristic is an adaptable and fluid structure as opposed to structured interviews which comprise an organised arrangement of the same inquiries to be posed to all the interviewees.

The interview was structured and compiled according to the interview guide. The questionnaire and the guide may be found in the appendix section. The guide included points to be discussed during the interview as opposed to a sequenced script of institutionalised inquiries. The aim of the guide was to provide direction, to guarantee that all the important questions would be asked and to detail the order in which the questions would be asked. The researcher also understood that certain questions outside of the scope of the guide might arise during the interview sessions.

The researcher gathered subjective records to supplement his insight into the study area. The university policy documents and official reports or private documents, for example, myUnisa Discussion, conversations between students and teaching assistants and/or lecturers were reviewed. The interviews were held in assigned locations after the informed assent and consent of the key partners had been acquired. It was estimated that each interview would last for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The meetings were recorded using a computerised voice recorder in accordance with the recommendations of Lee and Lings (2008).

### **3.4 Population**

The study population comprised mainly of University of South Africa (UNISA) students, as the research aim was to investigate politeness in the open distance learning environment. A few students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), both Pietermaritzburg and Durban, were interviewed on the issues surrounding politeness in order to gain an overview of how Zulu students generally viewed and understood

politeness. Although a few students from UKZN were interviewed, the main focus, as mentioned above, was UNISA students simply because UNISA had been essentially classified as an ODL institution.

It should be noted that not all UNISA students were considered for the purposes of the study but only those who were taking one or more subject/s in the Department of African Language, preferably isiZulu, as the study aimed to investigate politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in the higher education open distance learning environment. This also provided an opportunity to investigate issues around pedagogy, language and politeness as well as communication in relation mainly to isiZulu-speaking students.

In addition, one of the reasons for choosing Zulu students was because isiZulu is the most spoken language in the country and the universities were characterised by a range of cultures and institutions that had been altered by the isiZulu language. There was also the perception that isiZulu-speaking students were the most likely of all students not to voluntarily choose to learn another language (De Kadt, 2005). In addition, De Kadt (2005) observed that predominantly isiZulu-speaking students were more apprehensive to language acquisition and reject language modernisation. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated, it was important to select participants who would provide the researcher with the information required. In this respect, the isiZulu-speaking students were able to provide important information for this study on politeness.

Furthermore, a selection of staff members within an ODL environment was also deemed to be relevant to the purposes of the study in view of the interaction which takes place – one of the foundations of an ODL environment – and also because lectures and/or TAs played an important role in the teaching and learning through online communication. Thus, the researcher also conducted 24 interviews with lecturers and/or TAs who were willing to participate in the study. The majority of the TAs interviewed were involved in teaching the Language Through an African Lens (AFL 1501) module. In addition, the researcher also used records from the myUnisa Discussion Forum responses among lecturers and/or TAs and students to investigate incidents of politeness.

### **3.5 Sampling techniques and procedure**

The study has used the systematic random sampling, as this method ensures the equal probability of each individual in the population being selected for the purposes of the study. Randomisation means that a representative sample from the student population from the universities will ensure that the study findings may be generalised to the population. In view of the fact that the list of students in the ODL environment was long and seemingly endless, it was always going to be difficult to draw a random sample; thus, a systematic sample was used.

The research questionnaire included a standard set of directions as a feature of the introductory letter to the respondents, informing them about both the reason for the study and how to react to the inquiries, thus stimulating them to take an interest in the study.

The item being studied has been individuals as portrayed previously as students and lecturers. Rubin and Babbie (2011) allude to units or items of examination as individuals or things in the populace whose attributes are watched, depicted and clarified by social exploration. Such units of investigation may be people, gatherings or social groups. Mouton, in De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2002: 107), characterises the unit under instigation as the “what” of the study and plainly laying out the specific components that shape the core of the study.

In respect of the sample size, De Vos et al. (2002: 199) maintain that, in the main, “...the bigger the populace, the littler the percentage of the populace the sample should be”. On the other hand, it is important to consider that the measurable importance is impacted upon as the sample size increases in that any impact will become significant in a huge sample. Grinnell and Williams, in De Vos et al. (2002), recommend an aggregate sample size of 30 while keeping in mind the end goal in order to ensure adherence to statistical procedures. However, this figure is in no way, shape or form acknowledged as a general standard in the research literature where test sizes up to at least 100 are viewed as statistically significant.

For the purposes of the quantitative measure, an aggregate sample of 200 participants was envisioned for the study. This number of responses enabled the researcher to conduct a factor analysis in relation to the questionnaire in order to avoid questions that were responded to in an undependable means. A statistical necessity in a factor

analysis suggests a minimum of approximately 100 responses if the factor analysis is to be both effective and viable. This prerequisite shaped the premise for the appropriate sample size.

Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) proposed that, for a sample to be considered representative, the number of observations must be fewer than twenty and above fifteen for each independent variable. In line with this proposal, this study stood at 20 respondents (i.e.  $6 * 20$ ). However, based on the statistical analysis employed, the researcher considered such a sample size to be too small.

Thus, Slovin's formula was used to determine the sample size as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2) \quad (i)$$

where  $n$  is the sample size,  $N$  is the total population, and  $e$  is the error tolerance.

However, the actual number of returned questionnaire was 90, some of which could not be considered for analysis due to poor answers and a lack of adherence to the instructions. Furthermore, the total number of students in this case could not be considered as it was significantly huge. In addition, the numbers might not have been exact, and determining the actual population in each university would have been costly and time consuming due to all the steps involved in accessing such information.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

The data analysis in mixed methodology involves trying to analyse a quantitative design "using quantitative methods and the qualitative data using qualitative methods", as demonstrated by Creswell and Plano (2007: 128), and trying to combine both methods. The analysis of data in a qualitative research design differs from that in quantitative research. Qualitative data analysis involves organising vast amounts of data and breaking them into small units, coding and searching for patterns or using software programs, such as Atlas and/or NVivo to produce reports (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib & Rupert, 2007). This may be done by transforming individual, open-ended questions into a series of codes and trying to ascertain the number of times a particular code appears. However, it must also be mentioned that both qualitative and quantitative analyses require labelling and coding in order to understand the patterns and similarities that emerge. In the qualitative analysis in this study, speech act and

politeness theories have been utilised to analyse the qualitative data. Quantitative data analysis involves statistics and due to the nature of this study a statistical analysis package known as SPSS version 12 was used.

Phase one of the data gathering process involved information gathering using close-ended questions. This meant that most of the open-ended questions had to be coded and transformed into quantitative data. This was done by converting the verbal and visual data obtained from the interviews and observations into numerical order. This same data was then entered into the SPSS program and analysed. Although the researcher aimed to maintain and preserve the qualitative meaning, only numerical items function in quantitative research; thus, the conversion of the open-ended questions into quantitative data (Sandelowski, 2000). The same process of changing data from qualitative research to quantitative research may be conducted in changing the data from quantitative to qualitative research. The decision on whether to change the data from quantitative to qualitative research was taken during the data analysis process. However, the changes made were rectified during a follow-up session with participants to ascertain whether the information recorded did indeed represent what the participants wanted to say.

### **3.6.1 Quantitative data analysis**

The questionnaire administered consisted of five sections which enabled the respondents to be consistent in their answers. The intention was to capture variables that would test the following hypotheses:

*H i: The language strategies used primarily by instructors or lecturers affect the learning outcomes in an ODL environment.*

*H ii: The politeness in language and email communication affects the learning outcomes gains in an ODL environment.*

*H iii: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents, use appropriate politeness strategies may improve learning outcomes.*



*H iv: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents, use appropriate politeness strategies, improve learning outcomes by promoting learner motivation, collaboration and academic compliance.*

The two major variables in the study were the independent variables, namely language learning strategies, language, communication and politeness in email communication while the dependent variables were the students' compliance and positive attitudes. The detailed relationship between these variables is discussed in section 2.4 of chapter two. Here, the objective of the study was to understand the views about the way in which politeness and the language of communication affected student compliance. In addition, the pedagogical agents, as a model of interaction, were used as they also played a role in ODL interaction, teaching and learning.

The summary of the variables considered in the questionnaires are presented in the appendices.

### **3.6.2 Data collection procedures**

Data was collected from isiZulu-speaking students from the universities mentioned in section 3.3, using a self-administered questionnaire which was distributed informally during the recess period. There were also trained research assistants involved in the data collection process. In view of the fact that it was not anticipated that the study results would not affect any of the respondents, reliability was always at minimum invalid studies of personality, attitudes and values as referred to by Bird (1989).

### **3.6.3 Tests of reliability and validity**

Reliability refers to "the consistency of a measure of a concept" (Bryman & Bell, 2007:21). This means obtaining the same results by repeating the same research using similar methods. The nature of this study required the collection of primary data only since the study sought answers that related to the way in which the variable mentioned above would have affected student attitudes and compliance. In order to gain the trust of the respondents and to enhance the response quality, a cover letter, which explained the nature of the research, was attached to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was classified into several sections which covered the general orientation of the research.

“The reliability of the instrument was then estimated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient which is used to assess the internal consistence or homogeneity among the research instrument items” (Awino, 2013: 127). As Malebana and Swanepoel (2015: 97) suggested, “(t)he reliability of the measuring instrument was tested by means of Cronbach’s alpha. Garson (2009) states that the cut-off criteria for internal consistency reliability is 0.60 for exploratory research and that an alpha value of at least 0.70 or higher is required to retain an item in an adequate scale”. The calculation for the Cronbach’s alpha was carried out effectively in the study. The alpha values are presented in the next chapter.

Reliability refers to something that is dependable and will give the same results over time. For example, according to Golafshani (2003), if a sportsperson is able to perform in the same way over and over, it may be claimed that the person is reliable. The researcher is in agreement with Zohrabi (2013) that it is relatively easy to obtain similar results in a quantitative research study because the data is in numerical form. However, this is not always the case with a qualitative research design. The data in qualitative research is in a narrative form and subjective, thus making it difficult to obtain similar results. However, Zohrabi (2013) suggests overlooking the issue of same results and advise considering the dependability and consistency of the data, thus implying that the researcher should collect data until the data collected becomes redundant. Three techniques have been suggested to ensure the dependability of the results:

- i) *The position of the researcher*: The researcher must explicitly explain the process and phase of inquiry.
- ii) *Triangulation*: Different procedures, such as questionnaires which contain both open- and close-ended questions, as well as interviews and observations should be used to collect the requisite data. In addition, the data should be obtained from different sources, such as students, lecturers and teaching assistants.
- iii) *Audit trail*: Finally, the researcher should explain how the data was collected and analysed as this will help subsequent researchers trying to conduct the same research in order to obtain the same result and demonstrate the reliability of the study (Zohrabi, 2013:260).

In general, validity refers to ensuring that a research study is both true and believable. As Joppe (2000:71), in Golafshani (2003:11), notes:

Validity regulates whether the research truly measures what it was supposed to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit “the bull’s eye” of the research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answer in the research of others.

In general, validity is about looking at the quality and the acceptability of the research. Validity requires that the instruments used are validated, as the results or conclusions emanate from both the data and the instruments used (Zohrabi, 2013). Six techniques have been suggested by Zohrabi (2013:252) as tools to ensure validity:

- i) *Triangulation*: The data collection should include different sources, as gathering data using one technique only may be both questionable and biased.
- ii) *Member checks*: This refers to taking the results and interpretations back to the interviewees to validate that they are an accurate representation of what they said during the interviews.
- iii) *Long-term observation*: Repeating the observations and visiting different classes may help to validate the research.
- iv) *Peer examination*: During this process the research data and findings should be reviewed by the researcher’s peers who have an understanding of the subject being studied but who are not part of the research itself.
- v) *Participatory or collaborative modes of research*: The participants, for example, students, teachers, ex-students and language instructors, should be involved in all phases of the inquiry. Their views and suggestions may help to enhance the research and also to look at it from a different perspective.
- vi) *Research bias*: As in any other research study it is easy for a researcher to be biased towards a study.

As mentioned above, a good researcher collects data and analyses and interprets it without being biased. In addition, such a researcher observes all the ethical considerations of research. The researcher should always try to be non-judgemental and, as already stated, adhere to all the ethical considerations mentioned by Zohrabi

(2013). The latter issue has been explored in section 3.3.6. If used, all the above-mentioned techniques will help to ensure that the research is as valid and reliable as possible.

All of the above have been taken into consideration by the researcher with most of the above-mentioned techniques of questionnaires, interviews and observations being used to avoid unreliable and invalid results.

#### **3.6.4 Data analysis and procedures**

As indicated previously, SPSS version 12 was used to analyse the data and to carry out descriptive statistics and hierarchical multiple regression analyses. SPSS is a computer-based program for data analysis which is used in various businesses and in social sciences around the world. It is a Windows-based program that allows the participants or researchers to enter data and to analyse it while generating tables and graphs at the same time (Mendenhall & Sincich, 2011). SPSS is extremely useful, as it allows a large amount of data to be entered and analysed at the same time.

According to Mungai and K'Obonyo (2014:1709), "(d)escriptive statistics encompass frequency distributions, measures of central tendency such as means, medians and modes, and measures of dispersion such as the standard deviation". These were all employed to develop an in-depth understanding of the nature of the data and to provide summary descriptions of the respondents in the sample.

ANOVA is a technique that is used to test a significant difference between more than one independent group. It was carried out where there was a need to compare the means of different groups to double check statistically significant variables. Where it was unrealistic to state categorically that these suspicions had been fulfilled, non-parametric procedures, such as the Scheffe's posterior F-test, were used to test the significance of the mean between two ranks of the various groups (i.e., if the value of a certain variable is similar or different when compared with that of two or more groups). Scheffe's posterior F is a non-parametric ANOVA which is applied where there are groups of unequal sizes. Unlike standard ANOVA, these tests may be used as ordinal variables, as they do not assume normality (Alsolaiman, 2014).

Another factual method connected to evaluating the existence of relationships between variables is the test of a relationship. For the purposes of this study, as the information to be tested included ordinal or dichotomous ostensible information, the non-parametric Spearman's correlation coefficient has been calculated. This test first positions the information and then applies the Pearson's mathematical statement to determine the connection coefficient. Correlation measures the way in which variables or rank requests are connected. They are useful in deciding the quality and bearing of the relationship between two variables which may be decidedly related, not related at all or contrarily related (Field, 2010). The relationship coefficient ( $r$ ) lies in the middle of  $-1$  and  $+1$ . In the event that the  $r$  is near either  $-1$  or  $+1$ , the two variables are near a flawless straight relationship. On the other hand, when the  $r$  is near  $0$ , there is practically no connection between the variables (Field, 2010).

The investigation into the relationships between the variables was done along these lines to determine the existence of a relationship between language, politeness, pedagogical agents and student attitudes and compliance. The Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients, as indicated by  $r$ , were processed. This measurement was deemed to be appropriate when both the variables in question were measured at an interim level (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007).

Correlation calculations are a common statistical tool in culture-related research. Examples of studies that have utilised this technique include studies by Liu (2009) and Cheung and Rensvold (2013). This measure of association has also been noted as an important step in the development of the regression model(s) (Mungai & K'Obonyo, 2014).

Finally, multiple regression analyses were also used to ascertain the relationship between the independent and the single, dependent variables (Hidayatuloh & Wuryandari, 2011). Mungai and K'Obonyo (2014:934) stated that "(i)n addition to the independent variables' collective prediction of the dependent variable, this statistical method determines the individual contribution of each of the individual variables to the dependent variable, both directionally and longitudinally".

### 3.6.5 Hypotheses and correlation testing

The study has controlled for correlation using the approach advocated by Levine, Weber, Hullett, Park and Lindsey (2008). This methodology requires the calculation of the Durbin Watson measurement (D) which measures the relationship between every variable remaining and lingering for the time period immediately preceding the time period of interest. At the point at which the progressive residuals absolutely auto relate, the estimation of D approaches 0. In the event that the residuals are not auto associated, the estimation of D will be near 2. If there is a negative auto relationship, D will be greater than 2 and may approach its greatest estimation of 4. For each of the tests performed, the study has completed a test for an auto relationship and estimated of D in terms of the above criteria to determine whether the autocorrelation could be discrediting the outcomes.

The possibility of multicollinearity depends on the fundamental suspicion that, in regression modelling, the independent variable in the model is not linearly related.

The presence of a direct relationship between a percentage of the autonomous variables is known as multicollinearity (Wang, 2006), and it influences the steadiness of the parameter gauges calculated in different relapse investigation models. The study has registered the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the resistance insights which show whether there is a solid direct association between an indicator and the alternate predictor(s). For the VIF, equality more prominent than 1.0 is an acceptable estimate while values that are considerably greater than 1.0 suggest that multicollinearity may be causing bias in the regression model. The resilience measurement is registered as the corresponding VIF ( $1/VIF$ ). Resilience measurement values below 0.1 are significant while those below 0.2 demonstrate a potential issue. The tests of theories have been joined by a calculation of a VIF score and the outcomes translated by origin.

Empirical research is often affected by either a type one or type two error due to the wrong interpretation that may result from testing the hypotheses. A type one error involves the rejection of a hypothesis when it should have been accepted while a type two error occurs when the researcher accepts a null hypothesis when it should have been rejected (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004; Zikmund, 2013). The argument among scholars is that the type one error is considered to be more serious than the type two

error. To reduce the chances of a type one error occurring, researchers agree that this will largely depend on the level of significance set by the researcher conducting a research study when testing a hypothesis. Nachmias and Nachmias (2004) suggest levels where  $P < 0.001$ ,  $P < 0.01$  and  $P < 0.05$ . Based on the above explanation, the hypotheses have been tested. The probability of a type one error occurring is low. In an attempt to avoid a type two error, the sample size has been increased.

### **3.6.6 Qualitative data analysis**

Prior to the analysis of the interview data, the data was collected, recorded and interpreted. There are different ways in which the data in a qualitative research study may be recorded; for example, the use of certain electronic devices, namely a voice recorder, a highlight recorder or a propelled voice recorder. The voice recorder is the electronic device that is recommended and used the most. It is ideal for data storing and recovery on computers; thus, when needed it is available. Creswell (2010) affirms the three strategies that may be used in notes taking, namely brief notes in the researcher's field record book that are taken in a way so as not to distract the audience and a full field report which is completed not long after the data gathering. Some researchers may prefer to use a camera, sound tape or highlight apparatus to record the data collection and discernments.

