

**6.0 Introduction**

This chapter forms the first part of an analysis of politeness strategies used in performing speech acts which are face-threatening in nature (B and L, 1987:65-7). The focus is on the analysis of the speech act of offer and invitation produced by selected characters in the ten plays listed on page 103.

In Bahasa Melayu, and probably most languages, an offer is meant exclusively for the addressee whereas an invitation is inclusive, i.e. it is meant to include both S and H (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993:Ch. 31). When a speaker makes an offer, he offers something to or offers to do something for the addressee. When he extends an invitation, he invites H to do something with him. Therefore, the difference in illocutionary point of these acts is as follows: to offer is to get S to give or do something for H while to invite is to get H to do something with S.

In terms of cost-benefit, both acts are considered beneficial to H. In addition, when face wants are taken into consideration, these acts function at fulfilling H's positive-face wants. For these reasons, offers and invitations are grouped together in this study. Also, by reasons of brevity, the term "offer" is used in this study to refer to both speech acts (the terms "offer" and "invitation" are used separately when description specific to each is necessary).

## 6.1 Offers as FTAs

B and L (1987) view the act “offer” as a threat to an addressee’s negative-face want because it impedes H’s freedom of action. Since a speaker makes an offer having only H’s interests at heart, H is more likely to accept the offer even though he wants the freedom to reject it. The pressure to accept an offer and the possibility of incurring a debt by doing so threaten H’s want “that his actions be unimpeded by others” (B and L, 1987:62). However, S can nullify H’s perceived indebtedness to S by employing appropriate face-redressive means. At this point, it is again important to state that the notion of threat to face is not intrinsic to face dualism, negative face in this case. Therefore, each other’s face is attended to “without the slightest awareness that they [positive and negative face] are being threatened” (O’Driscoll, 1996:19).

When S makes an offer H knows that it is more important to protect S’s face than his own, and thus allows himself “to be pressured into” accepting the offer. This in turn leaves him with the possibility of being in debt. The importance that H places on incurring a debt depends, to a certain extent, on how different cultures view this notion of debt. In non-debt-sensitive cultures, such as in England and U.S.A., offers are not very threatening FTAs but in a debt-sensitive culture such as Japan “an offer as small as a glass of ice-water can occasion a tremendous debt” while in India, “repayment” for offers made and accepted is expected (B and L, 1987:247). Generally-speaking, Malay culture appears to share this debt-

sensitive trait with Japan and India. Thus, H assumes that he will have to repay S in some form when accepting S's offer.

B and L (1987:99) suggest that S can "alleviate H's anxieties" about incurring a debt as a consequence of accepting S's offer by "pre-emptively inviting H" to impose on him. In doing so, S communicates that he is sincere in making the offer and does not expect anything in return. B and L predict that "pre-emptive invitations" are delivered baldly on record where the risk that H may not welcome such invitations is small, e.g. offers made to family members or close friends. Where this risk is great, e.g. making an offer to a stranger or a person of higher social ranking, some other strategy is preferred to bald on record (B and L, 1987:99).

The need to express sincerity when making an offer is also shared by the Chinese society. However, this show of sincerity is not conveyed by the use of bald-on-record utterances as Hua, Li and Qian (2000) discovered in a study of gift offering and acceptance in the Chinese cultural context. Instead, a speaker shows his sincerity by repeating the offer again and again until the addressee accepts (Hua et al., 2000:99). At the same time, S is mindful that these repeated offers may be viewed by H as an attempt to impose an unwanted gift on him and as a way of suggesting that H is in need of it (Hua et al., 2000:100). So, S has to "phrase the offer in such a way that H feels easy and comfortable in accepting it" (ibid.). This principle of sincerity which forms one of two principles of social interaction in

Chinese society (the other being the principle of balance) is applicable to all social deeds because “sincerely enacted deeds are intrinsically polite” (Hua et al., 2000:99).

In Malay society, the practice of performing a social deed with sincerity (without expecting something in return) is in line with the teachings of Islam, the religion embraced by these people. Malay people express this sincerity (*keikhlasan*) by being earnest (*bersungguh-sungguh*). This fact predicts that offers in BM are made baldly on record to reflect sincerity and earnestness. This chapter looks at utterances that are used to make offers to see how these elements are worked into the interaction to address negative face.

## 6.2 Grammar and Face Redress

B and L (1987) suggest that the need for face preservation during social encounters is discernible in a language’s linguistic structures. They say “face redress is a form of social pressure which could in fact leave its imprint on grammatical structures” (B and L, 1987:258). An example of a linguistic form that functions to satisfy face concerns, in this instance, negative-face wants, is the phrase “if you don’t mind” used in requests. According to B and L, since the phrase literally means “if you have no objection to doing A”, its use as a negative-politeness strategy (i.e. don’t assume H is able/willing to do A) is evident or straight-forward (1987:258). Grammatical structures such as this where “the

pragmatic effect is achieved by virtue of their literal meaning” are said to have “structure-determined usage” (ibid.)

B and L have also identified forms that they call “usage-determined structure”. The name reflects these forms direct connection to usage “without the mediation of meaning” (B and L, 1987:259). A prime example of how form alone can encode face redress is the use of honorifics. An honorific form when used correctly and appropriately will reflect deference for an addressee since its use recognizes the addressee’s social status relative to that of the speaker. Simply-put, face-redressive properties of honorifics determine their use, hence the name “usage-determined structure”. The next section looks at imperatives in Bahasa Melayu in terms of its use in speech acts and the characteristic of its component parts that encode face concerns.

