What about speech acts? A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my late father, Arthur Boyana Nyangiwe, who was very passionate about education and who would have been very proud of me for this great achievement.

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Writing a PhD thesis has been a challenging, yet the most fulfilling journey of my life. I learned a lot of different skills on this journey: patience and resilience being two of them.

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ABSTRACT

The current study investigates students' awareness and challenges with using speech acts and politeness in written business correspondence.

The research is motivated by the researcher's observations and experience as an English Communication Skills practitioner at the tertiary level. She found that most first-year English second language (L2) students battle with using appropriate speech acts and politeness strategies when writing business correspondence. Furthermore, students struggle with understanding both transactional and interactional functions of business letters. Yet, university graduates must develop and possess effective business writing skills to meet global communication needs because future employers expect their employees to communicate successfully internally, nationally, and internationally with people of various cultures through business correspondence.

In addressing these challenges, the study explores to what extent an understanding of isiZulu speech acts and politeness strategies can be used in developing practical written business communication skills for English business communication.

Data was collected by a mixed-method approach, using a student questionnaire, a politeness scoring task, focus group interviews and business letters on the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English and isiZulu. A total of 150 first-year tertiary students, who are isiZulu first language and English second-language speakers, participated in the study.

The study's findings show that while the students recognize the importance of politeness in business writing and have an awareness of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and isiZulu, they experience difficulties in choosing the appropriate words that show politeness and achieve the intended meaning in English. The students understand both the transactional and interactional intentions of writing business letters in isiZulu. However, they struggle with performing these language functions when writing the same letters in their L2. The study found that the L1 can be used to enhance pragmatic competence in English business correspondence and intercultural communication. Hence, in the teaching of business communication at the tertiary level, the acknowledgment of the students' existing competencies in their L1 seems to be crucial in addressing challenges with intercultural communication.

Keywords: business correspondence, speech acts, politeness, transactional intention, interactional intention, English, isiZulu, intercultural communication

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALLU	Academic Literacy and Language Unit
ANAs	Annual National Assessments
BSAE	Black South African English
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
C2005	Curriculum 2005
D	Social distance
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
DoE	Department of Education
DUT	Durban University of Technology
ECP	Extended Curriculum Programme
ECS	English Communication Skills
EFL	English first language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English as a medium of instruction
ESL	English second language
FTA	Face Threatening Act
KZN	Kwazulu-Natal
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LANGTAG	Language Plan Task Group
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LOI	Language of instruction
LOLT	Language of learning and teaching

LPHE	Language Policy for Higher Education
MUT	Mangosuthu University of Technology
NBT	National Benchmark Test
NBTP	National Benchmark Tests Project
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NMU	Nelson Mandela University
NWU	North-West University
OBE	Outcomes-based education
P	Relative power
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies
R	Absolute ranking
R	Reader
S	Speaker
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TLDC	Teaching and Learning Development Centre
UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UoT	University of Technology
W	Writer

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General introduction

This chapter explains the background to the problem that will be addressed in this study as well as the rationale for the need to conduct the study. In addition, the objectives of the study, research questions and the methods that were used to conduct the study are highlighted. Assumptions, delimitations, and terms to be used in the study are also briefly explained. The chapter outlines the scope of research and the following chapters.

1.2 Background to the study

The current study on speech acts was motivated by my observations over fifteen years as an English Communication Skills (ECS) practitioner at a University of Technology (UoT) located at Umlazi Township in the Durban Metropolitan, KwaZulu-Natal. The majority of students speak an African language as their first language (L1), and English as their second language. English is used as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in South Africa. The use of English as an LOLT puts students in this institution at a disadvantage academically because they, on average, have minimal opportunities to engage in social and cultural interactions with English mother tongue speakers (Kaburise, 2012: 37).

The site of the study predominantly caters for students from rural and township backgrounds where isiZulu and other African languages are the dominant languages (or L1). One needs to bear in mind that the transition of these academically disadvantaged students, with low levels of English literacy, to an academic and knowledge environment where English is the medium of instruction poses a major challenge to these English second language (ESL) students.

In addition, there are growing concerns about the poor quality of students' writing in schools and higher education (Chokwe & Lephalala, 2012: 1). At tertiary level students are faced with communicative disadvantages and yet they are expected to meet national academic requirements. Chokwe (2013: 377) cites that inadequate reading skills and under preparedness, a legacy from ineffective teaching of writing at school level, and a lack of English language competence, add to academic challenges. These are not unique challenges to South Africa but are global issues in many countries where English is used as a medium of instruction to English L2 speakers (Chokwe, 2013: 377; Chokwe & Lephalala, 2012: 535). In research that explored

the challenges of transitioning from school to work and tertiary institutions, one of six main findings identified was poor quality schooling at primary and secondary levels in South Africa (Spaull, 2013: 6). In addition, transition from a University of Technology to the commercial industry, where graduates are expected to have acquired competency in English written business communication, is an enormous challenge for these students. It is clear that the inadequate quality of education in the primary and secondary schooling systems results in a lack of skills and therefore, employability among the majority of black youth. This means that for most South African youth the inability to employ speech acts appropriately in English written business communication can handicap the successful transition into tertiary educational settings and consequently employment.

Effective writing skills, which incorporate the appropriate use of various speech acts in business communication, are crucial in both higher education and workplace or corporate environments. Andrews and Higson (2008: 413, 415) emphasise that oral and written communication skills are critical competencies required by graduates to function effectively in the world of work. Due to globalization, university graduates are faced with an expectation of being able to communicate both internally and externally in these business environments as well as nationally and internationally, to people of various cultures. A predominant means of communication in the workplace, and in the business world in general, is written correspondence. So, it is essential that university graduates acquire and develop proficient business writing skills, including the appropriate use of speech acts, to meet global communication needs. The acquisition of such writing skills requires a clear understanding of both transactional and interactional functions of formal business correspondence. Employers and employees write business letters to convey information and, to establish and maintain relationships, with companies and individuals they are addressing. Ranaut (2018: 32) highlights that employers nowadays look to employ graduates with excellent communication skills, especially in writing, as this proficiency assists in organizations attaining business goals. Since the main goal of business is to buy and sell goods and/or services, performing various acts such as requesting, complaining, apologising, and providing information, as well as being able to comply to instructions effectively and concisely, is an essential business skill.

Despite the emphasis on the importance of these skills, students worldwide are finding writing skills in formal environments a notable challenge. Research on the transition from school to work environments indicates that students entering the workplace struggle to adapt their writing and speaking to specific audiences (Paretti, 2006: 189). The National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) (Persky, Daane & Jin, 2003), known as the Nation's Report Card for example, also reported that American students displayed a high level of under-preparedness with regards to writing skills. In the same vein, 72 percent of grade four students scored at and below basic level, while 69 percent of grade eight students scored at and below basic level in 2002. Seventy seven percent of grade 12 students scored at and below basic level in 2002 (Persky et al, 2003: 21). Approximately a third of students in fourth grade (28%), eighth grade (31%), and 12th grade (24%) scored at, or above, proficiency levels in 2002. Only two percent in all three grades wrote at an advanced level in 2002 (ibid). Additionally, results of international and national benchmarking tests on educational achievement of primary and high school learners showed low literacy performance levels of South African learners. Reports, based on the National Benchmark Test (NBT) in 2009 and 2019, on South African universities which assessed students' levels of academic literacy proficiency, among other skills, when entering higher education indicated significant challenges to students in this regard. They revealed that very few of them were proficient in academic literacy and indicating that approximately only one-third of students entering higher education are likely to cope with the academic demands of their first-year studies.

The lack of these essential oral and written communication skills is a commonly stated concern by employers hiring graduates (Tymon, 2013: 842; Suleman, 2016: 171). The minutes of the Industry Advisory Committee Meetings, held between the institution of the site of this study and representatives from different companies which employ graduates, in 2014 and 2018 show that the industry has raised repeated concerns about graduates who cannot express themselves appropriately, in spoken and written business communication in English. Academics in schools and higher education institutions in the United Kingdom often complain about international students who do not possess adequate writing skills (Lea and Street, 1998, in Chokwe, 2013: 535). Further concerns regarding low literacy skills are reported by Munro (2003, in Chokwe, 2013: 535) and Chokwe and Lephalala (2012: 1).

This study aims to research empirically the challenge of ESL students in writing and the observed lack of pragmatic competence in the use of speech acts in written business correspondence, in the context of South Africa. In a multilingual country, like South Africa, where the use of English is dominant in all spheres of life, including education, there is a need to address this challenge by incorporating the use of African indigenous languages, which are also recognised as official languages. It heeds the call on academics and academic institutions to play a critical role in identifying the educator training needs, to assist students, in developing

written communication skills. Jurecic (2006: 6) suggests a close collaboration between secondary schools and tertiary institutions to address students' writing challenges. Likewise, Schneider and Andre (2005: 209) state that universities can play a key role in helping students develop the skills and knowledge they need to become successful writers in the workplace.

The development of language in South Africa has a long history which has seen African indigenous languages being marginalized, and going unrecognised, in official domains. That is, only English and Afrikaans were used in government and education. Following the first democratic election in 1994, efforts were made to develop and elevate the status of African indigenous languages. The South African Constitution of 1996 recognized nine indigenous South African languages as having official status alongside English and Afrikaans. The languages are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu. This Constitutional recognition was reinforced by subsequent policies such as the *Language in Education Policy* (LiEP) of 1997, revised in 2017; the *Language Bill* promulgated in 2010 and the *Language in Education Policy for Higher Education Institutions* (LPHE) of 2002 (revised in 2017).

Similarly, the Department of Education (DoE) made attempts to promote multilingualism in institutional policies and practices in public higher education institutions through the 2002 *Language Policy for Higher Education* (LPHE) and the *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions* of 1997 (revised in 2020). The LPHE (2020: 9, 13) clearly states that higher education institutions need to create conditions for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of meaningful academic discourse, as well as value these languages as sources of knowledge in the different disciplines of higher education. In heeding this call, most tertiary institutions in South Africa have made attempts to embrace the notion of developing indigenous languages through their language policies (see 2.6).

In South Africa, twenty-six years since democracy, despite official languages being accorded the same status, and in spite of numerous attempts to promote South African indigenous languages through instruction policies and practice in schools and higher education institutions, English still dominates as the language of education, international communication, a lingua franca, and a language of power in government and education. The continued dominance of English, especially in the education sector, is a big hurdle to many South African learners who form part of the approximate 80 percent of South Africans whose mother tongue is a traditional

language (Makalela, 2004: 363). Statistics South Africa's Community Survey conducted in 2016, indicated that only 8, 3 percent of the South African population spoke English as a first language. Additionally, the country has multiple varieties of English influenced by social class, race, ethnicity, level of education, age, and region (Abongdia, 2015: 473).

Research indicates that students, as writers, who use a second language in writing, face more challenges than their counterparts who write in the mother tongue. In particular, the use of English as the medium of instruction in tertiary education to English L2 speakers is not only criticised but highlighted as a global educational challenge (Dearden, 2014; Vu & Burns, 2014: 20). It has for example been found that first-year university students in South Africa show a high failure and dropout rate due to students' low levels of English proficiency not meeting the demands of tertiary education (Seabi, Seedat, Khoza-Shangase, & Sullivan, 2014: 77). The results of several studies indicate that L2 speakers of English do not possess enough pragmatic competence in using speech acts appropriately in English written business communication. They also struggle with employing appropriate speech acts and meeting politeness norms in English (Nikoobin & Shahrokhi, 2017; Goudarzi, Ghonsooly & Taghipour, 2015; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Kan, 2012; Ionel, 2011). In a world where there are growing ties with foreign countries, both corporate and cultural, business writing skills and pragmatic competency (or proficiency) are essential. The diversity of cultures, customers, clients, and business connections requires sensitivity in the use of politeness strategies in the realisation of speech acts. The use of appropriate politeness strategies augments effective and successful communication and fosters business transactions (Kan, 2012: 401). Unsuccessful politeness strategies may damage the company's corporate image. A lack of pragmatic awareness in English written business communication could lead to a communication breakdown between the writer and the reader, as readers may misunderstand the message, and writers may be perceived as uncooperative, rude, and insulting (Wijayanto, Prasetyarini, & Susiati, 2013: 188). It is, therefore, crucial for English L2 students to understand that successful communication in a target language requires not only the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but also pragmatic competence and knowledge about socio-cultural norms and conventions in realizing the speech acts. Cheng (2005, in Yoosefvand & Rasekh, 2015: 45) observes that a fundamental aspect of pragmatic competence is understanding the production of speech acts and their appropriateness in a given situation.

The current study focusses on the challenges facing students and graduates in the area of written business communication, in English. It attempts to address this problem by examining how

“cross-linguistic influence”, if any, of isiZulu and English can benefit students in business communication. It seeks to address the observed lack of pragmatic competence among students at the University that is the site of the study. The study primarily examines the use of speech acts in both English and isiZulu by English L2 learners in a tertiary institution. It seeks to explore how isiZulu politeness strategies in the use of speech acts can assist in developing practical business writing skills in the business context in English. This exploration of the transfer of politeness strategies across languages is addressed in research, for example, Carrell and Konneker (1981, in Bock & Mheta, 2013: 260), who demonstrate evidence of transfer from native (Spanish) pragmatic strategies to English. This study is also informed by the knowledge that L1 resources can be used to improve writing skills in L2 (Ahmadian, Pouromid & Nickkhah, 2016; Mgijima & Ngubane, 2018). The study deviates from the common research practices, where politeness is viewed Eurocentrically, and focuses on the richness in African politeness. This study is of the view that politeness strategies and speech acts used in both English and isiZulu can complement each other in written business communication. The study strives to develop isiZulu alongside English as an academic language in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Thus, it is an effort to embrace the diversity of languages in South Africa by not giving universal status to a language spoken by a minority (Ameka & Terkourafi, 2019: 75). Furthermore, the study bridges a knowledge gap on how L1 pragmatics can benefit business communication, a field of pragmatics which is still under-explored (Dlali, 2001: 366).

1.3 Research problem

It is noticeable that the majority of first-year students not only grapple with core linguistic competence but also with pragmatic competence in the appropriate use of speech acts, including politeness, in writing different forms of business correspondence. In this context, pragmatic competence is "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context” (Thomas, 1983: 92). This is a fundamental aspect of communicative competence which is crucial to successful written business communication in its practical application in the workplace (Wijayanto et al., 2013: 99). For instance, when writing a business letter of complaint or request, instead of using appropriate politeness strategies, students tend to use inappropriate politeness strategies which could result in a rude rather than a polite tone. The student or writer might not be aware that their language may be perceived as impolite, or be misinterpreted by the reader, resulting in ineffective communication. This miscommunication has the potential to damage relationships between writers and readers. In the long term a company can lose clients and thus lose market share. If

a non-native speaker is pragmatically incompetent in a business context, this may result in "professional failure"(Ionel, 2011: 61). Business letters aim to achieve two functions of language, namely transactional and interactional (Brown & Yule, 1983: 1). The negative consequence of students' lack of pragmatic competence in the appropriate use of speech acts, and the corresponding politeness strategies, in writing business correspondence may lead to failure to achieve these two functions of language.

As a solution, the present study examines whether the "cross-linguistic influence", if any, of isiZulu and English can be beneficial in the development of effective written business communication by merging useful resources from the two languages. It seeks to create awareness on the existing problems regarding the use of speech acts and politeness strategies and to mitigate them.

1.4 The rationale for the study

This study seeks to address the observed, practical lack of pragmatic competence among students at a UoT. The study primarily examines the use of speech acts in both English and isiZulu by ESL learners in a tertiary institution. By doing a comparative study, it seeks to explore to what extent isiZulu politeness strategies can assist in developing effective business writing skills in English. The study is motivated by the learning context at the research site where the learners have minimum contact with the target language.

Continued research on the investigation of this potential, and the development of teaching practices around such comparative studies, needs to be encouraged. This kind of research and its application may lead to student empowerment, the development of African languages as professional languages, and the constructive use of African languages as resources for teaching and learning other languages. In addition, if students can use isiZulu as a resource to improve their English business writing, they could both boost their pragmatic competence in their L2 and their appreciation for their L1 (Nyangiwe & Tappe, 2021: 52).

Several studies on the problem of English as an L2 in South Africa have already established a crisis in grammar rules, diction, and text organisation (Bembe & Beukes, 2007; Archer, 2010; Chokwe & Lephalala, 2012; Chokwe, 2013; Abongdia, 2015; Chaka, Mphahlele, & Mann, 2015). However, speech acts and politeness in African language pragmatics remain largely under-explored (Maier, 1992; Dlali, 2001; 2003). This is despite previous empirical research on speech acts and politeness in business communication conducted elsewhere having established that L2 speakers of English struggle in employing appropriate speech acts and

meeting politeness norms in English (Nikoobin & Shahrokhi, 2017; Karatepe, 2016; Goudarzi, et al, 2015; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Kan, 2012; Ionel, 2011; Vergaro, 2004; Maier, 1992).

Considering the lack of research, the present study sets out to bridge this gap of knowledge, in view of the growing international and intercultural context of business communication and the importance of written business communication in the 21st century. It reflects that communication failures, as a result of inappropriate speech acts and incorrect politeness strategies, can lead to misunderstandings, a loss of credibility and can damage a company's reputation.

It is envisaged that the findings of the study will have practical implications for the teaching of written business communication and may lead to critical reflections on the relationships between English and isiZulu politeness constructions and strategies in business communication. Further, the findings have implications for successful intercultural communication. This includes understanding differences in the use of speech acts and politeness strategies from different cultural and language orientations. Moreover, the findings of this study will hopefully be useful in creating awareness for the future planning of English L2 teaching methods in South Africa and internationally.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The main aim of the study is to investigate students' awareness and challenges on the use of speech acts, including politeness, in written business discourse. By doing a comparative study in English and isiZulu, it seeks to explore the extent to which isiZulu speech acts and politeness strategies can complement English speech acts in the development of effective written business communication skills.

In addressing the main aim, the study follows four research objectives:

- To establish the participants' awareness of the use of appropriate speech acts in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu).
- To find out whether the participants in the study have a comparable sense of politeness in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing.
- To ascertain to what extent the participants in the study are aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e. whether they understand the

intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation.

- To identify possible instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English).

1.6 Research questions

The research objectives lead to the following research questions:

- What is the participants' awareness of the use of appropriate speech acts in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu)?
- What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?
- To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation**?**
- Are there any instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?

1.7 Research design

This study employed a mixed-method design using quantitative and qualitative as well as an analysis of business letters. Quantitative data stemmed from a survey in the form of a student questionnaire as the main instrument for collecting data, and a politeness scoring task. Qualitative data was gathered through focus group interviews in order to explore perceptions and challenges regarding the use of speech acts in business writing. The research design consisted of an analysis of business letters which were written under controlled conditions in the classroom on the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English and isiZulu. The politeness scoring task was used to establish whether the students understand the intention behind the use of speech acts in English and isiZulu. It was also used to establish whether there are any convergence/divergence patterns in the participants' politeness scores. The task scores were furthermore used to assess whether there was any correlation between the participants'

responses in focus group interviews, their business letters and their politeness judgements in the politeness scoring task.

The aim of the business letter writing task was to identify the speech acts, and politeness strategies and markers used in both languages and to authenticate the results from questionnaires, focus group interviews and politeness scoring task.

1.8 Assumptions

It was assumed that the participants would benefit in developing their English business writing skills which they could then apply in the classroom and in the workplace.

It was also assumed that the targeted sample would give honest and accurate responses in both the questionnaires and focus group interviews because they had read the information sheet and consent form that assured that anonymity and confidentiality would be preserved. This would validate the findings of the study. However, this type of research utilised human subjects and therefore it was expected that the study may be affected by the *Hawthorne Effect.* This is due to the participants having an awareness that the study was being conducted for research purposes and thus they may have modified their responses when being observed. This is an unavoidable bias that the researcher tried to take into account when analysing the results.

Because the study looked into both isiZulu and English, it was assumed that all isiZulu L1 speakers who are second language (L2) learners of English would benefit from this research.

1.9 Delimitations

The study was only limited to first year students in the Marketing programme in one faculty. Only first year students, were used because it is crucial to develop students' business writing skills at entry (first year) level. English Communication Skills (ECS) is one of the core curriculum courses offered at first year level in all faculties, but Marketing students were used because it is assumed that as a result of their field of study, they may be involved in selling and promoting goods and services in business organisations once they have completed their degrees. This means that they may be using different speech acts in internal and external communication in communicating with clients and other stakeholders.

While the research included first year students who are English L2 learners, it only focused on isiZulu L1 speakers because the student population of the University is predominantly isiZulu-speaking. The research did not include students who speak other South African languages as

an L1. Therefore, the results of the study would not represent the speakers of other African languages spoken in the institution.

1.10 Scope of research

This study will lay a foundation for further studies on developing effective English business writing skills of English L2 speakers by conducting a cross-linguistic study (English/isiZulu) of speech acts in business communication. The scope of the study is first year students at a UoT in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.

1.11 Definition of terms

The term "African indigenous languages" in this study refers to ethnic or native languages spoken by Black South Africans, which are now constitutionally recognised as official languages of South Africa. These include Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu.

The term "non-standard English" in this study refers to English which may be considered by native English speakers as non-conforming to correct grammar and vocabulary criteria.

The term "appropriate", in this study, when linked with speech acts and politeness strategies, refers to their use in relation to the acceptable conventions of the target language, English.

The term "University of Technology" in this study refers to institutions (previously called Technikons) that offer a range of programmes that are vocationally, and/or professionally orientated.

1.12 Outline of the chapters

Chapter 2 briefly highlights the theoretical framework that guided the present study. It will also discuss the frameworks of politeness and impoliteness, including the concept of "face", and the Speech Acts Theory. The importance of written business communication, politeness and pragmatic competence is emphasised. Additionally, the use of English as a medium of instruction in Southern Africa is deliberated on. Language development in South Africa and the role of first language in developing a second language is explored. Finally, it reviews literature conducted locally and internationally on speech acts and politeness in written business communication.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed discussion on the research approach, the research tools, and the data collection methods that were used in order to answer the research questions informing the research. The data analysis tools that were used for this study are also explained.

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and explains the findings of the analysed data.

Chapter 5 explains the conclusions made from the findings that are presented in Chapter 4. It deliberates on the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations pertaining to areas for further research.

1.13 Summary

This chapter has outlined the background to the problem that will be addressed in this study as well as the rationale for the need to conduct the study. The objectives of the study, research questions and the methods that were used to conduct the study have been highlighted. A brief explanation of the assumptions, delimitations, and terms to be used in the study has also been given.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The predominant use of English as a medium of instruction in education to tertiary learners whose mother tongue is not English is a global challenge (Dearden, 2014; Vu & Burns, 2014: 20). While numerous attempts are being made by institutions of higher learning in South Africa to promote the use of all South African official languages, in elevating the status of the African indigenous languages which were neglected during the apartheid era, the dominance of English as a LOLT is still a prominent language problem. The continued use of a second language as a medium of instruction to learners whose mother tongue is not English has had negative effects on literacy skills beginning in the lower educational levels. This was revealed in the results of the 2006 and 2011 *Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS)* study on low literacy levels, especially in reading for South African grade four to six learners.

The language problem goes beyond just linguistic competence, that is, the knowledge of rules to produce grammatically correct sentences. Students at tertiary levels of education display a lack of pragmatic competence when using speech acts in writing different forms of business correspondence. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately, in different social situations to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context (Thomas, 1983: 92). Lack of pragmatic competence, revealed in the use of inappropriate speech acts and politeness strategies, results in pragmatic failure, and ultimately causes the reader to misunderstand the message. In business communication misinterpretation of messages may lead to failure of business transactions and thus loss of profit. The results of previous empirical research on the use of speech acts and politeness in business communication globally, predominantly indicate that second language (L2) speakers of English struggle with employing appropriate speech acts and meeting politeness norms in English when compared to first language (L1) speakers (Nikoobin & Shahrokhi, 2017; Karatepe, 2016; Goudarzi, Ghonsooly & Taghipour, 2015; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Kan, 2012; Ionel, 2011; Vergaro, 2004; Maier, 1992).

This research is further supported by the researcher's consistent observations of the challenges displayed by students, at the site of the present study, in their use of speech acts and politeness strategies in written business communication. The use of English as a lingua franca in a

multilingual country like South Africa, where even educational material is primarily written in English, perpetuates these challenges. Further, the expectations by the business world for English L2 speakers to emulate English L1 speakers, when using speech acts in English written business correspondence, poses further challenges.

Marsh (2006: 31) affirms that if the use of English as medium of instruction creates a "language problem" then it is necessary to find solutions which are workable in the classroom. My study attempts to address this assertion by exploring to what extent isiZulu (L1) politeness strategies can assist in developing effective business writing skills for application in a business context, in English (L2). This is done by looking at how speech acts like REQUEST and COMPLAINT are linguistically expressed by the students in their L2 (English) as compared to their L1 (isiZulu). This study further argues that there is a role for comparative language studies in teaching and learning English written business communication, where the first language (L1) may be used as a resource to improve graduates' business writing skills in their L2 (English). This is also reinforced in research on the role of L1 use in improving the quality of L2 learners' writing (Ahmadian, Pouromid & Nickkhah, 2016; Mgijima & Ngubane, 2018).

This study, in its focus on the use of speech acts and politeness in written business communication, is guided by two conceptual and theoretical frameworks. It is constructed around the two functions of language (Brown & Yule, 1983), and Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It is important to emphasise that speech acts and Speech Act Theory (explained in 2.3 and 2.3.1) are not the primary focus of the study but are used as a point of reference in the analysis of data. The focus of the study is on the students' awareness of, and understanding of, speech acts and politeness in the writing of business communication. Language is an inseparable part of our everyday lives. It is the main tool used to transmit messages, to communicate ideas, thoughts, and opinions.

The two functions of language identified by Brown and Yule (1983: 1) are the transactional function, which focuses on the transmission of factual information, and the interactional function, which concerns the maintenance of social relationships. Brown and Yule's (1983) theory originates in a discourse analysis of conversational oral communication, while the current study draws on further developments of the theory in written business contexts for example, (Goldkuhl & Melin 2001, Lewis & Mills 2018).

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) is based on the concept of "face". Essentially, the theory of politeness posits that individuals in any culture have both negative and positive

face (discussed in 2.2), which have the potential of being threatened by another in daily interactions. People therefore use politeness strategies to reduce these possible face threats as they interact with one another. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) provides insight into the reasons behind why people say what they do, when performing actions such as making requests, voicing complaints, or giving advice, among others. For this reason, it has more relevance for interpersonal communication research, and has implications for maintaining personal relationships. The current study has used this theory to investigate politeness strategies used to mitigate face-threatening acts in written business communication, which involves intercultural communication, as a means of maintaining social relationships in the business environment. It also identifies some of the impoliteness strategies that English second language speakers use, unconsciously, because of their lack of pragmatic competence in the second language. Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language in a way that is appropriately and contextually situated and will be explained in detail in 2.4.5. However, Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) has been criticised for its universalistic approach. Hence, this study focuses on developing effective business writing skills by accommodating cultural variability in relation to the use of speech acts and politeness.

In essence, the choice of the theoretical framework underpinning this study is driven by the reality that business letters have both transactional and interactional functions. They are written to transmit information and maintain good business relationships between the writer and the reader. At the same time, the transmission of information requires that both the writer's and the reader's face should be saved, particularly when the correspondence includes the acts of complaint and request, as these types of speech acts can be face-threatening.

This chapter is divided into eight sections. First, it explains the notion of *face* and politeness, including the frameworks of politeness and impoliteness. Second, the notion of speech acts, the categories of speech acts, and how they are realised in different cultures are explored. This is followed by the use of speech acts and politeness in written communication. The chapter also looks at the importance of effective business writing in business organisations. Next, English as a medium of instruction is discussed. Further, language development, including development of writing skills, in South Africa is discussed. The role of first language in improving writing in a second language is debated as the study is a comparative study, of the use of speech acts and politeness strategies, in isiZulu and English business writing. Lastly, various studies conducted on the use of speech acts and politeness in written business communication are highlighted.

2.2 Face and Politeness

The notion of face is fundamental to understanding politeness in social interactions. Politeness plays a crucial role in communication, by maintaining relationships and saving face, particularly across cultures, where misunderstandings may negatively affect good relationships between people. In human interaction, politeness is reflected in the use of language, and what is regarded as polite may vary between different groups, situations, and individuals (Brown & Levinson, 1987: xiii). In spite of a number of studies conducted on linguistic politeness, there is still no common, and agreed upon, definition of the term 'politeness' (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003: 1464). A review provided by Fraser (1990: 219) also shows that there is no generally accepted definition of politeness. The Oxford Learners Dictionary (online) defines politeness as: good manners and respect for the feelings of others, courtesy, the fact of being socially correct. In pragmatics politeness refers to linguistic expression of courtesy and social position. Lakoff (1989: 102) defines politeness as a means of minimizing confrontation in discourse. Politeness is a technique of maintaining a good relationship by speaking and responding in an appropriate manner, showing respect, and maintaining the hearer's face. Linguistic politeness could be described as attempts interlocutors make to maintain each other's face during an interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In line with this study, Ide (1989: 225) defines linguistic politeness as the language usage associated with smooth communication, realised,

> i) through the speaker's use of intentional strategies to allow their message to be received favourably by the addressee, and
>
> ii) through the speaker's choice of expressions to conform to the expected and/or prescribed norms of speech, appropriate to the contextual situation, in individual speech communities.

Ifechelobi (2014: 62) concedes, and posits, that linguistic politeness involves the use of discourse strategies or devices which are assessed by the other person (addressee) as maintaining harmonious relations and avoiding unnecessary conflict.

Culpeper (2011b: 2) states that politeness involves 'polite' behaviour (linguistic and non-linguistic) and that those behaviours differ according to a particular set of social norms, consisting of more or less explicit rules, which prescribe particular behaviour in a certain culture. It includes notions such as 'good manners', 'social etiquette', 'social graces' and 'minding your Ps and Qs' (Culpeper, 2011b: 3). Thus, politeness is a positive evaluation which arises when an action conforms to a socially agreed upon norm, while impoliteness or rudeness

is a negative evaluation which arises when an action conflicts with the accepted social norm. Culpeper (2011b: 2) makes an illustration of the use of the word "please" which is more typical of British than North American culture. The key issue in such a situation is the importance of culture which also influences all aspects of politeness. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan (1999: 1098-1099) have shown that the use of the word "please" is more frequently used in British English culture when compared to the North American English culture. It is used approximately twice as much in their conversations. The authors are clear that this does not mean that the American culture is less polite. The North Americans have other ways of showing politeness which are perceived as equally polite, as the word "please" is evaluated as polite in certain contexts by British English people.

It is easier to look at the term 'impoliteness' in relation to Brown and Levinson's (1987) Theory of Politeness. Impoliteness has long been a topic of research and has gained momentum within the parameters of politeness theory and debate. Despite the fact that impoliteness has developed into an independent field of investigation in politeness studies, its theories and empirical research forms an integral part of politeness theory. Like politeness, there is no agreed upon universally applicable definition of the term 'impoliteness', but the most recent definitions centre on the notion of face. Among these definitions, Culpeper (2011a: 261) defines impoliteness as the use of language or behaviour which people, in a particular context, evaluate negatively because it is in conflict with what one expects, desires or believes to be relative to the context of occurrence. As a result, the use of language or behaviour in this manner is perceived as threatening or as attacking a person's face, identity, or rights, which may lead to a negative emotional reaction.

There are several well-known and eminent theories, models, and principles about linguistic politeness in the field of pragmatics. These are, among others, Goffman's theory (1955), which introduced the concept of face, the Politeness Principle and Maxims of interaction by Leech (1983), rules of politeness by Lakoff (1975; 1989), the Cooperative Principle by Grice (1989), and Fraser's (1990) Politeness Theory which identifies four main ways of viewing politeness: the social norm view, the conversational contract view, the conversational-maxim view, and the face-saving view, and the Politeness View by Watts (2003) which focuses on the concept of (im)politeness in social interactions. The face-saving view of politeness by Fraser (1990) pays greater emphasis on the wants of every participant involved in a given interaction to be desired and their actions approved by others when using face-threatening speech acts rather than the interaction itself or the social norms of language use (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand

(2016: 29). This study will focus on the most well-known and criticised theory in the field of pragmatics, Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory on politeness. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, which is in line with Fraser's (1990) face-saving view of politeness, is relevant for this study as it is regarded as having a significant contribution to the study of speech acts, particularly those that threaten the speaker's or the hearer's face wants (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand (2016: 31). The theory looks at the linguistic forms used in softening face-threatening acts (FTAs). This study focuses on the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST, both regarded as face-threatening, as explained in 2.2.5 and 2.2.6, and politeness strategies used in mitigating the FTAs. Hence, it concentrates on negative politeness as mitigation strategies, rather than positive politeness strategies, in the analysis of business letters.

2.2.1 Politeness Theory by Brown & Levinson

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, the most influential politeness model to date, used the Speech Act Theory as its underlying notion (Zhang, Yuan, Su & Xiao, 2021: 2). The second underlying notion of their theory is that of 'face'. According to the interactional model of politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987: 61), claim that everyone has 'face', which is "the public self-image" that every person wants to claim for themselves and maintain (Brown & Levinson, 1987:61). They argue that in communication, either spoken or written, people tend to maintain one another's 'face' continuously. This term was originally used by Goffman (1967) and derives from the English folk term which is linked to the notions of being embarrassed or humiliated or 'losing face'. What needs to be borne in mind is the fact that 'face' is emotionally invested and can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and needs to constantly be attended to in interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987:61). The term 'face' is divided into two dimensions:

- positive face, which is the positive consistent personality claimed by interactants, in other words, the desire to be admired and accepted by others.
- negative face, which is the desire to preserve one's own independence, to be able to act freely and unimpeded in one's actions.

Brown and Levinson (1987: 60) contend that the speaker wants to maintain the hearer's face during an interaction. However, certain illocutionary acts are liable to damage or threaten another person's face. Sometimes the speaker may be forced to make "face-threatening acts", abbreviated as FTAs, in order to get what they want (ibid). FTAs are the acts that, by their very nature, operate contrary to the face wants of the speaker or addressee. They are determined by the context in which they are used.

2.2.2 Framework of politeness

Brown and Levinson proposed five super-strategies for performing an FTA. Depending on the degree of the threat the speaker has deliberated, they may produce a speech act using one of the following strategies:

1. *Bald on-record*: This strategy does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer's face. As a politeness strategy the FTA is performed in the most direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way possible. Hence this politeness strategy is performed in fairly specific circumstances where the danger to the addressee's face is very small. For example, the use of direct speech acts which have a clear illocutionary force, as in "Shut the door" or "Come in" or "Do sit down". This politeness strategy may be used when the speaker is has a higher social status or more power than the hearer, for example, "Stop complaining" when it is said by a parent to a child. In all these cases little face is at stake, and, more importantly, it is not the intention of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 69).

2. *Off-record*: In this strategy the FTA is performed in such a way that there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention, and the onus is on the hearer to decipher and interpret the speaker's intended meaning. In this way the speaker cannot be seen to have committed to a particular intention (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 69). For example, in saying "It's a bit hot outside" the speaker might be requesting the addressee to close a window so that the hot air does not come in or, to turn on the air conditioner. It is up to the addressee to interpret and understand the intention of this statement and comply with it. Some of the off-record strategies used are to give clues of association, presuppose, understate, overstate, use tautologies, use contradictions, be ironic, use metaphors, and use rhetorical questions.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987: 69-70) state that if the speaker decides to use a redressive action, they will attempt to minimize the threat to the addressee's face and will show in their utterance that they do not want to threaten the addressee's face. The speaker can then choose whether they will want to appeal to the addressee's *positive* or *negative face*. Thus, the speaker has a choice to minimise the FTAs by using different positive and negative politeness strategies, (3 and 4 below). A summary of the two strategies is illustrated in Chapter 3, Table 9. Speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST fall into this category as they threaten the speaker's or addressee's negative and positive face wants.

3. *Positive politeness*: the use of strategies designed to redress the addressee's positive face wants. Here, the potential face threat of an act is minimised. These strategies are applied to

fulfil the hearer's desire to be liked or acknowledged. Hence, positive politeness is approach-based in that the speaker in some way indicates that they want some of the addressee's wants. The speaker treats the addressee as a member of an in-group, a friend, or as a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked.

If the speaker decides to use the strategy of positive politeness, he will appeal to the addressee's want to relate to others, in other words the addressee's positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 69-70). The use of positive politeness strategies is an attempt by the speaker to show the addressee that they both work together with shared goals and common ground. These strategies are most effective when both the speaker and the addressee see themselves as equals or as colleagues. The use of exaggeration and showing a sense of optimism are strategies of positive politeness (Chapter 3, Table 9). Exaggeration would be shown in vocal aspects like intonation, stress and other prosodic features, and to overstate facts. Optimism is considered a positive politeness strategy because it connects with the speaker's desire to have their needs met. It also demonstrates that the speaker is trying to minimize the distance between the speaker and addressee by showing that they have common goals. The use of phrases like "look forward to", and "hope" are some of the examples of expressing optimism (Brown & Levinson. 1987: 126).

Positive politeness strategies are less face-redressive than negative politeness strategies in that they aim to 'anoint' the face of the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 70). A possible threat in using positive strategies would be when the addressee does not see the speaker as belonging to the addressee's group and may take offence. The addressee could either think the speaker is belittling them or is being sarcastic. Thus, because there is no reciprocity in the interlocutors' expectations, the illocutionary force of the utterance would be missed.

4. *Negative politeness*: the use of strategies designed to satisfy the addressee's negative face wants. Hence, negative politeness is avoidance-based. This group of strategies is used to satisfy the hearer's desire to be respected or recognised.

Some of the characteristics of negative politeness are self-effacement, respect, formality and restraint, apologies for interfering or transgressing, linguistic and non-linguistic deference, use of hedges, impersonalising mechanisms, for example, the use of softening mechanisms, indirectness, and maintaining social distance.

Thomas (1995: 150) asserts that although politeness and deference are sometimes equated, there is slight distinction between the terms. Politeness is a more general term concerned with showing consideration to others, while deference refers to the respect people show to other

people by virtue of their higher social status, greater age and so forth. Both politeness and deference can be manifested through social behaviour. Indirectness is a strategy to indicate politeness and respect for the addressee and it is used in a manner which indicates that the addresser does not wish to impose on the addressee. For example, the use of an indirect speech act "I would like to" and a politeness marker "thank you" indicate deference. Similarly, in isiZulu and isiXhosa the words "bengingathanda" and "bendingathanda", respectively, are indirect speech acts that show that the speaker does not want to impose on the addressee and the words "ngiyabonga" and "enkosi", respectively, are politeness markers that indicate deference. Modals such as "would", "could", "may", "might", and "should" have the effect of softening the idea being communicated. If the speaker has less power than the addressee, for example an employee interacting with an employer, it is more likely the speaker will use negative politeness strategies to minimize the threat to the addressee's negative face.

5. *Withhold the FTA*: Sometimes speakers find some speech acts too face threatening to be produced. Therefore, they prefer to remain silent and do not produce the FTA at all. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 68-75)

Brown and Levinson (1987: 74) argue that three social factors influence the degree to which an act might threaten one's positive or negative face in a communicative event:

- the relative power (P) of addressee to speaker
- the social distance (D) between the speaker and the addressee
- the degree of imposition or absolute ranking (R) in doing the FTA in a particular context

For example, in making a request for the addressee to tell the speaker the time:

(1) "Excuse me Sir, would you by any chance have the time?"
(2) Got the time, mate?"
(Brown & Levinson, 1987: 80)

Utterance (1) would be made in a context where the D, P and R between the speaker and the addressee are maximal, for example a student to a lecturer or if the interlocutors are strangers and the speaker does not want to impose on the addressee. On the other hand, utterance (2) would indicate that the D, P and R between the speaker and the addressee are minimal, or the D and P between the speaker and the addressee are more or less equal, and the R is small, for example one student to another.

The production of COMPLAINT and REQUEST speech acts bring about challenges for English second language learners, because the way speech acts are realised differs across cultures. For that reason, different negative or positive politeness strategies may be used to try and soften a request or complaint and also minimize face loss by the hearer. The notion of 'face' is a challenge to English L2 learners in their use of speech acts, even in writing. When using the speech act of REQUEST, for example, which can be face-threatening, they may find themselves producing FTAs which can harm the addressee's positive face. Hence this study attempts to identify the politeness strategies used by ESL students to avoid face-threatening acts (REQUEST and COMPLAINT), in English and isiZulu written business letters, in order to minimise chances of the reader losing face. The study of politeness phenomena has primarily been concerned with individual behaviour in spoken face-to-face interaction. This study extends the study of politeness phenomena and examines the use of politeness in speech acts in the context of written communication. In addition, Bock and Mheta (2013:38; 41) state that communication (oral and written) is an interactive process between a sender and a targeted audience, in social contexts, where meaning is created when the sender's intention is effectively communicated to the audience (Kaburise, 2012: 36).

In terms of the orientation to face, the politeness super strategies have opposite impoliteness super strategies.

2.2.3 Framework of impoliteness

Culpeper's framework of impoliteness is based on the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987). Culpeper (1996: 355) defines five impoliteness super-strategies which are opposites of Brown and Levinson's politeness super-strategies. Culpeper (1996: 356) states that instead of enhancing or supporting face, impoliteness super-strategies are a means of attacking face. Culpeper describes the five super-strategies as follows:

1. *Bald on record impoliteness* – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way in circumstances where face is not relevant or minimised. For example, "Make sure all your orders are delivered on time" is regarded as a direct instruction. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for a person from a lower rank to use such an utterance when communicating to a person of a higher position, as it attacks the face of the addressee. It is important to distinguish this strategy from Brown and Levinson's *Bald on record*, explained in 2.2.2.

2. *Positive impoliteness* - the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants. There are many sub-strategies within this strategy, as follows:

i. *Ignoring and snubbing the other* – The speaker fails to acknowledge the other's presence.

ii. *Excluding the other party from an activity.*

iii. *Disassociating from the other* – The speaker denies association or common ground with the other; he avoids sitting together.

iv. *Being disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic.*

v. *Using inappropriate identity markers* – The speaker uses title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.

vi. *Using obscure or secretive language* - The speaker mystifies the other with jargon, or uses a code known to others in the group, but not the target addressee.

vii. *Seeking disagreement* - The speaker selects a sensitive topic.

viii. *Making the other feel uncomfortable* – The speaker does not avoid silence, joke, or use of small talk.

ix. *Using taboo words* - The speaker uses abusive or profane language.

x. *Calling the other names* - The speaker uses derogatory nominations.

3. *Negative impoliteness* - the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants. As with positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness also has sub-strategies as follows:

i. *Frightening* - The speaker threatens others and instils a belief that detrimental action/s will occur to them.

ii. *Condescending, scorning, or ridiculing* – The speaker emphasises their relative power. The speaker is contemptuous.

iii. *Do not treat the other seriously* – The speaker belittles the other, for example by using diminutives.

iv. *Invading the other's space* – The speaker positions themselves closer than is appropriate for the relationship either literally with physical distance, or metaphorically by asking or providing information inappropriate to the parameters of the relationship.

v. *Explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect* – The speaker personalises, using the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.

vi. *Put the other's indebtedness on record.*

4. *Sarcasm or mock politeness* - the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations.

5. *Withhold politeness* - the absence of politeness where it would be expected. For example, failing to thank somebody for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness.

(Culpeper 1996: 356-358)

The choice of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework is appropriate in analysing the written business letters in this study. Using the categories of politeness would best reveal occurrences of politeness in realising the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST and what types were frequently used. Similarly, the choice of Culpeper's (1996) framework of impoliteness is suitable as using the categories of impoliteness could be used to identify occurrences of impoliteness and their frequency of use.

In terms of negative and positive impoliteness strategies, only those strategies applicable to written communication were used. Hence, the discussion selectively focused on those strategies central to the analysis.

Comparing Culpeper's impoliteness model to Brown and Levinson's politeness model, it is noticeable that these models are, in fact, parallel to each other. Thus, choosing these models would best assist the researcher in making a clear comparison between the strategies used in the data. This would also validate the findings of the research. Hence, they will be used for analysing data for the written business tasks.

A discussion of both frameworks will selectively focus on those strategies that are central to the analysis of the results, as highlighted in Chapter 4, 4.5.

2.2.4 Critique on Brown and Levinson's model

Although Brown and Levinson's (1987) model on politeness is undoubtedly one of the best known and most commonly used theories on politeness, it has also been criticised.

In line with this study, which largely examines the use of speech acts and politeness strategies in English and isiZulu by ESL learners in a tertiary institution, a major criticism of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model is that it has a western, or Eurocentric bias. It cannot therefore claim to present a universal theory applicable to all languages and cultures. This western bias has been argued on a number of levels.

One of the salient levels in which this western bias has been criticised is that Brown and Levinson's subdivision of politeness into negative and positive face reflects an Anglo-Western view of the supremacy of an individual's wants. In particular, a number of authors have strongly maintained that Brown and Levinson's notion of face, with its focus on an individualist ethos which is applicable to the Western culture, is quite inappropriate to the group orientation of Eastern cultures, specifically that of the Chinese and Japanese (Gu, 1990; Ide, 1993; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988; Wierzbicka, 1991, 2003, cited in Leech, 2005).

According to Mao (1994), cited in Leech (2005: 2), Brown and Levinson's notion of face is quite different from the Chinese concepts of *miànzi* and *liân (losing face* and *saving face)* In the same vein, Gu (1990) explains that their concept of politeness does not match the Chinese concept of *limào (courtesy or politeness).* Equally, according to Ide (1993), the Japanese concept of *wakimae* or discernment, neglected by Brown and Levinson, is needed in explaining Japanese socially constrained politeness or *teineisa*. De Kadt (1998: 179) concurs and contends that the collectivist nature of the African culture, Zulu in particular, is contrary to the 'individualistic' nature of the West. This casts doubt on the applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory to Zulu culture. In Zulu culture, in daily conversations and when greeting a person, it is common to show linguistic deference by the use of naming terms according to how the society "collective" views a person and their societal role, and not their personal name (De Kadt, 1995: 63). For example, a young person would address an elderly male as "baba" meaning 'father' and not by his name, as this is the way an elderly male person is viewed by the society. Addressing an elderly person by name is regarded as disrespectful in African cultures. Similarly, an elderly person would address a young man as "mfana wami" meaning 'my boy', or any young person as "ngane yami" meaning 'my child'. This is due to the concepts of "my child is your child" and "it takes a village to raise a child" being practically applied

cultural practices in African cultures. The assumption underpinning their category of negative and positive politeness, that the speaker has a want that his action be unimpeded by others, and that the speaker has a desire that his self-image be appreciated and approved by other members, is as questionable for many African languages and cultures as it is for the languages and cultures of the Far East.

In Zulu culture the term 'face' has validity in the folk sense (De Kadt, 1998: 175). This entails the way they interact with people in general, bearing in mind age and social class, among other factors, in a variety of contexts. A person speaking or behaving in a manner that is not acceptable to people of the same culture, in general, or their social group, may lose face. Therefore, in order to avoid loss of face and of being labelled negatively, there is a constant awareness of speaking and behaving in a manner that is appropriate to the expectations of the group. For instance, it is common in the Zulu and Xhosa cultures to use a standard request form such as the word "ngiyacela" and "ndiyacela" respectively, literally meaning 'I request', when a younger person requests an older person to do something for them, or even to stress social distance between the interlocutors who hold different social positions. Although in Western culture this would be regarded as a direct request (imperative) form, which may sound blunt and impolite, it is regarded as a very polite form of request showing deference in the Zulu and Xhosa cultures. Wierzbicka (2003), cited in Leech (2005: 3), maintains that interpersonal interaction is largely governed by norms which are culture-specific, and which reflect cultural values held by a particular society. Therefore, the principles of politeness cannot be regarded as the same and universal in all cultures. Rather, the application of the principles differs systematically across cultures, and within subcultures, categories and groups (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 283). In her cross-cultural study of DIRECTIVES, De Kadt (1998: 182) also points out that *'hlonipha'*, the isiZulu concept for paying respect, contradicts this claim of universality.

On another level, Brown and Levinson are criticized for their explanation of the phenomenon of politeness as a minimiser to face-threatening acts (FTAs). As an indicator of politeness, they specify five strategies, ranging from 'bald on-record' performance of the FTA to its non-performance, 'withhold the FTA'. This emphasis on FTAs seems to reinforce the western orientation of Brown and Levinson's model and hence, its restriction to a particular culture.

Further, Penman (1990: 16) argues that Brown and Levinson's (1987) model on politeness only concentrates on producing politeness and has left out aggravation or impoliteness from the

model. He also argues that the face-saving or face-threatening strategies, 'facework', can also be used for aggravation. Additionally, Penman (ibid) states that the model leaves out self-directed strategies and only focuses on interaction between two people. It is for that reason that Watts (2003: 93), in agreeing with Penman (1990), offers points of criticism towards the Brown and Levinson (1987) model. Watts (ibid) argues that the strategies Brown and Levinson have devised should not be called politeness strategies but rather facework strategies. He also points out that these strategies are not always used for politeness. Watts (2003: 95) further argues that Brown and Levinson's model does not take into account the knowledge of the social situation the two interlocutors have, and what is considered to be polite in that particular social context. An utterance that is not considered to be polite by the Brown and Levinson (1987) model can still be considered polite in a certain speech situation.

Nevertheless, Brown and Levinson's model of politeness is one of the only models that attempts to explain how people produce politeness. I have chosen to use their model for my research because it considers politeness in a plausible manner and pays attention to the various strategies people use to create politeness.

2.2.5 Speech Acts of REQUEST and Politeness Theory

Requests can be considered face threatening acts as a speaker may be seen as imposing their will on the hearer (Lwanga-Lumu, 1999: 84). Performing the act of requesting primarily threatens the addressee's negative face wants. Hence, it is suggested that individuals should make attempts to mitigate the act's threatening effect on the hearer's face to compensate for the imposing effect (ibid). Thus, the use of linguistic devices such as "Could you/I" or "Would you/I" and numerous similar forms are some of the negative politeness strategies designed to compensate the threat to the addressee's face. Also, speakers should vary the level of requests' politeness by means of certain words like "please" or phrases, like "would you mind" which are perceived, conventionally, to reflect respect for the hearer. These linguistic elements are defined as mitigation devices and speakers utilise them to indicate their courtesy for the hearer.

The degree to which the requester intrudes on the requestee, called "degree of imposition", may vary from small favours to demanding acts. In these instances people need to use strategies to ensure that their request is successfully delivered to the addressee. Trosborg (1995: 195) proposes eight strategies based on the degree of imposition towards the hearer. The strategies are hints; questioning the hearer`s ability and willingness; suggestory formulae; statements of speaker`s wishes and demands; statements of speaker`s needs and demands; statement of

obligations and necessities; performatives; and imperatives. These politeness strategies, and the way they are employed to save face, are of paramount importance as they determine the success or failure of the communication between the two parties.

The level of directness is determined by contextual factors such as power and social distance between the interlocutors and the degree of imposition involved (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Thomas, 1995; Park, Jean & Shim, 2021: 138). For instance, in a more formal situation where a speech act is addressed to a person who has more power it includes a high degree of imposition. In such a situation, a greater degree of indirectness is required to save the face of the interlocutor. In contrast, when the speech act involves a low degree of imposition and is produced for a person equal in relationship, a smaller degree of indirectness is required. Therefore, the use of indirect speech acts in making requests increases the degree of politeness.

2.2.6 Speech Acts of COMPLAINT and Politeness Theory

Performing the act of complaining largely threatens the addressee's positive face wants. It is for that reason that Brown and Levinson (1987) categorised the speech act of COMPLAINT as one of the face threatening acts which has a potential to break down the relationships between people communicating with each other. Wijayanto (2013: 188) contends that it is difficult for second or foreign language learners to show politeness in a speech act that is inherently face-threatening because what is viewed as polite in their first language can be perceived as impolite in the context of a foreign or target language.

A complaint may include acts of threatening, such as accusing or reprimanding. These acts can be interpreted as an offence, and they are highly threatening to the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Because a complaint is a face-threatening speech act, the speaker needs to use some politeness strategies so that the relationship between the complainer and the addressee does not get damaged. This includes being tactful in the use of the speech act concerned. People realise complaints in different ways. Brown and Levinson (1987) maintain that any face-threatening act can be performed taking into account three variables: the interlocutors' social power and social distance; the act's degree of imposition (illustrated in 2.2.2); and in the case of complaints, the act's severity of offence.

1. The speaker perceives that the addressee has committed an action which is socially unacceptable.

2. It involves the realisation of the speaker that the socially unacceptable action has unfavourable consequences for them or for the general public.

3. The speaker uses an expression of complaint which can be either direct or indirect depending upon the power and solidarity between the speaker and the addressee.

4. Sometimes, when the speaker thinks that his complaint might cause a breach in the relationship between speaker and addressee, they prefer to remain silent and utilise the 'Do not perform the FTA' strategy.

5. The speaker needs to use some politeness strategies to keep the channel open between them and the addressee.

6. The performance of the act may also involve the explanations of the socially unacceptable action, which can be used as an indirect strategy of complaint.

7. Generally, the complaint is used by a person of lower or equal social status, for example, age, class, or caste, among others, to address a higher status person. The higher status person would generally, in such situations, use the speech act of ORDER rather than that of COMPLAINT.

2.3 Speech acts

A speech act is an action performed by a speaker in uttering words aimed at a listener. It is regarded as a fundamental unit of communication that is part of pragmatic competence. Speech acts are used to realise certain functions in communication, in that they express an intention behind the use of words. Similarly, Yule (2016: 118) defines a speech act as an "action performed by a speaker with an utterance". For example, when a speaker says, "I'm sorry", he is not merely making an utterance, but performing an act of apologising or showing sympathy. It is related to the field of pragmatics which is concerned with the way in which words can be used to present information through linguistic expressions, but also to carry out actions such as promising, commanding, requesting, questioning, complaining, and so forth. When someone speaks, an act is performed, and the understanding of the intention of the speaker is essential for capturing meaning and for perceiving the utterance as a speech act. Speech acts can take the form of one word, illustrated in the word "No!" used to perform a refusal, or several words, for example "No, I will not come to your dinner tonight." (Austin, 1962). Searle (1969) contends that speech acts are performed in real life situations of language use. More

importantly, a speech act is used by people to express their action by means of speech or utterances, or in writing (Drid, 2018: 2).

It is important to note that within different cultures and languages speech acts differ in their functions as well as in the way they are realised. As a result, the same speech act may be understood differently across dissimilar cultures. This will be further discussed in 2.3.7.

Pragmatic knowledge of speech acts is imperative for successful oral and written cross-cultural communication. Briefly, in the context of business writing, pragmatic knowledge can be described as the reader's ability to understand meanings and intentions of utterances from a variety of social contexts.

Færch and Kasper (1984: 214) define pragmatic knowledge as:

> "…a particular component of language users' general communicative knowledge is the knowledge of how verbal acts are understood and performed in accordance with a speaker's intention under contextual and discourse constraints."

The notion of speech acts, first proposed by Austin (1962), is one of the most compelling contemporary philosophies that has provided groundwork for the study of language use, and it relates to the way in which language is used in daily interactions. It has also provided a useful focus for comparative cross-cultural and interlanguage research. Austin's (1962) notion of speech acts mainly focuses on spoken utterances. The researcher in the present study extends the concept of speech acts to written communication, which forms part of daily interactions in business organisations. In the corporate world, people communicate within a company and with outside stakeholders both in oral and written forms. They write different forms of business correspondence using language to perform various acts for a variety of purposes, just like in spoken communication. They may write various forms of business correspondence to carry out actions such as placing an order, inviting, requesting, and complaining, among others. Therefore, speech acts are also applicable in written business communication.

Speech acts can be performed either in an explicit or implicit manner. Yule (2016: 118) further classifies speech acts according to their structure into direct and indirect speech acts. This distinction is made on the basis of recognition of the intended perlocutionary effect of an utterance (explained in 2.3.1 below) in a particular situation.

