

1 **POLITENESS AND THE MALAY CULTURE**

1.0 **Introduction**

In most cultures, politeness is associated with the way in which a person behaves towards and speaks to others. The association between politeness and one's verbal and non-verbal behaviour is also evident in Malay society. In this society, the term *budi bahasa*, roughly equivalent to politeness, encompasses both forms of behaviour, i.e. proper conversational language (*bahasa percakapan yang baik*), refined speech (*halus tutur kata*), courtesy (*beradab*), well-behaved manner (*bersopan-santun*), disciplined behaviour (*bertatatertib*), good character (*berbudi pekerti mulia*), and good behaviour (*tingkah laku yang baik*), among others (Mustafa Haji Daud, 1995). This Malay concept of politeness or *budi bahasa* forms the basis for this study. This study is also based on the assumption that in Malay society politeness is motivated by face considerations. Specifically, the focus of this study is on how politeness is encoded in a Malay speaker's verbal behaviour to address face concerns.

1.1 **Malay Concept of Politeness**

Budi bahasa is highly valued by the Malay people (or Malays, for short) who practise it in their daily lives. A person who practises *budi bahasa* is called *orang yang berbudi bahasa* (a tactful person) or *budiman* (although *budi bahasa* is one

aspect of *budiman*. Others are diligence, resourcefulness, maturity, wisdom, and charity) (Mustafa Haji Daud, 1995).

The term *budi bahasa* derives from the words *budi* and *bahasa*. *Budi*, or its translation equivalents, kindness or understanding, as it is conceptualized by the Malays, encompasses everything good and fine by societal standards. Roziah Omar (1994) defines *budi* as “behaving well towards other people, acting kindly” and this form of behaviour is “connected with the moral or ethical orientation of Malay culture” (cited in Goddard, 2000:87). Mustafa Haji Daud (1995) suggests that “allegiance to the *budi* concept is part of the ethnic “self-image” of the Malay people” (cited in Goddard, 2000:87). In short, an integral part of being a Malay is to put the notion of *budi* into practice.

Berbudi (the act of *budi*) is considered a duty of every member of Malay society (Mustafa Haji Daud, 1995). This is because *budi* can be manifested in many ways; one can *berbudi* by contributing money and energy, giving advice, guidance, or suggestions, and showing sympathy when the situation calls for it. Generally speaking, *berbudi* involves goodwill towards others which members of Malay society (and that of any society) are capable, even required, of doing. Clearly then, the notion of *budi* and its cultivation is tied to the importance of maintaining a harmonious social relationship.

According to the Malay way of life, the existence of *budi* is necessitated by the fact that one cannot exist alone in a group or society. Living in a society entails interdependence among its members. This interdependency is achieved through *budi* which is practised by group members (Wan Abdul Kadir, 1993:26). The term *budi* is also associated with that of *adat* (customary/proper behaviour). One who lacks *budi* is likened to one who does not conform to customs, i.e. one who is discourteous and improper.

Berbahasa can be defined as the act of using “polite” or “proper” language when communicating with others. As stated above, *budi* can be seen in one’s actions or words. Therefore, *berbudi bahasa* means practising *budi* by means of words (i.e. polite/tactful language). A Malay has at his disposal a variety of language expressions that correspond to a degree of tact. For example, idioms (*simpulan bahasa*), adage (*pepatah*), hints (*kiasan*), and innuendos (*sindiran*) are used to reflect tact due to their indirect nature (Wan Abdul Kadir, 1993:41). The parallel drawn between the concept of *budi bahasa* and how *berbudi bahasa* is viewed as an act that conforms to cultural values clearly shows the importance of *budi bahasa* in Malay culture (ibid:28). In addition, a Malay’s behaviour, verbal behaviour in particular, when based on *budi bahasa* will reflect his self-respect or dignity (*maruah*).

This study attempts to discover how this notion of *budi bahasa* is encoded in Bahasa Melayu (henceforth BM), the native language of Malay people. To do

this, it is first necessary to discuss what motivates Malay speakers to use politeness in speech. It has been mentioned that harmonious relations are achieved and maintained through politeness. This is possible because politeness is motivated by a need to address face. The different perspectives on face and the role of face in politeness are discussed next.

1.2 Perspectives on Face and Its Constituents

The notion of face and its role in effecting verbal behaviour have been widely discussed and variably adopted in works on politeness. There is general agreement in these works that face is a universal construct in the sense that it is present in different constituents in different cultures. The different perspectives on face and on how it is constituted are discussed below.