### ***6.2.1 Imperatives in Bahasa Melayu***

When a speaker of Bahasa Melayu makes an utterance using an imperative sentence, he performs one of the following speech acts: command, request, offer, or warning (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993:Ch. 31). In other words, the form of the utterance (i.e. clause-type) principally determines the illocutionary force of an utterance in BM. The illocutionary act/force of utterances with this clause-type is linguistically marked by imperative terms (*kata perintah*). These are *minta* or *tolong* (request words (*kata permintaan*)) for requests, *silalah* or *jemput* (offer words

(*kata silaan*) for offers, and *jangan* or (*tidak*) *usah* (warning words (*kata larangan*)) for warnings.

These words are named such, i.e. request words, offer words, and warning words, because there exists a direct relationship between their literal meaning and use. They are said to have “structure-determined usage” whereby their meaning determines their use in speech acts. As such, *tolong* literally means “help (me)” and *minta* is a performative verb which is used in the explicit performative *Minta berdiri* (English gloss “Please stand). *Jangan* and (*tidak*) *usah* are equivalent to “don’t” in English and explicitly prohibit someone from doing something while *sila* or *jemput* is “an invitation to someone to do something, usually for his benefit or comfort”. These words appear in sentence-initial position. As for commands, the action is “associated by convention with” or effectively conveyed by the imperative verb.

Another feature of imperatives in BM is the use of *lah*, an emphatic particle. *Lah* is used only in speech and it serves a dual function in imperative sentences. Its position immediately after an imperative word reflects its role of giving focus/additional emphasis, e.g. *tolonglah*, *silalah*, *jemputlah*, *janganlah*, *usahlah* etc. At the same time, it performs its pragmatic role of “softening” the force of the imperatives. In other words, the imperative with *lah* draws attention to the imperative and the act conveyed by it, and simultaneously makes the act polite. Consequently, adding *lah* to an imperative enables a speaker to be direct yet

polite. For example, “*lah* generally functions to take the edge off a command, making it more polite” (Mintz, 1990:41). A command such as “Sit here” becomes something like “Why don’t you sit here?” with the addition of *lah* (ibid.). However, while the utterance “Why don’t you sit here?” is polite because it gives H the option not to comply, *Duduklah di sini*, though polite, does not give H such an option (ibid.). The label “polite”, when used to describe the rules for language usage, or more specifically, the conventional forms of linguistic expressions in BM, is conceived as absolute in value. In addition, when “polite” is used to describe speech acts, this description is context-dependent within the Malay culture.

Mintz further explains that both functions of *lah* are included in its every use but “at different times different functions will predominate depending on use and context” (1990:41). *Lah* can be called a form of “usage-determined structure”, following B and L (1987), since its form encodes politeness. The following section discusses the use of imperatives to perform offers and invitations.

### ***6.2.2 Linguistic realizations of the act “offer” in BM***

Offers and invitations which, in this study, are grouped under the general term “offer” are associated by convention with the imperative clause-type. As mentioned earlier (see p. 110), offers are exclusive while invitations are inclusive. In BM, the former is grouped under the linguistic category exclusive imperative

and the latter belongs under inclusive imperative. Offers are characterized by the following syntactic structure (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993:405):

Sil – Predicate – (Object) – (Adjunct)

(Sil) denotes an “offer word” (*kata silaan*) which are *sila* and *jemput* (roughly equivalent to “please”). Examples of the act offer with the above structure are:

- (1) *Sila masuk.*  
Please come in.
- (2) *Jemput duduk.*  
Please sit down/have a seat.
- (3) *Sila jamah makanan di atas meja itu.*  
Please help yourself to the food on the table.

As for invitations, they are conventionally marked as below (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993:408):

Aj – (Subject) – Predicate – (Object) – (Adjunct)

(Aj) represents an “invite term” (*kata ajakan*), i.e. *mari*, while the first-person plural pronoun (inclusive) *kita* is used for (Subject). The phrase *mari kita* is similar to the English term “let’s”. Below are some examples:

- (4) *Mari kita pergi.*  
Let’s go.
- (5) *Mari kita tengok wayang.*  
Let’s watch a movie.
- (6) *Mari minum dahulu.*  
Come and have a drink first.



The terms *sila*, *jemput*, and *mari* can be emphasized and given focus by adding the emphatic particle *lah* such as in the following examples:

- (7) Sil**alah** masuk.
- (8) Jemput**lah** duduk.
- (9) Mar**ilah** minum dahulu.

The role of *lah* here is to emphasize the offer word/invite term and bring into focus the intended speech act. At the same time, *lah* also “counters” this apparent directness of the illocutionary act by invoking a second, contradictory, role that works to “soften” the force of the illocution. In short, this particle “highlights and softens” an IF, performing opposing roles simultaneously.

*Lah* is an example of a particle that hedges illocutionary force. Such hedging particles “...indicate something about the speaker’s commitment toward what he is saying, and in so doing modify the illocutionary force” (B and L, 1987:147). B and L have divided these particles into “strengtheners (those that mainly act as emphatic hedges...) and weakeners (those that soften or tentativize what they modify)” (ibid.). *Lah* then appears to be both a strengthening and weakening particle when used to make an offer or extend an invitation in BM.

