

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

Communication involves two or more people coding and encoding messages to each other mainly through the medium of language. Thus, a language is a crucial tool for human beings to express their desires, moods, feelings, and needs. On a complex level, language is not just a communication tool but also an instrument for social interaction. According to Mulholland (1991:17), “Language is the instrument by which meaning is realized and by which effective social interaction can be created and sustained.” Just as there are many languages in this world, some similar in some ways and others totally different in every way, communication through these languages also require the use of specific linguistic resources and rules to convey meaning effectively.

How meaning is communicated through a particular language reflects the speaker’s identity and culture. Jamaliah (1995:32) adds that communication, therefore, allows members of a culture to act and show evidence of thinking, attitudes, beliefs and values that is appropriate to that culture, and in so doing they provide a background for understanding each other. Communication will be influenced by the background of the speaker, for instance, their culture. In the Javanese culture, for example, indirectness in speech and action is considered more polite than being direct; indirectness therefore is part of daily practice. This is done to preserve a good relationship between the speaker and the hearer. In support of this, Gunarwan

(1992:1) states that the Javanese tend to speak more indirectly than the Bataks. Geertz (1961) and Suseno (1984) stress the importance of understanding Javanese etiquette as an introduction into the understanding of Javanese politeness. They both explain at length the Javanese principles of *urmat* or *hormat* (respect) and *rukun* (harmony). Therefore, in applying these principles during communication, the Javanese speaker is habitually observed as speaking often in an indirect manner as a show of respect for the hearer and to create and maintain a harmonious relationship between the speaker and the hearer.

In addition, sociolinguists have reported that one of the unique features of Javanese is its speech levels. Geertz (1960) explains that the Javanese language has three speech levels with three distinct social dialects: lower level (*ngoko*), middle (*boso*) and the upper level (*kromo inggil*). Different speech levels are used at different times depending on the social status of both the speaker in relationship to the hearer and vice versa. When using these different levels, the Javanese speaker will choose appropriate words with the relevant person (hearer). *Boso* is also known as ‘refined language’ whereas *ngoko* is known as ‘coarse language’. Where these two levels are normally used in daily communication, the *inggil* level is used in special occasions, for instance in a formal or traditional ceremony. At the same time, there is the Indonesian language which is the national language of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesian has replaced the local language as the alternative language of communication for the Javanese speaker without considering the social background of the hearer. Holmes (2001) adds that Indonesian is used as an alternative language to the local languages in order to avoid making the wrong choice in speech levels during communication and giving rise to unnecessary conflicts caused by the misunderstanding.

Thus, communication within a particular group sharing the same language, cultural and social values will demonstrate communication features which are appropriate to a particular group and understood by all its members. In this sense, group members of different social status share and understand the same communication style and features, whether they are lawyers, housewives, students or prostitutes. However, within each group, there are sub-groups that share another set of communication features appropriate to their needs. Nevertheless, they are aware of the inter- and intra- cultural differences and similarities between the subgroups and would be able most of the time to use the relevant features where appropriate.

In the world of prostitution it can be said that money is the prostitute's first orientation, and sexual favours would be the potential client's first orientation. Hence, at the initial stage of communication between the prostitute and the potential client, there would be a considerable amount of negotiation between them as they offer and counter offer each other. Holmes (2001:1) says that "the way people talk is influenced by the social context in which they are talking". As a community that is marginalized by society on account of the business they offer, Javanese prostitutes may have a unique way of communicating their intentions to their potential clients.

Therefore, Javanese-Indonesian prostitutes, considering their vocation as well as their social and educational backgrounds, are expected or assumed to speak quite impolitely. However, with the knowledge that the Javanese language is so rich in polite linguistic features, it can also be counter-argued that Javanese-Indonesian prostitutes who speak Javanese should naturally, despite the nature of their vocation, be able to demonstrate the use of these same features. Specific styles of speaking may

depend on the nature of the message and the background of the individual prostitutes and their potential clients. However, while they may have specific linguistic features that are unique to their own subgroup, they also share the linguistic and communicative styles of all Javanese speakers. Therefore, it is the contention of this study that prostitutes use particular communication strategies in their discourse with their potential clients. As speakers of the Javanese language, which has a very rich and strong cultural background, they should therefore demonstrate many of the linguistic features of Javanese, including politeness strategies.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Prostitution has often been referred to as the oldest profession in the world. In Indonesia, where the main religion is Islam which does not condone prostitution, the profession is thriving to a point where the business of selling and buying of sex is done in the open. Lin Leam Lim (1998:42) reports that the biggest brothel complex in Asia in terms of the number of active prostitutes is in Surabaya. As can be imagined, in a country where poverty level is rising and jobs are insufficient to support a rapidly growing population, many resort to prostitution for survival. As a result, competition is strong as every seller is selling the same item and every buyer is looking for quality and the best price. One of the ways of ensuring a steady flow of clients, apart from offering quality service, is the ability to communicate effectively, especially at the negotiation stage.

