2 POLITENESS: CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

2.0 Introduction

Politeness research has ranged from developing theoretical notions of politeness and claiming universal validity across diverse cultures and languages to investigating politeness in individual cultures to discover the cultural slant on commonsense notions of politeness. This chapter will discuss these notions of politeness and will review the different models of politeness that have been proposed based on these notions. This chapter also contains an overview of the pragmatic concepts that have been employed in politeness research.

2.1 Notions of Politeness

As mentioned above, politeness studies have been concerned with developing theories of politeness or investigating norms of politeness in different cultures. The distinction between the two notions of politeness has been discussed by several authors. Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992), for example, use the terms "first-order politeness" and "second-order politeness" to distinguish between these concepts. The authors state that

> first-order politeness [corresponds] to the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of socio-cultural groups. It encompasses ... commonsense notions of politeness. Second-order politeness, on the other hand, is a

theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage (1992:3).

They further add that

the pursuit of universals will necessarily involve us in second-order concepts, whereas the investigation into politeness in individual cultural frameworks will almost inevitably involve first-order concepts (1992:4).

Eelen (1999), in discussing the relationship between politeness and ideology, equates first-order politeness with commonsense ideology of politeness. According to the author, this kind of ideology "refers to the set of ... norms which determine what is 'polite' and what is 'impolite' in everyday ordinary interaction" (1999:163). This includes "'culture-specific' interpretations of politeness"; for example Eastern vs. Western notions of politeness (ibid.). Eelen also labels Watts et al.'s second-order politeness scientific ideology of politeness since it involves the use of scientific concepts "to make sense of - or capture or explain - politeness phenomena" (1999:164). In other words, it is "the scientific conceptualization of politeness 1 [first-order politeness]" (Xie, 2003:814).

Kasper (1998) views commonsense notions of politeness as the type that is reflected in ordinary language use; that which refers to "proper social conduct and tactful consideration of others" (p. 677). This perspective on politeness is also known as the "social norm view". As for scientific conceptualizations of politeness, Kasper names "conversational maxim view", "face-saving view", and "conversational contract view" as the three main theoretical constructs or politeness models (1998:678). In this study, the theoretical framework which is used to examine politeness phenomena in Malay language is the "face-saving view" of politeness (B and L, 1987).

Investigations into the commonsense notion of politeness involve investigating "what ordinary speakers actually *do*" (Eelen, 1999:163, original emphasis) in everyday social interaction and how 'ordinary speakers' evaluate politeness, i.e. "their metapragmatic beliefs ... about politeness" or "what they *say* they do" (ibid., original emphasis). These politeness notions of 'ordinary speakers' or "emic accounts" (Xie, 2003:814) are based on "evaluations of social acts as well as the rules and mechanisms that inform such evaluations" (Eelen, 1999:163).

As for the scientific conceptualization of politeness, it involves scientists "theorizing about politeness" (Eelen, 1999:168) and it describes "how scientists see politeness" (ibid:164). Theories of politeness thus derived seek to expound the everyday phenomena of politeness. In this way, 'scientific' terms are used to account for ordinary speakers' politeness. However, several scholars have argued that a distinction between commonsense and scientific notions of politeness is necessary (e.g. Watts et al., 1992; Eelen, 1999; Xie, 2003).

Eelen (1999), for example, observes that when researchers talk about politeness they "somehow never seem to be talking about ... those phenomena ordinary speakers would identify as 'politeness' or 'impoliteness'" (p. 166). Furthermore, the presuppositions that these researchers adopt when discussing politeness "do not come from their talk with ordinary speakers asking what these ordinary speakers ... have to say on this matter" (Xie, 2003:811-812). As a result, scholars elevate "a lay first-order concept ... to the status of a second-order concept" (Watts et al., 1992:4). Put another way, they "qualify certain utterances as polite or impolite, where it is not always clear - and sometimes even doubtful - whether [ordinary speakers do] - or even would when so asked - also qualify these utterances in terms of politeness/impoliteness" (Eelen, 1999:166).

The commonsense-scientific distinction becomes even more necessary when second-order conceptualizations of politeness also involve the search for universals. This is because "lay concepts [of politeness] in different languages do not show a one-to-one correspondence" (Watts et al., 1992:11) and also, "that the terms that are in use [do not necessarily] refer to the same phenomena" (ibid:12).

This was pointed out in a study conducted by Ide, Hill, Carnes, Ogino, and Kawasaki (1992) to investigate how politeness is conceptualized by Americans and Japanese. Specifically, the relation of "polite" to "friendly" and the Japanese corresponding terms *teineina* and *sitasigena* were examined. Native-speaker judgments used in this study demonstrated that the American subjects perceived the terms "polite" and "friendly" as similar concepts when applied to certain behaviours in specific situations. For Japanese subjects, however, *teineina* and *sitasigena* are discrete concepts when applied to the same cross-culturally equivalent situations. The outcome of this study has led the authors to issue this reminder: "It cannot be assumed that the concept of politeness is fully equivalent to the concepts of corresponding terms in other languages....Concepts of terms lie in the minds of native speakers" (Ide et al., 1992:282).

These observations were also made by Blum-Kulka (1992) in a study where she explored the notion of politeness expressed in Hebrew by the words *nimus* and *adivut* (both are translation equivalents of "politeness"). The semantic definitions offered for the term "politeness" by Israelis who participated in this study suggested that "the constituents of tact and its appropriate modes of expression are very much subject to cultural interpretation" (Blum-Kulka, 1992:258). In addition, the study also reveals that "while there are particular types of social setting in which certain types of behaviour would be classified as polite and thus appropriate, there are certainly others in which politeness is viewed negatively" (Watts et al., 1992:15).

Another important point to illustrate the need for a commonsense-scientific distinction is that "there are languages in which no translation equivalent for the English "polite" exists at all" (Watts et al., 1992:11). However, the native speakers of these languages "would certainly perceive their social actions to be adequately labelled as such in English" (ibid:12).

