5   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts B and L's theoretical framework in its examination of politeness in Malay language. Therefore, this chapter aims to outline the politeness theory introduced by B and L in 1978 by discussing the components that make up this theory, specifically those that are relevant to this present study. The words and utterances that appear within quotation marks are taken from the authors' book entitled *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*, unless stated otherwise.

5.1   Basic Assumptions

In formulating the politeness theory, B and L make two assumptions concerning people who are engaged in a speech situation. The authors assume that each interactant is a "rational" member of a society, i.e. one who will attempt to achieve his communicative goal by choosing a means that will best satisfy this desired goal/end. In choosing a means to an end, a speaker will make "a rational or logical use of strategies" (p. 56) in order to fulfil his intention. However, restricting the scope of linguistic politeness to "the outcome of the rational choices of individuals" (p. 59) entails excluding "language use according to [social] conventions" (Ide, 1989:242), for example, the use of honorifics, greetings, and speech formulas. This neglected aspect of linguistic politeness

which Ide (1989) terms "discernment" (*wakimae*) is addressed in the following discussion on the second underlying assumption of B and L's theory, i.e. face.

5.2   Positive and Negative Face

In defining positive face and negative face, B and L treat these two aspects of face as basic wants rather than as norms or values. According to O'Driscoll (1996), these wants are basic human attributes, i.e. "they are inherent in the human condition" (p. 15). Viewed in this manner, "a universal category of human wants relative to human interaction" (O'Driscoll, 1996:10) can be conceived. Further, the two ends of this category may be characterized as positive wants (i.e. "the need … to make contact and identify with others") and negative wants (i.e. "the need to avoid contact and be individuated") (ibid:4).

The notion of "wants dualism" (i.e. positive wants and negative wants) as a universal facilitates the 'marriage' between wants dualism and face (also a universal concept) to produce positive face and negative face (i.e. "face dualism") (O'Driscoll, 1996). Therefore, the view that positive and negative face are the result of a bifurcation of face (B and L's original conceptualization) has shifted to one where positive face is derived from the combination of face and positive wants and negative face is a derivative of face and negative wants (B and L's revised concept of face dualism as proposed by O'Driscoll (1996) (see also sec. 1.3).

In this revised and modified form, B and L's two types of face (or B and L's face dualism) are defined as follows: "Positive face is the need for one's positive wants [e.g. to come together, to have ties, and to belong] to be given recognition" and "negative face is the need for one's negative wants [e.g. to go off alone, to be independent, and to separate] to be given recognition" (O'Driscoll, 1996:13). It is important to note that Band L's original concept of positive face as the need that one's "wants be desirable to at least some others" (p. 62) and negative face the need that one's "actions be unimpeded by others" (p. 62) are subsumed under O'Driscoll's (1996) concept of wants dualism. In addition, it is more important to note that wants dualism belongs in the background of consciousness and thus, "nobody goes around consciously seeking satisfaction of positive and negative face" (O'Driscoll, 1996:13).

As mentioned earlier (see sec. 5.1), B and L's claim that politeness is addressed to face dualism has been questioned by Ide (1989). According to Ide (1989:230), the use of polite expressions in Japanese can also be oriented toward social conventions, i.e. "to behave according to wakimae [discernment]". In such instances, a speaker's polite behaviour is motivated by socially-prescribed norms rather than face. However, B and L's original framework has not incorporated the discernment aspect of politeness and this raises the problem of cross-cultural applicability of the model. O'Driscoll (1996) observes that Ide's argument is a valid one but the revised concept of face dualism "as a trait of background consciousness" does not put it "in conflict with, or an alternative to" social norm

117

(p. 17). Put differently, in its revised form, the question of whether it is attention to face or social norm that underlies verbal politeness in interaction does not arise.

5.3   Face-threatening Acts

B and L's notion of "face-threatening acts" is based on that of speech acts, i.e. particular categories of speech acts are considered to be intrinsically face-threatening. These FTAs correspond to speech acts that are classified under representatives, directives, commisives, or expressives (Searle, 1977).

B and L classify FTAs in two ways:

(i)   acts which threaten positive face and those that threaten negative face, and

(ii)   acts which threaten primarily H's face and those that threaten primarily S's face

The discussion that follows will only touch on FTAs classified under (i). Furthermore, only acts that threaten negative face will be described since the focus of this study is H's negative face and acts that threaten this aspect of face.