Throughout the study, I will differentiate actions that express speech acts by writing them in a verb form, for example, apologising, requesting. While speech acts will be written in small capital letters throughout the study, for example APOLOGY, COMPLAINT. Although there are open ended lists of speech acts, the following speech acts have been used in this study: COMPLAINT, REQUEST, INVITATION, OFFER, CONGRATULATION, REFUSAL, THANKING (also known as GRATITUDE), APOLOGY, APPOINTMENT and COMMITMENT.

2.3.1 The Speech Act Theory

Speech Act theory makes the assumption that the minimal unit of human communication is not a sentence or expression, but rather the performance of certain kinds of language acts (Uises, 2018:6). Essentially the theory is about what people aim to achieve when they choose to speak.

The Speech Act Theory, as a theory of language, was initially proposed by Austin (1962), a British philosopher of language, and was further developed by Searle (1969), who was Austin's student. Both philosophers of language believed that people do not produce utterances to merely communicate information, but they produce utterances "to do something" or, for others to do something for them (Austin, 1962: 12). Therefore, the Speech Act theory posits that people not only use language to produce a series of sentences, but also to perform an action. In other words, by using language they either do something or make others do something (Bayat, 2013: 214). The theory views language as a medium of performing various kinds of acts, for example to; question, promise, request, apologise, and complain. For instance, when a speaker expresses a complaint to the hearer, the expectation is that the utterance is not only heard by the complainee, but more importantly, the speaker also wants the complainee to act on the complaint. As an act of communication, a speech act succeeds if the audience identifies with the speaker's intention or attitude being expressed.

The theory distinguishes between two types of speech acts: the constatives and the performatives. Constatives are statements which are used to describe an incident or a situation and could be considered as true or false, while performatives are those utterances which are used to perform actions and are distinguished by the use of a verb such as apologising, thanking, requesting or refusing and cannot be characterised as true or false (Bayat, 2013: 214). A constative is illustrated in the statement "I will be there". Austin (1992: 9) makes an illustration of a performative in the use of "I promise to …" and states that in this instance the person is not merely describing a physical action described in the words, but he is also expressing an inward and spiritual obligation. In addition, the person is uttering the words of promise with an

intention of keeping to his word. It is thus the performance of an act, "a performative" (Austin, 1992: 6). Performatives, therefore, are considered speech acts, as speech acts are patterned, routinised phrases which are frequently used to perform a function. These functions include requesting, complaining, complimenting, thanking, and apologising, to name but a few.

As Austin (1992) believed that all utterances are performative, he further categorised performative utterances as implicit and explicit performatives. Implicit performatives, sometimes called "primary performatives", are distinguished by the absence of a performative verb, for instance, "I'll be there at two o'clock" (Drid, 2018: 5). In this case, the addresser is performing an indirect act of promising. Explicit performatives, on the other hand, are those utterances that are accompanied by a performative verb such as, assert, request, promise, and others, which identifies the performed action. An illustration of an explicit performative is the phrase "I promise to be there at two o'clock" in which case an act of promise is explicitly stated.

Austin (1962) subsequently proposed a three-dimensional model of the speech act; the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary force. Locutionary act is the basic act of utterance. It is the act *of* saying something in a language (Austin, 1962: 99). It is the literal meaning or the actual words of what is uttered (propositional meaning). In other words, the meaning and intention of the words is explicitly expressed in the message. According to Yule's theory (1996: 48), the locutionary act is the basic act of an utterance in producing a meaningful linguistic expression. For example, saying "It's hot in here" means the room is hot. In the context of this study which focuses on written correspondence, the locutionary act would be the actual words used by the writer in communicating a message.

Illocutionary act refers to what the speaker means to convey in a message, the "communicative intention" (Harris, Fogal & Moss, 2018: 5). This means that it is the action the speaker intends to perform by giving the utterance. In effect, it is the force or intention behind the words, as the intention is not explicitly expressed in the message. It is the performance of an act *in* saying, and not *of* saying, something (Austin, 1962: 99). For example, the phrase "It's hot in here" could be an indirect request for someone to open the window (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 71). Alternatively, it could be an indirect refusal to close the window because someone is feeling cold, or a complaint implying that someone should know better than to keep the windows closed. This communicative force of an utterance is known as illocutionary force. It is related to the social function that the utterance has, as people form an utterance with some kind of

function, intention, or desire in mind. Yule (1996: 48) writes that "the illocutionary act is performed via the communicative face of an utterance", and it is the intended meaning of a speaker. Therefore, the term "speech acts" refers specifically to illocutionary acts (Drid, 2018: 6), and the terms "speech acts" and "illocutionary acts" are used interchangeably. It is worth noting that other terms such as "illocutionary force" and "pragmatic force" or merely "force" are used in exchange of the terms "speech acts" and "illocutionary acts". Speech acts are considered a form of pragmatic meaning, as they characterise utterances according to what they do (illocution) rather than what they literally say (locution). (Sultan, 2007: 23). Austin (1962: 112) asserts that performing an illocutionary act requires the speaker to be in line with the linguistic conventions governing such illocutionary force, and to act in accordance with it.

Perlocutionary act is the effect of an utterance (Yule, 1996: 48). It is the effect of the illocutionary act on the addressee in getting them to do or realise something. Thus, it is the result or effect produced by the utterance, in the given context, on the listener or reader when they hear or read the locutionary or illocutionary act. For example, the utterance, "It's hot in here", could result in someone opening the window. Perlocutionary act is regarded as the final category of an utterance that is normally used with the first two categories of speech acts (Drid, 2018: 6). If the perlocutionary act is performed as it was intended by the interlocutor, the effect of the illocutionary act has been achieved.

Thus, the Speech Act Theory provides a systematic classification of communicative intentions and the ways in which these communicative intentions are linguistically encoded in relation to the conventions of language use.

Numerous studies have investigated strategies used in the realization of speech acts (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Jalilifar, 2009; Tabar, 2012; Elmianvari & Kheirabadi, 2013; Majeed & Janjua, 2014; Tabatabaei, 2015; Al-Khawaldeh, 2016; Karatepe, 2016)

2.3.2 Speech Act Classifications by Searle (1979)

Searle (1969; 1979) reviewed Austin's classification of performatives and developed a taxonomy to classify illocutionary speech acts, according to their functions, into five main categories: representatives/assertives; directives; commissives; expressives; and declaratives/declarations. They are all performative expressions (implicit and explicit) as they are solely used to accomplish an action. However, some addressers may prefer to use a performative verb (explicit) and others may prefer not to (implicit).

1) Representatives or Assertives

Representatives are types of speech acts which state what the speaker knows or believes to be the case or not. The purpose of a speaker, in performing representatives, is to assert that the propositional content of the utterance is true. Representatives include acts of asserting, criticizing, boasting, informing, insisting, reporting, suggesting, and swearing, among others. The application of the type can be seen in the following examples:

(3) "I ordered the goods yesterday."

(4) "No one makes a better cake than me."

In example (3) the speaker does the act of informing the hearer that they ordered the goods the previous day, which is the case. In example (4) the speaker boasts about what they know and believe to be true regarding their skill in cake baking, comparing their skill to other people.

2) Directives

Directives are types of speech acts which the speaker uses to get someone else to do something. They express what the speaker wants and are used to make the addressee perform a desired action. They may vary from modest attempts, as in inviting a person to do something or, suggesting that a person does something, to fierce attempts such as when a person insists that someone does something. Directives include acts of commanding, ordering, requesting, suggesting, and others. The speech act of REQUEST used in this study belongs to this category. The use of directives is illustrated in the following sentences:

(5) "You may ask."

(6) "Could you close the window?"

In example (5), the sentence is a suggestion that has a function to get the hearer to do something as the speaker suggests. Meanwhile, in example (6), the speaker uses an interrogative sentence to request the hearer to close the window. In this case, the speaker does not just expect the hearer to answer the question with a mere yes or no, but rather expects performance of an action by the hearer. There is the possibility though, that the hearer might not be able to do what the speaker requests them to do. In such a case, a negative response would be given.

3) Commissives

In the use of commissives, the speaker commits themselves to a future course of action. It makes the recipient assume that the speaker will do an action in the future. The different kinds of acts in this category include promising, vowing, refusing, and offering. These actions can be performed by the speaker alone, or by the speaker as a member of a group. This speech act is illustrated in the following examples:

(7) "I will repay the money."

(8) "I'm going to get it right next time."

From the two examples above, it can be concluded that the content of the commissive has something to do with the future and a possible action of the speaker. The auxiliary verb "will" and the use of "going to", in certain rules, contexts, and situations, signifies a promise which is considered a commissive.

4) Expressives

An expressive is a type of speech act that expresses the speaker's feelings about a situation, or attitude about a state of affairs. It can be caused by something the speaker, or the hearer does. The person complaining expresses their psychological states and feelings, indicating pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, dissatisfaction, anger, joy, or sorrow. Some of the acts in this category are apologising, complimenting, complaining, congratulating, and thanking. The speech act of COMPLAINT used in this study belongs to this group. Examples of this speech act can be seen below.

(9) "I am sorry for the way I spoke to you."

(10) "What an achievement! Congratulations!"

Example (9) is an expression to show the speaker's feelings and regret, regarding a situation, as an apology. Example, (10) is used to express the speaker's excitement on what the hearer has attained and thus congratulates them.

5) Declaratives or Declarations

In this type of speech act classification, the speaker changes the external status, the condition of an object, situation, or context, or even the status quo, solely by making an utterance. In order to perform declarations correctly, the speaker has to have a special institutional role in a

specific context that can be used to express a speech act. Searle's directives can be linked to Austin's performatives. Examples of this type of speech acts are presented below.

(11) Judge: I find the defendant not guilty.

(12) Teacher: Class dismissed.

Example (11) is a declaration speech act which is uttered by a judge. The speaker, by virtue of their power as a judge, performs an act by declaring that the accused is guilty. In example (12) the speaker, as a person with authority to perform an act alters the status quo by dismissing the class. In both examples, the speakers perform a special institutional role which gives them power to articulate such utterances.

2.3.3 Speech Act of COMPLAINT

Trosborg (1995: 316) defines a complaint as an illocutionary act in which the speaker (or writer) expresses their disapproval, disagreement, dissatisfaction, or other negative feelings related to a service, action, product, or state of affairs. A complaint is addressed to the person that the speaker considers responsible for the problem, either directly or indirectly. The speaker expects the hearer to give attention and react to the complaint by rectifying the issue at hand. Based on Searle's classification, the speech act of COMPLAINT is classified under the category of expressives because a complaint represents the complainer's emotional state, feeling, and/or opinion (Trosborg, 1995: 15). According to Tanck (2002: 67), in a complaint speech act, a speaker reacts with displeasure or annoyance to an action that has affected them in an undesirable manner. It can be performed in both spoken and written interactions. Because the addresser expresses their dissatisfaction regarding the service rendered, this may include threatening, accusing or reprimanding. As such, the act of complaining has the potential to cause an offence to the addressee and this may be highly threatening to the social relationship between the interlocutors. Hence, a complainer has to use politeness strategies to maintain a good relationship with the complainee.

2.3.4 Speech Act of REQUEST

Requests, just like complaints, form part of daily human communication. In their daily social interactions, people frequently make requests asking for some kind of assistance from other people. Similarly, in business organisations people write different forms of business correspondence to ask for some kind of assistance, from both internal and external sources.

They often make requests directly and indirectly, for example to ask for help, for permission, and for goods and services,

The speech act of REQUEST is one of the most widely examined speech acts in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. According to Searle (1969), requests fall under the category of directives. Generally, a request is an act of asking for something to be given or done. It is intended to produce some effect through an action by the addressee. A request is referred to as an attempt to get the hearer to perform an act which the speaker wants the hearer to do, although it is not given that the hearer will do it the way the speaker expects it to be done (Searle, 1969: 66). Trosborg (1995: 187) defines a request as an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys that they want the requestee to perform an act which is beneficial for the requester. In some cases, the act may be a request for non-verbal action where the addressee does not have to literally respond verbally but by performing an action, for example, a request to fix a problem, an action or request for an object, a request for goods and services, or a request for information. A request is different from an order since a request is understood as asking somebody politely to do something rather than telling or instructing somebody to do something. In the case of business letters, it is an act of asking the reader politely to do something for the writer.

There are many types and classifications of speech acts. The researcher in this study has focused on the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST and has used speech act classifications based on Austin's and Searle's theories of speech acts. The reason for selecting the two speech acts is that both are considered as negative acts and are thus highly threatening to the social relationship between the writer and the reader of the business letters. For that reason, they require the appropriate use of politeness strategies in maintaining the relationship. The production of these kinds of acts by English L2 speakers might bring about a challenge.

The speech act of REQUEST, in particular, was selected for investigation because of its direct relation to politeness theories and the cultural issues attached to requests. Within the universals of politeness, every language, and culture has its own politeness configurations. Further, the reason behind the selection of this type of speech act is that a request is considered as a highly imposing act by Brown and Levinson. Therefore, in realising this type of speech act, it is necessary for ESL learners to have some pragmatic knowledge on how to mitigate it, to lessen its imposing pragmatic force. Should the writer of a business letter select inappropriate communicative structures, strategies, words, or utterances it can result in pragmatic failure and

ineffective or problematic communication. Furthermore, the researcher chose Searle's theory of speech acts in that it provides a more systematic classification of the speech acts than Austin's classifications, and introduces a new set of speech acts, namely indirect speech acts.

The speech act of COMPLAINT used in this study falls within the classification of an expressive speech act. In this study, the complainer had to present the true state of affairs, and the case as they believe, and express their dissatisfaction with a product received. In addition, the speech act of REQUEST used in this study belongs to the category of directives, as respondents were made to write a letter with the purpose of getting someone else to do something. The writer expressed what they wanted and used the speech act of directive to make the reader perform an action.

2.3.5 Direct speech act

Speech acts that are obtained by means of a clear relationship between a form or structure and a function (communicative function) are described as " direct speech acts '' (Sultan, 2007: 28). They sound less polite, abrupt, and more direct than indirect speech acts. They are considered direct speech acts because their illocutionary force is explicitly named by the performative verb in the main part of the sentence, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Direct speech act (Yule, 2016: 118)

Examples	**Structures**	**Functions**
(13) Did you **eat** the pizza?	Interrogative	Question
(14) **Eat** the pizza (please)!	Imperative	Command (Request)
(15) You **ate** the pizza.	Declarative	Statement

In Table 1, (example 13) the performative verb "eat", or the past tense form "ate" (example 15) is common in the utterances used. When the speaker says, "Did you eat the pizza?", the use of an interrogative structure "Did you?" serves the function of a question and it is known as a direct speech act. It makes the listener assume that the speaker lacks information and therefore, is asking someone to provide information.

In the utterance “Eat the pizza!” (example 14), beginning the statement with a performative verb together with the use of an imperative structure makes it a command or order. In English, the imperative is normally used in commands and orders (Madoyan, 2014: 21). However, adding “please” in “Eat the pizza, please!” makes it a direct request.

In the utterance “You ate the pizza.” (example 15) the declarative structure used makes it a statement in which the speaker merely shares information.

The declarative, interrogative and imperative are regarded as three central structural forms of sentences in English associated with the functions of assertion, question, and order or request, respectively (Drid, 2018: 10).

2.3.6 Indirect speech act

Indirect speech acts are acts that contain the illocutionary force indicators for one kind of illocutionary act but, perform another type of illocutionary act (Madoyan, 2014: 19).

Indirect speech acts result when there is an indirect relationship between the structure and function of words used. In other words, there is no direct relationship between their linguistic form and communicative purpose or, illocutionary meaning. In the case of business letters, a reader would infer meaning behind the illocutionary force of the message by considering the context in which the words are used, and by having pragmatic knowledge of how an indirect speech act is used. People use indirectness, because sometimes direct addresses may appear impolite, for example, “Would you lend me some money?” versus “Lend me some money!” Indirect speech acts are implicit and seen as diplomatic, polite, and tactful compared to direct requests. A person who makes a request indirectly may be perceived as displaying more respect and courtesy than one who makes a direct request. They are used if the speaker does not wish to impose on the listener, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Indirect speech act (Yule, 2016: 118)

Examples	**Structures**	**Functions (communicative)**
(16) Can you pass the salt?	Interrogative	Request
(17) You left the door open.	Declarative	Request
(18) Don’t talk to strangers.	Imperative	Warning or advice

One of the most common types of indirect speech acts in English takes the form of an interrogative, but it is not typically used to ask a question. This means that the speaker does not expect only an answer but expects action from the hearer. Actions, such as requests, when expressed in an indirect way, are generally considered more gentle and more polite than direct ones in a Western society (Yule, 2016 : 119). For example, "Could you open that door for me?" is an indirect speech act of REQUEST for someone to open the door which sounds more polite than "Open that door for me!" which is a direct speech act of REQUEST (ibid, 2016: 119).

In Table 2, the use of a syntactic structure associated with the function of a question, "Can you?" (example 16), sounds like a question about someone's ability to do something. However, unlike in example 13, here the speaker is performing an action of request, hence the use of an indirect speech act. The use of interrogatives, such as, "Can you", "Will you", "Could you", Would you" are the most common types of indirect speech acts in English. These types of indirect requests are known as "whimperatives" (Madoyan, 2014: 19).

The use of a declarative structure in the utterance "You left the door open." (example 17) makes the utterance sound like a direct speech act which would be used to make a statement. However, if the speaker says this to someone who has just come in and it is cold outside, this would be a request for the person to close the door. Therefore, the speaker is not merely using the imperative structure. They are using a declarative structure in making a request in an indirect way.

The use of an imperative structure in the utterance "Don't talk to strangers.", (example 18), makes it sound like a statement, yet it has been used indirectly to perform an action of warning, prohibition, or advice, depending on the context. Mey (1993: 145) and Yule (1996: 55) contend that in English people prefer to use indirect commands and requests as they are often perceived as gentler and more polite than direct ones. It is for this reason that it is common for speakers to start their requests with expressions such as will you …?, would you …?, can you …?, could you …?. Moreover, indirect speech acts are commonly used when a person of a lower social status addresses a person of a higher social status to avoid imposing on a person (Madoyan, 2014: 20). Directness signifies familiarity and closeness, while indirectness shows social distance and diplomacy (ibid, 2014: 20).

Madoyan (2014: 19) cites two other forms of indirectness, namely whimperatives and hedged performatives. Whimperatives are indirect requests that take the form "Can you...?" and "Will you...?", for example "Can you shut the door?". Hedged performatives, on the other hand, take the form of explicit performatives with a modal verb in the main clause, for example, "I would suggest you try some". Furthermore, Madoyan (2014: 20) points out embedded performatives as another form of indirectness, which is difficult to interpret. "Embedded performatives contain the proposition to which they refer indirectly, but that proposition may be embedded arbitrarily deep within the literal expression" (ibid, 2014: 20). An illustration of this performative is, "I would like to congratulate you". This utterance indirectly performs the act of congratulating. The three forms of indirectness have been used in analysing business letters in this study and have been further illustrated in Chapter 3, Table 9.

There are three factors that guide the speaker into choosing whether to use direct or indirect speech acts (Madoyan, 2014: 20).

- the social distance between the speaker and the listener.
- the power the listener has on the speaker.
- the degree of imposition of the face-threatening act in a specific culture.

Hence indirect requests are predominantly used when a person of a lower social status communicates with a person of a higher social status, whereas direct requests would be more applicable when the social distance is minimal between the two interlocutors, for instance between colleagues.

It is crucial to bear in mind while encoding or decoding speech acts that certain speech acts can be culture-specific and for that reason they cannot be employed universally.

2.3.7 Culturally specific speech acts

The interpretation of speech acts differs throughout cultures and the illocutionary act performed by the speaker can be easily misinterpreted by a person of a different cultural background. Moreover, failure to understand the intention behind the use of indirect speech acts, in particular by the listener, could lead to miscommunication as the speaker's illocutionary intention is not achieved. For instance, in isiZulu and in the Zulu culture, the word "ngicela", literally interpreted as 'I request', is mostly used to show a high degree of politeness. It is regarded as an indirect speech act which highlights politeness and thus, a strategy to soften the

face threatening act of request, even when complaining about something. Yet, the literal translation of the word 'I request' has the potential of being misinterpreted as a direct speech act in English, which can be regarded as a blunt and an impolite form of request. Similarly, the phrase "benginesicelo", 'I have a request' is an indirect speech act in isiZulu which highlights politeness and thus, a strategy to soften the face threatening act of request. On the other hand, the literal translation 'I have a request' could be misinterpreted as a declarative which merely functions as a statement in English. This can easily tone down the illocutionary effect of the meaning the word carries in isiZulu. In isiXhosa, the sentence "Ndicela ukuba undixelele ixesha" interpreted as 'I request you to tell me the time' is an indirect request. Firstly, the literal interpretation of the sentence in English may be understood in such a way that it appears as though the speaker is asking whether the writer has the ability to tell them the time (Dlali, 2001: 368). Secondly, it may be misinterpreted as a direct speech act which is perceived as impolite in English.

Although two languages might possess a similar range of linguistic patterns for any given speech act, speech acts are culturally specific, and the way they are realised differs from culture to culture. People from different cultures are guided by different norms and sets of behaviour in the way they express their gratitude, apology, complaints, and requests, for example. Numerous cross-cultural studies investigating the speech act PERFORMANCE have shown that although speech acts appear to be universal, the way they are conceptualised varies to a great extent across cultures (e.g., Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Sithebe, 2011).

Some politeness strategies such as "sorry" 'uxolo' used in performing certain speech acts are similar in both English and the southern African Nguni group of languages, including isiXhosa and isiZulu. However, Mdemka (2001) highlights differences in the way English and isiXhosa native speakers perform the speech act of APOLOGY. In isiXhosa, when performing a speech act of APOLOGY, requests for forgiveness which are introduced by the verb *-cela* 'request' are frequently used (Mdemka, 2001: 120).

For example:

(19) "Ndicela uxolo" or "Ndizicelela uxolo"

Similarly, isiZulu uses the same strategy "Ngicela uxolo" or "Ngizicelela uxolo".

'I am sorry' or 'I am asking for apology' or 'I apologise'

“Ndicela uxolo” and “Ngicela uxolo” if literally translated into English would mean ‘I request sorry’, although it means ‘I am sorry’ or ‘I am asking for apology’ or ‘I apologise’. De Kadt (1992: 103) also claims that the standard polite request “ngicela” is normally a form with a high directness rating. This is illustrated in further studies of the isiZulu language. Politeness is a core value in the isiZulu culture, with the direct form “ngiyacela” ‘I request’ being the standard form for a polite request in a range of contexts (De Kadt, 1995: 57; De Kadt, 1998). This contradicts the link between indirectness and politeness in terms of requests, as initially pronounced by Brown and Levinson (1987). The use of a direct form of request “ngiyacela” ‘I request’ is also found in siSwati.

For example:

(20) “Ngicela ute ephathini yekutalwa kwami ngeMgcibelo”

‘Please come to my birthday party at the weekend’ (Sithebe, 2011: 43).

In addition, apologies in isiXhosa may be expressed by the use of interjections of apology such as “uxolo” “ngxe” “tarhu” which mean ‘I am sorry’ in English (Mdemka, 2001: 119).

For example:

(21) “Uxolo ngokungawenzi lo msebenzi.”

‘I am sorry for not doing this work.’

It is apparent that sometimes an apology in isiXhosa can be expressed using various politeness strategies and words used could have a different illocutionary meaning when directly translated to English. Speakers from other cultures might not understand the illocutionary meaning of “ngxe” “tarhu”, as it is culture and language specific, and it is regarded as a profuse apology rather than a mere ‘sorry’.

The use of a double intensifier, repetition or intensifying adverbial as an apology strategy in isiXhosa is also common (Mdemka, 2001: 52).

For example:

(22) “Ndiyangxengxeza”

‘I'm really dreadfully sorry’ or ‘I'm very, very sorry’

A strategy to convey regret may be expressed in isiXhosa by means of the nominal relative stem -*Iusizi* followed by an explanatory clause or a phrase with -*nga* as head (Mdemka, 2001: 119).

For example:

(23) "Ndilusizi, umsebenzi wakho ngendiwenzile."

'I am sorry, I should have done your work.'

The word "Ndilusizi", if directly translated to English, means 'I am sorrowful', which may have a wrong illocutionary force as it might be interpreted as if the speaker is feeling grief or is heartbroken or sad, yet the intention behind the use of word is to apologise. This could result in a communication breakdown between English and isiXhosa L1 speakers due to an incorrect illocutionary meaning being assigned to the utterance.

In an African context, the use of indirectness as a negative politeness strategy in requests is shown by an avoidance of imperatives, for example, when asking for the time. In isiXhosa the person performing a request will sometimes be vague or euphemistic by saying, "Ndizama ukufumanisa ukuba inokuba ngubani ixesha ngoku", when translated is: 'I am trying to find out what time it is now' instead of being straight to the point such as "Do you mind telling me the time?" (Dlali, 2001: 368). The same indirect speech act with the same English meaning would be used in isiZulu "Ngizama ukuthola ukuthi ingabe isikhathi sini manje".

In a research study conducted by Sithebe (2011) that investigated differences in the communication styles between siSwati native speakers and American native speakers of English, who were learning to speak the siSwati language, the results indicated that in their performance of greetings and requests in different situations, siSwati speakers predominantly use indirect means to realise communicative goals, such as requests, irrespective of the social distance between the interlocutors (Sithebe, 2011:33). This is displayed in their long responses compared to those produced by the Americans. Even when they attempt to be direct, they tend to use a large number of words and phrases to arrive at their goal (Sithebe, 2011: 33)

For example:

(24) Son: "Sawubona babe"

'Good morning/afternoon/evening, father'

Father: "Yebo ndvodzana, kunjani?"

'Good morning, my son. How are you?'

Son: "Ngiyaphila babe. Bengifuna kukutjela kutsi esikolweni bangicoshile ngoba ngikweleda imali yesikolwa. Angati noma ungakhona yini kungibhadalela, Nkhosi?"

'I am fine, father. I wanted to inform you that I have been sent away from school because I owe the fees. I was wondering if you would be able to pay for me, Nkhosi?'[1].

The level of formality of the language used by the son, such as the formal address term "Nkhosi", clearly shows that the distance between father and son is quite large. It is also used as a politeness strategy to show deference to the older person (Sithebe, 2011: 34). In contrast, the American English-speaking learners of siSwati's responses to the same situation are far more informal and straightforward (ibid). This indicates the different perspectives the two groups have of the situation, as well as the relationship between the interlocutors.

For example:

(25) Son: Dad, I talked to the school, and they say you have to pay. I can't go to school until you do.

Father: Oh, damn, I'm sorry kiddo, I must have forgotten. Here, I'll write a cheque now [sic].

Son: Thanks padre. I'll see you after school. Love you [sic]

Father: Love you too.

(Sithebe, 2011: 34; 35)

Another aspect which is predominant in African cultures is the use of plural forms in the performance of greetings when the interlocutor could use the first person singular pronoun, as realised in siSwati, in a situation between an employer (A) and an employee (B) (Sithebe, 2011: 36).

For example:

(26) A: "Kunjani?"

[1] Nkhosi is an address term to show respect, particularly to people of the Dlamini clan.

‘How are you?’

B: “Siyaphila babe”

‘We are fine, sir’ instead of saying, “Ngiyaphila babe” ‘I am fine, sir’.

A: “Uhambe kanjani?”

‘How was the journey?’

B: “Sihambe kahle”

‘We had a good journey’ instead of “Ngihambe kahle” ‘I had a good journey’ as he is the only one who has been away.

(Sithebe, 2011: 35)

The author (Sithebe, 2011: 36) explains that use of the plural form is a very common phenomenon in the way Swazi people communicate. It is customary for one person to greet another, “Ninjani? (plural)” ‘How are you?’ (plural)) instead of “Unjani?” (singular) ‘How are you?’ (singular)”), and for the other to respond by saying, “Siyaphila” ‘We are fine’ when he is referring just to himself. This kind of behaviour could be due to the modest quality prevalent in Swazi society in general, the attitude is that it is not about me, but all of us (Sithebe, 2011: 36). In most instances, using the first-person pronoun to refer to oneself, particularly when talking about one’s accomplishments, is considered a sign of arrogance. In such instances, native speakers would know that the speaker is talking about himself, as they can easily tell the difference between a singular “we” and a plural “we”. However, when the Americans in the study wrote a dialogue on the same situation in English, a first-person singular pronoun was used.

For example:

(27) A: Hey, Jen!

B: Hey, Paul!

A: How are you? So good to see you!

B: I’m good, good to see you as well.

A: What have you been up to?

B: Nothing much. What about you?

(Sithebe, 2011: 41)

The research showed that Swazis are more indirect, passive, and less confrontational in their language approaches than the Americans in the study were. They were found to be formal and respectful. Their communication is more time consuming, less hurried, and indirect, whereas Americans in their language use were direct and concise and time cautious (Sithebe, 2011: 49). Due to the marked differences in the production and interpretation of the speech act of GREETING, the Swazis perceived the direct and straight forward way expressed by the Americans as impolite and slightly arrogant and felt it disregarded others (Sithebe, 2011: 39). On the other hand, Americans felt that the Swazis were too wordy, too repetitive, and did not get straight to the point of what they wanted to say (Sithebe, 2011: 46). Even with regards to the speech act of REQUEST, the Americans phrased their requests in a more direct way than the siSwati native speakers did (Sithebe, 2011: 49).

De Kadt (1995: 58) asserts that isiZulu society is structured as a series of hierarchies and collectives. IsiZulu speakers tend to see themselves not as individuals, but as members of several collectives, such as family, clan, community, and other societal structures. This can be seen in the following scenario between A (employee) who has come to ask for a raise in salary and B (employer).

For example:

(28) A: "Ninjani?"

'How are you?'

B: "Sikhona. Ninjani?"

'We are fine. How are you?'

A: "Ayi sikhona bandla ikona nje isimo sezinto kakhulukazi isimo somnotho esis'mele kabi."

'No, we are still here people. It's just the situation of things especially the economic situation that is bad.'

(De Kadt, 1995: 64)

The above example illustrates that another way of showing politeness in African cultures is by the use of plural instead of singular forms of greeting. In addition, being indirect as a politeness strategy when a subordinate is requesting something from a superior is shown by describing a problem at great length before performing the actual request is made. In this case, regarding a salary increase, the speaker hints at the request by employing indirect means in an attempt to

avoid stating the request openly (De Kadt, 1995: 63). This technique might be misconstrued as a waste of time or being not certain of what the speaker intends to say which could lead to the addressee from another cultural and language background missing the actual intention of the speaker. Yet, both the plurality and the indirectness are politeness means, with indirectness used as an attempt to avoid placing a superior in a forced position to respond immediately because that may be seen as imposing on them and as face-threatening.

Luganda native speakers and English native speakers have different perceptions of the notions of directness and politeness in performing requests. In Baganda culture and language, indirectness does not essentially communicate politeness (Lwanga-Lumu, 1999: 83). In Luganda language, the highest level of politeness is constituted by the Want Statements, which according to Brown and Levinson (1987) are regarded as direct and blunt, and thus impolite.

For example:

(29) "Njagala kunjazikako ku bifunze bwewandiise mu sommo lyajjo."

'I want you to lend me a little bit your notes from yesterday's lecture.'

(Lwanga-Lumu, 1999: 88)

This suggests that the association between politeness and indirectness, does not necessarily apply in all languages and cultures. Thus, Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that indirectness is essentially a universal indication of politeness is not necessarily the case, as is seen in the Baganda culture. There are clearly different interpretations of the notion of politeness in different cultures which contradicts their claim (Lwanga-Lumu, 1999: 90).

It cannot be disputed that politeness in performing various speech acts is culture-specific, as individuals tend to interact in accordance with their cultural norms and beliefs (Nene, 2017: 26). This applies even among different African cultures. It is quite apparent that the difficulties that English second language learners face in achieving pragmatic competence when performing various speech acts in the target language might primarily stem from differences between languages and cultures.

The linguistic realisation of the same speech act and the rules for the successfulness of a speech act differ across cultures. Again, different cultures may have different understandings of when to use which speech act which are motivated by different cultural ways of interacting, even in written business correspondence. Lack of understanding of such cross-cultural norms and the

transfer of L1 cultural and language patterns may cause a serious communication failure or breakdown, as different cultures hold different cultural values and beliefs, and these are reflected in the use of language when people communicate.

2.3.8 Speech acts in writing

Although most research on the Speech Act Theory has concentrated on the spoken medium of language, many linguists assert that its insights also apply to the written and the signed media, because a speech act is a unit of linguistic communication in all its modes (Drid, 2018: 12). Widdowson (1996: 131), cited in Drid (2018) concurs and maintains that a speech act is "an act of communication performed by the use of language either in speech or in writing, involving reference, force and effect". Hence, this study has extended the Speech Act Theory to written business communication. However, there is a difference in the way people express themselves and interpret utterances for meaning between spoken and written mediums of language. It is for that reason that one cannot transfer the way one speaks in interpersonal communication to written communication. This is due to the proximity of time and space between two interlocutors. Written mediums lack the non-verbal aspects of communication present in interpersonal face-to-face communication. Furthermore, written messages lack immediate feedback where the audience could seek more clarity for meaning to overcome breakdown in communication. Moreover, in the context of written communication, the reader may be unknown to the writer in terms of age, gender, and culture. Hence, pragmatic knowledge of speech acts is crucial for successful and effective written business communication. Both writers and readers of business communication should consider the context, the intention behind the words used in the message, and the relationship between the writer and reader. This will help the reader in understanding the appropriate meaning of the message as intended by the writer.

2.4 Business writing

It is vital to explain the term "communication", as business writing forms part of communication. Communication is a complex process; hence it can be defined in a number of ways. Generally, communication, may be defined as "a two-way process whereby information (the message) is sent from one person (the sender) through a channel to another person (the receiver) who in turn reacts by providing feedback" (Van Staden, Marx & Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2007: 11). A channel is any means or route used to transmit a message, and it can be spoken, written, or signed. Various forms of business correspondence such as business letters and emails, among others, form part of such channels. The word "communication" comes from the

Latin word *communicare*, which means "to share" information, ideas, and knowledge between a sender and a receiver (Cleary, 2008: 2). Communication takes place in all spheres of life. In the corporate world, business writing, also known as business communication and professional writing, is an important form of communication. It takes place between two or more parties, who exchange business related information in organisations, by means of memorandums, business letters, reports, proposals, emails, and other forms of writing. It is the essence of information sharing used in organisations to communicate internally and externally. In the context of this study communication occurs when the writer shares information with the reader in the form of business letters using various speech acts such as that of COMPLAINT and REQUEST.

Although there are several types of business writing, business letters, memos, and emails are the most commonly used in business organisations. A year-long study was conducted in India, with managers and corporate employees, to investigate whether written communication is important in the business world, and what kind of written communication is most frequently used. The results showed that writing business letters plays a dominant role in terms of written communication in the corporate world with 58,33 percent of the respondents indicating that they frequently write business letters (Arputhamalar & Kannan, 2016: 113).

Arvani (2006: 13) states that despite widespread developments in communication technology, business letters are still widely used, globally, as a main channel of business correspondence. Different situations and contexts lead to distinct choices in terms of channels of communication. For instance, when a person applies for, or resigns from a job it would be inappropriate to do so by means of a memorandum or telephone call. A business letter is still considered as the appropriate channel of communication in such contexts. Nowadays, due to technological advancement, business letters, as the most conventional and popular communication means, are typically sent electronically rather than by post.

The focus in a business letter in this study is the content. The researcher is not focusing on the layout, that is, address, date, salutation, subject line and ending or complimentary close, or on the format, but rather on the content used in the body. The emphasis is on the appropriate or inappropriate use of register or words employed in the message being conveyed. The body of the letter, which normally follows the salutation, is regarded as the most important part of the letter as this is where the core matter of the business letter is explained to the recipient (Bilíková, 2010: 20). What the present study highlights is that despite modern technology and

the fact that letters are now digitally transmitted, the fact remains that a business letter requires sensitive and appropriate use of words in accomplishing a particular intention. Therefore, the importance of writing business letters cannot be underplayed. Various means of business communication are used by members of organisations to pursue the goals of the organisation. Lesikar, Flatley and Rentz (2008) distinguish business communication into three categories: internal-operational; external-operational; and personal communication. Internal-operational communication is any form of communication which takes place within the organisation. In explaining the main aim of internal communication, Van Staden et al, (2007: 14) highlight three categories of function. The command function which entails giving and carrying out instructions, the relation function which works towards creating good interpersonal relationships, and the ambiguity-management function which deals with getting the job done while showing concern to the needs and feelings of employees. Internal communication helps in achieving an organisation's goals by informing the employees about the general and specific objectives of the organisation. This information may be sent internally by means of letters, reports, memoranda, and emails. External-operational communication is professional communication that takes place between the organisation and the outside world. This communication may include business letters, emails, telephone calls, and media advertisements, to name but a few. External communication is crucial for an organisation in that it assists in sustaining relationships with other organisations, clients, customers, suppliers, shareholders, various stakeholders, and the general public. Thus, the success of a business depends on the effectiveness of business communication both internally and externally. The use of appropriate tone and register, to show politeness in the use of speech acts, is paramount as the ultimate purpose of writing any business letter is to sustain existing business relationships, and to create and establish new business relationships between the writer and audience. Not all communication that occurs in a business is operational. Personal communication is the exchange of information and feelings that people engage in, when coming together. This type of communication is as important as the other two in that it helps in making and sustaining relationships in business. Because communication is vital in business and ranked as one of the "very important skills" required for the success of a business, it is crucial for writers of business letters to display effective communication skills by using speech acts appropriately (Lesikar et al., 2008: 3). Cosman (2013: 135) emphasises that business discourse is communication, which takes place in a corporate setting, and which encompasses various speech acts, relies on politeness to sustain relationships. Depending on their purpose,

business letters can be classified into various types, for example, enquiry, request, claim or complaint, order placement, sales, and covering letters, among others.

2.4.1 Purpose of business writing

There are several purposes to business writing in an organisation expressed in different speech acts. Arputhamalar and Kannan, (2016: 111) assert that the fundamental purposes of written communication in the business world is to relay information, to make requests, to persuade people to act and to enhance relationships. A business letter may simply be used to transmit information to a reader. An example of this may be to deliver news, wherein the writer shares recent events with an audience which may consist of people from inside or outside the company. However, business writing can also be used to give direction on a course of action to be taken whereby superiors can instruct employees of what to do and how to do it. Similarly, it can be used as a way to provide an explanation or justify an action that has already been taken, particularly if the matter is a complicated one. In addition, business communication may be used to influence readers to take a specific action, such as purchasing a product or service as part of marketing strategies. In considering these it can be seen that business writing is informative, instructive, persuasive, and transactional. Most importantly, it aims to build and sustain existing relationships between the people who send and receive the message.

As business writers seek to achieve a specific purpose, appropriate use of speech acts and tone is essential in helping the reader understand information easily, while at the same time maintaining a good relationship between the parties. In order to maintain a good relationship, it is also crucial for the writer to keep in mind the type of audience being addressed, and to convey a positive image about the company. The way a message is structured is determined by the type of audience.

In considering the dual function of both conveying information and maintaining or establishing relationships it is clear that business letters have both transactional and interactional functions. In communication, the speaker commonly expects that their communicative intention will be recognized and be understood by the hearer. Similarly, Bock and Mheta (2014: 37 and 41) state that communication (oral, signed, and written) is an interactive process between a sender and a targeted audience, in social contexts, in which meaning is created when the sender's intention is effectively communicated to the audience. Hence, the transmission of information requires that both the writer's and the reader's face should be saved (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This is

particularly significant when the correspondence includes complaints and requests, as these types of speech acts are essentially face-threatening (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

2.4.2 Importance of good written communication in business

Written communication plays a significant role in today's business world. It can help define the brand of a company and enhance an organization's image. Moreover, good written communication adds to the credibility of the writer. When a person from one company writes a letter, complaining about poor service rendered by another company, the writer is essentially an ambassador of the company. In business, every document, no matter how large or small it is, is a reflection of the company. Hence it is crucial for the writer to employ speech acts and politeness strategies appropriately so as to save the reader's time in trying to understand the message. Due to globalization, university graduates who enter corporate environments will, in all probability, be required to communicate both internally and externally, nationally and internationally, to people of various cultures. It is therefore essential that they develop and possess effective business writing skills in order to meet global communication needs. Ranaut (2018: 32) highlights that employers nowadays want to employ graduates with excellent communication skills, especially in writing, in order for business organizations to be able to achieve their goals. Since the main goal of a business is to buy and sell goods or services, this involves requesting information, complaining about situations, apologising, and complying with instructions. Consequently, the appropriate use of speech acts is crucial for a business to maintain good relationships with its customers and suppliers. This entails conveying clear, accurate, concise, and courteous messages.

2.4.3 Effects of poor written communication in a business

Corporate and business environments often require cross-cultural communication to take place between people who do not share the same languages and cultures. It can therefore be anticipated that during the daily activities of business discourse, misunderstandings may occur. In written business discourse, it is essential that the reader understands the communicative purpose, as used in different speech acts, as intended by the writer. Time and money are lost when the reader of a business communication has to decipher the writer's intention and purpose. Poorly written communication wastes time, money and loses goodwill (Arputhamalar & Kannan, 2016: 111). Badly written business letters, emails and memos can lead to misunderstandings between the writer and the reader which may result in a loss of credibility. In written business communication, if the writer fails to use speech acts and polite expressions

appropriately, they may unconsciously offend the reader. The writer is likely to be perceived as uncooperative, rude, and insulting (Wijayanto, Laila, Prasetyarini & Susiati, 2013: 188). Consequently, unsuccessful politeness strategies may damage the company's reputation and the company may lose profit. In addition, the interactional goals of letter writing may be compromised.

2.4.4. Politeness in business letters

English is the most widely used language globally, and as such business letters written in English have become an essential part of transactional communication worldwide. The writer of a business letter aims to convey a specific message and in order to achieve this intention, whilst maintaining relationships, will use politeness strategies.

The term "politeness" has been explained in 2.2.2. In business letters, the writer uses politeness strategies as a means to show awareness of the reader's face. In so doing, the writer is trying to avoid threatening the reader's public self-image by means of face saving acts. In this section I will use examples by Hollinger (2005) and following the original numbering of the author (a), (b), and so on throughout, as they provide clear illustrations relevant to business letters. A simple example given by Hollinger (2005: 21) is as follows:

(30) (a) "We are sorry you misinterpreted our instructions."

(b) "We are sorry the instructions in our catalogue were not entirely clear."

The first example (30a) can be viewed as a face threatening act as it implies that the recipient of the instructions is not intelligent and is unable to interpret the instructions correctly. In addition, considering social distance, if a business letter with such a statement was read by a person holding a higher status in a company, it could be perceived as imposing on a person's negative face. It would have failed to meet the conventions of formal politeness, which expresses respect and deference for the other person associated with the negative face. On the other hand, example (30b) can be seen as a face saving act, as the writer assumes responsibility for the error, thus avoiding offending the other party. Such a strategy, which is an act of politeness, is a way of avoiding conflict and of continuing business relations. Thus, it achieves the interactional function of preserving the social and business relationship between the writer and the reader (Brown & Yule, 1983). Performing different speech acts in business correspondence warrants both pragmatic and linguistic competence by the writer, as they may be writing to readers from various cultures who bring with them certain linguistic knowledge

and behaviour. Each way of performing a speech act encompasses its own diverse social implications. In this section, I will only make illustrations of politeness in business letters of COMPLAINT and REQUEST, as these two speech acts form part of the study. I will continue to use examples by Hollinger (2005) and the original numbering by the author (a)-(d), who provides some relevant examples of requests and complaints made in business letters and points out the linguistic forms used to express politeness in business correspondence (Hollinger, 2005: 23).

(31) (a) "There appears to be an error in the statement."

(b) "The mistake must be corrected as soon as possible."

(c) "On unpacking I found that six mahogany finished dressing tables had been sent instead of…"

(d) "We are writing concerning the outstanding October account which should have been cleared last month."

The above statements serve the function of expressing a complaint about an error made and advising of an overdue account. In comparison to the earlier given statement (30a), in each of the examples (31a-d) the writer has employed a face saving politeness strategy. In all four examples a politeness strategy has been used by writing in an impersonal tone utilising passive voice. The use of passive voice is an attempt by the writer to avoid sounding as though they are accusing the supposed doer of action. Thus, they use this politeness strategy to indicate the reason for complaint, without being discourteous or offensive. There is no personal reproach, as the mistake is depersonalised, which consequently avoids placing the recipient in a position to feel defensive.

The statements below are examples of polite requests expressed in business letters (Hollinger, 2005: 22-23).

(32) (a) "As the margin on the order is very small, we *hope* you *can* allow us the extra discount of 5%".

(b) "I would be *grateful* if you *could* send me a copy of your latest brochure."

(c) "*May we suggest that* you should send us your instructions as soon as possible?"

In statement 32(a) above, the insertion of the word "hope" is a politeness strategy and a mitigation of the request for a reduction in the price. This is an attempt by the writer to show

that they do not want to impose on the reader to get extra discount on the price of the order. This effect is also intensified by the use of the modal "can". Statement 32(b) is another illustration of the use of a politeness strategy indicated by the use of "grateful" as well as the modal "could". These devices have been used to make the reader feel at ease. The reader feels the writer is polite in that there is no pressure placed on the reader to do what the writer requests. In statement 32(c) the writer has used an indirect request by using the phrase "May we suggest that" to mitigate the request and to avoid making a blunt request, which would make the reader perceive them as impolite.

It is a challenge for English L2 writers to use the above illustrations of politeness strategies in the production of business letters in a manner that sounds polite and courteous. Instead, they tend to produce abrupt articulations, by failing to apply an appropriate politeness strategy correctly, in relation to the social distance between the writer and the reader, if at all, which makes them sound discourteous. This can result in a communication breakdown between the two parties which ultimately has a negative effect on company productivity.

Growing business and cultural ties with foreign countries requires that business letter writing skills include being able to successfully communicate with people from diverse cultures, as well as proficiency in the use of politeness strategies in the realisation of various speech acts (Dido, 2017: 81). Acquiring these skills will contribute to successful communication between the writer and the reader. It is crucial for English L2 writers to understand that successful communication in a target language requires not only the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but also pragmatic competence and knowledge about socio-cultural norms and conventions in realising the speech acts in the culture of the target language (Jalilifar, 2009: 46). Overall, business correspondence is a means of communicating and sharing information and maintaining a proper relationship between the writer and the reader. Thus, the primary goals that the writer of a business letter wants to achieve are illocutionary goals, which is the intention of linguistic communication, and social goals, which is being polite in order to maintain good communicative relations with the reader. It is crucial that business correspondence should preserve the two functions of language, which are the transactional and interactional functions.

2.4.5 Pragmatics, pragmatic competence, pragmatic failure, and pragmatic transfer

Pragmatics is predominantly concerned with the way people use language within a context in real-life situations. It particularly deals with the relationships between sentences and the

contexts or situations in which they are used. According to Thomas (1983: 91), the term "pragmatics" refers to the use of language in a goal-oriented speech situation, where the speaker is using language to produce a particular effect in the mind of the hearer. In view of that, Yule (2016: 112) adds that pragmatics is concerned with the study of 'invisible' meaning, rather than the actual words or phrases conveyed by a speaker and illustrated by a listener. Pragmatics is primarily based on the theory of speech acts, first proposed by Austin (1962), as it deals with the expression of a sentence to do an action in certain contexts and situations. It also includes the norms of politeness that speakers use in conveying meaning in their use of language. While Thomas's (1983) and Yule's (1996) explanation of pragmatics is based on the use of language in a speech situation, this study extends the application of the term into a written situation, as a writer and reader have to share and understand the same meaning in relation to the communicative goal. In this sense, for effective performance of various speech or communicative acts, speakers and writers are required not just to have linguistic competence, that is, grammatical competence, including intonation, phonology, syntax, and semantics, but to have pragmatic competence in order to perform communicative acts appropriately.

The ability to perform social language functions appropriately in a context is known as pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2006: 514). Pragmatic competence is generally considered as "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (Thomas, 1983: 94). In addition, pragmatic competence involves contextual meanings and purposes of utterances. In other words, it involves the addresser's intention and the addressee's interpretation. For example, writing a business letter is goal-oriented, such as to complain or to request, and so on. Hence, the writer has to use language effectively to achieve a specific purpose. At the same time, it is crucial for the reader to understand the intended illocutionary force of the writer's words within the context in which they are used. A fundamental aspect of pragmatic competence is understanding and producing speech acts appropriately in a given situation (Cheng, 2005, in Yoosefvand & Rasekh, 2015: 45). Leech (1983: 11) and Thomas (1983) concede that being pragmatically competent involves two basic components: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistic competence refers to the ability of speakers to select and apply linguistic means to perform communicative acts or convey illocutionary force. This includes the selection of pragmatic strategies, such as directness and indirectness, and other linguistic forms, which can intensify or soften communicative acts. Sociopragmatic competence entails the ability to use language appropriately according to context, taking into consideration social factors such as social status,

social distance or, relative power and the degree of imposition of specific communication acts. For example, choosing polite forms when communicating to a person of a higher status shows sociopragmatic ability. Tanck (2002: 65) proposes that even though some speakers may be fluent in a second or foreign language, they may lack pragmatic competence and therefore may be unable to produce culturally and socially appropriate language. Lack of pragmatic and linguistic knowledge may lead speakers of different cultures with different patterns of understanding to experience communication failure, misinterpretations, and misunderstandings (refer to Chapter 2; 2.4.5 for an explanation of pragmatic knowledge). It is therefore, imperative for English L2 learners to master both competences in order to function appropriately in any communicative situation, failing which they will experience communication challenges or difficulties (Wijayanto, 2016: 99). Pragmatic incompetence essentially leads to pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983).

According to Thomas (1983: 91), pragmatic failure is the inability to understand what is meant by what is said, in other words there is a failure to understand the speaker's intention. This often leads to a breakdown of communication, especially in cross-cultural situations and may lead to face loss in interlocutors (ibid: 97). Thomas (ibid: 99) explains that there are two types of pragmatic failure: pragmalinguistic, and sociopragmatic failure.

Pragmalinguistic failure is language specific as it occurs when the pragmatic force intended by the speaker, in a given utterance, is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of the target language. It also arises when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2. It may arise from pragmalinguistic transfer (to be explained later in this section).

Sociopragmatic failure is culture specific as it refers to social conditions placed on language in use. It stems from cross culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour and is as a result of differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force. In general, pragmatic failure occurs when language learners use inappropriate communicative acts which transfer from L1 to L2, and they estimate the situational factors based on the sociopragmatic norms of their native language.

Pragmatic transfer or sociolinguistic transfer is the use of rules of speaking from one's own native speech community when interacting with members of the host speech community or simply speaking or writing a second language (Wolfson, 1989: 141; Dilek, 2020: 1265). It stems from the influence of learners' pragmatic knowledge of their L1 and culture, which is

transferred to their comprehension, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information. Pragmatic transfer can be either positive or negative.

Positive transfer, also known as facilitation, occurs when the two languages share the same language system, and the target form is correctly transferred. It shows pragmatic universality among languages. Negative transfer, or interference, or cross-linguistic influence occurs when the two languages do not share the same language system, resulting in incorrect production. It is the transfer of pragmatic knowledge that is not shared by L1 and L2 which always results in pragmatic failure.

Negative transfer is common in intercultural communication, either spoken or written, where there is tendency by the interlocutors to transfer the forms and rules of their native language, including their native culture, into the target language, which may sometimes lead to a communication breakdown. Deveci (2015: 2162) adds that negative pragmatic transfer may ensue if learners of a foreign language mistakenly generalize pragmatic knowledge of their native language (L1) to the language they are learning (L2). In the case of business correspondence, sometimes English L2 speakers may transfer the cultural norms and writing conventions of their L1 to the L2, resulting in pragmatic failure.

Therefore, different languages and different cultures have different speech acts which are motivated by different cultural ways of interacting, even in written business correspondence. Lack of knowledge regarding cross cultural norms and the transfer of L1 cultural patterns may cause a serious communication failure or breakdown as different cultures hold different cultural values and beliefs, and these are reflected in the use of language when people communicate.

2.5 English as a medium of instruction

A brief discussion on English as a medium of instruction is important for this study as this may be the main contributory factor to the challenges experienced by English second language (L2) students in South African universities, when using speech acts and politeness strategies in written business communication. English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English (Dearden, 2014: 2). Although English is predominantly used as the medium of instruction globally, this discussion will mainly focus on the African sub-region of Southern Africa, which includes South Africa, the country in which the present study is conducted.

2.5.1 The power of English

There are several factors that are considered in developing and implementing a language policy for an education system. Chavez (2016: 192) highlights six main issues that have an influence on the choice of a language of instruction (LOI), namely, psychological, educational, linguistic, socioeconomic, political, and financial. These are further viewed from two perspectives: intrinsic (psychological, educational, and linguistic) and instrumental (socioeconomic, political, and financial) values of education. Ruling governments and policy makers who put emphasis on local indigenous languages as mediums of instruction, generally view these issues in order of importance as presented earlier, placing psychological and educational issues at the forefront. Yet, those who favour the use of a global language, such as English in Namibia, emphasise the aforementioned issues in the reverse order, placing financial and political issues ahead of the others (Chavez, 2016: 192).

Globalisation, internalisation, economic, and technological developments have contributed to the need to have a shared linguistic medium. This has resulted in the spread of English as a medium of instruction, replacing other languages worldwide, and thus, English has assumed the role of being the dominant language of communication, "lingua franca", internationally (Marsh, 2006; Crystal, 2012; Hu & Lei, 2014). Southern Africa countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and eSwatini (formerly Swaziland), to name a few, are other examples where English is the main LOI. Education policies in these countries, especially in public schools, have largely confined the use of indigenous languages as mediums of instruction to the lower primary levels in schools, with the transition to using English beginning in Grade 4 through to tertiary level (Chavez, 2016: 190; Trudell, 2016: 18; 40; 65). At present, language policies which promote multilingualism in some Southern African countries, for instance South Africa, emphasise equal use of all recognised official languages as languages of instruction, English still emerges as the standard and principal LOI up to tertiary level. The practicality of the status quo in education policies still perpetuates the continuing hegemony of English.

Governments and policy makers of most Southern African countries, like Namibia and South Africa, are influenced by instrumental values of education (Chavez, 2016: 192). The quality of education and the choice of the medium of instruction are measured by political issues and the degree to which education, directly or indirectly, contributes to the economic productivity of the country. As a result, many educational stakeholders in these countries still believe that

English is the ideal LOI because it will make students more employable internationally in the future. The majority of students, teachers, and parents in Namibia, for instance, feel that English should be the main LOI from the first year of primary school because they believe that people who do not know English are unable to contribute to society (Chavez, 2016: 190). This is a common conviction in many Southern African countries dominated by a belief that the earlier exposure of learners to English will make them more competent in the language.

In addition, English is viewed as a language of power which is used to serve the demands of global economies. Crystal (2012: 3) points out that a language achieves genuine global status once it attains the special role of being recognised in every country around the world, even if that country has only a few speakers of that language. This special role is also achieved by making that language a language of communication in different domains, such as governments, the courts, the media, and educational systems, globally. It is an undisputed fact that former colonial languages, English as one of them, still dominate virtually all the formal domains of language use, enjoying a hegemony status in relation to indigenous languages in Africa and worldwide. English is still the official language used in government administration, law and courts, business, and education out of all the other recognised official languages in South Africa. Others are only used for translation purposes when there is a need. For instance, indigenous languages in education are at times used to aid in the explanation of complex English concepts which may require clarification. It should be acknowledged, though, that at universities, such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), students produce Masters and Doctoral theses in their indigenous languages, isiZulu in this case. There is a research focus on indigenous knowledge systems that certainly does not only translate English concepts.

English is widely seen as a language of prestige and being able to speak English well is equated with being well educated. In Lesotho, English is widely seen as the language of power, status, economic opportunity and "the language of the elite" (Trudell, 2016: 40). One of the reasons for parents' objections to the use of Sesotho as the LOI, even in the lower grades, is that they do not attach any economic value to Sesotho (ibid). Instead, English is associated with employment opportunities.