The recorded material is decoded from the changeable media position onto a formed substance design, such as paper. The principal recordings will then be stored in a safe place as reference material, should it be needed in future (Ehigie & Ehigie, 2005).

### **3.6.7 Data capturing and transcriptions**

According to Myers (2009), encoding involves the process of translating any thought, communication or voice into a message while deciphering or decoding refers to a method of reading the message and understanding its meaning. The aim of decoding data is to ensure that everyone will understand it. In this study, both encoding and decoding have been used to make sure that all data have been transcribed correctly. Decoding takes place in accounts or surveys or even discussions. The decoding must be a full script of whatever has been decoded to ensure the full meaning has been captured. In view of the possible unpredictability of human collaboration on a

transcript, listening to and/or viewing the “first” recorded information brings the information alive through appreciating what has been said.

Transcribing is a long and lengthy process. The transcription also delivers a significant amount of self-possessed content. For the purposes of an investigation of a discussion or a discourse analysis, a particular interpretation is often required. This includes the exact documentation of, *inter alia*, the exact lengths of stops and intonations. The estimated proportion of time required to transcribe a meeting is approximately 6:1. In this study, it took about an hour to decode a single meeting.

An expert transcriber, who was aware of the privacy requirement, was used to double-check the transcripts in relation to the recordings in order to ensure that everything that had been transcribed was an exact version of what had been recorded during the discussions or data gathering process. At times it became a problem for either the expert transcriber or the main researcher to portray and denote the tone and sentiments that had been portrayed and had emerged during the understanding of the discoveries made. While the deciphering thought was given to the way in which these sentiments and implications could be conveyed on paper by using punctuation marks such as a full stop or a comma, it would appear that deciphering is, by all accounts, a clear and specialised assignment that included making judgements as to what to record and how it might be recorded.

The transcription process included the perception of information through rehashed and cautious tuning in (and watching), as it framed an essential initial phase in information investigation. The researcher, together with the researcher partner, guaranteed appreciation with information and regard for what was actually there instead of what was normal; thus, encouraging the acknowledgment of thoughts which had evolved during the investigation.

### **3.6.8 Analysis and interpretation of the results**

The analysis of data during a research project includes condensing the information which has been gathered, and introducing the outcomes in a way that imparts the most crucial components. In the data analysis in this study, the researcher wanted to establish the most comprehensive view; thus, he utilised diverse procedures to do this.



Diverse methodologies required distinctive types of investigation. In terms of the initial content, the study focused on constant assessment (Creswell, 2010).

Creswell (2010) has further established that the information gathered may be analysed at two different levels. The fundamental level, which involves the most distinct analysis of the information, deals with what has actually been said, reported or seen with nothing being read into it and nothing expected of it. Some of the literature alludes to this as the show level of investigation. The second level focuses on the interpretative analysis of the data, and involves what may have been implied by the response, what has been gathered or what has been inferred. The transcripts of the qualitative interviews have produced an extensive volume of data. This has been sorted or generally translated substantially. This has proved to be the most extreme and efficient aspect of the study.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that the data collected from the interviews and focus group interviews should be interpreted from the voice group into the content body. This has been accomplished by engaging the services of a professional transcriber. The interview transcripts have been perused with the specific end goal being drawn out the key foci and subjects radiating a procedure known as content analysis (Maxwell, 2005).

According to Wiedemann (2013), computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programming (CAQDAS-Nvivo adaptation 11) is valuable for coding information, disaggregating it into reasonable parts and distinguishing or naming these fragments. Emerging ideas, classes and subjects may be effectively coded, recorded or altered throughout the whole procedure. It is essential to understand that subjective exploration and programming are not able to carry out the investigation for the researcher – not with the same outcomes as SPSS. The SPSS is not able to read the content and decide what it implies; thus, the scientist is still the fundamental instrument in the examination (Weitzman, 2000).

In addition to SPSS, Nvivo version 11 was also used to analyse the qualitative data. Nvivo is a programme that groups and minimises a large amount of qualitative data into a readable amount. The analysis of the data comprised the following steps:

Step 1: Established numerous codes;

Step 2: Minimised the data by using the coding that had been established in step 1. In addition to the codes, comments were added to improve the understanding of the analysis;

Step 3: A coding plan diagram in the system was produced that recognised and named the codes as well as the connections between the codes; and

Step 4: A table of code numbers was produced from the code chief window and saved as an archived document or Excel record.

The coding was conducted using a hybrid coding system, intertwining the codes from the prior open coding with codes from the records of the master reports. Using the codes that had emerged from the preparatory round of open coding, the researcher coded the information which had been gathered from the field, and the itemised transcripts had been created long as valid data to refine codes.

Coding includes the connection of marks to areas in the information on the basis of implications that the researcher has discovered in the information (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The interviewer documented the themes that had emerged from the coding. A sample of the transcripts was given to another researcher to cross-code for the purposes of legitimacy. With the end goal of achieving an accord in the coding in mind, a procedure was developed to arrange or accommodate the coding differences between the researchers.

In addition, the researcher read the data transcripts several times until a state of immersion had been achieved with the subjects start to show up repeatedly (Maxwell, 2005). At this point the themes were assembled into more sensible groupings of sub-topics, and a platform of the primary themes emerging from the participants' responses was compiled. The conclusions and suggestions were drawn from these themes.

### **3.6.9 Ethical considerations**

In mixed-method research, the data is usually gathered in various phases. Information that may be used to distinguish between and identify the participants, should they need to be contacted at a later stage, is often required. In addition, it is incumbent on the researcher to safeguard and protect this information. If a follow-up is required, it is the duty of the researcher to inform the participants, and then to request and make a future

appointment with them before they sign a consent form so that their decision may be based on the information provided.

A mixed-method approach further requires the researcher to use different types of approaches and this may place an additional burden on the participants, especially if the same participants are used over time (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark & Smith, 2011). In this research study, the researcher has decided to use different participants in the various phases of the study, thus ensuring that the participants do not feel burdened by their participation in the study. However, it has been suggested to the participants who have agreed to be involved that a follow-up session may be required. From the outset of the study the researcher has followed the principle of voluntary participation. In other words, the participants have not been coerced into taking part in the research (Creswell, 2010).

Previous research on ethical issues has demonstrated the basic ethical principles that must be followed when conducting research that involves human beings, namely respect, anonymity, beneficence and justice. Respect refers to respecting the participants sufficiently to disclose the nature of the study in which they are about to take part and to give them the opportunity to decide on their own if they want to be part of the study. Ethical principles also require the researcher not to expose the participants to physically or psychologically harmful situations.

Ethical considerations are required in research so as to prevent any wrongdoing; for example, untrustworthy behaviour incorporating a disregard for non-revelatory assertions, violating the participants' confidentiality, distorting reports, misleading individuals, applying receipt variations and evading legitimate liabilities et cetera (Cooper & Schindler, 2008).

In this study, the following moral considerations were upheld:

- i) *Scientific legitimacy*: The examination was directed in a way that guaranteed its scholastic uprightness and investigative legitimacy. Untrustworthy practices, for example, unoriginality were avoided at all costs.
- ii) *Participation*: The privacy of the participants was respected and their identity protected. Any discoveries about the participants amid their link to the study were kept confidential.

- iii) *Requests for authorisation*: These were conducted properly. See attached in the appendices, the letters of confirmation and access.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the different approaches that were used to analyse the data. The SPSS software for quantitative data and Nvivo for qualitative data were found to be useful programs that helped to transform data into a readable format. The process of changing data from qualitative data to quantitative data was explained. As discussed above, questionnaires, interviews and observations were used in the data collection process, as these were the main tools used in the mixed-method approach. In addition, different techniques were suggested as tools to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. As suggested, eliminating bias and being trustworthy and rigorous increased the trustworthiness of the research.

In view of all the above techniques that were used it was possible to conclude that findings of this research study on politeness among isiZulu mother-tongue and non-mother tongue speakers were both reliable and valid.

Chapter four contains the presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The data presented and analysed was taken from the conversations between the students and the lecturers and/or TAs. This data was extracted from the myUnisa Discussion Forum. Communication between the students and lecturers/TAs was believed to have taken place (1) primarily when the students encountered problems with their assignments and required clarification; (2) when students questioned their marks and (3) when students did not understand the system, such as where to submit an assignment and/or where to obtain learning materials in myUnisa. The researcher used one or two conversations per TA. The UNISA AFL 1501 tutorial letter of 2015 stipulated that each TA may be responsible for four groups of approximately 30 to 40 students. The TA's job was to provide guidance to the students with their assignments and assessment activities via discussions and announcements, and to mark all the students' formal assignments.

The study results are presented in two sections, namely part one and part two. Part one presents the analysis of the 2015 data extracted from myUnisa (qualitative data) as well the data from the interviews with the students conducted during the study. Thus, part one comprises a dissection of the politeness and language in the email (including discussion forum) exchanges between the lecturers and the students as well as students' perception of politeness within an ODL environment. For the interview, text analysis of the results in qualitative overviews were provided, using the Nvivo version 11 software as discussed in the previous chapter. Part two presents the findings from the interviews conducted with the students. This second section involves a quantitative analysis that includes tables and graphs of the data obtained from the questionnaires (quantitative data).

## 4.2 Presentation and discussion of quantitative findings: Section One

### 4.2.1 Presentation of results: Part One

The presentation of the data and the results in part one allowed the researcher to examine the responses in detail. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to review the comments on the basis of politeness and speech act theories. The data presented below is taken from myUnisa. No alterations have been made, except the names and student numbers of the participants that have been changed. Of all the TAs and/or lecturers involved on this module, the researcher decided to randomly choose a comment or two of each TA and student. For example, if, in group 1, **student pp** sent a question to a TA, the researcher used the question and the TA's response verbatim, changing only the names. If the student had more than one discussion with the TA, then the discussion was recorded as **a student** and **a number**, then **(a)** or **(b)** or **(c)**, depending on the number of discussions.

Student 1

Good day

I am busy with my assignment 9 and it seems that my blog is empty...I did submit a blog and now there is nothing.

Please advise on how I should move forward?

Regards

(Student 1)

TA 1

Good day

You will need to address the issues/questions raised on the blog section of the portfolio, i.e. you do not have to create any blogs now.

Regards,

TA 1

Student 5

I am really struggling to cope with this online course. How do I obtain this You Tube video and where do I find it? Somebody, please help

TA 5

Dear Student

Assignment 03 is in Learning unit 2. Please read the entire section and you will find the requirements for the assignment as well as the link that you have to open and watch. Once you do this you will have to write about what happens in the video and give your personal interpretation as well. This is the

link:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU8DDYz68Km>

Do read the announcements regularly as I have already posted an announcement regarding assignment 03.

Regards

MC

Student 10

For our final portfolio should we copy and paste assignment 6 and the add the reflection? Am confused

TA 10

Dear (student 10),

For the relook at assignment 6 you do not even have to copy and paste your entire assignment but, rather, just give us a summary of the information you gave in your assignment 6. Therefore, give us a brief summary of the ceremony you chose and then add your reflection.

Regards

TA 10

Student 13

I know that this might not be the most applicable place to ask this but I am not really sure what to do. I would like to enter my blog but I am unable to type in the text box. What would my solution be?

Thank you.

TA 13

Hi there,

This is the place where you can ask ANY questions regarding this module so, if you need to ask something, you are at the right place. To add your own blog entry...

p13 (TA)

Student 19

WHERE DO WE SUBMIT OUR PORTFOLIO?

TA 19

Good day

The Portfolio is actually assignment 09, which is viewed as the final written assignment, and should, therefore, be submitted via the Online Unisa assignment tool. Further instructions will be provided closer to the due date but you may try to submit now.

Kind regards

TA

Student 20

Hai, can you kindly assist me on assignment 3 are we support to watch all the videos and choose 1 or what. can't understand

TA 20

Dear PM

As far as I know, there is only video to watch for assignment 03, which is the Youtube: one showing a scene from the Kruger National Park. I fail to understand where you got this idea of more than one video from and that you should then choose????? Kindly read instructions carefully...

Please follow the applicable link and answer the questions...

Regards

TA

Student 25

Good day! Please help. I don't know how to find my first portfolio activity and it seems as if I sent it the same way I sent my second portfolio. Thank you in advance

TA 25

Hi! I am not too sure about your question here.... There are two portfolio activities which you needed to do. The first one was about your language background, usage, etc. and the second one was about your family tree. The first one you posted in your blog, and the second one you needed to post in the last forum on the list of forums in the Discussion page. Now, if you are looking for your first portfolio activity, then it should be in your blog.... however, I am not sure if I answered your question here.

Student 32

HELOW, I HAVE A PROBLEM I CAN'T RECEIVE EVEN ONE ASSIGNMENT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN MY ASSIGNMENT



TA 32

Dear NM

I'm not sure what you mean by you can't receive even one assignment – can you please email me: j5@gmail.com, so I can help you.

Student 36

Hallow, good people, any of you who can help me to write assignment 02, yes, I observe the community but I can't see the space for expressing my views. Please help – I want to write all my assignment on time.

TA 36

You need to submit assignment 2 on a Word document by following the instructions in your learning units!

Student 40

Hi, Sir. I just realised I made a mistake answering assignment 03. I answered it as activity 2 that talks about misunderstandings. I need to know if I can please rewrite.

TA 40

I have responded to your questions privately, please do not sent the same question more than once.

Student 43

Good day Mrs Dd.

I have some questions regarding the use of the online tools, if you would be so kind as to assist me?

I am using my pc as well as my cellphone to connect. I tried to leave a comment to M Matjea's blog post, it would not allow me to do so. Do I need to edit my blog profile first?

Also for the first ice breaker assignment. "Tell us about yourself" I could not find the forum to do so under the "discussion" tab. I see the dates for these forums are 2013. Do the forums still need to be updated? Or are these the forums for us to use in the group?

Your guidance will be much appreciated.

Kind regards

O (5...2)

TA 43

Hi O



With regards to replying to a blog entry, you can write a blog entry and reply in your own blog entry. However, there is no option to reply to a blog entry. The instructions for the forums were created in 2013 and have just been copied every year so, if you see 2013, that is why. When you are in the DISCUSSIONS tool scroll down and look for UNIT 0. This is the forum which you need to select in order to complete the first icebreaker. The instructions are also there which you will find under J LE ROUX's post.

I hope this helps.

Ta

Student 48

Good Evening L

Whilst i have posted my contribution for the folklore assignment today, I am VERY unsure if what I have posted is correct. I am not sure if the theme I have based my story on is correct and also if the manner in which I have written is correct.

How would I know if I did it correctly or should I relook at it completely?

Many thanks

V

TA 48

Hi V

I have checked your assignment and I see two stories – the one about Thomas Edison and the other one about the lady who was paraplegic. Both are fine and will do the trick. However, the best type of story is the story that you heard as a child – one that one of your parents or grandparents, or friends may have told you in order to explain a moral concept or lesson. It is a story that you would be able to tell from memory. You don't have to have as many details and dates aa you gave in your stories, but it should be a story that you know quite well. I am not sure if that makes sense to you. It can be any story about any moral lesson, even if it is quite a short story. I will leave the choice up to you about whether you want to change what you have written or leave it as is.

Kind regards,

L

Student 50

Hi sir, I got 0% for the first assignment. I'm really confused because I submitted it on the discussion tool. Thanks

TA 50

N

I do not have your record(s) of assignment 01. Kindly check under assignment 1 discussion forum and indicate to me the date and time of your submission. I will then trace your assignment and act accordingly.

Regards

Teaching Assistant

Student 56

Hi Mr P

Do I still need to continue with my blog activities, I have already done three. Or shall I focus on preparing for my portfolio now

TA 56

Dear M Gumbi.

You have the freedom to look at your blog activities and correct them. if you are satisfied with your work you can now focus on the portfolio. Your blog, by the way, is part of the portfolio. I would advise you to go through each learning unit and ensure that you have done all the blog entries. I am currently finishing marking all your assignments and will only be looking at your blogs and portfolio from May.

Student 58 (a)

Dear Lecturer

I am not pleased with the results that I have received for some of my assignments, because I put a lot of effort into them. Please can my assignments be rechecked and remarked if possible? I apologise for the inconvenience but, if my marks remain the same, could I please have a rundown of where I went wrong and how I can improve on the weaknesses found in my assignments.

Thank you

S

TA 58 (a)

Dear S

Herewith comments for your assignments. You had to observe one focus group and give the details of what you observed by including the contents of the module. You didn't show insight into what you had

observed but explained on the superficial level. You didn't bring in personal information to enhance the discussion in the essay e.g How you used personal information to interpret what you saw or observed. The second part of the assignment was not interpreted; you just wrote the answers to the interview questions. Assignment 4: The problem with the above mentioned assignments is the way you responded to others. Excellent, Well done, etc alone are used often and doesn't show that you engaged with what others wrote. You need to highlight points that resonate with you to enhance the discussion between you and others. Assignment 6; You explained the cultural ceremony at the superficial level. No insight into the discussion, you didn't explain how this ceremony explains your culture

G (TA)

Student 58 (b)

Dear Lecturer. Are we allowed to go back to our discussions to comment more in order for us to improve our marks for our assignments or is time up? Another thing, for my final assignment portfolio, am I allowed to improve my assignment for my portfolio since it wasn't good enough? Thank you

TA 58 (b)

Dear S

It is too late to change discussion forum marks but you should actually improve assignments that form part of the portfolio.

Regards

G (TA)

Student 58 (c)

Dear Lecturer. Thank you for the insight. I will work on what is left. Kind regards

TA 58 (c)

No problem

Student 62 (a)

DEAR TA\LECTURE

I want to begin to write about LANGUAGE DIVERSITY but i can't find the article about the Greaves family.