Apart from the need to differentiate between these two notions, there is also a related need to examine the relationship between them. Empirical investigations into politeness are aimed at discovering this connection by "test[ing] scientific ideologies against everyday reality" (Eelen, 1999:165). For instance, theories on politeness are compared with 'evaluations of politeness' by 'ordinary speakers' to test whether these theories "accurately capture the practice of everyday reality" (ibid:166), i.e. using politeness 2 (a second-order concept) to account for politeness 1 (a first-order concept) (Xie, 2003:814). Examining the relationship between commonsense and scientific notions also involves the use of 'real' data to make theoretical claims, i.e. having politeness 1 account for politeness 2 (Xie, 2003:814).

At this point, it is important to note that central to the issues discussed above, i.e. making a distinction and examining the relationship between first-order and second-order conceptualizations of politeness, is how politeness, as a subject of study, is defined. The present state of politeness studies reveals that there are "currently numerous definitions ... of politeness" (Xie, 2003:812) that represent "varied conceptualizations of politeness" (ibid.). This current state of affairs is due to a failure to clearly differentiate between and thoroughly examine the relationship between commonsense and scientific notions (Xie, 2003:814). A detailed discussion about the ways in which "the blurred distinction of politeness 1 and politeness 2" (ibid.) shapes politeness theories is, however, beyond the scope of this present study. Suffice it to say that the term "politeness", despite the large amount of research work on the subject, remains "definitionally fuzzy" (Held, 1992:131).

2.2 Models of Politeness

Scientific conceptualizations of politeness have produced theories which view politeness as 'conflict-avoidance' and as 'social indexing' (Xie, 2003:813). Put another way, politeness is

> taken to be a consequence of rational social goals such as maximizing the benefit to self and other, minimizing the face-threatening nature of a social act, displaying adequate proficiency in the accepted standards of social etiquette, avoiding conflict, making sure that the social interaction runs smoothly, etc. (Watts et al., 1992:3).

The above definition of the term "politeness" constitutes "the ends to which politeness could be put" (Watts, 1992:47). These goals can be achieved through the use of language, namely "linguistic politeness". Linguistic politeness is defined in the literature as "the various forms of language structure and usage which allow the members of a socio-cultural group to achieve [social] goals" (Watts et al., 1992:4) or as "the language usage associated with smooth communication realized … through the speaker's use of intentional strategies …

and through … the speaker's [expression of] the expected and/or prescribed norms of speech" (Ide, 1989:225). And since second-order politeness is concerned with investigating universal principles of language use, these definitions suggest that "all speech communities have linguistic ways and means … of avoiding conflict and maintaining in a state of equilibrium the perceived fabric of interpersonal relationships" (Watts, 1992:47) or in other words, of encoding politeness.

Investigations into the universals of linguistic politeness can be approached from four main perspectives, i.e. the "social-norm view", the "conversational-maxim view", the "face-saving view", and the "conversational-contract view" (Fraser, 1990). Each perspective on politeness and the advocates(s) of each view are discussed below.

2.2.1 The social-norm view

The "social-norm view" assumes the setting of behaviour patterns or standards of behaviour that define polite behaviour. Books or manuals on etiquette that prescribe behavioural conventions and verbal politeness are typical products of the influence of the collective norms of a community on its members. Thus, verbal politeness is determined by these norms, i.e. they effect the linguistic system via its lexicon and grammar to produce particular speech styles.

Held (1992:137) suggests that this social-norm view of politeness is based on two factors:

a) status conscious behaviour which is realized by showing deference and respect to others' social rank;
b) moral comportment and decency which involves a concern for general human dignity (by protecting others from unpleasant intrusion, and respecting taboos and negative topics) as well as the maintenance of others' personal sphere (by reducing or avoiding territorial encroachment).

Watts et al. observe that the social-norm view corresponds to "the kind of politeness that has been termed "discernment" (*wakimae)*" (1992:4). This is because *wakimae* is "the practice of polite behaviour according to social conventions" (Ide, 1989:230). To behave according to *wakimae* is to behave in accordance with "one's sense of place or role in a given situation" and also to acknowledge that of the addressee and the referent (ibid.). This is essential in order to "keep communication smooth and without friction" (Ide, 1989:230).

In Japanese, *wakimae* or "discernment" is achieved through the use of formal linguistic forms, e.g. honorifics, which encode the role differences of the participants in a given communicative setting. The use of these forms also reflects the "formality of particular settings". In other words, *wakimae* addresses "the wants of roles and settings". Ide explains "discernment" as follows:

> Discernment is oriented mainly toward the wants to acknowledge the ascribed positions or roles of the participants as well as to accommodate to the prescribed norms of the formality of particular settings (1989:231).

Janney and Arndt (1992) view politeness that is guided by socio-cultural conventions as "social politeness". "Social politeness" is politeness from a social point of view because it focuses on people's need, as members of groups, for "smoothly organized interaction with other members of their groups" (Janney and Arndt, 1992:22). This need is achieved by following the conventions of social politeness which include "conversational routines", "politeness formulas", and "compliment formulas". Such conventions "provide a framework of standardized strategies for getting gracefully into, and back out of, recurring social situations such as: initiating...maintaining...and terminating conversation" (Janney and Arndt, 1992:23). Essentially, social politeness is "a matter of behaving in a socially "correct" way [by] following rules of social usage" (ibid.)

2.2.2 The conversational-maxim view

The second politeness model, i.e. the conversational-maxim view, was proposed by Lakoff (1973,1977) and Leech (1983), among others. This view is a complement to the Cooperative Principle (CP) and its related maxims of conversation put forth by Grice (1975). The conversational maxims dictate that verbal communication should proceed in a clear and precise manner by "saying as much and no more than is necessary (Quantity); saying what is true (Quality); what is relevant (Relevance); and saying it in a non-confusing way (Manner)" (Lakoff, 1977:87). A speaker who does not abide by these rules but who is still being cooperative is seen as employing another set of rules in order to communicate his intentions. Lakoff (1973) names these rules "the rules of politeness" while Leech (1983) uses the term "the politeness principle" and as stated above, both fall under this conversational-maxim view of politeness.