In Tzeltal, the “emphatic or exclamatory particle” *c’e* or *c’i* is a strengthener that is used to mark polite IF (B and L, 1987:148), much like the particle *lah*. Below

are two instances of its use as, for example, responses to a guest's offer to shut the door (ibid.):

(10) *wokolok c'i*  
Do please!

(11) ?*obolbahan c'i*  
Do help (me)!

The syntactic forms and emphatic particle that characterize the speech act offer and invitation are used in BM to effectively convey the illocutionary force and fulfil face wants, to some extent. Politeness conventions are also evident in the use of imperatives in English. Lakoff (1972) explains this phenomenon using different ways of inviting someone into one's house. These are listed below and ranked in an order of descending politeness (Lakoff, 1972:914):

(12) Come in, won't you?

(13) Please come in.

(14) Come in.

In normal conversation, a speaker who utters either (12) or (13) provides the addressee with a choice – to accept the offer or not. Therefore, both utterances are polite since giving H an option implies that S does not assume H is willing to do the act and that H's status is sufficiently high with respect to S. The notion of not coercing H into doing an act by giving H an option not to do it is also a feature of face-redressive or politeness strategies under B and L's politeness framework. (14) is less polite because it assumes compliance from H and suggests that S's high status allows him to expect H to accept the invitation to enter, leaving H with

no options. Syntactically, politeness is communicated by the use of a tag-question in (12) and the insertion of “please” in sentence-initial position in (13).

Wolfson, D’Amico-Reisner and Huber (1983), who studied the speech act “invitation” in American English using data that were collected through participant observation, have proposed that an invitation is unambiguous when it has the following properties: (1) reference to time and/or mention of place or activity and (2) a request for a response (kernel) (p. 117). In addition, “an unambiguous invitation does not occur without a request for a response (ibid.). In other words, this speech act is realized by the kernel and the two most common syntactic forms for it in American English are (Wolfson et al., 1983:117-8):

(Do you) – {want to/wanna} – VP (e.g. You wanna get together for lunch?)

and

Why – Do Neg – {you/we} – VP (e.g. Why don’t you join us?)

Another form that is similar to the one commonly used in BM for invitations is

Let’s – VP (e.g. Let’s go get coffee)

However, unlike its frequency of use in BM, this syntactic pattern is less common in American English.

Wolfson et al. (1983) also recorded the degree of power and solidarity that existed between the interlocutors in order to gauge the influence of these dimensions on

“the way invitations are managed”. They found no examples of ambiguous invitations given to a superior and concluded that “power, or inequality of status, favoured direct invitations” (Wolfson et al., 1983:125). They also concluded that “some degree of solidarity must be present in order for interlocutors to attempt negotiating invitations” (ibid.). In negotiating an invitation, a speaker can begin by expressing (directly or indirectly) “a wish for a social commitment” or by establishing availability (with a question or statement) of the hearer and from here, S and H “move through steps that may lead to a completed invitation” (Wolfson et al., 1983:120). It is obvious then that interlocutors must share some degree of closeness or familiarity with each other in order to negotiate an “invitation interaction”.

The following sections of this chapter look at how offers and invitations are made in BM given the varying degrees of P and D which define the social relationship between S and H and influence the choice of a politeness strategy.

### **6.3 Strategies for Making Offers**

The speech act “offer” identified from the data was categorized using the speaker’s (the person making the offer) interpersonal relationship with the addressee (the recipient of the offer). This involved identifying the level of power(P) H had over S (determined by, among others, position and role within a family or society, age, occupation, or wealth) and their level of

familiarity/closeness with each other. Consequently, there were three levels of power(P), i.e. low, equal, and high, and two levels of distance(D) – low and high, that resulted in six levels of PxD interaction.

A total of 150 utterances that contained the speech act “offer” were identified. The number of offer tokens for each PxD interaction is shown in Table 6.1 (see p. 157). As can be seen from the table, the number of offers made to people whom S was not familiar with (high D) was small (31 tokens) compared to those made to people whom S was close to or familiar with (low D). From the number of offers made to individuals categorized under high D, roughly half the amount was made to those with low P over S (16 tokens) while only a small number of offers were made to people of equal P with and high P over S (9 and 6 tokens, respectively). Also evident from the table is that the majority of offers, i.e. 119 tokens, were made to individuals whom S regarded as close or familiar (e.g. family members, relatives, and friends). The following sub-sections look at the effects of each PxD interaction on the choice of a politeness strategy when making an offer or extending an invitation.

**Table 6.1: Offer tokens for each PxD interaction**

Power(P) Social distance (D)	low	equal	high	Total
low	32	51	36	150
high	16	9	6	

### 6.3.1 Effects of low P low D on choice of strategy

It was found that bald-on-record utterances were used by the speaker for offers made to people who differed in age and social role relative to S. The addressees were younger than the speaker and were the son, daughter, future son-in-law, or sister-in-law of S. The roles H assumed in each context of utterance, more than age, were considered of low P relative to S's role. These roles also served as indicators of S's and H's level of familiarity with each other which could be considered low (i.e. low D). Below are some examples from the data (the nature of the relationship between S and H is stated within square brackets):

- (15) [between two villagers; S is older]  
*Duduklah.*  
Do sit.
- (16) [brother-in-law to sister-in-law]  
*Oi Nah. Kemarilah duduk dekat kerusi ni.*  
Hey Nah. Do come here and sit on this chair.
- (17) [future mother-in-law to future son-in-law]  
*Oooo, Umar. Masuk nak!*  
Oh, Umar. Come in son!

