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**Integrating Pragmatic Competence in  
Teaching English to the Students of  
Medicine at Taiz University**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....                                  | 3  |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....                                     | 7  |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....                                    | 8  |
| <b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....                              | 9  |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....                                   | 11 |
| <b>RÉSUMÉ</b> .....   | 13 |
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....                                       | 37 |
| <b>CHAPTER 1: Preliminary Considerations</b> .....              | 48 |
| 1. 1 A Study in Interlanguage Pragmatics .....                  | 50 |
| 1. 2 Teaching Pragmatics in the Foreign Language Context.....   | 54 |
| 1. 3 The Concept of Appropriateness: Which Norms to follow..... | 59 |
| 1. 4 Pragmatic Competence and Linguistic Competence .....       | 65 |
| 1. 5 Summary .....  | 72 |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: Literature Review</b> .....                       | 73 |
| <i>PART ONE: Pragmatics: Exploring the Territory</i> .....      | 74 |
| 2. 1 Context in Pragmatics.....                                 | 74 |
| 2. 2 Defining Pragmatics.....                                   | 77 |
| 2. 3 Origin of Pragmatics .....                                 | 79 |
| 2. 4 Borders of Pragmatics .....                                | 83 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 2. 5 Pragmatics and Speech Act Theory .....                                   | 88  |
| 2. 5. 1 Requests.....   | 93  |
| 2. 5. 2 Refusals.....   | 94  |
| 2. 5. 3 Apologies .....   | 95  |
| 2. 6 Pragmatics and Politeness .....  | 97  |
| 2. 6. 1 Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory .....                          | 99  |
| 2. 6. 2 Politeness and Culture.....   | 102 |
| <i>PART TWO: Pragmatics in the ESP Context</i> .....                          | 105 |
| 2. 7 ESP and Pragmatics.....  | 105 |
| 2. 7. 1 Exploring the Liaison.....  | 106 |
| 2. 7. 2 Previous Studies on the relationship between ESP and Pragmatics. .... | 108 |
| 2. 8 The Case within ESP: Medical Students .....                              | 111 |
| 2. 9 Getting into the Core: Pragmatic Competence .....                        | 114 |
| 2. 9. 1 Pragmatic Competence and Communicative Competence.....                | 115 |
| 2. 9. 2 Pragmatic Awareness and Pragmatic Failure .....                       | 120 |
| 2. 10 Summary .....   | 124 |
| <b>CHAPTER 3: Methodology</b> .....   | 125 |
| 3. 1 Contextual Background .....  | 126 |
| 3. 1. 1 Brief History of Yemen .....  | 126 |
| 3. 1. 2 The Educational System: An Overview.....                              | 129 |
| 3. 1. 3 The Status of English in Yemen.....                                   | 135 |
| 3. 2 Research Design.....   | 141 |
| 3. 3 Participants.....  | 144 |
| 3. 3. 1 Participants in the questionnaire .....                               | 144 |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| 3. 3. 2 <i>Participants in the interview</i> .....                             | 146        |
| 3. 4 Research Instruments.....   | 148        |
| 3. 4. 1 <i>The Questionnaire</i> .....   | 149        |
| 3. 4. 2 <i>The Interview</i> .....   | 156        |
| 3. 5 Pilot Study .....   | 162        |
| 3. 6 Data Collection .....   | 165        |
| 3. 6. 1 <i>The First Stage: distributing questionnaires</i> .....              | 165        |
| 3. 6. 2 <i>The Second Stage: conducting interviews</i> .....                   | 167        |
| 3. 7 Summary .....   | 169        |
| <b>CHAPTER 4: Data Analysis and Results</b> .....                              | <b>170</b> |
| 4. 1 Questionnaire Data.....   | 172        |
| 4. 1. 1 <i>Awareness Test Data</i> .....                                       | 172        |
| 4. 1. 2 <i>DCT Data</i> .....  | 185        |
| 4. 2 Interview Data.....   | 211        |
| 4. 2. 1 <i>The graduates' own experience with English</i> .....                | 214        |
| 4. 2. 2 <i>The graduates' viewpoints of English for medical students</i> ..... | 218        |
| 4. 3 Summary .....   | 225        |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: Discussion</b> .....   | <b>226</b> |
| 5. 1 Addressing the Research Questions .....                                   | 227        |
| 5. 1. 1 <i>The First Research Question</i> .....                               | 227        |
| 5. 1. 2 <i>The Second Research Question</i> .....                              | 251        |
| 5. 2 Study Implications .....  | 256        |
| 5. 2. 1 <i>The Proposed Model: Theoretical Considerations</i> .....            | 260        |
| 5. 2. 2 <i>The Proposed Model: Application</i> .....                           | 269        |

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 5. 3 Limitations of the Study ..... | 280 |
| 5. 5 Summary .....                  | 282 |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b> .....             | 283 |
| <b>REFERENCES</b> .....             | 288 |
| <b>APPENDICES</b> .....             | 314 |

# LIST OF TABLES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 1 Students' Profile .....                         | 146 |
| Table 2 Interviewees' Profile .....                     | 148 |
| Table 3 Summary of the Awareness Test Responses .....   | 174 |
| Table 5 Distribution of the Reasons .....               | 177 |
| Table 6 The Percentage of Relevant Reasons.....         | 184 |
| Table 7 Classification of Request Strategies.....       | 187 |
| Table 8 Type and Frequency of Request Strategies .....  | 190 |
| Table 9 Classification of Apology Strategies .....      | 194 |
| Table 10 Type and Frequency of Apology Strategies ..... | 196 |
| Table 11 Classification of Refusal Strategies .....     | 202 |
| Table 12 Type and Frequency of Refusal Strategies ..... | 204 |

# LIST OF FIGURES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1 The System and the Usage of Language.....                  | 85  |
| Figure 2 The Relationship between Pragmatics and Semantics .....    | 87  |
| Figure 3 Models of Communicative Competence.....                    | 118 |
| Figure 4 Map of Yemen.....  | 127 |
| Figure 5 The Structure of Education in Yemen .....                  | 134 |
| Figure 6 Level of Pragmatic Awareness.....                          | 229 |
| Figure 7 Distribution of the most frequent request strategies ..... | 236 |
| Figure 8 Distribution of the most frequent apology strategies ..... | 240 |
| Figure 9 Distribution of the most frequent refusal strategies ..... | 244 |
| Figure 10 The Characters of Scrubs .....                            | 272 |
| Figure 11 The Structure of the Model.....                           | 273 |



# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CP: Cooperative Principle

DCT: Discourse Completion Task

DCTs: Discourse Completion Tasks

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

FL: Foreign Language

FTA: Face-threatening Act

ILP: Interlanguage Pragmatics

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

PP: Politeness Principle

SL: Second Language

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Science

TL: Target Language

## ***Dedication***

*To my great parents: Dr Fadle and Amal*

*To my wonderful brothers: Marwan, Ziad and Amr*

*To the little angels, my nieces: Meera and Leana*

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# RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse porte sur un sujet de pragmatique dans un contexte relatif à l'anglais de spécialité (ASP), en particulier au sein du département de médecine à l'Université de Taiz. L'étude a pour ambition d'enquêter sur le niveau de compétence pragmatique en anglais chez les étudiants. Son but ultime est d'intégrer la compétence pragmatique dans l'enseignement de l'anglais.

Le résumé de la thèse est articulé en trois parties: le cadre théorique, la méthodologie de la recherche et les résultats de l'enquête.

## ❖ ***Contexte théorique***

Cette partie est consacrée à l'arrière-plan théorique qui est pertinent pour l'étude actuelle. Les études de la pragmatique en langue seconde ou étrangère et la recherche linguistique peuvent être étudiées à partir de différents points de vue: interculturel et interlangue. Cette étude se situe dans la recherche en pragmatique interlangue qui peut être décrite comme l'étude de l'utilisation de locuteurs non indigènes et l'acquisition de modèles d'action linguistique dans une langue seconde (Kasper et Blum-Kulka, 1993).

La pragmatique interlangue enquête sur des questions telles que les stratégies d'actes de langage, les facteurs contextuels qui influencent les choix des locuteurs, la distribution contextuelle des modes de réalisation, et la compétence pragmatique. Ayant à l'esprit que la compétence pragmatique est l'un des

domaines étudiés dans la pragmatique interlangue, la présente étude consiste principalement en une enquête relative à la capacité des apprenants à comprendre et à utiliser la langue dans différents contextes sociaux.

La pragmatique interlangue a pour but de décrire l'utilisation et l'apprentissage de la pragmatique dans les contextes de la langue seconde et étrangère. Dans le contexte d'une langue étrangère, la nécessité d'enseigner la pragmatique dans la salle de classe semble primordiale, car les possibilités de pratiquer la langue sont bien moindres.

Rose et Kasper (2001) montrent que l'enseignement de la pragmatique explicite ou implicite facilite l'apprentissage de nombreux aspects de la langue qui pourraient passer inaperçue sans un enseignement de la pragmatique en soi. De même, Schmidt (1993) affirme que l'enseignement de la pragmatique est nécessaire. Il met en évidence que, même dans le cas de l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde, l'exposition à la langue ne suffit pas; les caractéristiques contextuelles et les fonctions pragmatiques ne sont pas identifiées par les apprenants.

En dépit de son importance, la tâche d'enseigner la pragmatique se trouve confrontée à certains défis en particulier dans le contexte des langues étrangères. L'un de ces défis est l'absence d'un ensemble spécifique de normes d'adéquation à suivre dans le cadre d'une langue étrangère.

Rose (1994 : 55) identifie le problème et déclare :

If pragmatic competence is to be taught, whose pragmatic system should serve as the model? In university ESL programs, the answer to this question is simple: there is an immediate need, and thus rationale, for the learning/ teaching of the host community's pragmatic system. . . But this question is not so easily answered in an EFL context.<sup>1</sup>

En effet, la pertinence de l'utilisation de la langue est évaluée par rapport aux normes socioculturelles de la langue cible. Les normes se réfèrent à l'ensemble des règles établies dans chaque société de ce qui rend les comportements soit appropriés soit inappropriés. Dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, l'anglais est devenu le moyen de communication internationale.

House (2003) mentionne que les locuteurs non natifs d'anglais sont plus nombreux que ses locuteurs natifs. Par conséquent, l'anglais n'est plus « la possession » des locuteurs natifs. Les utilisateurs de langue seconde et étrangère ne sont souvent pas prêts à faire partie d'une communauté anglophone comme dans le cas de nombreux immigrants qui préfèrent garder leur identité linguistique en écartant volontairement les normes pragmatiques de la communauté d'accueil (House, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup>Si la compétence pragmatique est à enseigner, quel est donc le système pragmatique qui devrait servir de référence ? Dans les programmes d'anglais langue seconde à l'université, la réponse à cette question est simple : il y a un besoin immédiat, et donc une raison d'être, pour l'apprentissage / enseignement du système pragmatique de la communauté hôte. . . Mais cette question n'est pas si facile dans un contexte de langue étrangère.

En accord avec Bardovi-Harlig (2003) et Rueda (2006), il est souligné à juste titre que l'enseignement de la pragmatique ne vise pas à imposer les choix pragmatiques des locuteurs natifs sur les apprenants, ou conformer à une norme particulière de la langue cible. Au contraire, l'objectif principal est de les sensibiliser, de les exposer aux différents moyens d'exprimer un certain aspect pragmatique de manière à ce que, peu à peu, ils soient en mesure de prendre de meilleures décisions quant à ce qui convient le mieux à l'interaction dans la langue cible.

Une autre question restant à clarifier, c'est la relation entre la compétence pragmatique et la compétence linguistique. Les deux types de compétence sont des éléments essentiels dans la construction des compétences linguistiques. Félix-Brasdefer et Cohen (2012) expliquent que la capacité à comprendre et à utiliser l'action communicative dans la langue cible, tels que la demande ou le refus, exige différents types de connaissances. Pour améliorer la communication dans une langue cible, des connaissances linguistiques et pragmatiques sont requises.

Comme la compétence pragmatique se trouve dans le modèle de la compétence communicative, elle est perçue soit en interaction avec la compétence grammaticale, soit en autonomie par rapport à celle-ci (Kasper, 2001a). La recherche en pragmatique interlangue a donné lieu à deux points de



vue en ce qui concerne la relation entre la capacité pragmatique et la capacité grammaticale.

Le premier point de vue considère la compétence pragmatique et la compétence grammaticale comme indépendantes l'une de l'autre. Bardovi-Harlig (1996; 2001) démontre qu'un niveau élevé en compétence grammaticale ne garantissent pas un niveau parallèle en compétence pragmatique. Elle a découvert que les apprenants éprouvent des difficultés en pragmatique quel que soit leur niveau de compétence.

Selon Bardovi-Harlig et Taylor (2003), à la différence des erreurs grammaticales, l'impact négatif des erreurs pragmatiques est pris à un niveau social ou personnel plus global que l'impact négatif causé par des questions linguistiques.

Le second point de vue en ce qui concerne la relation entre la compétence pragmatique et la compétence grammaticale montre qu'il est impossible d'apprendre la pragmatique sans un apprentissage préalable de la grammaire. Les études qui appartiennent à cette hypothèse, comme Bardovi-Harlig et Dörnyei (1998) et Niezgodna et Röver (2001) affirment que la conscience pragmatique et la conscience grammaticale sont interdépendantes. Dans leur étude, Bardovi-Harlig et Dörnyei (1998) ont étudié la conscience pragmatique et grammaticale des apprenants d'anglais langue seconde et d'anglais langue étrangère par une évaluation des énoncés en termes de pertinence et d'exactitude. Ils ont découvert que la reconnaissance des erreurs et les évaluations différaient entre les groupes de compétence.

Rueda (2006) affirme que, en dépit de la nature contradictoire des deux points de vue, ils peuvent être conciliés. En d'autres termes, ils peuvent être considérés dans une perspective de développement où les apprenants d'anglais comme langue étrangère ou comme langue seconde tirent profit de leur connaissance pragmatique de la langue maternelle pour communiquer leurs messages dans la langue cible avec un niveau de base de la compétence linguistique. Puis, progressivement, comme les apprenants développent leur maîtrise de la langue, ils commencent à se concentrer sur les différentes fonctions des formes grammaticales de la langue cible.

De même, Neddar (2012) rappelle que l'adoption d'une approche pragmatique interculturelle à l'enseignement des langues comprend l'enseignement de tous les aspects de la langue sans pour autant négliger les niveaux formels et lexicaux. Par conséquent, les deux types de compétences sont importants pour l'apprentissage des langues. Cette étude se concentre sur l'une d'entre elles, à savoir la compétence pragmatique.

Passons maintenant à l'exploration du domaine de la pragmatique, il est connu pour être vaste et polyvalent. Ses domaines d'intérêt portent sur des questions larges et variées qui apparaissent dans d'autres disciplines. Il a été défini et décrit différemment par divers chercheurs.

Une définition largement citée de la pragmatique est fournie par Crystal (2003: 364):

Pragmatics . . . is the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication.<sup>2</sup>

D'après la définition, la relation entre une langue et ses utilisateurs, leur point de vue, les choix qu'ils font est un axe essentiel à ne pas négliger. Cette relation est conditionnée par certaines complications sociales (Mey, 2001).

La première définition de la pragmatique a été formulée par le philosophe Charles Morris (1983). Il considère la pragmatique comme une étude explicative des signes et comme faisant partie, à part entière, de la sémiotique, en ce qu'elle concerne l'origine, l'usage et les effets produits par les signes (Morris, 1964).

En 1962, Austin a écrit un ouvrage intitulé *How to do Things with Words*. Il a marqué une étape importante pour l'évolution de la pragmatique qui est la théorie des actes de langage.

Concernant la présente étude, elle est inspirée par deux théories pragmatiques qui sont la théorie des actes de langage et la théorie de la politesse.

---

<sup>2</sup>La pragmatique . . . est l'étude du langage du point de vue des utilisateurs, en particulier des choix qu'ils font, des contraintes qu'ils rencontrent dans l'utilisation de la langue dans l'interaction sociale, et des effets que leur usage de la langue a sur les autres participants dans un acte de communication donné.

La pratique de la parole implique qu'elle a souvent un objectif significatif, comme formuler une demande, faire une promesse ou une excuse. Ce sont ces actes qui motivent souvent les échanges langagiers (Searle, 1969).

En fait, le livre d'Austin *How to do Things with Words* est considéré comme étant à l'origine d'une des notions les plus fécondes de théorisation linguistique contemporaine (Wunderlich, 1980). La théorie des actes de langage est basée sur l'étude d'Austin selon laquelle la langue est non seulement un moyen de dire, mais aussi de faire. Les mots sont utilisés pour faire des choses plus que pour transmettre des informations. L'idée générale de la théorie est basée sur ce que les locuteurs veulent dire par leurs énoncés. La théorie de la politesse développe l'idée selon laquelle les stratégies discursives sont déterminées par les conditions sociales inhérentes à la situation.

La théorie de la politesse développée par Brown et Levinson (1987) est considérée comme faisant partie des références les plus importantes dans la recherche consacrée à la politesse (Watts, 2003: 85). L'objectif principal de cette théorie est d'affirmer l'importance de la notion de face. Brown et Levinson considèrent qu'il existe deux faces: une face négative et une face positive. La face négative est celle qui est relative au désir de l'individu d'être libre de toute imposition et la face positive reflète le désir d'être approuvé et apprécié.

L'utilisation de stratégies dans une interaction dépend de trois facteurs ou variables sociales : la relation de pouvoir, la distance sociale et le degré de

l'imposition. Ces facteurs selon Brown et Levinson (1987) influent sur l'évaluation de l'acte de langage.

Thomas (1995) a souligné que ce n'est pas la forme linguistique seule qui fait du discours un acte poli ou non, mais ce sont les interactions entre la forme linguistique, le contexte d'énonciation, la relation entre le locuteur et l'interlocuteur ainsi que le niveau culturel qui en sont responsables.

Cette étude vise à étudier la compétence pragmatique dans le contexte d'anglais de spécialité et plus particulièrement la compétence pragmatique d'étudiants en médecine. Développer la compétence pragmatique des étudiants en anglais de spécialité est essentiel afin de leur permettre de devenir des praticiens qui auront confiance en leur compétence communicationnelle. L'approche de l'enseignement de l'anglais de spécialité est largement développée en fonction des besoins et des motivations des apprenants (Hutchinson et Waters, 1987).

Dans le domaine médical, il est fréquent que les étudiants rejoignent l'espace anglophone. Il convient donc qu'ils aient une bonne connaissance de la langue et des stratégies communicationnelles. Cette compétence ne se réfère pas seulement à la compétence linguistique, mais aussi à la compétence pragmatique qui s'exprime dans des situations différentes avec des incidents mineurs d'incompréhension. L'incompréhension résulte de l'absence de compétence pragmatique de la part du locuteur qui a appris les formes linguistiques d'une manière isolée sans les mettre en adéquation avec les situations socioculturelles.

Chen (1996) souligne que ce dont un apprenant en langue étrangère manque souvent est la compétence pragmatique qui ne se développe pas nécessairement avec l'acquisition de la compétence grammaticale.

La compétence pragmatique est définie comme la capacité d'atteindre un but précis et de comprendre la langue dans le contexte. Cela se reflète dans deux aspects: pragma-linguistique et socio-pragmatique (Thomas, 1983). L'utilisation appropriée de la langue dans différents contextes sociaux permet d'augmenter la connaissance de la pragmatique. Ces deux aspects sont reflétés dans la description de la compétence pragmatique par Barron (2003). Elle explique que la compétence pragmatique implique la connaissance des ressources linguistiques disponibles dans une langue, la connaissance des aspects séquentiels des actes de langage et enfin, la connaissance de l'utilisation contextuelle appropriée des ressources linguistiques.

### ❖ ***Méthodologie de la recherche***

Cette étude a pour but de mettre en évidence l'importance de développer la compétence pragmatique dans un cadre de langue de spécialité, avec une attention particulière aux étudiants en médecine. Par conséquent, afin d'explorer ce sujet, deux questions de recherche sont étudiées:

1. Quel est le niveau de la compétence pragmatique des étudiants en médecine ?
2. À quel point est-il important de développer la compétence pragmatique pour

les étudiants en médecine?

Dans le but d'apporter une réponse suffisante à ces questions, cette étude a adopté des méthodes mixtes dans sa conception. Selon Dörnyei (2007), les méthodes mixtes impliquent la collecte ou l'analyse des données quantitatives et qualitatives dans une seule étude avec des tentatives d'intégrer les deux approches à une ou plusieurs étapes du processus de la recherche.

Cette approche est présentée dans cette étude à l'aide d'un questionnaire utilisé comme outil quantitatif pour la collecte des données, et d'une interview utilisée comme instrument qualitatif pour ce qui est de la collecte et l'analyse des données. Par ailleurs, les données recueillies à partir du questionnaire sont analysées quantitativement et qualitativement.

La question principale de la recherche est :

*Quel est le niveau de compétence pragmatique des étudiants en médecine?*

Afin d'étudier cette question, deux sous-questions sont formulées:

1- Sont-ils capables de reconnaître les énoncés appropriés et inappropriés dans des contextes différents?

Cela a impliqué l'utilisation d'un test de conscience dans le questionnaire pour savoir si les étudiants étaient en mesure d'identifier les énoncés appropriés et inappropriés.

2- Comment produisent-ils des actes de langage dans des contextes différents?

Le DCT répond à cette question en sollicitant les étudiants pour savoir comment ils réagiraient dans des situations différentes en fonction des stratégies utilisées pour réaliser les trois actes de langage.

La deuxième question dans cette enquête est la suivante:

*À quel point est-il important de développer la compétence pragmatique pour les étudiants en médecine?*

Cette question est traitée à l'aide d'entretiens. Les entretiens sont utilisés pour identifier le point de vue des étudiants diplômés en médecine au sujet de la compétence pragmatique dans l'apprentissage et l'usage de l'anglais.

Afin d'étudier les questions posées dans cette enquête, deux outils ont été employés: le questionnaire et l'entretien. Le questionnaire est un outil écrit proposant une série de questions ou d'énoncés auxquels les répondants doivent réagir soit en écrivant leurs réponses, soit en choisissant certaines parmi celles déjà proposées (Brown, 2001).

Le questionnaire dans la présente étude est composé d'un «Discourse Completion Task» et d'un test de conscience pragmatique. Le DCT est définie comme un questionnaire comprenant un ensemble de situations brièvement décrites et conçues pour extraire un acte de discours particulier. Les participants lisent chaque situation et répondent à une consigne écrite (Varghese et Billmyer, 1996). Elle contient neuf situations qui mettent la base pour susciter les trois actes de langage: les requêtes, les refus et les excuses. En réponse aux différents



scénarios, les participants doivent rédiger leurs réponses en anglais.

La deuxième partie du questionnaire consiste en un test de conscience pragmatique destiné à l'évaluation du type d'instrument mis en jeu (Martinez-Flor et Usó-Juan, 2011). Il est destiné à mesurer la conscience pragmatique. Dans cette enquête, les participants sont d'abord invités à indiquer si la phrase soulignée, dans la situation décrite, est appropriée ou non. Ensuite, ils sont tenus de justifier leurs choix afin de voir s'ils comprennent ou non les raisons pour lesquelles ils jugent l'acceptabilité de certains énoncés ou non.

La deuxième technique d'enquête suivie dans cette étude est un entretien semi-guidé, mené via internet. Les entretiens à l'aide d'Internet sont des instruments de recherche pratiques et rentables. Comme l'a expliqué Denscombe (2010), ce mode de réalisation d'entretiens permet au chercheur d'interviewer des gens à travers le monde sans se soucier du temps ni du coût de voyage.

L'entretien commence avec des questions concernant les participants au niveau d'âge et d'éducation. Les autres catégories comprennent des questions qui ont été utilisées pour connaître les perceptions, l'expérience et la pratique des participants à l'égard de l'anglais au cours de leurs études et ensuite au moment de l'enquête. Le thème majeur dans le guide d'entretien porte sur leurs points de vue sur l'usage de la langue anglaise et l'importance d'une utilisation appropriée dans des contextes différents.

Puisque l'étude utilise deux instruments d'enquête différents, les participants sont divisés en deux groupes. Le premier groupe représente les participants qui ont répondu au questionnaire. Le questionnaire a été distribué à 56 étudiants de deuxième année de la faculté de médecine à l'université de Taiz. Le questionnaire comporte deux parties; le test de conscience pragmatique comprenant 12 points et le DCT comprenant 9 points. La liste finale se traduit par l'analyse de 1176 articles: 672 dans la première partie et 504 dans la deuxième partie. Le deuxième groupe de participants comprend ceux qui ont pris part à l'entretien. Ce groupe est composé de sept étudiants diplômés de la faculté de médecine de l'Université de Taiz. Ce groupe comprend trois hommes et quatre femmes, tous sont yéménites.

#### ❖ **Résultats de la recherche**

Les résultats de l'étude sont discutés en relation avec les questions de l'enquête. La question principale de cette étude vise à mesurer le niveau de compétence pragmatique dans l'échantillon de l'étude, à savoir, les étudiants en médecine. Il a été étudié par deux sous-questions, la première s'énonce ainsi : les étudiants en médecine sont-ils capables de reconnaître les actes de langage appropriés et inappropriés dans des contextes différents ?

Cette question concerne la conscience pragmatique des étudiants. Cette prise de conscience a été essentiellement mesurée sur la base de deux critères: l'évaluation correcte de l'énoncé et la justification de ce choix. Il y avait douze situations différentes couvrant les actes de langage : requêtes, excuses et refus.

Les données ont été analysées quantitativement et qualitativement. Ainsi, la première partie a été soumise à une procédure de codage pour permettre le traitement assisté par ordinateur, tandis que la seconde partie a été traitée manuellement.

Les résultats révèlent que les étudiants n'ont pas réussi à identifier la pertinence des questions et des situations dans la plupart des énoncés et l'inadaptation de leurs réactions. Seulement 22% des réponses répondent aux critères : des réponses correctes et une justification pertinente, ce qui reflète le faible niveau de conscience pragmatique de la population étudiée.

L'analyse de l'évaluation des étudiants et de la justification a fourni une explication de ce qui fonctionne mal dans leur choix. Par conséquent, en réponse à la première sous-question, le niveau de prise de conscience pragmatique démontré par les réponses des étudiants a été révélé. Cela peut être attribué à deux facteurs. Tout d'abord, la raison du faible niveau de prise de conscience pragmatique chez les étudiants tient au fait qu'ils supposent, à tort, que les formules de politesse sont toujours appropriées. Ceci est en partie influencé par des facteurs culturels.

Selon Baumer et Rensburg (2011), la politesse est conditionnée par des expériences culturelles. Les expressions de politesse peuvent être mal interprétées sur la base de la perception de l'individu et de la pratique culturelle. Le deuxième facteur, qui explique le faible pourcentage de conscience pragmatique

chez les étudiants, est l'écart constaté dans leurs justifications entre l'énoncé et son contexte. Selon les réponses des étudiants, il a été montré que leur jugement sur la recevabilité des énoncés était partiel; c'est-à-dire qu'il n'a pas été basé sur le contexte décrit dans les situations précédant les actes de discours.

Alors que la première sous-question est liée à la réception de la compétence pragmatique, la seconde est dédiée à la production. La deuxième sous-question est formulée de la façon suivante: comment les étudiants en médecine produisent-ils des actes de langage dans des contextes différents?

Cette question a été étudiée grâce à l'utilisation d'un DCT. Les étudiants devaient lire neuf scénarios représentant des requêtes, des excuses et des refus, puis ils devaient formuler leurs réactions dans chaque situation. Les données ont été analysées quantitativement et qualitativement. Les réponses des étudiants ont été vérifiées afin d'identifier quelle stratégie ils ont utilisée dans chaque acte de langage et le pourcentage de récurrence dans chaque stratégie. Ensuite, les stratégies de l'acte de langage ont été examinées en fonction de différents critères, comme les variables sociales dans les différentes situations.

Sur la base de l'analyse des données, il a été démontré qu'au plan linguistique, les étudiants étaient en mesure de produire des actes de langage. Cependant, les stratégies ne sont pas influencées par les variables sociales des différentes situations. Par conséquent, en réponse à la deuxième sous-question concernant la production des trois actes de langage comme une mesure de leur compétence

pragmatique, les résultats indiquent que la plupart des étudiants montre une familiarité avec les stratégies de base de l'acte de langage.

Cependant, ils manquent de sensibilité pour opérer une distinction entre les variables sociales dans différentes situations. L'incapacité de transmettre efficacement le sens voulu par le locuteur se reflète dans les réponses. Autrement dit, l'utilisation de stratégies d'actes de langage ainsi que leurs techniques d'atténuation ont été influencées par la culture de la langue maternelle et la faible exposition à la langue cible.

Par conséquent, il convient de répondre positivement à la principale question de la recherche et il convient d'examiner la compétence pragmatique chez les étudiants. Dans l'ensemble, les résultats à la fois du test de conscience pragmatique et de DCT révèlent que les étudiants en médecine ne montrent pas un niveau élevé de compétence pragmatique.

La deuxième question de l'enquête examinée dans cette étude est la suivante:

*À quel point est-il important de développer la compétence pragmatique pour les étudiants en médecine?*

Par cette question nous tentons de prouver l'importance de la compétence pragmatique aux étudiants en médecine en explorant sa pertinence pour eux.

Elle a été étudiée au regard de l'expérience des étudiants diplômés en médecine qui ont appris et qui font usage de la langue anglaise. Les données recueillies

dans les entretiens sont analysées qualitativement. Sur la base du sujet de l'enquête et la nature de l'entretien, l'analyse des données dans cette étude est basée sur l'analyse qualitative du contenu qui est un terme général utilisé par Dörnyei (2007) pour caractériser la collection des changements analytiques, qualitatifs, et génériques qui sont utilisés pour établir des propriétés caractéristiques des données. Cette méthode d'analyse comprend les étapes générales du codage, de l'évolution des idées, de l'interprétation des données et de la déduction des conclusions.

Ce processus a abouti à identifier deux thèmes principaux: l'expérience des diplômés en médecine en classe de langue et leurs points de vue sur l'apprentissage et l'usage de cette langue. Ensuite, une comparaison a été faite entre leurs points de vue passés en tant qu'étudiants et leurs perceptions actuelles en tant que diplômés et médecins praticiens.

Sur la base de cette comparaison et grâce à l'analyse des données, les résultats montrent que leurs points de vue sur ce qui est plus important dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais ont changé avec le temps et l'expérience. Ce changement est principalement identifié dans leurs préférences quant à ce qu'ils considèrent comme important concernant la langue anglaise en tant que matière enseignée et puis en tant que diplômés.

En fonction de leurs réponses, une explication possible de cette contradiction pourrait être attribuée à l'effet de leurs expériences avec l'anglais et aux difficultés qu'ils ont rencontrées quand ils ont commencé à utiliser la langue.

Un autre résultat évident à déduire de cette analyse est le consensus entre les participants sur l'importance de la compétence pragmatique. Les raisons qu'ils donnent tournent autour de deux points:

1. Éviter l'incompréhension ou les malentendus: ils ont souligné qu'être capable de connaître les différentes significations d'un message selon le contexte de communication, devrait leur permettre d'élaborer un message clair et en même temps de comprendre le sens visé. Ils ont aussi affirmé que les conséquences d'une absence de compréhension peuvent être de nature sérieuse comme risquer la vie d'un patient parfois.

2. Un large cercle de communication : un autre facteur important est la dimension du cercle de communication que les médecins auront. Ils doivent faire face à des discussions en anglais avec des interlocuteurs anglophones de différentes nationalités. L'anglais sera l'outil de communication. Il faudra donc qu'ils aient un bon niveau de langue.

Ces résultats sont en adéquation avec l'étude menée par Martinez-Flor et Alcón (2004) qui soulignent l'importance de l'enseignement de la compétence pragmatique dans un contexte d'anglais de spécialité. De même, Usó-Juan et Martinez- Flor (2006a) recommandent la nécessité de développer la capacité de

communiquer de manière appropriée parmi les apprenants d'anglais de spécialité. Ils ont conçu un matériel d'enseignement destiné à favoriser la connaissance pragmatique et ce matériel complète l'actuel manuel d'anglais de spécialité utilisé.

Une autre étude plus récente de Hafasi (2013) révèle que les apprenants d'anglais de spécialité manquent de compétences pragmatiques et ces lacunes devraient être comblées par un enseignement explicite et des tâches visant à les sensibiliser sur le plan pragmatique afin de communiquer avec efficacité.

En conclusion, l'importance d'une compétence pragmatique pour les étudiants en médecine a été prouvée aux entretiens. Dans l'optique d'optimiser l'efficacité des exercices proposés, ces derniers doivent avoir un rapport direct avec la future carrière des étudiants, qui sont alors motivés et réceptifs.

Basé sur les résultats de la recherche, et en phase avec la précédente recherche qui prône une intervention pédagogique et pragmatique dans une langue étrangère (Martinez-Flor et Alcón Soler, 2004, Rose et Kasper, 2001), un modèle provisoire est proposé pour intégrer la compétence pragmatique dans la classe d'anglais de spécialité.

Ce modèle est basé sur le développement de la conscience pragmatique. L'approche de sensibilisation est fondée sur le «noticing hypothesis» de Schmidt (1993, 2001). Cette approche démontre l'importance de la prise de conscience et de l'observation de ce qui est en jeu dans une situation de communication.



Cette hypothèse se concentre sur le rôle de la prise de conscience des enjeux linguistiques et pragmatiques dans l'acquisition de la langue visée par l'apprentissage. Elle affirme que ce qui est remarqué comme entrée est ce qui est retenu dans l'apprentissage. Schmidt affirme que l'apprentissage implique une prise de conscience et qu'il convient d'attirer l'attention des apprenants sur les aspects linguistiques qui pourront ensuite être acquis.

Conformément à l'approche « awareness-raising », la finalité du modèle proposé est de développer une conscience pragmatique afin que les apprenants puissent faire usage de la langue effectivement.

Martinez-Flor, et Usó-Juan (2010: 9) dans les recherches sur la pragmatique, expliquent leur approche et quelles sont les conditions théoriques pour apprendre les actes de langage et développer une réelle compétence pragmatique. Ils soulignent:

Learners' overall ability to communicate successfully in a given TL is influenced by three main conditions, namely appropriate input, opportunities for output and provision of feedback. The importance of these conditions is also applied to learners' development of their pragmatic competence and, consequently, to the learning of different speech acts. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>La capacité globale des apprenants de communiquer avec succès dans une langue cible est conditionnée par trois éléments principaux, à savoir l'entrée en matière appropriée « input », les possibilités de production « output » et de fourniture la mise en place d'un retour sur l'expérience « feedback ». L'importance de ces conditions est également appliquée au développement de leur

Pour le développement d'une compétence pragmatique en général, et des actes de langage en particulier, le protocole qui vient d'être mentionné est essentiel (Martinez-Flor, et Usó-Juan, 2010). Elles formeront les bases pour le modèle proposé dans le cadre de la présente étude.

Selon Martinez-Flor et Usó-Juan (2010: 10), la phase initiale de «input» pourrait être simplement définie comme: «la langue à laquelle les apprenants sont exposés». Les opportunités des apprenants d'acquérir la langue cible en général et une compétence en particulier sont influencées par le cadre d'apprentissage.

La seconde condition pour acquérir la pragmatique est de fournir des opportunités pour la mettre en pratique «output».

La mise en pratique implique la co-présence d'au moins deux apprenants pour activer la participation et aussi leur fournir des opportunités de pratiquer (Martinez-Flor et Usó-Juan, 2010).

La troisième condition dont Martinez-Flor et Usó-Juan discutent est le « feedback ». Ils affirment que le feedback est également nécessaire si les finalités des enseignements sont de combiner la communication et la précision.

Pour ce qui est du modèle que nous proposons, les séries télévisées sont utilisées pour alimenter les apprenants avec des contenus pertinents pour leur future carrière. Non seulement les séries télévisées constituent une source

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compétence pragmatique des apprenants et, par conséquent, à l'apprentissage des différents actes de langage.

authentique, elles fournissent aussi des contextualisations variées, visuelles et sonores. La série médicale '*Scrubs*' met en scène un groupe d'étudiants médecins : John Dorian «J.D», Elliot et Turk, qui arrivent à l'Hôpital du nom de «Sacred Heart» en tant qu'internes sous la supervision de leurs professeurs: Dr Cox et Dr Kelso.

Le choix de cette série est fondé sur sa pertinence pour les étudiants qui peuvent se projeter dans les différentes catégories professionnelles: médecins, chirurgiens, infirmiers.

La variété des personnages contribue à motiver les étudiants qui se sentent proches des rôles assumés par les différents personnages.

La procédure pour appliquer les trois phases de ce modèle est illustrée comme suit:

- Input : utilisation des séries télévisées : *Scrubs*
- Output : jeu de rôle (forme orale), et DCT (forme écrite)
- Feedback : évaluation et discussion

Le modèle proposé ci-dessus est une tentative pour intégrer la pragmatique dans les salles de classe de l'd'anglais de spécialité. De cette façon, le contexte médical de la série télévisée est utilisé à des fins langagières. Comme le soulignent Bardovi-Harlig et Mahan Taylor (2003), l'objectif premier de l'enseignement de la

pragmatique est de sensibiliser les étudiants à l'acquisition d'une conscience pragmatique afin qu'ils puissent faire des choix dans leur interaction dans la langue cible.

En conclusion, cette thèse a permis de réaliser une enquête sur la compétence pragmatique chez les étudiants en médecine à l'Université de Taiz. Elle recommande une intégration de la compétence pragmatique dans les salles de classe d'anglais. La mise en œuvre proposée est un modèle visant à sensibiliser les étudiants à « une conscience pragmatique » afin qu'ils puissent utiliser le langage d'une manière efficace. Il est donc souhaitable que les étudiants en médecine deviennent des utilisateurs maîtrisant la langue anglaise en plus de leur confiance dans leurs domaines spécifiques.

# INTRODUCTION

*The vast majority of our frustrations,  
our suffering, our sadness, our misfortune,  
results from a hasty interpretation.*

- Arthur Dreyfus (2011: 64)<sup>4</sup>

Generally speaking, the use of words in order to take part in communication is not as easy as it seems. Misinterpretation can take place due to the inability of speakers to express their intention clearly, or to the inability of addressees to comprehend the intended message. As Dreyfus (2011) above states, this can affect reactions and thereby the relationships between people.

Being proficient in a language does not guarantee successful communication. Rather, high proficiency may render the non-native speaker hesitant to initiate conversations especially with native speakers for fear of error. Then, in case of any communication breakdown, chances of reciprocal misunderstanding can be taken personally or culturally. This is equally applicable with new learners of the language. They share the same hesitation in trying to practise what they have learned.

From personal experience, the interest in pragmatics started from an intriguing question of the reason of communication breakdown while communicating in a foreign language. Back in 2003, an example of mutual misunderstanding took

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<sup>4</sup> Translated from French: “L’immense majorité de nos frustrations, de nos souffrances, de nos tristesses - de notre malheur - résulte d’une interprétation hâtive”.

place with a Serbian friend during an exchange programme in Syria, which comprised students from different countries. After coming back from shopping and trying out a new blouse, I received a compliment from her saying: "It looks very nice", to which I responded: "Thank you". Then she exclaimed saying: "Why do you THANK ME, it is YOUR blouse? We laughed and it ended there. However, it piqued my curiosity as to why this misinterpretation took place. I started wondering whether thanking is associated with personal belongings or whether there might be different ways of responding to compliments, or perhaps there might be different perceptions of compliments in different languages.

Later, in 2008, during my Master's degree programme at the University of Nottingham, we were asked to read an article in order to discuss it the next day. The class comprised twelve students coming from different language backgrounds. It was to the surprise of our lecturer that no one had read it because all of us interpreted it as a suggestion rather than a request. The request was indirectly addressed in the form of a hint. This incident also triggered my interest in the different ways in which a request can be realised and how this could be received differently by people.

Then I became aware that all these issues fall within the areas of study of a linguistic field called 'Pragmatics'. Pragmatics provides explanation of the different interpretations of language in context. Here is an example taken from Wierzbicka (1991: 391) about two women discussing their children:

*A: How is Tom doing at school?*

*B: Ah, well ... you know what they say: boys will be boys.*

*A: Yeah, but girls are no easier ... you know what Jess did the other day?*

Although speaker B does not provide an explicit answer to the posed question, the message is delivered and comprehended successfully by speaker A. The conversation continued smoothly due to the common ground shared by the two speakers. Such dialogue might be challenging for foreign language learners as they may just pay attention to the literal meaning of the linguistic forms and dissociate it from the users of these forms. It is the field of pragmatics which sheds light on this relationship between utterances and users. It provides a better understanding of how language is used to convey different functions in different situations.