1.2.1 Chinese concept of face

The concept of face is commonly thought to be Chinese in origin. The term “face” is a literal translation of two Chinese concepts for face as expressed by the words *lien* and *mien-tzu*. The difference(s) between these two concepts lies in the “two distinct sets of criteria used for judging conduct” (Ho, 1976:867). Every member of a society is entitled to *lien* by virtue of his membership in that society. Hu (1944) states: “all persons growing up in any community have the same claim to *lien*, an honest, decent “face”” (cited in Ho, 1976:870). *Mien-tzu*, on the other

hand, is gained from a person's social position in his society. This reputation or social status can be either ascribed or achieved through personal effort. Ho also notes that "the meanings of *lien* and *mien-tzu* vary according to verbal context and ... the terms are interchangeable in some contexts" (1976:868). In addition, *lien* and *mien-tzu* also share the meanings of "face" and "sensibilities" (Ji, 2000:1060)

Ho (1976) defines face as "the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social network and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct" (p. 883).

Ho's definition of face is similar to Mao's interpretation of the word *mien-tzu*. Mao (1994:457), in outlining the constituents of face in Chinese culture, suggests that *mien-tzu* which can also mean "prestige" or "respectability" (Ji, 2000:1060) refers to an individual's "desire to secure public acknowledgement of one's prestige or reputation". In other words, seeking the respect of the community constitutes *mien-tzu*. As for *lian*, it represents one's "desire to be liked and approved of by others" (Mao, 1994:462). However, its resemblance to positive face is limited. *Lian* "goes beyond personal desires in that it has a distinctive moral overtone" (Yu, 2003:1685). This is because a person's desire to be liked by others is motivated by the need "to avoid condemnation by society through meeting the socially endorsed requirements of conduct" (ibid.)

Based on the above definition of terms, Mao (1994) concludes that the Chinese concept of face emphasizes the harmony of individual conduct with the views and judgments of the community rather than the accommodation of individual desires.

1.2.2 Goffman's notion of face

Goffman's elaboration of face indicates the influence of the Chinese notion of face. This is evident in Goffman's discussion of the sensitivity to and the concern for face (own and others) in interaction (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003). Goffman, who introduced the notion of face into interaction, defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (1967:5). Further, line is defined as "a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (ibid.). In other words, "'line' is the interactant's own evaluation of the interaction and of all its participants, which includes self-evaluation" (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003:1458).

This notion of face by Goffman has led Werkhofer (1992:176) to conclude that face may be claimed by the individual and it may be granted by others. Also, based on Goffman's definition of face, Ho (1976) concludes that Goffman treats "face as situationally-defined – meant to refer only to the immediate respect a

person expects others to show in each specific instance of social encounter” (p. 868).

In summary, Goffman’s interpretation of face suggests that the weighting of face is determined by normative and situational factors. Further, these factors, as the determinants of face, illustrate “the interdependence of the individual and social [order] in interaction” (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003:1456). Thus, Goffman’s ‘face’ is a social public one that is maintained by adhering to the norms of interaction.

1.2.3 Brown and Levinson’s notion of face

Brown and Levinson’s notion of face is based on Goffman’s ‘face’ and on the English folk notion of face. Borrowing from Goffman, Brown and Levinson (henceforth B and L) define face as “the public self-image that every member (of a society) wants to claim for himself” (1987:61). In addition, B and L distinguish between positive face and negative face.

Positive face is characterized by “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (B and L, 1987:62). It is “the desire to have one’s personality and possessions *approved of* by significant others” (Wilson, 1992:192, original emphasis). Negative face, on the other hand, is defined as “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” (B and L, 1987:62). This is “the desire to maintain *autonomy*” (Wilson, 1992:192,

original emphasis). B and L assume that this notion of face and its constituents are cross-culturally applicable, i.e. the constructs of face and its maintenance in interaction via politeness are universal.

This claim of universality by B and L has been criticized on the grounds that B and L's 'face' is individualistic in nature and is based on Western, ethnocentric, culture-bound perspectives (e.g. Matsumoto, 1988; Ide, 1989; Gu, 1990; Nwoye, 1992; Mao, 1994). The charge of individualism stems primarily from B and L's 'face' as basic wants. Such a conceptualization of face as the wants of the individual suggests an emphasis on the individual and his "general properties" instead of the "general properties" that individuals share in social interaction" (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003:1460). Thus, 'face-as-wants' is not socially created and representative of interpersonal realities. It represents intrapersonal realities which are divorced from social conventions or norms (Werkhofer, 1992: 156 & 168).

Viewed from a non-Western perspective, B and L's 'face' as the basis of interaction "implicitly elevates the individual over the group" (Nwoye, 1992:312). However, in a society where group membership regulates human communication "this notion of individuals and their rights ... cannot be considered basic to human relations" (Matsumoto, 1988:405).