TA 62 (a)

Dear SN

Thank you for your question. Please go to Learning Unit on the left of your group site, click, then scroll down to unit 1 which says: language as a process. Then go to 2.3.1.2- which says; So how do we see each other? Click, you will find the story. Should you have problems, please do not hesitate to post your question, I will gladly help. Good Luck!

Your TA

MT

Student 62 (b)

What is the technical instruction required for us to do our typed assignments and submit them online, the font size, how many pages, spacing etc.?

TA 62 (b)

Dear SN

Thank you for your question, you can use either Arial 11 or times New Roman 12, there is no limit to the pages but it must be the pages that will allow you to upload, because if it is too long it might give you a problem with the uploading. Good Luck!

Your TA

MT

Student 67

Aningisize le module angiboni nje nokuthi ngiqale kuphi ngiyephi?

IsiZulu Translation

(Can I be helped. This module, I do not see where to start and where to go)

TA 67

Please email me if you have problems.

[n.t@gmail.com](mailto:n.t@gmail.com)

Student 72

Hallo TA, when are the assignments to be marked?

TA 72

CHECK ANNOUNCEMENT.

Student 76

I would like to ask teaching assistant when will my assignments be marked? I only received results for assignment 1. Assignments 2 to 8 is not marked and no results when I check on myUnisa.

Ta 76

Dear Mb

I have marked the majority of the assignments. Marks should be reflecting. if not, they will very soon. Keep checking your myUnisa.

Your TA

Student 80

Plse help me, when is the due date for assignment 09 portfolio. I have been trying to submit from Wednesday but it does not appear on the assignment tool. Plse help me student no 4776767667 S

TA 80

The due date was on Friday, as per all of my announcements in the Announcements tab. I reminded students several times about the due date, there is a notice on your home page of the due date, and I requested that you submit ahead of time to prevent issues. When you say that it does not appear on the assignments tool, what do you mean? I need more information as I cannot see that section of the website

Student 80

Plse can u tel me when is the due date for assignment 9, the portfolio, as I went to the assignment tool frm wednesday and it does not appear there for me to submit. Plse help me I am soooo worried because I did it early to post but can't ! Student no 4776767667 S

TA 80

I refer to my previous reply to you. The assignment was due on Friday (22nd). Please see if you can submit now?

Student 86

I AM WORRIED ABOUT MY ASSIGNMENT WHEN I SUMBT THEM IT SAYS REPLY DELET SO I DNT UNDERSTAND WHAT WHY IT SO HELP ME PLEASE

TA 86

Good day

Please be more specific as to what your query is. Is it for assignment 01, 02 or 03?

You can also email me on [ta1c@gmail.com](mailto:ta1c@gmail.com)

Regards

Caitlin

Student 94

Dear Mo

Please note that I erroneously submitted assignment 01 as the written assignment 02.

Kindly delete this submission, I will type the correct assignment in a Word document and submit it accordingly.

Kind regards,

LA

TA 94

Dear LA

Kindly go back to assignment page and you will see it is now giving you the option to Resubmit.

Click on it and follow the instructions, it's not necessary for me to cancel it.

Make sure you submit your assignment 02 before closing date.

I hope you have already submitted assignment 01 on the Discussion Forum.

Regards

Mo (Teaching Assistant)

The narrations depicted in the communication exchanges between the students, lecturers and/or TAs have been selected randomly to establish linkage to politeness within the discussion forum / email messages. While the detailed discussion follows, it is important to point out the interpretation of politeness in the email / discussion forum exchange may be divided into two parts, namely conventional and non-conventional politeness strategies used by both parties. What is common is that English linguistic interpretation of words "Dear Sir/Madam" and "Please" is assigned to politeness (Jibreen, 2010). Whereas the English language is commonly considered polite (Anderman & Anderman, 2010) it is, unmistakably, the main medium of communication at the university, together with the view that this has always been this way for most learners as they finish grade twelve. This may have affected the

changing partner of the respondents, increasing their awareness of the sociocultural and realistic features of modality in English and bearing in mind that their responses may have affected the feedback expected from the lecturers. For the teachers it is common practice that many of them would have undergone orientation on how to deal with online requests and they would have had experience in handling any responses.

## **4.2.2 Analysis and discussion**

### **4.2.2.1 Speech act analysis**

In terms of greetings, it is important to distinguish between “passing greetings” and “discussion openings”, both of which have tremendous social significance, particularly in online email exchanges. Zulu people are raised on the principle that any adult person is their parent. This is why, in Zulu society, any child may be disciplined by any adult. Zulu society believes that “it takes a village to raise a child” and that is why most people address any person whom they meet anywhere as *mama* (mother) if the person is an adult female, or *baba* (father) if the person is an adult male. In addition to the fact that they view an adult person as their own mother, father, aunt or uncle they must also always follow the protocol of greeting an adult person, even a passer-by. A “passing greeting” is a type of greeting that is used for both individuals who are known and outsiders.

On the other hand, a discussion opening is a type of greeting used in emails, phone calls or at social and formal conferences between at least two individuals. This type of greeting is used whether the other person is a stranger or is known to the person. Discussion openings have their own settings and context-dependent laws. This is the reason why the link to speech theory becomes relevant, as the theory describes how greetings may be contextualised to circumstances in communication that may generate specific feedback.

Notwithstanding the fact that greetings have attracted considerable attention in the social sciences field, there is, however, no standardised way that has been put into place regarding what qualifies as a greeting in a speech field (Jibreen, 2010). Nevertheless, there are rules that have been formulated by linguists to define the greetings that should be considered.



Many people may agree with the researcher's view that writing to a person in the academic world, whether it be a TA or a lecturer, may be viewed as communication. Thus, it must always be borne in mind that one is not writing to or texting friends. The relationship is not a causal relationship but a formal one. Accordingly, certain rules need to be taken into account; for example, the greeting and the close of the email. Some people are fortunate enough to learn all these communication rules during their early childhood development.

It was clear from the extracts above that the majority of the students started their discussion with the greeting and they had followed the rules of etiquette. Some of the students, for example, students 1, 25, 43 and 48, started their discussion with a correctly spelled 'daily formal greeting' of "Good morning", "Good day" or "Good evening" as per Jibreen (2010: 4). This could be interpreted as being relatively polite. Other students used "Dear" which is also viewed as a formal way of greeting, especially when a student includes a title, such as Sir, Doctor, Mr, Ms, Mrs or Professor. Some of the students, for example, students 40, 50 and 56, used the informal greeting of "Hi" to greet the lecturer/TA. Nevertheless, despite this informal way of greeting, they still managed to maintain some formality within the greeting and made it a semi-formal greeting by including the title of the person, such as Sir, Ms, Mr. or Madam. Some of the students deviated completely by not using proper academic language; for example, "Hai", "Helow", "Hi There" and "Hallow". The students' responses helped us to understand Jibreen's (2010: 1) statement that "(t)he speech act of 'greeting' is one type of the expressive speech acts which reflect the psychological states of the speakers specified in the propositional contents". This led us to question the psychological state of mind of the students during the discussions cited above, especially in respect of those students who did not include a greeting but proceeded directly to the point that they wanted to address.

The ratio of TAs and/or lecturers who replied to students' emails or discussions was 18/22. TA and/or lecturers 1, 19 and 86 used a "time-bound greeting", such as "Good day", to formalise their conversation despite the fact that students 19 and 86 had not bothered to greet them. This should have enlightened the students about the etiquette of greeting before starting any conversation. TA and/or lecturers 5, 10, 20, 32, 56, 58, 62, 72, 76 and 94 used the "formal time-free greeting" of "Dear" followed by either

“Student” or the name of the student to address the student. However, some of the lecturers/TAs were completely informal in their responses to the students queries.

Based on the above, we may deduce that, in the English language, the formal greeting that is most likely to be accepted and viewed as a polite way of greeting in the academic world is a “time-bound greeting” (Jibreen, 2010: 4). A time-bound greeting is a type of greeting that communicates the time at which one person is greeting another person; for example, good morning, good day, good afternoon or good evening. However, in the isiZulu-speaking community most people do not use time-bound greetings such as *kuhle ekuseni* (good morning), *kuhle emini* (good day), *kuhle ntambama* (good afternoon) or *kuhle ebusuku* (good night). Instead, they use the most common way of greeting, *sawubona* (hello), which is considered in the English language as a “time-free greeting” although, in the isiZulu language, it is viewed as a formal way of greeting, especially if a title is added, such as *Sawubona Mnumzane* (Morning Sir).

A time-free greeting is a type of greeting that does not indicate a specific time, such as “hi” and “hello”. In the English language, it may be considered as a semi-formal greeting which should probably be avoided in the academic world. Accordingly, it is used mostly when friends greet one another or when people know one another and are about to chat. In the academic world, when there is a significant status difference between the two parties, the use of informal types of greetings should be avoided.

The use of *sawubona* in the isiZulu-speaking community is considered a formal way of greeting, especially if the person adds a title, for example, *sawubona Mnumzane*. If *sawubona* were to be translated directly it could be viewed as the equivalent of “hello” by an English speaker.

In view of the decontextualised nature of email and/or online communication between the students and lecturers or TAs, and the brevity of such messages, the politeness indicators may be either reduced or omitted. However, once this happens, an online communication may be perceived as a medium of information transaction rather than an interaction-based communication system indicating the interpersonal relations between the two parties. In other words, email or any online communication may be used by some people to transmit information to the receiver only rather than as a way of establishing social relationships by including politeness pointers.

#### 4.2.2.2 Politeness analysis

Leech (1983), as stated in section 2.2.2.3, has investigated politeness as a way of avoiding conflict by decreasing the cost and increasing the benefits for the hearer or the reader, thus also decreasing the benefit and increasing the cost for the speaker or the writer. According to Leech (1983), politeness is about minimising one's own desires and values and making the other person happy. Within an African context the "greeting" should constitute the foundation of any conversation. Hence, it creates trust and warmth, and defines the type of conversation one will have. The fact that students 5, 10, 13, 19, 76, 80 and 86 did not include a greeting but went straight to the point might make the reader (TA or lecturer) question the tone of the conversation. This scenario, in a f-2-f environment, irrespective of culture, would have created conflict between the two parties or it would have been seen as a face-threatening act in terms of Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory as discussed in section 2.2.2.4, as there is a status and power difference between the lecturer and student. Thus, using Brown and Levinson's (1978) strategies, as presented in figure 2.3, would help to create and maintain a polite environment. Hence, in the instance mentioned above, to commence the communication with a proper greeting would give the reader a different understanding of the writer.

It may be said that those students who commenced their communications with slang language, such as "Hai", "Helow" and "Hallow" had failed to follow the rules of politeness. It was clear that Lakoff's (1973) four maxims (see section 2.2.2.2), which guided polite conversation and, in particular, one of the important maxims that stipulated the way in which one conveys the message should be short and straight to the point, had not been followed. Lakoff (1973) did not, however, state that the sentences or words should be informal and/or slang. Participant 32's message was as follows:

HELOW I HAVE A PROBLEM I CAN'T RECEIVE EVEN ONE  
ASSIGNMENT I DNT UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENING IN MY  
ASSIGNMENT

Not only did participant 32 fail to greet the lecturer/TA properly, but the participant also used capital letters in the discussion. In a way, this is considered to be the same as

shouting. Instead of using “do not”, the participant used “DNT”. It may have been that the participant did not understand the status difference between lecturers/TAs and students. In addition, participant 80 also appeared not to understand the importance of greeting and also used slang in his/her conversation with the TA or lecturer:

Plse can u tel me when is the due date for assignment 9, the portfolio,  
as I went to the assignment tool. Frm Wednesday and it does not appear  
there for me to submit. Plse help me I am soooo worried because I did  
it early to post but can't ! Student no 4776767667 S

Thus, the student failed to greet, and also used slang language; for example, ‘plse’ instead of “please”, “u” instead of “you”, “tel” instead of “tell” and “Frm” instead of “from”. The researcher is of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the TA or lecturer to discipline and educate the students on how they should speak to those in positions above them. Nevertheless, the ratio of students who did not greet (7/22) was small compared to the ratio of those who did greet (15/22). It may, thus, be concluded that most of the students appeared to understand the rules of politeness in greeting and followed these rules although they failed to understand how they should structure their sentences.

Unlike some of the students who did not appear to understand the importance of being polite, most lecturers and TAs were polite in their communication with the students. However, this might have been subjective, as many of them would understand the repercussions of impolite feedback having been informed about the university policy in this regard. In addition, English is the main language used at UNISA, even in some modules within the African Languages Department. It would have been interesting if these text exchanges had been in the mother tongues such as isiZulu, to illustrate cultural and inter-cultural instances in communication within HE institutions.

On the other hand, it would seem that students acknowledge the importance of being polite when communicating with their lecturers, particularly if they received feedback timeously. Ideally, this would mean that the conversations between the students and the lecturers would be polite if feedback were received on time. The myUnisa tool indicated the exact time at which students and lecturers replied to each other and it appeared that most lecturers or TAs replied to students within 48 hours. Thus, the

timeframe should not be considered as an indicator that affected the way in which students responded to TAs or lecturers.

#### **4.2.3 Presentation of results: Part Two**

As mentioned by Kvale (1996), open-ended interview schedules are designed to reflect the integrated theoretical approach as well as the sociocultural theory that takes into account the historical and cultural influences on individuals participating in social groups within both their immediate and their wider contexts. The guided interviews recognise the students as active participants, both entitled and able to contribute to the research and in the context of the ODL setting.

The purpose of the study was to generate data that would reveal issues related to politeness, language and communication strategies and the pedagogical agents within an ODL environment and, specifically, in the institutions mentioned above. While there were always potential imbalances of power between the researcher and the researched that might manifest during interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), the researcher's attention to ethical relationships enhanced this entire process.

The qualitative data is centered on issues of politeness, language and the relationship between these issues as well as the performance of the students within an ODL environment. Nvivo version 11 has been used to capture the data verbatim. Nvivo is a program that is used to handle qualitative data and information. As stated earlier in chapter three, Nvivo enables the user to arrange and code a large volume of information and then to generate coding reports in the form of thematic information. The fact that codes are sorted out easily is one of the advantages of this program. After some experimentation, this investigation was carried out by composing reminders with a method of reasoning for every code, regardless of the possibility that it was not yet clear how the code would clarify the views of the students (Appendix iii). These reminders, as part of the analysis, were expressive meanings of the developing codes and ensured alignment between the diverse information sources.

It was necessary that the analysis of the responses from the coded transcripts adopted a wider approach in terms of a unit of study as opposed to a solitary expression or speech in order to adhere to the postmodern ways to deal with politeness and in terms of which graciousness is progressive and interactionally accomplished (e.g., Arundale,

2006; Haugh, 2007; Watts, 2013). This study broadened the unit of an investigation by inspiring the participants' case of their considerate practices/expressions (politeness) within a broader discourse of communicative events, despite the fact that the reactions were, to a great extent, restricted to individual articulations and utterances. The study was also geared toward tapping individual responses to ascertain how politeness might have affected their academic compliance as a whole (Haugh, 2007). Thus, the data presented represented the harmonisation of key information as captured by the coding, without repeating the same information but stated differently and also not omitting any information. One code, therefore, could be a representation of a single view of many respondents and, thus, a summary of what would have been several duplications of the same statement.

#### **4.2.3.1 Politeness and student compliance**

Previous and current thinking explored in the literature review revealed the role of politeness in encouraging students' compliance. The findings in this section confirmed the notion of student compliance. The purpose of this section was also to link the relationship and the impact of pedagogical agents (teachers or lecturers), the nature of their politeness in feedback, in particular, and its subsequent effect on student compliance. Furthermore, the section aimed to highlight the role of language in the entire interaction process.

**The first question in this section inquired whether the students thought that the lecturers expressed politeness differently in email communications in the first and second languages, and if they ever perceived a lack of politeness in the emails received from lecturers.**

Respondent 3 and 4 respectively stated:

"The comments that we get from some lecturers are destroying us. One lecturer commented that my work does not show that I am an educator. This is discouraging indeed."

The researcher got the impression that some of the students did not know whether they were talking to and carrying on a discussion with their lecturer or their tutor. Respondent 3 said:

“Some tutors are good and they really encourage us to work hard, they prepare for us and are ready to guide us properly. Some, no doubt, are terrible”.

Furthermore, participant 5 indicated that “there is a clear need for high-quality information, constant advice, and guidance. These, we do not get from most of our tutors as we do not communicate with them as much as we could”.

“In this internet setting, if you say something, it is possible that you get a few reactions and you don’t know what the feelings behind it are, or you don’t get any reaction, and what does that mean? . . . So I here and there chose to have less contributions, since I was frightened since I say something and these individuals feel that ‘She’s a stupid, an idiot, or otherwise’.”

It seems that the participant 5 in the above comment is expressing the fact that, at times, it is extremely difficult to understand the true meaning of others without body language. Some students have problems with language and, when they do comment, they are treated as if they are stupid. They are clearly not able to communicate properly in English. Some, however, appear unmoved. Respondent 9 reveals that:

“it does not matter because politeness is not based on the language that you use. It is based on how you approach someone and how you are using the language you are speaking. So, it does not matter”.

With regard to the perception of politeness in the email communication as experienced by the students, the respondents have made the following comments. Respondent 4 mentions that it is, indeed, important.

“For example, I have, for the AAA module (name changed) and it is an online module. Whatever mistake that happens with them they take it out on us as if it is our mistake and, at the end of the day, I have to redo a certain module, pay for that module and waste another semester.”

To the same respondent, in a follow up-question as to whether he considered contacting the lecturer or the TA to remark the assignment, the response was:

“...they have connected me to the lecturer and the lecturer connects me back to the TA as, sometimes, they are busy with their own things. They let the tutor

deal with us, it is not very professional, and it is, like, the customer service is not fine”.

Respondent 6 also notes that:

“Not thus far, but with teaching assistants (TA’s), they are polite and they are very helpful but the only thing I can say that is related is that sometimes they respond very late to the questions and that affects your assignment and the time that you have to complete it. The fact that you don’t have physical contact with them, it creates a bit of a problem, especially when you don’t understand something. Sometimes something can be explained to you online but you need to be in the same space with that person to actually be able to understand what is going on. So, I would say this thing of the TA being available online, it has its pros and cons.”