2.5.2 Reasons for adopting English as a medium of instruction

There are various reasons for choosing a particular language as a favoured medium of instruction. Crystal (2012: 5) cites a number of reasons including historical tradition, political influence, and the desire for commercial, cultural, or technological contact. In developing

countries, the adoption of European languages such as English, French, and Portuguese, has often been driven by practical and political decision-making (Marsh, 2006: 30).

In most developing countries the predominance of English as a medium of instruction is partly linked with colonial and postcolonial legacies that favoured global languages rather than indigenous languages. A large majority of colonial African countries introduced EMI to replace a colonial language. In South Africa and Namibia, Afrikaans was replaced with English which was considered as "the language of liberation" (Trudell, 2016: 52). This shows that in many Southern African countries EMI was adopted mainly for political reasons. In South Africa in particular, it was a political decision taken by the apartheid government when the country was ruled by the Afrikaner Nationalists, who showed little regard for the indigenous languages. Hence it was introduced 'top-down' by the government in power and was embraced by policy makers (Dearden, 2014: 2). Hence, it is the language of media, politics, education, and business and serves as the lingua franca of the country. Even though the country has eleven official languages, English is still the dominant language. As a result, many Black parents prefer that their children are educated in English (Trudell, 2016: 65). In Botswana, the process of language planning was influenced by viewing language diversity as a problem that threatens unity, social cohesion, and development (Trudell, 2016: 18). In Lesotho, introducing EMI was motivated by its economic value in order to create more employment opportunities internationally for learners (ibid: 40). It is concerning, that in multilingual Southern African countries such as South Africa, where the majority of the population do not speak English as a home language, English is the dominant LOI, and the indigenous languages are taught as subjects. In terms of mother tongue, about 80 percent of the population in Botswana speak Setswana, more than 99 percent in Lesotho speak Sesotho, and approximately 75 percent in eSwatini speak Siswati, as their home languages (Trudell: 18; 40; 74).

2.5.3 Outcomes of adoption of English as a medium of instruction

The adoption of English as a medium of instruction in different countries around the world has yielded both positive and negative educational outcomes, and mixed feelings.

2.5.3.1 Positive outcomes

Some studies have highlighted the positive effects of EMI on language learning (Hu & Lei, 2014). There is a general perception that English as a medium of education from upper primary school levels provides learners with the necessary English proficiency required for English education in the tertiary levels. EMI also increases academic and employment opportunities as

well as career development internationally. Further, it increases the prospects of learners regarding international or global communication, with people from diverse cultural groups, using English as a lingua franca. Business organisations use business letters to communicate and build relationships among one another internationally and, using English as a language of communication facilitates this role. It is an undisputable fact that English, in this context, is crucial in enabling people from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate. Thus, it makes interaction with the international community easy. It is well known that English is internationally the predominant and most significant academic language.

In the case of African countries such as in Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, where there are several nationally recognised languages using a lingua franca assists in bridging communication across language and ethnic groups.

In countries where English as the medium of instruction was introduced using appropriate educational principles, it resulted in successful and sustainable outcomes. For instance, in Europe the adoption of English as a common LOI at some universities has and continues to contribute to English proficiency in students' learning, which has resulted in the ease of movement for students and staff between universities in different countries (Kirkpatrick, 2014: 16). Throughout Europe some of the reasons for the introduction of EMI have been to enhance language competence, to increase cognitive competence, as well as to increase lifelong opportunities for learners. It also creates coherence and opportunities of mobility within the European Union.

In other countries EMI has been introduced for practical reasons for example, to achieve social cohesion and educational development. In Ethiopia, situated in the sub-Saharan African region, it was implemented so as to offset the problem of school age children having different first languages and was thus aimed at having a shared linguistic medium (Marsh, 2006: 29).

In Malaysia, because it is a multicultural and polyglot society, the aim was, and still is, to produce students who are proficient in more than one language and to attract international students (Dearden, 2014: 12; Kirkpatrick, 2014: 20).

2.5.3.2 Negative outcomes

Although there are some positive effects of using English as a medium of instruction, the negative effects outweigh the positive ones, especially in learning. One of the biggest challenges experienced by many countries like South Africa is that EMI acts as a barrier to

learning. In these countries, English L2 students do face serious problems in their efforts to achieve success in their educational outcomes because English is the LOLT. This sometimes results in academic exclusion, high failure and drop-out rates, especially at first year university level.

Students who come from previously disadvantaged schools, like students from the site of this research study, are highly affected, as they not only struggle with conversational English, due to poor English instruction in the lower academic years but find academic discourse in English to be an added obstacle to learning. This challenge is further seen in their inadequate writing skills in class tasks, assignments, and assessments. Hence the consistent observations by the researcher on challenges in the use of speech acts in English written business communication. Currently in South Africa, English is only one of eleven official languages Furthermore, approximately 80 percent of the speakers of English are not English mother tongue speakers (Makalela, 2004: 363). Statistics South Africa's Community Survey, 2016 indicates that while about three quarters (78,7%) of the South African population speak indigenous languages as their first language, only 8,3 percent speak English as their home language. Additionally, the country has different varieties of English due to the influence of the many other languages spoken in the country which is further influenced by social class, level of education, age and region (Abongdia, 2015: 473). The emergence of Black South African English (BSAE) as a distinct variety of English commonly used by mother-tongue speakers of South Africa's indigenous African languages is apparent (Makalela, 2004:362). Another variety of South African English is the Indian South African English spoken by over three quarters of a million people mainly, but not exclusively, in KwaZulu-Natal province (Mesthrie, 2003: 119). The common use of slang by Black youth due to the use of social media is another language variation. From a linguistic point of view, slang is a non-standard language variant characterised by the use of highly informal style which is common among the Black youth especially in urban speech communities in South Africa (Bembe & Beukes, 2007: 463)

Because it is not easy to remove the prestigious power that English has been bestowed with, this study argues that students can benefit from using English as a global language in international academic and business communities. Nevertheless, students can still see value in their first language, isiZulu. It is a fact that English is a language that meets global needs and for that reason it is used by business organisations when writing business letters to a variety of clients worldwide. However, that does not mean that the writer’s L1 cannot be used to complement English, especially in the use of speech acts and politeness strategies in written

business communication. African languages have a wealth of politeness strategies that can be used alongside with English to develop written business communication. There is a strong possibility that English L2 speakers automatically formulate the things they want to say in their mother tongue and may experience anxiety in their efforts to find the appropriate words in expressing politeness while using different speech acts. Allowing them the opportunity to use their mother tongue politeness strategies could reduce this anxiety. At the same time, they would slowly gain self confidence in using a second language as well.

One of the risks of a global language is that it perpetuates inequality both culturally and educationally. Those who speak a global language as a mother tongue are automatically in a position of privilege compared to those who learn it as a second language. Further, they write faster because they are only formulating what they want to say in one language rather than two and are more linguistically and pragmatically competent than L2 speakers. In South Africa, the growing use of English as the medium of instruction has made L2 speakers look down upon the value of their own first languages, instead of using them as a means to improve their L2 use, which will further be discussed in Section 2,7. Indigenous languages are perceived to have very little educational and economic value (Abongdia, 2015: 474). Crystal (2012: 15) contends that a global language has the potential to hasten the disappearance of minority languages and "other languages will simply die away". It must be borne in mind that when a language dies, the cultural identity of its speakers also dies, and it can never be recaptured Crystal (2012: 20).

2.5.3.3 Mixed feelings and perceptions on the adoption of English as a medium of instruction

The introduction of EMI has resulted in mixed feelings among university students in some countries. For instance, at the University of the Basque Country in Spain, some students felt that EMI has broadened their minds, exposed them to other cultural groups and increased chances of moving between countries (Kirkpatrick, 2014: 17). On the other hand, some students felt that using one language, English, as a language of communication perpetuates the hegemony of English and further imposes "one-way thinking" in English when interacting with others (Kirkpatrick, 2014: 17). Hence the role of first language in developing a second language, discussed in 2.7 is a way to diffuse this hegemony.

2.6 Language development in South Africa

Before explaining writing skills development in South Africa, it is imperative to highlight the efforts that have been made to develop language in general in South Africa.

Spolsky (2004: 9), cited in Hu & Lei (2014: 553), conceptualises language policy as being constituted by "all the language practices, beliefs and management decisions of a community or polity". Each of these components are a driving force for language choice. Language beliefs, also known as language ideology, consist of deeply held attitudes and assumptions about what constitutes appropriate language choices or practices in a community, or a context of communication (Hu & Lei, 2014: 553). According to Spolsky (2009), cited in Hu & Lei (2014: 553), the values and prestige that are assigned to particular languages, their varieties, and linguistic features, have a significant influence on language policy and management. Thus, different countries, including South Africa, have been driven by this notion in their development of language policies.

The development of language in South Africa has a long history, dating back from the arrival of the British at the Cape in 1806. During the 19th century, through the introduction of the language policy of anglicisation which sought to replace Dutch, English was established as a Southern African language and was imposed upon the Dutch (Afrikaner) community who had been at the Cape since 1652 (Ndhlovu & Siziba, 2018: 66). An attempt to make English the sole legal and educational language of the country was received with indignation and hostility by the Afrikaners which led to it being labelled as "the language of the enemy" (Silva, 1997: 1). English was also introduced as a medium of instruction into Black missionary schools in the Eastern Cape and Natal. In 1910, the Constitution of the Union of South Africa declared English and Dutch as the two official languages. In 1925 Afrikaans was added as an official language. Later, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 reinforced apartheid in the education system through its language policy by segregating educational facilities by race. Because the Afrikaner nationalists during the apartheid era associated ethnicity with language, communities were racially classified and segregated into small homelands for each black ethnic group, such as the Transkei for isiXhosa speakers, Zululand for isiZulu speakers and Bophuthatswana for Setswana speakers (Abongdia, 2015: 473). This led to the creation of separate language boards for indigenous languages with a lot of effort and money spent on developing material for primary education like dictionaries and literature in these languages. When the National Party government came to power in 1948, Afrikaans gained traction as the dominant language over English and became the favoured official language. Afrikaans not only assumed status as the language of government and administration but was also promoted as a medium of instruction, even in black schools. A great deal of effort and finance was spent by the apartheid regime on the development of Afrikaans as an academic language and a language of prestige, with English

having a slightly lower status. Both Afrikaans and English were recognised as official languages in all sectors, including education, but the African indigenous languages were marginalised and ignored. The attempt to introduce Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, replacing English, in black schools, led to the Soweto uprising in 1976. Afrikaans was labelled "the language of the oppressor" (Silva, 1997: 4).

When the African National Congress rose to power in 1994 after the first democratic election, essentially ending the apartheid era, efforts were made to redress this practice through language policies that recognised multilingualism. These policies included the formation of a Language Plan Task Group in 1995, designed to advise the government in the implementation of a multilingual language policy, the establishment of the Pan-South African Language Board in 1996, an independent statutory body designed to develop and promote all the official languages in the country, and the National Language Policy Framework in 2003 which ensures that government structures adopt multilingualism by using indigenous languages for communication in order to promote national unity (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003: 3; 8). In 1996 the adoption of the new South African Constitution, included a focus on developing and elevating the status of South African indigenous languages. The constitutional provisions were expanded upon with the development of the *Language in Education Policy* (LiEP) of 1997, revised in 2017, the Language Bill promulgated in 2010, and the *Language in Education Policy for Higher Education Institutions* (LPHE) of 2002 (revised in 2017). Similarly, the Department of Education (DoE) made attempts to promote a multilingual instruction policy and practice in schools and higher education institutions. As a result of the new policies, linked with the new constitution, nine indigenous languages have been recognised as official languages, together with English and Afrikaans, and are regarded as equal in status. The 2002 LPHE asserts that the state "must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages" (DoE, 2002: 3). The LPHE further states that language "has been and continues to be a barrier to access and success in higher education; both in the sense that African and other languages have not been developed as academic/scientific languages and in so far as the majority of students entering higher education are not fully proficient in English and Afrikaans" (DoE, 2002: 4-5). It is also highlighted that the biggest "challenge facing higher education is to ensure the simultaneous development of all languages as academic/scientific languages, while at the same time ensuring that the existing languages of instruction do not serve as a barrier to access and success" (DoE, 2002: 5). In this regard, all higher education institutions are encouraged "to develop strategies for promoting proficiency

in designated language(s) of tuition" (DoE, 2002: 11). Most tertiary institutions in South Africa have embraced the notion of developing indigenous languages through their language policies. For example, Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), through its language policy informed by the Higher Education Act of 1997, the LiEP (1997) and the LPHE (2002), is making an attempt to develop South African official languages.

The policy emphasises the institution's attempt to promote multilingualism in South Africa. The language policy not only encourages the use of isiZulu, or any other official South African language, by the students and instructors as reinforcement in class, but also, in the administrative areas of the university. This is to ensure that the use of English as a medium of instruction and administrative language does not act as a barrier to the students' academic success.

Even though all the official languages have been accorded the same status in South Africa, English remains the main language for both national and international communication, a lingua franca, and a language of power in government and education due to its significant academic, business, and international value. This dominance of one language over others, poses a challenge in academic institutions because English is a second language for the majority of South Africans.

Table 3: Numbers of speakers of official languages in South Africa: Statistics South Africa's Community Survey, 2016

Languages	**% of population**
1. isiZulu	24,6%
2. isiXhosa	17%
3. Afrikaans	12,1%
4. Sepedi	9,5%
5. Setswana	8,8%
6. English	8,3%
7. Sesotho	8%
8. Xitsonga	4,2%

9. siSwati	2,6%
10. Tshivenda	2,4%
11. isiNdebele	1,6%

Table 3 shows that, according to Statistics South Africa's Community Survey 2016, isiZulu (25%) and isiXhosa (17%) are the most widely spoken first, or home languages. Comparatively, English is only in sixth place at eight percent. This indicates that English, as a first language, just like all official languages, is spoken by a minority in South Africa, yet it is spoken by the majority as a second language, with an increase from three percent in 1996 to 27 percent among Africans in 2011 (Posel & Zeller, 2016: 368). The use of English, which is the mother tongue of the minority of the South African population, dominant in the educational sphere at the expense of indigenous languages, spoken by the majority of the population, puts English L2 students at a disadvantage academically.

Most institutions of higher learning in South Africa, including MUT and UKZN in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, have embraced the responsibility of developing and promoting multilingualism through their language policies, which cater for the linguistic diversity principle proclaimed in the Constitution (Mutasa, 2015: 47-48).

While much effort has gone into the development and promotion of African indigenous languages students of all ages have been identified as having challenges with regard to literacy levels.

2.6.1 Writing skills development in RSA (South Africa)

An investigation and resulting report, commissioned by the Centre for Development and Enterprise in 2012, regarding national assessments of pupils' levels of performance, provided an empirical overview of the quality of education, post democratic transition, in South Africa. It showed an on-going crisis in the South African education system with regards to literacy and numeracy (Spaull, 2013). According to the study South Africa is rated as the worst education system when compared to all middle- and low-income countries in Africa. Spaull (2013: 3) indicated that the majority of South African pupils cannot read, write and compute at grade-appropriate levels and large proportions are functionally illiterate and innumerate. This is

despite a number of educational policy developments, including assessment methods, which have been made in post-apartheid South Africa. These are briefly highlighted below.

2.6.1.1 Outcomes-based education

The outcomes-based education system (OBE), initially called Curriculum 2005 (C2005), was introduced in South Africa in 1997 and renewed in 2000. It was aimed at overcoming the curricular divisions of the past and seen as "the centrepiece for the transformation of teaching and learning in South Africa" (Spreen & Vally, 2010: 41). Considered a corrective educational move (Zhang & Fan, 2020: 246), this education model, conceived and implemented in the predominantly English-speaking countries of Australia and New Zealand, was seen as a move toward democracy in education wherein all relevant stakeholders would participate in deciding the curriculum. The process aimed at placing learners at the centre of education as opposed to the previously state controlled, teacher centred systems. Traditionally, and specifically during the apartheid era, the state had full control of the content taught to learners, as well as the methods of assessments which were applied. This resulted in educators merely transmitting required and permitted information, solely aimed at achieving pre-determined outcome measurements (Nakkeeran, Babu, Manimaran & Gnanasivam, 2018: 1484).

OBE was introduced in an attempt to reduce identified deficits in the traditional educational system. These shortfalls included the restrictive nature of a narrowly prescribed curriculum, the focus on memorisation of content for outcomes assessments, the lack of group centred student engagement in classrooms, and a gap between formal education and career focussed education. Most importantly, and in line with this study, a lack of emphasis on soft skills such as communication skills, which prepare scholars and graduates for the workplace, was recognised (Nakkeeran et al., 2018: 1484). OBE aimed to empower learners to take responsibility for their own learning, and to encourage independent thinking practices through active student engagement with the curriculum, with teachers serving as educational facilitators.

Among the claims made in favour of OBE was that it would contribute to the country's economic development needs by ensuring skills and job creation which would promote economic growth, as well improve literacy levels and productivity (Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Cross, 2012: 135). It was expected that the flexible learning approach would enhance knowledge, skills and competencies that could be used and applied outside the learning environment. In developing and designing the curriculum, OBE focused on the following:

- life skills
- basic skills
- professional and vocational skills
- intellectual skills
- interpersonal and personal skills

It focussed on eight learning areas, one of which was Language, Literacy, and Communication. The aim of this learning area was to provide and enhance skills related to effective oral and written communication. The ten specific outcomes of this learning area, later shortened and refined to seven, were:

- learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding
- learners show critical awareness of language usage
- learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural, and social values of language in context
- learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations
- learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context
- learners use language for learning
- learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations

(OBE: Teacher's Manual, 2001: 25-26)

Despite OBE's envisaged positive outcomes, its inception was controversial and confusing for South African educators, policy makers, and the general public. The implementation of OBE faced some major challenges, including a national shortage of textbooks. Teachers were faced with new and difficult concepts, contradicting teaching terminologies and models, as well as insufficient training due to a shortage of competent personnel.(Spreen & Vally, 2010: 40; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Cross, 2012: 135). A lack of finances compounded these challenges by affecting the provision of training and development materials for educators. It became apparent that the curriculum was poorly planned and hastily introduced in schools, with teachers being insufficiently prepared. Certain scholars indicate that the curriculum change was driven by a political agenda and not by the realities of the learning environment (Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Cross, 2012: 135). There were negative perceptions of the curriculum in terms of comparative international benchmark trends in literacy and numeracy, as well as in numerous national evaluations and tests.

2.6.1.2 The National Curriculum Statement

In 2002, the Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R to Nine and the National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10 to 12 were introduced. Due to ongoing challenges with regards to implementation, the two documents were reviewed in 2009. Subsequently, in 2012, the two National Curriculum Statements were combined into a single document known as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Grades R to 12. The aim of the revised document was to provide clear specifications of what content was to be taught and learned on a term-to-term basis. The learning of language in all grades accommodated all official languages in South Africa. One of the general aims of the NCS, cited in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, which has a bearing on this study, is to provide access to Higher Education and to facilitate the transition of learners from education institutions to the workplace. An important principle stated in this document, also in line with the present study, is an understanding of the diversity of languages (Department of Basic Education, 2017: 5). This principle encompasses the value of indigenous languages as highlighted in the Constitution. In facilitating the transition of learners from education institutions to the workplace, stakeholders in educational institutions should begin to contemplate the following questions: To what extent is this general principle achieved if, at present, learners who are taught in English, a predominant second language, are regarded as illiterate? How possible is effective transition from education institutions to the workplace? In what ways can indigenous languages in South Africa be used to develop literacy, especially writing skills, and to emphasise their value? Hence, the contribution of this study includes practical implications for the teaching of business communication in accommodating language diversity in South Africa. It also provides critical reflections on the relationships between English and isiZulu politeness constructions and strategies, in business communication.

2.6.1.3 International and National tests

South Africa has participated in three main international benchmarking tests of educational achievement: the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS)*, *Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS),* which is an international initiative that tests the reading literacy of Grade Four and Grade Eight pupils from participating countries, and the *Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ)* which focuses on Grade Six numeracy and literacy. The results of the 2006 and 2011 PIRLS indicated remarkably weak performances of South African Grade Four and Five

pupils in relation to the other participating countries. The results of SACMEQ II, conducted in 2000, and SACMEQ III, conducted in 2007, showed low literacy and numeracy performance levels of South African Grade Six learners. The study found that 27 percent of South African Grade Six pupils were illiterate and could not read a short, simple text and extract meaning from it (Spaull, 2013: 4). The above results are substantiated by the latest data, provided by the National Benchmark Test 2019 (NBT), on students' levels of academic literacy proficiency when entering higher education. Briefly, the main objective of the National Benchmark Tests Project (NBTP) is to assess the entry level academic skills of students entering institutions of higher learning, in terms of Academic literacy, Quantitative literacy and Mathematics (NBTP, 2019: 11). Candidates are normally placed according to four benchmark levels: Basic, Intermediate Lower, Intermediate Upper and Proficient. The NBT results for the 2019 intake revealed that, out of a total of 75,569 students who wrote the test in Academic literacy, 24 percent were deemed to be proficient, while 26 percent fell into the Upper Intermediate band. 36 percent were in the Lower Intermediate benchmark band, and 14 percent of the candidates performed at the Basic academic proficiency level (NBTP 2019: 26). The performance of this cohort strongly suggests that while a majority of students (62%) are likely to perform within the Intermediate benchmark bands, there are still those that are likely to perform at a Basic level in terms of language skills.

According to a report provided by Yeld (2009), as part of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's Transformation Audit of 2009, just under half of the 11 500 first-time entering students that were assessed in accordance with the National Benchmarks Tests, at seven South African universities, were found to be proficient in Academic literacy. This implies that more than half of the students could have academic literacy challenges and would need academic support for them to cope with the demands of higher education. Additionally, the report (2009) on the NBTs, that measured post-Grade 12 students' level of preparedness for academic tasks at tertiary level, revealed that the majority of the students were placed at basic (0%-37%) or intermediate (38%-65%) levels with regard to literacy skills (Boakye & Mai, 2016: 235). These statistics are an indicator that only one-third of students entering higher education are proficient and might be able to cope with the academic demands of first year studies. The majority, on the other hand, come to institutions of higher learning academically underprepared. Hence, they struggle with writing assignments, tasks, tests, and examinations. This transition from school literacy to academic literacy is daunting for most students, and these writing skills are crucial in both higher education and the world of work. Writing is among the six basic academic

skills, also known as employability skills, required by employers today when hiring employees. The skills are as follows: reading, writing, science, maths, oral communication and listening. It is important that schools and universities teach students these employability skills, which can be further developed in employment settings.

South Africa is not the only country faced with low academic proficiency levels, including writing skills. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2002, American students displayed a high level of under-preparedness with regards to writing. Less than a third of students in 4th grade (28%), 8th grade (31%), and 12th grade (21%) scored at or above proficient levels. Only two percent wrote at an advanced level (Nelson & Van Meter, 2004).

2.6.1.4 Annual National Assessments

Other initiatives by the national Department of Basic Education towards language policy development in South Africa include *Annual National Assessments (ANAs)* and the national workbooks, both implemented in 2011. ANAs are standardised tests conducted every year, nationally, for Grades One to Six and Grade Nine with the purpose of identifying learning needs and remediation of learning deficits. Despite these assessments students are still proceeding through school to higher grades, and to the National Senior Certificate level, without acquiring foundational skills in literacy and numeracy.

2.6.1.5 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

The *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)* is a document which has resulted due to a culmination of efforts by the Department of Basic Education in transforming the curriculum, including language, in South Africa. The document was introduced in 2017, for Grades 10 to 12, and is a revision of the previous NCS documents. It gives teachers clear and detailed guidelines of the specific content to be taught as well as specifying assessment areas and criteria, on each subject and grade.

The CAPS explicates that one of the aims of the NCS, Grades R to 12, is to produce learners who are able to communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The value of the use of language as a tool for thought and communication, and the importance of learners learning to use language effectively, is also emphasised in the document. The document further states that language learning in Grades 10 to 12 includes all the official languages in South Africa, which can be offered at different language levels (Department of Basic Education, 2017: 8). Schools

have a choice to use the official indigenous language/s predominantly spoken in their province, like isiZulu in the KZN province. One of the specific aims of CAPS that links with this study is that learners should be able to acquire the language skills necessary to communicate accurately and appropriately taking into account audience, purpose, and content. In written business communication, it is crucial for the reader to consider the audience and purpose and write appropriately using a polite tone. Although the curriculum covers the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the structure below only highlights the aspects covered on writing as a language skill, which relates to the focus of this study.

Table 4: Summary of CAPS curriculum for English Home Language- Writing skills (Grades 10-12)

ASPECTS	CONTENT	KEY FEATURES	SPECIFICS/FOCUS
Different text types	• interpersonal (personal)	• friendly letters	• invitation
	• transactional (work-related)	• business letters; emails	• complaint • enquiry • request • apology • letter to the press • letter of appreciation • notice for a newspaper
	• different essays	• argumentative • discursive • reflective • narrative • descriptive • persuasive	
	• visual	• graphs • diagrams • advertisement	

Language structures and conventions	• grammar and vocabulary (in the context of writing)	• parts of speech • concord • modals	
	• register; style and voice	• conditional sentences • passive voice • reported speech	
	• sentence construction	• punctuation • spelling	
	• paragraph writing		• main idea • supporting sentences • clarity
	• question forms		
	• informal and formal language		• slang and colloquial language • no contractions
Process writing	• planning • drafting • revising and editing		
Summary writing		• full sentences • use of synonyms • own words	
Literary texts	• novel • short stories • drama • poetry • diary	• summarise • analyse • respond	

The above table illustrates that business writing is given minimal emphasis in the curriculum. The business writing content includes the use of appropriate style, tone, and register, considering the audience, purpose, and context.

In summary, the Outcomes-Based Education Policy, the National Curriculum Statement, the Annual National Assessments, the recently introduced Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) are some of the ways in which the Department of Basic Education has made and is making attempts to develop language, and to address the problem of literacy in South Africa. The above discussion highlights aspects of functional literacy and numeracy challenges among most South African children and young adults, who are performing significantly below curriculum standards. Therefore, the development of writing skills in educational institutions, nationally as well as globally, is crucial.

2.6.2 Language curriculum in Higher Education

Having discussed the English curriculum currently used at high school level, this section will highlight the curriculum at institutions of higher learning. The purpose is to determine to what extent the CAPS curriculum used at high school level prepares or overlaps with the one offered at tertiary level, specifically in terms of writing skills.

Most tertiary institutions focus on academic writing rather than business writing. For example, the UKZN, Edgewood campus, offers an Academic Literacy Syllabus in all faculties. The syllabus includes understanding different genres or text types, such as narrative, argumentative, and discursive, among others. The syllabus also includes paraphrasing, referencing, plagiarism, paragraph writing, summary writing, text organisation, interacting with text, and engaging with writing. Business writing is not catered for. Similarly, MUT offers Academic Literacy in the foundation phases for the Pre-tech (a bridging course) and the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP), which is also available as both a semester and annual course in all faculties. An English Communication Skills (ECS) course is offered in those programmes that do not have a foundation phase.

The Academic Literacy Syllabus on writing, offered at first year level in all faculties at MUT, includes writing for different audiences, purposes, and contexts. It covers academic literacy terms, and task words, as well as summary writing skills, note taking and composing logical academic texts. General writing skills that are covered include grammar, essay and assignment

writing, plagiarism, and academic referencing. In modules dealing with written communication, students are taught to understand register, style, tone, clarity and conciseness, paragraph writing, and business correspondence. The business correspondence section covers business letters, emails, memoranda, facsimiles, curriculum vitae, and reports.

Durban University of Technology (DUT) offers Academic Literacy in the foundation phase for ECP. The Academic Literacy syllabus is similar to the one offered at MUT. Communication Skills is offered in various programmes as a semester and annual course and the syllabus on writing skills is akin to that of MUT.

From as early as the 1980s South African tertiary institutions have introduced units for Academic Development known then as 'Academic Support'. This was a means to address academic under-preparedness of students in language skills, including writing, especially those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds (Archer, 2010). Most South African tertiary institutions now have Writing Centres which offer academic support and guidance to undergraduates, in various programmes, by teaching academic literacy and other communicative skills. While these Writing Centres develop reading and oral skills, their main focus is on developing students' academic writing skills for academic literacy. The curriculum at DUT Writing Centre includes teaching writing strategies aimed at assignments for different courses and across disciplines, as well as proposal, dissertation, article, and book writing. It also teaches research skills, academic referencing and develops business and professional writing skills related to curriculum vitae, emails, motivational letters, and memoranda. MUT has a Writing Centre, established in 2021, in the Academic Literacy and Language Unit (ALLU) under the Teaching and Learning Development Centre, established in 2013, which offers resources and support, predominantly to first year students, in all disciplines. It specifically focuses on academic and research writing skills, and reading and oral skills, to a lesser extent. ALLU further assists individual students from other academic levels who need support in these skills. The Writing Place at UKZN offers the academic support service of improving academic writing and critical thinking skills for students with the use of trained tutors and through writing workshops. The Writing Centres at the University of Cape Town (UCT), North-West University (NWU) and Nelson Mandela University (NMU) provide support to students, but these also focus on academic writing skills.

In spite of the role played by Writing Centres in tertiary institutions in developing students' language skills, there are still a number of challenges in the way these centres are developed

and operated in tertiary contexts in South Africa (Archer, 2010). Archer (2010) contends that one of the main challenges for the Writing Centres is the lack of developing students' conceptual analysis in accessing academic and disciplinary discourse. Most Writing Centres focus on developing only three aspects, namely study skills, academic socialisation, and academic literacies (Archer, 2010: 497).

The writing curriculum, in tertiary institutions in South Africa, is similar to the one done by Spanish foreign language students in most upper-division courses in American colleges and universities. Their focus is on developing academic writing skills in a second language (Vásquez, 2013). However, Vásquez (2013: 97) cautions that students may not successfully transfer academic writing skills to business writing due to the differences in the respective writing styles. He emphasises the need to change the curriculum so that students can meet the real demands of globalisation. He posits that entrepreneurs and corporate executives seek professionals who have strong writing skills and who display a mastery of a wide spectrum of company communication genres. I concur with the author and further propose that tertiary institutions should focus equally on both developing academic and business writing skills, which are both needed in the workplace, locally and internationally. They should not emphasise academic writing at the expense of business writing, as this practice does not fully prepare students for workplace communication. I further argue that Writing Centres do not adequately prepare students for the real world of the workplace because they too exclude written business communication in their curriculum. Students may acquire academic literacy, but the workplace expects them to write appropriate forms of business communication.

Moreover, if graduates come to the world of business lacking business writing skills, this might have a serious negative economic impact on companies, due to poor communication resulting in failure to deliver the products and services. Consequently, companies may lose potential clients as well as existing customers.

The above discussion reflects that, in South Africa, the emphasis on aspects of writing at secondary school level are different from the aspects of writing covered in post-secondary education. It is no wonder that the majority of students in South African tertiary institutions struggle with business writing and the appropriate use of style, speech acts and tone. These skills are glossed over in both secondary and tertiary educational writing curricula.

2.6.3 Differences between academic and business writing

(Vásquez, 2013) highlights the ways in which academic and business writing differ, summarised in Table 5 below, which clarifies how and why the skill required for each style is vastly different.

Table 5: Differences between academic and business writing

Extracted and adapted from Differences between Academic and Business writing by (Vásquez, 2013)

ASPECTS	ACADEMIC WRITING	BUSINESS WRITING
Audience or reader	Aimed at limited audience and readers (e.g., lecturer, supervisor)	Aimed at multiple and diverse readers
Common genres	Writing essays, research papers, dissertations, etc.	Memos, business letters, emails, reports, press releases, etc.
Focus	Facts and issues	Facts and recommendations, courses of action
Style	Formal, academic, and field specific	Formality is adjusted per professional setting, and focusses on courtesy and relationship management
Tone	Authoritative and often detached	Choice of tone varies with the content, context, and purpose
Structure	Similar structures with an introduction, body, and conclusion	Rigid format which differs according to form of business correspondence and purpose of text

The above table which shows the major differences between academic and business writing, raises awareness that if tertiary institutions aim to prepare graduates for the world of employment, more attention has to be given to the development of business writing skills. While academic writing skills are important for the academic field, regrettably these skills cannot be transferred to business writing skills. Thus, institutions of higher learning have to

strike a balance between developing the two writing skills, otherwise they will continue to produce graduates with ineffective business writing skills, as continually expressed by companies.

2.7 The role of first language in improving writing in a second language

First language (L1) plays a fundamental role in second language (L2) development, by means of language transfer (Sultana, 2018: 2). Language transfer (positive and negative) has been explained in 2.4.5. This discussion on the role of L1 in developing L2 will focus on positive transfer, that is, how it facilitates learning an L2. The role of the learners' L1 in L2 writing is a focus in second language pedagogy research (Ahmadian, et al, 2016: 767). A number of research studies have examined the role of L1 use in L2 academic writing, focussing on the aspects of translanguaging and code- or language-switching. Code-switching is an occurrence in which a speaker alternates between two or more codes (languages) in a single conversation. The L1 and L2 are viewed as separate codes which are "switched" for communicative purposes.

In contrast, the term "translanguaging" refers to the idea that multilingual speakers use their languages as an integrated communicative system which allows them to carry out flexible and meaningful actions. This entails that bilingual speakers select features in their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate appropriately (Velasco & García, 2014: 7).

For example, in a classroom context, learners can discuss a topic or concept in their L1 and then write about it in an L2, especially when dealing with difficult concepts. It is thus a planned teaching strategy aimed at achieving a positive outcome. It is beneficial in that it may promote a deeper comprehension of the concept dealt with, and at the same time help in developing an L2. Hence, the aim of the present study is to look at the role that isiZulu (L1) speech acts and politeness strategies can play in developing effective business writing skills in English (L2).

A number of studies that have looked into the functions of L1 use in L2 writing indicate that L1 plays a positive role in L2 writing (Van Weijen, Van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam & Sanders, 2009; Ahmadian et al., 2016; Motlhaka & Makalela, 2016). A study was conducted, among Persian L1 and English foreign language learners in a private language school in Iran, on how L1 use affects the quality of L2 learners' written productions. Results revealed that a writer's L1 can play a facilitative role when writing in L2; and assists the learners in the organisation, development, structure and mechanics of the written work, thus, significantly improving L2 writing (Ahmadian et al., 2016: 773). In the same vein, a study conducted by Van Weijen, et al (2009) examined writers' use of their L1, Dutch, while writing an argumentative essay in

different topics in their L2, English. The results indicated that all participants in the study used their L1 while writing in their L2, to some extent, in various activities. It was also found that L1 has a facilitative role in L2 writing, especially in generating ideas, planning, grammatical structures, solving linguistic problems such as vocabulary, and stylistic choices (Van Weijen et al., 2009: 235). These results are consistent with Yigzaw's (2012: 23-24) findings which showed that the use of an L1(Amharic) in pre-writing, and idea generating stages, had a favourable impact on students writing development and resulted in better content writing in their L2.More in line with the present study, Yigzaw (2012: 24) posits that when students discuss and gather ideas in a language that they are comfortable with (L1), they are able to transfer the skills and strategies used to the target language (L2). In that way, they gain competence in using the target language.

Research conducted on the use of translanguaging shows positive effects of L1 use in developing L2 academic writing skills. Motlhaka and Makalela (2016) conducted research, at a South African university, to determine the extent to which students use sociocultural strategies to conceptualise shared and collaborative acts of enquiry, as they translanguage between their L1 (Sesotho) and L2 (English) systems, in writing descriptive essays. They investigated the ways in which dialogic pedagogy, that is, allowing collaboration in a dialogue by mixing rhetorical conventions of two languages, can improve writing abilities of first year bilingual students by using translingual techniques. The results of the study showed that translanguaging between L1 and L2 facilitates students' awareness, as they could use their social strategies to construct their desired voices in writing essays. Similarly, a study conducted by Velasco and García (2014) examined writing samples of bilingual elementary school learners, in Spanish/English and Korean/English, in New York City, in which translanguaging was used in the planning, drafting, and production stages of writing. The findings of the study indicated that eight out of twenty-four writing samples showed evidence of translanguaging practices. Translanguaging allowed the bilingual writers to solve challenges, in all the stages of their writing process, as they learnt to self-regulate their complex linguistic repertoire in creating their own texts and conveying their own voices in the L2.

Constant switching between first and second languages during communication has been recognised as one of the noticeable features of L2 writing (Wang, 2003: 347; Van Weijen et al., 2009: 246). The results of Wang's (2003) study, conducted to discover aspects of variation in language-switching in individuals' L2 writing process, and its effects on their written texts, found that language-switching was quite common during the writing process (Wang, 2003:

366). Participants frequently switched to their L1 (Chinese) in the two writing tasks (an argumentative essay and informal letter) while thinking aloud. Switching to their L1 facilitated the writing process for three main purposes, namely, to generate ideas, lexical searching, and metacomments in L2 (English). Interestingly, the study discovered that participants with high levels of English proficiency switched more frequently than those with lower English proficiency while composing the two writing tasks. This finding contradicts some studies on language-switching which show that less proficient learners in L2 repeatedly switch to their L1 while writing in their L2 (Woodall, 2002: 7; Wang, 2003: 348; Yigzaw, 2012: 24). These contradicting findings may suggest that language-switching takes place naturally irrespective of a learner's language proficiency level. L2 learners of all proficiencies plan their writing in their L1 most of the time, and all have similar reasons for switching languages or resorting to their L1 when composing written tasks in L2.

Since research indicates potential in the use of L1 to develop L2 academic and descriptive writing, the present study explores whether there is a role for students' L1, in using speech acts and politeness strategies, in business writing in L2.

This study therefore seeks to explore to what extent the "cross-linguistic influence", in this case positive transfer, of isiZulu and English can be beneficial in the development of written business communication and the use of speech acts. It also highlights that there is a role for comparative language studies, in teaching and learning English written business communication, where the L1 may be used as a resource (Ahmadian, et al, 2016; Mgijima & Ngubane, 2018). This is motivated by the learning context at the site of this study, where learners have minimal contact with the target language. Ameka and Terkourafi (2019:76; 79) recommend a shift from "Western-centrism" in politeness and a move towards more inclusive pragmatics by paying more regard to variation and diversity of language systems. This is quite possible in a multilingual country like South Africa where a call on developing African indigenous languages has been made since 1994. Continued research on the investigation of this potential and the development of teaching practices around such comparative studies needs to be encouraged. This kind of research and its application may lead to student empowerment, the development of African languages as professional languages, and the constructive use of African languages as resources for teaching and learning other languages. In addition, if students can use isiZulu as a resource to improve their English business writing, they could both boost their pragmatic competence in the L2 and, at the same time, they can appreciate their L1. In South Africa, the growing use of English as the medium of instruction has made

Africans look down upon the value of their own indigenous languages in terms of hierarchical value, viewing them as having an inferior status (Cakata 2015: iv, 21). In addition, the use of English as the medium of instruction, with its prestigious and economic status, has perpetuated inequality between different language speakers. Those who speak a global language (English) as a mother tongue are automatically in a position of privilege compared to those who learn it as a second language. Therefore, because of the status quo regarding the language issue, it is possible that in South Africa people may still not want to embrace L1 education, despite its multilingual policy. Regardless, there is a need to use L1 as a means to improve learners' L2 use. The real issue is finding a right balance between L1 and L2 so that the L1 is used as a valuable resource. Additionally, building a solid linguistic background in L1 can help learners to overcome anxieties and frustrations they encounter in writing in L2. Apart from these psychological effects, the use of L1 helps learners to draw on their linguistic knowledge in dealing with the complexities of writing in L2. In the context of business writing, L1 can assist students to determine the communicative intention of the addresser in L2. Thus, positive transfer of L1 strategies can assist in enhancing L2 development and serves as a useful resource in L2 writing. The incorporation of the L1 can reduce the stress of not understanding difficult concepts, create a more comfortable and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, and allow for better classroom communication, which in turn can positively influence L2 development.

2.8 Studies conducted on students' writing skills, speech acts and business writing

2.8.1 Higher Education and employers

Good written business communication skills are one of the crucial competences required by business professionals in different fields, like marketing, finance, and others, for successful conveyance of information (Ranaut, 2018: 32). This also assists business organisations to achieve their goals of making profit and building good relations with one another and with clients.

Research conducted to examine English second language (ESL), first-year students' conceptions of writing has shown that there are continuous challenges in this regard, particularly in higher education, worldwide (Lillis & Scott, 2007; Ivanic & Lea, 2006; Lea, 2004; Munro, 2003; Lea & Street, 1998; Gambell, 1991, in Chokwe, 2013). The findings of Chokwe's (2013: 535) study revealed that although students rated their writing skills as between fair and average, tutors had a different perspective and they indicated that students struggled with writing in general. This shows that students may not be aware of the extent of

their lack of writing skills. At the same time academics in schools and higher education institutes are bemoaning the low literacy levels and poor writing skills of international students, particularly in the United Kingdom (Lea & Street 1998, in Chokwe, 2013: 535). These views on literacy difficulties, which include poor writing skills, of university students globally, are reinforced by Munro (2003, in Chokwe, 2013: 535). Similarly, in South Africa there are growing concerns about the poor quality of student writing skills in schools and higher education. It has been observed that students entering higher education are struggling to write effectively and are therefore under-prepared for studies in institutions of higher learning (Chokwe, 2013: 535). A low proficiency in the language of learning (English) in South African universities may be a contributing factor to a high failure and dropout rate. This may be especially true for African first year students, for whom English is an L2, who appear to be inadequately equipped to deal with the demands of tertiary education (Seabi, Seedat, Khoza-Shangase, & Sullivan, 2014: 67). Studies highlight the challenges by ESL university learners in realising speech acts. This is evident in a study that investigated first year university English L2 Communication students' realisation of the COMPLAINT speech act (Deveci, 2015). Students had to complain to their instructors, university professors, about their assignment marks. The findings revealed students' difficulty in realising the speech act when presenting their case in that they used blunt, direct expressions thus making demands when complaining to their professor about their assignment marks. Evidence of the production of the speech act of CRITICISM being used along with the speech act of COMPLAINT, in attempts to resolve the issue, were found. This could be perceived as the student holding the addressee responsible for the problem they were addressing (Deveci, 2015: 2162).

There are continuous complaints by employers about graduates who appear to be ill-prepared for the world of work and who lack some of the most basic skills, including oral and written communication skills, needed in the work environment (Suleman, 2016: 171; Tymon, 2013). Given the rural background and poor schooling of some of the students who come to tertiary institutions in South Africa this observation is of critical importance. Under-preparedness, which includes lack of English language proficiency, is one of the major factors attributed to tertiary students' poor writing skills (Chokwe, 2013: 377). Andrews and Higson (2008) emphasise the need for adequate development of oral and written communication skills as one of the most important competencies required by graduates. This presents a necessity for higher education institutions to develop their students' business writing skills, which begins with emphasising the importance of writing in the business world. Most importantly, students in

higher education need to be sensitised to the two main functions of business letters, necessary for successful written business communication, namely transactional and interactional. Irrespective of the growing influence of social media and e-mail, a business letter is still regarded as a standard form of business communication by companies (Pikhart & Koblizkova, 2017: 1). Due to the multicultural communication taking place in the global market, effective written communication is of paramount importance.

Therefore, educational institutions must play a critical role in identifying the training needs for both educators and students, to assist students in developing written communication skills. In line with this, Jurecic (2006: 6) emphasises the importance of a close collaboration between colleges and high schools in order to address students' writing problems. Further, collaboration between institutions of higher learning and business organisations is needed to curb graduates' challenges on writing. In support of this notion, little synergy between high schools and tertiary institutions in the teaching of writing is cited as the biggest challenge, as the high school curriculum does not contribute much to the tertiary education curriculum in this regard (Chokwe, 2013: 381). Growing international and intercultural context of business communication requires that students be sensitised to the appropriate use of speech acts in a formal business context. Formality of language also includes the use of appropriate tone which is revealed in the writer's use of appropriate politeness strategies. Writing effectively is a critical skill that students must master to be successful in their education, and later when they enter the workforce.

2.8.2 Written business communication, speech acts and politeness markers

Ranaut (2018) emphasises the importance of written business communication in which various speech acts and politeness markers are used. Politeness markers are crucial in achieving smooth and successful communication in business letters (Dlali, 2003). Politeness markers are more appropriately used by native speakers than non-native speakers, which, in turn, is related to the empirical finding that speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1979) like REFUSAL, APOLOGY, PROMISE, COMPLAINT, REQUEST, ADVICE, among others, are realised linguistically in very different ways across cultures (Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Egner, 2002; Kim, 2008; Martínez Flor & Usó Juan, 2011; Mboudjeke, 2010; Sithebe, 2011; Umar & Majeed, 2006). However, challenges faced by English L2 speakers in written business communication, due to the complexity of speech acts, are evident (Martínez Flor & Usó Juan, 2011).

2.8.2.1 Speech Acts

Numerous studies have investigated strategies used, and have highlighted the challenges faced by ESL learners, in the realization of speech acts (Blum-Kulka, 1980; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Taguchi, 2006; Tabar, 2012; Elmianvari & Kheirabadi, 2013; Wijayanto et al., 2013; Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014; Deveci, 2015; Tabatabaei, 2015; Karatepe, 2016). Such challenges are evident in the use of varying REQUEST strategies employed by European and American speakers of English when they are requesting in English in a university setting (Cenoz & Valencia, 1996). Americans used more direct strategies and fewer conventionally indirect strategies to mitigate their requests compared to Europeans in English (ibid: 49). An inappropriate use of politeness strategies with the speech act REQUEST was also found in job applications written by semiliterate speakers of French in Cameroon (Mboudjeke, 2010). These variances in chosen strategies was also apparent in research into Turkish L2 learners of English and their apparent failure to understand and express the intended illocutionary meaning of the speech act of REQUEST, as used in a letter of complaint, compared to native speakers of English (Karatepe, 2016). This was noticeable in their frequent use of direct requests in the form of imperatives "Please check my notes again", explicit performatives "I request you to take your time and …" and want statements "I want the problem solved", instead of using conventionalised indirect forms, like hedged performatives (Karatepe, 2016: 356, 357, 360). Although Turkish students attempted to soften their imperatives by using a politeness marker "please", a direct request comes across as blunt and sounds like a command. It is thus considered less polite in English. A study was conducted on the sociolinguistic development of Iranian EFL learners on the concept of politeness in their requests in English through native speaker evaluation (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014). The results of the findings revealed that only 21,5 percent of the request utterances were rated as polite by English native speakers, with elements of mixed polite and impolite strategies. The findings also confirmed both conformities to, and deviations from, the native speaker norms in the realization of the speech act of REQUEST (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014: 23). Although the findings further demonstrated reliance on the use of positive and negative politeness strategies by Iranian EFL learners when requesting, negative politeness was the most frequent strategy used by participants (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014:29). Elements that caused impoliteness, such as total absence of politeness markers and mitigators, were also found. These deviations from native speaker norms by the learners in their requests in English has the potential to cause breakdowns in intercultural communication.

A further challenge faced by L2 speakers in the use of speech acts is a lack of socio-pragmatic skills. This was evident in a study wherein advanced Sudanese learners of English struggled to formulate appropriate COMPLAINTS in English despite "[…] their relatively long period of learning English" (Umar & Majeed, 2006: 9). A study that investigated politeness strategies used in complaints, in relation to social distance and social status levels, among Indonesian undergraduate learners of English, showed that the use of bald on record and some elements of threatening were the most prevalent strategies used by the participants (Wijayanto et al. (2013). The use of threat and sarcasm strategies by Persian native speakers, for whom English is an L2, was also revealed in Tabatabaei's (2015: 137) research on the speech act of COMPLAINT. Moreover, the results of this study indicated a tendency by Persian native speakers to express their dissatisfaction more explicitly, putting the blame on the addressee, while English native speakers expressed their dissatisfaction more implicitly, avoiding putting the blame on the addressee (ibid: 141). In an African culture, like Xhosa, although the use of indirect complaints as a face-saving act are common when performing an act of complaining, a threat may be used (intentionally) by a person of authority in a situation where one's instructions or demands are not obeyed by a person of a lesser authority. For example, when a teacher complains about a learner's poor performance, instead of using a polite request they would opt to use a threat as a request for the complainee to improve his low marks. This was exposed in research by Dlali (2003) which found the use of impolite strategies in which threats were made in the speech act of COMPLAINT in isiXhosa, a language closely related to isiZulu. On the other hand, the use of indirect accusation as a frequently used strategy was also apparent in research conducted on the speech act of COMPLAINT used by isiXhosa speakers when voicing complaints in isiXhosa (Dlali, 2003: 137; Manjiya, 2001: 147). The use of this strategy is a subtle way of showing annoyance and to avoid blaming the other person explicitly in trying to avoid conflict and is thus a face saving act.

Another difficulty that may be faced by English L2 speakers in performing speech acts emanates from different cultural styles which influence the way people from different cultures communicate. A cross-cultural study examined cultural styles and politeness strategies used by native speakers of English and Jordanian native speakers of Arabic on the speech act of COMPLAINT. Results revealed that although English native speakers used more strategies in voicing their complaints, both groups employed direct expressions of complaint in the form of a direct threatening request and accusation as some of the frequently used complaint strategies in their linguistic expressions (Al-Khawaldeh, 2016: 197). These were performed to get the

addressee to do something to redress the situation. For instance, English L1 speakers tended to be more direct in some situations and used "I don't care you have to repair it or buy me a new one" (threat) and "It is your fault" (accusation), while Arabic L1 speakers tried to avoid imposing by using mitigations in some cases "if it is possible, cancel the report and try to assess me honestly" (threat) and "you are an irresponsible person" (accusation) (ibid: 201). This variation in their complaints shows that although people from different cultural groups may employ the similar strategies in realising a communicative act of complaining, what is considered as an appropriate way of expressing a complaint in a certain situation varies from culture to culture. An investigation on the realisation patterns of speech acts of REQUEST and GREETING in siSwati and English revealed marked differences in the way native siSwati and American English (non-native siSwati) speakers perform and interpret these speech acts, as explained in 2.3.7 (Sithebe, 2011).

An investigation was done on politeness strategies employed by Iranian post graduate learners of English, when performing the speech act of COMPLAINT in English, in communicating with other nationalities in a university academic context. The findings revealed the use of a variety of complaint strategies, such as indirect accusation, annoyance, direct accusation, modified blame, and explicit blame. The use of more polite strategies in the form of indirect accusation and indirect requests, in trying to minimise the face threatening act of complaining, were the most frequent negative politeness strategies used by participants (Masjedi & Paramasivam, 2018: 46). However, the use of direct annoyance strategy was also apparent, which was used to express the addresser's dislike and disapproval of the addressee's actions. This strategy implies that the addressee is responsible and guilty of the act.

2.8.2.2 Speech Acts and politeness in written business communication

Research points out the difficulties experienced by ESL speakers in using different speech acts and demonstrating appropriate politeness strategies in written business communication (Goudarzi, Ghonsooly & Taghipour, 2015; Vergaro, 2004; Maier, 1992). These studies compared a corpus of business letters written by native speakers of English to those written by non-native speakers. The results highlighted striking differences in the politeness strategies used by each group to realise different speech acts. Goudarzi et al (2015) investigated the use of politeness strategies in the speech act of REQUEST, in a corpus of English business letters of four companies, written by Iranian non-native speakers in comparison with business letters written by English native speakers. This study focussed on social distance as a factor in

determining the choice of politeness strategies. The results showed noticeable differences in the use of politeness strategies by the two groups. Although both groups employed negative and positive politeness strategies in their letters, non-native participants employed positive politeness strategies more frequently than negative politeness strategies, compared to native speakers. Similar results were found by Vergaro, (2004) in a contrastive study on rhetorical differences between Italian and English sales promotion letters from different companies. Results indicated differences in the organisation of discourse patterns, as well as the use of mood and modality for the expression of politeness. Negative politeness strategies with mood and modality to express negative politeness were mostly evident in the Italian corpus, whereas positive politeness strategies with mood and modality to achieve positive politeness were mostly recurrent in the English corpus. The results of Maier's (1992) study comparing business letters written by a group of native speakers of English with those written by a group of non-native speakers indicated noticeable differences in the politeness strategies used by each group. Although the data for non-native participants showed an awareness of various types of politeness strategies, there was tendency for the language used to express politeness to be less formal and more direct than that of the native speaker group.

The results of previous empirical research on the use of speech acts and politeness in business communication globally, predominantly indicate that L2 speakers of English struggle with employing appropriate speech acts and meeting politeness norms in English when compared to L1 speakers (Nikoobin & Shahrokhi, 2017; Goudarzi, et al, 2015; Shabani & Zeinali, 2015; Kan, 2012; Ionel, 2011). Such challenges are shown in the way Persian English L2 speakers living in Iran respond to compliments, as compared to English L1 speakers living in Canada, in a corpus of business letters. Compliments may be used in business letters in instances where the writer is showing appreciation of the good service they have been getting from a company. This is mostly reflected at the beginning before employing the intended act of requesting, complaining, enquiring, and so on. The results mainly showed a significant difference in terms of the way the two groups use compliment response strategies (Shabani & Zeinali, 2015: 63)

These challenges may originate in the complexity of cultural differences due to the varying ways in which speech acts are realised across cultures that affect the use of speech acts and the choice of politeness strategies. The difficulties experienced by English L2 speakers in using various speech acts and demonstrating appropriate politeness strategies in written business communication in English have been linked to the fact that politeness differs across cultures. Rudwick and Shange (2009: 475) concur with this assertion by affirming that the perception

of what is considered polite varies from one culture to another and people cannot assume that politeness is universal. There are various variables at play within each culture that prescribe politeness standards, as earlier illustrated in 2.3.7.

The use of the speech act of REQUEST by isiZulu speakers, as compared to English speakers, highlights a different set of cultural premises in which *hlonipha,* meaning respect in English, prescribes ways of speaking to show deference (De Kadt, 1992).

2.8.3 Politeness in Zulu culture

In general, the culture of respect and politeness is very important among African Nguni societies (Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, and isiNdebele). In these cultures, respect embodies the sense of *ubuntu* 'humanity' (De Kadt, 1995: 58; De Kadt, 1998: 182). The Zulu culture, specifically, is structured in terms of a series of hierarchies and collectives, submission to authority, and age and gender differences, and these social variables prescribe the way in which politeness is displayed (De Kadt, 1995: 58; 1998). In support of this notion, the Zulu respondents in Ige and De Kadt's (2002: 150) study emphasised the relationship between the need for politeness, which includes non-verbal aspects of communication like the tone and body language, and the age of the addressee.

Not only is language used to show politeness, but other non-linguistic and non-verbal means such as tone of voice, body movement, including gestures, and eye contact play a huge role in showing deference in the African culture (De Kadt, 1995: 62; Ige & De Kadt, 2002: 149). Younger people are expected to show respect to older people at all times (De Kadt, 1998: 181). For example, a young man would take off and "fold his hat" literally known as 'ukufoconga isigqoko' in isiZulu to show great respect to an elder especially when requesting something. Additionally, respect and politeness is displayed in gaze, or eye contact. A younger person is not allowed to look straight into an older person's eyes or a person of a higher status, as this is regarded as being disrespectful. Instead, they would look away from such a person or downwards to show respect during an interaction. Similarly, a younger person is not allowed to raise their voice when talking to an older person even if they are angry or complaining about something. As a result, some of these non-linguistic mechanisms are transferred to linguistic (verbal) situations. Even in written communication, you may find the writer using subservient phrases like "ngishaya indesheni" literally meaning 'I salute', which indicates the traditionalist gesture of kneeling down and raising one's hands above one's head (De Kadt, 1995: 66).

In the Zulu culture, greeting is a very important procedure. It is considered ill-mannered not to greet, even when meeting a stranger. This gesture is a way to acknowledge a person's presence and to express the concept of *ubuntu* 'humanness'. Polite greetings in isiZulu are associated with authority and age, among other factors. A case in point is when greeting a superior, a subordinate would use the plural form of address in order to show respect.

Example, when pupils greet their teacher:

(33) "Sanibonani thisha!" 'Good day teacher!'