As for the charge of cultural bias, this arises from B and L's formulation of negative face. Negative face is characterized as the desire to have "freedom of

action and freedom from imposition” (B and L, 1987:61). Such a desire or want evokes an image of the individual who defends and protects his “personal territory [or sphere] from potentially harmful interpersonal contact” (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003:1461). This concept of negative face “does not accord easily with folk notions of face” (O’Driscoll, 1996:7) when applied cross-culturally. For example, Gu (1990) observes that “the Chinese notion of negative face seems to differ from that defined by Brown and Levinson” (pp. 241-242)

Among the many critiques of B and L’s notion of face, a particularly significant one is that proposed by Matsumoto (1988, 1989) and Ide (1989) in their works on linguistic politeness in Japanese (works by Gu (1990) and Mao(1994) for face construals in Chinese represent the other significant contribution to the debate). The following section discusses the Japanese notion of face.

1.2.4 Japanese concept of face

In Japanese society, the notion of face as wants of the individual is problematic because Japanese people “do not prevalently perceive themselves as independent selves, but as members of networks and social structures” (Pizziconi, 2003:1475). “The basic need of such a social persona” is conformity to socially-prescribed norms and “not freedom of action” and from preservation (ibid.). Thus, in discussing the relevance of B and L’s ‘face’ to Japanese, Matsumoto argues that “the negative face want of preservation of individual territories seems alien to

Japanese” (1988:408). Further, an image of self is “embedded in social constraints” (Pizziconi, 2003:1474).

Given the importance of social norms over self, Ide (1989) refutes B and L’s claim that face wants is the basis of interaction. Instead, Ide (1989:231) proposes “the wants of roles and settings as basic to interaction among the Japanese”. Orientation toward these wants involves behaving according to “one’s sense of place or role in a given situation according to social conventions [wakimae]” (ibid:230). In sum, social interaction in Japanese society is not oriented solely toward face; in this society face plays a secondary role only.

1.2.5 Malay concept of face (air muka)

The translation equivalent of ‘face’ in Bahasa Melayu is *air muka*. *Air muka*, in the literal sense, is defined as a person’s “facial expression” or the “look on one’s face” which can suggest a type(s) of emotion, e.g. happiness or sadness. In terms of its use within the Malay socio-cultural context, *air muka* (and associated concepts such as *maruah* “dignity” and *nama* “reputation”) is characterized as a person’s concern with his standing in the eyes of others; i.e. his public self-image (Goddard, 2000:93). A salient feature of this general notion of face in Malay culture is the association between face and feelings.

The connection between face and feelings is explained by Goffman (1967). The author states that in a social encounter, a person's feelings become attached to face. If the encounter improves his self-image, he will "feel good"; if it does not fulfil or it damages it, he will "feel bad" or "feel hurt". A person will also be responsive to the face and feelings of the other participants in the encounter.

The Malay language is rich in sayings and expressions that caution a speaker to be careful about what he says lest the hearer has his feelings hurt (Goddard, 2000:91). Such expressions are *jaga mulut* "mind your mouth", *berkata peliharakan lidah* "speak minding one's tongue", and *rosak badan kerana mulut* "the body suffers because of the mouth" (ibid.). There are also expressions that emphasize the need to protect people's feelings such as *jaga hati orang* "look after people's feelings", *memelihara perasaan* "look after feelings", and *bertimbah perasaan* "weigh feelings" (ibid.).

The discussion thus far reflects the two different perspectives on how face is constituted; i.e. Western and non-Western notions of face. In general, the Western perspective on face as proposed by Goffman and B and L (vis-à-vis the role of face in interaction and language usage) is concerned with "individual rights, i.e. what is owed to the individual" (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003:1466). Conversely, the non-Western perspective on face, namely that proposed by Chinese and Japanese scholars, "signals a concern for duty, what is owed to the group" (ibid.).

A natural corollary of the above non-Western perspective on face is that a concern for face in Malay society also signals an emphasis on duty to the group. If this is true, this present study on politeness in Bahasa Melayu using B and L's politeness model is flawed on theoretical grounds; the underlying assumption of 'face-as-wants' is not applicable to Malay society. Therefore, what is needed is a reconsideration of face in terms of its universal role in social interaction, in general and the weight it bears in effecting politeness, in particular. This will then facilitate the application of B and L's theoretical framework to the data chosen for study.

1.3 B and L's 'Face' Reconsidered

The notion of face proposed by B and L "denote[s] the desire ... everybody has that their self-image [face] will be taken into account in interaction with others" (O'Driscoll, 1996:2). B and L claim that there are two aspects of face which are basic wants of each individual, i.e. positive face and negative face. B and L further contend that attention to "these two kinds of face-want give[s] rise to two corresponding types of interactive behaviour" which are positive politeness and negative politeness (O'Driscoll, 1996:3).

B and L's claim that this construct of face and its constituents (particularly negative face) can be viewed as universals and therefore, are applicable across different cultures has been criticized. Among the many criticisms that have been

levelled at it, one which is of particular interest to this present study is B and L's argument that politeness is motivated by the need to address face-wants. In essence, this view of politeness involves operationalizing B and L's 'face' in a culture where their conception of 'face-as-wants' is inapplicable.