The beginning stage of this type of interaction is crucial and has to be carefully orchestrated. The first stage of the interaction is the 'offer stage.' At this stage, the

seller has to say the right things the right way in order to attract the potential client's interest and attention. Once the potential client has been successfully 'pulled over', the next important step is to sustain his interest long enough to persuade him to take on the offer. The final step of this stage is to seal the deal.

There is currently a lack of research conducted on the discourse of prostitutes. It is likely that many would assume prostitutes, because of the nature of their work, use crude language in their interactions with potential clients. Lyon (1997, cited in Fauzi, 2000:6) says that "the prostitute's language has the capacity to produce a certain emotional effect upon the hearer". Fauzi (2000) has studied the registers used by a group of Javanese prostitutes in Surakarta and found that the prostitutes tended to use specific codes which are understood only by them and the people who use their services to disguise and protect themselves as well as their clients from being exposed to the scrutiny of the people around them. One of the codes used by the prostitutes is '*Ijo Mas*' ('Green, sir') to signal that she is free and ready to serve the client. On the other hand, preliminary observation carried out for this current study revealed that the code '*mampir mas*' apart from being a term used among the prostitutes in a brothel complex in Surabaya to welcome the clients, is also used as a signal that the prostitute is free and ready to serve the client. *Mampir* means 'approach' or 'come hither' and is normally used in Javanese culture to invite anyone who happens to pass in front of one's house. In Javanese culture if the house owner does not greet people who pass in front of her house, she is considered as *wong sombong* (an arrogant person). Thus, *Mampir, Mas* (*Come closer or please approach, sir*) on the surface level can be taken as a polite greeting normally used to greet an honourable or respected young person, as *Mas* (*sir*) is generally used to address a higher level or educated Javanese person.

In addition, *Mas* is used to show respect for a person although he is younger than the speaker, for example a lecturer will refer to his male students as *Mas*. Thus, '*Mampir, Mas*' is used as a common polite form of greeting by prostitutes in Surabaya to welcome the potential client to their place. In doing so, the speaker can save both her face as well as the potential client's face in instances where the offer she has made is rejected as she has merely uttered a polite greeting to welcome the potential client who is passing in front of her house and to invite him to stop and rest for a while. Should the potential client accept the offer, further negotiation will ensue. The issue that is of interest to this study is that even individuals who are not normally expected to speak politely due to their vocation and social as well as educational backgrounds do demonstrate a certain extent of sensitive awareness of and ability to use politeness strategies in their speech.

In studying verbal interaction and communication, Searle (1969) explained that speech act theory is very useful because the utterances we produce can be divided into specific speech acts. Leech (1983) then came up with the politeness maxims. Brown and Levinson (1987) developed the Politeness Theory. They propose that there are similarities in the way people demonstrate politeness through language use. Grice (1975) has proposed the co-operative principle, and the related conversational implicatures which focus on the quality and the quantity of utterances. Held (1992:133) sums up the importance of speech act theory in studies that employ the pragmatics framework: "it is primarily the speech-act theory which has succeeded in accounting for the linguistic aspects of the phenomenon of politeness."

Furthermore, Holmes (2001:159) has highlighted the issue of gender in discourse

analysis: “Women as a subordinate group, it is argued, must avoid offending men, and they must speak carefully and politely”, which relates in some sense to the concept of *face* which was first introduced by Goffman (1967). According to Goffman, in effective interaction, people have their own and their interlocutor’s *face* to consider. Brown and Levinson (1987:13-15) explain that the notion of face and its constituents are applicable in cross-culturally society. In other words, they propose that the strategies employed in the construction and maintenance of face in an interaction via politeness is universal because this is applicable in all languages. Thus, each human being needs to be to have his face respected and maintained in public. As a human being and a Javanese, a prostitute also has similar needs – to preserve either her own face and to make an effort to preserve her client’s face during communication.

Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish between two types of *face*: positive face and negative face. The positive face is a person’s want to be appreciated while the negative face is the person’s want to be free of imposition or force. Brown and Levinson also propose the theory of ‘Face threatening Acts’ (FTAs). Strategies under this theory are used to minimize threat on interlocutors’ face. These strategies are bold on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record indirect and don’t do the FTA. All these will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

As securing a customer in whatever kind of business requires some amount of coaxing and persuasion, it would seem logical that prostitutes, in the business of selling sex, would employ some degree of politeness to melt the potential client’s

guard. Koentjoro (2004) in his longitudinal study involving prostitutes has provided evidence that his subjects more often than not do speak politely. As not much has been previously documented on discourse involving prostitutes, an investigation into this area would prove useful to add on to the literature on how humans interact and communicate in this area of socio-cultural practice. Prostitution discourse is undeniably a rich source of communication data that can help us understand how people express meaning. Koentjoroningrat (1985) adds that in an effort to create good relationship with the society around them, and in order to avoid being treated negatively, prostitutes tend to be very careful in the way they behave and speak. In addition, Koentjoroningrat also explains that being sellers and providers of 'hospitality services' they must be polite in order to attract customers (clients).

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The first objective of this study is to identify, based on Brown and Levinson (1987) Politeness Theory, the positive, negative politeness strategies used by the subjects during interactions with potential clients. The second objective is to identify the lexical choices made by the subjects, and to discuss how these choices reflect the degree of politeness they employed.

### **1.4 The Research Questions**

This study investigates the communication strategies used by the subjects during talk with their clients involving the offer of their services. Hence, two research questions have been formulated to aid in the investigation:



1. What are the lexical choices made by the subjects, and how do these choices reflect the degree of politeness intended?
2. What positive and negative politeness strategies do the subjects employ?

Based on these questions, the ensuing chapters will review relevant literature related to the issues of interest, which will in turn aid in the construction of the theoretical framework as well as in the determination of the appropriate data collecting and analysis methods.

### **1.5 The Scope and Limitation of the Study**

As the negotiation stage is the crucial stage in the business transaction between prostitutes and their potential clients, the study limited its investigation to identifying and describing the lexical choices made and the politeness strategies used by the prostitutes during the negotiation stage of the interaction. In other words, the data only included interaction that comprises the point at which the subject first calls out to the potential client, gets into negotiating the price and until the point at which the potential client either accepts the offer and seals the deal or refuses the offer and walks away. The data that was collected did not go beyond this stage.

This study was also limited to one particular prostitution complex in Surabaya, Indonesia and involved only Javanese speaking subjects. Therefore, the linguistic features under study were based on those pragmatic features practised and used by Javanese speakers and influenced by Javanese culture.

More specifically, this study was limited in the following aspects:

- i) The analysis of the data was limited to socio-pragmatic features only, in particular, the politeness strategies used by the subjects concerned. Therefore, this study would not investigate the meaning or structures of the language used.
- ii) The data analysis would focus mainly on Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory for strategies of doing FTAs. This was further limited to positive and negative politeness strategies only. Off record strategies will not be used to analyze the data.
- iii) The subjects of this study were limited to Javanese speaking lower class prostitutes who worked at a brothel complex in Surabaya. The subjects offered their services at a price ranging between Rp. 50.000.00 and Rp 70.00.00 for short time service and between Rp. 150.000.00 and Rp 250.000.00 for an all-night service.
- iv) The data of this study depends highly on audio recordings. Further details on the data gathering procedures are discussed in Chapter Three.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The findings from this study of the language used during the different stages of the selling-buying process would reveal the specific style of language used by the prostitutes. This study focuses on the socio-pragmatics, especially in the politeness strategies used in the offer of sale by the prostitutes in Surabaya, Indonesia. The findings of this study can contribute towards and enhance the existing literature in the

field of sociolinguistics and pragmatics as they cover strategic use of language in society. Findings of this study will also add to the body of knowledge that is already available on the universals in language usage as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and could therefore be used as a reference by other researchers with interest in this area and those interested in the effects of cultural contexts on language use. Finally, the findings of the study outcomes will contribute to the body of literature on Javanese culture, politeness of the Javanese language in particular and a diversity of Indonesian culture.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

The title of this study is **“MAMPIR, MAS”: POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN OFFERS OF SALE AMONG JAVANESE SPEAKERS**. The terms used in the title are explained as such:

### ***Mampir***

Javanese people will in everyday interaction use the term *mampir* to call out or invite someone who passes in front of his/her house to stop-by for a while, to rest or have a cup of coffee. More specifically, *mampir* is used to call an addressee younger or of the same age with the speaker, whereas its synonym, *pinarak* is used with an older addressee or with someone who is a stranger to the speaker. Thus, both *mampir* and *pinarak* are used as a greeting or an invitation in everyday interactions. However in a buying-selling situation, the seller would use *mampir* and *pinarak* to call out or attract a perspective to his or her goods. At the same time, because *mampir* is commonly used to call out to younger addressees, it is also used to foster solidarity or intimacy. *Pinarak* on the other hand, is used to show greater respect as it is meant for someone

older than the speaker or someone unknown to the speaker.