"Ninjani?" 'How are you?' (plural) instead of saying "Unjani?" 'How are you?' (singular)

"Salani kahle thisha." 'Goodbye teacher' or literally 'Stay well teacher' instead of "Sala kahle thisha" 'Goodbye teacher' (singular)

The *–ni-* in "sanibonani, "ninjani", and "salani" denotes not only the plural, but more importantly it is the polite form of greeting. Similar polite greetings are evident in the siSwati culture, highlighted in example 26, page 68. Furthermore, the use of a relationship term "teacher" in the above example (33) is another way of displaying politeness in the isiZulu culture. It is considered impolite to greet someone without using any form of address. A form of address could be the person's name (among equals), surname or clan name, a relationship term or title. It is common among the isiZulu culture to find individuals calling one another "dadewethu" 'my sister' or "mfowethu" 'my brother' even if they are not biologically related. Also, use of the terms "mama" 'mother' and "father" 'baba' are not used for addressing biological parents only, but as a polite form of addressing any man or woman you respect. The use of a naming term together with a clan name denotes an extra layer of politeness, for instance "baba Sotobe" literally 'father Sotobe'. 'Sotobe' is a clan name. This shows the extent of isiZulu politeness. Generally, the use of clan names, which is common in African culture, plays a huge role in showing politeness and deference.

In addition, the Zulu culture extends the *ukuhlonipha* 'respect' or being polite towards older people in the way they are addressed, whether still alive or dead (Nene, 2017: 6). The Zulu culture instils in children the respect value of not addressing their older siblings or persons by their first names. In the case of an older brother, the age difference is revealed in the use of "bhuti Musa" 'brother Musa' as a way of showing respect (ibid). Politeness to acknowledge age difference has been extended to the settings of academic institutions where you may find students using address forms like Doc (Doctor), Prof, (Professor), Ma'am (Madam) and even

to the extent of "mummy" or "ma" meaning 'mother', for older female lecturers, as a means to show deference (Ifechelobi, 2014: 66).

Furthermore, using the third person voice in addressing someone is another way of showing deference, for instance "Uyaphila uthisha?" literally translated as 'Is teacher well?', but in this case it means 'Are you well, teacher?'. Use of a second person in this case is perceived as more abrupt and direct and thus, impolite.

Similarly, age difference, power, and status are considered as some of the contributing factors to the way people express politeness to others in Zulu culture. Generally, age is considered the most dominant social variable regarding politeness (De Kadt, 1995: 58; Nene, 2017: 6).

In the African culture, including the fundamentally patriarchal Zulu cultural system, the practice of respect is structured in a series of hierarchies which prescribe gender-specific ways of communication (De Kadt, 1998: 181). The *hlonipha* (respect) practice, stereotypically associated with women, especially from rural areas, is quite common in the Zulu culture. As a result, women are expected to show deference to men and their husbands, and this is displayed in their actions, general behaviour, and language practices (Irvine & Gunner, 2018: 189; Rudwick & Shange, 2009: 72). This deference is displayed by women, especially from rural areas, by the lowering of their voices when talking to their husbands or, apologising to show that they are sorry for an action (Ige & De Kadt, 2002: 150). When a woman asks for school fees for her child from her husband, traditionally she has to bend or kneel down and will not look at the husband directly when performing that request (ibid). Additionally, not only is *ukuhlonipha* displayed in tone and posture in traditional African society, but in many subtle linguistic and social patterns of behaviour that reflect patriarchy. This is reflected in that wives are required to demonstrate deferential behaviour towards her husband's family by means of dress code and avoiding calling the names of the in-laws and closest relatives (alive and dead) (Rudwick & Shange, 2009: 69). These deference mechanisms are considered to be one of the main politeness elements of Zulu society.

2.8.4 Gendered differences

Research results show differences in the way males and females use politeness strategies and speech acts. For instance, an empirical study that investigated Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies used by Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language, in realising the speech act of REQUEST in English, showed a difference between genders. Although the results did not demonstrate a significant difference between males and females with regard to their use

of negative politeness strategies, females tended to employ more of these strategies than their male counterparts (Alfattah & Ravindranath, 2009).

Similarly, research on the use of polite and impolite strategies in the speech act of REQUEST among Iranian EFL post-graduate students revealed that both males and females favoured the use of negative politeness strategy. However, males employed bald on record more than females did, and females also used positive politeness strategies more than males (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014: 29).

The findings in Masoud and Farhang-Ju's (2020) research which investigated gender-linked differences in requests performed by Persian native speakers, who were English L2 post-graduates in different Iranian State universities, had similar results. The findings indicated that although there were no significant differences in the way in which male and female students performed requests, both using negative politeness strategies in the form of conventionally indirect speech acts, females tended to use this strategy slightly more. Male participants tended to use direct strategies more than their female counterparts (Masoud & Farhang-Ju, 2020: 6).

A study by Saidi and Khosravi (2015) examined Iranian EFL postgraduate students' perceptions of politeness and impoliteness in performing the speech act of REQUEST. Similar to the present study, the participants were asked to rate requests according to the levels of politeness ranging between polite and impolite. It further aimed to explore how male and female students would respond to requests in different situations. Although the results showed similar perceptions of politeness and impoliteness in the act of requesting by male and female participants, there was variation in the way the genders responded to different situations (Saidi & Khosravi, 2015: 1). Some male participants rated the requests in certain situations as mostly or slightly polite, while their female counterparts rated them as mostly or slightly impolite, and vice versa (ibid: 6).

The results of research that explored politeness strategies used by male and female Iranian EFL learners in their written requests revealed no significant difference between males and females, although females used more polite language in the form of negative politeness strategies in comparison to males (Karimkhanlooei & Vaezi, 2017: 118).

2.8.5 Pragmatic Transfer

Another difficulty experienced by second language learners in the use of speech acts may emanate from the transference of socio-pragmatic skills from their first language to a second

language. Due to different language use rules, this in turn, may lead to the conveyance of a pragmatic force in the target language which was not intended (Umar & Majeed, 2006; Sithebe, 2011: 12)

The results of a study which examined the pragmatic production of the speech act of COMPLAINT on Persian-speaking EFL students and Iranian EFL students showed frequent evidences of pragmatic transfer in their complaint performances (Yarammadi & Fathi 2015). Similarly, the findings of research that investigated the pragmatic transfer in English request realisations, made by EFL undergraduate students of an English Study Program in a state university in Indonesia, who had good English proficiency showed evidence of pragmatic transfer (Syahri & Kadarisman, 2015). This was apparent in their use of "Sorry" or "I am sorry" instead of "Excuse me" as interjections of attention to make their requests. In English, these expressions are commonly used to express sorrow, regret or apology (Syahri & Kadarisman, 2015: 139). Although the use of attention getters was used as a politeness strategy, they were inappropriately used in the context of requests and could thus bring about misunderstanding between the interlocutors.

A research study that investigated the judgements of politeness made by native speakers of American English and non-native ESL learners with varied language backgrounds demonstrated some evidence of the transfer of native (Spanish) pragmatic strategies to English (Carrell & Konneker, 1981). Bock and Mheta (2014: 260) term this as "cross-linguistic influence", the influence of the native language on a person's use of another language.

Inappropriately used speech acts in written business communication may lead to failure in conveying a message, or a misunderstanding of the writer's intentions by the reader, and may damage the company's corporate image (Arputhamalar & Kannan, 2016; Yoosefvand & Rasekh, 2015). Hence, L2 learners need to be aware of pragmatic rules pertaining to differences between, for example, an offence in their culture compared to an offence in the target culture, as well as different degrees of offensiveness for different speech acts in each of the languages.

The results of a study on a corpus of business letters written in English by Kazakhstani business professionals (English L2 speakers) to fellow English L1 business professionals showed frequent occurrences of pragmatic failure and communication breakdowns due to the manner in which they implemented politeness strategies and communication intentions (Aimoldina, Zharkynbekova & Akynova, 2016). It is evident that speech acts are complex and function differently in different languages and cultures.

2.9 Summary

This chapter has explained the concept of "face" and politeness in relation to the frameworks of politeness and impoliteness. In addition, the theory of Speech Acts including culturally specific speech acts and speech acts in writing have been discussed. Moreover, the importance of written business communication, politeness and pragmatic competence have been emphasised. Also, the challenges brought about by the use of English as a medium of instruction in Southern Africa. Furthermore, language development in South Africa and the role of first language in developing a second language have been explored. Lastly, studies conducted on students' writing skills, speech acts and business writing have been highlighted.

Although a great deal of research has been conducted on speech acts and politeness, African language pragmatics is largely under-explored (Dlali, 2003). There is also a general scarcity of research relating to African languages. While several studies have focused on politeness and the use of speech acts in spoken English, not much research has been conducted on the area of politeness in writing (Maier, 1992). This study attempts to fill the gap in the knowledge by focusing on students' use of speech acts and politeness strategies in context by comparing isiZulu (L1) and English (L2) with the aim of developing their business writing skills.

It is envisaged that the findings of the study will have practical implications for the teaching of written business communication and may lead to critical reflections on the relationships between English and isiZulu politeness constructions and strategies in business communication. Further, the findings may have implications for successful intercultural communication which is common in business organisations. This includes understanding differences in the use of speech acts and politeness norms which originate from different cultural orientations. Awareness of these differences in verbal and non-verbal behaviour needs to be included in the training of all members in a multicultural workforce (Ribbens, 2007). Moreover, the findings of this study will hopefully be useful in creating awareness for future planning of English second language teaching methods in South Africa and internationally.

Chapter 3 will present the research methodology, the methods and data analysis methods used in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study employs qualitative and quantitative research methods. The use of mixed methods research is becoming more popular in the field of applied linguistics, including language teaching and learning (Riazi & Candlin, 2014: 139); hence my choice of approach for this study. The data collection encompassed a questionnaire, focus group interviews, a politeness scoring task, and written business letters.

In this chapter, the research philosophy adopted by the researcher is explored with the purpose of clarifying the reasons for the choice of methodology used in this research. Accordingly, this chapter presents an overview of the research methodology and the methods used in the study. The data analysis methods used in conducting the present study are also explained. Furthermore, ethical considerations and measures to provide trustworthiness are discussed.

3.2 Ethical considerations

Creswell (2003), and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) assert that researchers, as professional scientists, have to consider the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. They further state that researchers who enter the private spaces of the participants, in trying to find evidence for their research, run the risk of impinging on those rights, needs and values. Understandably, this raises ethical issues that should be addressed before, during, and after conducting research. It was important for the researcher to abide by ethical principles and practices while conducting this research.

Walliman (2017: 42) recommends that educational and professional organisations who undertake research projects need to follow strict ethical guidelines. In ensuring that the researcher worked with integrity, and treated the participants with due ethical consideration, for this study the ethical clearance application has been assessed by both the Higher Degree Committee and the Research Ethics Committees of both UKZN and MUT. The ethical clearance certificate “letter of permission to conduct research” are attached as Appendices K and L. Please note that the name of the institution has been blacked out in both appendices to maintain confidentiality. The role of ethics committees is to oversee research conducted in their organisations to ensure ethical standards and scientific merits of research are upheld. They

formulate the research ethics code of conduct and monitor its application within their organisations. Therefore, the researcher has taken appropriate steps to adhere to strict ethical guidelines, in order to uphold participants' privacy, confidentiality, dignity, rights, and anonymity. In view of the foregoing discussions, the following section describes how ethical issues in the conduct of the research have been addressed.

3.2.1 Informed consent

Informed consent forms the basis of an "implicit contractual relationship" between the researcher and a participant (Cohen et al., 2013: 53). Prior to participants taking part in the research, the researcher distributed an informed consent form written in isiZulu and English. The aim of the investigation, the nature, and benefits of the study, as well as data collection methods were explained to the participants before they completed the questionnaire, took part in the focus group interviews, filled in the politeness scoring task, and wrote business letters. In addition to interview consent, participants who were interviewed also had to give permission for the interview to be recorded. A consent form, attached as Appendix B, was hence signed by each participant. The distribution of an informed consent enabled the participants to weigh up the possible risks and benefits of their involvement in the research, allowing them to make an informed decision as to whether or not to take part.

According to Cohen et al. (2013: 52) there are four elements involved in informed consent: "competence", "voluntarism", "complete information" and "comprehension". Competence implies that if the participants are given relevant information about the research, they will make autonomous, informed decisions as responsible, mature individuals. Voluntarism entails ensuring that participants freely choose to participate in the research or decline their participation at any point during the process without any adverse effects. Full information means that consent is given based on the participant being fully informed of the benefits and possible risks associated with participation in the research. Comprehension indicates that participants fully understand the nature of the research project and all aspects of the research they will be part of. It was, therefore, imperative for the researcher to apply these four principles in order to ensure that the participants' rights were given appropriate consideration.

3.2.2 Harm and risk

No risks or possible harmful scenarios were anticipated and identified, in terms of the participants, as the research was solely conducted for the purpose of investigating the awareness and challenges students experience when using speech acts in business writing.

Participants were assured that no risks or discomfort would be encountered during the research. It was explained that the research was beneficial to them, as it focused on the content of the English Communication Skills (ECS) syllabus. Therefore, they would benefit academically from the research in that their business writing skills would be enhanced. This is known as "cost-benefit balance" (Dőrnyei, 2003: 67).

3.2.3 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

Dőrnyei (2003: 68) asserts that it is the participants' right to remain anonymous in a way that makes it difficult to trace the respondents from the information provided. Thus, the participants were informed and assured that only the researcher and the supervisor would have access to the collected data, their answers would be strictly confidential and anonymous, and their identities would not be revealed under any circumstance. Only codes representing the participants would be used in instances where extracts have been used, as reflected in Chapter 4. The respondents were requested to identify themselves by only writing the last four digits of their student numbers, starting with either F for female or M for male. In this way, no person outside of the study panel would be able to connect any specific participant with any particular data, since their actual names would not be used in reporting data findings.

Dőrnyei (2003: 68) furthermore cautions researchers that the storage of data can pose a threat to confidentiality, particularly audio and video recording as well as transcripts. To address this concern and to avoid the data falling into unauthorised hands, the original student questionnaires used for this study are stored in a safe place for a period of three years, after which they will be destroyed. A similar procedure is followed to maintain privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity for the participants in the interviews, politeness scoring tasks, as well as written business letters that were submitted by some students. The data will securely be disposed of by shredding documents and erasing recordings of interviews.

3.2.4 Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw form study

It was made clear to the participants that the research was only for academic purposes, and that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty or future disadvantage, and that they did not have to provide any reason for their decision. Cohen et al (2013: 55) caution researchers that participants may feel coerced or pressurised to volunteer in partaking in the research. In my case as a researcher and a subject lecturer, this was avoided by emphasising that whether or not a student participated in the study, their decision would not have a bearing on the

relationship between the participant and the lecturer. Likewise, their withdrawal at any stage of the research would in no way influence their results in assessments and examinations.

3.2.5 Dissemination of results

The participants were informed that the results of the research would be disseminated in the form of a research report available for them to access at any time. The results of this study would, hopefully, be shared through conference presentations, and/or conference papers that would be published in accredited journals, websites, or other forms of publication.

3.3 Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study the researcher utilised ideas provided by Crotty (1998), cited in Creswell (2003: 5) in designing the research. These ideas have assisted in the choice of the epistemology that informs the research, the theoretical perspective, the methodology that directs the choice of methods, and the methods used.

Researchers frame their research according to philosophical underpinnings regarding what makes their research valid, and which methods best suit the issue being investigated. In addition, researchers need to "situate" themselves in the research (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013: 10). It is, therefore, imperative that a study be situated within a particular philosophical assumption to achieve the intended outcomes of the research. Equally important is to explain the difference between method and methodology in order to clear the confusion that is often associated with how these terms are used, particularly by emerging researchers.

The term "methods" refers to techniques and procedures used to obtain and analyse data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009: 3). This includes the use of specific instruments, tools, and techniques of collecting data, and how data is produced, interpreted, and analysed in the research study being undertaken. A research method is thus a strategy of enquiry which moves from the underlying philosophical assumption to the research design and data collection.

Methodology**,** on the other hand, is the "theory of the way research should be undertaken" (Saunders et al., 2009: 3). According to Riazi and Candlin (2014: 136) methodology is a conceptual framework that assists researchers in designing their study. It guides the researcher by highlighting the underlying philosophical assumptions, specifying the selection of respondents, the techniques to be used in gathering the data, and how the data will be analysed. Methodology refers to the entire process or strategy of a study which assists the researcher in justifying the choice and use of research methods to appropriately gather and process relevant

data. It also guides the researcher in applying the methods and organising the data samples in a sequence which best suits the research purpose and goals. Methodology thus includes the design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, as well as the data collection and analysis techniques in a study. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004: 36) describe methodology as a coherent group of methods that complement one another and assist in producing data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose.

In this study, methodology refers to how research was done, and its logical sequence, to answer the research questions and objectives.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), cited in Maree (2007) suggest that when doing research, it is useful to think in terms of the three significant perspectives in order to examine the practice of research: ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions and methodological considerations.

Ontology is the branch of philosophy concerned with being and with what exists. It refers to beliefs about the fundamental nature of reality (Neuman, 2014: 94). Epistemology can be defined as the relationship between the researcher and the reality or, how this reality can be known (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001: 4; Maree, 2007). Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge and what is regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline. The epistemology that informed this study is objectivism. Objectivism is the "ontological position" that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors, whereas the subjective view is that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (Saunders et al, 2009: 111; Bryman & Bell, 2015: 22).

Cohen et al. (2013: 8) contend that assumptions about how individuals view and interpret the world have direct implications for the methodological concerns of researchers, since different ontologies, epistemologies, and models of human beings will, in turn, demand different research methods.

There are two dominant ontological and epistemological ideologies: Positivism and Interpretivism. Both these major theoretical paradigms informed the methodological framework of this study. A paradigm refers to a cluster of beliefs which dictate and influence what should be studied, how research in a particular discipline should be done and how the results should be interpreted (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 25). It is, therefore, a net that contains the researcher's ontological, epistemological, and methodological premises. It has to be

acknowledged that the doctrine of positivism is difficult to explain in a precise and succinct manner because there are vast differences between settings in which positivism is used by researchers. In its essence, positivism is based on the idea that science is the only way to learn about the truth. As a philosophy, positivism adheres to a view that only factual knowledge through observation, including measurement (data collection), is trustworthy. Positivist researchers seek objectivity and use consistently rational and logical approaches to research (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988: 512; Carson et al., 2001: 5). This means that the researcher has to remain detached from the research participants to remain objective. According to positivist ontology there is a single, external and objective reality to any research question regardless of the researcher's belief (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988: 509).

Interpretivism, in contrast to positivism, is concerned with the theory and method of the interpretation of human action, in other words, the "understanding of human behaviour" (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 18). It focuses on what people think and do, what kind of problems they are confronted with, and how they deal with them. The key philosophy of Interpretivism is to study phenomena in their natural environment. The knowledge generated from this discipline is perceived through socially constructed and subjective interpretations (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988: 509; Carson et al., 2001: 9). However, the researcher must remain neutral and arrive at the truth without biases emanating from the participants' feelings and opinions. In this study an Interpretivist epistemology would enable the researcher to understand the meanings that participants assign to various phenomena and thus contribute to a rich and detailed set of data (Saunders et al., 2009: 324).

3.4 Research design

The main purpose of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained from the data analysis enables the researcher to answer the research questions as clearly as possible. Therefore, the choice of a research design depends on the nature of the problems posed by the research objectives. The research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data, by articulating what data is required and what methods of collection and analysis will be used to best answer the research questions (Walliman, 2017: 13). It also guides how participant samples will be drawn and which variables will be measured (Oppenheim, 2000: 6). In this study I used a mixed-methods approach by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods.

There are three forms of research design, namely exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. Each research design depends on, and serves, a different end purpose. I will only discuss exploratory and descriptive research which are relevant to this study.

3.4.1 Exploratory research

An exploratory research study is conducted when there is limited knowledge or information about the situation, or no information is available on how similar problems or research issues have been solved in the past. Its aim is to explore the research topic with varying levels of depth and not to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions. According to Neuman (2014: 38) the primary aim of exploratory research is to investigate a phenomenon or issue in order to provide and gain new insights and understanding of the topic under investigation.

Gaining a greater understanding of the topic under investigation can be beneficial in guiding potential future research around the area of investigation. The results of exploratory studies can refine research questions and objectives in future research endeavours.

Exploratory research is usually characterised by a high degree of flexibility and lacks a formal structure. This means that a researcher should be adaptable and be willing to change direction when new data and new insights emerge. It was previously mentioned in Chapter 1, 1.2 that very few studies have been conducted in business writing involving an African language. In this study, the researcher selected the exploratory method to gain new insights on the experiences and challenges of students on the use of speech acts in written business communication in the form of business letters. The researcher therefore entered the research field with curiosity from the point of not knowing, and to provide new data regarding the phenomena in the context.

This study attempts to explore and uncover students' knowledge, experiences, and challenges on the use of speech acts in written business communication in the form of written business letters. There are several ways in which exploratory research can be conducted. This includes searching for the literature, talking to experts in the subject, and conducting focus group interviews (Saunders et al., 2009: 140). In this study, the researcher selected the exploratory method through qualitative data by conducting focus group interviews, discussed in 3.5.2 and 3.8.2 in this chapter**.** This was done to uncover students' underlying opinions, attitudes, and challenges on the use of speech acts in business writing which would help clarify the researcher's understanding of the problem.

3.4.2 Descriptive research

A descriptive study, also known as statistical research, is undertaken in order to ascertain and describe the characteristics of the variables of interest in a situation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009: 105). In other words, descriptive research is used to describe characteristics and/or behaviour of a sample population. This approach is used to describe variables rather than to test a predicted relationship between variables. The researcher might simply report the percentage summary on a single variable. This makes descriptive research more structured than exploratory research. The main purpose is to describe, explain, and validate research findings by providing an accurate representation of a situation, participants or event, and to show how these are related to each other (Saunders et al., 2009: 590). In descriptive research**,** the researcher's focus may be to ascertain the opinions of a group of people towards a particular issue, at a particular time. This can be done in three ways, namely, observations, case studies and surveys. A descriptive approach in data collection, in qualitative research, affords a researcher the ability to collect accurate data on, and provide a clear picture of, the phenomenon under study (Mouton & Marais, 1988: 43-44). One of the advantages of descriptive research is its effectiveness in analysing non-quantified topics and issues, thus it is less-time consuming in comparison to analysing quantitative experiments.

In the present study, the descriptive approach was particularly appropriate because an accurate and authentic description of the students' opinions, on the challenges they experience, when using speech acts in business writing in English and isiZulu, was required. Hence, surveys in the form of a questionnaire, focus group interviews, and written tasks, were the instruments used to obtain data. Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection in the same study presented an advantage as they provided a multifaceted approach for data collection. This approach achieved the purpose of a descriptive study by describing and explaining the characteristics of the sample population as well as validating the findings.

The knowledge claims, the strategies, and the method all contribute to the particular research approach that a researcher may use to conduct research (Creswell, 2013: 6). There are three types of research approaches, namely, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The choice of an approach depends on the researcher's philosophical orientation, type of knowledge sought, and methods and strategies used to obtain this knowledge. Most importantly, this choice is determined by whether the specific approach being utilised will enable the researcher to answer particular research questions and objectives, the researcher's philosophical

underpinnings, and the amount of time and resources available to the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009: 141).

3.4.3 Quantitative research

Quantitative research relies on measuring variables using a numerical system which analyses these measurements using any of the statistical models, and then reports relationships and associations among the variables. The advantage is that it provides data that is descriptive and that can be expressed in numbers. Therefore, numerical data can be analysed using statistical methods. In addition, data analysis is less time consuming as it uses statistical software such as the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS). The quantitative findings can then be generalised from the randomly selected sample population to the whole population. The goal of quantitative research is to describe the trends or explain the relationship between the variables. Quantitative research is deductive. Researchers develop a theory or hypothesis and subsequently design a research strategy to test the hypothesis. Hypotheses are statements about the potential and/or suggested relationship between variables. In this study my research design assisted in answering research questions instead of testing a hypothesis. In this study quantitative data stems from a questionnaire survey and a politeness scoring task that were completed by the respondents, discussed in 3.8.1 and 3.8.3 in this chapter.

In addition, the researcher elicited written business letters in a controlled setting, discussed in 3.5.3 and 3.8.4 in this chapter.

3.4.4 Qualitative research

While quantitative research deals with numbers and statistics, qualitative research is a systematic, subjective approach which is used to understand concepts, thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and give them meaning. This type of research enables a researcher to gather in-depth insights on the problem under investigation. It is the collection and analysis of primarily open-ended, non-numerical data, especially words or descriptions and actions which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods (Dőrnyei, 2003; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Qualitative studies are, by their very nature, inductive. Theory is derived from the results of the research. In contrast to the quantitative approach, qualitative research is an enquiry process of understanding where a researcher develops a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative approaches are particularly valuable in providing in-depth and rich data. In this study qualitative data originated from focus group interviews (see 3.5.2 and 3.8.2 in this

chapter). Qualitative methods are commonly used in learning and teaching research (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3352).

The benefits of using qualitative research approaches and methods includes, firstly, being able to produce detailed descriptions of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences and then interpreting the meanings of their actions. Secondly, during data collection, a researcher interacts with the participants directly, as in the case of a focus group interview, and detailed information can be collected. Lastly, qualitative research design adopts an interactive approach and has a flexible structure which allows for the design to be constructed and reconstructed until suitable results are obtained.

3.4.5 Mixed methods research

Mixed methods research involves different combinations of qualitative and quantitative research either at the data collection, or the data analysis, level. In mixed methods research data is viewed from many perspectives, and as such it is often associated with the concept of triangulation. This leads to multiple views and valid conclusions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003: 14). Hence, the concept of mixed methods in research has drawn attention from many researchers due to differing views on what the concept actually refers to.

One view claims that mixed methods is when a study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 2006, cited in Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007: 303), while other views assume that mixed methods may be conducted within a larger study that is qualitative or quantitative in nature (Brannen, 2005; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002, cited in Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). Ritchie et al. (2013: 44) support the latter view when they state that the term "mixed methods" may also apply within one type of methodology. In their view a case of mixed methods would apply when a researcher uses more than one qualitative method. Furthermore, they are of the opinion that mixed methods generally help to provide an understanding of how events or behaviours arise, and to reconstruct perspectives on their occurrence. Mixed methods research may thus provide a better understanding of research problems than a single approach.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher is in support of Yin's (2006) view and believes that merging quantitative and qualitative methods will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the objective of the study. A mixed methods approach has been utilised through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Hashemi (2012), cited in Riazi and Candlin (2014: 139) asserts that between 1995 and 2008, 75 percent of articles published in seven international peer-reviewed journals showed an integration of quantitative

and qualitative approaches as inclusive methodologies. This specifically included applied linguistics and language teaching research. As all research methods have their own advantages and limitations, the goal of using mixed methods research in this study was to draw from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of either method in a single research study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 14-15).

The study used a research-based combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods for two purposes out of the five popular ones, namely triangulation and development (Riazi & Candlin, 2014: 143). The other three purposes are complementarity, initiation, and expansion. Triangulation refers to the intentional use of more than one method of data collection and analysis while studying the same research question, with the purpose of seeking convergence. In line with this explanation, the researcher may use concurrent procedures to collect and integrate data for a comprehensive analysis of the research problem and interpretation of the results (Creswell, 2003: 18).

There are three basic types of mixed methods designs, namely convergent, also known as parallel or concurrent designs, sequential designs and embedded designs (Klassen, Creswell, Clark, Smith & Meissner, 2012: 379). This study used sequential research design, in that quantitative data in the form of questionnaires was collected first and then the focus group interviews were used to build on the results of the questionnaires. Creswell (2003: 18) asserts that sequential procedures are used when the researcher seeks to elaborate on, or expand the findings of, one method with another method. In this procedure, the researcher may begin with a qualitative method for exploratory purposes and follow up with a quantitative method with a larger sample, so that they can generalise results to a population. Alternatively, a quantitative method may precede a qualitative one. In this study, the statistical data from a questionnaire was used to further structure the interview schedule questions. This is also known as development. Development occurs when the results of one method are used to develop or inform another method (Riazi & Candlin, 2014: 144).

Mixed methods research has both benefits and limitations. It helps the researcher to acquire broader, deeper, and more in-depth information and knowledge of the problem being investigated. Moreover, it assists in providing substantial data and increases the reliability of the findings by integrating the strengths of both methods into the research. However, it is time consuming and expensive in terms of data collection and analysis. It is difficult to find a researcher with experience in both qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson &

Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 21). This is known as the "methods experience gap" (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 213). One of the challenges of using concurrent procedures is that findings from the two methods may be contradictory (Klassen et al., 2012: 380). Consequently, the use of the two research methods can compensate for such a challenge and offset the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of the other. It should also be noted that the strengths of one method may add to those of the other method. This will contribute to well-validated and substantiated findings (Creswell, 2013: 218). A further challenge for using mixed methods research can occur when more attention is given to one method instead of capitalising on the strengths of both methods. The value of mixing methods enriches a researcher's understanding of a phenomenon being investigated and the research problem (Creswell, 2003; Ritchie et al., 2013). Mixed methods research was used in this study to provide a more extensive picture of the challenges faced by English second language students when using speech acts, especially in the written business context.

Both the quantitative and qualitative methods chosen have shortcomings. The researcher, however, in engaging with the methods and being aware of the limitations, found that for the purpose of this project the chosen methods have advantages that outweigh the disadvantages. Cohen et al., (2013: 141) contend that relying on one research method may lead to bias or distortion of the way the researcher views the particular slice of reality being investigated. Recognizing that all methods have limitations, the researcher felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods. Litosseliti (2010: 33) further asserts that whether combining or integrating quantitative and qualitative elements, mixed methods designs arguably contribute to a better understanding of the various phenomena under investigation.

Table 6: Distinctions between quantitative and qualitative data: Saunders et al, (2011: 482)

Quantitative data	Qualitative data
• Based on meanings derived from numbers	• Based on meanings expressed through words
• Collection results in numerical and standardised data	• Collection results in non-standardised data requiring classification into categories

• Analysis conducted through the use of diagrams and statistics	• Analysis conducted through the use of conceptualisation

3.5 Research methods and forms of data

Different types of research methods which are normally used in academic and applied research can be employed to collect data from the sample of respondents (Walliman, 2017: 63). The choice of method is determined by theoretical, practical, and ethical factors. These factors include the use of either a quantitative or qualitative research method, the duration of the research, cost, availability of funding, research opportunities such as ease of access to respondents, the personal skills, and characteristics of the researcher, and lastly, how the research impacts on those involved with the research process. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages.

There are two major approaches to gathering information about a situation, problem, or phenomenon. The researcher may need to collect the required information from a primary source, alternatively, they may need to extract the necessary data from information that is already available. Based on these major approaches, data can be categorised as primary or secondary data (Sekaran, 2006; Kumar, 2011; Walliman, 2017). Primary data refer to information obtained first-hand by the researcher on the variables of interest for the specific purpose and the aims of a particular study. Examples of primary data are observation, focus groups, questionnaires, and panels of respondents, specifically set up by the researcher, from whom opinions may be sought on specific issues.

Walliman (2017: 70) highlights four basic types of primary data, that is, “measurement”, “observation”, “interrogation”, and “participation”. Measurement includes the collection of numbers indicating amounts, for instance voting polls and examination results. Observation relates to records of events or situations experienced with a person’s own senses which are recorded using an instrument such as a camera and a tape recorder. Interrogation takes place when data is collected by asking and probing, for example, information about people’s convictions, likes and dislikes. Lastly, participation refers to data gained by experiences of doing things rather than just observing.

Secondary data refers to information gathered from sources that already exist, known as secondary sources, for example, company records or archives, government publications,

industry analyses offered by the media, websites, and the Internet. In other words, secondary sources are written sources that interpret or record primary data (Walliman, 2017: 70).

This study predominantly collected data through interrogation; that is, asking and probing. Data was collected by conducting a survey, in the form of a questionnaire, and focus group interviews. Supplement to that, a politeness scoring task and the elicitation of written business letters were used to assess the respondents' awareness and challenges when employing speech acts in business writing.

A questionnaire is defined as any written instrument with a series of pre-formulated questions or statements to which respondents respond by either writing out their answers or selecting from existing options (Brown, 2001, cited in Dőrnyei, 2003: 6). A questionnaire can be extremely versatile and efficient because it can gather a large amount of information quickly. Hence it is the most common data instrument used in second language research and applied linguistics (Dőrnyei, 2003: 1).

3.5.1 Questionnaire design and administration

The way the researcher designs a questionnaire has a bearing on the response rate and the validity of the data collected (Walliman, 2017: 97). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to design an appropriately relevant questionnaire which will collect the exact data required to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives.

There are several ways of administering a questionnaire, also known as a survey, as a data collection method or tool (Walliman, 2017: 97). It can be administered personally, mailed to the respondents, or electronically distributed via the Internet and Intranet.

The choice of questionnaire is influenced by a variety of factors related to the researcher's research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2009: 363). These factors are, in particular, the characteristics of the respondents from whom the researcher wishes to collect data; the importance of reaching a particular person as respondent; types and number of questions needed to collect data; the importance of respondents' answers not being contaminated or distorted; and the size of sample required for the analysis, taking into account the likely response rate; and the resources the researcher has available, such as time and financial implications.

A self-administered questionnaire can be completed in the presence or absence of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2013) and the way a questionnaire is administered will have both advantages and disadvantages.

3.5.1.1 Advantages and disadvantages of a questionnaire

A personally distributed questionnaire is convenient in terms of the respondents' and the researcher's time, effort, and financial resources (Walliman, 2018: 223). It is also versatile in that it can be used successfully with a variety of people, in a variety of situations, targeting a variety of topics.

Kumar (2011:147) states that distributing and collecting questionnaires in those instances where a researcher has a captive audience, such as in a classroom setting, can produce a high response rate. This time saving advantage can be enhanced by data being processed faster and more thoroughly using modern computer software.

It must also be considered, however, that the depth of the investigation can be compromised by the short amount of time respondents spend in completing a questionnaire. The researcher has little opportunity to double-check the seriousness and validity of the answers because of limited personal contact between him/herself and the respondents.

While the anonymity of a questionnaire makes it a more reliable research tool compared to interviews, as it may encourage participants to provide more honest answers, it is always possible that some respondents may provide false information in their responses (Cohen et al., 2013).

Sometimes people do not always provide true answers about themselves, that is, the results represent what the respondents report in terms of what they deem an appropriate response, rather than what they actually feel or believe. Respondents may also not know the exact response to a question yet answer it by guessing without indicating their lack of knowledge; a tendency known as "uninformed response" (Saunders et al., 2009: 363).

Misinterpretation, especially in the case of open-ended questions, may lead to different understandings of the same question by different respondents, which may further contribute to a lack of authenticity in responses. Respondents may discuss the questions among themselves and in that way their responses may be contaminated. These limitations can affect the reliability and validity of questionnaires as a data collection tool.

Validity and reliability of a questionnaire is achieved if the respondent decodes the question the way it was intended by the researcher and the answer given by the respondent is understood by the researcher in the way it was intended by the respondent. This is known as "internal validity" (Walliman, 2017: 104). Internal validity is the ability of a questionnaire to measure what it is intended to measure. Reliability refers to the consistency in interpreting a questionnaire.

This study used a self-administered questionnaire for assessing students' awareness on the use of speech acts and politeness in written discourse. A questionnaire was chosen for the study because the structured format makes it a fast, convenient, and inexpensive way of collecting a large amount of data. Further, the questionnaire was personally distributed in a classroom setting enabling the researcher to explain the purpose and benefits of the study and assist in clarifying any issues of concern that may arise. In order to address the limitations of a questionnaire, highlighted previously, focus group interviews were conducted to allow more probing of responses by the researcher.

3.5.2 Focus group interviews

Focus-group interviews, as a means of qualitative data collection, have become a popular method amongst professionals in the fields of health and social care for acquiring information (Rabiee, 2004: 655; Bell, 2010: 165). A focus group interview is an interview that is usually conducted with a small group of people, who are purposely selected as a sample of a specific population, focusing on a given topic. Focus groups are useful in gathering exploratory data and gaining new insights into perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, and identified research problems.

A focus group can be explained as a group of people who are selected for their relevant expertise or involvement in a subject, who are gathered together with the aim of discussing a particular topic or focus of the research in order to reveal their opinions and beliefs (Walliman, 2017: 171). These individuals often have common interests or characteristics and, with the assistance of a moderator, interact with the aim of gaining information or exploring their feelings and perspectives related to specific issue.

Krueger (1994) cited in Rabiee (2004: 656) espouses that rich data can only be produced if individuals in the group are prepared to engage fully in the discussion by being comfortable in talking to the moderator and to one another. For this reason, bearing in mind the topic under

investigation, the use of a homogenous group sharing similar characteristics in terms of gender, age, ethnic, and social class background is paramount.

It is important to consider the size of a group when forming a focus group (Kumar, 2011: 128). The size of a group that is neither too large nor too small is recommended because the involvement of groups that are too large or small can constrain the extent and quality of the discussion. Hence, generally, a suggested manageable number is between six and ten participants. This number is considered large enough to provide a variety of perspectives, yet small enough to stay connected and not to become disorderly. Krueger and Casey (2000: 4) suggest between six and eight participants, as they believe that the smaller the groups, the greater potential is achieved. Factors such as homogeneity in terms of gender and other demographic factors determine the choice of respondents. Other factors that may influence the amount, kind, and quality of interaction in focus groups are the location, the seating and recording arrangements, the presence of observers, perceptions of confidentiality, and other ethical issues. Group dynamics are regarded as one of the distinct features of focus-group interviews. The dynamics that occur with group participants, in terms of social group interactions, generates richer and more multifaceted data than that of one-on-one interviews. The multiple interactions occurring allow a researcher to gather a range of ideas and perspectives as data (Rabiee, 2004: 656).

Depending on the purpose of the interview, focus groups can be structured or completely unstructured (Bell, 2010: 165). Structured focus groups are designed around a set of carefully predetermined questions, usually between six and ten, and checklists. In the case of unstructured focus groups, the intervention of the researcher is minimal. In focus group interviews, participants are able to build on each other's ideas and comments to provide in-depth views which cannot be achieved from individual interviews. Hence, it is crucial to develop a topic guide to be used in the structured focus group interviews in advance so that the study gathers the best possible data from the beginning. A topic guide is a document, normally a page or two in length, which contains a set of key themes and/or broad questions to explore during the interview. The main goal of the topic guide is to enable the researcher to collect data that, when analysed, will answer the research question(s). In this study the use of structured focus groups, with an interview schedule consisting of questions prepared beforehand, (see Appendix F), was merely used to ensure focus to the discussions around the issue that was investigated.

In order to maximise participation, the researcher must ensure that there is an agreed upon, prearranged date and time for interviews, and that participants are reminded timeously a few days prior to the interviews. Each group interview usually lasts approximately one to two hours, based on the complexity of the topic under investigation, the number of questions and the number of participants. It is, therefore, ethical, and good practice to warn the participants about their time commitment.

Interviewers, known as moderators, play a key role in the success of focus groups. The interviewer's main task is to keep discussions flowing, to guide discussions back from irrelevant topics, make transitions into another question and to be sensitive to the mood of the group. Moderators should also have some background knowledge about the topic being discussed. Hence, for the focus groups in this study, the moderator is an English Communication Skills practitioner who is familiar with the challenges of English L2 speakers in the use of speech acts in English written business correspondence. Another role of a moderator is to prevent single participants or partial groups from dominating the interview with their contributions. To achieve this the interviewer should encourage reserved members to become involved in the interview so as to obtain answers from the whole group to cover the topic as far as possible. Finally, the interviewer should be skilled in being able to balance their behaviour between directively pointing the group in the right direction and non-directively moderating it. They should also consider how they would address weaknesses of the method, if any, such as the limited number of questions and the problems of taking notes during the interview. A skilful moderator should be able to manage the existing relationship and create an environment in which the participants, who do not know or are not familiar with each other, feel relaxed and encouraged to engage and exchange feelings, views, and ideas about an issue.

In general, the interviewer should be “flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive, a good listener” (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 652). Krueger (1994) proposes that it is important that the moderator continues to conduct focus groups until a clear pattern emerges and subsequent groups only repeat information already given, this is known as “theoretical saturation” (Rabiee, 2004: 656).

It is advisable to have, apart from moderator, a note taker to observe and document non-verbal interactions such as the impact of the group dynamic. This person can also make note of the exchanges of views, the general content of the discussion, and note pertinent statements made by individual participants, thereby supplementing the oral data for a deeper analysis. Nonetheless, in this study, the moderator performed the role of a note taker.

3.5.2.1 Advantages of a focus group interview

It has already been highlighted that the use of focus groups is gaining much popularity especially in social science and health research. This is because interviewing a group of people at the same time is more efficient and costs less than interviewing different individuals at different times. At the same time, the moderator is able to stimulate group responses to avoid getting the responses of a single interviewee all the time. Focus groups usually require less preparation and are comparatively easy to conduct, because the moderator is guided by an interview schedule. In addition, focus groups are beneficial in their capacity to reveal valuable, in-depth information related to opinions and perceptions regarding an issue (Bell, 2010: 166). Considering the above, these groups therefore generate large amounts of data in a relatively short time span, and the findings may be used to precede quantitative procedures. The fact that the researcher or moderator can interact directly with the participants allows for clarification, follow-up questions, and probing. Moreover, the researcher can gain information from non-verbal responses to supplement verbal responses. Notably, group collaboration enables generation of rich data. However, conducting focus groups has limitations.

3.5.2.2 Limitations of a focus group interview

The limitations of focus groups are that audio recordings are mostly time-consuming to transcribe and sometimes there might be inaudible information. Bell (2010: 168) cautions that if the researcher has to do the transcription themselves, it can take at least four hours of transcribing for every hour of an interview for a skilled typist and more for an inexperienced typist. In this study, the researcher took notes to supplement the recordings. Bell (2010: 167) contends that a limitation to recording is that respondents may hinder honest responses. To counteract this limitation, the researcher herself did not conduct the interviews, but used a colleague who is in the same field as a moderator to conduct the interviews. Although a huge amount of data can be produced from these interviews, it is not easy to develop an analysis strategy that incorporates both the themes of the discussion as well as the interaction patterns. Further, it may be difficult to decode as to who said what in group interviews compared to one-to-one interviews. This makes it difficult to analyse the data.

Limitations can be found in those instances where a moderator lacks the necessary skills to competently deal with various group dynamics, personalities within those dynamics, as well their own influence on the group. An untrained or inexperienced moderator may have less control over the group and therefore will be less able to monitor and regulate the information

produced. Further, if the discussion is not carefully directed it may reflect the opinions of those who have a tendency to dominate within a group. Moreover, the moderator may show their bias in the framing of questions and the interpretation of responses by consciously or unconsciously providing cues about what type of responses are desirable. Because a focus group interview consists of smaller samples of participants, a bias within a small group can significantly skew the results. This bias can limit the ability to generalise to larger populations. Thus, to offset this limitation, before the interviewing process began, the researcher stressed that the moderator should encourage all participants to engage in the process and should be mindful of moderating dominant participants to get varied responses and opinions.

3.5.3 Politeness scoring task and writing tasks

3.5.3.1 Politeness scoring task

The essentiality of applying the appropriate speech acts and politeness for effective communication when writing business letters has been highlighted in Chapter 2. Literature on speech acts and politeness has also been discussed. However, the researcher found no relevant literature or research based on, or specifically conducting, politeness scoring tasks.

In order to mitigate this gap in the literature the researcher created her own politeness scoring task (see Appendices J 1 and J 2).

3.5.3.2 Writing tasks

As previously mentioned in the literature review (see 2.4.1 in Chapter 2), business letters are one of the main forms of internal and external communication used in the business world. They are commonly written in a formal style and a polite tone which helps to establish and maintain the image of a business and develop longstanding business relationships between the writer and the reader (Zheng, 2015: 1467). The purpose of teaching business writing, which includes business letters at higher education levels, is to help students acquire proficient skills and competencies in producing effective and appropriate written communication in the workplace.

Barton and Hall (2000: 1) point out that letter writing, as a form of business correspondence, should be viewed as a social practice, as it is prevalent across a range of cultures, communities, and continents. Since the writing of business letters is embedded in particular social situations, the meaning that the reader attaches to specific or particular words, known as the locutionary force, is situated in cultural beliefs, values, and practices. For instance, the way the reader interprets the use of speech acts by the writer depends on their understanding of how these

speech acts are realised in their own culture. This can either be advantageous or disadvantageous to the writer, depending on how the speech acts that have been used in the content of the letter are interpreted by the reader.

3.5.3.2.1 Advantages and disadvantages of writing tasks

Generally, the primary purpose of business writing in the workplace is to communicate and share information appropriately to specific audiences, including clients (Hollis-Turner & Scholtz, 2010: 242). In this study, the use of business letter writing tasks was beneficial to the respondents as it presented them with an opportunity to simulate workplace writing, using speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST for real life business purposes, in an academic setting. In line with the objective of the study, the tasks were a means of preparing the participants for participation in the world of work, as the objective of the study.

Written tasks in the form of business correspondence are usually written with specific readers in mind. Understanding the readers' roles in the business context, and the social distance between the writer and reader, helps in the choice of words in using speech acts, since these roles are socially constructed. A case in point is when an employee writes to a manager complaining about a service, he would employ a high level of formality due to the maximal hierarchical or social distance between the two parties. However, when an employee writes to another employee with the same intention, the tone used in realising accompanying speech acts would be more consultative than formal because in this case the social distance is minimal between the writer and the addressee. Business letters have a particular illocutionary force or a specific intention of meaning that the writer aims to convey to the reader. The business letter writing tasks given to the participants provided them with a clear sense of audience, context, and purpose apparent in workplace writing, in order that they could adapt their message accordingly.

An advantage to conducting the tasks in a natural classroom setting allows respondents to feel at ease, unlike if they were to write in an unfamiliar environment. This has the potential to increase the external validity of the research. External validity refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be generalised to the entire population (Dőrnyei, 2007: 52).

In addition, the tasks were performed in an authentic learning environment using authentic students. Groups were intact, that is, using the same respondents who were used in the rest of data collection instruments. Using a natural classroom environment is convenient in terms of the respondents' and researcher's time and costs. Similar to a questionnaire, the anonymity of

a writing task inspires the respondents to write honestly and diligently, making it a reliable research tool.

Writing tasks also have limitations. The use of "simulated" audiences, as they are imagined by the respondents, might lead the respondents to lose sight of social distance between the writer and the reader. This distance as a social factor influences the degree to which an act might threaten one's positive or negative face in a communicative event (Hollis-Turner & Scholtz, 2010: 242). This might contribute to the inappropriate use of the speech acts in question, including politeness strategies. The use of imagined audiences in a writing task also lacks the authenticity of actual business letters written in the workplace context. Moreover, the respondents' awareness of the task not resulting in an academic assessment mark may mean that the task is not afforded the value significance of a graded task and information may be omitted and less effort applied. This might compromise the depth of the investigation. It is for this reason that multiple methods of data collection were used in the study to offset such limitations. Lastly, the writing tasks were given to students after they had been taught speech acts and business correspondence writing. Therefore, only a post-test group, also known as "one-shot case study design", and no pre-test group was used (Neuman, 2014: 293). Consequently, there was no capacity to compare the writing tasks of the group of respondents before and after they were taught some of the issues under investigation.

3.5.4 Translation issues

Translation is an "interpretive use of language" in that the intention is to rewrite or resay what is said in one language in another language (Gutt, 1991: 461). It is the means of transferring information from one language to another, whereby a translator reproduces and re-organizes the source language on the basis of an accurate understanding of the meaning of the original information. Translation should be viewed as part of communication and a "cross-language communicative act" (Frawley, 1992: 516). It serves a pragmatic function as it shows the kind of communication intended by the communicator. It is crucial for the translator to retain the author's intended meaning in the original text when translating to another language. This ensures that the meaning of the message produced during translation is equivalent and coherent in the two languages (Li, 2015: 220). The meaning of an utterance depends, to a certain extent, on its semantic context, and, largely on the context in which it is interpreted. Thus, the contextual information around the word/s used technically makes it easier for the reader to infer meaning. This is called "co text" (Gutt, 1991: 43). The use of incorrect contextual information

can result in a complete failure of the communication attempt. Before the translation is presented, it is advisable that the researcher gives the text to a person, who represents the intended audience, for assessment. This process will assist the translator in making the necessary adjustment to the text to achieve a satisfactory effect (Li, 2015).

Table 7: List of translated materials

Student questionnaire
Politeness scoring task
Written tasks (business letters: complaint and request)

It was imperative for the materials used to be translated as this is a comparative study on the use of speech acts and politeness on English and isiZulu. However, I am sensitive to the translation process and its shortcomings, including the effects it might have on the results of the study. One of the challenges of translation is that it is possible for the meaning given in the original text to be lost in the process of translation to another language. Gutt (1991) asserts that the original text and translation belong to different languages. Thus a "semantically perfect translation" between any two languages can pose a challenge (Guenther & Guenther-Reutter, 1978: 374). Different languages may not be semantically equivalent. To mitigate these shortcomings, the researcher sought the expertise of isiZulu first language speakers who are also academics at tertiary level to assist in the translation. The researcher also utilised her knowledge and understanding of the two languages, based on comprehensive insight and comprehension of the socio-linguistic realities and issues of the two languages.

3.6 Research site and research participants

3.6.1 Research site

The educational institution that formed the site of the study was a University located at Umlazi township on the east coast of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of South Africa in the Durban Metropolitan area. Umlazi township has a population of approximately 750,000 which is predominantly black source. The majority of the population speaks isiZulu as a first language (L1) with a minority of other Nguni and Sotho languages such as isiXhosa, isiNdebele, Setswana, and Sesotho, and very few English first language speakers. According to Statistics South Africa's 2012 Report on Population (StatsSA, 2012), Umlazi township consists of 99,44

percent Black African population, wherein 91.42 percent are isiZulu L1 speakers, 2.99 percent speak isiXhosa as L1, and 2.09 percent are English L1 speakers (Statistics South Africa, 2012).

It is due to the nature of these demographics that the mission statement of the research site states that the institution's "[…] location emphasises a call to serve students with a genuinely historically disadvantaged background". The majority of students have a disadvantaged schooling background with limited capacity to effectively promote English proficiency. By virtue of the location, the main language spoken at this institution is isiZulu, followed by English, with its language choices shown in the Report on the use of African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education (DHET, 2015: 29). The language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is English. As it has been previously discussed in 1.2, students at the research site have minimal interactive opportunities to connect and communicate with English L1 speakers.

3.6.2 Research participants (N=150)

The sample for the study included 150 students from the total population of approximately 280 first-year English L2 students, enrolled for a National Diploma in Marketing in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the site of the study. A sample is the segment or subset of the population that is selected for investigation.

The selected sample was accordingly balanced in terms of gender (N=75 male and female students). The participants were all isiZulu L1 speakers, who ranged between 16 and 25 years of age. From the population of the participants who indicated in the questionnaires that they would be willing to be interviewed, eighteen students participated in the focus group interview. They were randomly selected bearing in mind homogeneity, such as gender, ethnic or cultural background and educational level (Litosseliti, 2010: 60). Therefore, the sample was representative of the whole population in terms of language, gender and age to allow an accurate generalisation of result (Maree, 2007). The first language of the participants was indicated in the questionnaire and this information was further verified in the institution's student biographical information system.

As the researcher teaches at the same institution where data was collected, a convenience sample was used. This sampling method refers to situations where population elements are selected due to their ease of accessibility and availability (Bryman & Bell, 2014: 178; Maree, 2007: 177). This method is useful in exploratory research where a researcher is interested in getting an inexpensive, quick approximation of the truth. Although it is cheap and quick, its

limitation is that it does not result in a representative sample. To make up for this limitation, this study further employed probability sampling methods in the form of stratified purposive sampling. Participants were selected according to preselected criteria, including gender, relevant to a particular research question (Maree, 2007). The population sample was divided into males and females (strata), and within each stratum, simple random sampling was then conducted.

3.7 Pilot study

Dőrnyei (2003), Kothari (2004), Saunders et al (2009), Cohen et al (2013), Mackey and Gass, (2015), and Walliman (2017) emphasise the importance of piloting the research instruments before they are used with the research participants. A pilot study is a small-scale trial of the procedures, tools and methods the researcher intends to use (Mackey & Gass, 2015: 362).

Ross (2005) highlights two main purposes of doing a pilot study. Firstly, it can assess whether the way an instrument has been designed will elicit the required information from the respondents. Weaknesses such as redundancy, use of ambiguous and complex language that may contribute to misinterpretation of the words used can be detected. Secondly, conducting a pilot study assists in testing whether the respondents interpret the questions and instructions correctly, and evaluates the suitability of the response categories provided for the questions. Moreover, pilot testing assists in checking the time taken by the respondents in responding to the instrument. Maree (2007: 159) asserts that it is important that a questionnaire is structured so that respondents are, preferably, able to complete it in less than 30 minutes. The feedback from the respondents in the pilot study helps the researcher in making the necessary adjustments to the instruments before preparing the final version (Fink, 2015). Cohen et al, (2013: 341) explain that the objective of pilot studies aims to identify and improve data collection instruments in terms of their reliability, validity, practicability, and feasibility.

In this study, a questionnaire, a politeness scoring task, and focus interviews were all piloted. The same procedure that would be used in the final administration was followed (Kelley, Clark, Brown & Sitzia, 2003). The three instruments were piloted to determine whether the objective of the study would be achieved. The business letter writing tasks were not piloted, as the tasks used for data collection were part of the subject syllabus.

It is compulsory to pilot test the instruments with a small group of people similar to the sample, but who will not partake in the final data collection (Ross, 2005; Cohen et al., 2013; Mackey & Gass, 2015). All the three instruments were piloted on 75 first-year students enrolled for the

Human Resource Management diploma in the Faculty of Management Sciences, not taught by the researcher. This group also does business correspondence as a component of the English Communication Skills syllabus. From the 75 students, a group of six volunteer participants, who had indicated willingness to be interviewed was used to pre-test the focus interviews. The interview schedule that would be utilised in the actual interview was used. Piloting the focus interviews was intended to assess the relevance and appropriateness of the interview questions, and to identify any duplicate questions. In addition, it was a means to help the researcher familiarise herself with the topic guide and adjust the flow of the questions so that the interview would be well paced. This process could have the positive effect of increasing the researcher's confidence in the efficacy of the data collection tool used for the interviews when conducting the study. In this case, the process ensured the researcher that the moderator would manage to conduct the group interviews in the absence of the researcher. Since the politeness scoring tasks were translated from one language to another, part of the pilot test was to give the translated isiZulu version to an isiZulu L1 speaker, who represents the intended audience, for pre-test. This allowed the translator sufficient time to make adjustments to the work to achieve a satisfactory effect.

The data gathered by the collection instruments in the pilot were not used in the study itself. Rather, the feedback from the respondents assisted the researcher in making the necessary adjustments to the questionnaire, especially in terms of the open-ended questions. It also helped the researcher in terms of developing and improving probing questions in the focus group interviews.

3.8 Research tools and data collection methods

The current study used primary sources for gathering data. Some of the basic methods of collecting primary data are by means of asking questions, conducting interviews, and doing experiments (Walliman, 2017: 92). The data for this study was collected using a questionnaire, focus group interviews, a politeness scoring task and two writing tasks.

3.8.1 Student questionnaire (n=150)

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013: 344) assert that there are several ways in which questionnaires can be administered, including, amongst others, self-administration, by post, by telephone, and via the internet. They expand on self-administered questionnaires distinguishing those that can be completed while the researcher is present and those that are completed when researcher is absent. In the present study, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to

223 respondents and completed in the presence of the researcher, with an expected response rate of 150. The response rate was higher than expected as a total of 179 questionnaires were returned. These were divided according to males and females (strata), and within each stratum, simple random sampling was then conducted to get a targeted sample.

The student questionnaire was used to answer the following research questions:

- What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?
- To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation?

The researcher handed the questionnaires out to students in class, and these were collected after they had been completed. One of the benefits of using a personally administered student questionnaire is that the researcher had a direct contact with the study population. Thus, rapport between the researcher and the respondents was established. Further, the researcher was able to explain the purpose and the relevance of the study and immediately clarify any queries and uncertainties that respondents had. The researcher also motivated the respondents to offer honest answers. However, since the researcher teaches the respondents, it was crucial to highlight the content of the informed consent form in terms of honesty in answering questions, confidentiality, and anonymity. It was also stressed that the respondents were in no way forced to participate in the survey and that their responses had no bearing on their assessment and examination marks on this subject.