In order to accommodate the objection to this view of politeness, it is necessary first to revise "the characterizations of the two kinds of face", and second to argue that "politeness addressed to face dualism [in its modified form] ... is very positively or negatively polite or only slightly so" (O'Driscoll, 1996:4). The discussion on the issues above relies heavily on O'Driscoll's "elaboration and revision of ... the notion of face" in B and L's model of politeness with a view to upholding their claim of universality (ibid:1).

Central to O'Driscoll's defence of B and L's politeness model is the reconstruction of B and L's conception of positive and negative face. O'Driscoll (1996) argues that positive and negative face "are not primary concepts" (p. 4), i.e. they are not "a bifurcation of face" (p. 13). Rather, the two types of face "are compounds derived from the combination of face and wants dualism" (O'Driscoll, 1996:4). An elaboration of "wants dualism" and "face dualism" followed by a reformulation of face are given below.

1.3.1 Wants dualism

Wants dualism, i.e. positive wants and negative wants, is mapped on “an axis which delineates” one’s “relative association with others” (O’Driscoll, 1996:4) or more specifically, which “delineates the sheer amount of interaction with other people which is involved in the satisfaction of one’s wants” (ibid:10). This then represents “a universal category of human wants relative to human interaction” (O’Driscoll, 1996:10). Positive wants and negative wants represent “the two opposing sides of this category” (ibid.). “The need to come together, make contact and identify with others; to have ties; to belong; to merge” is characteristic of positive wants (ibid:4). Negative wants is described as “the need to go off alone, avoid contact and be individuated; to be independent; to separate” (ibid.).

Positive wants and negative wants “encompass a wider sphere of [human] activity than do” B and L’s positive face and negative face (O’Driscoll, 1996:10). Therefore, the concepts of positive face and negative face are derivatives of positive and negative wants (and face), respectively. Essentially, “in order to be ‘appreciated and approved of’ [positive face], one has to associate...[and in order to be] ‘unimpeded in one’s actions’ [negative face] [one has to have]...freedom from the ties of contact” (O’Driscoll, 1996:10). It is important to note that positive and negative wants are inherent in the human condition. These wants are there in the realm of background consciousness “whether their owner recognizes their presence or not” (O’Driscoll, 1996:9).

1.3.2 *Face dualism*

O'Driscoll derives the notion of face from an aspect of self-esteem. Self-esteem is the feeling "that our wants...have been, are being or will be satisfied" (O'Driscoll, 1996:12). And since we exist or live in communities, the fulfilment of our "self-esteem" is dependent "in large part on the attitudes of other people towards us" (ibid.). This aspect of self-esteem is "face". Face means that "a large part of our *feeling* of [belonging or individuation] depends on other people *recognizing*" this need of ours (O'Driscoll, 1996:13, original emphasis). Face, conceived as such, becomes "inextricably involved in the satisfaction of positive and negative wants" (ibid.).

As mentioned earlier, positive face and negative face are the result of face and wants dualism combined. Therefore, "positive face is the need for one's positive wants to be given recognition" while "negative face is the need for one's negative wants to be given recognition" (O'Driscoll, 1996:13). Also, since wants dualism belongs to the realm of background consciousness, "nobody goes around *consciously seeking* satisfaction of positive and negative face" (ibid., added emphasis). In addition, we can (and do) consciously seek a "good face".

This need for a "good face" is universal. However, the constituents of a "good face", i.e. "[the] characteristics [that] are likely to lead to the bestowal of a good face...are often culture-specific" (O'Driscoll, 1996:14). As such, this kind of face

is tied to folk notions of face and is described by O’Driscoll as “culture-specific face”.

O’Driscoll’s reconstruction of B and L’s ‘face’ thus results in three kinds of face: positive face and negative face conceived as universal human attributes, and culture-specific face conceived as “a product of cultures” (1996:14).

1.3.3 The three reflexes of face

O’Driscoll (1996:4) argues that, “with respect to wants, face has three reflexes”. These are:

- 1) *culture-specific face* – the foreground-conscious desire for a ‘good’ face, the constituents of ‘good’, because they are culturally determined, being variable;
- 2) *positive face* – the background-conscious (preconscious) desire that the universal need for proximity and belonging be given symbolic recognition in interaction;
- 3) *negative face* – the background-conscious (preconscious) desire that the universal need for distance and individuation be given symbolic recognition in interaction.

1.4 B and L's 'Face' and Politeness

Face, as defined in the previous section (see sec. 1.3.3), allows for the role of face in politeness as postulated by B and L. B and L's politeness model has been criticized for its claim that politeness is "motivated by strategic and rational attention to face and [is] a means of redressing threat to face [i.e. face-work]" (O'Driscoll, 1996:15). These critics have argued that politeness oriented to face is a claim that is inapplicable cross-culturally (Matsumoto, 1988; Gu, 1990; Nwoye, 1992; Mao, 1994).

