POLITENESS IN MAKING COMPLAINTS AMONGST COLLEGE STUDENTS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the politeness in making complaints among college students. Focusing on 15 male and 15 female Chinese Malaysia respondents who are studying in a private college in Malacca, data was extracted via two approaches. First, a set of tasks were provided to the participants. They were asked to respond to those tasks accordingly. All the activities took place within the classroom setting and all their responses were tape-recorded. Data were transcribed orthographically and the responses were analysed according to Olshtain and Weinbach's (1987) framework of the Notion of Severity of the Complaint and Lakoff's (1975) framework of Politeness Strategies – *Lakoff's Language and Women's Place*. The results of this study suggest that the closer the relationship between the speaker and intended hearer, the more direct the linguistic forms of complaints used, the higher the power of one over another (between the speaker and intended hearer), the more indirect the linguistic forms of complaints used. This study also found that female speakers were more sensitive in such situation and therefore they used more politeness strategies than the male speakers. As a conclusion, it is apparent that power and gender are factors which could affect one's degree of politeness when behaving in a society, in particular when making complaints.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menumpukan kepada strategi-strategi kesopanan dalam membuat aduan di kalangan pelajar-pelajar kolej. Kajian ini dijalankan terhadap 15 orang pelajar lelaki dan 15 orang pelajar perempuan Cina Malaysia yang sedang belajar di sebuah kolej swasta di Melaka. Data telah diekstrak melalui dua pendekatan. Pertama, satu set tugas telah disediakan kepada peserta. Mereka diminta untuk bertindak balas terhadap tugas-tugas mereka dengan sewajarnya. Semua aktiviti dijalankan di dalam bilik darjah dan semua jawapan mereka dipita-rakamkan. Data yang diperolehi diterjemahkan secara lisan dan jawapan dianalisis mengikut rangka kerja Olshtain dan Weinbach (1987) Notion of Severity of the Complaint dan rangka kerja Lakoff (1975) Strategi Kesopanan - *Lakoff's Language and Women's Place*. Keputusan kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa lebih dekat hubungan antara penutur dan pendengar, maka bentuk linguistik aduan yang digunakan adalah lebih langsung, semakin tinggi kuasa salah satu atas yang lain (antara penutur dan pendengar yang dimaksudkan), bentuk linguistik aduan yang digunakan adalah tidak langsung. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa pelajar perempuan adalah lebih sensitif dan oleh itu mereka menggunakan strategi kesopanan yang lebih banyak daripada pelajar lelaki. Sebagai kesimpulan, ia adalah jelas bahawa kuasa dan jantina adalah faktor-faktor yang boleh menjejaskan tahap kesopanan seseorang apabila berkelakuan dalam masyarakat, khususnya apabila membuat aduan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter starts with the background of the study, which aims to analyse the speech acts of complaints made by both male and female speakers in four given scenarios. The significance of the study is then discussed to provide some ideas on the importance of the study. In this study, two research questions were developed based on the research objectives. The purpose of the study is to examine how the relationship of power and distance affect the use of politeness strategies in the making of complaints by male and female speakers. In addition, it also seeks to see if there are any salient patterns in the way of making complaints by male and female speakers. Besides that, the statements of problem, scope of the study as well as the limitation of the study are also identified in this chapter.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language is a very important instrument that we use it every day to communicate with the people around us. We communicate with people by sending messages, exchanging our ideas and thoughts and sharing useful and accurate information and messages with them by using the methods of communication such as emailing, telephoning, sending short messaging services (SMS) and writing letters. When we do the above actions, we are actually performing some kinds of speech acts. A speech act is defined as an utterance that has the particular functions in communication. A speech act can consist only one word or more than one word. In order perform an

accurate and understandable speech act; we need to know the cultural background of our participants well and also very importantly we need to have the knowledge in the language that we are going to use to communicate. This research is looking at the speech act of complaining. According to Olshtain and Weinbach (1987), complaint happened because the people encountered some events or actions which they are not happy with. There are two types of complaints which are the direct complaints and indirect complaints. Direct complaints are more face-threatening than indirect complaints and have significant negative impacts for the speakers and hearers. Therefore, in having conversations, we are advised to be careful in choosing the correct language and communication strategies in order to have an effective communication. As a participant in any communications, we should be able to identify and use the appropriate politeness strategies so that our communication will be more acceptable and also will be less offensive to others.

According to Holtgrave (2008), the act of communication is a form of social discourse. It can be used to maintain and standardize social activities as well as define the relationship between power and status. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) mentioned that, in order to save the hearers' face, we are required to follow a few politeness strategies. Holmes (1995) claims that women are generally communicate more polite than men. This is because, according to Holmes (1995), women are more concerned with the sentimental values when communicating with people rather than the referential aspect of utterances as the men does.

The study presented in this paper aims at analyzing speech acts, in particular the speech act of complaints made by college students towards 4 scenarios given. In this study, the researcher will examine how the participants perform the speech act of complaint with special consideration being paid to the aspects of power as well as gender in relation to the notion of politeness. For that purpose, utterances produced by

15 male and 15 female participants will be analysed in order to detect the relevant patterns if any.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The main reason for choosing this topic for the research is to find out how the two variables, 1) power and 2) distance, affect the expressions of complaints made by the Malaysian Chinese speakers. Even though dissatisfaction may occur anywhere and at any time, this study seeks to prove that the way complaints are expressed may actually vary, depending on the social status and the relationship between the interlocutors involved. Another reason for conducting this study is to find out if there is a relationship between gender and politeness in making complaints. In other words, it seeks to understand whether male and female speakers have different strategies in making complaints.

1.3 AIM OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to:-

  a) To find out whether the notion of power and distance affect the use of politeness strategies in making complaints, and

  b) To examine if there are differences in the complaints made by female and male Malaysian speakers

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two research questions were developed for this study:

a) How does power between the speaker and hearer affect the way complaints are made?

b) What are the differences in term of politeness strategies used between male and female Malaysian Chinese college students when making complaints?

1.5 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

A complaint is an instance where a person expresses his or her displeasure or annoyance in response to an action that is seen as unfavourable. It is found that, in the Malaysia context, different approaches were used by male and female speakers of English in making complaints. In general, the approaches used by female speakers when making complaints, in certain situation, tend to be indirect and more polite than male speakers. Therefore, it became the interest to the researcher to examine this area further.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In order to be focused, the researcher limits the scope of this study to encompass the complaints made by 30 Malaysian Chinese participants. The participants of this research are from one of the private colleges in Melaka. The reason for choosing the participants from that particular private college is influenced by purposive sampling where Malaysian Chinese participants can be easily accessed. In addition, the researcher also works in the college, thereby narrowing bureaucracy for getting consent. Some limitations were found throughout the implementation of this study. The first limitation identified was the limited number of the Malaysia Chinese participants. In that regard, this study could not be seen as conclusive; as there were only thirty participants (15

males and 15 females) involved. The second limitation found was the ethnic background of the participants whom all of the participants are only of one ethnic background - Malaysian Chinese; hence the findings may be restrictive.

1.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the purpose of carrying out the study which is aimed to analyse the speech acts of complaints made by both male and female speakers in four given but different situations. The signification and the aim of this study were also identified to see whether male and female speakers have different strategies in making complaints. Two research questions and three hypotheses have been developed and the researcher hopes that the findings of the research will be able to answer the two research questions and support all the three hypotheses provided in section 1.4 & 1.5 respectively. The statement of problem was identified so that the researcher can examine further and deeper. The scope of the study and the limitations of study were also identified and discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the theories that are related to the politeness strategies used when making complaints. This chapter also reviews the relevant literature on politeness, gender differences, definition and function of a complaint, and previous studies on complaints. Besides that, the research gaps will also be identified by the researcher in this chapter.

2.1 THE SPEECH ACT THEORY

The famous philosopher of language, J.L Austin from British has contributed largely in the speech act theory. According to Austin (1962), he claims that most of the utterances are performatives. This means that the utterances that performed by people do not simply for communication purpose. The utterances that performed by people are sometimes equal to actions. This means that, by uttering these utterances, we are actually required people to do things for us.

Searle (1969) mentioned that, there are three criteria which we need to follow in order to be able to classify the illocutionary acts. The first criterion is the purpose of the illocutionary acts; the second criterion is communication between the words that we are using and real world; the third criterion is the psychological state of the speaker. Searle (1979:1-29) had categorized the five speech acts based on their functions. The five categories are:

1) Directives: When performing this speech act will cause the hearer to take certain action such as making requests and suggestions, giving commands and advice.

2) Commissives: When performing this speech act, the speaker is actually committed to some future actions such as giving promises.

3) Representatives: When performing this speech act, the speakers is actually committed to tell the truth of the expressed suggestion. For examples: affirming and concluding.

4) Declaratives: When performing this speech act, it is expected to be able to bring changes in the reality. For examples: baptism, declaring war.

5) Expressive: When performing this speech act, the speaker is actually express his or her emotions towards certain situations or conditions such as making complaints, apologizing, and thanking.

The study in this research focuses on the 'complaint' which is categorised as 'expressive'. It is categorised as 'expressive' because the speaker expresses disappointment, and dislike.

2.2 POLITENESS

The term, "Politeness" comes from the word polite which means "behaving to other people in a pleasant way that follow all the usual rules of society" (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2002:1090). Lakoff (1975) defines politeness as something that is developed by the societies to reduce the conflict between persons in their interaction with each others. Brown and Levinson (1978) see politeness as a complex system that use by most of the people to soften the face threats. Another definition of politeness by Foley (1997) is that, politeness has been seen as a succession of social skills with the

goal to ensure everyone involved in the communication feels affirmed. Brown and Levinson (1978) defined face as something that can be upheld or improved, or lost. The speaker has the responsibility to either help the hearer to maintain or lose his/her face.

According to Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (1995b: 65), it is easy for us to observe the polite manners that a person has. We can observe a person's politeness through the way he or she interacts with people either verbally or nonverbally. Asmah Haji Omar (1992: 23-24) mentioned that there are a few aspects of behaviour that a Malaysian possesses which can be considered as finesse. The behaviour are (1) showing not very straightforward or not too forceful, (2) not being too direct in showing one's view and opinion, and (3) trying to avoid any situations or actions that will cause a person lose face.

According to Asmah Haji Omar (1992), from the use of the language by a person, we can easily observe that the person is polite or not. We can know a person is polite or not by just referring to possible features that they use when communicating with people. As mentioned by Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (1991), we can observe that a polite people will always tend to word their utterances carefully, respond politely and positively to other people and express their appreciation kindly. Being a polite people, he or she will always try to avoid any confrontation with the speaker or hearer, avoid to being too forceful or direct. It is because, for them, the mentioned above are all the examples of behaviour which are considered as rude, offensive and may cause ill-feeling.

Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (1995b: 75) claims that due to the norms of society, the way we communicate or interact with people around as are usually comply with our social rules. According to Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (1995), we need to take care of the "face" or in Malay we say, "jaga air muka" of the hearer when communicate with them in order to maintain good relationship and good manners in communication. "Face saving", as

defined in Malaysian communities by Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (1995), means that we need to save both ourselves and the other party's face from being embarrassed by anyone.

Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that each individual possesses two types of "face". The two types of face are 1) the positive face and 2) the negative face. Brown and Levinson (1987) define positive politeness as an individual's wish that he or she would be appreciated in the social interaction. As for negative politeness, it is defined as an individual's wish to be able to get freedom from his or her actions and to also get freedom from being imposed.

Holmes (1995) regards politeness as having the concern for the feelings of others. Holmes says that when following the politeness strategies, a speaker has to be very careful when he or she wants to say anything so that he or she will not hurt the hearer and at the same time he or she can save the hearer's face. According to Holmes (1995), women use more positive politeness if compare to men. Holmes (1995) mentions that we can observe this from the women's utterances. Women, when communicating with people, their utterances always have to evidence of showing her concern for the feelings towards the people they are having conversation with. Holmes (1995) claims that, for women, communication is an important way for them to be in contact with the people they are talking to, especially with their close friends. Men, in other hand, as mentions by Holmes (1995), regard language as a tool to get information or as a tool to communicate information in order to build up or establish personal relationship with the hearer.

Scollon and Scollon (1995) introduced three politeness systems. The three politeness systems are (1) the deference system, (2) the solidarity system and (3) the hierarchical system. Scollon and Scollon (1995) define that, in the (1) deference system, both of the speaker and hearer has an equal social level. None of them have exerted power and authority over the other. But in this system, there is a distant between their

relationships. Therefore, the speaker or the hearer may use independence strategies when communicating in order to avoid any face losing between them. The interlocutor has the chance of choosing the suitable strategies when communicating. All these depend on the cultural background that the interlocutors belong to. As in (2) solidarity politeness system, both the interlocutors have equal social position and both of them have a very good relationship between each others. Due to the close relationship between the interlocutors, therefore they will tend to use the intimacy strategies to express their viewpoint. The last system is the hierarchical system. According to Scollon and Scollon (1995), in this system, one of the interlocutors has super ordinate position and the other participant has a lower position. However, both the interlocutors in this system may have either close or distant relationship.