The questionnaire elicited students' personal information, language background as well as their awareness and challenges on the use of speech acts (see Appendix E). The questionnaire was formulated in both English and isiZulu to assist in the interpretation, especially by the respondents of limited literacy in English. Dőrnyei and Csizér (2012: 79) assert that presenting the questionnaire in the respondents' own mother tongue improves the quality of the obtained data. The questionnaire contained both open (unstructured) and closed (structured) questions and was divided into two sections.

In the first section, factual questions, in the form of closed questions, were used to get the participants' background information covering demographic characteristics such as age, gender, home language, residential location, and work experience. This information was

pertinent to the interpretation of the findings of the survey. Additional data on the participants' exposure to the use of English outside the university was also included. The purpose of asking about their work experience was to ascertain if there would be a difference in the use of speech acts in the writing tasks between those who had work experience and those without. The closed questions consisted of dichotomous questions, with only two possible answers; multiple-choice questions, with three or more response categories; and the Likert scale, a measurement of the respondents' frequency of the use of English outside university (Maree, 2007). Generally, closed questions enhance the comparability of answers, making it easier to show the relationship between variables and to make comparisons between respondents. The closed ended questions were presented with fixed options, which allowed the respondents to quickly select the choice most applicable to them. These limited option questions also assist the researcher in terms of time spent on analysis procedures. In addition, too many options can make a question unclear, whereas limited options can provide clarity. A disadvantage, however, might be that respondents may find closed questions frustrating especially when they are unable to find a category that they feel applies to them. A respondent can answer even if they have no option or knowledge of the issue at hand, which may lead to guesswork. Hence the researcher counterbalanced this limitation by including open questions.

The second section mainly focused on attitudinal questions, in the form of open questions which focussed on the participants' attitudes, opinions, beliefs and challenges on the use of speech acts, including politeness, in written business communication. The respondents could answer a question in the way they wished and on their own terms. Open questions in the questionnaire were intended to allow the respondents the opportunity to express their views so as to offset the bias and limitations that would have been created by the use of closed questions.

The respondents completed the questionnaires on their own and the structured format allowed them to complete the questionnaire in under an hour.

3.8.1.1 Questionnaire data analysis

The questionnaire raw data was prepared for processing by converting the respondents' answers to numeric scores, especially the closed-ended questions, through a process known as coding. This is known as "data reduction" (Cohen et al., 2013: 348). Then a new data file was created in a computer program into which the data was recorded. The data was keyed into a statistical analysis tool, known as SPSS, for analysis. This software package is most commonly used in the social sciences, applied linguistic and educational research (Dőrnyei, 2007; Dőrnyei

& Csizér, 2012). Further, the data was cleaned for any typing errors, and appropriate changes were made in the dataset before the analysis took place. This is known as "data manipulation" and "data screening and cleaning" (Dőrnyei 2007: 202-204; Dőrnyei & Csizér, 2012: 83-84). This phase is crucial, as some mistakes in the data can completely distort the results. Descriptive statistics was used to reveal the distribution of the data in each variable. It was also performed to provide valuable information about measures of central tendency in terms of the mean, mode, and median scores. The mean is simply the average score of a distribution. The median is the centre, or middle score within a distribution. The mode is the most frequent score within a distribution. In the case of open-ended questions that elicited more diverse or longer responses, the analysis went beyond conversion of categories into numbers. Additionally, the researcher added a thematic analysis to the open-ended responses and in instances where the respondents had to give reasons for their choices, and those responses were summarised accordingly.

3.8.2 Focus group interviews (n=18)

In this study focus group interviews were used for exploratory purposes. The main purpose was to collect in-depth qualitative data about a group's perceptions and challenges on the use of speech acts in business writing (Maree, 2007). More specifically, the focus was on the participants' awareness of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu. In other words, whether they understand the intended meaning, which is the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force, of the speech acts being used in written business communication. As previously mentioned, focus interviews were also used in this study for triangulation and development purposes.

The focus group interviews were used to answer the following research questions:

- What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?
- To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation?
- Are there any instances of the role of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?

In this study, out of a sample of 30 participants who were selected from those who had shown their willingness to participate in the questionnaire, only eighteen arrived on the day of the interviews. The participants were then selected using simple random sampling. As a result, three semi-structured focus group interviews (N=6/group) were conducted face-to-face with the eighteen students. Because participating in the focus group interviews was voluntary, ten males and eight females took part. Each interview session lasted approximately one hour and 25 minutes. Rabiee (2004: 656) points out that the duration of each interview should be between one to two hours in length, depending on the complexity of the topic under investigation, the number of questions, and the number of participants involved. The participants were informed of the expected duration of the interviews and their time commitment. The participants were sub-divided into small groups of six, bearing in mind factors such as homogeneity, age, gender, race, and language. Rabiee (2004: 656) considers a focus group, consisting of between six and ten participants manageable. In the study this number allowed flexible and effective group interaction to take place.

Due to the fact that the researcher teaches the respondents, in order to avoid bias and as an attempt to elicit honest answers to enhance the credibility of the study, a moderator who is also an English Communication Skills lecturer was used to conduct the focus group interviews. The researcher had drawn up a list of broad questions which would be used to develop a discussion among the focus group participants. The use of an interview schedule would prevent the ensuing discussion from digressing from the focus points. At the start of the focus group, during the welcome and introductions session, the researcher built a rapport between the moderator and the participants by doing the introductions and allaying any fears that the participants might have. The researcher also encouraged the participants to express their feelings, opinions, and perceptions in a full and honest manner.

Two convenient, private venues were used; one venue was used to accommodate all the respondents while the other one was used for the interviews. The interview venues provided relaxed and comfortable settings with comfortable chairs, adequate lighting and were air-conditioned. The respondents had been given a focus group letter confirming date, venue, and time (Appendix G) four days prior to the interviews.

At the beginning of the discussions, the moderator established a code of conduct by asking people not to talk at the same time and to respect each other's views (Litosseliti, 2010: 172). In addition, it was mentioned that the interviews were to be conducted in English. However,

the participants were free to answer in isiZulu for further clarity and whenever the need arose. The two languages were concurrently used to maximally accommodate the language needs of all participants as well as to be able to adequately address all concepts. Further, the use of both languages was a means to make the respondents feel at ease in responding to the moderator's questions, as some of them, as ESL learners, are not fluent in English. The moderator, using an interview schedule with topics, asked questions, and where necessary, explained them. The moderator's job was to facilitate and guide the participants' discussions. To avoid bias of the information collected through domination of the discussions by the more outspoken individuals, the moderator requested each participant to display a pseudo name in front of them. This enabled the moderator to involve even the shy or less participative individuals by randomly calling out their names and seeking their opinions during the discussion. The participants indicated that they preferred the use of pseudo names rather than using the last four digits of their student numbers as used in other data collection research instruments in this study. It was primarily used to maintain confidentiality during the process.

The moderator directed discussions with the purpose of collecting in-depth qualitative data about the group's perceptions and challenges on the defined topic. These discussions were audiotape recorded**,** as per the signed consent (Appendix B), to assist with clear conversation transcriptions. No videotape camera was used, as this would inhibit group interaction since the participants would be cautious in their responses**.** This was explained to the participants. The moderator also took notes during the discussion capturing non-verbal cues.

3.8.2.1 Focus group interviews data analysis method

Cohen et al. (2013: 461) maintain that there is no single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data. The way analysis is done depends on the research question the researcher wants to answer and the objective of the study. It is also contingent on the number of data sets and participants from whom data was collected and available resources. Therefore, it is significant for the researcher to be clear about what they want the data analysis to do, for example, to discover patterns, generate themes, to explain and seek causality, to name a few. This will determine the kind of analysis that is undertaken, such as the use of grounded theory, or content analysis, among others. This, in turn, will influence the way in which the analysis is written up. Cohen et al. (2013: 467; 468) highlight five ways of organising and presenting data analysis, each with their own advantages and limitations. Firstly, data can be presented by groups of respondents, on the issue under investigation. Secondly, this can be done by

presenting the total responses of an individual. Thirdly, all the data relevant to the issue at hand can be presented. Fourthly, the presentation can be structured by research question. Lastly it can be organised by data instrument.

In this study, qualitative data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. This framework was chosen as it provides a clear explanation of the steps required, making it easy for even inexperienced researchers to deal with the large amount and complex nature of qualitative data. Rabiee (2004: 657) posits that large amounts of data generated from qualitative research, particularly focus group interviews, can be overwhelming for both novice and experienced researchers. A unique aspect of this framework analysis is that even though it uses a thematic approach, it permits themes to develop both from research questions and participants' responses.

Thematic analysis is a method which is used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes that are important within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3352). It is one of the qualitative research approaches most used by researchers across disciplines. Thematic analysis was chosen because, from the teaching and learning perspective, it is regarded as a method rather than a methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3352). This means that in comparison to other qualitative methodologies, it is "not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective" which makes it a very flexible method (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3352). It is also one of the prominent methods used for the analysis of content message and as a research tool it provides a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 78; Brough, 2018: 211).

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide for conducting thematic analysis shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for doing thematic analysis

Step 1: **Familiarising oneself with the data** (text; may be transcriptions) and identifying items of potential interest.
Step 2: **Generating initial codes** that identify important features of the data relevant to answering the research question(s); applying codes to the dataset (segmenting and "tagging") consistently; collating codes across segments of the dataset.

Step 3: **Searching for themes**; examining the codes and collated data to identify broader patterns of meaning.
Step 4: **Reviewing themes**; applying the potential themes to the dataset to determine if they tell a convincing story that answers the research question(s); themes may be refined, split, combined, or discarded.
Step 5: **Defining and naming themes**; developing a detailed analysis of each theme.
Step 6: **Writing-up the report**; weaving together the analytic narrative and data segments, relating the analysis to extant literature

These six steps were followed in analysing the focus group interviews in this study, bearing in mind the objectives of the study (see Chapter 1, 1.5 and a discussion of the steps in Chapter 4, 4.2). The choice of this framework was motivated by its regard as the most effective approach in many fields. as it provides clear and practical guidelines for doing thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3353).

3.8.3 Politeness scoring task (n=150)

The politeness scoring task was used to answer the following research question:

- To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation?

The researcher developed the politeness scoring task as her own contribution to the field (see Appendices J1 and J2) by taking utterances from different business letters, written in English, from various Communication textbooks. The task consisted of utterances in which different politeness markers in a variety of speech acts, such as REQUEST, OFFER, COMPLAINT, REFUSAL, APOLOGY, and others, were used. Since the study compares the use of speech acts in English and isiZulu, the same utterances were translated to isiZulu by several isiZulu mother tongue speakers who have translation experience. Li (2015: 220) asserts that translation has to reproduce, in the receptor language. the closest natural equivalent of the source language

message. Hence expertise in translation was crucial to sustain the equivalence and coherence of the two languages both in meaning and style. Further, the purpose of translating the same utterances was to maintain the use of the same speech acts which ultimately would assist in making comparisons between the participants' ratings in the two languages in the data analysis stage. The participants were given the task, which included a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 'very rude' to 'very polite' to measure their awareness of the degree of politeness of each utterance. They were issued two politeness scoring tasks in the classroom, one in isiZulu, one in English (Appendices J1 and J2). These were issued together with the writing tasks. The languages of the politeness scoring task correlated with the language of the writing task for each of the two groups. The task was used to elicit politeness ratings from the participants. It was further aimed to establish whether there was any convergence or divergence of patterns in the participants' politeness scores. It was expected that speakers who were very consistent in their politeness scores would also be proficient in the use of speech acts in the business letter writing task. However, there is the possibility that the consistency in the politeness scoring task and the proficiency in the use of speech acts might diverge. This would then indicate that there are two different processes at work in the assessment of politeness and the 'production' of politeness which would have to be addressed differently in pedagogical approaches to business writing skills development. The task scores were furthermore used to assess whether there was any correlation between the participants' responses in the questionnaires, focus group interviews, their business letter writing and their politeness judgements in the politeness scoring task.

One of the limitations of the task could be extracting sentences from different English business letters out of context. This could lead to a slight difference between the original meaning from the business letters and the one given or perceived by the respondents.

3.8.3.1 Politeness scoring task data analysis

The ratings of the task were analysed guided by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies focusing, in particular, on the use of negative politeness (minimising imposition) out of the four strategies. Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness super-strategies were also used focusing on bald on record impoliteness strategy out of the four strategies. Bald on record is a direct way of expressing a speech act, without any minimisation to the imposition. These two politeness and impoliteness strategies were more appropriate to analyse the utterances from business letters in the tasks in both languages, the rest of the strategies would be more useful in analysing

spoken communication. Social distance between the writer and the reader of the business letter was also taken into consideration. There was a challenge for the researcher to find relevant literature that underlines specific criteria to measure different extreme levels of politeness, for example measuring a distinction between rude and very rude, polite, and very polite. Hence, the use of the politeness strategies and impoliteness strategies mentioned above.

In addition, because politeness varies across cultures and is therefore a relative term, a sample of two politeness scoring tasks in each language was evaluated by two English L1 and two isiZulu native speakers in terms of politeness. The purpose was to determine whether the respondents' ratings were in line with the standard conventions of English and isiZulu politeness norms, thus ensuring validity of the results.

Also, the responses of the respondents were coded by the researcher using Microsoft Excel. Similar to the questionnaires, data was then submitted to the SPSS software (version 25) for descriptive analysis and the Chi-Square test. Descriptive statistics was used to identify and reveal the percentage and distribution of the data in each variable in each language. It was also performed to provide valuable information about the central tendency, dispersion, and distribution of the data and to facilitate further interpretation in terms of the mean, mode, median scores, and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics is commonly used in speech act research (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014: 28). Next, the respondents' politeness scoring tasks were evaluated against the ratings of English L1 and isiZulu L1 speakers. Finally, a Chi-Square test was conducted to compare whether there were any significant differences in what the respondents perceive as polite or rude in the use of various speech acts between English and isiZulu responses.

3.8.4 Writing tasks (n=100)

The writing tasks were used to answer the following research questions:

- What is the participants' awareness of the use of appropriate speech acts in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu)?
- What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?
- Are there any instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?

The writing tasks were given to 230 respondents, with the expected response rate of 150. As this is a comparative study on the two languages, 100 business letters that were written by the same respondents in the two languages in the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST were used for this study. Because the writing tasks were done in the second semester prior to their last assessment before the final examination, student attendance in class was low. Hence, the response rate was lower than expected. Out of the targeted 230 respondents, the researcher received 118 complaint business letters written in English and 103 complaint business letters written in isiZulu. On the other hand, 122 request business letters written in English and 101 written in isiZulu were received. Consequently, 100 business letters were selected for each speech act for consistency in analysing the data. These were selected by means of random sampling. This is a procedure used by researchers in which all samples of a particular size have an equal chance to be chosen for an experiment.

The participants were asked to write two business letters in the classroom, one focusing on the speech acts of COMPLAINT, the other focusing on the speech act of REQUEST. They were instructed to write a letter to the Manager of a company complaining about a product that had been recently delivered to their company. As Sales consultants in a company, they were also requested to write a letter to the Sales Manager requesting marketing materials that would be needed in an upcoming advertising campaign (see Appendix I). These tasks were done in different sittings. The participants were separated into two groups (N=115). In the first sitting, where the participants (N=230) were asked to write a letter of complaint, each group (N=115) wrote letters in isiZulu, while another wrote in English. In the second sitting in the following week, the participants were asked to write a letter of request. In the same way, each group (N=115) wrote letters in isiZulu, while another wrote in English. After three weeks the groups reconvened and repeated the letter writing tasks with the only difference being that they had to swop languages (Appendix I).

To maintain the anonymity of the respondents, they were asked not to write their names, surnames, and student numbers on the letters, but to write the last four digits of their student numbers beginning with M for male or F for female, for example M5278. In this way it would be impossible to trace the code back to the student. Cases where the respondents had preferred to write the last five digits of their student numbers were observed during the data analysis. This, likewise, did not make it possible to trace the code back to the respondent.

Although respondents were required to write the entire formal business letter, including the salutation and the complimentary close, the focus for this study was the informational content of the letter. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) Theory of Politeness and Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness super-strategies, the aim of the writing tasks was to identify the politeness and impoliteness strategies and markers used in both languages in realising the two speech acts in English. These theories would further assist in identifying the politeness and impoliteness strategies used in isiZulu in order to develop their appropriate use in English.

3.8.4.1 Writing tasks data analysis method

Because politeness varies across cultures and is therefore a relative concept, a sample of 15 business letters focusing on each speech act under investigation (COMPLAINT and REQUEST), and in both languages were evaluated by an English L1 and an isiZulu native speaker in terms of politeness and further evaluated by the researcher. The samples were then converged and compared. The purpose was to determine if the respondents' tasks were in line with the standard conventions of English and isiZulu politeness norms, thus ensuring validity of the results.

All the 100 business letters focusing on each speech act, in both English and isiZulu, were analysed by the researcher to examine the occurrences of politeness and impoliteness strategies used by the respondents in the data. This was done using Brown and Levinson's (1987) super-strategies for minimising the imposition of a face-threatening act (FTA) and Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness super-strategies shown in Table 9 below.

Although, Brown and Levinson highlight five super-strategies of politeness for performing FTAs, this study only used negative politeness strategies, focusing on the use of indirect speech acts and linguistic deference to analyse written business letters, as one of the "four highest-level strategies" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:92). The linguistic features that were focused on will be explained in the data analysis chapter. In addition, although Culpeper (1996) highlights five super-strategies of impoliteness as means of attacking face, this study used bald on record and negative impoliteness strategies, mainly focusing on frightening, to analyse written business letters. The researcher chose to use these politeness and impoliteness strategies as they are more applicable to written business communication. Further, they have been used in other studies in analysing written business letters (Wijayanto, Laila, Prasetyarini & Susiati, 2013; Goudarzi, Ghonsooly & Taghipour, 2015; Khatib & Lotfi, 2015; Nikoobin & Shahrokhi, 2017). The positive politeness strategies and withhold the FTA strategy apply more to spoken

utterances and have been used in various studies (Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Kamlasi, 2017; Nurmawati, Atmowardoyo & Weda, 2019).

Firstly, the written business letters on each speech act were randomly coded (1-100) but were matched in terms of language used in writing the letter. This means that each participant was assigned the same code for both letters written in English and isiZulu. Secondly, the occurrences of politeness and impoliteness in the data were coded by the researcher. Then, the data was evaluated by using the technique of content analysis, focusing on the linguistic expressions, in order to identify politeness and impoliteness strategies as shown in Table 9 below, but modified as shown in Table 10 below. This was achieved by subjecting the data obtained from the descriptive analysis, that is, frequencies and percentages to inferential analysis, to see if there was a significant difference between the two languages (Bayat, 2013: 216). The data obtained from this process was categorised and organised according to strategies used in each speech act under investigation (COMPLAINT and REQUEST). During the categorising process, if more than one strategy was found within a language structure, the most dominant one was considered. Using SPSS, the frequency of usage for the politeness strategies, used by writers to mitigate the FTAs, and the impoliteness strategies was calculated for each respondent. Thereafter, the number of each type of strategy used was tallied, and finally the researcher produced the total frequency tables. The role of social distance as one of the three factors affecting the weight of the FTA was also considered. Subsequently, similar to the politeness scoring tasks, a Chi-Square-test analysis was conducted to compare whether there were any significant differences between the politeness and impoliteness strategies used by the respondents when using the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English and isiZulu. Lastly, an Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the level of politeness measured in the complaint and request letters between the two languages. The Independent Samples T-test, also called the two Sample T-test, is an inferential statistical test that determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means in two unrelated groups.

In order to clarify the technique of content analysis, Table 9 below illustrates politeness strategies that can be used when performing a face threatening act to redress the addressee's *face*, adapted from Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. It also illustrates impoliteness strategies that attack *face*, adapted from Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework.

Table 9: Politeness and impoliteness strategies

POLITENESS STRATEGIES		IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES	
1.	**Bald on-record**	**1.**	**Bald on record impoliteness** e.g., You must check; we want to …; pay immediately
1.1	direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise communicative intention which the reader concurs with	**1.1**	direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimised
1.2	Danger to reader's (R) face is small, e.g., in requests	**1.2**	use of direct speech acts rude, harsh tone
1.3	Writer (W) is vastly superior in power to R		
1.4	use of direct speech acts		
2.	**Off-record**	**2.**	**Sarcasm or mock politeness**
2.1	Use of more than one unambiguously attributable intention which the W cannot be held to have committed himself to a particular intention	**2.1**	use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations
2.2	Use of metaphor and irony		
2.3	Rhetorical questions		
2.4	Understatement		
2.5	Tautologies		
2.6	Hints		
2.7	Indirect and vague language		
3.	**Positive politeness**	**3.**	**Positive impoliteness**

3.1	use of strategies to fulfil the hearer's desire to be liked or acknowledged	**3.1**	*Ignoring and snubbing the other* – The writer (W) fails to acknowledge the reader's (R)'s presence.
3.2	treating the R as member of a group, a friend, or a person whose personality traits are known and liked	**3.2**	*Excluding the other party from an activity*
3.3	show that the W wants some of the R's wants	**3.3**	*Disassociating from the other* – The W denies association or common ground with the R
3.4	show that the W likes the R	**3.4**	*Being disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic*
		3.5	*Using inappropriate identity markers* – The W uses title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.
		3.6	*Using obscure or secretive language* - The W mystifies the R with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target addressee.
		3.7	*Seeking disagreement* - The W selects a sensitive topic.
		3.8	*Making the other feel uncomfortable* – The W does not avoid silence, joke, or use of small talk
		3.9	*Using taboo words* - The W swears, or uses abusive or profane language.
		3.10	*Calling the R names* - The W uses derogatory nominations.

4.	**Negative politeness**	4.	**Negative impoliteness**
4.1	use of strategies to satisfy the hearer's desire to be respected or recognized	**4.1**	*Frightening* – instil a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur e.g., threats
4.2	Self-effacement (respect and deference)	**4.2**	*Condescending, scorning, or ridiculing* – The W emphasises your relative power. The W is contemptuous.
4.3	Formality and restraint	**4.3**	*Do not treat the other seriously* – The W belittles the reader (e.g., uses diminutives).
4.4	Apologies for interfering or transgressing	**4.4**	*Invading the other's space* - literally (e.g., positioning yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g., asking for or speaking about information, which is too intimate to be shared, given the relationship).
4.5	Linguistic deference	**4.5**	*Explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect* – The W personalises, using the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.
4.6	Respect	**4.6**	*Put the other's indebtedness on record*
4.7	Use of hedges, *e.g., kind of; sort of; somehow; more or less; rather* **4.7.1** Impersonalising mechanisms, *e.g., passives*		
4.8	softening mechanisms, *e.g., would appreciate*		
4.9	indirectness		

4.10	maintain social distance		
5.	**Withhold the FTA**		
5.1	being silent		

Table 10, which has been adapted from the two frameworks highlights the strategies that were used to analyse business letters in the present study. It also highlights examples of the politeness and impoliteness strategies which assisted in analysing the data for consistency.

Table 10: Politeness and impoliteness strategies used for writing tasks data analysis (taken from Table 9 above)

POLITENESS STRATEGIES Brown and Levinson's (1987)	**IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES** Culpeper's (1996)
Negative politeness	**Bald on record**
Indirect speech acts **Whimperatives** - indirect requests Examples: Can you/Can't you/Will you? "Won't you please send the order?" "Send the order, will you?" **Hedged performatives** - use of a modal verb to hedge a performative verb "would; could; may, etc." (softening mechanisms) Examples: "I would request you rectify the situation." "I would suggest/recommend that you try your best to assist me." **Embedded performatives** indirectly perform the acts of requesting or complaining, etc.	**Direct speech acts (imperative)** **An explicit performative** Examples: I complain/request. The FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way in contexts where face is relevant and maximised. Example: command/order/instruction – rude, harsh tone

Examples: "I would like to request that …". "I would like to complain about ...". "May I request that …".	
Negative politeness	**Negative impoliteness**
Linguistic deference (respect) Politeness marker to reveal deference or request for cooperation. Examples: "Please, if you wouldn't/don't mind…" "I was wondering …" "I would appreciate…" "I hope …, thank you"	**Frightening** The writer threatens the reader that some detrimental action will occur to them.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter ethical considerations have been discussed. The research methodology and design used in the study have been explained in detail. The rationale for using a quantitative and qualitative design was explained. Research instruments used for the study and how they were piloted were also explained. The procedures that were used for data analysis have been explained and described in detail.

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

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and findings of the research. It is divided into four sections. Section A presents data and results from student questionnaires, while Section B offers results from the focus group interviews. Section C presents the results from the politeness scoring writing tasks. Finally, Section D yields the outcomes of the analysis of the written data in the form of business letters. An overview of the research questions, the data type, and the data analysis instruments are attached as Appendix M.

The order in which the findings are presented does not necessarily follow the order in which data was collected. The student questionnaire was collected first, followed by the politeness scoring task, then the writing tasks, and lastly the focus group interviews. In this chapter, the sections are presented in a way that facilitates the discussion of the results of each data instrument used to collect data.

SECTION A

4.2 Student Questionnaires

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25, to describe and summarise the important characteristics of the data, using the measures of the central tendency, being mean, median and mode, as well as the measures of dispersion in the form of variance. Data was summarized and represented using graphs and tables, as shown in in this chapter.

The results from the student questionnaire are presented to answer the following research questions:

- What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English), in the context of business writing?
- To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation?

4.2.1 Results

As shown in Table 11, the first section of the student questionnaire elicited personal information about the participants.

Table 11: Profile of respondents

Variables		N=150	%
Gender	Male	75	50%
	Female	75	50%
	Total	150	100%
Age	16-19	53	35,33%
	20-24	82	54,67%
	25 and above	15	10%
Mother tongue		isiZulu	100%
Level of study		Level 1	100%
Residential area	Urban	80	53,33%
	Rural	59	39,33%
	Other	11	7,33%
Work experience	Yes	49	32,67%
	No	101	67,33%

The participant group comprised of 75 male and 75 female first year students enrolled for the Marketing programme in the Faculty of Management Sciences at a University of Technology. The majority of the respondents who participated in the study were between the ages of 20-24, followed by those between the ages of 16-19 (35, 33%) and only 10% were 25 years of age and above. It is not surprising that a vast majority of them are between the ages of 16 and 24. Normally, this is the age range of students who are in tertiary institutions in South Africa. All of the participants speak isiZulu as their home language (L1) and English as their second language (L2). The results were analysed by means of SPSS, Version 25. The analysis revealed that just over a half (53,33%) of the participants live in urban areas and 39,33% live in rural areas. The remaining 7,33% indicated that they lived in areas that are not classed as either rural or urban.

In terms of work experience, 32,67% of the participants had work experience and 67,33% did not. It was important to get their work experience, as it was presumed that their level of competence in the use of speech acts, including politeness, would be influenced by their exposure to business writing in the workplace. Even so, work experience was not specifically looked at as a variable in the study.

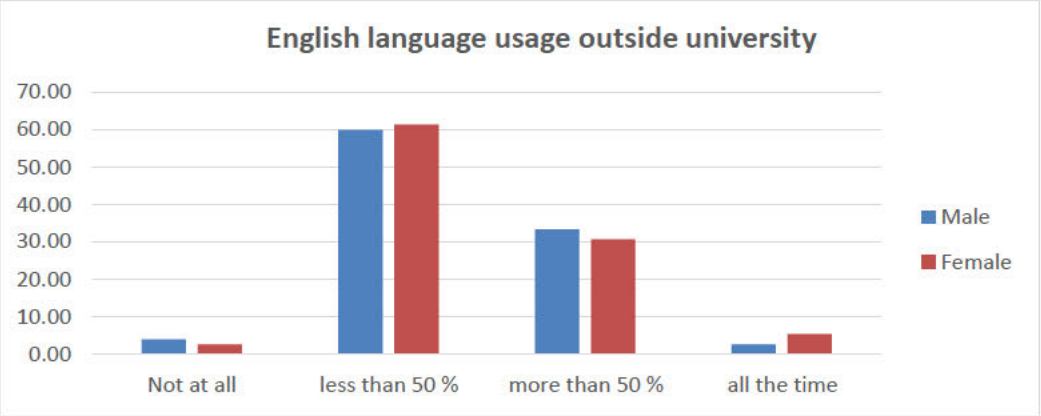

Figure 1: English language usage outside university according to gender

The majority of both male and female participants (60-61,33%) indicated that they use English less than 50% of the time outside the university. A sizeable number (31-33,33%) indicated that they use English more than 50% of the time outside the university, while small numbers feel that they either do not use English all the time (4%) or at all (3%) outside of university (Figure 1). This is supported by the fact that the research site is located at Umlazi township of which the population is predominantly black and isiZulu-speaking.

Table 12: Gender based English usage outside the university

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
Male	75	176	2.346667	0.364685
Female	75	179	2.386667	0.402523

Overall, the analysis of variance in Table 12 (above) shows that there is no significant difference between the use of English, outside university, by female and male participants. All we can observe is a trend indicating that males use English to a lesser extent than females do, outside of university.

The second section of the student questionnaire assessed students' awareness and challenges on the use of speech acts, including the practice of 'politeness' in both English and isiZulu business communication. The results indicated that an overwhelming majority of males

(97,33%) and females (100%) supported the importance of the practice of *hlonipha* in both their culture and as individuals. Comparatively the statistics indicated that the practice was supported more by female participants than males. These results confirm the practice of respect, which is valued in the African culture, and supports the claim that Zulu society is structured in a series of hierarchies which prescribe gender-specific ways of communication (De Kadt, 1998: 181). Additionally, the practice of respect displayed through linguistic behaviour is a stereotype more commonly associated with women especially in a patriarchal rural Zulu society (Irvine & Gunner, 2018: 189).

When the participants were asked to state how the practice of politeness is important in English oral and written business communication in South Africa, a number of responses were given. The following common aspects from the most frequently cited responses were salient in the participants' responses:

(34) a sign of respect and a sense of 'ubuntu' so that you may not be perceived as rude and disrespectful

(35) builds long term relationships between the writer and reader (speaker and listener) and with customers

(36) ensures co-operation

(37) to avoid conflict

(38) makes writer's intention clear

(39) defines a person and attitude

The following are some of the reasons that were frequently provided by the respondents, identified as M (male) or F (female), on the above common aspects. Note that the following participants' responses are rendered verbatim:

(40) It shows respect to the other person receiving the message. (M-7)

(41) To show the sense of ubuntu. (F-60)

(42) It prevents you from coming across as rude and disrespectful as well as unprofessional. (F-5)

(43) When you are polite you are able to build a long-term relationships and people respect you. (F-12)

(44) It help [sic] the business to have a good relationship with the customers. (F-75)

(45) Very important especially in the selling environment where you can't be harsh to customers and expect them to buy from you. (M-35)

(46) It ensure [sic] smooth business and emphasize professionalism. (F-13)

(47) It also shows willingness to do business with the other person/company. (M-7)

(48) It eliminate [sic] conflict in the business. (M-11)

(49) To use polite language makes the reader to be informed with what the writer wants to convey. (M-67)

(50) To understand or capture the actual aim or purpose of writer. (M-20)

(51) It determines a person's attitude. (M-29)

(52) Politeness defines you. (F-31)

(53) It portrays the kind of a person that a speaker is. (F-66)

Most of the respondents' reasons clearly express Brown and Yule's (1983) interactional function of language. Additionally, the responses show that the respondents are aware that this function in business letters exists both between individuals, and between the companies that the individuals represent. The respondents also show awareness of possible consequences that may result from impolite speech act behaviour.

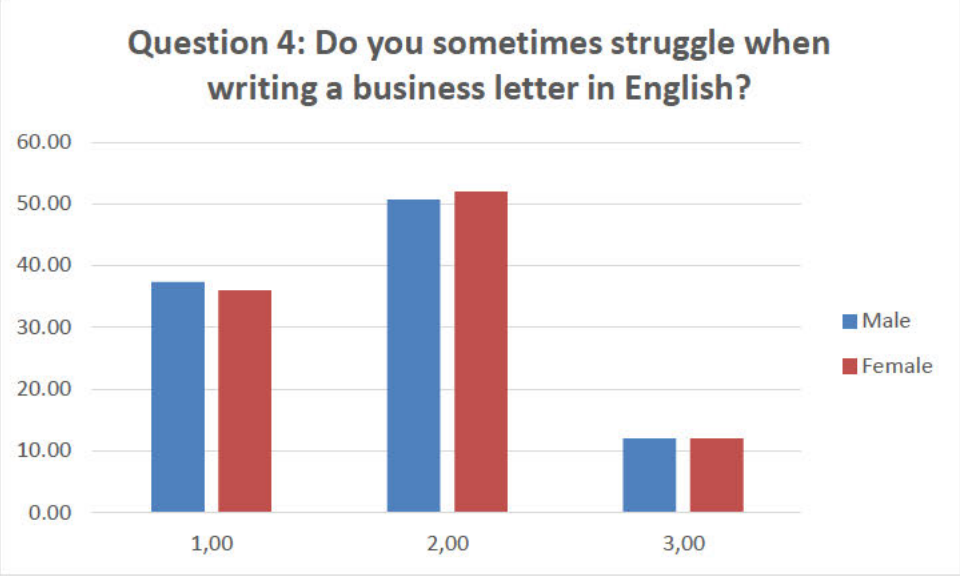

Figure 2: Self-assessment of challenges when writing a business letter in English

While some of the respondents indicated that they sometimes struggle when writing a business letter in English, 51% of males and 52% of females asserted that they do not struggle. This response is in contradiction with the main motivation of this study which is driven by consistent observation on lack of pragmatic competence in writing by students. Those who indicated that they sometimes struggle cited the following as the most common reasons for the challenges:

(54) Sometimes I struggle with words and how I am going to put them so that my letter will sound polite, not rude. (F-2)

(55) The usage of the words that are suitable and appropriate for the message. (M-12)

(56) I tend to use a lot of informal language and the reader sometimes think that I'm rude. (M-1)

(57) It is very hard to find the words that express my true feelings and emotions in English. (F-68)

(58) Sometimes I find it hard to use the right English words of politeness when it is necessary. (M-20)

(59) I end up using words which are unappropriate [sic] and can be perceived as rude by the reader. (M-43)

(60) Sometimes others may find it so difficult to understand exactly my point of view, for instance, when they read my letter, they may find that I'm rude while I'm not, because of the words used. (M-71)

(61) Putting the correct words together so that I do not offend the one writing for. (M-50)

(62) Sometimes it easy to express yourself in your own language. (F-48)

However, the analysis of variance in Table 13 reveals that the variance on the responses to this question is relatively high, which suggests that some students may find it difficult to admit that they do experience problems.

Table 13: Gendered self-assessment of challenges in L2 business letters writing

SUMMARY

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
Male	75	131	1.746667	0.434955
Female	75	132	1.76	0.428108

The majority of males (59%) and females (69%) also indicated that when using English, they maintain the same politeness that they show when expressing themselves in their mother tongue. Only 28% indicated that they do not maintain the same politeness when using English that they show when expressing themselves in their mother tongue. The following common reasons were provided by the respondents:

(63) The fact that English is not my mother tongue makes me struggle in expressing myself (F-51)

(64) These are different languages from different cultures that entail use of different words, different tones and meaning (M-8)

(65) Some isiZulu words are not polite so when you use them you might sound rude. (F-12)

(66) There are some words that shows politeness when they are said or expressed in my mother tongue and shows no politeness or rudeness when they are expressed in English. (M-37)

(67) Some words sound polite when you say them in English than in isiZulu. (F-22)

(68) English is more specific it state [sic] everything as it is and rude but isiZulu show some respect you don't need to be rude or more specific. (F-60)

Participants were asked to think of a situation in which they would complain in English, and then state if the words or expressions that they could use, to achieve this intention, would express the same attitude, feeling or sentiment as the words or expressions they would use in isiZulu. Most participants (50%) indicated that the words or expressions that they could use, in English, to achieve this intention would not express the same attitude, feeling or sentiment as the words or expressions they would use in isiZulu. On the other hand, 38,7 percent of the respondents indicated that they thought the words or expressions that they could use to achieve this intention would express the same attitude, feeling or sentiment as the words or expressions they would use in isiZulu.11,3 percent did not respond. These results show that participants believe that the way in which the words are used to achieve the illocutionary force of a speech act, expresses different attitudes and feelings in different languages.

The following were some of the examples given by respondents:

(69) Because there are words that are used to express some feelings in my mother tongue which I cannot use in English. (F-71)

(70) I think mostly if you have a complaint and you put it in English it doesn't get across as likely as it would in my mother tongue e.g., "Ngidinga imali yami ngoba anganelisekanga." (Would you please refund me as I was not satisfied.) (F-73)

(71) If I were to say, "What is done to us is so wrong" (Okwenziwa kithi akulunganga) isiZulu makes it a bit polite. (M-41)

(72) Some words are too harsh, and they can lead to conflict e.g. "I will wait then" (Ngizolinda ke). The word "ke" can sound rude to some people. (M-58)

Participants were asked to think of a situation in which they would complain, in English, and then state if the words or expressions that they could use to achieve this intention would have the same effects on the person than the words or expressions they would use in isiZulu. A mixture of feelings was displayed in that 44 percent of the respondents indicated that they thought the words or expressions that they could use, in English, to achieve this intention would have the same effects on the person than the words or expressions they would use in isiZulu. On the other hand, 40 percent indicated that the words or expressions that they could use to achieve this intention would not have the same effects on the person than the words or expressions they would use in isiZulu, while 16 percent did not respond. The mixed feelings indicate the participants' uncertainty on whether the words or expressions used in various speech acts in one language could have the same illocutionary effect when used in another language. Those who indicated 'No' (not the same effect), gave the following examples to illustrate the different effects:

(73) isiZulu sometimes tends to sound more aggressive than English. (F-23*)*

(74) Because certain words I would use in English might not be as intense as words I would use from my mother tongue. For example, saying "I'm disgusted" might not be as intense as saying "Nginyanyile". (M-8)

(75) In English you can say "How dare you?" and it portrays the right emotion while in my mother tongue you can say "Ukwenza kanjani lokho?" and it sounds way polite. (M-10)

(76) e.g., "your service is of poor standard" sound [sic] like you are rude, when "umsebenzi osinikeza wona awukho ezingeni elincomekayo" is more polite. (M-13)

(77) Because in English there is no limit to how you express yourself whilst in my mother tongue there are words that I am not supposed to use to certain people e.g., "uyabheda" especially to older people. (F-68)

(78) Some words are very aggressive in English but when you transcribe to Zulu become more polite [sic] e.g. “I cannot” (angikwazi). (M-64)

(79) The effect will never be the same, like saying “Lomuntu ngizomkhahlela” (I will hit this guy). The effect is unique even the tone. (M-71)

When the participants were asked why they think it is important for the reader of a business letter to pay special attention to the actual use of words, with the aim of understanding the intention behind the use of speech acts, the following common reasons were provided:

(80) So that the reader can see if the writer’s tone is polite or rude. (F-1)

(81) To get clear understanding of message of the reader. (F-65)

(82) It helps the reader to understand the writer’s intention so that s/he can respond appropriately to the message (M-10)

(83) So that he/she will do why [sic] is required from him/her as soon as possible to keep the company’s reputation excellent. (F-39)

(84) To get the full attitude, feeling or sentiment of the words or expression behind the writer’s intention. (M-28)

(85) It ensures that the reader perceives the encoded message in the same way that the writer was meaning to convey the message in order to avoid miscommunication. (F-13)

(86) To understand the writer’s purpose/aim/intention of writing the letter. (M-44)

(87) To understand the message from writer’s point of view. (M-55)

Some of the reasons quoted above are in line with Rothschild and Burnett, (1997); de Jong, (2002); Janssen, (2007), cited in Jansen and Janssen (2010: 2534) who mention that communicating a clear message while maintaining a relationship with the client, and preserving the image of the organization, is one of the major challenges in business writing. This assertion further highlights a challenge in balancing transactional and interactional functions that business letters aim to achieve, which has been shown by the participants as important. The importance of the practice of politeness in the use of speech acts and its positive effect on the business is also emphasised.

Participants were then asked to state the different factors they consider when using speech acts in isiZulu and English.

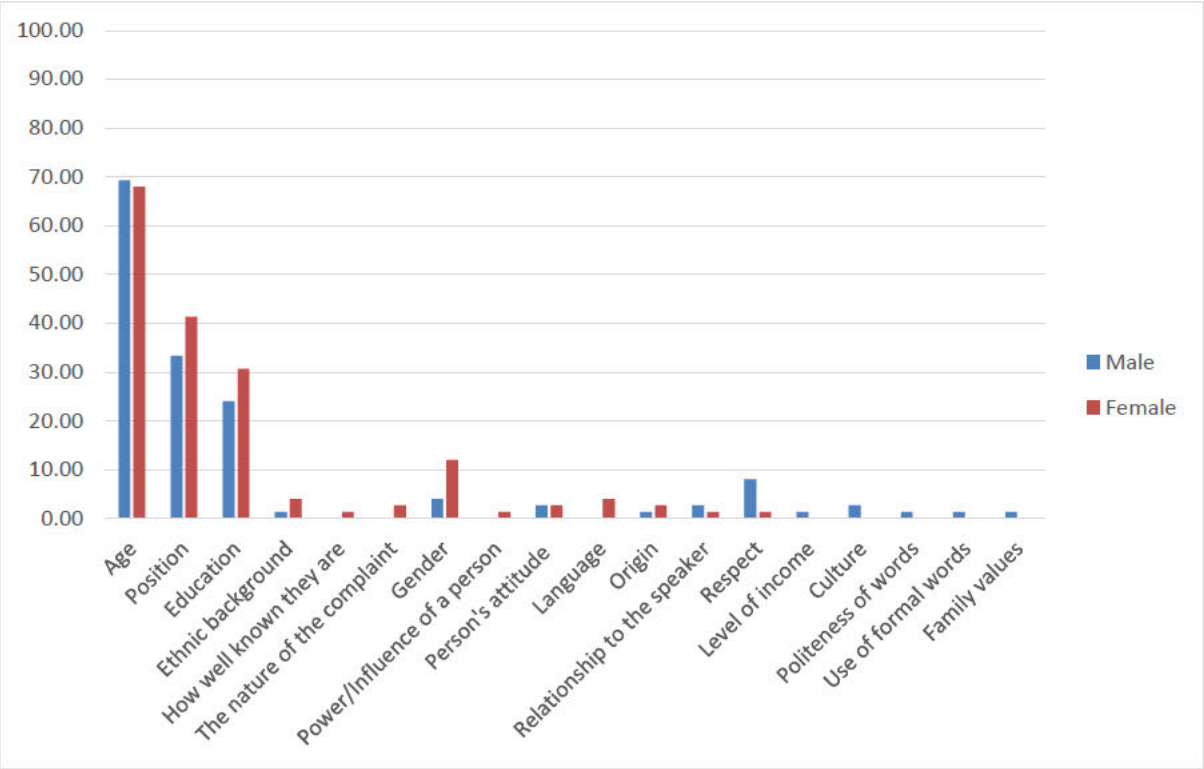

Figure 3: Gendered responses on factors considered when using speech acts in isiZulu

The majority of both males (69,33%) and females (68%) indicated that the factor they consider most important, when they use speech acts in their mother tongue (isiZulu), is the age of the person they are addressing. Another factor that was considered important by both males (33,33%) and females (41,33%) was the position a person occupies in a company. Of the top three factors, males (24%) and females (30.67%) considered the level of education of a person they are communicating with as the least important. In support of these results, age difference, power and status are contributing factors to the way people express politeness to others in Zulu culture (De Kadt, 1995: 58; Nene, 2017: 6).

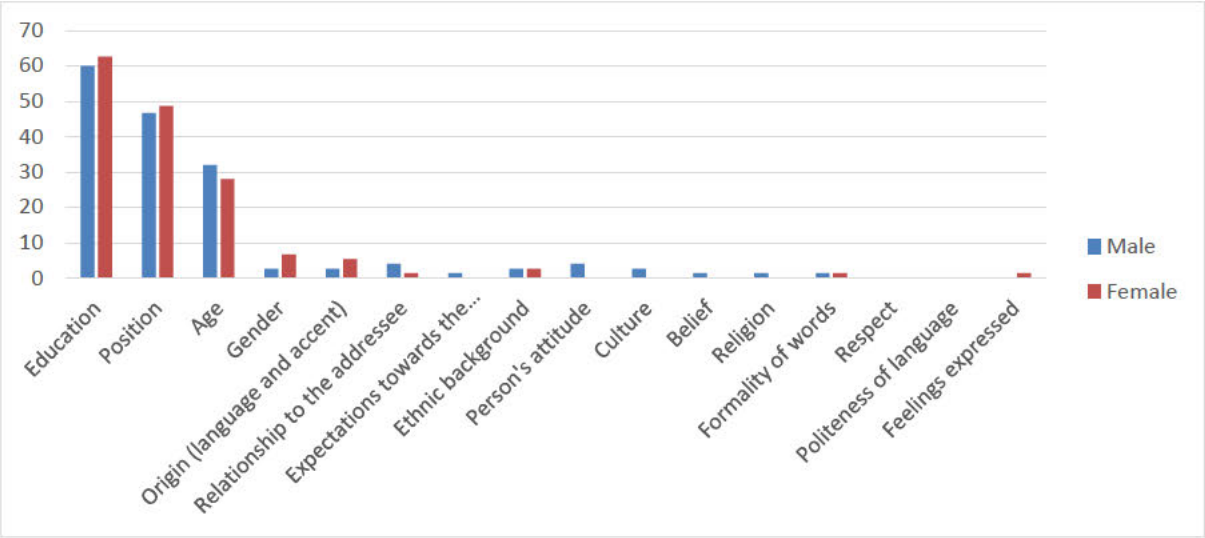

Figure 4: Gendered responses on factors considered when using speech acts in English

The results revealed that the majority of both males (60%) and females (62,66%) indicated that the reader's level of education is the most important factor that they consider when using speech acts in English. Another factor that was considered important by both males (46,66%) and females (48,64%) was the position of a person in a company, while males (32%) and females (28%) considered the age of a person they are communicating with as the least important factor compared to the level of education and position.

Although the results of the student questionnaire indicate mixed feelings regarding age and education as the most important factors considered in the use of speech acts in the two languages, it is not surprising that age is considered as the most important factor when using speech acts in isiZulu. Generally, age is considered the most dominant social variable regarding politeness in Zulu culture (De Kadt, 1995: 58; Nene, 2017: 6). This response is in line with some of the reasons given by participants, when asked to think of a situation in which they complain in English and then state if the words or expressions that they could use to achieve this intention would have the same effects on the person than the words or expressions they would use in isiZulu (statement 77, participant F-68) and statement 79, participant M-71. It is also not surprising that education is perceived as an important factor by both genders when using speech acts in English. This may be due to socially structured hierarchical perceptions where people in higher positions are assumed to be more educated and, as such, are in a better position to communicate well even in written forms. In addition, this perception highlights a shift in African generational ways of thinking, where culture has traditionally placed more emphasis on politeness based on the age of a person, and not necessarily on how educated a person is. It seems like the new African generation now views education as playing a role in

the way a person uses speech acts in English. The perception of the position a person occupies, as one of the important factors by the respondents, is also in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative politeness strategy (discussed in Table 9, Chapter 3, page 158) as a means to maintain social distance. Therefore, considering a person's position when speech acts are used, helps in understanding the social distance between the writer and the reader. This social factor influences the degree to which an act might threaten one's face. Moreover, the perception of a person's position as an important factor is in line with Thomas (1995), cited in Mdemka (2001) who associates deference with politeness and respect, which people show to others by virtue of their higher status and age. In the same vein, according to Ige and De Kadt (2002: 150), in traditional Zulu culture the need for politeness is determined by the age of the addressee.

In summary, from the results of the questionnaire it can be deduced that although most of the participants use English less outside the university, they have a comparable sense of politeness in both languages in the context of business writing. This is revealed in their acknowledgement of the importance of politeness in their isiZulu culture and English business communication. The participants' indication of their awareness of possible effects of impolite behaviour further highlights their sense of politeness in both languages. Additionally, the importance of politeness in English and isiZulu is shown by the majority of participants who think that they maintain the same level of politeness in both their L1 and their L2.

From their self-assessment of the challenges when writing a business letter in English, it can also be construed that there is a sense of awareness of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu. Although there are mixed feelings about the effects of the words used to achieve the illocutionary meaning on the reader in the two languages, overall, the participants emphasise the significance of understanding the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of the speech acts in English written business communication.

SECTION B

4.3 Focus Group Interviews

4.3.0 Introduction

This section presents the data and results from the focus group interviews. The results from the focus group interviews are presented to answer the following research questions:

- What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?
- To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation?
- Are there any instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?

As indicated in Chapter 3, three semi-structured focus group interviews (N=6/group) were conducted face-to-face with 18 students. The main purpose was to collect in-depth qualitative data about a group's perceptions, attitudes, and experiences on the use of speech acts in business writing. The focus group interviews were also used for triangulation and development of the results obtained from the student questionnaires, the politeness scoring tasks and written business letters. Further, the respondents' self-assessment results of the focus group interviews were compared to the results of the student questionnaires and written business letters. These results were used to determine if the participants in the study have a comparable sense of politeness in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing. In the cases where extracts have been used, the respondents have been identified as MR… or FR… to avoid using the pseudonyms. Note that the participants' responses are rendered verbatim. It is vital to mention that the researcher had no control over the choice of gender in selecting the focus groups, as partaking in the focus group interviews was voluntary. As a result, 10 males and eight females participated.

In the current study, the focus groups' data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework by means of the following steps, explained in Chapter 3, Table 8:

Step 1: Familiarising oneself with the data by transcribing and reading the interactions several times for meaning and patterns.

Step 2: Generating initial codes by identifying interesting features that have connection with each other.

Step 3: Searching for themes by identifying sub-themes and broader themes within the codes.

Step 4: Reviewing themes by refining and combining them for coherence according to the research questions.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes by doing a detailed analysis of the themes.

Step 6: Writing-up the report to discuss the results of the analysis.

Subsequently, four major themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group interviews data. Each theme had relevant categories that supported it. Below is a detailed presentation of the themes and their categories with participant exemplars. These key themes were: challenges in writing business letters, perception of politeness, importance of politeness and pragmatic transfer.

4.3.1 Results

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: Challenges in writing business letters

Overall, the participants appeared to be aware of the illocutionary force behind an utterance in business letter writing. They shared that:

> All: "Yes (It should clearly indicate your intention)."

However, they experience difficulties with regards to the choice of appropriate words to achieve the intended meaning. They further stated that the challenge in choosing the appropriate words negatively impacts the interpretation. The reader may misinterpret the meaning of certain words, especially where ambiguous words have been used. To illustrate, participant FR1 mentioned that the difficulty in the choice of words is most prominent in instances where certain isiZulu words that have more than one meaning are used. Most isiZulu words have the same form but are highly polysemous in that they highlight different meanings. As a result, in the context of a business letter, the reader might end up getting a different illocutionary meaning from what the writer had intended, due to multiple interpretations attached to the word. This interpretation might further impact on the perlocutionary force of

the words given by the reader in the response. The difficulty in the use of appropriate words to illustrate the illocutionary meaning has a bearing on the reader's interpretation of the meaning and thus the reaction; the perlocutionary force.

MR7: "... So like in church or in the workplace, like in church, you don't know what umfundisi 'priest' is called, cause in isiZulu one word can mean three [sic] different things. You can find that "umfundisi" means 'teacher', "umfundisi" 'priest'… "umfundisi" 'teacher'. In Zulu it is really the same word but pronounced in different tones. But maybe one word. So, it's very difficult in Zulu.

MR9: **"**Yes, actually to add on to what he said, there was a case of a letter where it is said, there was a letter sent asking if the cow could be slaughtered "ingahlatshwa". So, when the letter came back it said "ingahlatshwa". Someone else may interpret it as it must be slaughtered, as in approval that it be slaughtered, or it must not be slaughtered. So that is the case."

MR13: "Choice of words is difficult."

FR5: "Or you end up not able to say the appropriate words that you had intended to, because you don't know how it's going to be perceived."

The responses revealed that the responsibility for the interpretation of the message ultimately rests with the reader. Once the writer has expressed the intention behind the speech act used, it is the responsibility of the reader to decipher the correct meaning.

Respondent FR1 also notes that:

> "It all depends on the person who is going to read it. As long as I have expressed what I'm complaining about, I'm okay."

The participants further highlighted that the challenge is in choosing the appropriate wording, to achieve the clear intention of the business letter, whilst also catering to the cultural diversity of readers and related interpretations. Furthermore, the participants indicated that it is challenging for the writer of a business letter to immerse themselves in the position of the reader.

FR2 notes that:

> "I agree with … that the difficulties we encounter are especially in the business letter…, like she said that it depends on the person who is going to read it. You are sometimes

> right, being concerned about how it will be perceived. Is the person going to like it? Then that is where you end up losing the correct words."

FR3 also states that:

> "…What I do if I am writing … Then what I am going to do is to put myself in the position of a person who is going to read my letter. And try to think of what he wants to hear from me.

Participants FR2 and FR3 concur with FR1 by highlighting that one of the difficulties they experience in writing business letters is being concerned with how the message will be perceived by the reader. As a result, the writer struggles with selecting the appropriate wording whilst simultaneously trying to protect their self-image, as they do not want to be seen as a rude person. This assertion reflects on the level of anxiety experienced by English L2 speakers about the use of register, which may be unfamiliar to them. This anxiety stems from having to determine not only the correct speech act to use, but also both the appropriate register and possible interpretations by readers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The participants also indicate that they are acutely aware that the intended recipients and readers could be a person who has a different societal standing, they may be older, may have more professional experience, or be in a position of power. They emphasize that this creates further anxiety with regards to possible misinterpretations in terms of their business writing communication. This anxiety, regarding the recipient, is possibly brought about by 'race relations' and limited exposure to cross-racial communication in business settings. South Africa is a multicultural country with the history of apartheid where English has been perceived as the language of power. A writer who is an English L2 speaker cannot predict the cultural identity of the reader. Young black South Africans who have limited experience in communicating with people of another race, in a business setting, may end up being overly cautious in choosing the appropriate words due to concerns of causing a communication breakdown.

FR1 in support of the statement by FR2 states that:

> "It's like what I said earlier. You don't know the words that will impress him, because you wish to write to someone you don't know."

The effects of the challenges of anxiety experienced by English L2 students, when writing a business letter in an imagined and simulated business environment, needs to be addressed in the teaching of business communication at higher education level. Doing so will indicate to students that, as English practitioners, we are aware of the challenges and pressures of intercultural communication. To ask a black student to write a business letter is asking more of them than merely conveying meaning in the form of speech acts, but it also involves socio-cultural aspects of the student as well. It is crucial to hear the students' voices in order to address the challenges of intercultural communication in business.

Participants are aware that business writing in the corporate world involves using a different register to what they usually use in speaking and writing in their L1, and that it is crucial to use appropriate register and maintain professionalism. Nonetheless, the participants struggle in choosing appropriate corporate language to maintain professionalism needed in the business world because they have to use an L2.

MR12: "Maybe just to add to what brother has said there, I think because it is a business letter, and it is very corporate, so utilizing the corporate language is ideal, because your vocabulary also needs to be on point, yeah as opposed to isiZulu."

MR15: "As for me, I would also say, maybe when I'm putting it maybe [sic] in isiZulu, I will be quite familiar with the words. I would be comfortable. But in English there are some words that if you translate, it may seem unappropriate [sic] or I may seem as an unprofessional person."

The participants highlighted that another difficulty they experience in choosing appropriate words when writing a business letter results from having a limited English lexis. This is due to inadequate English proficiency and background, as stated by participants below.

FR3: "I hear what she is saying. She is saying, right, you are trying to explain, right, but words limit you. Obviously, the time you try and write, you want to express yourself as a person who is right for this job. But then you run out of words, you see, cause you are trying to impress."

MR14: "**…** emh, sometimes it's how… it's where to place the words [sic]. And sometimes you find that when they translate it, because the level of English that we all have is not the same. And the background. Some of us have…some have home first additional English, and then there are those people that have home language. So sometimes it can differ in terms of how

the translation of the word can be misinterpreted, and then placing appropriate words become an issue."

