

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This section starts with the background information of the study and the statement of problem where it clarifies the reasons for the study of directives in advice texts. Then, the research objective and research questions are outlined. Next, the significance of the study is discussed to illustrate the benefits of this study. This is followed by the scope and limitations to demonstrate the boundary and issues covered in the study. The terms that are used repeatedly throughout the study are also defined to ensure the clarity and comprehensibility. Finally the outline of the research sums all the chapters in this study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Advice columns originated from the British newspaper special features about 800 years ago and quickly became the most popular cultural phenomenon of that era. It spread quickly to America and served as a source of entertainment for a small group of elite intellectuals and became the medium for advice-seekers who needed emotional support from non-threatening, authoritative figure (Moran, 1989; McKinstry and McKinstry, 1991). Hendley (1977) states that advice columns have become successful because everybody seeks advice at one point in their life and everybody is nosy about other people's well-being. Nowadays, advice columns are found in almost all printed and electronic media as it is both entertaining and informative at the same time (Locher, 2006). These advice columns include a variety of themes such as career, financial, relationship, religion and health.

Some studies that have been conducted on advice are in the fields of medical and psychology (Moran, 1989; Dibner, 1974), the origins of advice (Hendley, 1977), the norms and social context of American advice (Decapua and Huber, 1995), advice columns as a Japanese cultural mirror (McKinstry and McKinstry, 1991) and indirect strategies in giving advice (Pudlinski, 1998). Even though there is quite a huge body of studies on advice, not many have focused on the area of pragmatics. Since the study of advice or specifically, the study of advice columns promotes the application of many speech acts, this study attempts to analyse the directives used in the advice texts. The advice texts of each advice column usually consist of an abundance of directives which might indicate the practice that

Malaysian English users adopt when giving advice in the written form. This study chooses to analyse advice columns in the written form rather than the spoken texts because most studies on speech acts neglect written materials and tend to focus more on spoken data as they are perceived as more authentic and interesting due to the involvement of very high face-values (Goffman, 1967).

Although no specific studies on speech acts have been conducted on written advice columns, two studies that concern advice-giving and advice-solicitation are by Locher (2006) and Harrison and Barlow (2009). Locher (2006) studied the syntactic structures of a famous American online health-themed advice column entitled *Lucy Answers* which was initially built for the students of an institution. However, due to its popularity, it is extensively accessed by the public to ask health-related questions as well as to find desired health issues from the website's archive. The website is highly successful due to a few reasons; the professionalism of a team who stands in for *Lucy*, the policy of anonymous questioners and the policy of non-directiveness in advice-giving (Locher, 2006). These policies illustrate empathy and respect towards the questioners' self-image and privacy which is vital in the English culture (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1967; Yule, 1996; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991).

Likewise, Harrison and Barlow (2009) found that the participants in an online forum of an arthritis workshop employed indirect methods to provide advice. They preceded their advice with narratives of their own experience to convey respect to each others' boundary and maintain others' self-autonomy (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1967; Yule, 1996; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991). The narratives also act as a pre-sequence to mitigate the advice to avoid imposition on other participants. Mitigation can be achieved by applying the syntactic mitigation, internal-external mitigations and/or the lexical mitigation (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Yates, 2005; Skewis, 2003; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

Both *Lucy* and the arthritis workshop participants (Locher, 2006; Harrison and Barlow, 2009) apply various strategies such as being indirect, using narratives and applying mitigations to soften the illocutionary force of advice. These strategies are frequently employed because advice-giving is a face threatening act as it imposed on the other person's freedom of actions and show their incompetence (Brown and Levinson, 1978). This is clearly observed in the Western society where interlocutors show respect to each other's privacy by practicing the strategies of negative politeness such as lexical hedges and imbedded structures

to show deference, create distance and avoid coerciveness (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Jones, 1992; Locher, 2006; Harrison and Barlow, 2009). In contrast, other cultures such as the Russian, Venezuelan, Argentinian, Polish and Chinese perceive advice-giving as an act of spontaneity, courtesy, friendliness and goodwill (Lee-Wong, 1994; Larina, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Garcia, 2008). Thus, the solicited or unsolicited advice is intensified rather than mitigated to show sincerity and enhance solidarity which indicates high level of positive politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Jones, 1992; Lee-Wong, 1994; Locher, 2006; Larina, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006).

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Advice is considered as a form of directive as it tells the addressees to do some kind of actions to solve their problems (Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996, Jones, 1992). Directive is an obligation for someone to make a proposition comes true or to refrain someone from making the proposition comes true. Either way, it imposes the addressees by asking them to do the required action or refraining them from doing the required action (Lyons, 1977; Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996, Jones, 1992). There have been extensive researches conducted to study directives over the years. Some of the researches include directives and contextual complexity (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Weigel and Weigel, 1985; Jones, 1992; Vine, 2001, 2009; Georgalidou, 2008), directives and children's play/ family discourse/ mother-child conversation (Aronsson and Thorell, 1999; Han, 2000), directives and mitigation strategies (Skewis, 2003; Yates, 2005, Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008), directives and politeness/directness-indirectness (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999; Larina, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006) and directives and institutional identity (Yates, 2005).

Many studies on directives however, focused mainly on spoken data rather than written data. Nevertheless, recently, Kohnen (2008) conducted a study of directives using corpus-based diachronic speech-act analysis that transcends texts and time as he analysed a corpus of sermons, private letters and prayers written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Old English. Significantly, out of the three genres, prayers, contain the most enormous accumulation of directives, followed by letters and sermons. Similar to Harrison and Barlow (2009), letters contain long description of narratives, congratulations and

complaints. It is generally characterised by the second person imperatives, performatives and indirect speech acts. But, Kohnen (2008) stated that the decline of directives in letters does not make it any more polite or less imposing (Kohnen, 2008).

In an advice column, there are two types of letters in use: a) Letters of problem: requests for advice and b) Letters of advice: advice to solve problems. The term '*letters*' is adopted from Locher (2006) who found that both the questioners and advice-givers in her study write the problems and advice to each other in the forms of letters. The speech functions *request* and *advice* found in the letters are subsumed under the directive speech act (Searle, 1975; Yaeger-Dror and Sister, 1987). However, the directives in the problem texts are limited as the advice-seekers usually provide the background details of their problems which hardly contain directives or only contain directives in the form of vague hints and question directives. Although there are also explicit directives, they are irregular and low in frequency, thus, insignificant for this study.

Therefore, this study investigates the directives used in the advice texts of an advice column that appear in a daily-English newspaper, *The Star*. Advice texts are chosen because they are rich in directives such as requests, commands, suggestions, advice, warnings and prohibitions. According to Ruhi (1999), prohibitions are highly face-threatening and require intensifying markers to reflect the advice-giver's judgement. Directive is also chosen to be analysed as it is commonly used by all age groups and is easy to be identified as it leads to actions (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Directives are closely related to the issue of politeness and are governed by the situational contexts where it is uttered (Searle, 1978; Yule, 1996; Vine, 2009; Georgalidou, 2008). Unlike spoken data which requires immediate feedback from the interlocutors, written data realising the speaker's wish and desire can survive temporal and spatial distance (Kohnen, 2008). Furthermore, as a source of written data, an advice column does not promote face-to-face and real-time interaction which greatly decreases the level of face-threatening-act for both the advice-giver and the questioners.

Since it is the questioners who purposefully and specifically solicit advice from the advice-giver, the face-threatening-act of receiving advice is reduced as the questioners are fully aware that the advice is forthcoming. Furthermore, since the advice-giver's task is to provide advice, it automatically warrants her with more power and authority over the questioners. So, the advice given would be more acceptable and trusted since advice-givers are regarded as experts who are objective in their view (Hendley, 1997; McKinstry and

Mckinstry, 1991; Locher, 2006). Therefore, the purpose of interaction, which is to provide solicited advice, plus the advice-giver's power status and expertise, help maintain the questioners' face presented in the advice column, hence mitigating the face-threatening-acts of the advice (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Vine, 2009; Locher, 2006; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991).

However, the delicate and sensitive issues presented in the public view might contribute to a high degree of imposition as both interlocutors are mutual strangers who are socially distant from each other (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1989; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996). Plus, the act of giving advice imposes on the questioners (Yaegor-Dror and Sister, 1987) because the existing social distance as mutual strangers between the advice-giver and the questioners further deepen the possibility of a face-threatening-act as the delicate issues presented might be embarrassing and disturbing to the interlocutors. In interactions, the interlocutors are putting their face on the line and risk their public self-image (Goffman, 1967; Brown and Levinson, 1978; Yule, 1996). By receiving advice that might not support the questioners' opinions, the face might be threatened as their desires, wants and freedom of actions are impeded by the expert advice-giver (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987). Thus, this might humiliate and embarrass the questioners and could cause them to lose face as their public self-image is threatened.

Hence, this study looks into the syntactic structures of advice adopted by the advice-giver in interactions with the questioners to investigate the protection of face and mitigation strategies employed in the advice texts of an advice column. This study first identifies directives based on several working definitions from Searle (1975), Asmah Omar (1982) and Jones (1992) who define directives as the speaker's attempt to get the addressees to do some actions or to refrain the addressees from doing any actions and directives are generally directed at the second person. The directives identified are coded and classified based on Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Blum-Kulka's (1987) frameworks. Since directives are intricately connected to the issue of politeness, two (im)politeness theories that fit the objectives of this study are Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) positive-negative politeness and FTA-mitigations theory (traditional theory) and Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based view of politeness. The frame-based view is an improvement of the positive-negative politeness theory and it attempts to complement the weaknesses of the traditional theory (Terkourafi, 2005). Finally, the face-saving strategies identified in the advice texts are analysed based on Blum-Kulka *et.al* (1989), Skewis (2003), Yates (2005) and Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor's

(2008) frameworks to look into the mitigation strategies used by the advice-giver to maintain the questioners' face in the advice columns. This is essential because as a daily-reading material that is read by millions of people, newspaper must ensure the finest of their language to avoid coerciveness on the readers.

### **1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions**

There are three objectives of this study and three research questions in this study. Firstly, this study investigates the forms and functions of directives in the advice texts of an advice column. Secondly, it identifies the relationship between the forms and functions of directives and the protection of interlocutors' face in the advice texts. Finally, this study looks into the mitigation strategies used to soften the directives in the advice texts. The protection of face in the advice texts is analysed in relation to the issues presented in the problem texts.

#### **Research Objectives:**

The research objectives of this study are to:

1. investigate the forms and functions of directives in the advice texts of an advice column.
2. identify the relationship between the forms and function of directives and the protection of the interlocutors' face in the advice texts.
3. look into the mitigation strategies used to soften the directives in the advice texts.

Thus, the research questions of this study are:

#### **Research Questions:**

1. What are the forms and functions of directives used in the advice texts of an advice column?
2. What is the relationship between the forms and functions of directives in maintaining one's face in the advice texts of an advice column?
3. What are the face-saving strategies used in the advice texts of an advice column?

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in adding knowledge to a body of existing research in the study of directives as it analyses written data rather than spoken data (Asmah Omar, 1982; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Weigel and Weigel, 1985; Vine, 2001, 2009; Georgalidou, 2008; Skewis, 2003; Lee-Wong, 1994). Previous studies related to directives often focused on spoken data and neglected written data. Thus, by doing this, researchers and language practitioners would be able to see the importance of written texts as a source of data for the study of directives. Interestingly, the advice columns analysed try to maintain a balance between written and spoken texts to create informality, friendliness and closeness between the interlocutors.

Since the paralinguistic features (laughter, intonation, etc.) are not available in written data, the interlocutors must rely on other mitigation devices to maintain their faces. This is useful for language learners to learn the polite forms of making requests and giving advice and suggestions in their daily interactions as today's technology promotes written communication medium, i.e. emails, online chat, and short messaging system (SMS).

Since the advice columns are published in a newspaper, the interaction between the questioners and advice-columnist is very limited with no means of clarifications (Harrison and Barlow, 2009). This could result in misinterpretation of meaning in directives. Therefore, this study allows us to see how a message is interpreted when it is ambiguous due to limited interaction. Most importantly, this study demonstrates how mutual strangers discuss personal issues and maintain each others' faces when there is a wide social distance and inequality of power status between them. Vine (2001), in her study on directives in the workplace, concluded that in a workplace, failure to pay attention to personal relationship will cause dissatisfaction, demotivation and unproductiveness. Similarly, Decapua and Huber (1995) agree that the social norms of authority, expertise and intimacy are essential in the American English advice exchanges.

## 1.5 Scope and Limitations

This study analyses the advice texts in the advice columns that appeared in the *Heart and Soul* section of *The Star* newspaper dated from February 2010 to November 2010. This newspaper was chosen because it gives the longer version of the problem and advice texts unlike other media which summarise them. Thus, more data could be gathered and analysed. However, the data analysed is limited to only 47 advice texts because the advice columns are published only once a week and for each publication only one to four texts are selected by the newspaper to be printed. The previous issues of the advice columns are not accessible.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

This section defines the words that are used repeatedly throughout this study. Some of the words might not have conventional meanings and will therefore work in the scope of this study only.

- 1) Advice: Advice is the suggestion/s given by the advice-givers to the questioners to solve their problems.
- 2) Problem text: Problem texts are letters describing problems written by advice-seekers to a specific advice column.
- 3) Advice text: Advice texts are letters written by advice-givers in response to problem letters. In Locher (2006), the term *response letters* is used.

The problems described by questioners and the response written by advice-givers follow the format of letters. In this study, these letters will be referred to as *texts* that are produced in the particular discourse of newspaper advice columns (Locher, 2006), hence *problem text* and *advice text*.

- 4) Advice-seekers: Advice-seekers are people who write problem texts to an advice column. This term is used interchangeably with *questioners* in this study. Both terms are adopted from Locher (2006). The advice-seekers are usually anonymous as most of them used pseudonyms to protect their privacies.



- 5) Advice-columnist: Advice-columnist(s) is a person/ a group of people who write advice texts to address the issues in problem texts. This term is used interchangeably with *the experts* in Locher (2006).

## **1.7 Thesis Outline**

This research is written in five chapters which are introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and discussions and conclusions.

Chapter 1 presents the general introduction of the research. It contains the background information of the study, statement of problem and the objectives of the study which ultimately set the course of the study. This section also includes the definition of terms that are used repeatedly throughout this study.

Chapter 2 elaborates previous studies on directives, (im)politeness and face-saving strategies that have been conducted by other researchers. It includes the definitions, frameworks, previous studies and arguments on the areas raised in this study which are directives, (im)politeness and mitigation strategies.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the research. It describes the material, sampling and data analysis that form the base of this study.

Chapter 4 describes the findings and discussion of the study. This chapter answers all three research questions and relates the findings to the (im)politeness theories adopted in this study.

Chapter 5 concludes the findings of the study and outlines some recommendations for the betterment of similar study in the future.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the literature review of advice, directives, (im)politeness and face-saving strategies. The theoretical frameworks that support these notions are outlined and elaborated for their pros and cons and to enrich the analysis of this study. The study of directives is intriguing as it is intricately connected to the issue of (im)politeness and situational contexts.

### **2.1 Advice**

Advice is defined as ‘an opinion you give someone about what they should do’ (Longman Online Dictionary). Giving and receiving advice are common acts that sometimes happen unnoticed. In daily lives, advice is given regardless of whether it is solicited or unsolicited as it is a very common and natural act. When it relates to personal issues, it might be done more privately between two or more people, but when it is general information, it is usually conducted in institutionalized ways to reach the public immediately (Larina, 2008; Locher, 2006). For example, the urge that female citizens get HPV vaccines to prevent uterus cancer is televised nationwide as it is a general information and advice.

Apart from being televised via electronic media such as television and radio talk shows (Ho, 2009), written advice are very popular as advice columns in newspapers. Initially, advice column emerged in Britain and due to its informative, entertainment values, they quickly spreads to America. With some famous advice columnists such as Ann Landers, Abigail van Buren and Dr. Joyce Brothers, advice columns became a part of newspapers’ special features for about 800 years and reached millions of people everyday (Moran, 1989). They rapidly became one of the most popular pop cultures, beating other sources of reading material such as the Playboy magazines and served as a favourite for a group of elite

intellectuals (Hendley, 1977; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991). A group of people who failed to communicate effectively with other people or other established agencies, felt the need to search for non-threatening, authoritative figures for emotional support and some connections with other individuals, hence resorting to advice columns (Gieber, 1960).

Gieber (1960) reasoned that people with emotional problems go through the process of seeking help by getting a practitioner. By writing to advice columns, these people are given mediums to tell their stories, express their opinions, seek advice and obtain psychological information. However, Dibner (1974) found that in the letters sent to newspaper advice columns, questioners usually blamed other involving parties for their problems and failed to see that they need to change. Advice columns, thus, appeal to people who cannot go elsewhere to talk about their problems in getting professional help (Dibner, 1974). This assists the advice-seekers to see the problems from a different perspective and acquire some suggestions to solve it. Apart from seeking for advice directly, some advice-seekers seek support and assurance for their decisions from the advice-givers (Ho, 2009).

The dependency on advice columns for non-threatening, objective, authoritative figures was justified by Mckinstry and Mckinstry (1991) who found that in Japan, the *Jinsei Annai* advice column became very famous as there were limited places for advice-seekers to seek help. Unlike in the USA where many agencies offer free and available counselling and psychological therapy, the Japanese view psychological therapy strictly as a place for people who are mentally ill. Furthermore, the clergymen of the two largest religions in Japan (Buddhist and Shinto) had never made a tradition of giving advice on personal problems (Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991). Therefore, as a medium where people can seek advice, entertainment and information, *Jinsei Annai* became an essential part of the Japanese lives. Mckinstry and Mckinstry (1991) compared an American advice column to the Japanese advice column, *Jinsei Annai* and observed that the problem and advice letters in *Jinsei Annai* were very seriously written, which creates almost sombre character while missing the glib smart aleck tone which was usually found in the American advice column. This is substantiated by Locher's (2006) who identified that *Lucy*, the advice-giver in an American university online health advice column, *Lucy Answers*, portrayed herself as a well-informed, trustworthy and reliable expert due to her balanced use of scientific and unscientific grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, *Lucy* possesses a good sense of humour as she shows support, empathy and professionalism when responding to questioners' requests.

Since advice columns are accessible to everybody, the issues discussed are usually restricted to non-taboo issues. However, Gudelunas (2008) argues that advice columns in the American newspapers should be made a safe space for discussing taboo topics such as sexual practice and sexual identity due to the lacking medium of safe sex-talk site for students' community and educational purposes. This argument is related to this study because there are taboo topics such as affairs, sexual identities and marital problems presented in the advice columns analysed. Thus, although both the American and Malaysian societies restrict public discussion about taboo topics, newspapers have now become a venue where people talk, learn and debate about sex and sexuality due to limited educational medium for sex talk (Gudelunas, 2008). The discussions about sexuality and affairs prove that for a culture that is determined to confine sex talk, Malaysians have become more open in addressing the controversial, taboo issue.

As advice columns were very popular, the discourse of advice has attracted the interest of many researchers for several years. However, studies tend to focus only on spoken form of advice in face-to-face settings such as in counselling sessions and call-in radio talk shows on issues of medical, health, family and psychological (Moran, 1989; Dibner, 1974; Locher, 2006; Ho, 2009). However, there are also a few studies conducted on printed genre of advice such as online chats, forum and advice columns in the area of politeness, syntax and social identity such as in Hendley (1977), Mckinstry and Mckinstry (1991), Locher (2006) and Harrison and Barlow (2009).

Pudlinksi (1998) outlines three indirect strategies of offering advice which are; a) incorporating a solution within a query, b) sharing one's own problem and solution and c) merely giving information about a solution. Harrison and Barlow's (2009) finding demonstrated that participants in an arthritis workshop used one of Pudlinski's (1998) strategies as they preferred sharing their own problems and solutions via narrative forms to convey that they had gone through similar experiences which made their advice more credible.

Another set of advice discourse strategies are outlined by Ho (2009) who found that the hosts of two radio talk shows used three strategies to intensify their ideological beliefs on issues discussed. The discourse strategies are: a) exaggerating problems via extended turn, b) assuming possibility using imagined scenarios and c) predicting unfavourable events to get the callers to take their advices. It is observed that the hosts' aggressiveness to reinforce their

advice were respected and unchallenged by the callers due to their higher power status and authoritativeness that led callers to believe in the ‘rightness’ of the advice. The power asymmetry also forced the callers to resort to mitigated disagreement via backchannels, i.e. *uh uh* or *yeah*, in response to the hosts’ advices while at the same time allowing the hosts more extended turns of talking (Ho, 2009).

Apart from the discourse strategies, a few linguists such as Pudlinksi (1998), Locher (2006) and Harrison and Barlow (2009) analysed the structures used in advice columns to determine the strategies in the interactions. Locher (2006) found that interrogatives and implicit requests were most frequently used in the problem letters of *Lucy Answers* advice columns although a small number of problem letters did not contain a question or a request at all. This is because, as an online advice column, all the interactions are stored in an archive which is freely accessible. Thus, the response letters to the same problem can be read by everybody who accesses the website’s archive although the person does not specifically request for the advice. In the advice letters, declarative was the most frequent structure used with 52 percent, followed by imperatives (26 percent) and interrogatives (11 percent). The declarative was further divided into smaller units of non-agentive (62 percent) and *you+modal* form (38 percent).

Likewise, Harrison and Barlow (2009) replicated the method of data analysis from Locher (2006) in their study of politeness strategy in an online advice forum in an arthritis workshop. Again, declarative was the most frequent structure (64 percent), followed by imperatives (21 percent) and interrogatives (15 percent). However, the declarative distribution includes more categories of directives as follows: general statements (27 percent), agentive with modals (16 percent) and agentive with narratives (21 percent).

## 2.2 Speech Acts

In an interaction, a speaker expresses certain attitudes. These attitudes are related to the speech act being performed at the time. Speech acts are actions performed via utterances and are influenced by the *speech event* or *context of utterance*, i.e. the situation where the speech acts are performed (Yule, 1996).

There are three types of speech acts identified by Austin (1962): a) the locutionary act, b) the illocutionary act and c) the perlocutionary act. The locutionary act is the action of saying the utterance while the illocutionary act is the intentions behind the utterance. The perlocutionary act is the effect of the utterance. An example of a locutionary act is, “*I’ve just made coffee.*” This utterance might be intended as a statement, offer or explanation. The communicative intent of the utterance is the illocutionary act. Finally, the perlocutionary act is the action that a hearer takes based on the utterance. In this case, the hearer might go get some coffee from the kitchen or just acknowledges the fact that coffee has been made (Yule, 1996). However, studies on speech act typically centre on illocutionary act due to the non-direct realisations of speech forms and functions.

For a hearer to understand the intended illocutionary force, some conditions must be met. These conditions are the general conditions, the content conditions, the preparatory conditions, the sincerity conditions and the essential conditions. The accumulation of these conditions is termed felicity conditions (Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996). The functions of each condition are as follow:

General conditions mean that the participants of an interaction can understand the language used and they are not play-acting or being non-sensical.

Content conditions mean that for a specific classification of speech act, different rules apply. For example, for both promise and warning, the content of the utterance must be in the future.

Preparatory conditions mean that different types of speech act should be acted upon differently. For example, a promise is different from a warning because by promising, two preparatory conditions should be met which are, the event will not happen by itself and the event will have a beneficial effect.

Sincerity conditions mean that the speaker genuinely means what he says. For example, when making promises, the speaker must sincerely intend to conduct the action in the future.

Essential conditions change the speaker's state of mind from non-obligation to obligation. For example, when a promise is made, the speaker is obliged to carry out the action in the future.

(Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996)

Speech acts can be constructed by five types of structures which are declarations, representatives, expressives, commissives and directives (Yule, 1996). The descriptions of the structures as follow:

Declarations are speech acts that convey the truth as it changes the world via words. The speaker is responsible in this interaction and needs to have a special institutional role in a specific context to convey the validity of declaratives. An example of a declarative is "*I now pronounce you husband and wife*", uttered by a priest to a couple.

Representatives are speech acts that bring assertions, conclusions, and descriptions based on what the speaker believes. In using representatives, the speaker makes the words fit the world. Therefore, the speaker is responsible in the interaction. An example of a representative is "*It is a warm, sunny day*" which is true in the eyes of the speaker.

Expressives are speech acts that express the speaker's feelings. The expression includes psychological states such as pleasure, pain, joy and sorrow. It can be triggered by both the speaker and hearer but it is the speaker who experiences the psychological state. By expressing something, the speaker makes the words fit the world. Thus, it is the speaker who is responsible in that interaction. An example of an expressive is "*I'm so happy!*"

Commissives are speech acts that a speaker uses to commit himself to do something in the future. Commissives express the intention of the speaker such as promising, inviting, swearing and agreeing. It can be performed alone or in groups. By using commissives, the world fits the words because the action will happen in the future. Since the speaker commits himself for future actions, he is responsible for the relationship in that interaction.

Directives are speech acts that a speaker uses to get someone to do something. Directives express the speaker's desire via commands, requests, suggestions and so forth in both positive and negative forms. When a directive is applied, the world is supposed to fit the word. Directives are indeed different from the other types of speech acts because instead of the speaker, it is the hearer who is responsible for the action since the directive is directed at

the other person. Some examples of directive are *advising*, *admonishing*, *asking*, *urging*, and *warning*.

(Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996; Bach, 2005)

## 2.3 Directives

In Austin's (1962) original taxonomy, exercitives were used to represent speech act that exert power, right or influence. Then, Searle (1975) introduced directives in his model of speech act to replace exercitives. Although both speech acts are quite similar in function, their underlying purposes differ from each other. While exercitives focus on exerting power and influence over others, directives are concerned with desire that a speaker wants to achieve in his utterances (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975). Directives have been studied extensively as researchers are interested in analysing the underlying meaning of utterances in achieving action-oriented goals (Yule, 1996).

Directives are utterances of varying degrees that attempt to get hearers to do something or to refrain them from doing something as it expresses what the speaker wants (Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996; Jones, 1992). Ervin-Tripp (1976) states that any utterances that are intended to affect hearers' behaviour are also categorised as directives. In a local study, Asmah Omar (1982) states that directives are acts that need reactions and are generally directed at the second person. There are two categories of directives, exclusive and inclusive. Exclusive directives include the first person while the inclusive directives concern the second person.

One of the most common functions of directives that have been widely studied is *request*. In general, the definition of *request* is quite similar to *directive* where "request is an attempt to get a hearer to do an act which a speaker wants a hearer to do" (Jalilifar, 2009; cited in Andreasson, 2009). Other than *request*, the functions of directives also include *commands*, *hints*, *jokes*, *teases*, *threats*, *challenges*, *orders*, *advices*, *suggestions* and *permissions* (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Jones, 1992; Arronsson and Thorell, 1999; Georgalidou, 2008; Vine, 2009; Ho, 2009). These speech functions can take either the positive form (for example: *Give me the money.*) or the negative forms (for example: *Don't*



*talk to strangers.*) (Yule, 1996). Yule (1996) asserts that by using directives, speakers want their words to be put into action by hearers.

The study of directives is governed by the issue of (im)politeness and (in)directness. Direct speech means that there is a direct relationship between the form and function of the utterance while indirect speech means that there is an indirect relationship between the form and function of the utterance. So hearers must interpret the underlying meaning of the utterance. The indirectness of speeches led the early studies of speech acts to conclude that indirectness equates politeness, i.e. the more indirect an utterance is, the higher the degree of the speaker's politeness (Searle, 1975; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996). This theory is supported by many English language studies including Vine (2001) who found that indirect interrogative is a much more polite way to issue a directive as being compared to a direct imperative which is viewed as the least polite form. On the contrary, some cultures like Russian and Polish view indirectness as impolite as it creates distance between the interlocutors. Imperative is polite as it demonstrates a speaker's sincerity and spontaneity (Larina, 2005; Locher, 2006; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006).

Since directives are commonly used and are easily identifiable in daily speeches (Ervin-Tripp, 1976), many frameworks of directives have been developed. Some of the frameworks are by Searle (1975), Ervin-Tripp (1976), Asmah Omar (1982), Blum-Kulka *et.al* (1989), Jones (1992) and Eken (1996). Quite a number of researchers applied these frameworks in their studies and adapted them to fit the specific context of interaction analysed. Some of the directives theoretical frameworks are described below.

## **2.4 Theoretical Frameworks of Directives**

Directives have been classified into a number of frameworks based on the contexts of interaction analysed. Some of the theoretical frameworks are by Asmah Omar (1982), Blum-Kulka *et.al* (1989) Eken (1996), Jones (1992), Searle (1975) and Ervin-Tripp (1976). However, this research only discusses four major frameworks that are most relevant to the study for the data analysis.

### 2.4.1 Blum Kulka's (1987) Directives Framework

In an expansion of the directive categories, Blum-Kulka (1987) constructed a directive-politeness model by categorising directives under three forms: direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect.

#### a) Direct form

The direct form is generally constructed with imperatives. It is rated as the least polite form by English and Hebrew participants of Blum-Kulka's (1987) study. An example of a direct imperative form is, "***Come** down immediately*".

#### b) Conventionally indirect form

Contrary to prior studies that claimed the more indirect a structure is, the higher the degree of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1976, 1977), the English and Hebrew participants of Blum-Kulka's (1987) study, rated the conventionally indirect form, i.e. query-preparatory modal as more polite than the non-conventionally indirect form, i.e. hint. This is because, the participants viewed pragmatic clarity and avoiding coerciveness as important factors in determining the degree of politeness of an utterance. Although hint is the least coercive structure, it is very vague and ambiguous. Therefore, it is rated as less polite than the query-preparatory modal directive which is less coercive and explicit at the same time. The conventionally indirect form are made up of modal interrogatives and suggestory formulae (Blum-Kulka, *et.al*, 1989) such as "*Could you..*", "*Would you..*", "*Would you mind..*" and "*Why don't you..*". Blum-Kulka's (1987) finding substantiates Searle's (1975) argument that modal interrogative is the most indirect and non-imposing polite form in making requests.

#### c) Non-conventionally indirect form

The non-conventionally indirect forms are constructed via hints and grounders. Grounders are justification for the implied requests (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999:1174). These forms are rated as less polite than the query-preparatory modal strategies due to the lack of clarity of the utterance, although they are the least coercive form. An example of a hint is, "*The door is right there*" when indirectly asking someone to leave. Although it seems polite as it is less imposing, the ambiguity in its meaning makes it difficult to understand the speaker's true intention.

#### 2.4.2 Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper's (1989) Directives Framework

Building on previous attempts to provide a typology of request strategies, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) had expanded Ervin-Tripp's (1976) directives into a Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization (CCSARP) with nine mutually exclusive categories of directives. The study was conducted to investigate request strategies because request is a quasi-synonym of directive that represents the part of hearer to perform or to terminate an action. Using the CCSARP coding manual, the directives are initially segmented into Head Act (the minimal unit whereby the directive speech act is realised) and the strategies that modify it. The modificatory strategies may be applied to the utterance internally or externally. The nine mutually exclusive directive strategies are:

a) Mood derivable:

Mood derivable is usually realised by imperatives. In a study, Vine (2009) found that direct imperatives are usually used in four situations at the workplace: (i) as a summary at the end of a long discussion, (ii) when there are multiple tasks needed to be allocated, (iii) when it is directly elicited and (iv) in case of NOW-directives, i.e. urgent or immediate situation (Yule, 1996; Vine, 2009). An example of a mood derivable is "***Give** me the files now*".

b) Explicit performative:

In explicit performatives, the illocutionary intent is made overt and clear via explicit verbs such as *to ask* and *to say*. An example of an explicit performative is, "*I would like **to ask** about the book you are reading.*"

c) Hedged performative:

In hedged performative, the explicit verb specifying the illocutionary act is softened by modal verbs or hedging expressions. Jones (1992) found that the participants in her Morris dancing team always used the minimizer *just* to mitigate the directives. An example of a hedged performative is "*I **just** want you to go get the books*".

d) Locution derivable:

In locution derivable, the illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic meaning where hearers are obligated to carry out the directives stated. For example, the utterance "*Make sure you comprehend this*" means that the illocutionary force (*comprehend*)

is directly understood from the structure. Similar to the mood derivable, locution derivable is also usually realised by the imperative structure (Skewis, 2003).

e) Want statement:

Want statements express a speaker's desires, wants and needs to be carried out by the addressees. The term *want statement* is used interchangeably with the term *need statement* in studies (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996; Georgalidou, 2008; Vine, 2009). An example of a need statement is "*I **want** all of you to work hard on the project*".

f) Suggestory formulae:

In suggestory formulae, the illocutionary intent is stated in suggestive forms such as *how about* and *why don't you*. It is similar to the imbedded imperatives form in Ervin-Tripp's (1976) study. An example of a suggestory formulae is "***Why don't** we start the meeting now*".

g) Query preparatory:

Query preparatory mitigate speech act by making inquiries on a hearer's ability, willingness, possibility and permission to comply with the directives. It functions to provide addressees with escape routes should they wish not to comply with the directives issued (Yule, 1996; Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976). The query preparatory strategies can come in the form of pre-sequences (Yule 1996), modal interrogatives (Searle, 1975) and question directives (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). An example of a query preparatory is "***Would it be possible** for you to get the file done by today?*"

h) Strong hints:

The illocutionary intent in strong hints is partially explicit, thus, a speaker's intended meaning must be derived from the immediate contextual clues at the time of the illocutionary or propositional act is issued. Typically, it relates to a hearer's feasibility to carry out the directives. An example of a strong hint is, "*Your Highness is the most gracious, but his Highness supervising matters at the eastern mansion is taking matters more seriously, and I believe he has already ordered all the gates to be sealed*" which means "*Don't be so casual about the matters and seal the gate*" (Skewis, 2003).

i) Mild hints:

Mild hints are more indirect than strong hints. The illocutionary act in mild hint is implicit and must be interpreted based on context and background knowledge. An example of a mild hint is, “*I hear that someone from your household has been appointed a country magistrate*” which translates into “*Why don’t you borrow money from him*” based on the contextual clues during the utterance.

(Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Jones, 1992; Skewis, 2003; Vine, 2009)

### 2.4.3 Eken’s (1996) Directive Framework

In his study, Eken (1996) initially used Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Holmes’ (1998) directive theoretical frameworks. However, a few additional categories were created to include all directives in his data. Although there are some overlaps with other frameworks, Eken (1996) provides a clear cut distinction of the different types of directives as follow:

a) Need statements:

Almost all need statements are very direct and unambiguous, but when there is an absence of the singular pronoun *you*, the statements become less direct. For example, “*You need to bear in mind*” and “*so something to bear in mind*”.

b) Imperatives:

There are five types of imperatives which are:

- i) Base form of verb (**Don’t** be overambitious, have a specific aim),
- ii) You + imperative (**You** guide them),
- iii) Verb-ing (So for this point, **making** the task more specific),
- iv) Verb ellipsis (So always more specific)
- v) Let-shall-why don’t we/you (**Why don’t** we start).

The last three types of imperatives (*verb-ing*, *verb ellipsis* and *let-shall-why don’t we/you*) are more indirect to soften the effect of the forceful imperatives (Jones, 1992). The *let-shall-why don’t we/you* directive is similar to Asmah Omar’s (1982) inclusive directive

and Blum-Kulka *et.al's* (1989) suggestory formulae which are indirect polite forms of directive.

c) Modal-imbedded directives

There are three types of modal-imbedded directives:

- i) Adverb-imbedded directives are to soften the illocutionary act of a directive and make it more acceptable to the hearers. An example of an adverb-imbedded directive is, “*maybe not just the instructions*”.
- ii) Modal-imbedded interrogatives serve to reduce the negative face threatening to hearers. An instance of a modal-imbedded interrogative is, “*why should you use different ways?*”
- iii) Modal-imbedded statement directives function to reduce the negative face threatening act to hearers. An example of a modal-imbedded statement directive is, “*blackboard might be worth thinking about*”.

d) Non-modal question directives

There are two types of non-modal question directives which are *wh-questions* (including *how* question) and *yes-no questions*. Apart from the structures, Eken (1996) distinguished the non-modal question directives by stating that *wh-questions* are “genuine information questions” or *advisives*. Meanwhile, the *yes-no questions* are information questions that are expected to be used by subordinates when providing information to their superiors. An example of a *wh-question* is “*What didn't you like about it?*” while an example of a *yes-no question* is “*Does he often say things that are different?*”

e) Hints

Hint is an indirect form of directive. It requires hearers to infer the underlying meaning from their knowledge, experience and immediate situational contexts (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976, Yule, 1996). An example of a hint is, “*So most of these are OK, but this one was a bit detailed so to answer your question, you had to stop and look and so on*”.

#### 2.4.4 Ervin-Tripp's (1976) Directive Framework

According to Ervin-Tripp (1976), directives can be expressed in a variety of syntactic forms which are need statements, imperatives, permission directives, imbedded imperatives, question directives and hints. These syntactic forms are a variation of the three basic syntactical structures: imperatives, declaratives and interrogatives.

##### a) Need statements

Need statement is typically found in family discourse and is among the earliest directives uttered by children (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). In working environment, need statements appeared in transactional settings between people of differing ranks. When a person's task is clear, need statements are usually uttered by superiors to imply subordinates' obligations. An example of a need statement is "***I want** you to get me some books from the library*". This need statement changes into requests with the addition of politeness marker *please*. Meanwhile, subordinates use modals (***I could** use some polish*) and addressee displacement (***why don't** you go ahead*) when using need statements to their superiors to change the directive into a suggestion (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, *et.al*, 1989; Sato, 2008).

##### b) Imperatives

The typical form of imperative includes a verb, an object (transitive) and sometimes a beneficiary. Four imperative structures identified in Ervin-Tripp's (1976) data are: you + imperative (*you should turn right*), attention-getters (*hey, excuse me, names, please*), post-posed tags (*modals, address terms, OK, please, etc.*) and rising pitch, i.e. frequency of rising pitch increases with physical distance.

Apart from that, elliptical forms are also used when the action needs to be taken is obvious, thus only the new information (direct or indirect object) is specified. An example of an ellipsis is "*Pen*" instead of "*Give me a pen*" or "*Could I borrow your pen?*". Elliptical form is also used as a solidarity move to reduce social distance and show friendliness and casualness in familiar situation (Kawashima, 2005).