2.3 GENDER DIFFERENCES

Gender is an issue in many aspects of life simply because males and females are made up differently, both mentally, physically and psychologically. It appears that our social expectations and experiences may be a contributing factor to the language differences or differing linguistic styles between men and women at anytime and in any situation. According to Lakoff (1975) and Fishman (1983), one of the theories used in describing the language of males and females is the "dominance approach". In this approach, we can see that men and women speak differently because of male dominance and female subordination. In other words, the language used by males is regarded as more powerful as compared to the females which is known as less powerful. Lakoff (1975) and Fishman (1983) mentioned that, this is due to the standard hierarchical position in society where males resemble as the dominants while females as the supporters for the dominants, thus, the language used by the dominants tends to show power by the choice of words that sometimes can be found more direct (explicit).

Coates (1986) and Tannen (1990) believe that in "difference approach", men and women who are from different cultures will have different linguistic forms used by both male and female speakers when communicating. Due to cultural differences, the way people behave, and the way people respond to a situation are varies. Women who are mostly being considered as a soft person will tend to use more indirect (implicit) way to communicate.

Lakoff (1975) indicates that there are some differences between the language used by the male and female speakers. Lakoff (1975) has pointed out the significant features that could be seen in a typical female language. The significant features are that females used more hedging devices, tag questions, qualifiers and rising intonation on declaratives compared to male. Hedging devices are empty phrases. The example of hedging device is "I think" or "you know". According to Holmes (1995), she claims that because the speaker is not really committed to what he or she is conversing, therefore they can choose to use hedging devices in order to soften or mitigate utterances so that it will not hurt the hearer's feelings. Qualifiers are the words such as "very", "quite", "I assume", "I mean", "may be", "relatively", "generally" and etc. Hirschman (1994) claims that, without "qualifiers" in an utterance will not change the content of the utterances. It will only affect the degree of the assertiveness of a sentence. Hirschman (1994) claims that females used to use fillers such as *"...um...", "...er..." and "...ah..."* in their speech when communicating with people. They use fillers to mitigate the face threatening act towards the hearer.

Moving on to Holmes (1995), she claims that women use tag questions as positive politeness devices when communicating. The purpose of using the positive politeness devices is to protect the speaker's positive face. As for men, according to Holmes (1995), they use the positive politeness devices to get information or to make

confirmation of assumptions. The example of positive politeness device that frequently used by women is the phrase "I think".

Tannen (1990) argues that for most women, the language that they use to communicate is basically a language to maintain the rapports or as a way to establish connections and negotiating relationships. As for men, they see talk as a means to maintain freedom and status in a hierarchical social order. The way they communicate is called "report talk".

Thus, we can conclude that, the language of female takes into consideration the face of the addressees in speaking as to maintain a good relationship while men are not keen on this as they rarely discuss matters pertaining to personal affairs.

2.4 COMPLAINTS

What is a 'complaint'? As it has been defined in Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, the word "*complain*" has two definitions: The first definition given in the dictionary is, "to express feeling of pain, dissatisfaction, or resentment", and the second definition is, "to make a formal accusation". The reason for a person to make complaints is actually he or she wants to let the other people aware that he or she is unhappy or is frustrated due to a particular situation. The complainer might want the hearer to responsible for the frustration situation that happened to him or her. Although we may think that we all understand what complaints are, it is important to define "complaints: in light of pragmatics. A complaint as defined by Schaefer (1982) is as follows:

> "*An utterance or set of utterances, which identifies a problem or trouble source and seeks remediation, either from the person responsible for the trouble source, or a third party who has the power to affect the situation*" (p.8)

Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) claim that in the speech act of complaining, the speaker (S) expresses the anger or frustration towards some particular action or situation that had happened in the past or the action or situation that is happening now. The speaker sees the action or situation has affected him or her unfavorably. Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) listed the possible preconditions for the complaints to happen. They are:

1) The speaker expects a favorable event to occur or the speaker tries to prevent an unfavorable event from occurring.

2) The speaker sees an action (which is an offensive act) as having unfavorable effects for him or herself.

3) The speaker thinks that the hearer is the one who should responsible for the action.

4) The speaker expresses his/her frustration and dissatisfaction verbally.

Most of the people have generally agreed that it is face threatening if we perform the speech act of complaining to the hearer. The speaker's action will also cause ill-feeling if the speaker makes direct complaints (Moon, 2001). This will make the relationship between the interlocutor becomes worse. Saucer (2000) claims that when making complaints towards the hearer, the speaker will try to use a wide range of linguistic forms as well as some non-verbal signals because they want to save the hearer's face. They also try to remain polite when performing the inherently face-threatening speech act of complaint.

According to Olshtain and Weinbach (1993), complaints are categorized as a speech act. This means that, a speaker makes complaints when a prior action or an ongoing event, activity or situation has unfavorably influenced the speaker and the speaker expressed his or her annoyance towards the event or situation. The speaker will usually make the complaints directly to the hearer. The hearer has to be responsible for any offensive action.

Trosborg (1995) also provided a broader definition of complaint in light of the responsibility on the part of the hearer as:

> "...an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his/her disapproval, negative feeling etc., towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he/she holds the hearer (the complainee) responsible, either directly or indirectly." (p.311)

Furthermore, according to House and Kasper's (1981), complaint is considered as an expressive speech act. They stated that:

> "complaints embrace other expressive sharing the features "post-event/anti-X" which may be referred to in English by such verbs as "criticize," "accuse" or "reproach." (p.159)

In this study, the definition of Olshtain and Weinbach (1993:108) is applied. In this regard, the speaker thinks that the hearer should be the person who has to be responsible for any offensive action that happened.

2.5 SELECTED REVIEW OF STUDIES ON COMPLAINTS

The speech act of complaints has not been commonly studied, and in particular studies in Malaysia has been few in between. However, there are a few studies conducted by various researchers might be able to give a good outline for this study.

House and Kasper

House and Kasper (1981) observe both speech acts of complaint and request which happened through the English and German language. In their study, they also focused on the politeness markers used by the native speakers of German and native speakers of English. In their study, conversational data were collected from both groups of them. All the native speakers were asked to act out the twenty-four (24) informal daily situations orally. The purpose of this study was to determine if Germans were actually

less indirect than the English natives.

The present study was conducted with the aim of determining if Germans were actually less indirect than the English natives. House and Kasper (1981) brought up the directness in complaints in eight different levels with level 1 is considered as very indirect and the level 8 is considered as very direct. In this study, four schemata were identified in order to examine the directness levels. These four schemata were used to compare the complaints data sets by German and English native speakers. By substituting X and Y for interlocutors and P for the action that causes a complaint.

1. The action that causes a complaint is mentioned either implicitly or explicitly;

2. Interlocutor "X's" has explicitly expressed his or her negative evaluation about the action that causes a complaint;

3. Interlocutor "Y" has expressed his or her involvement either in an implicit or explicit way, and

4. The negative assessment of the Interlocutor "Y's" action and interlocutor "Y" oneself was expressed either implicitly or explicitly.

(House and Kasper 1981:160)

The researchers indicated that the negative evaluation would be emphasized by a more direct complaint, but the negative evaluation would be avoided and restricted to describing action by a less direct complaint. Different possibilities for those four choices were combined to make them devise the scale of directness which is mentioned below:

Table2.1 House and Kasper's Eight-Point Directness Continuum

Level	Situation context	Examples
1	The speaker (S) has expressed the utterances in front of the hearer (H) directly as the speaker (S) knows that the hearer (H) has done the action.	I have just cleaned my blouse yesterday.
2	The speaker (S) has explicitly mentioned the event as the speaker (S) supposed the hearer (H) did the action.	Why my blouse became so dirty?
3	The speaker (S) explicitly mentioned the event is unfavorable and the speaker (S) supposed the hearer (H) did the action.	Terrible, this stain won't ever come off.
4	The speaker (S) has explicitly asked the hearer (H) about the incident. The speaker (S) supposed the hearer (H) did the action.	Why you didn't get my permission before wearing my blouse?
5	The speaker (S) has explicitly mentioned that the hearer (H) did the action.	You've made my blouse dirty.
6	The speaker (S) mentioned a preference for other option which was not chosen by the hearer (H), the speaker (S) supposes that the hearer (H) is bad. The speakers (S) mentioned that the hearer (H) has to be responsible for the bad event that happened.	You should ask my permission first before wearing my blouse. You have destroyed made my blouse.
7	The speaker (S) has explicitly mentioned that the hearer (H) action is bad.	I think it's mean that you just take my things.
8	The speaker (S) explicitly mentioned that the hearer (H) is bad.	You are really mean.

(House and Kasper, 1981:160)

House and Kasper (1981) classified these participants' role play of 107 German complaints and 80 English native complaints according to the eight levels of directness (see Table 2.1). They arrived at the conclusion that German students prefer choosing more direct complaint styles to indirect, in contrast to their English counterparts.

Furthermore, they found that "modality markers" such as downgraders were interpreted as lowering the impact of an utterance, and upgraders were used to increase the force of the impact of an utterance. These were proposed to differentiate the type of

complaints in their study. For instance, making use of the downgraders of modality markers such as "would you mind if" would lessen a complaint, but in contrast making use of upgraders such as "absolutely and terribly" reinforces a complaint. The researcher also stated in conclusion, that "German speakers display more aggressive verbal behavior in socially delicate situations" (p.177). We may go on from this to the conclusion that Germans use more upgraders of the modality markers, i.e. they tend to intensify the force of their speech act in particular or probable situations.

Olshtain and Weinbach

In the study done by Olshtain and Weinbach (1993), they investigated the complaints by native speakers and non-native speakers of Hebrew. The purpose of carrying out this study is to have a clear understanding regarding the semantic formulas and strategies of complaints used between these two groups. In this study, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) have developed the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) questionnaires. The DCT questionnaires comprise 20 situations. Both groups of speakers were asked to provide their complaints for the 20 situations in written forms.

In their survey, the speech act of complaining was seen to have taken some important steps in this direction. It would be better to say that the researchers of this study argued that complaint is a kind of face-threatening act (FTAs). It is also a critic where in the condition where the speaker's speech or behavior is contrary to the expectation of the hearer and does not meet with his/her standards or hopes (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993:108). In a similar situation, Brown and Levinson (1987) considered that the speaker will always proceed to some "payoff considerations" to decide whether FTA will be put into practice or not.

Hence, the preconditions are very important for the speech act of complaining to come up. It follows from the section below what has been about the three factors which

are included in the speech event which encompass "what makes the participants talk, what they are talking about, and what the purpose of complaining is?" (Kyunghye Moon, 2001:4). It is necessary to fulfill four preconditions as illustrated in the following, from the point of view of speakers' for an act of complaint to occur:

1) The speaker expects an encouraging event to happen or the speaker tries to prevent an unfavorable event from occurring.
2) The speaker observes an action (the offensive act) as having unfavorable effects for himself or herself.
3) The speaker assumes that the hearer should responsible for the action that happened.
4) The speaker expresses his/her frustration and dissatisfaction verbally. (Kyunghye Moon, 2001: 195-196)

We can recognize from what we talked about above that Olshtain and Weinbach deemed that the speaker is in the presence of two important considerations to choose in the case in executing the complaints. One consideration is with regard to the situational context, and the other one is with reference to Face. The former is concerned with the speaker estimating the decision analysis for going about redress or not at the same time of complaining. According to the researchers of this study, if the speaker determines not to repair the loss of Socially Unacceptable Act (SUA), then complaint is a statement or a demand made directly to address the situation, while the latter is about the level of face-threat that the speaker appears to experience on the severity scale. It appears that in such conditions, existing situational variable between the speaker and the hearer may also come into play as an influence.

Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) developed five major categories to specify the severity of the complaint by reflecting on available alternatives for realization patterns which accompany varied strategies that constitute the speech act of complaints. In order to present this classification more carefully, the five categories of severity of the complaining strategies are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Severity Scale of Face-Threat of Complaints

Severity of the Complaint	Level	Function	Feature	Example
Below the Level of Reproach	1	1. Speaker avoids explicit mention of the offensive event. 2. Speaker avoids Face Threatening of Hearer minimally. 3. Speaker intends to narrow down the cost and increase the benefit for Hearer.	To avoid making mention of Hearer or the unacceptable event absolutely.	*Situation:* Hearer spilled something and damaged the table cloth. Speaker might say: "Such things happen." "Don't worry about it, there's no real damage." "Never mind, nothing serious happened."
Expression of Annoyance or Disapproval	2	1. Speaker makes any reference to the Hearer or the offensive event indirectly or vaguely rather than explicitly. 2. Speaker still tries to avoid open confrontation with Hearer. 3. Complaining doesn't specify exactly what was wrong and who was responsible.	To avoid making mention of Hearer or the unacceptable event directly or explicitly but clear hint at the fact that an event or a behavior was offended by Hearer.	"Such lack of consideration." "This is really unacceptable."
Explicit complaint	3	1. To make mention of Hearer obviously. 2. To make mention of the unacceptable event obviously. 3. To make mention of both Hearer and the unacceptable event obviously.	To make mention of Hearer or the unacceptable event even both.	"You're inconsiderate!" "One should not postpone this type of operation." "You should not have postponed such an operation."
Accusation and Warning	4	1. Speaker adopts an open face-threatening to perform for Hearer. 2. A potential sanction is implied by Speaker.	1. Not only does the Speaker makes mention of Hearer or unacceptable event but also takes action to impose sanction against Hearer. 2. The pattern of complaint is future tense and 1st person.	"Next time I'll let you wait for hours."
Immediate Threat	5	1. Speaker openly attacks the face of Hearer and threatens Hearer immediately. 2. The ultimatum with instant outcome is used by Speaker.	1. The pattern of complaint is present tense. 2. Speaker often mentions the present action of Hearer with instantaneously threat revealing highly the property of demanding immediate attention.	"You'd better pay the money right now." "I'm not moving one inch before you change my appointment." "You're an idiot."