This study, however, has not adopted this theoretical framework mainly because it does not explicitly state the motivation that underlies the use of politeness, whereas this study is concerned with examining the factor which motivates politeness in the Malay language (which in this case, is the concept of face).

2.2.2.1 Lakoff's Rules of Politeness

Lakoff (1973:298) proposes the following rules of politeness that are designed "to make one's addressee think well of one" and consequently, "to impart a favourable feeling about" the content of the communication:

1) Don't impose
2) Give options
3) Make A feel good - be friendly

According to Lakoff (1973), the above rules are used when the speaker's principal aim is to express politeness/avoid offense by indicating where he and the addressee stand in terms of status, i.e. by reaffirming and strengthening relationships. Rule 1 (Don't impose) is observed when S creates a sense of distance between himself and H, thus "ensuring that status distinctions are adhered to, that no informality develops, that the relationship remains purely formal" (Lakoff, 1977:89). This can be achieved linguistically by using title + last name (TLN) as a form of address, the passive, and technical terms to avoid mentioning unmentionables (in academic, business, legal, and medical situations).

Lakoff (1977) describes Rule 2 (Give options) as "the rule of hesitancy" since giving the addressee options allows the speaker to express uncertainty over the speech act he is performing. Apart from using Rule 2 as a form of conventional politeness (i.e. "the speaker knows what he wants, knows he has the right to expect it from the addressee, and the addressee knows it too"), it is also used to communicate true politeness (i.e. "the speaker knows what he wants, but sincerely does not wish to force the addressee into a decision"), and to express genuine uncertainty (i.e. "not used as a politeness device at all") (Lakoff, 1977:90). Linguistic manifestations of Rule 2 include the use of tag-imperatives, or "please", or both, with instructions; particles like "well", "er", and "ah"; euphemisms; hedges like "sorta", "in a way", and "loosely speaking".

Rule 3 (Make A feel good) is "the equality rule" because the speaker who uses it implies that he and the addressee are equals and this (providing that S is superior or equal in status to A) makes A feel good. This sense of camaraderie or solidarity can be verbally expressed by the use of first names or nicknames (suggests an informal relationship); particles such as "I mean", "like", and "y'know" (their use enables S to share with A his feelings about what he is talking about) (Lakoff, 1977:94-5). Giving compliments and using explicit terms for tabooed or unmentionable words are also characteristic of Rule 3.

Lakoff (1973,1977) has also suggested a relationship between her rules of politeness and Grice's (1975) rules of conversation, namely that the conversational maxims are subcases of Rule 1: Don't impose. This is the case because the purpose of both rules is to achieve efficient communication and thus to avoid imposition on the addressee. In addition, a violation of the rules of conversation (and at the same time, Rule 1) indicates the application of Rule 2 or Rule 3, or both.

One of the problems with Lakoff's conceptualization of politeness is the lack of a clear definition of the term "politeness" itself (Watts et al., 1992). This then results in a related problem with how the "three levels of politeness", i.e. Formal/Impersonal Politeness in the case of R1, Non-formal Politeness for R2, and Intimate Politeness for R3, are to be understood (ibid:5). The "levels of politeness" which form this politeness model are also not relevant to this study because in this present study, the use of politeness markers and strategies in formal/impersonal settings is not part of its focus.

2.2.2.2 Leech's Politeness Principle (PP)

The other conversational maxim approach to politeness is the Politeness Principle (PP) and its six maxims as proposed by Leech (1983). Leech notes that "politeness concerns a relationship between self and other" where "self" typically refers to the speaker and the label "other" applies to the addressee and/or a third party (1983:131). Further, the author describes politeness as "minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs" when these beliefs are unfavourable or "at a cost to H" (ibid.). Thus, the PP addresses the social goal of "establishing and maintaining comity" (Leech, 1983:104). Thomas has noted that minimization of the expression of impolite beliefs by a speaker does not suggest that the speaker does not have these "impolite thoughts or feelings" (1995:160). Rather, the speaker, observing the PP, conveys these beliefs indirectly.

The PP is also "a necessary complement to the CP", for example when the CP cannot explain "why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean" or it cannot explain "the indirect relationship between sense and force" (Leech, 1983:80). Leech explains the "trade-off" relation between these two principles and their respective roles as follows:

> The CP enables one participant in a conversation to communicate on the assumption that

> the other participant is being cooperative. In this the CP has the function of regulating what we say so that it contributes to some assumed illocutionary or discoursal goal(s). It could be argued, however, that the PP has a higher regulative role than this: to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place (1983:82).

Leech also makes a distinction between "absolute politeness", which is his focus, and "relative politeness". "Absolute politeness" involves the use of an appropriate degree of politeness to "minimize the impoliteness of inherently impolite illocutions" (e.g. orders) and "maximize the politeness of polite illocutions" (e.g. offers) (Leech, 1983:83-4). It involves the association of speech acts with types of politeness. Specifically, Leech groups illocutionary acts under four types of politeness, i.e. Competitive Politeness, Convivial Politeness, Collaborative Politeness, and Conflictive Politeness (1983:104). The first two types of politeness are directly relevant under the PP since Competitive Politeness involves the minimization of intrinsically impolite illocutionary goals by linguistic means while Convivial Politeness involves using linguistic strategies for the maximization of intrinsically polite illocutionary goals. On the other hand, Collaborative Politeness is indifferent to politeness while Conflictive Politeness as the name suggests conflicts with politeness. Therefore, speech acts that fall under them are not considered under the PP. The amount of politeness is determined by six politeness maxims and their associated set of scales.