##### c) Imbedded imperatives

Similar to need statement, children acquire imbedded imperative early in their language development. Some examples of imbedded imperatives are "*Why don't you open the window?*" and "*Would you mind opening the window?*" As evident, an imbedded

imperative has an explicit, straightforward agent and object. Therefore, there is no interpretive problem for the structure. The forms that precede it are just a formal addition to make the structure sound more polite (Searle, 1975). As imbedded imperatives usually apply modals, Sinclair and Coulthard (1974) termed them as *modal directives*. Three rules of modal directive are; i) it contains the modals auxiliary verbs (for example: *can, could, will, would*), ii) the subject of the clause is also an addressee and iii) the predicate describes an action which is physically possible at the time of the utterance (Sinclair and Coulthard. 1974; Ervin-Tripp, 1976). The imbedded imperative (Ervin-Tripp, 1976), modal directive (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1974) and modal interrogative (Searle, 1975) are indirect structures which are considered as the most polite forms in the English society (Searle, 1975).

d) Permission directives

In Ervin-Tripp's (1976) study, there are only a few occurrences of permission directives that come in the form of *modal + beneficiary + have/verb*. This category of directive is quite similar to imbedded imperatives as both apply modal auxiliary verbs in their structures. However, the two structures can be contrasted in terms of the beneficiary. In permission directives, the focus is shifted from the activities of donor-addressees to beneficiary or recipient. When hearers do not react to question directives, permission directives are used as a follow up in interactions among non-peers, strangers and in difficult tasks where there might be non-compliance. Although modal verbs are used in the structure, permission directives are considered as an on-record directive utterance. An example of a permission directive is, "*Can you pass me the book?*" where the speaker is the beneficiary of a hearer's action.

e) Question directives

Question directives are ambiguous and a bit difficult to be identified as directives because misunderstandings might occur if they are analysed out of context. For example, the utterance "*Are we out of coffee?*" intended as an information question might be interpreted as a directive by the hearers. Alternatively, question directives provide escape route for the hearers who do not wish to comply with the directives as the inquiries could be simply treated as an information question rather than a command. Quite similarly, Searle (1975) stated that modal interrogatives are used by non-complying hearers as an escape route from the directives issued.



f) Hints

Similar to question directive, hint is ambiguous and difficult to be interpreted as directives. Therefore, it is easy for hearers to ignore hint by simply treating it as general statements. In order to correctly interpret hints, hearers must have situational knowledge of the hint. Hints are used informally to convey addressees' willingness and desire to conduct an action (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999).

Hints appear under three circumstances: i) children who might not have a well-articulated sense of what they have to do frequently employ statement of conditions as they expect someone else to take the required action for them (for example: *my nose is bleeding*), ii) the speakers who want to be implicit in making requests for special services, which leaves the interpretation of the requests to the hearers (for example: *mother, you know I don't have a bathing suit*) and iii) in settings where the action to be accomplished is clear (for example: *it's quite stuffy in here*). In familiar settings such as among families and close friends, hints are very frequent in the forms of teases and jokes as it serves as a solidarity-enhancer (Ervin-Tripp, 1976).

#### **2.4.5 Weigel and Weigel's (1985) Directive Framework**

Weigel and Weigel (1985) have outlined a directive theoretical framework that divides Ervin-Tripp's (1976) framework into other categories. Interestingly, while the five syntactic structures of need statement, imbedded imperative and permission directive are termed differently, imperative is divided into six smaller units but hint and question directive are not divided. The terms and classifications are as follow:

- a) Need statement is termed want/need statement (WNS)
- b) Imbedded imperative is termed request for action (RFA)
- c) Permission directive is termed request for permission (RFP)
- d) Imperative is divided into positive imperative (PIM), negative imperative (NIM), 'you' positive directive (YPD), 'you' negative directive (YND), 'let's' imperative (LIM) and 'come on' imperative (CME).

- e) Hint and question directive cannot be divided into smaller units because of their ambiguity and vagueness.

## 2.5 The Theoretical Frameworks of Directives Applied in the Current Study

From the theoretical frameworks of directive outlined above, the syntactic structures of *imperatives*, *need statements*, *question directives* and *modal-imbedded directives* are frequently present, albeit being termed differently.

### Imperative

Imperative is the most typical type of directives and is present in all four theoretical frameworks discussed above. Additionally, it is also identified in Asmah Omar (1982) and Jones' (1992) directives frameworks. In Asmah Omar (1982), *imperative* is termed *exclusive directive* and *inclusive directive* while in Blum-Kulka *et.al* (1989), it is categorised as *mood derivable* and *locution derivable*. Asmah Omar's (1982) definition of *imperative* (and other types of directives) is very different from the other frameworks, but both exclusive and inclusive directives play similar directive functions such as requests, commands and orders.

In most of the theoretical frameworks, *imperative* is found to serve as solidarity-enhancer in informal situations among socially close interlocutors (Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996; Larina, 2008). It is also used in the workplace to summarise long discussions, distribute multiple tasks, and give answers when directly elicited in urgent situations (Yule, 1996; Georgalidou, 2008; Vine 2009). Since *imperative* is categorised as a direct form (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Yule, 1996), it is perceived as less polite because it demonstrates lack of concern for the interlocutors' face (Blum-Kulka, 1987).

In order to identify *imperatives* in the advice texts of this study, the various types of *imperatives* outlined by Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Eken (1996) serve as the basic guide. The types of *imperatives* are: a) you + imperative (*you positive/ negative imperatives*), b) based-form of verb (*positive/negative imperatives*), c) attention-getters, d) post-posed tags, e) elliptical form, f) verb + ing and g) let-shall-why don't we/you.

## Imbedded Imperative

The imperative *let-shall-why don't we/you* is a category outlined by Eken (1996). While *let* imperative is typically found in most directive frameworks including Asmah Omar (1982) and Jones (1992), *why don't we/you* directive is categorised as an *imbedded imperative* by Ervin-Tripp (1976), and a *suggestory formulae* by Blum-Kulka *et.al* (1989). This study is in favour of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) *imbedded imperative* category because a phrase such as *why don't we/you* that precedes a directive, clearly imbeds the imperative to soften the illocutionary force. Similarly, Blum-Kulka's *et.al* (1989) category of *suggestory formulae* lowers the impact of an imperative by turning the imperative into a suggestion rather than a command.

However, Eken (1996) might have categorised the phrase *why don't we/you* as *imperative* based on the specific context of the study. Eken's (1996) framework of directives only consists of five directive categories where more attention is given to *modal* and *non-modal imbedded* directive categories instead of the other category. Therefore, based on the suitability of the phrase to fit into the contexts of written advice columns, this study classifies the directives being preceded by the phrase *why don't we/you* as an *imbedded form* based on the Ervin-Tripp's (1976) framework.

In Ervin-Tripp's (1976) theoretical frameworks, *imbedded imperative* also includes directives preceded by modals such as *would you*, *could you* and *will you*. This form is categorized as the conventionally indirect form (on-record indirectness) (Blum-Kulka, 1987). The form is rated as polite due to its high pragmatic clarity and lack of coerciveness. Since it is usually initiated by modals, it is also known as *modal directive*, *modal interrogative* and *modal-imbedded directive* (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1974; Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Eken, 1996). To describe this type of directives, this study adopts Ervin-Tripp's (1976) *imbedded imperative* term. The category is also derived from Eken's (1996) *modal-imbedded directives* and *non-modal question directives* as the imperatives issued are preceded by imbedded phrases (for example: ***Would you mind taking the file?***) that downtoned the illocutionary force. Hence, the directive sounds more formal and less forceful to the hearer (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Jones, 1992).

Nevertheless, Searle's (1975) categorization of *modal interrogative* instead of *imbedded imperative* is also accurate because the structure of the form is constructed using modals in the interrogative form. Thus, it is acceptable to interchangeably use the term *modal*

*interrogative* when describing the *imbedded imperative* form. However, to avoid ambiguity in this study, the term *modal interrogative* is reserved to be used only when describing question directive/interrogative that is used with modal verbs.

Apart from being initiated by modals, the *modal interrogative* (Searle, 1976) or the *modal-imbedded interrogative directive* (Eken, 1996) can also be instigated by the *wh-question markers* (for example: *why, where, how*). To avoid confusion and ambiguity in this current study, the term *wh-question with modals* is used to differentiate the *modal interrogative* structure from the *imbedded imperative* structure. For example, the question directive “**Why should** you stay in this loveless marriage?” is categorised as a *modal interrogative/wh-question with modal* as the wh-question *why* is used alongside the modal *should*.

Past researches substantiate that *modal interrogative* is the most polite form in the English society as it is highly indirect, formal and show concern for the hearer’s face while at the same time, is high in pragmatic clarity. It also provides escape routes for hearers who wish to disobey the directives as it inquires the possibility of the directives to be carried out (Searle, 1975; Jones, 1992). The act of deference indicates politeness (Searle, 1975; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Vine, 2009).

### Question Directive

Instead of *modal interrogative* (Searle, 1975), Ervin-Tripp (1976) suggested that *question directive* provide escape routes as it allows for hearers non-compliance. Therefore, *question directive* can also be classified as an *indirect interrogative form* that differs from the *indirect modal interrogative* as it lacks the modal verbs. In Eken (1996) however, the *question directive* is structured as *yes-no question directive* which is used to elicit information from the hearers rather than to direct them to do something (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Eken, 1996). The vagueness and ambiguity of *question directive* makes it difficult to be identified (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Hence, this study further specifies the directives in the advice texts as *wh-question directive* and *yes-no question directive* to ensure clarity. These two categories are derived from Eken’s (1996) framework of *non-modal question directive*. The *yes-no question directive* is commonly used in the workplace when a subordinate tries to elicit information from the superior (Vine, 2009).

## Permission directive

*Permission directive* is another type of directives that uses modals in its structure (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). The structure of a *permission directive* is similar to *modal interrogative* and *imbedded imperative*, in which it is initiated by modals. However, a *permission directive* is more easily identifiable in texts as the focus of the structure is on the recipient or beneficiary of the actions instead of the donor-addressees' activities. Since the illocutionary force is easily interpreted, it is considered as a conventionally indirect directive (on-record indirectness) as similar to *imbedded imperative* and *modal interrogative* (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1987). Therefore, in the advice columns, *permission directive* is identified when the directive benefits the person who writes it. An example of a permission directive is, "Can you pass me the books?" where a speaker is asking hearers to do something for his benefit.

## Hint

In comparison to *question directives*, *hints* are also vague, ambiguous and difficult to be identified in a text (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Thus, hint as a non-conventionally indirect directive (off-record indirectness) is categorised as less polite than the conventionally indirect directive (on-record indirectness) as it lacks clarity, hence is more difficult to be interpreted (Blum-Kulka, 1987). This contradicts the findings of many previous researches on directives and politeness where *hint* is considered as one of the most polite, unobtrusive, inherent form of directives that conveys respect, formality and deference (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Asmah Omar, 1982; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996). However, some studies suggested that *hint* and *imperative* share similar characteristic as solidarity-enhancer as they are typically used among familiar interlocutors who share similar background knowledge and feasibility to do the required actions (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996).

Blum-Kulka *et.al* (1989) and Skewis (2003) distinguish two types of *hints*; *strong hint* and *mild hint*. As *hint* is vague and ambiguous, this study identifies *hint* when the directive is very indirect, least forceful and leaves the addressees with freedom to interpret the meaning and make decision for the problems (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Asmah Omar, 1982; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996). Furthermore, in this study, hint is also identified when it is inherently advising and directing the questioners to take certain actions to solve their problems.

## Need statement

Similar to imperative, need statement is also present in all the theoretical frameworks discussed above. The variation of terms for *need statement* includes *inclusive directive* (Asmah Omar, 1982) and *preference expression* (Jones, 1992). The multiple terms of *need statement* in the theoretical frameworks indicates its regularity of occurrences in interactions. Ervin-Tripp suggested that a *need statement* is more direct than an imperative. Therefore, both types of directives share similar characteristics as they are frequently used among familiar interlocutors (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Eken, 1996; Georgalidou, 2008) as sometimes, the used of lexical items to indicate preference such as *I hope* and *I wish* implies concerns and care towards the hearers, albeit hypothetically (Asmah Omar, 1982).

In contradiction to the familiar settings, superiors at the workplace have the freedom to direct their subordinates using *need statement* without being regarded as impolite as long as it is appropriately within the subordinates' scope of work (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). However, there is a slight difference between Ervin-Tripp (1976), Asmah Omar (1982) and Blum-Kulka's *et.al* (1989) definitions of *need statement* with that of Eken's (1996). While the former only includes the structure with *I want/need/hope/wish* to indicate their desire, the latter incorporates the second singular pronoun, *you need* and *ellipsis* of the singular pronoun *you* as *need statement*. However, this study applies only the need statement that expresses the writer's desires, wants or needs in the advice texts instead of what should be done by the addressees (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, *et.al*, 1982; Skewis, 2003; Georgalidou, 2008). Therefore, the structure *you need* and the *ellipsis* form are classified as *imperatives* as they direct the addressees to do something (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Weigel and Weigel, 1985). *Need statement* is easily identifiable as it is direct and unambiguous (Eken, 1996). Consequently, the *need statement* in the advice texts is identified when the structure is initiated by *I want/need/hope/wish* only (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Asmah Omar, 1982; Jones, 1992).

The discussion above presents the similarities and differences shared by the theoretical frameworks of directives by Blum-Kulka (1987), Blum-Kulka, *et.al* (1989), Eken (1996) and Ervin-Tripp (1976). Additionally, some directive references from Searle (1975), Asmah Omar (1982) and Jones (1992) are also addressed. From the discussion, it is apparent that Ervin-Tripp's (1976) framework encompasses most of the directives types outlined by other researchers which are *imperative*, *question directive*, *imbedded imperative*, *permission*

*directive, need statement and hint*. Therefore, the directives in the advice texts of this study are identified based on Ervin-Tripp's (1976) framework. The directives are then simplified into the three main structures of declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives (Yule, 1996; Georgalidou, 2008; Vine, 2009). These directives are then coded based on Searle (1975) and Blum-Kulka's (1987) *direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect* directives to make the findings more significant. In order to avoid any confusion when describing the directives, Weigel and Weigel's (1985) types of imperatives and Eken's (1996) types of interrogatives are used in this study. The types of *imperative* are: *positive imperative* (PIM), *negative imperative* (NIM), *you positive directive* (YPD) and *you negative directive* (YND) while the types of *interrogatives* are: *Wh-questions*, *Wh-questions with modals* and *Yes-no questions* (see Table 6, page 82).

All of these syntactical structures can be categorized into three categories of directives outlined by Yule (1996). These categories are declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives. Although these categories are not explained in detail by Yule (1996), they are important to classify directives into general group to increase the clarity of analysis. Therefore, the syntactical structures are classified as such: need statement and hint are subsumed under declarative, imperative is subsumed under imperative and permission directive, question directive and imbedded imperative are subsumed under interrogative (Yule, 1996).

## **2.6 POLITENESS**

The study of politeness has been a favourite among linguists of many cultures which has resulted in extensive studies of politeness and development of politeness theories. Politeness is a complex phenomenon, which involves a number of issues including cultures, society and individuals. For a very long time, Pragmatic researchers have been attempting to find the most suitable theory to encompass the concept of politeness. One of the most prominent theories of politeness was by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) who proposed *the positive-negative politeness* theory which was an expansion and adaptation from Goffman's (1967) concept of face and has been applied widely in many cultures to evaluate its validity. This theory claims the universality of politeness where all cultures experience similar

politeness strategies. As more theories of politeness are developed, the positive-negative politeness theory is termed the *traditional theory* to contradict the differing views of politeness. Another traditional theory of politeness is the *Politeness Principles* based on *conversational maxims* by Leech (1983) and Lakoff (1973).

As the studies on politeness develop rapidly, more findings suggested that the *traditional theory's* claim of politeness universality is unfounded. It received tremendous criticism from the post-modernism politeness researchers who dispute the claim of universality of politeness. This is because many studies have discovered that politeness is a discursive concept which is dependent on a specific culture (Lee-Wong, 1994; Larina, 2005; Terkourafi, 2005; Locher and Watts, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006). Due to the discursiveness, Locher and Watts (2005) propose the theory of relational work which encloses the continuum of politeness. With the emergence of the post-modernism view, more theories on politeness are developed such as the *face constituting act* (Arundale, 1999), *rapport management* (Spencer-Oatey, 2000), *the frame-based view* (Terkourafi, 2005) and *the dialectic approach* (Haugh, 2006).

## **2.7 Goffman's (1967) Theory of Face**

Goffman (1967) defined *face* as the positive social values claimed by a person for himself through other people's assessment, i.e. *line*. In an interaction, the interlocutors act out verbal and non-verbal behaviours (*line*) in assessing the situation, other participants and also themselves. Therefore, in interactions, the interlocutors will consider carefully what to say to each other because impressions are formed for each utterance.

*Face* is viewed as something that is emotionally invested and can be maintained, enhanced or lost and must be frequently attended to in interactions. A person's *face* is diffusely located in an interaction, not something that is fixed on his body. In Goffman's (1967) view, *face* is constructed via the cognitions of self and others. Therefore, to maintain *face*, a person must present himself verbally or non-verbally with the image that is internally consistent to what he desires. This is because, when the image presented in the interaction is evaluated, supported and confirmed by other participants, the *face* is maintained and enhanced (Goffman, 1967).



Although the *traditional* and *post-modernism* politeness theories differ from each other, both theories stem from the concept of *face*. The traditional theory defines *face* as the public self-image posed by a person. This self-image can be distinguished into *positive face* and *negative face*. However, instead of adopting the concept of *face* fully, the *traditional theory* only focuses on individual's face while neglecting the participants' *face* and the interaction process (Goffman, 1967; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Locher and Watts, 2005). This disregard for the participants' face and the interaction process makes the traditional theory seem individualistic which contradicts the purpose of interaction. Therefore, Locher and Watts (2005) propose the *theory of relational work* to complement the weaknesses of the *traditional theory*.

## **2.8 The Traditional Theory: Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Positive-Negative Politeness and Face- Threatening-Act (FTA) mitigation**

In an interaction, politeness is defined as putting things in such a way to account for the feelings of the addressee and to maintain their face (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Face is the public self-image of a person which relates to emotional and social sense of self. It is carried by everyone and is expected to be recognized and respected by each other. As face carries the self-image of a person, it is important for interlocutors to maintain and enhance each others' face (Yule, 1996). The notion of face was first introduced by Goffman (1967) but it is Brown and Levinson (1978) who applied the concept of face in the context of politeness.

Face is the "public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61) and is distinguished into two types: *the positive face* and *the negative face*. *The positive face* is the need to be accepted, treated like a member of a group and for the wants to be shared with other members of the group. In another word it is "the desire that one's wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62). Some strategies of *positive politeness* are solidarity strategies where the members share dialects and personal information, use nicknames, abusive terms, similar slang expressions and inclusive terms *we* and *let's* among each others (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Asmah Omar, 1982; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996). Meanwhile, the *negative face* is the need to be

independent, free and not imposed by others or “the desire that one’s wants is unimpeded by others (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62). The strategies of *negative politeness* are deferent strategies of formal politeness and making speeches impersonal by excluding the referent to speaker and/or hearer. These are done by using questions with modal verbs, apologising for imposition, hesitating, using extended talk, using less direct, less clear, longer and more complex structures (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Yule; 1996).

Although *face preservation* is polite, it poses to be the primary constraint for the achievement of interactional goals. Speakers manipulate *face maintenance* strategies to achieve higher discourse goals of negotiating their opinions and supporting their feelings. Figure 1 demonstrates possible strategies of doing face-threatening act (FTA) (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

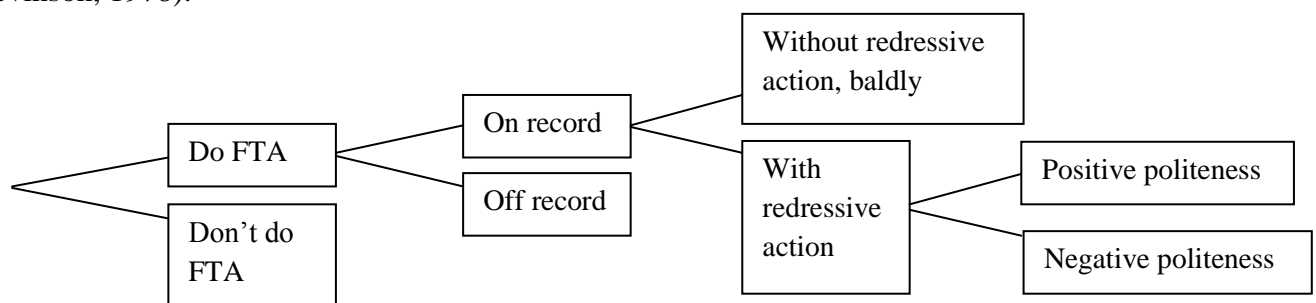


Figure 1: Possible strategies of doing FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1978)

### 2.8.1 Criticisms on Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) Politeness Theory and FTA-mitigation

Although Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) theory has been widely applied for a long span of time, it suffers intense criticism from the post-modernism views of politeness. Some of the criticisms are as follows:

- a) The *traditional theory* is criticised for being too ethno-Anglo-centric based on studies that prove politeness is culturally-dependent instead of universal (Lee-Wong, 1994; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Larina, 2008; Georgalidou, 2008). These studies demonstrated that politeness is dependent on the *norms* of a certain culture as well as the interlocutor’s *expectations* and *judgments* in specific contexts of interactions. *Norm*

varies depending on the nature of interlocutors' relationship. Thus, the *norm* of (in)appropriate social behaviour and (im)politeness are subjected to participants' *expectations* and *judgments* rather than being predicted universally by the analysts (Locher and Watts, 2005). Hence, indirectness does not equate politeness and directness does not mean impoliteness (Lee-Wong, 1994; Saxena, 2002; Skewis, 2003; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Larina, 2008; Georgalidou, 2008).

- b) The *traditional theory* did not take into account the whole concept of *face* that is introduced by Goffman (1967). Instead, it focuses only on the individual's *face* instead of both *self* and *others' face*. Multiple face(work) that includes the face of individual and interlocutor is sometimes a requirement and a possibility in interaction as more than one face can be threatened at one time. To fill in the loophole, Arundale (1999) proposed the model of Conjoint Co-Constituting Model of Communication and Face Constituting Act (FCT) which analyse face support, face threat and stasis face of self and others in an interaction. Furthermore, the traditional theory treats impoliteness as a second class concept by focusing only on politeness.
- c) The encoding/decoding model that the *traditional theory* uses to analyse speeches is too simplistic and explains the production of meanings as a strictly linear and sequential process. This separates language acts into singular, isolated and self-contained event when in reality it should be analysed in contexts of the interactions (Arundale, 1999). Arundale (1999) also claimed that the *traditional theory* focuses too much on human's cognitive as opposed to the interactional process that explains the language used as originally proposed by Goffman (1967).

## **2.9 Post-Modernism Theories of Politeness**

Unlike the traditional theory, the post-modernism politeness theory is still in its early years. Thus, the theory has not been fully developed like the traditional theory. However, the post-modernism theory put forward theories of (im)politeness to overcome the weaknesses of the traditional theory.

### 2.9.1 Theory of Relational Work

Due to the vast criticisms and weaknesses of the traditional politeness theory, Locher and Watts (2005) proposed the *theory of relational work* which sees that participants in interactions negotiate their relationships with each other for (im)polite behaviours. This makes (im)politeness a first order concept as it is determined by the participant's assessment instead of being theoretically predicted by analysts. Furthermore, the post-modernists argue that as a discursive concept, (im)politeness cannot be simply equated to the FTA-mitigation as people do not limit themselves to follow theoretical rules in order to be polite (Ng, 2008). Thus, the theory of relational work proposes an/a (im)politeness continuum that explains the range of polite and impolite social behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005).

The continuum of (im)politeness encompasses the range of social behaviour in between politeness and impoliteness including politic behaviours such as appropriacy and aggravations (Ng, 2008). As a discursive concept, Locher and Watts (2005) argue that (im)politeness cannot be equated with FTA-mitigation as (im)politeness is not a fixed concept and changes accordingly to specific cultural norms (Ng, 2008). Thus, the *theory of relational work* proposes that interlocutors negotiate their relationships with each other to determine the polite or impolite social behaviour in interactions. This is because as (im)politeness is a dynamic concept, it has the ability to emerge from a specific interaction, which transforms the interactional contexts to be relevantly important to a study (Watts, 2003). Therefore, the *theory of relational work* attempts to explain a wider variety of social behaviour which is situated along the (im)politeness continuum.

As opposed to the traditional theory, the *theory of relational work* focuses on the participants' *norm* in an interaction. Instead of being predicted theoretically by analysts, the participants in an interaction evaluate and judge theirs and others' utterances to determine the degree of (im)politeness. Furthermore, the post-modernism theory adopts the concept of politeness<sup>1</sup> and treats both politeness and impoliteness equally, rather than viewing impoliteness as a second class concept (Locher and Watts, 2005). For example, since (im)politeness is viewed as a continuum rather than a black and white concept, the less favourable behaviour is categorised as an unmarked behaviour instead of impolite (Locher and Watts, 2005; Ng, 2008).

A study of politic behaviour in relational work suggests that direct speech acts could be interpreted as appropriate or politic behaviour rather than impolite (Ng, 2008) as claimed

by prior researchers such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Ervin-Tripp (1976), Jones (1992) and Yule (1996). In two English movie extracts, it is demonstrated that direct speech acts are the norms among the characters as they view directness speech as appropriate rather than simply polite or impolite (Ng, 2008). This study thus proves that the contextual norms among interlocutors determines the degree of (im)politeness as they evaluate and judge (im)politeness during the course of an interaction (Locher and Watts, 2005; Ng, 2008).

### **2.9.2 Theory of Face-Constituting Act**

Arundale (1999) views conversation as an interactional process that must be co-constituted and co-maintained by the interlocutors to achieve politeness. He contests to the encoding-decoding model used by the traditional theory to analyse politeness. Initially, the encoding-decoding model is used because the Westerners have consistent concepts of cause and effect, similar sentence-by-sentence structures in reading and writing and lack of alternative for politeness model in the field (Stewart, 1996; Linell, 1982; cited in Arundale, 1999). However, the post-modernist linguists argued that the decoding-encoding model is too simplistic and linear and segments the speeches into singular, act-by-act units. Therefore, it fails to analyse the multi elements in an interaction such as the interconnectedness of language and the dynamic interchange and contextual effects of language (Good, 1990; Schegloff, 1988; cited in Arundale, 1999).

As such, it is evident from Arundale's (1999) arguments that multiple politeness and facework are sometimes a requirement and a possibility in interactions. Therefore, more than one face can be threatened at one time. To fill in the loophole, Arundale (2006) proposed the model of Conjoint Co-Constituting Model of Communication (CCM) and Face Constituting Act (FCT) which analyse face support, face threat and stasis face. The CCM enables the interlocutors to co-constitute, interpret and analyse each others' adjacent utterances in interactions. Thus, any analysis of an interaction would be purely from the interlocutors' utterances and free from analysts' prediction.

In terms of facework, the FCT model helps to provide explanation to the CCM model interaction analysis. This is because the three types of face defined by Arundale (1999) which are routine/stasis face maintenance, outright face threat and outright face support are co-

constituted in interaction as participants maintain their social relationship via language (Arundale, 1999). FCT defines face as being intrinsic to an interaction instead of being treated as extrinsic needs, wants and motivations for an individual to do something. Therefore, it is important that face is examined within the study of a conversation using appropriate method (Arundale, 1999).

## **2.10 The Frame-based View of (Im)politeness**

The post-modernism view of politeness such as the theory of relational work and the co-constituting model attempts to overcome the weaknesses of the traditional theory. However, since the post-modernism theories are relatively new, it has yet to be fully developed which cause its shortcoming (Terkourafi, 2005; Ferencik, 2009). Firstly, politeness<sup>1</sup> proposed that the definition of politeness should be gathered from the society instead of being theoretical. However, some of the participants in interactions have difficulty defining politeness<sup>1</sup> because in some cultures, no one-word equivalent synonym for politeness is available. Secondly, the notion of norms has yet to be fully developed to be explained as a concept which impedes the analysis process. Finally, since the post-modernism theory rejects the analysts' prediction theory, the possibility for linguists to theorize (im)politeness at any degree is denied (Terkourafi, 2005: 244-245).

Thus, as an alternative to the traditional theory and the post-modernism theory, Terkourafi (2005) proposed a data-driven frame-based view of (im)politeness which is based on three principles: the regularity of occurrence, societal rationality and prior experience. The frame-based view believes that the regularity of occurrence of an utterance determines the (im)politeness in an interaction. This is because, in interaction, people will frequently use forms that they view as polite rather than the forms they view as impolite. Hence, Terkourafi (2005) asserts that a polite form should be the form that is regularly used in interactions by specific cultural members.

Another two principles of the frame-based view are the societal rationality and participants' prior experience in dealing with speech act in specific contexts. Participants who have had experience of similar interactional contexts would be able to speak and act based on their prior experience to determine (im)politeness in similar interactional context as they

already know what to say and how to act in those situations. However, if the participants have never been in the situation before, they would not have any prior experience as reference. In this situation, the participants will have to rely on what the society views as polite in the interaction because the (im)politeness is dependent on a specific culture (Terkourafi, 2005).

In a perspective, the frame-based view is an improvement of the traditional theory as it accepts the predictive theory of im(politeness) while at the same time views im(politeness) as non-universal due to the dependency on specific cultures. Terkourafi (2005) argues that the rejection of predictive theory is not entirely right as it is needed in analysing interaction. This is because, the absence of researchers during the interaction hinder complete accuracy in the analysis of the participants' speech. Therefore, analysts' prediction complements the participants' assessments in analysis of interactions.

## **2.11 The Politeness Theory Applied in the Current Study**

From the theories of (im)politeness presented above, it is evident that there are some similarities and distinctions between the traditional theory and the post-modernism theory. Firstly, Goffman's (1967) notion of face forms the basis for both the traditional theory and the post-modernist theory of (im)politeness. However, the traditional theory failed to inculcate the whole concept of face in their description. In order to overcome the partial, individualistic face concept of the traditional theory, the post-modernism theory encompasses Goffman's (1967) notion of face as a whole. Therefore, the post-modernism theory defines *face* as similar to Goffman (1967) where it is stated that a person would feel positive about himself when the image (line) that he portrays in an interaction is evaluated, judged and supported by both himself and other participants (Goffman, 1967:5; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003:1458). Thus, Goffman (1967) and the post-modernists belief that the participants co-constitute and negotiate (im)politeness in interactions as they evaluate, judge and determine the politic, polite or impolite behaviour in their utterances (Goffman, 1967; Arundale, 1999; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; Haugh, 2006; Ng, 2008).

Thus, this study adopts the term *relational work* to encompass all of the range of polite, impolite and politic behaviours (Locher and Watts, 2005). Although the positive-negative politeness theory is being negatively criticized, some scholars such as Terkourafi

(2005) and Haugh (2006) perceive that it is valid to be used as an (im)politeness framework. This is proven in a study of Modern Standard Japanese honorifics where the positive-negative face were “reduced to an undifferentiated notion that can be lost or saved”, but is still able to measure (im)politeness, (Haugh, 2005; cited in Haugh, 2010:1). Haugh (2006:23) then re-conceptualized the positive-negative face into “more abstract notions that can encompass multiple meanings” to verify the validity of the positive-negative politeness theory. These two studies thus, indicate that the positive-negative face is indeed valid to be applied in the analysis of texts.

Prior to this, the researcher mentions that Goffman’s (1967) notion of face is the umbrella term that encompasses the wide concept of face. Thus, in the researcher’s view, the traditional theory could be assumed as forming one part of the whole face concept. This is because, the researcher believes that every individual innately possesses face or the self-image he has created for himself and wants the face to be recognised and respected by others (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Yule, 1996). As the original notion of face involves individuals, society and culture, the traditional face can be assumed to define the individual’s face only.

Furthermore, the positive-negative politeness is more suitable to be applied in the current study because in a context where limited interaction is observed, such as in the advice columns, the exchanges between the interlocutors are insufficient to draw the degree of (im)politeness from the participants’ evaluation and assessment. This is due to the non-existence real-time cross-interaction between the interlocutors that disables any ways to clarify meanings in the advice columns. Thus, analysts’ prediction is needed to determine the (im)politeness in the advice columns. In sum, analyst’s prediction and a fix concept of face are needed in situation where limited interaction and no real time interaction process are observed to form more accurate analysis (Terkourafi, 2005). Also, the fix concept of face and positive-negative politeness theory provide the possibility for researchers to theorize more in-depthly about (im)politeness (Terkourafi, 2005). Thus, this study employs the positive-negative politeness theory to analyse the directives in the advice texts due to the limited interaction between interlocutors (Goffman’s, 1967; Arundale, 1999; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; Haugh, 2006).

To address the third research objective on mitigation strategies use in the advice columns, the researcher views that FTA-mitigation theory as suitable to be used in measuring



(im)politeness as it has some similarities with the theory of relational work. This is evident in Locher's (2006) study of advice columns where the aspect of relational work is elaborated in terms of hedges, criticism, boosting, emphasizing, praising and bonding. One might argue that these strategies are found on the (im)politeness continuum to describe politic, polite or impolite behaviours (Locher and Watts, 2005). However, four of these strategies, i.e. hedging, empathising, praising and bonding, are categorised as mitigation strategies in prior studies such as in Blum-Kulka, *et.al* (1989), Skewis (2003), Yates (2005) and Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008). Another two strategies, i.e. criticism and boosting do not mitigate, but aggravate the speeches. They also appear on the (im)politeness continuum as politic or unmarked behaviour (Ng, 2008)

These strategies share some similarities with FTA-mitigation of the traditional theory and appears on the (im)politeness continuum of the relational work theory. Therefore, since the FTA-mitigation strategy is too simplistic to stand as a theory on its own, it can be assumed to play a section along the (im)politeness continuum of the relational work concept. Thus, the FTA-mitigation strategy could be expanded to include impoliteness rather than just politeness to validate it as an (im)politeness framework. Therefore, based on the argument, this study beliefs that the FTA-mitigation strategy is applicable to be used in measuring (im)politeness (Brown and Levinson. 1978, 1987). The term *relational work* is adopted to determine the accuracy of the analysis as it encompasses a wide range of (im)politeness behaviour in a continuum (Locher and Watts, 2005).

Nonetheless, the positive-negative politeness theory claimed of universality is somewhat misguided as the conceptualisation of politeness is biased towards the Anglo-American which makes it intrinsically ethnocentric as proven by cultural-based studies (Lee-Wong, 1994; Haugh, 2006; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Garcia, 2008; Georgalidou, 2008; Larina, 2008; Arundale, 1999). Therefore, Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based view which is an improvement of the traditional theory, helps to establish the specific context/culture of the utterance. The frame-based view takes into consideration the norms of specific cultures in the analysis.

In the present study, the specific norm/context studied is the norm/context between the advice-columnist and advice-seekers in the scope of *The Star* newspapers advice columns. As the post-modernists (Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003; cited in Locher and Watts, 2005) argued that the traditional theory treats impoliteness as a second class concept, the frame-

based view is also used in the study to complement the positive-negative politeness theory in the analysis of (im)politeness in the advice columns.

The frame-based view is very straightforward in describing its concept of (im)politeness based on its three principles, i.e. the regularity of occurrence, societal rationality and prior experience (Terkourafi, 2005). These three principles are able to justify the (im)politeness analysis in the advice texts. Both the traditional theory and the frame-based view perceive analysts' prediction as important in analysing speeches in limited exchanges. Therefore, these two theories are used to complement each others' weaknesses in analysing the wide concept of (im)politeness in the advice texts (Terkourafi, 2005; Ferencik, 2009).

## **2.12 Directives and Politeness**

The study of directives is interesting as it is governed by the issues of (im)politeness and situational contexts. These issues are approached from different cultural views including the Western, Chinese, Russian, Indonesian and Arabic to draw some similarities and differences in the employment of directives and (im)politeness strategies. Earlier studies of politeness are in favour of the Westerner's view that indirectness are the most desired and polite form of directive structure (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996). As such, modal interrogative, question directive, hint and mitigation strategies are considered to be polite in making requests (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976). However, the more recent studies of directives and politeness that involve other cultures found that indirectness does not necessarily mean politeness. Instead, it could be interpreted as insincerity, hostile and alienating (Larina, 2008).

Sections 2.11.1 and 2.11.2 below discuss the issues of directness and indirectness and directives and situational contexts in the study of directives and politeness.

### 2.12.1 Directness and Indirectness in Directives

In the early stages of directives and politeness study, it is believed that indirectness equates politeness as it conveys respects to other people's privacy. This is strongly proven by many studies that focus on the Westerner's view of politeness including Blum-Kulka (1987), Jones (1992) and Yule (1996). By being indirect, a speaker caters to the hearer's negative face by respecting his options and giving him the freedom to make his own decision. Indirect form is typically adopted among strangers as it implies formality. Leech (1989) asserts that indirectness increases the degree of addressee's optionality, thus diminishing the force in the speech. Meanwhile, by using direct form, the speaker caters to the hearer's positive face as it is a solidarity enhancer which is typical among familiar interlocutors such as family and friends and implies friendliness, closeness and concern.

Likewise, the Hebrew and English speakers in Blum-Kulka's (1987) study, perceive that the conventionally indirect request strategy, i.e. modal interrogative and question directive, are the most polite form to make request as it is explicit, less forceful and leave the addressee with the freedom to either comply or not with the directives issued. Meanwhile, the direct request, i.e. imperative, is impolite as it commands the addressee to do something, thus restricting his freedom. Surprisingly, the non-conventionally indirect request, i.e. hint, is also classified as impolite because the vagueness and ambiguity hinder pragmatic clarity even though it is the least forceful form of directives (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1987).

Locher (2006) substantiates the importance of indirectness in the Western culture as she found that an online health advice column, *Lucy Answers*, practices the policy of non-directness in giving advice to the questioners. As a result, the advices written in response to the questions are often mitigated to give the questioners' freedom in making decision based on the advices. Thus, the non-directness policy ensures that the advices are structured indirectly with more declarative and interrogative structures which alleviate the face-threatening-act of telling someone what to do (Locher, 2006).