(Olshtain and Weinbach, 1987:199-201)

De Capua

De Capua's (1989) study is to examine whether or not pragmatic transfer in the speech acts of complaining comes up and if so, what are the types of pragmatic transfer that happen between German and English. The data of his study were also elicited by virtue of the Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) offered to100 participants: 50 native German speakers and 50 native English speakers who were asked to respond to five situations in a written form. What makes his study remarkable than previous ones is that it touches on the speech act of complaining in three specific areas where socio-cultural transfer is deemed to take place. 1) The types of semantic components categories used by the utterances; 2) the degree of directness of the utterances; 3) the types and frequency of directness markers. At the outset, De Capua (1989) categorized the semantic components of the complaint into seven most important semantic responses categories as Table 2.3 presents:

Table 2.3 Complaint Components of De Capua

Categories	Definition	Examples
1. Criticism	A statement in which the speaker criticizes something the hearer has done or the hearer him/ herself.	"This is a very bad system you have here."
2. Demand for Repair	A statement whereby the speaker demands the hearer remedies the situation.	"You will have to repay me for this."
3. Justification	A statement whereby speakers vindicate their utterances.	"I'm having trouble cooking without it."
4. Opt out	Subjects were told to skip, that is not respond to any situation they encouraged if it was one where in real life they normally would not do anything.	
5. Request for Repair	A statement whereby the speaker asks the hearer to remedy the situation.	"Would you please correct the mistake on my bill?"
6. Statement of Problem	A statement of fact that lets the hearer knows what the complaint is about.	"There's a hair in my soup."
7. Threat / Pressure	A statement that lets the hearer know that the speaker is expecting some remediating actions and that if it does not occur, the speaker will take other measures.	"If something is not done soon I'll have to contact a repairman and have the bill sent to you!"

(De Capua, 1989:90)

Additionally, De Capua's degree of directness is also based on a previous study done by House and Kasper (1981) and Olshtain and Cohen (1987). Given that straightforwardness is thought of as existing along a continuum rather than viewed as a hierarchical concept, with areas which intermingle together at the two edges, De Capua (1989) began to see that strategies of requests and demands are different, particularly on the directness scale.

Thus, De Capua has arranged the directness levels according to a scale. To put it another way, requests and demands were ranged along such a continuum according to how direct a particular strategy was. These are two edges along the scale: one of which is demand-like complaints, such as the speciality with most direct and most face-threatening, and the next one is request-like complaints, the properties of least direct and least face-threatening are attached to it. The following figure has been deduced:

```
         <-------------------more request-like / more demand-like------------------>
              least direct                                    most direct
    <------------------a----------------------------b----------------------------c------------------>
          least face- threatening                    most face- threatening
```
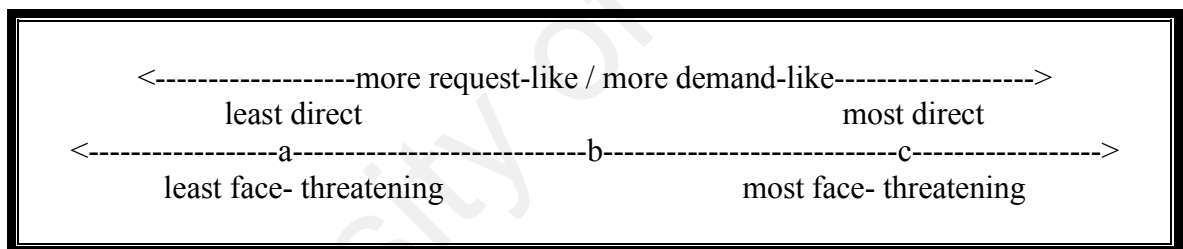
Figure 1

De Capua (1989) used the continuum Figure 1 to gauge the directness of a response set and made up eight major areas on the continuum of complaints on which each unfixed number displays general areas that we can more or less understand the degree of directness. Figure 2 is presented based on the researcher's understanding.

```
         least direct                                          most direct
              1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8
    <--------------------------------------------------------------------------------->
    least face- threatening                                 most face- threatening
```
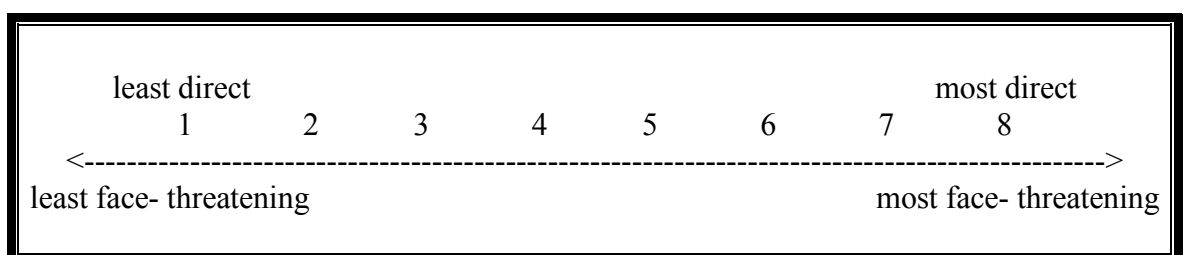
Figure 2

Earlier studies seem to use the scales on the severity of complaints (e.g. Olshtain and Weinbach, 1985; House and Kasper, 1981) in hierarchical structure with distinctly

discernible divided parts.

Past studies done by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and House and Kasper (1981), De Capua also discussed the directness modifiers in particular modifiers 5 of the responses.

In another study, German and American subjects were found to use seven types of downgraders and six types of upgraders. This study was conducted by De Capua (1989). On his study, De Capua (1989) came to the conclusion that the Germans utilized more directness modifiers, and they also used these modifiers in more circumstances and across a broader range along the directness continuum than English subjects did.

The study of the socio-cultural transfer from German into English indicates that pragmatic transfer does happen. So from the data collected, we can conclude that speakers of German in English are in general more direct. They are observed as more forceful and blunt than the Americans in similar situations (p.211).

Many of these differences in directness were seen to be used due to the different cultural perceptions in German and American society.

Boxer

Murphy and Neu (1996) and Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) mentioned that direct complaint (DC) is a kind of face-threatening act. This is because, when a speaker makes complaints about someone or something, the party complained against is present in the scene. Before turning to Boxer's study (1993a), we must draw attention to what has been established about what is the definition of complaint. Complaint is a kind of illocutionary speech act. According to Boxer (1993a), the terminology 'indirect complaint' (IC) was used by her to make a distinction between the types of complaints. The term 'indirect complaint' in Boxer's study, to borrow D'Amico-Reisner's (1985:103-115) phrase, refers to "the expression of frustration to an interlocutor about someone or something

that is not present." D'Amico-Reisner (ibid) mentions that indirect complaint (IC) or gripping is a not face-threatening. This is because the person or object that is responsible for the act doesn't show up at the time the conversation. In this regard, it can reasonably be concluded that a complaint is a negative evaluation where the receiver is not having the responsibility for the offense. According to the researcher, the native speakers of English frequently make use of indirect complaints (ICs) in order to try to establish good relationship or solidarity between themselves and their interlocutors (pp.2-3).

In her study, there were 295 interlocutors and 533 naturally occurring indirect complaints were produced. Boxer identified that, there three kinds of themes in the indirect complaint (IC). The three kinds of themes are: (a) self, (b) other, and (c) situation. All of these themes are followed by six types of Indirect Complaint (IC) responses. She discovered that the form of topic switch which occurs among intimates or high-social distance was caused by unequal social status. Such an act helps to convey the hearer's attitude towards someone. When used in most frequent utterance, or when referring to both the complainee and the complaining event, an Indirect Complaint (IC) is inconvenient for the hearer to participate in and thus exhibits less interest in the conversation, thereby reducing or terminating the dialogue.

It has been found that during complaints, friends who used simple clarifying requests, elaborate request, or challenging questions may then expressing uncertainties about the validness of the complaints. Additionally, disagreement may also take place among intimates who do not accept or approve of the complaint. They disagree with the speaker by providing a certain type of argument for the thing being complained about. Sometimes, joking or teasing can also come up among strangers in order to mitigate the atmosphere. In addition, to form a better relationship between interlocutors, advice or lecture responses offering advice on solving a problem may also be added. Almost half of all the Indirect Complaint (IC) responses in Boxer's (1993a) study fell into the

category of commiseration, which shows agreement or support to the speaker to make him or her feel better. Additionally, despite the fact that complaints are not typically recognized as "rapport-inspiring speech behavior" (p.220), Boxer suggests that this is "cause to speculate that the underlying social strategy of much complaining behavior in the community is not negative but positive in nature" Boxer (1993a, p.219). Boxer also found that English speakers often used gripping in continuous interaction while seeking to establish solidarity.

In her other work (1993b), Boxer explored the problem of indirect complaint and commiseration in conversation between Japanese English Second Language learners (ESL) and their English first language (E1) peers, especially adopted spontaneous speech or field notes, which were recorded by 295 interlocutors (195women and 100 men) in spontaneous conversation. In order to find out how these participants respond to indirect complaints by natives, six basic response types were provided. The six basic types of response are joking or teasing, non-substantive reply ("hmn"), questioning, advising or lecturing, contradicting, and commiserating. Results showed that Native Speakers (NSs) use the commiseration ways to give responses. As for Non-Native Speakers (NNSs), non-substantive type was the major category, who sometimes also questions and sometime commiserates. The central finding was that Japanese ESL learners lost their chances to communicate as they are not going into the conversation fully.

Trosborg

Trosborg (1995) investigated complaints strategies of non-native and native speakers of English. In her analysis of complaints, she furnished us with some general ideas and comprehension of which kind of categories and strategies a complaint belongs to. To be specific, complaints in Trosborg's (1995) work were classified into four categories according to the directness scale which was structured by Trosborg. The

directness level of a complaint in Trosborg's work is determined by three factors. The three factors are: propositional content, complainer, accused.

Trosborg's (1995:319) four categories are attached with strategies as the following describe: Category I: No explicit reproach, hints may be used as strategy by the complainer as "soft" complaints; Category II: Expression of annoyance and disapproval, Category III: Accusations, the complainer will use indirect and direct strategies; Category IV Blaming. In carrying out the compliant categories, 8 strategies were outlined. For example, in the situation of a damaged car as shown below, strategy 1 is the most indirect, and strategy 8 is the most direct, as shown in Table 2.4 together with detailed items.

Table 2.4 Strategies of Complaining

Category	Situation: Damaged car	
	Hearer has borrowed speaker's car and damaged it.	
	Speaker complains.	
I	No explicit reproach	
	Situation 1: Hints	My car was in perfect order when I last drove it.
	Expression of Disapproval	
II	Situation 2: Annoyance	There's a terrible scratch in my car. Oh dear, I've just bought it.
	Situation 3: Consequences	How terrible! Now I won't be able to get to work tomorrow. Oh, damn it, I'll lose my insurance bonus now.
	Accusation	
III	Situation 4: Indirect	You used my car yesterday night, didn't you?
	Situation 5: Direct	Did you happen to bump into my car?
	Blame	
IV	Situation 6: Modified blame	Honestly, couldn't have been more careful? You should take more care with other people's cars.
	Situation 7: Explicit Blame (behavior)	It's really too bad, you know, going round wrecking other people's cars. How on earth did you manage to be stupid?
	Situation 8: Explicit blame (person)	Oh, no not again! You really are thoughtless. Bloody fool! You've done it again.