- (18) [mother to adopted daughter]  
*Marilah duduk.*  
 Do come and sit.
- (19) [elderly relative to young relative]  
*Mari kita pergi minum kopi di kedai mamak simpang tu.*  
 Let's go and have coffee at the coffee stall near the junction.
- (20) [mother to her daughter's friend]  
*Duduklah Suriah ya?*  
 Do sit Suriah, won't you?

The offer in example (17) and the invitation in (19) are delivered baldly. This strategy choice is appropriate given S's high P over H. In utterances (15), (16), and (18), it is more likely that the emphatic particle *lah* is used to make the offer/invitation firmer and to stress the sincerity of the offer rather than to mark the power differential between S and H. The bald-on-record offer in (20) is followed by a tag form, i.e. *ya*, which is similar in literal meaning to "yes". The function of *ya* in this utterance is to give emphasis to the imperative. It is not used here to form a tag question although it takes the surface form of one. This can be shown to be the case by the possibility of moving *ya* to a position immediately after the imperative verb as in below:

- (21) *Duduklah, ya, Suriah.*

Thus, (20) consists of two emphatic elements, i.e. *lah* and *ya*. However, unlike *lah* which encodes S's sincerity by way of making a firm offer, the use of *ya* allows S to request for and perhaps even coax H's acceptance of the offer. This is achieved by drawing upon the literal meaning of *ya* ("yes" in English). Thus, S

communicates that he is making a sincere offer which H should readily accept by means of physical or verbal action, or both. The use of this agreement particle for a similar purpose is also found in Indonesian language.

Wouk (2001), in a study of the functions of *ya* and *iya* (two allomorphs of the Indonesian word for “yes”) in Indonesian conversation, found that many of the uses of *ya* “grow naturally out of its literal meaning” (p. 188). An example is the use of *ya* as an interrogative tag. According to Wouk (2001), since *ya* has “a basic meaning of agreement”, a speaker who tags it at the end of an utterance typically requests agreement or verification of the preceding utterance from the hearer (p. 183). This is parallel to the use of affirmative tags such as “right” and “OK” in English (ibid.)

Other than bald-on-record offers as means to minimize the threat to negative face, there are bald-on-record offers which use positive-politeness strategies to further redress this FTA. Some of these are:

(22) [mother to son]  
*Affandi duduk nak, engkau penat.*  
Sit Affandi, you’re tired.

(23) [mother to daughter]  
*Marilah dulu, makan kuih seri muka tu. Berbuka tadi tak kau jamah pun.*  
Come and have some dessert first. You didn’t have any during the break of fast.

In both (22) and (23), the bald-on-record offers are followed by positive politeness (output strategy 1) where S notices H’s condition (tiredness in (22)) or



need (possibly some dessert in (23)). This strategy – Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods) which follows the baldly-made offer suggests that the offer is made to benefit H and should not be viewed as an imposition. B and L (1987) cite an example from English that uses this said strategy (p. 103).

- (24) You must be hungry, it's a long time since breakfast. How about some lunch?

From the examples above, it can be seen that most offers are redressed by S although S need not do so since H's power over S is low. Face redress is made by using the emphatic particle *lah* and positive-politeness output strategy 1. It can be concluded that S, in making an offer to H, does not place much emphasis on the fact that H is younger than him/her or that H's social role in the interaction makes him/her inferior to S in terms of status. A clear example of this is shown in the utterance below:

- (25) [mother to friends of her daughter]  
*Minumlah. Tak ada apa-apa di rumah makcik ni.*  
Do drink. There's nothing (to offer) in my house.

The offer above is made baldly on record followed by the humbling of the speaker's possession, i.e. the lack of "the right kind of food" to serve guests (rather than the absence of any kind of food). Under politeness strategies, this form of redress can be described as a negative-politeness strategy where S gives deference to H by being humble about the offer. However, the self-humbling in (25) is not an open show of S's respect for H. Rather, it serves to allay H's fear of having incurred a debt by accepting an offer from S who is of high social status.

S, apart from showing sincerity by using a bald-on-record offer, humbles herself to indicate that the offer is small, and thus requires no repayment from H. The fact that S incorporates a negative-politeness strategy to further redress the offer even though S's social position grants her high P over H signals that the power differential between them is secondary to the want to have H accept the offer without much reluctance, albeit a drink. In other words, the power differential, i.e. low P, does not have a significant effect on the choice of politeness strategies.