As illustrated above, personal motivation triggered the query of this research at the very beginning. Nevertheless, I realised that it is important to start investigating such issues in foreign language teaching. Since the ultimate aim of learning languages is communication, it is important to conduct a study that contributes to facilitating this aim with the help of pragmatics. This aim seems even more indispensable in contexts where little emphasis is given to develop communicative competence, in particular ESP contexts.

Among the common complaints heard from professionals or students of non-English majors are the following:



- *I feel competent in my scientific language and can discuss any topic confidently but I become hesitant to engage in any conversation with English speakers outside my specialty.*
- *I can read and write English quite well but I am not confident about my communicative skills.*
- *I feel embarrassed to make mistakes and risk my image as an expert in my field.*

This brings me back to my earlier thoughts about my topic and the reasons for carrying out the study. So the motivation gets higher when I think of developing ESP students' pragmatic competence which is part of their overall communicative competence.

Therefore, the current study aspires to introduce pragmatic competence in teaching English to the students of ESP to help them overcome some of the language difficulties they may encounter when they communicate through the medium of English.

#### **❖ *Statement of the Problem***

The general tendency in teaching English to students in specific domains focuses mainly on providing language rich in the specific jargon and on developing tasks that meet their academic or occupational needs.

Talking about Yemen which is the field of study in this thesis, the actual practice of teaching English to the students of other disciplines or non-English major students is usually focalised on the language aspects that are related to the specific domain.

Research in this regard has mainly been conducted in this direction. To illustrate this point, here is a review of a few research studies carried out in Yemen about teaching English to students of other domains. Othman (2006) has carried out a study at the University of Aden that investigates the writing needs of undergraduate students in the field of Business. The study aims to fill the gap between the absence of business writing in the current course and the demands of the workplace. It aspires to address these needs through a writing course in English that focuses on teaching vocabulary, grammar, discourse and functions related to business tasks.

Another study is conducted by Laban (2008) who aims to investigate and identify the English language needs of the students of the faculty of Medical Sciences at the University of Hodeidah in Yemen. The researcher has employed a needs-analysis method to identify the students' needs. The study also aims to evaluate the teaching method, assessment system and medium of instruction and identify the problems that encounter ESP teachers.

In a similar context, Abdullah (2008) has carried out a study in the High Institute for Health Sciences where English is used as a medium of instruction in medicine. The study investigates the problems encountered in teaching English for academic

purposes with reference to the learners' needs. It aims to bridge the gap between the learners' language proficiency and their medical academic demands.

Additionally, Al-Ahdal (2010) has investigated the needs of fresh medical students at the University of Hodeidah. The aim of this study is to design a 20-hour ESP course entitled English for Academic Medical Purposes (EAMP) that is taught to students at an early stage, before their enrollment at the university. The course is intended to help students understand the lectures delivered in English in their medical course as well as improve their medical communication skills and academic presentations.

Lastly, a study is conducted by Al-Tamimi (2010) who explores the motivation and attitudes towards learning English among the students of Petroleum Engineering at Hadhramout University. The study is intended to find out which type of motivation, whether instrumental, integrative or personal, is the primary source of motivation for the students of Petroleum Engineering in learning English. Based on their attitude and motivation, some pedagogical implications are suggested to improve the English language teaching at the faculty.

In contrast to the previous studies conducted in Yemen, the current study looks into English teaching in the ESP classroom from a different angle; in particular a pragmatics-oriented objective. Undoubtedly, it seems strange at first to involve a branch of linguistics like pragmatics in teaching English for non-language-majoring students. Nevertheless, pragmatics will not be presented to students as a raw

material for learning. Linguistic terms such as pragmatic competence, speech acts, illocutionary acts, etc., will not be used; it is rather the implication of the field that will be introduced as will be shown in the pedagogical implication suggested in this thesis.

Central to the study is the investigation of pragmatic competence. Two main hypotheses are postulated:

1. ESP students, namely medical students, do not have a high level of pragmatic competence. They rely greatly on their L1 when using English.
2. Pragmatic competence proves to be important and should be integrated in the ESP classroom.

This will be investigated through two research questions.

**RQ1:** What is the level of pragmatic competence among medical students?

This question is examined through two sub-questions:

1. Are medical students able to recognise the appropriate and inappropriate utterances in different contexts?
2. How do they produce speech acts in different contexts?

The first question is the main one and it seeks to find out the level of medical students' pragmatic competence through three speech acts (request, apology and refusal). The aim is to identify areas of weakness and the reasons for pragmatic failure, if any.

**RQ2:** How important is it to develop pragmatic competence for medical students?

The second research question is intended to know the importance of pragmatic competence for medical students by investigating the repercussions of their past and present experiences with the English language. It explores graduate medical students' viewpoints regarding their study of English at Taiz University, their current experience with English and their perspectives towards integrating pragmatic competence in the English classroom.

#### ❖ ***Structure of the Thesis***

This thesis is composed of five chapters. The first chapter entitled "Preliminary Considerations" is devoted to highlight the conceptual background of the research. It begins by relating the study to its broader field. The study investigates a topic that belongs to interlanguage pragmatics; namely the comprehension and use of language in different contexts. The idea of teaching pragmatics to second and foreign language learners is highly recommended by researchers. The current study deals with introducing pragmatic competence in the foreign language context. The chapter moves to present a discussion of the norms of appropriateness in foreign language contexts. The chapter ends with exploring the relationship between pragmatic competence and linguistic competence in relation to the different viewpoints in the literature.

The second chapter presents a review of the literature with regard to pragmatics in this study. The previous research studies in the field provide insights that form a theoretical base for the current study. The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part is dedicated to explore the territory of pragmatics, its definition, origin, and borders with other disciplines. This is followed by a discussion of two major theories in pragmatics which guide the theoretical framework of the current study, namely speech act theory and politeness theory. These theories have largely influenced research in pragmatics. Three speech acts are investigated in the study: request, apology and refusal. For speech act strategies to be performed effectively, they are guided by politeness theory. The second part of the chapter discusses pragmatics in relation to 'English for Specific Purposes'. The link between the two fields is explored which is followed by a review of the previous studies carried out in this regard.

The third chapter describes the methodology used for this study. In the first part of the chapter, there is an overview of the contextual background where the study takes place. This includes a brief historical account of Yemen, and a description of the educational system with an illustration of the status of English in Yemen. The second part is dedicated to demonstrate the methodological structure of the study. The research design presents the framework employed to answer the research questions. The study adopts a mixed-method approach which comprises qualitative and quantitative methods in terms of data collection as well as data analysis. Two research instruments are used for this study: a questionnaire which

includes Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) and Awareness Test, and interviews. The chapter proceeds to describe in detail the design of these instruments, the research sample and it ends with reporting the procedures of data collection in two phases.

The fourth chapter discusses the process of data analysis and the presentation of data results. The data of each research instrument is reported in a different section. The first part gives an account of the data analysis and results of the questionnaire which is composed of the Discourse Completion Task data and the Awareness Test Data. The analysis of the questionnaire is conducted quantitatively and qualitatively. In the second part, the data of the interview is analysed qualitatively. The findings of each section are presented after the analysis.

As for chapter five, it is concerned with the interpretation of the data findings with reference to the research questions. The first part of the chapter addresses the research questions and presents a discussion of the findings comparing them to previous studies. The second part discusses the implications of the study in the light of the findings. Based on the data findings and theoretical models in pragmatics, a pedagogical proposal is provided to integrate pragmatic competence in teaching English to medical students at Taiz University.

The last part of the thesis presents a general conclusion, sums up and links all the components of the study.

# CHAPTER 1:

## Preliminary Considerations



This chapter is intended to shed light on the orientation of this study. It presents the main conceptual grounds. In particular, the following points are explored and taken into consideration in relation to the current study: interlanguage pragmatics, teaching pragmatics in the foreign language context, the norms of appropriateness, and the relationship between linguistic competence and pragmatic competence.

On a general level, this research study is situated within the domain of applied linguistics. It is defined by Ayon (2007: 2) as follows:

Applied linguistics is an inter-disciplinary field of research concerned with practical issues related to language and communication. Although its two main areas of research have been language education and foreign/second language acquisition, it covers a much wider range of linguistic issues.

As a field concerned with language and communication, pragmatics belongs to applied linguistics. Describing pragmatics, Pütz and Neff-Aertselaer (2008: ix) state:

Pragmatics as a usage-based perspective on the language sciences such as linguistics, the philosophy of language and the sociology of language essentially focuses on the exploration of language use and the users of language in real-life situations, and more generally, on the principles which govern language in everyday interaction.

The field of pragmatics is wide and diverse in its research areas and connection with other fields. The following section presents the research area, which is pertinent to the current study.

## 1. 1 A Study in Interlanguage Pragmatics

Studies of pragmatics in second or foreign language research can be investigated from different perspectives: cross-cultural, interlanguage or intercultural. These perspectives are not necessarily separate; rather, they can be interrelated in one area or another.

Cutting (2008: 66-69) describes each one as follows:

1. Cross-cultural pragmatics provides synchronic studies of first language use. It involves contrastive studies of the language of two or more social groups, using comparative data obtained independently from the different groups.
2. Intercultural pragmatics provides synchronic studies of second language (L2) use by non-native speakers with other non-native speakers or native speakers. Using interactional data obtained when people from different societies or social groups communicate with each other using a lingua franca, it examines the effect of their different norms and values.
3. Interlanguage pragmatics provides synchronic or diachronic/developmental studies of second language learning. The synchronic ones describe one level of language learner; the diachronic ones compare two levels or follow the development of one level.

As seen in this description, this study attempts to investigate one level of language learner. It falls within the research in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) which studies

“the acquisition, comprehension and production of contextually appropriate language by foreign or second language learners” (Schauer, 2009: 2).

Being concerned with learners’ pragmatic ability, interlanguage pragmatics is defined as “the study of nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)” (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993: 3). In another definition by Kasper and Dahl (1991: 5), interlanguage pragmatics refers to “nonnative speakers’ (NNS) comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2-related speech act knowledge is acquired”. Furthermore, Schauer (2009: 2) defines ILP as “the acquisition, comprehension and production of contextually appropriate language by foreign or second language learners”.

According to Barron (2003), the focal point that lies at the heart of interlanguage pragmatics is that it is related to language in use or rather language as action and that the term ‘interlanguage pragmatics’ itself implies that research should pay attention to both learners’ use and acquisition of pragmatic knowledge.

In the view of Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993), interlanguage pragmatics is considered a hybrid that belongs to two interdisciplinary disciplines: pragmatics and second language acquisition. Likewise, Schauer (2009: 15) indicates that “Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is, as the name suggests, a subfield of both interlanguage studies, which belongs to the domain of second language acquisition research, and pragmatics”. This accounts for the fact that most of the definitions of interlanguage pragmatics show both facets; i.e., language use and language learning.

According to Kasper and Rose (2002), from the perspective of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how non-native speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language, and as a study of second language learning, it looks into how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language.

In the same way, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (2005: 7) explain:

Interlanguage pragmatics research investigates the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge in second languages, deriving its research methods from comparative cross-cultural studies and second language acquisition research. Both disciplines place a high value on the control of variables that facilitate comparison across speakers, whether across cultures and languages, between native and nonnative speakers, or among learners at different stages of acquisition.

As can be seen in the above definitions, both words 'speaker' and 'learner' and thereby 'language use' and 'language learning' are recurrently used. Therefore, both language use and learning fall within the investigation of interlanguage pragmatics.

On the other hand, Barron (2003) ascribes the reference to speaker other than learner in the early definitions of interlanguage pragmatics to the fact that interlanguage pragmatics has mainly derived its theoretical background and research methodology from cross-cultural pragmatics rather than from second language acquisition which is its other parent discipline. A similar view is held by Kasper and Schmidt (1996: 150) who indicate that "ILP's main field of reference has not been second language acquisition research but empirical pragmatics,

especially cross-cultural pragmatics” and that is why its main concern has been with language use rather than second language learning.

Being theoretically and methodologically grounded in cross-cultural pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics shares with cross-cultural pragmatics many research issues such as speech act strategies, contextual factors, contextual distribution of realisation patterns, etc.

Another concern that has been explored in interlanguage pragmatics research is the effect of native language and culture on learners’ production and comprehension of L2 speech acts (Barron, 2003), and the investigation of inappropriate speech act realisations by learners (Trosborg, 1995).

Besides, in ILP the focus has been more on the difference between the pragmatic knowledge of non-native speakers and native speakers, as well as among learners with varied linguistic or cultural backgrounds (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996). The domains of ILP comprise pragmatic comprehension and production of speech acts, development of pragmatic competence, communicative effect and pragmatic transfer (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993).

Bearing in mind that pragmatic competence is one of the domains examined in interlanguage pragmatics, the present study is concerned with the investigation of learners’ pragmatic competence which entails the ability to comprehend and use language in different social contexts.

The following section explores the importance of teaching pragmatics in the foreign language classroom.

## **1. 2 Teaching Pragmatics in the Foreign Language Context**

As mentioned in the previous section, interlanguage pragmatics concentrates on describing the use and learning of second language pragmatics both in second and foreign language contexts. Although research on the effect of instruction in pragmatics is still in its infancy, there is a strong argument for its importance as well as its effectiveness (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Rose, 2005). In this regard, Rose (2005: 396) illustrates:

There is considerable evidence indicating that a range of features of second language pragmatics are teachable. These include a variety of discursal, pragmatic and sociolinguistic targets of instruction, such as discourse markers and strategies, pragmatic routines, speech acts, overall discourse characteristics, and pragmatic comprehension.

As the other branches of linguistics which are taught in the language classroom, pragmatics should receive equal attention. Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012: 650) assert: “Like phonology, morphology, and syntax, which are necessary for learning a L2, pragmatics should be integrated into the language curriculum from the beginning levels of language instruction”.

Bardovi-Harlig (1996) explains that the research conducted in interlanguage pragmatics has provided a needs-assessment for pragmatics and language teaching and it showed clearly that learners have difficulty in pragmatics irrespective of their linguistic proficiency. Consequently, learners need to be introduced to pragmatics with a proportion that parallels their proficiency whether high or low.

Another point is indicated by Kasper (1997: 2) who adds that “the most compelling evidence that instruction in pragmatics is necessary comes from learners whose L2 proficiency is advanced and whose unsuccessful pragmatic performance is not likely to be the result of cultural resistance or disidentification strategies”. In this case, the learners’ failure to carry out successful communication is ascribed to their pragmatic incompetence since there are no problems on the linguistic and cultural levels.

Moreover, Schmidt (1993) asserts that instruction in pragmatics is important. He pinpoints that even in second language learning environment, mere exposure to the target language is not sufficient; contextual features and pragmatic functions are not noticed by learners.

In their book entitled *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*, which reviewed studies carried out in seven different countries (both in ESL and EFL classroom settings), Rose and Kasper (2001) demonstrate with empirical evidence that teaching pragmatics, whether explicit or implicit, facilitates the learning of many aspects of language that can be unnoticed without instruction. They point out (2001: 8):

Many aspects of L2 pragmatics are not acquired without the benefit of instruction, or they are learned more slowly. There is thus a strong indication that instructional intervention may be facilitative to, or even necessary for, the acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability.

Additionally, Bardovi-Harlig (1996) stresses that when pragmatics is included in language pedagogy, students can experiment with language and make use of the language classroom as an opportunity to expand their cultural boundaries and communicate through the language successfully.

As reported by Bardovi-Harlig and Taylor (2003: 4), teaching pragmatics can be useful in many ways such as:

1. Instruction can help learners understand when and why certain linguistic practices take place.
2. It can help learners interpret the input that they hear, in both actual comprehension (what does this formula mean) and interpretation (how is this used, or what does a speaker who says this hope to accomplish).
3. A classroom discussion of pragmatics is also a good place to explore prior impressions of speakers.
4. Instruction provides the opportunity to discuss the lack of some types of politeness markers in English and the presence and function of others that may not be immediately recognizable to learners.

Bardovi-Harlig and Taylor (2003: 1) illustrate that “there is no single approach to the teaching of pragmatics. The variety of approaches means that pragmatics can



be integrated easily into any classroom whether traditional or communicative". They affirm that most of the teaching methods share two pedagogical practices: authentic language samples are used as examples or models, and input precedes interpretation or production by learners.

Kasper (1997) proposes some activities that can be used for pragmatic development. She classifies them into two types: activities directed at raising pragmatic awareness such as observation tasks and authentic-based input (audio-visual media) and activities offering opportunities for practice such as role play, simulation and drama.

Therefore, teaching pragmatics in the FL classroom should fulfill three aims as reported by Rueda (2006: 178):

1. Exposing learners to appropriate TL input
2. Raising learners' pragmatic and metapragmatic awareness about the instructed aspect
3. Arranging authentic opportunities to practise pragmatic knowledge

In line with the above discussion, it is underlined that the aim of teaching pragmatics is to "facilitate the learners' ability to find socially appropriate language for the situations they encounter" (Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan Taylor, 2003: 1). Teaching pragmatics entails providing learners with the linguistic tools that enable them to use and comprehend language appropriately in different contexts (Rueda, 2006).

Besides, Bardovi-Harlig (1996: 11) makes it clear that by “teaching pragmatics”, she does not intend to “evoke the image of the teacher-centered classroom where the teachers “tell” and the learners “receive” the information”. Rather, the aim is to “help learners increase their pragmatic awareness”, and that is achieved, for example, by helping learners to pay attention to the use of language around them and find out what results from choosing one utterance rather than another.

As far as the current study is concerned, since it is undertaken in a foreign language context, it will be oriented towards an awareness-raising approach for integrating pragmatics in the classroom. Conforming to the previous studies, it is believed that pragmatics is teachable. In spite of its importance, the task of teaching pragmatics faces some challenges especially in the foreign language context.

According to Alcón and Martínez-Flor (2008), learners in second language settings are more fortunate than foreign language learners as they have ample opportunities and exposure to language. In the foreign language context, however, the opportunities for language practice are scarce and that is why there is a need to compensate for that by teaching pragmatics in the classroom. They assert that in order to realise this effectively, it is essential to examine all the conditions that influence learning pragmatics in formal learning settings and then choose the approach for the specific context. The following sections draw light on one of the challenges faced in teaching pragmatics in the foreign language classroom, namely the norms to be followed in such cases.

## **1. 3 The Concept of Appropriateness: Which Norms to follow**

Appropriateness is a concept that is widely discussed in many fields such as pragmatics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and anthropology (Oishi, 2007). Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998: 233) link pragmatics with appropriateness as they state: “Grammar relates to the accuracy of structure, including morphology and syntax, whereas pragmatics addresses language use and is concerned with the appropriateness of utterances given specific situations, speakers, and content”.

In his discussion about communicative competence, Hymes (1972: 277) points out that knowledge of grammatically correct sentences is essential but it is also important to know “when to speak, when not, and what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner”. This is what appropriateness entails, i.e., knowing how, what and when to say something to someone. He clarifies that appropriateness is affected by linguistic and sociocultural aspects; therefore, it is necessary to be aware of sociocultural norms so as to produce appropriate speech according to the social situation.

In a similar vein, Canale (1983: 7) explains that appropriateness of utterances refers to “appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of meaning concerns the extent to which particular communicative functions (e.g. commanding, complaining and inviting), attitudes (including politeness and formality) and ideas are judged to be proper in a given situation”. In other words, appropriateness

depends mainly on the contextual factors in this situation; namely, purpose of the interaction, norms of interaction and status of participants.

In addition, the concept of appropriateness has usually been equated with pairing sentences with their contexts (Levinson, 1983) and the relationship between a particular expression and a particular context of use. This context is culture-specific and consequently language-specific (Mey, 2001).

Dewaele (2008: 246) maintains that “the very concept of ‘appropriateness’ is slippery, as different individuals may interpret behaviour very differently”. Thus, appropriateness can mean different things to different people. The meaning of appropriateness can be further clarified in Crystal’s (2003: 364) definition of pragmatics:

Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

These constraints are the conventions that guide appropriateness in social interaction. The appropriateness of language use is assessed relative to the sociocultural norms of the target language.

Here comes the question as to which specific norms to follow. Rose (1994: 55) identifies the problem and states:

If pragmatic competence is to be taught, whose pragmatic system should serve as the model? In university ESL programs, the answer to this question is simple:

there is an immediate need, and thus rationale, for the learning/ teaching of the host community's pragmatic system. . . . But this question is not so easily answered in an EFL context.<sup>5</sup>

Along similar lines, Hinkel (2014) points out that L2 learner who live in English-speaking communities have a dire need to be aware of the sociocultural norms of that specific community and accordingly they have a target to follow. The situation is different for FL learners since the need is not immediate. The different choices, which are open to them, add more pressure as to which norms to follow.

Norms refer to the set of rules established in each society of what makes appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. It should be clarified that the term 'norm' can be used reciprocally with 'value' in the discussions of pragmatics.

In discussing sociopragmatic failure and value judgements, Thomas (1983: 106) asserts:

It is important to remember that in speaking of 'values' we are not in any way dealing with moral absolutes such as 'Truth' or 'Justice'. Presumably no-one would claim that any one nation or culture has a monopoly of such virtues or even that they are observed to a greater degree in one society than in another. . . . We are not dealing with moral or spiritual qualities, only with the linguistic encoding of certain attitudes and values.

Hence, the intended meaning of norms and values are those which affect the use of language and vice-versa. These values may also change according to the different perspectives of individuals in the same society. This is supported by

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<sup>5</sup> Pragmatic system refers to the set of pragmatic norms followed in a target community

Trosborg (2010: 2) as she affirms: “It must be remembered, though, that within a nation, within a corporate culture, individual differences will always exist”.

However, individual perceptions of norms of appropriateness are not meant here; rather, the norms referred to are those shared by speakers of the language. On this point, Hinkel (2014) illustrates that individual behaviour should be separated from those that are determined by culture in order to learn the impact of socio-cultural norms on language use. Those which are culturally-determined tend to be repeated across many individuals in a particular community and they form an identifiable pattern.

The issue of looking for a specific standard in pragmatics is unresolved. As mentioned previously, Rose (1994) maintains that this is a thorny question that cannot be answered easily in an EFL context. She explains that there are many possible target communities and that different varieties would compete over this matter.

With the numerous varieties of English, it becomes problematic in the FL context as to whose norms should be considered the standard (LoCastro, 2003). As there are different varieties of English, each variety holds its tacit norms.

In fact, in today’s world, English has become the medium of international communication. English non-native speakers outnumber its native speakers. Therefore, it is no longer ‘owned’ by its native speakers as described by House (2003). Consequently, there is a need to develop familiarity with pragmatic norms cross-culturally. Similar to this is the view of Neddard (2012: 5690) who observes:

With its massive expansion across the globe, English has somehow been de-nationalised, cut off from its cultural roots and adapted to suit new surroundings: diverse sociolinguistic histories, multicultural identities, multiple norms of use and distinct contexts of functions giving rise to 'derivative versions'.

Neddar (2012) maintains that one of the real problems that encounter instruction in pragmatics is making a decision as to which pragmatic system to teach. The spread of English around the globe has given rise to several varieties of English. Therefore, the choice of one type of English over another is more often based on economic and political considerations rather than pedagogical ones. Another issue, which appears problematic, is whether learners want to follow a specific pragmatic system or not. In this regard, he indicates that in some EFL contexts, there is a high nationalistic feeling and that learners do not want to assimilate into Anglo-Saxon cultures or set the native pragmatic norm as the target, like in China and Vietnam for example (Neddar, 2012).

Similarly, House (2003) argues that second and foreign language users are often not willing to become part of any English speaking community as in the case of many immigrants who prefer to keep their identity by diverging intentionally from the pragmatic norms of the host community.

In addition, Hinkel (2014) maintains that users and learners of English as a means of wider communication do not have to follow Anglo-American socio-cultural norms of interaction. Hinkel (2014: 29) illustrates this point by the following example:

In an L2 English communication between, for example, a speaker of a Central European language and a speaker of an Asian language, where both are non-native users of English, it does not seem reasonable to expect that they would attempt to follow Anglo-American socio-cultural norms of politeness.

She further indicates that in such cases it is necessary to develop cross-cultural awareness of familiarity with pragmatic norms for successful communication. As for the native speakers' norms, it is not important for language learners to become native-like. However, learners can be made aware of the socio-cultural and pragmatic norms so that they can choose what to say and how to say it.

Having explored the different views, the perspective that the current study is aligned with is that students should decide for themselves which standards to follow. This happens only after they become pragmatically aware of the different choices. What language teachers should do is to enlighten their students on the existence of different norms and raise their awareness cross-culturally.

It is the norms of the situation that will dictate whether an utterance is appropriate or not. This will be based on contextual variables of these utterances such as: distance and power between interlocutors, level of imposition, place and time. It will be useful when teachers clarify to their students how different choices can result in different interpretation. Politeness markers, for example, should not be used nor interpreted in relation to the student's L1 culture as different cultures might assign different weight to these markers (Thomas, 1983).

Another supporter for this view is Dewaele (2008: 260) who rightly asserts:



While judging appropriateness can be difficult in a native language, it is specifically hard for foreign language learners and users. The reason for this is that judgments of appropriateness are highly dependent on the specific context of the interaction. Given the highly situated nature of the judgment of appropriateness, foreign language teachers can only point to general rules in specific speech communities. Armed with that theoretical knowledge, L2 users have to venture out and experience for themselves what works and what does not.

Therefore, as Rose (1994) suggests, it will be feasible to choose a consciousness-raising approach in teaching pragmatics. Its aim is to make the learners aware of the variation in different contexts and how the use of language can change accordingly.

In line with Bardovi-Harlig (2003) and Rueda (2006), it is rightly asserted that instruction in pragmatics does not aim at imposing native speakers' pragmatic choices on learners, and conforming to a particular target-language norm. Rather, the chief goal is to raise their awareness, expose them to the various means to express a certain pragmatic aspect and gradually they will be able to make better decision as to what suits the interaction in the target language.

## **1. 4 Pragmatic Competence and Linguistic Competence**

The last issue to be clarified in this chapter is the relationship between pragmatic competence and linguistic competence. The necessity of both of them for language competence is undoubted. Bachman (1990: 87) illustrates:

Language competence is subdivided into two components, 'organizational competence' and 'pragmatic competence'. Organizational competence comprises knowledge of linguistic units and the rules of joining them together at the level of sentence 'grammatical competence' and discourse 'textual competence'. Pragmatic competence subdivides into 'illocutionary competence' and 'sociolinguistic competence'.

Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) explain that the ability to understand and use communicative action in the target language, such as requesting or refusing, requires various types of knowledge. To improve communication in the target language, both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge are essential.

According to Kasper (2001a), pragmatic competence is located within the model of communicative competence. Therefore, its relationship with grammatical competence is either viewed in interaction with grammatical competence or independent from it. Research in interlanguage pragmatics has resulted in two perspectives regarding the relationship between pragmatic and grammatical competence.

The first view considers pragmatic competence and grammatical competence as independent from each other. Bardovi-Harlig (1996; 2001) demonstrates that high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee a corresponding level of pragmatic competence. She found out that learners experience difficulty in pragmatics regardless of their proficiency level.

One of the major studies in this view is the one carried out by Schmidt (1983). He examined the pragmatic skills of a participant called Wes over three years of

observation. It was found out that Wes's pragmatic skills progressed greatly while his grammatical knowledge lagged behind. He concluded that a restricted level of grammar does not necessarily restrict pragmatic and interactional competence especially when speakers acculturate to the target language community.

Another study is conducted by Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) which revealed that, in their experiment, advanced learners of English have also experienced difficulty in expressing gratitude. Similarly, other studies like Trosborg (1987), Bouton (1996) and Bardovi-Harlig (2001) support the independence of pragmatic competence and language proficiency. One form of this scenario is represented, for example, when learners provide pragmatically appropriate strategies with ungrammatical forms (Kasper, 2001a). An example of this is the use of thanking strategies such as:

1. *That's very nice from you; I hope to see you by us.*
2. *I have never taken such a good dinner; it is so glad to me* (Bodman and Eisenstein, 1986, cited in Kasper, 2001a: 510).

Kasper (2001a) argues that although the grammatical errors (on the level of prepositions in 1 and the choice of words in 2) may make the expression less effective, they are pragmatically appropriate and serve the purpose of thanking.

Similarly, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989: 10) affirm that: "Even fairly advanced language learners' communicative acts regularly contain pragmatic errors, or deficits, in that they fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force or politeness value". Consequently, in such cases the effect of

misunderstanding increases as it is taken personally and not due to lack of language proficiency.

According to Bardovi-Harlig and Taylor (2003), unlike grammatical errors, the negative impact of pragmatic differences is taken on a social or personal level rather than a result of language issues.

Likewise, Barron (2003: 2) reports: “While all learners are open to potential misunderstanding, advanced learners are actually more at risk than lower proficiency learners since for these learners, grammatical proficiency is no longer seen as an excuse for impoliteness”.

The second view regarding the relationship between pragmatic and grammatical competence shows that it is not possible for learners to learn pragmatics without a previous learning of grammar.

The studies which belong to this assumption, like Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) and Niezgodá and Röver (2001) affirm that pragmatic and grammatical awareness are interrelated. In their study, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) investigated ESL and EFL learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness by looking at learners’ evaluation of utterances in terms of appropriateness and correctness. They found out that error recognition and ratings differed across the proficiency groups. The low-proficiency EFL learners rated both grammatical and pragmatic errors as low, while the high-proficiency group assessed grammatical errors as more severe than pragmatic one. On the other hand, the high-

proficiency ESL group considered the pragmatically inappropriate utterances as more severe than the grammatical errors.

Niezgoda and Röver (2001) replicated Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study with Czech EFL learners. They found out that low-proficiency ESL and EFL learners rated pragmatic errors as more severe than grammatical ones while high-proficiency learners gave the opposite rating. Both studies also illustrate that the development of pragmatic and grammatical awareness is influenced by the learning environment. The different ratings of pragmatic inappropriateness reflected in the two EFL groups indicate that foreign language contexts are not equal.

Another study that supports positive relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence is conducted by Hamidi and Khodareza (2014). They investigated pragmatic competence among Iranian EFL learners across different levels of proficiency. The findings of the study revealed that learners with higher language proficiency performed better in the pragmatic competence test. They concluded that their language proficiency plays a significant role in the level of pragmatic competence (Hamidi and Khodareza, 2014).

Each one of these views has a valid foundation based on the research findings that support it. On the other hand, the relationship between linguistic and pragmatic competence can also be seen from a different perspective. This perspective is clarified by Rueda (2006: 175) in the following quotation:

Notwithstanding the contradictory character of these two hypotheses, they can be reconciled when considering them under a developmental perspective in which adult L2 or FL learners initially rely on L1 pragmatic transfer and pragmatic universals to communicate linguistic action in the TL, even with a limited command of the TL grammar. As their interlanguage development progresses, their learning task changes and they start figuring out not only the primary functions of the TL grammatical forms they have achieved, but also their secondary meanings, so the order reverses, and form precedes function.

At a certain stage of proficiency, learners can only rely on the available linguistic tools to perform a pragmatic function. As their linguistic level improves, they start to comprehend the different realisations that can be used to express pragmatic functions. In this way, linguistic and pragmatic competence will get developed.

Rueda (2006) further suggests that the development of pragmatic competence has to be an essential component in the teaching of L2 or FL from early proficiency stages.

Moreover, Geyer (2007) investigated the interface of grammar and pragmatics in L2 Japanese learners with a specific focus on contrastive expressions. The study findings revealed that the development of pragmatics and grammar in learner language is complex and interrelated. Geyer (2007: 113) reports that adopting the scenario of grammar primacy or that of pragmatics primacy depends largely on “factors other than acquisitional stages: the saliency and simplicity of particular pragmatic meanings, alternative options in interlanguage, and focal pragmatic and grammatical aspects.”

Similarly, Neddar (2011) believes that language proficiency is essential for pragmatic competence; however, it is not sufficient for its mastery. Pragmatics should be taken into account along with linguistic competence.

Neddar (2011: 6) states:

While developing knowledge and understanding of how the new language works, the learner must also develop an awareness of, and sensitivity to, sociocultural patterns of behaviour. It is only skillfully combined linguistic and pragmatic knowledge that can lead to communicative competence in foreign language learning.

In line with the above discussion, the current study agrees with the last perspective that linguistic competence is an essential factor for the development of pragmatic competence but it is not enough. Having a high proficiency level linguistically does not guarantee successful communication pragmatically. Pragmatics sheds light on the use of language and its relationship with its users. Therefore, it contributes to a better performance in communication strategies.

## **1. 5 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the general framework of the current study. It has clarified the main issues in the field of pragmatics, which are relevant to the study.

The present study investigates a topic in interlanguage pragmatics; that is, the learners' comprehension and use of language appropriately in different contexts.

The literature on pragmatics provides a consensus that pragmatics can be taught and it proves to be effective as well as essential to the learning and use of language in second and foreign language contexts. It is even more important in the foreign language context where opportunities for practice seem to be low. In order to compensate for this lack, it is necessary to introduce pragmatics in the classroom and teach students the different ways of using language appropriately in different situations. Familiarising students with the specific norms of these situations can facilitate their competence in pragmatics. This pragmatic competence is not detached from linguistic competence; rather, both construct a solid foundation in students' overall language competence. The current study focuses only on the former as it constitutes the main area of investigation.

The following chapter focuses on the specific areas of interest in pragmatics and reviews the literature on pragmatics in relation to the present study.



# CHAPTER 2:

## Literature Review

## ***PART ONE:***

### **Pragmatics: Exploring the Territory**

The field of pragmatics is vast and versatile. Its areas of interest cover wide and diverse issues that get across other disciplines. The first part of this chapter provides a general exploration of the territory of pragmatics with reference to the areas that are relevant to the current study. It sets the conceptual ground for the present study.

As the field of pragmatics is distinguished by its relation to the context of language use, it is essential to start with discussing this factor.

#### **2. 1 Context in Pragmatics**

To begin with a quotation by Yule (1996a: 134), "Understanding how people communicate is actually a process of interpreting not just what speakers say, but what they intend to mean". In fact, communication is a complicated process that entails certain factors to be successful. Such factors involve the following:

- A tool of communication (language)
- Participants (speaker and hearer)
- A purpose of communication (function)

- A context (in which functions are used)

The context designates the spatial and temporal circumstances attached to speech, along with other 'accessories' included in the situation (Garric and Calas, 2007). Hence, the meaning of a word or a phrase remains ambiguous until the context is known. Although a dictionary can provide one definition or more for a single word, it is the context which enables one to identify the different meanings of the word. Ervin-Tripp (1994: 1) signifies the necessity of context in language understanding and states that: "Language tolerates both polysemy and homonymity heavily because humans are very context-sensitive, unlike a machine translator, which can be tripped up".

According to Sowa (1995: 2), a context is defined by English dictionaries as having two major senses:

The basic meaning is a section of the linguistic text or discourse that surrounds some word or phrase of interest. The derived meaning is a nonlinguistic situation, environment, domain, setting, background, or milieu that includes some entity, subject, or topic of interest.

This is consistent with the types of contexts described by Celce-Murica and Olshtain (2000). There are three types of context which help to clarify the meaning of a text:

- Linguistic context or co-text (prior and subsequent textual forms that may have a bearing on interpreting some items in a text or portion of a text)
- Physical setting (what surrounds the speaker/hearer at the time of communication)

- Social context (the social relationship of the people engaged in the communication)

Therefore, a context includes all the factors whether linguistic or non-linguistic which affect spoken and written communication.

As Leech (1983: 13) insightfully puts it: “I shall consider context to be any background knowledge assumed to be shared by **s** and **h** which contributes to **h**'s interpretation of what **s** means by a given utterance”.<sup>6</sup>

This background knowledge is affected by the characteristics of the situational context: “the participants, the message content and the communicative activity” as propounded by Spencer-Oatey and Zegarac (2002: 83).

The interpersonal context - the speaker's and the hearer's intentions and beliefs - plays a major role in interpreting the message of communication. It receives more attention for investigation in disciplines like pragmatics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis (Salmani, 1995). Therefore, it is the field of pragmatics that examines the ways in which meaning is affected by context. It is concerned specifically with the speaker's intended meaning in a particular context (LoCastro, 2012). The following section sheds light on what pragmatics is and further clarifies how context is a crucial factor in describing meaning in pragmatics.

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<sup>6</sup> s = speaker , h = hearer

## 2. 2 Defining Pragmatics

Pragmatics has been defined and described differently by various researchers. In the literature, there has been no unified consensus on defining pragmatics exactly. Crystal (2003) partly ascribes the existence of many conflicting definitions of pragmatics to the vast scope of the field. On the other hand, Levinson (1983: 5) points out that the diversity of possible definitions “may be disconcerting, but it is by no means unusual”. That is because of the diversity of assumptions and focal problems generally involved in academic fields. This makes it unattainable to arrive at a wholly satisfactory definition. Another view is expressed by Garric and Calas (2007) who note that the difficulty to define pragmatics is attributed to the fact that the field has been born of reflections from diverse backgrounds: logical, philosophical, and linguistic. Likewise, Thomas (1995) highlights that the lack of unanimous definition can be ascribed to the fact that pragmatics has been in constant development. Therefore, as new approaches and theories are formed in linguistics, they contribute to enriching or rather changing the view towards pragmatics.

Now, regarding some of the definitions of pragmatics, a widely-cited one is the following by Crystal (2003: 364):

Pragmatics . . . is the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication.

As illustrated in the definition, the relationship between language users' point of view and how they express themselves through language is at the focal point of pragmatics. This relationship is governed by some social constraints or "the conditions of society" as described by Mey (2001). LoCastro (2012) clarifies that decision-making includes word choice, syntactic structures, and prosodic contours. The following quotation by Spencer-Oatey and Zegarac (2002: 74) further enhances this relationship: "pragmatics is concerned not with language as a system or product per se, but rather with the interrelationship between language form, (communicated) messages and language users". More precisely, they indicate that pragmatics is concerned with exploring questions like:

- How do people communicate more than what the words or phrases of their utterances might mean by themselves, and how do people make these interpretations?
- Why do people choose to say and/or interpret something in one way rather than another?
- How do people's perceptions of contextual factors influence the process of producing and interpreting language?

Turning to other definitions, Rose and Kasper (2001: 2) state that pragmatics is "the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context". This is to reinforce what has been discussed previously that context plays a major role in deciphering the message of communication, and this is studied in the field of pragmatics. Levinson (1983: 24) stresses the importance of context as he defines pragmatics

as “the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate”. By the same token, Yule (1996b: 3) describes pragmatics as “the study of speaker meaning” which takes into consideration “what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said”.

It is clear, therefore, that pragmatics employs the context as one of its tools to study and analyse not only the meaning of words, but also the meaning and communicative purpose beyond the words (LoCastro, 2012). The meaning beyond the words constitutes a special feature of pragmatics as expressed by Yule (1996b: 3): “Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said”.

The field of pragmatics will be further clarified by providing a brief description of its origin in the next section.

## **2. 3. Origin of Pragmatics**

Pragmatics passed through three main stages before it became an independent discipline in linguistics. The first stage took place in the 1930's when pragmatics was first identified by the philosopher Charles Morris. In his analysis of semiotics, Morris considered pragmatics one of its branches. The other two branches are syntax or as he called it “syntactics” which is the study of “the formal relation of signs to one another”, and semantics by which he referred to: “the study of the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable”. Pragmatics was

defined as the study of "the relation of signs to interpreters" (Morris, 1938: 6), and in other words, he described it as: "Pragmatics is the aspect of semiotics concerned with the origin, uses and effects of signs" (Morris, 1964: 44).

During this period, pragmatics was investigated from a philosophical perspective. Another philosopher and logician, Rudolf Carnap (1938, cited in Levinson, 1983: 2) adopted a similar trichotomy to that of Morris, with some modifications. Carnap viewed pragmatics as covering all empirical and descriptive investigations of sign systems, while syntax and semantics covered pure investigation, i.e., being only on the theoretical level.

The second phase in the history of the development of pragmatics took place in the 1960's and 1970's. The foundations of pragmatics as a linguistic discipline started to be established by language philosophers and speech-act theorists like John Austin, John Searle and Paul Grice. A new approach to language study was formed by considering it a kind of human action (Nerlich, 2006). Austin's influential work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) marked an important step in the development of pragmatics with regard to Speech Act Theory. Austin's student John Searle (1969) also worked on Speech Act Theory and divided speech acts into five categories: Representatives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declarations.

Another major contribution to the field of pragmatics was Paul Grice's paper 'Logic and Conversation' in 1975. It discussed his theory of conversation in terms



of the Cooperative Principle, its related Conversational Maxims<sup>7</sup> and the concept of Implicature. His theory aimed to reflect the general nature of verbal communication. Thomas (1995: 56) describes Grice's theory as: "an attempt at explaining how a hearer gets from what is said to what is meant, from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning".

As Mey (2001: 4) rightly comments, the preliminary theories in pragmatics were not identified by linguists, but "by philosophers working in the grey zone where philosophy and linguistics share a border".