Some respondents mentioned that because of inadequate English proficiency and background they have poor writing skills. As a result, they struggle to use appropriate corporate language and write meaningful words in a business letter.

The participants in the above comments articulate that it is, at times, difficult to express themselves in English, because it is their L2, and this restricts their ability to clearly communicate their intentions, by the use of speech acts, to the reader.

The participants revealed that they sometimes struggle choosing appropriate words, from both the reader's and writer's perspectives, in English. This is an indication that they perceive writing a business letter as demanding. It is not just merely conveying information in complaining about or requesting something. Writers are also faced with having to place themselves in the role of the reader. Additionally, they have the responsibility of maintaining a good relationship with the reader. If a positive relationship is maintained, the business is in a better position to make profit or maintain services. Hence, it is crucial to try and balance the transactional and interactional functions of a business letter. Nevertheless, the participants indicated that they sometimes find it difficult to choose appropriate words that they know will get a positive response and maintain a good relationship with the reader. Hence, the goal of achieving the interactional intention of writing a business letter in English is challenging for them.

MR9: "Oh yeah, yeah. I would say I do sometimes find some difficulties; 'cause sometimes you may use a word that will add another sense [sic] to the other person you are writing a letter to. So, if you were to use words, you have to be in the writer's situation, and also the reader's situation, so that you may see if … how will the person you are writing the business letter analyse that…the words used there. How will they feel as they are reading that? So, choosing those words is quite difficult, cause I might be in another situation, but when the reader is reading, you can be in another situation."

MR14: **"…**, the letter as you write it, that's what you are trying to get at that it should suit the person, maybe let's say the person who is complaining or it is a request because in the business environment, whoever is at the other end has to respect the person who is writing the letter. So, if I am writing the letter, the business has to go about doing what will keep me happy. So, when they keep me happy…so whatever I will say is important to them, so they have to do it as quickly as possible, so that I can remain satisfied, so that I can come back and do a repeat purchase."

The participants in the focus group interviews further revealed that, over and above general difficulties with choice of words, they specifically struggle with using appropriate words that show politeness and respect, especially when using the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English. They articulated that as the writer expresses feelings and attitude when using speech acts in business letters, expressing feelings in a polite way, and as intended, in English, is also a challenge for them.

> MR14: "Only when it is in a form of a complaint. In a complaint sometimes it's difficult to be able to ask if or express something in a polite way to say I saw this and that in your shop maybe per se…that I saw this and that, and the way things happened, or your staff members, so that I can try and rectify the matter the way the situation happened they responded…, sometimes you have that anger. Sometimes you just don't wanna come across as being rude or, sometimes it happens, especially if it is in a form of a request or a complaint."

This indicates that the participants are aware of the importance of using appropriate politeness strategies as a writer to achieve a specific intention in speech acts. However, they struggle to use the appropriate politeness strategies. The challenges on the use of appropriate words that show politeness were also mentioned by some respondents on the student questionnaire responses.

When comparing genders, an overwhelming majority of both males (seven out of ten) and females (six out of eight) indicated that they experience challenges in writing a business letter in English. This result contradicts the self-assessment responses in the student questionnaire where about half of the participants indicated that they do not struggle when writing a business letter.

Just as in the questionnaire results, choice of words was cited as one of the challenges experienced by the respondents in the focus group interviews. Therefore, the responses in the focus group interviews on the challenges experienced in writing business letters are to a great extent consistent with the responses from the student questionnaire.

4.3.1.2 Theme 2: Perception of politeness

Generally, the participants felt that different cultures view politeness differently. Likewise, it was mentioned that English and isiZulu L1 speakers do not express themselves the same way in terms of politeness. Nonetheless, people learn politeness and respect from both home and

school backgrounds in both cultures. The participants further explained that in South Africa, this perception sometimes results in a clash between African and Western cultures in terms of what people are taught at home and school. A case in point is the way non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, is interpreted differently in these two cultures. Additionally, it was stated that in Zulu culture, there are things one is not allowed to talk about with an older person, yet in a Western culture it may be acceptable. This clearly means that a writer of a business letter needs to consider the culture of the person who is going to read the letter. Hence the choice of appropriate words, to avoid being perceived as rude, is crucial.

As MR17 and MR14 highlight:

> MR17: "Yes, like eye contact, because that is always like a major thing in high school. Especially when talking to an older person, be it a teacher, a principal of anyone else. At home I was taught that when an older person scolds you or when talking to an older person, you don't look at them in the eyes directly. So, when I speak at school, you find that here is something not right that I have done and you are scolding me, I rather look on the floor. To me I am showing respect, but to them, I am being rude because I am not paying attention to them, I am looking on the floor. There are those small factors…"
>
> MR14: "Yes, that happened to me a lot in the workplace where the managers were thinking that I was being blatantly rude by not looking at them in the eyes, and they were like, "look at me, look at me!". And then you look at them and you look back down, they will think that there is something that you are hiding."

The participants were contradictory in their responses, with English being perceived by some as more polite, whilst others stressed that isiZulu showed more politeness and respect. The participants also highlighted that sometimes the same words may show the same sense of politeness in both languages. The mixed feelings revealed by the participants, on politeness in both languages, were evident and this may be as a result of the use of certain words which sound polite in one language, but when translated may sound rude in another language, as stated by FR5.

> FR5: "Okay, some words in isiZulu, it's like they are insulting. Like if a person can say "unyoko". We know that "unyoko" means 'your mother'. But maybe when you use this word in English it's… English is more polite …"

The use of the same word may be taken literally and not reveal politeness in one language. Yet, if translated to another language it shows politeness, as identified by MR9.

> MR9: **"**Even saying, "baba" literally translated 'father'. He will take it literally, but in Zulu you understand that when you say "baba", it is a form of politeness."

Moreover, the participants indicated that isiZulu shows more respect in terms of age and gender, both of these factors will be discussed further in this section.

During the focus group interviews the majority of the participants indicated that, in the English business letter writing task that they were given for this research, they did not maintain the same politeness that they would have shown when expressing themselves in isiZulu. Most of them felt that they were more polite when writing a business letter in isiZulu. This is in contrast to the data from the student questionnaire, where the majority of the participants highlighted that, when using English, they maintain the same politeness as when expressing themselves in their mother tongue.

It was also highlighted that the use of clan names, which is common in African culture, plays a huge role in showing politeness and deference and has a positive effect on the recipient. For example, if the addresser is at fault and uses clan names when apologising to the listener, this gesture could help in resolving the matter.

> MR7: "You said so", "you said…, right…" [sic] those kinds of words, no isiZulu does have polite words, which are polite and with respect deeply [sic] than in English. When you use them, you are able to combine a lot of things at the same time. Like showing respect to a person. Like okay, for example using a clan name just because he saw your name tag, you can't use a clan name to a White person. But if I may come in here, no matter how angry you were, but if I come in and say, "baba Sotobe" (use of clan name) you will be like, eish this person knows me. Do you see that kind of thing? You even forget that we don't know each other."

Because different cultures view politeness differently, the participants stated that it is important to consider certain factors when you complain about, or request something, in both languages whether written or spoken. In African and Western cultures, politeness depends on a person's background, upbringing, and exposure to other cultures. Cultures differ in terms of politeness, and so one cannot generalise.

Firstly, the participants in these interviews indicated that in English when you complain about, or request, something in written or spoken communication, as the interlocutor you have to consider the culture of an addressee. As an example, in this case, the participants emphasised that it is also imperative for a speaker to consider the use of non-verbal communication such as eye contact and facial expression, which can be very culturally specific. This response in the interviews, placing culture at the forefront of factors considered, is in contrast to the responses in the student questionnaire wherein the level of education was stated as the most important factor. The importance of considering the culture of a reader was earlier emphasised when the participants pointed out that they struggle to choose the appropriate words that will cater for culturally diverse readers in order to achieve the intention of the letter. The second most important factor that came up in the interviews, was that when complaining or requesting in English the interlocutor needs to consider the tone. In this case, the tone, if placed into the context of written communication, translates as the attitude a writer reflects and demonstrates through choice of words and speech acts. Again, this response in the interviews is in contrast to the responses in the student questionnaire wherein the position of the addressee within a company was stated as the second most important factor. In the questionnaires the third most important factor, when using speech acts in English, which was raised was the age of the person being addressed. However, in the interviews, over and above age, the participants highlighted that the position of the addressee within a company has to be considered as a crucial factor.

MR13: I think for myself, when you speak to a person at school, when you spoke to your teachers, maybe outside the school environment, and you are in prefect and what [sic], and you are with a teacher and you guys are talking, I think when you speak to him, you show a sense of respect, neh [sic]. You can't really relate to the things you speak to an isiZulu or isiXhosa speaker and a white person in English. There are some things that you can't really, what can I say? You can't relay them so that it makes sense to him. So, you would want to share what you are talking about. You know that you think carefully and then speak about that thing. I think that is what you would consider when speaking in English."

MR14: "…, and when you are requesting in English, I think the tone emphasises [sic] because the English language, maybe is polite or there are words that make it seem polite, when you are scolding someone it makes it seem as if…you can see that this customer it's either they want this thing now or they are complaining about something which has affected them in such a way. So, it is the tone that is one of the factors that you can consider. And also, the position of that person in that job."

In these interviews, a vast majority of participants indicated that when using speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in isiZulu, in written or spoken communication, it is important to consider the age of the recipient. This entails the use of tone especially when talking to an elder. Hence the appropriate choice of words is crucial. It was stressed that it is essential to maintain politeness even when expressing anger in a complaint. The participants also stated that according to Zulu culture, there are things that a young person is not allowed to talk about with an older person, yet in modern, urban Western culture, one may be able to do so. This result was consistent with the result of the questionnaire, where this factor was considered as the most important factor by the majority of the respondents. This assertion is in line with Ige and De Kadt's (2002) study where respondents emphasized the relationship between the need of politeness, inclusive of the tone and body language, and the age of the addressee in traditional Zulu culture (Ige & De Kadt, 2002: 150).

FR5 and MR7 state that:

> FR5: "It's age. First of all, I will try by all means not to raise my voice, first of all. Because it's obvious the language I'm going to use, on its own, because I am Zulu, if ever I'm talking to my mother, I try by all means not to raise my voice because I will seem as that rude child. Yet isiXhosa, just like isiZulu is rude. So, what I try by all means is not to raise my voice and then be careful of the words I use, you see, and the way I will respond, and sometimes I choose to shut up because there's that thing. There's something to want to say, but now, because it's your parent, he will view it otherwise. Yet you meant it the other way around."
>
> MR7: **"**There it will depend from which background that person comes from. Because even here at school, let's say when a student comes in the door *(knock, knock)*, "Oh ngize kuwena" 'Oh I came to you'. We don't use that kind of language to an elderly person. "I am here to see Mr…" 'Ngizobona u-Mr…' … even if he can't see your name tag, that is being polite in Zulu, rather than me standing at the door and say, "ngize kuwena Sir" 'I came to you Sir' or "ngize kuwe" 'I came to you'.

Second to age, the participants expressed that consideration has to be given to what is acceptable or not, in terms of politeness in another culture, as politeness differs across cultures. Rudwick and Shange (2009: 475) concur with this assertion by affirming that the perception of what is considered polite varies from one culture to another and people cannot assume that politeness is universal. Thirdly, it was stated that when complaining or requesting something in isiZulu (the students' mother tongue), a person has to consider the gender of the recipient

and their position or level in a company. Gender differences are evident in the African culture, including the patriarchal Zulu cultural system in which women are expected to show respect to men by being submissive to their husbands at all times. In this context the *ukuhlonipha* custom constrains women in terms of their actions, general behaviour, and what to say, and how things are said. (Rudwick & Shange, 2009: 72). In traditional Zulu society isiHlonipho constrains women in how they speak because they are required to use an avoidance register by replacing certain syllables that appear in their husband's and their husband's family (ibid, 69). The position of a person as an important factor in considering speech acts was correspondingly referred to in the student questionnaire responses. Yet gender was not rated as an important factor in the student questionnaire.

4.3.1.3 Theme 3: Importance of politeness

As the choice of appropriate words to achieve the illocutionary meaning has already been emphasised, it is equally important to maintain politeness when using various speech acts in business letters. The participants mentioned some positive perlocutionary effects of politeness, in the use of speech acts in business correspondence. In so doing, several reasons were given. Firstly, it was highlighted that maintaining politeness when realising speech acts is very important as it yields a solution to a problem. For instance, if the writer is complaining about a product or service in a polite manner, the reader may find themselves empathising with the writer and thus find a quick solution to the problem. Secondly, the participants indicated that there is better understanding and co-operation between the two parties. In this way, a compromise in dealing with the matter may easily be reached. Thus, politeness maintains a good long-term relationship between the writer and the reader.

> MR15: **"**I would believe that I personally, if you were to write me a letter, and immediately you are attacking me, I do not think that I would finish reading that letter. And my point will not be reached across [sic] as to what it is exactly that I was talking about, or what it is that I was complaining about. So, I believe that being polite, as much as I would explain that I am not happy, but I would put it in such a way that you would see that I am not happy and I don't want what is happening. But also understand where I am coming from. Because once I attack you saying that I am unpleased, you will also end up…you will also end up having with words [sic]. Then end up being biased and not helping me the way you were going to, based on your negativity."

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that maintaining politeness is very important as it shows professionalism in the workplace. When the writer focusses on being professional, there is more likely to be a positive response from the reader. Hence, balancing the illocutionary act with politeness to maintain professionalism helps in achieving the transactional and interactional intentions of writing a business letter.

> MR13: "I can also say so. Because when you receive a letter, reading it, if it is more polite or it is shown that it is in a polite way, neh [sic] when reading it, your attitude when looking at that person, it's gonna be in a positive manner. Not if it is rough or it was a letter to attack a person. When that person reads it, when he helps you, he won't help you the same way. It won't be like…his effort that he is going to give you won't be as the same as if you were polite to him."

The positive effects of expressing politeness, when using speech acts in business correspondence, as given in the focus group interviews, are in line with those shared in the student questionnaire.

In summary, the participants highlighted that it is crucial to maintain politeness by means of the appropriate choice of words if you are complaining or requesting something. Simultaneously, it is vital to be aware of cultural variations in which speech acts are used. In this way, the interactional function of writing a business letter is achieved and as a consequence the company productivity may increase. However, because the English L2 speakers understand the importance of politeness when writing a business letter, they become more cautious when choosing words in order to sound polite. This leads to anxiety that the recipient may misinterpret what they are trying to communicate.

4.3.1.4 Theme 4: Pragmatic transfer

A vast majority of the participants indicated that when writing a business letter in English, isiZulu as a first language influences their use of speech acts to a great extent. They formulate the letters in isiZulu first, then translate them into English.

MR 12 and MR11 highlight:

> MR12: "... Umh but once you have translated your speech from isiZulu to English, there is some sort of influence. I believe our home language for all of us here is isiZulu. So, in that case, it has an influence. It definitely has an influence."

MR11: "Positive one, because sometimes you have to try and think of this thing in a Zulu way or write it in isiZulu before translating it into English. So, it has an influence."

The way a home language (isiZulu) influences the way speech acts are used in English depends on the writer and reader's first language background. These focus group responses are consistent with the English written business letters which had instances of pragmatic transfer from isiZulu in the way the speech acts were used. These findings are supported by Yarahmadi and Fathi (2015) in their study which examined the pragmatic production of the speech act of COMPLAINT on Persian-speaking EFL students and Iranian EFL students. In Yarahmadi and Fathi (2015) evidences of pragmatic transfer were mostly found in their COMPLAINT performances. Similarly, the results of a research by Syahri and Kadarisman (2015) found evidence of pragmatic transfer in English request realisations made by EFL undergraduate students in a University in Indonesia in their attempt to be polite.

MR16: "I would say it depends on how I think of the way to approach the letter. Because sometimes it happens that my background does not really count if I am going to be addressing somebody who will not understand my background. So, if I am writing to you, as Sir, and I know that my business letter is going to be addressed by [sic] somebody, maybe of a different race or nationality it is difficult for me that as I write I also show him my background because they will not relate to it. So, it won't be perceived the way maybe [sic] I had told myself that it would be perceived even when writing. But if I know that it's somebody who will have some sympathy, then even the way I write, I will be using certain expressions that I link back to my background so as to give him a broader picture of what I'm talking about."

The above assertion clearly indicates the anxiety and frustrations that English L2 speakers experience when using speech acts in English business letters. The anxiety emanates from the uncertainty of not knowing the background of the actual person who will read the letter. In addition, the writer is nervous about whether the words used will make the reader perceive the message as initially intended. The difficulty faced is that the choice of words, even if they seem appropriate, may still impact negatively on the reader, and create a negative response. This is the perlocutionary effect. This difficulty might further lead to a communication breakdown especially if the two interlocutors are from different cultures. As a result, the transactional and interactional goals of business letter writing may be compromised.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that a few participants indicated uncertainty as to whether isiZulu influences the way speech acts are used in English, because politeness is the same in both languages.

SECTION C

4.4 Politeness Scoring Tasks

4.4.0 Introduction

This section presents the data and results from the written data in the form of politeness scoring tasks. The results from the politeness scoring tasks are presented to answer the research question presented below:

- To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation**?**

As indicated in Chapter 3, a total of 150 participants (all English L2 and isiZulu L1 speakers) were targeted to participate in the tasks. There was no deviation from the researcher's plan in terms of the amount and kind of data collected using the targeted sample. The politeness scoring tasks were developed by the researcher by taking statements from a corpus of authentic English business letters extracted from various Communication textbooks. The extracted statements from business letters contained a variety of speech acts such as REQUEST, INVITATION, OFFER, COMPLAINT, CONGRATULATION, REFUSAL, THANKING, APOLOGY, APPOINTMENT and COMMITMENT, as highlighted in Chapter 3, 3.8.3. As the study compares the use of speech acts in English and isiZulu, the extracted statements were further translated to isiZulu to assist in comparing the respondents' scores in the two languages. The participants were required to rank statements extracted from business letters written in English and isiZulu on a scale of 1-4. The minimum scale of 1 meant very polite and the maximum scale of 4 meant very rude (see Appendices J 1 and J 2).

The analysis of the ratings of the tasks was guided by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies focusing, in particular, on the use of negative politeness (minimising imposition) out of the four strategies. Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness super-strategies were also used focusing on the bald on record impoliteness strategy, out of the four strategies (see Chapter 3 for details, and a critical discussion of Culpeper 1996). The researcher selected these two strategies because they were also used in analysing the business letters. Therefore, they were used to maintain uniformity in the scoring and to validate the ratings. Additionally, these two strategies were more applicable to analyse the statements extracted from business letters in the politeness tasks in both languages, as most of the rest of the strategies would be more useful in analysing

spoken communication (see Chapter 3, Table 9, page 158). Social distance as a factor, in determining the choice of politeness strategies, between the writer and the reader of the business letter, was also taken into consideration. Lastly, the Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the ratings of the levels of politeness between the statements written in English and IsiZulu languages (see Chapter 3 for a motivation of the statistical tools used).

The challenge, however, was finding relevant literature highlighting specific criteria to measure different levels of politeness, for example measuring a distinction between rude and very rude, polite, and very polite (see Chapter 3, page 110). As a result of this challenge, and because politeness varies across cultures, the politeness scoring tasks were given to two English first language speakers and two isiZulu first language speakers, who are all English practitioners in a tertiary institution, for rating. Consequently, the respondents' ratings were compared with ratings from English and isiZulu first language speakers. Henceforth, the language practitioners whose ratings serve as a baseline are called "scorers". This baseline was used to get an approximate idea whether the respondents' ratings correlated with ratings given by a native speaker.

The aim of the tasks was to measure the participants' awareness of the degree of politeness of each statement in each language. The task scores would further assist in assessing whether there was any correlation between the participants' responses in the questionnaire, their business letter writing, focus group interviews and their politeness judgments in the politeness scoring task.

A Chi-Square test was performed to compare whether there were any significant differences in what the respondents perceive as polite or rude, in the use of various speech acts. The results are summarized in Table 14 below. For further reference, a detailed cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of levels of politeness between English and isiZulu written statements individually has been attached as Appendix N.

4.4.1 Results

This section provides a detailed discussion of the results on the ratings of the levels of politeness in statements from business letters containing various speech acts in English and isiZulu. Table 14 gives a summary of the respondents' ratings by showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statements. A detailed analysis of this summary (Tables 14.1-14.26) is attached as Appendix N.

The results of the statements are presented individually, but it should be noted that there were no statistical differences in politeness ratings with most of the speech acts used, as illustrated in Table 15. Primarily, in discussing the results, the researcher concentrates on the highest ratings from the respondents, however there were some speech acts that had extremely different ratings in the same language. I am going to include this brief highlight in the summary at the end of this section.

Table 14: Summary of cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statements

Speech act	English rating (%)				isiZulu rating (%)				P value
	1. Very rude	2. Rude	3. Polite	4. Very polite	1. Very rude	2. Rude	3. Polite	4. Very polite	
1: INVITATION/REQUEST	0.0%	4.0%	68.0%	28.0%	0.0%	4.7%	64.7%	30.7%	0.825*
2: REQUEST	0.7%	10.7%	59.3%	29.3%	0.0%	12.7%	60.0%	27.3%	0.713*
3: OFFER	1.3%	1.3%	51.3%	46.0%	1.3%	1.3%	49.3%	48.0%	0.989*
4: REQUEST	1.3%	17.3%	64.0%	17.3%	3.3%	21.3%	58.7%	16.7%	0.518*
5: COMPLAINT	17.3%	53.3%	23.3%	6.0%	20.0%	52.0%	22.7%	5.3%	0.943*
6: COMPLAINT/REQUEST	1.3%	11.3%	68.7%	18.7%	1.3%	13.3%	67.3%	18.0%	0.964*
7: CONGRATULATION	2.0%	15.3%	52.0%	30.7%	2.7%	19.3%	48.0%	30.0%	0.780*
8: REFUSAL	22.7%	44.7%	28.0%	4.7%	22.7%	41.3%	31.3%	4.7%	0.924*
9: THANKING	0.0%	1.3%	66.0%	32.7%	0.0%	2.7%	67.3%	30.0%	0.652*
10: REQUEST	1.3%	6.0%	64.0%	28.7%	1.3%	8.0%	65.3%	25.3%	0.860*

11: OFFER/REQUEST	24.7%	42.0%	27.3%	6.0%	25.3%	41.3%	27.3%	6.0%	0.999*
12: INVITATION/REQUEST	0.7%	0.7%	24.7%	74.0%	0.7%	3.3%	26.7%	69.3%	0.390*
13: CONGRATULATION	0.7%	2.0%	30.7%	66.7%	0.7%	2.0%	31.3%	66.0%	0.999*
14: REQUEST	6.7%	43.3%	46.0%	4.0%	7.3%	45.3%	43.3%	4.0%	0.972*
15: OFFER	3.3%	30.7%	51.3%	14.7%	3.3%	28.0%	54.0%	14.7%	0.963*
16: APOLOGY	2.7%	4.0%	54.0%	39.3%	1.3%	2.0%	56.7%	40.0%	0.621*
17: COMPLAINT/REQUEST	30.0%	46.0%	20.7%	3.3%	32.7%	43.3%	20.7%	3.3%	0.962*
18: APOLOGY	1.3%	6.0%	49.3%	43.3%	1.3%	6.0%	50.0%	42.7%	1.000*
19: REQUEST	0.0%	10.0%	62.7%	27.3%	0.0%	13.3%	61.3%	25.3%	0.654*
20: REQUEST	12.0%	22.7%	44.7%	20.7%	10.7%	22.0%	48.7%	18.7%	0.910*
21: COMPLAINT	8.0%	23.3%	55.3%	13.3%	8.0%	24.0%	56.0%	12.0%	0.989*
22: REFUSAL/APOLOGY	13.3%	37.3%	41.3%	8.0%	14.0%	40.7%	38.7%	6.7%	0.907*
23: INVITATION	0.7%	2.0%	64.0%	33.3%	3.3%	6.7%	58.0%	32.0%	0.075*
24: OFFER	1.3%	10.7%	42.7%	45.3%	1.3%	10.7%	43.3%	44.7%	1.000*
25: APPOINTMENT	2.7%	3.3%	68.0%	26.0%	1.3%	4.0%	65.3%	29.3%	0.768*
26: COMMITMENT	12.7%	14.0%	56.0%	17.3%	11.3%	14.7%	55.3%	18.7%	0.975*

P *->5%

Statement 1: INVITATION/REQUEST

When asked to indicate the level of politeness of the statement "We would like you to address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week" (Besingathanda ukuthi ube isikhulumi emcimbini wethu wonyaka, ohlelwe egameni labaphathi abayiziMenenja, wokuklonyeliswa kwebenze kahle ngesonto elizayo), no statistically significant difference was found between the English and isiZulu ratings (P>0.05). It emerged that majority of the English (68%) and isiZulu (64.7%) respondents found the statement to be polite (Table 14, row 1). This statement was rated in the same way by the English and isiZulu scorers. Interestingly, some respondents rated it as very polite in English (28%) and isiZulu (30,7%).

Statement 2: REQUEST

In terms of the statement "Please let us have the information as soon as possible" (Sicela usazise ngokushesha), no significant difference was found in the perceived politeness between the English and isiZulu ratings (P>0.05). It was found that 60 percent of the respondents rated the isiZulu statement, and 59.3 percent rated the English statement, as polite (Table 14, row 2). The English and isiZulu L1 scorers also rated the statements similarly. Interestingly, some respondents rated it as very polite in English (29,3%) and isiZulu (27,3%).

Statement 3: OFFER

Regarding the rating of the statement "We would like to develop a long-term relationship with your Institute and would be ready to offer help required by you" (Besingathanda ukuba nobudlelwano obude nesikhugo sakho futhi sizobe sikulindele ukukunika usizo oludingayo), no significant difference was found in the perceived politeness between the English and isiZulu ratings (P>0.05). It was found that 51.3 percent of the English respondents rated the statement as polite, while 49.3 percent rated the statement as polite in isiZulu. Interestingly, the statement was rated as very polite, in English by 46 percent, and 48 percent in isiZulu (Table 14, row 3). The uncertainty of rating the statement between polite and very polite could be due to the use of the modal verb "would" twice and isiZulu words "besingathanda" and "sikulindele ukukunika" which signify linguistic deference. The statement was rated as polite by the English L1 scorers and very polite by isiZulu L1 scorers.

Statement 4: REQUEST

In terms of the statement "Looking forward to any help that you could provide us, in this regard" (Sibheke-ke noma uluphi usizo ongase usinike lona, mayelana nalokhu), no significant difference was found in the perceived politeness between the English and isiZulu rating (P>0.05). The majority of the English respondents (64%) as well as more than half (58.7%) of isiZulu respondents found the statement to be polite (Table 14, row 4). This was similar to the English and isiZulu L1 scorers' assessments. Surprisingly, some respondents perceived the English statement as either very polite (17,3%) or rude (17,3%), and the isiZulu statement as very polite (16,7%) or rude (21,3%).

Statement 5: COMPLAINT

When asked to rate the level of politeness in the statement "I would like to receive the order within a few days; failing that I expect an immediate refund of the full amount" (Bengingathanda ukwamukela i-oda ezinsukwini nje; ngale kwalokho ngibheke ukubuyiselwa, ngokushesha, imali igcwele), more than half of both English (53.3%) and isiZulu (52%) respondents rated it as rude (Table 14, row 5). A small percentage of the English (23.3%) and isiZulu (22.7%) respondents rated it as polite. Similarly, the statement was rated by some of the English and isiZulu scorers as rude and by others as polite. Interestingly, some of the isiZulu respondents (20%) rated it as very rude. Overall, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating of the respondents between the two languages (P>0.05). The use of "I would like to" 'bengingathanda' signifies deference and therefore falls under Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative politeness strategies. On the other hand, according to Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness strategies, the use of a threat "failing that" 'ngale kwalokho', in the second part of the statement, is one of the negative impoliteness strategies known as Frightening. Hence the statement consists of the use of both negative politeness and negative impoliteness strategies, which explains the respondents' ratings.

Statement 6: COMPLAINT/REQUEST

When asked to rate the level of politeness in the statement "Your prompt attention to this matter would be appreciated" (Ukusukumela kwakho lolu daba ngokushesha kuyoncomeka), the majority of the English (68.7%) as well as the isiZulu (67.3%) respondents rated it as polite (Table 14, row 6). Interestingly, the statement was rated as polite by some English L1 scorers and as very polite by others, while it was rated as polite by isiZulu L1 scorers. Generally, there

was no statistically significant difference in the rating of the participants between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 7: CONGRATULATION

When asked to rate the level of politeness in the statement "Hope you will enjoy your new position" (Ngithembe-ke uyosithokozela isikhundla sakho esisha), it was found that more of the respondents rated it as polite in English (52%) when compared to isiZulu (48%) (Table 14, row 7). There was, however, no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05). Interestingly, the statement was also rated as very polite in English (30.7%) and isiZulu (30%). This was in line with the rating of some of the English L1 scorers who rated it as polite and others as very polite, while the statement was rated as polite by isiZulu L1 scorers.

Statement 8: REFUSAL

When asked to rate the level of politeness in the statement "I got your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer" (Ngisitholile isimemo sakho, kodwa uxolo ngeke ngikwazi ukwemukela okucelile), many of the respondents in both English (44.7%) and isiZulu (41.3%) found the statement to be rude (Table 14, row 8). On the other hand, some respondents also rated it as polite in isiZulu (31,3%) and in English (28%). It is notable that the statement was also rated as very rude by 22,7 percent in both English and isiZulu. The English L1 scorers rated the statement as polite, while the isiZulu L1 scorers also had contrasting ratings with some rating it as polite and others as rude. The use of the word "sorry" in the speech act of APOLOGY in English is more appropriate in spoken situations where social distance between the two parties is minimal. For that reason, in written business communication where social distance between the writer and the reader is maximum, it could be perceived as impolite. In terms of isiZulu, impoliteness is shown by the use of negative terms such as "ngeke ngikwazi" 'I can't' used in the statement. Overall, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 9: THANKING

When asked to rate the level of politeness in the statement "Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of products" (Siyabonga ngokufuna kwakho ukwazi ngohlu lwempahla esinayo yesimanje), the majority of the respondents rated it as polite in English (66%) and isiZulu (67.3%), while a few of them considered it as very polite in English (32.7%) and isiZulu (30%)

(Table 14, row 9). The English L1 scorers regarded it as very polite, while the isiZulu L1 scorers perceived it as polite. There was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 10: REQUEST

When asked to rate the level of politeness in the statement "We would appreciate if you could forward us the information as soon as possible" (Siyothokoza uma uyosinika ulwazi masinyane), many of the respondents rated it in English (64%) and isiZulu (65.3%) as polite (Table 14, row 10). This rating was similar to the English and isiZulu L1 scorers' ratings. Some respondents rated it as very polite in English (28,7%) and isiZulu (25.3%). There was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 11: OFFER/REQUEST

In terms of the statement "If you want to interview me, call my secretary on 021-3774269" (Uma ufuna sibonane futhi sikhulume, shayela unobhala wami kulenombolo 021-3774269), many of the respondents viewed it as rude both in English (63%) and isiZulu (62%) (Table 14, row 11). It was also perceived by some as very rude in the English statement (24.7%) and in the isiZulu statement (25,3%). Similarly, it was rated by some English and isiZulu L1 scorers as very rude, yet by others as rude. The use of the phrase "If you want" 'uma ufuna' sounds impolite in the context of a business letter. The use of "would like" to mitigate the request would have been more appropriate. In addition, the word "call" 'shayela' sounds like a command and is categorised as Culpeper's (1996) bald on record impoliteness strategy. Quite interestingly, the statement was also rated as polite in English (27,3%) and isiZulu (27,3%). Nevertheless, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 12: INVITATION/REQUEST

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "We would be very honoured if you could address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week" (Siyohlonipheka kakhulu uma ungase wenze inkulumo emcimbini wethu wonyaka, ohlelwe ogameni labaphathi abayiziMenenja, wokuklonyeliswa kwabenze kahle, ngesonto elizayo), the majority of the respondents in English (74%) as well as isiZulu (69.3%) considered the statement to be very polite (Table 14, row 12). This was similar to the English and isiZulu L1 scorers' ratings. Some respondents found the statement polite in English (24,7%) and isiZulu

(26,3%). There was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 13: CONGRATULATION

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "On behalf of the company, I wish you everything of the best in your new position" (Egameni leNkampani, ngikufisela konke okuhle esikhundleni sakho esisha), the majority of the respondents in English (66.7%) as well as in isiZulu (66%) perceived the statement as very polite (Table 14, row 13). Similarly, the statement was rated as very polite by the English L1 scorers. On the other hand, the isiZulu L1 scorers regarded it as merely polite. Some respondents rated it as polite in English (30,7%) and isiZulu (31,3%). Nonetheless, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 14: REQUEST

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "Place an order urgently, please" (Siza, phuthuma ufake i-oda), a mixed reaction was observed in the rating between the two languages. It was found that 46 percent of the respondents rated the English version as polite, and 43.3 percent perceived it as polite in isiZulu. In the same light, 45,3 percent rated the isiZulu one as rude, while 43,3 percent rated it as rude in English (Table 14, row 14). The statement was perceived by some English L1 scorers as polite while others thought it was very rude, similar to the isiZulu L1 scorers who also rated it as very rude. Nevertheless, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05). The mixed feelings are due to the fact that the statement was formulated as a direct speech act in English, which can be interpreted as an imperative, and thus a command. At the same time, the use of the word "please" translated as 'ngiyacela' in isiZulu is an indication of politeness. In addition, the directness of the speech act stemming from the urgency in "siza, phuthuma" 'Place an order urgently' sounds like an imperative and thus a command or instruction which makes it sound rude in isiZulu.

Statement 15: OFFER

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "Just shout if you need help from us. We will help." (Ungenqeni ukusho uma udinga usizo. Sizokusiza), more than half of the English (51.3%) as well as the isiZulu (54%) ratings indicated that the statement was polite, while 30.7 percent of the respondents rated the English, and 28 percent rated the isiZulu

statement as rude (Table 14, row 15). The English and isiZulu L1 scorers rated it as polite. There was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two language speakers (P>0.05). It is understood why some respondents rated the statement as rude. The use of the words "just shout" sounds too casual in written business communication. Such words would be more appropriate in spoken conversation between people in the same hierarchical group. In written business communication, which is formal, the use of "do not hesitate to contact us" would have been more appropriate and more polite that "just shout".

Statement 16: APOLOGY

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "We trust that you will accept our sincere apology" (Seyethemba uyokwamukela ukuxolisa kwethu ngokweqiniso), more than half of the English (54%) as well as the isiZulu (56.7%) respondents considered the writing to be polite, while 39.3 percent of the English and 40 percent of the isiZulu ratings were very polite (Table 14, row 16). Equally, the statement was viewed by the English and isiZulu L1 scorers as both polite and very polite. There was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 17: COMPLAINT/REQUEST

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "I have been waiting for your response for three weeks now and am asking for a refund as soon as possible" (Kade ngiyilindele impendulo yenu, amasonto amathathu manje, futhi ngicela ukubuyiselwa imali ngokushesha), the respondents felt that the English (46%) as well as the isiZulu (43.3%) versions were rude, although 30 percent of the English and 32.7 percent of the isiZulu statements were rated as very rude (Table 14, row 17). Interestingly, similar numbers of both English and isiZulu respondents (20.7%), however, rated it as polite. It can be understood why respondents rated the statement as rude or very rude. The first part of the English statement indicates impatience by the writer, which is prone to being perceived as rude in the context of business writing. The isiZulu version "Kade ngiyilindile impendulo yenu, amasonto amathathu manje, futhi" 'I have been waiting for your response for three weeks now, and' also displays a high level of impatience and annoyance. Hence it is perceived as rude by the respondents and very rude by the scorers. It is not expected that the writer should display such impatience and annoyance as they want to do business with the reader. On the other hand, the second part of the statement is more polite because of the use of "am asking for" 'ngicela', which mitigates the request and politely highlights the intention of the letter. The ratings by English L1 scorers

were rude and polite, and very rude and polite by isiZulu L1 scorers. However, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 18: APOLOGY

The apology statement read as, "Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of HP computers, but I'm afraid we cannot be of service to you as we are out of stock at the moment" (Ngiyabonga ukuthi ubuze ngohla lwama-computer, esimanje, olukhiqizwa ngabakwa-HP esinalo; kodwa-ke mangixolise, angeke sikwazi ukukusiza okwamanje asasiphelele). More of the respondents rated the statement in English (49,3%) as well as isiZulu (50%) as polite, than the number of English (43,3%) and isiZulu respondents (42,7%), who rated it as very polite (Table 14, row 18). This is an indication of mixed feelings between the two ratings, of polite and very polite, which was also displayed by the ratings of the English L1 scorers. The use of "thank you" is a politeness marker that indicates deference. Therefore, it is understood why some respondents rated the statement as polite. The use of "I'm afraid" which is regarded as very polite in English, especially in spoken discourse, makes it also understandable for other respondents to rate the statement as very polite. Hence, the uncertainty shown in the respondents' ratings in the English statement. On the other hand, the isiZulu L1 scorers predominantly considered the statement polite. Although the use of negative terms such as "angeke sikwazi" 'we cannot' which are regarded as impolite in isiZulu, this face-threatening act is mitigated by the use of "mangixolise" literally translated as 'let me apologise' which is a very polite strategy in isiZulu. This mixture of the use of impolite words and the mitigation thereof by the use of a very polite strategy makes the isiZulu statement polite. Nonetheless, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 19: REQUEST

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "As we would like to finalise our order, we would appreciate your prompt response on the matter" (Njengoba sithanda ukuphothula i-oda lethu, besingayijabulela impendulo esheshayo kulolu daba), the majority of the respondents rated the statement in English (62.7%), as well as in isiZulu (61.3%), as polite. 27.3 percent of the English and 25.3 percent of the isiZulu respondents rated it as very polite (Table 14, row 19). However, 10 percent of the English and 13.3 percent of the isiZulu respondents considered the statement rude. The rating by the English and isiZulu L1 scorers

was polite. Even so, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 20: REQUEST

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "If you have any more queries, please come and discuss them with me when it suits you" (Uma kusekhona ofuna ukukwazi, ngicela uze sikhulume uma uthola ithuba), it was found that 44,7 percent of the respondents rated the English as polite and 48,7 percent rated the isiZulu as polite. On the other hand, 22.7 percent rated the English, and 22 percent rated the isiZulu as rude. It was also found that 20.7 percent of the English, and 18.7 percent of the isiZulu, statements were viewed as very polite (Table 14, row 20). However, some respondents rated the English (12%) and the isiZulu (10,7%) versions as very rude. The rating by the English L1 scorers was polite and the L1 isiZulu scorers rated it as both polite, by some, and very polite, by others. The use of the blunt words "please come" is regarded as a direct speech act in English which can be interpreted as impolite, although the word "please" can be used as a politeness strategy to mitigate the request. This contrast can be a challenge to English second language speakers and thus brings about confusion in terms of ratings. However, the use of "ngicela" 'please' shows linguistic deference and thus perceived as polite in isiZulu. This confirms the rating of the statement by respondents in isiZulu. Generally, there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 21: COMPLAINT

The complaint statement read as, "I am looking forward to your reply and the resolution of my problem and will wait for another week before seeking third-party assistance" (Ngilangazelele impendulo yakho nesisombululo enkingeni yami, nokho-ke ngizolinda elinye isonto anduba ngifune omunye eceleni ongasiza kulenkinga). It was found that more than half of the respondents rated the English (55.3%) as well as the isiZulu (56%) version of the statement as polite. However, 23.3 percent rated the English statement as rude, and 24 percent rated the isiZulu statement as rude (Table 14, row 21). Equally, the statement was rated as polite in both English and isiZulu by the English and isiZulu L1 scorers. There was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 22: REFUSAL/APOLOGY

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "Thank you for your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer" (Ngibonga isimemo sakho, kodwa-ke uxolo ngeke ngisamukele), more respondents thought it was polite in English (41,3%), than in isiZulu (38,7%). However, more respondents rated it rude in isiZulu (40,7%) than in English (37,3%). (Table 14, row 22). Although the words "thank you" indicate linguistic deference and thus politeness, the use of just the word "sorry" in this speech act is more appropriate in situations where social distance between the two parties is minimal. For this reason, in written business communication where social distance between the writer and the reader is usually maximum, it could be perceived as rude. Just like in statement 8, the use of negative terms such as "ngeke ngisamukele" 'I can't accept' are perceived as impolite in isiZulu which is confirmed by the respondents' ratings. There was, however, no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05). The statement was rated as polite by the English and isiZulu L1 scorers.

Statement 23: INVITATION

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "We are having some friends from Pretoria this week and I was wondering if you could join us for dinner on Friday" (Sinabangani thizeni abavela ePitoli kulempelasonto; ngingazi-ke noma ungaba yini nathi esidlweni sakusihlwa ngo lweSihlanu), it was found that although the English statement was considered polite by 64 percent of respondents, and only as polite in isiZulu by 58 percent of the respondents (Table 14, row 23), there was no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05). The statement's rating by the English L1 speakers was both polite and very polite and polite by isiZulu L1 scorers.

Statement 24: OFFER

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "Should you wish to interview me, I am available at any time convenient to you and can be reached at the following number: 021-377 4269" (Uma ufisa sibonane futhi sikhulume, ngingatholakala kulenombolo: 021-3774269 noma ngasiphi isikhathi esikulungele), there were mixed feelings revealed in scoring it as polite and very polite. 45,3 percent of the respondents rated it very polite in English and 44,7 percent as very polite in isiZulu. At the same time, the statement was perceived as polite in English (42.7%) and isiZulu (43.3%), as shown in Table 14, row 24. There was, however, no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05). The

English L1 scorers perceived the statement to be very polite, while it was regarded as polite by isiZulu L1 scorers.

Statement 25: APPOINTMENT

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "We trust that you will be very happy working for Lunarco sales and hope to receive written acceptance of this offer of employment before 1 April" (Seyethemba uyokuthokozela ukusebenzela i-Lunarco Sales; sethembe futhi ukuthola isiqiniseko sokumukela lomsebenzi lungakafiki olukuqala kuMbasa), the majority of the English scores (68%) as well as the isiZulu (65.3%) indicated that it was polite (Table 14, row 25). The statement was perceived as polite by some, and very polite by other, English and isiZulu L1 scorers. There was, however, no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

Statement 26: COMMITMENT

Regarding the rating of the level of politeness in the statement "We want to work with your institute and we can, for sure, help whenever needed" (Sifuna ukusebenzisana nesikhungo sakho futhi kungenzeka, nakanjani, singasiza noma inini uma kunesidingo), more than half of the respondents rated the statement in English (56%) as well as in isiZulu (55.3%) as polite (Table 14, row 26). This was consistent with the English L1 scorers' rating of the statement. Some isiZulu L1 scorers indicated the statement to be rude, while others regarded it as very polite. There was, however, no statistically significant difference in the rating between the two languages (P>0.05).

The mean, standard deviation, and Independent Sample T-test for the level of politeness scoring tasks between English and IsiZulu written statements is shown in Table 15. No statistically significant differences were identified in the ratings of the levels of politeness between the English and IsiZulu written statements (P>0.05). The mean value measured was closest to 'polite' which suggests that the respondents consider all the written statements in the politeness scoring task in both languages as being polite.

Table 15: Independent Sample T-test of the levels of politeness

	Language	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	*P value*
Statement	English	150	2.9554	.20058	.01638	0.423
	IsiZulu	150	2.9364	.20872	.01704	

In summary, the above task explicitly highlighted the ratings of the levels of politeness in statements from business letters containing various speech acts in two languages, English, and isiZulu. Overall, it emerged that the respondents tend to rate the level of politeness in both languages in the same manner. Thus, the scoring patterns are more or less the same and there are similar perceptions of politeness and impoliteness in the same context of what is polite, very polite, or rude, very rude in both isiZulu and English. However, there are remarkable findings where the same statement received extremely different ratings in the same language (statements 4; 5; 8; 11; 17 and 20). This finding is unpacked in the summary of findings below.

Thus, the results of the politeness scoring tasks reveal that the participants are aware of the pragmatic function of the speech acts in English and in isiZulu as shown by the comparison between the respondents' and L1 scorers' ratings. The participants show understanding of the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of the speech acts in English written business communication. This was evident in the majority of the respondents' ratings which were in line with the politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness strategies and the English L1 and isiZulu L1 scorers' ratings. However, there are cases of different ratings of the same statement in the two languages. It should be noted that some statements contained both polite and impolite linguistic forms which resulted in them fitting into either a polite or an impolite strategy used. For that reason, different ratings of the same statement in English and isiZulu are justified.

Essentially, there were no significant differences found in the politeness ratings between English and isiZulu. I discuss the significance and limitations of this finding in Chapter 5; 5.7 (page 217).

SECTION D

4.5 Written Business Letters

4.5.0 Introduction

This section presents results that emanated from analysis of the business letters. The results are presented to answer the following research questions:

- What is the participants' awareness of the use of appropriate speech acts in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu)?
- What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?

Are there any instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?

As indicated in Chapter 3, a total of 150 participants (all English L2 and isiZulu L1 speakers) were targeted to participate in the written tasks. The response rate was lower than expected. As a result, this section reports on a sample of 100 business letters written by the participants on each speech act: COMPLAINT and REQUEST, in English and isiZulu. The participants were asked to write a letter to the manager of a company complaining about a product that had been recently delivered to their company. They were also requested to imagine themselves as sales consultants in a company and write a letter to the Sales Manager requesting marketing materials that would be needed in an upcoming advertising campaign (Appendix I). The purpose of the written tasks was to examine the occurrences of politeness and impoliteness strategies used by the respondents in the data in both languages.

This study used Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies and Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness strategies to analyse the business letters. The analysis focused mainly on negative politeness strategies particularly the use of indirect speech acts and linguistic deference, and impoliteness strategies, those being, bald on record and, negative impoliteness focussed on frightening (see Table 9 in Chapter 3). In terms of negative politeness, indirect speech acts were identified focusing only on three features: whimperatives, hedged performatives, and embedded performatives as forms of indirectness. As whimperatives are indirect requests, in this study they were identified in English using examples such as "can/can't/will/won't you please send the order?", and in isiZulu by the use of expressions, like for instance, "ungalithumela ioda/ungangithumelela ioda/ungasiza/ungesize uthumele ioda". Following Madoyan (2014: 20)

hedged performatives in English were identified by the use of a modal verb to soften a performative verb such as "would/could/may" and in isiZulu by the use of expressions such as "ngingacela/ngingaphakamisa/ngingancoma ukuthi …". As embedded performatives indirectly perform the acts of requesting or complaining (see (Madoyan, 2014: 20), I followed Madoyan's (2014) analysis and identified them in English by the use of indirect requests such as, "I would like to request/complain …/may I request/complain …" and in isiZulu by using examples such as, "ngifisa/bengifisa/ besifisa/ ngicela/ bengicela/ sicela/besicela/ bengidlulisa isicelo/ngithanda ukudlulisa isicelo/ bengingathanda/ besingathanda …". As linguistic deference can be shown by using a number of features like pluralisation of pronouns, impersonalisation, hedges, and others, this study focused specifically on the use of politeness markers to show respect, such as "please, if you wouldn't mind, if you don't mind, I was wondering …, I would appreciate, I hope … and thank you". For bald on record, the focus was on the use of direct speech acts which sounded like commands, orders, or instructions that led to a rude or harsh tone. For negative impoliteness, the focus was on the use of a frightening strategy which sounded like a threat. Social distance between the writer and the reader of the business letter was also taken into consideration.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the written business letters on each speech act were randomly coded (1-100) and each participant was assigned the same code for both letters written in English and isiZulu. Similar to the student questionnaires, descriptive analysis was utilised as this is most frequently used when conducting research on speech acts (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014:28). Additionally, a Chi-Square analysis using SPSS was conducted to compare whether there were any significant differences between the politeness and impoliteness strategies used by the respondents when using the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English and isiZulu. Lastly, an Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the utilisation of politeness and impoliteness strategies in the complaint and request letters, between the two languages.

4.5.1 Results of letter of complaint

This section aimed to assess the politeness and impoliteness strategies used in the complaint business letter task, written in English and isiZulu, which was given to the participants. To clarify the results, first, the complaint strategies are presented. This is then followed by frequency counts (N) of the politeness and impoliteness strategies, shown in the tables below to address the research questions. In cases where examples of politeness and impoliteness

strategies are shown, the specific participant is reflected by the number written at the end of the expression.

4.5.1.1 Politeness strategies

As shown in Table 16, the Chi-Square test indicates that there was a statistically significant difference in the complaint letters written in the two languages (P<0.01). It emerged that while only 12 percent of the English complaint letters had indirect speech acts, 36 percent of those written in isiZulu had indirect speech acts. Similarly, it was found that an overwhelming majority, 97 percent of the isiZulu complaint letters, had linguistic deference when compared to 80 percent found in the English letters (P<0.01).

Table 16: Raw frequency and percentage of indirect speech act and linguistic deference found in the complaint business letters between English and isiZulu

Politeness	English		isiZulu		Total	Chi Square
	Number	N %	Number	N %		p-value
Indirect speech act	12	12%	36	36%	100	0.000***
Linguistic deference	80	80%	97	97%	100	0.000***

Note: P<1%***

Furthermore, an Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the level of politeness measured in the complaint letters between the two languages (Table 17). It emerged that the complaint letters written by the isiZulu language participants were significantly more polite than those written by the English language participants (P<0.01).

Table 17: Language based politeness strategies in the complaint letters

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Politeness	English	100	.4600	.23225	.02322	0.000***
	isiZulu	100	.6650	.24675	.02467	

Note: P<1%***

The following are some of the extracts taken directly from the participants' letters indicating the use of indirect speech acts as a politeness strategy used in English:

(88) Can you kindly correct the error? (77)

(89) May you please come and collect your stock back and bring back the stock [sic] (95)

(90) However I would like to give you back this box of lipsticks. (7)

(91) Next time to avoid this kind of mistake, I would suggest that you make sure that all the orders are checked thoroughly. (13)

The following are some of the extracts from the participants on linguistic politeness used in English:

(92) I hope we will be able to work together and build a good relationship. (67)

(93) Thank you for the product that your company delivered to me last week. (41)

(94) We would really appreciate it if you check if it [sic] working properly. (10)

(95) I was wondering if I can be refunded the money I paid. (55)

(96) Could you please make sure that all the orders made are checked thoroughly before being delivered? (13)

The following are some of the extracts from the participants on indirect speech acts used in isiZulu:

(97) Ngakhoke bengicela ukuba nisithumele izincwadi lezi ezingafikanga. (3)

'Therefore I was requesting that you send us the books that we did not receive.'

(98) Bengisacela nizozilanda lezi kibha … (36)

'I was requesting that you collect these T-shirts …'

(99) Bengingathanda ukucela ukuthi lamabhuku angabhalwanga aphindele emuva. (8)

'I would like to request that the books that are not printed be returned.'

(100) Into ebengingacela ningenzele yona ukuthi nithumele … (100)

'What I would request you to do is to send …'

(101) Beningakwazi ukungilethela elinye ioda? (38)

'Could you bring me …/Would you be able to bring me another order?'

(102) Ungangilungisela leliphutha ngokushesha? (77)

‘Would you correct the error for me as soon as possible?’

(103) Benginesicelo uma kwenzeka inkampani ingithumelele ezinye izimpahla. (69)

‘I have a request, if it is possible, that the company sends me other goods.’

The following are some of the extracts from the participants on linguistic politeness used in isiZulu:

(104) Ngicela ulungise le nkinga ngokuphuthuma. (33)

‘Please rectify this problem urgently.’

(105) Kungaba yenkulu intokozo kimina uma ngaba isikhalazo sami singa … (55)

‘It would be a great pleasure to me if my complaint would be …’

(106) Ngiyobonga kakhulu uma isikhalazo sami samukeleka. (37)

‘I would be very thankful if my complaint is accepted.’

(107) Siyi Aluminium SYS singathokoza kakhulu uma ningaba nesixazululo … (48)

‘As Aluminium SYS we would greatly appreciate it if you could have a solution ...’

(108) Ngokukhulu ukuzithoba sidlulisa ukungeneliseki ngephasela elifikile … (67)

‘With great respect we express our dissatisfaction about the parcel delivered.’

(109) Ngiyethemba siyophinde silenze ibhizinisi futhi kungasekho inkinga. (52)

‘I hope we will do business together again without a problem.’

(110) Sicela ukuba usilungisele leliphutha. (6)

‘We request you to rectify this mistake.’

(111) Siyabonga ngesikhathi sakho. (98)

‘We thank you for your time.’

In examples 88-96 the participants have successfully used the face saving acts by means of the whimperatives “can you”, “may you”; hedged performatives “I would suggest”; embedded performatives “I would like to give you back”; and politeness markers to show deference “I hope”, “thank you”, “would appreciate”, “I was wondering” and “please”, to soften the complaint. Further, they have displayed an understanding of the social distance between themselves, in their role as an employee, and the reader, who is the manager in a company, by not imposing on the reader. Through conveying information, they have successfully maintained

relationships between themselves and the addressees of their letters. Thus, they have maintained both the transactional and interactional intentions of business letters.

Examples in 97-103 indicate some of the indirect speech acts which were commonly used by the participants in the form of whimperatives "beningakwazi" 'could you', "ungangilungisela" 'would you correct', hedged performatives "ebengingacela" 'I would request', embedded performatives "bengingathanda ukucela" 'I would like to request', and phrases like "bengicela" 'I was requesting', "bengisacela" 'I was requesting', "benginesicelo" 'I have a request', used in isiZulu. The phrases "bengicela" and "bengisacela", both interpreted as 'I was requesting', and "ngicela", interpreted as 'I request', have the potential of being misinterpreted as direct speech acts in English, which can be viewed as impolite strategies, yet they are an indirect and polite form of requesting in isiZulu. In addition, the use of the phrase "benginesicelo", 'I have a request', could easily be misinterpreted as a declarative, which functions as a statement in English, yet it is an indirect speech act in isiZulu which highlights politeness and thus, a strategy to soften the face threatening act of request when complaining about something.

In examples 104-111 the use of "ngicela" 'I request', "kungaba yenkulu intokozo" 'it would be a great pleasure', "ngiyobonga kakhulu" 'I would be very thankful', "singathokoza kakhulu" 'we would greatly appreciate', "ngokukhulu ukuzithoba" 'with great respect', "ngiyethemba" 'I hope', "sicela" 'we request', "siyabonga" 'we thank' are linguistic expressions that signify deference and politeness in isiZulu. Such politeness markers help in building a good relationship between the writer and the reader and thus contribute to accomplishing the interactional intentions of written business letters.

4.5.1.2 Impoliteness strategies

As shown in Table 18, a significant number (67%) of bald on record were found in the complaint letters written in English compared to 25 percent noted in isiZulu ($P<0.01$). Although more threats (21%) were found in the English language complaints, compared to 15 percent in the isiZulu, there were, however, no statistical differences in both languages ($P>0.05$). These findings are supported by Wijayanto, Laila, Prasetyarini and Susiati. (2013) who investigated politeness strategies used in complaints relating to social distance and social status levels among Indonesian undergraduate learners of English. Their results showed that of the four politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987), bald on record, with elements of threatening, was among the most prevalent strategies used by the participants in complaint scenarios. These

results further highlight the challenges of English as an L2, especially for first year university students, in realising the speech act of COMPLAINT, as pointed out by Deveci (2015). Dlali's (2003) study found similar results on the use of impolite strategies in which threats were made on the speech act of COMPLAINT in isiXhosa. Additionally, in a cross-cultural study on the speech act of COMPLAINT between British native speakers of English and Jordanian native speakers of Arabic, the use of direct threat was a commonly used complaint strategy employed by both groups in their linguistic expressions (Al-Khawaldeh, 2016: 197).