### 6.3.2. *Effects of equal P low D on choice of strategy*

The type of status-equal relationship yielded from the data was that of intimates, e.g. married (husband-wife) and unmarried couples, and close friends. Thus, the interactants are close to and familiar with each other; they share low social distance. Offers to status equals were made in the following ways:

- (26) [to a close friend]  
*Nanti kuambilkan kopi untukmu, Fandi.*  
I'll get you some coffee.
- (27) [between an unmarried couple]  
*Nantilah minum dulu. Kejap saja Yah siapkan.*  
Do wait and have a drink first. I'll only take a while to make it.
- (28) [between close friends]  
*Silalah minum. Air sejuk saja.*  
Please have a drink. It's just cold water.
- (29) [wife to husband]  
*...Nita bawakan nasi dan lauk untuk abang. Kita makan sama-sama bang.*  
...I've brought rice and dishes for you. We'll eat together.

- (30) [wife to husband]  
*Tadi abang kata lapar, mari kita makan dulu.*  
 You said you were hungry, let's eat first.
- (31) [to a close friend]  
*...aku masuk buat kan air.*  
 ...I'll go and make some drink.

In the above examples, there does not appear to be a dominant politeness strategy used. Utterances (26) and (31) are bald on record and these involved S offering to do something for H (i.e. make H a drink). S's bald offers are probably motivated by sincerity more than by the status-equal relationship. The offers in (27) and (28) are bald on record followed by negative politeness where S goes on record as not indebted to H (Strategy 10). There are similar expressions in English that disclaim any indebtedness of H when making an offer (B and L, 1987:210):

- (32) I could easily do it for you.
- (33) It wouldn't be any trouble; I have to go right by there anyway.

The verb *nanti* in (26) and (27) which is used only in speech functions differently in each utterance. *Nanti* in (26) functions as a verb which indicates future action. Its function is parallel to that of the modal verb "will" which is sometimes used in English to indicate future time. Apart from the use of *nanti* to signal that S is about to offer to do something for H, the words *biar* and *mari* are also common in BM. Consider the examples below:

- (34) [between a couple]  
*Oh, biar abang yang memakaikan pada lenganmu, Idah...*  
 Oh, let me put it on for you, Idah...

- (35) [to a close friend]  
*Marilah aku hantar kau balik, Swee Lan.*  
Do let me walk you home, Swee Lan.

It was mentioned earlier that the word *mari* is used as an “invite term” (*kata ajakan*). However, *mari* functions as *kata silaan* (offer word) in (35). The two uses of *mari* can be differentiated by the pronoun that follows it. When *mari* is used to invite, it is followed by *kita* (first-person plural) to indicate clearly that the invitation includes both S and H. Whereas in making an offer, *mari* is followed by *aku/saya* (first-person singular) to explicitly say that the action inherent in the offer will be performed by S. In short, a speaker of BM uses *mari kita* (let us) when inviting and *mari aku/saya* (let me) when offering.

In (27), *nanti* is an imperative verb and it is equivalent in meaning to “wait”. In (29) and (30), the strategies used for the invitations are the same and they are positive politeness strategies. S initiates the FTA by first presupposing or asserting S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s need for food (Strategy 9) and then proceeds to extend an invitation.

The term “presuppose” is used by B and L (1987) to describe S’s presumption that something is “mutually taken for granted ... and S speaks *as if* it were mutually assumed” (although this may not be the case, i.e. mutual knowledge of H’s wants) (p.122, original emphasis). This form of “presupposition

manipulations” is realized in English by the use of negative questions that presume “yes” as an answer. Examples for offers are as follows:

(36) Wouldn't you like a drink?

(37) Don't you want some dinner now?

The use of these strategies suggests that, apart from making bald-on-record offers, status equals also redress these offers to further reinforce their closeness to each other. As the above examples show, strategies which address either positive or negative face of H are used not only to indicate S's awareness of H's face aspect(s) in a given context but ultimately to strengthen the existing relationship between them. This is also evident in S's use of H's first name (i.e. *Fandi*) in (26) and a term of endearment, i.e. *abang/bang*, in (29) and (30) which is commonly used by wives to address their husbands. S also refers to herself in (27) and (29) using a shorten form of her first name; i.e. *Yah* (short for *Shamsiah*) and *Nita* (short for *Anita*), respectively. This first-name-basis practice reinforces the interactants' status as equals. In general, the use of one's given name or pet name instead of the use of a first-person pronoun (i.e. *aku* or *saya*) to refer to oneself is common among speakers of Malay. Such uses encode the closeness/familiarity shared by the speakers. The same is true with the use of familial terms as a form of self-address (e.g. *ayah*, *ibu*, *kakak*, *adik*, *makcik*, etc.). It can be surmised that, in making offers, status equals use politeness strategies and address forms which emphasize the equal P and low D type of relationship.

### 6.3.3 Effects of high P low D on choice of strategy

Addressees of high P were represented in the data as S's parents, older relatives, and elders. Thus, the bases of H's power were his age and/or role in a family institution. Given these bases of power, S's offers to H were made using the utterances below:

- (38) [to an older relative]  
*Eh, duduklah Bang Majid.*  
Oh, do sit Bang Majid.
- (39) [young man to his elders]  
*Duduklah tuk, pak, duduk.*  
Do sit, tuk, pak, sit.
- (40) [adopted daughter to mother]  
*Makanlah pengatnya, ibu.*  
Do eat the dessert, mother.
- (41) [to an older relative]  
*Nanti saya ambihkan air.*  
I'll get something to drink.
- (42) [to an elderly lady]  
*Er, Nek Haji, marilah kita makan sekali.*  
Uh, Nek Haji, let's eat together.
- (43) [daughter to mother]  
*Biar Aziah pergi ambil (sepucuk surat).*  
Let me get it (a letter).