The main thrust of these objections is that a speaker's use of politeness by way of strategically and rationally generating utterances to achieve his intentions and at the same time address face has not taken into consideration the speaker's use of polite expressions as prescribed by social norms (and thus requires no conscious choice). Politeness research has shown that there are cultures where "'face' takes second place" to social forces (socially stratified societies such as Japan and Mexico) or where both face and social conventions are equally dominant (status-based societies such as China and Korea) (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003:1463).

These observations, however, does not diminish or invalidate the relevance of B and L's face in a universal theory of politeness. O'Driscoll argues that "face dualism [i.e. positive face and negative face] when viewed as a trait of background consciousness...is not dependent on any communal recognition of the

importance of face as opposed to social norm” (1996:17). Unlike normative aspects, attention to face aspects is not a ‘conscious’ requirement of interaction “precisely because it exists in the background of consciousness” (ibid.). Therefore, polite behaviour which is motivated by attention to face involves “conscious strategy” or “routine (prescribed) choice” (O’Driscoll, 1996:17). Both kinds of polite behaviour, i.e. strategic or routine, involve face; these polite acts “can be described as giving a small or large amount of attention to one or other of the two poles of face dualism” (ibid.).

The notion of threat to face built into B and L’s model also has been heavily criticized. Nwoye (1992:311), for example, argues that the emphasis on threat “could rob social interaction of all elements of pleasure” since it involves “continuous mutual monitoring of potential threats”. In B and L’s defence, O’Driscoll (1996) argues that “the notion of face-threatening acts (FTAs) need not be intrinsic to face dualism” (p. 20) because belonging “in the background of consciousness [face is not a trait] which people have the conscious intention of...preserving” (p. 19) from threat. Several studies have also concluded that “acts listed as inherently threatening by B and L are clearly not seen as such” by certain cultures (O’Driscoll, 1996:18). For example, Gu (1990) describes the act of repeating an invitation when it is refused and continuing doing so even after repeated refusals as a non-imposition and non-face-threatening act. O’Driscoll (1996) explains that the act of making repeated invitations is not seen as an imposition by mainland Chinese because it is an instance of culture-specific face.

The discussion here and in the preceding section (sec. 1.3) have shown that B and L's concept of positive face and negative face and the attendant concept of positive politeness and negative politeness are applicable across cultures. Positive and negative face "are simply wants which people are driven to satisfy...without the slightest awareness that these were being threatened" (O'Driscoll, 1996:19). Further, the use of positive or negative politeness in a particular situation within a particular culture demonstrates the notion of culture-specific face (*ibid.*).

The conclusions drawn thus far should adequately serve as justifications for the incorporation of B and L's model of politeness in this study of politeness in Bahasa Melayu (or its English equivalent, Malay). From this point on, B and L's notion of face and model of politeness will be understood and used in their revised and modified form.

It is necessary to first, provide a brief explanation of the address system in Malay before an examination of politeness in Malay is undertaken. One of the features of politeness in Malay culture, if not the most important feature, is the address system. Malay address terms, when appropriately used, encode deference and politeness, among others. Also, the appropriate address term fulfils the level of politeness necessary for a particular speech act. Since address terms form a part of linguistic politeness in Malay language, and perhaps all languages, the following section looks at the address system in Malay in terms of its form and use. The discussion also provides background information on how address terms in Malay

function as a politeness device in dyadic interactions, in general and on how these terms function as a mitigator when performing face-threatening speech acts, in particular (as analyzed in this study).

1.5 The Address System in Bahasa Melayu

The system of address in the Malay language reflects a certain hierarchy, i.e. the hierarchy that is determined by one's position in a family, age, social status and title, which in turn reflects the way of life of the Malay people (Sumalee Nimmanupap, 1994:41). This particular system of address clearly delineates an addressee's social class, status, and ancestry, among others (Amat Juhari Moain, 1989:xiii). At the same time, it reflects a speaker's social position with respect to his addressee and other members of his society. It is important for a speaker of Malay to know the correct use of the address system that is ingrained in the Malay society because a speaker who uses it accordingly is regarded as a polite and tactful person. Conversely, its wrong use will imply a lack of proper upbringing on the part of the speaker and will be considered rude or impolite or an insult even by the addressee (Nik Safiah Karim, 1981:113). Like the terms of address in Indian languages, those in Bahasa Melayu also constitute "the underlying conventions of appropriateness" within the Malay culture (Pandharipande, 1992:244).

1.5.1 Forms of address in Bahasa Melayu

There are various forms of address in Malay that are used to encode the type of relationship and the gender of the speaker and addressee (Sumalee Nimmanupap, 1994:42). These forms include personal pronouns and names. Names are a form of address which includes first names, familial terms, greeting forms, and title (Noor Azlina, 1975:17).