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, pragmatics started to be distinguished as an independent discipline in linguistics. The theoretical system and key concepts in pragmatics were formulated and elaborated by Leech in his *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983), and by Levinson in *Pragmatics* (1983). This period was also marked by the publication of an international journal 'The Journal of Pragmatics' by Mey and Haberland in 1977 and the establishment of The International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) in 1986. Since then, pragmatics has grown rapidly and received ongoing investigation from different researchers. In addition, several international conferences were held in the field like Viareggio 1985, Antwerp 1987, Barcelona 1990, Kobe 1993, Mexico 1996, Reims 1998, and Budapest 2000 (Mey, 2001).

Currently, the IPrA has over 1,200 members in over 60 countries world-wide and organises annual conferences on pragmatics. In 2013, for example, the

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<sup>7</sup> These maxims will be discussed at a later section.

conference was held in New Delhi, India under the theme: Narrative Pragmatics: Culture, Cognition, Context.<sup>8</sup>

Another recent and well-known association which is interested in pragmatics is the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) which holds international conferences annually. There is a special interest group (SIG) of Pragmatics that belongs to JALT. The SIG was formed in 1999 and since then it has been organising forums and individual presentations at the annual JALT conference<sup>9</sup>.

Ever since, research in pragmatics has resulted in producing two schools of thought: the Anglo-American and the Continental (LoCastro, 2012; Huang, 2012). The Anglo-American school views pragmatics as “the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language” (Huang, 2012: 1). Thus, pragmatics includes, as its central topics of enquiry: implicature, presupposition, speech acts, deixis, and reference. This view is called the component view of pragmatics. In this view, Huang (2012: 1) points out that: “A linguistic theory consists of a number of core components: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. . . Pragmatics, then, is just another core component placed in the same contrast set within a linguistic theory”.

Similarly, LoCastro (2012) points out that the component view of pragmatics reflects its origin in the philosophy of language. On the other hand, he points out that the Continental school places pragmatics with sociolinguistics and discourse

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<sup>8</sup> <http://pra.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=CONFERENCE13>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pragsig.org/>

analysis, and includes a critical analysis of language in use. Additionally, Huang (2012: 8) states: “Within the European Continental conception of linguistics, pragmatics is taken to present a functional perspective on all core components and ‘hyphenated’ areas of linguistics and beyond”. In short, the Anglo-American branch focuses on theoretical, philosophical and formal pragmatics, while the Continental branch draws attention to empirical pragmatics and sociopragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics and interpersonal pragmatics.

In recent years, pragmatics has also become a core area of interest not only in linguistics but also in many fields. As illustrated by Huang (2012: vi):

Pragmatics is one of the most vibrant and rapidly growing fields in contemporary linguistics and the philosophy of language. In recent years it has become increasingly a central topic in cognitive science, artificial intelligence, informatics, neuroscience, language pathology, anthropology, and sociology.

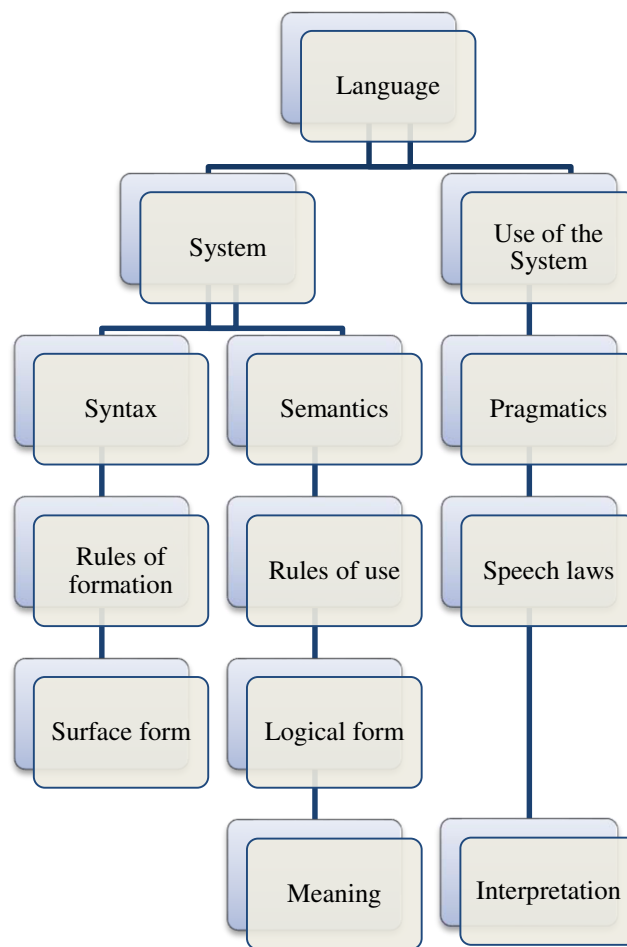
Consequently, it has spread in many directions, integrated and overlapped with various topics inside and outside linguistics (Huang, 2012; Green, 1996). The following section discusses the relationship between pragmatics and related domains in linguistics.

## **2. 4 Borders of Pragmatics**

Pragmatics shares some common grounds with other adjoining fields. Cummings (2005: 1) argues that pragmatics “is significantly informed by a range of

academic disciplines” and is also a branch of enquiry in its own right which can influence other neighbouring disciplines. Although it is not easy to arrive at well-defined boundaries for pragmatics, investigating its connection with other fields in linguistics serves to explore this territory. This is affirmed by Crystal (2003: 364) as he indicates that pragmatics is a field of study that “focuses on an area between semantics, sociolinguistics and extralinguistic context; but the boundaries with these other domains are as yet incapable of precise definition”.

Being originally identified in the trichotomy of Morris’ semiotics, pragmatics was first discussed in relation to syntax and semantics. Moeschler (1994) views the relation between syntax and semantics on the one hand and pragmatics on the other hand as the “system” of language versus the “use” of this system. He represents the place of pragmatics in regard to linguistics in the following classification:



**Figure 1 The System and the Usage of Language<sup>10</sup>**

According to Moeschler (1994), language is composed of two complementary levels; the system and the usage of this system. The system of language involves syntax which deals with the rules of forming well-structured sentences, and semantics which is concerned with the rules of composition. Both the surface structure and the logical form constitute the meaning of the sentence. Therefore,

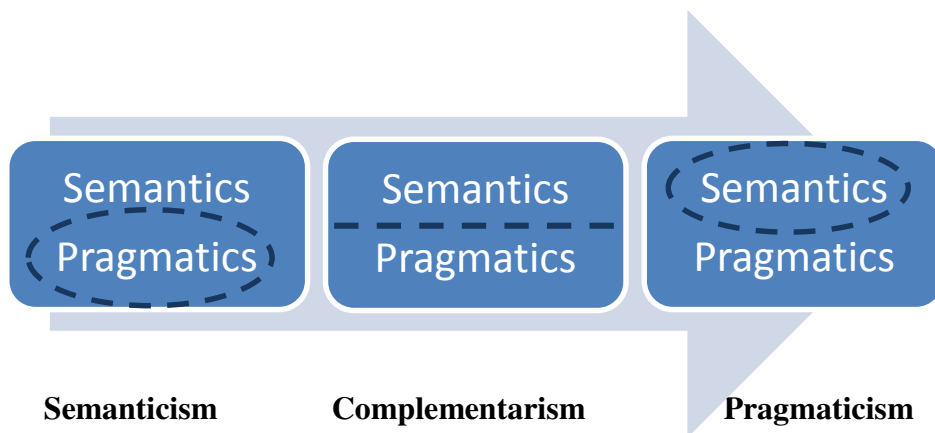
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<sup>10</sup> This classification is a translation of the original one in French cited in Moeschler (1994: 25). As for the term "speech laws", it is a literal translation of "lois de discours" which is a francophone equivalent to "conversational maxims" (Ducrot, 1979).

meaning in a language has to be accompanied by interpretation. This interpretation is provided by pragmatics. Interpretation refers to the process of assigning value to an utterance. Hence, the role of pragmatics is to complete the task that has been partly fulfilled by syntax and semantics. Pragmatics makes sense of what has been formed structurally and logically.

However, assigning meaning to an utterance may cause confusion as to which field this task is ascribed; to semantics or pragmatics. To handle this dilemma, Leech (1983: 6) distinguishes between two uses of the verb “to mean”. He clarifies that semantics “deals with meaning as a dyadic relation as in: “what does X mean?” while pragmatics “deals with meaning as a triadic relation as in: “what did you mean by X?”

Leech (1983: 6) further propounds that although pragmatics and semantics are “distinct, though complementary and interrelated fields of study”, it is not always easy to justify this relationship. Nevertheless, he presents three possible views to structure this relationship: semanticism (pragmatics inside semantics), pragmaticism (semantics inside pragmatics) and complementarism (semantics and pragmatics complement each other). The three views are diagrammed in the following figure (Leech, 1983: 6):



**Figure 2 The Relationship between Pragmatics and Semantics**

Akin to Leech's view of complementarism is one of the definitions of pragmatics posed by Levinson (1983: 12) when he states: "Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in a semantic theory". In other words, the task of semantics is to study meaning as derived from the components of a sentence, while pragmatics studies meaning as derived from the users and the context of the sentence.

Similarly, Channell (1994: 29) states that: "semantics + pragmatics = meaning". She points out that the hypothetical division between both fields can serve to add useful insights into language understanding. She indicates that although it is difficult at times to distinguish between semantic meaning and pragmatic meaning, it is still necessary to give clear assumptions about them.

Thus, she proposes that: "Within semantics are described those aspects of meaning which are unchanging across different occasions of utterance of a particular string or word-sense; within pragmatics are characterised those aspects of meaning which are changeable across contexts" (Channell, 1994: 29).

As expressed in the quotation, pragmatics provides different meanings for the same utterance with the help of its contextual factors while semantics provides a meaning that is 'unchanging' in different contexts. Meaning is best understood when both fields take part in the description process. This is further reinforced by Levinson (1983: 15):

From what we now know about the nature of meaning, a hybrid or modular account seems inescapable: there remains the hope that with two components, a semantics and a pragmatics working in tandem, each can be built on relatively homogeneous and systematic lines.

Thus, it is concluded that the distinction between semantics and pragmatics is the distinction between the meaning conventionally attached to words and sentences, and the meaning inspired by contextual information (Davies, 2003).

## **2. 5 Pragmatics and Speech Act Theory**

As discussed in the previous section, semantics deals with the meanings of words and sentences. Pragmatics, on the other hand, deals with how people produce and receive a speech act in social situations. A speech act is an utterance that has a functional purpose like requesting, promising or apologising. It is "the basic unit of communication" (Searle, 1969: 21), and in Cohen's words: "A speech act is a functional unit in communication" (1996a: 253).

By uttering a speech act, an activity is performed and it changes a certain state of



affairs, even on the intentional level (Mey, 2001). The concept of speech act was introduced by Austin (1962) in the discussion of the speech act theory in his book *How to do Things with Words*. It is regarded as “one of the most fruitful notions of contemporary linguistic theorizing” (Wunderlich, 1980: 291).

The speech act theory has received widespread interest in many fields like psychology, anthropology, philosophy and specifically in linguistic pragmatics as it is considered “one of the central phenomena that any general pragmatic theory must account for” (Levinson, 1983: 226). This is highlighted by Kissine (2013) who asserts that the notion of speech act is not only confined to pragmatics, it is also used in syntax and semantics, in ethics and epistemology, in clinical and experimental psychology and in literature and cinema studies.

The speech act theory is based on Austin's (1962) assumption that language is not only a means of saying but also of doing, and that words are used to do things more than just to convey information. The general focus of the speech act theory is on what speakers intend by their utterances. In order to fulfil the intended purpose of an utterance, there are necessary conditions that need to be met. They are called felicity conditions. Brown and Levinson (1987: 132) provide the following definition: “A felicity condition is one of the real-world conditions that must be met by aspects of the communicative event in order for a particular speech act to come off as intended”. Levinson (1983: 229) summarises Austin's categories of felicity conditions as follows:

- A. (i) There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect  
(ii) The circumstances and persons must be appropriate, as specified in the procedure.
- B. The procedure must be executed (i) correctly and (ii) completely.
- C. Often, (i) the persons must have the requisite thoughts, feelings and intentions, as specified in the procedure, and  
(ii) if consequent conduct is specified, then the relevant parties must do it.

As exemplified by Austin, the purpose of the utterance: “I pronounce you husband and wife” cannot be fulfilled unless it is expressed in a marriage ceremony by a priest who has the authority to do so. In his discussion of speech act theory, Austin identifies three types of a speech act:

1. Locutionary act: the basic act of saying something
2. Illocutionary act: the speaker's intention or the performance of an act in saying something
3. Perlocutionary act: the result or effect of what was said

As an illustration of this typology, the mere utterance of the expression ‘I am cold’ represents the locutionary act. The utterance might be a description of the speaker’s physical state, or it might be that the speaker wants the hearer to close the window, thus intending it as a ‘request’. The speaker’s intention represents the illocutionary act. When the hearer gets up and closes the window, the function of

the utterance is being performed and this is called a perlocutionary act. Performing a speech act brings about a new state, an obligation, or a commitment related to the speaker or the hearer (Wunderlich, 1980).

According to Levinson (1983), the second type 'illocutionary act' is normally associated with the term 'speech act' and that is the focus of Austin's discussion. Likewise, based on Austin's interpretation, Kissine (2013: 1) is inclined to use the two terms synonymously as "it is convenient to equate the speech act performed by way of an utterance with the illocutionary force of this utterance".

Searle (1969: 22) adopts the ideas of speech act theory from Austin and elaborates it further. His main argument is that "speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour. . . talking is performing acts according to rules". In 1976, Searle also develops Austin's concept on illocutionary acts and classifies them into five types: Representatives (Assertives), Directives, Commissive, Expressives, and Declarations. These types are summarised in the following table (taken from Searle, 1976: 10-13).

**Table 1 Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts**

| <b>Illocutionary Act</b> | <b>Clarification</b>   | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Representatives</b>   | to commit the speaker to something's being the case                                  | claiming, hypothesizing, describing, telling, insisting, asserting |
| <b>Directives</b>        | to get the hearer to do something  | ordering, requesting, daring, defying, challenging                 |
| <b>Commissives</b>       | to commit the speaker to some future course of action                                | promising, threatening, intending, refusing                        |
| <b>Expressives</b>       | to express a psychological state   | congratulating, thanking, condoling, welcoming, apologizing        |
| <b>Declarations</b>      | to bring about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred-to object | blessing, firing, baptizing, bidding, passing sentence             |

As can be shown in the table, each illocutionary act serves a particular purpose in communication and each one can be represented by a set of speech acts.

Three speech acts are explored in this research study (Request, Refusal and Apology). The current study investigates the importance of pragmatic competence which is best reflected in the appropriate use of speech acts. Hence, as this investigation covers different categories of speech acts. The choice fell on:

1. Request: representing the category of Directives
2. Refusal: representing the category of Commissives
3. Apology: representing the category of Expressives

These speech acts are discussed in the following sections.

### ***2. 5. 1 Requests***

Requests belong to the classification of directives as the speaker tries “to get the hearer to do something” (Searle, 1979: 13). The speech act of request has received greater attention than any other speech act in pragmatic studies (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Barron, 2003; Ueda, 2006; Safont Jordà, 2007; Octu and Zyrek, 2008; Jalilifar, 2009; Ogiermann, 2009a).

Its importance comes from its impositive nature which makes it difficult for foreign language learners. The speaker threatens the hearer’s face by imposing his/her freedom of action; therefore, a request is a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson, 1987). A face-threatening act is one that inherently affects the face of the speaker or the hearer by acting as opposed to the wants or desires of the other.

By face is meant “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 66). Requests can affect a person’s autonomy, freedom of choice and freedom from imposition. Thus, they should be worded carefully and in a way that the addressee does not feel irritated or face-threatened (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

In order to avoid losing face while interacting, a request needs to be used skilfully. For communication to take place successfully, conflict must be avoided, face must be saved and requests must be carried out appropriately (Barron, 2003).

Thus, a sufficient level of pragmatic competence is required to be able to master this speech act. Therefore, this study employs the speech act of request in the research tools to measure pragmatic competence. Additionally, requesting is one of the mostly used speech act in everyday communication.

### ***2. 5. 2 Refusals***

A refusal is a response of unwillingness to comply with an offer, a request, a suggestion or an invitation. The speech act of refusal is placed within the category of commissives since the speaker commits (not) to performing an action in the future (Searle, 1969). Refusals are face-threatening acts as the speaker contradicts the will or the expectation of the hearer. The face of either interlocutor is at risk when a refusal is performed. In order to avoid this, a speaker should pay attention to the social variables such as the social distance and power (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

The task of refusing is a complex one as it encompasses multiple indirect strategies to soften the embarrassment and to avoid misunderstandings. These strategies may include using apologies, providing reasons and offering future promises (Cohen, 1996b; Al-Eryani, 2007). Being able to know which strategy to use, how and when to use them is a difficult task for non-native speakers. How one says 'no' is more important than the response itself (Al-Kahtani, 2005). Takahashi and Beebe (1987) highlight that saying 'no' is a major cross-cultural 'sticking point'. They point out that: "The inability to say 'no' clearly and politely, though not too

directly, has led many non-native speakers to offend their interlocutors” (Takahashi and Beebe, 1987: 133).

A foreign language learner is liable to transfer the cultural norms of refusals in his/her target language which may result in inappropriate utterances. Thus, a high level of pragmatic competence is required to perform refusals successfully (Allami and Naeimi, 2011; Aksoyalp, 2009).

Due to the sensitive nature of refusal and to the skills required for its performance, it has been chosen in this study as a measurement tool of pragmatic competence. Executing this speech act appropriately is indicative of one’s pragmatic competence (Al-Kahtani, 2005). Chen (1995: 6) also stresses that “refusals as a sensitive, subtle, and high-risk FTA, can provide much insight into one’s pragmatics”.<sup>11</sup>

### ***2. 5. 3 Apologies***

An apology is an utterance that reflects remorse or regret. It is required when there is a violation of any social conduct (Cohen, 1983). The apology can be expressed by a single word “sorry”, or by a statement that shows an offer of repair or a reason of damage (Cohen, 1983, 1996b). As apologies express a psychological state, they fall under Searle’s (1976) classification of expressives. An apology is a face-threatening act for the speaker and a face-saving act for the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Blum-Kulka and Olsthain, 1984). The hearer’s

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<sup>11</sup> FTA: Face-threatening Act

face is saved by receiving an expression of regret of the offence, and the speaker's face is threatened in case the apology is not accepted.

According to Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper and Ross (1995: 158), after requests, apologies are "the next-best studied speech act in descriptive, cross-cultural, and interlanguage pragmatics". That is because they are called upon for remedial verbal action when an offense is made. An apology is an important speech act as it plays an essential social role in communication by restoring harmony (Ogiermann, 2009b). In a similar vein, Leech (1983: 125) depicts that an offence results in 'an imbalance' in the relation between the speaker and the hearer. Apologising, therefore, can be considered "an attempt to restore the equilibrium" between them.

As apologies are used to compensate for damage or offence, Ogiermann (2009b) stresses that they need to be fulfilled carefully because any failure might be interpreted as another offence. This is affirmed by Cohen (1983: 20) as he indicates that: "The act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to set things right". In order to set things right, an apology needs to be expressed with regard to the degree of the offence, and the social variables between the interlocutors such as power and distance (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). Thus, a sufficient level of pragmatic competence is necessary to perform this speech act successfully.

To sum up, the speech act theory has received the widest interest among the theories of language use. Its application in pragmatics paves the way for a better



understanding of using utterances to perform actions. Bearing in mind the previous discussion of the speech act theory, it is regarded as an analytic lens to explore pragmatic competence. Equally important, there is another theory which has a great impact on facilitating comprehension of language use; that is, politeness theory.

The following section provides a discussion of politeness theory, its use and importance in pragmatic research and in this study in particular.

## **2. 6 Pragmatics and Politeness**

According to Thomas (1995), the term politeness can cause confusion as it is liable to different interpretations. She points out that “Within pragmatics, most people have been careful to define ‘politeness’ as a pragmatic/communicative phenomenon and not to equate it with any moral or psychological disposition towards being nice to one’s interlocutor” (Thomas, 1995: 178).

In the field of pragmatics, politeness has been associated with the theories which investigate politeness phenomenon and speech act research across cultures. Barron (2003) clarifies that the pragmatic concept of politeness is different from a ‘sociolinguistic concept’ and a ‘lay concept’. The sociolinguistic concept of politeness refers to the “obligatory signals of respect or familiarity, which derive from such characteristics as age, sex, family position and social position” (Barron, 2003: 14-15), while the lay concept is concerned with the proper social behaviour

and the consideration of others such as etiquette conventions. On the other hand, politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon refers to the set of strategies which a speaker employs in order to attain a variety of goals like promoting or maintaining harmonious interpersonal relations (Thomas, 1995; Barron, 2003).

One of the earliest theories on politeness is Grice's (1975: 45) formulation of what he calls the 'Cooperative Principle' (CP) which reads: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". His main argument indicates that speakers are rational individuals and that they have goals in common; therefore, conversations are guided by a cooperative principle. He puts forward four maxims for conversation:

1. Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as required
2. Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true
3. Relation: Be relevant
4. Manner: Be perspicuous

When a speaker fails to fulfil a maxim, a hearer attempts to understand the message by deducing from the utterance, this is what Grice (1989: 30) calls 'implicature'. Grice's intent is to set the ground for achieving efficient communication by his cooperative principle, but it has been criticised for being interpreted as 'a moral code of behaviour' (Mey, 2001).

Building on Grice (1975), Leech (1983: 81) introduces 'Politeness Principle' (PP) which states: "Minimize the expression of impolite beliefs; maximize the

expression of polite beliefs”. Leech believes that the CP is important but not sufficient because it does not explain why speakers are indirect in their expressions; therefore, he sees that his PP serves to complement the CP. Like Grice, Leech presents a list of maxims to be observed in conversation, such as: Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy. These maxims are intended as statements of norms to guide conversations. However, the unrestricted number of maxims has been viewed as a point of weakness in Leech’s approach to politeness in addition to a lack of empirical basis to support them (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Thomas, 1995).

There is a vast amount of literature that investigates theories of politeness because it is a large and complex field of study and has various facets. However, the present research will deal with one facet; that is, the face-saving view of politeness explored by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Their politeness theory is considered one of the most significant and influential frameworks in politeness research.

### ***2. 6. 1 Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory***

Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is built on the concept of face. Goffman (1967) was the first to introduce the concept of ‘face’. It is defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself” (Goffman, 1967: 5). According to Goffman, face is a ‘sacred’ thing which can be saved or lost, depending on the routes one follows while interacting with others. Goffman (1967: 12) points out:

To study face-saving is to study the traffic rules of social interaction; one learns about the code the person adheres to in his movement across the paths and designs of others, but not where he is going, or why he wants to get there.

Based on Goffman's concept of face, Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) adopt this notion and affirm that "face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction". This maintenance requires cooperation among interactants that is based on 'the mutual vulnerability of face'.

Politeness theory is "often referred to as the 'face-saving' theory of politeness" (Watts, 2003: 85). The principal objective of this theory is to assert the value of face. This can be done by attending to the wants of the two aspects which Brown and Levinson assign to face. They divide face into two related aspects: negative and positive. Negative face refers to the individual's want to be free from imposition, and positive face reflects the desire to be approved of and appreciated. If an individual's face is liable to be impeded by an utterance, this utterance is characterised as face-threatening. A face-threatening act can cause damage to the speaker's or the hearer's face when it goes against the self-image of the interlocutors.

In order to minimise the effect of this damage, certain strategies are used in conversations. Therefore, politeness strategies will either aim at maintaining the hearer's positive face (positive politeness), or be directed at avoiding imposition on the hearer's freedom (negative politeness). This is another area of interest in politeness theory; it focuses on reducing the potentiality of the effect of

inconvenience of a face-threatening act, which is referred to by Watts (2003: 85) as 'minimisation of face-loss'.

The use of strategies in an interaction depends on three factors or social variables as illustrated by Brown and Levinson: power (P), distance (D) and rank of imposition (R). The first variable refers to the relative power which the speaker holds over the hearer, for example, between a boss and an employee, a teacher and a student. The variable of social distance indicates the degree of familiarity between the speaker and the hearer, for example whether they are friends or strangers. As for the third variable of imposition, it refers to the degree of interference with the hearer's freedom of action, for example the degree of imposition when asking someone to open the window compared with requesting to borrow someone's car. The greater the imposition on the hearer, the more polite the speaker is expected to be. Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that these factors influence the assessment of the seriousness of the face-threatening act, which in turn determine the strategy to be used.

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory is the most influential theory to date (Thomas, 1995). Barron (2003: 19) acknowledges that "Brown and Levinson's theory has been applauded for its insightful explanations into the working of society, for the questions it has raised, and finally, for its tangibility and, thus, ease of application to further empirical research endeavours".

## ***2. 6. 2 Politeness and Culture***

As stressed by Thomas (1995: 157): “We cannot assess politeness reliably out of context; it is not the linguistic form alone which renders the speech act polite or impolite, but the linguistic form, the context of utterance, and the relationship between speaker and hearer”. The context of utterance and the relationship between interlocutors are highly attached to cultures.

Hofstede (1991: 5) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. This programming is influenced by one’s social environment. Culture is also described by Kramsch (1998: 10) as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings”. It is involved in everything people do in their society. As language is an aspect of human behaviour, it is strongly shaped by culture (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2011). Similarly, Kramsch (1998:3) maintains that when language “is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways”.

Furthermore, Barron (2003) highlights that culture is a broad concept that is difficult to be linked to a unanimous definition. In spite of this, there is a set of elements which characterise it. She states that “culture is (a) man-made and learnable, (b) related to human groups rather than to individuals, and lastly, (c) found in symbols and action” (Barron, 2003: 24).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), culture plays a major role in the different assessment of social variables (power, distance and rank of imposition) and consequently choosing politeness strategies to perform speech acts. They point out that: “Each of these three social factors may be weighted differently in different cultures, leading to culture-specific views of the relative degree of face-threat and, thus, culture-specific strategy choices in a single situation” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 243).

Consequently, misunderstanding occurs as a result of applying the cultural norms of one’s language instead of that of the target language. In the words of Barron (2003: 25): “Where there is a lack of awareness of cultural distinctiveness, the home (L1) culture is looked on as the norm; the target language culture as deviant”. She maintains that the goal of language learning should not be directed to mastering the system of signs without referring to the contexts where these signs will be used. This is asserted by Rose and Kasper (2001) as they note that linguistic knowledge is not enough for foreign language learners to communicate effectively.

In this regard, Thomas (1983) clarifies that to speak a language well does not necessarily indicate following the cultural norms, but rather be aware of these norms in the first place. She comments: “Our only concern as language teachers is to ensure that the learner knows what s/he is doing” (Thomas, 1983: 109). In agreement with this view, it is important to help students’ become aware of language use in different contexts. And this is part of developing their pragmatic competence as aspired in this study.

In conclusion, the first part of this chapter has dealt with the basic theoretical background for the current study. Although the realm of pragmatics is very wide and rich, this part has highlighted key concepts that are essential for the research topic. The subsequent part is devoted to exploring pragmatics in the context of ESP.



## ***PART TWO***

### **Pragmatics in the ESP Context**

The second part of this chapter will be devoted to investigating the use and importance of pragmatics in the context of English for Specific Purposes. The discussion proceeds to the heart of the current study.

This section starts with looking into the liaison between the fields of Pragmatics and ESP.

#### **2. 7 ESP and Pragmatics**

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is an approach to language teaching that focuses mainly on the learner's needs or reasons for learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Hutchinson and Waters clarify that ESP is not a particular type of language, nor does it involve a different methodology or teaching material, but rather its content and method depend on the learner's reasons for learning. Being viewed differently by Robinson (1991), ESP is seen as an enterprise that on the one hand involves education, training and practice, and on the other hand draws on three fields of knowledge: language, pedagogy and the student's discipline.

Based on Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), ESP is a multi-disciplinary approach which is reflected in two ways: its involvement with other disciplines

through teaching and its openness to benefit from the insights and research outcomes of other disciplines. They point out that “The teaching of English for Specific Purposes has generally been seen as a separate activity within English Language Teaching (ELT), and ESP research as an identifiable component of applied linguistics research” (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 1).

Not only is it connected with research in applied linguistics, but with other domains as well. The liability of ESP to collaborate with other disciplines has been a topic of interest and continuous investigation. Recently in March 2013, an international conference was held in Paris to discuss this collaboration under the theme “Domains, Territories and Borders in English for Specific Purposes”. The papers presented at the 34<sup>th</sup> conference of the “Groupe d’Étude et de Recherche en Anglais de Spécialité” (GERAS) have focused on the need to extend ESP studies in various aspects, namely, linguistic, didactic and cultural. It has been discussed that ESP can draw insights from and also affect other domains and that it is currently witnessing a new phase in which it stretches beyond its traditional frontiers.<sup>12</sup>

### ***2. 7. 1 Exploring the Liaison***

The current study is interested in this sort of collaboration. It reflects a liaison between ESP and pragmatics by addressing a pragmatic issue to be developed in

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.geras.fr/dossiers/cat.php?val=37\\_colloque+2013](http://www.geras.fr/dossiers/cat.php?val=37_colloque+2013)

a context of ESP. In particular, it aims at promoting pragmatic competence for ESP students. Developing the communicative side of language is a neglected area in ESP teaching. In teaching English for specific purposes, it can be observed that much attention is paid to developing the linguistic (structural and lexical) repertoire of students in relation to their specific fields. What happens as a consequence is that when they graduate and come in contact with any speakers of English whether natives or non-natives, they use the skeleton of language which they have already learned and apply their own norms of communication as discussed in a previous section. Consequently, they end up producing or receiving messages that might be misunderstood.

Here comes the role of pragmatics. Pragmatics gives guidance on language usage for better understanding in production and reception. Some of the questions that fall within the interest of pragmatics include knowing which norms of communication to use, how speakers can use a language to express their intentions, and when to use certain forms and with whom. As stated in the words of Mey (2001: 12): “pragmatics is needed if we want a fuller, deeper and generally more reasonable account of human language behaviour . . . outside of pragmatics, no understanding”.

Furthermore, pragmatics is of vital use to the students of ESP. It can be assumed that their future profession would require a status to be respected and a face to be saved. As professionals and practitioners, they would always desire to avoid embarrassing situations. Thus, there is a need to foster ESP students’

pragmatic competence to enable them to become self-confident speakers of the language in addition to their confidence in their professional skills. As argued by Latorre and Kaulen (1985), in most ESP instruction there is an assumption that the professional or occupational needs of learners deserve to be given a priority at the expense of neglecting the communicative side of the language. Therefore, the communicative aspect needs to be improved in order to enable learners to express themselves appropriately in different contexts inside and outside their professional or academic fields.

### ***2. 7. 2 Previous Studies on the relationship between ESP and Pragmatics***

In the literature, the link between pragmatics and ESP has been dealt with in various ways. Triki (2002) argues that pragmatics inherently comprises English for Specific Purposes. He comments:

ESP is a goal-oriented type of English specially tailored to customer specifications. The matching between language structure and social function is exactly the domain of Pragmatics. In other words, Pragmatics will be called upon to mediate between the customers' needs identified through Needs Analysis and the linguistic structures taught in ESP (Triki, 2002: 2).

Similarly, Clennell (1999) investigates developing speaking skills in English for Academic Purposes. He asserts that raising learners' pragmatic awareness can reinforce their confidence in oral skills and consequently improve their academic performance. Reinforcing this point, Usó-Juan & Martinez-Flor (2006a: 457)

maintain that:

Language learners need to be exposed to appropriate input in the classroom, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) foreign language settings where learners' opportunities to be in contact with the target language outside the classroom context are scarce or inexistent.

Moreover, in a recent study, Sirikhan and Prapphal (2011) attempted to assess the pragmatic production of Tourism students from different levels of English proficiency in Taiwan. The findings of their study provided insights into ESP and EOP teaching and assessment, particularly in hospitality services for Thai students<sup>13</sup>.

Another study was carried out by Ildiko (2008) who analysed four ESP publications to assess the presence of pragmatic awareness with an emphasis on conversation openings and closings. The ESP publications which he examined were two for tourism (High Season, and English for International Tourism) and two for business (Head for Business, and New Insights into Business). He found out that pragmatic awareness is not given enough attention in three of the publications. These textbooks did not provide a proper set of formulae for opening and closing conversations. He suggested that more emphasis should be given to teaching language in use.

In a similar vein, Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler (2004) conducted a study that aims at investigating pragmatic awareness and production across six ESP

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<sup>13</sup> EOP: English for Occupational Purposes

disciplines, namely, English Philology, Primary Education, Law, Business Administration and Management, Computer Science Engineering and Agricultural Technical Engineering. They suggested that there is a need to integrate pragmatic aspects in the teaching of English in the disciplines examined.

Likewise, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006b) provided insights into the fields of pragmatics and ESP by looking into learners' requesting behaviour in the foreign language context across two ESP disciplines (English Philology and Computer Science Engineering). They offered some pedagogical implications which could be adopted for different ESP disciplines, and proposed that "pragmatics should be integrated in different foreign language learning syllabi attending to learners' needs in a given discipline" (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006b: 39).

In the light of the above studies, it can be said that since pragmatics is the study of language from the viewpoint of its users, it is a field which is basically characterised by the emphasis given to users. Thus, in this study the 'user' is not the language learner in general, but the ESP learner. A distinguishing factor in this research is its specific context of study in achieving a pragmatic goal. It deals with medical students as the case to be chosen from the ESP context. The following section sheds light on the significance of this choice.

## **2. 8 The Case within ESP: Medical Students**

There are two main reasons for selecting medical students for this study. The first reason is related to the need of providing medical students with the essential tools of successful communication in English. The English language plays a vital role in the global scene, especially in medicine and science. It is the language of international journals and scientific publications, and the means of communication in international conferences.

In the medical field, in particular, students' chances to join the English speaking world are wide. Their demand for mastering the language is necessary in order to enhance their confidence and reduce misunderstanding in communication. Their future profession will impose a position to be respected and a face to be saved. Thus, being competent in English is a fundamental prerequisite for the medical student. This competence does not only refer to linguistic competence, but also to pragmatic competence, which would enable speakers to express themselves properly in different situations.

As enhanced by Eslami-Rasekh and Noora (2008: 362): "Acquiring grammatical knowledge alone is not sufficient; rather learners may also have to acquire and practice different sets of sociolinguistic rules by studying and paying attention to what is considered to be generally appropriate in the target culture".

To be a successful doctor does not only concern excelling in the field of specialty, but also communicating efficiently in English in all walks of life. This is

highlighted by Horňáková (2009: 155) as she states: “An ability to communicate well belongs to the most important knowledge of each health care professional and a social contact is an unreplaceable part of health care profession”. She also asserts that the use of foreign languages in health care profession will increase in the future in this globalized world. Therefore, it is necessary to learn and develop communication skills in a foreign language.

The second reason for selecting medical students is the tendency to investigate an area that has not received much attention in the research carried out on teaching English for medical students. As can be observed in relation to ESP research studies in general, much attention is paid to ESP teaching materials and ESP methodology in order to provide learners with the appropriate language in their specialties. In order to illustrate this trend, the following review sheds light on the research conducted in English for medical students.

Several studies have dealt with the needs of medical students in learning English. Hwang and Lin (2010) carried out a study that provided a description of the linguistic needs of medical students and faculty members in Taiwan. One year later, Hwang presented some pedagogical implications based on the previous study in order to integrate the received linguistic needs with a pedagogical practice (Hwang, 2011). In a similar vein, Chia et al. (1999) conducted a study to find out and describe the perceptions of medical students’ needs in the English language. In a study at Rangsit University in Thailand, Naruenatwatana and Vijchulata (2001)



explored the needs of medical students in the use of academic English by using three sets of questionnaires for three groups: the medical students, the teachers of English and the subject teachers. Using a different research tool, Shi, Corcos and Storey (2001) examined the possibility of using authentic data from students' performance to develop an English course that addresses students' needs in clinical training.

Other research areas investigated the importance of English language proficiency for medical students like Eggly, Musial and Smulowitz (1998) who examined the relationship between proficiency in the English language and success as a medical resident. Similarly, Malcolm (2009) studied the extent of awareness among Arab medical students regarding their reading strategies and how this is linked with their proficiency in the English language. A different area of research was tackled by Wang, Liang and Ge (2008) who presented a corpus-based lexical study of the most frequently used medical academic words in articles on medical research. On the other hand, Dahm (2011) explored the perception and use of everyday language and medical terminology among international medical graduates in a medical ESP course in Australia.

According to the review of these studies, it can be observed that the linguistic needs of medical students in English have been investigated thoroughly. All the above studies highlighted the linguistic aspect when learning English for medical students. Consequently, this has informed the present study to fill a gap in the

literature by taking a different angle of research. It will not deal with the linguistic needs of medical students. Rather, it aims to focus on the communicative aspect of language and the necessity of enabling medical students to become efficient communicators in the future. This will be achieved by developing their pragmatic competence which constitutes a solid base in effective communication. The following section presents a discussion of pragmatic competence and the areas related to it.

## **2. 9 Getting into the Core: Pragmatic Competence**

Highlighting the importance of pragmatic competence, Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan and Reynolds (1991: 4) assert: “Speakers who do not use pragmatically appropriate language run the risk of appearing uncooperative at the least, or, more seriously, rude or insulting”. Similarly, as indicated by Murray (2009: 1): “The consequences of misinterpretation or the inappropriate use of language can range from unfortunate to catastrophic”. Therefore, as the “stakes can often be high”, he argues that being pragmatically competent is critical for successful communication.

This issue of misunderstanding results from the lack of pragmatic competence on the part of the speaker who has learned the linguistic forms in isolation from their sociocultural associations. Chen (1996: 14) reiterates that: “What a foreign language learner often lacks is pragmatic competence, which does not necessarily

develop with the acquisition of grammatical competence”.

In fact, both components are of paramount significance for language learning and, in particular, for effective communication. This draws support from researchers like Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983). Leech divides linguistics into grammar: knowledge of the decontextualized system of language, and pragmatics: knowledge of the language usage in different situations. Likewise, Thomas proposes that linguistic competence is composed of two components: grammatical competence and pragmatic competence.

Pragmatic competence constitutes a fundamental part of a learner's communicative competence (Kasper, 1997), or rather as expressed in the words of Safont Jordà (2005: 66): “it is one of the main components of the global construct of communicative competence”. Departing from this point, it is important to look at the position of pragmatic competence in relation to communicative competence. As rightly stated by Barron (2003), research into pragmatic competence came out as a result of the intriguing interest in communicative competence.

## ***2. 9. 1 Pragmatic Competence and Communicative Competence***

The concept of communicative competence was coined by Hymes (1967, 1972). It emerged as a reaction against Chomsky's notion of competence which entails knowledge of the rules of grammar solely, irrespective of any social or contextual considerations. Hymes' concept of communicative competence consists

of linguistic competence as well as sociolinguistic competence. According to him, it is not enough to know the system of a language, but also to be able to use this tacit knowledge in different contexts.