However, more recent studies that are conducted within specific cultural contexts proved that there is no linear relationship between indirectness and politeness. Some of these studies include the languages of Chinese, Russian, Polish and Indonesian (Lee-Wong, 1994; Skewis, Hassall, 1999; 2003; Larina, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006). Lee-Wong (1994) and Skewis (2003) studied the Chinese language of different centuries in written and spoken forms. While Lee-Wong (1994) studied spoken data of directives among current Chinese

society, Skewis (2003) analysed written data from the *Honglou meng* novel which is written based on the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese society. Although the language transcends different centuries, both studies found that indirectness play insignificant role in the Chinese societies. Alternatively, the speakers of both languages employ different mitigation strategies to soften their directives. The 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese mitigated the directives using grounders and honorifics while the modern Chinese speakers used impositives (a direct bald on record strategy) most frequently when making requests. These impositives appear in four categories; imperatives, questions, need statements and presumptive statements (Lee-Wong, 1994). These studies thus demonstrate that the Chinese speakers prefer to use direct form in their interaction (Lee-Wong, 1994; Skewis, 2003; Larina, 2008).

The preference for direct speech thus, proved that the Chinese society practice positive politeness strategy in their daily interaction which conveys sincerity and solidarity (Lee-Wong, 1994). Sincerity is important when making request as it conveys that a) the speakers want the hearers to do the requests, b) the speakers assume that the hearers can do the requests and c) the speakers assume that the hearers would be willing to do the requests (Lee-Wong, 1994). If a speaker were to use an indirect method to perform requests, the hearer would feel that the speakers doubt his generosity to carry out the actions, hence could be seriously offended (Lee-Wong, 1994). This is similarly observed in other cultures such as Russian, Kinnauri, Greek, Indonesian and Polish (Hassall, 1999; Saxena, 2002; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Larina, 2008; Georgalidou, 2008).

As a mean to portray sincerity in inviting, Russian speakers would intensify the invitation by putting a lot of pressure on the hearers to comply with the invitation (Larina, 2008). This is dissimilar to the English speakers who would give the hearers options to refuse the invitation. The reason behind this is that, the Russian speaker values the act of friendliness and goodwill in interaction while the English speaker feels that it is not his place to impose on the hearer's freedom of action (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Yule, 1996; Larina, 2008). Thus, while the Russian speaker practices the act of redress, the English speaker is being deferent. For example, invitations issued by an English speaker and a Russian speaker might sound like these:

English: It would be very nice to have tea together, but I'm sure you are very busy.

Russian: Let's go out for coffee. Stop working. Relax. It's time to have a break.

(Larina, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Lee-Wong, 1994)

Therefore, the intercultural aspect of politeness causes the English speakers to perceive the Russian society as impolite because the Russian society often sounds over-assertive, argumentative and aggressive in conversation. Furthermore, the incessant use of imperatives when they interfere into others' conversation, ask personal questions, give unsolicited advice and express their opinions directly is considered as rude to the English society. On the contrary, the Russian society views English speakers as rude if they use indirect forms in interaction as the over-politeness of the indirect form makes the English speakers sound insincere, ceremonious and distant (Larina, 2008).

Hence, the English society's communicative orientation is hearer-oriented or form-oriented while the Russian society's communicative style is message-oriented. Nevertheless, both cultures try to minimise the face-threatening-act in conversations by employing their own (im)politeness strategies. More importantly, research demonstrated that some negative politeness strategies that are constantly used by English speakers do exist in Russian, but appearing less frequently and is perceived as of little importance (Larina, 2008). Likewise, the practice of positive politeness strategy is also observed among the Westerners who are socially close to each other. For example, Jones (1992) found that the Morris dancing team uses direct imperatives to get their message across efficiently and has no fear of committing face-threatening-act due to their close relationships with one another.

Recently, however, Haugh's (2006) observation of the Westerner's (im)politeness strategy suggested that some of the American societies are now leaning towards the positive politeness which overlooks the status quo in their interaction, but the British society still adheres to the negative politeness which emphasizes the importance of social status. In sum, the relationship between the (im)politeness and directness is perceived differently in different cultures. Thus, politeness is not a universal concept and must be analysed accordingly to specific norms and societies (Larina, 2008; Lee-Wong, 1994; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Skewis, 2003; Georgalidou, 2008).

### 2.12.2 Directives and Situational Context

Situational contexts are intricately connected to directives as every utterance is influenced by the contexts that surround it and determines the hidden meaning of a speech. Some of the researchers who have conducted studies on directives and situational contexts are Ervin-Tripp (1976), Vine (2001, 2009) and Georgalidou (2008). According to Ervin-Tripp (1976), directives are determined by some social and ecological factors between interlocutors which are; a) social status, b) age, c) familiarity, d) presence/absence of outsiders, e) territorial location and f) task expectations. However, these contextual complexities can be simply subsumed under three contexts; a) power status, b) social relationships and c) level of impositions (Le Couteur, 1996; Yule 1996; Vine, 2009). The Chinese's view of these three contexts is as follow:

- a) Power is defined in terms of seniority, age and status where two types of relationships, solidary and non-solidary are built based on these. Solidary are used among family members while non-solidary is applied among authority/official interlocutors. With the increase in power, the use of impositive (action verb) also increases while the use of query-preparatory (formulaic suggestion) decreases.
- b) Social distance is defined based on familiarity and kinship. Kin is defined as people who are related in blood or close to each other while distant stranger is people with no relationship with each other. Similar to the English society, the Chinese society uses conventionally indirect requests when communicating with socially distant people while direct requests are used among kins (Searle, 1975; Brown and Levinson, 1978; Lee-Wong, 1994). As for the Polish society, social relationship is indicated by distinguishing the second and third personal pronouns '*ty*' (you) and '*Pan*' (sir/ Mr) or '*Pani*' (Madam/ Miss). By using '*ty*', the degree of intimacy between interlocutors increases while '*Pan*' or '*Pani*' shows social gap between participants (Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006).
- c) The ranking of imposition is defined by the degree of difficulty in carrying out a request. When the level of imposition increases, the impositive (bald-on record speech) decreases which is similarly applied in the English society (Searle, 1975; Brown and Levinson, 1978; Lee-Wong, 1994; Yule, 1996).

(Lee-Wong, 1994)

Among the three social contexts, power status is considered as the most influential in interactions. This is evident in studies where researchers used a person's rank to describe the directives issued, such as in communications between doctor-nurse, manager-temporary staff

and technician-technician (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Vine, 2009). This is confirmed by Jones (1992) who found that in the Morris dancing team meeting, status variations are more important than gender difference in the group as the participants ask more questions to the female facilitator of the group than to each other. Her role as facilitator and authority justified her directives and reduces face-threatening-act on other members (Jones, 1992; Vine, 2009; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Georgalidou, 2008).

Similarly, the act of giving advice involves power asymmetry between the participants where the advice-givers possess more power than the questioners (Locher, 2006). In advice columns, the advice is purposefully solicited by the questioners, thus granting advice-givers authority (Hendley, 1977; McKinstry and McKinstry, 1999; Locher, 2006; Ho, 2009). In both *Jinsei Annai* and *Lucy Answers* advice columns, advice-givers are perceived as more powerful than the questioners as they have the freedom to control the selection of letters to be read, responded to and published (Locher, 2006; McKinstry and McKinstry, 1991; Hendley, 1977).

Another important situational context that determines types of directive is the purpose of interaction (Vine, 2009). Although it is inherently present in many studies, it was Vine (2001, 2009) who singled it out that as a contributing factor that influences the types of directives. Vine (2001, 2009) observed that at the workplace, directives took different forms when used in different meetings. While direct imperatives are always used in task-allocation meetings, indirect modal interrogatives were frequent in problem solving meetings as it inquire the possibilities of an action to be carried out by the addressees (Vine, 2001, 2009).

Ervin-Tripp's (1976) findings discovered that, in an adult-adult conversation, people's job ranks are used to define directives and situational contexts. In short, the superiors always used need statements and imperatives when directing the subordinates while imbedded imperatives, permission directives, question directives and hints are typically used by superiors among unfamiliar members, when the task is not part of the subordinates' job specifications and when there is a possibility of non-compliance from the hearers (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Weigel and Weigel, 1985)

However, Weigel and Weigel (1985) who tested Ervin-Tripp's (1976) hypothesis using a set of different participants found contradicting results where imperatives were used almost exclusively in interaction where others syntactic directive structures are expected to take place. The different finding is due to the different participants used to gather data. While

Ervin-Tripp (1976) collected data from the male and female middle class, white, collared professional workers and students, Weigel and Weigel (1985) analysed data from all male, lower class, black, agricultural farmers. Both sources of data were of distinct cultural heritage and went through different socialization processes that affected their language used. The differences were also caused by the nature of power relationships (office manager versus farming crewleader), organizational hierarchy and physical settings (urban/ indoor versus rural/ outdoor) (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Weigel and Weigel, 1985).

Situational contexts are usually pre-determined prior to an interaction process but, they could change during the course of an interaction. For example, the social relationship between interlocutors is pre-determined before a conversation as people usually form first impressions of their interlocutors. However, during the course of interaction, the relationship might grow friendlier due to the increasing level of familiarity with each other or vice versa. As such, directives used in an interaction might become less face threatening and less imposing or might increasingly be a threat to the interlocutors' face (Yule, 1996).

## **2.13 MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, *mitigate* originate from the Latin word '*mitigatus*' which means to soften. Therefore, in the modern English language, *to mitigate* means to cause (something) to become less harsh or hostile or to make less severe or painful. In the study of speech acts, mitigation strategies are linguistic tools employed to lower the imposition and soften the directives issued by speakers to hearers.

In most studies of speech acts, mitigation devices are frequently analysed as they are common in natural conversation. Directives are often mitigated to maintain interlocutors' face and to sustain an interaction. They are softened much more than they are strengthened in an interaction (Jones, 1992: 428). Since mitigation devices are used to decrease interlocutors' face-threatening act, they are considered as a politeness strategy. Some examples of the most common mitigation strategies for directives are justification for directives, lexical hedges (*perhaps, maybe, definitely*), terms of address (*Sir, Madam, Doctor*), modal auxiliary verbs (*can, could, should*) and humour (Vine, 2001, 2009; Skewis, 2003; Locher, 2006; Eken,



1996; Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Jones, 1992, Holmes 1998; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008; Valor, 2000).

Politeness is much more reliant on internal and external mitigations rather than on the level of indirectness of directive forms (Skewis, 2003). Even though politeness is not universal and depends on a specific culture, mitigation devices are usually present in interactions as downtoners to reduce face-threatening-act. Directives might also be softened by social contexts such as age, social position, place of interaction, social relationship and intonation (Larina, 2008). Rinnert and Kobayashi (1999) confirmed that the English speakers' prefer deference markers such as mitigating phrases (*please, possibly, etc*) to appear polite while the Japanese speakers' degree of politeness is realized by the use of semantic devices.

Even though indirectness does not play any function in marking politeness in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese society, a lot of linguistic tools are used to soften the directives (Skewis, 2003). For example, servants mitigate speeches more frequently when talking to their masters than when the masters talk to the servants. More importantly, Skewis (2003) found three types of mitigation that frequently appear at the Head Act (the minimal unit where the directive is realised) of an utterance which are internal mitigation, external mitigation and terms of address. While Skewis (2003) showed that the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese society prefers external modifiers, Lee-Wong (1994) demonstrated that the more current Chinese society prefers the internal modifiers in their requests. Internal mitigation includes lexical and phrasal downgraders while external mitigation includes supportive moves. These mitigation strategies are an expansion of Blum Kulka *et.al's* (1989) mitigation framework.

### **2.13.1 Internal mitigation**

Internal mitigation includes lexical and phrasal downgraders. These mitigation devices are added to the Head Act to soften the force of the directives:

#### **a) Politeness markers:**

All words and formulaic phrases added to the Head Act are to gauge cooperative behaviour from hearers and used as politeness markers. The most common politeness markers are *please* and "*May I trouble you?*" In Russian and English, an imperative modified

by *please* (*pozhaluysta*) changes the directive into a request, thus making the utterance less imposing, polite and acceptable at all level (Larina, 2008).

Georgalidou (2008) and Skewis (2003) found that *please* functions as a politeness marker to minimize the threat of a request and to increase the level of formality between interlocutors. In an intensive study of *please*, Sato (2008) found that the different positioning of *please* in an utterance carries different meaning. The initial position of *please* shows demands and pleas where speakers may explicitly expressed their individuality. Meanwhile, *please* in the medial position is applied most extensively and functions as a politeness marker in commands. Finally, *please* in the final position is employed when speaker's behaviour as an individual is restricted to achieve a task or to perform requests (Sato, 2008).

b) Understaters:

Understaters are made up of adverbial and adjectival modifiers that function to minimise the state of affairs in the form '*I do not want to ask too much of you*'. An example of an understater is "*All I ask is that just once in a while, you do as you're told*" (Skewis, 2003).

c) Subjectivisers:

Subjectivisers lower the assertive force of a directive when a speaker is voicing a subjective opinion on the issue in the form, '*This is just what I think you should do, but you do not have to agree*'. An example of a subjectiviser is "*If I were you sir, I wouldn't get involved*" (Skewis, 2003).

d) Downtoners:

Downtoners usually comes in the form of sentential or propositional modifiers that modulate the impact of directive by signalling possibility of non-compliance via verb reduplication and addition of particles. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese society, the addition of particle '*ba*' downtoned the directives uttered (Skewis, 2003). Reduplication of verbs is perceived as weaker directives while action verbs are neither strong nor weak in its requestive force (Lee-Wong, 1994). For example, "*Spare him*" (Skewis, 2003).

e) Cajolers:

Cajolers are conventionalised speech items used to establish, restore and increase harmony between interlocutors in a conversation. However, the semantic content bears little relevance to its pragmatic function. An example from Skewis (2003) is "*All right. I'll give you a day to do it.*"

f) Appealers:

Appealers are used to signal turn-availability and to elicit positive response to hearers' propositions. It usually takes the form of sentence final question markers or tag questions. The message attempted to be conveyed is, '*You can choose whether you want to do the action or not, so if you want it, please tell me.*' An example of an appealer is "*My lodge is not far from here, please stop by and have a chat, won't you?*" (Skewis, 2003: 177).

In relation to Blum-Kulka's *et.al* (1989) mitigation framework, the internal mitigating devices are simplified by Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008) into three different subtypes which are openers, softeners and fillers.

a) Openers:

As the name suggest, openers are used to initiate expressions or utterances of the intended requests. For example, in a sentence like "*Gentleman, would you mind leaving us, please?*" the phrase *would you mind* functions as an opener as it introduces the upcoming request *leaving us*.

b) Softeners:

Softeners are lexical items that downtoned the imposition and soften the illocutionary force of a request. Some examples of softeners are *a second* and *possibly*. Two examples of sentences that realized these softeners are "*Can I talk to you for a second?*" and "*Could you possibly return this?*"

Some researchers like Leung (2009), Valor (2000) and Coates (1983) termed softeners as *surface hedges*, i.e. lexical words that are used to soften and mitigate the strong illocutionary force of directives. There are three types of surface hedges in the taxonomy of hedges: the modal auxiliary verbs, the modal lexical verbs and adjectives, nouns and verbs.

## **Surface Hedges**

### *1) Modal auxiliary verbs:*

Modal auxiliary verbs are used to express modality in the English language. It is also used to demonstrate tenses, ability, willingness and possibility. Some examples of modal verbs are *can*, *could*, *would*, *should* and *must* (Valor, 2000). Kohnen (2008) found that *would* and *could* are more polite than *will* and *can*. While *can* and *could* imply possibility, *will* and *would*

imply willingness. The use of modal auxiliary verbs is considered as indirect in Kohnen (2008).

2) *Modal lexical verbs:*

Modal lexical verbs are verbs used to perform actions. Different verbs express different directives force. Middle or weak forced verbs are considered as polite as it increases the level of optionality for addressees while simultaneously mitigating the speaker's power and commitment (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2005). Some examples of verbs with reduced or no imposition are *appeal*, *call upon*, *authorize* and *invite* as they are used to state duties and obligations of an authority in an institutionalized setting (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2005).

3) *Adjectives, nouns and adverbs:*

Adjectives, nouns and adverbs are the most common softeners that are frequently used in daily conversation. The choices of the right adjectives, adverbs or nouns give softer impact to the directives issued. As outlined by Leung (2009), some examples of adjectives, nouns and verbs are:

- a) Adjectives: possible, probable and unlikely.
- b) Nouns: assumptions, claim, possibility, estimate and suggestion.
- c) Adverbs or non-verbal modals: perhaps, possibly, probably, practically, presumably, virtually and apparently

(Leung, 2009; Coates, 1983).

On the contrary, Valor (2000) distinguished the non-verbal modality and attitudinal-marker/emotionally-charged intensifiers where nouns, adjectives and adverbs are categorised as non-verbal modality while adjectives and adverbs are classified as attitudinal markers. The attitudinal markers are comment words that indicate author's reactions and his personal involvement in an issue (Valor, 2000). Specifically, adverbs mark the speakers' subjective evaluation of the propositional content (Ruhi, 1999). Likewise, Kohnen (2008) also identified negative politeness markers such as attitudinal markers and hedges that restrict hearers' freedom of action while at the same time freeing the hearers from imposition.

In a more specific study, Vasilieva (2004) distinguish the adverbs into semantic categories of adverbs: *adverbs of degrees* that encompass intensifiers and downtoners and *epistemic adverbs* of stance that indicate certainty, doubt and hedges. These categories are further divided into *boosting adverbs (intensifiers and certainty adverbs)* and *hedging adverbs (downtoners, adverbs of doubt and hedges)*. There are also *syntactically simple adverbs (surely)* and *fixed phrases adverbs (of course)* functioning as modifiers and adverbials (Vasilieva, 2004). In her study, Vasilieva (2004) concludes that women usually use intensifiers, downtoners and hedges more frequently than men which result in more positive and negative politeness strategies. Meanwhile, both men and women adopt hedging and boosting strategies in interaction even though it does not display significant differences in reaching specific goals (Vasilieva, 2004).

c) Fillers:

Fillers are lexical items used to fill in the silence, pauses or gaps in an interaction such as hesitators ('er', 'erm', 'uh'), cajolers (*you know, you see, I mean*), appealers (*OK, right*) and attention-getters (*hello, excuse me, sir*). Thus, fillers subsumed cajolers, appealers and term of address in Skewis' (2003) framework.

(Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008)

### 2.13.2 External mitigation

External mitigators consist of supportive moves that can occur before or after the Head Act. The external mitigators outlined by Skewis (2003) in his study are preparators, grounders, disarmers, sweeteners, apologies, imposition minimiser and promises of rewards.

a) Preparators:

Preparators function to prepare the hearers of the forthcoming directives by asking permission before issuing the directives and/or enquiring about the hearers' willingness, ability and availability to comply with the directives without revealing its' content. Usually, it comes in the form with the intended meaning: *'I want you to do something but I will not ask you unless you are willing/able to do what I want'*. Skewis (2003) and Harrison and Barlow (2009) illustrated that the 18th century Chinese society and the arthritis workshop participants always preceded their requests and advices with extensive reasoning to reduce the coerciveness of the directives. The arthritis workshop participants used a lot of narratives

to precede their advice towards their fellow friends. These narratives served as a downtoner and an act of solidarity to inform the participants that they share the same predicament and experience which validate their advice (Harrison and Barlow, 2009). This pre-sequence move provides opportunity of rejection for non-complying as it alerted hearers of the forthcoming directives and allows them to guess the content of the directives (Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996).

b) Grounders:

Grounders are used to give reasons, explanations or justifications for directives issued (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 2006). Jones (1992) discovered that the English society provides justification for directives issued in an informal Morris dancing team meeting even though it is conducted among participants of close relationship.

c) Disarmers:

Disarmer is when speakers try to anticipate possible refusal due to potential offence. The illocutionary force is in the form *'I don't want you to feel bad because of what I want you to do'*. An example of a disarmer is *"Professor David, **if it's not too much trouble**, I would like a copy of the book, sir"* (Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

d) Sweeteners:

Sweeteners are compliments or flatteries given to the hearers on matters related to the directives issued. It is usually positioned at the beginning of the speech event to establish good feelings to the addressees. The intended message is *'I think good things about you'*. An example of sweeteners is, *"We all hold your integrity in the highest esteem."* Skewis (2003).

e) Apologies:

In mitigating the directives, speakers naturally offer apologies for the burden that the directives might cause. Apologies also happen when speakers accept the blame for the problems that the directives had caused. By doing this, the speakers put the hearers in a position where compliance is benevolent. An example of apology is *"**Forgive me** for ruining your evening."*

f) Imposition minimisers:

Imposition minimisers are used to reduce the burden placed on the hearers when issuing directives via the form *'What I want you to do is not a big thing'*. An example of an imposition minimiser is *"You have to complete the paintings by tomorrow, **but nothing fancy, just** something we see in the magazines."*

g) Promises of rewards:

As the name suggests, promises of rewards is offering rewards to increase hearers' compliance after a directive has been fulfilled. It comes in the form, "*Something good will happen to you if you do this*". An example of promise of rewards is "*The lady requested a bottle of wine. I hope you can get it for her and **I promise I would give you the money.***"

(Skewis, 2003)

In contrast to Skewis (2003), Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008) outlined only five subtypes of external mitigators with some overlapping supportive moves. There is an additional supportive move introduced in the five subtypes which is the *expanders*. Thus, the external mitigators in Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008) are preparators, grounders, disarmers, expanders and promise of reward. Expanders are used when speakers repeat their utterance to show tentativeness. An example of an expander is "*Can you take him to the airport in the morning? ... Can you pick him up at 8.30?*" When the speakers ask the question for a second time, it demonstrates their uncertainty and hesitancy which functions to lower the illocutionary force of the requests (Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

In a different perspective, Yates (2005) who studied the directives of native and non-native teachers proposes three mitigation strategies as shown in Table 1. Using the strategies as a basis, Yates (2005) distinguished the Chinese and the English speakers' mitigation devices where the findings suggested that the authority of Chinese speakers mitigate less, are more direct in their speech and use less syntactic and propositional mitigation than the authority of English speakers (Yates, 2005).

Table 1: Mitigation Strategies (adopted from Yates, 2005)

Strategy	Syntactic mitigation
<p>Distance-maintaining e.g. <i>you+ stem</i> or <i>you will</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>you copy it down</i></li> <li>• <i>you are here/ you will start from here</i></li> </ul> <p>Less distancing, e.g. <i>going to</i> or <i>I want</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>alright/ so first we're going to listen now/ I want the boys all to move/ thata way/ ok</i></li> </ul>	<p>More distancing: e.g. <i>past tense</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>would you go and speak to Mr. X please (name)?</i></li> </ul> <p>Less distancing, e.g. <i>going to</i> and <i>defocalisers</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>You are going to have to stop distracting all the people around you.</i></li> <li>• <i>So, what I suggest you do/ is just read through it</i></li> </ul>
Lexical mitigation	Propositional mitigation
<p>More distancing, e.g. <i>politeness marker</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>if you still talk you sit in there please, OK?</i></li> </ul> <p>Less distancing, e.g. <i>vernacular</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>grab a copy of that</i></li> </ul>	<p>Warm but not solidary, e.g. <i>approval moves</i>, e.g. <i>praise</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ok that was good/ come in here guys</i></li> </ul> <p>Less distancing solidary rapport moves, e.g. <i>personal/ cultural reference</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>get off it (name) it's not a surfboard alright?</i></li> </ul>

### 2.13.3 Terms of Address

*Terms of address* functions to assert or affirm the nature of the relationship between interlocutors. Larina (2008) stated that in Russia, *terms of address* is important because it indicates interlocutors' social status, define their social relationship (level of intimacy, social distance, status) and at the same time possess information about a given language. Likewise, in Greece, Georgalidou (2008) found that children use the plural first person pronoun *we* to



give commands to their teacher. This is to lower the force, to show respect and to acknowledge the nature of the relationship between them.

a) Self-referring terms

Self-referring terms consist of the first personal pronoun, self-deprecating terms that function as pronouns, kin terms and/or a combination of these. In using the first personal pronoun to refer to oneself, a person is referring to his mental states, property, values, attitude, family members and official duties. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese society the first personal pronoun 'wo' is impolite to be used when addressing superiors (Skewis 2003). Apart from that, the Chinese society often uses self-deprecatory forms to describe themselves to demonstrate humbleness due to lower status. For example, slaves used the terms 'nucai' (slave) and 'xiaode' (small one) when interacting with others (Skewis, 2003).

b) Other-referring terms

Other-referring terms consist of the second personal pronoun, honorific, kin terms, names and/or a combination of these. These *diminutive* names (Larina, 2008) are used to address peers, inferiors, children, colleagues, close friends and family members. For example, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese society uses the second personal pronouns 'ni' when interacting with their superiors. Furthermore, honorific terms are reserved for people of power only, and are not applied when talking to children, younger siblings and servants (Skewis, 2003). Meanwhile, the Polish society used *diminutive* as a device to mitigate their requests since interrogative structures play limited roles in conveying politeness in their culture. These *diminutives* are one of the expressive derivations that function to indicate warmth, affection, cordiality and tightening the relationship between interlocutors (Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006). Examples of diminutives in Russian and English are as follows:

*'Dochen'ka, prinesi mne, pozhaluysta, stakanchik vodichki'*

(Daughter, bring me a glass of water please).

*'Honey, could you bring me a glass of water, please'.*

(Skewis, 2003; Blum-Kulka, 1987)

Although the Polish society uses different types of personal pronouns and honorifics to address people in their interaction, they prefer imperatives to be used openly to emphasize equality between the interlocutors. The command via imperatives is rarely mitigated, instead is intensified by using lexical items that eliminate hearer's option. By intensifying the directives, the speaker is perceived as very sincere in his proposition. Furthermore, the authority and powerful people of Polish society are privileged as they are allowed to openly express their emotions as courtesy, cordiality and intimacy in interactions are emphasized (Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006).

By using the adverbs and terms of address in an interaction, the participants are indirectly illustrating their personal involvement in the issues discussed (Leung, 2009; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008). Locher (2006) found that involvement strategies are one of the most important mitigation forms found in *Lucy Answers* advice columns. This is because, the involvement strategies help to create good rapport and solidarity between the interlocutors while at the same time enables *Lucy* to emphasize and bond with the questioners via the compliments and humour. Humour is usually related to laughter. As laughter is a softening device, it decreases the authoritativeness of a person while simultaneously lowers the face-threatening-acts of a directive (Jones, 1992). Thus, we could see that humour is also a mitigation strategy as it helps to reduce the tension in discussing an issue (Jones, 1992; Holmes, 1998).

Hence, this current study attempts to measure the mitigation strategies used in advice texts. This is based on the mitigation frameworks outlined by Skewis (2003), Yates (2005) and Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008). The multiple frameworks complements each others, thus, encompassing all of the possible mitigation strategies employed in the advice columns.

## 2.14 Earlier Studies on Directives, (Im)politeness and Situational Contexts

Directive speech act has been extensively studied by researchers as it is commonly used in daily conversation (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Its ability to play multiple speech functions provides researchers with a variety of perspectives to continuously carry out distinct studies in relation to culture and (im)politeness. Sometimes, the directive produced is neither direct nor indirect and thus, do not fit into either the positive or the negative politeness strategies. So, this directive is categorised as playing an intermediate position where it implies formality and a high degree of politeness while at the same time builds solidarity with the addressees. Examples of directives in the intermediate position are requests that use the lexicals *hope* and *wish* to express care and concern (Asmah Omar, 1982; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Yule, 1996). In studies of politeness by Valor (2000) and Harrison and Barlow (2009), it is illustrated that the participants balance positive and negative politeness to reduce the highly threatening-act of criticising and advising to their peers. So, alongside the positive and negative politeness strategies, the participants used other mitigation strategies to soften their criticisms and advices such as lexical hedges, modality, formal interaction, indirect structures, narratives and compliments.

As such, the production of directives and (im)politeness strategy are context-dependent. Hendley (1977), Mckinstry and Mckinstry (1991), Locher (2006) and Ho (2009) maintained that in a context of advice column where asymmetrical power relationship is observed, the person with higher power status has the freedom and supremacy to maintain authority, control the direction of talk and uphold his ideological belief regarding the issues discussed. Meanwhile, the questioners with lower authority tend to mitigate their rejection of the advice to appear polite. As a result, the advice-giver usually exaggerates the issues, resorted to presumed possibilities and created imagined scenarios to influence the questioners to take the advice (Ho, 2009).

Apart from the situational contexts of power, distance, imposition and purpose of interaction, gender is also believed to influence the production of directives. Earlier studies of gender and politeness concluded that women speak more politely with highly prestigious indirect, non-assertive and emphatic language than men (Yule, 2006; Shibamoto Smith, 2003; cited in Saito, 2008). However, Andreasson's (2009) finding suggested that both male and female use similar request strategies which can be polite or impolite in the same situations. These contradicting findings stem from the society's beliefs on how certain gender should

speak. Women are assumed to be more polite as they care for other people's feelings to maintain solidarity in interactions. Meanwhile, men are believed to use language to convey and receive information in more competitive ways that exclude politeness (Holmes, 2005; Andreasson, 2009). However, Saito (2008) dispute this claim as he found that men also use language to achieve interpersonal relationships and maintain solidarity in interactions rather than just to accomplish institutional goals at the workplace. Saito (2008) and Andreasson's (2009) findings again prove that directives and (im)politeness are not fixed concepts that can be determined theoretically. Instead they transform based on specific cultural contexts that governed their productions. Therefore, directives and (im)politeness should be analysed in relation to their immediate contexts to gain more accurate characteristics of the language studied.

Directive is also famously studied in relation to children's speech as it is one of the first speech acts children acquire growing up (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Some of the researchers of directives and children's speech are Bock and Hornsby (1980), Arronsson and Thorell (1999) and Han (2000). In Bock and Hornsby (1980), the children aged two to six were found to be increasingly polite with age as they use interrogative structure and the politeness marker *please* when they performed the act of asking. However, they prefer to use the imperative structure without *please* when they performed the act of telling.

Likewise, Arronsson and Thorell (1999) also studied children directives in family role plays. However, instead of focusing on the mitigation strategies like many studies on directives, the study focuses on the aggravation strategies that are situated on the opposite end of the politeness continuum. The findings suggested that the male children tended to act more directly and aggressively than the female children. However, both genders shared a similar strategy of threat-tell sequences in their role plays that escalated in the manner of: threat of telling → telling → threat of action → mitigated directives → aggravated directives → violent physical reaction. Other types of aggravations that were present in the children's role plays are threats, challenges, unmitigated bald on record directives, insults, pejorative forms, repetition, physical actions and alliances (Arronsson and Thorell, 1999).

In contrast to the role-play settings of Bock and Hornsby (1980) and Arronsson and Thorell's (1999) studies, Han (2000) recorded natural conversations between a mother and her son. The mother is always prompting the son to speak and it is found that the prompting imperatives facilitated the son's production of utterances rather than hindering them (Han,

2000). The prompting directives also help to facilitate the child's participation in constructing continuous structures with the mother while at the same time helping him socialize into the cultural values.

In sum, all of the prior literature discussed above is closely related to this study as it presents multiple perspectives of directive studies including the forms, functions, (im)politeness, situational contexts and face-saving strategies. The issue of (im)politeness is dynamic as it changes with cultures and contexts (Locher, 2006). Therefore, in studying directives, the ability to recognize the contexts is important in order to determine the intended meanings of the directives. Thus, this study attempts to analyse the directives forms and functions in advice texts to identify (im)politeness and face-saving strategies used by the advice-giver in the advice texts.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks and methodology employed for the data analysis in two sections. The first section introduces the theoretical frameworks of directives, (im)politeness theory and face-saving strategies adopted and adapted to suit the objectives of this study. The second section demonstrates the research methodology employed for the data collection and data analysis.

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework on the Analysis of Directives

This research adopted and adapted the theoretical frameworks of Yule (1996), Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Blum-Kulka (1987). While Ervin-Tripp (1976) differentiates directives under six categories; need statement, imperative, imbedded imperative, permission directive, hint and question directive, Yule (1996) simply explains directives into three syntactic forms: imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives. Meanwhile, Blum-Kulka (1987) specifies the directives into direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect categories.

#### a) Need Statement

Need statement is subsumed under direct, declarative structure (Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Georgalidou, 2008; Vine, 2009). It is identified when the initiating phrase takes any of these forms: *I want, I need, I hope, I wish, I prefer, I would like* and so forth. It is usually used by superiors to subordinates when the task is clearly defined. It can also be modified using politeness markers such as *please* and modals (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Sato, 2008). For example: *I need a pen.*

b) Imperative

Imperative is a direct structure and is identified in the forms of: a) you + imperative (you positive/ negative imperatives), b) based-form of verb (positive/ negative imperatives), c) attention-getters, d) post-posed tags, e) elliptical form, f) verb + ing and g) let-shall (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Weigel and Weigel, 1985; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Jones, 1992; Eken, 1996). Examples of the imperative forms are as follow:

Table 2: Types of Imperative Directives

	Types of Imperative	Explanation	Example
a)	<b>You + imperative:</b>	Takes the positive or negative forms and typically includes modals and lexical verbs such as <i>'do/don't want', 'have/don't have'</i> and <i>'need/don't need'</i> .	(See examples under You Positive Directive and You Negative Directive)
i.	You Positive Directive	The structure starts with "you" and is followed by positive command.	<b>You will have to</b> decide if you can live with another of your children or have a place of your own.
ii.	You Negative Directive	The structure starts with "you" and is followed by negative command.	<b>You must not</b> accept that the rest of your lives must be spent by your mother's side.
b)	<b>Base-form of verb</b>	Takes the positive and negative forms.	(See examples under Positive Imperative and Negative Imperative)
i.	Positive Imperative	Takes the structure of positive command	<b>Consider</b> divorce and plan it carefully.
ii.	Negative Imperative	Takes the structure of negative command	<b>Do not</b> even think of killing yourself for him.
C)	<b>Attention-getters</b>	To get attention from the hearer	hey, excuse me, names, please

d)	<b>Post-posed tags</b>	Consist of politeness markers	modals, address terms and 'please'
e)	<b>Elliptical form</b>	Only the obvious, feasible desired action is stated by the speaker to the addressee	<b>"Pen?"</b> instead of "Could I borrow you a pen?"
f)	<b>Verb + ing</b>	The continuous form of verb	"So for this point here, <b>making</b> the task more specific and being clear..."
g)	<b>Let-shall</b>	Shows the speaker's personal involvement for the directive stated	<b>"Let's</b> all be adults here"

In the workplace, an imperative is appropriately used when; a) summarizing and clarifying required actions after a long discussion or meeting, b) it is directly elicited, c) a speaker wants the hearer to take multiple actions to complete a task and d) used in the case of NOW-directive or emergency situation (Yule, 1996; Vine, 2009). Meanwhile, Ervin-Tripp's (1976) found that an imperative is used when i) a superior issues directives to a subordinate but the task is not needed, yet it is within the role of the subordinate, ii) when there are outsiders present and iii) among close members with equality of power and of similar ages. Alternately, in familiar situations of family and friends, an imperative is used as a form of control act (Georgalidou, 2008). However, when employed in isolation, an imperative puts a high level of imposition and convey strong illocutionary force. This is why face-saving strategies, such as justification of the imperative, are always used in the workplace (Vine, 2009). In this study, the term '*imperative*' (Ervin-Tripp, 1976 and Yule, 1996) is used to refer to the syntactical structure while the term '*direct*' is used to describe imperatives.

#### c) Imbedded Imperative

Imbedded imperative is identified in three situations: i) when used among unfamiliar interlocutors, ii) when the subordinates address the superiors and iii) when the superiors summon the subordinates in the presence of outsiders, if the task is not part of the subordinates' jobs and the subordinates are in their territory (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Imbedded imperative is a conventionally indirect, imbedded structure (Blum-Kulka, 1987). An example of an imbedded imperative is: *Can you afford to throw away your career for this man?*



d) Permission Directive

The structure of a permission directive is similar to that of an imbedded imperative and a modal interrogative as it is also initiated with modals. However, the focus of permission directives is on the beneficiary or recipient of the action rather than on the action itself. Permission directives were not so frequent in Ervin-Tripp's (1976) study. It is a conventionally indirect, imbedded structure (Blum-Kulka, 1987). An example of a permission directive is: *May I use that pen?*

e) Hint

In this study, hint is subsumed under the non-conventionally indirect, declarative structure. It is identified when a directive is implicit and the least forceful, yet leads the questioners to take some sort of actions, while giving the questioners the liberty to decide (Georgalidou, 2008). Skewis (2003) distinguishes two types of hints; strong hint and mild hint. Although both types of hints require contextual clues, the illocutionary force of a strong hint is easier to be realised than a mild hint (Skewis, 2003). Declarative hint is used as control act and can serve both positive and negative politeness as it enhances solidarity and shows deference at the same time. Georgalidou (2008) found that declarative hint demonstrates the Greek children's awareness of the differing status between them and their teachers. For example, a child says to his teacher, "*Mrs, Yannis hit me in my belly. Hard.*" The utterance shows that the child is directly reporting the crime but is indirectly asking the teacher to punish Yannis as he is aware of the teacher's authority in the situation (Georgalidou, 2008). Hint is also used in the interrogative forms but instead of being perceived as an indirect speech, it is categorised as a pre-sequence to check the precondition for turn-taking (Georgalidou, 2008). An example of a hint is: *It's also about time that they learn to take care of themselves without the invisible hand that's been doling out goodwill and care without condition or expectation.*

f) Question directive

Question directive is a conventionally indirect, interrogative structure. Nevertheless, one might argue that a question directive is vague and ambiguous which makes it hard to be identified as a conventionally indirect structure (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). However, since the question directive in this study is in the specific context of advice texts, the questions initiated with *Wh-question*, *Wh-question with modals* and *Yes-no question* that lead to actions are

considered as question directives. A question directive is used when there is a possibility that hearers would not comply with the directive issued (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Typically, interrogative is used to get information, clarification, confirmation, permission, objects and services to make it a request instead of a demand (Georgalidou, 2008). An example of a question directive is: *Where is your fighting spirit and courage?*

Hence, for this study, Blum-Kulka's (1987), Ervin-Tripp's (1976) and Yule (1996) frameworks are used to identify the directives as these frameworks provide clear cut distinction between each category of directives. This enables easy identification of directives and the face-saving strategies employed in the advice texts.