Acts that threaten the addressee's negative face want are those that impede H's freedom of action. The FTAs that require H to act (or not to act) in a prescribed manner and therefore restricting his choice of action are divided into three broad categories. These are:

(i)   "acts which predicate some future act A of H, and in so doing put some pressure on H to do (or refrain from doing) the act A. The acts are orders and requests, suggestions and advice, remindings and threats, warnings or dares";

(ii)   "acts which predicate some positive future act of S toward H, and in so doing put some pressure on H to accept/reject them, and possibly to incur a debt. These are offers and promises";

(iii)   "acts which predicate some desire of S toward H or H's goods, giving H reason to think that he may have to take action to protect the object of S's desire, or give it to S. Such acts are compliments, expressions of envy or admiration, and expressions of strong (negative) emotions toward H, e.g. hatred and anger" (p. 65-6).

Politeness studies in individual cultures have shown that "acts listed as inherently threatening by B&L are clearly not seen as such" (O'Driscoll, 1996:18) in these cultures. For example, the Igbo culture does not view requests and offers as impositions (Nwoye, 1992) or the Chinese negative face is not threatened by repeated invitations (Gu, 1990). B and L's model does account for the fact that "the *amount* of perceived threat of an act varies cross-culturally" and that this variation accounts for the different ways different cultures handle similar situations (O'Driscoll, 1996: fn18, original emphasis). Essentially, B and L posit

that "what kinds of acts threaten face" (p. 13) are subject to cultural specifications. In the event that S has to perform an FTA, he will employ strategies to minimize the threat of an FTA in the interest of satisfying H's face wants. The strategies available to S are discussed in the following section.

5.4   Strategies for Doing FTAs

In classifying the sets of strategies that are used to perform an FTA, B and L make a distinction between doing the FTA on record and doing it off record. When S does an act A on record, he wants his "communicative intention" to be unambiguous, i.e. there is just one possible interpretation of S's intention in doing the act A which is communicated to H. When S goes off record in doing A, he does so because he does not want "to commit himself to one particular intention". An off-record act has more than one possible interpretation of intent.

An act that is done on record can be done with or without "redressive action". Redressive action is defined as "the action that "gives face" to H, i.e. that attempts to counteract the potential face damage of an FTA" (p. 69). This definition of "redressive action", however, needs qualification in view of the revised concept of positive and negative face. As discussed earlier (see sections 1.3 and 5.2), positive and negative face which belong in the background of consciousness "are not traits which people have the conscious intention of maintaining, preserving, or enhancing" (O'Driscoll, 1996:19). Rather, people "are driven to satisfy ... these

faces ... without the slightest awareness that these were being threatened" (ibid.). Put another way, "the notion of [threat or] FTAs need not be intrinsic to face dualism" (O'Driscoll, 1996:20). Therefore, the use of the terms "redress" and "threat" in combination with the term "face" are to be understood in this modified sense, i.e. these terms do not connote aggressive, premeditated communicative intentions.

B and L describe doing an act without redress (baldly) as "doing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible" (ibid.). There are circumstances where S can do an FTA baldly. Such circumstances are where urgency or efficiency takes precedence over face as in warnings that alert H of imminent danger (e.g. Watch out for the train!); where the face risk of the FTA to H is very small as in "offers, requests, and suggestions which are clearly in H's interest"; and "where S is vastly superior in power to H" (p. 69). On the other hand, a speaker who performs an FTA on record with redressive action needs to consider which aspect of H's face is being stressed – positive or negative. Accordingly, FTAs that are done on record with redressive action take the form of positive politeness or negative politeness. The schematic figure below shows the set of five "super-strategies" that can be employed for doing FTAs.
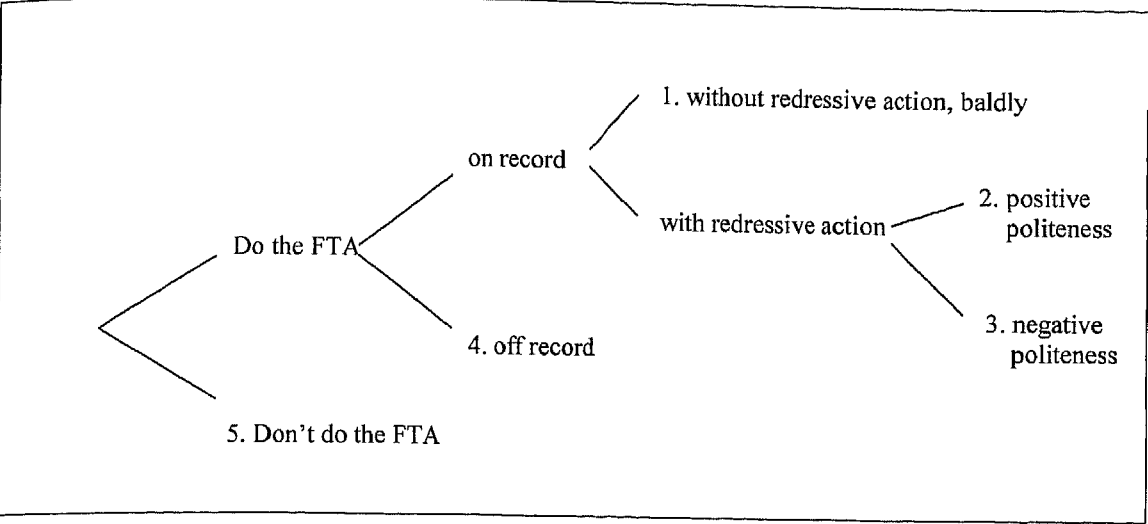
Figure 5.1: Strategies for doing FTAs