(Trosborg, 1995:319)

Trosborg (1995) specified that a particular point of interest occurs that is the speaker or hearer perspective of a complaint. She pointed out that not only are there different ways of referring to the complainer or the complainee in a complaint, but that the way the complainer refers to the complainee can either enrage or minimize the impact of what is said. Drawing on Haverkate's (1984:56) important distinction between focalizing and defocalizing expressions, Trosborg (1995) outlined the differences

between the two by referring to the speaker (i.e., the complainer) and the hearer (i.e., the complainee). Other possible ways of referring to the above are also illustrated below:

> "Focalizing expressions have the intention of bringing into prominence the role of the referent in the state of affairs described, whereas the opposite hold for defocalizing expressions. Speakers make use of the latter in order to minimize or to avoid articulating the role of the referent in the state of affairs described." (p.323)

Trosborg's (1995) research manifested that native speakers of English used more defocalizing to refer to the complainer than each of the three groups of learners. It would in other words; native English speakers who were complainers were concerned with making the complainee share responsibility in the event. In contrast with the native speakers of English and the native speakers of Danish across all four focalizing and defocalizing, it was found that the inclusive of *I*, *you*, *it*, and *we*, almost the same in the two groups of native speakers. "*It*" was the most used by both Danish and English native speakers, but "*we*" was the least used by both native speaker groups. In short, the native speakers of Danish like the native speakers of English prefer to withhold the identity of the agent of the offense in order to delay direct confrontation. Therefore, it can protect the face of the interlocutor.

Murphy and Neu

Murphy and Neu (1996:191-216) examined at the complaint produced by American Learners of English and Korean Learners of English. They have acknowledged that there are four semantic formulas. The four semantic formulas are: explain the purpose, make complaint, make justification, and a solution: request. The results of this research expose that there is a high correlation between the ways the native and nonnative speakers perform the four speech act components. As for the second component, they showed differences in producing the complaints.

Bornmann

Bornmann (1998) presented many kinds of speech acts with his teaching experience. In his research, he mentioned that American and Chinese cultures being so different lead to the special usage of speech acts. Nash (1983), cited by Bornmann. (1988) showed that American complaints are inclined to emphasize the situation where the person who makes the complaint such as: "Could you please be a little quieter? I have to wake up early tomorrow" is given as an example. Chinese complaints, in contrast, often express a way about someone's health or welfare - for example, "It's too hard on you staying out so late. Your health is important." (pp. 97-98) This illustrates the cultural differences of the same complaint.

Sauer

Sauer (2000) also mentions that there are differences between speech act of complaints and criticism. Sauer (2000) in her research mentioned that, criticism is much stronger than complaint. Therefore, when criticising, the speaker's responses will be much more direct and disapproving. As for complaints, according to Sauer (2000), it can be controlled by the speaker. In order to remain polite, when making complaints, the speaker can choose to use different linguistics forms. She mentioned that there were differences between perception of politeness and threatening. It differs cross-culturally. Thus, there is a possibility that the nonnative speakers may accidentally perform improper complaints. Consequently, it has become a challenge for the nonnative speaker to perform the speech act of complaining. The communication breakdowns that happened were caused by a lack of sociocultural competence as well as linguistic competence. This can result in nonnative speakers becoming isolated and alienated in the target community.

Moon

Moon (2001) examined the speech act of complaint produced by native and nonnative speakers of English. Questionnaires were used by the researcher in the "Discourse Completion Test" (DCT) in order to get the data from the native and non-native speakers. The Discourse Completion Test comprises four scenarios that require the subjects to make complaints accordingly. The researcher is then analyses the data based on the framework by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) - "severity of the complaint". The results of this research showed that the nonnative speaker have their own ways of making complaints. It was found that the non-native speakers are more explicit in making their complaints. As for the native speakers, they tend to use the implicit ways to make complaints.

Tanck

Tanck (2002) carried out a research to examine the speech act of complaints and speech acts of refusals. His aim of conducting the research on speech act of complaints and refusals was to see is there any differences in term of the pragmatic competence between the adult English Second Language (ESL) speakers and the adult native English speakers. In this research, the participants were asked to write down their responses to six prompts based on the Discourse Completion Test that was prepared by the researcher. Out of the six prompts that designed by the researcher; there were only two situations that were related to speech act of complaining. The researcher then reviews the responses that given by the native English speakers to see are there any similarity in the responses given. It was found from the results of the research; both the speech acts of complaining and refusing were produced indistinguishable by the native and non-native speakers. As for the quality of the speech act components, it was found that the non-native speakers have produced it differently from the native speakers by

looking at the samples by the speakers. The results also revealed that, the non-native speakers' responses were linguistically correct but it showed lacked of pragmatic elements in their responses.

2.6 HEDGING – A STRATEGY

This present study also seeks to find out how the complaints of female speakers differ from the complaints of male speakers in terms of politeness. Therefore, it will also made reference to Lakoff's (1975) study of *Language and Women's Place* which focussed on politeness strategies used by both the male and female subjects. According to Lakoff (1975:45-80), we can easily observed women's speech. It is because there are some differences in women's speeches compared to men's.

1. Hedges: such as "*sort of,*" "*kind of,*" "*it seems like*"
2. Empty adjectives: *dear, divine, wonderful, gorgeous*, etc
3. (Super-)Polite forms: "*Would you mind...*" "*...if it's not too much to ask*" "*Is it o.k if...?*"
4. Apologize more: "*I'm sorry, but I think that...*"
5. Speak less frequently
6. Avoid coarse language
7. Tag questions: such as "*You don't mind eating this, do you?*"
8. Hyper-correct grammar and pronunciation
9. Indirect requests: "*Wow I'm so thirsty.*"
10. Speak in italics: Use tone to emphasis certain words, e.g., "*so*", "*very*", "*quite*".

However, in this particular research, the analysis of politeness in terms of gender will be only focusing on the use of hedging devices, (Super-) polite forms and apologize more. It is because these three are the politeness strategies that usually or frequently used by most of the speakers. According to Lakoff (1975), one of the significant features to differentiate male and female language is by scrutinising the hedging devices which are used to soften or mitigate utterances so that it will not to hurt the hearer's

feelings. Furthermore, the use of fillers such as "…um…", "…er…", "…ah…" and etc in the responses will also be scrutinised. Thus, these features will be looked at in the sample data to find the salient pattern of male and female language in making complaints.

2.7 THE RESEARCH GAPS

There have been a number of valuable studies of complaints done by various researchers such as Olshtain and Weinbach (1987), Murphy and Neu (1996), Moon (2001), Tanck (2002), Sang-Yi O (2005), and Kim, Duk-Young (2008). The research done by these researchers were only comparing the way native and nonnative speakers of English perform the speech act of complaints. A Discourse Completion Task (DCT) with four prompts was used by the researchers as an instrument to collect data. Collecting data by using Discourse Completion Test (DCT) might not be the best way to get the authentic data. It is not authentic because the subjects are asked to record their answers by writing not by given spoken answers. So they have the chance to think and change their responses. So the answers given might not be a reflection of reality.

As suggested by most of the researchers above, oral interview, recording, or role play activities may be the best way to get the authentic spoken data from the speakers within a limited situation. Thus, in this study, I have chosen recording as an instrument to collect authentic oral data. In this study also, I will study the way male and female subjects making complaints instead of looking at the way how native and nonnative speakers of English making complaints. This is also an area where not many researchers have given attention, and in the Malaysian context, where different ethnic groups mingle and interact with each other, the speech acts of complaints by specific ethnic groups have not been researched on with depth. This study hopes to fill in that gap.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has looked at the relevant literature on various topics such as "Speech Act Theory", "Politeness", "Gender differences", "Complaints", "Selected Review of Studies on Complaints", "Hedging – A Strategy" and lastly, the research gaps has been identified and discussed. This study examines the relationship of power, politeness and gender in making complaints. According to Searle (1969), in his proposed five categories of illocutionary speech act, "complaint" is categorised as "expressive" because the speaker expresses disappointment, dislike and etc. To be a polite person, according to Brown and Levinson (1978), a person (speaker) should be very carefully in expressing his or her thoughts towards the hearer so that it will not hurt the hearer. Asmah Haji Omar (1992) mentioned that polite people will avoid confrontation, public displays of being too forceful or direct because these are all examples of behaviour which are regarded as impolite, coarse, rude, and may even suggest ill-breeding (Jamaliah Mohd. Ali 1991). Holmes (1995) regards politeness as "an expression of concern for the feelings of others", says that the speaker, when following the politeness strategies, has to be very careful in his/her utterances in order to save the face of the hearer. According to Holmes (1995), we can know that women are more polite by observing the utterances that produced by them when communicating with people. According to Lakoff (1975), there are differences between language used by males and females due to the standard hierarchical position in society. He claims that male tends to show power and the language used tends to be more direct (explicit) compared to females who are more indirect (implicit). The research gap was identified and the researcher hoped that this study could fill the gap.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

As discussed earlier, the purpose of this study is to identify whether there are any significant differences in the politeness strategies used by male and female Malaysian Chinese college students in making complaints. Thus, this chapter presents the design of this study. Specifically, it discusses the population and data sampling procedures, instruments for collecting data and data analysis techniques.

3.1 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS
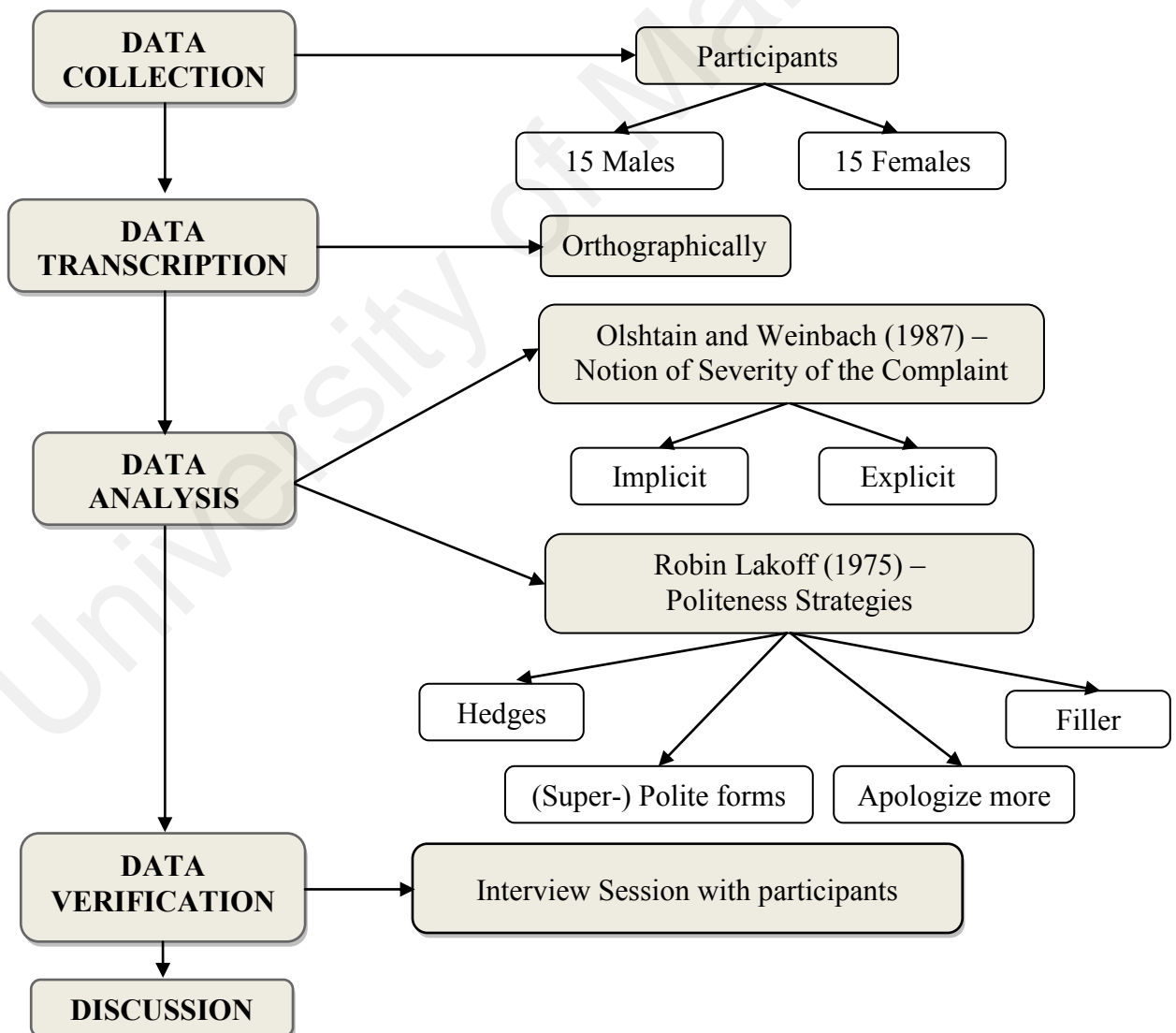
Diagram 3.1: Data Collection and Data Analysis Process