### ***Mas***

*Mas* literally means ‘big brother’ and is normally used to address a male older sibling in the Javanese family. Other synonyms of *Mas* is *kang* and *cak*. In some areas or communities such as in *pesantren* (Islamic Boarding Schools), *Kang* is commonly used to address senior students while in lower social status Javanese families, *kang* is used to address an older male sibling or older person. Geertz (1961:24) states that “to address a person without using such a term (and there is a specific word [in Javanese] for “to address by name only”: *njangkar*) either with or without his name indicate disrespect and extreme familiarity”. Geertz (1961) adds that the word *mas* is used in many contexts with different meanings in each. For example a wife addresses her husband as *mas* meaning ‘older brother’ because it the common practice that a woman would marry a man older than herself. In addition, *mas* is also used to address someone younger, for example a lecturer may address his/her male student or a seller may address a younger male buyer as a show of respect. Gunarwan (1997) adds *mas* can be used to show solidarity and ethnicity between speakers belonging to the same ethnic group.

### ***Politeness Strategies***

Reiter (2000:10) explains that “the English term ‘polite’ dates back to fifteenth century and etymology derives from Late Medieval Latin *politus* meaning ‘smoothed’, ‘accomplishes”. Central to the act of politeness is the consideration of others as stated in Holmes (2002:268) “*generally speaking politeness involves taking account of the feeling of others*”. Therefore, politeness is used to consider the feelings

of others so they will not be offended by the speaker's words. In relation to that, the speaker will make a conscious effort to choose appropriate words when speaking. Brown and Levinson (1987) and some other linguists and pragmatists state that there are some universal rules that govern the act of politeness from the perspective of linguistics.

As already mentioned, central to the theory of politeness, is the concept of *face*. In a communication act, the hearer and the speaker cooperate to ensure they show respect for each other's *faces*. They do so through the employment of specific politeness strategies. In Javanese languages these strategies include matching the choice of words with the different levels of speech styles.

### ***Offer of Sales***

In the Javanese culture, an offer is made always with some degree of politeness. For example when a Javanese is about to eat or drink, it is expected of that person to offer or invite other people around him/her to share his food/drink. If he/she does not offer, he or she will be considered *wong cethil* (stingy).

Based on the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) an offer is a threat to an addressee because it will affect the freedom of the addressee; he/she is forced to either accept or to refuse the offer. Raja Rozina (2004:144) adds that the act of "offer" as threat to an addressee's negative face want because it impedes addressee's freedom of action.

### *Javanese Speakers*

The uniqueness of the Javanese language lies in its complex levels of speech styles. The appropriateness of speech styles in actual usage depends very much on the social status of the Javanese speaker and the social status of the person he/she is speaking with. Holmes (2001:143) says ‘Javanese social status is reflected not just in choice of linguistic forms but also in the particular combinations of forms which each social group is customarily expected to use.’

The Javanese speaker has to choose the most appropriate words and levels of speech to the correct hearer in order to avoid insult or embarrassment. As such, a person who does not observe this practice is considered a *rong jowo* (not Javanese yet), which really means someone who is impolite. Geertz summarizes the importance of this practice (1960:248): ‘It is nearly impossible to say anything without indicating the social relationships between the speaker and the listener in terms of status and familiarity.’ Before a Javanese speaks to another Javanese, he or she must decide on an appropriate speech style (or *styleme*, using Geertz’s terminology): high, middle or low.

There are three main levels of speech in the Javanese language: high (*kromo*), middle (*madyo*), and low (*ngoko*). These three levels are divided into six finer levels:

- *karma inggil* (high style, high honorifics)
- *krama biasa* (high style, no honorifics)
- *krama madya* (middle style, no honorifics)
- *ngoko sae* (low style, high honorifics)
- *ngoko madya* (low style, low honorifics)
- *ngoko biasa* (low style, nohonorifics)

(Source: Geertz, 1960)

Geertz (1961) states that there are two distinct differences among the Javanese levels, namely *ngoko* (low) and *boso kromo* (high). These levels are normally used in daily life, *ngoko* is used with speakers of the same age or younger while *boso* is used with older speakers or with strangers.