The following sub-sections contain a detailed description of each of the five sets of politeness strategies. Such a description will prepare the ground for the analysis of data.

5.4.1 Bald on record

As stated previously, S uses bald on record or Strategy 1 (see Figure 5.1) whenever he wants to communicate the content of an FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's face. Non-recognition or non-satisfaction of face which bald-on-record acts entail is a non-issue, i.e. it does not hamper smooth communication, because attention to face is not openly-demanded or consciously-seeked. Therefore, distinguishing between cases where bald-on-record usage communicates attention to face on the one hand and non-attention to

face on the other (which B and L have done) is unnecessary given the revised concept of face.

Cases of bald on record include acts that communicate the need to be efficient and also that address H's positive face; for example, welcomings ("Come in, don't hesitate, I'm not busy") and offers ("Have some more cake") that take the form of direct imperatives.

5.4.2 Positive politeness

Positive politeness (Strategy 2 in Figure 5.1) is one of two ways of delivering an FTA on record with redressive action. In this instance, positive face redress involves recognition of H's "need [or want] to come together, make contact, and identify with others" (O'Driscoll, 1996:4). In other words, to address positive face is to communicate S's recognition of H's wants or to express that S and H share similar wants.

B and L have identified three classes of positive politeness strategies and these are:

(i)   the type which involves S "claiming common ground" with H. This claim can manifest itself in three ways: (a) S may convey that some want of H (either past or future goal or desired object) is admirable or interesting; (b) he may stress common membership in a group or category with H; and (c)

S can claim common perspective with H, i.e. common point of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, or empathy,

(ii) the type where S conveys to H that they are cooperators in some activity and thus share the same goal(s). S can do so in three ways: (a) S indicates that he knows H's wants and is taking them into account; (b) S claims "some kind of reflexivity between S's and H's wants – either that S wants what H wants for H or that H wants what S wants for himself" (p. 125); and (c) S claims reciprocity between himself and H, "that they are somehow locked into a state of mutual helping" (p. 125), and

(iii) the type where S fulfils H's want for some X, i.e. tangible or non-tangible gifts.

B and L have suggested 15 output strategies that can be used to redress positive-face concerns. These strategies are grouped according to the three classes of positive-politeness strategies described above. Strategies 1-8 belong to that labeled (i), strategies 9-14 fall under (ii), and strategy 15 belongs under (iii). The 15 strategies (and their linguistic realizations in English, where relevant) and the FTAs associated with some of them are described next.

(i) **Strategy 1**: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods) – notice changes, remarkable possessions or anything which looks as though

124

H would want S to notice and approve of. FTA: a compliment, an offer, or a request.

(ii) **Strategy 2**: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H) – use exaggerated intonation, stress, and exaggerated or empathic words/particles (e.g. *for sure, really, exactly, absolutely*). FTA: compliments or expressions of sympathy.

(iii) **Strategy 3**: Intensify interest to H – use 'vivid present', direct speech, tag questions, or expressions such as *you know?, see what I mean?, isn't it?* to increase H's interest and to draw him into the conversation.

(iv) **Strategy 4**: Use in-group identity markers – use address forms, in-group language, dialect or slang, and ellipsis. FTA: orders or requests.

(v) **Strategy 5**: Seek agreement – choose safe topics to precede FTA or use repetition to stress emotional agreement or to stress interest and surprise. FTA: requests.