Diagram 3.1 illustrates the data collection, data transcription and data analysis process in completing this study. The process starts with data collection. Then, all the data collected will be transcribed orthographically. There are two parts of data analysis. Firstly, the data transcribed will be analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks developed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) to examine the complaint strategies used by the male and female Malaysian Chinese college students. Secondly, the same data will also be used to examine the differences in the politeness strategies used by those Malaysian Chinese college students based on the theoretical frameworks developed Lakoff (1975) – Politeness Strategies. The last part of the process will be the discussion section. The discussion section will be shown in Chapter 4.
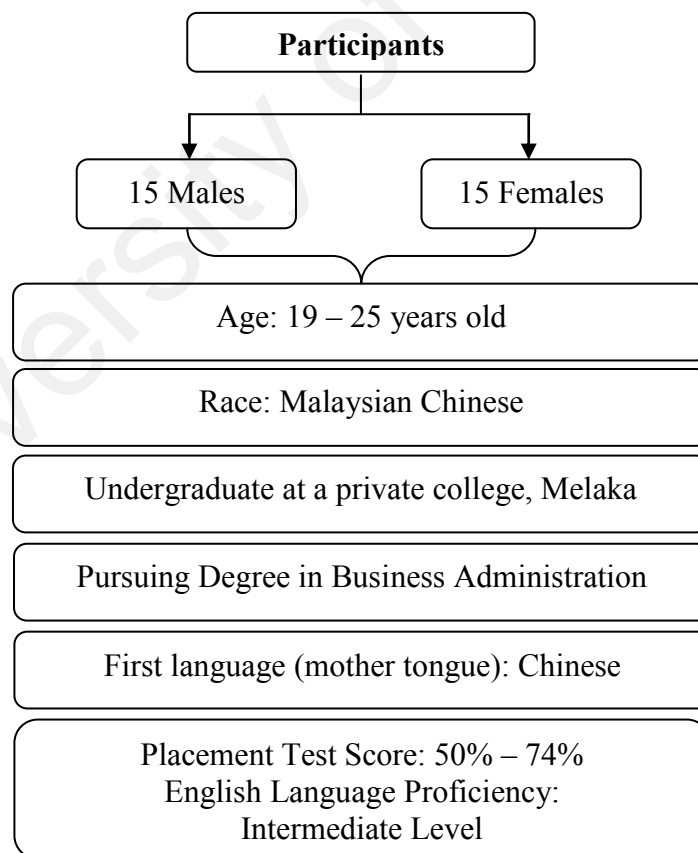
3.2 BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

Diagram 3.2: Background of Participants

Diagram 3.2 illustrates the background of the participant for this study. In order to collect data, first of all, the researcher has to identify the participants. The sample of the study comprises of 30 undergraduate students at a private college in Ayer Keroh, Melaka, Malaysia. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 25 years old. Of the 30 participants, 15 were males and 15 were females. All participants were non-native speakers of English as English is not their first language. Their mother tongue is Chinese language. Each participant was engaged in undergraduate study in Business Administration. All the participants were considered as fluent speakers of English as all of them were in the intermediate level of proficiency. The level of proficiency of these participants was determined by looking at their English Placement Test score where in average, all of them have their score in the range of 50%-74%. The college has its own range score to determine the level of English proficiency of the students. The college English Placement Test range score are as below:

Levels of English Proficiency	Score
Advanced Level	75% - 100%
Intermediate Level	50% - 74%
Beginner Level	0% - 49%

Table 3.1 Levels of English Proficiency
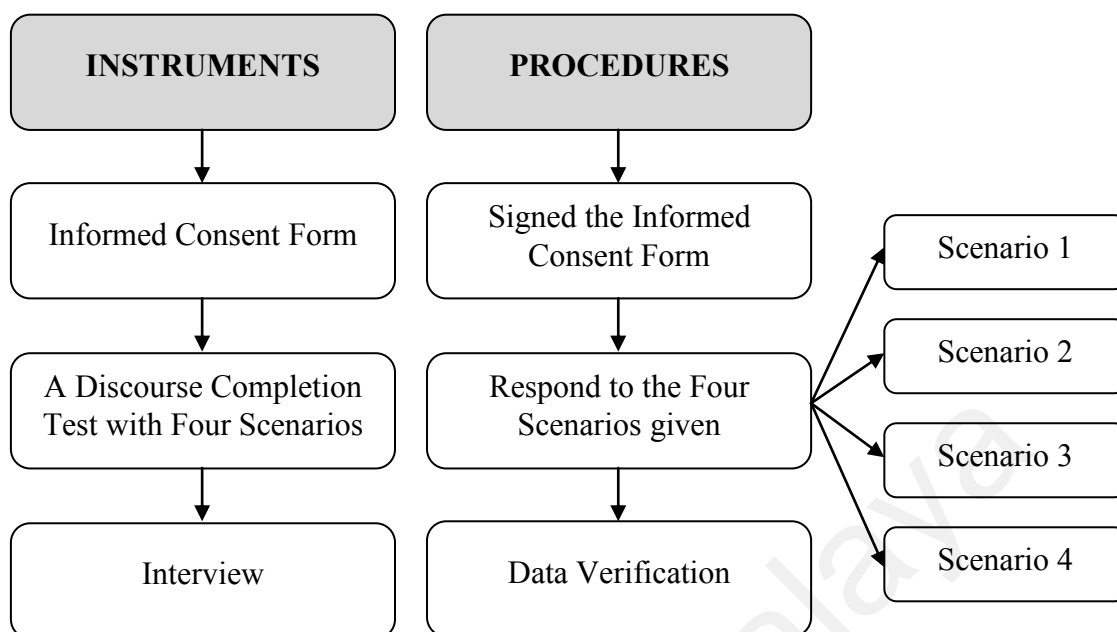
3.3 INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Diagram 3.3 Instruments and Procedures

Diagram 3.3 illustrates the instruments used and the procedures to elicit the data in this research. The participants were given an Informed Consent Form which would be confidential. They were briefed on the content of the Informed Consent Form before they signed the form. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) with four scenarios was then given to them to complete in class time. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was chosen as an instrument to collect data by the researcher in this research because DCT allows the researcher to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short time. Furthermore, DCT creates model responses which are likely to occur in spontaneous speech. The participants were also instructed on how to fill in the prompts. The researcher explains the terms used in the scenarios so that they are aware of the various roles of their "interactants". The participants were encouraged to read the description of a complain situation carefully and then give their responses verbally and all the responses for the four scenarios were tape-recorded by the researcher. The participants produced the responses based on the social distance between the interlocutors. In the first scenario, the speaker is in the inferior to the Academic Advisor. In the second

scenario, the speaker is in the superior to the listener. In the third scenario, the speaker is in a close relationship with the listener and the last scenario, the listener is a stranger to the speaker. Below is the task which comprises four scenarios that given to the participants to respond to.
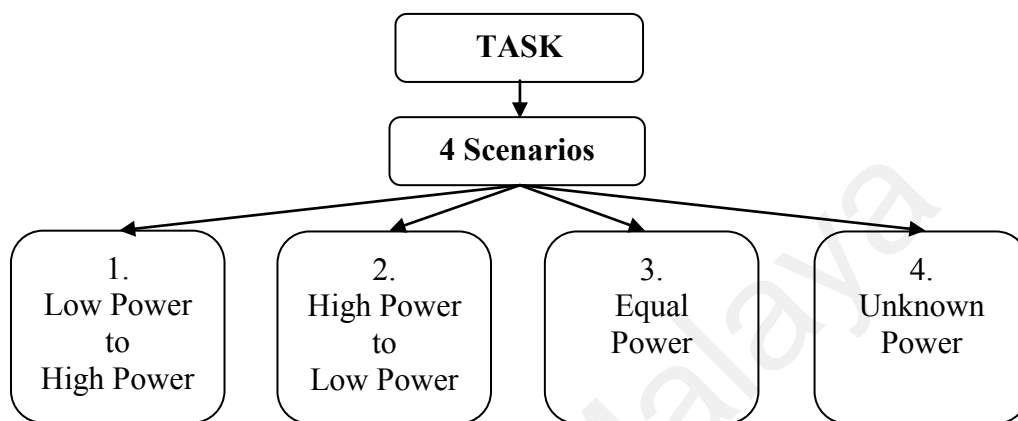

Diagram 3.4: Scenarios

Diagram 3.4 illustrates the four scenarios with different degree of power between the speaker and the listener. The diagram is presented based on the researcher's understanding.

High power is defined as one with authority and can made decision which can affect "your" life. Example: In a college, academic advisor has higher power than student.

Low power is defined as one who has lesser authority than those who are in high power and whatever decision made by this people will not affect anyone. Example: In a family, according to the hierarchical system, the youngest will be in lower power compared to the elders.

Equal power is defined as both parties share the same authority where nobody has more or less authority than the other. Example:

Unknown power is define as one does not know whether the other party has any authority than him/her and vice versa.

In order to collect data of the male and female participants, a task comprising four scenarios was used. As diagram 3.3 shows, the four scenarios were developed based on the different degrees of power level. Each scenario would be simulated as a situation that could occur in a university setting. Each scenario is expected to produce speech components (utterances) based on the social distance of the two interlocutors involved. The four scenarios are further explained below:

Scenario 1 (Low Power to High Power)

You are a new student in your college. You have no idea what are the courses you need to take for your first semester. So, you met your new academic advisor to get his or her advice about courses that you need to enroll for the semester. The academic advisor had advised you to take a few courses during the semester. When you finished the courses for the semester, you realized that your academic advisor has advised you one wrong course that you are actually do not need to enroll and study for it. You are now need to again take another suitable course to replace the wrong given course. You are very unhappy about this and you go to see the academic advisor. What would you say to the academic advisor?

Low Power	:	*The speaker*
High Power	:	*Academic Advisor*
Offender	:	*an academic advisor*
Offensive action	:	*selecting the wrong course to the speaker*

Scenario 2 (High Power to Low Power)

Your younger sister/brother just got his/her car license but he/she doesn't have a car. So every time he/she wants to go out, he/she will just use your car without getting permission from you in advance. Sometimes, you have to wait for hours to get your car back. And today, again, your younger sister/brother has driven your car out without

informing you. You are very impatient about his/her attitude and you think this is the time you need to talk to him/her. What would you say to your younger sister/brother?

High Power	:	The speaker
Low Power	:	Your younger brother/sister
Offender	:	younger brother or sister
Offensive action	:	using the speaker's car without permission

Scenario 3 (Equal Power)

Last week, you got an email from your long lost friend. He/she was your very good friend when you were in secondary school. In the email, your good friend mentioned that he/she will be coming to visit you during his/her semester break. When you got the message, you were very excited to meet him/her again since both of you have not met for nearly two years. You have invited your good friend to stay with you at your house during his/her one-week trip so that you can have a long chat with him/her. Now, your friend is at your home. He/she has been staying with you for four days. During his/her stay at your place, you found out that he/she has a bad habit where he/she likes to mess up the bedroom and the bathroom. Every day, you have to work very hard to clean the bedroom and the bathroom for him/her because you are a clean person and you feel uncomfortable if the room is messy and dirty. Today is the fourth day where you again need to clean up the bedroom and bathroom for him/her and you are already fed up with the situation. You think this is the time you need to speak to your friend about his/her messiness. Now, your friend is in front of you and what would you say to him/her?

Equal Power	:	The speaker
Equal Power	:	Speaker's good friend
Offender	:	a very good friend
Offensive action	:	messing up the bedroom and bathroom

Yesterday, you got to know from the newspaper that your favourite artist is coming to Genting Highlands for a concert. The concert tickets are limited and will be on sale tomorrow morning. You were very excited and you plan to buy ticket to watch his/her concert at Genting Highlands. So the next day, early in the morning, you are already there queuing up to buy the limited concert tickets. You are like the other people, lining up to buy the ticket and you have been waiting in the long queue with others for more than two hours. Suddenly, there is a teenager who came late is trying to get into the queue in front of you. You are very angry about his/her action. So what would you say to him/her?

Unknown Power	:	The speaker
Unknown Power	:	A stranger
Offender	:	a stranger/ a teenager
Offensive action	:	Getting into in line in front of you

All the participants are required by the researcher to attend a structured interview session after they have completed their tasks. The purpose of having this interview session is to determine why they used certain linguistic structure when making complaints. This interview will then help the researcher to confirm and validate the findings.

In responding to the scenarios given, the participants are not given a specific time frame to complete each of the tasks. Therefore, the numbers of meaningful and complete utterances that were produced by each of the participants regarding each of the tasks is different. The numbers of utterances that were produced by the participants are in the range of 3 to 8 sentences. Each of the complete and meaningful sentences will be considered as an utterance by the researcher. The data analysis will then look at each of the utterances that were produced by the participants. Each of the scenarios has different numbers of utterances that were produced by the participants.

