CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Negotiation takes place in every society, and it essentially involves the use of language as the primary medium of communication. Lewicki et al (1999) says that negotiations occur for one of two reasons: (1) to resolve a problem or dispute between the parties, or (2) to create something new that neither party could do on his or her own. Patterson (1999) shares the same views as Lewicki et al (1999), when he says that anytime we bring two or more people together to solve a problem or make a decision, we are negotiating. On the other hand, Stark (1999) states that negotiation should be considered as a positive way of structuring the communication process. Thus, negotiation can be concluded as the use of language in any discussion between two or more parties to solve a problem, to achieve an aim and to avoid a conflict.

The aim of negotiation is to obtain a goal or 'to win'. A negotiation reaches 'win-win' outcomes when both sides feel they have obtained the best deal possible (Lewicki, 2003). Patterson (1999) says win-win negotiating is based on honesty and effective communication, so that both sides can get most of what they want, or at least more than they expect to get. The people involved in negotiating can be family members e.g between husband and wife (Abdullah Hassan, 2002), teacher and student (Govindasamy, 1994), diplomats (Ravichandran, 2006), borrower and bank (Nambiar,S,1999), and also customer and trader who negotiate in their selling-buying process (Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin, 1994; Bertheussen, 2005). In other words, if the

negotiator, whether seller or buyer, fails to take part in the negotiation process positively, the mission would not be successful. In order to 'win' their aims, both the customer and the seller will use a variety of negotiation strategies, which often may involve manipulating the language to achieve the end.

In the supermarket scenario, the selling-buying process does not allow for negotiation of the prices or bargaining as the price of goods is fixed. Usually the customers will go directly to the cashier to pay for the goods chosen after accepting the price printed on the item. On the other hand, negotiation for the price will definitely take place during selling-buying at the night markets and bazaars whereby the price of the goods are not fixed. As most bazaars sell the same goods, which are often of the same quality and material the sellers will use their linguistic creativity to compete for customers and the customers will also put to use their linguistic creativity to get the best price.

An example of this buying and selling situation can be observed in the *Kedai Payang Market* in Kuala Terengganu. Most of the stores sell clothes and local food stuffs such as *keropok*, dried squid, salted fish and *bepang* (rice cakes). The buying and selling practice there is unique as it strives to achieve satisfaction fulfillment for all parties involved. Competition between sellers is high because they offer similar (often exactly the same) goods. Local customers who are familiar with the goods and the price draw a hard bargain. So much so that when listening to them outbidding each other one cannot help but be amazed at the creativity of the sellers and the sharp wit of the more experienced bargain hunters. Undoubtedly language skills play a crucial role as both customers or buyers and sellers banter to achieve their objective. The main language used at the *Pasar Payang* is the Terengganu dialect of the Malay language.

The Malay customers and culture put a lot of emphasis on politeness both in speech as in action. Indirectness in speech is one of the attestations of how Malay customs and culture uphold politeness in order to maintain rapport with their interlocutors (Asmah, 1992). During the buying-selling process, sometimes the price offered by the customers is too low or the quality of products offered by the sellers may not grab the customers' interest. Situations like these could raise conflict in negotiation. As members of the Malay community, sellers would not say 'no' to the customers' demand and the latter will not frankly reject the offer because this would cause embarrassment to either party. This action is considered impolite and insensitive to others' feelings. Therefore, sellers will use indirect language to politely turn down customers' request while the latter will give appropriate reasons so that conflict would be avoided. Since Malays are always be polite while interacting (Asmah; 1992), the sellers and customers are able to predict the meaning conveyed to them through indirect utterances and use of implicatures during negotiations. In this way, it will create a harmonious Malaysian society that upholds culture and values passed down through the generations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In a selling-buying event, sometimes, the customer is not able to buy the goods desired as it is too expensive or out of his/her budget. In order to attain his/her aim, the customer will work very hard to find the right way of expressions. The manipulated language becomes the main weapon to achieve the aim. Sometimes, the seller will recommend the goods that should be purchased to the customer through advertising to attract the attention of the customer. Therefore, the elements of politeness, courtesy and

respect, will certainly be utilised by both the customer and the seller in their conversation, so both parties could achieve their objectives.

However, in certain situations, with strong finances and higher purchasing power, some customers can afford to buy the products sold even at a very high price. Since the need to obtain the goods is high, the need to negotiate for a lower price is seldom practiced by these customers as they are not restricted by a tight budget. For these customers, bargaining or haggling in order to get a lower price is not a practice. In other words, the customers are willing to pay for products which match the retail price without putting any effort to negotiate for a lower price. On the sellers' part, their main aim is to get the highest level of profit from the rich customers as such they usually treat them well by using the elements such as courtesy, culture, and politeness when dealing with them.

Some sellers would converse imprudently without considering the customers' feelings while some customers feel that they do not need to use the elements of politeness in conversing with the sellers. This causes a great concern as unfriendly buying and selling practices reflect a decline in politeness among society members. If this problem is not adressed appropriately, in the future, politeness may not be practiced in certain domains.

In finding ways to examine how far the language of politeness is still practiced by the Malays nowadays, this study will identify the extent of which language of courtesy is used in buying and selling as practiced by the customers and sellers at Pasar Payang, Kuala Terengganu. As such this research focuses on the rules of indirectness among Malays (Asmah, 1992) and Nor Hashimah (1994) and Jamaliah (2000). Through

the analysis of the interaction strategies employed during the buying-selling contexts meaning and supposition which are constructed based on the semantics and pragmatics approach proposed by Grice (1975) will also be discussed.

1.2 Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

The main aim of this study is to examine how customers and sellers at the Pasar Kedai Payang express their politeness during the process of selling-buying. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the strategies used during selling-buying process; and
2. To analyze these strategies identified in (1) in terms of its semantic and pragmatic value. As such, two research question have been constructed to meet these objectives:

1. What are the strategies used in the selling-buying interactions at Pasar Payang.
2. How are the semantic and pragmatic features presented through the strategies identified in (1).

1.3 Significance of the Study

Language is a very important tool in human communication. Each member of a community shares the same communication features through the same language. Through language, feeling and desires can be conveyed. The community's culture and beliefs would be reflected through the use of the shared language. Thus, the study of language used during interaction in a selling-buying setting is seen as a very interesting phenomenon, as it would reveal the specific style of language used by sellers and

customers who are in themselves natural negotiators. Furthermore, this research can contribute and enhance the literature in the field of sociolinguistics and pragmatics as it covers strategies used in language in society. In this sense, the findings of this study could be used as a reference for other researchers with interest in the culture and language of the Malays of Terengganu.

1.4 Limitation of the study

This socio-pragmatics research is limited to one particular setting and to a sample of sellers and customers within that setting. The sellers are those who are involved in textile and local food, even though there is a variety of other tradings occurring at this place. The field of research is only concerned with interactions between the sellers and the customers covering particular aspects such as greeting and welcoming during pre-negotiation; repetition, hyperbole, praise, offers, refusing and terms used to address customers during the negotiation. Lastly, the way the sellers close the negotiation will also be investigated as it is an important stage where the sellers seal the deal with the customers.

1.5 Summary

Chapter 1 has presented the background to the study in relation to language used among sellers and customers within the trading community in Pasar Payang, Kuala Terengganu. Through this chapter, two significant elements, the language phenomenon and the socioculture of the community have been discussed. This chapter also explains the objectives of the study, the research questions, the limitation and significance of the study in order to facilitate a better understanding of the research's conceptual framework. In Chapter Two, pertinent research related to this study will be discussed.