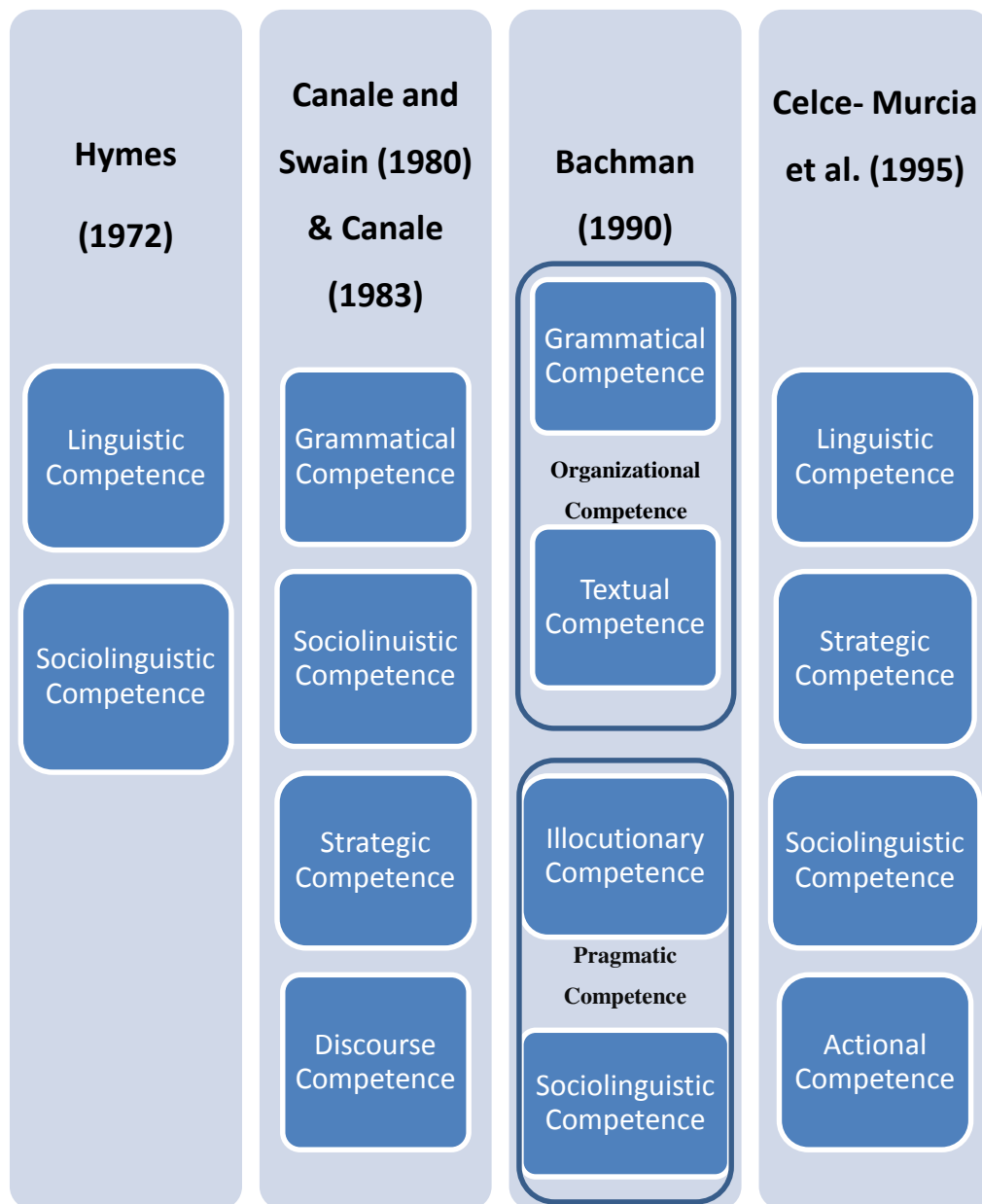
Barron (2003) explains that Hymes' view of language has shifted the attention to the study of language in use rather than in isolation. This is apparent in the study of Canale and Swain (1980) that followed a similar investigation of language in use. They developed Hymes' notion of communicative competence and proposed a new model. In Canale and Swain's (1980) model, communicative competence includes grammatical competence which entails knowledge of lexis, morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology, sociolinguistic competence which involves choices of language in use in relation to the socio-cultural context, and strategic competence which comprises verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that are used to enhance communication or to fill in the gaps whenever there is a communication breakdown. Canale (1983) proposed an additional competence to three competences, namely, discourse competence that is concerned with coherence and cohesion of a series of utterances.

In the previous models, pragmatic competence is embedded within sociolinguistic competence. It is Bachman (1990) who, for the first time, represents pragmatic competence ostensibly in his model of communicative language ability. Bachman divides communicative language ability into language competence, strategic competence and psycho-physiological mechanisms. Pragmatic competence is manifested in the language competence division. According to

Bachman, language competence includes organizational competence and pragmatic competence.

Organizational competence consists of grammatical competence and textual competence which is the knowledge of cohesion and coherence; this is the same as Canale's discourse competence. Pragmatic competence is composed of sociolinguistic competence: knowledge of the appropriate use of linguistic forms in different contexts, and illocutionary competence: knowledge of speech acts and language functions. Illocutionary competence is termed as functional competence in a modified version of this model by Bachman and Palmer (1996).

In addition, the model developed by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995) illustrates a similar division where communicative competence is composed of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, discourse competence and actional competence. In this model pragmatic competence is referred to as actional competence as it reflects "competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent" based on the knowledge of speech acts (Celce-Murcia et al. (1995: 17). The figure on the following page summarises the models of communicative competence.



**Figure 3 Models of Communicative Competence**

Based on the previous discussion, it is observed that pragmatic competence forms an integral component of communicative competence. The common idea in the above-discussed models signifies that communicative competence does not depend on grammatical knowledge only; it rather requires a development of

pragmatic competence and other types of competence.

Pragmatic competence is a broad concept that has been looked at differently according to the perspective of various researchers as shown in the preceding models. One of the earliest and widely cited definitions of pragmatic competence is that of Thomas (1983). She defines pragmatic competence as: “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context” (Thomas, 1983: 92). This ability is reflected in two aspects: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. The former is related to the knowledge of the pragmatic force of linguistic items, and the latter refers to the appropriate use of language in different social contexts. Leech (1983: 10-11) describes sociopragmatics as ‘sociological interface of pragmatics’ and pragmalinguistics as being related to ‘the more linguistic end of pragmatics’. These two aspects are mirrored in Barron’s (2003: 10) definition of pragmatic competence as: “knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realising particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts and finally, knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular languages’ linguistic resources”.

A similar definition is provided by Murray (2009: 239): “Pragmatic competence can be defined as an understanding of the relationship between form and context that enables us, accurately and appropriately, to express and interpret intended meaning”. Likewise, Fraser (2010: 15) defines pragmatic competence as “the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-

cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocutor as it was intended”.

These definitions revolve around a common point: being pragmatically competent means being able to produce and understand the intended meaning of a message. Nevertheless, the task is not as easy as it seems. Various factors whether linguistic or social influence the clarity of the message and misunderstanding might take place. This misunderstanding is reflected as pragmatic failure which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

### ***2. 9. 2 Pragmatic Awareness and Pragmatic Failure***

As already indicated, speech acts can be represented differently in different linguistic or cultural contexts and this might cause misunderstanding. Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) state that it is impossible to teach all speech acts in all contexts. What is possible and more important is “to make students aware that pragmatic functions exist in language, specifically in discourse, in order that they may be more aware of these functions as learners” (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991: 5). Therefore, making students aware pragmatically is a necessary initial step in developing pragmatic competence.

Pragmatic awareness involves recognition of “how language forms are used appropriately in context” (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005: 200). Nikula (2002) argues that although there are many research studies which have investigated pragmatic awareness, coming into an explicit definition of the term is a difficult task. He



proposes that an indicator of pragmatic awareness can be manifested in: “Participants’ attention to appropriateness of language use and various features oriented to the interpersonal level of language” (Nikula, 2002: 451). Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) suggest that awareness-raising activities should be integrated in classroom instruction, especially in the EFL setting.

Likewise, Kondo (2004) denotes that awareness raising can be used as one of the approaches for teaching pragmatics. This involves making learners analyse, think and reflect their own speech in different contexts. He points out that awareness raising can make learners pay attention to different variables in language use and accordingly “learners will be able to apply the pragmatic awareness acquired in class in whatever setting they may encounter in the future” (Kondo, 2004: 67). This view is also shared by Eslami-Rasekh (2005) who asserts that developing pragmatic awareness in classrooms would enable students to communicate better outside classrooms.

Taking the importance of pragmatic awareness in consideration, it can be said that a low level of pragmatic awareness leads to pragmatic failure.

Pragmatic failure is defined by Thomas (1983: 91) as “the inability to understand what is meant by what is said”. It is the main cause of communication breakdown and misunderstandings (Thomas, 1983; Barron, 2003).

Thomas (1983) distinguishes between two types of pragmatic failure: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. She clarifies that: “pragmalinguistic failure is basically a linguistic problem, caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of

pragmatic force, sociopragmatic failure stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour” (Thomas, 1983: 99).

Pragmalinguistic failure occurs as a result of the inappropriate transfer of speech act strategies from one language to another, or the different pragmatic force given to utterances which are equivalent semantically or syntactically in the two languages. Pragmatic transfer refers to the influence of L1 sociocultural competence or cross-linguistic transfer (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). As exemplified by Thomas, the utterance: “*would you like to read*” is interpreted as a conventionalized polite request in a British classroom, while it would be often understood as a question of preference in a Russian classroom, to which the students might respond as: “*no, I wouldn’t*”.

On the other hand, sociopragmatic failure occurs as a result of cross-cultural mismatch in the assessment of social distance and relative power, of what makes an utterance impositive, and of when to avoid a face-threatening act. Thomas stresses the point that the term ‘cross-cultural’ does not necessarily refer to the communication between natives and non-natives, but any interaction between individuals who do not have a shared linguistic or cultural background; this can be applied, for example, to a manager and an employee, a teacher and students. An example of sociopragmatic failure is when the speaker considers the social status of the hearer to be lower than what it really is and, therefore, produces an utterance that is judged as impolite from the hearer’s viewpoint (Barron, 2003).

The negative effects of pragmatic failure on communication might range from slight to serious misunderstandings. Richard and Sukwiat (1983: 116) mention an example of a pragmatic failure in which a Japanese speaker expresses gratitude in English by saying “I am sorry” because saying “Thank you” is not sincere enough. This makes the other interlocutor feeling perplexed ‘why sorry’! They ascribe this failure to the fact that one routine might be used differently. Thank you, for example, can be used in English to accept an offer but to refuse one in Malay.

Hence, Thomas (1983) stresses the point that language teachers should ensure that learners ‘know’ what they are doing. Similarly, Amaya (2008: 20) proposes that students should be provided “with the necessary tools to make adequate pragmatic decisions in the L2”. In other words, they should be made aware pragmatically.

## **2. 10 Summary**

This chapter has shed light on the main areas of pragmatics in the literature with regard to the current study. The discussion was presented in two parts. The first part dealt with exploring the field of pragmatics. This included a discussion on the different definitions of pragmatics and how the context constitutes an essential factor in decoding the meaning of utterances. This was followed by describing the development of pragmatics in three phases throughout the history of the discipline. The discussion also tackled two important theories in pragmatics, namely; speech act theory and politeness theory and how these theories are considered significant in the investigation of pragmatic studies. As this study is interested in enhancing the importance of pragmatic competence in the context of ESP, the second part of this chapter was devoted to exploring the link between pragmatics and ESP. This involved exploring the studies in the literature that investigated this liaison. This was followed by a discussion on pragmatic competence as it constitutes the focal point of interest in the study. The following chapter discusses the methodological process adopted in carrying out the current investigation.

# CHAPTER 3:

## Methodology

This chapter starts by describing the background context of the study. The description includes a brief overview of the history and educational system of Yemen, where the study takes place. After that, the chapter will discuss the methodological processes which have been used to investigate the research questions. The research design will be illustrated by indicating the type of method which has been followed in conducting the research. Next, there is a description of the profile of the participants who have taken part in the study. This will be followed by presenting the instruments of data collection and how these instruments have been piloted. The chapter ends with describing the process of data collection.

### **3. 1 Contextual Background**

In this section, an overview of the contextual background of the study will be presented. As the title of the thesis indicates, the study takes place at Taiz University in the Republic of Yemen. It is, therefore, crucially important to shed light on the context of Yemen. This part provides a brief overview of Yemen's historical background and the status of English in the country in order to relate the study to its context and understand its relevance.

#### ***3. 1. 1 Brief History of Yemen***

Yemen is located in the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula in the southwest of Asia as shown in the map below. It is bordered by Oman to the east, the Red Sea

to the west, Saudi Arabia to the north, and the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the south. Additionally, Yemen comprises some small islands in the Red Sea along with a large island called “Socotra” in the Arabian Sea.



Figure 4 Map of Yemen<sup>14</sup>

Yemen has a total area of 527,968 sq. km<sup>15</sup>. It has an estimated population of about 23,154,000 (Central Statistical Organization, 2011). The capital is Sana'a and the major cities are Aden, Taiz, Hodeidah, and Mukalla. Islam is the official religion of the country where the Islamic Law is the source of all laws. Arabic - the literary and cultural language of the broader Arab world - is the official language in Yemen.

<sup>14</sup> World Atlas. Map of Yemen. <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/ye.htm>

<sup>15</sup> CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html>

The people of Yemen speak a Yemeni dialect of Arabic, which is represented by three major dialects according to the major geographical zones of the country: Sanaani, Taizzi-Adeni and Hadrami. Two minor dialects: Gulf Arabic and Egyptian Arabic have also arrived in Yemen with modern migrations. Hindi, Somali and other African languages are spoken by a few immigrants (Lewis, 2009). There are also two major South Arabian languages: Mehri (spoken in the far east of Yemen) and Socotri (spoken on the island of Socotra). These two languages remain in a chiefly oral capacity. They represent a very small percentage; each represents 0.3% (Leclerc, 2011).

Before 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1990 (Unification Day), the Republic of Yemen consisted of two states. In the North there was the Yemen Arab Republic (1962-1990), and the southern part was called the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (1967-1990). Prior to the sixties, North Yemen was a monarchy ruled by the Imams, and South Yemen was occupied by the British who saw a significant location in the port of Aden to protect their routes through the Red Sea (Chander and Palan, 2004).<sup>16</sup> After the unification, Yemen started to establish a new spirit on all sides, politically, economically, socially and educationally. Whitaker (2000) precisely summarised the situation as follows.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Imams were the kings belonging to Hamid Addin Family who ruled North Yemen from 1918 to 1962. They formed what then was called "Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.al-bab.com/yemen/artic/mei63.htm>



The unification of north and south Yemen was greeted with a mixture of surprise and consternation: here were two regimes which, apart from shared nationality, had wildly differing outlooks. The south was Marxist and relatively secular; the north a traditional Arab society with strong elements of tribalism. Alarming for some of its royalist neighbours, Yemen not only unified but announced the birth of a multi-party democracy.

### ***3. 1. 2 The Educational System: An Overview***

The system of education in the Republic of Yemen is regulated by a set of articles in the Constitution. These articles refer to the obligations of the government and the rights of the citizens in relation to education. Article 53 of the Constitution (1994) reads:

Education is a right for all citizens. The state shall guarantee education in accordance with the law through building various schools and cultural and educational institutions. Basic education is obligatory. The state shall do its best to obliterate illiteracy and give special care to expanding technical and vocational education.<sup>18</sup>

This article of the constitution and other related articles provide a strong foundation for education. The current educational system in the Republic has been preceded by different attempts to build a well-structured system. Thus, in order to understand the current structure of education and how it has developed, it is important to see how it was before the unification. In fact, the educational system differed greatly in

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<sup>18</sup>Constitution of the Republic of Yemen: <http://www.parliament.gov.ye/Arabic/Constit.pdf>

the north state from that of the south due to the different political and social conditions as will be shown in the following sections.

❖ ***Pre-unification Period: North Yemen***

During the rule of the Imams (1918-1962), the country was backward economically, socially and educationally (Ba'abad, 2003). The only form of education available was through "Kuttab"; a religious school in which children were taught Quran and some religious education. The imams knew that secular education might open Yemen to the outside world and that would endanger their reign. It was to their benefit to keep the country isolated (Ba'abad, 2003; Gray, 2002). Although in the last twenty years of their reign (1948-1962) there had been an introduction of secular school system, the schools were in a limited number and mainly for males.

The school system was divided in three levels: primary (six years), preparatory (four years) and secondary (four years). This slow motion of improvement took place with the help of some Egyptian delegations who contributed to participate in teaching, training and designing educational programmes. However, the percentage of learners was only about 20% of the population. At that time, many Yemenis had to travel abroad to pursue their secondary or tertiary education (Ba'abad, 2003).

When the revolution took place in 1962 to overthrow the Imams, the new military government started to secularize and improve the educational system.

With the cooperation of Egypt, a large number of schools were established and new topics were introduced for the first time. The Ministry of Education was established in this post-revolutionary period. There came a new age of awareness and growth of public education. The school system was divided in three subsequent phases: six-year primary education, three-year preparatory education and three-year secondary education. This was followed by tertiary education at a university in the country or abroad.

A new era began with the foundation of the University of Sana'a in 1970 with the help of Kuwait. The university started with only three faculties (Science, Arts and Law) and it comprised 61 students. In the late 1980s, the number of students grew to over 5000 students (Gray, 2002). Education was still in its primary stages because only 6 to 8 percent of the annual budget was devoted to education and that was why the system had to rely on external aid to a great extent.

#### ❖ ***Pre-unification Period: South Yemen***

As there were two political stages that had an impact on the educational system in North Yemen, a similar scenario took place in the South. The first stage was during the British rule (1839-1967) and the second one was after independence (1967-1990). During the first period, the main priority of the British was to control the port of Aden and they invested little money in education. At that time, the main goal of public education was to find employers and interpreters for the benefit of the British (Ba'abad, 2003). There was limited access to education, especially

before World War II. In the 1930s, the number of pupils enrolled in public schools was about 1000, and 2000 pupils were in private education (Gray, 2002). The situation improved in the 1940s as there was a structured system of public education. English language courses were introduced by the British Council, and there were opportunities for elite young people to study in universities in the United Kingdom.

After the departure of the British in 1976, education expanded and was arabicised. There was an increased sense of awareness of the importance of education and the need for making it accessible to all people. The system of education consisted of two years of kindergarten, eight years of basic schooling and four years of secondary school. The secondary level had alternative options; it could be two years of vocational training or specialised programme. Education was free at all levels and attendance was widespread compared to earlier periods.

As for higher education, the University of Aden was established in 1975. It included six faculties: Law, Agriculture, Economics, Education, Technology and Medicine. Furthermore, there were some scholarships to study in The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Gray, 2002).

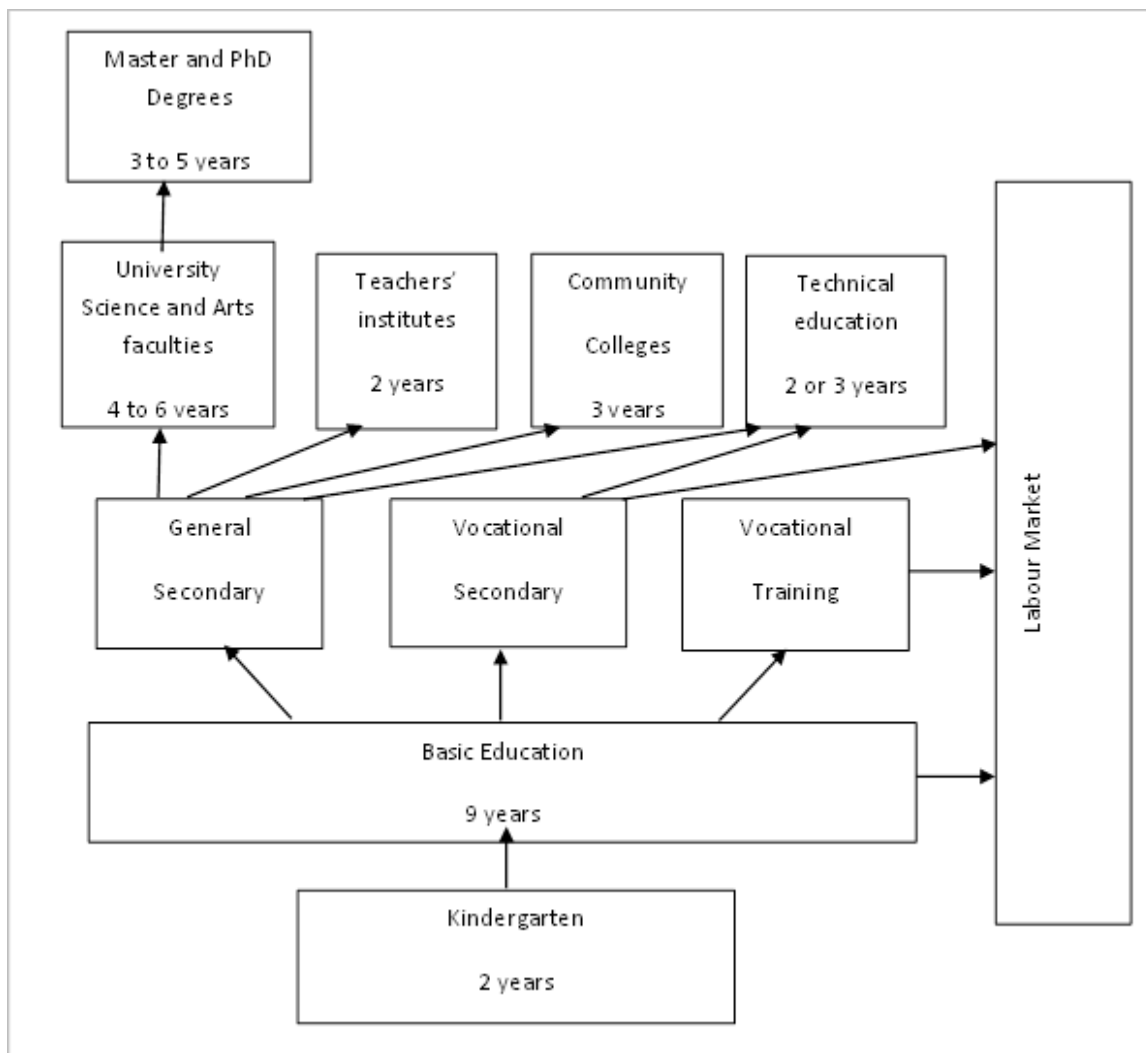
#### ❖ ***Post-unification: The Republic of Yemen***

The Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen were unified in 1990. This unification came as a result of economic pressures as well as a shared feeling of belonging to the same nationality. Accordingly, their

educational systems were merged. The main changes included a standardisation of textbooks and curricula and a slight restructuring of the education cycle. In 1992, the General Law of Education was issued to unify the form, structure, goals and content of education (Alaghbari, 2009). Since unification, the general curriculum of education has gone through two phases; the interim curriculum which combined elements of the curricula of the two states before unification, and the new curriculum which was implemented in 2000.

Currently, there are three ministries concerned with education: the Ministry of Education, which supervises primary, basic and general secondary education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which is concerned with planning the higher education sector and the Ministry of Technical Education, and Vocational Training, which is responsible for providing curricular and educational aids to technical and vocational institutions.

As for the structure of the educational system, it consists of two years of kindergarten, nine years of basic education, three years of secondary education (general or vocational, and it could be two years of vocational training). The post-secondary level comprises four to six years, depending on the faculty. Students can also choose to enrol in technical education (two to three years). The following figure summarises the whole educational structure.



**Figure 5 The Structure of Education in Yemen<sup>19</sup>**

<sup>19</sup>World Data on Education: Yemen (7<sup>th</sup> edition)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002117/211701e.pdf>

To conclude, here is a quotation from the National Report on education in Yemen (2004: 24):

The progress that Yemen made in building its educational system is considered as a perceptible achievement compared with the low start-point from which Yemen began forty years ago and the economical, social and cultural circumstances in which this achievement arose. Such circumstances and variables seem to keep affecting the level of educational system development and present major challenges to its development and passing its difficulties.<sup>20</sup>

### ***3. 1. 3 The Status of English in Yemen***

English is considered a foreign language in the Republic of Yemen. It is the medium of international communication, and it is the means of communication among the non-Arab groups working in Yemen. There are two newspapers written in English: The Yemen Times and Yemen Observer. The English language has been introduced into the educational system quite recently. In fact, the situation was different before unification as each state underwent a different political system.

As has been viewed earlier, the political system under the rule of the Imams in the North state paid little attention to education. The English language was first introduced into the curriculum after the revolution in 1962. English was taught in schools from class seven up to secondary level. As there were no local teachers of English, Egyptian teachers were recruited. They used the same English textbook

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<sup>20</sup> Education in Republic of Yemen: The National Report (August, 2004) [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/yemen\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/yemen_eng.pdf)

as the one that was used in Egypt and it was called “The Nile Course of English”. In the 1970s, another English textbook was introduced “The Progressive Living English for the Arab World”. These textbooks, however, did not meet the needs of the Yemeni environment. Therefore, under the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and the British Council in Yemen, a new textbook was developed called “English for Yemen” which was used for about 20 years.

In South Yemen, the English language enjoyed a different status. Its presence in the South started with the arrival of the British in the country in 1838. It was almost considered a second language as it was used in governmental institutions. The English language was introduced in schools from class one in primary schools up to the secondary level in which the medium of instruction was English. It was taught by British teachers, Sudanese, Indians and a few Yemenis. As for the textbooks, they were imported from Britain. After the withdrawal of the British in 1967, English did not keep its status as the official language, but it was regarded as the most important foreign language to learn.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the unification of the two states in 1990 played a major role in unifying the educational system. Similarly, there was a coordinated policy of teaching English in schools and universities in the Republic of Yemen as will be shown in the following section.



### ❖ *English in Schools*

In today's Yemen, English is taught in public schools from class seven onwards, with an average of 5 to 6 periods of 40 minutes per week. In some private schools, English is taught from grade one, and in other private schools there is a department where pupils can choose to study all the subjects through the medium of English beside the English language subject. As for the textbook, a new series called "Crescent: English Course for Yemen" was published in 1995 with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Oxford University Press for English teaching in the Arab world.

Although the textbook adopts a communicative approach, the English language is not taught accordingly. That is due to some factors such as: the lack of audio-video teaching aids, and the great number of pupils in a classroom which makes it difficult for the teacher to implement communicative teaching strategies. The teacher dominates the scene most of the time, and pupils' participation time is much less. Pupils usually feel inhibited and hesitant to participate in class for fear of making mistakes. In fact, there is an exam-based approach towards teaching English. Therefore, accuracy is being prioritised over fluency. That is why pupils graduate from schools with a low level of communicative competence. Consequently, many of them enrol in private English language institutes which have been widely established all over the country.

### ❖ *English in Universities*

In the 1990s, tertiary or higher education expanded dramatically. In 2000, there were about seven public universities and eight private ones throughout the country, compared with two public universities (Sana'a University and Aden University) during the unification in 1990. English language teaching in tertiary education has a recent history of about 30 years only.

Today there is an English language Department at the faculty of Education and the faculty of Arts in almost all universities in the country.<sup>21</sup> English is taught as a compulsory requirement subject in all departments. The number of teaching credits varies across departments. Besides, English is the medium of instruction in some departments like Engineering, Medicine, and Information Technology.

As for Taiz University, where this study is conducted, it was founded in 1993. Previously in 1985, there was a faculty of Education with a department of English, but it was affiliated to Sana'a University. In 1991, the faculty of Arts was established with two departments: Arabic and English (also affiliated to Sana'a University). It was only in 1993 that Taiz University became autonomous and responsible for its faculties.

In 1998, a Centre for Languages and Translation was established and joined Taiz University. The Centre has two departments: the department of English which

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<sup>21</sup> There are eight public universities in Yemen with different faculties that comprise thirty nine departments of the English language (Higher Education in the Republic of Yemen, 2007).

is responsible for teaching the English language as a compulsory requirement subject to the students of all the departments of the university, and the department of Arabic which teaches the Arabic language as a compulsory requirement subject to the students of some departments. It also runs a Master's and PhD programmes in Linguistics and Translation in the departments of English and Arabic. Another task of the Centre is translating and ratifying certificates and documents. Additionally, the Centre runs English language courses and diplomas at certain times of the year. The Centre has lately been responsible for administering TOEFL as well as teaching preparation courses for the test.<sup>22</sup>

#### ❖ ***English at the Faculty of Medicine***

The faculty of Medicine was founded in 1998 and the first academic year started in 1999/2000. The curriculum is implemented from the first year to the sixth year, followed by a year of internship. Each year includes 2 semesters, and the semester lasts for 18 weeks. The six years involve three phases: the first one is a preparatory stage for the students to be qualified to study medical sciences; the second phase integrates the study of basic and applied sciences with clinical sciences; and the third one is a phase of training in clinical medical sciences.

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<sup>22</sup> Centre for Languages and Translation, Taiz University website

<http://www.taizuni.net/center/info-lng.php>

[http://taiz.edu.ye/lc/DEFAULTDET.ASPX?typ=2&pnc=522&SUB\\_ID=30803](http://taiz.edu.ye/lc/DEFAULTDET.ASPX?typ=2&pnc=522&SUB_ID=30803)

English is taught as a compulsory requirement subject at the faculty of Medicine in the first year for two semesters; five hours per week for a total of 180 hours of teaching. Generally speaking, the English language subject is not restricted by a fixed syllabus. It is the task of the teacher to determine the syllabus, and gather the teaching material. The English syllabus is commonly a mixture of general English and medical English with a focus on terminology and grammar.

Concerning the students of medicine, they do not constitute a homogeneous set in terms of their level of English. That is because some of them graduated from public schools, while others came from private schools and the English language teaching approach varies in public and private schools in terms of quality and quantity as has been shown in a previous section.

To conclude, this section was devoted to the discussion of the contextual framework of the study. It has shed light on the background of Yemen and its educational system in order to locate the study in its context for better understanding of the research topic.

The following parts of the chapter present the methodological procedures which have been used to conduct the study.

### 3. 2 Research Design

In order to discuss the design of this research, it is essential to recall the research questions which will be dealt with. This study aims at enhancing the importance of developing pragmatic competence in teaching English in the specialized context, with a special attention to medical students. Hence, in order to explore this issue, two research questions are investigated:

- 1. What is the level of pragmatic competence among medical students?*
- 2. How important is it to develop pragmatic competence for medical students?*

In order to answer these questions, this study has adopted a mixed methods approach in its research design. A research design is “the plan or proposal to conduct research” (Creswell, 2009: 5). According to Dörnyei (2007: 163), the mixed methods approach “involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process”. Similarly, Angouri (2010) affirms that using a mixed methods design provides a fuller understanding of the target phenomenon.

One major potential of using a mixed methods design is that it combines the advantages of both paradigms. They complement each other; the strength of one can cover the weakness of the other (Dörnyei, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). This is also underlined by Creswell (2009: 14) who points out that: “Recognizing that all

methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods”.

Another merit of a mixed methods approach is that it improves the validity of research outcomes by converging findings. Dörnyei (2007: 46) further points out that: “Corresponding evidence obtained through multiple methods can also increase the generalizability – that is, external validity – of the results”.

The mixed methods approach employed in this study is represented by using a questionnaire as a tool of data collection on the quantitative side of the research, and an interview as a qualitative instrument for data collection and analysis. Besides, the data collected from the questionnaire is analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. To investigate the research questions of the study, it was decided to deal with the topic by using two types of methods in order to improve accuracy and provide a more complete picture. Using different methods allows researchers “to look at the research topic from a variety of perspectives” (Denscombe, 2010: 154).

The main research question in the study is: *What is the level of pragmatic competence among medical students?*

In order to investigate this question, two sub-questions are formed:

1. *Are they able to recognise the appropriate and inappropriate utterances in different contexts?*

This involves using an awareness test in the questionnaire to know whether the students are able to identify the appropriate and inappropriate utterances.

2. 1. *How do medical students produce speech acts in different contexts?*

The other part of the questionnaire, which is a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), addresses this question by investigating how students will respond in different situations in terms of the strategies which will be used to realise the three selected speech acts.

The second research question is: *How important is it to develop pragmatic competence for medical students?*

This question is investigated by conducting interviews. The interview is used to identify the viewpoints of graduate medical students regarding pragmatic competence in English learning and use. Schutt (2011: 348) highlights that: "Conducting qualitative interviews can often enhance the value of a research design that uses primarily quantitative measurement techniques".

The nature of the research questions in the current study calls for using a mixed methods approach. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in this research is believed to bring about a better and deeper understanding of the research topic and to improve the validity of the research findings. Creswell (2009: 205) points out that using a mixed methods approach may pose challenges for the enquirer like "the need for extensive data collection, the time-intensive nature of analysing both text and numeric data, and the requirement for the researcher to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative forms of research".

Despite the challenges which might be encountered in this approach, it has been chosen in the current study as it serves to contribute to a better understanding of the topic under investigation. To quote Creswell (2009: 203), he states: “There is more insight to be gained from the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research than either form by itself. Their combined use provides an expanded understanding of research problems”.

### **3. 3 Participants**

As the study makes use of two different research instruments - questionnaires and interviews - the participants are divided in two groups. Before describing each group separately, it should be noted that research ethics were taken into consideration. All the participants were asked to take part in the study voluntarily. They were informed of the research aims and significance, and they were made aware of their right to be anonymous in the data.

#### ***3. 3. 1 Participants in the questionnaire:***

The first group represents the participants who took part in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 56 second-year students from the faculty of Medicine at Taiz University.<sup>23</sup> The questionnaire contained two parts; the

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<sup>23</sup> This is the number of the students who were present when the survey was conducted.



awareness test comprising 12 items and the DCT comprising 9 items. The final list leads to the analysis of 1176 items: 672 in the first part and 504 in the second.

As was previously stated, the English language is taught in the first year at the faculty of Medicine. Taking this into account, it was decided to deal with students who had just finished studying English as a requirement subject. Therefore, the choice fell on second-year students.

The group consisted of 12 males and 44 females. In fact, the number of males versus females in university depends on the discipline. In some disciplines the males may outnumber the females. But generally speaking, this difference can also be ascribed to the demographics of the country, or to the fact that the economic status forces most male students to turn to the work field after high school.

In terms of age, most of the participants (83.9%) ranged from 19 to 21 years of age. The majority of them went to public secondary schools with a total percentage of 94.6, and 69.6% of the students had been to language institutes to learn English after school. Their personal evaluation of their proficiency in English was estimated as "Intermediate" with a percentage of 69.6%, "Basic" with a percentage of 14.3%, and "Advanced" with 16.1%. The following table summarises the characteristics of the students.

**Table 1 Students' Profile**

| <b>Total Number of Students = 56</b> | <b>Value Labels</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                        | Male                | 12               | 21.4%             |
|                                      | Female              | 44               | 78.6%             |
| <b>Age</b>                           | From 19-21          | 47               | 83.9%             |
|                                      | From 22-24          | 9                | 16.1%             |
| <b>School</b>                        | Public school       | 53               | 94.6%             |
|                                      | Private school      | 3                | 5.4%              |
| <b>Attending Language Institute</b>  | Yes                 | 39               | 69.6%             |
|                                      | No                  | 17               | 30.4%             |
| <b>English Level</b>                 | Basic               | 8                | 14.3%             |
|                                      | Intermediate        | 39               | 69.6%             |
|                                      | Advanced            | 9                | 16.1%             |

### **3. 3. 2 Participants in the interview:**

The second group of participants includes those who take part in the interview. This group consists of seven graduate students of the faculty of Medicine at Taiz

University. In principle, it would have been more effective to conduct interviews with a group of students belonging to the same sample; namely, the students who take part in the questionnaire. However, in practice, it is not feasible to wait until they graduate and work. That is because the intent of the interview is to find out how graduate students perceive their past experience with English and how they wish to develop it. When they graduate and work with different people, their perception of the language would be different from that of a student. Therefore, the alternative choice was to choose another set of participants; specifically, graduates of the same faculty of Medicine who have been taught in a similar situation.

This group includes three males and four females and they are all are Yemenis. Three of them are Master's students, two are Master's graduates, and two are PhD students. As for their background with regard to English, two participants studied in private schools where English is learned from grade one, and five of them studied in public schools. Four participants stated that they have attended an English language institute after school. They were also asked to indicate how they perceived their own level of English. The following table illustrates the interviewees' profile.

**Table 2 Interviewees' Profile**

| <i><b>Participant</b></i> | <i><b>Educational Status</b></i> | <i><b>Secondary School</b></i> | <i><b>Attending Language Inst.</b></i> | <i><b>Self-evaluated Level of English</b></i> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 1                         | Master's Student                 | Private                        | No                                     | Advanced                                      |
| 2                         | Master's Graduate                | Public                         | Yes                                    | Intermediate                                  |
| 3                         | PhD Student                      | Private                        | No                                     | Advanced                                      |
| 4                         | Master's Student                 | Public                         | No                                     | Intermediate                                  |
| 5                         | Master's Graduate                | Public                         | Yes                                    | Intermediate                                  |
| 6                         | Master's Student                 | Public                         | No                                     | Intermediate                                  |
| 7                         | PhD Student                      | Public                         | Yes                                    | Intermediate                                  |

### **3. 4 Research Instruments**

In order to investigate the research questions, two instruments are employed: questionnaire and interview. The following section sheds light on their description and use in the present study.

### **3. 4. 1 The Questionnaire:**

A questionnaire has been considered one of the most popular instruments in social sciences research (Dörnyei, 2007). Questionnaires are defined as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (Brown, 2001: 6). They have the potential of providing standardised answers as all participants respond to the same questions (Denscombe, 2010; Dörnyei, 2007). They are also characterised as being “extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processible” (Dörnyei, 2007: 102).

The questionnaire in the present study is composed of three parts. It starts with questions on background information of the students. This part of the questionnaire belongs to Denscombe’s categorisation of questionnaire that is based on ‘Factual information’ where participants are only required to “reveal straightforward information” such as age, gender, education (2010: 157). It is important to some background information of the students who take part in the study in order to find out the homogenous traits of the group. This section requires information about gender, age, nationality, whether they attended private or public school and whether they had taken any English courses in private language institutes.

Now the two parts of the questionnaire will be described in the following discussion.

### **3. 4. 1. 1 *Discourse Completion Task***

The first part of the questionnaire is in the form of a Discourse Completion Task or Test (DCT). Varghese and Billmyer (1996: 39) define a DCT as “a questionnaire containing a set of very briefly described situations designed to elicit a particular speech act. Subjects read each situation and respond to a prompt in writing”. It is one of the most widely used types of questionnaire used in pragmatics (Kasper, 2008). She further indicates that “DCTs require a constructive, that is, participant-generated textual response that is coherent with the context specified in the stimulus item” (Kasper, 2008: 292).

The DCT was initially used by Blum-Kulka (1982) for speech act investigation. It has been used ever since as a valuable device for gathering data in speech act research (for example, Kasper and Dahl, 1991; Varghese and Billmyer, 1996; Yuan, 2001; Barron, 2003; Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler, 2004; Kasper, 2008; Pavareh and Tavakoli, 2009; Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2011). The DCT was best known when it was employed in the big and extensive research project of Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisations Patterns (CCSARP) by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989). The CCSARP investigated the realisations of requests and apologies in different social contexts across eight languages. In addition, Chen (1995) asserts that data analysis is more reliable and consistent when a DCT is used because all participants are provided with the same scenarios and have to respond in written form.

The current study employs a written DCT in which participants are required to write what they would say in different contexts after reading a brief description of the context (Pavaresh and Tavakoli, 2009). The items of the DCT used in this research has been inspired by the studies of Johnston, Kasper and Ross (1998), Nelson, Carson, Al Batal and El Bakary (2002), Bataineh and Bataineh (2006), Allami and Naeimi (2011), Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011), and Yuan (2012). It contains nine situations which set the ground for eliciting three speech acts: requests, refusals and apologies. As mentioned before, these specific speech acts have been selected because they are mostly used in oral communication and they need to be used skillfully as they can be face-threatening. Additionally, as has been described in the previous chapter, these speech acts have been frequently investigated in pragmatic research due to their importance in effective communication.

The participants are required to write in English what they would say in response to the various scenarios. It is to be noted that the scenarios in the DCT as well as in the Awareness Test are not concerned with gender variant. This does not imply that gender is not an important factor. However, this is to signify that it does not fall within the purpose of this study to investigate the variation of responses of males versus females. What is of greater importance to the current study is how the participants (males or females) would react when responding to an utterance made by an interlocutor (male or female). The linguistic realisations of utterances along with their social contexts are more pertinent than the factor of

gender. Therefore, the situations of the nine items vary in terms of social distance and social status or power between interlocutors. Social distance refers to the degree of familiarity between the interlocutors. It is classified in three levels: stranger, acquaintance and close. Regarding power, it reflects the relationship between the interlocutors in terms of social position, title, or age. It includes three levels: higher, equal and lower.

This variation makes it possible to explore participants' responses in different social contexts in relation to the selected speech acts. As discussed by Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011: 53), it is admitted that: "One of the advantages attributed to this instrument consists of its allowing control over the contextual variables that appear in the situational description and which may affect learners' choice of particular forms when writing their responses".

As each research method has its merits and drawbacks, the use of a DCT for data collection is no exception (Beebe and Cummings, 1995). According to Beebe and Cummings (1995: 77), the DCT "does not bring out the "psycho-social" dynamics of an interaction between members of a group". Another issue brought out by Cohen (1996c) is that of time because in writing the respondent spends more time thinking of the suitable response. He also points out that the process of writing itself might make the respondent produce a shorter response in writing than in speaking. Additionally, Eslami-Rasekh (2005) indicates that the data elicited by a DCT does not carry the same richness and complexity as natural data.



Despite its limitations, the DCT remains an effective research instrument that enables the researcher to gather a large amount of data in a short period of time and it provides a controlled set of variables for the speech act under investigation (Beebe and Cummings, 1995; Cohen, 1996c). Besides, the anonymity of DCTs makes it possible for respondents to express their feelings freely without fear of losing face (Hartford and Bardovi-Harig, 1992). Trosborg (1995) indicates that most studies of interlanguage pragmatics rely on written discourse completion tasks which can provide information about learners' competence in controlled situations.