"Relative politeness", on the other hand, is relative to the norms of "a particular culture or language community" and varies according to context or speech situation. This relativity can be attributed to "the difference in the application of the PP by language communities" (Leech, 1983:84).

Returning to "absolute politeness", the maxims which form the PP are:

(I) Tact Maxim: (a) Minimize cost to other. (b) Maximize benefit to other.
(II) Generosity Maxim: (a) Minimize benefit to self. (b) Maximize cost to self.
(III) Approbation Maxim: (a) Minimize dispraise of other. (b) Maximize praise of other.
(IV) Modesty Maxim: (a) Minimize praise of self. (b) Maximize dispraise of self.
(V) Agreement Maxim: (a) Minimize disagreement between self and other. (b)Maximize agreement between self and other.
(VI) Sympathy Maxim: (a) Minimize antipathy between self and other. (b)Maximize sympathy between self and other. (Leech, 1983:132)

Leech describes I and II as maxims that "concern the cost or benefit of future action to other and to self" and III and IV "concern the degree to which S's remarks convey some good or bad evaluation of other and of self" (1983:132). In terms of the importance of these maxims in regulating conversational behaviour, maxims I and III are more important than maxims II and IV, and this reflects the idea that "politeness is focused more strongly on other than on self" (ibid: 133). Furthermore, Leech considers sub-maxim (a) within each maxim to be more important than sub-maxim (b), and attributes this to the notion that "negative politeness (avoidance of discord) is a more weighty consideration than positive politeness (seeking concord)" (1983: 133). Leech (1983) also associates each maxim with one or more illocutionary act (as the following discussion of each maxim will show). The association of maxim with speech act under Leech's approach to the study of politeness has been described as "an implied classification of speech act types as polite or non-polite" (Watts et al., 1992:7).

The Tact Maxim is used for impositives (e.g. ordering, commanding, requesting, advising, recommending, and inviting) and commissives (e.g. promising, vowing, and offering). These illocutionary acts refer to some action to be performed by either the hearer (i.e. impositives) or the speaker (i.e. commissives). Under this maxim, the action "may be evaluated in terms of its cost or benefit to S or H" using a cost-benefit scale (Leech, 1983:107). Using this scale, an action which is beneficial to H is more polite than one that is at a cost to H. The degree of tact appropriate to a particular speech act can also be determined by the optionality scale, the indirectness scale, the authority scale, and the social distance scale.

The Generosity Maxim, which works in tandem with the Tact Maxim (in most cases), also applies to impositives and commissives. However, the hypothesis that the Tact Maxim receives greater emphasis than the Generosity Maxim results in impositives that omit reference to the cost to H of an action and that describe the intended goal of the act as beneficial to S.

In adhering to the Approbation Maxim, a speaker "avoids saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly, about H" (Leech, 1983:135). Under the

PP, S can use various strategies of indirectness (e.g. an uninformative response or an understatement) in order to mitigate the effect of a criticism. While it is considered impolite to dispraise others, self-dispraise is called for under the Modesty Maxim. However, this maxim (like the other maxims under the PP) is observed "up to a certain point". Leech (1983) describes "a person who continually seeks opportunities for self-denigration" as tedious and insincere, at least in Western societies (p. 133). The Approbation Maxim and the Modesty Maxim are generally associated with expressives and assertives.

The remaining maxims of politeness, i.e. the Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim, correlate with assertives and expressives, respectively. The Agreement Maxim calls for the speaker "to exaggerate agreement with other people, and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial disagreement, etc." (Leech, 1983:138). As for the Sympathy maxim, condolences and congratulations are examples of speech acts that fall under this maxim.

The main problem with Leech's PP is the tendency "to produce a new maxim to explain every tiny perceived regularity in language use" (Thomas, 1995:167). This makes the theory "inelegant" (Thomas, 1995:167) since it will result in "an infinite number of maxims" (B and L, 1987:4). In addition, this proliferation of maxims will render difficult "the recognition of any counter-examples" (B and L, 1987:4) or will make the theory "virtually unfalsifiable" (Thomas, 1995:167).

B and L (1987) and Thomas (1995) have also observed that Leech's view of the PP as being of the same status as the CP creates another problem. The Gricean maxims are "robust to apparent counter-evidence": "if someone drastically and dramatically deviates from maxim-type behaviour, then his utterances are still read as underlyingly co-operative if this is at all possible" (Levinson, 1983:109). However, Leech's maxims do not have the same robustness since, while it is hard to undermine the assumption of cooperative behaviour, it is not hard to undermine the assumption of polite behaviour, i.e. it is not hard to be impolite (B and L, 1987:5). B and L (1987) conclude that Leech's working assumption of an equal-status relationship between his PP and Grice's CP requires consideration.

Despite these problems with Leech's approach, Thomas singles out its utility in making "specific cross-cultural comparisons" and in explaining "cross-cultural differences in the perception of politeness and the use of politeness strategies" (1995:167-8). This is possible if Leech's maxims are seen as "a series of social-psychological constraints influencing, to a greater or lesser degree, the choices made within the pragmatic parameters" (ibid:168). Cross-cultural variability will then "lie in the relative importance given to one of these maxims vis-à-vis another" (B and L, 1987:15). For example, Leech suggests that in Japanese society the Modesty Maxim takes precedence over the Agreement Maxim since "Japanese mores make it impossible to agree with praise by others of oneself" (ibid.). Viewed in this way, i.e. as a model that reflects societal constraints on linguistic behaviour, politeness strategies in particular, and the degree of importance placed on these constraints in different cultures/societies, Leech's open-ended list of maxims seems plausible (Thomas, 1995).

These suggestions on how the PP and its attendant maxims are best applied to the study of politeness are the reasons why the PP is not relevant to this study. Essentially, the focus of the present study is not on conventions of politeness. Also, it is not a cross-cultural study.