Table 3 demonstrates the directive scoring criteria used in the study which is adapted from Ervin-Tripp (1976), Weigel and Weigel (1985), Eken (1996) and Yule's (1996) directive frameworks. The imbedded form is derived from the data from this study. Meanwhile, the keywords are adopted from the Heart and Soul advice column in The Star newspaper. The directive scoring criteria shows the general and specific categories of directives as well as the keywords of the directives identified in the advice texts.

From Table 3, the directives are first classified into four syntactic structures which are imperative, declarative, imbedded form and interrogative. Then, the syntactical structures are divided into smaller units. Imperative is divided into four categories which are positive imperative (PIM), negative imperative (NIM), you positive directive (YPD) and you negative directive (NIM). Declarative is divided into hint, need statement and ellipsis. Imbedded form is divided into if-statement, imbedded with linkers, imbedded imperative and permission directive. Finally, the interrogative form is divided into yes-no question, wh-question and wh-question with modal/modal interrogative. Each unit of syntactical structure is followed by the keywords/examples taken from the advice texts.

Table 3:

## A directive scoring criteria

(An adaptation from Ervin-Tripp (1976), Weigel and Weigel (1985), Yule (1996) and Eken's (1996) directive frameworks and the data from the current study).

Directive Categories		
Yule (1996) and Current Study	Ervin-Tripp (1976), Weigel and Weigel (1985), Eken (1996)	Key words/Examples from advice texts (Heart and Soul advice column, The Star, February 2010 to November 2010)
1. Imperative	Positive Imperative (PIM)	<u>Accept</u> that he had stopped loving you. <u>Appreciate</u> her courage, her seeming cruelty as she spared you lies. <u>Be</u> magnanimous in love, wish her well.
	Negative Imperative (NIM)	<u>Do not</u> kid yourself that you are in control. <u>Stop</u> flirting with your colleague and avoid him unless you have to work together.
	“You” Positive Directive (YPD)	Perhaps <u>you should</u> move out so that they will realise how much you have been contributing to make their lives so comfortable.  <u>You will have to</u> decide if you can live with another of your children or have a place of your own.  Perhaps <u>you could</u> discuss your mother with your siblings so that one of them could care for her until you get a job and are financially stable.
	“You” Negative Directive (YND)	You <u>must not</u> accept that the rest of lives must be spent by your mother's side.  You <u>cannot</u> really measure if you love more or less
2. Declarative	Hint	Staying on a marriage that is slowly robbing you of pride, esteem and dignity makes you the greater fool.

		<p>Being angry and defiant will not score you any points and they may even blame your boyfriend for being a bad influence.</p> <p>Thinking about this and hurting yourself will not provide the answers</p>
	Need statement	-
	Ellipsis	-
3. Imbedded	If-statement	<p><u>If</u> he ever raises his hand against you, file a police report.</p> <p><u>If</u> you really like her, then get out there and find her.</p> <p><u>If</u> you and your mother truly prefer to live in KL, then think about selling up and getting a place of your own.</p>
	Imbedded with linkers	<p><u>While</u> you could not accuse him without proof, you should tell him about the pain you suffered when he was cold and uncaring towards you.</p> <p><u>Instead</u> of seeking thrills and sexual gratification with another man, re-ignite your relationship with your husband.</p>
	Imbedded imperative	<p><u>Can</u> you afford to throw away your career for this man?</p> <p><u>Can</u> you get a relative/ friend or hire help to care for the baby and take over the household chores?</p>
	Permission directive	=
Interrogative	Yes-no question	<p>Do you blame this woman for trying to protect what she has left for her old age?</p> <p>Do you still want a skeleton in your closet, or are you looking for a way out now?</p>
	Wh-question	<p>So <u>why</u> do you have to compromise your self-esteem and self-respect for another horrible relationship?</p>

		<u>Where</u> is your fighting spirit and courage?
	Wh-question with modal/ modal interrogative	<u>Why</u> would leaving him make you a laughing stock?  How <u>can</u> you hope to make everyone happy when you are not?

### 3.2 Theoretical Framework on the Analysis of Politeness and Face(work)

In analysing the (im)politeness strategy and protection of interlocutors' face in the advice texts, this study adopts and adapts the positive-negative politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1979, 1987) and the frame-based theory (Terkourafi, 2005) as they are viewed to be more relevant to the study. This is due to the minimum interaction between the interlocutors in the advice columns which restricts the process of (im)politeness negotiation, evaluation, judgement and co-constitution in the advice texts (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Terkourafi, 2005). The non-real time and limited interaction between the interlocutors in the advice column hinder the immediate process of clarifying and giving feedback which restricts the authenticity of interlocutors' *evaluation* and *judgments*. Therefore, an analysts' prediction offered by the traditional theory and the frame-based theory might be more appropriate in determining im(politeness) in the advice columns. In support of the traditional theory, Haugh (2004) substantiates that Brown and Levinson's (1978) positive-negative politeness theories are applicable in the study of honorifics in Modern Standard Japanese via reduced form of positive-negative faces to undifferentiated notion of lost and saved face (Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010).

However, this study acknowledges the non-universality of the traditional politeness theory. This is because, many previous studies of other cultures (Russian, Polish, Indonesian, Greek), have demonstrated different findings where imperative does not necessarily means impoliteness and hint, imbedded imperative and interrogative do not specifically means politeness such as found in Hassall (2003), Larina (2008), Krolak and Rudnicka (2006) and Georgalidou (2009).

Therefore, this study applies Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based view to describe the societal norms of the advice columns interaction. The three principles of the frame-based

view which are the regularity of co-occurrence, societal rationality and prior experience, are culturally dependent and help to explain the specific cultural (im)politeness value in the advice columns.

Meanwhile, the FTA-mitigation theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987) is used to explain the face-saving strategies employed in the advice texts to soften the directives. Some of the mitigation strategies that have been identified in previous studies are grounders, lexical hedges and politeness markers (Skewis, 2003; Yates, 2005). Also, to help describe the complex concept of im(politeness), the term *relational work* is adopted from Locher and Watts (2005) as it encompasses the wide range of im(politeness) such as appropriacy, marked and unmarked behaviour and over-politeness.

In sum, this study adopted Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theories of positive-negative politeness and FTA-mitigations alongside Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based view to establish the non-universality of politeness. As the concept of (im)politeness is very wide and complex, these two theories complement each others' in analysing (im)politeness (Terkourafi, 2005).

### **3.2.1 Analysis of the (im)politeness strategy and the protection of interlocutors' faces using Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) positive-negative politeness theory and Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based view.**

After the directives in the advice texts are classified and quantified, they are analyzed in terms of the relationship between the forms and functions of directives and maintaining one's face in advice texts. This analysis is based on Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of positive-negative politeness and Terkourafi's (2005) theory of frame-based view of politeness.

It is identified in previous studies that imperative is a direct structure which threatens face when used among socially distance people (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Yule, 1996). It is considered rude to directly asked strangers to do certain action for a speaker's benefits (Yule, 1996). However, when it is used within a group of close knit friends and families, it functions as a solidarity enhancer. Thus, there is a clear cut distinction between

the positive and negative politeness functions played by an imperative. Depending on the contexts of the advice text, the imperatives identified are classified as either being positively or negatively polite. An example of the non-universality of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory is via the use of imperative in the Russian culture. The Russian society uses imperative frequently even when communicating to strangers. This is to show sincerity in their proposition and the use of imperative is not impolite (Larina, 2005). In contrary, they are considered impolite if they use polite, more formal form of directive such as interrogative or imbedded imperative form. This is because, polite form that is mitigated in its illocutionary force shows that the speaker is not sincere in his proposition and at the same time doubt the hearer's ability to do the action asked (Larina, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006). This clearly contradicts Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) universality of politeness theory where they believe that imperative is impolite to be used among strangers.

Meanwhile, in some studies, hint is considered as a polite form as it is the least coercive and the least forceful directive. Thus, it gives the hearer freedom to not comply with the hint without threatening the speaker's face (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). In a way, it could be suggested that, hint gives the freedom to both the speaker and listener when directive is uttered as it is very indirect. It is commonly used among socially distant interlocutors to project politeness. However, a study by Blum-Kulka (1987) illustrates that hint is considered as less polite because of its ambiguity and vagueness. These two characteristics of hint make it difficult for a hearer to understand the intended meaning, thus is highly face threatening. In the advice texts, Thelma uses hint probably to give the questioners liberty to decide for themselves while at the same time trying to stay as an objective third party on the matter to cater for the questioners' faces and appear polite. The use of hint in the advice texts can be categorized as a negative politeness strategy as Thelma is being deferent towards the questioners.

The imbedded and interrogative forms are considered as the most polite form in the English language as they are less coercive and less forceful, but are clear in the intended meaning. They are commonly used among people of socially distant relationship. Furthermore, these structures are always written with auxiliary modal verbs such as *can*, *could*, *would* and *should* and adverbs such as *perhaps*, *maybe* and *probably* which decrease the impact of the directive's illocutionary force (Coates, 1983). These structures are categorized as indirect although the intended meaning is unambiguous. In the advice texts, the imbedded and interrogative forms are used by Thelma to probably acknowledge the social

distance between the questioners and herself. By using these two forms, Thelma conveys her respect, politeness and formality for the questioners' autonomy, to save their faces from humiliation and embarrassment. Similar to hint, the use of imbedded and interrogative form in the advice texts show Thelma's negative politeness strategy as she positions herself as a distant friend from the questioners.

This classification of directives into positive and negative politeness are then matched to Terkourafi's (2005) principle of frame-based view which are societal rationality, the regularity of occurrence and prior experience. Therefore, the norms of the advice texts are determined by the three principles; who are the societies of the advice texts, which types of directives are regularly used and what are Thelma and questioners' experience in writing advice columns. The most regularly used structure is considered as the most accepted and polite form or unmarked behavior among the societies of the advice texts. In contradiction, the least frequent form used in the advice texts is considered as the least polite form and marked behaviors in the advice texts.

### **3.3 Theoretical Framework on the Analysis of Mitigation Strategies**

This study employs the mitigation strategies outlined by Blum-Kulka (1987) and expanded by Skewis (2003), Yates (2005) and Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008). All the frameworks complement each other as they include most types of mitigation strategies of internal, external and terms of address. Both internal and external mitigation strategies are employed to identify the face-saving strategies in the advice texts. However, preliminary analysis of the advice texts did not find evident of the *term of address* face-saving strategy, hence, it is not presented in this study. The frameworks of internal and external mitigation strategies employed in this study are shown in Tables 4 and 5 below.



Table 4: The Internal Mitigation Strategies (adopted and adapted from Skewis, 2003; Yates, 2005; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008)

Internal Mitigation Strategies	Explanation	Example
a) Lexical Hedges/ Softeners	Lexical items that downtone the illocutionary force of directives	
i. Modals		can, could, should, must
ii. Probable Adjective		probable, possible
iii. Adverbs		perhaps, probably, truly
b) Politeness Marker	Words/formulaic phrases added to the directive to soften the directive	please, okay
c) Understaters	Adverbials or adjectival modifiers to minimise imposition.	"I don't want to ask to much of you"
d) Subjectivisers	Lower the assertive force of directives when voicing opinions.	"This is what I think you should do, but you don't have to agree"
e) Downtoners	Take the forms of sentential or propositional modifier to modulate impact of directives.	"Spare him"
f) Cajolers	Conventionalised speech items to establish and maintain harmony.	"All right. I'll give you a day to do it."
g) Appealers	To signal turn-availability and to elicit positive response.	"You can choose whether you want to do the action or not, so if you want it, please tell me.
h) Openers	To initiate expressions of intended requests.	" <b>Would you</b> mind leaving us?"

Table 4 shows the internal mitigation strategies used in the current study. The strategies are lexical hedges/softeners, politeness markers, understaters, subjectivisers, downtoners, cajolers, appealers and openers (Skewis, 2003; Yates, 2005; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

Table 5: The External Mitigation Strategies adopted and adapted from Skewis, 2003; Yates, 2005; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008)

<b>External Mitigation Strategies:</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Example</b>
a) Syntactic Mitigation	Sentences structured to mitigate the impact of directives.	
i. Hint	Vague, ambiguous, implicit and the least forceful directives.	Staying on a marriage that is slowly robbing you of pride, esteem and dignity makes you the greater fool.
ii. Imbedded Form	The directive is imbedded by a preceding phrase	<b>If he ever raises his hand against you</b> , file a police report
iii. Interrogative Form	Vague, ambiguous and indirect directives.	How would you sister and family react should they ever find out about your affair?
b) Preparators	To prepare the hearer of the forthcoming directives	<b>If your daughter-in-law simply does not want you around, there can be no compromise.</b> You will have to decide if you can live with another of your children or have a place of your own.

c) Grounders	To give reasons, explanations or justifications of directives	You should love and respect your parents, but there will be times when your values, thoughts and aspirations matter. <b>Parents are not always right even though they want the best for their children.</b>
d) Disarmers	Used when speaker tries to anticipate possible refusal due to potential offence in directives.	“Professor David, if it’s not too much trouble, I would like a copy of the book, sir.”
e) Sweeteners	Used to give compliment to the hearer on matters related to the directives.	You are a wonderful person who has suffered much in life.
f) Apologies	Used when the directives burden the hearers.	Forgive me for ruining your evening.
g) Imposition minimiser	To decrease the burden of directives issued to the hearers.	You have to complete these paintings by tomorrow, <b>but nothing fancy, just something we see in magazines.</b>
h) Promises of rewards	To offer rewards in attempts to increase the hearers’ compliance to do the directives instructed.	<b>I will give you some money</b> after you deliver the flowers to that lady.

Table 5 illustrates the external mitigation strategies used in the current study. The strategies are syntactic mitigation, preparators, grounders, disarmers, sweeteners, apologies, imposition minimiser and promises of rewards study (Skewis, 2003; Yates, 2005; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

### 3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.4.1 Material

The advice column analysed is subsumed under the *Heart and Soul* section of an English-daily newspaper, *The Star*. The advice column is entitled *Dear Thelma* and is published once-a-week in the Sunday newspaper. Each publication consists of one to four sets of problem-advice letters which vary in lengths and issues. The advice texts were collected based on convenience sampling from February to November 2010. For this study, 47 advice texts are selected and analysed.

#### 3.4.2 Method

The directives are identified based on Searle's (1975), Asmah Omar's (1982) and Jones' (1992) definitions of directives which are: directives are attempts to get people to do things, or refrain them from doing things and are generally directed at the second person. Four forms of directives, the imperatives, need statements, permission directives and imbedded imperatives, are easily identified due to the straightforward realisation of the forms and functions. However, the interrogatives and hints directives are more difficult to be identified than the direct forms due to their vagueness and ambiguity. Some interrogatives and hints are rhetorical while some try to indirectly lead the questioners to take action in solving their problems. In this study, both interrogatives and hints are identifiable as directives when they are analysed based on specific issues of the advice texts and the functions they play. The interrogatives and hints are categorised as directives when they indirectly ask or lead the questioners to take action or prohibit them from taking any action in solving their problems. For example:

**Hint:** *Thinking about this and hurting yourself will not provide the answers.*

**Question directive:** *Why would leaving him make you a laughing stock?*

In the example above, firstly, the hint structure is categorised as directive because it implicitly prohibits the questioner from doing futile things that might harm him as it is pointless. The *-ing* verb form in '*thinking*' and '*hurting*', which is followed by sort of an indirect prohibition, is probably the advice-giver's attempt to implicitly ask the questioner to

stop thinking and stop hurting himself. However, it is done in a very indirect way, taking the form of a declarative. Secondly, the question directive is indirectly telling the questioner that leaving the boyfriend is the right thing to do as she is not at fault in the situation. The interrogative structure is categorised as a directive based on the issue that the questioner presented to the advice-giver. The question tag *why* that is used to initiate the structure is probably the advice-giver's attempt to tell the questioner that it is okay to leave the boyfriend as nobody would laugh at her.

In sum, the directives identified are firstly coded based on Ervin-Tripp (1976), Blum-Kulka (1987) and Yule's (1996) classification of directives. These directives are then further classified in accordance to the function they play. Secondly, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) positive-negative politeness and FTA-mitigation theories and Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based view are employed to analyse the (im)politeness in the advice texts. Although Locher and Watts (2005) state that (im)politeness is discursive and cannot be equated to FTA-mitigations (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987), the researcher believes that FTA-mitigation strategy varies from contexts to contexts and can also be expanded to include more strategies in different situations. Thus, the framework of mitigation strategies employed in this study is adopted and adapted from Skewis (2003), Yates (2005) and Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008).

An example of how the directives are identified and analysed in the advice texts is as follows:

**Example: 14 February 2010-- Romance on Hold**

*a. Problem Text*

Y is a loving and independent man who is six years older than me. We met each other a year ago through a mutual friend. It started with daily online chats which led to casual dates and five months ago, he confessed his feelings for me. Initially everything went well until my parents found out. They told me that I should focus on my studies and career and nothing else. I was devastated and heart broken. My parents even confronted Y which I thought was unnecessary. My dad said if he really loved me, he should wait for me to graduate before carrying on with the relationship. What really upsets me is that I am not allowed to choose and make decisions for myself even though I am in my 20s. My parents are also religious and insist whoever I marry must be of the same religion. I am really frustrated and just feel like

moving out. I still care for my parents but how am I supposed to deal with this issue? I tried talking to them but they just won't listen. Although Y is from a rich family, he has a stable career and is hard working. Why can't my parents be understanding?

Nothing Left to Say

*b. Advice Text*

(S1)You have very protective parents who try to keep you safe within the parameters that they have set. (S2)They view education, career, tradition and religion as safeguards for a better future and they will endeavour to steer you towards security and success they see it. (S3)They truly have your best interests at heart but unfortunately, they forget that their little girl has grown up and has a mind of her own. (S4)They have not accepted that today's youngsters have a strong idea of what they want. (S5)They live in their safe little world and expect that their child will do as she is told.

**(S6)Be patient with the old folks. (S7)Being angry and defiant will not score you any points and they may even blame your boyfriend for being a bad influence. (S8)Prove that you can manage your studies, career and a relationship without getting into trouble. (S9)If they refuse to accept your guy, then keep him away until you are both ready for marriage. (S10)Parents are never too difficult because they love you. (S11)[When they are made aware that you are happy, cared for and loved, then they will make some allowances. (S12)But if they are determined to have their own way, then you will need to have the strength and courage to fight for your own happiness and future with the man of your choice. (S13)Bide your time. (S14)You do not really want to upset loved ones and get ostracised but you are an adult and no one can stop you from getting married or making your own decisions. (S15)So do not be afraid to fight for love regardless of the obstacles you face at this moment.**

Firstly, the advice texts are numbered (S1, S2, S3...) to make the analysis more efficient. Secondly, the directives are distinguished from other types of speech act in the advice text. After identifying the directives, they are analysed and coded specifically based on Ervin-Tripp (1976), Blum-Kulka (1987) and Yule's (1996) directives frameworks. After the coding process, the functions that the directives play in protecting the interlocutor's face in the advice column is illustrated using the positive-negative politeness theory and the frame-based view (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Terkourafi, 2005). When the relationship is established, the internal and external mitigation strategies are identified and analysed (Skewis, 2003; Yates, 2005; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

Below is an example of the analysis to answer **Research Question 1:**

The directives in the advice text above are categorised as follows:

**Imperative:**

a) Positive Imperative (PIM) : S6, S8, S13

b) Negative Imperative (NIM) : S15

c) You Negative Directive (YND) : S14

**Hints** : S7, S11

**Imbedded (if-statement)** : S9, S12

From the brief analysis, five of the directives identified are in the various forms of imperatives, two hints and two if-statements. The classification of the imperatives and the if-statement imbedded forms is straightforward as they are conventional indirect strategies, hence requires no further interpretation. However, the classification of S7 as hint might be somewhat doubtful because while Eken (1996) classified it as a verb-*ing* imperative, this study classified it as a strong hint (Blum-Kulka *et.al*, 1989). This is because the directive written by the advice-giver is formed as an informative statement instead of an explicit directive which leaves the freedom of determining the action to the questioner (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Since S7 is a strong hint, the illocutionary force of the directive is partially explicit which enables the questioner to interpret the directive meaning successfully based on the contextual clues and feasibility to do the action (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, *et.al*, 1989; Skewis, 2003). The line S7 is hinting the questioner to stop being angry and defiant towards her parents to avoid more troubles. However, if the questioner wishes not to comply with the directive, she can freely do so as the hint directive is not forceful (Jones, 1992) and written in such a casual way which can be defined as an explanation rather than a directive.

After the directives have been identified from the advice texts to answer the first research question, the reasons that might contribute to their appearance are discussed in detail in Chapter Four. These reasons serve to answer the second research question. Finally, the face-saving strategies used together with the directive structures in the advice texts are identified and analysed to answer the final research question.

A set of interview questions regarding the forms and functions and Thelma's motivation in writing the advice texts was emailed to Thelma via The Star staff worker, Malini Dias. Unfortunately, the researcher received no response from Thelma.

### 3.4.3 Data Analysis

Firstly, Chapter Four of findings and discussions is preceded by the illustration of general structure and placement of directives in the advice texts to give ideas on the structure of the letters.

Secondly, the data are analysed and presented in the sequence of the research questions. The first research question identifies the forms and functions of directives. The second research question outlines the relationship of form and function of directives and the protection of face in the advice texts. The third research question presented the mitigation strategies employed in the advice texts.

The directives in the advice texts are identified and coded according to its forms and functions. The forms identified in the advice texts are: imperatives, declaratives, imbedded directives and interrogatives. It must be noted that the imbedded form category is specifically derived for this study as there is an abundance of imbedded forms in the advice texts. The imbedded form varies in structures and includes *if-statement*, *imbedded imperatives* and *imbedded with linkers*. The imbedded form is actually an expansion of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) category of imbedded imperatives. Thus, the sentences with imbedded phrases are categorised under the imbedded form. The four basic forms are then further categorised under more specific classification (see Table 6, page 82).

Tables 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are part of the findings and discussions in Chapter 4. They are repeatedly mentioned and referred to in the discussion sections to explain the findings of this study.



The analysis of the data illustrates that, the directives in the advice texts can be classified into four syntactical structures; imperative, declarative, imbedded and interrogative. The distribution of directive forms in the advice texts is demonstrated in Table 6 (page 82). The directives are then distributed based on their specific types. For example, imperatives are divided into *PIM*, *NIM*, *YPD* and *YND* while interrogatives are divided into *Wh-questions*, *modal interrogatives* and *yes-no question directives*. Their total frequency (f) and total percentages (%) are calculated to form the basis for discussions (refer to the discussion of directive forms on page 95).

Table 6: The Distribution of Directive Forms in the Advice Texts

Types of Directives	Imperative				Declarative		Imbedded				Interrogative		
	PIM*	NIM*	YPD*	YND*	Hint	Ellipsis: There is...	If-state*	Others	Linkers (while, etc.)	Imbedded Imp*	Y/N-Q*	Wh-Q*	Wh-Q (+mod) *
*f	132	51	41	15	139	4	57	24	12	7	25	15	15
%	24.5	9.5	7.6	2.9	25.8	0.7	10.6	4.5	2.2	1.3	4.6	2.8	2.8
Total (f)	239				143		100				55		
Total (%)	44.5				26.5		18.6				10.2		

\*f=frequency

\*Positive Imperatives (PIM) \*Negative Imperatives (NIM) \*You Positive Directives (YPD) \*You Negative Directives (YND) \*If-statement (if-statement) \*Imbedded Imperatives (Imbedded Imp) \*Yes-No Questions (Y/N-Q) \*Wh-Questions(Wh-Q) \*Wh-Questions with Modals (Wh-Q + mod)

Further into **Research Question 1**, the functions of directives are identified based on the forms they take. In this study, the functions of directives such as *order*, *command* and *prohibition* are subsumed under the function *advice/ suggestion* due to the context of advice columns. *Hint*, on the other hand, is a function on its own as it provides contextual clues of the advice to the questioners. These forms and functions determine the strategies of face-protection in the advice columns. Table 7 is used to categorise the functions of directives identified in the advice texts.

Table 7: The Distributions of Directive Functions in Advice Texts.

<b>Functions</b>	<b>Advice/ Suggestions</b>	<b>Hints</b>
<b>f</b>	339	198
<b>%</b>	63	37
<b>Total (f)</b>	537	
<b>Total (%)</b>	100	

Table 7 shows the distribution of the directives functions in the advice texts. Although directives play various functions such as *request*, *command*, *order*, *prohibition* and *tease* (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Asmah Omar, 1982; Locher, 2006; Georgalidou, 2008), in the context of advice text, the functions of directives are reduced to *advice/suggestion* and *hint*. The total frequency (f) and total percentages (%) of the directives functions are calculated (refer to discussion of directive functions on page 107).

Finally, the face-saving strategies are outlined based on the internal and external mitigations. It should also be noted that some of the directives forms identified in Research Question 1 function as syntactic mitigators (Yates, 2005). The syntactic mitigators, along with other mitigation strategies, i.e. *sweeteners*, *promises of rewards*, *apologies* and *preparators* are categorised as the external mitigators. Due to excessive data, the external mitigation is difficult to be quantified into frequency and percentages. Thus, the external mitigations that appear in the advice texts are qualitatively discussed.

Meanwhile, the internal mitigators include *lexical hedges*, *politeness markers*, *downtoners* and *appealers* (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Skewis, 2003; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008). Tables 8, 9 and 10 demonstrate the softeners in the forms of modal auxiliary verbs, probability adverbs and descriptive adverbs that function as internal mitigators in the advice texts.

Table 8: The Distribution of Modal Auxiliary Verbs in the Advice Texts

<b>Modal Verb</b> <b>Directive Forms</b>	<b>Should</b>	<b>Will</b>	<b>Must</b>	<b>Can</b>	<b>Would</b>	<b>Could</b>	<b>May</b>
<b>Imperative</b>							
PIM	1				1		
YPD	7	2	5			4	
YND	3		2	1			
<b>Declarative</b>							
Hint	2					1	
<b>Interrogative</b>							
Modal interrogative	3	1		2	3		
<b>Imbedded</b>							
Imbedded imperative		5		2	1		
Imbedded + YPD	2	1	3	1			1
Imbedded + Modal Interrogative					2		
Imbedded + YND	2			1			
Imbedded + Imbedded Imperative		1		1			
Imbedded + PIM	1						
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 8 demonstrates the distribution of an internal mitigation strategy (modal auxiliary verbs) that appears in the 47 advice texts. After being identified and categorised, the total frequency (f) of the internal mitigation strategies are calculated to form the basis of discussion (refer to the discussion of modal auxiliary verbs on page 164).

Table 9: The Distribution of Probability Adverbs in the Advice Texts

<b>Adverbs</b>	<b>Perhaps</b>
<b>Directive Forms</b>	
<b>Imperative</b>	
YPD	7
<b>Imbedded</b>	
Imbedded + modal interrogative	1
Imbedded + YPD	1
Imbedded + PIM	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

Table 9 demonstrates the distribution of an internal mitigation strategy (probability adverb, *perhaps*) that is used in the advice texts. The probability adverb, *perhaps*, is used nine times in the advice texts and this frequency (f) will form the basis for discussions on page 169. Apart from probability adverbs, descriptive adverbs are also used as internal mitigators in the advice texts. Table 10 illustrates the distribution of descriptive adverbs used in the advice texts.

Table 10: The Distribution of Descriptive Adverbs used in the Advice Texts

<b>Adverbs</b>	<b>Really</b>	<b>Simply</b>	<b>Just</b>	<b>Truly</b>	<b>Seriously</b>
<b>Directive Forms</b>					
<b>Imperative</b>					
PIM		2	1		
NIM					1
YPD		1	1		
YND	4	1			
<b>Imbedded</b>					
Imbedded + YPD	1				
If-statement		1			
Imbedded + if-statement			1		
Imbedded + PIM				1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 10 highlights the distribution of descriptive adverbs used in the advice texts. Some of the frequently applied descriptive adverbs are *really*, *simply* and *just*. Other descriptive adverbs include *truly*, *seriously* and *hopefully*. *Really* and *simply* are used five times each in the advice texts while *just* is used three times. The rest of the descriptive adverbs are used only once each. The descriptive adverbs are further discussed on page 170.

The directives forms and functions and the face-maintenance strategies identified are calculated into their total frequencies and percentages. The directives forms are coded as follows: imperatives (negative/ positive imperatives, you positive/ negative directives), interrogatives (yes-no questions, wh-questions with/ without modals) and declaratives (need statement, hints), imbedded imperatives and permission directives. Meanwhile the face-saving strategies are categorised into external and internal mitigations. All the frequencies and percentages calculated are presented in figures such as graphs and pie charts. The quantitative results of frequencies and percentages form the basis of discussion to answer the three research questions.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the first section of this chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks of directives, (im)politeness and mitigation strategies identified in the advice texts. The theoretical frameworks for identifying directives are by Ervin-Tripp (1976), Blum-Kulka (1987) and Yule (1996), while the frameworks of (im)politeness are the positive-negative politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987) and the frame-based view (Terkourafi, 2005). Finally, the face-saving strategies are coded based on the external and internal mitigations by Skewis (2003), Yates (2005) and Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008). The multiple frameworks of directives, (im)politeness and face-saving strategies complement each others' to include all possibilities of data analysed.

The second section of this chapter outlines the methodology applied in this study. The discussion of methodology includes the materials used as data, the process of data collection, the method employed throughout this study and the data analysis to answer the research questions.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the results of the data analysis. The three research questions of this study are addressed in four main sections. Section 4.1 provides brief discussions about the general structures of the advice texts which include the tone and the distributions of the advice texts. Section 4.3 illustrates the forms and functions of directives found in the advice texts. Section 4.5 examines the relationship between the forms and functions of directives and (im)politeness using the positive-negative politeness theory and the frame-based theory. The directives are divided into Blum-Kulka's (1987) direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect directives. Finally, in Section 4.6, the face-saving strategies used in the advice texts are outlined and illustrated with examples. These strategies are divided into external and internal mitigations based on Skewis (2003), Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008) and Yates (2005). All discussions are illustrated with examples.

### 4.1 GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE ADVICE TEXTS

The *Dear Thelma* advice column under the *Heart and Soul* section of *The Star* newspaper centres on the theme *Personal and Relationship*. It discusses issues involving relationship, affairs, financial, courtship, personal identity and hobbies between couples, husbands and wives, friends and individuals. Each set of the problem and advice texts published are preceded by titles that capture the gist of the problem and advice discussed such as *Growing out of young love*, *Foolish sister* and *Leave him, fast*. After the title, the problem letters directly ensue to the content without being preceded by any honorific such as *Dear Aunt Agony* or *Dear Abby*.

The advice letters are written directly after each problem letter. As similarly observed in the problem letters, the advice letters are also not initiated with greetings. Instead, Thelma

uses the first sentence of the advice texts to straightaway address the questioners' problems such as "(S1) *if you do not find out the truth you will always be suspiciously looking for tell-tale's sign of your husband's infidelities*" (Appendix I, *Find out the truth*).

From the advice texts, Thelma's role as an advice-giver are a) to clarify and break the questioners' problems into smaller chunks, b) to describe the advantages/disadvantages and strengths/weaknesses of the questioners and other involving parties, c) to outline some solutions to the problems and d) to leave the responsibility of making decision to the questioners. Thelma's role to leave the decision-making to the questioners is further substantiated by a disclaimer note that is always present for each *Dear Thelma* publication. Additionally, Thelma sometimes confirms or lends support to questioners' views on their problems. This is similar to the role played by two radio talk-show hosts in Ho's (2009) study who clarified and confirmed their callers' solutions to their problems. At the end of the letters, Thelma usually reinforces her advice by stating what she believes the questioners should do to solve their problems. An example of Thelma's concluding remark is, "(S25) *Now it's time to do your best for yourself*" (Appendix E, *Choked by apron string*). Finally, unlike at the end of the problem letters, Thelma does not sign off the advice letters with her name or pseudonyms.

#### **4.1.1 Tone of the Advice Texts**

From the letters, both questioners and Thelma adopt the semi-friendly and semi-formal tones that keep the interaction light and clear regardless of the issues discussed and the high frequency of complex sentences used. Example 1 illustrates the complex sentences in an advice text:

##### **Example 1:**

##### **20 June 2010: Parents Object to Inter-racial Love (Appendix O)**

S12: When they still choose to be bigoted and stubborn, then the next generation will have to show them that true love is more important than superficial skin tones and beliefs.



There is also evidence of sentences infused with local slangs such as, “*This is one Malaysia lah.*” According to Asmah Omar (1982), there is no actual meaning to the particle – *lah* at the end of the sentence, but it is used to convey respect and politeness to the addressee.

When writing the problem letters, the questioners usually adopt the narrative approach to precede their requests. These narratives play two functions which are to provide the background of the problems and to relate the event to the questioners’ requests as well as a technique to gain sympathy from Thelma and other readers. In Harrison and Barlow (2009) and Skewis (2003), the narrative is termed *pre-sequence* that functions to convey respect and politeness to the addressee. For example, in the problem text *Parents object to inter-racial love* (Appendix O), the explicit request that was being preceded by the narratives is, “(S17) *What can I do?*”

Furthermore, it is observed that while some questioners were really baffled by their problems, some put the blame on other involving parties instead of themselves. In the problem text *Blowing hot and cold* (Appendix I1), the phrase in line S8, “.... *as if that would solve the matter*” indicates that although the boyfriend is trying to make peace, the questioner still feels discontented. Similarly, in line S33 (Example 2), the questioner feels that she is a good friend but is taken for granted by her housemate. These examples substantiate Dibner’s (1974) finding that questioners usually blame the other parties for their problems and fail to see their fault. Example 2 shows that the questioner blames the other party for the problem.

### **Example 2: Problem Text**

#### **27 June 2010: Friends Turn Foe (Appendix R)**

S33 But I’m angry with her for taking me for granted, after all that I’ve done for her.

Meanwhile, in responding to the problem letters, Thelma is friendly but frank in her advice. She uses a lot of direct speeches and intensifies them with more directives. The ability to get people to open up to her illustrates her reliability as an advice-giver as similarly observed by Locher (2006) in *Lucy Answers*. Apart from showing concern for the questioners’ well-being, Thelma treats the questioners like adults who must be responsible for their problems. Thus, at times, sarcasm is used to convey the message (see Example 3: S1, S6, S11, S12) to boost the questioners confidence to take appropriate measures to solve their problems. Example 3 illustrates sarcasm in the advice text.

### Example 3: Informal Tone and Sarcasm in an Advice Text

#### 5 September 2010: Topsy-turvy Love Affair (Appendix G1)

S1     You are an idiot.

S2     What man would offer the woman he loves to another?

.....

S6     You started a relationship like two juveniles playing “she loves me, loves me not”.

.....

S11    What sick game is this?

In Example 3 above, S1 illustrates Thelma’s frankness in line S1 by stating her mind about the questioner’s personality. This is followed by an indirect interrogative in line S2 which explains Thelma’s outburst in S1. Evidences of sarcasm are observed in line S6 and S11 where instead of treating the questioner like an adult, Thelma downgrades him as immature and argues that he treated the relationship a joke.

Meanwhile, in dealing with the issues discussed, Thelma varies her tone depending on the social contexts, such as the status of the questioners. For example, when writing on the issue of affair, Thelma uses a softer, non-judgmental tone when advising an older woman who is a wife and a mother, but adopted a harsher tone when advising a younger, single woman. In the advice text of *You can’t have it all* (Appendix G), Thelma advises an older woman who is having an affair with a younger man as she felt that her husband mistreated her. Although she is clearly at fault, Thelma non-judgmentally clarifies the situation and options and leaves the decision-making to her by stating, “(S38) *It’s your choice, your decision.*” However, when advising a younger, single woman who is having an affair with her brother-in-law (Appendix B, *Foolish Sister*), Thelma uses a more direct, accusing tone to blame the questioner and to indicate her strong opposition to the affair. The examples of the harsher tone are “(S11) *Yes, you are such a fool*” and “(S26) *Blame no one for your actions because you chose to betray your sister from the very start*”. Apart from the differences in status and age of the questioners, Thelma uses more admonishing tone in her response to the younger woman probably because she perceives the offence as more severe than the older woman’s.

Thus, it is illustrated that Thelma employs a variety of tones when writing to different types of questioners and issues. This illustrates her principal beliefs in the issues discussed.

This confirms Vine (2009) and Ho's (2009) findings that purpose of interactions and advice-giver's ideological beliefs influence the advice given.

## 4.2 THE DISTRIBUTION OF DIRECTIVES FORMS IN THE ADVICE TEXTS

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of directives in the advice texts.

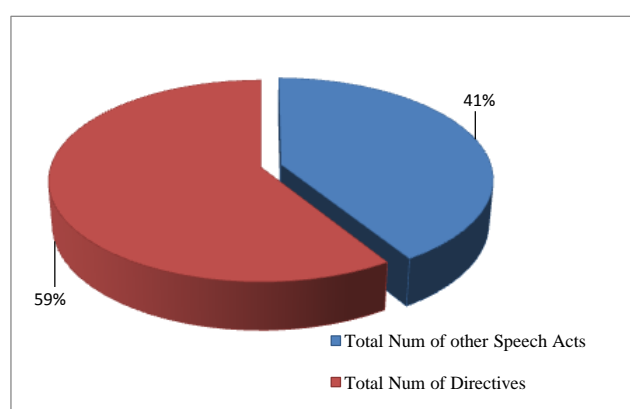


Figure 2: The Distribution of Directives in the Advice Texts

Figure 2 demonstrates that 59 percent of directives appear in the 47 advice texts. The high percentage of directives might be attributed to the functions of advice texts which are to give solicited advice and suggestions and respond to questioners' inquiries. In the English society, the act of giving advice to strangers is viewed as rude and a violation of the questioner's privacy and indicates his incompetence (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Yule, 1996; Brown and Levinson, 1976). However, in an advice column, the act of giving advice to strangers is appropriate because the questioners specifically solicit advice from the advice-givers. This gives the advice-giver the authority as an expert to give the advice. The power asymmetry between Thelma and the questioners justifies her continuous directives in the advice texts, thus making her directives appropriate and less-threatening (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996; Ho, 2009). Thelma's directives in the advice texts also demonstrate her sincerity in helping the questioners solve their problems. This is substantiated in studies

involving Russian and Chinese cultures where direct directive indicates trust, willingness and confidence in the addressees (Lee-Wong, 1994; Larina, 2008). Furthermore, the continuous directives intensify Thelma's beliefs on the issues discussed such as justified by Ho (2009) who says that two radio talk-shows reflect their ideological beliefs aggressively. For example, in *Ignored and irritated* (Appendix Q1), Thelma repeatedly writes about the questioner's weaknesses in direct and indirect forms to emphasize her belief on the matter that the questioner is at fault for being too egoistic and self-absorbed. The repetition strategy also ensures clarity of the advice and avoids any misunderstandings between Thelma and the questioner.