Scenario	Utterances produced
1	126
2	100
3	164
4	113

Table 3.2 Total Number of Utterances Produced in Each of the Scenarios

3.4 DATA TRANSCRIPTION

The responses collected from the 15 male participants and 15 female participants through the audio tape recording. It is then transcribed orthographically.
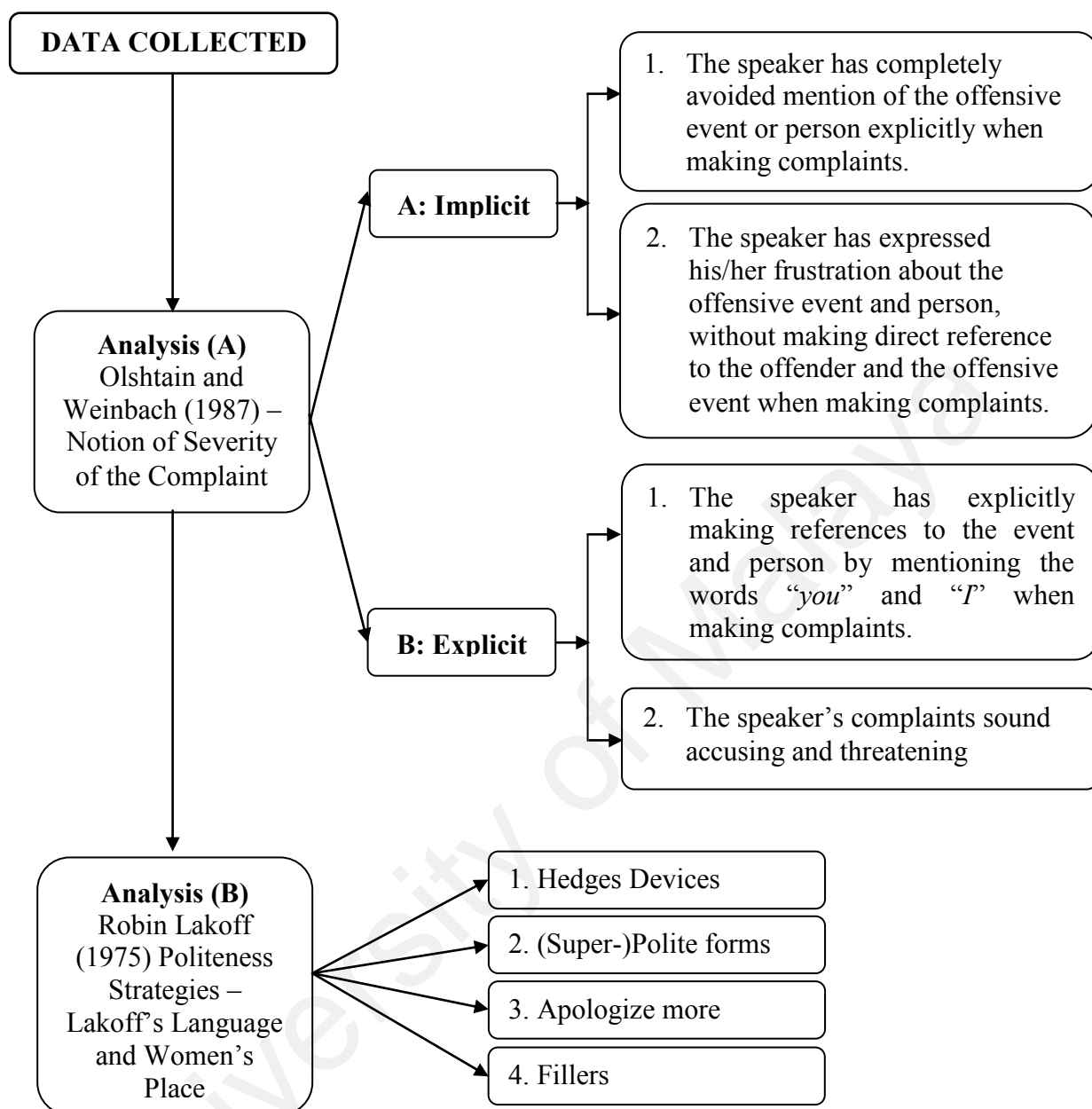
3.5 FRAME WORK FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Diagram 3.5: Framework for Data Analysis

Diagram 3.5 illustrates that the data transcribed for both 15 male and 15 female participants will be then analysed by the researcher for components of each speech act of complaints present in the responses. Firstly, the data that are collected from the participants will be analysed based on the notion of severity of the complaint by Olshtain & Weinbach (1987). The five categories of severity of the complaint were then modified and simplified for this research. In this study, the severity of complaints

comprises of two major categories with two different strategies in each of the categories. The two major categories are the (A) implicit category and the (B) explicit category.

A. Implicit

First Strategy: The speaker has completely avoided mention of the offensive event or person explicitly when making complaints.

Second Strategy: The speaker has expressed his/her frustration about the offensive event and person, without making direct reference to the offender and the offensive event when making complaints.

B. Explicit

First Strategy: The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person by mentioning the words "*you*" and "*I*" when making complaints.

Second Strategy: The speaker's complaints sound accusing and threatening

Later on, the same data collected and transcribed will be used to analyze the politeness strategies (Lakoff, 1975) used by the male and female Malaysian Chinese college students when making complaints. The presence of each component is then calculated for frequency of use. The responses are then reviewed to determine which language forms are present or absent in each item.

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the data collection, data transcription, data analysis and data verification process. There are 15 males and 15 females participated in this study. All of them are Malaysian Chinese and currently pursing degree in a private college in Melaka. All the participants were asked to respond to a task which comprised 4 different scenarios. The responses were them tape-recorded and transcribed orthographically. The data was then first analysed based on the framework of Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) – Notion of severity of the complaints which was already modified and simplified by the researcher to see what are the complaint strategies that used by the male and female participants for each of the scenarios given. Secondly, the same data was used to analyse the politeness strategies used by male and female Malaysian Chinese college students to determine which language forms are present or absent in each item. Lastly, an interview session was held with the purpose to determine why the participants used certain linguistic structure when responding to each of the tasks given. This is to make sure that the researcher analysed the data correctly as what the participants meant.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this chapter, I will examine the strategies used by the male and female subjects when making complaints based on the theoretical framework developed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) - Notion of Severity of the Complaint. The analysis will be categorised in terms of low power to high power (scenario 1), high power to low power (scenario 2), equal power (scenario 3) and unknown power (scenario 4).

As for the second part of this chapter, I will examine the politeness strategies used by the male and female subjects when making complaints based on the theoretical framework developed by Lakoff (1975) - *Lakoff's Language and Women's Place.*

4.1 Part I: Strategies Used to Make Complaints
4.1.1 Scenario 1 *(Low power to High power)*

A new college student made complaints towards his/her academic advisor who has selected the unnecessary course for him/her. In this scenario, the offender is the academic advisor and the offensive action is selected the wrong course to the speaker.

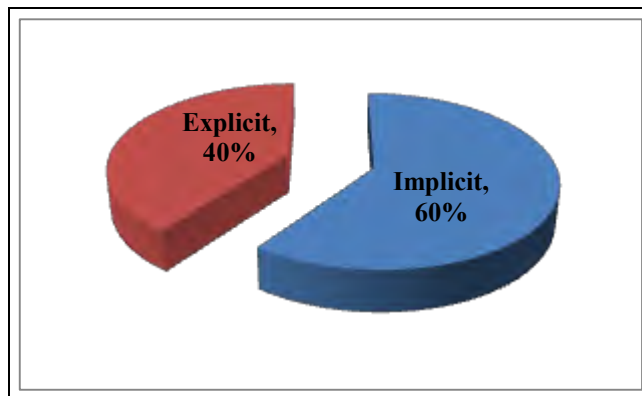|		
Low Power	*:*	*The speaker*
High Power	*:*	*Academic Advisor*
Offender	*:*	*an academic advisor*
Offensive action	*:*	*selecting the wrong course to the speaker*

Diagram 4.1
The Percentage of speakers who performing implicit and explicit act of complaining

From the diagram 4.1 above, one can clearly observe that out of 126 utterances that made by male and female speakers, there are 75 utterances which are implicit or indirect in the complaint made towards their academic advisor. Therefore, it indicates that 60% of the total utterances made by both the male and female speakers are implicit whereas 40% of the utterances made by the speakers are explicit. In this scenario, the speakers tend to use indirect or implicit strategy as one of the interlocutors (academic advisor) has higher position or designation than the speakers. Table 4.1 is the samples of complaints for scenario 1.

Table 4.1: Samples of Complaints for Scenario 1 (High power to Low power)

	Ways of Making Complaints	Types of Strategies Used	Samples of Utterances for Scenario 1
(Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) – Notion of Severity of the Complaint)	A) Implicit	**First Strategy:** The speaker has completely avoided mention of the offensive event or person explicitly when making complaints.	• *... what happen now?* • *Why **this thing** can happen to me?* • *How can **this mistake** happen?* • *So now erm... erm... what should I do?* • *Why **this happened** to me?*
		Second Strategy: The speaker has expressed his/her frustration about the offensive event and person, without making direct reference to the offender and the offensive event when making complaints.	• It is wasting my time and my money. • I am really angry and upset to hear about this. • So how am I going to solve this problem? • … erm… I erm…I am very unhappy about this situation. • It has wasted my money and time.
		Third Strategy: pluralize the pronoun by using *'they'*	• *Now **they** said I need to register different course again this semester to fulfill the required course.* • ***They** said the course is not necessary for me.*
	B) Explicit	**First Strategy:** (a) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person	• Excuse me sir, why you have given me the ***wrong course*** last semester? • … I really very angry about the ***wrong course*** that you have selected for me. • …you have selected the ***wrong course*** for me. • I have given the ***wrong course*** and now this has wasted my time and money. • Who is going to pay the fee for the ***wrong course*** that you ask me to take?

		(b) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person by mentioning the words "*you*" and "*I*" when making complaints	- The course that *I* took last semester is useless for me actually. …*I* found it was unnecessary for me actually. …one of the courses *I* attended last semester is actually not necessary for me. - One of the courses *you* ask me to take is actually not necessary for me. - How can *you* make this kind of mistake? *You* should give me the correct information.
		<u>**Second Strategy:**</u> The speaker's complaints sound accusing and threatening	- I think *you should be fired*! - You are *not suitable to be an advisor*! - I think you are *not professional*.

Table 4.1 illustrates that there are two main ways of making complaints. One consists of implicit ways which comprises three strategies with the second strategy appears more dominance than the other two. The other ways is the explicit ways of making complaints with the first strategy appears more dominance than the second strategy. In this scenario, the participants were found used more implicit ways in making complaints towards their Academic Advisor.

4.1.2 Scenario 2 *(High power to Low power)*

This is the scenario where the speaker expresses his/her annoyance towards his/her younger sister/brother who always uses his/her car without her permission in advance. In this scenario, the offender is the speaker's younger brother or sister and the offensive action is the speaker's younger brother or sister uses the speaker's car without permission.

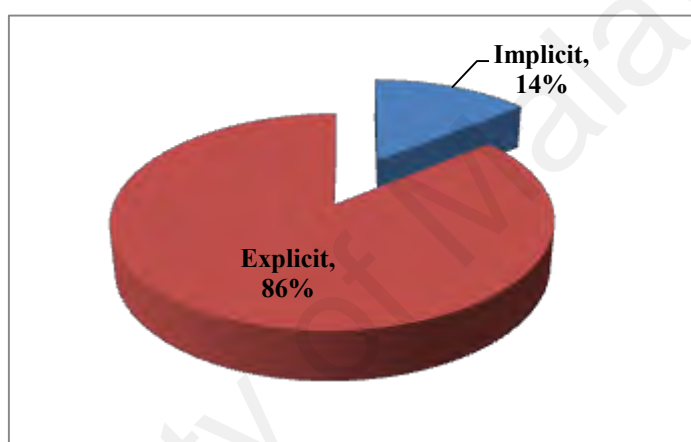|		
High Power	:	*The speaker*
Low Power	:	*Your younger brother/sister*
Offender	:	*younger brother or sister*
Offensive action	:	*using the speaker's car without permission*

Diagram 4.2
The Percentage of speakers who performing implicit and explicit act of complaining

From the diagram above, it can be observed that out of 100 utterances that made by male and female speakers in this scenario, there are 86 utterances which sounded explicit or direct in the complaint made towards their younger brother or sister who always use the speaker's car without asking for permission in advance. Therefore, it indicates that 14% of the total utterances made by both the male and female speakers are implicit whereas 86% of the utterances made by the speakers are explicit. In this scenario, the speaker and the offender are siblings. Two of them have a very close relationship. Therefore, the speaker chose the explicit ways to utter his/her disappointment and anger towards his/her brother or sister. Table 4.2 are the samples of the complaints for scenario 2.