2.2.3 Brown and Levinson's face-saving model

The most influential politeness model to date is the face-saving view proposed by B and L in 1978 (Watts et al., 1992; Kasper, 1998). This model is based on the basic assumption that an individual who is equipped with "rational capacities" (i.e. that which allows him to engage in means-ends analysis) is able to decide on the linguistic behaviour necessary for the maintenance of face. In short, the emphasis on addressing social members' face needs results in politeness strategies; polite behaviour is basic to the maintenance of face wants. Face wants consist of "the want of approval" (i.e. positive face) and "the want of self-determination" (i.e. negative face) (Kasper, 1998).

The relationship between politeness and face also exists in the Malay socio-cultural context. Therefore, B and L's face-saving model of politeness is applicable to this study of face considerations in Malay language as linguistically realized by politeness strategies.

B and L observe that certain speech acts are intrinsically face-threatening (face-threatening acts or FTAs) (see sec. 5.3 for details) and identify a number of politeness strategies that can be used to minimize this threat to face. The strategies range from not performing the FTA to carrying it out on-record or off-record. Performing an FTA off-record is achieved by being indirect while on-record FTAs are made baldly or with redress. Redressive action addresses either positive face (positive politeness) or negative face (negative politeness), or both (see 5.4 for details). The choice of a politeness strategy is dependent upon the "weightiness" or severity of an FTA. The severity of the FTA is derived from the cumulative sum of three independent variables, i.e. the social distance between S and H, their relative power, and the degree of imposition associated with a particular speech act in a given culture (see sec. 5.5 for details).

A problem which has often been raised about this politeness model is its notion of face which B and L claim is universal. Critics of this model (e.g. Matsumoto, 1988; Ide, 1989; Mao, 1994; Nwoye, 1992), while acknowledging the presence of a concept of face or self-image in all cultures, caution against the universal applicability of it as conceptualized by B and L across diverse communities and cultures. As the concept of face is closely related to that of self, a claim to the semantics of face as universal "would presuppose identical notions of self across cultures" (Kasper, 1998:680). However, culture has been shown to significantly shape "construals of self" and consequently, face notions.

Two distinct construals of self have been suggested: the independent and the interdependent (Kasper, 1998:680). The "independent construal", favoured by most Western cultures, views each member of a group as an individual separate from his role and function as a social group member. The "interdependent construal", on the other hand, does not separate the individual from his membership in a group (prevalent in most non-Western cultures). Thus, B and L's notion of face as the wants of individuals does not fit with the interdependent concept of self. However, given the modified form of B and L's 'face' (see sec. 1.3.3) the "independent construal" is included under B and L's face wants as "culture-specific face". This type of face represents a concept of self that is dependent on the "value judgements of other people" (O'Driscoll, 1996:14) who belong in the same group with self. Thus, "culture-specific face" addresses the interdependent concept of self.

2.2.4 Fraser's conversational-contract view

The conversational contract view proposed by Fraser (1990) is the fourth alternative approach to politeness studies where politeness is seen as "a dynamic concept, always open to adaptation and change" during the course of an interaction (Watts et al., 1992:11). Essentially, politeness means "operating within the then-current terms and conditions of the CC (Conversational Contract)" (ibid: 12). The CC is determined by participants' rights and obligations prior to the interaction but it may change during, and as a result of, the interaction. A renegotiation of the CC would depend on the perceived goals and intentions of the participants and shifts in these factors and other contextual factors such as shifts in relationships and distribution of power (Watts et al., 1992:12).

The main appeal of this conversational contract approach is its universal applicability. In implementing the CC, socio-cultural factors are the main consideration and the CC "does not exist outside specific speech communities and their members" (Kasper, 1998:679). The main problem with Fraser's model is its lack of details which in turn does not lend itself well to empirical studies (Thomas, 1995).

Of the four politeness models discussed here, B and L's framework has been the one most widely used in politeness studies, particularly those studies that examined how speech acts are performed within a particular language community or across different speech communities.

2.3 The Cooperative Principle (CP) and Politeness Theory

The model-theoretic approaches to the study of linguistic politeness proposed by Lakoff (1973, 1977), Leech (1983), and B and L (1987) represent "the three classical approaches" (Held, 1992:139) in explaining the link between politeness and language within the framework of Anglo-American pragmatics. The common bases of these works are their interpretation of speech-act theory, in particular Searle (1975) (see sec. 2.4 for details) and the cooperative principle (CP) proposed by Grice (1975). The pragmatic means by which the above-mentioned scholars account for politeness in language has enabled "the operationalizing [of] verbal politeness as a socio-pragmatic function" (Held, 1992:142).

This section contains a brief discussion on the CP and on how apparent deviations from the CP, e.g. the use of indirectness, are explained by politeness theory. In formulating the CP, Grice (1975:307) describes talk exchanges or conversational moves as "cooperative efforts" whereby "each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction". The CP operates as follows:

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (Grice, 1975:307).

Grice also identifies four maxims that serve to uphold the CP or that serve as guidelines for conducting a conversation "in a maximally efficient, rational, co-operative way" (Levinson, 1983:102). These conversational maxims and sub-maxims are expressed as follows:

The maxim of Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

(1) Do not say what you believe to be false.

(2) Do not say that for which you lack evidence.

The maxim of Quantity: (1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

(2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

The maxim of Relation: Be relevant.

The maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous, and specifically:

(1) Avoid obscurity of expression.

(2) Avoid ambiguity.

(3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

(4) Be orderly.

According to Levinson (1983:102), speakers who observe these maxims "should speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly, while providing sufficient information". However, when talk does not proceed by the CP and its attendant maxims, participants will, nevertheless, assume that these principles are in operation. This assumption of cooperation in such a situation generates what Grice calls a conversational implicature.