The following are the six types of address terms:

- (i) First names (*nama peribadi*)
- (ii) Personal pronouns (*kata ganti nama diri*)
- (iii) Familial terms (*nama panggilan kekeluargaan*)
- (iv) Greeting forms (*bentuk sapaan*)
- (v) Honorifics (*rujukan kehormat*)
- (vi) Title (*gelaran*)

The discussion will be limited to the first three types of address terms since these are directly relevant to the findings of the study.

1.5.1.1 First names

Unlike most societies where first names are followed by family names, every Malay is given a first name which is followed by his/her father's first name, e.g. Ali bin Ahmad or Anita binti Aziz. The words *bin* and *binti* carry the meaning "son of" and "daughter of", respectively. First names also include pet names and a shorten form of one's first name, e.g. Li for Ali or Nita for Anita. First names are used by status equals who know each other well and also by those of a high status to those of a low status (Sumalee Nimmanupap, 1994:42). Family members and

close friends use pet names or shorten forms of first names more than they use first names (ibid.).

1.5.1.2 Personal pronouns

The use of personal pronouns is closely related to the social dimensions of any language user's society and its use in the Malay society reflects some aspects of the values held by the Malays (Noriah Mohamed, 1998:43). In this society, appropriate and correct use of these pronouns signifies a high degree of tact. As in the English language, the Malay language has three types of personal pronouns, i.e. first-person, second-person, and third-person pronouns.

Personal pronouns in Malay are characterized by four distinct forms which are:

- (i) the refined/deferential form (*bentuk halus atau hormat*)
- (ii) the neutral form (*bentuk neutral*)
- (iii) the condescending/intimate form (*bentuk kasar atau intim*)
- (iv) the dialect form (*bentuk dialek*)

Since this study focuses on verbal interactions between dyads, only the first and second-person pronouns and three forms of these pronouns will be discussed. The type of personal pronoun and its form are presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Forms of First- and Second-person Pronouns

Personal Pronoun	Refined/Deferential Form	Neutral Form	Condescending/Intimate Form
First-person	<i>saya</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>aku</i>
Second-person	<i>tuan, puan, encik, cik</i>	<i>anda, saudara, saudari</i>	<i>awak, engkau, kamu</i>

Source: Taken and adapted from Noriah Mohamed, *Sosiolinguistik Bahasa Melayu di Malaysia*, 1998.

As evident from the table, the first-person pronoun singular *saya* (“I” in English) is both the refined/deferential form and the neutral form. The plural forms of the pronoun are *kami* (exclusive of second-person) and *kita* (inclusive of second-person). Its closest English equivalent is the first-person pronoun plural “we”. *Aku* is the condescending/intimate form and it is used between interactants who are status equals and close. Although this form is semantically impolite, it conveys intimacy in the pragmatic sense when used in certain contexts between certain interactants.

The refined/deferential forms for the second-person pronoun are *tuan, encik, puan* and *cik*. *Tuan* is used by a speaker to address a male of a higher status and one who is older than him or someone who is respected while *encik* refers to a male addressee who is of equal status and of the same age or younger than the speaker. *Encik* also encodes respect (Sumalee Nimmanupap, 1994:44). These two pronouns are similar to the word “sir” or “mister” in English.

Puan is used to address a married lady but in the same context as the use of *tuan*. An unmarried lady is addressed with the pronoun *cik* and it is used in the same context as *encik* (Sumalee Nimmanupap, 1994:44). In the Malay grammar of old, no distinction was made between male and female or a person's marital status whether married or single (Amat Juhari Moain, 1989:167). The address form *puan* did not exist and the word *cik* did not distinguish whether the female addressee is married or not (ibid.). The practice today where *puan* is reserved for married ladies only and *cik* for unmarried ladies is a result of external influences especially that of the English whereby the title "Mrs" is used before the names of married ladies and "Miss" unmarried ones (ibid.).

Anda, *saudara*, and *saudari* are the neutral forms of the second-person pronoun and are commonly used in formal speech situations. *Anda* which is equivalent to "you" is used by interactants who are of the same status and age, of unequal status, or by those who do not know each other. *Saudara* is used to address a man or woman who is of the same age or younger and who the speaker does not know well while *saudari* is only used for women but under the same circumstances as *saudara* (Tung, 1989:160).

The condescending/intimate forms are *awak*, *engkau*, and *kamu* where *kamu* is considered the most condescending and *awak* the least condescending (Noor Azlina, 1975:15). These pronouns are reserved for use between close friends who

are of the same age and status to signal intimacy or by older and higher status speakers to young or low status hearers (Sumalee Nimmanupap, 1994:44).