Overall, the participants appeared to feel that telephones, messages and computers (PCs) were not used sufficiently by their mentors “to bolster us in redesigning and expanding our insight and knowledge”. A few of the participants raised the issue that a significant number of the lecturers and/or TAs were not inviting and polite when communicating by telephone and that a few, once in a while, would answer their office telephones. A few participants revealed that they did not have access to PCs at home or in their surroundings, and that this impacted adversely on their studies and their correspondence with their lecturers and/or TAs.

**The second question related to whether, in general, the students thought that politeness in the lectures’ email communications affected the academic compliance of students.** (Guidance on compliance – conformity in fulfilling academic requirements was given by researcher)

There was an overwhelming “yes” in response to this question, thus highlighting the role of motivation in any given environment in which language plays a significant role.

**The last question was to whether students thought that politeness in the lectures’ email communications affected the students’ emotion/s towards learning. If so, how / why?**



As with the responses to the previous question, all the responses to this question were in the affirmative, confirming that politeness in the lecturers' email communications did indeed affect the students' emotions and attitude.

The following striking response was made:

“Obviously. Remember that you are asking help from the lecturer and, if the lecturer is being rude, *mina* next time even *noma ngingaba nenkinga ngizosaba ukumbuza ngoba lomuntu* u-rude, *uyabona-ke* (//translation of the sentence: For me, even when, next time I encounter a problem, I will be scared to ask because this person is rude, you see). It is going to affect you, it is going to affect the course, *uzogcina wenza into* (//translation: you will end up doing something) even *noma* (//translation: even though) you don't understand because of the attitude you are getting from them.”

Participant 6 shared that:

“Because some of us, we know why we come to UNISA, we don't focus on how the person that has to teach us deals with us. We know that, irrespective that you give me attitude or become impolite, this is where I want to go. But some of us are not like that. They want someone to show that they care and are polite.”

Participant 6 was stressing that some students did sometimes experience impoliteness from their lecturers but that those who were stronger carried on with their studies without worrying about what had happened. However, it was also mentioned that not all the students were the same and that some became discouraged and abandoned the module in question.

#### **4.2.4 Summary of qualitative findings**

##### **4.2.4.1 Language, politeness and communication in an ODL institution**

Communication in any HE institution is extremely important but it is even more important in an ODL institution than in other institutions, as it is vital if the students are to pass. The study has revealed that communication may be through study material, email conversations, feedback letters or other means but it must always be available

timeous. It is fortunate that UNISA has an ICT department that facilitates communication by providing all the necessary tools in myUnisa to enable staff and students to get in touch with one another. It is, thus, essential that both lecturers and students constantly check the myUnisa Discussion Forum or the Question and Answer Tool to ensure regular communication between them.

Thus, the question arises as to the way in which politeness in the language of communication influences the learning outcome in an ODL environment. Although the majority of students' language background is either isiZulu or other indigenous languages, this study has revealed that most of the students prefer English as the language of instruction, as they feel that neither isiZulu nor any other African language will equip them enough to life after university. One of the participants has indicated that she uses English to avoid having interpreting what she has said, should someone not understand her. Mention has been made previously about the students' motivation and emphasise the fact that teachers, lecturers, tutors and administrative staff members in HE institutions have the power to motivate students. Thus, the question arises as to how UNISA is motivating its students since most of the African students in the African Languages Department and all other departments prefer to use English rather than their native languages despite the fact that they find English difficult. Some of the students have revealed that they are aware of their writing and their mistakes.

The researcher prefers students to use the tools given to them by the universities to communicate with their lecturers and tutors, and to use whatever or whichever language they may feel comfortable with as long as they use it appropriately. In addition, students must also learn to follow the rules of communication and avoid using non-academic language such as, inter alia, slang language, capital letters, unnecessary exclamation marks, as lecturers and tutors may feel that the use of such practices indicates that a student is being impolite as indicated by respondent 32 under section 4.2.2.2. This is similar to some of the participants who have indicated that the use of capital letters and exclamation marks is often their way of expressing how unhappy they are. On the other hand, some students use capital letters because of the challenges they face in terms of knowing how to use computers properly.

#### **4.2.4.2 Learner motivation and compliance**

Motivation in HE institutions is extremely important as, whether in ODL or f-2-f institutions, it is one of the things that provides students with the impetus to keep going and to extend themselves. According to Schunk et al. (2008), “motivation can impact what we realize, how we learn, and when we learn”. In this case, the people who motivate and demotivate students are those people to whom the students look for guidance, namely tutors, lecturers and institutional support groups (administration, learner support et cetera). If these support groups are able to motivate students, this may affect their results.

#### **4.2.4.3 Politeness in language and motivation in ODL**

The reality is that students in an ODL environment require as much guidance and support as those in the f-2-f environment. However, if lecturers and TAs are made responsible for more students than they are able to handle, this may result in delays in the feedback provided to students. It is clear that the bigger the class, the more difficult it is for a lecturer to meet the students' requirements. Lecturers and tutors must complete their marking on time and prepare feedback for each student, not forgetting that, while doing this, students need to be motivated. It must be remembered that, in ODL institutions, the students rarely see their own lecturers and tutors; thus, they need assurance that what they are doing is correct. In addition, they require motivation to help them to study. Without proper and polite motivation students may lose interest in the module and/or in the institution itself.

#### **4.3 Presentation of quantitative results: Section Two**

This section presents the results of two main data collection instruments, namely the questionnaires and the interviews. The results are presented in line with the design of the questionnaires with a quantitative overview of the results being provided. In this quantitative overview, the figures are expressed as valid percentages. Valid percentages are used from those who have answered the questions only (Murphy, 2006). There were some participants who did not answer all the questions; thus, their percentages were low and not considered for comment.

From the onset, the following hypotheses guided the study:

**H i: The main language strategies used by instructors or lecturers affect the learning outcomes in an ODL environment.**

**H ii: The politeness in language and email communication affects the learning outcome gains in an ODL environment.**

**H iii: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents, use appropriate politeness strategies may improve learning outcomes.**

**H iv: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents, use appropriate politeness strategies improve learning outcomes by promoting learner motivation, collaboration and academic compliance.**

Furthermore, the study wished to investigate the various approaches to language and politeness by focusing on the social and cultural behaviour of the pedagogical agents (teachers, lecturers and/or TAs), in particular, and their use of politeness strategies. Thus, the main research question was:

**How does politeness in email communication, language strategies and pedagogical agents influence the learning outcomes within an ODL environment?**

In addition, the study aimed at exploring the politeness shown by lecturers during tuition and student support conversations with the objective of promoting polite interactions among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in higher education in South Africa.

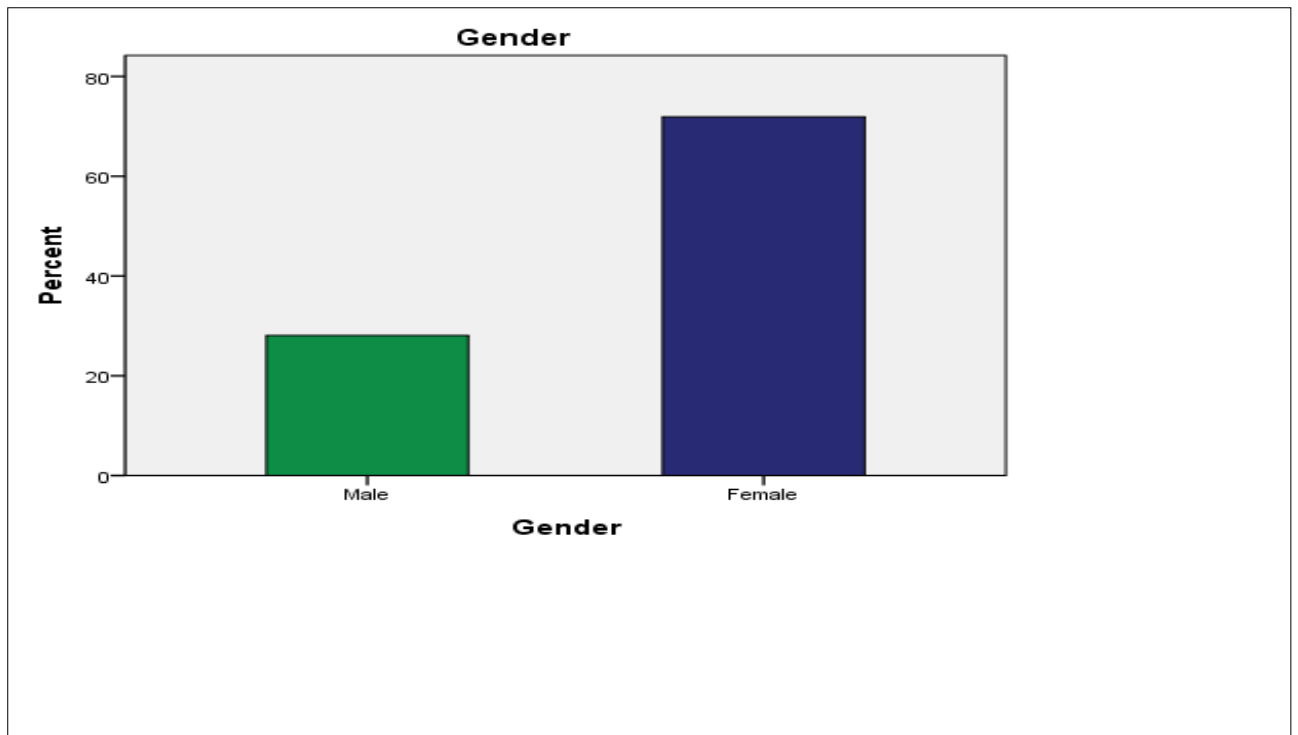


Figure 4.1: The students' responses to the question on gender

Despite the wish not to downplay the role of gender with regard to the responses, the study showed that majority of the respondents were female students. Given the approach to the study, as explained in the proceeding chapter, there was no deliberate attempt in the selection of respondents based on gender and, therefore, the result is simply the outcome of the sampling strategy that was used

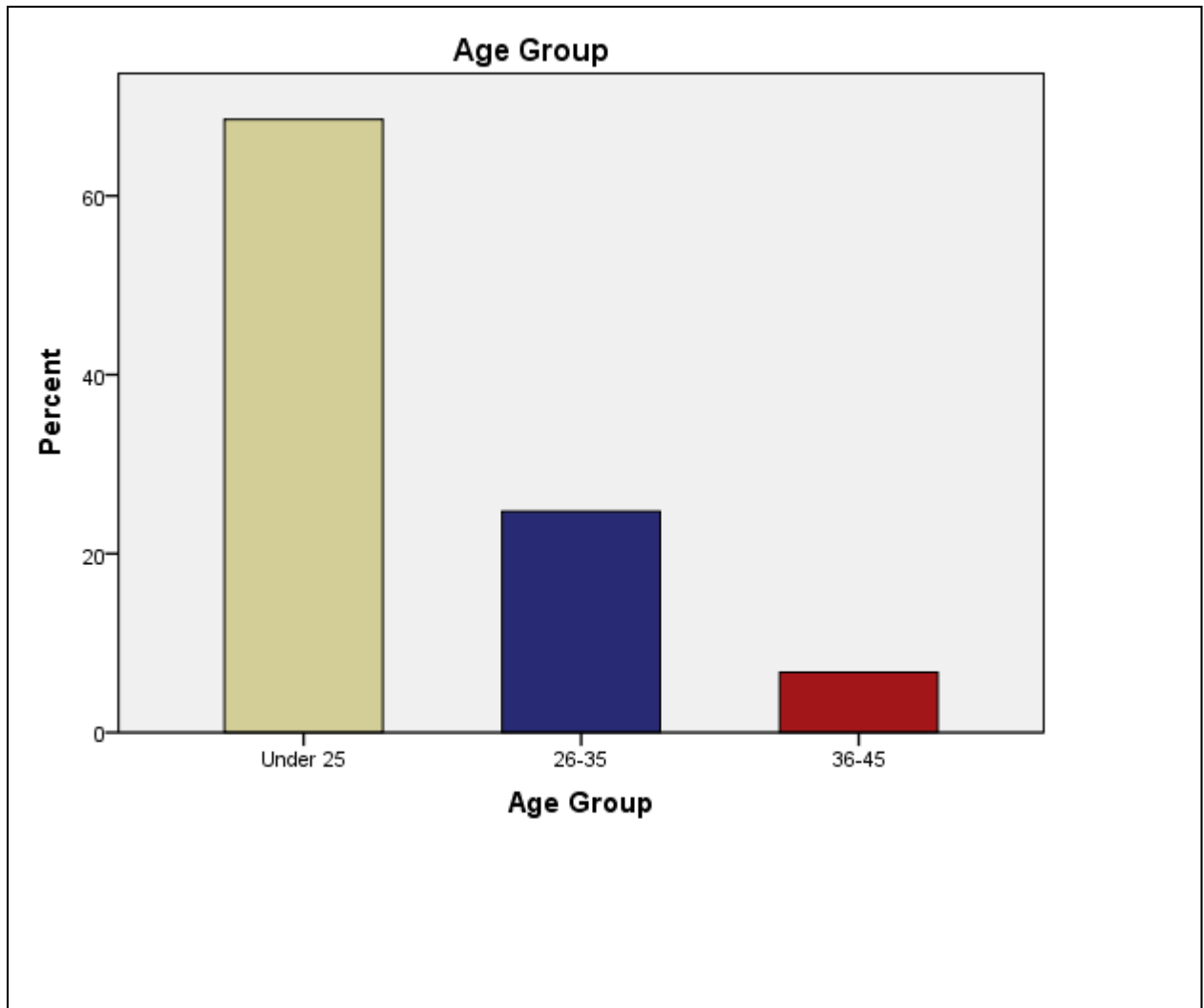


Figure 4.2: The demographic profiles of the respondents

The majority of the students who responded to the questionnaire were under 25 years of age. Age, in this case, was important, especially in respect of the age group 26-35 and above, as these age groups best demonstrated mutuality and an understanding of learning and objectives. It was also felt that the responses of these age groups would be objective and made after thoughtful reflection. Nonetheless, because the under-25 age group is usually the dominant age group in any higher learning environment, this age group is bound to dominate the responses.

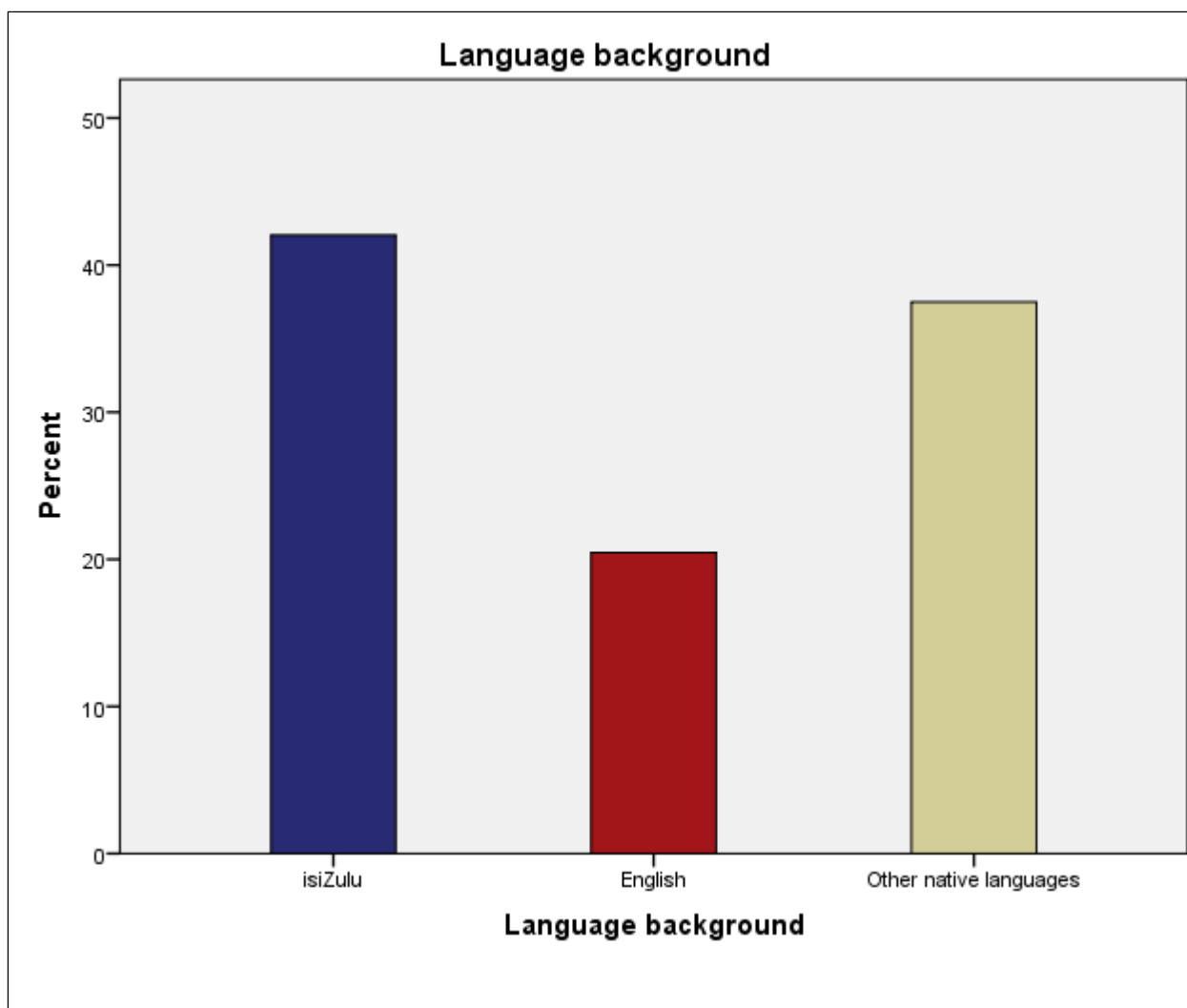


Figure 4.3: Language background of the respondents

From the onset, there was a deliberate intention on the part of the researcher to study the research aspects as they pertained predominantly to the isiZulu-speaking environment. Thus, for many reasons given in the preceding chapters, the majority of the respondents (41.6%) were predominantly isiZulu-speaking. It was interesting to note that, while other languages were not deliberately selected (37.1%), English fared quite well with 20.2%. This, in turn, ensured balanced and more reflective results.