Table 4.2: Samples of Complaints for Scenario 2 (Low power to High power)

	Ways of Making Complaints	Types of Strategies Used	Samples of Utterances for Scenario 2
(Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) – Notion of Severity of the Complaint)	A) Implicit	**First Strategy:** The speaker has completely avoided mention of the offensive event or person explicitly when making complaints.	• It is too much already. • Sometimes I have urgent things to do and I found my car was not there.
		Second Strategy: The speaker has expressed his/her frustration about the offensive event and person, without making direct reference to the offender and the offensive event when making complaints.	• I am going to late for work already. • I felt very angry about this. • I am almost late for my class you know.
	B) Explicit	**First Strategy:** (a) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person	• Why you always drive ***my car without*** getting my ***permission*** first? • Can't you get ***my permission*** first before you want to ***use my car***? • …get ***my permission*** when you want ***to use my car***? • …you use ***my car without*** getting ***my permission*** first. • …you always drive ***my car without*** asking ***my permission***.
		(b) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person by mentioning the words "*you*" and "*I*" when making complaints	• Can't ***you*** get my permission first before ***you*** want to use my car? • Again, ***you*** used my car without letting me know about it. • Eh…why ***you*** use my car and not telling me? • ***I always need to wait for at least one hour to get back my own car.*** • ***Every time when I need to use my car, it is disappeared…*** • ***Sis, I don't think you will have the chance to use my car anymore.***

		Second Strategy: The speaker's complaints sound accusing and threatening	• Bro, I will *not let you to use my car from now onwards*. • …you will *not have the chance to use my car* anymore next time. • *You are very irresponsible*! • I will *never let you have my car anymore*. • Sis, I *don't think you will have the chance to use my car anymore.*

Table 4.2 illustrates that there are two main ways of making complaints. One consists of implicit ways which comprises two strategies with the second strategy appears more dominance. The next ways is the explicit ways of making complaints with the first strategy appears more dominance than the second strategy. In this scenario, the participants were found used more explicit ways in making complaints towards their younger brother or sister.

4.1.3 Scenario 3 *(Equal power)*

This is the scenario where the speaker expressed his/her frustration towards his/her very good friend who has messed up his/her bedroom and the bathroom. In this scenario, the offender is a very good friend of the speaker and the offensive action is messing up the bedroom and the bathroom.

Equal Power   :   The speaker
Equal Power   :   Speaker's good friend
Offender   :   a very good friend
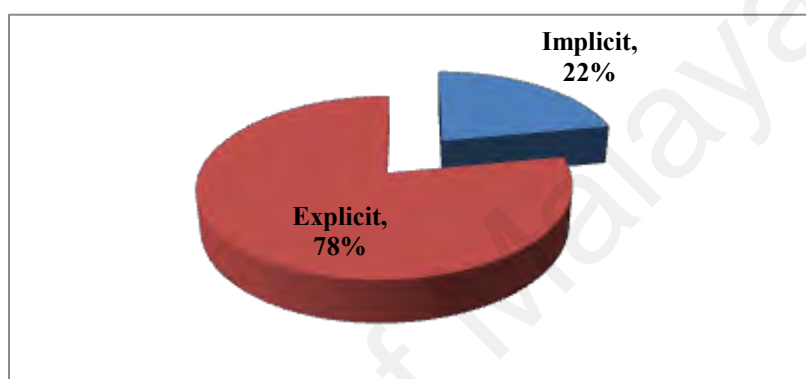*Offensive action   :   messing up the bedroom and bathroom*

Diagram 4.3
The Percentage of speakers who performing implicit and explicit act of complaining

Based on the analysis, it was found that out of 164 utterances that made by male and female speakers in this scenario, there were 128 utterances which sounded explicit in the complaint made towards the situation of messing up the bedroom and bathroom performed by their friend and which the speaker has to clean up the mess. Therefore, it indicates that 78% of the total utterances made by both the male and female speakers are explicit whereas 22% of the utterances made by the speakers are implicit. In this scenario, the offender is the speaker's good friend. Therefore, in making complaints, the speaker chose the explicit way to express his frustration. This scenario denotes that the distance of relationship does matter in complaining as the linguistic forms of complaints turn to be more direct or explicit when the complaint is express towards a person who has closer relationship with the speaker. Table 4.3 is the samples of complaints for Scenario 3.

Table 4.3: Samples of Complaints for Scenario 3 (Equal power)

	Ways of Making Complaints	Types of Strategies Used	Samples of Utterances for Scenario 3
(Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) – Notion of Severity of the Complaint)	A) Implicit	**First Strategy:** The speaker has completely avoided mention of the offensive event or person explicitly when making complaints.	• Why every day likes that?
		Second Strategy: The speaker has expressed his/her frustration about the offensive event and person, without making direct reference to the offender and the offensive event when making complaints.	• I already fed up. • I am so tired to do again and again. • I was so fed up already.
	B) Explicit	**First Strategy:** (a) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person	• You must be responsible..to clean your thing and don't *mess up your room*. • I amm sick of looking *the room so messy*. • So next time can you please don't *messy the room* anymore. • *The room seems very messy* with your things all over the place. • Julia, why *your room* always looks *so messy and dirty*.
		(b) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person by mentioning the words "*you*" and "*I*" when making complaints	• This means that *I* have become the cleaner of your room for four days. • … yesterday *I* just cleaned the room for you. • How many times more *I* need to clean the room? • Hello, why *you* do not clean up your room? • *You* must be responsible..to clean your thing and don't mess up your room. • Why *you* like to put all the clothes *you* wore on the floor. • Next time, before you go out, can *you*

| | | Second Strategy: The speaker's complaints sound accusing and threatening | If you still like that, I think I will ***chase you out*** of my house. If not, you better ***find other place to stay***. If not I will immediately ***throw all your things out of the room***. …clean the room now before I ***get angry and chase you out of my house***. So please clean the room before I ***get angry about you***. |

Table 4.3 illustrates that there are two main ways of making complaints. One consists of implicit ways which comprises two strategies with the second strategy appears more dominance. The next ways is the explicit ways of making complaints with the first strategy appears more dominance than the second strategy. In this scenario, the participants were found used more explicit ways in making complaints towards their good friend.

4.1.4 Scenario 4 *(Unknown power)*

This is the scenario where the speaker made complaints towards a stranger (almost same age with the speaker) who has cut the line that he/she has been queuing for almost two hours. In this scenario, the offender is a stranger who is similar to the speaker in age and the offensive action is cutting the line.

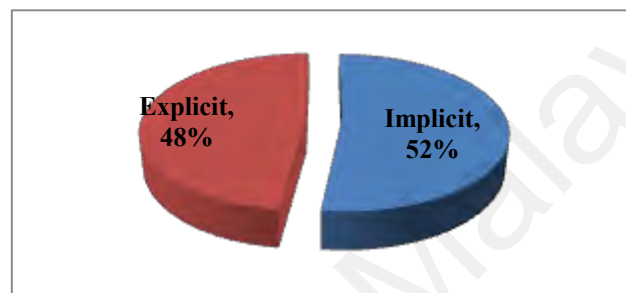|		
Unknown Power	:	*The speaker*
Unknown Power	:	*A stranger*
Offender	:	*a stranger who is similar to the speaker in age*
Offensive action	:	*cutting in line*

Diagram 4.4
The Percentage of speakers who performing implicit and explicit act of complaining

Based on the analysis for scenario 4, it was found that out of 113 utterances that made by male and female speakers, there are 59 utterances sounded implicit in the complaint made towards the situation of cutting the line performed by a stranger. Therefore, it indicates that 52% of the total utterances made by both the male and female speakers are implicit whereas 48% of the utterances made by the speakers are explicit. The percentage of performing the act of complaining implicitly and explicitly is nearly the same with the implicit ways of making complaints is slightly higher with only 4% than the explicit ways of making complaints. In this scenario, the speaker doesn't sure where the offender has any authority than him or her. So when making complaints towards the offender, most of them used the implicit ways of making complaints. They used the implicit ways because they wanted to save the offender from embarrassment especially in public domain. (Jamaliah Mohd. Ali,1991). Table 4.4 is the samples of complaints for Scenario 4.

Table 4.4: Samples of Complaints for Scenario 4 (Unknown power)

	Ways of Making Complaints	Types of Strategies Used	Samples of Utterances for Scenario 4
(Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) – Notion of Severity of the Complaint)	A) Implicit	**First Strategy:** The speaker has completely avoided mention of the offensive event or person explicitly when making complaints.	• Hi friend, what are you doing? • Hello, the line is at the back. • ...It is my place.... • ...This is very unfair for me... • We are here for almost two hours already...
		Second Strategy: The speaker has expressed his/her frustration about the offensive event and person, without making direct reference to the offender and the offensive event when making complaints.	• ...Go to the back.... • ...Many people are waiting for a long time to buy the ticket... • ...Everyone here is waiting to buy the ticket...
		Third Strategy: pluralize the pronoun by using *'we'*	• ...*We* are queuing up here for hours already … • ...*We* have been waited here for hours already.... • ...*We* already waited at here for two hours.... • ...*We* are here for many hours already.... • ...*We* are all here to buy the concert ticket...
	B) Explicit	**First Strategy:** (a) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person	• ...Don't ***cut the line***.... • … you just simple want to ***cut*** my ***line***. • ...Don't ***cut queue***.... • ...Don't ***cut*** our ***line***.... • Are you trying to ***cut*** my ***line***?
		(b) The speaker has explicitly making references to the event and person by mentioning the words "*you*" and "*I*" when making complaints	• *I* have been waiting for long and you just come and cut in. • …*I* am waiting here quite a long time and yet you are cutting the queue. • Hey, arh.. *I* think it is not right for you to line up in front of me. • … *I* line up here from …and *I* still waiting to buy the ticket. • *You* don't know how to queue up? • Arh…excuse me miss but ***you*** are

			cutting my line.
			• **_You_** are not supposed to cut the queue.
			• If you want to buy ticket, **_you_** have to queue up like us.
		Second Strategy: The speaker's complaints sound accusing and threatening	• If not, I **_will beat you_**. • If not, I **_will call the security_**.

Table 4.4 illustrates that there are two main ways of making complaints. One consists of implicit ways which comprises three strategies with the first and third strategies appear more dominance. The next ways is the explicit ways of making complaints with the first strategy appears more dominance than the second strategy. In this scenario, the participants were found used more implicit ways in making complaints towards the stranger.

4.2 Part II: Politeness Strategies Used by Malaysian Male and Female Chinese College Students

Apart from looking at the linguistic forms used by the participants in complaining in order to see the effect of the distance of relationship between the speaker and hearer to politeness, this study also aims to find out the difference in politeness strategies used between male and female speakers. After the entire collection of data complied, the following statistics were generated.
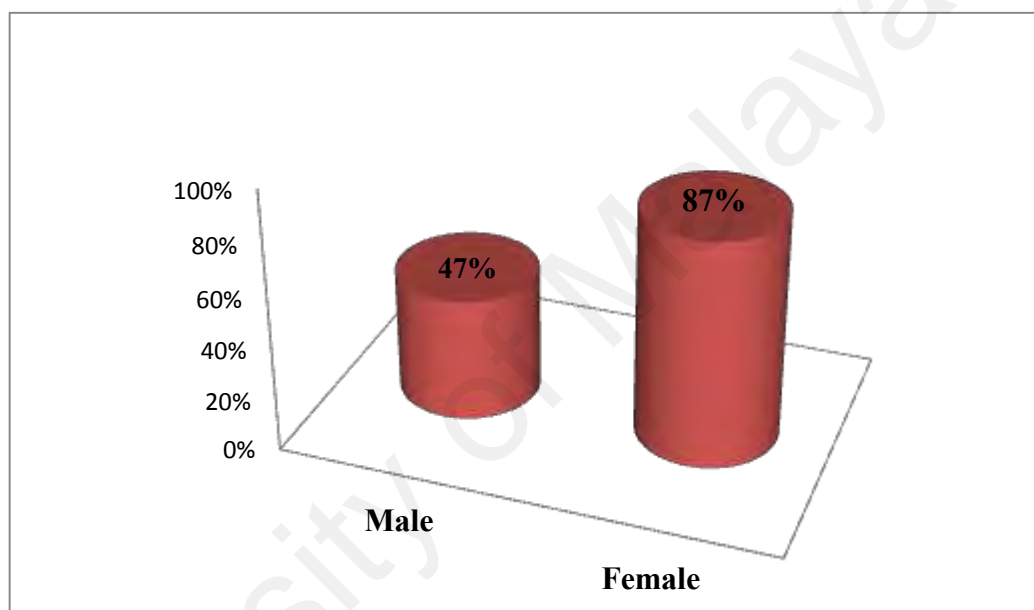

Diagram 4.5
The percentage of the male and female speakers who use positive politeness strategies

From the Diagram 4.5, it is seen that out of the total number of 15 male speakers and 15 female speakers, 13 female speakers or 87% of the female speakers used politeness strategies such as hedging devices, (super-) polite forms, fillers and "apologize more" in performing the act of complaining towards the four scenarios given and 7 male speakers or 47% of the male speakers used the above politeness strategies in performing the act of complaining.

4.2.1 HEDGING DEVICES

Types of Politeness Strategies	Male	Female
1. Hedging Devices	***...you know...*** • I have waited you for almost one hour already *you know*. • This is really a bad habit *you know*.	***...you know...*** • Sis, I have been waited you for almost one hour already, *you know*? • I have been waiting for you for few hours already *you know*? • I am almost late for my class *you know*. • I don't like your this attitude *you know*. • *You know*, I line up here from 8 o'clock in the morning….
	...I think... • *I think* you should be responsible for this mistake. • *I think* you should be fired!	***...I think...*** • Erm…*I think* the course is not..not necessary for me. • *I think* you are not professional. • Hi, *I think* I need to talk to you something. • *I think* this time you need to take the responsibility to clean it yourself. • Now *I think* you have to clean it yourself.