(vi) **Strategy 6**: Avoid disagreement – use 'token' agreement (*Yes, but...*) to disagree, *then* and *so* for real or fake conclusions to prior agreement for requests and offers, white lies to refuse a request, and hedges (e.g. *sort of, kind of, like, in a way*) for complaints, criticisms or suggestions.

(vii) **Strategy 7**: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground – begin with gossip or small talk when requesting for a favour; use point-of-view operations, i.e. personal-centre switch: S to H (*you know*), time switch (vivid present), place switch (*here* and *this* rather than *there* and *that*), avoidance of adjustment of reports to H's point of view (direct quotes); use

presupposition manipulations, i.e. presuppose knowledge of H's wants and attitudes (negative questions which presume *yes* as an answer for the FTA offer or request), presuppose H's value scales are the same as S's, presuppose familiarity in S-H relationship (familiar address forms), presuppose H's knowledge of in-group codes (in-group language, jargon, dialect, local terminology) and pronouns.

(viii)   **Strategy 8**: Joke – show shared background knowledge and shared values. FTA: requests.

(ix)   **Strategy 9**: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants – FTA: offers and requests.

(x)   **Strategy 10**: Offer, promise – show whatever H wants, S wants for him and S will help H to obtain.

(xi)   **Strategy 11**: Be optimistic – assume H wants S's wants for S/S and H and H will help S to obtain them. Use *a little, a bit, for a second* and token tag (e.g. *OK?, ...do you?, ...won't you?*) for requests.

(xii)   **Strategy 12**: Include both S and H in the activity – use *we* or *let's* when S really means *you* or *me*. FTA: an offer or a request.

(xiii)   **Strategy 13**: Give (or ask for) reasons – use indirect suggestions that demand reasons. FTA: offers, requests, or criticisms.

(xiv)   **Strategy 14**: Assume or assert reciprocity – negate debt aspect and/or FTA aspect of speech acts of complaints and criticisms.

(xv)   **Strategy 15**: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation) – show S knows some of H's wants and wants them to be fulfilled.

5.4.3   *Negative politeness*

Negative politeness (i.e. Strategy 3) is the other available alternative when performing an FTA on record with redressive action. Here, negative face redress involves recognition of H's "need [or want] to go off alone, avoid contact and be individuated" (O'Driscoll, 1996:4). S can fulfil this want by communicating that he "recognizes and respects H's negative-face wants and will not (or will only minimally) interfere with H's freedom of action" (p. 70). There are five classes of negative-politeness strategies and these are described below:

(i)   the type where S, in performing the FTA, finds a compromise between the want to go on record by being direct and the need to not impose on H by being indirect by using conventional indirectness. Conventional indirectness is defined as "the use of phrases and sentences that have contextually unambiguous meanings" (p. 132). Thus, S conveys the FTA off record but conventionalization makes it on record,

(ii)   the type that involves "making minimal assumptions about H's wants and what is relevant to H" (p. 131),

(iii)   the type where S avoids coercing H's response to an FTA by (a) giving H the option not to do the act or by (b) minimizing the threat of the FTA which S can do by making explicit the P, D, and R values,

(iv)   the type where S communicates his want to not impinge on H. This can be done in two ways: (a) S apologizes for making the FTA or (b) S dissociates either S or H or both from the FTA, and

(v)   the type that involves S directly acknowledging H's want to not be imposed upon "by explicitly claiming indebtedness to H or by disclaiming any indebtedness of H" (p. 210).

The output strategies that belong in each class are as follows: Strategies 1 and 2 belong under (i) and (ii) respectively, strategies 3-5 fall under (iii), strategies 6-9 belong to that labelled (iv), and strategy 10 belongs under (v). A description of each strategy is provided below.

(i)   **Strategy 1**: Be conventionally indirect – use indirect speech acts.

(ii)   **Strategy 2**: Question, hedge – use particles (e.g. tags, expressions such as *I wonder*), 'if' clauses, Quality hedges for the FTA advice or criticism, Quantity hedges for complaints and requests, Relevance hedges for offers and suggestions, or Manner hedges for all kinds of FTAs, e.g. insults.

(iii) **Strategy 3**: Be pessimistic – use the subjunctives (i.e. *could, would, might*), the negative with a tag, or remote-possibility markers.

(iv) **Strategy 4**: Minimize the imposition, R_x – use *just, a tiny little bit, a sip, a taste, a drop, a smidgen, a little,* or *a bit* for requests.

(v) **Strategy 5**: Give deference – use *sir*, titles or names; humble one's self, capacities, possessions; convey H's wants are more important than S's and hence become S's; hesitate (e.g. the use of *uh*).