Table 18: Raw frequency and percentage of impoliteness strategies in the complaint letters between English and isiZulu

Politeness	English		IsiZulu		Total	Chi Square
	Number	N %	Number	N %		p-value
Bald on record	67	67%	25	25%	86	0.000***
Threats	21	21%	15	15%	81	0.269*

Note: P<1%***, P>5%*

An Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the level of impoliteness measured in the complaint letters between the two languages (Table 19). It emerged that the complaint letters written in the English language were significantly more impolite than those written in the isiZulu language (P<0.01).

Table 19: Impoliteness strategies in the complaint letters according to language

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	P value
Impoliteness	English	100	.4400	.32004	.03200	0.000***
	isiZulu	100	.2000	.28427	.02843	

Note: P<1%***

The following are some of the extracts from the participants on bald on record used in English:

(112) Make sure all your laptops have charges [sic]. (15)

(113) This is to tell you that all the cameras had faulty lens [sic]. (39)

(114) Techno Equipment must check their equipment before delivering (8)

(115) When a customer place order [sic] you need to listen carefully and write down exactly what the customer want [sic] so you can not [sic] forget. (52)

(116) … and give me a new one. (7)

(117) I expect that you repair [sic] this car before I press charges against your company. (19)

(118) I need my order delivered to me by Monday. (33)

(119) If you are not willing to do that kindly bring back all my money. (33)

(120) Please follow up to [sic] this mistake and alert us when we are receiving our goods. (40)

(121) I request you to [sic] kindly replace the defective electric toaster. (84)

(122) Next time call me if you are unsure of my order. (73)

The writers are using blunt and direct expressions, "make sure", "must check". "you need to listen", "give me", "I need", "bring back", "call me". These sound like the writer is giving instructions to the reader. These harsh instructions are inappropriate in this context because they suggest that either the employees are failing to do their job or the company in question is failing to offer satisfactory service to the clients. Similarly, the study conducted by Deveci (2015) revealed that the students used blunt, direct expressions thus making demands when complaining to their professor about their assignment marks. In this study, the social distance between the writer who is a customer and the reader who is a manager is not clear. However, to maintain a good relationship between the two companies, the writer should try and avoid giving orders to the reader. If we consider that the reader is the assumed Manager, who is in a higher position, then they should not be given orders by the writer, irrespective of their rank. Moreover, the writer expects to get a positive response from the reader, no matter the rank. The use of "you need to listen carefully and write down …" may also sound like a reprimand, which is inappropriate. In addition, the use of directives like, "you need to…", and "you repair …" are considered impolite in English. It should also be considered that in African culture it is generally unacceptable, in terms of social distance, to address a person of authority with the personal pronoun "you". Hence, both sentences are impolite and threaten the transactional as well as the interactional function of the correspondence. The use of explicit performatives "I expect", "I request", and the words "Please follow up" are a direct strategy for using speech acts in English. Irrespective of the use of "please", which is a politeness marker that is used to

soften a face threatening act, the expression is a direct speech act that is regarded as impolite, as indicated in Table 1: Direct speech act, Chapter 2. In contrast, the word "please" translated as 'ngiyacela' in isiZulu, is a polite way and has an extra pragmatic layer of expressing a request, as opposed to "I request". This is direct transference of the way language is used in the first language, isiZulu, to English which may lead to pragmatic failure of the message. The word "ngiyacela" is a standard form of polite request used by isiZulu speakers in a wide variety of contexts (De Kadt, 1998: 175). It holds the same perception in other Nguni languages like "ndiyacela" in isiXhosa and "ka kopo" in Sesotho. The phrase "This is to tell you that …" sounds rude in the context of business communication where the writer has no authority to give orders to the reader. In this case, it would be better to use an embedded performative "I would like to inform you that …" to soften the act. Karatepe (2016: 356) also found that the Turkish learners of English used explicit performatives and the polite marker "please" in their requests.

The following are some of the extracts from the participants on bald on record used in isiZulu:

(123) Qinisekisa ukuthi izitsha … (2)

'Make sure that the dishes …'

(124) Ngifaka isikhalazo ngezingilazi azilethwe eNkampanini … (7)

'I am lodging a complaint about the glasses delivered to the company.'

(125) Ngiyakhalaza impela … (16)

'I am really complaining …'

(126) Mnu Hlatshwayo uyadinga ukuba ulalelisise amakhasimende nokuthi ulobe phansi konke akushoyo … (52)

'Mr Hlatshwayo you need to listen to the customers carefully and write down all what they say …'

The expressions above are regarded as impolite in the African culture, as they are direct and blunt. Also, the use of "uyadinga ukuba ulalelisise" 'you need to listen' by participant 52 is a demand being made by the writer who still wants to continue doing business with the reader and is therefore rude. Furthermore, it implies that the reader lacks good listening skills which can be interpreted as an insult. Use of such statements would break the interactional function of the business letter in question.

The following are some of the examples of the frightening strategy used by the participants in English business letters:

(127) If you do not, you will face legal action our company will take against you (63)

(128) If none of what I have mentioned is not done by the end of the week than you leave me no choice but to take you to court. (78)

The following are some of the examples of the frightening strategy used by the participants in isiZulu business letters:

(129) ….. Uma kungenjalo sesiyokhuluma enkantolo. (32)

'… If not, we will talk in court.'

(130) Uma niqhubeka nokusidilivela lempahla, siyophoqeka njengenkampani ukuba singabe sisaba nobudlelwane nenkampani yenu. (21)

'If you continue delivering these goods, we will be forced as a company not to have a relationship with your company.'

In the above examples both an expression of an intent to take legal action against the reader, as well as a warning to cut ties with the company, are being made, if the writer's demands are not met. The use of such threats in English and isiZulu business communication are not allowed, as it attacks the reader's face. Such threats would damage the relationships between the parties concerned. Use of a polite request or complaint would be more appropriate in this context.

In some cases, the students' writing showed both polite and impolite strategies in the English business letter within a single sentence, as reflected in the following examples:

(131) I would like to return this box of lipsticks and give me [sic] a new one … (7)

(132) It will be a great pleasure if you fix this mistakes [sic] because I want those laptops … (31)

The words "would like" and "will be a great pleasure" soften the complaint, whereas the words "give me" and "I want" illustrate a demand and are therefore impolite. This emphasises the uncertainty of students as to the use of appropriate politeness strategies when using speech acts.

The mixture of polite and impolite strategies, where a threat was used, was also common in the isiZulu business letters as seen in 129 and 130 above.

Figure 5 illustrates the frequency use of politeness and impoliteness strategies in the complaint letters between the English and isiZulu languages. It is evident that linguistic deference was

the common form of politeness noticed in both languages, while bald on record appeared to be the common impolite strategy used by the participants. Overall, the majority of the complaint letters contained negative politeness strategies. This observation is consistent with the results of the research on politeness strategies, in complaints by Iranian post graduate learners of English (Masjedi & Paramasivam, 2018), that showed negative politeness as the most frequent politeness strategy used by participants. The use of indirect speech acts, in the form of indirect accusations followed by indirect requests, was the most frequent negative politeness strategy used by the learners (Masjedi & Paramasivam, 2018: 46). The use of indirect accusation has also been shown in research conducted on the speech act of COMPLAINT in isiXhosa, a language closely related to isiZulu, as one of the most frequent strategies used by respondents in voicing their complaints (Dlali, 2003: 137; Manjiya, 2001: 147). The use of this strategy is a subtle way of showing annoyance whilst also trying to avoid blaming the other person explicitly, to avoid conflict and is thus, a face saving act. Although in this study frightening in the form of threats was the least common impolite strategy used, it was mostly used in English business letters compared to isiZulu. This is a similar observation to the study on politeness strategies in complaints by Iranian post graduate learners of English, where threats were found to be the less frequently used strategy (Masjedi & Paramasivam, 2018: 40).

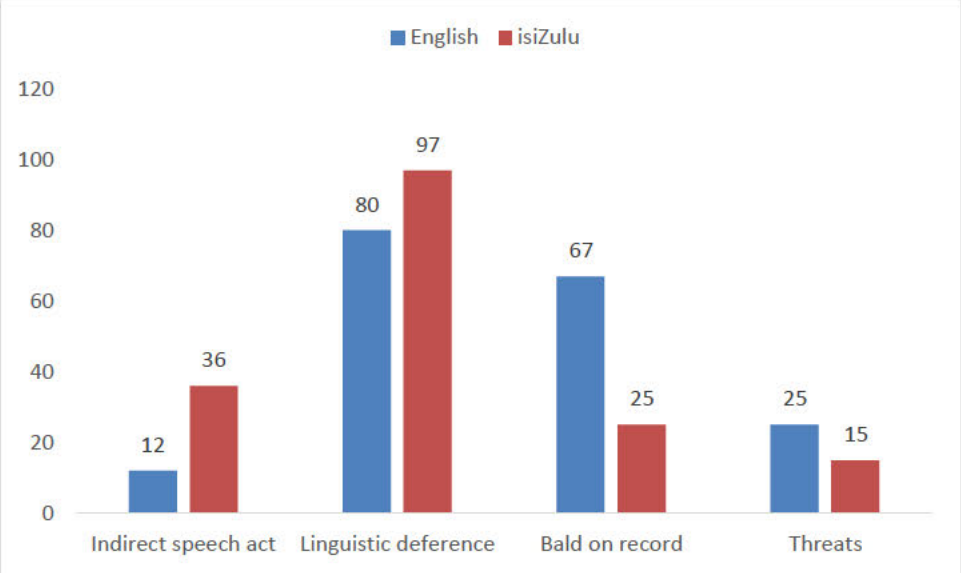

Figure 5: Frequency of use of politeness and impoliteness strategies between English and isiZulu complaint business letters

4.5.1.3 Differences according to gender

When comparing gender, although there was no significant difference in the occurrence of politeness strategies in the business letters of complaint, indirect speech acts were more frequently used by females (36%) than males (34%) in isiZulu but, used more by males (16%) than females (8%) in English. Regarding the use of linguistic deference, females (98%) used this politeness strategy more frequently than males (96%) in isiZulu. In the same way, this politeness strategy was used more frequently by females (82%) compared to males (78%) in the English complaint letters. These results are in line with Alfattah and Ravindranath (2009) whose results demonstrated that males and females did not differ considerably in respect of their use of negative politeness strategies. However, females tended to employ more of these strategies (ibid). This observation is consistent with the patriarchal language practices in a Zulu society, like many other African Nguni societies, which display *hlonipha* (respect) (Irvine & Gunner, 2018). In Zulu culture, females, especially from rural areas, are expected to show deference at all times when addressing, in particular, the family of their husbands (De Kadt, 1998; Rudwick & Shange, 2009). It is quite clear that females transfer these patriarchal linguistic strategies of respect to the way they show politeness in written business letters. The Chi-Square test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the linguistic deference observed in male and female participants in English ($P>0.05$) and isiZulu ($P>0.05$). On the other hand, the majority of male and female respondents' complaint letters had no bald on record in isiZulu. Nonetheless, this impoliteness strategy was used more frequently by females (26%) than males (24%) in isiZulu complaint letters compared to males (68%) and females (66%) in English complaint letters. The Chi-Square test indicates that there were no statistically significant differences in the linguistic deference observed in male and female participants in English ($P>0.05$) and isiZulu ($P>0.05$). Although the use of threat in both languages was the least used impoliteness strategy, it was more frequently used by males (28%) than females (14%) in English complaint letters compared to 22 percent of males and 10 percent of females in isiZulu. The Chi-Square test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the linguistic deference observed in both the male and female participants in English ($P>0.05$) and isiZulu ($P>0.05$).

4.5.2 Results of letter of request

This section aimed to assess the politeness and impoliteness strategies used by the participants in the request business letter task written in English and isiZulu. To clarify the results and

address the research questions the request strategies are presented first, followed by the frequency counts (N) of the politeness and impoliteness strategies. In cases where examples of politeness and impoliteness strategies are shown, the participant is reflected by the number written at the end of the expression.

4.5.2.1 Politeness strategies

As shown in Table 20, more indirect speech acts were found in request business letters written in the isiZulu language (41%) as compared to the 31 percent written by participants in the English language. Nonetheless, the Chi-Square test suggests that there were no statistically significant differences in the indirect speech found in the two languages (P>0.05). In terms of the number of linguistic deference politeness strategies, 100 percent of the participants used it in their isiZulu request business letters compared to 89 percent in the English letters (P<0.01).

Table 20: Raw frequency and percentage of indirect speech act and linguistic deference found in the business letter request between English and isiZulu

Politeness	English		IsiZulu		Total	Chi Square
	Number	N %	Number	N %		p-value
Indirect speech act	31	31%	41	41%	100	0.141*
Linguistic deference	89	89%	100	100%	100	0.001***

Note: P<1%***, P>5%*

Furthermore, the Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the politeness strategies used in the request business letters between the two languages (Table 21). It emerged that the request business letters written by participants in the isiZulu language were significantly more polite than those written in English (P<0.01).

Table 21: Politeness strategies in the request business letters between English and isiZulu

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	P value
Politeness	English	100	.6000	.26591	.02659	0.004***
	isiZulu	100	.7050	.24716	.02472	

Note: P<1%***

Some of the common extracts from the participants on indirect speech acts used in English are shown in the following expressions:

(133) Please can we have the material by the 10 August. (86)

(134) If you are interested in my proposal, would you please let me know. (98)

(135) I would like to request that you provide us with marketing materials. (10)

(136) Would you please let us know the price payable … (24)

(137) I would request [sic] that you provide us with the marketing materials … (40)

The use of whimperatives in "can we" (133), "would you please" (134) and (136); hedged performatives in "would request" (137); and embedded performatives in "would like to request" (135) indirectly perform the speech act of request. They are thus strategies to mitigate the face threatening act of request.

In comparison with whimperatives and hedged performatives, embedded performatives "bengingathanda", "bengifisa", "benginesicelo" were commonly used as an indirect speech act in isiZulu request letters as shown in the following expressions:

(138) Bengingathanda ukucela ukuba umphathi enginikeze izinsiza zokukhangisa. (26)
'I would like to request the manager to provide me with the marketing materials.'

(139) Bengifisa ukucela nomabonakude … (39)
'I would wish to request the television as well …'

(140) Benginesicelo sale zinto ezilandelayo … (6)
'I have a request for the following items …'

Some of the commonly used politeness markers to indicate linguistic deference used in English are shown in the following expressions:

(141) I hope this letter will find you in a good mood. (6)

(142) Thank you for trusting me with this massive campaign. (50)

(143) I would appreciate a response before this campaign actually happens. (55)

(144) If you could please make the order before the end of the month. (67)

Similar to the letters of complaint, the participants used politeness markers "I hope", "Thank you", "would appreciate" and "please" to express politeness and deference. In addition, the use of "If you could please make the order …." (144) is an attempt to show that they do not want to impose, and this effect is also heightened by the use of the modal "could" and the word

"please". The use of linguistic deference further maintains positive relationships between the writer and the reader. Thus, the functional and interactional purposes of the business letter is attained.

The following expressions highlight linguistic deference used in isiZulu business letters:

(145) Ngingakuthakasela ukuthola isiqopha mshini. (59)
'I would appreciate it if I could get a recorder.'

(146) Besingakujabulela futhi sikuthokozele ukuthola usizo lwakho … (66)
'We would be glad and enjoy to get your assistance.'

(147) Okokugcina siyothokoza uma umphathi engaphinde asisize … (73)
'Lastly, we would be glad if the manager could help us again.'

(148) Sicela umphathi asihlanganisele izinsiza zokukhangisa ezizodingeka … (4)
'We request the manager to please organise the marketing materials …'

(149) Ngiyethemba ukuthi uzokwazi ukusisiza (6)
'I hope that you will be able to assist.'

(150) Ngiyabonga ngesikhathi sakho. (12)
'Thank you for your time.'

Politeness in isiZulu is manipulated by using different morphemes, especially from different moods, such as "ngiyethemba" versus "ng(i)ethemba" (149), the frequent use of the potential mood –nga- as used in (145), (146), and tenses, especially the future tense "siyothokoza" versus "sothokoza" (147). Another form of politeness in isiZulu is the use of the third-person form of address instead of the second person "you" as illustrated in "umphathi" (147) and (148). This strategy is regarded as a highly polite way of showing deference in the Zulu culture, especially when a person of a lower status or younger age is communicating to a person of a higher position or older person.

4.5.2.2 Impoliteness strategies

As shown in Table 22, the Chi-Square test indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the request business letters written in the two languages ($P<0.01$). It emerged that request business letters written in the English language had more (54%) bald on record

compared to those written in the isiZulu language (10%). However, no threats were found in the request business letters written in the two languages.

Some of the examples of bald on record which were common in English business letters are shown in the following expressions:

(151) I ask for more marketing materials so that the campaign will be … (2)

(152) Please also provide T-shirts, mugs, calendars … (84)

(153) I remind you about one of the biggest upcoming advertising campaigns (13)

(154) I also demand a sound system so as to project our speakers [sic] voices (42)

(155) You must include bronchues [sic], flyers, post cards and business cards …. (77)

(156) I need cameras, a bunch of actors and studio time. (74)

(157) We also want speakers and microphones so that … (93)

The use of "I ask for", "please also provide", "I remind you", "I also demand" are direct speech acts which sound rude especially in the context of business communication. The use of "I ask" translated as 'ngicela' or 'ngiyacela' is an indication of direct transference of the rules of language use from isiZulu to English. The writer, as a second language speaker of English, thinks that they are being polite, due to the fact that they lack pragmatic competence in English. In this situation such lack of pragmatic competence has the potential of resulting in pragmatic failure and may ultimately cause the reader to misunderstand the message. In a similar vein, the use of "please" to hedge a performative verb is evidence of transferring the rules of language use from isiZulu to English. In isiZulu using "ngicela" which means 'please' to fulfil the same illocutionary intention would have been perceived as a polite word, which softens the request, and also as a strategy to show respect, and thus, appropriate. Second language learners may transfer socio-pragmatic skills from their first language to a second language. Due to different language use rules, this in turn, may lead to the conveyance of a pragmatic force in the target language which was not intended (Umar & Majeed, 2006; Sithebe, 2011: 12; Dilek, 2020: 1265). Using words such as "you must", "I need" and "we … want" are blunt and direct requests which are demanding action from the reader and thus, appear rude. This can break a good relationship and fail to achieve both the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of the speech act in question. Instead, the use of a modal verb such as "would" could have been a

more polite and appropriate politeness marker to ensure the reader received the request in a positive manner.

Unlike in the business letters written in English, no occurrences of the use of polite and impolite strategies were mixed in a single sentence in isiZulu letters.

Table 22: Raw frequency and percentage of bald on record and threat in the business letter request between English and isiZulu

Impoliteness	English		IsiZulu		Total	Chi Square
	Number	N %	Number	N %		p-value
Bald on record	54	54%	10	10%	100	0.000*
Threats	0	0%	0	0%	100	

Note: P<1%***

The Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the level of impoliteness measured in the business letter of request between the two languages (Table 23). It emerged that the business letters of request written by the participants in English were significantly more impolite than those written by the participants in isiZulu (P<0.01).

Table 23: Impoliteness strategies in the request business letters between English and isiZulu

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	P value
Impoliteness	English	100	.2700	.25045	.02505	0.000***
	isiZulu	100	.0500	.15076	.01508	

Note: P<1%***

Figure 6 further illustrates the frequency use of politeness and impoliteness strategies in the request business letters between the English and isiZulu languages. Evidently, and similar to complaint business letters, it can be seen that linguistic deference was the common form of politeness noticed in both languages, while bald on record appeared to be the common impoliteness form used. Research findings of the study, that investigated the degree of politeness and impoliteness on the speech act of REQUEST in English, with Iranian EFL learners, also showed negative politeness as the most frequent politeness strategy used by participants (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014: 29). Compared to complaint business letters

where there was some evidence of threats, the frightening impoliteness strategy was not used at all in request business letters. This might be due to the writer's desperation to get the requested material, and awareness of the necessity of a positive response, in order for the "marketing campaign" to be successful. The writer is therefore more cautious in terms of their word choices and actively avoids using any language, in this case a threat, that may jeopardise this. Generally, the request business letters had more politeness strategies in both languages. This overall picture is similar to that of the complaint business letters.

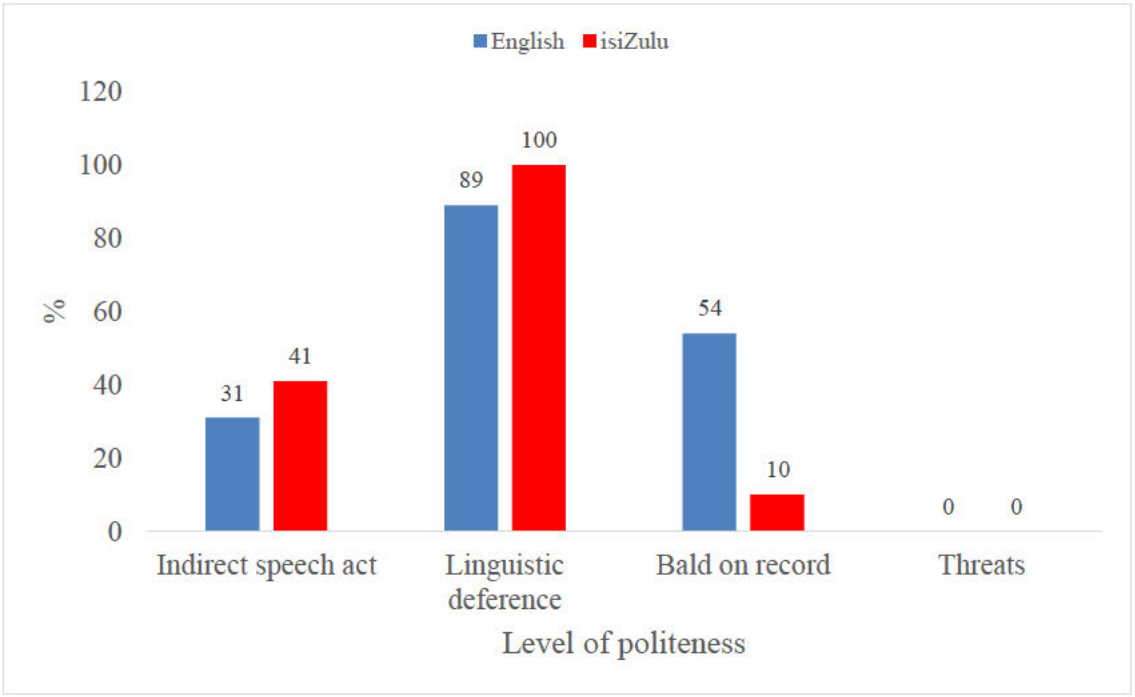

Figure 6: Frequency of use of politeness and impoliteness strategies between English and isiZulu request business letters.

4.5.2.3 Differences according to gender

When comparing males and females in both languages, the request letters written by females had more occurrences of indirect speech acts in isiZulu (41,5%) than in English (32,3%). The request letters written by males also had more occurrences of indirect speech acts in isiZulu (40%) compared to English (25,7%). However, there was no statistical difference in the occurrences of indirect speech acts between the two genders. Concerning the use of linguistic deference, this strategy occurred more frequently in the request letters written by the female participants (93,8%) than in those written by males (82,9%), in isiZulu. Similarly, this politeness strategy was used more frequently by females (90,7%) compared to males (85,7%)

in the English request letters. The Chi-Square test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the occurrence of linguistic deference in both the male and female request letters in English (P>0.05) and isiZulu (P>0.05). Bald on record was the least used strategy in the request letters written by the majority of both male and female respondents in isiZulu. However, this impoliteness strategy occurred more frequently in English request letters used by 55,4 percent of females and 51,4 percent of males, compared to 9,2 percent of females and 8,6 percent of males in isiZulu request letters. The Chi-Square test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the occurrence of bald on record observed in both the male and female participants in English (P>0.05) and isiZulu (P>0.05). No occurrences of threat by either gender were identified in both languages.

Table 24: Summary of politeness and impoliteness strategies in both business letters

	Letter of complaint					
Politeness	English	IsiZulu	Total N %	Chi Square		
	Number	N %	Number	N %		Number
Indirect speech act	12	25%	36	75%	48	0.000***
Linguistic deference	80	45.2%	97	54.8%	117	0.000***
Bald on record	67	72.8%	25	27.2%	92	0.000***
Threats	21	58.3%	15	41.7%	36	0.269*
	Letter of request					
Politeness	English	IsiZulu	Total N%	Chi Square		
	Number	N %	Number	N %		Number
Indirect speech act	31	43.1%	41	56.9%	72	0.141*
Linguistic deference	89	47.1%	100	52.9%	189	0.001***
Bald on record	54	84.4%	10	15.6%	64	0.000*
Threats	0	0%	0	0%	0	N/A

Note: P<1%***, P>5%*

4.5.3 Summary of findings

In summarising the above findings, Table 24 highlights the politeness and impoliteness strategies found in the complaint and request business letters written by participants in English and isiZulu. For the complaint business letters, it emerged that the letters written in isiZulu significantly contained more politeness strategies than those written in English. It was noted that the participants frequently used linguistic deference as a politeness strategy in their

complaint business letters written in isiZulu. It was also found that the participants were significantly more impolite in their English complaint letters compared to their isiZulu letters. Significantly, the use of more bald on record in complaint business letters was observed in the English language. Some instances of transferring the way language is used in the first language to the second language were also evident. Similar trends were also noticed in the request letters written by the participants in English and isiZulu languages. Although there were elements of the use of both polite and impolite strategies found in singular sentences in the business letters of complaint, in both languages, this occurred more in English letters. This is an indication of the challenges of using speech acts and politeness strategies in the target language.

Although both males and females favoured negative politeness, females employed linguistic deference in business letters written in isiZulu more than males, while males employed more bald on record in business letters written in English than females. This observation is in line with the results of the research on the speech act of REQUEST that revealed that although both males and females favoured negative politeness strategies, males employed bald on record more than females did (Mohammadi & Tamimi Sa'd, 2014: 29). Equally, a study on request strategies conducted with Iranian MA student participants, who were Persian native speakers, indicated that although conventionally indirect strategies such as negative politeness strategies were found in both males and female requests, females tended to use it slightly more. Males used direct strategies more than females (Rahimi Domakani & Farhang-Ju, 2020: 6). Research by Alfattah and Ravindranath (2009) and Karimkhanlooei and Vaezi (2017) also revealed that females use more polite language than males. In terms of the use of threats, this impoliteness strategy was used more by males in complaint business letters, in both languages, than females. Furthermore, it was found that the request and complaint business letters were not statistically different in terms of the gender of the participants for both the English and isiZulu languages.

Thus, the results of the written business letter tasks reveal that the students are aware of the use of appropriate speech acts and the importance of politeness in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu). This is shown in their use of linguistic deference as the most frequent form of politeness observed in the realisation of the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in both languages. On the other hand, the students also commonly used bald on record, which is an impolite form of strategy, in the English business letters.

The results further reveal that the students are more polite when using speech acts in isiZulu compared to English, in the context of business writing. These findings demonstrate that

students understand both the transactional and interactional functions of language in written business communication, which is displayed by their successful application of politeness strategies in their L1. The findings are consistent with the literature which reveals that African language speakers avoid face threatening acts because they are aware and sensitive to the possible negative repercussions of using FTAs (De Kadt, 1998; Manjiya, 2001; Sithebe, 2011; Sommer & Lupapula, 2012). Nevertheless, the students struggle with achieving these language functions in their L2 and they experience challenges in the use of speech acts in business writing. This is evident in their use of a mixture of polite and impolite strategies in their English business letters, as well as in their use of sometimes harsh and impolite language choices in expressing their complaints and requests. This is due to the complexity of speech acts and a lack of pragmatic competence, which may result in both the transactional and interactional functions of language in written business communication not being achieved. In addition, there are noted instances of pragmatic transfer from the way students use speech acts in isiZulu to the way they use speech acts in business writing in English.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, the results from the questionnaire survey and focus group interviews have been presented. The results from the written data in the form of politeness scoring tasks and business letters have also been discussed.

Chapter 5 will present the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the data analysed in this chapter. The chapter will also explain the contribution of the current study. It will equally underline the limitations of the study. Lastly, the chapter will highlight possible areas of future research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The first aim of this chapter is to conclude the study by reviewing each chapter. This is followed by a summary presentation of the findings and conclusions, drawn from the results of the analysis of the student questionnaires, focus group interviews, politeness scoring tasks, and written business letters. The chapter also makes recommendations for further research and mentions the contribution of the study. Lastly, the limitations of the study are identified, and areas of further research are highlighted.

5.2 Review of the study

Chapter 1 gave an overview of the study. It outlined background to the problem that was addressed as well as the rationale for conducting the research. The purpose of the study, research questions, and the methods that were used, were highlighted. An explanation of the assumptions, delimitations, and terms to be used were also given.

Chapter 2 argued the theoretical framework that informed the study. It explained the concepts of "face" and politeness, including how these relate to business writing. This was followed by a discussion on the theory of Speech Acts including culturally specific speech acts and speech acts in the writing context. Additionally, the chapter highlighted the purpose and importance of written business communication, politeness, and pragmatic competence. It also discussed the challenges brought about by the use of English as a medium of instruction in the African sub-region of Southern Africa. Further, the chapter explained the initiatives that have been taken in South Africa to develop language in general and learners' writing skills. The role of first language in improving writing in a second language was explored. Lastly, the chapter highlighted various studies that have been conducted on students' writing skills, speech acts and business writing.

Chapter 3 discussed ethical considerations that were followed in the study. The chapter also presented an overview of the research methodology and the methods used. Further, the research instruments were highlighted, and the data analysis methods were explained.

Chapter 4 outlined the presentation, analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the findings from the student questionnaires, focus group interviews, politeness scoring tasks and written business letters.

5.3 Summary of the research

The challenge of poor writing skills experienced by students who are English L2 speakers is a global one. Yet graduates are expected to have acquired good business writing skills, including appropriate use of speech acts and politeness, in order to communicate effectively both globally and locally, when they are employed. This includes the value of understanding both transactional and interactional functions of business letters, and the appropriate use of speech acts and politeness in achieving these two functions. Of great concern is that the industry is constantly voicing concerns about graduates who fail to demonstrate pragmatic competence in written business correspondence. The main objective of the study, as stated in Chapter 1, was to investigate the students' awareness and challenges on the use of speech acts, including politeness, in written business correspondence. In addressing these challenges, the study sought to explore to what extent isiZulu speech acts and politeness strategies can complement English speech acts in the development of effective written business communication skills.

Based on the main objective, the research questions (indicated below as RQ) that were answered by the study were as follows:

- RQ1: What is the awareness of the participants on the use of appropriate speech acts in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu)?
- RQ2: What is the sense of politeness of the participants, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?
- RQ3: To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation**?**
- RQ4: Are there any instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?

The research approach used in this study was quantitative, and qualitative. To collect relevant data a student questionnaire, which assessed students' awareness on the use of speech acts,

including politeness in written discourse, was used. Secondly, a politeness scoring task, written in English and isiZulu, was utilised to measure students' awareness of the level of politeness of each written utterance taken from a corpus of business letters. Furthermore, focus group interviews were employed to collect in-depth qualitative data about students' perceptions and challenges on the use of speech acts in written business correspondence. Lastly, written business letters on the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English and isiZulu were engaged to identify the speech acts and, politeness strategies and markers used in both languages.

5.4 Conclusions of the current study

5.4.1 RQ1: What is the awareness of the participants on the use of appropriate speech acts in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu)?

The results of the tasks on business letters, which focused on the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST, and which were written in isiZulu and English, reveal that the students are aware of the use of appropriate speech acts in written business correspondence in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu). In line with the study by Nyangiwe and Tappe (2021: 52), the results further indicate that the students are aware of the importance of politeness in business writing in both languages. This is confirmed by their frequent use of linguistic deference as a politeness strategy in performing the two speech acts in both languages.

As this is a comparative study on the two languages, it is noted that results indicate that students display more awareness of the use of appropriate speech acts in isiZulu compared to English. From the analysis of the findings, it appeared that the letters written in isiZulu, for both speech acts, contained significantly more politeness strategies than those written in English. This was evident in the observation that the students predominantly used linguistic deference as a politeness strategy in business letters written in isiZulu when using both speech acts. In addition, they used more indirect speech acts in isiZulu business letters than in English (see Figures 5 and 6 in Chapter 4). It is interesting to note that the students used more politeness strategies in the speech act of REQUEST in English, compared to the speech act of COMPLAINT in English, as both speech acts are regarded as face threatening. It was highlighted in the Literature Review that the speech act of COMPLAINT involves the addresser's emotional state when expressing disapproval or dissatisfaction for a service, action, product, or state of affairs. It is therefore classified as one of the face threatening acts which has the potential to break down relationships between people communicating with each other (Brown & Levinson,

1987). It is not surprising that the English L2 students in this study found it difficult to use this face-threatening speech act when writing, due to a lack sociolinguistic competence in their L2. This lack of sociolinguistic competence in performing a face threatening speech act of COMPLAINT is confirmed in a number of studies discussed in the Literature Review chapter such as Umar and Majeed (2006) and Deveci (2015).

In the same way, the students use of more impoliteness strategies in the speech act of COMPLAINT in English, as compared to the speech act of REQUEST, is noteworthy. It became apparent that the students were significantly more impolite in the English business letters when compared to the isiZulu letters. This was confirmed by a significant use of more bald on record, an impolite strategy, in business letters written in English when using both speech acts. Moreover, there were more elements of the use of the frightening impoliteness strategy, in the form of threats, in English business letters of COMPLAINT compared to the ones written in isiZulu. Therefore, in as much as students show an awareness of the use of appropriate speech acts in written business correspondence, as English second language students, especially at first year level, they still have challenges with using speech acts in this context in English. They are more polite when using speech acts when writing in isiZulu compared to English in the same context. In relation to Brown and Yule's (1983) theoretical framework that the study adopted, the findings demonstrate that students understand both the transactional and interactional functions of language in written business communication. This is largely exposed in their successful application of politeness strategies in their L1. Nonetheless, they struggle with achieving these language functions when writing in their L2.

The challenges in the use of speech acts in business correspondence in English is also apparent in the way students mix polite and impolite strategies in the same sentence in their English business letters. Regrettably, this use of a mixture of polite and impolite strategies in expressing their complaints and requests leaves them equally likely to succeed or fail in achieving the major functions of writing business letters. Much as they make attempts to be perceived as polite, they appear harsh and impolite to the reader of the business letter. Subsequently, in trying to achieve the transactional purpose by giving information, the interactional intention of maintaining a good relationship with the reader is compromised.

5.4.2 RQ2: What is the sense of politeness of the participants, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?

The results of the study confirm that the students are more polite when using speech acts in isiZulu compared to English, in the written business letters. This is shown by the empirical observation that the students used politeness strategies (indirect speech acts and linguistic deference) appropriately, and more often, when using speech acts in isiZulu written business letters compared to the English ones. The students are quite aware that although all languages show politeness, politeness is viewed differently in different cultures. For this reason, it should be expected that English and isiZulu L1 speakers do not express themselves the same way in terms of politeness. That is why most of the students were more polite when writing a business letter in isiZulu, their home language, than in English. The use of the same word such as "baba" literally translated 'father' may not carry the same form of politeness in different languages. For instance, in English the word "father" may be taken literally as referring to a male parent, while in isiZulu as much as "baba" may refer to a male parent, it may also be used to address any other older male person, or a male person of higher authority, as a way of showing respect. Therefore, the word "baba" reveals a great degree of politeness. In this study the students expressed that they felt that isiZulu displays more politeness and respect as compared to English. Additionally, the use of "izithakazelo" (clan names) is a common form of showing politeness and deference in the African culture. For example, when the writer of a business letter from an African culture uses the clan name of the reader from the same culture when performing a REQUEST, COMPLAINT, APOLOGY, COMPLIMENT or THANKING, the reader will understand the intention behind such use. Due to a common cultural understanding, this gesture would show a positive illocutionary force and, in return, yield a positive perlocutionary effect. Also, the avoidance of a second person "you", when addressing a person of a higher position or an older person and replacing it with the third person is regarded as a highly polite way of showing deference in the Zulu culture. Yet this richness in African politeness, in using a person's clan name and third person instead of "you", with its positive effect is missed when writing a business letter to a reader from a different culture. The students lose an opportunity of expressing politeness to a degree with which they are familiar when writing in their L2 to a reader of a different culture and different home language. This is the reality that English L2 students are faced with when using speech acts in English business correspondence. They lose an opportunity of expressing politeness, to a degree, when writing a business letter to an unknown reader.

The students were of the view that, in terms of the cultural differences in politeness, different factors affected the use of speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST when communicating in isiZulu and English. While some factors were taken into consideration equally, others were found to be more important in one language or the other. To illustrate this, the age of the recipient and the position they held within a company was stressed for both languages. Although the students in the focus groups indicated that when writing in isiZulu, culturally, gender was also considered vital, it was surprising that gender was not cited as important in the questionnaires. Looking from a patriarchal Zulu culture perspective, this finding seems to contradict the expectation and thus, highlights a possible shift in view by the younger generation. When writing in English they felt that the level of education and the culture of the recipient were defining factors.

The study recognizes that, culturally, people learn politeness and respect from both home and school backgrounds. In South Africa, for an African child who is taught African values in terms of politeness at home, assimilating into a Western culture outside of the home is a massive undertaking. It is therefore not surprising that English L2 learners have challenges in using speech acts when writing business correspondence in English, due to the clash between African and Western cultures. The students in this study further pointed out that there are topics that cannot be broached with an older person in isiZulu culture, however the same topics may be acceptable with an older person in a Western culture. An example of this is the openness with which people from a Western culture may explain the reasons for a personal issue to someone older, or younger. They will provide details. However, this may not be acceptable in an African culture where there is a limit on the details and depth to which you would discuss a problem with an elder, or older person. This limiting of details may downplay the severity of the problem in realising the speech act in question. This omission or inclusion of crucial details by a writer, even in terms of business letters, was a noted concern by the students in terms of considering who the reader of a letter might be. Because business correspondence involves intercultural communication, it is quite apparent that the writer of a business letter needs to consider the culture of the person who is going to read the letter. The reader also brings their own culture to the interpretation of speech acts and it is therefore crucial that writers are able to avoid a breakdown in communication across cultural differences by selecting and choosing the appropriate speech acts. However, meeting the expectations of both the writer and reader is a challenge for English L2 speakers, as the writer might not know the culture and age of the reader.

5.4.3 RQ3: To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu, i.e., do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation?

The findings emanating from the students' self-assessments and the ratings on the level of politeness indicate that they have a sense of awareness of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu. There appears to be an understanding of the significance of maintaining politeness by choosing the appropriate words to achieve the illocutionary intention behind the use of speech acts when writing a business letter. Nevertheless, students have expressed that they experience difficulties with regards to the choice of appropriate words to achieve the intended meaning in English. In circumstances where ambiguous words have been used, the reader may potentially misinterpret the intended meaning. As a result, in the context of a business letter, the reader might end up getting the wrong illocutionary meaning from what the writer had intended, due to multiple interpretations attached to the word.

Languages worldwide vary profoundly from one another in terms of lexicon and meaning (Evans & Levinson, 2009: 429). This is exposed in the use of different combinations of morphemes or verb extensions to convey meaning of words in different languages. Likewise, English and isiZulu have different lexicons in the case of verbs. The extension of verbs by adding an affix to a root and their meaning is a key feature in isiZulu. For example, the word "bona" which means 'see' is formed by -bon (verb root) –a (suffix). Yet, the word "see" is formed by the verb root with no suffix. The word "bonisa" 'to show' is formed by adding more than one suffixes -bon (verb root) –is (suffix) –a (suffix), whereas in "show" no suffix has been added to the verb root. Additionally, in terms of lexical semantics, some words in isiZulu will only have one meaning, yet the same words in English can have more than one meaning. Lexical semantics is the linguistic study of the meaning carried by individual words of a particular language and how the meaning is connected to the words used (Bosch & Pretorius, 2017: 153). A clear case in point is the word "ukubona" which literally means to 'see' in isiZulu. Yet, the same word "see" may have more translations in English compared to isiZulu, such as to 'view', 'grasp', 'understand', 'perceive', 'realise', 'recognise', 'notice', 'acknowledge'. This difference in lexical semantics in different languages is a challenge to English L2 learners and it may bring about added complexity as these learners might fail to attach the correct meaning of the word used.

The historical policies of the apartheid government, which only recognised English and Afrikaans as the official languages that were used in government and education, further perpetuates the difficulties of English L2 students in using English. These policies resulted in the dominance of English as a language of teaching and learning, to the detriment of the African indigenous languages. In addition, because African languages were marginalised, there was no effort by the apartheid government to develop these indigenous languages, hence, the underdevelopment of isiZulu terminology. In support of this notion, Bosch and Pretorius (2017: 153) assert that isiZulu is an under-resourced language. Thus, the disparity between English and isiZulu lexicon in this study has contributed to the students' challenges on the choice of words.

It is worth mentioning that the success of any communication process rests on the words used by the sender. Moreover, if the students find themselves struggling in choosing the words in general, it is clear that they will have a challenge in finding words that display politeness when using speech acts in a second language. The participants in the student questionnaires and focus group interviews made it clear that, over and above general difficulties associated with the choice of words, they specifically struggle with using appropriate words that show politeness and respect, especially when using the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English. This challenge was further confirmed in their recurrent use of impoliteness strategies in the English business letters when using the speech acts that were investigated in this study. In addition, this challenge was revealed in the politeness scoring task where, in some cases, the same speech acts received extremely different politeness ratings in the same language. This was prominent in instances where a mixture of words or phrases, which revealed different levels of politeness, were used in one statement, thus giving opposite sentiments to the message. This was evident in the use of "I would like to" which indicates deference and "failing that" which is an impoliteness strategy in the form of a threat in one sentence (Chapter 4; Statement 5-speech act of COMPLAINT). Mixing words or phrases which bring about different sentiments in one statement might form conflicting messages and this creates a sense of uncertainty as to whether the statement is polite or rude, as was seen in the politeness scoring tasks. Thus, it is reasonably clear that the difficulty in the use of appropriate words to illustrate the illocutionary meaning has a bearing on the reader's interpretation of the meaning. The reader may end up interpreting the illocutionary force in a way that was not intended by the writer, and this may impact on the reader's response, that is, the perlocutionary force.

Subsequently, the interactional function of speech acts may be undermined in business letters due to the use of words with conflicting meanings.

In line with this finding, students cited that one of the difficulties they experience in writing business letters is being concerned with how the message will be perceived by the reader. They realise that as a writer of a business letter they struggle to choose the appropriate words to meet the type of reader. This difficulty in choosing the appropriate words may result in the incorrect interpretation of the writer's intention. This misinterpretation might further impact on the perlocutionary force of the words given by the reader in the response. This difficulty amounts to a lot of pressure and anxiety for an English L2 speaker when they have to write a business letter in English to an unknown audience. The writer may not know the cultural background of the reader, let alone the reader's level of education and because the student is not using their mother tongue, they may be overly cautious in an effort to not be perceived as rude. The L2 writer's anxiety is exacerbated by the concern that they may cause a communication breakdown. Other aspects that may intensify this anxiety are factors related to the recipient being an older person or a more experienced professional or someone in a position of power. As an isiZulu L1 speaker whose cultural values of respect in terms of the age, gender, and level or position of a person, influence communication styles, the student has to be cautious in the tone used, even in the context of written business communication in English. It has to be borne in mind that the tone in written business communication is mostly reflected by the actual words and phrases used, unlike in spoken communication where tone is also communicated by voice and non-verbal cues. All these factors that the L2 writer has to consider when writing a business letter are an added burden in terms of choosing the appropriate words to maintain politeness in order to successfully achieve the intended illocutionary force of the speech act concerned. This proves that the students perceive writing a business letter as far more demanding than merely conveying information, in complaining about or requesting something.

It was mentioned in Chapter 3 that the sample of this study comprises of first year, English L2 students in a tertiary institution largely dominated by black students who come from previously disadvantaged educational backgrounds. Furthermore, because of the location of the institution in a black township, these students have limited social interaction with English L1 speakers outside the classroom. The only place where they are exposed to the use of English is the classroom environment as it is used as a medium of instruction. Another major difficulty experienced by the students in choosing appropriate words, as evident in the findings, is as a result of a limited English vocabulary and inadequate English proficiency due to them coming

from a disadvantaged schooling background, as highlighted in Chapter 2; 2.5.3.2. All these challenges make the feelings of anxiety experienced by these students understandable.

The study shows that students seem to be aware of the positive perlocutionary effects of maintaining politeness in the use of speech acts in business correspondence. This further highlights an understanding of the pragmatic function of speech acts in achieving the interactional intention of business letters. The importance of politeness highlighted by students was discussed in Chapter 4. It was apparent in the focus group interviews that when a writer is complaining about a product or service in a polite manner, the reader may find themselves empathising with the writer, and thus the reader may find a quick solution to the problem. The participants also indicated that politeness leads to better understanding and co-operation between the two parties. As a result, a compromise in dealing with the matter may be easily reached. Thus, politeness helps in maintaining a good long-term relationship between the writer and the reader, which is the interactional intention performed in writing a business letter. Overall, a company benefits from positive interactional relationships as they may increase productivity. If the writer displays respect through the tone used, this portrays their positive attitude towards the customers and displays professionalism needed in the business environment.

In the questionnaires, the respondents pointed out that expressing politeness helps a business have a good relationship with customers. They stressed that showing politeness is of utmost importance in sales environments where salespeople cannot be harsh with customers and then still expect them to buy from them. It was made clear that when a writer displays respect, this depicts their attitude. It also shows a willingness to do business with the other person or company. Thus, being polite ensures a smooth business deal and displays professionalism. Another interesting point that came from the questionnaire, though it was not articulated in the interviews, is that using polite language helps the reader to clearly capture the actual aim or purpose of the letter. This demonstrates the participants' understanding of the pragmatic function of speech acts in written business letters.

5.4.4 RQ4: Are there any instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?

Lastly, with regard to the occurrences of pragmatic transfer, evidence of isiZulu influence was detected in the students' business letters of COMPLAINT and REQUEST in English, in line with

other studies conducted by Umar and Majeed (2006), Sithebe (2011), and Yarahmadi and Fathi (2015). The students in the focus group interviews indicated that they too feel that their use of speech acts in the English business letter were greatly influenced by their first language, isiZulu. They formulate the letters in isiZulu first then translate them into English. This mother tongue influence is revealed in their English business letters by the use of indirect speech acts when performing a speech act of REQUEST. While this direct transference of the rules of language use from isiZulu to English results in a negative illocutionary force in this context, it is an attempt by an English L2 speaker to show politeness in requesting by transferring the way in which politeness is expressed in their L1 to English. The students' use of the words "I humbly" "please" "could I ask for" translated as 'ngokukhulu ukuzithoba', 'ngicela' or 'ngiyacela', 'ngingacela' are expressions indicating extreme politeness in isiZulu. The word "ngicela" literally translated as 'I ask for' in English has an extra pragmatic layer of requesting in isiZulu. Hence the use of these words in English business letters was an attempt by students to mitigate the speech acts of REQUEST and COMPLAINT. However, the use of a direct speech act "I ask for" and the use of "please" to hedge a performative verb in English, as much as it is an attempt to mitigate the request, renders the utterances too blunt and direct. The writer is perceived as demanding action from the reader, which may be interpreted as rude, especially in the context of business communication. For example, in Chapter 4, Extract (120) "Please follow up to this mistake and alert us when we are receiving our goods." (40), as an example (page 212). The use of "Please" directly followed by verbs "follow up" and "alert" does not have the effect of politeness but makes this statement sound like an instruction. Instead, using "Please" with "could you" would mitigate the request and thus make it polite. In contrast, the word "Please" translated as 'ngicela' in isiZulu would have a different effect of politeness. Hence, the students thought they were being very polite by using "Please" in their English business letters. It is considered offensive to give an order when requesting something in English. Thus, instead of having a positive effect, the use of such politeness markers sounds as if the writer is giving an instruction in this context. This shows that the writer, as a second language speaker of English, thinks that they are being polite because they lack pragmatic competence in English. The lack of pragmatic competence that is evident in the illustrations of pragmatic transfer could lead to failure to achieve both the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of the speech act in question. It is this intricacy involved in the use of speech acts, including politeness in English, that the students show a lack in, as speech acts in English are in some way different from the way they are used in isiZulu.

With regards the main objective of the study, the results of this research provide convincing evidence of the students' awareness on the use of speech acts and the importance of using politeness strategies appropriately in written business correspondence. Generally, the results further offer resounding evidence of the challenges experienced by English second language speakers in expressing politeness when using speech acts and maintaining politeness in English written business correspondence.

Given these findings, it seems reasonable to conclude that since politeness is expressed differently in various cultures, and African indigenous languages are now recognised as official languages, just like English and Afrikaans, there is a need to balance the strengths of English and African language politeness strategies. Accordingly, there is a need to start familiarising English L1 speakers with the politeness strategies used in African languages. This would reduce the focus on English L2 speakers having to learn and correctly apply English politeness strategies by creating an awareness, in English L1 speakers, of the different strategies used across various languages. In return, different cultures would begin to understand why the writer of an English business letter has chosen the words to illustrate the speech act in question. Thus, there is a general need to use African politeness alongside English in order to develop the students' business writing skills. English language practitioners may consider using the richness of African politeness to their advantage in the teaching of speech acts especially in written business discourse. Ultimately, because of the same understanding of the intention behind the words used by the two parties, both the transactional and interactional functions of writing a business letter would be achieved.

5.5 Recommendations

In the light of the above, the researcher wishes to make recommendations, which, if taken into consideration, might assist in developing students' business writing skills as English L2 speakers with an African L1.

Recommendation 1

It is crucial to include pragmatics in the teaching of English as a second language from high school level (Grade 8-12) in South Africa so that by the time students reach tertiary institutions, they are already familiar with the appropriate use of speech acts. This foundational knowledge may assist in learning how to write effective English business letters.

Recommendation 2

I also argue that educational institutions need to play a critical role in identifying the training needs of educators in the area of pragmatics to assist students in developing effective written business communication skills. There should be a close collaboration between high schools, universities, and industry in order to identify and address students' business writing challenges. Such an interaction may increase employability skills, which includes suitable and effective written communication. It is a fact that English is the most commonly used language in the corporate world (Pikhart & Koblizkova, 2017: 2; Rao, 2017: 1). Therefore, effective business writing in English is one of the most important employability skills.

Recommendation 3

Students should be given more education on the importance of choosing appropriate politeness strategies in business correspondence. This education should include intercultural communication skills that acknowledge different levels of politeness in different languages, because business writing in a globalised world involves intercultural communication.

Recommendation 4

The anxiety experienced by English L2 students when writing a business letter in an imagined and simulated business environment need to be addressed in the teaching of business communication at higher education levels. This will indicate to students that as English practitioners, we are aware of the challenges and pressures of intercultural communication. Asking a black student to write a business letter is more than merely requesting them to convey meaning in the form of speech acts, but it also involves socio-cultural aspects as well. It is crucial to hear the students' voices in order to address the challenges of intercultural communication in the business.

5.6 Contribution of the current study

Firstly, as stated in Chapter 1, most research conducted on the challenges of tertiary students in writing skills has focused on academic writing. In contrast, the current study, focuses on developing effective business writing skills, which are real life skills that are crucial in the workplace.

Secondly, most studies on the speech acts of COMPLAINT and REQUEST such as Yarahmadi and Fathi (2015) and others have used the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) as a method of data

collection (refer to Chapter 2; 2.8.5). The current study has gone beyond this common method by using four methods of data collection, including a politeness scoring task and business letters written in a controlled classroom situation. The researcher could not establish literature on research conducted on speech acts using politeness scoring tasks. As indicated in Chapter 3, the researcher developed the politeness scoring task as her own contribution. Thirdly, the present study is expected to contribute to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the South African context, since it compares the use of speech acts in two South African languages. Moreover, the findings of the current study will hopefully be useful in creating awareness for the future planning of English second language teaching methods in South Africa and internationally.

Fourth, it is envisaged that the findings of the study will have practical implications for the teaching of written business communication and may lead to critical reflections on the relationships between English and isiZulu politeness constructions and strategies in business communication.

Fifth, the findings have implications for successful intercultural communication which is common in business organisations. This includes understanding differences in the use of speech acts and politeness norms which originate from different cultural orientations.

Sixth, while considerable research has been conducted on speech acts and politeness, African language pragmatics is largely under-explored. Furthermore, business communication is a growing area of research. Thus, this study fills a gap by doing a comparative analysis of speech acts in English and isiZulu, an African language mostly spoken in South Africa, as shown in Table 3, Chapter 2.

Seventh, numerous studies that have looked at the functions of L1 use in L2 writing have focused on code switching and translanguaging (Woodall, 2002; Wang, 2003; Van Weijen et al., 2009; Yigzaw, 2012; Motlhaka & Makalela, 2016; Mgijima & Ngubane, 2018). As a contribution to the body of knowledge, the current study highlights that there is a role for comparative language studies in teaching and learning English written business communication, where the L1 may be used together with the L2 as a resource. The use of isiZulu by students as a resource to improve their English business writing could both boost their pragmatic competence in their L2 and their appreciation for their L1. This recommendation is in line with calls to value and develop African indigenous languages in South Africa as an attempt to promote multilingualism in institutional policies and practices in

public higher education institutions, as highlighted in Language Policy for Higher Education (LPHE) of 2002 (revised in 2017) and the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions of 1997 (revised in 2020). The Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020: 9) clearly states that higher education institutions need to create conditions for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of meaningful academic discourse, as well as sources of knowledge in the different disciplines of higher education. Against this background, the current study is an effort to embrace the diversity of languages in South Africa. I argue that as a starting point, the students' existing pragmatic knowledge, which includes an understanding of Zulu politeness strategies, needs to be acknowledged. This acknowledgement may enable the students to write more polite business letters in their L2 (English).

Lastly, this research has revealed the feelings of anxiety experienced by English L2 students when writing a business letter in an imagined and simulated business environment. The effects of such nervousness and the pressures of intercultural communication felt by these ESL students have surfaced and the current study finds that they need to be addressed in language and communication curricula.

5.7 Limitations of the current study

All studies have their limitations. The acknowledgment of limitations adds to the trustworthiness of the study, and it may reveal areas for further study.

In this study, one of the limitations was that, due to practicability and time constraints, the sample of the population of this study only consisted of isiZulu L1 students. It was not manageable within the scope of this research to access English L1 speakers as a control group. For the same reasons, the study had to be limited to first year students in one programme, in one faculty, and one tertiary institution.

Furthermore, the use of extracted sentences from different English business letters in the politeness scoring task had the shortcoming of taking the sentences out of context. In context, these sentences may have been interpreted and perceived differently by the respondents. This might have interfered with the meaning that was initially intended by the author of the business letters compared to the one perceived by the respondents, who took the meaning out of context. Furthermore, translating the speech acts as used in the extracted sentences from English to isiZulu does not adequately reflect politeness in isiZulu. This is revealed in the results of the politeness scoring task which largely showed no statistical differences in the students'

politeness ratings between English and isiZulu. In contrast, the results of the focus group interviews, and written business letters showed differences in the use of politeness strategies in the two languages. These contrasting results show that writing a business letter in isiZulu does not mean simply translating the words from English. Perhaps, if the researcher had translated isiZulu speech acts into English, there is a possibility that the results of the politeness scoring task would have ended up with a greater politeness score. Nonetheless, the researcher was not able to identify this limitation before the study was conducted.

Lastly, this research was conducted after the respondents had been taught speech acts and business letter writing in class. There is a possibility that if this research had been conducted before these two aspects were taught, more challenges faced by English L2 students in writing business letters would have surfaced. These added challenges that may have come up could have further assisted in answering the research questions. The identification of those challenges, as well as the challenges highlighted in this research, could provide more research possibilities than those identified here. Moreover, the consideration of the entirety of the challenges would help language practitioners in identifying other useful approaches in the teaching of the use of speech acts in the context of written business communication.

5.8 Areas of future research

The main focus of this research was to investigate students' awareness of, and challenges on the use of speech acts including politeness in written discourse. The literature review and the findings of the research show that students are aware of the use of speech acts and politeness. Nevertheless, they experience various challenges when using speech acts in English business correspondence.

Based on the limitations of the study, future studies might include English L1 speakers and speakers of African languages, other than isiZulu. This would expose other ways in which politeness is expressed in other African languages and how these politeness strategies might be used alongside English in the teaching of English written business correspondence.