#### 4.3.1 Language learning strategies

The role of the strategies, the students' perceptions of the use of the English language and how they would progress in their studies are presented in the table below. This table contains a summary of an overall mean score and standard deviation sum of

12.266. This positive mean score reveals that the English language strategy has been effective in the learning conditions and their possible impact on learning gains.

**Table 4.1: Statistical summary of learning strategies**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	84	4	1	5	4.29	0.102	<b>0.939</b>
I notice my English mistakes and I use that information to help me do better.	84	4	1	5	4.31	0.107	<b>0.981</b>
I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	84	4	1	5	4.27	0.106	<b>0.974</b>
I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	83	4	1	5	4.39	0.101	<b>0.922</b>
I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	84	4	1	5	3.57	0.129	<b>1.185</b>
I look for people to whom I may talk in English.	81	4	1	5	3.44	0.129	<b>1.162</b>
I look for opportunities to read as much in English as possible.	84	4	1	5	3.93	0.121	<b>1.106</b>
I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	84	4	1	5	4.18	0.113	<b>1.032</b>
I think about my progress in learning English.	83	4	1	5	4.04	0.124	<b>1.131</b>
I give myself a reward when I do well in English.	84	4	1	5	3.61	0.143	<b>1.308</b>
I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	84	5	1	6	3.76	0.166	<b>1.526</b>

### 4.3.2 Language and communication

Communication is intrinsically linked to language and it is, in fact, not possible to separate the two. This section infers to the role of language in teaching and learning. The SD of 17.026 is a reflection that it is significant. Almost all aspects of this section relate to the language and communication being relevant in higher education, both within the ODL and classroom environments.



**Table 4.2: Statistical summary of language and communication**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
The teacher just needs to write down the structure and the key words of the sentence instead of the whole sentence in emails .	88	6	1	7	4.42	0.183	<b>1.72</b>
The sentence feedback should be related to the students' daily life.	85	6	1	7	5.55	0.159	<b>1.468</b>
The sentence should be interesting and humorous.	86	6	1	7	5.52	0.177	<b>1.643</b>
Quite simple words should be used in the sentence.	88	6	1	7	5.72	0.145	<b>1.356</b>
Besides the meaning of the words, the sentence should also convey the cultural information to us.	86	6	1	7	5.33	0.176	<b>1.634</b>
The sentence should help me to review the words I have learned.	86	6	1	7	5.77	0.159	<b>1.477</b>
The teacher should use colours for meanings when writing the sentence down.	86	6	1	7	4.33	0.166	<b>1.537</b>
One sentence is enough for one language point.	87	6	1	7	4.28	0.158	<b>1.476</b>
For one language point, the teacher should use two or three sentences to explain.	86	6	1	7	4.59	0.165	<b>1.529</b>
The more sentences for each language point, the better.	86	6	1	7	5.08	0.178	<b>1.646</b>
The meaning of the sentence should be positive, not negative.	87	6	1	7	5.24	0.165	<b>1.54</b>

#### 4.4 Discussion of language, communication and language learning strategies

As far as language learning strategies are concerned, an average score of 52% seems to indicate agreement with the view that participants try to find as many ways as they can to use English, notice English mistakes and use that information to help them do better, pay attention when someone is speaking English, try to find out how to be better students of English, plan schedules so that they will have enough time to study English, look for people to talk to in English, look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English, have clear goals for improving their English skills, think about their

progress in learning English, self-reward when performing well in English, and talk to someone else about how they feel when learning English.

While the impact and power of language are subjective, the findings reveal that students view English as a major medium of communication despite their strength in their mother tongues. Similar sentiments are discussed in the qualitative discussion that follows this quantitative section. This confirms the theories of self-motivation in language acquisition discussed in chapter two of this study.

Although there is little in the findings in terms of the role of the lecturer and/or TA in motivating students through the use of a second language in HE, they confirm the literature that students have a tendency to realise ways through which individual learning can be enhanced. They perceive the view that learning the second language in HE is one way in which students can continue to progress in their course learning and development process.

Whereas the study agrees with Anderman and Anderman (2010) that teachers play a significant role in increasing or decreasing students' motivation, it will be interesting for lecturers and/or TAs to integrate approaches or strategies in their interaction with students to help them make the most of their language learning, knowing that the inner drive to acquire and improve on the second language already exists. Whereas several of the theories and strategies reviewed have some value, no single theory or strategy can sufficiently explain students' resolve to learn and improve their second language acquisition.

Therefore, it would be wise if lecturers and/or TAs drew from these theories and strategies, or at least most of them, and tried different combinations in their interaction with students, taking into the reflection the fact that students are different and thus different motivational strategies may work differently with each group of students. In addition, it is significant that lecturers and/or TAs should be aware of their actions and behaviours, as it is very likely that their actions can demotivate the students.

With regard to politeness in language and communication, the findings concur with the view that in recent years, particular within an ODL environment, language learning and communication have been viewed from diverse perspectives. Reflecting on the literature, in chapter two of this study, this is understood as resulting from processes such as the interaction between the learner and users of the language, collaborative

creation of meaning, creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language, negotiation of meaning as the learner and his or her interlocutor arrive at understanding, learning by attending to the feedback students get when they use the language, paying attention to the language the learner hears (the input) and trying to incorporate new forms into the learner's developing communicative competence, and trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things. According to Richards (2006), communicative language teaching can be understood as a set of principles for the goals of language teaching, how students learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom.

The findings point to the role of effective communication and language strategies in the HE environment which many seem to ignore. In particular, most respondents perceive that the sentence should be interesting and humorous, consist of quite simple words and the more sentences for each language point, the better. This reflects on the role of politeness in an interactive environment.

Methodologies for language teaching today seek to capture the rich view of language and language learning assumed by a communicative view of language. Jacobs and Farrell (2003) see the shift toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as marking a paradigm shift in our thinking about teachers, learning and teaching. The findings of this study identify the key components of this shift as the need to focus greater attention on the role of learners rather than the external stimuli learners are receiving from their environment. In this way, the center of attention shifts from the teacher to the student. This shift is generally known as the move from teacher-centred instruction to learner-centred instruction which is often the foundation of teaching and learning in HE.

#### **4.5 Politeness in email communication**

This section is based on the initial research that suggests that there is a change or decline in the customary conventions of politeness in email dialogue compared with more established written forms of communication (Bunz & Campbell, 2002). Various factors may lead users to alter, reduce or omit certain politeness indicators in their email discourse. Therefore, such aspects are the direct transactional nature of the

message, the relative concealment of emails, the use of uninhibited or “careless” language behaviour, an inclination for self-disclosure and self-orientation as well as the brevity of some email texts (Baron, 2001), particularly in the learning environment.

**Table 4.3: Statistical summary of politeness in email communication**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Formal language was an important politeness consideration.	82	6	1	7	5.84	0.162	<b>1.47</b>
Correct titles were also an important consideration for politeness.	83	6	1	7	5.88	0.146	<b>1.329</b>
Face-saving language in email texts was considered important for politeness and the absence of it was seen as impolite.	81	6	1	7	4.56	0.143	<b>1.285</b>
Brief email texts were seen as impolite.	83	6	1	7	4.28	0.156	<b>1.425</b>
Indirect language for requests was considered polite.	82	65	1	66	4.93	0.773	<b>7</b>
Modal verbs ( <i>would, could, and might</i> ) are preferred to indicate politeness.	83	5	2	7	5.36	0.123	<b>1.122</b>
Interest in the way they do things in IsiZulu is considered to be polite	84	6	1	7	4.58	0.18	<b>1.652</b>
The full title, address e.g., <i>Dear Madam, Mr, Mrs, Sir</i> , was an important politeness consideration.	83	6	1	7	5.78	0.142	<b>1.298</b>
Suitable formulaic expressions, e.g., <i>please, many thanks</i> were important politeness considerations.	84	5	2	7	5.92	0.131	<b>1.204</b>
Respectful expressions of salutations and leave taking, e.g., <i>Best wishes, Kind regards, I look forward to hearing from you, Thanks once again</i> were important politeness considerations.	84	6	1	7	6.08	0.148	<b>1.355</b>
Formal language was an important politeness consideration.	84	6	1	7	5.43	0.172	<b>1.578</b>

The findings in this section show an average score of 5.9% for strongly agreeing to all aspects of the questionnaire, and a total SD OF 20.718 which portrays a significant sense of the reliability of the responses.

The overwhelming response to how students perceived and expressed politeness differently lay in the formality of their writing as well as what they would expect in return. In other words, participants said that they expressed politeness in their communications through the level of formality. Other ways of expressing politeness

included using proper titles, proper verbs, respectful expressions of salutations and leave-taking, avoiding colloquialisms and formal language as an important politeness consideration to mention just a few.

The resulting inclinations were identified from an overall analysis of the findings:

- i) Politeness in an email, according to the participants, was incorporated in many elements of writing such as orthography, text structure, punctuation and clarity.
- ii) Formality, including formal greetings and closings, was an important way of showing politeness in email communications.
- iii) First language and cultural awareness were also important.
- iv) The omission of certain written elements, for example, colloquialisms, jargon and/or humour, could indicate politeness.

#### **4.5.1 Discussion of politeness in email communication**

In the ODL environment, subjects often lack the social context such as the nonverbal communication that apparently becomes a barrier to effective communication, a major tool in a learning environment (Wellman, 2014). Subjects are most likely to receive immediate feedback as a result of f-2-f contact and other clues such as body language, voice, intonation and facial expression. For teaching to take place, it is important to adjust and practise strategies for face-saving.

Email communication compels the writer to adjust to the expected politeness levels in the process of interaction because of the lack of understanding the context of the communication environment as well as the difficulty in attempting to clarify misunderstandings and repair breakdowns. Both students and lecturers and/or TAs are often vulnerable due to the complex nature of emails and this hinders them from conveying a sense of politeness in their messages, especially where culture and predominant language patterns are so different. It is, therefore, important to understand that both cultural and social etiquette be upheld during intercultural communication within a learning environment.

There is evidence in this study that speaks to the role of politeness indicators, particularly in decontextualising the nature of emails and the brevity or simplicity of messages (Bunz & Campbell, 2002). In an ODL context, emails become an information transaction medium, and such communication may support and promote interpersonal relationships. This study, in particular, reveals how some students consider emails as a medium of communication or contributing to interpersonal relationships. They use a number of politeness indicators, and the acceptable levels of such indicators differ culturally.

It is also important that those in the teaching environment recognise the effect of the medium of communication used. Because many students have been exposed to the use of emails prior to joining the university, proper usage tends to become less formal and more like speeches. Additionally, email communication tends to be more inclined to impoliteness due to the lack of standardisation and understanding of situations that increase the level to be imposed. However, research indicates that, in f-2-f interactions that have remained integrated within a distance learning component such as contact sessions, subjects are visible and likely to push students towards a more status congruence and greater email politeness.

Similarly, the study findings are in line with those of Walther (1997) who claims that email users are influenced by their own expectations for whether such an interaction may have been a “once-off” or projected to extend over lengthy periods during the teaching and learning processes. This standard nature and a potential reason for the speech-like characters of email language indicate how emails have become a dominant form of contact among people, not only in academia but also social life. However, this type of communication requires formal standards.

#### **4.5.2 Politeness and positive attitudes on the part of students**

This section is guided by the literature on the role of politeness and the attitudes of students within an ODL environment. It was assumed that the teacher-specific variables that may influence student motivation to learn in an ODL context. The design of the questionnaire in this section is intended to capture the various aspects of politeness of ODL instructors within HE and the nature of their impact on student learning.

**Table 4.4: Statistical summary of politeness and positive attitudes of students**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
The tutor made it easy for me to know the standard of work expected.	85	6	1	7	5.58	0.174	1.606
The tutor motivated me to do my best work.	84	6	1	7	5.8	0.154	1.412
The tutor gave me a reasonable amount of time to understand the work I had to learn.	84	6	1	7	5.55	0.176	1.609
The tutor seemed to understand the difficulties I might be having with my work.	84	6	1	7	5.46	0.182	1.668
The tutor normally gave me helpful feedback on how I was doing.	84	6	1	7	5.52	0.185	1.697
The tutor was good at clearly explaining new ideas.	84	6	1	7	5.64	0.175	1.603
The tutor asked me questions just about facts.	84	6	1	7	5.48	0.187	1.718
The tutor made the content of the unit interesting.	82	6	1	7	4.95	0.161	1.456
The tutor made it clear right from the start what she/he expected from students.	84	5	2	7	5.31	0.131	1.202
My tutor noticed and attended to students' wants or needs.	84	6	1	7	4.85	0.158	1.452
Exaggerate interest in, approval of, or sympathy with a previous message	84	6	1	7	4.57	0.136	1.245
Intensify interest in the students' own contributions, using words that make one's own comment more interesting by overstating facts	84	6	1	7	4.73	0.133	1.216
Connect with the reader by using words to indicate the reader is a member of the writer's own discourse community	83	5	2	7	5.23	0.13	1.182
Seek agreement, discussion and dialogue	81	6	1	7	5.32	0.16	1.439
Avoid disagreement – saying something so as to soften disagreement or hedging one's opinion or being vague so as to seem to agree	82	5	2	7	5.5	0.144	1.308
Show interest in the student by starting a message with small talk, greetings or unrelated topics	83	6	1	7	5.52	0.15	1.365

Joke – using humour to indicate shared connections with the reader	80	6	1	7	5.36	0.193	1.723
Use language to show that the writer knows what the reader wants and is willing to fit his/her wants or needs in with the reader's	82	6	1	7	5.34	0.152	1.381
Make an offer or promise and keeps his/her word	83	6	1	7	5.58	0.152	1.389
Give (or ask for) reasons for an imposition on the reader	81	5	2	7	5.59	0.167	1.506

Owing to the length of this section, all items were analysed using factor analytic methods. A measured regression approach, the Cronbach alpha, was found to be 0.95. Because Cronbach alpha was largely dependent upon the number of scales it contained as well as the standard deviation sum or sums, its reliability and co-efficiency are highly acceptable over the items. Furthermore, due to the nature of the items, the distribution of students' scores was considered for the descriptive findings, and this was supported by the quantitative analysis that is presented at the end of this section.

The findings also indicated that most students felt that the teachers all used different motivation techniques: jokes, keeping promises, dialogue, attending to students' needs, making content interesting, clearly explaining ideas and making learning easy and simple were important motivation factors across the board. Such feedback and addressing students' issues unreservedly would be assumed to be polite. Furthermore, the findings showed that lecturers and/or TAs offered constructive criticism and provided relevant information related to learning as well as praising students for good performance by using a language known to everybody. Thus, they generally created an environment conducive to learning and by establishing a link between now and future learning created a sense of achievement.

#### **4.6 Discussion of politeness and positive attitudes of students**

These findings agree with the literature on various positive politeness strategies. In particular, sharing common ground, the sharing of interest and treating students in a friendly way are likely to be inspirational. Lecturers and/or TAs should use different politeness strategies to have a better understanding of students within an ODL



environment. Lecturers and/or TAs need to view students as corporators in most cases. Positive politeness strategies may satisfy students' positive face, especially with regard to offering help and trying to understand the students' needs while showing sympathy, especially for students having difficulties with learning and suffering embarrassment related to language and communication. It is observed from the findings that communication using humour, relaxed language, honesty and encouraging compliments stimulates students' learning enthusiasm and leads to self-confidence in students.

While there is no standard way to motivate students, multiple strategies should be used as often as possible. Teachers should be aware that understanding motivation, especially, for students in ODL, is like "one blind man holding the tail of an elephant and says it's like another holding a leg, and says it's like a tree trunk, while others would say that an elephant is like a big pillow, a big nose, or a spear. Each blind man, in this case, has an accurate view from his specific vantage point of the whole picture" (Robinson in Friedman, 1999:2).

This indicates that all writers have valuable opinions and standpoints that make an immense contribution to understanding student motivation as linked to the politeness of lecturers and/or TAs. If such ideas are translated to a learning environment, using specific items that are useful and effective for each unique situation, student motivation would be inspired. Most importantly, however, the study indicates that motivation is a function of many factors, and lecturers and/or TAs should choose among possibilities carefully. They should reflect on themselves and their behaviour to become self-aware of aspects of motivation in an ODL environment (Robinson in Friedman, 1999).

#### **4.7 Politeness and feedback on learning and compliance**

This section was generated from the literature review. Accordingly, feedback was found to be a very important aspect of learning, understanding and compliancy, and this should be clearly understood in an ODL environment. All of these aspects in the questionnaire were in particular benchmarked against the work of Cialdini (2003) and Zhang (2009) who tried to explain compliance as a specific response to the particular communication.

After receiving requests, subjects generally use their feelings as cues for responding to the situation. It is also thought that the politer someone's request is, the more positive emotions it elicits and this later leads to compliancy; however, the reverse is also true. The table below summarises these aspects of feedback in a learning environment and how such positive (polite) feedback generates negative or positive emotions.