This study chooses to analyse only the directives that appear in the advice texts as the limited number of directives in the problem texts might be insignificant. Therefore, this study analyses the forms and functions of directives, the relationship of the directives and the protection of face and the face-saving strategies used in the advice texts. However, frequent references to the problem texts are made to help justify and explain the directives in the advice texts. Table 11 below presents the distribution of issues that appear in the 47 texts analysed.

Table 11 and Figure 3 show the distribution of directives in advice texts.

Table 11: The Distribution of Directives in the Advice Texts

<b>Types of Texts</b>  <b>Placement of Directives</b>	<b>Advice</b>		
	<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>*f</b>	129	175	235
<b>%</b>	23.9	32.5	43.6
<b>Total (f)</b>	539		
<b>Total (%)</b>	100		

\*f=frequency

Table 11 illustrates the distribution of directives in the advice texts. The directives are used more frequently towards the end of the advice texts with 43.6 percent. This is followed by the medial position with 32.5 percent and the initial position with 23.9 percent. It is interesting to note that the directives in the advice texts are written continuously rather than at certain sections of the texts only. Thus, this explains the high frequency of directives found in the advice texts.

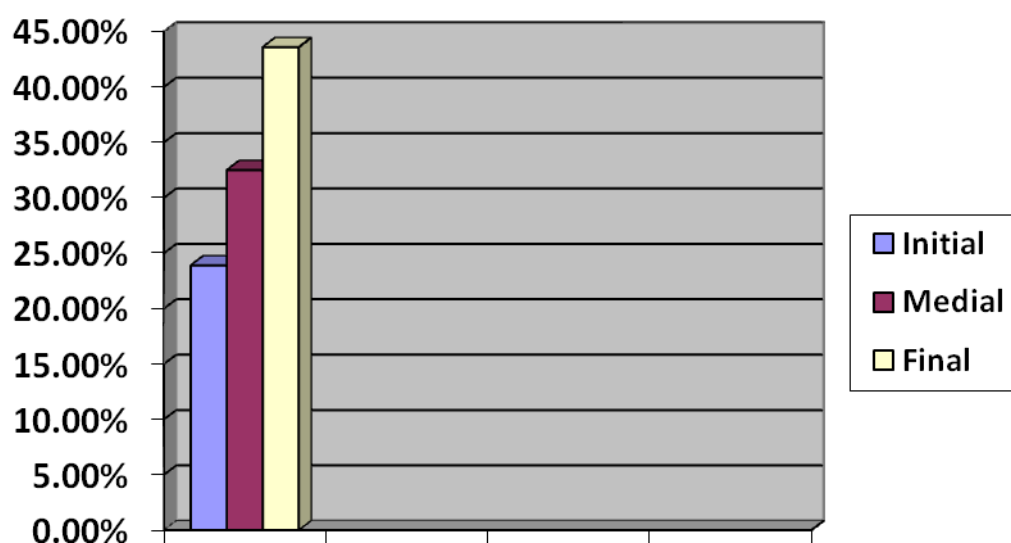


Figure 3: The Distribution of Directives in the Advice Texts

In Figure 3, it is evident that the directives in the advice texts are distributed quite evenly at all three positions with 43.6 percent at the final position, 32.5 percent at the medial position and 23.9 percent at the initial position. Although more directives tend to appear at the final position, the differences in the percentages between the three directive distributions are small. This might be because, frequent and continuous advice are more beneficial in addressing the questioners' problems to show consistency. By being consistent, Thelma could articulate what she really thinks about the problems (see Example 4: S1, S2). This finding is justified by Larina (2008) and Krolak and Rudnicka (2006) as they found that the Russian and Polish societies who practice positive politeness favour intensity and continuity in their requests to convey their sincerity.

Apart from that, Thelma might feel that the advice should be given in parts so that it would not overwhelm the questioners as sometimes the questioners need to be acknowledged

that the problems are their faults (see Appendix Q1, *Ignored and irritated*). The advice in the initial positions is usually in the indirect forms of hints and interrogatives that prepare the questioners for more direct advice in the medial and final positions (see Example 4: S1, S2). In Example 4 below, the directives in medial and final positions are constructed with imperatives while the directive in the initial position is a yes-no question.

#### **Example 4:**

#### **11 July 2010: Dirty Old Man (Appendix T)**

##### Initial

S1 At this point in your lives, do you still feel the need to watch over a man who is less virile and sexually subdued?

##### Medial

S5 Since you cannot watch him 24/7, you need to either trust him or stay next to him

##### Final

S13 If your husband is purely indulgent and harmless, then treat this as bad habit.

In order to explain the data in this study, Table 12 illustrates the distribution of issues analysed in the advice texts. The issues are as follow:

Table 12: Distribution of Issues in the Problem and Advice Texts

<b>Relationships/ Issues</b>	<b>Boyfriend- Girlfriend</b>	<b>Husband- Wife</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Friends</b>	<b>Affairs</b>	<b>Others</b>
<b>f</b>	13	10	9	7	5	3
<b>%</b>	28	21	19	15	11	6
<b>Total (f)</b>	47					
<b>Total (%)</b>	100					

From Table 12, it is evident that the questioners are mainly people with personal relationship issues. 28 percent of the questioners face the boyfriend-girlfriend problem while 21 percent face marital problem. Other problems include family (19 percent), friendship (15

percent), affair (11 percent) and random issues such as interest and social identity (six percent). However, it is observed that Thelma's responses are dependent on the complexity and contexts of the problem rather than on the theme. For example, Thelma used more mitigation strategies in response to a letter from a wife who committed adultery but applied more sarcasm to a man who complains about his colleagues at the workplace.

### 4.3 THE FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF DIRECTIVES IN THE ADVICE TEXTS

This section discusses the directive forms and functions that appear in the advice texts. There are basically three types of directives; declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives. However, a huge number of imbedded directives were also identified when the advice texts were analysed. The imbedded structures are complexly constructed with a lot of syntactic mitigation. Therefore, another form of directives, *imbedded form* is introduced for the purpose of the analysis. *Imbedded form* is used by Ervin-Tripp (1976) to categorise directives in her study. Although her classification of imbedded form is only restricted to *imbedded imperative*, this study has widened the frame of *imbedded imperative* to include other imbedded structures such as *if-statement* and *imbedded linkers*. Also, in this study, the term *question directive* by Ervin-Tripp (1976) is used interchangeably with *interrogative*. The four basic forms are then further classified into its smaller units as presented in Table 6 (page 82). Figure 4 below illustrates the distribution of directive forms in the advice texts.

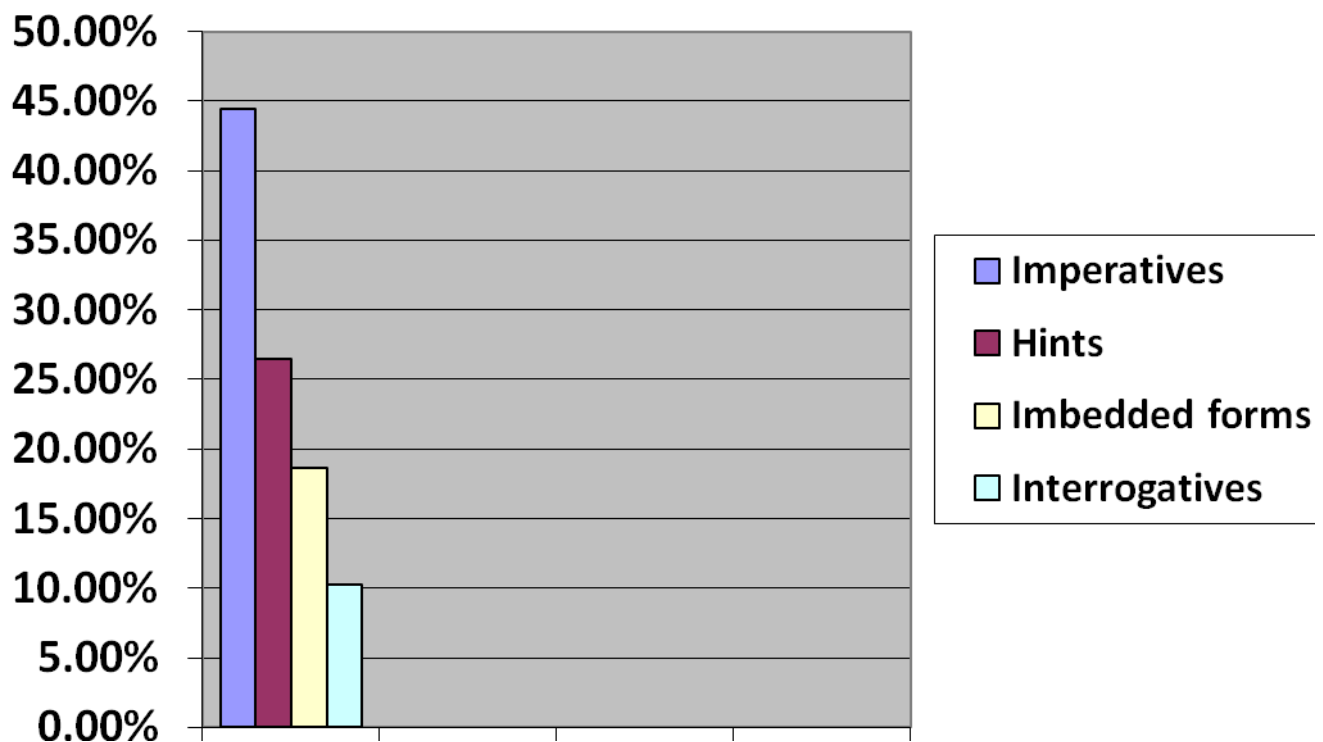


Figure 4: The Distribution of Directive Forms in the Advice Texts

From Figure 4, it is evident that the imperative structures construct the highest percentage of directives (44.5 percent) in the advice texts. This is followed by the declarative structures comprising hints and ellipsis statements (26.5 percent), the imbedded structures (18.6 percent) and the interrogative structures (10.2 percent).

Meanwhile, Table 6 (page 82) illustrates the distribution of directive forms in the advice texts. Imperative and hint are the most frequently used forms in the advice texts while imbedded and interrogative forms are less favoured.

Out of the four varieties of imperatives, the PIM structure collected the highest percentage with 24.5 percent. An example of a PIM structure is “(S18) **Bide your time and ensure** that you have your future mapped out” (Appendix O1, *Father’s lost manhood*). The NIM structure comes in second with 9.5 percent. An example of NIM is, “(S9) **Do not convince yourself** that your hobby is wasteful and frivolous” (Appendix S1, *Okay to pay for a passion*). The YPD structure makes up 7.6 percent of the total imperative structure. An example of a YPD structure is, “(S10) **You should love and respect your parents**, but there will be times when your values, thoughts and aspirations matter” (Appendix O, *Parents object to Inter-racial Love*). The last imperative structure is the YND structure with 2.9



percent. An example of a YND structure is, “(S6) *You should not be bashful about picking one since you are not a secret*” (Appendix Y, *Naïve but a good catch*).

In case of the declarative structures, there is a huge difference between the percentages of hint and ellipsis structures. Since the ellipsis structure collected an insignificantly low percentage (0.7 percent), it is not discussed in this study. Meanwhile, a huge percentage of hint (25.8 percent) in the 47 advice texts supports Asmah Omar’s (1982) conclusion that Malaysians tend to be more indirect in their speeches. In the advice texts, hints are identified as directives when they implicitly imply that the questioners take certain actions to solve their problems. An example of a hint is, “(S7) *Staying on a marriage that is slowly robbing you of pride, esteem and dignity makes you the greater fool*” (Appendix A, *Leave him fast*). This classification of hint structure might contradict Eken’s (1996) framework that classified line S7 as an *-ing imperative*. However, in this study S7 is considered as a hint because Thelma is implicitly telling the questioner that separation is the best solution to the problem, hence covertly directing the questioner to take action.

As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, this study expands the imbedded imperative structure to include more imbedded forms such as the *if-statement* and imbedded with *linkers*. Table 6 (page 82) illustrates that *if-statement* makes up 10.6 percent of the total directive structures while a variety of other imbedded forms make up 4.5 percent. These are followed by imbedded linkers with 2.2 percent and imbedded imperatives with 1.3 percent. Some examples to demonstrate these imbedded forms are: a) *if-statement*, “(S27) *If he ever raise his hand against you, file a police report*” (Appendix A, *Leave him fast*), b) other imbedded form, “(S17) *It will be a painful process for all of you but it must be done*” (Appendix A1, *Cut your son off*), c) imbedded linkers, “(S18) *instead of seeking thrills and sexual gratification with another man, re-ignite your relationship with your husband* (Appendix U, *Cougar on the prowl*) and d) imbedded imperative, “(S7) *Can you get a relative/friend or hire help to care for the baby and take over the household chores?*” (Appendix L1, *Turning a deaf ear*).

Finally, the interrogative form contributes the least percentage of directives in the advice texts. This finding is unexpected as it is widely believed that the interrogative form is highly desired in issuing directives. Out of the three structures, the *yes-no question* structure makes up the highest directive percentage with 4.6 percent, followed by the *wh-question* and *wh-question with modal* 2.8 percent each. Some examples of the three interrogative structures are: a) yes-no question, “(S14) *Have you tried harder to make your marriage more exciting and fulfilling?* (Appendix F1, *Don’t be fooled again*), b) wh- question, “(S1) *Why bother with a guy who gave you the flip without a word or explanation?*” (Appendix S, *Weighing options of two guys*) and c) wh-question with modals, “(S10) *Why should you be made to feel guilty when he was not forced into marriage* (Appendix B1, *He can’t be yours*).

The directive forms identified in the advice texts contradict Blum-Kulka’s (1987) findings as the less polite, more direct imperative form and the less coercive but vague non-conventionally indirect hint form are more frequently used as being compared to the more polite, less coercive and explicit conventionally indirect forms (imbedded forms and interrogative forms). The directive forms are discussed below based on the frequency of occurrence and percentages of each structure. The discussion would be divided into these sections:

#### 4.3.1 Imperatives

#### 4.3.2 Hints

#### 4.3.3 Imbedded Forms

#### 4.3.4 Interrogatives

### 4.3.1 Imperatives

Positive Imperative (PIM) is the highest form used in the advice texts with 24.5 percent. Other imperative forms employed are as follow: Negative Imperative (NIM) (9.5 percent), You Positive Directives (YPD) (7.6 percent) and You Negative Directives (YND) (2.9 percent) (see Table 6, page 82).

Thelma frequently uses PIM probably because it is an explicit form of positive advice which is direct yet meaningful. By using PIM, the intended advice is explicit which demonstrates Thelma's confidence, thus might help the questioners to realise that it is the right action that needs to be taken as a solution to their problems. The degree of confidence portrayed by Thelma shows her expertise, trustworthiness, reliability and compassion towards the questioners (Hendley, 1977; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991; Locher, 2006; Ho, 2009). The positiveness of the advice also expresses Thelma's optimism that the problems can be solved. As an imperative, the directness of PIM gives the impression that Thelma is spontaneous and sincere in giving her advice as she treats the questioners as close friends rather than distant strangers. This is similarly observed in studies of the Russian and Polish societies where directness equates friendliness and an act of goodwill (Larina, 2008; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006, Locher, 2006).

In contrast to PIM, NIM uses the negative verb forms rather than the positive verbs although it plays the same function as PIM. Therefore, although both imperatives are direct form, they are used hand in hand due to their directness, intensity and clarity with no interpretive issue. According to Blum-Kulka (1987), the high pragmatic clarity of an utterance indicates politeness. Therefore, the use of PIM and NIM imperatives are Thelma's effort to appear polite (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Larina, 2005).

Meanwhile, the other two imperative forms (see Example 5), YPD and YND are typically used when Thelma needs to emphasize the actions that questioners should take to solve their problems. Usually, these two forms include modal verbs in their structures to emphasize the degree of importance of the actions. For example, the YPD and YND structures use the modal *must* to emphasize the importance of the proposed actions in solving the questioner's problems (see Example 5). The use of other modals help to soften the imposition in the directives, hence downtoning Thelma's authoritative tone to level herself with the questioners, instead of being more superior (Searle, 1975; Brown and Levinson,

1978, 1987). The YPD and YND imperatives are easily identifiable in the advice texts as they are always preceded by the second person pronoun *you* and are usually followed by modals *must (not)*, *should (not)*, *can (not)*, and *will have to (not)* or the verbs *need/do not want/have to/do not have to*. Example 5 demonstrates some instances of the PIM, NIM, YPD and YND imperatives found in the advice texts.

### **Example 5: Imperative Forms of Directives in Advice Texts**

#### PIM

#### **20 June 2010: Growing out of young love (Appendix P)**

- S10    Accept that he had stopped loving you.
- S12    Appreciate her courage, her seeming cruelty as she spared you lies.
- S16    Be magnanimous in love, wish her well.

#### NIM

#### **11 July 2010: Cougar on the prowl (Appendix U)**

- S3     Do not kid yourself that you are in control
- S21    Stop flirting with your colleague and avoid him unless you have to work together.

#### YPD

#### **18 April 2010: Find out the truth (Appendix I)**

- S22    However, you must also have the courage to tell him that you will walk away from your marriage if he ever cheats on you again.

#### YND

#### **14 March 2010: Choked by apron string (Appendix E)**

- S18    You must not accept that the rest of lives must be spent by your mother's side.

### 4.3.2 Hints

As mentioned earlier, there are two types of declarative structures found in the advice texts: hints and ellipsis. However, due to the insignificant percentage of the ellipsis structure (0.7 percent), only the hint structure is discussed in this study.

The regularity of hints (25.8 percent) in the advice texts can be viewed as Thelma's effort to balance the explicit forms (imperative) and implicit forms (hint, interrogative, imbedded forms) used in the advice texts. By using hints, Thelma helps the questioners clarify their problems and sort through their options in detail. These strategies are also used by two hosts of radio talk shows when giving advice to callers (Ho, 2009). After telling the questioners what she feels they should do, Thelma leaves the decision-making process to the questioners which is evident via some of the advices given such as "(S37) *It's your choice, your decision*" (Appendix G, *You can't have it all*) and also the disclaimer of any responsibilities that is always presented with each publication of the *Dear Thelma* advice columns.

Thelma might also use hints to give advice on delicate issues which might threaten the questioners' faces as hint is the least forceful form of directive that places a high degree of concern to the questioners' faces (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Therefore, its frequent application might help to reduce the illocutionary force of dictating what the questioner should do in matters involving their personal lives. Ervin-Tripp (1976), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Jones (1992) and Harrison and Barlow (2009) view hint as a polite form of directives. Lines S7 and S12 in Example 6 below demonstrate Thelma's indirectness via hints when telling the questioner to leave her cheating husband for the sake of her children.

As hints are often vague and ambiguous, they are identified based on the problems described by the questioners and Thelma's advice that leads to actions. Example 6 shows three hints which fall into two categories; mild hints (S7 and S12) and strong hints (S27) (Skewis, 2003). Lines S7 and S12 are categorised as mild hints because Thelma simply predicts the situation in the future without giving the slightest clue to what the questioner should do. Then, in line S27, Thelma uses stronger hint by suggesting that the questioner is worthier than her husband and will be happier if she leaves him or if he changes for the better. This conclusion is also derived from the title of the article which is *Leave the sham behind*.

### **Example 6: Hint structures in the Declarative Forms**

#### **13 June 2010: Leave the sham behind (Appendix N)**

- S7 Growing up in an environment that's fraught with anger and misery will do them more harm than good.
- S12 Your children will feel sorry for you but they will never learn strength of character from someone who is weak and submissive.
- S27 You deserve better than a man who does not know love.

Apart from the declarative form, hints also come in the interrogative form when Thelma is attempting to point out the source of the questioners' problems and simultaneously gets them to think about what they should and should not do to solve their problems. It is a rhetorical question which does not require any answer from the questioner but functions to gauge their thoughts. Also, via interrogative hints, Thelma involves the questioners' emotions and feelings about their problems. In Example 7 below, line S8 (Appendix A) is a hint in the interrogative form and is flanked by two strong hints (lines S7 and S9). Line S8 thus gives the questioner an opportunity to consider the source of the problem which is gauged via the use of strong lexical items and phrases such as *greater fool* and *how dare*.

### **Example 7: Hints in the Interrogative Form**

#### **7 February 2010: Leave him, fast (Appendix A)**

- S7 Staying on a marriage that is slowly robbing you of pride, esteem and dignity makes you the greater fool.
- S8 And you have been asked to choose between children, siblings and him?
- S9 How dare he make such a demand when he should love you and your family from the day he married you.

#### **6 June 2010: Boyfriend a playboy (Appendix L)**

- S1 You haven't done anything wrong so why do you accept physical, verbal and emotional abuse from a man who does not respect you?

### 4.3.3 Imbedded Forms

Table 6 shows that the most common imbedded form used throughout the advice texts is *if-statement* with 10.2 percent. Other imbedded forms found in the advice texts are *imbedded with linkers* (2.2 percent), *imbedded imperatives* (1.3 percent) and *other types of imbedded forms* (4.5 percent). *If-statement* is categorised as an imbedded form because the directives written are being preceded by *if-phrases*, hence lessening Thelma's authoritative tone as the *if-statement* justifies the directives. This decreases the face-threatening effect because in the English cultures the act of giving advice indicates the addressees' incompetence (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Larina, 2005; Locher, 2006). The *if-statements* are followed by various forms of imperatives (PIM, NIM, YPD), question directives and hints. Example 8 illustrates instances of imbedded forms identified in the advice texts.

#### Example 8: If-statement of Imbedded Forms in Advice Texts

##### If-statement with PIM

#### 5 September 2010: Is he just not that into me (Appendix H1)

S4 If he is not ready for a serious relationship, then allow him the time and space he needs.

##### If-statement with YPD

#### 18 July 2010: Find out the truth (Appendix I)

S11 If not, you may simply have to accept that you have done a good deed without returns.

##### If-statement with question directives

#### 3 October 2010: Fatal attraction (Appendix M1)

S5 If she had no qualms telling her husband the truth, and was only too happy to confess, what else couldn't or wouldn't she do to grab your guy?

Apart from the *if-statements*, other imbedded forms also help Thelma to demonstrate the intended meanings of the advice to the questioners. In Example 9 (Appendix A, *Leave him fast*), the sentence in line S5 is, "*Deep in your heart, you know you should get away as soon as you can*". The intended advice which is, "...*you should get away as soon as you can*" is softened by the phrase that precedes it, "*Deep in your heart, you know...*". The phrase *you know* is often used by Thelma to involve the questioners in generating ideas to solve the problems. This is because by using *you know* Thelma gives the impression that the

questioners are in control of the situation and are capable of thinking the best action for themselves.

Besides decreasing the level of impositions, imbedded imperatives also help to illustrate Thelma's soft and sympathetic side as implicit forms mean that she cares about the questioners' faces and self-worth. This is consistent with Harrison and Barlow's (2009) findings that even though the participants of an arthritis workshop are in the same predicament, they used indirect means to give advice to each other to appear polite. Therefore, to mitigate her advice, Thelma adopts linkers in the imbedded form to avoid threatening the questioners' faces. An example is in line S12 of *Woeful shotgun marriage* (Appendix N1) below where Thelma uses *instead* to suggest some actions that could solve the problems. This advice is also mitigated via the probability adjective *perhaps* and modal verb *could* to further decrease the imposition on the questioner's personal life. Example 9 below illustrates other types of imbedded structures in the advice texts.

### **Example 9: Other Imbedded Directive Forms in Advice Texts**

#### Imbedded with YPD

#### **7 February 2010: Leave him, fast (Appendix A)**

S5     Deep in your heart, you know you should get away as soon as you can

#### Imbedded with linkers (while, when, since, instead of)

#### **3 October 2010: Woeful shotgun marriage (Appendix N1)**

S12     Instead of feeling trapped, perhaps the two of them could start dating and romancing to try nurture their relationship.



#### 4.3.4 Interrogatives

The interrogative structures are the least applied forms in the advice texts. Out of the three interrogative forms, *yes-no question directive* is employed most frequently with 4.6 percent while the *wh-questions* and *wh-questions with modals* (modal interrogatives) make up 2.8 percent each in the advice texts.

It is anticipated that the interrogative structures are used less frequently in the advice texts because, the purpose of the advice texts is for Thelma to provide solicited advice to the questioners rather than to make requests or asks questions. Therefore, the usual strategies of giving advice are via direct imperatives or hints and imbedded forms rather than interrogatives. This demonstrates that the purpose of interaction is an important factor that influences the type of directives produced by interlocutors (Vine, 2001 2009). Furthermore, in this interaction, Thelma, as an expert advice-giver possesses higher power status than the questioners. Hence, the low percentage of indirect interrogative form used in the advice texts is justified because as an authority, Thelma has the privilege of speaking directly to questioners who have lesser power than her without being regarded as impolite (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Jones, 1992; Vine, 2009). Also, the fact that the questioners specifically solicited advice from Thelma indicates their respect for her input and expertise. Locher (2006) argued similar findings in the advice column *Lucy Answers* where the questioners perceived the advice-givers as more knowledgeable. However, this argument contradicts Vine's (2009) finding where the superior manager sometimes mitigates her requests depending on the subordinates' expertise, seniority, age and status.

As mentioned, hints can also be constructed using interrogatives. When interrogative forms are employed to function as hints, they get the questioners to think about the cause of their problems. This enables the questioners to think of solutions on their own before they are confirmed by Thelma. In Example 10, line S6 (Appendix O, *Parents object to inter-racial love*) is a *yes-no question* that leads the questioner to think about the source of the problem which is parental objections. Then, in line S16 Thelma writes a sarcastic rhetorical question that functions to help the questioner construct a solution to his problem.

## Example 10: Interrogative Forms in the Advice Texts

### Yes-No Questions

#### **20 June 2010: Parents object to inter-racial love (Appendix O)**

S6 Are you simply going to give in to parental objections, knowing that they were wrong?

S16 Do we continue to kill and terrorise each other in the name of race and religion?

### Wh-Questions

#### **6 June 2010: Boyfriend a playboy (Appendix L)**

S11 So why do you have to compromise your self-esteem and self-respect for another horrible relationship?

### Wh-Questions with Modals

#### **7 February 2010: Foolish sister (Appendix B)**

S9 How can you continue to love this man who refused to take responsibility when you had a miscarriage?

S20 How would you sister and family react should they ever find out about your affair?

Meanwhile, the functions of *wh-questions* and *modal interrogatives* are almost similar to the *yes-no questions*. The difference between the structures is that Thelma uses the *wh-questions* and *modal interrogatives* to point out the source of the problems and help questioners construct solutions to their problems. The modals *would* and *can* are used frequently with the *modal interrogatives* to soften the advices which illustrates a high degree of negative politeness. In Example 10, lines S9 and S20 of the advice text *Foolish sister* (Appendix B) demonstrate that Thelma tries to warn the questioners about the risk of having an affair with her brother-in-law as the matter involves their family members.

#### 4.4 THE FUNCTIONS OF DIRECTIVES IN THE ADVICE TEXTS

Table 7 demonstrates the distribution of directive functions in the advice texts.

Table 7: The Distribution of Directive Functions in Advice Texts

Functions	Advice/ Suggestions	Hints
<b>f</b>	339	198
<b>%</b>	63	37
<b>Total (f)</b>	537	
<b>Total (%)</b>	100	

There are two main directive functions in the advice texts which are advice/suggestion and hint. Although some might argue that hint is not a function of directive, all directive structures in the advice texts are intended to give advice to the questioners. Therefore, hint is important to be recognised as a function of directive in this study despite its vagueness and ambiguity. Due to the context of advice columns, the functions *prohibition* and *command* are subsumed under the function *advice/suggestion*.

As advice texts are analysed in this study, the function *advice* makes up a huge percentage of 63 percent while *hint* makes up 37 percent. *Advice* is constructed in a variety of imperative forms (PIM, NIM, YPD and YND) and imbedded forms (if-statement, imbedded imperatives and imbedded with linkers). Meanwhile, *hint* includes the variety of declarative and interrogative forms.

As shown in Table 6 (page 82), PIM dominates the function *advice* which might be due to its ability to present Thelma's advice with clarity. The pragmatic clarity of directives is a form of politeness as it liberates the addressees from interpretive problem (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Rinnert and Kobayashi, 2005). Therefore, PIM and other imperative structures indicate Thelma's politeness strategy and sincerity in helping the questioners solve their problems (Larina, 2005; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006).

Meanwhile, *hint* functions to give the questioners opportunities to think about their problems while at the same time assists them to generate possible solutions in overcoming

their problems. Hint is also frequently used by Thelma in the advice texts as it leaves the options and freedom of making decisions to the questioners. This flexibility allows the questioners to either follow or dismiss the advice as they wish (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Yule, 1996). So, there is no pressure that forces the questioners to agree with the proposed advice. As observed in the advice texts, hint is typically employed when Thelma discusses sensitive issues that might threaten the questioners' face. Thus, by dropping hints and preparing questioners for more explicit advice, Thelma lowers the impact of the advice. In this case, a hint can be viewed as a pre-sequence that justifies the forthcoming directives as similarly found in the English and Chinese cultures (Lee-Wong, 1994; Yule, 1996; Skewis, 2003; Harrison and Barlow, 2009).

## Summary

This section answers the first research question of this study which is the forms and functions of directives in the advice texts. The directives in the advice texts are constructed in four structures: imperatives, interrogatives, declaratives and imbedded forms. *Imperatives* are used most frequently in the advice text, followed by *hints*, the *imbedded forms* and *interrogative forms*. The high frequency of imperative thus contradicts Asmah Omar's (1982) finding and indicates that Malaysian are more direct in giving written advice. This is consistent with Haugh's (2006) observation that the American society is shifting towards directness and positive politeness rather than being indirect and negatively polite. The functions that these directives play are divided into two which are *advice/suggestion* and *hint*. Other directive functions such as command, request, order, and threat are subsumed under advice/suggestion based on the context of interaction analysed: the advice texts.

#### **4.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF DIRECTIVES AND MAINTAINING ONE'S FACE IN ADVICE TEXTS**

This section discusses the relationship between the forms and functions of directives and maintaining one's face in advice texts. Jones (1992) argues that analysing the syntactic forms is insufficient to determine the force of directives, so other factors that influence the strength of directives are: the situational contexts in which the directives are produced, the strengthening and softening devices applied alongside the directives and the paralinguistic features accompanying the directives. However, since this study analyses the written advice texts from a local newspaper's advice column, the paralinguistic features that are usually present in spoken texts are absent. Hence, the researcher can only make predictions of Thelma's tone in her advice based on three factors that are present in the advice texts which are the syntactic structures, the situational contexts and the mitigation devices.

In terms of situational contexts, the power status and social relationships between Thelma and the questioners are fixed before the interaction is initiated. Thelma is assumed to be of higher power status than the questioners and both of them are socially distant mutual strangers to each other. Furthermore, Thelma's expertise and authoritativeness are needed to solve the questioners' problems. This gives her the freedom to choose which letters to answer and publish as similarly found in the study of Japanese and American advice columns by Mckinstry and Mckinstry (1991). Also, Thelma and the questioners are mutual strangers who only interact with each other for a specific purpose. Therefore, the interaction in the advice texts are expected to be involving a high degree of formality and negative politeness strategies to maintain each others' face as established by prior researchers such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Ervin-Tripp (1976), Jones (1992), Yule (1996), Harrison and Barlow (2009) and Vine (2001, 2009).

Despite the differences in power status and social relationships between Thelma and the questioners, this study acknowledges that the force of directives and the degree of imposition in the advice texts might be significantly reduced due the following reasons:

- a) Unlike in spoken interaction, the interaction between Thelma and the questioners does not take place in face-to-face setting but is mediated by a public, local newspaper.

- b) Both Thelma and the questioners' identities are anonymous. Although Thelma's name is published, it is more likely to be a make-belief identity as such found in *Lucy Answers* where a team of professionals stand up for *Lucy* to give solicited health advice (Locher, 2006). Furthermore, Thelma is not directly reachable for the questioners or the public to contact her as all emails are filtered through the staff workers at *The Star* newspaper. The emails are then forwarded to Thelma and she has a choice to either reply the emails or not (Malini Dias, *The Star Newspaper*, May 2011). This is discovered during the data gathering process where the email sent by the researcher was answered by Miss Malini Dias, a staff writer at *The Star*, who filtered and forwarded the email to Thelma.
- c) The interaction does not take place in real time setting or simultaneously between Thelma and the questioners. Therefore, both Thelma and the questioners have many opportunities to modify their speeches before sending it to each other.

As the advice column maintained the anonymity of both Thelma and the questioners, it is impossible for anyone to identify them (Locher, 2006). The anonymity of both interlocutors lowers the face-threatening-act and the degree of imposition. The questioners can claim that the advice texts are not written for them and would be able to simply dismiss the advice should they wish not to comply. Furthermore, the specifically solicited advice reduces the face-threatening-act as the questioners are aware of the forthcoming advice they consulted from Thelma.

However, the advice texts might still be face-threatening to the questioners because of the high imperative frequency used by Thelma. Plus, some of the issues discussed are highly sensitive and personal. As Malaysians are generally indirect in their directives (Asmah Omar; 1982), this finding is significant as it proves otherwise. Since studies on directives in the local context are limited, this section discusses the relationship of the forms and functions of directives and its relation to the protection of questioners' face. It is discovered that the direct form in the advice text is constructed with a high percentage of imperative (44.5 percent) which contradicts Blum-Kulka's (1987), findings that direct imperative is the least polite form to be used in interaction. Meanwhile, the non-conventionally indirect form of directives, i.e. hint, is the second most frequent form used by Thelma with 26.5 percent. Finally, the conventionally indirect form, i.e. the imbedded form and the interrogative form, are the least frequently used structure throughout the advice texts with 18.6 percent and 10.2 percent respectively.

The three structures; direct, non-conventionally indirect and conventionally indirect are presented based on their percentages in the advice texts.

## **4.6 DIRECT DIRECTIVES IN THE ADVICE TEXTS**

### **4.6.1 IMPERATIVE**

Imperative is classified as a form of explicit directive because the structure has a direct relationship with the function (Searle, 1975; Brown and Levinson, 1978; and Yule, 1996). The intended meaning of an imperative is usually overt and requires no deeper interpretation. In section 4.3, all the imperatives identified (PIM, NIM, YPD and YND) in the advice texts function to provide advice/suggestion to the questioners. This finding is similar to Lee-Wong (1994), Hassall (1999), Saxena (2002) and Georgalidou's (2009) studies where imperatives are found to be the main form of request in their interactions. In these studies, the Chinese, Indonesian, Kinnauri and Greek speakers used imperative most frequently to make request and give directives to others. However, the participants usually mitigate their directives and requests using appropriate terms of address and honorifics such as personal pronouns (Lee-Wong, 1994), ellipsis of subject (Georgalidou, 2008) and lexical and phrasal mitigators (Hassall, 1999).

The high frequency of imperatives in the advice texts indicates Thelma's confidence in her advice to solve the questioners' problems. It also illustrates the nature of the relationships that Thelma and the questioners share as more direct imperatives imply either closer relationship or inequality of power status. This is substantiated by Georgalidou (2008) in his study where the Greek children use more direct imperatives in their interaction to acknowledge the social relationships between them and the higher status teachers. One way of looking at the frequent application of imperatives is that Thelma practices positive politeness in her advice to cater to the questioners' positive face as suggested by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Thelma tries to create rapport and solidarity with the questioners to show her genuineness in helping them. This is because, in discussing personal problems which sometimes include very private matters such as affairs, sexuality and personal habits, questioners are risking their self-image to the public (Locher, 2006).

Although the identities of the questioners are kept anonymous, they are still putting themselves on display and judgment from Thelma and the public readers. Thus, when the self-image that they try to portray and maintain might or might not be supported by others, the questioners are positioned in a very vulnerable place that could damage their self-image and embarrass them (Goffman, 1967). Furthermore, the feeling of vulnerability could be further intensified as the inability to solve problems to the extent where they require help from a stranger indicate the questioners' incompetence (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991; Locher, 2006). Perhaps, this is the reason Thelma tries to cater to the questioners' positive face by illustrating her friendliness, compassion and sincerity via the use of imperative. In some cultures like the Chinese, Indonesian, Russian, Kinnauri and Polish, directness indicates friendliness and sincerity (Lee-Wong, 1994; Hassall, 1999; Saxena, 2002; Skewis, 2003; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Larina, 2008). By building rapport and enhancing solidarity, Thelma familiarizes herself to the questioners which reduce the social distance between them, thus saving their faces. This finding is similar to Larina (2008) who found that a Russian speaker demonstrates acts of goodwill and friendliness by giving direct advice to everyone including strangers whether it is solicited or unsolicited.

While creating distance among strangers in the English culture is perceived as showing respect for a person's autonomy, cultures like Polish, Indonesian, Arab, Chinese and Russian view it as hostile, alienating and indifferent as it isolates the interlocutors (Lee-Wong, 1994; Hassall, 1999; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Locher, 2006; Larina, 2008). Thus, by applying the positive politeness strategy via direct imperatives (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987), Thelma avoids appearing as an arrogant, knowledgeable authority.

Alternately, the use of imperatives might also establish that Thelma possesses more power than the questioners. This is because studies of the English societies by Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Vine (2001) demonstrate that superiors usually use imperatives when addressing their subordinates in many situations including the workplace. Likewise, Lee-Wong (1994) and Skewis (2003) found that the Chinese society defines power by *age* and *status* where the increase in power results in the increase of the direct bald-on record form (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Lee-Wong, 1994; Skewis, 2003).

In Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based theory view, Thelma's regularity of imperative occurrence indicates the appropriacy of the structure in the advice texts. This is because, the



regularity of the structure is well accepted by the questioners and other readers. In interaction, people tend to use commonly applied structures because the regularity of the structures demonstrates its politeness and appropriacy. Nobody would want to use unusual structures in usual circumstances as the marked form could be polite or impolite. Therefore, the high application of imperatives in the advice texts shows that imperative is actually a polite, appropriate and acceptable structure that can be used in the advice texts without being regarded as less polite or impolite (Terkourafi, 2005). This is confirmed by Ng (2008) who found that direct forms of directives are preferred in two English movies without being regarded as impolite.

#### **4.6.1.1 Positive Imperative (PIM)**

As illustrated in Table 6 (page 82), PIM is the imperative structure used most frequently in the advice texts. The structure of PIMs consists of positive verbs. Some reasons that might contribute to the high employment of PIMs are: a) the positive form verbs indicate optimism that the advice might help solve the problems, b) the direct and straightforward structure ensures the clarity of meaning which helps to avoid misunderstanding, c) the positive verb form with direct imperative indicates the intensity of the advice and the extent of Thelma's sincerity and confidence.

Based on the finding, it can be seen that Thelma portrayed herself as an expert who is caring, genuine and trustworthy as people keep writing to her for advice despite the frequent use of the highly coercive, face-threatening direct imperative structures. This justifies previous findings that people tend to open up to those whom they trust (Hendley, 1977; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991; Locher, 2006). Thus, the questioners who write about their deep dark secrets and personal problems are confident in Thelma's expertise and capability to help them. The *Dear Thelma* advice column has attracted the questioners to talk about taboo issues such as affairs, marital problems and self-identities (homosexuality). Apart from the level of confidence for Thelma's faith, it also illustrates the Malaysian's ability to adapt to the dynamic social issues to be able to reveal and discuss highly personal problems in public. Examples of PIM are as follows:

### Example 11:

#### 13 June 2010: Leave the sham behind (Appendix N)

- S18     So you believe that perhaps it's all your fault that he cannot love you?  
S19     He will never change.  
**S20     Accept that he had stopped loving you.**  
S21     It is painful; it is a huge blow to your pride and esteem.  
S22     But you will live, and live better if you have the will, courage and determination to beat the odds.  
**S23     Get a divorce.**  
**S24     Do this for your children, for yourself.**  
**S25     Fill your home with joy, laughter and hope so that your children do not grow up repressed and suppressed.**  
**S26     Fight for them and for yourself.**

Example 11 demonstrates PIM (in bold) used in an advice text to address the problem of a wife whose husband is having an affair that threatens to break their family apart. The questioner's husband wants to marry the other woman and threatens to divorce the wife if she does not accept it. Although she is not afraid of getting divorced, she is worried that the divorce might affect her children's well-being.

The first PIM in line S20 directly asks the wife to accept that her husband does not love her anymore. Line S20 is preceded by lines S18 and S19 that pinpoint the source of the problem, i.e. the husband. Line S18 that is an interrogative form serves to tell the wife that she is not at fault because it is her husband who initiates the affair. Therefore, it indirectly tries to convey that the wife should not blame herself although the husband holds her responsible for his affair. Meanwhile, S19 is a general statement in the declarative structure that explains the husband's weakness. Both indirect forms in lines S18 and S19 function to create an opportunity for Thelma to give a direct PIM advice in line S20. Lines S18 and S19 can also be viewed as a justification for the direct advice S20. Since they appear before the PIM in S20, they can be categorised as a pre-sequence to soften the impact of the direct PIM.

Then, lines S21 and S22 are Thelma's attempt to create rapport with the questioner by demonstrating that she understands the pain that the wife will endure when the reality of losing her husband hits her. But Thelma comforts the questioner by persuading her to live a better life with her children. These two lines (S21 and S22) are proofs of Thelma's compassion, optimism and care for the questioner's well-being that could help create solidarity with the questioner. This is substantiated by Kawashima (2005) where sister-like

relationship is formed between the writers and readers of an Australian magazine due to the solidarity created via the written texts.

Next, the PIM structures that appear from lines S23 to S26 can be seen as *control acts* for the action to be taken at a fast pace. *Control act* is when an imperative is used to manage specific required actions from the addressee (Ervin-Tripp, 1977:184; Georgalidou, 2008). It can be also termed NOW-directive to illustrate the importance of the action to be done immediately (Vine, 2009). This set of control acts (lines S23 to S26) demonstrate Thelma's belief that the immediate action must be taken for the wife and children's benefit. Although the PIM in line S23 is short and concise, it possesses a huge impact because Thelma is advising the wife to do the one thing that she fears the most that is to get a divorce from her husband. The force of the PIM is strong and directly discusses the taboo topic of divorce. However, Thelma quickly follows up the strong advice with other PIMs that justify line S23 as the PIMs in lines S24 to S25 suggest that the divorce would give the children happier lives instead of being depressed due to their parents' marital problem. Line S26 then encourages the wife to do what is right for herself and her children.

These lines (S24 to S26) again show Thelma's attempt to portray herself as compassionate, understanding and caring for the well being of the questioner and her children which is achieved via her frequent reference to them. Thelma shows her maternal side where the happiness of the children is always prioritized in any situation. In line S23, Thelma is so bold in suggesting a divorce, although the questioner explicitly states that she is afraid of it. This shows that as a concerned, close friend, Thelma tries to be truthful and sincere in her advice as she wants the best for the questioner and her children despite the trickiness of the situation. This confirms Larina (2005) and Krolak and Rudnicka's (2006) findings that direct imperative indicates genuineness and sincerity as in the Russian and Polish societies.

Due to her high level of confidence of the advice which is indicated via the frequent use of PIM (lines S20, S23 S24, S25, S26), Thelma manages to present herself as a knowledgeable, objective, professional advice-givers who can rationalize her suggestions. Her ability to give valid, justified advice qualifies her as a powerful authority that permits her frequent application of direct imperatives without being regarded as impolite (Lee-Wong, 1994; Locher, 2006; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Georgalidou, 2008; Larina, 2008). Despite the existence of the inequality of power status, the social gap between Thelma and the questioners could be significantly reduced via Thelma's attempt to create good rapport and

solidarity through PIM. The sincerity and truthfulness in the advice which is accompanied by comforting, encouraging words show Thelma's comprehension of the tough situation as women. Therefore, in this example, Thelma practices more positive politeness strategies in her advice.

Apart from sincerity, imperatives also demonstrate *spontaneity*. *Spontaneity* and sincerity are very important factors that determine the degree of (im)politeness in the Polish society (Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006). *Spontaneity* is polite as it illustrates the speaker's genuine response to the propositions made via impulsiveness. As the speech is spontaneous, it is usually constructed in the direct form of imperatives. Thus, in the advice texts, the imperatives could indicate Thelma's impulsive response when responding to the problem letters. Similarly, the Russian society used imperatives to create solidarity with each other. This permits them to be genuine and frank in their interaction as their main concern is the other person's well-being which can be immediately achieved via explicitness rather than non-explicitness (Yule, 1996; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Larina, 2008). Example 12 shows the element of spontaneity present in the advice texts.

### **Example 12:**

#### **27 June 2010: Friends turned foe (Appendix R)**

- S1      Take a break from each other.**
- S2      Cool off and, hopefully, you can patch things up in time.**
- S3      Forget guilt and stop worrying about what others may think.**
- S4      It's a cat fight between two women and it's forgivable, so sleep on it.
- S5      It all started out with high expectations as you truly believed that this woman was your perfect BFF.
- S6      You gave more than she asked but you got upset when she seemed to take you for granted.
- S7      You felt betrayed, angry and used.
- S8      You felt such a fool for believing that she's the best friend you have ever had.
- S9      Do not be so idealistic or be too possessive and intense.
- S10     Your friend has a life of her own, whether at work or play.
- S11     Sharing an apartment does not mean spending all your available time together.
- S12     It should be a carefree arrangement, without obligations or expectations.
- S13     A friend is not a companion.
- S14     She can be a shoulder to cry on, a confidant when you need sympathy and empathy.
- S15     But do not expect her to be there for you at all times.
- S16     It's time you explore deeper relationships.
- S17     You need more than friendship when you feel lonely and repressed.
- S18     Getting so emotional and uptight over this situation could mean you really need someone to share your life with.

- S19 Think of marriage, children, and a home of your own.**  
 S20 Having someone to love and being loved could help ease your loneliness and the desperate need for someone closer and dear.  
**S21 Call your girlfriend or e-mail her when you are emotionally less strung.**  
**S22 Have drinks, relax and have a good laugh over the past.**  
 S23 You are not enemies as you have not done anything to deliberately hurt each other.  
 S24 Good friends should forgive and forget.  
**S25 Move on and do not allow this incident to dampen your love for the people you care about.**

Example 12 shows the PIM used in an advice text that discusses the issue of friendship where a female questioner is upset that her best friends neglects her after she makes more new friends. The questioner then wrote to Thelma to ask for her advice on the matter.

The first three lines (S1 to S3) of the advice text are constructed with PIM. This shows Thelma's spontaneity as she does not hesitate or sugar-coat her advice to the questioner. In a way, the three lines can be viewed as Thelma's genuine feeling about the issue and her ideological belief on the matter. Thus, Thelma illustrates herself as a sincere friend who wants to help the questioner as she attempts to create solidarity between them. By being friends, Thelma's forthcoming advice could be easier accepted by the questioner. Other PIMs that construct the advice text are in lines S19, S21, S22 and S25.

Based on the frame-based view, the high regularity of PIM in the advice texts proves that in the context of *Dear Thelma* advice column, directness is the appropriate and polite norm to be used in interactions between Thelma and the questioners. This finding shares some similarities and differences with the English culture as socially distance interlocutors are usually indifferent and indirect in their speeches. However, since Thelma is trying to build trust, rapport and solidarity with the questioners, the social gap is reduced which allows the use of directness and genuine negative descriptions such as *desperate* and *lonely* (see Example 12, line S20). In paving ways for PIMs, the indirect structures such as interrogatives, imbedded forms and hints serve as pre-sequences and grounders that justify the PIMs. These structures indicate some extent of deferent act and negative politeness to protect the questioners' negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996; Harrison and Barlow, 2009).

#### 4.6.1.2 Negative Imperative (NIM)

Although NIM is the second highest imperative form applied in the advice texts, it is only used half the PIM frequency with 9.5 percentage. This might be due to the following reasons: a) the use of negative verb form indicates prohibition which is highly face-threatening as it impedes the addressee's freedom (Ruhi, 1999), b) it exudes Thelma's power status and authoritativeness and stresses the inequality of power between her and the questioners and c) the negative verb form that impedes addressee's freedom gives negative effect to the meaning of advice in total. These are probably the reasons that NIM is used only when necessary in the advice texts. Example 13 illustrates some of the NIMs found in an advice text.

#### Example 13:

##### 11 July 2010: Cougar on the prowl (Appendix U)

- S1 Your marriage is in jeopardy if you cannot stop thinking and fantasising about another man.
- S2 You are flirting with danger and you know it
- S3 Do not kid yourself that you are in control**
- S4 The moment your colleague gives you the slightest hint of encouragement, you will go all the way emotionally and sexually.
- S5 You seem a woman in heat and there will be no stopping your passion if you ever have the opportunity.
- S6 Talking about this man with your husband is a mental game plan
- S7 You are paving the way for a rendezvous, allowing your colleague into your lives slyly
- S8 Stop short and challenge your feelings**
- S9 You are aware of how much you have to lose should you persist with your foolishness
- S10 The guy senses your sexual overtures; he is flattered but knows it will be a mistake to have an office affair.
- S11 But he is a hot-blooded male who will not be able to resist a sexy, hot and ready woman.
- S12 The more you spend time together, the greater the temptation
- S13 You love your husband and children
- S14 However, you may be bored after 10 years of marriage that has become routine and predictable
- S15 Have romance and passion waned in your marriage?
- S16 Do you feel physically and emotionally unfulfilled?
- S17 If sex has become a chore and conversation dull between you and your husband, then you need to do something to rekindle the excitement and passion
- S18 Instead of seeking thrills and sexual gratification with another man, re-ignite your relationship with your husband.

- S19 Plan dates with your man, steal kisses and tantalises him with caresses.
- S20 Play out your fantasies with him
- S21 Surprise him with your lust as no man can resist a woman who finds him sexually appealing
- S22 Spend time with him away from the kids so that you do not feel so burdened and pressured by family daily crisis.
- S23 Stop flirting with your colleague and avoid him unless you have to work together**
- S24 Send out a clear message that you are no longer interested.
- S25 Be professional and cool
- S26 Remember that he has tried to warn you that he is reluctant to be involved with a married woman.
- S27 Do not embarrass yourself as you are his senior at work**
- S28 You do not need office gossip if you want a sound, unblemished career
- S29 You also need to rediscover love, have time to talk and communicate with the man you chose to marry for a life together.
- S30 Do not risk love, marriage and family for a moment of weakness.**

In Example 13, Thelma is advising a female questioner who harbours feelings for her younger male colleague even though she has a loving husband and children. The questioner gets jealous when the male colleague gets closer to other female colleagues. The male colleague once told the questioner randomly that a psychic friend said he attracts married women which makes him uncomfortable. However, the male colleague made no attempt to avoid the questioner at the workplace which causes her to believe that he might also has some feelings for her. Out of guilt to her husband, the questioner tries to stop her feelings for the male colleague, but is in vain. She said that her marriage and work are stable at the moment as she can still control her feelings for the younger man. Therefore, the questioner writes to ask for Thelma's advice to stop her feelings for the male colleague.

There are only five NIMs out of the 30 sentences in the advice texts. These NIMs are divided into two types: the base verb form *do+not* (lines S3, S27 and S30) and negative form verb (lines S8 and S23) (Eken, 1996). When used in the base form *do+not*, the NIM plays the specific function of prohibition as it impedes the questioner's freedom from doing certain actions (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Yule, 1996; Ruhi, 1999). According to Ervin-Tripp (1976), prohibition is a peripheral form of directives. Before telling the questioner to stop pretending in line S3, Thelma explicitly argues that the questioner's marriage will be jeopardized if she continues to harbour feelings for her male colleague (lines S1 and S2). So, the lines S1 and S2 are strong hints that provides an opportunity for Thelma to write an explicit NIM (line S3) where the questioner is strongly suggested to stop thinking that she is

in control of her feelings when in reality she will immediately crumble should the male colleague give her some encouragement.

In another perspective, S3 is a form of sarcasm that Thelma uses to convey her meaning of disbelief to the questioner. The word *kid* which usually implies light, positive meaning, sounds sarcastic when combined with the prohibition *do not*. The sarcasm in line S3 could indicate the questioner's immaturity. As the feelings could lead to an affair and destroy the questioner's marriage and career, lines S1 to S5 justify Thelma's advice and prohibition. So, as the restriction of the questioner's option and freedom threatens the negative face (Rui, 1999), sarcasm is used when impolite meaning of a structure is conveyed via an indirect form to downtone the illocutionary force. Sarcasm is discussed in more details in Section 4.9.2.

The second NIM with *do not* appears in line S27 where it is followed by the word *embarrass* which usually brings negative connotation. The impact of the prohibition *do not* that is used together with the lexical *embarrass* demonstrates the seriousness of the advice. This is because embarrassment is always related to humiliation that might threaten a person's negative face (Goffman, 1967). Therefore, nobody wants to suffer the humiliation of being embarrassed especially the questioner whose reputation as a senior at the workplace might be tarnished due to her fling. The message is very direct and clear which simultaneously helps to highlight the danger of the fling and to show Thelma's sincerity in helping the questioner. Immediately following the serious warning and prohibition in line S27, line S28 which is a YND imperative justifies the advice and downtones the strong illocutionary force of S27 as it encourages the questioner to keep her reputation as a career woman intact. YND gives a strong yet mitigated command to the questioner. This is observed as the prohibition verb *do not* is used alongside the lexical verb *need* that is derived from the need statement. The YND structure is strong in its force as at times, a need statement is more forceful than an imperative (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Since line S28 is written with elements from both structures, the illocutionary force is higher. However, this force is mitigated via the *if-statement* that justifies the command in the second phrase of the structure.

Following line S28, line S29 is also a directive with the lexical verb *need*. But instead of prohibiting, line S29 uses a more positive tone of encouragement via the YPD structure. Line S29 suggests that the questioner spends some time with her loving husband. The lexical verb *need* indicates the importance of this advice as it exudes strong illocutionary force (Ervin-Tripp, 1976).



Finally, in line S30, the NIM with *do not* form ends the text with another prohibition and warning to remind the questioner from letting her short-lived fling destroy her family. The more positive tone in line S29 can be seen as making way for Thelma to give a more direct, serious advice as a reminder to the questioner. It also functions to prepare the questioner for the forthcoming advice. As line S30 adopts a more serious tone, it threatens the questioner's negative face. However, the strong advice is needed to conclude the advice text as it illustrates Thelma's principle and belief in the matter.

As observed in Example 13, the YND structures initiated with *do not* are written directly for the questioner's benefit. This is evident via the pre-sequence and justification that comes before or after each prohibition. Apart from softening the force of the directives, the pre-sequence and justification demonstrate Thelma's concern for the questioner and her family as the advices centre on the questioner and her career, her husband and her children. Therefore, as similar to PIM, NIM also functions to create good rapport and close the distance with the questioner because, as a friend, Thelma wishes the best for the questioner and her family. This strategy helps cater to the questioner's positive face as the advices given by Thelma indicates a concerned, close friend rather than a stranger (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996; Harrison and Barlow, 2009).

Besides NIM with the *do not* structure, Example 13 also illustrates NIM that is initiated with a negative verb form to convey the message. This NIM structure frequently appears in Weigel and Weigel's (1985) study of directives among black immigrant agriculture community. In the advice text above, the verb *stop* is used twice in lines S8 and S23 to show the force of Thelma's advice. Line S8 is preceded by lines S6 and S7 which serve as pre-sequences that pave way for Thelma's NIM advice in line S8. Thus, the pre-sequence plays dual function where it introduces the point that Thelma wishes to discuss and consequently downtones the impact of the direct NIM. This is to cater to the questioner's negative face because the NIMs used in the advice text generally impede the questioner's freedom and privacy. Thus, by softening it with pre-sequences and grounders, the degree of imposition of the advices might be reduced, thus influence the questioner to take it (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996; Skewis, 2003).

Another NIM with negative verb *stop* in line S23 serves as a control act where the questioner is directly told to avoid her male colleague if possible. The structure shows Thelma's attempts to control the questioner's action. The lines S24, S25 and S26 further

intensify the message in line S23 via the more positive PIM commands. The intensity of the advice indicates Thelma's confidence in the advice and her concern for the questioner and her family. The positive PIMs used amongst NIMs shows Thelma's effort to balance the optimism with the prohibitive warnings. Thus, she portrays herself as an encouraging friend rather than a dictator of the questioner's life. This finding is substantiated by Kawashima (2005) who discovered that while the Australian magazine adopts the friendly and cheerful sister-like tone in its text, the Japanese magazine used more teacher-student tone when interacting with their readers.

The PIM structures found in Example 13 are in lines S19, S20, S21 and S22. These structures precede line S23 and describe the things that might improve the questioner's marriage. The lines before and after S23 illustrate the difference between the husband and the male colleague. This difference is a repetition of the advice in line S8 where Thelma asks the questioner to measure her love for each man. By listing the wonderful things that the questioner can do with her husband and simultaneously commanding the questioner to stop flirting with her male colleague, Thelma shows the contradiction between the two men; one that should be loved and one that must be forgotten immediately. The repetition of advice in lines S8 and S23 proves its importance and Thelma's degree of confidence that the actions will solve the questioner's problem.

Apart from *stop*, other verbs that are categorised as NIMs are *warn* and *forget* (Weigel and Weigel, 1985). An example of NIM with the verb *warn* is shown in Example 14 below.

**Example 14:**

**11 July 2010: Dirty Old Man (Appendix T)**

S14 But warn him that should he betray your love and trust, you will be less forgiving.

### 4.6.1.3 You Positive Directive (YPD) and You Negative Directive (YND)

YPD and YND are the third and the least frequent imperative strategies applied by Thelma in the advice texts (refer Table 6, page 82). These two strategies might be used less frequently as being compared to PIM and NIM because *you* imperative carries a very confrontational tone and should be avoided if possible (Reader's Digest, April 2010: 36). The confrontational tone could be interpreted wrongly by the questioners which might lead to rejection of the whole advice. Therefore, it is suggested that the questioner uses the collective plural *we* to convey the intended message as it downtones the authoritativeness of the imperative (Reader's Digest, April 2010: 36). This is similarly found in studies of the Greek and Polish societies where the plural personal pronoun used softens the illocutionary force of an imperative utterance (Georgalidou 2008; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006). In Georgalidou's (2005) study, the Greek children used plural pronoun *we* to soften the illocutionary force of imperative when making request to their teacher. Examples of YPD and YND are as follow:

#### Example 15: YPD

##### 14 February 2010: Find her and confess (Appendix D)

S4 : You need to talk to her, or forget about her.

##### 13 June 2010: The other woman (Appendix M)

S11 : You will have to decide if you can live with another of your children or have a place of your own.

##### 27 June 2010: Caught in family mess (Appendix Q)

S3 : Frankly, you should stop considering moving back with your siblings.

##### 18 July 2010: Sister showing off her selfish side (Appendix V)

S3 : Perhaps you could also talk to your sister with other family members.

##### 18 July 2010: Romanticising Love (Appendix W)

S5 : You must also learn to read your man.

##### 25 July 2010: Naïve but a good catch (Appendix Y)

S10 : Perhaps you should simply be yourself and not play a role to try to attract the ladies.

## **Example 16: YND**

### **14 March 2010: Choked by apron strings (Appendix E)**

S18 : You must not accept that the rest of lives must be spent by your mother's side.

S21 : You must not feel guilty about wanting a life without your mother.

### **18 April 2010: Find out the truth (Appendix I)**

S2 : You do not really want to leave your men.

### **4 July 2010: Weighing options of two guys (Appendix S)**

S8: You cannot really measure if you love more or less.

### **25 July 2010: Naïve but a good catch (Appendix Y)**

S6 : You should not be bashful about picking one since you are not a secret.

Examples 15 and 16 above show the variety of YPD and YND forms used by Thelma in the advice texts. YND and YPD differ from each other as the modal verb in YND is followed by *not* to construct the negative form. Although the application of YPD and YND forms is not regular in the advice texts, the confrontational tone might be too imposing for the questioner when they are used. This is probably the reason that the YPD and YND structures include a lot of modal auxiliary verbs as hedges to soften the imperative. According to Perkins *et.al* (1983:9), hedges are realised through the use of epistemic modality which convey possibility or necessity. The modality used in speeches also conveys speaker's attitudes, opinions and personal involvement on matter (Palmer, 1986; Leung. 2009).

For both YPD and YND structures, the modal verb *should* is used most frequently by Thelma in giving advice to the questioners. In an advice text *Naïve but a good catch* (Appendix W), the YPD in line S10 uses *should* to advise a man who is unsure of the reason he was being dumped by all his girlfriends even though he is a nice, stable and decent guy. The modal *should* in line S10 is observed to play dual functions simultaneously where it lowers the confrontational tone of the imperative and demonstrates the man's obligation to solve his problem. As reasoned by Thelma, the questioner is obliged to show his actual self to the girls and be truthful to his feelings to solve his problem. The confrontational tone in the YPD structure is further mitigated via the probability adverb *perhaps* that indicates Thelma's uncertainty. The uncertainty in Thelma's advice acts as an indicator that although she is an

expert, she does not have the control over the questioner's life. Huddleston (2009) confirmed that the modal *should* is used to show the extent of responsibility of a person.

Other than uncertainty, the modal verb *should* indicates probability of a situation. So, in giving advice, Thelma writes based on the fact known to her as described by the questioners. Leung (2009) found that in his study of hedges used by the former Hong Kong financial secretary, the modal *should* is used when the speaker is uncertain about some facts. In writing the advice texts, Thelma is permitted to be misguided in her advice that depends solely on the situation described to her and the way she interprets the facts known to her. It is observed in line S3 that Thelma feels the questioner fails to describe his full predicament in details which leaves the narrative with many gaps. However, as a professional expert, Thelma still gives lines of advice to the questioner based on the situations described to her. Leung (2009) confirms that *should* is used based on the probability of a situation.

In addition to the modal *should*, the modal *must* is also regularly applied in YPD and YND structures. The modal *must* has the strongest force out of all the modal verbs (Coates, 1983). Thus, instead of mitigating the advice, *must* intensifies it. In the advice texts, *Romanticising love* (Appendix W) and *Choked by apron strings* (Appendix E), Thelma chooses *must* and *must not* to demonstrate her strong belief and confidence in the advice. Leung (2009) stated that *must* is used more frequently in written rather than spoken text which explains the regular occurrence of *must* in the advice texts.

In *Romanticising love* (Appendix W), a young female student writes to Thelma to complain about her boyfriend who neglects her as he has to work hard to support his family. Due to her boyfriend's lack of commitment, the questioner thinks that he might be cheating on her. In line S5, Thelma uses the modal *must* to strongly suggest that the girl understand her boyfriend better as Thelma believes that it is the right thing to do (Coates, 1983; Leung, 2009). In Thelma's view, the questioner has to understand the boyfriend's responsibility towards his family but at the same time checks him up to ensure his loyalty to her. However, in lines S9 and S10, Thelma states her main belief that the questioner should focus on her study and not let her love life leave her miserable and depressed. These advice are intensely justified in lines S11 to S16 as Thelma pinpoints that blind love is risky (refer to Appendix W: Romanticising Love below). Again, it is observed that Thelma's advice goes beyond the questioner's real problem as rather than merely advising the questioner on her relationship issue, Thelma's goes the extra length to advise the questioner on her study and career for her future benefits.

**18 July 2010: Romanticising Love (Appendix W)**

- S1 You are still a child who expects love to be sweet, wonderful and perfect.
- S2 While you revolve around love, your fellow has to take care of his family.
- S3 Do not take this relationship so seriously.
- S4 Although you have shared every intimacy, you are also emotionally immature.
- S5 You must also learn to read your man.
- S6 If he is cool and rarely texts you now, then something is not quite right.
- S7 However, check him out.
- S8 If he is really bothered by responsibilities at home, then be more understanding of his moods and time.
- S9 In the mean time, you need to think of your studies and your future.
- S10 Can you afford to throw away your career for this man?
- S11 If this relationship can break you into pieces and leave you crying, dying and helpless, then does this mean you will not be able to deal with losing this guy?
- S12 Anyone can suffer a failed relationship and heal.
- S13 You are young and untried.
- S14 Sure, love seems the only thing to live for right now but when you are more in control of your own feelings, you will be able to handle the trials and tribulations better.
- S15 Yes, love hurts especially when he is your first.
- S16 But if you allow this relationship to make you miserable and depressed, then it's not love at all.

As opposed to the YPD example above, the YND structures are used in the advice text *Choked by apron string* (Appendix E). The questioner is a 40-year-old woman who is not married and still lives with her mother. Although she loves her mother, she feels trapped because the mother controls everything she does including prohibiting her and her younger brother from getting married as the mother suffered a bad marriage before (refer Appendix E below).

## 14 March 2010: Choked by Apron String (Appendix E)

### Problem Text

- P1 I am a 40-year-old single woman with a good career and wonderful life.  
P2 Recently, I was told by a male friend that he was interested in me a few years back but never asked me out  
P3 He decided not to pursue me after realising I always referred to my mother for everything, even when it came to going out dinner with my colleagues.  
P4 He is now married  
P5 He told me this because he invited me to his son's first birthday and the first thing I said was, "I'll see if my mum wants to go".  
P6 Also, recently, my brother who is 32 and single confided that he had met a great woman and started dating her.  
P7 It ended when our mum, upset that her son frequently had dinner and spent weekends outside the home, went to the woman's office and berated her for keeping her son out so much.  
P8 Although she had never gone to such an extent previously, the few times either of us had some form of life outside the home was always feel with "peril".  
P9 My brother decided to end the relationship for the sake of not hurting the woman.  
P10 He also did not want to embarrass our mum and himself, but mother is convinced he did it because, he finally came to his senses.  
P11 For years we have tried talking to her but she either denies controlling us or sidesteps the issue  
P12 When I shared with her what my male friend told me, she said it's okay to be single  
P13 Better to not get married than to have a bad marriage like hers, and we must concentrate on our careers  
P14 Don't get us wrong—we love our mum to bits and we know she worries that our love for her might diminish in tandem with our growing love for that someone special.  
P15 My brother and I grimly joke about seeing who will enter an asylum first  
P16 I am still getting mum's approval to go out with friends at this age!

*Give up*

### Advice Text (refer page 128)

S1 Your mother's love is overwhelming, suffocating and overbearing  
 S2 She may appear to be the best mother in the world for all her sacrifices, but in holding your freedom to love, to find companionship and a future with families of your own, she is being selfish and obsessive  
 S3 Her possessiveness is not healthy  
 S4 Berating your brother's girlfriend at her office was absolutely unreasonable and out of bounds.  
 S5 That your brother had given up the relationship to appease your mother showed how much control she has over him.  
 S6 And not going out without seeking mum's approval is simply proves her power over you.  
 S7 Frankly, you and your brother are deluding yourselves.  
 S8 You are both terrified of going against her wishes because of her ability to make you feel bad.  
 S9 In your mind, mum does know best so you will never do anything without her blessing or consent  
 S10 In mum's mind, the two of you are her babies to protect and to keep safe.  
 S11 She doesn't want to let you go because she thinks that she is nothing without her children.  
 S12 She suffered a bad marriage and is stopping you from getting into any relationships.  
 S13 She believes that she is keeping you from grief and pain  
 S14 Sadly, she does not realize that she is wrong to hold you back from living.  
 S15 Two puppets on strings, you are being manipulated and strung along by mother's love.  
 S16 There is horror in the truth and you must do something about it  
 S17 Talk to your brother  
 S18 You must not accept that the rest of lives must be spent by your mother's side.  
 S19 Your mother will pass on one day  
 S20 What will happen then?  
 S21 You must not feel guilty about wanting a life without your mother.  
 S22 You and your brother are wonderful, filial children.  
 S23 Your mother knows how blessed she is but she does not understand that her will is destructive and damaging.  
 S24 You two have been doing the best for mum.  
 S25 Now it's time to do your best for yourselves.  
 S1 Your mother's love is overwhelming, suffocating and overbearing  
 S2 She may appear to be the best mother in the world for all her sacrifices, but in holding your freedom to love, to find companionship and a future with families of your own, she is being selfish and obsessive  
 S3 Her possessiveness is not healthy  
 S4 Berating your brother's girlfriend at her office was absolutely unreasonable and out of bounds.  
 S5 That your brother had given up the relationship to appease your mother showed how much control she has over him.  
 S6 And not going out without seeking mum's approval is simply proves her power over you.  
 S7 Frankly, you and your brother are deluding yourselves.  
 S8 You are both terrified of going against her wishes because of her ability to make you feel bad.  
 S9 In your mind, mum does know best so you will never do anything without her blessing or consent  
 S10 In mum's mind, the two of you are her babies to protect and to keep safe.  
 S11 She doesn't want to let you go because she thinks that she is nothing without her children.  
 S12 She suffered a bad marriage and is stopping you from getting into any relationships.  
 S13 She believes that she is keeping you from grief and pain  
 S14 Sadly, she does not realize that she is wrong to hold you back from living.  
 S15 Two puppets on strings, you are being manipulated and strung along by mother's love.  
 S16 There is horror in the truth and you must do something about it  
 S17 Talk to your brother  
 S18 You must not accept that the rest of lives must be spent by your mother's side.  
 S19 Your mother will pass on one day  
 S20 What will happen then?  
 S21 You must not feel guilty about wanting a life without your mother.  
 S22 You and your brother are wonderful, filial children.  
 S23 Your mother knows how blessed she is but she does not understand that her will is destructive and damaging.  
 S24 You two have been doing the best for mum.  
 S25 Now it's time to do your best for yourselves.



An interesting observation in the problem text is that the questioner ends her letter with a declarative sentence, “*P16: I am still getting mum’s approval to go out with friends at this age!*” rather than with a specific request in the interrogative or imperative form like other problem letters. Thus, the questioner seems to be describing her predicament rather than consulting advice from Thelma. However, the fact that she submits her letters to the *Dear Thelma* advice column indicates that she implicitly wants to get some advice for her problem. Her request is very indirect and is written using hint. This might be done to be the least forceful and to maintain her face if Thelma chooses not to reply her letter or does not support her argument. The questioner also drafts her letters in a very light, cheerful tone which is probably to protect herself from humiliation as her inability to solve the problem could imply her incompetence despite her status as a career woman. The lack of an explicit request in the problem letter could also indicate that the questioner is not requesting for advice to solve her problem, but for merely some support and encouragement from Thelma.

In response to the problem letter, the first 16 lines of the advice texts (lines S1 to S16) are written in equally indirect way as the request in the problem text. The advices in lines S1 to S16 break the problem into smaller pieces to explain the reality of the situation to the questioner. These indirect structures act as pre-sequences and justifications for a more direct PIM in line S17 and the confrontational YND (line S18) with the powerful modal verb *must not*. The YND is used to urge the questioner to have a life of her own instead of being tied down to her mother. The forceful modal verb *must* demonstrates Thelma’s confidence that the action is the right thing to do. Although *must* is highly imposing, it emphasizes the degree of truth of the advice. Lines S19 and S20 introduce a new point which is the mother’s demise in declarative and interrogative forms. These indirect structures provide Thelma with the opportunity for another YND with the modal verb *must not* in line S21 to forbid the questioner from feeling guilty if she wishes for a family of her own. The lines S19 and S20 justify the YND in line S21 as the questioner needs someone as her companion should her mother pass away. Thus, the modal verb *must not* in the line S21 of the YND structure also encourages the questioner to build a family of her own rather than just caring for the mother.

Thelma’s confidence and encouragement are probably what the questioner is searching for when she writes her problem. Perhaps, the questioner needs someone to confirm and encourage the decision that she has made. Therefore, rather than giving advice, Thelma’s role as an advice-giver includes confirming the questioner’s decision, supporting her dream and encouraging her to take the right actions to solve her problem as similarly observed by Ho (2009).

Other modal verbs found in the YPD and YND structures to convey Thelma's intended meaning and soften the illocutionary force of the imperatives are *will*, *can* and *could*. The modal *will* is usually used by Thelma to mark the future tense or predictability of the future (Coates, 1983). In the advice text *The other woman* (refer to Appendix M below) of Example 15, the modal *will* employed in the sentence implies Thelma's uncertainty of the action that the questioner should take in the future (Leung, 2009). This is because Thelma is unsure of the woman's rapport with her other children, so by asking her to move out of the house might be an imposition on her options and freedom. Therefore, *will* implies the future, uncertainty and simultaneously lowers the degree of imposition as the action can be taken at a later time rather than at the spur of the moment.

### **13 June 2010: The other woman (Appendix M)**

#### **Advice text**

- S1      You are a wonderful person who has suffered much in life.
- S2      You have learnt to be considerate and sensitive to the needs of others because you love and care about your family.
- S3      You are trying very hard to be a good mother-in-law (MIL) but, unfortunately, your son's wife does not understand.
- S4      Yours will always be the age-old tale between the in-laws.
- S5      While you have your woes, your daughter-in-law (DIL) has her grouses.
- S6      Your son is caught between the two women he loves.
- S7      So what choice does he have?
- S8      He cannot ask his mother to move out as he is gentle and filial.
- S9      He also cannot divorce his young wife, who is also mother of his child.
- S10     If your daughter-in-law simply does not want you around, there can be no compromise.
- S11     You will have to decide if you can live with another of your children or have a place of your own.
- S12     Sometimes, we take our old folks too much for granted.
- S13     While you have always been helpful and mindful, the DIL does not appreciate your efforts because you are the presence of inconvenience.
- S14     Young people like to have their own space and time together without having to constantly worry about offending the MIL.
- S15     Perhaps you should move out so that they will realise how much you have been contributing to make their lives so comfortable.
- S16     Let them feel your absence in terms of help and financial assistance.
- S17     It's also about time that they learn to take care of themselves without the invisible hand that's been doling out goodwill and care without condition or expectation.
- S18     Let the wicked wife do the housework, care for the child 24/7.
- S19     When she has no extra cash to spend, she will be aware of how kind and generous you have been.
- S20     Perhaps her family should help out now since they have always been the factor in causing the rift.
- S21     Do not hurt too much.
- S22     Allow your son to be the man in his household.

- S23 He will learn to manage wife and finances when necessary.
- S24 DIL will have to learn be a better wife and mother, too.
- S25 We have all walked this path after marriage.
- S26 Trials and tribulation ... we cannot spare them the worse.
- S27 They need to be more responsible and careful people for they are now parents.
- S28 Let them make the mistakes so they can learn.
- S29 You have done your best so have a deserved rest and enjoy life with your hard-earned money.

The modal *can* and *could* are present five times in both YPD and YND advice. Since the modal verb *could* is the past tense of *can*, both carry almost similar functions. In the advice texts, *can* appears in YND structures while *could* appears in YPD structure. Coates (1983) and Leung (2009) asserted that *could* carries the meaning of possibility, permission or ability and uncertainty. These functions of *could* are observed in the advice text, *Sister showing off her selfish side* (Appendix V) in line S3 where Thelma suggests the possibility that the questioner talks to the sister in the presence of other family members. The possibility of this action to be carried out is dependent on the questioner's ability to organize and sit through such meetings. Line S3 also illustrates Thelma's uncertainty of the advice as she does not know the questioner's real predicament apart from what is described to her. Thus, she conveys her advice based on the facts known to her (Leung, 2009). This uncertainty is further justified with the use of possibility adjective *perhaps* that initiates the sentence.