The use of these forms in the Malay society over a period of time has resulted in the society's subjective evaluations of the speakers who use them. The refined/deferential form when used will suggest that a speaker belongs to an upper-class family and is well-mannered while a speaker who uses the condescending/intimate form is considered of low status and lacking in good manners (Nik Safiah Karim, 1992:95). Brown and Gilman (1960:253) have also observed that there exists a "covariation between a pronoun used and the characteristics of a person speaking...A speaker's consistent pronoun style gives away his class...".

1.5.1.3 Familial terms

In a Malay family, a family member's position in the family is evident from the way he/she is addressed. According to Nik Safiah Karim, the use of familial terms symbolizes respect, closeness, and politeness (1981:106-7). It is used among family members and by others who are related by blood or marriage. This use is also extended to those without family ties as explained by Noor Azlina:

Since the Malays consider the use of familial names as the most polite and tactful way of addressing people...[it has also become] a form of address for non-relatives and for strangers. (1975:19)

The basic familial terms in Malay are:

Ayah/Bapa/Pak (for a father)

Ibu/Mak (for a mother)

Anak/Nak (for a son/daughter or a boy/girl who is of the same age as one's child)

Abang/Bang (for an elder brother or a man who is older than oneself)

Kakak/Kak (for an elder sister or a lady who is older than oneself)

Adik/Dik (for a younger brother/sister or a man/woman who is younger than oneself)

Datuk/Tok (for a paternal or maternal grandfather)

Nenek/Nek/Wan (for a paternal or maternal grandmother)

Cucu/Cu (for a male/female grandchild)

In addition, *pak cik* is used to address one's paternal or maternal uncle while *mak cik* is the name for one's paternal or maternal aunt. *Pak cik* and *mak cik* are also forms of address for a man or woman who is of the same age as one's father or mother, respectively.

As is evident, familial names in Malay have pragmatic features, i.e. they encode information about gender and age. For example, *adik* and *anak* represent both gender and *abang* and *adik* when used by a speaker to address a hearer shows whether the hearer is older than (the use of *abang*) or younger than (*adik*) the speaker (Sumalee Nimmanupap, 1994:16-7).

1.5.2 Patterns of usage

As in most societies and languages, the use of personal pronouns in the Malay language is also determined by the two social factors first introduced by Brown and Gilman in 1960, i.e. power and solidarity. Power is defined by the authors as “...a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behaviour” (1960:255). Brown and Gilman further state, “there are many bases of power – physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalized role in the church, the state, the army, or within the family” (ibid.). As for solidarity, it can be produced by “frequency of contact as well as objective similarities...[which] will ordinarily be such things as political membership, family, religion, profession, sex, and birthplace” (Brown and Gilman, 1960:258).

Nik Safiah Karim (1992), in isolating the three factors that separately or together produce the pattern of usage for personal address in Malay, has suggested that these factors are solidarity and two of the bases of power, i.e. age and social status. According to her, the three factors produce the following patterns of usage:

- (i) non-reciprocal
- (ii) reciprocal

In general, the non-reciprocal pattern is used between two interactants who are of different social standing. The person with high social status uses the condescending form and receives the refined/deferential form from the person

with low social status. This pattern is also common in communications between the old and the young. The reciprocal pattern is used between two people who are of the same social status and who may or may not be solidary where both interactants will use and receive the refined/deferential form. This pattern is also used between two people who are solidary and of different or similar social status where both will use and receive the condescending/intimate form.

The use of personal pronouns in the patterns above is determined by the speech situation, i.e. formal or informal. Formal situations require the use of the reciprocal pattern whereby both speakers will use and receive the refined/deferential forms or the neutral forms of first- and second-person pronouns. In informal situations, both reciprocal and non-reciprocal patterns are used.

A typical example of an informal situation that uses non-reciprocal address forms is one that involves interactions between family members. When parents communicate with their children, they will use the condescending forms of the first- and second-person pronouns (*aku* and *engkau/kau*, respectively) while their children will use the refined/deferential form of the first-person pronoun (*saya*) and the second-person pronoun will be replaced by a familial term (*ayah/ibu*). A variation from the pattern above exists when both parties use first names and familial terms, i.e. the parents will use *ayah* or *ibu* to refer to themselves and a child's first name to refer to their son/daughter while the child will use his/her

name in place of the first-person pronoun to refer to him/herself and a familial term instead of the second-person pronoun to refer to his/her parents. The use of first names and familial terms as personal address between parents and their children symbolizes closeness and respect.

According to Nik Safiah Karim, the frequent use of first names and familial terms in place of or together with a second-person pronoun (e.g. *Pak cik Ali*, *Puan Anita*) when communicating with an addressee of high social status (within a family or community) is an effort to reaffirm social distance and is also a form of respect and deference (1992:104).

A reciprocal use of address forms can be seen in interactions between siblings. Solidarity and difference in age are manifested by the use of first names for the younger siblings and familial terms for the older ones. Reciprocity here means the address forms used by both speakers are of the intimate type.