According to Grice, a conversational implicature is generated when the hearer is confronted with a speaker's blatant non-observance of a maxim and the assumption that the speaker is able to fulfil the maxims, or at least that the CP is in operation. In such cases, the hearer is prompted to search for an implicature; to seek an answer to the following question: "How can the speaker's saying what he did say be reconciled with the supposition that he is observing the overall CP?" (Grice, 1975:310). In flouting a maxim or a combination of maxims, a speaker can also be indirect when wording his utterance. For example, the speaker can do so by using hints and metaphors or by being ironic.

A plausible explanation for the use of indirectness is that its use is considered polite given the relevant circumstances. In fact, politeness proponents argue that politeness theory "'rescues' Grice's theory by explaining the social constraints governing utterance production and interpretation" (Thomas, 1995:70). One of these proponents is Leech who proposes that "the CP and the PP (Politeness Principle) interact in the interpretation of indirectness" (1983:79). In fact, Leech views the PP as a principle that 'rescues' the CP by "explaining why speakers do not always observe the Gricean maxims" (Thomas, 1995:159) (see also 2.2.2.2).

In other words, an apparent breach of the CP can be shown "at a deeper level of interpretation involving the PP, to be no such thing: in this way, the CP is redeemed from difficulty by the PP" (Leech,1983:81). Lakoff (1973, 1977) is another politeness proponent who also views her 'rules of politeness' as a complement to the CP (see 2.2.2.1 for details). In essence, Lakoff's and Leech's politeness theories fall under the conversational-maxim view of politeness.

The politeness theory proposed by B and L has also incorporated Grice's theory of conversational implicature, namely in its discussion of off-record strategies (see 5.4.4). B and L state that an off-record strategy is performed by flouting a Gricean maxim. Flouting a maxim enables a speaker to be indirect and this indirectness is due to politeness concerns. B and L list the means by which each maxim can be flouted some of which are also discussed by Grice.

Like Grice, B and L suggest the use of tautologies to flout the maxim of Quantity. Unlike Grice, B and L also include the use of overstatements and understatements (Grice uses the terms hyperbole and meiosis, respectively), whereas Grice considers them as examples in which the Quality maxim is flouted. Both Grice and B and L agree on the use of irony and metaphors to flout the maxim of Quality. B and L also include the use of contradictions and rhetorical questions as possible means of flouting the Quality maxim. As for the maxim of Manner, B and L expand Grice's examples of flouts, i.e. ambiguity and obscurity, to include displacing H and the use of overgeneralization and ellipsis.

In citing examples in which the maxim of Relation is flouted, Grice limits them to those which are "real, as distinct from apparent" flouts (1975:312). Grice admits that such examples "are perhaps rare" (ibid.). B and L, on the other hand, suggest that the implicature which is generated by flouting the Relation maxim is dependent on contextual cues. As such, giving hints, giving association clues, and presupposing are apparent rather than real Relation flouts.

While relying on the Gricean maxims in their discussion of off-record strategies, B and L argue that the "only essential presumption" shared by Grice's CP and politeness principles is "a working assumption by conversationalists of the rational and efficient nature of talk" (1987:4). Politeness principles do not share the "unmarked or socially neutral" nature of the CP in terms of a "presumptive framework for communication" (ibid:5). B and L describe the nature of polite motivations as such: "politeness has to be communicated, and the absence of communicated politeness may ... be taken as absence of the polite attitude" (1987:5). Essentially, B and L view Grice's CP as "quite different in status from that of politeness principles" (ibid.).

B and L explain how the two principles function in their politeness model as follows:

> [Implicatures of politeness are derived from] the mutual awareness of 'face' sensitivity [and the CP]. From the failure to meet the maxims at face value, plus the knowledge of face-preserving strategies, the inferences are derived (1987:5-6).

However, in the light of recent work on politeness, B and L consider the description above as "somewhat underdescribed" (1987:5-6). Their revised view is stated below:

> Instead of deriving the details of linguistic form directly from face-preserving strategies as we attempt it, it may be better to let the mechanisms of generalized conversational implicature [which are independent of face considerations] get us half-way, as it were ...

we can then let face considerations take us to the more specific polite implicatures (1987:6).

This brief discussion on the relationship between the Cooperative Principle and politeness theory has shown that in instances where non-observance of the conversational maxims is achieved by using indirectness this is prompted by politeness. Furthermore, being indirect should not be viewed as undermining the CP in terms of communicating in an effective and efficient manner. Rather, as Leech (1983) suggests, its use as a politeness strategy helps to keep the channel of communication open by "maintaining comity". Hence, politeness can be considered a co-operative tool in interaction. In fact, Grice (1975) himself suggests the possibility of adding the maxim 'Be polite' to the list of maxims of conversation.

2.4 Speech Acts

The utility of the speech-act theoretic approach to the study of linguistic politeness lies in its "identification of indirectness with politeness" (Held, 1992:139). On the basis of a discussion of indirect speech acts, the indirectness approach to politeness describes the interactive function of such acts. Essentially, indirect verbal behaviour functions to put "a conflict-free pursuit of goals before the efficient transfer of information" (Held, 1992:140). For example, this can be achieved with recourse to Leech's "benefit scale oriented to *alter*" (Held, 1992:141, original emphasis) or B and L's "four types of indirectness" (ibid:140).

In speech-act theory, "a speech act is created when speaker/writer S makes an utterance U to hearer/reader H in context C" (Allan, 1998b:922). In uttering U, S performs an action such as stating or requesting something, thanking someone, making a promise, or delivering a verdict. Such actions are called speech acts and they are represented by the illocutionary force (IF) of U.

2.4.1 A classification of acts

Searle (1977) has established five classes of illocutionary acts which B and L (1987) use as a means of classifying face-threatening acts.