**Table 4.5: Summary of polite feedback on learning and compliance**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
The tutor acknowledgement/criticism: acknowledges that the student action is correct or incorrect	43	6	1	7	4.86	0.227	1.489
The tutor elaborates: explains a language fact related to the student's action.	41	5	2	7	5	0.215	1.378
The tutor suggests actions: offers hints to the student for the next step.	42	6	1	7	5.02	0.252	1.63
The tutor seems to understand difficulties the student might be having with his/her work.	43	6	1	7	4.88	0.254	1.665
The tutor normally recasts: when the student makes a mistake, instead of explicitly criticising the action, the tutor simply demonstrates the correct action.	42	5	2	7	4.79	0.23	1.49
The tutor encourages effort: feedback aims to elicit more effort from the student.	40	6	1	7	4.88	0.275	1.742
Consolation: consoles the student by saying his/her errors are expected.	40	6	1	7	4.68	0.233	1.474
The tutor helps the student to build challenging but achievable goals.	40	6	1	7	5.15	0.249	1.578
The tutor creates a safe, welcoming and non-intimidating teaching environment.	41	6	1	7	5.17	0.277	1.773
The tutor inspires the student through his/her polite treatment in interaction.	40	6	1	7	5.18	0.226	1.43
Through interactions, the tutor conveys that he/she cares about the student.	38	6	1	7	5.18	0.25	1.54
The feedback provides the student with options and relates to the student's life experiences and perspectives.	38	6	1	7	4.92	0.268	1.65

The tutor regularly checks the student's progress throughout to determine understanding.	39	6	1	7	4.56	0.291	1.818
The tutor takes on roles of facilitating the student in playing an active part in the learning process.	41	6	1	7	4.95	0.244	1.564
A student's differences in individual knowledge, style and pace of learning are not usually accommodated by the tutor.	40	6	1	7	4.48	0.291	1.84
The tutor's teaching and pedagogical practices enable the student to develop and refine critical thinking skills.	40	5	2	7	4.98	0.219	1.387
The tutor works with student towards a common goal.	40	5	2	7	5.2	0.212	1.344
The tutor is always friendly to me	39	6	1	7	4.97	0.228	1.423
The tutor lets me make my own choices.	40	6	1	7	5.08	0.236	1.492
The tutor praises me when I do something right.	41	6	1	7	4.88	0.242	1.552
The tutor is critical of me but interesting.	39	6	1	7	4.67	0.245	1.528
My relationship with the tutor has improved over time.	41	6	1	7	4.61	0.254	1.626
I intend to comply with tutor requests.	41	5	2	7	5.49	0.195	1.247
I plan to act in ways that are consistent with tutor requests.	39	6	1	7	5.38	0.264	1.648
I will make an effort to do what the tutor asks me to do.	39	5	2	7	5.64	0.231	1.442
Valid N (listwise)	3						

This section confirms the literature (Chandler, 2013) covered in chapter two that feedback in communication is very important in an ODL environment. Specifically, the percentage score of respondents who have indicated “Strongly agree” to the following aspects points to an alarming situation in ODL:

- i) The tutor helps the student to build challenging but achievable goals (56%).
- ii) The tutor creates a safe, welcoming, and non-intimidating teaching environment (52%).
- iii) The tutor inspires the student through his/her polite treatment in interaction (12%).

- iv) Through interactions the tutor conveys that he/she cares about the student (10%).
- v) The feedback provides the student with options and relates to the student's life experiences and perspectives (9%).
- vi) The tutor regularly checks students' progress to determine understanding (7%).
- vii) The tutor takes on roles that facilitate the student playing an active part in the learning process (22%).
- viii) A student's differences in individual knowledge, style and pace of learning are not usually accommodated by the tutor (69%).
- ix) The tutor's teaching and pedagogical practices enable the student to develop and refine critical thinking skills (17.2%).

Where previous research has indicated that students who receive polite feedback are more likely to increase their self-efficacy, it does not seem to be the case in the current study. The findings are in accordance with Chandler's (2013) study. However, providing online students with an awareness of their mistakes in a timely, correct and polite manner, whether by means of explicit or implicit feedback, enhances their learning abilities. As can be seen from the responses, the effectiveness of feedback, especially polite feedback in such environments, cannot be underestimated.

#### **4.7.1 Discussion of polite feedback on learning, and compliance**

The motivation behind this section is to recognise students' reactions to educator politeness, students' positive feelings and compliance expectation. The findings show that lecturers and/or TAs' polite requests and solicitations will probably inspire positive feelings rather than decreasing politeness requests. The findings also show that the literature recommends low politeness demands because the use of strong, face undermining and controlling language frequently incites negative feelings, for example outrage. This research further demonstrates that the use of positive comments during a discussion in the discussion forum and feedback letters triggers positive feelings in students and increases motivation, thus influencing them to comply. The study additionally demonstrates that positive feelings mediate the impact of request politeness on students' compliance intent. Lecturers and/or TAs' polite requests inspire positive feelings in students which then influence their consistence

expectations. By contrast, strong and inconsiderate language is found to bring out negative feelings which then cause resistance.

These findings agree with the view that teachers use politeness strategies in order to elicit respect and compliance from their students. If politeness is used, students generally comply with their lecturers and/or TAs' requests in directive speech acts and expressive speech acts. This supports Zhang's (2009) view which suggests that the use of a high level of politeness may result in compliance. She states that making requests to students with a high level of politeness will evoke positive emotions, which will subsequently result in compliance. By contrast, if a request or utterance is issued to students with a low level of politeness it will result in negative emotions being evoked, in turn, resulting in resistance.

#### 4.8 Pedagogical agent, politeness strategies and learning outcomes

From the outset a theoretical framework was applied that guided the study. It also pointed to the role of political agents and the relationships among polite language and communication and learning outcomes. The effect of politeness strategies on students' learning performance was examined across all students in higher education, referred to as the politeness effect, and the results presented in the section below. The intention was to ascertain how pedagogical agents impacted on learning outcomes and what strategies were used by lecturers/TAs within an ODL environment.

**Table 4.6: Pedagogical agent, politeness strategies and learning outcomes**

Aspects of the pedagogical agent enhanced learning	Mean	Std Deviation
The pedagogical agent helps me to extend my prior knowledge.	3.95	.872
Feedback provided by the animated pedagogical agent encourages deeper learning.	3.79	.940
The pedagogical agent helps to give me a deeper reasoning.	3.79	.804
The pedagogical agent provides online conversational dialogue to help the process of learning.	3.74	.848
The agent helps to give directions for the pace at which I work.	3.72	.882

The pedagogical agent helps me to focus on answering the task/question.	3.70	.914
The pedagogical agent provides hand-on activities.	3.58	.982
I believe the time the agent and I spend together is helping me to learn efficiently.	3.58	1.029
The pedagogical agent helps me to concentrate on the learning	3.56	.796
The pedagogical agent helps me to concentrate on the learning	3.56	.934
The pedagogical agent helps me to write better.	3.53	.882
The pedagogical agent helps me to solve the problems/difficulties in learning.	3.53	.855
The pedagogical agent and I collaborate on setting goals for our work on learning.	3.49	.985
The pedagogical agent focuses on answering real-life questions.	3.49	.883
	<b>3.64</b>	<b>0.661</b>

This topic is very important, as it illustrates the positive relationship between the lecturers and/or TAs and the student as they relate to the learning environment. In addition, the summary of the overall mean score and SD of 3.64 and 0.661 respectively points to these findings. The results also show a reliable positive mean which implies that pedagogical agents may be effective in a learning environment and have a positive impact on learning outcomes. Additionally, the use of various politeness strategies, together with the independent political agents, may also have a positive effect on learning outcomes.

#### **4.8.1 Discussion of the pedagogical agent, politeness strategies and learning outcomes**

The results demonstrate that politeness can indeed impact on students' learning experiences. For instance, providing students with both positive input and feedback on their accomplishments may help them to engage with the learning material and adhere to curriculum requirements. Being respectful may also help students to assimilate difficult ideas and expand their self-adequacy. In addition, students may sometimes interpret being direct as intrusive and may in some cases be viewed as nosy. These outcomes have a bearing on pedagogical applications, and may also be

informative for people who are in the business of assisting clients with help and giving criticism on their activities. The data indicates the impact of politeness strategies and their relationship to teaching.

In addition, it may be stated that when students seek help, both pedagogical agents and polite agents may be effective, especially for students who are highly extrovert in nature, as such communication helps them to understand difficult concepts better. Facilitating or prompting students to like an agent helps them to learn better. The relationship between this factor and politeness is that it is not the presence of the agent that matters, but rather his or her usefulness and the quality of the feedback given that creates an impact.

People in the ODL environment should not think that f-2-f dialogue is the only place where politeness strategies can be applied. This study has also examined f-2-f interaction to ascertain whether conditions in different universities are the same. It is also important to note that when giving instructions in real life, various strategies are used to build confidence, to report and to react empathetically and sympathetically. Therefore, a general approach has been taken to limit the frequency of tutorial interaction so that the real consequences of frequent instruction and introduction rather than the politeness strategies deployed by agents become important.

The results from the study concur with those obtained from the literature review (Moreno & Mayer, 2010; Woolverton, Mumme, & Gurtner, 2013). This study holds the view that students are actively involved in the learning practices responsible for their learning. So, an environment that mixes strategies for teaching and learning creates an environment that is conducive for self-directed and autonomous learning where students independently manage and monitor their learning practices. Furthermore, polite pedagogical agents reduce and eliminate the perceived difficulty of the instructional and learning material. This, together with prompt responses to students' queries, may have a positive influence on learning outcomes.

This study suggests that pedagogical agents who are polite in every sense stimulate student engagement, creating appropriate learning processes, and this view is supported by Collins, Brown and Newman (2009). According to these authors, such an enabling environment and the support dimensions are required, depending on the prior knowledge of the students. Referring to table 4.6, an overall mean score of 3.64

with an SD of 0.661 shows that in a real sense, in an open learning environment, students are responsible for their own learning. Instructional agents may enhance the learning and help students achieve their learning goals (Baylor & Plant, 2005)

Additionally, agents extend the experience by tapping into the students' knowledge to identify the pedagogical approaches that can be used in different circumstances. For example, an agent will need to be creative and generate knowledge, and to make supportive and empathetic comments that enhance motivation in frustrated students. Similarly, should students be bored, the agent needs to be engaging with a sense of humour while presenting challenging problems for the students to work on. Again should students be confused, the agent will need to guide the students on productive learning trajectories that oscillate between cognitive disequilibrium and equilibrium.

This association, therefore, is a two-way association and will be dependent on the characteristics of both the student and the agent, notwithstanding the environment within which both interact. Furthermore, it has been found that reliable feedback energises the student, eliciting more profound thinking in conversational discourse with the agent. With the specific end goal of ensuring the quality of learning situations, pedagogical specialists must be successful lecturers and/or TAs, and subsequently, be versatile and dynamic in their instruction procedures. They should have the capacity to alter their instruction to fit a specific issue, state or learning situation, and they should be equipped to change their instructional methods in response to students' levels of learning. Pedagogical agents should have the capacity to ask and answer questions, make suggestions and clarify issues, screen students' understanding, give suitable input and monitor what has been acquired in the learning session. The majority of the pedagogical agents investigated above have the capacity to do this to some degree. Obviously, the litmus test for any pedagogical agent is whether he/she produces positive learning results in students.

The findings of this study match those of previous research that indicates that pedagogical agents help students negotiate and mediate e-learning programmes. The research has shown that not only do pedagogical agents augment learning programmes and make them more stimulating and "human", but when used properly they actually improve and facilitate learning. Some studies such as that done by Clark and Mayer (2013) have shown that pedagogical agents can improve instruction and



it is worth the expense of including them in ODL courses.

In summary, pedagogical agents work better in an interactive environment where the agent and the student come into contact and are engaged. Keeping in mind the end goal, an individual must be effectively drawn into the material in terms of the thoughts and use of ideas. In any case, there are many routes through which a student can be dynamic. Most change-oriented teachers encourage a specific type of dynamic learning; for example, students should be positioned as active participants and self-motivated members in the development of learning instead of as inactive beneficiaries of information (Green, 2013: 13). This position calls for both a meaning of “dynamic” investment and strategies for evaluation within an ODL platform. According to Scardamalia and Bereiter (2006), dynamic students are those who select issues, ask questions and self-screen their comprehension. In spite of the fact that there is confirmation to recommend that beneficial to student engagement and support encourages learning, dynamic student learning is not an element of common classroom direction and instruction.

UNISA is the largest and the leading ODL institution in Africa, both in terms of the number of students and its use of multimedia, such as video-conferencing, telecommunication with students and so forth. However, although UNISA is equipped with such multimedia, there are students who are unable to afford any of the gadgets which then prevents them to communicate better with their tutors and lecturers. While it is true that most students have cellphones and some have laptops and tablets, many still fail to use them properly when communicating with their lecturers. This may be due to a lack of data, no need to communicate with them as everything they need is online, not having a clue of whom to contact, not having time to contact them or just not wanting to communicate with them.

During the study, it has been found that many students do not see the need to contact lecturers and tutors unless they are struggling with something. As long as all the information is placed on myUnisa and they receive their assignments and feedback letters on time, they do not feel the need to use such pedagogical agents. As one of the third-year student states, she has never contacted a lecturer since she started studying at UNISA. She states that she does not even know who her lecturers are; all the information she needs is available on the internet.

## **4.9 Summary of the hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

**H i: Politeness strategies used by instructors or lecturers affect the learning outcomes in an ODL environment.**

**Results: ACCEPTED**

**H ii: Politeness in language and email communication affects the learning outcomes in an ODL environment.**

**Results: ACCEPTED**

**H iii: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents, use appropriate politeness strategies may improve learning outcomes.**

**Results: ACCEPTED**

**H iv: Teachers who, as pedagogical agents, use appropriate politeness strategies improve learning outcomes by promoting learner motivation, collaboration and academic compliance.**

**Results: ACCEPTED**

## **4.10 Conclusion**

As may be perceived from both the quantitative results and the qualitative findings of the research study, the challenges that ODL students face within HE institutions are indeed complex. These findings do not exclude f-2-f students, as their feedback has been captured as well. The findings show that the English language by and large lives up to students' desires and expectations. The study shows that incorporating language skills and compliance with policy within an ODL or f-2-f learning environment needs to

be planned and arranged well in advance. The negative impression of students about effective and compelling instruction within ODL environments may be credited to the hypothesis test.

Pedagogical agents and learner motivation and compliance are other issues which are assessed negatively. This may be a direct result of the time limitation in the synchronous courses, as such courses are the main chance students have to obtain feedback from their lecturers. Assignments, evaluation methods and explanations of students' obligations are scrutinised by a large number of students. The study has also identified the view that politeness does not depend on the language used and the first language does not matter particularly, although a good number tend to view the expression of politeness in the native language as commonly and largely understood, and this may not be the same with English. Nonetheless, the language communication strategies of pedagogical agents play a big role in learner motivation and compliance.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate whether isiZulu mother-tongue and non-mother-tongue speakers in the Department of African Languages at UNISA, an ODL higher education institution, show politeness or not, by examining their forms of communication. Accordingly, this study investigated politeness in terms of language strategies, email communications, pedagogical agents, academic collaboration and compliance among isiZulu mother-tongue and non-mother tongue speakers within the said environment.

This study is benchmarked against a few studies where subjects have either received polite tutorial feedback that has promoted the students face and mitigated facial threat, or received direct feedback that has disregarded the students' face. In this chapter, the researcher provides an overview and a descriptive analysis of selected topics within this research by summarising the findings in terms of the aims outlined in chapter one. The previous chapters have dealt with the presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of the data. The researcher presents theoretical and empirical conclusions as well as the overall conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research into this area in this chapter.

Chapter one formed the introduction to the thesis and outlined the contents of the thesis. Chapter two presented the literature review. It examined various studies conducted earlier in relation to this topic. Although a few researchers were identified who looked at and discussed politeness among the Zulu people, none of these looked specifically at language and interaction; rather, they were looking at *isihlonipho sabafazi*. In other words, most of the studies conducted on politeness in the Zulu culture tended to focus on politeness research in regard to gender and were based on researchers such as Luthuli (2007). The contribution made by Rawlinson (1999) on politeness was based on both the first and the second language when requesting and

apologising in various circumstances. The work of Blum-Kulka et al. (1986) has also contributed a great deal to the field of politeness among the Zulu people, in particular and culture in South Africa in general. Another researcher whose work had relevance for the current study was De Kadt (1998), as her work was based on Zulu society and its inherent hierarchy. For the researcher to understand the student-lecturer relationship it was deemed important to know what De Kadt (1998) had stated about posture, gesture and gaze in relation to politeness between students and lecturers. Ultimately, the researcher realised that De Kadt's (1998) three important aspects of communication would only be relevant and could only be applied during contact sessions and not in an online environment.

On the other hand, theory on politeness was discussed in depth, based on the work of Grice (1989), Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) (see section 2.2.2). Apart from these authors, other theorists were discussed briefly as their contributions had no real effect on the study or could not be applied to this study. For example, the issue of FTA was not specifically analysed since the analysis conducted for this study was based on an online environment, whereas FTA could only really be applied in analyses conducted within a f-2-f environment. Although the main focus of this study was politeness, the speech act theory was also utilised in addition to the politeness theory for the purpose of analysis.

Chapter three focused on methods of data collection. Mixed method data collection was utilised to identify the different politeness forms used by students towards their lecturers and the extent to which these were used. Questionnaires containing closed-ended items were administered to collect quantitative data while open-ended questions were posed in qualitative research interviews (as elaborated on in section 3.3). However, most of the qualitative data utilised was collected from the myUnisa discussion forums and email discussions provided by lecturers.

Chapter four presented the framework upon which the research was based. Predicated on the theories, this study found that lecturers used politeness strategies and techniques in their expressions with a specific end goal, namely to gain respect and compliance from students. By utilising politeness in language, the students generally consented to their instructions. It was also mentioned that high politeness language usage at any given point could result in compliance, irrespective of whether

it emanated from students to lecturers or from TAs/lecturers to students. Supported by various authors mentioned in chapter two of this thesis, requests or comments (solicitations or articulations) addressed to the students that occurred with high politeness would inspire positive feelings at that point, which would result in compliance on the part of the students. At the same time, requests or comments made to students with low politeness would elicit negative feelings and consequently result in resistance.

The examination of the theory indicates that, when instructors make requests in a polite way, it inspires positive feelings in students which will then influence their compliance intention and expectation. By contrast, abrupt and rude expressions are found to summon negative feelings (e.g., outrage) which, at that point, cause resistance. The above clarification applies to both lecturers and students. If a student demonstrates willingness to be helped from the start, even when the wording of the request is impolite, it will inspire positive feelings in the lecturers who then are polite in their response. To this end, it can be assumed that the politeness strategies of students and lecturers in HE, particularly in ODL, are signified by both positive and negative politeness with different capacities and functions, each of which plays an important role in the theories of politeness.