In utterances (38), (39) and (42), the bald-on-record offers are redressed with "negative-politeness respect terms". The terms of address used, i.e. *Bang Majid*, *tuk, pak*, and *Nek Haji* (utterance (38), (39) and (42), respectively), are kinship terms which allude to either the age or family position (or both) of the addressee

and in so doing give deference to H. Specifically, the address term *Bang Majid* encodes information about H's (i.e. *Bang Majid's*) age and family position; H is older than S and H is S's husband's older brother. As for the address forms *tuk*, *pak* and *Nek Haji*, these allude to H's age only. The term *pak* is used because H is roughly the same age as S's father and the terms *tuk* and *Nek Haji* suggest that H is about the same age as S's grandfather and grandmother, respectively.

The use of these kinship terms enables S to satisfy H's positive-face wants, "namely that which satisfies H's want to be treated as superior" and to convey that "H is of higher social status than S" (B and L, 1987:178). These linguistic forms which encode deference are called honorifics. Honorifics, as used in this study, follows B and L's use of the term insofar as they are "direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants ... in the communicative event" (1987:179).

As is evident in (39) and (42), kinship terms in Malay are not restricted to people who are related by blood or marriage. When it is used within this group, the form(s) used encodes and recognizes a person's position in the group's hierarchical family structure. Usage of these terms is also common outside the said group. Terms such as *pak cik* (one's paternal/maternal uncle) and *abang* (elder brother or male relative who is older than oneself) are used to address a man who is of the same age as one's uncle and a man who is about the same age as one's brother or who is slightly older than oneself, respectively. Although this

extended usage alludes only to age and not status, it still encodes respect for the addressee because in Malay society respect comes with age (in general).

The use of the deferential form of the first-person pronoun (singular) *saya* in (41) suggests that the offer is made in a respectful manner (compare this to the use of *aku/ku* (the intimate form of the same pronoun) in utterances (26) and (31) where H is S's status equal). These examples show that S uses a negative-politeness strategy, i.e. give deference, to redress the bald-on-record offers, and S does this in order to acknowledge the high power differential. S communicates that H's high P accords him "rights to relative immunity from imposition" and does not put S "in a position to coerce H's compliance in any way" (B and L, 1987:178).

Another example of this strategy in use is the following:

- (44) [adopted daughter to mother]  
*Eh, ini ada penganak sedikit untuk ibu...Masakan Lati sendiri, entah sedap entah tidak pada selera ibu. Cubalah barang sesudu dua.*  
Oh, here's (a little) dessert for you...I made it myself, I'm not sure whether it's nice and to your liking. Do try a spoonful or two.

In the utterance above, S gives deference to H by humbling herself, in this instance, her ability to cook before inviting H to sample the offer/dessert. This form of deference where S humbles herself signals awareness of her social position which discourages her from being persistent when making the offer. Hua et al. (2000) have identified a similar strategy in their study of gift offering and acceptance in Chinese whereby S's expression of uncertainty concerning the



beneficial value/suitability of a gift makes him “appear more modest and less persistent”. This, in turn, gives H an opportunity to decline the offer. However, the authors note that this opportunity is seldom seized by H because to decline the gift offer is to imply that the gift is not to H’s liking. Below is an example cited by Hua et al. (2000:91):

- (45) [student to teacher]  
*Woge zai jisuanji gongsi, zhei jizhang CD buzhi nin youmeiyouyong.*  
 My brother works in a computer company. I don’t know whether these CDs will be of any use to you.

In (44), apart from expressing uncertainty about whether the food offered will be to H’s liking (use of the phrase “...*entah sedap entah tidak pada selera ibu...*”), S also minimizes the imposition ( $R_x$ ), i.e. the offer. This then suggests that the offer is not in itself great/huge and the adjective *sedikit* (lit. a little) is used to this effect. *Sedikit* alludes to the small (almost insignificant) nature of the offer and not the quantity of the food/dessert. H could very likely place a huge pot of *pengat* in S’s hands and still call it *sedikit*. B and L view this negative-politeness strategy (Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition  $R_x$ ) as an indirect means of paying H deference since it suggests that “P or D is great, rather than  $R_x$ ” (1987:176-8). In (44), this strategy goes hand in hand with output strategy 5 where S explicitly shows deference by humbling herself. The invitation to try the dessert also contains an expression (a quantifier) that minimizes the imposition – “*sesudu dua*” (lit. one or two spoonfuls). In short, S’s redressive moves in this utterance can be glossed as: The offer of food is redressed in order to pay deference to H

followed by the invitation (to try the dessert) which is made bald-on-record but redressed to indicate that P is great rather than R<sub>x</sub>.

While (44) is an example where S offers something to H, (43) is one where S offers to do something for H. Below are two more examples of the latter:

(46) [son to father]

*Saya sudah berhenti sekolah. Biarlah saya di rumah menolong bapa.*

I've quit school. Do let me stay home and help you.

(47) [adopted daughter to mother]

*Oh kasihan, ibu sudah tua, mari Lati tolong cucukkan benangnya.*

It's such a pity that you've grown old. Let me help you thread the needle.