The structures of YPD and YND in the advice texts repeatedly involve the possibility adjective *perhaps* and possibility adverb *really* as commonly found in a study of request mitigation strategy by Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008). *Perhaps* is applied seven times in YPD while *really* is only exclusive to YND and is used four times in the structure. The limited numbers of the possibility adverb in the advice texts confirms Leung's (2009) finding that the modal auxiliaries verbs are used more frequently than the possibility adverbs as hedges in interactions. The possibility adverbs function to hedge the propositions and soften the force of the given advice. For example, *perhaps* used in S10 in *Naïve but a good catch* (Appendix Y) tries to downtone Thelma's assumption that the questioner is a phoney when he meets girls (S10: *Perhaps you should simply be yourself and not play a role to try to attract the ladies.*). So, the use of *perhaps* gives the impression that Thelma is merely guessing the characteristics of the man and is uncertain about of her proposition and advice (Leung, 2009). This softens the impact of the sentence.

Apart from that, the use of *perhaps* is an act of deference as it creates distance between the interlocutors to convey respect for a person's autonomy (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Jones, 1992). In the advice text, the use of hedges caters to the questioner's

negative face and allows Thelma the opportunity to leave the responsibility of making the decision to the questioners. This is because hedges merely imply the *possibility* of doing something. Therefore, by creating distance and conveying uncertainty in the proposition, Thelma disclaims any responsibility or influence over the questioner's decision as she is uncertain of her advice (Locher, 2006). For example, line S3 of the advice text *Sister showing off her selfish side* (Appendix V) illustrates that *perhaps* is used alongside *could*; (S3: *Perhaps, you could also talk to your sister with other family members.*). Since both the lexical hedge and modal auxiliary indicate negative politeness, the combination of both in line S3 marks a high degree of formality, distance and respect for the questioner's freedom, option and privacy (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Jones, 1992; Yule, 1996). As such, the questioner has the liberty to make his own choices and decisions to solve the problem.

The use of lexical hedges and modal verbs also indicate Thelma's degree of involvement in the advice text (Coates, 1983; Leung, 2009). This is evident when the probability adverb *really* is used in line S8 of the advice text *Weighing options of two guys* (Appendix S). *Really* that is used in sentence "S8: *You cannot really measure if you love more or less*" shows Thelma's partial degree of personal involvement in the proposition. This is because, although Thelma argues that love cannot be measured by the things people do for each other, other people might argue otherwise. Thus, it is evident that in such cases where lexical hedges and modal verbs are used, Thelma illustrates her degree of certainty, personal involvement and judgment on the matter (Perkins, 1983; Coates, 1983; Palmer, 1986; Leung, 2009).

In the English culture, the application of modal auxiliary verbs and lexical hedges caters to interlocutors' negative face as they create distance and act of deference that convey respect for individual's autonomy (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1976). In contrast, other cultures such as the Russian, Polish and Greek view modal verbs and lexical hedges as impolite and rude as they imply the speaker's insincerity and the hearer's non-reliability in making and carrying out the proposition (Locher, 2006; Larina, 2008; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Lee-Wong, 1994; Leung, 2009). However, since there are regular occurrences of both the lexical hedges and modal verbs in the advice texts, Thelma is assumed to be following the norms of the English culture in preserving questioners' negative face. This strategy of using lexical hedges and modal verbs provide a balance to the high percentage of forceful direct imperatives used in the advice texts.

## 4.7 NON-CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT DIRECTIVES IN THE ADVICE TEXTS

### 4.7.1 HINTS

Hints in the declarative form construct the highest implicit form in the advice texts. Although hints are generally vague and ambiguous, this study identifies hints based on the illocutionary force of the advice that implicitly leads the questioners to take certain actions which is determined based on the contexts of each advice text. Table 6 (page 82) illustrates that hints dominate the advice text with 25.8 percent. The high frequency of hints might be due to their indirectness that creates less imposing and weak forced advice. This finding justifies the Japanese society's high application of indirect speech in interaction (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999), but contradicts the English and Hebrew speakers limited use of hints as they are vague and less polite (Blum-Kulka, 1987). In the analysis, it is found that hints are used as pre-sequences that precede more direct imperative advices to create opportunities for Thelma to gradually construct her advice from indirect to more direct structures. These pre-sequences also help prepare the questioners for more direct, forthcoming advice. Example 17 illustrates some instances of hints found in an advice text.

#### Example 17:

#### 28 March 2010: You can't have it All (Appendix G)

- S1 How can you hope to make everyone happy when you are not?  
S2 You feel trapped in a miserable marriage but are too afraid to consider divorce  
S3 You fear losing the kids, but the idea of marrying your lover tugs at your heartstrings.  
**S4 Picking out the worst points about your husband will not make you feel better**  
S5 You feel pressured by guilt and shame to hang on to your marriage although you continue to justify your affair  
S6 Surely you would be a happier wife if your husband treated you better?  
S7 And if you had a good marriage, you would not be tempted to have an affair, right?  
S8 Yet you do not really want to lose X because he makes you feel loved, cherished and pampered  
S9 Perhaps if he were not so much younger, you would consider running off with him?  
S10 You are in an unenviable position, but unfortunately you cannot have it all  
**S11 Keeping X in your life will eventually complicate matters should the affair be exposed.**  
S12 You are fully aware that you stand to lose almost all that you have now—children, husband and esteem  
S13 Deep in your heart and mind, you probably worry whether X will really marry you  
S14 An 18-year old age gap may be acceptable to him now but will he see you with

- different eyes as you grow older?
- S15 Instead of getting deeper into the dilemma, think of your marriage and your affair separately.
- S16 Will you divorce your husband if you did not have a lover?
- S17 Although he is hot-tempered and unromantic, he has always been a responsible husband and father.
- S18 His expectations of you as wife and mother are traditional and not unreasonable.
- S19 Perhaps he fails as a husband only because he has always been too busy trying to eke out a living and never has time for you.
- S20 He does not know how to show love or tenderness—perhaps because it is not his nature to do so.
- S21 But in his heart, he probably loves and cares for you.
- S22 You are a lonely wife, who feels emotionally neglected and unappreciated.
- S23 When your husband was away, you were tasked with duties and responsibilities.
- S24 Now that he is back, you feel used, like unpaid labour.
- S25 There is no joy between husband and wife because your man expects you to be subservient, obedient and dutiful.
- S26 In his mind, a wife should be understanding and quietly supportive while you would like him to talk to you, show that he loves and cares about you.
- S27 It is not the perfect marriage.
- S28 The affair is exciting and flattering
- S29 Finally you have found someone who seems truly care about you
- S30 Sex is wonderful because you do not feel used and abused
- S31 And you cannot help but compare because while your husband is taciturn and distant, your lover is sweet, tender and thoughtful.
- S32 He is always sensitive to your needs, thinks of you and wants to marry only you.
- S33 Throwing away the old life may not promise a huge change as relationship always settle into routine or complacency.**
- S34 If you want to do it for yourself, do so.
- S35 But do not regret or blame anyone should you feel disappointed
- S36 There are women who are happier when they have love.
- S37 Some would rather have their children to warm their hearts.
- S38 It's your choice, your decision.**

In Example 17, Thelma is addressing the problem of a 48-year-old wife who has an affair with a man 18 years her junior, X, because she feels that her husband mistreats her while X takes care of her.

Out of the 38 sentences, there is only one imperative structure present. In line S35, the NIM acts as a prohibition and warning to the questioner. Other structures that construct the advice texts are in more indirect forms such as hints (lines S4, S11, S33, and S38), interrogatives (lines S1, S6, S7, S9, S14, and S16) and imbedded forms (lines S15 and S34). The reason that might contribute to the lack of imperative in this advice text is the status and maturity of the questioner. As the questioner is a middle-aged woman, wife and mother,

Thelma might feel the need to be more indirect in her proposition to show respect. The lack of imperative might also be due to the delicateness of the issue presented by the questioner. The questioner has written a long, 52 lines letter to explain her predicament to Thelma. So, from the facts known to her, Thelma probably feels that the affair is justified by the questioner's argument. Thus, instead of directly telling what is right and wrong as observed in other advice texts, Thelma generally sorts through the problems by describing the strengths and weaknesses of both the husband and X without biasness of her personal judgment. Generally, there is no favouritism towards the parties involved in the problem and Thelma dissects the problems into smaller pieces that require the questioner's thorough consideration such as the welfare of the children, the reality of life after a divorce, the possibility of losing her children and the risk that X would not marry her after her divorce.

Four hints (lines S4, S11, S33 and S38) appear in the advice text. Three of the hints (lines S4, S11 and S33) are initiated with the *ing-verb*. The structures are classified as hints rather than imperatives (Eken, 1996) because instead of explicitly commanding the questioner to do something, the structures are written in an implicit manner via declarative to give suggestions. So, the structures strongly resemble hints rather than imperatives. Since the intended meaning of these hints (lines S4, S11 and S33) are not vague and ambiguous, they are classified as strong hints (Skewis, 2003).

Line S4 conveys Thelma's advice that the questioner stops criticising her husband as it does not help erase her guilt. Implicitly, Thelma implies that she understands the questioner's situation and her need to show her husband's fault but Thelma reasons in line S5 that no matter how hard she proves her husband's unworthiness, it is still insufficient to justify her affair with X. This point is followed by the interrogative structures in lines S6, S7 and S9 which probe the questioner's real feelings on the matter. These interrogative structures provide sort of an interaction for the questioner to confirm her feelings. So, these three interrogative lines (S6, S7 and S9) can be viewed as pre-sequences for turn-taking between Thelma and the questioner in the interaction (Georgalidou, 2008).

However, since the text only provides a one-way interaction, the interrogative is rhetorical and functions to clarify the source of the problem and the questioner's true feelings, i.e. her misery of the marriage. The adverbs *surely* and *right* used in the interrogative structures indicate Thelma's confidence and her high degree of involvement in her proposition. Although, lines S6, S7 and S10 seem to indicate the questioner's fault, the

indirectness of the interrogative structures demonstrates Thelma's respect for the questioner's status as a mother and wife (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999).

The indirectness might also be due to the questioner's indirect request in the problem text (refer Appendix G). The requests for advice are constructed using two modal interrogatives and a yes-no question, in lines "S49: *What should/ can I do to make my husband treat me better?* S50: *How can I be fairer to X while keeping my family intact?* S51: *Is there any way to make everyone happy?*" Thus, this finding illustrates that an implicit request is responded in an implicit way.

Another strong hint with similar structure as in line S4 appears in line S11. It is preceded by an imbedded YND form in line S10 where Thelma tells the questioner to choose between her husband and X. Right after this point, S11 is written to lightly warn the questioner that the affair is risky as it could be exposed. Implicitly, Thelma is trying to get the questioner to understand that what she does is wrong but she still has the opportunity to leave X before it is too late. The hint in line S11 is justified by lines S12 to S15 where Thelma reasons that life with X in the future might not be as what the questioner wishes for.

In lines S16 to S27, Thelma intensely sorts out and argues the husband's strengths and weaknesses to make the questioner realize that her husband is not all bad as he is a responsible family man who loves his wife and children. Thus, what seems like an abuse for the questioner could just be the husband's traditional characteristic. Then, Thelma helps the wife see that the reason she feels so alive with X is because both men are different in nature.

Line S16 is written as an interrogative hint that attempts to challenge the wife's principle by suggesting that although she feels unhappy in the marriage, it is the affair that influences her decision because if X is not in the picture, she would never have thought about leaving her husband. The indirect interrogative and the modal *will* attempt to get the questioner to think about the future of her marriage and the same time soften Thelma's challenging tone. They also leave the questioner with the liberty to make her decision.

The third hint that is constructed in the declarative form is in line S33 where Thelma writes that the exciting affair will eventually become a routine. Implicitly, Thelma is probably trying to prevent the questioner from leaving her old life for a new one as the excitement of a new relationship will fizzle once it reaches its peak. Furthermore, a marriage and an affair are different because while a marriage leaves the questioner with a huge



responsibility to her family, an affair does not tie her down, thus giving her freedom and excitement. So, to leave her old life to start a new one with X might not be as thrilling as she hopes it would be. Hence, Thelma is indirectly telling the questioner to rethink her decision very carefully as there is a possibility that X's behaviour might change due to the nature of a long term, routinized relationship and the huge age difference between them.

Line S34 shows Thelma's '*approval*' if the questioner still wishes to leave her husband. However, the second person pronoun *yourself* used in the if-statement and YPD implies the questioner's selfishness if she sticks to her decision as she neglects the children's feelings. Since this is a highly threatening accusation as it indicates the questioner's irresponsibility, it is written indirectly using an imbedded if-statement to lower the illocutionary force of the directives and appear as highly polite. This finding lends support to Georgalidou (2008) and Skewis' (2003) studies where it is found that the Greek children and the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese society used the plural pronoun such as *we* and *them* to appear less coercive in their directives and if-statements as highly formal, politeness marker.

Then, line S35 warns the questioner from blaming anyone but herself if she regrets her decision in the future. This warning is the only direct structure of NIM found in the advice text, thus stressing its importance and high imposition. These threatening structures (lines S34 and S35) are justified by Thelma's explanation of different women's needs in lines S36 and S37. Thelma wants to let the questioner know that her decision to marry X might also bring happiness if she requires love from a man rather than from her children to be happy. However, since a mother is expected to prioritize her children in all situations, lines S36 and S37 might be indirectly urging the questioner not to be selfish in her decision as it involves her children's lives. So, essentially, Thelma is trying to remind the questioner that at the age of about 50, she should be living a happy life with her children and a responsible husband instead of trying to build a new life with a much younger man.

These justifications and indirect advice (lines S36 and S37) are followed by the final hint that appears in the last sentence of the advice text (line S38). The strong hint implies that the questioner has the freedom and responsibility in making her decision. However, the noun *choice* used in the structure urges the questioner to decide wisely as it will influence her life and other people's happiness in the future. Furthermore, Thelma's prior arguments such as the nature of the affair, the responsible husband and the reality of life after marriage illustrate her belief on the matter, i.e. leaving the husband is not the right decision. Therefore, by using

hint in her last sentence, Thelma manages to avoid coerciveness by leaving the decision-making to the questioner and avoid threading on her privacy, thus disclaiming any responsibility should the advice backfires (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999; Locher, 2006).

In addition to preserving the questioner's privacy and autonomy, Thelma still keeps some extent of informality in her tone by balancing the simple and complex sentences in her advice such as observed in lines S31 and S36 (see Example 17). As a friend, Thelma approaches the issue directly by stating her belief as informal hints are used with socially and psychologically close people (Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999). For example, Thelma writes "*S18: His expectations of you as wife and mother are traditional and not unreasonable*" to contradict the questioner's proposition that her husband does not appreciate her and burdens her with responsibilities. Nonetheless, Thelma still respects the questioner's status and personal space as she chooses not to admonish the questioner for her immorality but simply hinted that the questioner cannot justify her guilt by criticizing her husband. Indirectly, it implies that the wife did something wrong to be feeling guilty.

Thelma's hint in line S38 might also suggest that she does not take either the questioner or her husband's side due to the difficulty of the situations to stay objective in sorting out the problem. So, the questioner has the liberty to either follow Thelma's implicit advice or dismiss it as the indirect structures have weak illocutionary force and low degree of imposition (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Weigel and Weigel, 1985; Yule, 1996; Georgalidou, 2008; Vine, 2009). However, Thelma reminds the questioner to be responsible for the consequences of her decision.

Thelma might adopt the declarative and interrogative hints to soften the imposing tone of the advice out of respect for the wife's status. This finding is similarly observed in studies by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Ervin-Tripp (1976), Lee-Wong (1994), Skewis (2003), Harrison and Barlow (2009) and Vine (2009) where the situational contexts of age, power status and purpose of interaction influence the types of directives produced. Thus, a more indirect, polite way of giving advice portrays the Eastern culture's respect for older people as they are more superior to the younger people (Lee-Wong, 1994; Skewis, 2003; Huang, 2008).

Furthermore, as the problem involves very serious, delicate issues such as adultery, sexual affairs and family matters, Thelma is more tactful in giving advice to avoid threatening the questioner's negative face. The impact of the advice is significantly reduced via indirect structures although the questioner had committed immoral behaviour. By being

tactful, Thelma's advice might be more willingly accepted and the questioner would be able to save herself from embarrassment and humiliation of her actions. This is because, in this situation where the questioner is clearly at fault, her public image could be easily damaged if it is not maintained by Thelma (Goffman, 1967; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987). Although most of the directives in the advice texts are in the indirect forms, the pre-sequences and grounders that prepare and justify the advice help to clarify and intensify the meanings of the advice. Thus, the structures are highly and increasingly polite as they are explicit and less coercive at the same time (Blum-Kulka, 1987).

All in all, Example 17 presents four strong hints (lines S4, S11, S33 and S38) use in the advice text *You can't have it all* (Appendix G). The advice text is generally constructed using indirect structures of hints, imbedded forms and interrogatives. As this problem is serious and delicate, Thelma uses the indirect forms to cater to the questioner's negative face. The social distance created illustrates Thelma's respect for the questioner's privacy, status and age. As the questioner is a mature woman, a wife and a mother, Thelma is more tactful in her advice to appear professional. The indirect forms are clarified by the pre-sequences and grounders that precede and justify the directives to intensify the meaning. Thelma also tries to be friendlier in her interaction with the questioner to decrease the level of formality in her advice to enhance solidarity. However, the positive politeness strategy is limited as Thelma still preserves the questioner's privacy and autonomy to spare her from humiliation and embarrassment.

Another example is in the advice text, *No one forced his hands* (Appendix R1) where a questioner writes to Thelma for advice to help a friend. The friend was forced to marry an older woman but now feels discontented with her due to her inability to produce children, sexually inactive and dependency on medication due to some sickness. The friend rebels by attempting to keep a mistress but does not want to divorce the wife. The wife is a hardworking career woman whose job often requires her to travel outstation. As the friend is treating his wife badly, the questioner consults Thelma for advice to get the friend to stop cheating on his wife as both of them are bound in a miserable, lonely marriage.

Although the questioner explains that the friend is forced to marry his wife, Thelma doubts the story as she feels that no one could force a matured man to marry someone he does not want to. Thelma feels that the friend married his wife because of money. Furthermore, the fact that the wife is still working at the age of 60 years old shows the friend's negligence as a

husband. Due to her strong belief on the matter based on the facts known to her, Thelma challenges the friend to divorce his wife if he is unhappy with having her around. Thus, Thelma openly chastises the friend by calling him *a jerk* for committing adultery, being an irresponsible husband and disrespecting the wife. It is clearly evident that Thelma sides with the wife in this situation and the only advice she gives the friend is to think hard and divorce the wife if he is dissatisfied rather than criticising her.

The two advice texts (*Ignored and irritated* and *No one forced his hands*) demonstrate that Thelma has a set of personal belief about the issues presented. This set of belief leads her to show her preference towards the party or the solution which she thinks might work best in solving the problems. Thus, it is based on this set of beliefs that Thelma tries to tell the questioner in Example 18 (*You can't have it all*, Appendix G) to think her choices thoroughly as there is a possibility that X might change when the relationship becomes complacent in the future. Thelma describes the husband's characteristics while at the same time challenges the questioner's feelings about the marriage to raise her awareness that she is being blinded by the thrill of the affair.

From the thorough analysis of the advice texts, it can be concluded that Thelma tends to implicitly show preference to a party mentioned in the problem text. This shows that although Thelma is an objective third party, she already has a set of belief on the way certain issues should be treated. This is the reason that it seems Thelma is siding with a party in the problem texts. Similarly, Ho (2009) found that two hosts in two radio talk shows stressed their ideological beliefs on family issues when giving advice to the callers. For example, in the advice text *Ignored and irritated* (Appendix Q1), a senior, male office worker is annoyed that his two female colleagues ignored him although he has done nothing wrong. Although the man is the questioner, Thelma still sticks to her belief that he is the source of the problem as his egoistical and disrespectful nature is not supported by his colleagues. Therefore, instead of siding with the questioner and admonishing the colleagues, Thelma advises the questioner to change his attitude to achieve a happy working atmosphere and get people to be more pleasant to him.

## **4.8 CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT DIRECTIVES IN THE ADVICE TEXTS**

As discussed in Section 4.9, hint is the least coercive form of directives. However, due to its indirectness, vagueness and ambiguity, hint is rated as less polite than the conventionally indirect forms, i.e. modal interrogatives, question directives and imbedded forms (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Rinnert and Kobayashi). The meaning of the conventionally indirect directive can be easily interpreted due to its high pragmatic clarity as being compared to a hint. At the same time, the indirect form that constructs the conventionally indirect directive decreases the illocutionary force which makes it polite. Searle (1975) lends support to Blum-Kulka's (1987) finding as he asserted that modal interrogative is the most polite and preferred form of request in the English culture. The varieties of imbedded forms found in the 47 advice texts are also classified as a conventionally indirect form due to easy realisation of message and reduced level of coerciveness. Although Rinnert and Kobayashi (1999) classify grounders as part of the conventionally indirect form, this study views grounder as an external mitigation strategy and thus, is discussed in Section 4.12.

### **4.8.1 IMBEDDED FORMS**

In the analysis, it is found that imbedded forms construct the highest percentage of the conventionally indirect structures with 18.6 percent (refer Table 6, page 82). The imbedded forms that are frequent in the advice texts are *if-statements* (10.6 percent), *imbedded with linkers* (2.2 percent) and *imbedded imperatives* (1.3 percent). Meanwhile, other varieties of imbedded forms make up 4.5 percent of the total imbedded structures. These imbedded forms are often written together with another directive to soften the illocutionary force because the imbedded forms usually act as pre-sequences and grounders that prepare the questioner for an advice and justify the given advice to lower the impact and degree of imposition (Yule, 1996; Blum-Kulka, *et.al*, 1989; Skewis, 2003; Harrison and Barlow, 2009).

#### 4.8.1.1 If-statement

If-statement is the most frequently employed imbedded form in the advice texts where it appears 57 times. Thelma uses a variety of if-statement forms in the advice texts including *if-statement with PIM*, *if-statement with NIM*, *if-statement with YPD*, *if-statement with question directive* and *if-statement with hint*. Example 18 illustrates some of the instances of the if-statement found in the advice texts.

#### Example 18: If-statements

##### 25 July 2010: Cut your son off (Appendix A1)

S16 : But if you love him and want to save him, harden your heart and mind.

##### 11 July 2010: Cougar on the prowl (Appendix U)

S17 : If sex has become a chore and conversation dull between you and your husband, then you need to do something to rekindle the excitement and passion.

##### 18 July 2010: Romanticising love (Appendix W)

S11 : If this relationship can break you into pieces and leave you crying, dying and helpless, then does this mean you will not be able to deal with losing this guy?

Example 18 above illustrates the variety of if-statements used in combination with other forms of directives such as PIM, YPD and Yes-no interrogative. Thelma employs if-statements probably to increase the degree of formality in her advice to show politeness (Georgalidou, 2008; Vine, 2009) as some of Thelma's propositions are based on sensitive issues such as sex, financial, marital problems and affairs. These issues could be humiliating and destructive to the questioners' images. The high degree of formality indicates Thelma's aloofness and respect to the questioners' personal matters. Hence, the if-statement gives the questioners freedom to consider their options as they are not forced to follow Thelma's advice. In *Cut your son off* (Appendix A1), the if-statement that precedes lowers the impact of the PIM phrase as it justifies it. This is similar to the if-statement + YPD in *Cougar on the prowl* (Appendix U) where the YPD is pre-sequenced by the preceding if-statement. alternately, in *Romanticising love* (Appendix W), the if-statement is followed by a yes-no

question directive that does not only soften the illocutionary force of the advice, but also gauge the questioner's emotions to take required actions on the matter.

#### **4.8.1.2 Imbedded Linkers**

An interesting finding that characterises written data is the use of linkers to form complex sentences when giving advice. Although imbedded linkers are not as frequently employed as the if-statements, they create some degree of formality, distance and deference to cater to the questioner's negative face (Goffman, 1967; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Yule, 1996). It also helps to maintain Thelma's image as an expert and a professional third party. These linkers are termed *contrastive structure*, i.e. an approach to describe the differences and similarities in a language, where they assist Thelma in providing a balanced advice to the questioners in preserving their public face (Valor, 2000). Example 19 presents some instances of imbedded forms with linkers found in the advice texts.

#### **Example 19: Imbedded with linkers**

##### **18 April 2010: Find out the truth (Appendix I)**

S9 : While you could not accuse him without proof, you should tell him about the pain you suffered when he was cold and uncaring towards you.

##### **11 July 2010: Well-rid of two timers (Appendix J1)**

S5 : Since you cannot watch him 24/7, you need to either trust him or stay next to him.

##### **3 October 2010: Woeful shotgun marriage (Appendix N1)**

S12 : Instead of feeling trapped, perhaps the two of them could start dating and romancing to try nurture their relationship.

In the examples above, three linkers, *while*, *since* and *instead*, are used with the imbedded forms to soften the illocutionary force of the advice as they help to ground the directives into formal, polite structures (Vine, 2009). The linkers are followed by two

different directive structures. The linkers *while* and *since* are followed by the YPD structures probably to lower the impact of the confrontational imperative tone as the second singular person, *you*, in the YPD imperative is too direct and commanding (Reader's Digest, April 2010:36). Therefore, the imbedded forms that precede the YPD imperatives alert the questioners of the forthcoming advice and simultaneously justify the advice.

Meanwhile, the imbedded structure with linker *instead* is followed by a hint. The application of both the linker *instead* and hint significantly reduced the imposition and softened the advice because as much as Thelma admires the questioner for wanting to help her brother's marriage, she feels that the couple should be given opportunities to work on their marriage without outside interference. Therefore, the hint implicitly tells the questioner to quit meddling into the couple's business. But as it is highly threatening to prohibit the questioner from seeing her brother, Thelma further reduces the force and prepares the questioner for an advice via the linker *instead*. The probability adverb *perhaps* also helps to decrease the force of the advice while at the same time indicates Thelma's uncertainty on the matter as she is advising based on the facts known to her (Perkins, 1983; Leung, 2009). Thus, *perhaps* increases the degree of formality and demonstrates Thelma's limited knowledge on the matter to maintain the questioner's autonomy.

Together with the imbedded forms and probability adverb, Thelma uses the modal verbs such as *could* and *should* to mitigate directness in the advice texts. In example 19, line S9 of the advice text *Find out the truth*, illustrates that the linker *while* is used with the modal *could* in the first phrase to soften Thelma's highly-threatening prohibition of the questioner's action. The second phrase which is a direct YPD imperative is also softened by the modal *should* and the preceding imbedded phrase that justifies the advice. Thus, the use of imbedded linkers together with the modal verbs and possibility adverb cater to the questioner's negative face as Thelma reduces the degree of imposition while at the same time leaving the questioners with the freedom to make their decision by being distant, objective and aloof in her advice (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Yule, 1996).

Apart from the imbedded forms, interrogative is also part of the conventionally indirect structure. However, since the percentage of interrogative in the advice text is low and insignificant (10.2 percent), it is not discussed in this study.



## 4.9 MARKED BEHAVIOURS

In the advice texts, there are two strategies of marked behaviours identified which are the downgrading descriptive terms and sarcasm. These two strategies are very rarely used by Thelma, hence substantiate that they are not regular form of giving advice (Terkourafi, 2005). Thus, they can be assumed as inappropriate or less polite in the context of advice column because, as asserted by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Yule (1996), a culture that practices positive politeness strategy commonly uses the abusive terms and slangs in familiar settings to show solidarity. In the advice texts analysed, direct structures are used more regularly than the indirect structures which illustrate Thelma's positive politeness strategy. As there is very limited sarcasm and abusive terms in the advice texts, these two strategies are thus inappropriate, marked behaviours on the relational work continuum (Locher and Watts, 2005).

### 4.9.1 Downgrading Descriptive Terms

In this study, Thelma uses a number of downgrading descriptive terms to describe the questioner. The downgrading descriptive terms can be defined as the adjectives used to describe the questioner in a negative way to lower the questioner's status. Although Thelma tries to maintain the questioner's face, the renegotiation of status that happen during the course of interaction helps to assert Thelma's authoritative power in relation to the questioner's status and problems (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Terkourafi, 2005). This renegotiation tends to occur if Thelma feels that the problems presented by the questioners are their fault. Thus, the downgrading descriptive terms are employed to raise the questioners' awareness of their mistakes and get them to stop blaming other parties for their problems. Some of the terms found in the advice texts are *stupid*, *silly*, *selfish*, *sadistic*, *tyrant*, *cad* and *fool*.

These downgrading terms are highly face-threatening as the questioners' public image is not supported by others and highlight their weaknesses and incompetence (Goffman, 1967; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Locher, 2006; Harrison and Barlow, 2009). However, to appear professional and maintain the questioners' faces, Thelma balances the use of the downgrading descriptive terms with other mitigation devices such as syntactic and lexical mitigations (see Section 4.12). In contrast, Skewis (2003) discovers that the 18<sup>th</sup> century

Chinese society used the self-degrading term to describe themselves to demonstrate humility. Hence, this self-degrading strategy poses no threat to their face as their public self-image is still maintained by others.

#### **4.9.2 Sarcasm**

In the advice texts, Thelma uses some sarcastic remarks to point out the questioners' weaknesses in a natural, pleasant way. Although seemingly polite, the meaning of sarcasm might threaten the questioners' faces (Holmes, 1998; Arronsson and Theorell, 1998). For example, in the advice text *Tyrant in disguise* below, the extracts of problem and advice texts are as follow:

##### **Example 20:**

**10 October 2010: Tyrant in disguise (Appendix P1) (refer page 147)**

## Problem Text

- P1 I've been married for 18 years and have two teenage children.  
P2 I can't stand my wife's stupidity.  
P3 I'm busy, unlike her, and I'm stressed out.  
P4 She is a housewife (a foreigner staying here on a social pass) and does not understand my feelings.  
P5 I used to ignore her whenever she talked to me because she said nothing that was worth listening to.  
P6 I felt I needed some space so I started to sleep at another house which I rented.  
P7 I keep this arrangement secret, even from my close friends.  
P8 She annoyed me by confronting me about this.  
P9 How ungrateful.  
P10 Who bought the house she is living in?  
P11 Who bought the car she drives?  
P12 Who pays the household expenses?  
P13 I sometimes tell my friends and family how stupid she is, to her face, so she will learn that other people cannot tolerate her.  
P14 I think she has influenced our children's mind in a negative way—they stopped talking to me.  
P15 I want to remove this woman from my life, but I don't want to be blamed because she is the one who has no ability to satisfy me.  
P16 How can I convince her to go back to her country?

*Stupid wife*

## Advice Text

- S1 Yes, your wife is certainly not very clever because she chose to marry you.  
S2 How silly to have lived with a man for 18 years, borne him two children and yet be treated like a fool, without love, respect or dignity.  
S3 Do you realise that you have been subjecting your wife to emotional abuse and neglect?  
S4 Insulting her in front of friends and family, belittling her, ignoring her and not talking to her is being very cruel.  
S5 Who do you think your children have stopped talking to you?  
S6 They see the tyrant that you are, the mean and callous husband who has been mistreating their mother for so many years.  
S7 You have stopped loving this woman and want to get her to leave you.  
S8 Showing your true feelings, staying in a rental house, and allowing her to suffer in silence is your way of trying to get rid of her.  
S9 You want to look good to others so you make sure that this "foreigner" knows she is a mere irritant in your life.  
S10 You want her to get out on her accord so that you can be absolved from this failure of marriage.  
S11 You are a selfish, sadistic man.  
S12 You know your wife has no choice but to tolerate your mode of torture because foreign spouses in Malaysia have no other recourse if they do not want to lose their children.  
S13 Divorce means that she will have to leave this country as she needs you to renew her visa every year.

- S14 The good news for you is that you can apply for permanent residence for her.  
S15 If you want to be rid of her so badly, allow her the option to remain.  
S16 Tell her you want a divorce once she gets this status.  
S17 Give her a life line so that you can live without regret and hatred brewing in your dark heart.

Lines S1 and S2 in the advice text above show Thelma's sarcasm in her response to the questioner's inquiry. The questioner harshly criticised his wife as stupid and useless in the problem text. In line S1 of the advice text, the first phrase of the sentence seems to be agreeing with the questioner's accusation that his wife is stupid. This phrase supports the questioner's self-image as his proposition is supported by Thelma. However, the second phrase that justifies the reason the wife is stupid clearly indicates the questioner's fault as Thelma implies that the wife married an awful man. Thus, Thelma's criticism to the questioner is done in a very subtle way.

Likewise, line S2 of the advice text further uses sarcasm to describe how silly of the wife to have stayed with a husband who clearly disrespects her. Although it seems that Thelma is confirming and agreeing with the questioner's assertion, she is actually condemning his rudeness and tactlessness to the wife who loves him. So, sarcasm is used to admonish the questioner's behaviour in a polite manner, which makes it a marked linguistic behaviour that is inappropriate.

Since it is irregularly observed, sarcasm is an impolite form and not the norm of the advice texts. It is also evident that Thelma applies sarcasm for specific cases such as when the questioner is rude and when the issue presented is trivial.

#### 4.10 Discussion

According to Kohnen (2008), letters that are characterised by the second person, typically includes imperative, performative and indirect speech acts. This is what is found in the advice letters written by Thelma; an abundance of all three speech acts used in construction of the advice texts. In fact, Thelma uses imperatives most frequently to convey her advice to the questioners. This finding thus contradicts Asmah Omar's (1982) that Malaysians usually choose the indirect form of directives when they interact with each other. However, it should be noted that instead of analysing spoken data, this study analyses non-real time, written data which is published in the newspaper. This contributes to the difference in the frequency of directives forms as no face-to-face interaction is involved in written advice texts. Therefore, face-threatening acts could be significantly reduced as both interlocutors are anonymous.

Nonetheless, the high frequency of imperative is surprising considering that the advice column is published in the local newspaper and is read by the public. Using explicit directives in giving advice might be considered as impolite in some cultures as it suggests the questioners' incompetence and violation of their privacy (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Brown and Levinson, 1978; Yule, 1996; Harrison and Barlow, 2009; Vine, 2009). This is probably the reason that Thelma balances the huge number of imperatives with an equally huge number of conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect forms such as hints, imbedded forms and interrogatives in issuing her advice. These forms lower the illocutionary force of the directives and help maintain the questioners' faces, enabling them to be less defensive and more open to suggestions.

The high regularity of imperative and hint occurrences indicate their appropriacy in the advice texts because society would rationally use commonly accepted and suitable expressions in daily interaction rather than unusual structures (Terkourafi, 2005). Along the continuum of (im)politeness, the usual structure is an unmarked behaviour and is highly acceptable by the society. In contradiction, the marked behaviour sees unusual or inappropriate expressions which are less favoured in the society (Terkourafi, 2005; Locher and Watts, 2005). Therefore, the high frequency of the most direct, forceful imperatives and the least indirect, least coercive hints in the advice texts indicate their appropriacy, acceptability as unmarked behaviours.

More importantly, the use of imperatives might also be regular due to its high pragmatic clarity that helps avoid misinterpretation of meaning. This is because, in the context of advice column, Thelma and the questioners do not have any opportunities to clarify and negotiate meanings with each other. Thus, multiple imperatives and supporting hints used in the advice texts emphasize the advice to ensure clarity.

Furthermore, Thelma uses high frequencies of imperatives and hints as they are the least costly mode of interaction to avoid hostility and distrust in interaction (Terkourafi, 2005: 248). In the context of advice columns, the society consists of the advice-givers, the questioners and the readers who read the advice columns. Based on the societal rationality, imperatives and hints are the most suitable forms to provide solicited advice to the questioners. Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Vine (2009) substantiate that direct imperative is usually used in response to questions or directives. Thus, the forms that Thelma uses to deliver her advice are based on the society's consent, rather than her individual preference since the two forms are unchallenged when used repeatedly in the advice texts. Thus, the regularity of imperatives and hints is appropriate in the advice texts (Terkourafi, 2005).

The high occurrence of imperatives and hints might also be due to Thelma and the questioners' prior experience of writing the advice columns. This is evident in Table 12 where similar issues such as couples, marital problems, affairs and financial are repeatedly discussed and presented. These repeating themes could have given Thelma the practice, experience and ability to identify the forms that work best with specific problems and questioners where they probably responded more positively to the advice when imperatives and hints are used as Thelma manages to convey sincerity, friendliness and formality simultaneously (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Larina, 2008). Terkourafi (2005) substantiates that society determines (im)politeness based on their prior experience in specific interactions.

In addition to imperatives and hints, imbedded forms are occasionally used in the advice texts which might be due to the social norm of the advice column. Terkourafi (2005) views norms based on Haugh's (2003) definition; norms about what one should do and norms about what one is likely to do (399-300). Thus, Thelma's prior experience, belief and society's value probably influence her advice. For example, in the advice text *Topsy-turvy love affair* (Appendix G1), Thelma uses a lot of imperatives to a questioner who seems confused about the feelings for his girlfriend as it seems that he treats the relationship like a

joke. Therefore, Thelma uses strong forms of directives such as “S11: *What sick game is this?*”, “S19: *Just get out of the mess you have created and walk away*” and “S23: *Take your pick but do not bother to play hero in the game of love*” with equally inappropriate lexical items such as *idiot* and *sick*. Although it seems rude, these are probably the forms of advice that people would give if solicited. Therefore, based on the societal norms of the advice-giver and questioners in the *Dear Thelma* advice column, imperatives, hints and imbedded forms are appropriate to be used in giving solicited advice.

Hence, although imperatives are frequently used in the advice texts, directness does not always mean impoliteness because as the frame-based view suggests, the regularity of imperative occurrence in the advice texts are based on the societal rationality and Thelma’s prior experience (Terkourafi, 2005). The regularity of imperatives occurrence thus indicates its high degree of politeness and appropriacy as a form of advice to questioners. It is a positive politeness strategy that shows solidarity, camaraderie, care and compassion among interlocutors (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Georgalidou, 2008; Larina, 2008). This is confirmed by Georgalidou (2008) in her finding as the Greek children used imperatives more frequently than other forms of directives to address their teachers and mothers. However, similar to the Chinese and Polish societies, they mitigated their utterance by using the plural form *we* instead of the singular forms *I* to be more persuasive and polite (Lee-Wong, 1994; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006; Georgalidou, 2008).