It is also important to remember that this study associates inter-language pragmatics and speech act research with ODL correspondence. It has analysed the way in which mother-tongue and non-mother-tongue speakers plan their communications that take place between lecturers and students. In other words, the use of emails in ODL enables the initiators to plan and change messages before sending them, in this way managing the chance to alter the text for linguistic use and mechanics as well as for pragmatic clarity and politeness.

Finally, it should be noted that the constructive feedback encouraged through emails remains at the discretion of the lecturer or TA. Conversely, lecturers are under no obligation to grant a request for an extension, say for assignments, as it is the student who is in contravention of the course policy with regard to deadlines for submission.

## 5.2 Research findings

The study has established that the use of emails can indeed lead to communication challenges because of the absence of the prompts, verbal signals and input that people typically have in up close and personal experiences. The literature reveals that it is harder to interface our message to reference focuses during email correspondence. For instance, parts of a past analysis cannot rapidly be drawn into the current email or to clear up what we need to say. In addition, we cannot use non-verbal communication or tone of voice to show what we mean. As a rule, email communication may induce misconceptions among those included in building meaning in an online domain. Successful communication is created and maintained by developing importance through dialogue (Bakhtin, 1993). The way in which Bakhtin has conceptualised dialogic interaction demonstrates the significance of building meaning through the exchange to maintain powerful communication (Bakhtin, 1993). As Bakhtin (1993) states, everyone whether scholar or not, speaker or not, is given an opportunity to raise their concerns. The question is how.

The research has established that many email writers do not know how to accomplish suitable levels of politeness, keeping in mind that the end goal is to produce compelling email discourse. As mentioned previously, there is a lot of doubt in relation as to how to approach the writing of emails, whether to approach it directly or indirectly, the format to be used and the language. All of these issues have an effect on students who are not trained on how to communicate in an online environment. To address this problem in some part, a few guidelines on maintaining politeness in email communication can be found in section 4.5.

The study has found that compelling and polite email correspondence is also a concern of the online language of educators and students. These days there is an expanding stream of email messages between second language students and their lectures in numerous colleges and universities worldwide because of an expansion in computer-mediated communication and e-learning. The most widely recognised correspondence channel between educators and their overseas students is emailing. This is true for UNISA as well as for any other ODL institution that uses online tools. Despite this, many college lecturers/TAs and second language students are not

properly prepared in the effective use of email or communicative tools, nor have they been taught how to deal with the interpersonal flow of the medium (Murphy, 2006).

The study has shown that individuals have a tendency to be more straightforward and less polite in closed connections than they are at a distance. It has been observed that students who depict their association with a tact maxim state: "Minimise the expression of beliefs which imply cost to others; maximise the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to others." The first part of this maxim supports Brown and Levinson's (1978) negative politeness of limiting the burden, and the second part mirrors positive politeness where the listener's needs and wants are taken care of.

The study has observed that polite communication strategies are more conducive to language learning. Techniques, if introduced properly, can help pedagogical agents in improving politeness communication strategies.

The study also found that politeness is vital in email correspondence, particularly between individuals from different societies and cultures. The application of politeness methodologies, both positive and negative, is observed to be imperative when considering face perspectives for both sender and receiver. These incorporate phonetic expressions that advance solidarity between sender and beneficiary, and demonstrate thoughtfulness and enthusiasm for the other. As seen from the consequences of this investigation, the idea of socially distinctive others in email correspondence may incorporate such things as giving a full title for location and utilising custom as a part of a dialect. This investigation additionally demonstrates that individuals from various social backgrounds, with particular reference to isiZulu speakers, have different perceptions in their email correspondence.

A level of inconvenience may likewise be experienced by socially diverse factors when the email dialect shows too direct a style; formality is not used when greeting and cultural awareness is not considered. A few societies lean towards irregular communication styles from ambiguous beneficiaries, particularly for the discourse demonstration of requests which might be naturally face threatening (Ma, 1996) such as of cultures that lean towards casualness, explicitness and quickness (Baron, 2001). However, this study shows such elaborate qualities are not as all-inclusive as we may think. Along these lines, email correspondents should be particularly cautious when



choosing the level of convention, straightforwardness and length if their intercultural correspondence is to be viable.

The study established that politeness strategies and learning outcomes were conclusive, as they were linked in many ways. It provided some insight into the way in which politeness could be applied within the various HE contexts and respective first languages or any online module in an ODL environment within HE. The study found that there was a gap between the feedback provided to students by lecturers and what students actually expected from their lecturers. Thus, the feedback, the language usage and the message on the feedback were not considered enough by the students. What could help was providing a platform for discussion at the beginning of each semester that could bring the two parties together, the lecturer and the student, to discuss each other's expectations in ODL.

The results showed that giving written corrective feedback to the students in the intermediate level of proficiency on their written work had a positive effect. It proved that the students found it useful to receive some feedback on their writing ability in the form of a correction from their lecturers. The results showed that they pondered their incorrect structures since they tried to do better on the succeeding tasks.

The results of this study may assist lecturers in answering the on-going question of the necessity of giving students written corrective feedback on their written output. Several factors are at work here such as the student's proficiency level, the objective of the classroom within an ODL and whether language fluency is important. In spite of being a specific decision, depending on several factors mentioned above, policy-makers and course designers can make use of the findings discussed here to help them improve their courses.

In summary: detailed specific feedback, which focuses mainly on a specific student's work rather than general feedback to the whole group, is very important and must be provided to students unless a similar mistake has been made by most students. Furthermore, for the above to happen in an ODL institution, including UNISA, the department concerned should have the correct lecturer or TA to student ratio. The benefit of this will be thorough feedback from lecturers or TAs to students, which will improve students' marks and performance. If evaluative feedback is used, such as

grading the students, it must include some type of encouragement and guidance on how to improve their work, where their work is lacking and what is needed to improve.

This thesis sheds new light on pedagogical agent design. It steers the agent research away from the traditional way of applying the media equation, which focuses on making agents look human, to a media equation application, which focuses on making agents behave according to the social role of human tutors.

Brown and Levinson's (1978) politeness theory holds that, even though the use of politeness is universal, the level of politeness depends on the social distance and relative power that exists between the speaker and hearer as well as the culture in which they live. In the studies presented in this thesis, the level of politeness in feedback dialogue is based on ratings from samples from the general population. The judgements from this sample represent and consider the social distance and relative power between a lecturer or tutor and a student. Thus, the politeness strategies presented in this thesis reflect only the social norm and culture in this context. In future, politeness research should involve other cultures or be between parties whose social distance and relative power may be different from those of this study and in which the use of politeness strategies must take into account culture and relationship variables. For example, in an intelligent tutoring system where a pedagogical agent (lecturer/tutor) is designed to be a friend to the student, the politeness level in the pedagogical agent's feedback can be much lower due to the shorter social distance between the pedagogical agent and the student compared to a standard tutor-student relationship.

In the studies presented in this thesis, the duration of the interaction between the pedagogical agents and the students was relatively short. So, this study has found that the social distance and relative power between the pedagogical agent and student does not change over the course of the interaction unless the student is an active student who requires a lot of attention from the pedagogical agent. The level of politeness used in the feedback remains within a certain range. However, for applications where users interact with the system for a longer period, the use of politeness strategies should be adapted to the progression of the relationship between the student and the pedagogical agent.

The findings have also shown that the use of politeness strategies needs to adapt to individual differences as well. For students with relatively lower task ability, proper use of politeness can contribute to better learning results. However, for students with relatively high task ability, the effect of politeness strategies may be less pronounced. This, perhaps, is because the student with higher task ability values the efficiency of the feedback relatively more. Less use of politeness strategies and more direct feedback can be considered more efficient and preferable. On the other hand, for students with higher task ability, their ability to accurately judge their own performance is higher than those with lower task ability. Hence, some politeness strategies aimed at boosting self-efficacy may be less effective for students with higher task ability.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Predicated on the research findings above, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

With regard to language communication within an ODL environment, for every language or communication module there is a need to explain politely and explicitly on which aspects of a language or communication the module will focus in the tutorial letter or welcoming page so as to avoid misunderstanding and to establish rapport. If such things are explicitly explained to mother-tongue and non-mother-tongue speakers of isiZulu or any other language, confusion can be avoided. Given that some students feel strongly about their own language, if the tutor is impolite, conflict may ensue. At times it may also lead to the speakers of the language acting differently or being intolerant towards second language speakers, especially when errors in grammar are involved.

During the course of the semester it is imperative for a lecturer or tutor of a language to identify students who receive lower marks and establish whether, in the dissemination of information, the individual is not polite and explicit enough to non-mother-tongue speakers of isiZulu or any other language. It is imperative then that the lecturer or tutor finds a way of helping those students in terms of communication.

When students are impolite in their interaction with the lecturer or tutor it is the latter's responsibility as an instructor to establish why students are impolite and correct the

behaviour in a respectful and understanding way. It is the quintessential role of the lecturer to maintain rapport with his/her students for the sake of effective learning and polite behaviour.

To advance student compliance, it is prudent for lecturers/TAs, despite their role-related power and control over students, to be extremely well mannered in their compliance-gaining requests and to avoid the use of intense, controlling and face-threatening language. Such considerations can stimulate positive feelings in students which lead to compliance and other fruitful results.

In addition, to understand the role of language in HE, this study has further looked at the impact of lecturers' politeness in requests on students' positive emotions, certain feelings and compliance intention. The findings demonstrate that instructors' demands and the way they are phrased directly affect the compliance intention of students, mediated by positive feelings. Given that positive feelings are imperative in provoking the required practices and responses, future studies could consider investigating more semantic and logical elements that trigger positive feelings in order to promote positive results in an ODL environment.

In relation to the results and findings of this study, it may be suggested that lecturers and writers, curriculum advisors and department heads should consider incorporating ideas of politeness into the first-year curriculum. These could be included in a module that deals with academic writing at first-year level so as to minimise misunderstandings that may lead to students' failing at a later stage.

In the ODL setup, students need to have access to culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy that is focused on their experiences, interests and need-to-know, and that is designed to maximise learning. This means providing complex, hands-on learning experiences in low-threat/high-challenge contexts as well as opportunities for active processing. The module that has been suggested in the previous paragraph may help students to link their previous lives with the new mature, current study life. This is in line with Bromley and Apple's (1998) view. They suggest a pedagogy of confidence as the best tool to promote support for students and help them perform well in a classroom environment. This tool uses the science of learning

to promote ways of cultivating high performance, also referred to as a high operational practice.

The formula used is:

Learning (L) = [Understanding (U) + Motivation (M)]\* [Confidence (C) + competence (c)].

However, this formula is not being used as it should be. The above formula further implies that lecturers should build on students' strengths and have a good relationship with them while stimulating their performance and so forth.

For most lecturers/TAs in the ODL environment, not being able to follow the above-mentioned formula, could be because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the number of students exceeds the number the lecturers/TAs can handle. Thus, the researcher suggests a formula that might help lecturers/TAs at UNISA to be able to adopt Bromley and Apple (1998) formula in its entirety:

Efficiency of Instructor (EI) = Semester (S) / number of students per semester per instructor (NS).

This formula simply means that the more students a lecturer/TA has per semester, the less the chances of performing effectively. This formula should be considered in the ODL environment, as it affects the throughput rate at the university and the quality of its offerings.

#### **5.4 The proposed framework**

The subject of this research involved an understanding of current research in four areas: politeness, the language of communication, pedagogical agents, and learner motivation and compliance. The intersection of these four areas revealed an area in need of research, especially in the ODL environment.

Figure 5.1 shows how this study is positioned at this intersection of the interrelationship. Figure 5.1 also summarises and highlights the interconnectedness of the major fields of research in this study that have guided the data collection process.

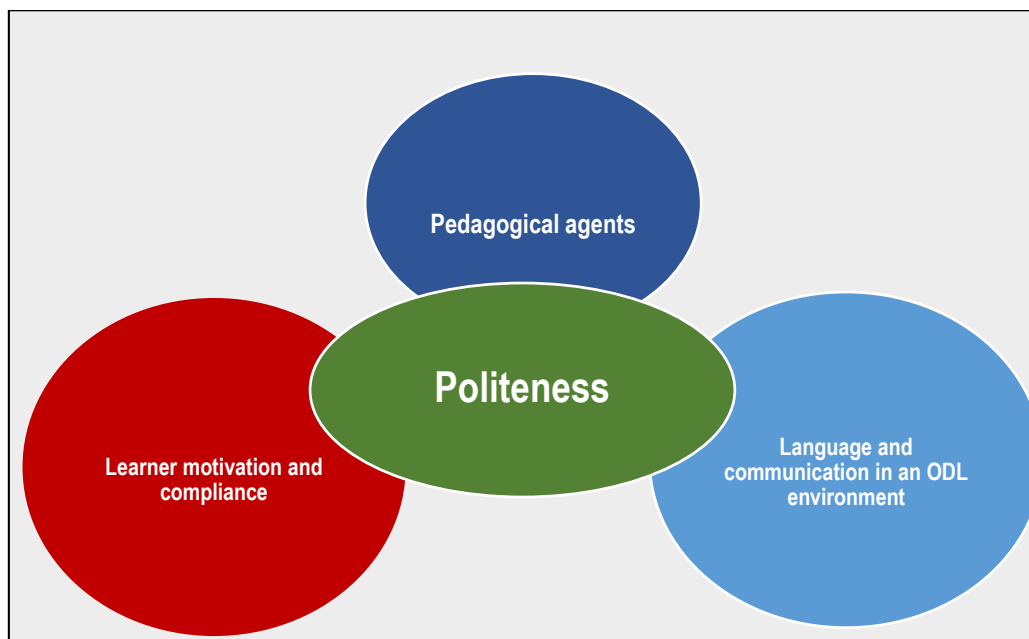


Figure 5.1: Connection of fields of research in this study (Source: Own adaptation)

The shaded area in green at the intersections in figure 5.1 indicate overlaps between the three areas. The other areas, being learner motivation and compliance, language and communication in an ODL environment and pedagogical agents, show that the centre intersection of all four bodies represents linguistic politeness which is the focal component within the context of communication in an ODL environment and which impacts positively on teaching and learning outcomes.

The study observed the proposed framework to be exceptionally valuable in portraying the key learning of ODL students within HE, which included aspects of learning and methodologies, politeness, language and communication, motivation and compliance of students as well as the role of pedagogical agents. Despite the fact that the study discovered certain issues concerning the framework (Rose, 2012), it was found that the level of non-compliance among students, as linked to language, strategies and politeness within the HE ODL environment, provided specialist knowledge on the struggles within ODL. Self-control additionally gave the researcher the language to classify and examine the issues confronted by the ODL student, with the issues confronted by individuals in an entire exhibition of circumstances secured by the umbrella of self-direction learning. It is, therefore, clear that the relationships and

interconnectedness of the variables studied are crucial elements of the ODL learning environment that should be addressed so that the role of HE institutions can be enhanced.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The conclusions drawn from the analysis show that there is evidence that there is politeness between the students and lecturers in an online module of African Languages at UNISA. Although we cannot argue that some students lack an understanding of what politeness is and when it should be shown, we cannot say the same for lecturers/TAs. Lecturers and TAs are in a position of authority and have knowledge of what is considered politeness and what is not; they have a choice in whether or not they will be polite.

This study has further disclosed that not all the blame should be placed on lecturers/TAs in HE ODL, as the interaction between lecturers or TAs and students is far less in an ODL environment than in a f-2-f institution. The students in an ODL environment have to do most of the work, have to be hungry for knowledge and have to be able to initiate work and ask questions when necessary – far more so than in a f-2-f institution. Failure to do so will result in a student failing.

If comparing the two institutions, in ODL there is a social distance between the students and lecturer in which the power is shifted to the student to be able to control his/her own studying and future. This differs from the f-2-f institution, as the power shifts from the student to the lecturer as the one who dominates the learning environment. Brown and Levinson (1978), as stated in section 2.4.2.4, demonstrate that whoever holds the power holds the will; those who have less power are inclined to be politer to those with more power. This does not necessarily mean that students in ODL use their power to control lecturers but it does mean that the students hold the power to actually control their own studying and progress.

The issue of social distance between participants in ODL does not affect students that much. As demonstrated by one student in chapter four, politeness is politeness, no matter who you are. As an African child or an adult we were taught to always act politely. Whether or not there is a social distance and difference in power between people, politeness must always be portrayed. However, the study further

demonstrates that, if the lecturer makes a habit of being polite while motivating students, students tend to enjoy the course and be compliant.

## **5.6 Recommendations for further research**

This study aimed at examining the effect of lecturers'/TAs' politeness on students' positive emotions/attitudes, academic collaboration and compliance among predominantly isiZulu mother-tongue students within an ODL environment in HE. Previous sections showed the effect of lecturers' and students' politeness in a learning environment specifically in an ODL institution. They further showed the extent to which both the lecturer and the student understood politeness.

Future studies might look at a comprehensive range of students, including postgraduate students from a variety of academic fields of study and language backgrounds as well as students whose computer experience most likely began at a much earlier age than that of fresh undergraduate students. If conceivable, studies could be undertaken longitudinally in the way that Chen (2007) had carried out her case study to gain an understanding of how students might alter and adapt their language in email communications to their lecturers over the course of several semesters. If ethical hurdles could be overcome, it would be meaningful to study email messages sent to different faculty members to investigate how faculty, gender, age and field of study might influence students' politeness in email messages.

Furthermore, future studies could attempt to examine polite requests, including an analysis of supportive moves (i.e., standard email elements) in addition to politeness devices discussed in chapter two. A more comprehensive representation of email politeness could emerge if the presence or absence of greetings and signatures as well as the nature of the "virtual 'envelope'" were examined.

Also, in order to triangulate the descriptions of language and email politeness aspects, research should survey university faculties for their impressions of various email messages to substantiate insights into what contributes to email politeness (or lack thereof) in institutional discourse.