#### **3.4.1.2 Awareness Test**

The second part of the questionnaire is an awareness test, which is considered a type of rating assessment instrument (Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2011). It is intended to measure pragmatic awareness. In this study, participants are first asked to indicate whether the underlined sentence is appropriate or inappropriate in the described situation. After that, they are required to justify their choices in order to verify whether they are aware of why certain utterances are appropriate or inappropriate. Chen (1996: 58) explains: "more insights would be obtained if the subjects could also provide open-ended opinions or reasons as to why they rated a given statement as (in) appropriate".

This design is based on the awareness test used by Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011) where a detailed description of a situation is offered, followed by a

response of refusal to be evaluated as appropriate or inappropriate and finally a justification for the chosen answers needs to be provided.

The awareness test is called 'Metapragmatic Judgement Task' by Chen (1995). In her study, she used it with 42 native speakers to rate the pragmatic appropriateness of 24 written statements in four different refusal scenarios. It is also termed as 'Discourse Evaluation Test' in the study of Safont Jordà (2003). She employed it to measure metapragmatic awareness by third language learners with a focus on the speech act of request. It consists of different situations where respondents have to evaluate the appropriateness of the request formulation in relation to the context. In addition, they are also required to justify their evaluation and to suggest another formula in the place of the inappropriate ones.

The awareness test of the current study was based on the studies of Cohen and Olshtain (1993), Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), Safont Jordà (2003), Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler (2004), Albertson, (2011), and Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011).

The awareness test used by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) aims to measure pragmatic versus grammatical awareness. Their test items include three categories: pragmatically appropriate but ungrammatical sentences, grammatical but pragmatically inappropriate sentences, and grammatical and pragmatically appropriate sentences.

It is obvious that both pragmatic and linguistic competences are essential for students. However, in the current study, the focus is on pragmatic awareness.

Therefore, the test items are all grammatically correct and comprised 12 pragmatically appropriate and inappropriate responses. The responses represented 4 cases of requests, 4 cases of apologies and 4 cases of refusals. The twelve situations vary in terms of sociopragmatic factors (social power and social distance) in relation to the three speech acts in order to evaluate the participants' judgement in different contexts. Accordingly, the speaker might be equal, higher, or lower (in power) than the listener; and s/he may be acquaintance, stranger, or close to the listener (social distance).

It is worth-mentioning that the use of this data collection method in the current study helps to reinforce and complement the previous method (the DCT). As asserted by Kasper and Rose (2002), Chen (1995) and Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011), employing assessment instruments is considered an effective way to support the findings of production instruments. In this regard, Chen (1996: 41) points out:

The researcher needs to employ multiple data collection methods (such as the DCT combined with a pragmatic judgement test) to investigate the various aspects of the construct in question, to avoid potential pitfalls, and to obtain findings that are more reliable and valid.

In speech act research methodology, a single data collection method is not sufficient and may result in biased findings (Chen, 1996; Beebe and Cummings, 1995). Thus, using a DCT along with a pragmatic judgement task supports research adequacy because they complement each other.

After designing the questionnaire, it became important to have it tested. The pilot study is an essential phase as it makes sure that the items of the questionnaire are clear enough, well-understood and convenient in terms of time. Section (3.5) gives an account of the process of the pilot study of the questionnaire.

### **3. 4. 2 The Interview:**

One of the most widely employed instruments in qualitative research is the interview and its use has grown up notably in social and human sciences (Edley and Litosseliti, 2010). By means of an interview, a researcher tries to understand a phenomenon from the perspectives of the respondents and to find out the meaning of their experiences (Kvale, 1996).

Moreover, Dörnyei (2007: 143) points out: “The interview is a natural and socially acceptable way of collecting information that most people feel comfortable with and which can be used in a variety of situations and focusing on diverse topics to yield in-depth data”. It is a valuable tool of gaining insights into people’s experiences, feelings and opinions. As stated by Denscombe (2010: 192): “Interviews are particularly good at producing data which deal with topics in depth and detail”. Furthermore, Denscombe considers interviews as the most flexible data collection method as they permit adjustments to the lines of enquiry during the process of interviewing. Interviewees have a chance to expand their views and new ideas add

up to the discussion, and more importantly, there is room for modification and validity checks.

In terms of structure, there are three types of interviews. Based on the description of Dörnyei (2007), the first type is structured interview, which contains a pre-prepared guide of questions to be followed exactly with each interviewee. The tightly-controlled nature of this type of interview makes sure that all topic areas will be covered and that responses will be compared among all interviewees. The other extreme is unstructured interviews which provide maximum flexibility for the interviewee based on the research agenda. There is no detailed guide to follow, but the researcher can prepare some introductory questions to help interviewees reveal their thoughts, and then the discussion is elaborated.

The third type is a semi-structured interview, which falls between structured and unstructured interviews. It has a pre-prepared guide of questions but this guide is flexible in a way that permits interviewees to explore on any issue and generate new ideas. As described in the words of Dörnyei (2007: 136), in semi-structured interviews: “the interviewer provides guidance and direction (hence the ‘-structured’ part in the name), but is also keen to follow up interesting development and to let the interviewee elaborate on certain issues (hence the ‘semi-‘part)”. Similarly, Denscombe (2010) clarifies that in semi-structured interviews there is a list of points to be discussed, but there is ample room for flexibility in terms of question order and developing new ideas on the topic.

This study employs a semi-structured interview, which is conducted via the internet. The decision to use an internet interview is based on the factors of availability and practicality. Five of the target participants are pursuing their higher studies in other countries. So they were not available in the field during the process of data collection in Yemen. In addition, the researcher as well as the participants are dispersed geographically (France, Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia). Therefore, the internet was thought to be the best practical solution to provide a common place for conducting the interviews.

Internet interviews are practical and cost-effective research instruments. As explained by Denscombe (2010: 190): “this mode of conducting interviews allows the researcher to interview people across the world without worrying about the time and costs of travel”. He points out that internet interviews have certain advantages such as minimising the culture and gender effects of interaction, getting over embarrassing issues in the absence of face-to-face interaction, and giving interviewees time for reflection on some questions which could improve the quality of responses. Furthermore, he remarks that as interview responses come out in a written form constructed by the interviewee, this reduces any possible inaccuracies that may arise from data transcription.

In the same way, Shepherd (2003: 22) values the employment of internet interviews as a useful addition in qualitative research. She indicates:

Traditional qualitative interviewing techniques are suitable for those who like expressing themselves through speech, but may discriminate against those who

feel shy about talking to strangers, who prefer to communicate via the written word, or are simply too busy to set aside an hour or so to be interviewed.

There are different types of internet interviews such as webcam interviewing, exchange of email correspondence, chat rooms, mailing lists, online one-to-one interviewing, web-page-based surveys, and bulletin boards or newsgroups (Denscombe, 2010; Mann and Stewart, 2000). It goes without saying that online interviewing like any other research method has its own limitations. The time factor constitutes one of the drawbacks. To complete an online interview takes about two hours while a face-to-face interview can be finished up in 30 or 45 minutes.

Also, as discussed in Shepherd (2003), it is not easy to interpret the silence between responses. It might indicate the process of thinking, or it can mean that the participant has finished responding. Another issue is the inability to grasp the facial expressions and the accompanying emotions which usually add more meaning to the interaction. Nevertheless, this point is debated by Denscombe (2010) as advantageous since the absence of visual clues can lead to statements which are less likely to be influenced by status factors of both interlocutors. Overall, internet interviews still serve as a valuable and practical collecting method in qualitative research in this age of accelerating technology.

The internet interview conducted in this study takes the form of one-to-one chat interview via the yahoo messenger. Mann and Stewart (2000: 60) state: “One-to-one chat involves two people having an interactive dialogue using CMC”.<sup>24</sup>

The aim of the interview is to collect data about the importance of pragmatic competence for medical students. More specifically, it intends to elicit graduate medical students’ viewpoints and experience with regard to the use of English and the importance of communicative skills.<sup>25</sup> It is important to clarify that no linguistic terms (such as pragmatics, or pragmatic competence) were used in the questions addressed to the participants because they would be ambiguous for individuals outside linguistic-related areas. What matters most in this context is the implications of linguistic concepts and their application in language teaching. Therefore, the interview questions revolve around the following topics:

- a) Background information
- b) Past experience with English
- c) Current use of English
- d) English at the faculty of Medicine
- e) Importance of learning language in context (pragmatic competence)

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<sup>24</sup> CMC is Computer-Mediated Communication

<sup>25</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, pragmatic competence is considered a component in the models of communicative competence (Kasper, 1997).



The interview starts with questions about background information of the participants. As clarified by Dörnyei (2007), it is important to start the interview with questions that break the ice between the interviewer and the interviewee and they serve to create a rapport and a comfortable climate for the subsequent interaction. In addition, the responses to the opening set of questions were used to provide the description of participants' profile which was provided in Section (3. 3. 2).

The other categories include questions which have been used to elicit the participants' perceptions, experience and practice with regard to English during their study and at the present time. The major theme in the interview guide was concerned with their viewpoints about using the English language and the importance of its appropriate use in different contexts. As mentioned earlier, there were no direct questions with pragmatic terminology. Instead, it was decided to start with examples of language use in contexts and then ask the participants whether they recognise the different use of language and its appropriateness. Firstly, two versions of apology were presented and they were asked to identify whether there was a difference between them and to justify their answers.

The examples were taken from Rose and Kasper (2001). Then they were asked to identify the different meanings which an utterance could reflect if mentioned in isolation. This question was not planned to test their pragmatic knowledge, but rather to engage them in an exercise that exemplifies pragmatics in use. The intent was to set the ground for the subsequent question; that is, their opinion about the

importance of learning this aspect of English usage. The questions were formed with the help of reading in the literature and reviewing similar studies on pragmatic competence (Chen, 1996; Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler, 2004; Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2011; and Yuan, 2012). The full guide of interview questions is found in Appendix C.

### **3. 5 Pilot Study**

The aim of the pilot study is to test the research instruments in order to make use of the feedback for modification and development. It is important to make sure that the instrument items are understood, and its instructions are clear. It also helps to measure how much time it takes to answer the questions of the research instrument. Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) indicate that pilot studies constitute a crucial element of a good study as they can yield useful insights. They point out that although carrying out pilot studies might not guarantee success in the study, the likelihood of success is increased.

The bigger part of the pilot study was performed with the questionnaire. The interview questions were tried out with two colleagues from the Faculty of Medicine at Taiz University to make sure that wordings and structure were clear and could elicit pertinent and sufficient data. A few modifications were made according to their remarks.

Concerning the questionnaire, it was sent to 11 participants (students and graduates) by email and 8 of them responded. The questionnaire was composed of two parts: the Discourse Completion Task, which includes 15 items and the Awareness Test, which includes 15 items. Distributing the questionnaires and receiving them back took about 3 weeks. Participants were informed that they could respond to the questionnaire and send it back at their own pace. Taking participants' commitments into consideration, it was important to give them free space and not to impose any time restrictions.

The participants varied in terms of age, gender and background. Four participants are males and four are females. Their ages ranged from 23 to 39 years and the average age is 29. Three of them were graduate students with a bachelor degree, one was a master's degree graduate, three were doctoral students, and one was an employee.

Although the pilot study sample does not exactly match the target sample, this is the only sample which has been obtainable. Availability and convenience were two major criteria for the selection of this sample. It is also important to reiterate that the principal aim of the pilot study is to check the validity and the clarity of the questions. This aim was achieved to a satisfactory extent. By studying their responses, subsequent modifications were carried out. It is also important to indicate that in order to ensure content validity, the items of the questionnaire had been checked by a British native speaker before distributing the questionnaires to the participants in the pilot stage.

The participants were asked to measure the time which they had spent to complete the questionnaire. Three of them stated that the task had lasted for almost an hour and a half. One spent about 2 hours, and the other five participants spent about 35 minutes. The average time spent was about an hour. In addition, two participants complained that they had felt exhausted because of the length of the questionnaire. The time spent on answering the questionnaire could be responsible for certain carelessness in the way it was answered. Having considered these issues, it was expected that second-year students might spend more than an hour to complete the questionnaire. Therefore, it was decided to reduce the questionnaire items.

As the DCT required more thinking and thus took a longer time, it was necessary to shorten it. Previously, the questionnaire contained 15 items that represented 3 speech acts (5 situations for each speech act). Therefore 2 items were deleted for each speech act, and then each speech act was represented by 3 situations. The criterion for choosing which items to delete was based on the sentences which had a similar function, and on the sentences which were misunderstood. In addition, some items were modified in the Awareness Test.

In terms of the clarity of the instructions, all participants understood what they were required to do. As for the general design, the space meant for the answers was enlarged as the previous space proved to be insufficient. The final version of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix A.

## **3. 6 Data Collection**

As mentioned earlier, the data was collected by using two instruments: questionnaire and interview. Hence, the data collection took place in two stages. Each stage will be discussed separately in the following paragraphs.

### ***3. 6. 1 The First Stage: distributing questionnaires***

As the fieldwork was planned to be carried out at the University of Taiz, travelling to Yemen was necessary. At this stage, the aim was to collect data from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year medical students by using questionnaires. There were attempts to coordinate with lecturers of medical subjects to see if they could allocate some time of their lectures for distributing the questionnaires. At the beginning, it was difficult to be granted one hour from any lecture of the medical subjects. One teacher kindly agreed to offer half an hour, which was not enough. Therefore, the search for a one-hour permission of a lecture continued until it was finally found.

After arranging with the lecturer, the time and date were fixed. Prior to distributing the questionnaire sheets, ten minutes were devoted to introduce the topic and the goal of research. It was made clear to the students that they could ask for any word or phrase which they did not understand and help would be provided. They were also asked to avoid copying from each other as this would not benefit the research.

The instructions were delivered orally in English and they were repeated in Arabic to make sure that everyone had understood what was expected. The questionnaire sheets were distributed and students started answering the questionnaire at 9: 15 am. After half an hour a student submitted his sheets, and four students submitted theirs after 40 minutes. The majority of the students handed in their sheets during the last 15 minutes. A few students took about 55 minutes to finish, which was more than the time previously allocated for conducting the questionnaire since it was assumed that it would take between 30 to 40 minutes.

The second-year students were divided in two groups. Therefore, another arrangement had to be made with another lecturer to allocate time of his lecture for the second group. The date and time were set for the second group, and that happened five days after distributing the questionnaire to the first group. Similar to what was done with the first group, the session started by introducing the topic of research and explaining the instructions. Students started at 8.55 am. During the first 40 minutes, only a few students handed in their sheets. Many students submitted their sheets at 9.55 am. At the end, there were a few students who still had the sheets. They were allowed extra ten minutes to finish and then the sheets were collected.

### ***3. 6. 2 The Second Stage: conducting interviews***

A total number of ten graduate students were invited to take part in the interview, but seven of them only were able to make it. The contact and negotiation with the participants lasted from June to September due to their personal circumstances and commitments. As the interview was conducted online, it was necessary to set up the required conditions such as: finding a suitable time for the interviewer and the interviewees while taking the local time difference into consideration, and exchanging email addresses as well as adding the interviewees to the interviewer's yahoo messenger list.

The duration of the interviews lasted from one to two hours, depending on each interviewee's interaction, typing speed, internet connection and data transmission speed. Each participant took his/her time to express his/her viewpoints freely. The participants were asked a series of questions which were grouped in topics as discussed previously.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the participants were informed of the research topic and aim of the interview. They were assured of the anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses, and that data would only be used for the purpose of the research. In addition, it was also made clear for them that they had the right to withdraw from participation if they had any concerns. The questions were asked in an order that was determined according to the flow of the conversation with each participant as it is the case in semi-structured interviews.

Clarifications and re-wording of questions were provided where required. Earlier interviews helped to improve conducting the subsequent ones such as starting some questions before others, extending some points further and being brief with others. During the conversation, some questions were answered in the discussion of earlier ones so they were not repeated again. Besides, while certain participants were very brief in their responses, others provided extended comments.

For the sake of transparency, it is important to point out the difficulties which were encountered during some of the interviews. To begin with, as the interview was conducted online, it was not easy at times to figure out whether the respondent had finished answering or not. A new question would be asked while the respondent was still thinking or in the process of writing a continuation of the previous answer. At times, the conversation had to come to a halt for a few seconds or minutes due to internet connection interruptions. In addition, the length of the interview was a source of complaint by the earlier participants. Therefore, this complaint was taken into account in the later interviews.

Overall, despite these difficulties, the interviews were conducted smoothly in a satisfactory fashion and valuable data were provided.



### **3. 7 Summary**

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the research methodology of the current study. It started with exploring the contextual background of the study. This part included a brief account of the history of Yemen, provided an overview of the educational system and it presented a description of the English language status in schools and universities. Then the research design of the study was discussed by highlighting the use of a mixed methods approach. This approach was represented by employing a questionnaire in the form of a DCT and an awareness test and an interview for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. Second-year students of medicine were invited to participate in the questionnaire and medical graduates took part in the interview. After the research instruments were piloted, they were modified and ready for use. After that there was a description of the process of collecting data which took place in two stages.

In the next chapter, the procedures of data analysis will be reported with the data results.

# CHAPTER 4:

## Data Analysis and Results

The previous chapter described the research methodology and the research tools employed in data collection; namely, the DCT, the Awareness Test, and the Interviews. In this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative data collected with the help of these tools will be reported. A description of data analysis will be provided and the results will be presented in the form of tables and figures.

Denscombe (2007: 235) highlights that: “The purpose of analyzing something is to gain a better understanding of it”. Researchers need to analyse their data thoroughly in a way that enable them to explain and answer their queries. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the current study makes use of a mixed methods approach. Therefore, the data will be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009: 263) indicate: “MM data analysis involves the processes whereby QUAN and QUAL data analysis strategies are combined, connected, or integrated in research studies”.<sup>26</sup>

In the current study, both methods are used for data analysis. The questionnaire data is analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, and the interview data is analysed qualitatively. As stressed by Dörnyei (2007), choosing the particular procedure of analysis will depend on the collected data and the research questions. Therefore, the following sections describe the process of data analysis with regard to the research questions investigated through the questionnaire and the interview.

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<sup>26</sup> MM = Mixed Methods

## **4. 1 Questionnaire Data**

The questionnaire data are concerned with the first research question: *What is the level of pragmatic competence among medical students?*

This question is investigated by using two research instruments.

The procedure of analysis depends on the type of data, so each part of the questionnaire will be discussed separately. Bearing in mind the order of the sub-questions, the presentation begins with the data of the Awareness Test and then the DCT data. The first section describes the results of the Awareness data in regard to the sub-question (1. 1), while the data of the DCT are related to the sub-question (1. 2).

### ***4. 1. 1 Awareness Test Data***

As mentioned earlier, in the awareness test used in this study the students were required to evaluate a speech act according to its described situation. Then they were asked to justify why they rated a certain item as appropriate or inappropriate. There are twelve different situations covering the speech acts of Request, Apology and Refusal.

The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. As was noted in the previous chapter, responding to the awareness test involved two parts: evaluating the appropriateness of the selected speech act and providing a reason to justify the

choice. Thus, the first part required a coding procedure to allow computer-assisted treatment, while the second part was dealt with manually.

According to Dörnyei (2007), the first step of data processing is to convert the answers to numbers by using a coding procedure. He also maintains that three steps are required to enter the data into a computer file: “creating a data file, defining the coding frames and keying in the data” (Dörnyei, 2007: 200). Hence, the data were coded and processed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software (version 15.0) for windows.

The responses were coded under two values (1= appropriate) and (2= inappropriate). As clarified by Dörnyei (2007: 199), “value is a technical term used in statistics, referring to the numbers assigned to the response options of the variable”.

The twelve items of the test were coded from 1 to 12 in the spreadsheet of the SPSS programme. Then, individual evaluations for each item were inserted for the 56 participants. The total number was 672 insertions. The frequency and the percentage of the responses were measured via the SPSS software. After that, each item was viewed in the SPSS output page in a separate table, showing how many items were evaluated as appropriate or inappropriate. The frequency table of test items can be checked in Appendix (B).

The following table shows a summary of the responses of the 56 participants in terms of frequency and percentage with regard to speech act items. The speech

act of Request is represented in items (1, 6, 8, and 9), Apology items are (2, 5, 10, and 12) and Refusal items include (3, 4, 7, and 11).

**Table 3 Summary of the Awareness Test Responses**

| Test Items  | Correct Response | Participants' Responses |       |                      |       |
|---|------------------|-------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|   |                  | <i>Appropriate</i>      |       | <i>Inappropriate</i> |       |
|   |                  | Freq.                   | Per.  | Freq.                | Per.  |
| 1- Can you tell me where the nearest bus stop is?   | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 15                      | 26.8% | 41                   | 73.2% |
| 2- Oh, sorry!   | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 27                      | 48.2% | 29                   | 51.8% |
| 3- I'm sorry, but I am not going straight home. There are quite a few things I need to do before heading home! Perhaps another day. | <i>App.</i>      | 39                      | 69.6% | 17                   | 30.4% |
| 4- In your dreams! I'm a busy person.   | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 5                       | 8.9%  | 51                   | 91.1% |
| 5- Oh, I'm very sorry. I completely forgot. Can I give it to you tomorrow?  | <i>App.</i>      | 49                      | 87.5% | 7                    | 12.5% |
| 6- I have to study for an important exam. Can you please do the washing up for me? I promise to do yours the next time.             | <i>App.</i>      | 55                      | 98.2% | 1                    | 1.8%  |
| 7- I am sorry, but I have an urgent appointment that I must attend. I can definitely help tomorrow.                                 | <i>App.</i>      | 44                      | 78.6% | 12                   | 21.4% |
| 8- Where is the menu?   | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 4                       | 7.1%  | 52                   | 92.9% |
| 9- Would you be so kind as to take this medicament regularly, please?   | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 42                      | 75%   | 14                   | 25%   |
| 10- I couldn't come earlier and anyway, we don't have to hurry anywhere.  | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 14                      | 25%   | 42                   | 75%   |
| 11- I don't want to. It goes against my convictions!  | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 5                       | 8.9%  | 51                   | 91.1% |
| 12- Oops! I'm terribly sorry. I wish I were more careful. Please forgive me.  | <i>Inapp.</i>    | 43                      | 76.8% | 13                   | 23.2% |

As can be seen, the table illustrates the participants' evaluation of appropriate and inappropriate utterances as compared with the correct evaluation. Most of the items were evaluated correctly as an initial observation.<sup>27</sup> The highest percentage (98.2%) was found in item 6. Also in item 8, the majority of evaluations (92, 2%) were correct. There was an approximately equal percentage regarding item 2.

However, the most striking percentage took place with item 9 and item 12. These items read as follows:

|  |
|--|
| <p>9- After examining his patient, the dentist says:<br/><b><i>Would you be so kind as to take this medicament regularly, please?</i></b></p>  |
| <p>12- While having dinner at your younger brother's house, you dropped a glass accidentally and it broke into pieces. You say:<br/><b><i>Oops! I'm terribly sorry. I wish I were more careful. Please forgive me.</i></b></p> |

Item 9 is a request made by a dentist to his patient, and item 12 is an apology addressed to a younger brother. Both utterances are inappropriate according to the described situations. But the majority of the students; precisely 75% and 76.8% respectively, evaluated them as appropriate. These students considered the items as appropriate because they were presented in a polite way as manifested in their justification. They did not pay attention to the context and the relationship between the interlocutors which determine the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the speech act.

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<sup>27</sup> It is an initial observation because after reviewing the reasons, it is possible to identify whether the evaluation is consciously given or unintentional.

So far, it has been shown how the participants evaluated the utterances, which constitute the first half of the general result of the awareness test. The other half plays an important role in determining whether the participants' evaluation reflects a thoughtful choice. In other words, the reasons provided by the participant are very important as they show whether the student knows what to answer and why or just fills in the blanks randomly.

Concerning the second part of the awareness test, all the reasons were compiled and entered into the computer for manual analysis. As the test items cover three speech acts, the reasons for each speech act were dealt with separately. The analysis was carried out across the 672 items in the following steps:<sup>28</sup>

1. Selecting the correct responses
2. Looking into the reasons and sorting the relevant and irrelevant ones
3. Examining the relevant reasons thoroughly and looking for common ideas
4. Dividing them into categories

It is to be observed that the irrelevant reasons involved those which did not denote a specific idea, gave no comment, repeated the description of the given situation, or gave a response contrary to the evaluation. This measure was inspired from Chen (1996) and Safont Jordà (2003). The irrelevant reasons were taken out of the total reasons and the remaining ones were checked again. The reasons were considered relevant or logical if they refer to any factors that affect the use of the

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<sup>28</sup> 672 items = number of participants 56 × number of test items 12



speech act in the way it was presented in its context. These factors can be linguistic or related to the social variables of the situation.

Having examined all the reasons, the number of relevant reasons for each of the items of the different speech acts was reported. The following table shows the final result of the distribution of relevant reasons in comparison to the total number of reasons provided by students.

**Table 4 Distribution of the Reasons**

| <b>Speech Act</b> | <b>Item No.</b> | <b>Total Reasons</b> | <b>Relevant Reasons</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Request</b>    | 1               | 41                   | 16                      | 28.6 %            |
|                   | 6               | 55                   | 8                       | 14.3 %            |
|                   | 8               | 52                   | 23                      | 41.1 %            |
|                   | 9               | 14                   | 8                       | 14.3 %            |
| <b>Apology</b>    | 2               | 29                   | 16                      | 28.6 %            |
|                   | 5               | 49                   | 4                       | 7.1 %             |
|                   | 10              | 42                   | 7                       | 12.5 %            |
|                   | 12              | 13                   | 9                       | 16.1 %            |
| <b>Refusal</b>    | 3               | 39                   | 14                      | 25 %              |
|                   | 4               | 51                   | 19                      | 33.9 %            |
|                   | 7               | 44                   | 13                      | 23.2 %            |
|                   | 11              | 51                   | 9                       | 16.1 %            |

The table presents the relevant reasons for each item of the speech acts. Overall, the number of relevant reasons is noticeably low vis-à-vis the total number of correct responses provided by students. For almost all the items, the relevant reasons constitute half or even less than half of the total reasons. The most striking

observation to emerge from this table is with regard to items 6, 5 and 11. The difference in the numbers of relevant reasons in comparison to the total responses is remarkably sharp. So these cases require further investigation. It is to be reminded that in those three cases, most of the participants provided correct evaluations.

Item 6 shows an appropriate request performed in the following situation:

6. You are sharing a flat with other students and today it is your turn to do the washing up. However, you have an important exam tomorrow, so you tell one of your flatmates:  
***- I have to study for an important exam. Can you please do the washing up for me? I promise to do yours the next time.***

Although 98.2% of the participants figured out the correct evaluation of the item, only 14.3% provided logical reasons for their choices. The remaining responses were regarded as irrelevant. The majority of participants expressed their approval of how nice or polite the utterance was formed. For example, they stated that it was “a polite way”, “a good request”, “nice answer”, and “very appropriate”.

Some reasons reflected general moral values. That is to say, some participants indicated that the utterance was appropriate because this was part of collaboration, mutual respect, and friendship. The rest of the participants either left it blank or repeated the same description of the scenario such as, because he has an exam, or he will do the washing up another time.

As for item 5, it is an apology delivered appropriately in the given situation.

5. Sarah has borrowed a book from her teacher. Her teacher needs it back, but Sarah has forgotten to return it. She says to the teacher:

**- *Oh, I'm very sorry. I completely forgot. Can I give it to you tomorrow?***

From the table of reasons, it is apparent that only 7.1 % of the participants provided logical reasons for their evaluation. Once again, the rest of the responses praised the apology, indicating that it is “the most suitable answer”, “a good way to apologise”, “a polite way”, and the like. Repeating information that occurred in the situation was also found among the reasons, for example, “because she really forgot”, and “because she said sorry”. Other participants left it blank.

In item 11, an appropriate refusal is provided in the following situation:

11. You are a university student and a close friend had been sick and asks if he/she can borrow your class notes. You refuse by saying:

**- *I don't want to. It goes against my convictions.***

In this situation, 91.1 % of the participants evaluated the refusal as inappropriate; however, only 16.1 % of them justified their choices logically. Similar to the above cases, most of the participants showed their disapproval of this refusal by stating, for example, that it was “not polite”, “a very rude way”, and “a rough and impolite reply”. The majority of the responses reflected the value of friendship, such as, because he/she is my friend, “I will give him/her anything”, “That may hurt my friend”, and “It is very hard to his friend”. The rest of the participants either copied the description of the situation, or left it blank.

The third and fourth steps of the analysis involved examining the relevant reasons and categorising them in order to find out what types of reasons were provided. This procedure is important in order to find out students' awareness regarding politeness issues such as the role of the speaker, the social distance between the interlocutors, and the situation in which the speech act is produced. The process of analysis involved examining the content of the reasons and looking for the common ideas.

Consequently, five categories emerged from the analysis. As there were responses that reflected more than one idea, they could belong to two categories at the same time. Therefore, setting a clear-cut demarcation among the categories was of little importance. It was more significant to recognise the major ideas that characterised students' responses. Accordingly, five categories were derived inductively from the responses:

### **1. Social Variables**

The category includes the reasons that referred to power (in terms of age or status) and social distance between the interlocutors in the described situation. This involves the reasons in which the reference to the social variable influenced the speech act used, such as the following examples:

- *It is ok for the doctor to be polite but not like this, and the end the choice is for the patient, he must advice him, not to beg his pardon*<sup>29</sup> (In item 9, Request)
- *Because he is my brother, so I won't be very sorry* (In item 12, Apology)
- *He's my younger brother & I shouldn't be so much sorry & embarrassed for what I did & it's also a small mistake* (In item 12, Apology)
- *The reply was polite and beyond that the student whom I met is not known* (In item 3, Refusal)

## **2. Politeness Markers**

This category comprises the reasons that referred to the use of politeness markers. House and Kasper (1981) define politeness markers as “expressions added to the utterance to show deference to the addressee and to bid for cooperative behavior” such as *please, if you don't mind* and tag questions (cited in Minoos and Sajedah, 2013: 112-113). This deference can also be shown by using an indirect way to fulfill a speech act. Examples of students' responses are the following:

- *Because if you need anything from anyone you must start with please* (In item 8, Request)
- *It's impolite request, she must say please at least* (In item 1, Request)
- *It's direct way to ask and not polite* (In item 8, Request)
- *She refuse in direct way* (In item 11, Refusal)

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<sup>29</sup> The grammatical accuracy of the students' answers is not examined. It falls beyond the scope of the current study. The aim of the questionnaire is to check student's pragmatic knowledge.

### **3. Strategy Type**

This category included the reasons which refer to the strategies used to realise the speech act<sup>30</sup>. The following examples are representative of the category:

- *It is good way to ask. First he say please and second he promise to do it next time*  
(In item 6, Request)
- *Because I tell him the reason & will help him tomorrow* (In item 7, Refusal)
- *Because I have another work, and I promise him to help tomorrow* (In item 7, Refusal)
- *Because he doesn't say the cause of late* (In item 10, Apology)

### **4. Suggestion**

In some responses, the participants wrote down a suggested form of what should be said in such situations. This has been counted as justification because it reflects the participants' understanding of the appropriate speech act in use. This category is exemplified by the following responses:

- *She must say: May you tell me where the nearest bus stop is, please?* (In item 1, Request)
- *Sorry, I couldn't come earlier* (In item 10, Apology)

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<sup>30</sup> A speech act can be performed by different strategies based on the components of the utterance. For example, the refusal "Thank you. I am not hungry" consists of two strategies: thanking + justifying.

- *Oh it's very kind! But you know my dear I'm so busy could you delay it for another day. Nice to meet you* (In item 4, Refusal)
- *Should use polite way, could you give me the menu, please?* (In item 8, Request)

### **5. Amount of information**

This category was only found in seven responses in the speech act of Apology (Item 2). Some participants expressed that the utterance used in the situation was not sufficient to express an apology, for example:

- *Because sorry not enough*
- *Because she doesn't keep in her mind that she did a big mistake. She had to be more sorry.*
- *Because these 2 words not enough to make me pleased*

The above categories reflect the participants' general perspective of appropriateness manifested in their justification. Here is the abbreviated version of figures in each speech act.

**Table 5 The Percentage of Relevant Reasons**

| <b>Speech Act</b> | <b>Item No.</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Request</b>    | 1               | <i>28.6 %</i>     |
|                   | 6               | <i>14.3 %</i>     |
|                   | 8               | <i>41.1 %</i>     |
|                   | 9               | <i>14.3 %</i>     |
| <b>Apology</b>    | 2               | <i>28.6 %</i>     |
|                   | 5               | <i>7.1 %</i>      |
|                   | 10              | <i>12.5 %</i>     |
|                   | 12              | <i>16.1 %</i>     |
| <b>Refusal</b>    | 3               | <i>25 %</i>       |
|                   | 4               | <i>33.9 %</i>     |
|                   | 7               | <i>23.2 %</i>     |
|                   | 11              | <i>16.1 %</i>     |

As shown in the table, the percentage of the relevant reasons provided by the students is low which in turn denotes their level of pragmatic awareness. Therefore, pragmatic awareness is shown among these students who have been able to identify appropriate and inappropriate items and at the same time who have provided reasons pertinent to the contextual factors governing this appropriateness.

The process of data analysis and results of the Awareness Test has been reported. The following section describes the data analysis and results of the other part of the questionnaire: the DCT.



#### **4. 1. 2 DCT Data**

This section gives an account of the DCT data in terms of analysis and result. The DCT data is concerned with the second sub-question which investigates the students' performance of speech acts in different situations. In order to answer this question, it is important to find out how the students produced speech acts in different situations by checking out the strategies used. The students were required to read nine scenarios and write what they would respond in each situation.

Similar to the Awareness Test, the three speech acts were employed in the DCT: Request (in items 1, 3, 9), Apology (in items 2, 4, 7) and Refusal (in items 5, 6, 8). The situations were designed to represent different social variables to study the students' performance in different contexts. In other words, there are three levels of social distance or familiarity between interlocutors: intimate (between friends and family members), acquaintance (a middle status of familiarity) and stranger (people who do not know each other).

Similarly, social power is represented in the situations by three levels: higher (the hearer has power over the speaker), equal (no interlocutor has power over the other), and lower (the speaker has power over the hearer).

The data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The following steps were taken:

- The students' responses were compiled and typed into the computer for easy retrieval of information during the analysis and for ordering them for the

subsequent step of the analysis. The final list included 504 responses that were subdivided into sets of 168 responses for each speech act.

- Then each response was analysed by breaking it down into semantic units.<sup>31</sup>
- After that, the frequency of strategy types was counted and put in tables.
- The qualitative analysis also included an examination of the responses in terms of how the strategy was used and whether there were other linguistic components in addition to the main speech act used, as will be illustrated afterwards.

The following section starts with reporting the data of the speech act of Request.

#### ***4. 1. 2. 1 Data of the speech act of Request***

The speech act of request is a pre-event act. In making requests, an action whether verbal or nonverbal is expected to be taken by the hearer for the sake of the speaker. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) a request comprises an essential part called the head act such as “Clean the house” and it may comprise additional parts to support or modify the head act such as “Clean the house, please

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<sup>31</sup> Each semantic unit represents a unified idea, for example the statement “I am sorry, the bus was late” consists of two units: an expression of regret + an explanation. It is also referred to as “idea unit” in Nelson et al. (2002: 170).

It's in a mess".<sup>32</sup> The request head act can be realised by strategies based on the choice of the level of directness. In the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CSARP), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 278) identify nine strategies for making requests on a decreasing level of directness. By directness, they mean "the degree to which the speaker's illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution". The nine strategies fall within three levels: direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect. The following table based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 17) illustrates the strategies.

**Table 6 Classification of Request Strategies<sup>33</sup>**

| <b>Level of Directness</b> | <b>Strategy Type</b>   |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Direct</b>              | 1. <b>Mood derivable:</b> an utterance in which the grammatical mood of the verb signals illocutionary force ( <i>Leave me alone</i> )   |
|                            | 2. <b>Explicit performative:</b> an utterance in which the illocutionary force is explicitly named ( <i>I am asking you to clean up the mess</i> )   |
|                            | 3. <b>Hedged performative:</b> an utterance in which the naming of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions ( <i>I would like to ask you to give your presentation a week earlier than scheduled</i> ) |
|                            | 4. <b>Obligation statement:</b> an utterance which states the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act ( <i>You'll have to move that car</i> )  |
|                            | 5. <b>Want statement:</b> an utterance which states the speaker's desire that the hearer carries out the act ( <i>I really wish you'd stop bothering me</i> )  |

<sup>32</sup> "A Head Act is the minimal unit which can realize a request; it is the core of the request sequence" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 275).

<sup>33</sup> based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Conventionally Indirect</b>     | 6. <b>Suggestory formula:</b> an utterance which contains a suggestion to do x ( <i>How about cleaning up?</i> )   |
|                                    | 7. <b>Query preparatory:</b> an utterance containing reference to preparatory conditions such as ability, possibility, willingness, and permission as conventionalized in any specific language ( <i>Could you clean up the kitchen, please?</i> ) |
| <b>Non-conventionally Indirect</b> | 8. <b>Strong hint:</b> an utterance containing partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act ( <i>You have left the kitchen in a right mess</i> )  |
|                                    | 9. <b>Mild hint:</b> an utterance that makes no reference to the request proper or any of its elements but are interpretable as requests by context ( <i>You've been busy here, haven't you?</i> )   |

In the current study, the students' use of requests were analysed based on the coding scheme of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) of the request head act. This classification has emerged out of their project of Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns of requests and apologies in different languages. It is considered the most extensive empirical investigation of cross-cultural pragmatics (Abuarras, Lochtman and Lutjerhams, 2013). It has been widely used in many studies of request realisations (e.g., Umar, 2004; Lin, 2009; Jalilifar, 2009; Kogetsidis, 2010).

In this study, the students were asked to make requests in light of the following situations:

**Situation 1:** It is time to submit a term paper, but you haven't finished it yet. You want to ask your teacher for an extension. (*P = higher, D = acquaintance*)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> P = Power, D = Distance.

**Situation 3:** You are a doctor and you are busy working in your clinic. You need a file of a patient that you examined last week, but you cannot find it. You want your secretary to look for it. (*P = lower, D = acquaintance*)

**Situation 9:** You are a doctor and you have travelled abroad to participate in an international conference. You are not sure of the location of the hall where you will deliver your presentation. You want to ask a colleague you have just met. (*P = equal, D = stranger*)

As mentioned earlier, the collected data of each speech act comprised 168 responses. They were coded according to Blum-Kulka et al.'s classification of request head act. The responses were analysed in terms of the frequency of request strategies. The frequency of request strategies was measured and converted into percentage. The following table shows which strategies were used by the students in each situation. The dark boxes indicate the absence of strategy.

Table 7 Type and Frequency of Request Strategies<sup>35</sup>

| <i>Strategy Type</i>               |                           | <i>Sit.1</i> |       | <i>Sit.3</i> |       | <i>Sit.9</i> |       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                                    |                           | Freq.        | Per.  | Freq.        | Per.  | Freq.        | Per.  |
| <b>Direct</b>                      | <b>Mood derivable</b>     | 9            | 16.1% | 11           | 19.6% | 4            | 7.1%  |
|                                    | <b>Want statement</b>     | 2            | 3.6%  | 3            | 5.4%  | 8            | 14.3% |
| <b>Conventionally Indirect</b>     | <b>Suggestory formula</b> | 1            | 1.8%  |              |       |              |       |
|                                    | <b>Query preparatory</b>  | 43           | 76.8% | 40           | 71.4% | 43           | 76.8% |
| <b>Non-Conventionally Indirect</b> | <b>Strong Hint</b>        | 1            | 1.8%  |              |       | 1            | 1.8%  |
| <b>Question</b>                    |                           |              |       |              |       | 4            | 7.1%  |
| <b>No Request</b>                  |                           |              |       | 2            | 3.6%  | 1            | 1.8%  |

The table above shows which strategies were used by the students for making requests. As can be seen, the type “Query preparatory”, which belongs to conventionally indirect strategies, was the most recurrent strategy in the three situations with a high recurrence of 76.8% in situation (1) and situation (9), and 71.4% in situation (3). This strategy was mostly realised by using ‘ability’ questions with “can/could”.

The next strategy used by the students was “Mood derivable” which belongs to direct strategies. Although it was much less frequent in the data, it came second to

<sup>35</sup> Sit = Situation; Freq = Frequency; Per = Percentage

“Query Preparatory”. The “Mood derivable” strategy or imperatives was used with a percentage of 19.6% in situation (3), 16.1% in situation (1) and 7.1% in situation (9). Similarly, the strategy “Want statement” occurred less frequently with a percentage of 14.3% in situation (9). The non-conventionally indirect strategies did not occur in the data except for a single use.

In addition to these strategies, there were four cases in situation (9) in which questions were used to realise the request, such as: “*Excuse me, doctor, do you know where the hall in which I’m delivering my presentation is?*” Their occurrence of 7.1% was marginal in comparison with the other main strategies.

Lastly, it can be observed from the table that there were three cases where the students did not provide requests. In situation (3), for example, a student just called the secretary to come “*Come here, please*” instead of asking for the patient’s file, which could indicate that the student did not understand what was required in the situation.