Further, it is recommended that students from a variety of academic programmes and faculties be included. A comparative study on more than one tertiary institution should be conducted in the future to gain extensive insight on students' awareness of the use of appropriate speech acts and challenges they face in this regard. This comparison among various tertiary institutions would also highlight similarities and differences on students' perceptions and challenges, and

further assist language practitioners on areas of focus in developing students' business writing skills.

Moreover, it is recommended that research is conducted to collect and analyse samples of COMPLAINT and REQUEST speech acts from both English L1 and L2 speakers to compare the results. Research should be conducted on the written business correspondence of L1 speakers of English, compared with L2 speakers. This may help indicate how, cross-culturally, different speakers perform in daily interactions with customers or other companies and may identify the functional similarities and differences between the realisation of different speech acts. Such research would be interesting as it would reveal the politeness strategies used by English L1 speakers compared to those used by L2 speakers in the corporate industry. Ultimately, both speakers would learn from each other's cultures and gain the same understanding of the effect of the choice of words on the reader in achieving the transactional and interactional role of business letters.

Additionally, similar research should be conducted prior to respondents being taught speech acts and business letter writing in class. This would reveal other challenges over and above those that were prominent in this study. As a result, other teaching methods, pedagogies and practical tasks could be used by English practitioners in teaching speech acts, so as to develop written business communication skills of the students.

It would also be interesting to investigate whether the content of the same letter, written by different races, as per South Africa's racial demographic classifications of Black South Africans, White South Africans, Coloured South Africans and Indian and Asian South Africans, without revealing the writer's identity or race, would be interpreted similarly or differently by English L1 speakers in a multicultural country like South Africa. This would reveal whether the interpretation of the words and the rating of politeness by English native speakers is influenced by the race of the writer.

Lastly, in-depth research on difficulties experienced by ESL learners, across multiple professional and academic contexts, in using speech acts when writing business correspondence in English needs to be conducted. This could further reveal more students' voices on the causes or effects of anxiety emanating from such challenges in writing business correspondence in a second language.

5.9 Summary

This chapter provides an overall conclusion of this study by giving a review of all the chapters. A summary of the findings of the study has been highlighted in terms of the research questions that this study attempted to answer. The findings reveal that the students experience various challenges when using speech acts in business correspondence. A discussion of the findings has been followed by the conclusions based on the findings and the research questions. The contribution of the present study has been explained. The limitations of the study have been mentioned. Lastly, suggestions for future research have been discussed to conclude the study.

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Appendices

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a University of KwaZulu-Natal research study. The aim of this research study is to assess your awareness on the use of speech acts, including politeness in written communication. It is further aimed at developing especially your business writing skills as English second language speakers, with the ultimate aim of trying to meet the demands of the workplace. This research is part of my Doctoral thesis and I am very grateful for your participation.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

The study investigates students' awareness and challenges on the use of speech acts especially in written discourse. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire, participate in a focus group interview and also do tasks on business letter writing and politeness. I will analyse the responses from the questionnaires and the interviews and the written tasks in order to find answers to my research problems and objectives. The motivation of the study is to find ways to assist second language learners when using speech acts in business writing.

You are requested to answer every question as honestly and accurately as possible in both the questionnaire and the interview. The data collected is confidential and we will not be able to tell that it is yours personally. The interview questions will be asked by a trained interviewer at a venue that will be suitable to the respondent and in a conducive atmosphere.

DURATION OF THE STUDY

Your participation requires about four and a half hours. This will be done in separate sessions during your class time for Communication Skills course.

RISKS

This study does not entail any medical, physical or emotional risk, as it relates mostly to the content covered in English Communication skills as one of your subjects.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This research is beneficial for development of English communication skills and future curriculum planning.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The study is anonymous, i.e. we will not be able to relate the data obtained to your name. Be assured that anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved – all of our analyses will focus on patterns in the overall data, rather than on data of the individuals. Your name will not appear in any published documents, and no individual information about you will be passed on to any other party under any circumstances.

PARTICIPATION

There will be no remuneration for participation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed.

FEEDBACK

Once I finalise my research, my doctoral thesis will be available online for you to read. I will provide you with the appropriate information so that you may access it. I am also happy to share my findings with you via email or via other media.

PROJECT MEMBERS

Project leader: Professor Heike Tappe (supervisor), Linguistics Programme, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban Tappe@ukzn.ac.za (031) 260 1131

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APPENDIX A *(Igcinwa ngabazimbandakanyayo)*

IKHASI LOKWAZISA

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners

ISINGENISO

Uyamenywa ukuba ube ingxenye yocwaningo eNyuvesi yakwa Zulu-Natal. Inhloso yalolu cwaningo ukuthola ukuthi bewazi yini ngokusetshenziswa kokukhuluma sakwenza; oxuba nokuzithoba kumbiko oshicilelwe. Futhi-ke kuqondwe ukuthuthukisa ikakhulukazi amakhono okubhala kwezohwebo kokhuluma isiNgisi njengolimi okungesilona olwebele; ngenhloso yokuthi ekugcineni kuzanywe ukuhlangabezana nezidingo zasemsebenzini. Lolu cwaningo luyingxenye yokulotshiweyo ngesifundo sami seziqu zobuDokotela kwezemfundo; ngiyathokoza kakhulu ukuthi ube ingxenye yalo.

ULWAZI OLUQONDISWE KWABAYINGXENYE YOCWANINGO.

Lesisifundo siphenya ngokuqonda kwabafundi nangezingqinamba uma kusetshenziswa ukukhuluma sakwenza; ikakhulukazi engxoxweni ebhaliwe. Uyocelwa ukuba ugcwalise iphepha elinamahlelo emibuzo, uzimbandakanye eqoqweni labaqokelwe inkulumo-ngxoxo futhi wenze umsebenzi wokubhala incwadi yezohwebo nokuzithoba. Mina ke sengobe sengihlaziya izimpendulo zenhlola-phando nenkulumo-ngxoxo kanye nemisebenzi ebhalkiwe enikiwe ukuze ngithole izimpendulo ezinkingeni zocwaningo lwami kanye nengikuphokophelele. Imbangela yalesisifundo ukuthola izindlela zokusiza abafundi bolimi okungelona olwebele uma besebenzisa ukukhuluma sakwenza kubhalo lwezohwebo.

Uyacelwa ukuthi uphendule lowo nalowo mbuzo emaphepheni enamahlelo emibuzo nakwinkulumo-ngxoxo ngokwethembeka futhi nangokucophelela. Imininingwane eqoqiwe iyimfihlo futhi-ke ngeke sikwazi ukusho ukuthi iqondene nawe ngqo. Imibuzo yenkulumo-ngxoxo iyobuzwa oqeqeshiwe okukwenza lokhu endaweni okusimo sayo siyobe sivumelana futhi sikulungele wena.

UBUDE BESIKHATHI BALESISIFUNDO

Ukuba ingxenye yalesisifundo kudinga cishe amahora amane nesigamu. Lokhu kuyokwenziwa ngezikhathi ezehlukene ngesikhathi sokufunda i Communication Skills.

UBUNGOZI

Lesisifundo asinabungozi obumbandakanya isayensi yokwelapha,okomzimba noma okukwenza usheshe uzwele, njengoba simaqondana ikakhulukazi nengqikithi edingidwa kwisifundo samakhono okukhulumisana ngesiNgisi okungesinye sezifundo zakho.

OKUZUZWA KULESISIFUNDO

Lolu cwaningo lunosizo ekuthuthukisweni kwamakhono okuxhumana ngesiNgisi nakwizinhlelo zezifundo esikhathini esizayo.

UBUMFIHLO

Lesisifundo asivezi gama, okungukuthi-ke, ngeke sikwazi ukuhlanganisa imininingwane otholiwe negama lakho. Qiniseka ukuthi ukungavezi igama nobumfihlo kohlala kunjalo – konke ukuhlaziya kwethu koqondaniswa futhi kuqhakambiswe imininingwane edidiyelwe kunokuthi kube imininingwane yomunye nomunye. Igama lakho ngeke lenekelwe umphakathi, futhi-ke akukho lwazi ngawe olodluliselwa kunoma ubani nangaphansi kwanoma isiphi isimo.

UKUBA YINGXENYE

Ukuba yingxenye ngeke kube nankokhelo.

Uba yingxenye kulesisifundo ngokuzinikela; ungenqaba ukuba yingxenye ngaphandle kwesijeziso. Uma uphetha uba yingxenye, ungahoxa kulesisifundo noma ngasiphi isikhathi ngaphandle kwesijeziso. Uma uhoxa kulesisifundo, noma yimiphi imininingwane eqoqwe kuwe iyobhujiswa.

IMIPHUMELA YOCWANINGO

Uma sengiluphothulile ucwaningo lwami lweziqu zobuDokotela kwezeMfundo ephakeme, ngiyobe sengilusabalalisa ngendlela yesimanje kuzo zonke izinhlaka umphakathi ongafinyelela kuzo ukuze ukwazi ukulufunda.

AMALUNGU ALENHLOSO:

Umholi waleNhloso: Professor Heike Tappe (supervisor), Linguistics Programme, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban Tappe@ukzn.ac.za (031) 260 1131

Researcher: Ms Bulelwa Lynette Nyangiwe: Department of Communication, Faculty of Management Sciences, Mangosuthu University of Technology, bule@mut.ac.za/bulenyangiwe@gmail.com (031) 907 7407

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APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a University of KwaZulu-Natal research study. The aim of this research study is to assess your awareness on the use of speech acts, including politeness in written communication. It is further aimed at developing especially your business writing skills as English second language speakers, with the ultimate aim of trying to meet the demands of the workplace. This research is part of my Doctoral thesis and I am very grateful for your participation.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

The study investigates students' awareness and challenges on the use of speech acts especially in written discourse. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire, participate in a focus group interview and also do tasks on business letter writing and politeness. I will analyse the responses from the questionnaires and the interviews and the written tasks in order to find answers to my research problems and objectives. The motivation of the study is to find ways to assist second language learners when using speech acts in business writing.

You are requested to answer every question as honestly and accurately as possible in both the questionnaire and the interview. The data collected is confidential and we will not be able to tell that it is yours personally. The interview questions will be asked by a trained interviewer at a venue that will be suitable to the respondent and in a conducive atmosphere.

DURATION OF THE STUDY

Your participation requires about four and a half hours. This will be done in separate sessions during your class time for Communication Skills course.

RISKS

This study does not entail any medical, physical or emotional risk, as it relates mostly to the content covered in English Communication skills as one of your subjects.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This research is beneficial for development of English communication skills and future curriculum planning.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The study is anonymous, i.e. we will not be able to relate the data obtained to your name. Be assured that anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved – all of our analyses will focus on patterns in the overall data, rather than on data of the individuals. Your name will not appear in any published documents, and no individual information about you will be passed on to any other party under any circumstances.

PARTICIPATION

There will be no remuneration for participation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed.

PROJECT MEMBERS

Project leader: Professor Heike Tappe (supervisor), Linguistics Programme, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban Tappe@ukzn.ac.za (031) 260 1131

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DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I …… (Full Name) hereby confirm that I have read and understand the contents of this letter and the nature of the research project has been clearly defined prior to participating in this research project.

I was given opportunity to ask questions and (on my free will) I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participant's Signature ……291

Date …… **Time** ……

APPENDIX B

ISIMEMEZELO SEMVUME

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners

ISINGENISO

Uyamenywa ukuba ube ingxenye yocwaningo eNyuvesi yakwa Zulu-Natal. Inhloso yalolu cwaningo ukuthola ukuthi bewazi yini ngokusetshenziswa kokukhuluma sakwenza; oxuba nokuzithoba kumbiko oshicilelwe. Futhi-ke kuqondwe ukuthuthukisa ikakhulukazi amakhono okubhala kwezohwebo kokhuluma isiNgisi njengolimi okungesilona olwebele; ngenhloso yokuthi ekugcineni kuzanywe ukuhlangabezana nezidingo zasemsebenzini. Lolu cwaningo luyingxenye yokulotshiweyo ngesifundo sami seziqu zobuDokotela kwezemfundo; ngiyathokoza kakhulu ukuthi ube ingxenye yalo.

ULWAZI OLUQONDISWE KWABAYINGXENYE YOCWANINGO.

Lesisifundo siphenya ngokuqonda kwabafundi nangezingqinamba uma kusetshenziswa ukukhuluma sakwenza; ikakhulukazi engxoxweni ebhaliwe. Uyocelwa ukuba ugcwalise iphepha elinamahlelo emibuzo, uzimbandakanye eqoqweni labaqokelwe inkulumo-ngxoxo futhi wenze umsebenzi wokubhala incwadi yezohwebo nokuzithoba. Mina ke sengobe sengihlaziya izimpendulo zenhlola-phando nenkulumo-ngxoxo kanye nemisebenzi ebhalkiwe enikiwe ukuze ngithole izimpendulo ezinkingeni zocwaningo lwami kanye nengikuphokophelele. Imbangela yalesisifundo ukuthola izindlela zokusiza abafundi bolimi okungelona olwebele uma besebenzisa ukukhuluma sakwenza kubhalo lwezohwebo.

Uyacelwa ukuthi uphendule lowo nalowo mbuzo emaphepheni enamahlelo emibuzo nakwinkulumo-ngxoxo ngokwethembeka futhi nangokucophelela. Imininingwane eqoqiwe iyimfihlo futhi-ke ngeke sikwazi ukusho ukuthi iqondene nawe ngqo. Imibuzo yenkulumo-ngxoxo iyobuzwa oqeqeshiwe okukwenza lokhu endaweni okusimo sayo siyobe sivumelana futhi sikulungele wena.

UBUDE BESIKHATHI BALESISIFUNDO

Ukuba ingxenye yalesisifundo kudinga cishe amahora amane nesigamu. Lokhu kuyokwenziwa ngezikhathi ezehlukene ngesikhathi sokufunda i Communication Skills.

UBUNGOZI

Lesisifundo asinabungozi obumbandakanya isayensi yokwelapha,okomzimba noma okukwenza usheshe uzwele, njengoba simaqondana ikakhulukazi nengqikithi edingidwa kwisifundo samakhono okukhulumisana ngesiNgisi okungesinye sezifundo zakho.

OKUZUZWA KULESISIFUNDO

Lolu cwaningo lunosizo ekuthuthukisweni kwamakhono okuxhumana ngesiNgisi nakwizinhlelo zezifundo esikhathini esizayo.

UBUMFIHLO

Lesisifundo asivezi gama, okungukuthi-ke, ngeke sikwazi ukuhlanganisa imininingwane otholiwe negama lakho. Qiniseka ukuthi ukungavezi igama nobumfihlo kohlala kunjalo – konke ukuhlaziya kwethu koqondaniswa futhi kuqhakambiswe imininingwane edidiyelwe kunokuthi kube imininingwane yomunye nomunye. Igama lakho ngeke lenekelwe umphakathi, futhi-ke akukho lwazi ngawe olodluliselwa kunoma ubani nangaphansi kwanoma isiphi isimo.

UKUBA YINGXENYE

Ukuba yingxenye ngeke kube nankokhelo.

Uba yingxenye kulesisifundo ngokuzinikela; ungenqaba ukuba yingxenye ngaphandle kwesijeziso. Uma uphetha uba yingxenye, ungahoxa kulesisifundo noma ngasiphi isikhathi ngaphandle kwesijeziso. Uma uhoxa kulesisifundo, noma yimiphi imininingwane eqoqwe kuwe iyobhujiswa.

AMALUNGU ALENHLOSO:

Umholi waleNhloso: Professor Heike Tappe (supervisor), Linguistics Programme, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban Tappe@ukzn.ac.za (031) 260 1131

Researcher: Ms Bulelwa Lynette Nyangiwe: Department of Communication, Faculty of Management Sciences, Mangosuthu University of Technology, bule@mut.ac.za/bulenyangiwe@gmail.com (031) 907 7407

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ISIMEMEZELO SEMVUME

Mina …….. *(Igama ngokugcwele)* ngithi ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngikufundile futhi ngakuqonda okuqukethwe kulencwadi; futhi ngichazelwe kwacaca bha ngengqikithi yocwaningo ngaphambi kokuba ngibe yengxenye yalo.

Nginikiwe ithuba lokubuza imibuzo; futhi-ke (ngokuthanda kwami) ngiyavuma ukuba ingxenye yalolu cwaningo. Ngiyakuqonda futhi ukuthi ngikhululekile ukuhoxa noma inini kulona uma ngifisa.

Sayina ……

Usuku …… **Isikhathi**……

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: *WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?*: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP

You have been asked to participate in a focus group in a research project conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose is to assess your awareness and challenges in the use of speech acts, including politeness in written discourse. The information learned in the focus groups will be used to find strategies that can be useful in the development of business writing skills in English second language learners.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group and stop at any time. Although the focus group will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report.

There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. I want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. I hope you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, I request that only one individual speaks at a time in the group and that responses made by all participants be kept confidential.

RESEARCHER		**SUPERVISOR**	
Full Name:	Bulelwa Lynette Nyangiwe	Full Name of Supervisor:	Prof Heike Tappe
School*:*	ARTS	School:	ARTS
College:	Humanities	College:	Humanities
Campus:	Howard College	Campus:	Howard College
Proposed Qualification:	Doctor of Philosophy	Contact details	031-260 1131
Contact:	031-907 7407	Email:	Tappe@ukzn.ac.za
Email:	bule@mut.ac.za		

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Full Name: Prem Mohun
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I, BULELWA LYNETTE NYANGIWE, (951057893), am a Doctoral student, at the Linguistics Department, College of Humanities, at the University of Kwazulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled:***WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?*: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners**. The aim of the study is to ascertain ways in which politeness strategies can be useful in the teaching of the use of speech acts, with the ultimate aim of improving business writing skills among learners.

Through your participation, I aim to help students in developing their business writing skills, which would be useful even in the workplace. I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate in the study. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed. Please sign on the dotted line to show that you have read and understood the contents of this letter.

Your active participation in the focus group will take approximately 60 minutes.

APPENDIX C

IKHASI LOKWAZISA

PROJECT TITLE: *WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?*: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners.

IMVUME YOKUZIMBANDAKANYA KWABAQOKIWEYO

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Ungakhetha ukuba ingxenye yabaqokiwe okanye cha futhi-ke ungayeka noma inini. Nakuba abaqokiwe beyoqoshwa ngomshini, izimpendulo zakho zohlale ziyimfihlo futhi-ke amagama ngeke abalulwe kumbiko.

Ayikho impendulo ewu ngqo kwimibuzo yabaqokiwe. Ngifuna ukuzwa imibono eminingi eyahlukehlukene futhi-ke ngingathanda ukuyizwa iqhamuka kuwonkewonke. Ngiyethemba ungathembeka nakuba izimpendulo zakho zingevumelane nabanye kwabaqokiwe. Ukuhlonipha abanye, ngicela kukhulume oyedwa ngesikhathi kwabaqokiwe; futhi-ke izimpendulo ezinikezwe abazimbandakanyile zibe imfihlo.

UMCWANINGI		**UMHLOLI**	
Igama Ngokugcwele:	Bulelwa Lynette Nyangiwe	Full Name of Supervisor:	Prof Heike Tappe
Isikole:	ARTS	School:	ARTS
Ikholiji:	Humanities	College:	Humanities
Inkundla:	Howard College	Campus:	Howard College
Iziqu ezihlosiwe:	Doctor of Philosophy	Contact details	031-260 1131
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Ukuhlanganyela kwakho, ngenkuthalo, kulabo abaqokiwe kothatha cishe imizuzu engamashumi ayisithupha.

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: *WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?*: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP

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RESEARCHER		**SUPERVISOR**	
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School*:*	ARTS	School:	ARTS
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Your active participation in the focus group will take approximately 60 minutes.

CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to participate in the Research Study.

I hereby confirm that I have read the above information.

Further explanation was given by the researcher, _____ about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study.

I was given opportunity to ask questions and (on my own free will) I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, should I so desire.

_____ _____ _____

Participant's signature **Date** **Time**

I, _____, consent to being audio-recorded.

_____

Participant's signature

APPENDIX D

ISIMEMEZELO SEMVUME

PROJECT TITLE: *WHAT ABOUT SPEECH ACTS?*: A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners.

IMVUME YOKUZIMBANDAKANYA KWABAQOKIWEYO

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UMCWANINGI

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Inkundla: Howard College

Iziqu ezihlosiwe: Doctor of Philosophy

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Full Name of Supervisor: Prof Heike Tappe

School: ARTS

College: Humanities

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Ukuhlanganyela kwakho, ngenkuthalo, kulabo abaqokiwe kothatha cishe imizuzu engamashumi ayisithupha.

IMVUME

Isitatimende sesiVumelwano sokuba yingxenye yocwaningo.

Nginika isiqinisekiso sokuthi sengiyifundile lemininingwane ekhonjwa lapha ngaphezulu.

Umncwaningi unginikile incazelo eyengeziwe, _____ ngobunjalo, inkambo, inzuzo kanye nobungozi balesisifundo.

Nginikiwe ithuba lokubuza imibuzo ngaseke (ngokuthanda kwami) ngivuma ukuba yingxenye yalesisifundo. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngingahoxa noma yinini, uma ngifisa.

_____ _____ _____

Sayina **Usuku** **Isikhathi**

Mina, _____, ngivuma ukuba nenkulumo eqoshiwe.

_____

Sayina

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) LEARNERS INHLOLACWANINGO YABAFUNDI BOLIMI LWESINGISI BESIGABA 2

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS INTENDED TO ASSESS STUDENTS' AWARENESS ON THE USE OF SPEECH ACTS, INCLUDING POLITENESS IN WRITTEN DISCOURSE.

LENHLOLACWANINGO IHLOSE UKUTHOLA UKUQWASHA KWABAFUNDI MAYELANA NOKUSEBENZISA AMAGAMA ASETSHENZISWA NGENHLOSO YOKUSEBENZISA UKUZITHOBA ENKULUMWENI EBHALWE PHANSI.

Personal information *(Imininingwane yakho)*

Mark with a cross **(X)** where applicable. *(Beka uphawu luka **X** maqondana nempendulo.*

1. Age *(Iminyaka yakho)*

16-19	20-24	25 and above

2. Gender *(Ubulili bakho)*

Male	Female

3. Home language *(Ulimi olukhulumayo)*

English	isiZulu	Sesotho	siSwati	
Afrikaans	isiXhosa	Tshivenda	other	

4. Do you live in a rural or urban area? *(Uhlala emakhaya noma emadolobheni?)*

Urban	Rural	other

5. Do you have any work experience? *(Wake wasebenza phambilini?)*

Yes	No

If Yes, what kind of experience? *(Uma kunjalo, nhloboni yolwazi lomsebenzi onalo?)*

_____

_____

_____

6. How often do you use English outside the university?
(Ulusebenzisa kangakanani ulimi lwesiNgisi uma ungekho la eNyuvesi?

Not at all	Less than 50% of the time	More than 50% of the time	all the time

Students' awareness and challenges on use of speech acts

7. Is the practice of *'hlonipha'* important in your culture?
(Umkhuba 'wokuhlonipha' usemqoka yini emasikweni akho?)

Yes	No	Not sure

8. Is the practice of *'hlonipha'* important to you?
(Umkhuba wokuhlonipha usemqoka yini kuwe?)

Yes	No	Not sure

9. How is the practice of *'politeness'* important in English business communication **(oral and written)** in South Africa? Explain.
(*Ingaba umkhuba wokuhlonipha usemqoka kangakanani ezinkulumweni eziphathelene nokomsebenzi (kungaba ukukhuluma noma ukubhala) ezihlelwe ngolimi lwesiNgisi lapha eNingizimu Afrika? Chaza.*

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you sometimes struggle when writing a business letter **in English**, for example complaining about or requesting something trying to be polite? (As a result the reader perceives you as rude).

(Kuyenzeka yini uthole ubunzima uma ubhala incwadi ephathelene nokomsebenzi ***ngolimi lwesiNgisi****, silinganise nje, uma ufaka isikhalo noma ucela nje into ethize ngokuhlonipha nokuzithoba?*

Yes	No	Not sure

If Yes, what makes you struggle? *(Uma kunjalo, yini ekunikeza ubunzima?)*

_____

_____

_____

11. Do you maintain the same politeness that you show when expressing yourself **in your mother tongue** when using English? This means do you sound more polite when using your mother tongue and sound a bit rude when using English or vice versa in saying the same thing?
(Ushaya ngesigqi esifanayo yini senhlonipho nokuzithoba uma uzibalula ***ngolimi lwebele*** *kepha usebenzisa olw*esiNgisi?*)*

Yes	No	Not sure

If No, provide a reason: *(Uma kungenjalo, nikeza isizathu):*

_____

_____

_____

12. Think of a situation which requires you to complain in English. Do you think that the words or expressions that you could use to achieve this intention **express the same attitude, feeling or sentiment** as the words or expressions you would use in your mother tongue? If No, give brief examples of such words or expressions.

(Cabanga ngesimo lapho kudingeka ufake isikhalazo ngolimi lwesiNgisi. Ucabanga ukuthi amagama noma ofuna ukukusho ongakusebenzisa ukuzuza le nhloso ***ichaza okufanayo ngokokubuka, ngokwemizwa noma ukuzwela*** *njengamagama noma ofuna ukukusho ongawasebenzisa ngokolimi lwebele? Uma kungenjalo, nika izibonelo ezimfishane zalawomagama noma ongakusho)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Think of a situation which requires you to complain **in English**. Do you think that the words or expressions that you could use to achieve this intention **have the same effects on the person** than the words or expressions you would use in your mother tongue? If No, give brief examples of such words or expressions.

(Cabanga ngesimo lapho kudingeka ufake isikhalazo ***ngolimi lwesiNgisi****. Ucabanga ukuthi amagama noma ofuna ukukusho ongakusebenzisa ukuzuza lenhloso* ***kungaba nomthelela ofanayo kumuntu*** *kunamagama ongawasebenzisa ngolimi lwebele?)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. In your own understanding, why is it important **for the reader** of a business letter to pay special attention to the actual use of words with the aim of understanding the intention behind what the writer is trying to say (use of speech acts)?

(Ngokwazi kwakho kusemqoka kangakanani ukuthi ***umuntu ofunda*** *incwadi aqaphelisise ukusetshenziswa kwamagama ngenhloso yokuqonda ukuthi umbhali wayo uqonde ukuthini (ngokusetshenziswa kokukhuluma sakwenza)?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What factors (for example age, level of education, position etc.) do you consider, for instance, when you complain about or request something **in your mother tongue**? *(Ikuphi okubeka emqondweni (isibonelo iminyaka yomuntu, izinga lemfundo, izinga akulona etc.), masithi nje, uma ufaka isikhalazo noma ucela into ethize **ngolimi lwebele**?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. What factors (for example age, level of education, position etc.) do you consider, for instance, when you complain about or request something **in English**?
*(Ikuphi okubeka emqondweni (isibonelo iminyaka yomuntu, izinga lemfundo, izinga akulona etc.), masithi nje, uma ufaka isikhalo noma ucela into ethize **ngolimi lwesiNgisi**? Isibonelo iminyaka yomuntu, izinga akulona etc.*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

You are not required to put your name to this document. ***If you are willing to be interviewed about some of your responses, please indicate below and write your contact details.***

Igama lakho aliphoqelekile, ***kodwa uma ungenankinga ngokunikeza izincazelo ngezinye zezimpendulo zakho, ungasinikeza imininingwane yakho ngezansi.***

Willing*/(Anginankinga)*

Name _____ Student no _____

Contact no _____

Thank you for taking time in answering this questionnaire.
Ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi.

APPENDIX F

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP

You have been asked to participate in a focus group in a research project sponsored by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose is to assess your awareness and challenges in the use of speech acts, including politeness in written discourse. The information learned in the focus groups will be used to find strategies that can be useful in the development of business writing skills in English second language learners.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group and stop at any time. Although the focus group will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report.

There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. I want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. I hope you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, I request that only one individual speaks at a time in the group and that responses made by all participants be kept confidential.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above:

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX F

IMVUME YOKUZIMBANDAKANYA KWABAQOKIWEYO

Uceliwe ukuzimbandakanya njengoqokiwe kucwaningo oluxhaswe iNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal. Injongo ukukala ulwazi lwakho nezingqinamba ekusetshenzisweni kokukhuluma sakwenza; okumbandakanya nokuzithoba kwinkulumo esangxoxo. Ulwazi olufundiwe kwabaqokiwe losetshenziswa ukuthola amasu anganosizo ekuthuthukisweni kwamakhono okubhala ngezohwebo kubafundi isiNgisi okungelona ulimi lwebele.

Ungakhetha ukuba ingxenye yabaqokiwe okanye cha futhi-ke ungayeka noma inini. Nakuba abaqokiwe beyoqoshwa ngomshini, izimpendulo zakho zohlale ziyimfihlo futhi-ke amagama ngeke abalulwe kumbiko.

Ayikho impendulo ewu ngqo kwimibuzo yabaqokiwe. Ngifuna ukuzwa imibono eminingi eyahlukehlukene futhi-ke ngingathanda ukuyizwa iqhamuka kuwonkewonke. Ngiyethemba ungathembeka nakuba izimpendulo zakho zingevumelane nabanye kwabaqokiwe. Ukuhlonipha abanye, ngicela kukhulume oyedwa ngesikhathi kwabaqokiwe; futhi-ke izimpendulo ezinikezwe abazimbandakanyile zibe imfihlo.

Ngiyaluqonda lolulwazi futhi ngiyavuma ukuzimbandakanya ngokugcwele ngaphansi kwemibandela ebekwe ngaphezulu:

Kusayiniwe: _____ Usuku: _____

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP CONFIRMATION LETTER

(Date)

Dear …….

Thank you for willingness to participate in the focus group. As explained previously, the purpose is to get more information on your awareness and challenges on the use of speech acts, including politeness in written discourse. You will be in a group of 6-8 students from your class. Your responses to the questions will be kept anonymous. Light refreshments will be served at the end of the focus group interview. The date, time, and venue are listed below.

DATE:
TIME:
VENUE:

I look forward to seeing you.

Yours sincerely

B.L. Nyangiwe

PROJECT MEMBER

APPENDIX G

INCWADI YABAQOKIWE EYISIFAKAZISO

(Usuku)

Thandekayo ……..

Ngiyabonga ukuzinikela ukuzimbandakanya kwabaqokiwe. Njengoba kuchaziwe phambilini, injongo ukuthola ulwazi oluthe thuthu lokuzikala kwakho nezingqinamba kokusetshenziswa kokukhuluma sakwenza, okumbandakanya nokuzithoba kumbhalo osangxoxo. Uyoba kwiqoqo labafundi abawu 6-8 ofunda nabo. Izimpendulo zakho kwimibuzo zogcinwa zifihla igama lakho. Kuyotholakala okuncane okuya ngasethunjini ekupheleni kokuxoxisana nabaqokiweyo. Usuku, isikhathi nendawo yokuhlanganela kuvezwe ngezansi.

USUKU:
ISIKHATHI:
INDAWO YOKUHLANGANELA:

Ngimagange ukuthi sibonane.

Owakho ngeqiniso

B.L. Nyangiwe

ILUNGA LOMKLAMO

APPENDIX H

LEARNER FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

IMIBUZO EQONDENE NABABAMBE IQHAZA OCWANINGWENI

1. Do you experience any difficulties in writing a business letter, especially choosing the appropriate words? What are some of those difficulties?
   Uyabuthola yini ubunzima ekubhaleni incwadi yezohwebo, ikakhulukazi ekukhetheni amagama afanele? Yibuphi lobo bunzima?

2. When writing a business letter in English, do you express yourself as politely as you do in isiZulu? Explain.
   Uma ubhala incwadi yezohwebo ngesiNgisi, uyibeka ngenhlonipho ngokufanayo yini kangangokuba usuke uyibeka ngolimi lwesiZulu? Chaza/yenaba.

3. Do you think it is important for the writer of a business letter to always maintain politeness even if he/she is complaining about something?
   Ucabanga ukuthi kusemqoka yini ukuthi umbhali wencwadi yezohwebo elokhu ekhombise izinga lenhlonipho elifanayo nakuba ekhalaza ngokuthile?

4. When writing a business letter in English, to what extent does isiZulu as your first language influence how you use speech acts in English, i.e. words that indicate your intentions as a writer?
   Uma ubhala incwadi yozohwebo ngesiNgisi, isiZulu okuwulimi lwakho lwebele lunomthelela ongakanani ekutheni usebenzisa isiNgisi ekukhulumeni sakwenza?

5. Do you sometimes struggle to choose the appropriate words which highlight your intention as a writer of business letters?
   Kuke kube yini umzabalazo ukukhetha amagama afanele akhombisa inhloso yakho njengombhali wezincwadi zezohwebo?

6. What are some of the factors you consider when you complain about or request something in your mother tongue in spoken or written communication?
   Ntozini ozibhekisisayo uma ukhalaza noma ucela okuthile ngolimi lwakho lwebele engxoxweni noma enkulumeni ebhaliwe?

7. What are some of the factors you consider when you complain about or request something in English in spoken or written communication?
   Ntozini ozibhekisisayo uma ukhalaza noma ucela okuthile ngolimi lweSingisi engxoxweni noma enkulumeni ebhaliwe?

8. Do you feel isiZulu and English L1 speakers express themselves the same way in terms of politeness?
   Unawo yini umuzwa wokuthi abakhuluma isiZulu nesiNgisi bazibalula ngendlela efanayo uma kukhulunywa ngokuzithoba?

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for taking part in this interview today!
Siyabonga bafowethu nodadewethu ukubamba kwenu iqhaza kulengxoxo yanamhlanje!

APPENDIX I

WRITING TASK: BUSINESS LETTER (English)

1. LETTER OF COMPLAINT OR ADJUSTMENT

You are not satisfied with the product that has been delivered to your company recently. Write a letter to the Manager of the company that delivered the product and complain about the situation. Explain what product has been delivered, what is wrong with it and what the company needs to do to rectify the mistake.

2. LETTER OF REQUEST

Imagine that you are a Sales consultant in a company. Write a letter to the Sales Manager requesting marketing materials that will be needed in the upcoming advertising campaign.

UMSEBENZI WOKUBHALA: INCWADI (IsiZulu)

1. INCWADI YESIKHALAZO

Awunelisekile ngempahla ethengwe yalethwa eNkampanini yakho ezinsukwini nje. Bhalela isiPhathimandla sale nkampani edilive impahla; ufak'isikhalo mayelana nalesisimo. Chaza ukuthi mpahlani eyalethwa, nanokuthi yini engalungile ngayo; uthole futhi ukuthi inkampani yini ezoyenza ukulungisa leli phutha.

2. INCWADI YESICELO

Zicabange ungumthengisi okhethekileyo enkampanini. Bhala incwadi uyiqondise kuMphathi wezokudayisa ucele izinsiza zokukhangisa ezizodingeka kuhlelo lokukhangisa oluzobakhona maduze nje.

APPENDIX J:

POLITENESS SCORING TASK

Score the sentences below according to their **level of politeness** by putting a cross **(X)** on the number of your choice.

Scoring grid 1= very rude 2= rude 3= polite 4= very polite

	Utterance	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	We would like you to address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week. *(invitation/request)*				
2	Please let us have the information as soon as possible. *(request)*				
3.	We would like to develop a long term relationship with your Institute and would be ready to offer help required by you. *(offer)*				
4	Looking forward to any help that you could provide to us, in this regard. *(request)*				
5	I would like to receive the order within a few days; failing that I expect an immediate refund of the full amount. *(complaint)*				
6	Your prompt attention to this matter would be appreciated. *(complaint/request)*				
7	Hope you will enjoy your new position. *(goodwill)*				
8	I got your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer. *(refusal)*				
9	Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of products. *(response/acknowledgement)*				
10	We would appreciate if you could forward us the information as soon as possible. *(request)*				
11	If you want to interview me, call my secretary on 021-377 4269. *(offer)*				
12	We would be very honoured if you could address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week. *(invitation/request)*				
13	On behalf of the company, I wish you everything of the best in your new position. *(goodwill)*				
14	Place an order urgently, please. *(request)*				
15	Just shout if you need help from us. We will help. *(offer)*				
16	We trust that you will accept our sincere apology. *(apology)*				

17	I have been waiting for your response for three weeks now and am asking for a refund as soon as possible. *(complaint & request)*				
	Utterance	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
18	Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of HP computers, but I'm afraid we cannot be of service to you as we are out of stock at the moment. *(apology)*				
19	As we would like to finalise our order, we would appreciate your prompt response on the matter. *(request)*				
20	If you have any more queries, please come and discuss them with me when it suits you. *(request/suggestion)*				
21	I am looking forward to your reply and the resolution of my problem, and will wait for another week before seeking third-party assistance. *(complaint)*				
22	Thank you for your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer. *(refusal)*				
23	We are having some friends from Pretoria this week and I was wondering if you could join us for dinner on Friday. *(invitation)*				
24	Should you wish to interview me, I am available at any time convenient to you and can be reached at the following number: 021-377 4269. *(offer)*				
25	We trust that you will be very happy working for Lunarco Sales and hope to receive written acceptance of this offer of employment before 1 April. *(appointment)*				
26	We want to work with your Institute and we can, for sure, help whenever needed.				

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX J: IPHUZU MAYELANA NOKUZITHOBA *(POLITENESS SCORING TASK)*

Khetha iphuzu **ngokwezinga lokuzithoba** kulemisho elandelayo. Khombisa ukukhetha ngalolu phawu **(X)** kulowo nalawo musho.

Khetha kulokhu: 1= Udelela kabi 2= Uyadelela 3= Uzithobile 4= Uzithobe kakhulu

	Ukusho	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	Besingathanda ukuthi ube isikhulumi emcimbini wethu wonyaka,ohlelwe egameni labaphathi abayiziMenenja, wokuklonyeliswa kwebenze kahle ngesonto elizayo. *(isimemo/isicelo)*				
2	Sicela usazise ngokushesha. *(isicelo)*				
3.	Besingathanda ukuba nobudlelwano obude nesikhugo sakho futhi sizobe sikulindele ukukunika usizo oludingayo. *(ukuzinikela)*				
4	Sibheke-ke noma uluphi usizo ongase usinike lona, mayelana nalokhu. *(isicelo)*				
5	Bengingathanda ukwamukela i-oda ezinsukwini nje; ngale kwalokho ngibheke ukubuyiselwa, ngokushesha, imali igcwele. *(isikhalo)*				
6	Ukusukumela kwakho lolu daba ngokushesha kuyoncomeka. *(isikhalo/isicelo)*				
7	Ngithembe-ke uyosithokozela isikhundla sakho esisha. *(ngenhliziyo enhle)*				
8	Ngisitholile isimemo sakho, kodwa uxolo ngeke ngikwazi ukwemukela okucelile. *(ukunqaba)*				
9	Siyabonga ngokufuna kwakho ukwazi ngohlu lwempahla esinayo yesimanje. *(impendulo/ukuvuma)*				
10	Siyothokoza uma uyosinika ulwazi masinyane. *(isicelo)*				
11	Uma ufuna sibonane futhi sikhulume, shayela unobhala wami kulenombolo 021-3774269. *(isithembiso)*				
12	Siyohlonipheka kakhulu uma ungase wenze inkulumo emcimbini wethu wonyaka, ohlelwe ogameni labaphathi abayiziMenenja, wokuklonyeliswa kwabenze kahle, ngesonto elizayo. *(isimemo/isicelo)*				
13	Egameni leNkampani, ngikufisela konke okuhle esikhundleni sakho esisha. *(ngenhliziyo enhle)*				
14	Siza, phuthuma ufake i-oda. *(isicelo)*				
15	Ungenqeni ukusho uma udinga usizo. Sizokusiza. *(isethembiso)*				

16	Seyethemba uyokwamukela ukuxolisa kwethu ngokweqiniso. *(ukuxolisa)*				
	Ukusho	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
17	Kade ngiyilindele impendulo yenu, amasonto amathathu manje, futhi ngicela ukubuyiselwa imali ngokushesha. *(isikhalo, nesicelo)*				
18	Ngiyabonga ukuthi ubuze ngohla lwama-computer, esimanje, olukhiqizwa ngabakwa-HP esinalo; kodwa-ke mangixolise, angeke sikwazi ukukusiza okwamanje asasiphelele. *(ukuxolisa)*				
19	Njengoba sithanda ukuphothula i-oda lethu, besingayijabulela impendulo esheshayo kulolu daba. *(isicelo)*				
20	Uma kusekhona ofuna ukukwazi, ngicela uze sikhulume uma uthola ithuba. *(isicelo/umbono)*				
21	Ngilangazelele impendulo yakho nesisombululo enkingeni yami, nokho-ke ngizolinda elinye isonto anduba ngifune omunye eceleni ongasiza kulenkinga. *(isikhalo)*				
22	Ngibonga isimemo sakho, kodwa-ke uxolo ngeke ngisamukele. *(ukunqaba)*				
23	Sinabangani thizeni abavela ePitoli kulempelasonto; ngingazi-ke noma ungaba yini nathi esidlweni sakusihlwa ngo lweSihlanu. *(isimemo)*				
24	Uma ufisa sibonane futhi sikhulume, ngingatholakala kulenombolo: 021-3774269 noma ngasiphi isikhathi esikulungele. *(isithembiso)*				
25	Seyethemba uyokuthokozela ukusebenzela i-Lunarco Sales; sethembe futhi ukuthola isiqiniseko sokumukela lomsebenzi lungakafiki olukuqala kuMbasa. *(ukuqashwa)*				
26	Sifuna ukusebenzisana nesikhungo sakho futhi kungenzeka, nakanjani, singasiza noma inini uma kunesidingo. *(ukuzinikela)*				

Siyabonga ngesikhathi sakho!

APPENDIX K

Appendix K

15 August 2016

Ms Bulelwa Lynette Nyangiwe 951057893
School of Arts
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Nyangiwe

Protocol reference number: HSS0405/016D
Project Title: What about speech acts? A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 20 April 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

.....

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Professor HME Tappe
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Nicola Jones
Cc School Administrator: Ms Debbie Bowen

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
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APPENDIX L

Appendix L

Insitution logo and name redacted for confidentiality purposes.

30 June, 2016

Ms. B.L.Nyangiwe

Dear Ms. Nyangiwe

It is my pleasure to inform you that permission to conduct survey titled: *"A comparative analysis of speech acts in isiZulu and English for the development of business writing skills in English second language learners."* Amongst [redacted] students has been granted.

Permission to conduct the survey is granted on the condition that any changes to the project must be brought to the attention of the [redacted] Research Ethics Committee as soon as possible.

Good luck with your research.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

Dr. Anette Mienie

Director: Research

031 9077354/7450

[redacted]

APPENDIX M:

Overview of the research objectives/questions, the data type and the data analysis instruments

Research question/objective	Data type	Data analysis instrument
Research Question 1: What is the participants' awareness of of the use of appropriate speech acts in business writing in their L2 (English) and in their L1 (isiZulu)?	Business letter COMPLAINT; isiZulu and English Business letter REQUEST; isiZulu and English	▪ lexical choices ▪ pragmatic politeness markers ▪ speech acts ▪ face threatening/ preserving acts
Research Question 2: What is the participants' sense of politeness, comparably, in their L1 (isiZulu) and in their L2 (English) in the context of business writing?	Business letter description and comments in focus group interviews Questionnaire	▪ compare the content of the comments/self-assessment in the focus group interviews to the findings from research question 1 ▪ analyse in particular answers to questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15 and 16
Research Question 3: To what extent are the participants in the study aware of the pragmatic function of speech acts in English and in isiZulu; i.e. do they understand the intended meaning – the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force – of the speech acts under investigation?	Politeness scoring Focus group interview Questionnaire	▪ compare the scores intra- and inter-individually ▪ analyse in particular answers to interview questions 5 and 6 ▪ analyse in particular answers to questionnaire questions 10, 13 and 14
Research Question 4: Are there any instances of pragmatic transfer from the way speech acts are used in the primary language (isiZulu) to the way speech acts are used in business writing in the L2 (English)?	Focus group interview Business letter	▪ analyse in particular answers to interview question 3 ▪ identify cases

APPENDIX N

TABLES SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN RATINGS OF LEVEL OF POLITENESS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND ISIZULU INDIVIDUAL WRITTEN STATEMENTS – (Summarised in Table 14)

Table 14.1: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 1 "We would like you to address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week"

			We would like you to address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week			Total	*P* value
			Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	6	102	42	150	0.825*
		% within Language	4.0%	68.0%	28.0%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	7	97	46	150	
		% within Language	4.7%	64.7%	30.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	13	199	88	300	
		% of Total	4.3%	66.3%	29.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%							

Table 14.2: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 2 "Please let us have the information as soon as possible"

			Please let us have the information as soon as possible				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	1	16	89	44	150	0.713*
		% within Language	0.7%	10.7%	59.3%	29.3%	100.0 %	
	IsiZulu	Count	0	19	90	41	150	
		% within Language	0.0%	12.7%	60.0%	27.3%	100.0 %	
Total		Count	1	35	179	85	300	

	% of Total	0.3%	11.7%	59.7%	28.3%	100.0 %	
P *->5%							

Table 14.3: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 3 "We would like to develop a long term relationship with your institute and would be ready to offer help required by you"

			We would like to develop a long term relationship with your Institute and would be ready to offer help required by you				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	2	2	77	69	150	0.989*
		% within Language	1.3%	1.3%	51.3%	46.0%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	2	2	74	72	150	
		% within Language	1.3%	1.3%	49.3%	48.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	4	4	151	141	300	
		% of Total	1.3%	1.3%	50.3%	47.0%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.4: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 4 "Looking forward to any help that you could provide us, in this regard"

			Looking forward to any help that you could provide us, in this regard				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	2	26	96	26	150	0.518*
		% within Language	1.3%	17.3%	64.0%	17.3%	100.0 %	
	IsiZulu	Count	5	32	88	25	150	
		% within Language	3.3%	21.3%	58.7%	16.7%	100.0 %	
Total		Count	7	58	184	51	300	

	% of Total	2.3%	19.3%	61.3%	17.0%	100.0 %	
P *->5%							

Table 14.5: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 5 "I would like to receive the order within a few days; failing that I expect an immediate refund of the full amount"

			I would like to receive the order within a few days; failing that I expect an immediate refund of the full amount				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	26	80	35	9	150	
		% within Language	17.3%	53.3%	23.3%	6.0%	100.0%	
		% of Total	8.7%	26.7%	11.7%	3.0%	50.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	30	78	34	8	150	
		% within Language	20.0%	52.0%	22.7%	5.3%	100.0%	0.943*
		% of Total	10.0%	26.0%	11.3%	2.7%	50.0%	
Total		Count	56	158	69	17	300	
		% within Language	18.7%	52.7%	23.0%	5.7%	100.0%	
		% of Total	18.7%	52.7%	23.0%	5.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.6: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 6 "Your prompt attention to this matter would be appreciated"

			Your prompt attention to this matter would be appreciated				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	2	17	103	28	150	
		% within Language	1.3%	11.3%	68.7%	18.7%	100.0%	0.964*
	IsiZulu	Count	2	20	101	27	150	

		% within Language	1.3%	13.3%	67.3%	18.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	4	37	204	55	300	
		% within Language	1.3%	12.3%	68.0%	18.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.7: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 7 "Hope you will enjoy your new position"

			Hope you will enjoy your new position				Total	P-value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	3	23	78	46	150	
		% within Language	2.0%	15.3%	52.0%	30.7%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	4	29	72	45	150	
		% within Language	2.7%	19.3%	48.0%	30.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	7	52	150	91	300	0.780*
		% of Total	2.3%	17.3%	50.0%	30.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.8: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 8 "I got your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer"

			I got your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	34	67	42	7	150	
		% within Language	22.7%	44.7%	28.0%	4.7%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	34	62	47	7	150	
		% within Language	22.7%	41.3%	31.3%	4.7%	100.0%	0.924*
Total		Count	68	129	89	14	300	
		% of Total	22.7%	43.0%	29.7%	4.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.9: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 9 "Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of products"

			Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of products			Total	P value
			Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	2	99	49	150	0.652*
		% within Language	1.3%	66.0%	32.7%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	4	101	45	150	
		% within Language	2.7%	67.3%	30.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	6	200	94	300	
		% of Total	2.0%	66.7%	31.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%							

Table 14.10: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 10 "We would appreciate if you could forward us the information as soon as possible"

			We would appreciate if you could forward us the information as soon as possible				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	2	9	96	43	150	0.860*
		% within Language	1.3%	6.0%	64.0%	28.7%	100.0 %	
	IsiZulu	Count	2	12	98	38	150	
		% within Language	1.3%	8.0%	65.3%	25.3%	100.0 %	
Total		Count	4	21	194	81	300	
		% of Total	1.3%	7.0%	64.7%	27.0%	100.0 %	
P *->5%								

Table 14.11: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 11 "If you want to interview me, call my secretary on 021-3774269"

			If you want to interview me, call my secretary on 021-3774269				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	37	63	41	9	150	0.999*
		% within Language	24.7%	42.0%	27.3%	6.0%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	38	62	41	9	150	
		% within Language	25.3%	41.3%	27.3%	6.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	75	125	82	18	300	
		% of Total	25.0%	41.7%	27.3%	6.0%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.12: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 12 "We would be very honoured if you could address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week"

			We would be very honoured if you could address us at our annual Managers' Achievement Awards ceremony next week				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	1	1	37	111	150	0.390*
		% within Language	0.7%	0.7%	24.7%	74.0%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	1	5	40	104	150	
		% within Language	0.7%	3.3%	26.7%	69.3%	100.0%	
Total		Count	2	6	77	215	300	
		% of Total	0.7%	2.0%	25.7%	71.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.13: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 13 "On behalf of the company, I wish you everything of the best in your new position"

			On behalf of the company, I wish you everything of the best in your new position				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	1	3	46	100	150	0.999*
		% within Language	0.7%	2.0%	30.7%	66.7%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	1	3	47	99	150	
		% within Language	0.7%	2.0%	31.3%	66.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	2	6	93	199	300	
		% of Total	0.7%	2.0%	31.0%	66.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.14: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 14 "Place an order urgently, please"

			Place an order urgently, please				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	10	65	69	6	150	0.972*
		% within Language	6.7%	43.3%	46.0%	4.0%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	11	68	65	6	150	
		% within Language	7.3%	45.3%	43.3%	4.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	21	133	134	12	300	
		% of Total	7.0%	44.3%	44.7%	4.0%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.15: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 15 "Just shout if you need help from us. We will help."

	Just shout if you need help from us. We will help	Total	P value

			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	5	46	77	22	150	0.963*
		% within Language	3.3%	30.7%	51.3%	14.7%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	5	42	81	22	150	
		% within Language	3.3%	28.0%	54.0%	14.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	10	88	158	44	300	
		% of Total	3.3%	29.3%	52.7%	14.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.16: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 16 "We trust that you will accept our sincere apology"

			We trust that you will accept our sincere apology				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	4	6	81	59	150	0.621*
		% within Language	2.7%	4.0%	54.0%	39.3%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	2	3	85	60	150	
		% within Language	1.3%	2.0%	56.7%	40.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	6	9	166	119	300	
		% of Total	2.0%	3.0%	55.3%	39.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.17: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 17 "I have been waiting for your response for three weeks now and am asking for a refund as soon as possible"

			I have been waiting for your response for three weeks now and am asking for a refund as soon as possible				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	45	69	31	5	150	0.962*
		% within Language	30.0%	46.0%	20.7%	3.3%	100.0%	

	IsiZulu	Count	49	65	31	5	150	
		% within Language	32.7%	43.3%	20.7%	3.3%	100.0%	
Total		Count	94	134	62	10	300	
		% of Total	31.3%	44.7%	20.7%	3.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.18: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 18 "Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of HP computers, but I'm afraid we cannot be of service to you as we are out of stock at the moment"

			Thank you for your enquiry about our latest range of HP computers, but I'm afraid we cannot be of service to you as we are out of stock at the moment				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	2	9	74	65	150	
		% within Language	1.3%	6.0%	49.3%	43.3%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	2	9	75	64	150	1.000*
		% within Language	1.3%	6.0%	50.0%	42.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	4	18	149	129	300	
		% of Total	1.3%	6.0%	49.7%	43.0%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.19: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 19 "As we would like to finalise our order, we would appreciate your prompt response on the matter"

			As we would like to finalise our order, we would appreciate your prompt response on the matter			Total	P value
			Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	15	94	41	150	
		% within Language	10.0%	62.7%	27.3%	100.0%	0.654*
	IsiZulu	Count	20	92	38	150	

		% within Language	13.3%	61.3%	25.3%	100.0%	
Total		Count	35	186	79	300	
		% of Total	11.7%	62.0%	26.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%							

Table 14.20: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 20 "If you have any more queries, please come and discuss them with me when it suits you"

			If you have any more queries, please come and discuss them with me when it suits you				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	18	34	67	31	150	0.910*
		% within Language	12.0%	22.7%	44.7%	20.7%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	16	33	73	28	150	
		% within Language	10.7%	22.0%	48.7%	18.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	34	67	140	59	300	
		% of Total	11.3%	22.3%	46.7%	19.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.21: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 21 "I am looking forward to your reply and the resolution of my problem, and will wait for another week before seeking third-party assistance"

			I am looking forward to your reply and the resolution of my problem, and will wait for another week before seeking third-party assistance				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	12	35	83	20	150	0.989*
		% within Language	8.0%	23.3%	55.3%	13.3%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	12	36	84	18	150	
		% within Language	8.0%	24.0%	56.0%	12.0%	100.0%	

Total	Count	24	71	167	38	300	
	% of Total	8.0%	23.7%	55.7%	12.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%							

Table 14.22: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 22 "Thank you for your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer"

			Thank you for your invitation, but sorry I can't accept your offer				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	20	56	62	12	150	0.907*
		% within Language	13.3%	37.3%	41.3%	8.0%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	21	61	58	10	150	
		% within Language	14.0%	40.7%	38.7%	6.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	41	117	120	22	300	
		% of Total	13.7%	39.0%	40.0%	7.3%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.23: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 23 "We are having some friends from Pretoria this week and I was wondering if you could join us for dinner on Friday"

			We are having some friends from Pretoria this week and I was wondering if you could join us for dinner on Friday				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	1	3	96	50	150	0.075*
		% within Language	0.7%	2.0%	64.0%	33.3%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	5	10	87	48	150	
		% within Language	3.3%	6.7%	58.0%	32.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	6	13	183	98	300	
		% of Total	2.0%	4.3%	61.0%	32.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.24: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 24 "Should you wish to interview me, I am available at any time convenient to you and can be reached at the following number: 021-377 4269"

			Should you wish to interview me, I am available at any time convenient to you and can be reached at the following number: 021-377 4269				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	2	16	64	68	150	1.000*
		% within Language	1.3%	10.7%	42.7%	45.3%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	2	16	65	67	150	
		% within Language	1.3%	10.7%	43.3%	44.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	4	32	129	135	300	
		% of Total	1.3%	10.7%	43.0%	45.0%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.25: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 25 "We trust that you will be very happy working for Lunarco sales and hope to receive written acceptance of this offer of employment before 1 April"

			We trust that you will be very happy working for Lunarco sales and hope to receive written acceptance of this offer of employment before 1 April				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	4	5	102	39	150	0.768*
		% within Language	2.7%	3.3%	68.0%	26.0%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	2	6	98	44	150	
		% within Language	1.3%	4.0%	65.3%	29.3%	100.0%	
Total		Count	6	11	200	83	300	
		% of Total	2.0%	3.7%	66.7%	27.7%	100.0%	
P *->5%								

Table 14.26: Cross-tabulation showing the difference in ratings of level of politeness between English and isiZulu written statement 26 "We want to work with your institute and we can, for sure, help whenever needed"

			We want to work with your institute and we can, for sure, help whenever needed				Total	P value
			Very rude	Rude	Polite	Very polite		
Language	English	Count	19	21	84	26	150	0.975*
		% within Language	12.7%	14.0%	56.0%	17.3%	100.0%	
	IsiZulu	Count	17	22	83	28	150	
		% within Language	11.3%	14.7%	55.3%	18.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	36	43	167	54	300	
		% of Total	12.0%	14.3%	55.7%	18.0%	100.0%	
P *->5%								