On the issue of patterning language and pedagogy, further research might focus on pedagogical intervention and investigate what type of instruction (explicit, implicit,



awareness-raising) might be effective in helping students of different language groups compose polite and effective email messages to their lecturers. Aspects such as the proficiency level, amount of input and practice, length of exposure in the target culture and academic environment as well as pragmatic transfer could be controlled to determine optimal intervention. Conceivably, as emails become as commonplace as the telephone, institutional standards will become more solidified and ODL teaching resources aimed at an academic audience will include email communication as a regular course component. As a result, lecturers may eventually no longer have to include rules for email etiquette in their syllabi.

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## **ANNEXURE A: REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

Department of African Languages  
P.O Box 392, UNISA, 0003  
012 429 2447

### **Request to participate in a research project**

My Name is Owen Jabulani Nene, an African Language Doctoral student at the University of South Africa, conducting a study; "Investigating politeness among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in higher education- open distance learning environment". The aim of this study is to explore politeness shown by lecturers and students during tuition and student support conversation with the objective of promoting polite interactions among isiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in South African higher education. This project will be conducted under supervision of Prof D E Mutasa and Prof M Mojapelo.

To complete this study, I need a few students' and lecturers' participant's to fill in the questionnaire provided below. It will take approximately 10-20 minutes. In this study I vow to keep anonymity by replacing your name with the letters. Personal details revealed in this study will be kept secret at all the time. Furthermore, you are allowed to withdraw from answering any question or to withdraw from this study at any time. It is understood that you are not under any obligation to complete and participate in this study. However, your volunteering effort will be highly appreciated.

Should you wish to obtain a copy of this research finding, it will be made available to you on request. You can contact the researcher on the above-mentioned address.

.....  
Signature (participants)

.....  
Date

O Nene (012 249 2447)  
Researcher

D E Mutasa  
Supervisor (012 429 8248)

M L Mojapelo  
Co-Supervisor

## ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PHASE 1 (ENGLISH)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Male /female</b>	<b>Student / lecturer (TA)</b>
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Age Range</b> (18-24) (25-34) (35-44) (45-54) (55 or older)	<b>No of years in this institution</b>

**1. When communicating with your isiZulu lecturer or a student by using your Phone which language do you use?**

--

**2. When communicating with your isiZulu lecturer or a student by using an email which language do you use?**

--

**3. When communicating with your isiZulu lecturer or a student in a face-to-face interaction which language do you use?**

--

**4. Why do you choose the above mentioned language/s in 1?**


**5. Why do you choose the above mentioned language/s in 2?**


**6. Why do you choose the above mentioned language/s in 3?**


**7. In your specified language are there any written / spoken rules of communication that you know of? If yes, please explain.**


**8. Do you think lecturers or students follow those rules of communication, when communicating?**


**9. How do you feel if a person is being impolite to you?**


**10. How do you feel if a person is being polite to you?**


**11. Which acts or gestures do you think represent being polite/respectful when communicating with your lecturer / student by email?**


**12. Which acts or gestures do you think represent being polite/respectful when communicating with your lecturer / student by sms?**


**13. Which acts or gestures do you think represent being polite/respectful when communicating with your lecturer / student by phone?**


**14. Which acts or gestures do you think represent being polite/respectful when communicating with your lecturer / student in a face-to face interaction?**


**15. Which acts or gestures do you think represent being polite/respectful when communicating with your lecturer / student through signs and gestures?**


**16. Do you think your lecturer / student exercise the polite/respectful acts and gestures when communicating with you? Please elaborate:**


**17. How do you expect your lecturer / student to interact with you in the course of a lecture?**


**18.How do you expect your lecturer / student to interact with you when using email?**


**19.How do you expect your lecturer / student to interact with you when using communication tools (e.g: MyUnisa or Groupwise)?**


**20.How do you expect your lecturer / student to interact with you using sms?**


**21.Please add any comments you may have with regards to politeness and communication that promotes rapport between the lecturer and the student?**


**PART B TO BE TO BE ANSWERED BY LECTURERS ONLY**

**22.How do you feel when a student just picks a chair and sits in your office without you offering him/ her a seat ?**


--

**23. How do you feel if a student comes late in your class and just go straight to sit without apologising? Why do you feel like that?**


**24. How do you feel if an isiZulu student comes to class dressed inappropriately?**


**25. How do you feel if any other student comes to class dressed inappropriately?**


**26. How do you feel if an isiZulu student addresses you by your name? Why?**


**27. How do you feel if a non-isiZulu student addresses you by your name? Why?**


**28. Do you consider your students to be impolite when using Mxit/ Tsotsi/ mixed language, when communicating with you?**




**PART C TO BE TO BE ANSWERED BY STUDENTS ONLY**

**29.How do you feel if a lecturer comes late to class and does not apologise? Why do you feel like that?**


**30.How do you feel if a lecturer does not respond to any of your correspondence whether by email, sms, or face-to-face? Why do you feel like that?**


**31.How do you feel if an isiZulu Lecturer comes to class dressed inappropriately?**


**32.How do you feel if a non-isiZulu Lecturer comes to class dressed inappropriately?**


## ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PHASE 1 (ISIZULU)

Usuku	Ubulili	Ungumfundi/Ungumfundisi
Igama lesikhungo semfundo ephakeme	Iminyaka	Uneminyaka emingaki kulesi sikhungo semfundo ephakeme?
	(18-24) (25-34) (35-44) (45-54) (55 kuyaphezulu)	

**1. Uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho wesiZulu noma omunye umfundi ngomakhalekhukhwini, usebenzisa luphi ulimi?**


**2. Uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho wesiZulu noma omunye umfundi nge-imeyili, usebenzisa luphi ulimi?**


**3. Uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho wesiZulu noma omunye umfundi ubuso nobuso, usebenzisa luphi ulimi?**


**4. Kungani ukhetha ukusebenzisa lolu limi/lezi zilimu ozibale kumbuzo (1) ?**


**5. Kungani ukhetha ukusebenzisa lolu limi/lezi zilimu ozibale kumbuzo (2)?**


**6. Kungani ukhetha ukusebenzisa lolu limi/lezi zilimu ozibale kumbuzo (3)?**


**7. Olimini lwakho, ingabe ikhona yini imithetho emayelana nokuxhumana ebhaliwe noma ekhulunywayo oyaziyo? Uma impendulo yakho kungu yebo, sicela uchaze.**


**8. Ngokucabanga kwakho, ingabe abafundisi noma abafundi bayayilandela yini leyo mithetho ebekelwe ukuxhumana uma bexhumana?**


**9. Uzizwa kanjani uma umuntu ebonisa ukungakuhloniphi?**


**10. Uzizwa kanjani uma umuntu ekuhlonipha?**


**11. Iziphi izenzo noma izimpawu ocabanga ukuthi ziveza inhlonipho uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho/nomunye umfundi nge-imeyili?**


**12. Iziphi izenzo noma izimpawu ocabanga ukuthi ziveza inhlonipho uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho/nomunye umfundi ngomqhafazo?**


**13.** Iziphi izenzo noma izimpawu ocabanga ukuthi ziveza inhlonipho uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho/ nomunye umfundi ngomakhalekhukhwini?


**14.** Iziphi izenzo noma izimpawu ocabanga ukuthi ziveza inhlonipho uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho/ nomunye umfundi ubuso nobuso?


**15.** Iziphi izenzo noma izimpawu ocabanga ukuthi ziveza inhlonipho uma uxhumana nomfundisi wakho/nomunye umfundi ngokusebenzisa izimpawu noma izenzo?


**16.** Ngokucabanga kwakho, umfundisi/umfundi usebenzisa ukuxhumana okunenhlonipho yini uma exhumana nawe? Chaza kabanzi:


**17.** Ulindela ukuthi umfundisi/umfundi axhumane kanjani nawe ngesikhathi sokufunda?


**18.** Ulindela ukuthi umfundisi/umfundi axhumane kanjani nawe uma nisebenzisa i-imeyili?


**19.** Ulindela ukuthi umfundisi/umfundi axhumane kanjani nawe uma nisebenzisa amathuluzi okuxhumana (isibonelo:UMyUnisa)?


**20.** Ulindela ukuthi umfundisi/umfundi axhumane kanjani nawe uma nisebenzisa umqhafazo?


**21.** Sicela unezezele ngemibono ongaba nayo ephathelene nenhlonipho kanye nokuxhumana, egqugquzela ubudlelwano obuhle phakathi komfundisi nomfundi?


Ingxenye B iphendulwa abafundisi kuphela

**22.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundi ezithathela isihlalo ahlale phansi ehhovisi lakho ngaphandle kwemvume?


**23.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundi efika emva kwesikhathi endlini yokufundela, asuke azihambele ayohlala phansi ngaphandle kokuxolisa? Kungani uzizwa kanjalo?


**24.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundi wesiZulu engena endlini yokufundela engagqokile ngokufanelekile?


**25.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundi noma ngabe yimuphi engena endlini yokufundela engagqokile ngokufanelekile?


**26.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundi wesiZulu ekubiza ngegama lakho? Kungani uzizwa kanjalo?


**27.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundi ongasifundi isiZulu ekubiza ngegama lakho? Kungani uzizwa kanjalo?


Ingxenye C iphendulwa abafundi kuphela

**28.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundisi efika emva kwesikhathi endlini yokufundela engaxolisi? Kungani uzizwa kanjalo?


**29.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundisi engaphenduli imizamo yakho yokuxhumana naye nge-*imeyeli*, ngomqhafazo noma ngobuso nobuso? Kungani uzizwa kanjalo?


**30.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundisi wesiZulu eza endlini yokufundela egqoke ngokungafanelekile?


**31.** Uzizwa kanjani uma umfundisi ongasifundisi isiZulu eza endlini yokufundela egqoke ngokungafanelekile?


## ANNEXURE D: QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRES

Section A: 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION			
<i>Please tick the correct box ✓ and complete the required sections:</i>			
1)	<b>Gender:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female		
2)	<b>Age:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> under 25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26 – 35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36 – 45 <input type="checkbox"/> 46 – 55 <input type="checkbox"/> 55+ years		
3)	<b>Language background:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Native Isizulu speaking <input type="checkbox"/> English is my second/or other language		
4)	If English is <i>not</i> your native language, which language is?		
5)	How long has writing emails been part of your coursework?		
6)	Do you ever write emails for study purposes in languages other than English? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> If YES, in which language(s) do you write them?		
Section B: 2. POLITENESS			
<i>Please tick the correct box ✓ and complete the required sections:</i>			
1	In general, do you think you express politeness <b>differently</b> in your email Communications with unknown receivers compared to your email communications with people you know?  If YES, how do you express politeness differently?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
2	In your opinion, do you ever perceive a <b>lack</b> of politeness in the emails you receive from staff or students  ? If YES, in what way?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
3	In general, how do you <b>show</b> politeness in your email communications?		

### 3. Section C: LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Please read every statement carefully and choose the responses (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tell how true of you the statement is. There is no right or wrong answers. Just answer as accurately as possible.

**1—never or almost never true of me**

**2—usually not true of me**

**3—somewhat true of me**

**4—usually true of me**

**5—always or almost always true of me**

Number	Questions	Choices
Q1	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q2	I notice my English mistakes and I use that information to help me do better.	1 2 3 4 5
Q3	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q4	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q5	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q6	I look for people I can talk to in English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q7	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q8	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	1 2 3 4 5
Q9	I think about my progress in learning English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q10	I give myself a reward when I do well in English.	1 2 3 4 5
Q11	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	1 2 3 4 5



## Section D. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

When communication electronically, I prefer;

Please mark with **X** in the relevant box.

Questions	Contents	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1)	The teacher/ TA/TA just needs to write down the structure and the key words of the sentence instead of the whole one in ...							
2)	The sentence feedback should be related with students' daily life.							
3)	The sentence should be interesting and humorous.							
4)	Quite simple words should be used in the sentence.							
5)	Besides the words meaning, the sentence should also convey the culture information to us.							
6)	The sentence should help me to review the words I have learned.							
7)	The teacher/ TA should use colours for meanings when writing the sentence down.							
8)	One sentence is enough for one language point.							
9)	For one language point, teacher/ TA should use two or three sentences to explain.							
10)	The more sentences, the better, for each language point.							
11)	The meaning of the sentence should be positive, not negative.							

## Section E. POLITENESS IN EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Question s	Contents	Strongly Disagree	Somewha t Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree Somewh at	Agree	Strongly Agree
1)	Formal language was an important politeness consideration.							
2)	Correct titles were important consideration for politeness also.							
3)	Face-saving language in email texts was considered important for politeness and the absence of it was seen as impolite.							
4)	Brief email texts were seen as impolite.							
5)	Indirect language for requests was considered polite.							
6)	Modal verbs ( <i>would, could, and might</i> ) are preferred indicate politeness							
7)	Interest in the way they do things in IsiZulu is considered to be polite							
8)	The full title, address e.g., <i>Dear Madam, Mr, Mrs, Sir</i> , was an important politeness consideration							
9)	Suitable formulaic expressions e.g., <i>please, many thanks</i> was an important politeness consideration							
10)	Respectful expressions of salutations and leave taking e.g., <i>best wishes, kind regards, I look forward to hearing from you, thanks once again etc</i> were important politeness consideration							
11)	Formal language was an important politeness consideration.							

#### 4. POLITENESS AND POSITIVE ATTITUDES FROM STUDENTS.

Question s	Contents	Strongly Disagree	Somewha t Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree Somewh at	Agree	Strongly Agree
1)	The teacher/ TA made it easy for me to know the standard of the work expected.							
2)	The teacher/ TA motivated me to do my best work.							
3)	The teacher/ TA gave me a reasonable amount of time to understand the work I had to learn.							
4)	The teacher/ TA seemed to understand difficulties I might be having with my work.							
5)	The teacher/ TA normally gave me helpful feedback on how I was doing.							
6)	The teacher/ TA was good at clearly explaining new ideas.							
7)	The teacher/ TA asked me questions just about facts.							
8)	The teacher/ TA made the content of the unit interesting.							
9)	The teacher/ TA made it clear right from the start what she/he expected from students.							
10)	My teacher/ TA notices and attends to Student's wants or needs							
11)	My teacher/ TA exaggerate interest in, approval of, or sympathy with a previous message							
12)	My teacher/ TA intensify interest in the student's own contribution—Using words that make one's own comment more interesting by overstating facts							
13)	My teacher/ TA connecting with the reader by using words to indicate the reader is a member of the writer's own							
14)	My teacher/ TA seek agreement, discussing and dialogue							

15)	My teacher/ TA avoid disagreement– Saying something so as to soften disagreement, or hedging one’s opinion, or being vague so as to seem to agree							
16)	My teacher/ TA show interest in the student by starting a message with small talk, greetings, or unrelated topics							
17)	My teacher/ TA joke– Using humor to indicate shared connections with the reader							
18)	My teacher/ TA use language to show that the writer knows what the reader wants and is willing to fit his/her wants or needs in with the reader’s							
19)	Make an offer or promise and keeps his word							
20)	Give (or ask for) reasons for an imposition on the reader							

## 5. IMPACT OF POLITENESS FEEDBACK TO LEARNING, COMPLIANCE AND POSITIVE ATTITUDES

Questions	Contents	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The teacher/ TA acknowledgement/Criticizes: acknowledge that the learner action is correct or incorrect							
2.	The teacher/ TA elaborate: explains a language fact relates to learner's action.							
3.	The teacher/ TA Suggest Actions: offers hints to the student for the next step.							
4.	The teacher/ TA seemed to understand difficulties I might be having with my work.							
5.	The teacher/ TA normally Recasts: when learner makes a mistake, instead of explicitly criticizing the action, teacher/ TA simply demonstrates the correct action							
6.	The teacher/ TA Encourage Efforts: feedback aims to elicit more effort from learner							
7.	Consolation: consoles the student by saying his errors are expected.							
8.	The teacher/ TA help students build challenging but achievable goals.							
9.	The teacher/ TA creates a safe, welcoming, and non-intimidating teaching environment							
10.	The teacher/ TA inspires me through his Polite treatment in interaction							
11.	Through interactions, teacher/ TA convey that they care about their students							
12.	The feedback provides students options and relates to student life experiences and perspectives.							
13.	The teacher/ TA regularly checks students' progress throughout to determine understanding.							
14.	The teacher/ TA takes on roles of facilitating the students in playing an active part in their learning process							

15.	Students' differences in individual knowledge, styles and pace of learning are not usually accommodated by the teacher/ TAs							
16.	The teacher/ TA teaching and pedagogical practices, enable students to develop and refine critical thinking skills							
17.	The teacher/ TA works with me towards a common goal							
18.	The teacher/ TA was always friendly to me							
19.	The teacher/ TA let me make my own							
20.	The teacher/ TA praised me when I did something right							
21.	The teacher/ TA was critical of me but interesting							
22.	My relationship with the teacher/ TA was improving over time							
23.	I intend to comply with teacher/ TA request							
24.	I plan to act in ways that are consistent with teacher/ TA request							
25.	I will make an effort to do what the teacher/ TA asked me to do							

**COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

16 February 2016

2016-CHS-011 Mr OJ Nene Staff Number: 90181581
--

Dear Mr OJ Nene

**Decision: Ethics Approval**

**Name:** OJ Nene  
Department of African Languages  
Neneoj@unisa.ac.za  
0124298248

**Proposal:** Investigating politeness among IsiZulu mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers in South African Higher Education

**Qualification:** Masters of Arts (African Languages)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research period as indicated in your application.

**For expedited review:** *The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee on 6 February 2016. The decision will be tabled at the next RERC meeting on 7 April 2016 for notification/ratification.*

*The proposed research may commence with the proviso that:*

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the (Name of unit/sub-unit) Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for*



*the research participants.*

- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

**Note:**

*The reference number [top right corner of this communiqué] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee.*

Kind regards,



Professor AH Mavhandu-Mudzusi  
Chair: CHS Ethics Review Committee  
Department of History  
Tel: +27 12 429 2055  
Cell: 082 4061 2494  
Email: mmudza@unisa.ac.za



Professor RMH Moeketsi  
Executive Dean: College of Human Sciences