(vi) **Strategy 6**: Apologize – admit impingement, indicate reluctance by using hedges, give overwhelming reasons, and beg forgiveness. FTA: requests.

(vii) **Strategy 7**: Impersonalize S and H: Avoid the pronouns *I* and *you* – use performatives (i.e. utterances that perform acts), imperatives, impersonal verbs (i.e. delete dative case), passive and circumstantial voices, indefinites (e.g. *one, someone (I know), you guys, folks, I-can't-guess-who, you all*), plural of *I* and *you*, address terms, or point-of-view distancing (use of past forms, distal markers, indirect reported speech).

(viii) **Strategy 8**: State the FTA as a general rule – use utterances that reflect social rule, regulation, or obligation.

(ix) **Strategy 9**: Nominalize – use formal expressions with a high degree of 'nouniness'.

(x) **Strategy 10**: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H – use *eternally grateful* and *never be able to repay* for requests; *could easily do it* and *wouldn't be any trouble* for offers.

5.4.4 Off record

Off-record strategies (Strategy 4) or indirect uses of linguistic strategies are used by a speaker to do an FTA when he wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it. S can perform the FTA and at the same time deny doing so because the off-record act has more than one interpretation of communicative intent. How the act is to be interpreted is left to the addressee and H's correct interpretation of what S really means is dependent upon context. B and L have suggested a two-stage process that H might use to arrive at S's intended meaning (p. 211):

(i)   A trigger serves notice to H that some inference must be made.

(ii)   Some mode of inference derives what is meant (intended) from what is actually said, this last providing a sufficient clue for the inference.

The trigger that alerts H to the fact that what S has said is an off-record utterance is "some violation of a Gricean maxim" (p. 211). Subsequently, he employs practical reasoning by using the hints derived from the violation to draw an inference about S's intended meaning. Violation of a particular Gricean maxim describes the two types of off-record strategies:

(i)   the type where S invites conversational implicatures by violating the Gricean Maxim of Relevance, Quantity, or Quality;

(ii)   the type where S violates the Manner Maxim by being vague or ambiguous.

Violation of the maxims under (i) can be achieved using off-record strategies 1-10 while strategies 11-15 violate the maxim under (ii). These strategies are:

(i)   **Strategy 1**: Give hints – raise the issue of some desired act A by stating motives or reasons for doing A; by asserting or questioning the conditions for A. FTA: requests.

(ii) **Strategy 2**: Give association clues – clues that can associate the act required of H with something that is precedent in S-H's experience or is mutual knowledge irrespective of interactional experiences. FTA: requests.

(iii) **Strategy 3**: Presuppose – used for criticisms.

(iv) **Strategy 4**: Understate – choose a point on a scalar predicate that is below the point that actually describes the state of affairs for understated compliments or a higher point which will implicate the (lower) actual state of affairs for understated criticisms.

(v)   **Strategy 5**: Overstate – choose a point on a scale which is higher than the actual state of affairs and which will result in an exaggeration. FTA: an excuse, an apology, or a criticism.

(vi) **Strategy 6**: Use tautologies – use blatantly obvious, non-informative utterances that take the form of patent and necessary truths. FTA: a criticism, a complaint, the expression of approval or disapproval, or the refusal of a request.

(vii) **Strategy 7**: Use contradictions – state two things that contradict each other. FTA: complaints or criticisms.

(viii) **Strategy 8:** Be ironic – say the opposite of what is meant. Irony may be combined with understatement or marked by hedges (e.g. *real, regular, just, exactly*) or by exaggerated stress.

(ix) **Strategy 9:** Use metaphors – renders an utterance off record when there is a possibility that which of the connotations of the metaphor is intended is unclear; may be marked with hedges (e.g. *real, regular, sort of, as it were*). FTA: criticisms.

(x) **Strategy 10:** Use rhetorical questions – an utterance using this will leave the answer hanging in the air, i.e. implicated. Rhetorical questions can be syntactically marked by *just, even, ever*, etc. FTA: an excuse or a criticism.

(xi) **Strategy 11:** Be ambiguous – use metaphors. FTA: compliments or insults.

(xii) **Strategy 12:** Be vague – be vague about who the object of the FTA is or what the offence is. Use understatements. FTA: criticisms.

(xiii) **Strategy 13:** Over-generalize – use general rules or proverbs. FTA: criticisms.

(xiv) **Strategy 14:** Displace H – go off record as to whom the target for the FTA is.