Searle's speech act categories and the purpose of a type of act (i.e. illocutionary point) in each category are as follows:

(i) representatives: "commit S (in varying degrees) to the truth of the expressed proposition". A statement, suggestion, hypothesis, conclusion, boast, and complaint are examples of representatives;

(ii) directives: "constitute attempts by S to get H to do something". Examples of directives are orders, requests, entreaties, invitations, and advice;

(iii) commissives: "commit S (in varying degrees) to some future course of action". A promise, pledge, and guarantee are examples in this category;

(iv) expressives: "express S's attitude to a certain state of affairs specified in the propositional content". Examples of expressives are greetings, thanks, congratulations, and apologies;

(v) declarations: "bring about correspondence between the propositional content and reality (i.e. the world)". This correspondence is achieved by "declaring it to exist; cases where "saying makes it so"". Thus, saying "I resign", "You're fired", "I appoint you chairman" or "We find the defendant guilty" makes it so (Searle, 1977:34-9).

Allan (1998b) describes representatives, directives, commissives, and expressives as "interpersonal acts" because they are typically "directed at individuals", and they require appropriate reaction from H (to what S says) in order to take effect. Declarations, on the other hand, do not rely on H's reaction for their success. Rather, such acts rely for their success on the reaction of the group which sanctions S to perform such acts in the first place (Allan, 1998b:924). It appears that this speech act class extends beyond dyadic interaction or beyond the speaker-hearer domain. Since B and L's politeness theory is mainly concerned with how social relationships are maintained and enhanced between participants engaged in verbal discourse, speech acts in categories (i)-(iv) appear to be applicable for B and L's classification of FTAs.

2.4.2 Direct and indirect speech acts

A speech act can be performed directly or indirectly. In performing a direct speech act, the speaker(S) "utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what he says" (Searle, 1975:59). On the other hand, when S performs an indirect speech act "he utters a sentence, means what he says, but also means something else" (ibid.).

For example, when invited to a movie, S can indirectly decline the invitation by making a statement to the effect that he has to prepare for an exam. In other words, S performs the indirect speech act "by way of performing another speech act" (Searle, 1975:60). Searle suggests that the hearer is able to understand the indirect speech act, i.e. S's illocutionary intention, "by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic ... a theory of speech acts, certain general principles of cooperative conversation ... together with an ability to make inferences on the part of the hearer" (1975:60-1). Searle also suggests that the chief motivation for indirectness is politeness (1975:64).

In studying the use of indirect speech acts to encode politeness, Searle states:

> In the field of indirect illocutionary acts, the area of directives is the most useful to study because ordinary conversational requirements of politeness normally make it awkward to issue flat imperative sentences (e.g., *Leave the room*) or explicit performatives (e.g., *I order you to leave the room*), and we therefore seek to find indirect means to our

> illocutionary ends (e.g., *I wonder if you would mind leaving the room*). In directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness (1975:64).

This present study has also selected offers and requests, members under the directive class of illocutionary acts, to examine the indirect means in which these acts are realized to encode politeness. For instance, due to politeness considerations, the speaker can request the hearer to open a window by means of questioning the possibility for H to open the window, i.e. S says, "Can you open the window?". In doing so, S offers H the option to refuse compliance by answering 'No' since the question allows 'no' as a possible answer.

Searle suggests that sentences such as "Can you reach the salt?" and "I would appreciate it if you would get off my foot" are "conventionally used as indirect requests" (1975:60). In other words, such forms (e.g. "Could you", "I want you to", "Will you") are conventional ways of making requests. Further they become "the conventionally polite ways of making indirect requests" (Searle, 1975:76). There are also conventional forms of indirect offers such as "Can I", "Do you want me to", "Would you like me to" and "Shall I give you" (ibid:80).

These forms are realized by asserting or questioning the conditions that are necessary for the successful performance of the speech act that these forms are used to perform indirectly. In general, the acts under the class of directive illocutionary act can be performed indirectly by either asking whether or stating that the propositional content, preparatory, and essential conditions obtain, and stating that the sincerity condition obtains (Searle, 1975:72).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), in a study of the realization patterns for requests, have identified three linguistic forms which they describe as conventionally used in making indirect requests. These "conventionally indirect strategies" also concern reference to felicity conditions namely preparatory and sincerity conditions. These conventionally indirect strategies are as follows:

1) *Scope stating*

   The utterance expresses the speaker's intentions, desire, or feeling vis-à-vis the fact that the hearer do X.

2) *Language specific suggestory formula*

   The sentence contains a suggestion to do X.

3) *Reference to preparatory conditions*

   Utterance contains reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability or willingness, the possibility of the act being performed) as conventionalized in any specific language.

In using the contrasting terms direct and indirect, on-record and off-record, and literal and non-literal, Allan (1998c) suggests that distinctions need to be drawn when discussing these related notions. Allan observes that "S can be on-record and either direct or indirect" (1998c:932). For example, a conventional indirect request such as "Could you close the door?" is indirect yet on-record while the use of the imperative, i.e. "Close the door", is considered a direct and on-record request.

Allan (1998c) also observes that S can be indirect and off-record by using either a literal or non-literal utterance. For instance, giving a reason for not accepting an invitation where S means literally what he says is one way of performing an indirect and off-record refusal. An utterance such as "I have to study for an exam" is meant as a "literal statement" of S's plan but "the illocutionary point is an indirect and off-record refusal" (Allan, 1998c:932). On the other hand, S can use a non-literal utterance such as "I'm sure the cat likes you pulling its tail" to perform an indirect, off-record request (ibid.). Here, S does not mean literally what he says, i.e. it is not a direct assertion about what the cat likes. This non-literal utterance, while used to perform an indirect, off-record request for H to stop pulling the cat's tail, is nonetheless sarcastic.

2.4.3 Problems with speech act theory

In their reassessment of the politeness framework proposed in 1978, B and L (1987:10ff) express their reservation with the attribution of speech act categories to single utterances and related to this the notion that face-threatening acts are realized in single acts.

Allan (1998c) lists two main weaknesses with speech act theory that call into question the assumption that conversation is built out of single acts. One weakness is the idea that each single-sentence utterance performs only one speech act. This assumption is problematic when dealing with, for example, an utterance such as "Would you like another drink?" since this utterance seems to be both a question and an offer.