As for the frequency of strategies with regard to the social variable of the situations, it is observed that despite the fact that the three situations for making a request exhibit different degrees of power (Sit 1: higher, Sit 3: lower, Sit 9: equal), the conventionally indirect strategy “Query Preparatory” had a relatively similar frequency in the three situations (76%, 71%, 76%).

By the same token, although the direct strategy “Mood derivable” or imperative occurred much less frequently in the data, their frequencies were comparably close

in situations (1) and (3) where the degrees of social power are totally different (higher vs. lower) with a relative similar percentage of (16.1% vs.19.6%).

In addition to the types of strategies and their frequency, the content of the responses was also investigated in terms of how the strategy was used. It should be noted that in situation (1) where the request was intended for extending a term paper, a few students (25%), misinterpreted it as extending exam duration. Nevertheless, as long as the speech act of request was provided by them, their responses were included in the analysis.

Moreover, two other observations were identified in the students' use of requests. The first aspect is related to the way in which "please" was used to mitigate the requests. It was observed that used in conjunction with the address terms in 20% of the data as exemplified in the following requests:

- *Teacher please, can I get some time to complete my writing?*
- *Could you please teacher give me an extra time to finish my term paper?*

The use of please with the address terms occurred more frequently in situation 1 where the request is intended for a higher status as a way to soften the effect of the speech act.

Additionally, mitigation is also apparent with regard to the second aspect identified in students' responses; that is, the use of possessive pronouns with the address terms such as:

- *Please my doctor, give me 5 minutes to complete?*



- *Please my dear, can you help me to look for the patient examined?*
- *Hi my friend please can you tell me about or where the international conference takes place*

According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), the use of address terms before requests serves as attention getters. However, in this context the students' use of possessive pronouns with titles is indicative of a wish to soften the effect of requests especially when it was accompanied with please in some responses.

#### **4. 1. 2. 2 Data of the speech act of Apology**

The speech act of apology is used to restore harmony between interlocutors after an occurrence of damage. In this study, the participants were asked to put themselves in the described situations and write how they would apologise in each case. An apology can be performed by different strategies or semantic formulas as they are referred to in Olshtain and Cohen (1983).

For the sake of classifying strategies in this study, the taxonomy proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) was followed. This particular model has been chosen as it was developed out of empirical observations. It was also used as a basis for other studies such as the CCSARP by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984); Holmes (1989), Trosberg (1987); and also Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Moreover, this taxonomy of apology strategies is inclusive and uncomplicated at the same time. Many recent studies on apology such as Nureddeen (2008); Jebahi (2011); Yousofi and Khakasar (2014) are built either on the taxonomy of Olshtain and Cohen

(1983), or on Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Besides, the taxonomies in the last two studies are also variations of Olshtain and Cohen's taxonomy.

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) differentiate between the case where there is a denial of responsibility and the case in which the offender realises the need to apologise. When there is a need to apologise, as it is the case in this study, Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 22-23) provide five potential strategies. They are demonstrated in the following table.

**Table 8 Classification of Apology Strategies<sup>36</sup>**

| <b>Strategy</b>   | <b>Sub-strategy</b>  |
|---|--|
| <b>1- An expression of an apology</b>                             | a. An expression of regret, e.g., I'm sorry  |
|   | b. An offer of apology, e.g., I apologize  |
|   | c. A request for forgiveness, e.g., Excuse me, Please forgive me, or Pardon me           |
| <b>2- An explanation or account of the situation<sup>37</sup></b> |  |
| <b>3- An acknowledgement of responsibility</b>                    | a. Accepting the blame, e.g., It is my fault   |
|   | b. Expressing self-deficiency, e.g., I was confused, I wasn't thinking, I didn't see you |
|   | c. Recognizing the other person as deserving apology, e.g., You are right                |
|   | d. Expressing lack of intent, e.g., I didn't mean to                                     |
| <b>4- An offer of repair</b>                                      |  |
| <b>5- A promise of forbearance<sup>38</sup></b>                   |  |

<sup>36</sup> based on Olshtain and Cohen (1983)

<sup>37</sup> It is offered either in addition or in lieu of the expression of an apology

<sup>38</sup> The last two formulas are situation-specific. They can occur only if the specific discourse situation calls for such formulas (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983:22-23)

Concerning the students' responses in this speech act, there were three situations in which they were required to apologise.

**Situation.2:** You are a student and you are half an hour late for a lecture. When you arrive, you want to apologise to your teacher for the delay. (*P = higher, D = acquaintance*)

**Situation.4:** Your friend lent you a book that she/he is very attached to. You left the book beside the window when it rained, and some pages were damaged. (*P = equal, D = intimate*)

**Situation.7:** You are a doctor diagnosing a patient at your clinic. A friend is calling you on the phone and you pick up. You keep talking for 10 minutes. Your patient looks annoyed. (*P = lower, D = acquaintance*)

The collected data of the speech act of apology included 168 responses. These responses were analysed in order to identify the strategies used by the participants. Then each strategy was counted to measure frequency. The following table shows which strategy types were used in each situation, their frequency and percentage.

**Table 9 Type and Frequency of Apology Strategies**

| <b>Strategy Type</b>                              | <b>Sit. 2</b> |       | <b>Sit. 4</b> |       | <b>Sit. 7</b> |       |
|---|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|
|   | Freq.         | Per.  | Freq.         | Per.  | Freq.         | Per.  |
| <b>An expression of apology</b>                   | 49            | 87.5% | 53            | 94.6% | 50            | 89.3% |
| <b>An explanation or account of the situation</b> | 32            | 57.1% | 13            | 23.2% | 40            | 71.4% |
| <b>An acknowledgement of responsibility</b>       | 4             | 7.1%  | 17            | 30.4% | 8             | 14.3% |
| <b>A promise of forbearance</b>                   | 9             | 16.1% |               |       | 7             | 12.5% |
| <b>An offer of repair</b>                         |               |       | 34            | 60.7% | 2             | 3.6%  |
| <b>No Apology</b>                                 | 3             | 5.1%  | 3             | 5.1%  | 3             | 5.1%  |

As can be viewed from the table, the strategy type “An expression of apology” was the most frequent one in the three situations. It was used with a percentage of 87.5% in situation (2), 94.6% in situation (4), and 89.3% in situation (7). An expression of apology includes three sub-strategies as shown in Olshtain and Cohen’s taxonomy in the table above. The first sub-strategies; namely, an expression of regret “I am sorry” was used frequently by the participants, either separately or combined with other strategies.

The next most frequent strategy is “An explanation”. It was used with a percentage of 57.1% in situation (2), 71.4% in situation (7) and 23.2% in situation (4). The other strategies were used less frequently depending on the situation itself. For example, as shown in the table, the strategy “Offer of repair” was found with a percentage of 60.7% in situation (4) where there is damage on a borrowed book.

Finally, as can be seen from the table, there were three cases in each situation in which no apology was provided. In situation (2), for example, where the student is late for a lecture, two participants avoided the apology and instead they chose to ask permission for entering the class. The third one wrote that he would not enter the class, and if he saw the teacher, he would provide an explanation.

Taking in consideration the different representation of social variables in the three situations, it can be observed that the strategy “Expression of strategy” was used most frequently (94.6%) in situation (4) where there is equal power and intimate distance between the interlocutors. On the other hand, it occurred less frequently in situation (2) in which the social power was higher.

The next frequent strategy was “Explanation” which showed the highest incidence (71.4%) in situation (7) where the apology was made to an addressee with lower power. Furthermore, among the three situations, the strategy “Acknowledgement of responsibility” occurred most frequently in situation (4) where the social distance is close and the power is equal.

Turning now to the qualitative review of the responses, there are two aspects which have been identified; namely, combination of strategies and intensification. Examining the responses of apology in the three situations shows a recurrent use of combined strategies. This combination is normal and expected when the situation calls for such use as rightly highlighted by Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 22) when they state: “In most cases just one of the formulas is sufficient in order to perform an apology, but often two or three are combined together and thus create

higher intensity of apology". What is quite interesting and worthy of comment in this regard is the type of combination used by some participants. The use of more than two and sometimes three strategies is frequent throughout the responses.

From the table of frequency, it can be observed, for example that the five strategies of apology have all been used in situation (7) in which the doctor picks up the telephone while examining a patient. The use of combined strategies is illustrated in the following examples from students' responses:

- [Expression of apology] + [Explanation] + [Expression of apology] + [Acknowledgement of responsibility]

*[Sorry], [that's one of my close friends who I haven't seen for a month, I think]. [I'm sorry] [I left you waiting for 10 minutes]. Are you ok or I made you late? Now....*

- [Acknowledgement of responsibility] + [Explanation] + [Promise] + [Offer of repair]

*[I'm really impolite to do that], [but is very nessecary call. If it isn't, I'll not answer]. [No problem I'll stay with you & answer you for all answer & your interview is free].*

- [Expression of apology] + [Acknowledgement of responsibility] + [Explanation] + [Expression of apology]

*[Excuse me], [I let you feel annoyed], [but there is something important that my friend say it to me related to us], [so I'm sorry].*

Sometimes the students tend to add strategies other than an apology such as greeting, asking permission, compliment, or gratitude. The following examples illustrate this kind:

**Situation 2:**

- [Two expressions of apology] + [Explanation] + [Asking permission] + [Expression of apology]

*[Excuse me doctor, I'm really sorry] [I couldn't come in time because of the traffic]. [Could you please let me in]? [I'm saying sorry again].*

- [Greeting] + [Asking permission] + [Acknowledgement of responsibility]

*[Hello teacher, good morning], [can I go please], [really that was out of my will]*

**Situation 4:**

- [Compliment] + [Expression of apology] + [Explanation] + [Offer of repair]

*[Oh my friend, you are the good friend], [I'm so sorry] [there are some thing happened for your book perforce me the rain drop wash your book], [so I will buy a new book for you].*

- [Gratitude] + [Explanation] + [Expression of apology] + [Offer of repair] + [Expression of apology]

*[First: thank you so much for your nice book]. [Second: there is accident occoure for your book], [I'm sorry about that] [and I'll buy new one for you] [so excecuse me].*

The other aspect observed in students' responses is the intensification of apologies. There are many examples of intensification in students' responses. The following extracts taken from students' responses exemplify this case:

**Sit. 2**

I'm sorry . . . can you forgive me

Sorry . . . forgive me

Excuse me, I'm sorry

Excuse me . . . I'm really sorry . . . sorry again

**Sit. 4**

I'm very very very sorry

Really I'm so sorry. . . could you forgive me please

I'm sorry . . . please pardon me

I'm really sorry . . . forgive me please

**Sit. 7**

Really I'm so sorry . . . please excuse me

I'm so so so so so sorry

I'm really sorry

Excuse me . . . I am sorry

I'm very sorry

As seen in the above examples, the intensification of apology is reflected in many forms. It takes the form of repeating the same word like "sorry... sorry again", or repeating the strategy but in two forms such as mentioning an expression of apology "Sorry" with a request for forgiveness "Excuse me or forgive me" in the same utterance. Besides, some apologies were also intensified by the use of adverbs "really, very, so" and repeating them like "so so sorry".



The last speech act to be reported is that of Refusal. The next section shows students' use of refusals in the DCT.

#### **4. 1. 2. 3 Data of the speech act of Refusal**

A refusal indicates a negative response to a request, an invitation or an offer. Refusals are realised by direct and indirect strategies as described by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990). As affirmed by Campillo, Safont-Jordà and Codina-Espurz (2009), the study of Beebe et al. has been the most influential and best-known study on refusals over the last 20 years.

Their classification of refusal strategies has been widely adopted in many studies (for example, Allami and Naeimi, 2011; Nelson, Al-Batal and El-Bakary, 2002; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Al-Eryani, 2007; and Félix-Brasdefer, 2003, 2006). It will also be used in the current study as a basis for analysing students' refusals. Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy emerged after examining how American English speakers and Japanese EFL learners declined invitations, requests, suggestions and offers. In their classification, the refusal can be realised directly or indirectly and each type is divided into a set of semantic formulas. It also includes a third category called "Adjuncts to Refusals" which are expressions used along with the refusal but which cannot be used by themselves as refusals. The full list of refusal strategies by Beebe et al. (1990: 72-73) is shown in the following table.

**Table 10 Classification of Refusal Strategies<sup>39</sup>**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>I. Direct</b>            | <p><b>A.</b> Performative (e.g., “I refuse”)<br/> <b>B.</b> Non-performative statement<br/> 1. “No”<br/> 2. 2. Negative willingness/ability (“I can’t.” “I won’t.” “I don’t think so.”)</p>  |
| <b>II. Indirect</b>         | <p><b>A.</b> Statement of regret (e.g., “I’m sorry...”, “I feel terrible...”)<br/> <b>B.</b> Wish (e.g., “I wish I could help you...”)<br/> <b>C.</b> Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., “My children will be home that night.”; “I have a headache.”)<br/> <b>D.</b> Statement of alternative<br/> 1) I can do X instead of Y (e.g., “I’d rather do...”, “I’d prefer”)<br/> 2) Why don’t you do X instead of Y (e.g., “Why don’t you ask someone else?”)<br/> <b>E.</b> Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., “If you had asked me earlier, I would have...”)<br/> <b>F.</b> Promise of future acceptance (e.g., “I’ll do it next time.”; I promise I’ll...” or “Next time I’ll...” - using “will” of promise or “promise”)<br/> <b>G.</b> Statement of principle (e.g., “I never do business with friends.”)<br/> <b>H.</b> Statement of philosophy (e.g., “One can’t be too careful.”)<br/> <b>I.</b> Attempt to dissuade interlocutor<br/> 1) Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., “I won’t be any fun tonight” to refuse an invitation)<br/> 2) Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: “I can’t make a living off people who just order coffee.”)<br/> 3) Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., “Who do you think you are?”; “That’s a terrible idea!”)<br/> 4) Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.<br/> 5) Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., “Don’t worry about it.” “That’s okay.” “You don’t have to.”)<br/> 6) Self-defense (e.g., “I’m trying my best.” “I’m doing all I can.”)<br/> <b>J.</b> Acceptance that functions as a refusal<br/> 1) Unspecific or indefinite reply<br/> 2) Lack of enthusiasm<br/> <b>K.</b> Avoidance<br/> 1) Nonverbal<br/> a) Silence<br/> b) Hesitation<br/> c) Do nothing<br/> d) Physical departure<br/> 2) Verbal<br/> a) Topic switch<br/> b) Joke<br/> c) Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., “Monday?”)<br/> d) Postponement (e.g., “I’ll think about it.”)<br/> e) Hedging (e.g., “Gee, I don’t know.” “I’m not sure.”)</p> |
| <b>Adjuncts to Refusals</b> | <p>1. Statement of positive opinions/feeling or agreement (“That’s a good idea...”; “I’d love to...”)<br/> 2. Statement of empathy (e.g., “I realize you are in a difficult situation.”)<br/> 3. Pause filler (e.g., “uhh”; “well”; “uhm”)<br/> 4. Gratitude/appreciation</p>  |

<sup>39</sup> Based on Beebe et al. (1990)

In this study, the students were required to refuse in three different situations.

**Situation.5:** You are a student in your final year at university. You have written an excellent research paper. A first year student, whom you don't know, wants to borrow your paper. (*P = lower, D = stranger*)

**Situation.6:** You are at your friend's house watching TV. Your friend offers you some nut cake but you are allergic to nuts. You cannot accept the cake. (*P = equal, D = intimate*)

**Situation.8:** You are an intern at a hospital in a meeting with a senior doctor. It is getting late and you want to leave work but the doctor wants you to spend an extra hour or two to finish some more work. (*P = higher, D = acquaintance*)

The collected data of the speech act of refusal comprised 168 responses. The number of semantic formulas used by the students in each situation was collected and then converted into percentage. The resulting refusal strategies employed by students are illustrated in the subsequent table.

Table 11 Type and Frequency of Refusal Strategies

| <i>Strategies</i>           |  | <i>Sit.5</i> |       | <i>Sit.6</i> |       | <i>Sit.8</i> |       |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                             |  | Freq.        | Per.  | Freq.        | Per.  | Freq.        | Per.  |
| <b>Direct</b>               | <b>No</b>  | 2            | 3.6%  |              |       |              |       |
|                             | <b>Negative willingness/ability</b>                        | 34           | 60.7% | 24           | 42.9% | 17           | 30.4% |
| <b>Indirect</b>             | <b>Statement of regret</b>                                 | 38           | 67.9% | 21           | 37.5% | 26           | 46.4% |
|                             | <b>Wish</b>  |              |       | 1            | 1.8%  | 1            | 1.8%  |
|                             | <b>Excuse, reason, explanation</b>                         | 35           | 62.5% | 53           | 94.6% | 46           | 82.1% |
|                             | <b>Statement of alternative</b>                            | 4            | 7.1%  | 5            | 8.9%  | 2            | 3.6%  |
|                             | <b>Attempt to dissuade interlocutor</b>                    | 1            | 1.8%  |              |       |              |       |
|                             | <b>Promise of future acceptance</b>                        | 1            | 1.8%  |              |       | 9            | 16.1% |
|                             | <b>Acceptance that functions as a refusal</b>              | 3            | 5.4%  |              |       |              |       |
|                             | <b>Avoidance<br/>Silence / Joke/Topic switch</b>           |              |       | 2            | 3.6%  | 2            | 3.6%  |
| <b>Adjuncts to Refusals</b> | <b>Statement of positive opinions/feeling or agreement</b> | 7            | 12.5% | 11           | 19.6% | 6            | 10.7% |
|                             | <b>Pause filler</b>  | 2            | 3.6%  |              |       |              |       |
|                             | <b>Gratitude</b>   |              |       | 24           | 42.9% |              |       |
| <b>No Refusal</b>           |  | 5            | 8.9%  | 3            | 5.4%  | 5            | 8.9%  |

According to the data, it is observed that the students used more than one strategy of refusal in the same response. As can be seen from the table, there are

three strategies which were used repeatedly throughout the situations, namely; “Negative ability”, “Statement of regret” and “Excuse/reason”, while the others appeared less frequently.

The strategy “Excuse/reason” was the most recurrent one in the three situations with the highest percentage, that is, 62.5% in situation (5), 94.6% in situation (6) and 82.1% in situation (8). What comes next in terms of frequency is the strategy “Statement of regret” with a percentage of 67.9% in situation (5), 37.5% in situation (6) and 46.4% in situation (8). These two strategies belong to the indirect type of refusals.

In the category of direct refusal, the strategy “Negative ability” was used with a percentage of 60.7% in situation (5), 42.9% in situation (6) and 30.4% in situation (8). This strategy was also used along with indirect strategies or adjuncts to refusals. Concerning the sub-strategy “Silence” which is classified as a nonverbal “Avoidance” strategy, one participant described it in writing: *“The shape of cake is very good & its smell delicious. Silent few minet. Do you know some food make allergi for me as nut cake”?*

Overall, it is apparent from the data that the strategies [Regret] + [Negative ability] + [Reason] were used together very frequently in the three situations. The other strategies, as viewed in the table, had a low frequency in the data. They were used depending on the situation of refusal. With regard to the use of “Adjuncts to Refusals”, the students employed them with their refusal strategies with the highest

frequency in situation (6). The recurrent adjunct was “Statement of positive opinions/feelings” which was used in the three situations. It is also noted that a few students did not provide refusals when required. There were five cases where the answer was left blank in situation (5), three cases in which the offer was accepted in situation (6), and five cases where acceptance or irrelevant responses were provided in situation (8).

As for the frequency of strategies with regard to the social variables, the occurrence of the indirect strategy “Statement of regret” in the three situations was not in line with the different social power relations in the three situations. It can be seen from the table that the highest percentage of statements of regret (67.9%) was found in situation (5) where the refusal is addressed to a lower power.

On the other hand, in situation (8) in which the refusal is directed to a higher power, the responses were less apologetic. Similarly, the strategy “Excuse, reason” was most frequently used with a percentage of 94.6% in situation (6) where the interlocutors were equal in power. In addition, in comparison with the other situations, the responses in situation (6) included the highest occurrence of “Statement of positive opinion/feeling” as adjuncts to refusals. As for the direct strategy of “Negative Ability”, its frequency was compatible with the social variables. It had the lowest percentage with higher power.

With regard to the analysis of content of refusals in students’ responses, certain aspects were identified with regard to mitigating the effect of the refusals

throughout the situations. The first aspect is the use of address terms such as dear, my dear, my friend which were apparent in situations (5) and (6), and doctor, my doctor in situation (8). In addition, the address term was combined with please especially in situation (5). The following extracts of students' refusals illustrate this use:

- *Sorry dear. I couldn't give it to you, please excuse me*
- *Thank you my friend, but I am very allergic to nuts*
- *Doctor, I would like to go now please*

This mitigation was even accentuated by the addition of "please" which was apparent in situation (8). The following examples demonstrate this case:

- *Please doctor. I am busy.*
- *Please my doctor I get late. I need to do something necessary please let me go*

Another aspect found in the data is the tendency to use additional strategies other than those of refusals. A frequent use of "Offering help" as a compensation after declining a request is observed in situation (5) as shown in these examples:

- [Offering help] + [Statement of regret] + [Negative ability]

*[Listen, I can help you in your research], [but sorry], [I can't give it to you]*

- [Adjunct to refusal] + [Reason] + [Offering help]

*[I hope I can give you] [but I need it very much] [and if you want I can help you in any things other]*

- [Statement of regret] + [Negative ability] + [Reason] + [Offering help]

*[Oh I'm sorry] [I can't give you my research] [because I have som reason for me][but if you need my helper for you , I ready for you at any time]*

The other strategy identified in situation (8) in addition to refusals was “Asking for permission”. Some students asked for permission to leave, along with the refusal which was probably used as a way to affirm the inability to comply with the doctor’s request.

- [Asking for permission] + [Statement of regret]

*[Doctor if you never mind could you permit me to go] [really I'm so so sorry].*

- [Statement of regret] + [Explanation] + [Asking for permission]

*[I'm sorry], [I feel tired]. [Could you let me go]?*

- [Statement of regret] + [Explanation] + [Asking for permission]

*[Excuse me doctor] [I have an important meeting] [please can you allow me to go]?*

Also, there were two cases where leave-taking was used by itself as in: ‘*Doctor, I would like to go now please*’. It was classified under the strategy “Avoidance: Topic switch”

The final observation with regard to the students’ use of refusals was the extended use of combined strategies. This tendency was also quite evident in the data of



apologies but it was absent in that of requests. With refusals, the combination of strategies was recurrent in the three situations with a higher frequency in situation (5) as the table of strategies shows above. Here are some examples of this combination:

**Situation (5):**

- [Statement of regret] + [Explanation] + [Negative ability] + [Explanation]

*[I'm sorry] [but, you know, I really need my paper] [and I can't give to you or any other person][because, as I told you, I might need it any time].*

- [Adjunct to refusal] + [Explanation] + [Statement of regret] + [Statement of alternative]

*[I want to give you the research] [but another one who is in my level needs it so he will advantage from it more than you. So I should give him]. [I'm sorry my friend]. [You can take another].*

**Situation (6)**

- [Statement of regret] + [Adjunct to refusal] + [Statement of regret] + [Negative ability]

*[I'm sorry], [your cake is very good, but I'm allergic to nuts. Thank you] [but I'm so so sorry] [I cannot eat].*

- [Statement of regret] + [Negative ability] + [Reason] + [Statement of alternative]

*[Oh I'm very sorry] [I couldn't eat cake] [because I have allergic to cake], [would you give a cup of tea]?*

### **Situation (8)**

- [Statement of regret] + [Negative ability] + [Explanation] + [Promise of future acceptance]

*[I am sorry] [but I can't stay any more] [I am really exhausted], [I can do it later but not today]*

- [Statement of regret] + [Adjunct to refusal] + [Explanation] + [Asking for permission] + [Promise of future acceptance]

*[I'm so sorry] [I would like to spend with you more times] [because the meeting and talking with you is very wonderful and nice but I have very important work that let me leave the meeting now] .[So, please let me go] [and I'll meet you next time and nice to meet you].*

The previous section has been devoted to reporting the process of data analysis and data results of the questionnaire. The interpretation of the results and their significance with regard to the research question will be presented in Chapter 5.

The following section sheds light on the data analysis and results of the second research tool: the interview.

## 4. 2 Interview Data

The research instrument of interview is used to address the second research question; namely, *how important is it to develop pragmatic competence for medical students?*

As the study is carried out among non-English majors, the linguistic terminology is not used. Rather, the question is examined by looking at their experience with English learning and use and hence the implication of pragmatic competence is viewed in the light of their experience with the language.

More specifically, this question is investigated by looking into medical graduates' viewpoints and experiences with regard to learning English during their study period as well as their practice at present. It also looks at their perspectives of using English as previous medical students and as current graduates.

The interview data are analysed qualitatively. On the basis of the topic of investigation and the nature of the interview, the analysis of the interview data in this study is based on qualitative content analysis which is a broad term used by Dörnyei (2007: 245) to "characterize the collection of generic qualitative analytical moves that are applied to establish patterns in the data". This method of analysis involves the general steps of coding, growing ideas, interpreting the data and making conclusions.

According to Denscombe (2010: 282), "Content analysis has the potential to disclose many 'hidden' aspects of what is being communicated through the written

text”. Hence, in this interview data, the objective is to look for recurrent ideas in the respondents’ comments and opinions regarding the research question addressed in the interview. The idea is to look for any clues in text to unravel a deeper rooted message that is communicated (Denscombe, 2010).

Qualitative data analysis does not follow strict or straightforward guidelines. Rather, it involves different techniques depending on the type of data (Kvale, 1996; Folkestad, 2008). Nevertheless, there are general strategies which can be followed to facilitate the analysis process. According to Creswell (2009), the main purpose of the data analysis process is to make sense out of texts and images. He describes some general steps for the analysis process which are:

- Organising the data for analysis
- Reading through all data
- Coding the data
- Using the codes to generate themes and description
- Interrelating themes and description
- Making an interpretation

These stages do not always proceed in a linear fashion. Cyclic and iterative process is a distinctive feature of qualitative data analysis. As highlighted by Folkestad (2008: 4), he comments: “it should be noted that the analysis phase in itself is a continuous process and that we cannot easily distinguish the collection, reduction and analysis phases from each other”.

The above stages were followed in analysing the data of the current interview. The analysis process started with gathering the seven scripts and getting them prepared. Names of interviewees were replaced by numbers to keep their identity anonymous. The earlier questions and answers in regard with their background information were put aside because they have already been used to provide a description of their profiles in the previous chapter.

The interview scripts were dealt with one by one. The initial step was to go through the data for familiarisation. After reading the data for a few times, broader understanding started to emerge. This was followed by another reading to begin the coding process. It involved highlighting extracts and writing notes of ideas.

Then the data was re-examined to modify the codes and put them in categories. As the interview covered five main topics, the codes helped to put the related data in identifiable categories within these topics. The detailed analysis entailed developing ideas, going through the categories, identifying related themes, merging them, and looking for interrelation. Therefore, the data was reduced into identifiable categories or themes.<sup>40</sup>

This process resulted in two main themes: the graduates' own experience with English, and their viewpoints of English for medical students. The following section reports on the findings of the interview data under these two themes.

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<sup>40</sup> "Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10).

### **4. 2. 1 The graduates' own experience with English**

In order to position or evaluate the viewpoints of medical graduates regarding pragmatic competence, it is important to know their past experience with the English language subject during their study period as well as their experience with the use of English at present.

To begin with the content of the subject, the interviewees reported that the topics dealt with in class were taken from medicine and general English. The main focus was on grammar, vocabulary, reading and comprehension with little attention to communicative activities or conversational skills as exemplified in their responses<sup>41</sup>:

- > *It was mostly vocabulary structures and medical paragraphs  
> no activities, with one way of learning  
> it was just reading of the course book and doing the book exercises  
> that was all*
- > *we had a handout that contained various medical topic the lecture contained comprehension, composition and grammar*
- > *it was poor courses along the first year, without any activities other than reading and memorization of some words*

Taking the above comments into consideration, the interviewees' attitude towards the subject at that time was generally negative. This can be manifested in their views regarding English. One interviewee indicated that there was no sufficient amount of medical content and that the course objectives were not clear by saying

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<sup>41</sup> The extracts are presented here in the same way they appeared in the instant messaging, including punctuation and typos. Each bullet point • represents a different interviewee and the symbol > signals the starting line of the sequence of instant messaging.

*"i was depressed as i cannot understand the aim of lecture and i feel that my study in English not related to medicine"*. Another respondent complained that the time and effort of study should be devoted to medical subjects and not to a requirement subject. A similar view of disinterest in the English subject was shared by another interviewee who stated: *"its score will not change my whole bachelor degree"*.

On the other hand, however, two interviewees indicated that they enjoyed the subject. One of them ascribed this to the desire for language development and learning anything in English irrespective of the subject content *"at that time i was eager to learn every thing"*. The other one commented that the subject was *"exciting yet i think because of my background in school i was somewhat ahead of my colleagues but in general we all enjoyed classes"*.

Concerning their preferences for the subject when they were students, a variety of perspectives were expressed. There was a general tendency towards medical-oriented English aiming at facilitating their medical subjects. For example, one interviewee expressed his wish for English to be a subject for learning scientific language by stating: *"It was better if the subject was a mini anatomy or histology lecture that the English proff main task is to make the student familiar with science delivered in English language"*.

At the same time, he thought that this way would help communication in English as he clarified *"This will be more beneficial to students and help them in studying and communicating"* which, according to him, will be achieved in two ways *"First to be*

*able to share information with medical staff even through the net. Second most reports are written in English and medical report have no grammar but only medical terms”.*

A similar view was expressed by another interviewee who stated that the subject should be based mainly on medicine and the English teacher should teach things like:

- *> how I understand the medicine and how I can discuss with our staff in English, how can I discuss with the nurse and lab about result of patient . . . we need to know about equipment drug and meaning of some ward like patient, nurse , labratory which help us in medical study*

On the other hand, an interviewee commented differently by stating a preference to learn English “*in lab where i hear how i can spoke, also with group of students or tutors with high english level so i can learn from them*”. He also points out that the importance of learning how to use the language for the following reasons:

- *> to understand well, and to communicate with others*  
*> medicine depends on good communication skills with foreigners*  
*> also all articles in medicine are in English*  
*>also if i want to work outside my country or even to study international medical courses i should have above than intermediate level in english*  
*> during my work, i see a lot of patients whom language was not arabic so i have some difficulties in communication*  
*> in international or even in local medical conferences, english is the main langauge*

In the same vein, another interviewee preferred to include various components by stating:

- *> My target was to developing my skills in english reading only in order to facing the difficulties with reading of medical english litritures*  
*> I was think the grammer skills, the conversation activities, the english culture articles and arts and self learning homework are very important to get langauage skills*  
*> a dialogue and ability to speak enlish in right way*



Regarding their current use of English language, it is varied; in academic, occupational, and social settings. Here are some examples of these situations:

- > *in my field english is important in writing a report in diagnosis a diseases*  
> *i need english in comunication with non -Arab people during my scholarship*
  
- > *I use it when teaching medical student*  
> *s*  
> *for completing my higher study*  
> *also when attending any medical conferences and so on*
  
- > *well, Mostly I use it with a non arabic colleagues in the medical field*  
> *In the Medical conferences*  
> *and in international cummunications*
  
- > *in lecture, conferences, exam and in article writing and in paper reading*  
> *i have many freinds who use english as their own language*  
> *we communicate in english*  
> *they are from india, nepal, pakistan, israel and so. all are doctors*

During these different situations, the interviewees have experienced some difficulties and miscommunication because of their use of English as illustrated in the following examples:

- > *some times i have difficulties in explaining things in details*
  
- > *Some times it is difficult to find the right expression to say and it take me long time to explain what I want to say but I don't remeber a specific situation*
  
- > *sometimes when we atttend a public lecture or conference and I had aquestions related to the topic, I become afraid of doing language mistake during asking*
  
- > *I tray to avoid any unnessisary english cummunication to avoid the laguages grammatic and vocabulary errors*

More specifically, the extracts below narrate incidents of embarrassment due to language use:

- *> oneday, i travel to sudan with my freinds from south sudan who speak english as their languge, i have difficulties to communicate with them. they brought patients from their contry and i was asked to communicate with them but it was difficult for me. so i give a wrong history to the supervisor and he was angry for that*
- *> before 4 years when i started to work in saudiarabia one of philpino nurse ask me to answer telephone and he was nigerian consultant in surgery he want me to do some labratory for one patient . he can speak fast and i canot unerstand any thing then i told him yes i will do then i ask another saudi doctor and i explaine to him what happen then the saudi doctor call nigearin consultant and he explaine to me in arabic.....i was shey at that time*

So far, the first category of the interview data has been described. It shows the interviewees' opinions as being part of the experience. The following section gives an account of their viewpoints from an external perspective. It shows their current opinions as graduates and practitioners towards teaching English for medical students.

#### ***4. 2. 2 The graduates' viewpoints of English for medical students***

When the interviewees were asked whether English should be taught to medical students, all of them confirmed its importance as exemplified in these extracts:

- *> sure 100% yes*
- *> I think it is so important*
- *> It's Is the language of science and the dr must be proficient in English to be updated*
- *> yes, but it should be continuous process in the first 3 levels*

The consensus on its necessity seems quite different from their past viewpoints as students. This is particularly evident in some of the respondents' comments in the

preceding section when they pointed out that the English subject was unnecessary as it took time from their medical subjects as declared by one interviewee *“it wasn’t relevant to our studying and was time consuming . . . And the schedule was full with other lectures”*.

In addition, the reasons which they provided demonstrate other incompatible opinions. One interviewee, for example, commented:

- *> for a medical student he must learn how to communicate with the broader community of medicine and to join the associations and societies each according to his speciality to help him keep in touch get further training and be able to present his research work within his community*

Another interviewee’s reasons were:

- *> to have an easy and right way in the communication with world wide medical field colleagues*  
*> to use internet medical web with out any language difficulties*  
*> to get an easy in prticipating and sharing with international activities*  
*> Medical conferences mostly been in enlish ,so comunication with speaking is very important for developing doctors medical skills around the world*

As observed in these comments, there was a focus on the use of English for communicative purposes in different contexts, which appears at odds with their previous perspectives during study period that the main objective of learning scientific English is to facilitate their medical study.

The requirement for the communicative component in learning English is further affirmed in some of interviewees’ responses when they were asked to make suggestions regarding the teaching of English to medical students.

One interviewee said:

- *>speaking, listening and communication skills  
> each of which has its own importance to make a doctor profesional in English language  
>these skills make the medical students able to get more and more through communicating with other via differnt methods of communications*

This viewpoint is strongly accentuated by another interviewee in the following extract:

- *> in medical university they concentrate on medical terms and somtimes on grammer . but really medical terms are easy to be learnt with studying, the problem is in the speaking fluently and in readind and understanding well and in the communicating with others who use english as their native language. so reading, speaking and usage of language phrases are important for all medical student and physicians*

Talking about the same issue, another interviewee confirmed that it is important to teach communicative skills to medical students and continued:

- *> most our job is communication between patient and his relative and nurse with staff of lab and social and nutrition , medical record .....so all this i have to communicate with them to help the patient  
> even i have to communicate with the patient and relative about bad news*

When this participant was asked to clarify why it would be important to learn communicating in English in an Arab-speaking country like Yemen, he clarified that:

- *> in yemen most of hospital or medical field they are speak in arabic but in saudi arabia or gulf area most nurse staff and lab are english speaker even doctor and social worker  
> so we have to learn speak listen and write in english  
> all doctor they have to know how to communicate with others doctor in all country in internet or universal conference to update his knowledge and looking or share of medical research that done in yemen or outside yemen  
> so these communications only done in english*

This perspective is supported in the discussion of another interviewee who confirmed that in the world of medicine the use of English is not confined to one place:

- *> if i want to work outside my country or even to study international medical courses i should have above than intermediate level in english*  
*> during my work, i see a lot of patients whom language was not arabic, so i have some difficulties in communication*  
*>in international or even in local medical conferences, english is the main language*  
*> i want to say that english is the language of medical sciences, so we are nothing without this language*

The idea of the bigger community was also illustrated in a previously-quoted comment in the preceding section:

- *> for a medical student he must learn how to communicate with the broader community of medicine and to join the associations and societies each according to his speciality to help him keep in touch get further training and be able to present his research work within his community*

Turning now to the experimental evidence on the importance of learning pragmatic competence, an exercise consisting of two parts was given to the interviewees.

1. *Here are two versions of Apology:*
  - *I am sorry*
  - *I am absolutely devastated. Can you possibly forgive me?*
  - a. *Is there a difference between the two versions? If yes, what is it?*
  - b. *What are the criteria that govern this difference?*
2. *What can you understand by these sentences?*
  - *At the end of the lecture, your teacher says: you may like to read the article entitled "x".*
  - *It is very hot/cold in this office.*

The purpose of giving them this exercise was not to test their pragmatic knowledge, but rather to engage them in one of the applications of pragmatics and

then set the ground for the subsequent question; that is, their opinion about learning a language in context. And the exercise served this purpose successfully. If they were asked a general question in its abstract sense, it would not be specific and the answers would be vague. Once they had done the exercise, they were asked: Do you think it is important to learn this area of language use, as to when to say something, how, to whom, just like the preceding exercise?

Their responses came as follows:

- > *Yes I do*
  - > *Of course it is important because much of english sentences have more than the simple meaning*
  - > *and that mostly will be in the dialogue*
  - > *ever more some sentences will have far meaning from the simple one*
  - > *so in case i can not get that far meaning may i will misunderstand the goal*
  
- > *yes*
  - > *for good communications with people whom my language "arabic" is not the mother language, i should understand how i talk with them*
  - > *in medicine, we sometimes study subjects called "communications with foreigners" or communication with patients whose mothe language is not your language, so we should study english more to understand their feelings*
  - > *also in medical group working, some medical research team comose of different nationalities but the main lang is english, so we have to learn the usage of english*
  - > *compose\**
  
- > *yes very important because if i can not figure out the aim of such i will stay deaf to what is being told*
  - > *that could be of serious consequences*

- > *yes i think it is the most important thing to learn*
  
- > *of course*
  - > *this area of language may has many hidden meanings and if we didn't understand them well, we'll be so confused*
  
- > *Yes i do because Sometimes a small misunderstanding can cost a patient life and also it's good to understand other people speaking English*
  
- > *yes of course*
  - > *we have to learn as we need to send our massage or qustion in away that other can understsnd it easly*
  - > *medical students are doctor of future and the doctore always make discussion in english with other doctor in the word or in conferance so they have to know it . . . good doctor is the good speaker in conferance or discussion*

As can be seen from the above extracts, there is a consensus among the interviewees that it is important to learn how to use language in context. It is also observed that even those interviewees who had a strong preference for teaching English as a medical subject, when presented with an application of pragmatic competence; they all stressed its importance. This is highly evident in the views of an interviewee who stated “*medical students are doctor of future and the doctore always make discussion in english with other doctor in the world or in conferance so they have to know it . . . good doctor is the good speaker in conferance or discussion*”. What makes this comment peculiar is that the same interviewee expressed earlier that in the past he wanted the English subject to focalise mainly on medical language as

he stated in one of his comments "*the subject should be oriented base medicine . . . we need to know about equipment drug and meaning of some ward like patient, nurse, laboratory which help us in medical study*". However, as a practising doctor, his opinion seems to be different as he experiences new needs for the communicative side of language.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the participants' views are different. As students they only saw one side of the English language, that which is restricted to medicine. However, as practitioners their views regarding learning English have widened to include other aspects, that is, learning language in context.



### **4. 3 Summary**

This chapter has presented the data collected by three research tools, i.e., the Awareness Test, the DCT, and online interviews. The data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Three main points were revealed in the findings. Concerning the Awareness Test, out of a total number of 672 answers, there was only 21.7 % of correct and relevant responses. Therefore, a low level of pragmatic awareness was demonstrated among the students. In the DCT, the students provided the correct speech acts but the strategies employed to realise these speech acts were not in conformity with the social variables in the different contexts. The interview data showed a positive tendency among graduate students to develop pragmatic competence and they advocate relating this to the medical context.

The next chapter moves on to discuss the interpretation of the results in the light of the theoretical perspectives of this study and in comparison with other research findings.

# CHAPTER 5:

## Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the study will be discussed in relation to the research questions. The discussion will include responding to the questions and integrating the findings with the relevant studies in the literature. The chapter is divided into two parts: the first part is devoted to answering the research questions based on the findings of the data analysis, and the second part presents the pedagogical implication of this study.

## **5. 1 Addressing the Research Questions**

In this section, the research questions are answered by combining the findings accumulated by the different stages of the investigation. These findings are then discussed in relation to the literature.