(xv) **Strategy 15:** Be incomplete, use ellipsis – leave the FTA half undone thus leaving the implicature 'hanging in the air'.

Strategy 5 (Don't do the FTA) is chosen when risk of face loss is great and this strategy will ensure that S avoids offending H altogether since S does not say anything.

The list of output strategies under each "super-strategy" shows a combined listing of behaviour strategies and linguistic strategies. For example, "behaviour strategies such as 'Notice, attend to H', 'Seek agreement', 'Offer, promise', 'Be pessimistic', 'Minimize the imposition', and 'Give deference' [are put] in parallel with linguistic strategies such as 'Use in-group identity markers', 'Question, hedge', 'Impersonalize S and H', or 'Nominalize'" (Ide, 1989:239). This has resulted in "confusion in the categorization of linguistic expressions" (ibid.) whereby these expressions belong under both behaviour and linguistic strategies. For instance, "plural personal pronouns 'we' and 'vous' are categorized under the linguistic strategy 'Impersonalize S and H' [and also] the behaviour strategy 'Give deference'" (Ide, 1989:239). Ide (1989) suggests, quite rightly, that "the confusion could be resolved if they [B and L] distinguished consistently between behaviour and linguistic strategies" (p. 239). However, the combined listing of strategies and the resultant 'dual' categorization of expressions do not pose a problem for this study which is concerned with the use of both forms of strategy to encode politeness.

Another aspect of B and L's list of super-strategies that has been studied is the manner in which these strategies are ranked, i.e. the "mutual exclusivity" nature

of positive-politeness, negative-politeness, and off-record strategies. These studies showed that a "mixture" of strategies were used in performing FTAs, for example, intimate address forms (a positive-politeness marker) were used in conventional or non-conventional indirect requests (a negative-politeness strategy or off-record strategy) or honorifics (a negative-politeness marker) co-occur with positive-politeness strategies. In short, the presence of markers characteristic of one strategy in another strategy calls into question the notion of mutually exclusive strategies.

While expressing reservations with the manner in which the three strategies are "ranked unidimensionally to achieve mutual exclusivity", B and L maintain that in instances such as the ones described above these markers most probably describe the social relationship between S and H and are independent of R-value, i.e. "may occur with an FTA of any R-value" (1987:18). In addition, this finding does not present a problem for the intrinsic ranking of these strategies from least polite (on-record positive- and negative-politeness strategies) to most polite (off-record) given the context and social dimensions.

O'Driscoll (1996), while upholding B and L's "hierarchy of politeness strategies", also argues that "B&L's output strategies can instantiate attention to either kind of face" and that it is a mistake "to assume that any one of them must inherently belong to one or other type of politeness" (p. 20). O'Driscoll claims that

deference, formality, and indirectness, for example, can instantiate both types of politeness.

B and L's association of deference with negative politeness assumes that high-status people are free from being imposed upon. This assumption by B and L is born of "western liberalism" where "the most common manifestation of +P's [high-status people's] relative freedom from imposition is the freedom from restriction on his/her use of time" (O'Driscoll, 1996:25). However, deference can also be associated with positive politeness. In some non-Western societies, deference that instantiates positive politeness takes the form of alluding to the importance and value a person has in his social unit, i.e. "ego strokes the positive face of alter ... thus emphasizing the ties that exist between them" (O'Driscoll, 1996:25).

Formality is also associated with negative politeness when it involves "conscious, careful formulation of phrasing which egos typically use to alters with whom they have little or no personal acquaintance [+D]" (O'Driscoll, 1996:26). This association entails equating +D with inequality in status. However, this equivalence is only valid in societies where "the bonds between those of unequal status are weak" (O'Driscoll, 1996:26). In societies where the bonds "can be strong", formality may often, for the same reasons given for deference, "attend to positive face" (ibid.). Indirectness can also instantiate both types of politeness and support for this claim can be found in research (see Kasper, 1990:200 for a review

of these findings) that has shown that "there can be no assumed correspondence between indirectness and negative politeness" (O'Driscoll, 1996:26).

A direct consequence of the above claim that B and L's output strategies can attend to either kind of face is that positive politeness does not necessarily correspond to W_x (weightiness of an act) of low value and negative politeness to W_x of high value, i.e. "there is no automatic correspondence between W_x and type of politeness [positive or negative]" (O'Driscoll, 1996:26). The sociological variables that determine W_x are discussed next.