Table 4.5: Hedging Devices

Table 4.5 illustrates the hedging devices used by Malaysian male and female Chinese college students when making complaints. Two types of hedging devices were used by the participants when making complaints. They were "…*you know*…" and "…*I think*…". It was found that female participants use more hedging devices than male participants.

4.2.2 (SUPER-) POLITE FORMS

Types of Politeness Strategies	Male	Female
2. (Super-) polite forms	***...can you...*** • ***Can you*** help me to transfer the credit hour for the course that I need? • Hey, ***can you*** get my permission whenever you want to use my car? • ***Can you*** put all your clothes and the towel properly after every time you used it.	***...can you...*** • ***Can you*** tell me what I should do? • ***Can you*** explain to me why this thing happened? • So next time ***can you*** please don't messy the room anymore. • So next time ***can you*** please clean it. • ***Can you*** please clean it now? • ***Can you*** please listen to me?
	...do you know... • Hey Bro, ***do you know*** that I need to go to class today? • Jason, ***do you know*** that these few days I was so tired cleaning up your room.	***...do you know...*** • ***Do you know*** that you have the responsibility …. • ***Do you know*** that we already waited in the line for almost two hours? • Hey, ***do you know*** that if you want to buy ticket, you need to queue up first?
	...if... • Hi sir, sorry ***if*** I have being rude to you … • And ask him to hold your license ***if*** you still behave like this.	***...if...*** • Now ***if*** I want to continue my study I have to take other different course and pay fee again. • Next time you must ask me first ***if*** you want to use my car. • I already tell you so many times, ***if*** you want to use my car, you must let me know. • ***If*** you not clean you room, next time I will not allow you to stay with me. • ***If*** you still want to stay at my place, then you have to clean the bathroom and the bedroom now.
		...would you mind... • Excuse me sir, ***would you mind*** to queue up at the back?

Table 4.6: (Super-) polite forms

Table 4.6 illustrates the types of politeness strategies used by Malaysian male and female Chinese college students when making complaints. The participants used four types of the (super-) polite forms in making complaints. The four types of (super-) polite forms are "*…can you…*", "*…do you know…*", "*…if…*", and "*…would you mind…*". It was found that female participants use more (super-) polite forms than the male participants.

4.2.3 FILLERS

Types of Politeness Strategies	Male	Female
3. Fillers	***…Eh…*** • ***Eh***, where are you going just now? • ***Eh***, what happened to you? • ***Eh***, you are not supposed to stand in front of me. • ***Eh***, please queue up at the back there.	***…Erm…, …er…, …arh…*** • ***Erm***..I am..I am sorry to say why you have to choose the course ***ermm***..for me. • ***Erm***…actually…actually I want to ask you about the course I took last semester. • ***Erm***…I think the course is not..not necessary for me. • Sir, ***erm***… the course you suggested me to take last semester was not necessary for me. • Good morning sir, ***er…erm***…I would like to know about the course you selected for me last semester. • Hey sir, I…***er***…I would like to know why you gave me…. • Sir, ***er…er***… one of the…the course that I took last semester… • ***Eh***…***eh***..I am going to burst already. • Hey, ***arh***.. I think it is not right for you to line up in front of me.

Table 4.7 Fillers

Table 4.7 illustrates the types of politeness strategies used by Malaysian male and female Chinese college students when making complaints. The male participants used only one type of fillers which is "*...eh...*" in making complaints. As for the female

participants, they used more than one type of fillers in making complaints. The fillers that used by female participants in making complaints *were "...erm...", "...er...", "...eh...", and "...arh...".* Female participants were found used more fillers than male participants.

4.2.4 "APOLOGIZE MORE"

4. "Apologize more"	• Hi sir, **sorry if** I have being rude to you but I really very angry about the wrong course that you have selected for me.	• … **I am so sorry** to say…

Table 4.8 "Apologize More"

Table 4.8 illustrates the types of politeness strategies used by Malaysian male and female Chinese college students when making complaints. The male and female participants were found using different type of "apologize more" strategy in making complaints. The male participants used "…*sorry if*…" strategy and the female participants were found using the "…*I am so sorry*…" strategy.

Overall from the above, we can clear see that female speakers use more politeness strategies such as hedging devices, (super-) polite forms and fillers compared to male speakers when making complaints. But both of the male and female speakers used the same number of "apologize more" politeness strategy when making complaints. Therefore, we can conclude that, female speakers are more polite than male speakers.

4.3 SUMMARY

The result in this chapter shown that, in low power (the speaker) to high power (the academic advisor) situation as in scenario 1, complaints that made by the speakers were tend to be more implicit (indirect) due to the hierarchical position in an educational organisation where the speaker and the hearer are not in the equal status.

As for the high power (the speaker) to low power (younger brother or sister) situation as in scenario 2, the speakers have performed the speech act of complaints in a more explicit (direct) way due to the hierarchical position in a family.

It also seems that in equal power (between speaker and his/her very good friend) situation as in scenario 3, complaints are more explicit (direct). In this scenario, the speaker and the hearer see themselves as being of equal social position and with a close relationship, therefore the speaker chose the explicit way to express his frustration.

Lastly, in the unknown power (between speaker and a stranger) situation as in scenario 4, complaints are slightly more implicit rather than explicit. In this scenario, the speaker and the hearer are at the same level in social context. None of the speaker and hearer has higher power than the other. But both of them show a distance in their relationship. Therefore, the speaker and the hearer may choose to use different strategies based on the appropriateness in order to reduce the threat of making other party to lose face. The speaker chose the implicit ways of making complaints because they wanted to save the offender from embarrassment especially in public domain. The results obtained in the second part of the analysis indicated that female speakers are more polite than male speakers when making complaints.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 is the most important chapter in this research because it provides an explanation of the results of the study conducted. Results of the analysis are important because it determines whether the research question has been answered or not. This chapter also discusses the findings of the analysis carried out in the previous chapter. Conclusions will be made based on the findings obtained in accordance with the research questions. In addition, the implications of the study is also made and discussed so that the parties concerned can be benefit from this study. Finally, the researcher will provide recommendations that will hopefully improve the further research on speech act of complaints and gives the idea to other researchers to make a more in-depth study of speech act of complaints

The results of the research will be discussed based on the research questions as follow:

a) How does power between the speaker and hearer affect the way complaints are made?

b) What are the differences in term of politeness of complaints between male and female speakers?

5.1 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE:

a) How does power between the speaker and hearer affect the way complaints are made?

In the hierarchical politeness system by Scollon and Scollon (1995), if the speaker and the hearer are not in the equal or same status because of the hierarchical status, therefore, the speaker will tend to use more indirect or implicit way when making complaints. This is because one of the interlocutors holds the higher position or designation than the speaker. In the analysis shown, it appears that in low power (the speaker) to high power (the academic advisor) situation as in scenario 1, the complaints that made by the speakers (low power) tend to be more implicit or indirect. In this scenario, due to the hierarchical position in an educational organisation where the hearer has higher power than the speaker, therefore, the language used by the speakers towards the hearer (the academic advisor) tend to be more indirect as one of the interlocutors; the academic advisor has higher position or designation than the speaker.

As for the high power (the speaker) to low power (younger brother or sister) situation as in scenario 2, the speakers who are in high power have performed the speech act of complaints in a more explicit or direct way by referring both the person and also the event. Again, in this scenario, based on the Scollon and Scollon (1995) in their hierarchical politeness system, the speaker has higher authority than the hearer due to the hierarchical position in a family; therefore the language used by the speaker tends to be direct when expressing his/her frustration and anger towards his/her younger brother or sister who always use his/her car without asking for permission in advance.

Hence, this inevitably supports the first hypothesis which states that, the higher the power of one over another (between the speaker and the intended hearer) the more indirect the linguistic forms of complaints.

In equal power (between speaker and his/her very good friend) situation as in scenario 3, complaints made by the speakers are more explicit or direct. As mentioned by Scollon and Scollon (1995) – solidarity politeness system in Chapter 2, in this scenario, the speaker and the hearer see themselves as being of equal social position and with a close relationship, therefore the speakers chose the explicit way to express their frustration. This scenario donates that the distance of relationship does matter in complaining as the linguistic forms of complaints turn to be more direct or explicit when the complaint is express towards a person who has closer relationship with the speaker.

Hence, the results from the third scenario inevitable supports the second hypothesis which states that the closer the distance of relationship between the speaker and the intended hearer, the linguistic forms of complaints tend to be more direct or explicit.

Lastly, in the unknown power (between speaker and a stranger) situation as in scenario 4, complaints made by the speakers are slightly more implicit rather than explicit. In Scollon and Scollon (1995) – deference politeness system, they claimed that in this politeness system, the speaker and the hearer see themselves at the same social level with no interlocutor has any power over the other, but just with a distance relationship. As a result, according to Scollon and Scollon (ibid.) (1995), both interlocutor may use independence strategies, which is also include expressions, which can minimize the threat to avoid any risk of losing face. The speakers choose the implicit ways of making complaints because they wanted to save the offender from embarrassment especially in public domain. The speaker tried to avoid any confrontation, and tried to not to be too forceful or direct when making complaints towards a stranger because all the behaviour mentioned above are the examples of

behaviour which according to Jamaliah Mohd. Ali, 1991, are regarded as rude, impolite and may even suggest ill-breeding.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO:

b) What are the differences in term of politeness strategies used between male and female Malaysian Chinese college students when making complaints?

The result of the second part of study shows that female subjects are more polite in uttering their complaints. It can be seen that most of the female speakers tend to use more politeness strategies compare to male speakers when conversing with the hearer such as using the hedging devices, (super-) polite forms, fillers and "apologize more".

Female speakers were found used more hedging devices than male speakers when making complaints. The speakers used the hedging devices such as *"I think",* or *"you know"* when expressing agreement with the hearer in order not to offend or drop the face of the hearer. According to Coates (1996: 156), the function of hedges is used to protect the face needs. Speakers use hedging devices to avoid imposing on people. Tannen (1990) and Coates (1996) mentioned that women use a lot of hedges when communicating and according to Tannen (1990) and Coates (1996), use of hedges when communicating is the speaking style that women used to have.

It was also found that female speakers used more (super-) polite forms of politeness strategy such as *"can you...", "Do you know..." and "...if..."* compare to male speakers. They use this type of politeness strategy to request help of the offender to do something for them.

The female speakers are also found use more fillers than male speakers. According to Hirschman (1974), a filler is a phrase which could appear anywhere in a sentence. A filler is also could be deleted from the sentence. It shall not affect the

content. Fillers that used by the speakers in this study are *"...eh...", "...erm...", "...er..." and "...arh...".* According to Hirschman (1994), fillers are used when the speaker is uncertain for words to converse but at the same time doesn't want to give up the claim to the floor and to signify positive politeness which means that the women tend to be more careful in uttering responses as they care for the feelings of each other and "apologize more" is usually used to communicating bad news as well as introducing disappointing messages or information.

As mentioned earlier in the Literature Review, Tannen (1990) illustrates that the language of female is regarded as "rapport talk" where they tend to concern for the feelings of others by creating good rapport. Holmes (1995) supports this idea by suggesting that women tend to use positive politeness than men to take care of the face of the hearer.

Therefore based on the analysis, the result of the findings indicate that the third hypothesis which states the female speakers are more sensitive thus they tend to use more positive politeness strategies than male speakers has been proved.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

There were two limitations that were found throughout the implementation of this study. Firstly, the number of the subjects was one of the limitations whereby the researchers only managed to find 30 Malaysian Chinese students (15 males and 15 females) randomly who were willing to participate in this study. Some of the students refused to participate in this study as they were busy preparing for their quizzes and exams. In that regard, this study could not be seen as conclusive. The next limitation was the constraint of the ethnic background of the participants. The participants, who to take part in this research, are all Malaysian Chinese of ages 19 to 25; hence the findings may be restrictive.

This study is very helpful to determine the factors that need to be taken into consideration by an individual in order to behave in the society. As the Malaysian citizens, it is an undeniable fact that politeness is an important value which has to be infused and instilled since young. Moreover, it has been assimilated in the Malaysian culture as we tend to secure other's face when speaking. The relationship of power, politeness and gender needs to be taken care when someone expresses his/her frustration or dissatisfaction over another person. It is not merely expressing our feelings towards anyone at anytime but it is important to bear in mind the circumstances in which the unfavourable incident has occurred and the person who has actually involved in the incident.

Hence, the result of this study reveals that a speaker of a particular language has the communicative competence whereby he/she knows the linguistic forms of complaints that need to be used by considering the participants and context.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research is looking at the politeness ways of making complaints among college students. The participants of this research are all Malaysian Chinese with the age ranged from 19 to 25 years old. Future studies should have involved participants from varies ethnic backgrounds and age ranges. The sample of this research is too limited which is only 30 participants involved (15 males and 15 females). Future studies could have larger samples. Future studies should also have more scenarios to be able to yield more valid and concrete results.

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