In summary, the forms of address in Bahasa Melayu, given a particular context, encode information about a speaker's position within a family or society, age, and gender, among others. Furthermore, a Malay who uses correct and appropriate terms of address is regarded as "polite" and "proper" by members of the Malay society.

1.6 Objective of the Study

B and L's politeness theory assumes that face concerns operate in all cultures. B and L also predict cross-cultural parallels in the use of politeness strategies to perform face-threatening acts (FTAs). Therefore, using B and L's list of politeness strategies as a guide, this study will identify the linguistic strategies that are used in BM to encode politeness when performing face-threatening speech acts. These acts are making an offer or a request, accepting an offer or a request, and refusing an offer/request. In terms of whose face is threatened by a particular speech act, this study will limit itself to examining the threat of an FTA to the hearer's face. In addition, only the threat to the hearer's negative face will be discussed since the speech acts chosen intrinsically threaten negative face.

The choice of a politeness strategy will be discussed in relation to the level of relative power and social distance that are present between the participants involved in an interaction. The third variable R_x (rank of an imposition in a given culture) which B and L consider as the third factor that influences the choice of a politeness strategy is treated as a constant in this study. The value for R_x is assigned by the culture under study. In Malay culture, an offer is generally considered low in imposition while a request is regarded as high. Therefore, the value for R_x is low when calculating the weight of an offer as a face-threatening act (W_x) and high when calculating W_x for a request.

Specifically, the questions that this study is attempting to answer are:

1. Given the different levels of P(relative power) x D(relative social distance) interaction, what politeness strategies are used when making offers?
2. Given the different levels of PxD interaction, what strategies are used to make requests?
3. What are the strategies employed when accepting an offer or a request?
4. What politeness strategies are employed when refusing an offer or a request?

Chapter 6 will answer the first question while chapter 7 will focus on the second question. Questions 3 and 4 will be answered in chapter 8.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Studies on politeness in Malay culture have mainly concentrated on the address system in Bahasa Melayu as a means of encoding politeness. Other studies have focused on the use of indirectness as a politeness strategy. While these studies are concerned with the linguistic devices that are available in BM/Malay to encode politeness, they do not discuss what, if any, are the factors that in the first place motivate the use of politeness in Malay culture. However, it can be assumed that the perspective on politeness that forms the basis for these studies is one which involves appropriate and acceptable behaviour within the Malay socio-cultural

context which one politeness proponent (Kasper, 1998) terms the social norm view of politeness.

This study proposes the notion of face (as reformulated by O’Driscoll (1996)) and the need to address it as the motivating factors for politeness in Malay society (this proposal is in line with B and L’s politeness theory). This perspective on politeness offers a different insight into politeness in this society. As such, this study can be considered a significant contribution to politeness studies in Malay culture.

Another significance of this study is that it will contribute to the literature on the universal concepts of politeness and face across different cultures and societies, in general and to the operationalizing of these concepts in Malay culture given the cultural specifications that these concepts are subject to in this society, in particular.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

In addition to linguistic strategies, B and L suggest that polite redress may be done by intonation or kinesic. Janney and Arndt (1992) elaborate on this by describing Westerners’ use of these redressive strategies which is as follows: “To avoid threatening each other, most Westerners constantly modulate verbal messages with nonverbal vocal and kinesic messages...e.g.,...using a rising

intonation to turn commands into requests, making criticisms in a pleasant tone of voice, smiling at each other, gazing toward each other, and so on” (pp. 23-4). The authors also cite Bolinger (1977) who describes the role of these nonverbal acts as such: “modifications of verbal directness and intensity, variations of intonation and tone of voice, changing facial expressions, shifting glances, and other activities provide a running commentary on what is said literally” (p. 35).

These observations are further supported by the findings of a study by Ambady, Koo, Lee, and Rosenthal in 1996. The authors found that politeness strategies are communicated nonlinguistically as well as linguistically in both American and Korean cultures. Thus, a study of politeness strategies of a culture and language should include the identification of both types of strategies. However, due to the nature of the data, this study will restrict itself to linguistic strategies of politeness and will not consider nonlinguistic means of communicating these strategies. This is one limitation of the study.

Another limitation has also to do with the nature of the data. Due to time, financial, and manpower constraints which the study is subject to and the complexities inherent in obtaining real data, the data used for analysis do not represent real-life conversational interaction. The strategies identified are examples of how politeness is linguistically realized in dramatic discourse (the texts used in this study are plays written in the 1960’s) using Bahasa Melayu as the medium. Therefore, these politeness strategies, most probably, are not

representative of those used in spoken conversational discourse nor are they representative of the forms of linguistic politeness used in the present, contemporary Malay society. Having said that, this study which involves a synchronic account of linguistic politeness in Malay serves as an illustration on how a notion of face can underlie the use of politeness in the Malay language.