5.5   Sociological Variables

B and L state that the circumstances under which S assesses the seriousness of an FTA are brought about by three sociological variables. These are:

(i)   the social distance(D) between S and H,

(ii)   the relative power(P) of H over S, and

(iii)   the ranking(R) of impositions.

D is measured, in most cases, by the level of familiarity or social closeness produced by frequency of contact between S and H. According to B and L, "stable social attributes" also form an important part of the assessment of D (p. 77). A measure of P is drawn from two sources, i.e. material control (e.g. physical strength or wealth) and metaphysical control (e.g. institutionalized role in the state

or within the family). As for R, the rank order of impositions is "culturally and situationally defined" (p. 77). In addition, R is also determined by whether the performance of an act fulfils, for example, legal, moral, or work obligations or runs contrary to a person's reasons for non-performance of the act (p. 77).

As mentioned earlier (see sec. 4.4), the given value for P, D, and R in this study is measured in the following way: the value for P is based on "institutionalized role", social position and age (metaphysical control), and occupation and wealth (material control); D is measured by the level of closeness and familiarity between S and H; R_x is determined by how the FTA is perceived in Malay culture.

The combined value of D, P, and R will produce "the weightiness of an FTA (W_x)" (p. 76). The formula is as follows:

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

W_x = the numerical value that measures the weightiness of the FTA x
$D(S,H)$ = the value that measures the social distance between S and H
$P(H,S)$ = a measure of the power that H has over S
R_x = a value that measures the degree to which the FTA x is rated an imposition in that culture

Further, the values assigned to these variables are determined by the participants who are involved in a communicative act and are valid only "in a particular context and for a particular FTA" (p. 79).

In relation to work that has studied the effects of these variables on politeness, B and L concede "that there may be a residue of other factors which are not

captured within the P, D, and R dimensions" (p. 16). One of these factors is liking which might affect the choice of a politeness strategy. The authors cite Slugoski (1985) who argue that familiarity (the D variable) should be distinguished from affect/liking. Specifically, familiarity should not be equated with liking since people of low social distance do not necessarily like each other. Also, the distinction between familiarity and liking is necessary, for example, "in interpreting ironic utterances as either insults or compliments" (Slugoski, 1985 cited in B and L, 1987:16).

According to Brown and Gilman (1989), B and L's D-factor equates intimacy (low D) with liking and distance (high D) with dislike/indifference. Brown and Gilman's 1989 study revealed that politeness increased with an increase of affect while the effects of intimacy/closeness on politeness were absent or insignificant, i.e. closeness and affect do not motivate politeness in the same direction. Another factor that may determine a politeness strategy is the presence of an audience since having an audience introduces an element of formality into a communicative situation. Thus, in assessing P, D, and R, the absence or presence of spectators should be taken into consideration.

Other factors that could have an effect on choice of politeness strategy are those examined by Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) in their study of request strategies. The authors investigated the effects of the variables sex, age, setting, and medium (in addition to relative power(P), relative social distance(D), and request goal(R) (i.e.

request for action, goods, information, and permission)) on requesting behaviour in Israeli society. It was found that the P, D, and R as postulated by B and L significantly affected the choice of request strategy on the scale of directness. In addition, the age of the hearer relative to the speaker, the type of setting, and the medium of communication were also found to be significantly associated with request strategy type. The results showed "more directness when the speaker was older than the hearer and less directness in the reverse situation" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985:124). As for setting, a request made in a private setting was more direct than one made in public. Also, written requests, as the medium of communication, were the most direct when compared to requests made face-to-face or on the phone.
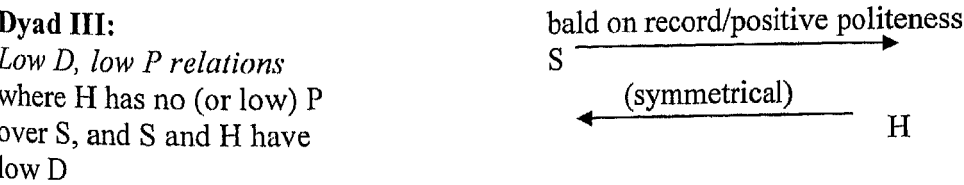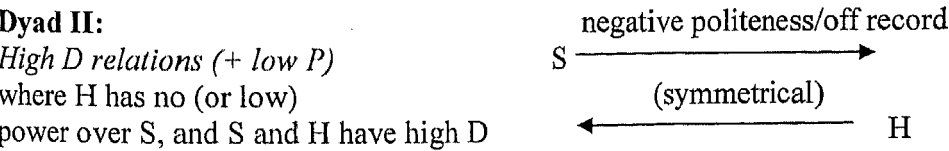
Given the presence of these additional factors, B and L agree that there are other aspects of social relations (which play a part in politeness considerations) that are not "captured" within their P, D, and R variables. However, they maintain that these variables, based on "culturally-specific dimensions of hierarchy, social distance, and ranking of imposition", are adequate in determining politeness levels across cultures (p. 17). These same variables, with dimensions that are specific to Malay culture, are used in this study to examine their effects on politeness strategies.