Another weakness of speech act theory is to assume that "S's illocutionary intentions can be precisely pinned down" (Allan, 1998c:933). For example, consider a situation where S says to H "It's 7.45" as H is getting ready for work. S could intend the utterance to function in the following ways: (a) to inform H of the time, and/or (b) to imply that "it is past the time when H should have already left for work, hence warning H that s/he is running late and furthermore counseling H to hurry" (Allan, 1998c:933). These problems suggest that the speaker's communicative intention could not be entirely determined at the level of single, isolated utterances.

In view of the problems with speech act theory, an approach whereby an utterance is not assigned to a speech act category but whereby an utterance is interpreted in the light of prior and/or succeeding acts would be a better alternative when studying verbal interaction. Conversation analysis subscribes to such an approach. This present study also takes account of prior and/or succeeding acts when identifying an utterance as performing an offer or a request. Also, with reference to B and L's reservation with speech act theory (mentioned at the beginning of this section), the authors acknowledge the importance of conversational structure in determining illocutionary intentions and in performing FTAs. An illustration of how an utterance-type situated within a discourse sequence is used to 'build up to' the performance of a face-threatening act is given by Levinson (1983) in his discussion of indirect requests.

Levinson (1983) proposes that indirect requests, fro example of the type where the requestor questions the requestee's abilities, are, in fact, pre-requests. Viewed in this way, questions about the "literal" or "indirect force" (or both) of a request do not arise (ibid:363). Thus, the question of how sentences like "Can you reach that book?" or "Will you come here please?" are read as requests is not an issue. A pre-request is used to check whether a precondition on a request obtains (parallel to the literal meaning of an indirect request). If so, the request proper is likely to succeed and if not, then it is abandoned. In other words, a pre-request minimizes the possibility of a request refusal by questioning "the most likely grounds for rejection".

From the perspective of politeness theory, pre-requests appear to have face-saving properties. In essence, pre-requests (which determine whether a request is made or not) protect the face of interactants, i.e. positive face; the requestor's face is "protected from" a rejection and similarly, the requestee's face is "unthreatened by" a dispreferred response.

It should be mentioned here that in this present study the identification of offers and requests for analysis was done with reference to prior and/or succeeding utterances. Furthermore, the present study also recognizes the fact that the use of politeness strategies in the performance of an FTA "may be spread over a conversational sequence…, instead of being confined to one utterance or turn" (B and L, 1987:233). This is evident in the discussion of the use of politeness strategies over several turns to perform large requests (see 7.5.5) and the use of subsequent versions (i.e. politeness modifications) to perform both offers and requests (see 8.3).

2.5 Conversation Analysis

Works in conversation analysis have broadened the understanding of politeness beyond single acts and beyond the politeness-indirectness paradigm. This wider perspective of politeness no longer views politeness as "the property of an utterance limited to the sentence unit but of a [structurally more complex speech event]" (Held, 1992:143).

According to Levinson, the speech-act models of conversation have captured "the obvious regularities of the sort that answers generally follow questions, actions or excuses follow requests, acceptances or rejections follow offers, greetings follow greetings, and so on" (1983:289). However, formulating a set of sequencing rules that will capture "the simple regularities" of these "paired utterances" presents problems. One such problem is when a question such as "What does John do for a living?" "can be happily followed by a partial answer ("Oh, this and that"), a rejection of the presupposition of the question ("He doesn't"), a statement of ignorance ("I've no idea"), or a denial of the relevance of the question ("What's that got to do with it?")" (Levinson, 1983:293). An explanation of how these responses to the question "What does John do for a living?" are treated as relevant responses to the said question is provided by conversation analysts in their study of adjacency pairs.

2.5.1 Adjacency pairs

The kinds of paired utterances mentioned above, e.g. question-answer, offer-acceptance/rejection, request-compliance/non-compliance, greeting-greeting, are described as adjacency pairs by conversation analysts.

Schegloff and Sacks (1973) (cited in Levinson, 1983:303) describe adjacency pairs in the following way:

> Adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are:
>
> (i) adjacent
> (ii) produced by different speakers
> (iii) ordered as a first part and a second part
> (iv) typed, so that a particular first part requires a particular second part (or range of second parts)

Consider the question "What does John do for a living?" again where the immediately relevant and expectable answer, i.e. information about John's occupation, does not immediately follow the information-seeking question; the second part of the adjacency pair does not follow the first part. However, the notion of conditional relevance allows other forms of response that "can be expected to deal with this relevance" (Levinson, 1983:293). In other words, such responses "will be heard where possible as some preliminary to the doing of the second part, the relevance of which is not lifted until it is either directly attended to or aborted by the announced failure to provide some preliminary action" (ibid:306).

Another feature of an adjacency pair and one that is directly relevant to this study concerns "the range of potential seconds to a first part" (Levinson, 1983:306). As such, the responses to the question "What does John do for a living?" count as acceptable seconds. These second parts can be ordered under a category of response called preferred seconds or dispreferred seconds (preferreds or dispreferreds for short, respectively).

This present study also examines how the notion of preference organization operates in Bahasa Melayu in its discussion of preferred and dispreferred responses to offers and requests (see chapter 8). A discussion on preference organization and also subsequent versions which this study undertakes are also attempts to extend the analysis beyond individual speech acts in order to gain better insight into how conversations in Malay are organized, in general and how politeness strategies are used when performing face-threatening acts, in particular.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the two ways in which politeness is conceptualized in linguistic research. The distinction between first-order politeness and second-order politeness and the relationship between these concepts have been highlighted. The chapter has also outlined the various theories of politeness put forth by politeness proponents in terms of how politeness is conceptualized and the rules, maxims, or strategies which form these theories. The pragmatic approaches to linguistic politeness research, i.e. the CP, speech-act theory, and conversation analysis have also been reviewed here.