The term *biar(lah)* (equivalent to English "allow/let me") as used in examples (43) and (46) does not only indicate that S is offering to do something but also that S is seeking permission to do so. In other words, *biar(lah)* is used by S to simultaneously request permission to do an act and to offer to do the said act. Therefore, there are two illocutions in these utterances with the illocutionary force of an offer. Since seeking H's permission is inherent in the meaning of *biar(lah)*, it is likely that the use of this term is motivated by H's high P.

In (47), S remarks about H's age (a positive-politeness strategy where S notices something about H) before she offers to do something for H that can be difficult for H to do herself at her age (in this example, thread a needle). S probably does this, i.e. remark about H's age, in order to pay deference to H since in Malay society (as in most other societies), one way of showing respect for one's elders is

to help them with tasks that they, due to advancing age, find difficulty in doing on their own. Here, paying H positive face is due to H's high P more than to the low social distance between S and H. The phrase *mari Lati* is used here to make the offer.

Offering to do something for one's elders by explicitly stating that certain tasks may be difficult to do given their age which is described above as a means of positive face redress can at times backfire as is illustrated in the following example where A and B are native speakers of Malay:

(48) *Mohammad Idris, 2000:134*  
[between uncle(B) and nephew(A)]

A<sub>1</sub>: *Pak cik tu dah tua. Tak larat kerja kuat-kuat. Biar saya tolong angkatkan.*

You've grown old. You're not able to do heavy work. Let me help to lift that (a heavy object).

B<sub>1</sub>: *Tua sangat ke aku ni?*

Am I that old?

A<sub>2</sub>: *Bukan begitu, pak cik.*

That's not it, pak cik.

B<sub>2</sub>: *...aku baru 53 tahun. Kalau ikutkan hati, aku masih boleh bekerja sepuluh tahun lagi. Ini umur masih muda, tapi tak berdaya. Buat apa?*

...I'm only fifty-three years old. If I have my way, I'll still be working for another ten years. What's the point of being young but weak?

A's show of respect by using a positive-politeness strategy that acknowledged B's age was lost on B. This is clear from B's response to the offer in B<sub>1</sub>. In terms of positive-face wants, B's question in B<sub>1</sub> ("Am I that old?") implies that being described as "old" is not a "want" that B wishes significant others, in this case his

nephew, to find “desirable”. In B<sub>2</sub>, B makes explicit this implicature by stating that he is relatively young and that he is able to work until he is sixty-three.

The examples above illustrate that H’s high P requires S to redress bald offers with strategies that address H’s negative-face aspects. This is achieved by using respect terms and by S minimizing the imposition and humbling himself. Respect terms, which in the examples take the form of kinship terms, are also used to address H’s positive face. Essentially, H’s want to be recognized as a superior is attended to with the use of kinship terms. Another means of addressing positive face is to remark about H’s advancing age; such a remark implies that an offer of assistance is made out of respect for H’s age. Therefore, paying deference when making an offer under high P low D relations can be either a negative- or positive-politeness strategy.

#### ***6.3.4 Effects of high D on strategy choice***

A total of 31 offer tokens made to people whom S was not close to/familiar with were identified from the data. From the data, the types of relationship that can be described as high D included that between employer-employee, government officer-member(s) of the public and between individuals who meet for the first time for a particular purpose (i.e. an interview, to discuss the possibility of marriage between their children or to discuss an investment plan). As for H’s relative power over S, this was determined by one or a combination of the

following factors: position in society, occupation, and wealth. Due to the small number of offers found for this level of distance, the politeness strategy used for each PxD interaction is discussed together.

It was found that similar offers were baldly made to hearers of low, equal, and high P. These were the “standard/routine” offers where S offered H a drink or a seat or where S invited H into her home. The linguistic realizations of these offers were also the same as the ones found for low D. This finding can be attributed to the fact that offers, in general, are low in imposition, particularly the “standard” ones. Also, the want to show sincerity is a primary reason for choosing direct means of making offers regardless of the level of social distance between offerer and recipient. Below are some examples:

- (49) [officer to member of public; low P high D]  
*Silakan, silakan masuk.*  
Please...please come in.
- (50) [socialite to interviewer; low P high D]  
*Jemputlah duduk.*  
Do please have a seat.
- (51) [elderly man to young lady; low P high D]  
*Marilah minum sama.*  
Do come and have a drink with me.
- (52) [host to first-time guests; equal P high D]  
*Silakan, silakan duduk di kerusi ini.*  
Please...please sit on this chair.
- (53) [host to first-time guests; equal P high D]  
*Minumlah, minumlah semua orang. Janganlah malu-malu.*  
Do drink...do drink everyone. Don't be shy.

- (54) [young lady to elderly man; high P high D]  
*Ini airnya, pakcik. Jemputlah.*  
 This is your drink, pak cik. Please help yourself.
- (55) [villager to officer; high P high D]  
*Masuklah, silalah masuk.*  
 Do come in...do please come in.