### ***5. 1. 1 The First Research Question***

The main research question of this study aims at measuring the level of pragmatic competence among the sample of the study. As the current study aims to enhance the communicative aspect of language, particularly pragmatic competence, it is essential to investigate students' level. As has been illustrated in the Literature Review chapter, pragmatic competence is located in the communicative language ability. Kasper (1997: 1) points out: "Pragmatic ability in a second or foreign language is part of a non-native speakers (NNS) communicative competence and therefore has to be located in a model of communicative ability".

Gaining knowledge of the students' level of pragmatic competence provides information about the areas that need to be developed in their use of English and can yield evidence for the importance of incorporating pragmatics in teaching English. One of the basic interests of pragmatics is the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in different contexts. This use comprises both reception and production of language. The current study investigated both dimensions by employing two research instruments to figure out students' understanding and production of various communicative situations.

The first research question is "*What is the level of pragmatic competence among medical students?*"

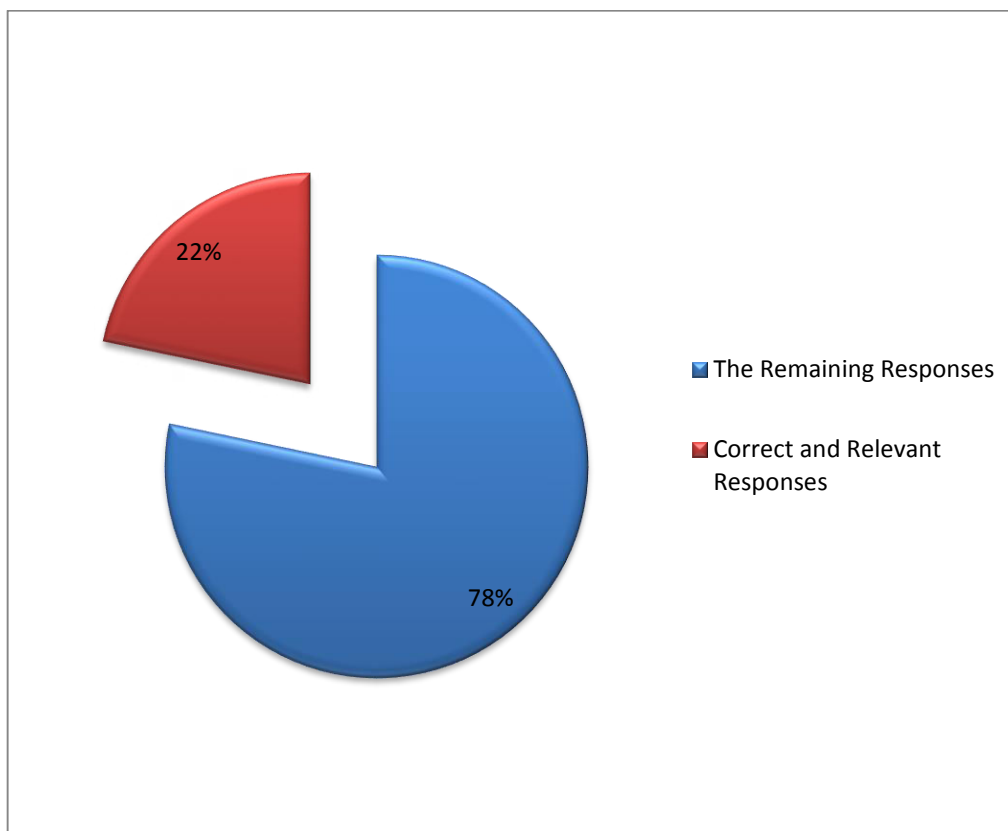
Addressing this question included the investigation of two further sub-questions that deal with their pragmatic awareness and production. They will be looked at separately in the subsequent section.

#### **5. 1. 1. 1 Pragmatic Awareness**

The first sub-question reads: *Are medical students able to recognise appropriate and inappropriate speech acts in different contexts?*

The question is concerned with students' pragmatic awareness in their comprehension of language. This awareness was basically measured by examining two criteria: the correct evaluation of the utterance and the justification for this choice.

According to the data analysis presented in the previous chapter, the number of items which matched the two criteria was relatively limited: only 146 out of a total number of 672 responses. The following pie chart shows the percentage.



**Figure 6 Level of Pragmatic Awareness**

The above graph shows the level of pragmatic awareness demonstrated by the students' responses. As can be seen, only 22% of the responses fit the criteria; namely, correct responses and pertinent justification, which in turn reflects students' pragmatic awareness. The rest of the responses include the incorrect responses and the correct evaluations with the irrelevant reasons. Accordingly, this result reveals that the students were not successful at identifying appropriateness

and inappropriateness in most of the utterances. The analysis of both the students' evaluation and justification provided an explanation of what made them go wrong in their choices. Two related factors were recognised as possible causes for their low level of pragmatic awareness:

1. *Confusion between politeness and appropriateness*
2. *Disconnection between the utterance and its context*

Concerning the first factor, the results showed that there was a tendency among students to associate politeness with appropriateness while in fact a polite utterance is not necessarily appropriate. The students who misjudged the utterances were unaware of this point. This can be exemplified by the high percentage of incorrect evaluation of items 9 and 12 in the awareness test. The two utterances comprise a request and an apology respectively and they are used inappropriately according to the described situations. However, they were evaluated as appropriate by the majority of the students; precisely, 75% in item 9 and 76.8% in item 12. The two situations are:

*(9) After examining his patient, the dentist says:*

*Would you be so kind as to take this medicament regularly, please?*

*(12) While having dinner at your younger brother's house, you dropped a glass accidentally and it broke into pieces. You say:*

*Oops! I'm terribly sorry. I wish I were more careful. Please forgive me.*

According to their justification, the utterances were considered appropriate because they were polite.

The reason for this result can be attributed to the students' only focus on the polite expressions such as "would be so kind to" and "please" in the case of request and the intensified apology in item 12. Apparently, they considered that these polite expressions make the utterances appropriate without linking the polite expressions to the context which affects the appropriateness of an utterance.

Failing to acknowledge the contextual features of the utterance contradicts the central idea of pragmatic awareness. Safont Jordà (2003: 48) explains that pragmatic awareness can be understood as "the acknowledgement of those contextual features that determine the extent to which a given linguistic routine may be appropriate for a particular situation".

In fact, some utterances can be polite and inappropriate at the same time. Meier (1996: 352) explains:

A form associated with a high degree of deference could thus be inappropriate as well as appropriate, depending on interlocutors' perceptions of a particular situation. This is also true for routine formulae (e.g. greetings) and lexical items (e.g. *please, thank you*). All are expected in certain contexts but also can occur inappropriately in other contexts.

This is also consistent with the argument developed by Thomas (1995: 156) that the politeness effect of an utterance is not necessarily dependent on the polite

linguistic forms as illustrated in the following request uttered by a wife to her husband:

*“Will you be kind enough to tell me what time it is?”*

Thomas (1995) explains that this request seems inappropriately indirect in the context of an intimate relationship. Similarly, if the linguistic form of an utterance lacks a polite expression but the context justifies its absence, it cannot be considered impolite. To exemplify further, a married couple are attempting to decide on a restaurant, then the husband tells his wife: *“You choose”*. In this context, this direct imperative seems perfectly appropriate in this context.

Therefore, appropriateness is not necessarily and solely dependent on the existence or lack of polite expressions in an utterance. It is rather a combination of the linguistic form and the context. Thomas (1995: 156) stresses that: “as soon as we put a speech act in context, we can see that there is no necessary connection between the linguistic form and the perceived politeness of a speech act”. Similarly, Meier (1997: 27) affirms that: “Because appropriateness is highly situation-dependent, contextual factors become of utmost importance”.

Thus, the study findings reveal that one reason of the low level of pragmatic awareness among the students is the inaccurate supposition that polite expressions are always appropriate. This is partly influenced by cultural assumptions. According to Baumer and Rensburg (2011), politeness is conditioned through cultural experiences. Expressions of politeness can be misinterpreted



based on the individual's perception and cultural practice. Similarly, Köskal (2000: 634) affirms that "In every society people can interpret politeness differently, so we have to relate pragmatic descriptions ultimately to specific social conditions". Therefore, students should be informed of the fact that politeness can be interpreted differently through speech act realisations.

The second factor, which explains the low percentage of students' pragmatic awareness, is the gap found in their justification between the utterance and its context. According to the students' responses, it was shown that their judgement of the utterances was partial; that is to say, it was not based on the context described in the situations preceding the speech acts. They evaluated the utterance in isolation from the relationship between the interlocutors.

Additionally, when they paid attention to the interlocutors' relationship, they did not match the effect of this relationship on the speech act strategy. This has been clearly demonstrated in the students' responses. As shown in the presentation of results in the previous chapter, the majority of the items; precisely, 87.5%, 98.2% and 91.1% respectively, were evaluated correctly.

Surprisingly, however, a sharp discrepancy is found in comparison with the percentage of the relevant reasons provided for the three items. The percentage of the relevant reasons was rather low; 7.1%, 14.3% and 16.1% respectively. The rest of the reasons which constitute the majority were not pertinent to the context of the speech act. For example, in the case of the refusal in item (11), many students

disapproved the refusal itself as being directed to a close friend. Similarly, their justification with regard to the request in item (6) focuses mainly on the relationship between the interlocutors and not on the effect of this relationship on the utterance. In addition, they ascribed the appropriateness of the apology in item (5) to the polite way in which the utterance is expressed without explaining or relating this to the context. Thus, their responses show a mismatch between the speech act and its context.

### **5. 1. 1. 2 Pragmatic Production**

While the first sub-question is related to the receptive aspect of pragmatic competence, the second one is concerned with the productive side. The second sub-question is: *How do medical students produce speech acts in different contexts?*

This section provides an answer to this question based on the students' responses to the Discourse Completion Tasks. By analysing their responses, the aim was to investigate which speech acts strategies they used to realise the three speech acts and to find out whether these strategies were guided by the social variables manifested in the different situations. In this regard, Harlow (1990: 329) points out that:

Given the fact that a learner's first and second languages may differ in linguistic realizations of particular speech acts, the use of an inappropriate semantic formula may cause him or her to fail to communicate, in terms of both social appropriateness and effectiveness.

Taking this into consideration, studying the set of strategies used by the students demonstrate their ability to communicate the intended illocutionary force.

Based on the data analysis presented in the previous chapter, it has been shown that the students were able to produce the linguistic realisations of the speech acts, however, the strategies were not influenced by the accompanying social variables in the different situations.

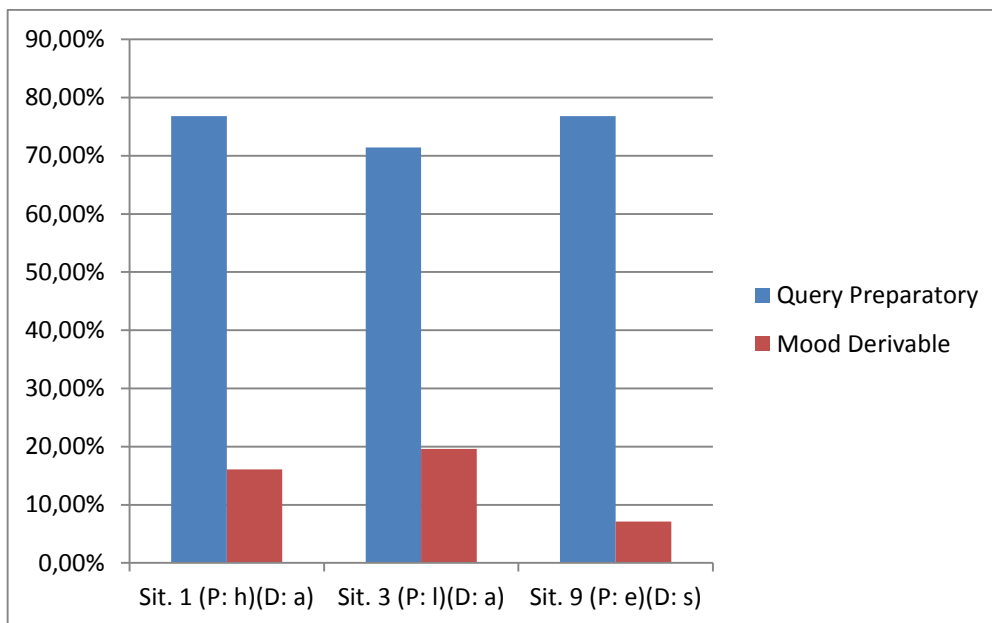
This result is explained further in the following section through the students' choice of strategies in terms of frequency and ways of mitigating the speech act.

The most frequent strategies used in each speech act vis-à-vis their situations will be shown in charts, and a subsequent commentary will be provided.

To start with the speech act of request, the first chart in this section displays the two most preferred strategies used by students: mood derivable or imperatives and query preparatory.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> As already explained in the previous chapter, mood derivable means that the grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force as a request, and query preparatory signifies that the utterance contains reference to preparatory conditions, such as ability or willingness, the possibility of the act being performed, as conventionalized in any specific language.



**Figure 7 Distribution of the most frequent request strategies<sup>43</sup>**

In the classification scheme developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), which was adopted as a measurement of classifying request strategies in this study, the nine strategy types are placed on a descending scale of directness; i. e, direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies and non-conventionally indirect strategies. “Mood derivable” is classified as a direct strategy and the strategy “query preparatory” as conventionally indirect. These two strategies were used frequently by the students to make requests in the three situations, with a remarkable preference for the “query preparatory”.

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<sup>43</sup> P: Power (h: higher, l: lower, e: equal)

D: Distance (a: acquaintance, s: stranger, i: intimate)

When speakers prefer an indirect strategy to a direct one for making a request, they intend to minimise the imposition of the request (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). According to the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987), the scale of directness of strategies descends as the distance between the interlocutors become higher. This is supported with regard to students' performance in situation (1) where they employed the indirect request strategy of "query preparatory".

However, in the other situations, the frequency of the strategy is not governed by the social variables. As can be seen from the chart, the majority of the students made requests by using the strategy "query preparatory" with similar rates 76.8%, 71.4% and 76.8% respectively in the three situations in spite of the difference in social power; situation (1): high, situation (3): low, situation (9): equal. Likewise, the imperative which is the second strategy, though comparatively much less frequent than the first, was used with approximate frequency 16.1% and 19.6% in situations (1) and (3) which represent opposite levels of power, i.e., high and low.

Sticking to the strategy of "query preparatory" with this high frequency in the three different situations could be interpreted as overgeneralisation. Probably, the students had limited knowledge of the different strategies that could be used for different contexts that made them employ a single strategy and generalise its use without considering the contextual factors.

On the other hand, it can be observed that the low frequency of the direct strategy in equal and lower situations is counter to expectation. In other words, it was not influenced by the Yemeni Arabic where a direct strategy with equals and lower

status is considered appropriate especially in informal settings as it reflects solidarity and an assumption of closeness. This is evident in the study of Alfattah and Ravindranath (2009) who investigate politeness strategies of requests in Yemeni Arabic. The main findings of their study reveal that there is a higher tendency to use “mood derivable” with politeness markers and indirect strategies have the second ranking. Speakers of different languages have different cultural interpretations of the same situation.

Consequently, the imperative form is not considered impolite in Arabic as it is in English especially in informal contexts; it rather implies a sense of solidarity and a small social distance between the interlocutors (Alfattah and Ravindranath, 2009).

A similar result is revealed by Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010) who affirm in their study of request in Yemeni Arabic that subjects employ direct strategies frequently with softeners to mitigate their requests. They maintain that direct requests can be considered as solidarity politeness strategies in Yemeni Arabic especially with equal status because they imply a small social distance between the interlocutors. In fact, the use of imperatives as an appropriate request strategy is not confined to the Arab culture; other Slavic cultures such as Poland and Russian demonstrate such use in their languages (e.g., Thomas, 1983; Wierzbicka, 2003).

According to Thomas (1983: 102), the Russian language permits the use of direct imperatives more than English does. She illustrates that “the usual way to ask for directions is to say (in Russian): Tell me (please) how to get to, and to use a more

elaborate strategy, such as: Excuse me, please, could you tell me, is completely counterproductive”.

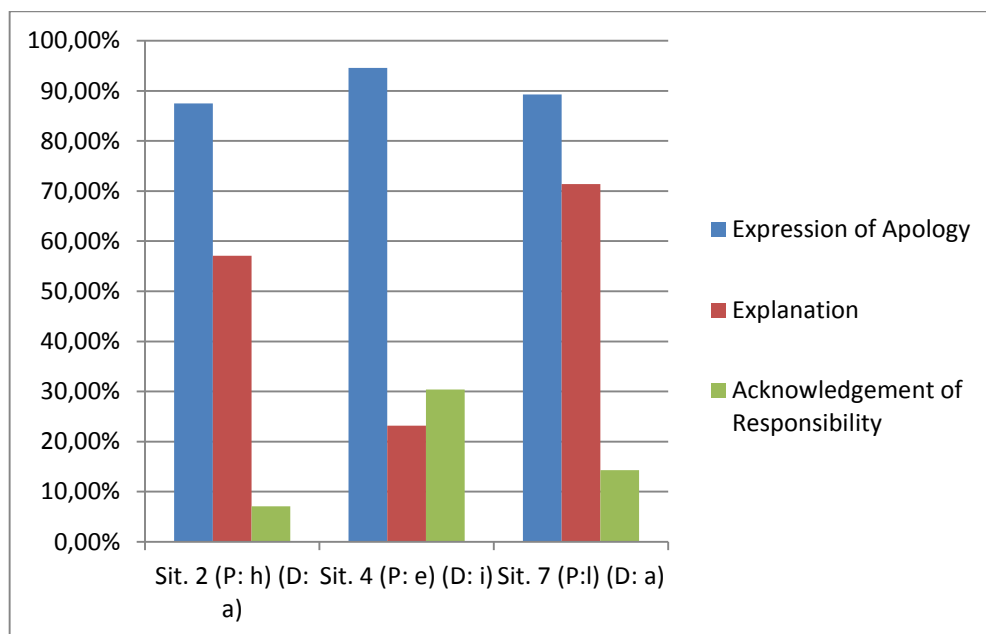
Nevertheless, in the current study, it is shown that the students did not transfer the same conception from the mother tongue regarding the use of requests in English. They used indirect strategies more frequently.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), as requests are face-threatening acts, the speaker needs to reduce the effect of imposition to save the hearer’s face. As a way to modify their requests, the students used terms of address with the politeness marker “please”. Others have added the possessive pronoun “my” as a way to reflect a close distance and reflect a soliciting tone.

This way of mitigating the request was evident in situation (1) where the request is directed to a higher power addressee. The use of please with the address term occurs with a percentage of 16% in the high power situation, 3.6% in the low power situation and just once in the equal power situation. The possessive pronoun was used with a percentage of 4.8% in the higher power situation and occurred only once in the other situations. Therefore, it can be inferred that although the choice and frequency of strategy type was not highly influenced by the different variables in situations (3) and (9), the students paid attention to the difference of power in situation (1) and mitigated their requests accordingly.

As for students' performance with regard to the speech act of apology, it was observed that the social variables had little impact on the strategies.

The most frequent strategies which the students used in the different situations are illustrated in the figure below.



**Figure 8 Distribution of the most frequent apology strategies**

As shown in the chart, the strategies “expression of apology” and “explanation” showed a high frequency in the data. According to Olshtain and Cohen (1983), whose set of strategies was employed for data analysis, the “expression of apology” is a direct way to express one’s regret clearly which consists of three sub-formulas: statement of regret, an offer of apology, and a request for forgiveness. The strategy “expression of apology” is used most frequently in the three situations as seen in the figure above. This result is congruent with the study findings of Alfattah (2010) who investigated apology strategies used by Yemeni learners of



English as a foreign language. His study revealed that the strategy “expression of apology” is the most explicit realisation of apology as employed by the subjects. He assumes that the students seem to relate this strategy with apology as a direct expression and a compulsory component of apology.

The strategy “explanation” can be used alone to express an apology indirectly and it can also accompany the “expression of apology” (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983).

In the data, it was the next frequent strategy as shown in the chart. Additionally, as viewed in the chart, the strategy “acknowledgment of responsibility” appeared most frequently in situation (4) where the power is equal and the distance is close and had only 7.1 % occurrence in situation (2) where the apology is addressed to a higher power addressee.

As for the use of the strategies compared with the social variables, they did not reflect sensitivity to the different situations. As the chart shows, the distribution of the strategy “expression of apology” is roughly similar, but it is rather higher in situation (4), where the social power is equal and the distance is close.

On the other hand, the strategy “explanation” is used more frequently in situation (7) where the social power is lower compared to situation (2) in which the addressee’s power is higher. Therefore, this discrepancy of frequencies may be attributed to the different perceptions of students with regard to making apologies. In other words, their perception of the contextual aspects seems to be affected by L1 culture. For example, their perception of friendship is highly valued and this is

shown in their extended use of apologies and their attempts to remedy the damage caused.

This impact of L1 is also evident in the ways in which students modify their apologies. Intensified and combined strategies are used to fortify the effect of apologies. The type of intensification used by a speaker is language-specific and situation-specific (Cohen, Olshtain and Rosenstein, 1986).

Intensification and combination of strategies are identified in the apology strategies. Combination is represented in using more than one strategy in the same utterance and using other strategies in addition to apologies.

The combination of strategies reflects a tendency to intensify the apology. It was mostly evident in situation (7) where the doctor picks up the telephone while examining a patient. It seems that the students gave more attention to the severity of the action than to the difference of power between the interlocutors<sup>44</sup>.

Another way of intensifying the apology is the use of adverbs with “sorry” such as “so sorry”, “really sorry”, “very sorry” which occurred mostly in the equal power situation with a percentage of 17.9%, 6.5% in the low power situation and only 3.6% in the high power situation. The apology was also intensified by repeating the “expression of apology”.

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<sup>44</sup> As was shown in the table of frequency in the previous chapter, all the strategies were used in situation (7)

In addition, this was highly evident in situation (4) with a percentage of 8% where the apology is addressed to a friend. This indicates that familiar and equal relationships between the interlocutors had a greater effect in the intensification of apologies. This might be attributed to the impact of students' L1 culture where they put a high value on friendship which reflects a higher demand of face-saving strategies. The use of combined and intensified strategies seems to be affected by students' L1 culture in which there is a tendency to exaggerate and lengthen utterances.

These intensification techniques match those observed in earlier studies such as Batineh and Batineh (2006) and Al-Zumor (2011). According to Batineh and Batineh (2006) who investigated Jordanian EFL university students' use of apologies, the use of more than one intensifier may be attributed to the subjects' need to express how bad they felt and the word 'sorry' does not seem to be enough.

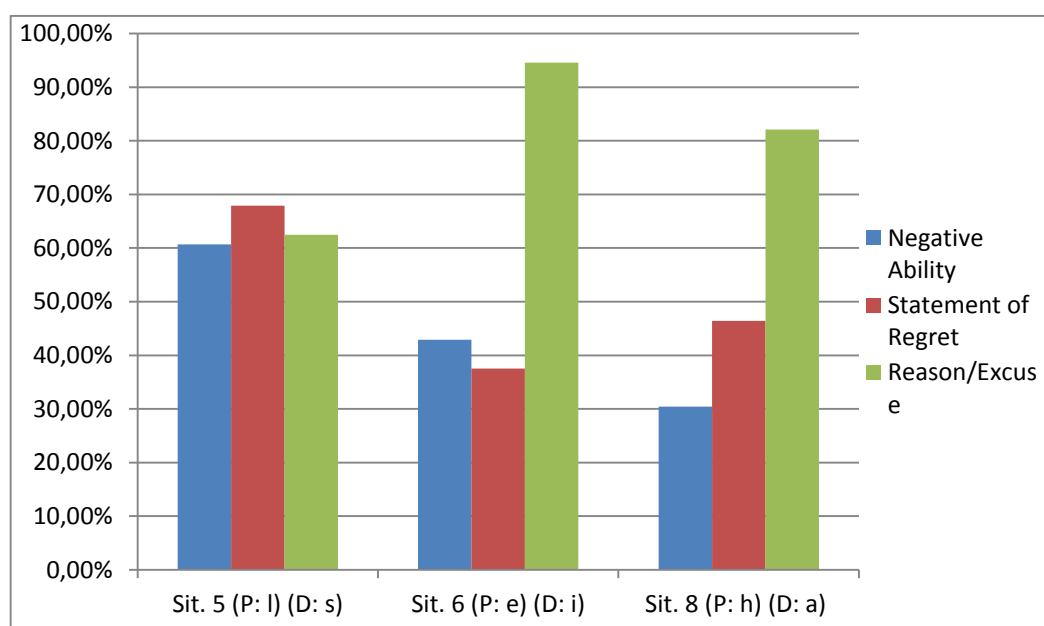
Al-Zumor (2011) conducted a study on the use of apology strategies in English by Arab learners of English who study in India. He made a comparison of strategies elicited in the same situations by Indian, American and British speakers of English. His study reveals that Arab learners' use of apologies is highly affected by a transfer from their L1 as well as a little exposure to L2. The influence is shown in the use of more than one "expression of apology", address terms, the use of certain semantic formulas and the avoidance of others.

On the other hand, Cohen, Olshtain and Rosenstein (1986) argue that non-native speakers including advanced learners do not show sensitivity to certain distinctions in the target language. The use of certain strategies or even phrases repeatedly is ascribed to overgeneralising and overlearning. Cohen et al., 1986: 69) point out:

In the current work with advanced learners, the patterns of intensity were, if anything, overlearned and appeared to be used indiscriminately. The pattern of sticking to one overgeneralized form, such as 'very', could be interpreted as a means of playing it safe.

Similarly, this happened to be the case with the students' use of intensification strategies.

Lastly, with regard to the speech act of refusal, the most frequent strategies used in the speech act of refusal are shown in the figure below.



**Figure 9 Distribution of the most frequent refusal strategies**

According to the classification scheme developed by Beebe et al. (1990) which was employed in analysing refusal strategies in this study, refusals can be performed directly and indirectly. In making refusals, the students use indirect strategies more frequently with a focus on giving explanations and statements of regret. This is manifested in the high frequency of the strategy “reason/excuse” in all situations. There is a tendency among students to justify their refusals.

The direct strategy “negative ability” was used appropriately according to the different situations. It had the lowest percentage with the higher power. It can be observed that when the highest percentage of the direct strategy “negative ability” appeared in situation (5), the highest percentage of the indirect strategy “statements of regret” was also manifested. This reflects students’ willingness to create a balance in the effect of the refusal.

As for the other two strategies, their use of strategies did not completely conform to the social variables of the situations. In refusing a request from a lower status in situation (5), the students used more statements of regret than in refusing a request from a higher status. The strategy “reason/excuse” was used with equal status more than with higher and lower status. This demonstrates that the intimate equal relations are highly valued among the students.

In addition, the high percentage of “statements of regret” along with “explanations” in situation (5) where the speaker refuses helping a junior colleague, reflects a culturally-based reluctance to disappoint someone in need. This corroborate the

findings of Abed (2011) which reveal that Iraqi learners of English are more sensitive to lower and equal status in their refusals than Americans who show sensitivity to higher status.

Similarly, Al-Eryani (2007) investigated refusal strategies of Yemeni learners of English in comparison with Yemeni speakers of Arabic and American speakers of English. He found out that although the learners show evidence of pragmatic competence in their performance of refusals, they sometimes reflect cultural background in these refusals.

As for mitigating the effect of the refusal, the students tend to use address terms such as “dear, doctor, my friend”. Such use had the highest frequency (15.5%) in situation (8) where the refusal is addressed to the higher power recipient.

Besides, in this situation the address term is accompanied by “please” that adds a sense of appeal to the addressee to understand the refusal. Such mitigation forms serve as a way to soften the force of the refusal by adding a soliciting tone to the refusal.

It is obvious that the students employ politeness markers based on their L1 culture. Thomas (1995) argues that politeness markers should not be interpreted with reference to the learners’ native system because they make an integral part of the foreign cultural system. It is in this way that students may experience pragmatic

failure. Umale (2011) points out that culture influences the type of strategies which may also result in pragmatic failure.

In refusals also, the students tend to mitigate the refusal by using a combination of strategies. The combined strategies make the utterances long especially when some strategies are repeated within the same refusal. The combination of strategies occurred in the three situations but as seen in the table of strategy frequency in the previous chapter, it was more evident in situation (5) where the refusal is directed to a lower power addressee. The highest percentage of direct strategy “negative ability/willingness” appeared in this situation, at the same time, the highest percentage of “statements of regret” indirect strategy was also manifested. This can be ascribed to the students’ intent to create a balance and soften the force of the refusal.

This combination also included other additional strategies besides refusals like offering help which occurred in situation (5).

This type of mitigation can also be attributed to the students’ reluctance to refuse the request, and offering help serves as a way to compensate for the effect of the refusal.

The use of combined strategies as a way to mitigate the effect of the refusal seems to be affected by students’ L1 culture which manifests elaborate negotiations. This interpretation is consistent with that of Umale (2011) who ascribes pragmatic failure in refusals with Omani learners of English to their long utterances which include a string of reasons and too many polite words in an

attempt to mitigate the force of a refusal. Umale (2011: 30) indicates “Omanis gave very long answers and this mitigated the force of a refusal, resulting in failure. This is in tune with Arabic culture where even simple greetings are an elaborate affair”.

In a similar vein, Abed (2011) finds out that Iraqi EFL learners express refusals with care and caution by using combined strategies such as statements of reasons, statements of regret, wish and refusal adjuncts in their refusals much more than the American speakers in his study.

The tendency to produce long utterances does not seem to be confined to the Arab culture. Tanck (2004) investigated the difference between the production of refusals and complaints by native and non-native English speakers. The sample involves American native speakers and non-native speakers of English; namely, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, and Thai. It was found out that non-native speakers’ utterances of complaints were twice as long as those produced by the native speakers.

It should be highlighted that whether the pragmatic transfer affects students’ realisation of speech acts negatively or positively, more attention needs to be given to familiarise students with the pragmatic features of the target language. In this way, they can distinguish them and disconnect their performance in the target language from their L1. It is also important to stress that in the current discussion of pragmatics and its relation to language teaching, it is not inferred that one culture is more appropriate than the other. Each language operates within its



cultural representations. Being aware of these cultural representations is vital in pragmatics.

Hence, in response to the second sub-question regarding students' production of the three speech acts as a measurement of their pragmatic competence, the findings indicate that most of the students show familiarity with the basic speech act strategies. However, they lack sensitivity to distinctions of social variables in different situations. The use of speech act strategies along with their mitigation techniques was influenced by the L1 culture and by the little exposure to the target language.

As regards the main research question of this study, it aims to investigate the students' pragmatic competence. On the whole, the basic findings from both the Awareness Test and the DCTs reveal that medical students do not show a high level of pragmatic competence. As mentioned in the Literature Review chapter, pragmatic competence involves the ability to comprehend and produce the language appropriately in different situations.

In the current study, this is investigated through the use of speech acts; particularly, three face-threatening speech acts which can demonstrate the ability of language users to get their message across without affecting the face of the interlocutors.

According to the politeness theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), it is indicated that in order to save face, the language user should show sensitivity to

the social variables by accommodating the strategies with the context. They point out that the greater the difference between the interlocutors is, the more indirect strategies would be used.

In the current study, the findings reveal that most of the strategies used by the students to save face are influenced by the L1 culture. These strategies might be completely appropriate in their mother tongue, however, applying them with language speakers of a different culture, whether native speakers or other non-native speakers, leads inevitably to miscommunication and consequently pragmatic failure. In order to communicate effectively, it is important to be familiar with the social factors that affect the use of speech acts in different situations in the target language.

Another reason that plays a role in the low level of the students' pragmatic competence is the way English is taught in schools as explained in the methodology chapter.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, students' pragmatic failure has probably resulted from limited access to authentic language or little contact with other speakers of English.

The findings of the second research questions are discussed in the subsequent section.

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<sup>45</sup> Section 3. 1. 3

### **5. 1. 2 The Second Research Question**

The second research question investigated in this study is: *How important is it to develop pragmatic competence for medical students?*

This question attempts to prove the importance of pragmatic competence to medical students by exploring its relevance to them.

It was explored in the light of graduate medical students' experience with the English language learning and use. As mentioned earlier, pragmatic competence has been considered as a major component of communicative competence as shown in the different models described by Canale and Swain (1980), Bachman (1990) and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995).

The importance of pragmatic competence is explored in the data through the questions about the communicative side of language and through participants' opinions on the exercise which was intended as an application of pragmatic competence.

As shown in the previous chapter, the interviewees' data were categorised into two groups; the graduates' own experience with English and their viewpoints of English for medical students. Then a comparison was made between their past views as students and their current perceptions as graduates and practising doctors.

Based on this comparison and data analysis, the findings reveal that their views regarding what is most important to learn in English have changed with time and experience. This change is mainly identified in their preference of what they

consider as important in the English language subject during their study period and currently as graduates.

During the study period, their primary focus was only the specialised language, i.e., medical vocabulary and language skills oriented towards medicine. Their primary focus was on comprehending the medical subjects.

At present, however, when they were asked about the importance of developing communicative skills, they all acknowledged it. They pointed out that the communicative aspect of language is very important and it should be learned in addition to medical English. As was shown in their scripts in the previous chapter, their current preference is inclined towards learning how to communicate with others and to use English appropriately in different contexts: occupational and academic.

A possible explanation for this inconsistency might be attributed to the effect of their experiences with English and to the difficulties they came across when they started using the language. As they started their career and started communicating with different people, they found out that new demands arise for the use of English. Their communication opportunities have changed and increased. Accordingly, their perspective towards the need and importance of English has changed.

Many factors might be ascribed to this. The difficulties they encountered could be due to a lack of exposure to pragmatic knowledge in their study of English. On the other hand, their level of language proficiency cannot be ruled out as contributing to their difficulties with language use. A higher proficiency level would

facilitate learners' use and comprehension of the language. Additionally, it might be presumed that if they studied English in a different manner, their current views would have been positive. The absence of pragmatic input, for example, in ESP textbooks, plays a major role in students' insufficient pragmatic knowledge. In this regard, Minoos and Sajedeh (2013) underline that the inadequate inclusion of pragmatic input in the ESP textbook leads to inappropriate development of communicative competence. In their study, they investigated politeness markers in a business textbook. They found out that there is limited amount of politeness structures in the ESP textbook which will eventually affect students' comprehension and production of appropriate communication in an international business context.

Another obvious result to emerge from the analysis is the consensus among the participants on the importance of pragmatic competence. Their reasons for its importance revolve around two points:

1. *Avoiding misunderstanding:*

The participants pointed out that being able to know the different meanings which any utterance has, would allow them to produce clear messages and at the same time understand the intended meaning. They also stated that the consequences of misunderstanding may be of a serious nature as to risk a patient's life sometimes.

2. *A wide circle of communication:*

Another important factor is the wide circle of communication which doctors will have. They will be exposed to discussions with different speakers of English of different nationalities. English will be the means of communication. So being a good speaker will facilitate communication.<sup>46</sup>

It can be observed that when the interviewees were given an exercise exemplifying learning language in context, all of them stressed the importance of developing pragmatic competence for medical students. It follows that pragmatic knowledge can be of interest to medical students. They realised that it can enrich their skills in English in medicine-related contexts.

These findings can be supported by the study conducted by Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler (2004) which advocates the teaching of pragmatic competence in the ESP context. Similarly, Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2006a) advocate the necessity to develop ESP learners' ability to communicate appropriately. They designed teaching material that aims at fostering pragmatic knowledge and this material would complement the actual ESP textbook used. Another recent study by Hafsi (2013) reveals that ESP learners lack pragmatic competence and it should be developed by explicit teaching and awareness raising activities in order to make them effective users of English in the target situation.

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<sup>46</sup> The complete responses of the participants' viewpoints in this regard were presented in the previous chapter.

Therefore, it is concluded that the importance of pragmatic competence for medical students has been stressed in the interview answers. In order to make the task effective, it should be linked with students' future career to enhance their motivation and interest.

Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that these results need to be interpreted with caution. With a small sample size, caution is required, as the findings might not be extended to all medical students. The particular conditions of every research study play a central role in data analysis and interpretation.

Based on the findings of this study, it is revealed that the medical students' level of pragmatic competence requires improvement.

A low level of pragmatic competence makes students prone to pragmatic failure in communication, especially in the foreign language setting. It has been shown that developing the students' ability to comprehend and produce language appropriately in different social contexts is vital for an effective communication in English.

It can thus be stated that the hypotheses postulated at the beginning of the study have been affirmed. The study findings explained the reasons which account for the students' low level of pragmatic competence and stressed the necessity of integrating pragmatic competence in the classroom, with reference to the medical context.

Consequently, and in line with previous research which supports a pedagogical intervention in pragmatics in foreign language settings (e.g., Martínez-Flor and Alcón Soler, 2004; Rose and Kasper, 2001), a tentative model for integrating pragmatic competence in the ESP classroom is proposed in the following section.

## 5. 2 Study Implications

This section discusses the practical implication of the current study based on the conclusions drawn from the study findings and inspired from the literature on pragmatics. The study proposes integrating pragmatic competence into the teaching of English for the students of medicine.<sup>47</sup>

There are two primary points that should be recapitulated before explaining the proposed model: objective and situation.

### ❖ **Objective:**

The main objective of this study is to modify the perspective of teaching English to non-major English students; i.e., medical students in this study. This modification is represented by minimising the focus on the medical jargon and adding a pragmatic perspective in the teaching of language.

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<sup>47</sup> The use of the verbs “integrate” and “incorporate” is not arbitrary. The main idea is to add a component along with whatever is already used in classroom and not to replace it. The reason for this is the nature of the context; that is, a non-major English classroom.



This perspective focuses on incorporating pragmatic competence with the already existing teaching framework in the ESP classroom.<sup>48</sup> That is to say, the proposal serves as a complementary component rather than a replacement. Therefore, the flexible nature of the proposal makes it applicable and suitable to different university contexts, and not only Taiz University.

On another note, as the main aim of the current study is pragmatics-oriented, it is important to restate that the needs of medical students with regard to the English language are not addressed in the investigation. Such a needs-analysis is conducted in ESP research studies, which is not the case in the present study. In addition, the study puts forward the idea that the specific field of students can be used as a motivational factor to serve language learning, not the opposite.

Another point to be underlined is that this model shall be treated on the level of a proposal. So its validity and functionality are subject to piloting. Although the situation conditions and constraints are taken into account while formulating this model, it is the application which will confirm or decline its effectiveness. The situation is discussed in the subsequent section.

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<sup>48</sup> As for the teaching material, as already mentioned, the teachers in the ESP classroom tend to use whatever is available to them; either coordinating a set of handouts explaining medical topics with some lessons on grammar, or using ready-made material in medical English.

❖ **Situation:**

Situation here refers to the description of the environment where this study is conducted in terms of current circumstances and constraints of teaching English at the faculty of Medicine at Taiz University in Yemen. By understanding the situation of teaching English at the faculty, it becomes easier to adapt a model that suits the context. Although this has been discussed earlier in the Methodology chapter, a brief overview is needed here to relate it to the proposed model.

At the university level in Yemen, the department board determines the course syllabus which is then to be validated by the university board.<sup>49</sup> As it is the case with the other university courses, the English course is to be determined by the course teacher and the department. Likewise, at the faculty of medicine, the teacher of English decides the content of the subject and the teaching method.

The content of the subject is either a mix of general English and medical English or purely medical English. The method of teaching is mostly directed at developing medical vocabulary and grammar knowledge. This is considered normal bearing in mind the exam-based approach which is followed in most courses at the university. This is the general practice in most universities in Yemen. In a study conducted at the faculty of Medicine Hodeidah University in Yemen, Al-Ahdal (2008) highlights that the ESP teachers' task is a difficult one.

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<sup>49</sup> Yemeni Universities Act (2008)  
<http://hust.edu.oak.arvix.com/media/108706/الجامعات-اليمنية.pdf>

Difficulties include limited knowledge of medical background, absence of training workshops for ESP teachers, and lack of teaching materials.

One of the disadvantages of the ESP approach as mentioned by Belcher (2004: 165) is that “it teaches learners enough English to survive in certain narrowly defined venues but not enough to thrive in the world at large”.

As expressed previously by the interviewees’ feedback, and also from personal experience and observation, it is perceived that teaching English through a condensed medical jargon seems neither successful for teachers nor satisfactory for students. The courses of medicine are taught in English and the medical textbooks are written in English, therefore, the goal of English classes seems redundant. This factor is not only related to students’ feelings but it also assigns a new role to the teacher. This is because the teachers of English at the university in general and at the faculty of medicine in particular graduated from the department of English language and literature, faculty of Arts and faculty of Education.

This point is identified in Belcher (2004) as a common complaint in ESP. She indicates that many ESP instructors feel unable or unwilling to engage in specialised language use. In addition, there are no training courses for ESP instructors at Taiz University. Dealing with a heavy load of scientific jargon is a challenging task for language teachers.