Interaction between relative social distance and power (PxD) is also used to describe social relationships or dyad types. In addition, particular levels of PxD

interaction motivate particular politeness strategies as discussed in the next section.

5.6   Patterns of Strategy Distribution

B and L (1987) propose that strategies for face redress are anchored to social relationships which are measured in terms of P and D. Further, these strategies are systematically distributed across four kinds of dyads (generalized social relationships) which are "specified by two polar values (high and low) attributed to S and H, on the two dimensions P and D" (p. 250). The politeness strategies used within each of these dyad types are shown below:
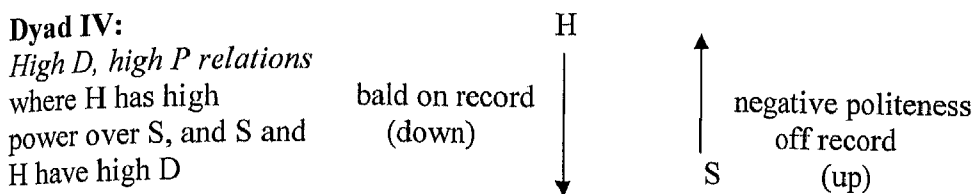
Dyad I: H
High P relations |
where H has high power   bald on record | ↑ negative politeness
over S (and D is low)   (down) | | off record
                                             | | (up)
                                             ↓ |
                                               S

Dyad II: negative politeness/off record
High D relations (+ low P)   S ——————————————————→
where H has no (or low)   (symmetrical)
power over S, and S and H have high D   ←————————————— H

Dyad III: bald on record/positive politeness
Low D, low P relations   S ——————————————————→
where H has no (or low) P   (symmetrical)
over S, and S and H have   ←————————————— H
low D

140

Dyad IV:
High D, high P relations
where H has high   bald on record
power over S, and S and   (down)
H have high D

H

negative politeness
off record

S   (up)

Figure 5.2: Patterns of strategy distribution

Source: Taken and adapted from Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C., Politeness: Some universals in language usage, 1987, p. 250.

B and L note that, in general terms, one of these dyad types may represent "'the typical social dyad' of a particular society ... and may predominate in public interaction" (1987:249). Thus, given the dyads and distribution of strategies above, the authors predict that "in societies ... dominated by high P relations" strategies corresponding to Dyads I and IV would be in operation, "with bald on record (+ perhaps positive politeness) going down to inferiors, and negative politeness and indirectness going up to superiors" (1987:250). As for societies where high D relations dominate (i.e. Dyad II), "symmetrical use of high-numbered politeness strategies would be most evident" (B and L, 1987:251). "Symmetrical use of bald on record and positive politeness (low-numbered strategies)" would be expected in societies where low P relations (D is minimized) or low D (P is minimized) is the emphasis (ibid.).

5.7   Conclusion

This study attempts to identify politeness strategies used in Malay society to perform face-threatening acts given the sociological variables (i.e. social distance, relative power and rate of an imposition) present during a social encounter. In any society, assessments of the size of the three variables are based on factors that are culturally-specific. For example, one society may view the D variable as less important than the P variable while another society may take the opposite view, i.e. places more significance on D than on P.

In general (and crude terms), the dominant or prevalent type of social relationship in Malay society is reflective of high-P values or status differentiation. For example, the high value placed on age (one of the bases of power) in this society is evident in the use of familial forms of address when addressing one's elders and to some extent, anyone older than oneself; or the significance of one's social standing (another P factor) is duly recognized when one is conferred honours and titles such as *Dato'*, *Datuk Seri*, and *Tan Sri*. Broadly speaking, assessments of P are more important than that of D in determining W_x, the weight of an FTA and subsequently the choice of a politeness strategy in this society. With an emphasis on P, it is likely that assymetrical use of strategies, i.e. bald on record by persons in authority and negative politeness and indirectness by inferiors, will be evident when performing a face-threatening act. The following three chapters will

examine these assumptions by analyzing the use of politeness strategies to perform FTAs given the P, D, and R values.