As previously mentioned, the linguistic realizations of these bald offers are similar for low D and high D relations. However, there appears to be more use of the offer words (*kata silaan*) *silalah*, *silakan*, and *jemputlah* for high D relations. The use of these words tends to lend an air of formality to the offers and the high D factor is a likely reason for their use. The following offers were also made to status equals:

- (56) [host to first-time guests; equal P high D]  
*Datanglah bila-bila masa saja. Pintu rumah ini sentiasa terbuka.*  
 Do come anytime. This house is always open (to you).
- (57) [same as above]  
*Ah, di sini sajalah tidur malam ini. Besok boleh balik. Dapatlah kita makan semua dulu.*  
 Ah, just sleep here tonight. You can go home tomorrow. Then we can have a meal together.

The invitation to H to visit S again (in (56)) and to spend the night (in (57)), although uncommon given the high D factor, are perhaps made because of it. In other words, S extends the invitations in an effort to reduce the social distance between her and the hearer. Also, such invitations are quite the norm among Malays since such hospitable acts are very much part of their culture. An invitation to one's home was also found for high P high D relations. Below are two examples:

- (58) [guest to host; high P high D]  
*Sudi pulalah kiranya datang ke pondok kecil kami di hulu. Tapi tempat kami, encik, tak adalah rumah batu beratap genting. Cuma yang ada, dinding papan beratap rumbia.*  
 Come to our hut upcountry, if you like. Our place doesn't have brick houses with tiled roofs, sir. All we have are wooden walls with thatched roofs.
- (59) [villager to officer; high P high D]  
*Senang-senang datang ke tempat kami. Ubi kayu dan jagung tu adalah.*  
 Come over to our place when you're free. There're tapioca and corn.

In making the above offers, H's high P over S causes S to be humble. In (58), S employs a negative-politeness strategy (output strategy 5: Give deference) where she belittles her house by describing it as a hut (*pondok kecil*) with wooden walls and a thatched roof (*dinding papan beratap rumbia*) located in a rural area (*di hulu*). However, this self-humbling is not entirely exaggerated since the high P factor is a result of H's material wealth. Thus, S's humility is a way of addressing H's high P over S. In addition, the invitation is hedged by using the phrase *sudi pulalah kiranya* which is similar to the English phrase "if you like" (an if-clause that hedges illocutionary force).

In (59), to a lesser degree, S belittles his offer (that H comes for a visit) by saying there's nothing much to look forward to when H visits other than an abundance of tapioca and corn (*ubi kayu dan jagung tu adalah*). B and L (1987:186) cite a similar example in Tzeltal where S belittles his offer:

- (60) hu?uk. bistuk ?a?wu?un, mastunis te hnae.  
 No. What good is it to you, my house (that you are going to borrow) is completely worthless.

In summary, offers made to individuals whom S is not close to or familiar with (high D) are mostly bald on record and similar to those made to low D individuals. A notable difference, however, is the frequent use of *sila(lah)*, *silakan*, and *jemput(lah)* in their linguistic realization that can be attributed to the high social distance. When offers other than the “routine” ones are made to status equals, this is done in an effort to reduce the high D. When such offers are made to high P individuals, S hedges and/or belittles them in order to pay H negative face. In other words, negative-politeness strategies are used to redress the offers and to address H’s high P over S.

#### **6.4 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has set out to analyze the effects of various levels of power and distance (where the determinants of these levels are specific to Malay society) on offers made. Looking first at offers made to people who share low social distance with S, the results show that when S makes a bald-on-record offer to H who is of low P, this is done to stress the sincerity of the offer. It is not done to stress the power differential between S and H. The finding that low P does not have a significant effect on the choice of a politeness strategy can also be supported by the presence of positive-politeness strategies to redress baldly made offers even though S’s high P does not necessitate such type of redressive action. In short, although H’s low P allows S to make offers baldly, S does not do so. Instead,



linguistic markings are used to signal sincerity and H's positive face is taken into account in making the offer.

As for offers made to a status equal, the results indicate that S places more emphasis on his close ties with H than the similarity of both his and H's social position. This emphasis yields offers that express sincerity (bald-on-record strategy), that assert/presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants (positive-politeness strategy), and that frees H from indebtedness to S (negative-politeness strategy). Here, equal P does not significantly dictate a dominant politeness strategy. Any strategy, which in a particular context, addresses and emphasizes the notion of equal P low D relations is used to make offers.

The effects of high P on the choice of a politeness strategy can be seen from the use of respect terms and the humbling of oneself in making the offer. These strategies are means of giving deference to H whose power over S is high. Therefore, negative-face redress is the result of high P where S communicates that he is in no position to make an offer and that H has every right to decline it. Paying deference to H's high P also instantiates a positive-politeness strategy since it entails noticing and attending to H's status as an elder and a superior.

Looking next at offers made to high D individuals, it can be concluded that for the three levels of P (low, equal, and high), the words *sila(lah)*, *silakan*, and *jemput(lah)* that are used rendered the bald offers formal. Also, when S makes an

offer to high P individuals, he hedges and/or belittles it in order to address the power differential between him and H.

In conclusion, the results show that the choice of a politeness strategy to accompany the speech act offer is significantly affected by high P where H's power over S compels him to employ strategies that address H's negative-face wants. The effects of low and equal P are not as significant. S's bald-on-record offers incorporate positive-politeness strategies although H's low P assumes that offers are made baldly. Equal P makes the same assumption but the findings indicate that apart from bald-on-record offers, strategies that address positive- and negative-face wants are also used in offers made to status equals.