Therefore, in order to solve this issue and to make the English language subject more effective, integrating the pragmatic perspective in teaching English would create a balance and yield good results especially when the language is linked with

the medical context so as to attract students' attention and enhance their motivation. Besides, medical English will always have its place throughout the career of the medical student, but when it comes to language learning, it is the responsibility of the language teacher to bring up their awareness on pragmatic aspects that will be beneficial in communication.

As mentioned earlier, the English language course is taught at the faculty of Medicine at Taiz University in the first year for five hours per week, divided into three days: two-hour class, two-hour class and one-hour class. The proposed model can be applied in one of these 2-hour classes. For the rest of the time allocated for the English course, the teacher can choose to focus on the linguistic competence of students, and teach medical English based on the students' level and needs. In this way, the English course can provide a good balance to some extent.

Bearing these two factors in mind, the foundation is set for the model proposed for incorporating pragmatic competence in the ESP classroom.

### ***5. 2. 1 The Proposed Model: Theoretical Considerations***

Based on the study findings, it is demonstrated that developing pragmatic competence is essential for the medical students to be proficient communicators in the language. As mentioned earlier, this goes in line with the research studies that promote pragmatics instruction. Kasper (1997: 3) clarifies that the aim of instruction shall be as follow:

There is thus a clear role for pedagogic intervention here, not with the purpose of providing learners with new information but to make them aware of what they know already and encourage them to use their universals or transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts.

Moreover, introducing pragmatics in the foreign language context is important because language learners have fewer opportunities to practise the language than second language learners who have direct contact with the target language community (Kasper, 2001b). On top of that, this task is not easy because in this particular study, the case to be dealt with is not a language classroom but rather an ESP classroom.

Safont Jordà (2005: 65) states:

Subjects learning a foreign language do not have many opportunities to be exposed to natural and authentic language use. If we do not provide them with sufficient sociocultural and sociolinguistic information, we are increasing their difficulty in understanding and producing politeness issues in the target language.

Therefore, she reaffirms that there should be a focus on pragmatic comprehension and production in the language classroom to foster pragmatic competence.

Many authors who investigated pragmatics teaching in the foreign language context, for example, Rose (1994); Bardovi-Harlig (1996); Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998); Clennell (1999); Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler (2004); Eslami-Rasekh (2005); Derakhshan and Eslami (2015), advocate the use of an awareness-raising approach for enhancing pragmatic competence. Pragmatic consciousness-raising aims at developing pragmatic awareness by sensitising

learners to “context-based variation in language use and the variables that help determine that variation” (Rose, 1994: 58). Moreover, based on their study findings, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) recommend the implementation of awareness-raising and noticing activities for the introduction of pragmatics in the EFL setting.

In the ESP context, various means for teaching pragmatics were provided. In their investigation of pragmatic competence in the ESP context, Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler (2004) proposed three tasks based on an awareness-raising method. The three different tasks are directed at the following goals:

- Task 1: Use of film or television scenes

Goal: To develop both learners’ awareness and oral production of three exhortative speech acts by means of contextualised communicative situations in a specific ESP situation

- Task 2: Use of a conversation from oral corpus

Goal: To make students aware of real conversations in a particular ESP context: the appropriate use of a specific speech act and its peripheral modification devices

- Task 3: Use of a multimedia-based activity

Goal: To make learners differentiate between various exhortative speech acts, and develop the learners’ oral and written production of these speech acts (Martinez-Flor and Alcón Soler, 2004: 184- 186)

Another proposal for developing pragmatic competence in the ESP classroom is provided by Hafsi (2013). She adopts the approach of Judd (1999) that includes: teacher analysis of speech acts, cognitive awareness skills, receptive integrative skills and controlled productive skills, and free integrated practice. Based on these steps, she provides two main tasks to foster pragmatic competence:

1. Tasks to promote pragmatic production such as role-play activities, discourse completion task, and feedback and discussion
2. Tasks to promote pragmatic comprehension such as model dialogue, evaluation of a situation, and discourse rating task

Hafsi (2013) highlights that explicit teaching and awareness-raising activities make a solid foundation for developing pragmatic competence.

It can be observed that these models are based on awareness-raising.

The awareness-raising or consciousness-raising approach is grounded in the “*noticing hypothesis*” developed by Schmidt (1993, 2001).

The noticing hypothesis concentrates on the role of awareness in the acquisition of target language knowledge. It affirms that what is noticed in input is what becomes intake for learning. Schmidt (1993) states that learning entails awareness and that any language aspect needs to be noticed first in order for it to be acquired.

With reference to pragmatics in particular, he points out that “in order to acquire pragmatics, one must attend to both the linguistic form of utterances and the relevant social and contextual features with which they are associated” (Schmidt,

2001: 30). In fact, as has been previously discussed in the Literature Review chapter, these two aspects constitute the basic nature of pragmatics which includes pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983). Therefore, learners need to pay conscious attention to the pragmalinguistic functions of relevant forms and to the sociopragmatic constraints involved in these particular forms.

As the noticing hypothesis calls for conscious attention to the pragmatic aspects, Schmidt (1993, 2001) points out that simple exposure is not enough. There should be pedagogical intervention to make the targeted pragmatic aspects more salient to students. Accordingly, he proposes a consciousness-raising approach for teaching pragmatics.

Conforming to the awareness-raising approach, the basic aim of the proposed model is to raise learners' pragmatic awareness so that they can use language effectively.

Based on research carried out in pragmatics, Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010: 9) explain that there are theoretical conditions for the learning of speech acts and thereby for developing pragmatic competence. They state:

Learners' overall ability to communicate successfully in a given TL is influenced by three main conditions, namely appropriate input, opportunities for output and provision of feedback. The importance of these conditions is also applied to learners' development of their pragmatic competence and, consequently, to the learning of different speech acts.



Before explaining these conditions, it is important to remember that the current study makes use of three speech acts in order to investigate pragmatic competence. The students' pragmatic competence is investigated through their ability to understand and produce appropriate utterances of apologies, requests and refusals with different social variables.

For the development of pragmatic competence in general, and speech acts in particular, the above mentioned conditions are essential (Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2010). They form the basis for the proposed model in the current study.

The importance of providing both input and opportunity for output or practice is highly accentuated in the foreign language classroom. Kasper (2001b: 57) maintains that based on interventional studies and observational studies, it has been found out that: "Sustained focused input, both pragmatic and metapragmatic, collaborative practice activities and metapragmatic reflection appear to provide learners with the input and practice they need for developing most aspects of their pragmatic abilities".

The following section is devoted to describing these conditions.

- **Input:**

According to Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010: 10), input can simply be defined as "the language samples learners are exposed to". Learners' opportunities to acquire the target language in general and pragmatic competence in particular are influenced by the setting of learning. As pointed out previously in the first chapter,

EFL learners have limited exposure to the target language which places high demands and importance for providing them with appropriate input to facilitate their language learning.

There are three types of input which learners are exposed to, namely, the teacher, the materials and other learners (LoCastro, 2003). In the current model, the focus will be on the second type; that of the materials and resources as they provide language in contextualised situations. These materials can be in the form of written input as in textbooks and audiovisual input as in TV shows, videos and films.

The main advantage of audiovisual sources is that they introduce authentic language samples. Although Rose (1994: 58) indicates that most video is scripted and accordingly it does not represent authentic speech, she asserts that it is “most likely the closest learners will come to authentic language in EFL settings”.

Besides its authentic-like trait, media-based materials provide a strong motivating factor for students, and help them to visualise words and meanings, and change the classroom routine (Marinez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2010).

- **Output:**

The second condition for acquiring pragmatics is providing opportunities for output. Output includes both encouraging learners to active participation and also providing them with opportunities for practice (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2010). Research in second language acquisition shows that practising what has been taught enhances language learning in all aspects including pragmatic ability (LoCastro, 2003).

In this regard, Trosborg (1995) stresses that engaging learners in the use of what they have learned is an effective way for enhancing their communicative abilities. One possible way for this practice is the use of role plays as she calls for. According to Trosborg (1995: 475), the use of role plays enables learners to “practice a wide range of language functions associated with these roles and positions, and they are responsible for getting the message across and maintaining conversation”.

Using the language for interaction also includes group discussion among the learners and interaction with the teacher which includes asking for clarification and confirmation (LoCastro, 2003). Another opportunity for the students to practise their pragmatic knowledge consists in involving them in discourse completion tasks. These tasks can be done in oral discussion and in writing.

The main advantage of DCTs is that the social variables can be controlled for the specific speech acts so that the teacher can measure their performance according to what has been taught. Aufa (2014) conducted a study on the effectiveness of using DCT as explicit instruction in developing EFL learners’ pragmatic competence in Indonesia. He finds out that it results in variations of linguistic forms that contribute to developing their performance. Accordingly, he advocates the effective use of DCT as one of the pragmatic teaching techniques in the EFL context.

- **Feedback:**

The third condition which Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010: 14) discuss is feedback. They state: “apart from receiving positive evidence (i.e. being exposed to comprehensible input and being provided with output opportunities, feedback is also necessary if the teachers’ aim is to combine communication and accuracy”.

As learners’ practise the language, they are prone to making mistakes and thus providing corrective feedback is essential. It is an important step as it informs learners about their language use.

Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010: 14) maintain that: “corrective feedback plays an important role in developing learners’ pragmatic ability in the classroom and it should be provided on both meaning and form”.

In the process of feedback, the learners should be made aware of the areas of their pragmatic failure. This feedback can be explicit by pointing out the error clearly or implicit by confirmation checks or clarification requests.

Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010: 15) conclude:

It is our belief that incorporating feedback, whether it be explicit or implicit, in the language classroom is as essential as the other two theoretical conditions (i. e. input and output) to help learners develop their pragmatic competence and their performance in speech acts.

### ***5. 2. 2 The Proposed Model: Application***

This section shows how the model can be put into practice in the classroom. For the case of the current model, television series are used to provide learners with input pertinent to their medical context. Not only will it serve as a source of authentic language, but also to provide varied and visual contextualisation. As previously indicated, learning language in context is one of the most important factors to avoid pragmatic failure.

According to Ishihara and Cohen (2014), the use of films and TV shows is generally approved in pragmatics instruction. Nevertheless, they should be used with a clear purpose as some pragmatic features might not be represented in such materials. In addition, they suggest that media-based materials can be used to demonstrate pragmatic failure especially in situational comedies.

They indicate that although situational comedies sometimes do not show naturally occurring conversations or may exaggerate pragmatic violations, they still help learners recognise pragmatic norms in the target language and provide an opportunity to reflect upon such pragmatic blunders. They affirm that media-based input can provide an opportunity for teachers and learners to engage in critical discussion (Ishihara and Cohen (2014). Moreover, the use of authentic language is beneficial for students as well as teachers.

As there are many medical TV shows, four series were explored, namely; *Scrubs*, *ER*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *House*. The selection was mainly based on the relevance factor. Among the four medical dramas, it was found that *Scrubs* has the closest pertinence to the students as the characters are interns representing different categories physicians, surgeons, and nurses. The variety of characters contributes to adding a sense of appeal to the students as they can relate to the one closer to their interests.

As for the other series, the storyline revolves around physicians and staff at the emergency room in *ER*, surgical interns and their supervisors in *Grey's Anatomy* and diagnosticians in *House*. In addition, the episodes of *Scrubs* (Season1) are accessible online along with their scripts which will be practical for both the teacher and the students.

*Scrubs* is an American comedy-drama series that was created by Bill Lawrence, produced by the television production division of Disney-ABC Television Group.<sup>50</sup> It was firstly aired on NBC in 2001 and continued for nine seasons until its last broadcast on ABC in 2010. *Scrubs* has gained popularity around the world as it was aired in more than thirty countries.<sup>51</sup>

The show revolves around a group of medical students; John Dorian "J.D", Elliot and Turk, who arrive at Sacred Heart Hospital as interns under the supervision of their instructors Dr Cox and Dr Kelso. The episodes are narrated from the

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<sup>50</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrubs\\_\(TV\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrubs_(TV_series))

<sup>51</sup> <https://scrubs.wikia.com/>

perspective of the main character J.D and the title of each episode starts with the word “My”. As indicated by the author Bill Lawrence, that is because the episodes constitute the diary of J.D’s experiences with his colleagues and working staff at the teaching hospital where he learns the ways of friendship and life in addition to medicine.

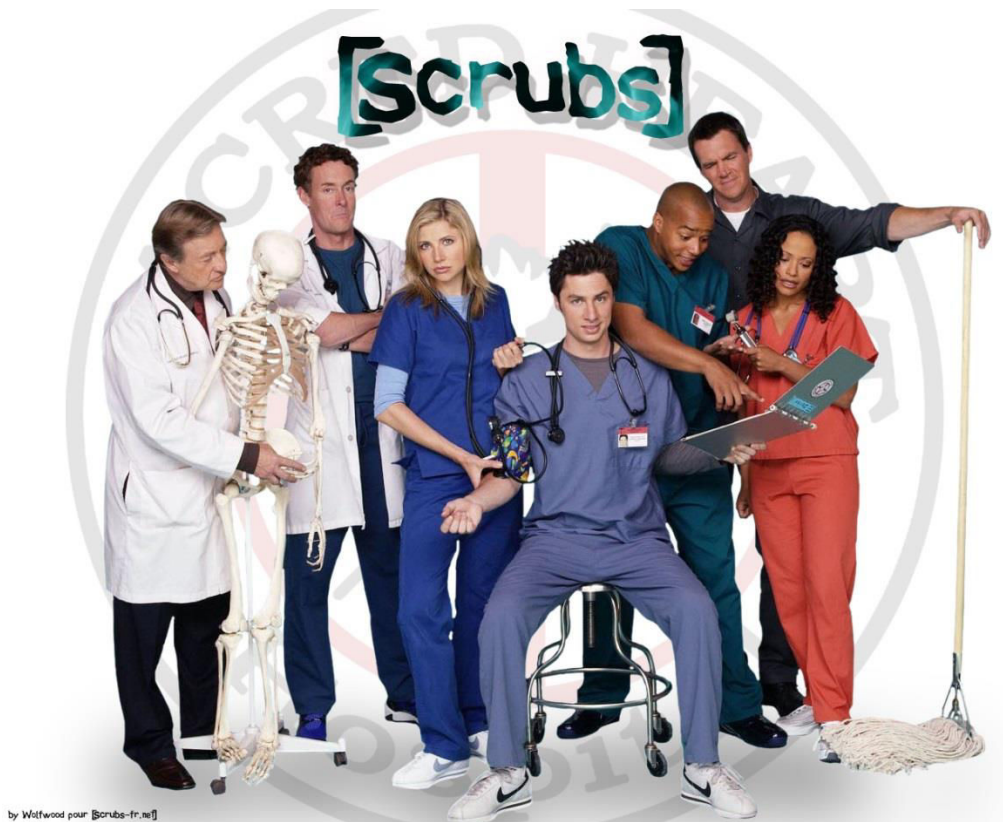
The title of the show *Scrubs* refers to the hygienic costume worn by doctors and nurses at hospital. It is defined in the Online Oxford Dictionary as “special hygienic clothing worn by surgeons during operations”.<sup>52</sup>

The word is used in the first episode by Dr Kelso: “*Dr. Dorian, do you not realize you are nothing more than a large pair of scrubs to me?*”

The following figure shows the main characters of the series.

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/scrub?q=scrubs>



**Figure 10 The Characters in Scrubs<sup>53</sup>**

Using a TV show seems enjoyable as well as motivating for students. Nowadays, most people spend a major part of their time watching movies and TV shows. Therefore, the process of mixing a daily routine with a learning purpose would be entertaining as well as engaging to the students.

Besides being an authentic source of input, this show will also help in creating the context in which the relationship between the characters is illustrated and the different situational variables are well demonstrated. The main goal is developing awareness and facilitating production of the targeted pragmatic aspects. Taking the

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<sup>53</sup> The picture is taken from <http://epicrabbattlesofhistory.wikia.com/wiki/File:Scrubs.jpg>



previous theoretical conditions in consideration, the following figure shows the procedure of this implementation.

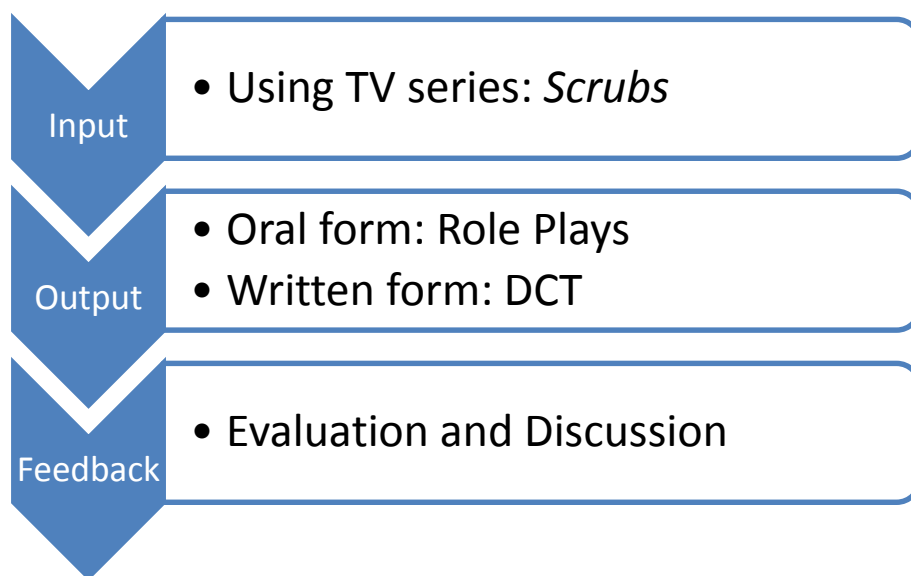


Figure 11 The Structure of the Model

**1. Input Phase:**

- The initial step is to familiarise the students with the TV series *Scrubs*; what it talks about, who the main characters are, and where the events take place. Another part of this orientation is to start a discussion of students' familiarity with *Scrubs*; whether any of them has previously watched it. At this stage, it is important for the students to understand the aim of making use of the show for learning purposes; namely, to present language use in context to develop their awareness and performance of English.
- The teacher chooses specific scenes in order to highlight a pragmatic aspect. Since the focus in the current study is on speech acts, the scenes

will serve as the context for the targeted speech acts, namely request, apology, and refusal.

- The students are asked to pay attention to the contextual variables of the selected scenes in terms of the social power and distance between the interlocutors. They are also encouraged to notice the way in which the speech act is performed in the target language, and how politeness is represented through direct and indirect strategies.
- As part of raising students' awareness, the teacher guides them to notice the targeted pragmatic feature, the linguistic forms and their occurrence in different contexts in their L1 culture and the target culture. Accordingly, the students can identify the similarities and differences of speech acts strategies, as well as the concept of politeness in both cultures. By means of observation tasks, the students will make connections between linguistic forms, pragmatic functions and cultural effects.
- As an illustration, the following excerpt taken from *Scrubs* (Season 1, episode 2) presents a context where an indirect apology takes place. The strategy employed for realising the speech act in this context is "Acknowledgement of Responsibility". Here at the hospital, J.D. pushes Elliot to apologise to Carla over a previous incident between the two; i.e., tattling.

*They approach the desk at the Nurses' Station. Carla looks up from her computer work.*

*Elliot: Carla...I...shouldn't have told Dr. Kelso on you.*

*Carla: No, you shouldn't have.*

*J.D.'s Thoughts: Ahhh, the comfortable silences.*

*Carla: But thank you for apologizing.*

In order to realise a speech act effectively, two factors are taken into account: the social variables in the situation and the linguistic tools to achieve this act; namely, the strategies. With the help of the excerpt, the teacher can start a discussion with the students on several points such as: the type of apology, the strategy employed to realise the apology, the social distance and power between Carla and Elliot and the effect it has on the choice of strategy.

Then, a comparison can be made between the appropriateness of this apology strategy in the mother tongue in such a situation with the one used in this excerpt. This discussion helps to enable students to identify the different possibilities of realising a speech act in a clearly described context, which will accordingly enhance their pragmatic awareness.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For more illustration, two more excerpts representing a refusal and a request are attached in Appendix D.

## **2. Output Phase:**

- After the students grasp the general idea of the targeted speech act, how it is used in different contexts, they are encouraged to practise what is learned. The production can be in the written or oral form.
- As for the written form, the teacher employs the DCTs in order to enable students write what they would say in various situations. In order to create a comprehensible context, the teacher can use the situations of the DCT based on the TV series. In this way, the students know the social variables and can evaluate the appropriate ways to express the speech acts.
- Orally, the students are encouraged to engage in a role-play to practise the speech acts learned in the input phase. They can imitate the speech act but with the context of their L1 or they can perform the speech act in the same situation as the one they have previously analysed. In the first case, the focus would be on the sociopragmatic aspects in terms of the effects of the social variables on the use of the speech act and the sociocultural repercussions. In the second case, the attention is directed at the pragmalinguistic aspects in terms of the different strategies used to perform a speech act and the ways of mitigating the speech act.
- During the performance, the teacher and the rest of the students take notes in order to evaluate and discuss the activity.

### **3. The Feedback Phase**

- At this stage, the teacher provides an evaluation of the performance of students and shows the areas that require further development.
- The feedback on the oral production is provided in the form of discussion with students who express their opinions regarding the performance of their peers. The teacher highlights and explains how those specific areas can be improved.
- In the written form, the teacher checks students' responses in the DCT and provides an evaluation.
- The feedback phase is a learning step as well. The teacher can check students' understanding and accordingly adjust the learning targets and procedures.

Finally and most importantly, it should not be disregarded that this is an ESP classroom and not a language one. Taking this into consideration, the technical terms used in pragmatics are not to be used during the three stages. In addition, it will be irrelevant to provide a heavy amount of language discussion to medical students. As reported in the interview data, the medical students will not be interested in lengthy language-based discussion.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 4. Section 4. 2.1 for the interview data results

This illustrated model is a tentative attempt to introduce pragmatic instruction in the ESP classroom. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive. It should be taken into account that these tasks are subject to modification. In practice, there are factors that play a role in determining the line of adjustment, such as the teacher's skills, the constraints in the instructional setting, the students' proficiency level and individual characteristics. Considering these factors, the teacher can modify and choose the most convenient techniques.<sup>56</sup>

Another point to clarify is related to the teaching materials. As illustrated at the beginning of this section, there is no specific syllabus devised for teaching English as a requirement subject at a university level. It is the task of teachers to prepare and gather materials. Nevertheless, it is hereby recommended to integrate components of pragmatics in the language syllabus from schools.

This is directed to educationalists and curriculum designers. The importance of pragmatics as a branch of linguistics like phonology, syntax and semantics calls for adding this branch as an essential component. Therefore, language learning researchers and curriculum designers should take pragmatics into consideration when it comes to language materials and assessment.

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<sup>56</sup> For example, if it is the case of beginner level students, they can be introduced to the use of 'please' as a mitigation device for making requests and how direct and indirect requests can vary according to the context.

Taken all together, the above proposed model is an attempt to incorporate pragmatics into the ESP classroom; in particular pragmatic competence. In this way, the medical context is used for language purposes to develop areas of the English language subject. As underlined by Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003), the primary goal of instruction in pragmatics is to raise students' pragmatic awareness so that they can make choices in their interaction in the target language.

### 5. 3 Limitations of the Study

Any research study is liable to suffer from limitations. Although the current study has reached its aims, there are some limitations that need to be pointed out.

The data results were based on a written questionnaire (DCT) that elicited the students' production of speech acts in context. Accordingly, the DCT did not provide enough evidence of their actual performance.

Nevertheless, in order to achieve this, specially equipped language laboratories would have been required to record students' performance, which were not available where this study has been conducted. So the written DCT proved to be an effective tool to collect a large amount of data in a short time. It is mainly characterised by the controlled variables which are set while designing the items in order to investigate the specific speech act, which cannot be controlled in naturally occurring data.

Another point to be mentioned regarding the research tools is the online interview used in this study. Conducting a face-to-face interview would have been better for a deep discussion with the interviewees. However, due to the different locations of the participants and the researcher, the online interview was found to be feasible as it provides a common meeting point.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The researcher is in France and the participants live in three different countries; namely Yemen, Egypt and Saudi Arabia due to their work or postgraduate study.



Lastly, in terms of application, it would have been far more beneficial to try out the tentative model proposed in this study with the students and check its outcome. However, this was not possible as it would have required further time to be achieved.

## 5. 5 Summary

This chapter has consisted of two main parts. The first section addressed the research questions of the study and provided a detailed discussion of the study findings. The students' low level of pragmatic awareness was ascribed to the limited knowledge of what constitutes appropriate and polite utterances. Their inability to realise speech act strategies based on the different social variables resulted mainly from the influence of their L1. Besides, the importance of pragmatic competence was stressed by the graduate medical students with a particular emphasis on relating it to the medical context.

The second part discussed the implications of the study based on the findings. A teaching model was proposed to integrate pragmatic competence in the language classroom for the students at the faculty of medicine. This model was based on three pillars discussed by Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010); namely, input, output and feedback. The model makes use of a medical drama in order to situate the language aspects in a medical context and thus retains students' interest and motivation. The chapter ends with identifying the study limitations.

# CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, personal observation of the effect of communication breakdown has created the enquiry to investigate the repercussions and causes of this issue. This has also led to observe that there is a common complaint among graduate students as users of the English language. The task carries on to look into the nature of teaching English to non-English majors as they do not realise the importance of English until they graduate and start practising it.

Therefore, the current study has been intended to contribute to facilitating students' communication in English with the help of pragmatics as it is the field concerned with the study of language in use. In order to do that, it was important to investigate the level of pragmatic competence among the ESP students to find out where their insufficiency lies, with the ultimate aim of integrating pragmatic competence as a component in the classroom. After conducting this investigation by means of two research instruments, the data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The main research findings have shown the following:

- A low level of pragmatic competence is revealed among the students. This is mainly ascribed to the influence of their L1. They rely on their L1 norms in understanding and producing the language. Besides, their unfamiliarity with the effect of contextual variables on speech act strategies leads to pragmatic failure.
- A positive tendency is shown among graduate students towards developing pragmatic competence. Although they show reluctance at first to devote

attention to English learning, they soon realise when they graduate that its mastery can facilitate their career and enhance their image as professionals and doctors. Besides, they recommend relating pragmatic competence to the medical context.

Hence, in order to address these issues, a tentative model is proposed to integrate pragmatic competence in the classroom for the students of medicine. It aims at raising students' pragmatic awareness. This model is based on an input-output-feedback process discussed by Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010).

As advocated by the results of the study, a medical drama is used as input to link the students' field with learning the language. This will encourage the students to deal with authentic language and to maintain their interest in learning English through a medical drama. The output phase will provide the students with opportunities to practise what they have learned. This will be achieved by using DCTs for a written practice and role-plays for a speaking activity. Lastly, the feedback phase helps to check students' understanding and performance. Corrective feedback plays a key role in developing students' pragmatic ability in the classroom.

It is hoped that this research contributes to the improvement of English teaching to enable language learners to communicate effectively. Developing the learners' pragmatic competence will play a major role in achieving this aim. As most teaching practices are devoted to developing the linguistic competence, this study

aims to complement previous studies and to address the neglected aspect which is pragmatic competence. This is important in the language classroom in general and in the ESP classroom in particular. When ESP students become proficient in English, they can maintain their face, and thus, work in their specific fields confidently.

❖ *Recommendations for Further Research*

Typically, a single research study cannot cover all the aspects of the research problem. That is why there is always room for improvement. Hereby, there are some suggestions for future research.

Firstly, while the evaluation of language proficiency is beyond the scope of the current study, its influence on students' pragmatic competence should be addressed in future research. The students can take a language proficiency test prior to conducting the field work. Then according to the test result, they can be grouped into levels. A comparison of students' performance can be made between the low and high proficient students in order to measure the effect of their language fluency on their pragmatic competence

Secondly, since the present study has a pragmatics-based objective, no needs analysis was conducted as in the case of ESP research. In order to complement the study findings, it is recommended to carry out a needs analysis that investigates students' necessities, wants and lacks with regard to learning English.

Thirdly, for future research it is highly recommended to include the language teacher in the research study. It is important to find out teachers' perceptions as well as suggestions about teaching pragmatic competence in the ESP classroom.

To conclude, this study has shown that pragmatic competence is an indispensable component of language and it needs to be integrated in the ESP classroom, particularly for medical students. The globalisation of English creates the need to use it for international communication in all aspects. Being a part of communicative competence, pragmatic competence enables the students to become aware of appropriate language use in order to avoid pragmatic failure or communication breakdown as much as possible.

Based on the insights provided by the study findings and on previous theories in pragmatics, a tentative model has been proposed to integrate pragmatic competence in teaching English to the students of medicine. This model could also be employed to inform language teachers to take pragmatics into consideration in ESP classrooms.

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# APPENDICES

# Appendix A

## Questionnaire

**Dear Student,**

*You are kindly requested to answer the items of this questionnaire carefully and accurately. It is important that you understand what you read. If there is something you do not understand, please ask and I will be happy to explain.*

*Be assured that the information obtained in the course of this study will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of academic research.*

*Remember: this is not a test; I am interested in what you think.*

**Thank you**

---

### **A: Background Information**

Complete the following with information about yourself, please.

1- Gender:       *Male*                       *Female*

2- Age:

3- Nationality:

4- Secondary School :       *Public*                       *Private*

5- How would you rate your English level?

*Basic*                       *Intermediate*                       *Advanced*

6- Have you studied English in a language institute?

*Yes*                       *No*

If 'Yes', please give details (*such as how many courses, for how long, the name of the course*)

.....

---

**B: What would you say?**

Please read the following situations carefully and respond naturally as you would talk in English in real life.

1- It is time to submit a term paper, but you haven't finished it yet. You want to ask your teacher for an extension. You say:

.....  
.....

2- You are a student and you are half an hour late for a lecture. When you arrive, you want to apologise to your teacher for the delay. You say:

.....  
.....

3- You are a doctor and you are busy working in your clinic. You need a file of a patient that you examined last week, but you cannot find it. You want your secretary to look for it. You say:

.....  
.....

4- Your friend lent you a book that she/he is very attached to. You left the book beside the window when it rained, and some pages were damaged. When you return the book to your friend, you say:

.....  
.....

5- You are a student in your final year at university. You have written an excellent research paper. A first year student, whom you don't know, wants to borrow your paper. You refuse by saying:

.....  
.....

6- You are at your friend's house watching TV. Your friend offers you some nut cake but you are allergic to nuts. You cannot accept the cake. You say:

.....  
.....

7- You are a doctor diagnosing a patient at your clinic. A friend is calling you on the phone and you pick up. You keep talking for 10 minutes. Your patient looks annoyed. You apologise to the patient saying:

.....  
.....

8- You are an intern at a hospital in a meeting with a senior doctor. It is getting late and you want to leave work but the doctor wants you to spend an extra hour or two to finish some more work. You refuse by saying:

.....  
.....

9- You are a doctor and you have travelled abroad to participate in an international conference. You are not sure of the location of the hall where you will deliver your presentation. You want to ask a colleague you have just met. You say:

.....  
.....

---

**C: State whether the underlined sentences are *appropriate* or *inappropriate* to the situations that precede them and then explain your answer, please.**

1- Mary needs directions to the bus stop. She goes to an old woman and says:

- Can you tell me where the nearest bus stop is?

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

2- It is not the first time that your neighbour has played loud music at night and you have to get up early the next morning. You phone her to complain and she says:

- Oh, sorry!

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

3- You are a university student. You are about to go home in your car. A senior student, whom you have never met before, approaches you and asks you for a lift home saying that you both live in the same area of the city. You refuse by saying:

- I'm sorry, but I am not going straight home. There are quite a few things I need to do before heading home! Perhaps another day.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

4- You are a student who enters a bookshop looking for a book. You have seen a friend of your younger brother. He is happy to see you and invites you for a cup of coffee outside the bookshop. However, you are in a hurry and cannot accept the invitation now. You refuse by saying:

- In your dreams! I'm a busy person.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

5- Sarah has borrowed a book from her teacher. Her teacher needs it back, but Sarah has forgotten to return it. She says to the teacher:

- Oh, I'm very sorry. I completely forgot. Can I give it to you tomorrow?

Appropriate                       Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

6- You are sharing a flat with other students and today it is your turn to do the washing up. However, you have an important exam tomorrow, so you tell one of your flatmates:

- I have to study for an important exam. Can you please do the washing up for me? I promise to do yours the next time.

Appropriate                       Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

7- You are a research assistant to a professor, with whom you have a good academic relationship. At the end of the office hours, you are going to leave. The professor asks if you can stay with him and help with some papers. You refuse by saying:

- I am sorry, but I have an urgent appointment that I must attend. I can definitely help tomorrow.

Appropriate                       Inappropriate

Reason:

.....



8- At a restaurant, you call the waiter to ask for the menu. You say:

- Where is the menu?

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

9- After examining his patient, the dentist says:

- Would you be so kind as to take this medicament regularly, please?

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

10- Peter is going to Sam's house. He is quite late.

- Sam: I've been waiting for you for over half an hour. Weren't we supposed to meet at 4.00?

- Peter: I couldn't come earlier and anyway, we don't have to hurry anywhere.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

11- You are a university student and a close friend had been sick and asks if he/she can borrow your class notes. You refuse by saying:

- I don't want to. It goes against my convictions!

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

12- While having dinner at your younger brother's house, you dropped a glass accidentally and it broke into pieces. You say:

- Oops! I'm terribly sorry. I wish I were more careful. Please forgive me.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Reason:

.....

*Thank you for your participation*

## Appendix B

### Frequency Table of Awareness Test Items via SPSS

Item1

|       |               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | appropriate   | 15        | 26.8    | 26.8          | 26.8               |
|       | inappropriate | 41        | 73.2    | 73.2          | 100.0              |
|       | Total         | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Item2

|       |               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | appropriate   | 27        | 48.2    | 48.2          | 48.2               |
|       | inappropriate | 29        | 51.8    | 51.8          | 100.0              |
|       | Total         | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Item3

|       |               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | appropriate   | 39        | 69.6    | 69.6          | 69.6               |
|       | inappropriate | 17        | 30.4    | 30.4          | 100.0              |
|       | Total         | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item4**

|       |               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | appropriate   | 5         | 8.9     | 8.9           | 8.9                |
|       | inappropriate | 51        | 91.1    | 91.1          | 100.0              |
|       | Total         | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item5**

|       |               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | appropriate   | 49        | 87.5    | 87.5          | 87.5               |
|       | inappropriate | 7         | 12.5    | 12.5          | 100.0              |
|       | Total         | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item6**

|       |               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | appropriate   | 55        | 98.2    | 98.2          | 98.2               |
|       | inappropriate | 1         | 1.8     | 1.8           | 100.0              |
|       | Total         | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item7**

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid appropriate | 44        | 78.6    | 78.6          | 78.6               |
| inappropriate     | 12        | 21.4    | 21.4          | 100.0              |
| Total             | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item8**

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid appropriate | 4         | 7.1     | 7.1           | 7.1                |
| inappropriate     | 52        | 92.9    | 92.9          | 100.0              |
| Total             | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item9**

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid appropriate | 42        | 75.0    | 75.0          | 75.0               |
| inappropriate     | 14        | 25.0    | 25.0          | 100.0              |
| Total             | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item10**

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid appropriate | 14        | 25.0    | 25.0          | 25.0               |
| inappropriate     | 42        | 75.0    | 75.0          | 100.0              |
| Total             | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item11**

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid appropriate | 5         | 8.9     | 8.9           | 8.9                |
| inappropriate     | 51        | 91.1    | 91.1          | 100.0              |
| Total             | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Item12**

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid appropriate | 43        | 76.8    | 76.8          | 76.8               |
| inappropriate     | 13        | 23.2    | 23.2          | 100.0              |
| Total             | 56        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Questions Guide**

1. What is your current educational status or profession?
2. As for your study in secondary school, was it a private or public school?
3. Have you studied English in any language institutes? If yes, please give details.
4. How do you rate your English proficiency level?
5. During your bachelor studies, in which academic year did you take the English subject?
6. How was the course structured in terms of grammar, vocabulary, comprehension exercises, etc.?
7. What was your attitude towards the subject? And how was your motivation level at that time?
8. Did you find the subject useful? Explain your answer please.
9. At that time, did you prefer to learn English in a different way? Explain how.
10. At present, in which situations do you use English?
11. How often do you use English?
12. Have you had any embarrassing situations, or misunderstandings because of language use?
13. Have you had any difficulties, or problems due to language use?
14. Do you think that it important for a medical doctor to be proficient in English?

15. Do you think that it is important to study English at the faculty of Medicine?

Why?

16. According to your current views and experience, what are the language aspects and areas that should be integrated in teaching English for medical students?

*Here are two versions of Apology:*

*a. I am sorry*

*b. I am absolutely devastated. Can you possibly forgive me?*

17. Is there a difference between the two versions? If yes, what is it?

18. What are the criteria that govern the choice of one of them?

19. What do you understand by these sentences?

a. At the end of the lecture, your teacher says: you may like to read the article entitled "so and so".

b. It is very hot/cold in this office.

20. Do you think that it is important to learn this area of language use (when to say something, how, to whom)?



## Appendix D

### **An Excerpt representing a Request – Scrubs season 1, Episode 2**

J.D.'s Narration: Everything has started to click.

He reaches down to turn on his walkman, Leroy's "Good Time" begins to play. He looks around the activity of the hospital to see that everyone is working to the beat of the music playing in his ears. When his patient suddenly wakes up and mouths some of the words to the song, J.D. looks up, somewhat confused by the surreal moment.

Dr. Kelso is now directly in front of him, exaggeratedly lip-sync'ing the chorus of the song: "Are you having a good time?"

Dr. Kelso: [pulling one of the phones off of J.D.'s ear] *Are you? Because if you have time to listen to music, then I assume you have time to finish your paperwork!*

J.D. hustles down the hall past the Janitor, who is standing against his broom.

### **An Excerpt representing a Refusal – Scrubs season 1, Episode 5**

Dr. Kelso: Well, sport, it looks like a permanent spot just opened up on the golf course. How does joining the Chief of Medicine for a weekly round sound?

J.D.: Actually, sir, I'm not really that in to golf.

Dr. Kelso: [curt] Well, I guess that's your choice, isn't it... Dr. Dorian.

He walks away.

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Diana AL-AGHBARI

## Integrating Pragmatic Competence in Teaching English to the Students of Medicine at Taiz University



### ***Integrating Pragmatic Competence in Teaching English to the Students of Medicine at Taiz University***

One of the goals of teaching a language is to make learners aware of how to use it to serve a communicative purpose. This lies within the scope of pragmatic competence. This research deals with teaching pragmatics in a context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), namely the faculty of medicine at Taiz University. It investigates medical students' level of pragmatic competence with the ultimate aim of integrating it in the classroom. The study makes use of a questionnaire composed of a Discourse Completion Task to examine students' ability to produce speech acts and an awareness test to measure their ability to identify appropriate and inappropriate utterances. The other tool is an interview conducted to explore graduate students' perceptions towards pragmatic competence. The data are analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The study findings reveal a low level of pragmatic competence among students in the production and awareness levels. Besides, a positive tendency is shown towards the importance of pragmatic competence. Accordingly, a tentative model is proposed to incorporate pragmatic competence with the help of a medical TV show which will keep them motivated in learning English.

Key words: pragmatic competence, awareness, ESP, teaching, speech acts

### ***Intégrer la compétence pragmatique dans l'enseignement de l'anglais aux étudiants de médecine de l'Université de Taiz***

L'un des objectifs de l'enseignement d'une langue est de rendre les apprenants conscients de la façon d'utiliser cette langue en fonction de leurs objectifs communicationnels. Cette compétence relève du champ de la pragmatique. Cette recherche porte sur l'enseignement de la pragmatique dans un contexte d'Anglais de Spécialité (ASP), à savoir la Faculté de médecine à l'Université de Taiz. Elle étudie le niveau de compétence pragmatique chez les étudiants en médecine dans le but de l'intégrer dans la salle de classe. L'étude fait appel à une enquête par questionnaire composé de "Discourse Completion Tasks" afin d'examiner la capacité des étudiants à produire des actes de langage, et d'un test de conscience visant à mesurer leur capacité à identifier les énoncés appropriés et inappropriés. L'interview est un autre outil que nous avons conçu pour explorer les perceptions des étudiants diplômés envers la compétence pragmatique. Une approche qualitative et quantitative est adoptée pour l'analyse des données. Les résultats de l'étude montrent que les étudiants ont un niveau de compétence pragmatique faible en ce qui concerne la production et aussi la conscience pragmatique. De plus, les étudiants ont fait preuve d'une réceptivité accrue quant à l'importance de la compétence pragmatique. Par conséquent, un modèle provisoire est proposé pour favoriser l'intégration de cette compétence en ayant recours à une série télévisée qui pourrait les motiver à apprendre l'anglais.

Mots-clés: compétence pragmatique, conscience, ASP, enseignement, actes de langage