The frame-based view suggests that in an interaction, both linguistic expressions and social categories co-occur (Terkourafi, 2005). Although the social categories such as age, sex and social class have the ability to develop or change during the course of interaction, the interlocutors usually make *default, fixed assumptions* during the early stages to initiate the interaction (Terkourafi, 2005: 247). In the course of the advice texts, there are some changes to the social contexts of the participants. Initially, before the advice texts are written, Thelma is the trustworthy and reliable authoritative expert. However, in writing the problem and advice texts, Thelma and the questioners renegotiate their relationships via directive structures. For example, in the advice text *Tyrant in disguise* (Appendix P1), Thelma uses different structures and lexical items to realize the meaning of the advice according to the questioner’s status and experience. The problem text is written by a male questioner who rudely criticises his wife by calling her stupid and annoying. Although the syntactic forms of the problem text such as the *modal interrogatives* and *imbedded forms* help to lower the illocutionary force of the complaints, the intended meaning of the text is very disrespectful.

As a professional authoritative advice-giver who writes for the newspaper, Thelma's response demonstrates respect for the questioner as she expresses her disagreement indirectly via implicit form of hints (*S1: Yes, your wife is certainly not very clever because she chose to marry you.*), yes-no question (*S3: Do you realise that you have been subjecting your wife to emotional abuse and neglect?*) and imbedded if-statement (*S15: If you want to be rid of her so badly, allow her the option to remain.*). However, as she is bound by her duty to give solicited advice, Thelma addresses the questioner's problem by advising him to get his wife a resident pass so that she could take care of the children even if they are divorced. These imperatives are written in the last two sentences (*S16: Tell her you want a divorce once she gets this status. S17: Give her a life line so that you can live without regret and hatred brewing in your dark heart.*). This illustrates Thelma's professionalism in dealing with the questioner's problem and maintaining her ideological belief on the issue as she expresses disapproval of the questioner's behaviour with downgrading descriptive terms, "*(S11) You are a selfish, sadistic man.*"

Since the imperatives (lines S16 and S17) and the declarative criticism (line S11) towards the questioner are direct, imposing and face-threatening, Thelma balances it with other indirect forms to soften her advice which might be out of respect for the questioner's status as a responsible father who works hard to ensure that his family has all the necessities despite his hatred towards his wife. So, the direct imperative could also be a solidarity-enhancer as directness, abusive terms and slangs show closeness and friendliness as justified in prior studies by Brown and Levinson (1978), Yule (1996), Skewis (2003), Yates (2005) and Larina (2008). Thelma's and the questioner's status renegotiation reduces the social barrier between them as mutual strangers when discussing personal issues. All in all, the high frequency of imperative and hint structures in the advice texts indicate appropriacy and acceptability in the advice texts (Terkourafi, 2005; Locher and Watts, 2005).



## Conclusion

In sum, a distinct characteristic of the *Dear Thelma* advice column is that it is predominated by the direct imperative form even though advice-giving is a face-threatening act as it demonstrates the questioner's incompetence (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Locher, 2006 Harrison and Barlow, 2009). However, the high imposition and illocutionary force are largely reduced as the interaction happens in mediated, non-real time setting. Furthermore, the advice texts are written to suit the newspaper publication needs which further eliminate any inappropriate language no matter how serious the problems are. Since the advice is purposefully solicited, the impact of receiving advice is also greatly reduced. Thus, the questioners might not feel very threatened when they are confronted with the details of their problems and advice. Although the advice is specifically written for a certain problem and questioner, it is also being directed to other readers. This further ensures that the advice is appropriate and acceptable to the public.

More importantly, since Thelma employs a lot of imperatives in the advice texts, the direct form is perfectly polite and acceptable based on the societal rationality and Thelma's prior experience. Therefore, this study shares some similarities to other cultural studies written by researchers such as Lee-Wong (1994), Skewis (2003), Krolak and Rudnicka (2006), Terkourafi (2005), Georgalidou (2008), Larina (2008) and Garcia (2008) where direct structures are typically used in everyday interactions as acts of goodwill and solidarity-enhancer to demonstrate friendliness, sincerity and spontaneity. However, in this study, the direct imperative structures are balanced with equally important indirect structures such as hints and imbedded forms to maintain a certain level of formality and respect to the questioners.

#### **4.11 THE FACE-SAVING STRATEGIES IN THE ADVICE TEXTS**

This section discusses the mitigation devices employed as face-saving strategies in the advice texts. As the data analysed are in the written forms, the prosodic/paralinguistic features such as laughter and fillers are absent from the texts. The prosodic features are very important in conveying a speaker's affective state and intended meaning (Han, 2000). Therefore, in writing the advice texts, Thelma has to rely on other mitigators to ensure the appropriacy and suitability of the content and language of the advice.

Together with the directives forms and function, Thelma uses a lot of mitigation strategies to mitigate and soften the illocutionary force of the advice. This is because the act of giving solicited or unsolicited advice to strangers is a face-threatening-act (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Larina, 2005; Locher, 2006; Harrison and Barlow, 2009). In the advice texts, the mitigation strategies identified are divided into external mitigation, internal mitigation and syntactic mitigation based on Skewis (2003), Yates' (2005) and USo-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008) frameworks. In a directive structure, Head Act is the main directive unit of a structure. So, the external mitigation is the supportive move that is present before or after the Head Act and the internal mitigation is the device added to the Head Act to lower the degree of imposition of the directive such as the softeners, hedges and fillers. Meanwhile, the syntactic mitigation is classified as a part of the external mitigation as the sentences come before or after the directive structure that contains Head Act. For example, the imbedded if-statement is an external mitigator that alleviates the illocutionary force of an advice.

In the advice texts, Thelma uses more external mitigators than internal mitigators. Due to excessive data, the external mitigators are difficult to be quantified, hence are discussed qualitatively in this study. The external mitigators identified are syntactic mitigation, preparators, grounders, sweeteners and promises of rewards. Meanwhile, the internal mitigations used in the advice texts include softeners and lexical hedges. Tables 8, 9 and 10 illustrate the frequency of modal auxiliary verbs (softeners) and adverbs (lexical hedges). According to Valor (2000), the use of softeners and lexical hedges is a deferent strategy as it attenuates the negative force of the directives.

## 4.12 EXTERNAL MITIGATION

As stated by Blum-Kulka (1989), Skewis (2003) and Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008), external mitigation lends support to the main phrase (Head Act) of advice which allows it to appear before or after the phrase. Grounders and preparators are two external mitigation strategies that are frequently used while promises of rewards and sweeteners are occasionally applied in the advice texts. The syntactic mitigation which makes up about 50 percent of the advice texts is also considered as a part of external mitigation since it appears before or after the Head Act of the advice.

### 4.12.1 SYNTACTIC MITIGATION

Table 6 (page 82) illustrates that hints and imbedded forms make up 45.1 percent of the total directive structure in the advice texts. These indirect forms realized the syntactic mitigation which is used to reduce the illocutionary force in the advice texts. These structures have also been discussed extensively in Sections 4.3 and 4.5.

#### 4.12.1.1 Hints and Imbedded Forms

##### Hint

Hint is very frequently used (25.8 percent) as it is the least coercive, indirect form of directives. Its vagueness and ambiguity allows the questioners the freedom to choose and decide the best solution for their problems by either complying or dismissing Thelma's advice. An example of hint is:

##### **Example 21:**

##### **7 February 2010: Leave him, fast (Appendix A)**

S7 : Staying on a marriage that is slowly robbing you of pride, esteem and dignity makes you the greater fool.

In example 21, Thelma is hinting the questioner to leave her husband as he disrespects her. Instead of directly telling the questioner to leave him, Thelma mitigates her advice by using an indirect declarative hint. The impact of the advice is thus reduced as there is no illocutionary force that urges the questioner to make a decision as Thelma states a fact. Therefore, the questioner can easily dismiss Thelma's advice if she wants to and make her own decision. This illustrates Thelma's act of deference as she acknowledges the questioner's privacy by not imposing on her options. Searle (1975), Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Vine (2009) found similar findings in their studies. Since hint is frequent in this study, it is appropriately used in the context of advice texts.

### Imbedded Forms

There are a lot of imbedded forms used in the advice text with the highest frequency structure being if-statement (10.6 percent), followed by imbedded with linkers (2.2 percent), imbedded imperatives (1.3 percent) and other varieties of imbedded forms such as imbedded with PIM, imbedded with hint and so forth (4.5 percent). These imbedded forms are rated as more polite than hints as they are less coercive and high in pragmatic clarity (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999). An example of an imbedded form with linker is as follow:

#### **Example 22:**

#### **18 April 2010: Find out the truth (Appendix I)**

S9: While you could not accuse him without proof, you should tell him about the pain you suffered when he was cold and uncaring towards you.

The imbedded form in Example 22 is initiated by the linker *while* that joins the mitigated and imperative phrases together. The mitigated phrase is the first phrase of the structure, followed by the YPD imperative as the second phrase. The mitigated phrase softens the direct illocutionary force of the YPD imperative and acts as a pre-sequence to the advice. This is probably due to the highly personal marital problem. Wrong advice might worsened the problem. The mitigating phrase also contains the advice that the questioner should not accuse the husband without proof. The linker *while* helps to downtone the force and justify the YPD imperative (...*you should tell him about the pain you suffered when he was cold and*

*uncaring towards you*). Thus, by mitigating the advice with a pre-sequence phrase and a linker, the advice is softened and at the same time, justified. The two phrases are further mitigated by the modal auxiliary verbs *could* and *would* which are high level politeness markers (Vine, 2009; Skewis, 2003; Georgalidou, 2008).

Nonetheless, the mitigating phrase is also a directive in the YPD form that prohibits the questioner from accusing the husband without proof. Its function changes into a pre-sequence and the impact is downtoned as it justifies the second YPD phrase.

#### 4.12.2 Grounders

In the advice texts, grounders are used to give solid reasons and rationales for the advice given. By lending support and intensifying an advice, a grounder shows Thelma's confidence on the validity of the advice. It also helps to portray Thelma as someone helpful and trustworthy as the advice is rationale and reasonable (Locher, 2006; Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991). An example of grounders is as follows:

##### Example 23:

##### 20 June 2010: Parents object to inter-racial Love (Appendix O)

- S1      You are two young people growing up in a multi-racial, multi-religious country where mixed marriages are no longer scandalous or taboo.
- S2      This is One Malaysia lah.
- S3      *If you really love each other, why play marriage martyr?*
- S4      That you should even consider asking her to find someone else reflects your lack of depth and commitment.
- S5      Where is your fighting spirit and courage?
- S6      Are you simply going to give in to parental objections, knowing that they were wrong?
- S7      Are we all living under false social ideals, where the reality is that race, colour and creed still affect our present and future?
- S8      You are both adults, working and financially independent.
- S9      What can your parents do if you are insistent and persistent?
- S10     *You should love and respect your parents, but there will be times when your values, thoughts and aspirations matter.*
- S11     Parents are not always right even though they want the best for their children.**
- S12     When they still choose to be bigoted and stubborn, then the next generation will have to show them that true love is more important than superficial skin tones and beliefs.
- S13     *If you love her, fight for the right to choose your and your children's future.*

- S14     It's her choice too, of course.  
 S15     But should we all succumb to the wrong pressure today, what will happen in the  
           generations to come?  
 S16     Do we continue to kill and terrorise each other in the name of race and religion?

Example 23 above is written in response to a questioner who explains that both his and his girlfriend's parents object to their relationship as they are of different religions. In order to please the parents and to make things less complicated, the questioner is considering breaking off with his girlfriend and searching for someone of the same religion.

Lines S3, S10 and S13 (in italics) are directives that are constructed using a variety of structures such as imbedded if-statement (line S3), hint (line S11) and YPD imperative (line S13). Line S11 (in bold) is the grounder justifying the advice. The grounder clearly supports the direct YPD imperative in line S10. In line S11, Thelma argues that the questioner should do what he thinks would work best for him as he is an adult who could decide for himself. Thelma also argues that although parents are wiser, they are also human who make mistakes. Thelma immediately justifies the main advice to deeply ground it and points out the rationales of the action. From the data analysed, almost all of the advice given are being justified by grounders. Apart from that, the advice given is also preceded by preparators or pre-sequences which pave ways for the advice to be written and grounded perfectly into the advice texts.

### 4.12.3 Preparators

Harrison and Barlow (2009) found that the participants in an online arthritis workshop preceded their advice with narratives to establish their experience on the matter thus, lowering the illocutionary force of their advice. In contrast, Thelma does not use any narratives throughout the 47 advice texts analysed. However, the advice given are often preceded by other types of pre-sequences such as questions and hints. These preparators serve to prepare the questioners for the forthcoming advice, to soften the impact of the advice (Yule, 1996; Harrison and Barlow, 2009; Vine, 2009). At times, the pre-sequences also function as grounders that justify the advice given.

### Example 24:

#### 13 June 2010: The other woman (Appendix M)

- S5 While you have your woes, your daughter-in-law (DIL) has her grouses.
- S6 **Your son is caught between the two women he loves.**
- S7 **So what choice does he have?**
- S8 **He cannot ask his mother to move out as he is gentle and filial.**
- S9 **He also cannot divorce his young wife, who is also mother of his child.**
- S10 **If your daughter-in-law simply does not want you around, there can be no compromise.**
- S11 *You will have to decide if you can live with another of your children or have a place of your own.*
- S12 **Sometimes, we take our old folks too much for granted.**
- S13 **While you have always been helpful and mindful, the DIL does not appreciate your efforts because you are the presence of inconvenience.**
- S14 **Young people like to have their own space and time together without having to constantly worry about offending the MIL.**
- S15 *Perhaps you should move out so that they will realise how much you have been contributing to make their lives so comfortable.*
- S16 *Let them feel your absence in terms of help and financial assistance.*
- S17 **It's also about time that they learn to take care of themselves without the invisible hand that's been doling out goodwill and care without condition or expectation.**
- S18 *Let the wicked wife do the housework, care for the child 24/7.*
- S19 When she has no extra cash to spend, she will be aware of how kind and generous you have been.
- S20 Perhaps her family should help out now since they have always been the factor in causing the rift.
- S21 *Do not hurt too much.*
- S22 *Allow your son to be the man in his household.*
- S23 He will learn to manage wife and finances when necessary.
- S24 DIL will have to learn be a better wife and mother, too.
- S25 **We have all walked this path after marriage.**
- S26 **Trials and tribulation ... we cannot spare them the worse.**
- S27 **They need to be more responsible and careful people for they are now parents.**
- S28 *Let them make the mistakes so they can learn.*
- S29 You have done your best so have a deserved rest and enjoy life with your hard-earned money.

The advice text in Example 24 is written by a questioner who lives with her son, daughter-in-law and grandson. The questioner feels that her daughter-in-law is very lazy around the house and does not appreciate her sacrifice in keeping the house neat and food on the table. Although she is still working to help with the expenses, she voluntarily takes care of her grandson to let the married couple spend quality time together. However, after five

years, she started to feel that the daughter-in-law should contribute more to the household by being more responsible. To make matters worse, the daughter-in-law's family always causes tension around the house by interfering with the family affairs. So, the questioner writes to Thelma to ask for advice.

In the example above, all the imperatives are in italics while all the pre-sequences are in bold. There is an abundance of advice in the forms of YPD (lines S11, S15), PIM (lines S16, S18, S22, S28), NIM (line S21) and imbedded form (line S29) throughout the text especially in the medial and final position. Interestingly, there are also a lot of pre-sequences that precede some of these advices. For example, lines S6 to S10 serve as pre-sequences to the YPD advice in line S11. The pre-sequences come in a variety of forms including hints (lines S8, S9), question (line S7) and if-statement (line S10). Since the advice in line S11 might hurt the questioner's feelings, the pre-sequences try to prepare the questioner for the advice by explaining the obvious source that might contribute to the problem. Thelma initiates the pre-sequence by making a statement that describes the problem; the son loves both the questioner and his wife. Then, Thelma slowly explains the guilt that the son might be feeling as he cannot let go any of the women from the house. After stating the obvious, Thelma starts to be more forward with her advice; that the daughter-in-law has more say in the house, so if she feels uncomfortable, the questioner must leave (line S10). Directly after that, Thelma writes a YPD imperative to give the questioner options to decide her next move.

Another example of pre-sequence is in line S17 which is also a directive in the form of hints. Before Thelma writes a PIM imperative in line S18, she preceded the advice by giving some credits to the questioner for taking care of the family for five years. But, it is time for the family to manage on their own. So, clearly, this pre-sequence tries to let the questioner down gently and prepares the questioner for the explicit advice. This is because in Thelma's view, the problem might be caused by the daughter-in-law's feeling of discomfort with the questioner around the house all the time. Although the questioner's intention is to help the family, Thelma feels that she should give the family a chance to manage themselves. However, she does this in a very subtle and thoughtful manner which might be due to the questioner's maturity and mother status. Therefore, to soften the impact of asking the questioner to move out of the house, Thelma precedes her advice with pre-sequences to explain the cause of the problem. Furthermore, she shows solidarity with the questioner by agreeing that the daughter-in-law is a *wicked* wife. Thus, Thelma and the questioner share a



unique moment of private joke when Thelma agrees that the *wicked* daughter-in-law should be left to run the household by herself.

So, we could summarize that pre-sequences or preparators prepare the questioner for the forthcoming advice and also sort out the problem in detail before providing a solution. Ultimately, it functions to mitigate the impact of explicit directives to cater to the questioner's face when a delicate issue is addressed. In this example, the pre-sequences are used to soften the impact of asking a mother to move out from her son's house because her daughter-in-law is not happy having her around (Skewis, 2003; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

#### **4.12.4 Sweeteners and Promises of Rewards**

Unlike the grounders and preparators, only limited occurrences of sweeteners and promises of rewards are observed in the advice texts. Example 31 illustrates instances of sweeteners found in an advice text.

#### **Example 25: Sweeteners**

##### **13 June 2010: The other woman (Appendix M)**

- S1      You are a wonderful person who has suffered much in life.
- S2      You have learnt to be considerate and sensitive to the needs of others because you love and care about your family.
- S3      You are trying very hard to be a good mother-in-law (MIL) but, unfortunately, your son's wife does not understand.
- S4      Yours will always be the age-old tale between the in-laws.

In example 25, the sweeteners are from lines S1 to S3. Thelma flatters the questioner by describing her as a wonderful, considerate, sensitive and loving mother-in-law. Similar to Skewis (2003), the sweeteners are positioned at the beginning of the text to establish good feelings for the questioner. It is also to mitigate the upcoming advice by indirectly suggesting that the problem is not the questioner's fault as she is a wonderful human being. Valor (2000) agrees that sweeteners contribute to establishing rapport and solidarity as it redress the other face-threatening-act used in the advice texts. Therefore, the use of sweeteners is a positive

politeness strategy. In contradiction, Yates (2005) stated that sweeteners only function to create warmth and indicate approval, rather than acting as a *solidary* move.

Another external mitigator that is rarely used in the advice texts is the promises of rewards. Example 32 illustrates an instance of promise of reward mitigation strategy found in an advice text.

### **Example 26: Promises of rewards**

#### **15 August 2010: Poor, used guy (Appendix C1)**

- S9      Perhaps you should talk to her and tell her your feelings.
- S10     Or, move out and get a better job.
- S11     When you can date her on your own terms instead of being in her employment, the relationship could be better.**
- S12     Neither party needs to have any obligations other than emotional attachments and hopefully, love.

The extract of an advice text in Example 26 above is written to address the problem of a questioner who feels that his employer/girlfriend does not appreciate his love towards her and his hard work to develop her company. He writes to Thelma to solicit advice on how to solve the problem. In line S9 and S10, Thelma writes the advice using YPD (line S9) and PIM (line S10) imperative forms. In line S11, Thelma justifies her advice by giving logical reasons to support her arguments. Apart from justifying the advice, line S11 also promises sort of a reward for the questioner if he quits working for the girlfriend. The reward is that his relationship with the girlfriend will flourish as she can no longer command the questioner to do things for her as an employee. In this example, the reward promised in the advice texts does not necessarily come in the form of tangible things but can also come in the form of intangible thing such as a promise for a better life ahead. Thus, by looking forward to this reward, there is a higher chance that the questioner is willing to change his job or simply discusses the matter with the girlfriend. Furthermore, the promised reward will not be granted by Thelma, but it will be gained from the questioner's relationship if he follows the advice given.

### **4.13 INTERNAL MITIGATION**

In the advice texts, the internal mitigations employed by Thelma are lexical hedges/phrases to soften the illocutionary force of the advice given. Among the common lexical hedges/phrases used are softeners (modal auxiliary verbs and adverbs). The modal verbs and adverbs are identified as internal mitigators when they mitigate the illocutionary act in the Head Act of the structures.

#### **4.13.1 Softeners: Modal Auxiliary Verbs**

Table 8 (refer page 164) presents the distribution of modal auxiliary verbs used throughout the advice texts. Only the modal verbs that mitigate the directives internally are analysed in this study.

Table 8: The Distribution of Modal Auxiliary Verbs in the Advice Texts

<b>Modal Verb</b> <b>Directive Forms</b>	<b>Should</b>	<b>Will</b>	<b>Must</b>	<b>Can</b>	<b>Would</b>	<b>Could</b>	<b>May</b>
<b>Imperative</b>							
PIM	1				1		
YPD	7	2	5			4	
YND	3		2	1			
<b>Declarative</b>							
Hint	2					1	
<b>Interrogative</b>							
Modal interrogative	3	1		2	3		
<b>Imbedded</b>							
Imbedded imperative		5		2	1		
Imbedded + YPD	2	1	3	1			1
Imbedded + Modal Interrogative					2		
Imbedded + YND	2			1			
Imbedded + Imbedded Imperative		1		1			
Imbedded + PIM	1						
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

Modal auxiliary verbs are mostly applied to soften the advice and downtone the strong force of commands. The use of modal auxiliary verbs is a negative politeness strategy as it creates distance between Thelma and the questioners to imply Thelma's respect for the questioner's autonomy. The modals that are used as internal mitigators in the advice texts are *should* (21 times), *will* and *must* (10 times each), *can* (8 times), *would* (7 times), *could* (5 times) and *may* (once). Some of the modal auxiliary verbs that appear in YPD and YND imperatives have been discussed in Section 4.6.1.3 (YPD and YND). Other examples of modal auxiliary verbs are as follows.

### Example 27: Should

#### 3 October 2010: Father's Lost Manhood (Appendix O1)

S7       Perhaps you **should** talk to your dad, but not pass derogatory remarks or criticise his woman.

Example 27 shows the modal *should* use in a YPD structure in the advice text. There is a double mitigation in line S7 where the modal *should* is used alongside the adverb *perhaps*. The adverb *perhaps* helps to show Thelma's uncertainty of the advice which decreases the degree of imposition. The modal *should* that comes after *perhaps* reduces the confrontational tone of the advice although Thelma uses the accusing second person pronoun *you*. The use of double mitigation in line S7 indicates negative politeness strategy as Thelma distances herself from the advice (Ruhi, 1999; Larina, 2005). Palmer (1986), Valor (2000) and Ruhi (1999) state that the modal verbs and adverbs are used in speeches when a speaker wants to illustrate his personal involvement and subjective evaluation in the issue. Thus, the adverb *perhaps* and the modal *should* used in the advice text indicate Thelma's low personal involvement in the advice given.

Thelma's hesitation of the advice in line 7 allows her to be mistaken if the advice backfires because the advice is given based only on the facts known to her such as a father would never scold his daughter over his mistresses or the daughter has the right to talk about her feelings with the father. So, Thelma uses the modal *should* to show the probability that the questioner can talk to the father as she knows her father better than anyone else. Therefore, apart from hedging the force of the advice, the modal *should* and adverb *perhaps* leaves the responsibility of making decision to the questioners (Coates, 1983; Valor, 2000; Leung, 2009; Huddleston, 2009).

Example 28 illustrates an instance of *will* where it is used 10 times as internal mitigator in the advice text.

### Example 28: Will

#### 25 July 2010: The other woman (Appendix M)

- S10 If your daughter-in-law simply does not want you around, there can be no compromise.  
S11 You **will** have to decide if you can live with another of your children or have a place of your own.

The modal *will* is used in a YPD structure (line S11) where *will* plays dual functions where it acknowledges the questioner of what she has to do and indicates future tense of the structure. The future tense helps to decrease the impact of the advice because instead of pressuring the questioner to take the action immediately, Thelma tells the questioner to do the action at a later time to give her some time to think and decide as she wishes. The use of *will* also conveys Thelma's uncertainty of her advice as it might not be the best solution for the questioner and her family as future can only be predicted rather than determined (Coates, 1983; Leung, 2009). Furthermore, Kohnen (2008) suggested that *will* is also used to raise the issue of the questioners' willingness in doing the proposed action in the advice.

Similar to *will*, the modal *can* mitigates Head Acts nine times in the advice texts. Example 29 shows the modal verb *can* used in a few advice texts.

### Example 29: Can

#### 26 September 2010: Turning a Deaf Ear (Appendix L1)

- S7 **Can** you get a relative/ friend or hire help to care for the baby and take over the household chores?

#### 7 February 2011: Foolish sister (Appendix B)

- S9 How **can** you continue to love this man who refused to take responsibility when you had a miscarriage?  
S10 How **can** you not acknowledged the lack of interest in you when he ignored another man's attraction for you?

The sentences in Example 29 above demonstrate the modal *can* used in two advice texts, Appendix L1 and Appendix B. In Appendix L1, an imbedded imperative structure (line

S7) is used meanwhile in Appendix B, two modal interrogatives (lines S9 and S10) are used. In the three structures, the modal *can* indicates the possibility of the questioner taking the needed actions to solve their problems. The modal *can* naturally has a low illocutionary force, thus indicating Thelma's lack of pressure and confidence in the propositions. Since *can* is used as conventionally indirect forms, the advice comes across as a low impact suggestion (Valor, 2000). Leung (2009) also states that *can* is used to indicate factualness as such observed in line S9 (Appendix B).

Apart from being used in the positive form, the modal auxiliaries can also be combined with *not* to form the negative form *cannot*. An example of a negative form *cannot* is in the advice text *Cut your son off* (Appendix A1), in line S4 “*As parents, you **cannot** do more*” in addressing the questioner's problem. In that advice, the modal *cannot* implies two meanings; a) it is a fact that the parents have done everything that they can to help the son and b) the parents are not allowed to help the son anymore. So, *cannot* that is used in a YND imperative is a weak prohibition where it reduces the force of the advice, control the questioner's act and conveys the informality in Thelma's tone when advising the questioners (Valor, 2000; Leung, 2009).

Unlike other modal verbs that mitigate a directive, *must* intensifies it. *Must* is used ten times as internal mitigator in the advice texts and the examples are as follow:

### **Example 30: Must**

#### **3 October 2010: Fatal attraction (Appendix M1)**

S1      If you love your man, you **must** forgive and try to forget.

#### **26 September 2010: Turning a deaf ear (Appendix L1)**

S13      You **must** learn to talk to her, and soothe her when she cries during recurring nightmares.

The example above shows the *must* used in two advice texts, *Fatal attraction* (line S1) and *Turning a deaf ear* (line S13). In line S1, *must* is used in an if-statement + YPD imperative while in line S13, *must* is used in a YPD imperative. *Must* is one of the strongest modal verbs that shows Thelma's permission for the questioner to do something and the

questioner's obligation to do the action. In line S1, the modal *must* is used to emphasize the questioner's obligation towards her husband by giving him another chance. Meanwhile in line S13, Thelma intensifies that the questioner needs to learn to comfort his wife in order to solve the problem. Thus, the modal *must* conveys Thelma's certainty and confidence in the truth of the advice and the questioners' obligation to follow it (Coates, 1983; Leung, 2009). It is evident that instead of softening the illocutionary force, *must* intensifies the advice. This makes it an *upgrader* rather than a mitigator.

#### **4.13.2 Lexical Hedges/Softeners: Adverbs**

There are two types of adverbs that appear in the advice texts which are the probability adverbs and the descriptive adverbs. The probability adverb is *perhaps* that functions indicate Thelma's uncertainty of the proposed advice that reduces the degree of imposition and makes it more feasible for the questioners to adopt the advice. Meanwhile, the descriptive adverbs are used to describe the noun or the adjectives in the advice texts. It also describes Thelma's personal judgment and personal involvement in the proposed advice (Leung, 2009; Coates, 1983; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008).

##### **4.13.2.1 Probability Adverbs**

Table 9 (refer page 169) illustrates the distribution of probability adverbs in the advice texts. Two probability adverbs *perhaps* and *probably* are found in the advice texts but only *perhaps* mitigate the advice internally.



Table 9: The Distribution of Probability Adverbs in the Advice Texts

<b>Adverbs</b>	<b>Perhaps</b>
<b>Directive Forms</b>	
<b>Imperative</b>	
YPD	7
<b>Imbedded</b>	
Imbedded + modal interrogative	1
Imbedded + YPD	1
Imbedded + PIM	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

The probability adverbs or non-verbal modality are used in the advice texts to create a sense of uncertainty and hesitancy on Thelma's part as an advice-giver (Valor, 2000; Leung, 2009). By using the adverbs, Thelma downtones the impact of the advice by reducing her authoritativeness in the personal issues to make the questioners feel more in control of their problems. With the power status decreased, Thelma acts as a friend who is genuinely trying to help the questioners solve their problems. The uncertainty in Thelma's tone illustrates her effort to give advice despite her hesitation (see Example 39). By using the probability adverbs, it is conveyed that Thelma's advice might not always be true, thus she is not to be blamed if the advice fails to solve the questioners' problems. The probability adverbs are markers of formality and politeness. When they are used in the advice texts, Thelma tries to create some distance with the questioner to show respect towards the questioners' privacy. Example 31 illustrates the probability adverbs *perhaps*.

### Example 31: Perhaps

15 August 2010: Poor, used guy (Appendix C1)

- S7      **Perhaps** you expected more than playing housekeeper and office boy.  
S8      You have been patient but now you feel that she has been keeping love at bay while seemingly exploiting your love and goodwill.  
S9      **Perhaps** you should talk to her and tell her your feelings.

Table 9 illustrates that *perhaps* is used nine times as internal mitigators in the advice texts. In Example 31, line S9 is a YPD while line S7 is an elaboration of the questioner's feelings. Both sentences are initiated with *perhaps* that shows uncertainty of the propositions and advice in lines S7 and S9. However, only *perhaps* in S9 plays the function of an internal mitigator. In line S9, *perhaps* functions as a lexical hedge to show Thelma's hesitancy and uncertainty that the talk with the employer/girlfriend will go as well as they hope for. Apart from that, *perhaps* is Thelma's effort to appear formal and create distance from the issue to convey respect for the questioner's personal life and privacy.

#### 4.13.2.2 Descriptive Adverbs

Descriptive adverbs are adverbs that explain the condition of nouns or adjectives. Table 10 shows the distribution of the descriptive adverbs that mitigate the advice internally in the advice texts.

Table 10: The Distribution of Descriptive Adverbs in the Advice Texts

<b>Adverbs</b>	<b>Really</b>	<b>Simply</b>	<b>Just</b>	<b>Truly</b>	<b>Seriously</b>
<b>Directive Forms</b>					
<b>Imperative</b>					
PIM		2	1		
NIM					1
YPD		1	1		
YND	4	1			
<b>Imbedded</b>					
Imbedded + YPD	1				
If-statement		1			
Imbedded + if-statement			1		
Imbedded + PIM				1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 10 illustrates that the adverbs *really* and *simply* are used five times each, while *just* is used three times. *Truly* and *seriously* are used one time each. Apart from the adverbs listed above, other descriptive adverbs that appear as internal mitigators in the advice texts are *frankly*, *absolutely* and *carefully*. By using these adverbs or attitudinal-markers in the advice, Thelma shows the extent of her involvement and her subjective evaluation in the issue (Ruhi, 1999; Vasilieva, 2004). In a way, the use of the adverbs is Thelma's strategy to maintain the questioners' positive face by showing compassion towards them. The term *descriptive adverbs* is used as these adverbs describe Thelma's feelings, opinions and beliefs on specific issues. Furthermore, the descriptive adverbs help to illustrate the degree of intensity or moderation of the proposed advice.

Table 10 shows that the descriptive adverb *really* is used most frequently in the advice texts with 11 times. This is followed by the adverb *just* (six times), *simply* (five times), and the rest of the adverbs with two times each. Example 41 presents an example of the adverb *really* identified in an advice text.

### **Example 32: Really**

#### **14 February 2010: Find her and confess (Appendix D)**

S13     If you really like her, then get out there and find her.

Example 32 demonstrates the adverb *really* that is used to intensify the lexical *like*. The intensifier *really* is used in an if-statement to emphasize the advice PIM in the second phrase. Although *really* aggravates the lexical *like*, it is not meant to be impolite (Arronsson and Theorell, 1999). Instead, it is prompting the questioner's emotions to lead him to take required action. Similar to the other adverbs, the use of *really* indicates Thelma's emotion and personal involvement in the matter (Valor, 2000). The fact that Thelma uses *really* rather than *very* shows her attempts at informality and friendliness in the interactions to enhance solidarity with the questioner.

Based on Vasilieva's (2004) adverbs category, the adverbs used in the advice texts such as *surely*, *frankly*, *really* and *truly* are a combination of boosting adverbs that indicates certainty. These adverbs intensify the advice via hedging adverbs such as *just*, *simply* and

*hopefully* that soften possible threatening act while at the same time express Thelma's personal involvement in the matter. While boosting adverbs try to build rapport via positive politeness strategy, the hedging adverbs downtone the force of the advice to show respect via negative politeness strategy. Thus, it can be summed that Thelma tries to balance the positive and negative politeness strategies in the advice texts to show her sincerity, respect and tactfulness in maintaining the questioners' face and giving the best advice (Larina, 2005; Brown and Levinson, 1978; Ruhi, 1999; Vasilieva, 2004; Krolak and Rudnicka, 2006).

Table 10 shows that the adverb *just* is used six times in the advice texts. Example 42 illustrates the descriptive advice *just* identified in the advice texts.

### **Example 33: Just**

#### **11 July 2010: Dirty old man (Appendix T)**

S11      His behaviour is not worthy of your concern, so if you can live with it, **just** have a great time with your grandchildren and children

In example 33 of the advice text *Dirty old man* above, a 50-year-old questioner writes to Thelma to ask for advice about her husband who loves to visit erotic websites and have sexual online chats with other girls. Now that their daughter has just given birth, the questioner wants to visit her but is afraid of leaving the husband alone. She asks Thelma for advice on the matter. The whole advice is in the imbedded if-statement and PIM forms. Thelma uses *just* to mitigate the directness of the PIM form in the second phrase where she tells the questioner to enjoy her time with her daughter and grandchildren without worrying about her husband as he is irresponsible. The first phrase of line S11 serves as a justification for the PIM in the second phrase. Therefore, the advice in line S11 is mitigated twice via the imbedded phrase that justifies the advice and the adverb *just* that softens the impact of PIM. The use of the adverb *just* in the advice texts is confirmed by Jones (1992) who found that a socially close Morris dancing team used *just* frequently in their speeches to mitigate their directives when addressing each other.

## Conclusion

This section discusses the mitigation strategies that Thelma uses in the advice texts to soften the illocutionary force of the advice. The strategies include the syntactic mitigation, external mitigation and internal mitigation. The syntactic mitigation is the most regularly employed strategy in the advice texts as the hints and imbedded forms construct 45.1 percent of the total directive structures in the advice texts (see Table 6, page 82). The preparators and grounders of external mitigation also frequently appear in the advice texts as they prepare the questioners for the forthcoming advice and justify the given advice to lower the impact of the directives. On the other hand, the sweeteners and promises of rewards are rarely used as mitigation devices in the advice texts.

As for the internal mitigation, lexical hedges and softeners such as modality verbs and adverbs are employed in the advice texts. The modal verbs such as *should*, *will* and *can* and adverbs such as *perhaps*, *really* and *simply* play multiple functions in the advice texts to: a) reduce the illocutionary force of the advice, b) shows probability, possibility and uncertainty and c) show the extent of Thelma's judgment and personal involvement in the matter (Coates, 1983; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008; Leung, 2009). However, instead of merely mitigating the advice, there are also lexical hedges that intensify the illocutionary force of the advice to emphasize its importance such as the modal *must*.

Many of these strategies including the indirect advice forms and lexical hedges indicate the strategies of negative politeness. According to previous researchers such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Valor (2000) and Dontcheva-Navratilova (2008), lexical hedges show negative politeness strategy as Thelma tries to create distance between herself and the questioners to convey respect and soften the force of the given advice.

However, the uses of sweeteners, promises of rewards, intensifier and adverbs indicate Thelma's personal involvement and judgment in the matters. Also, the more personal level of interaction which is evident via the structures in present tense shows Thelma's degree of informality and friendliness in the advice texts (Valor, 2000). Therefore, Thelma tries to balance her act of deference towards the questioners with the solidarity-enhancing strategies to cater to both negative and positive faces, despite more frequent negative politeness mitigation strategies employed in the advice texts.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter sums up the research by outlining all the findings found in this study to answer the research questions. In Section 5.1, the summary of findings is recapped. This section includes:

- 5.1.1 General structure of problem and advice texts
- 5.1.2 Research question 1: The forms and functions of directives in the advice texts
- 5.1.3 Research question 2: the relationship between forms and functions of directives and the protection of face
- 5.1.4 Research question 3: the face-saving strategies used in the advice texts

Following these sections are the implications of this study (5.2), the recommendation for future study (5.3) and limitation of the study (5.4)

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The summary of findings in this study is preceded by the general structure of problem and advice texts. This is followed by a summary of the finding for each research question.

### 5.1.1 General Structure of the Advice Texts

The advice texts are preceded by titles and problem texts that describe the issue presented such as *Foolish sister*, *Topsy-turvy love affair* and *Fatal attraction*. There is an abundance of directives in the advice texts including imperatives, hints and imbedded forms. The directives in the advice texts tend to appear mostly at the final position although it is also dispersed in the initial and medial positions. In solving the problems, Thelma's advice-giving strategies are sorting through the options, clarifying the questioners and other parties' strengths and weaknesses, stating her belief of what the questioners should do and finally leaving the responsibility of making decision to the questioners which is made explicit by a disclaimer note. In her advice, Thelma uses a semi-formal and semi-friendly approach to keep the conversation light yet loaded with advice in simple and complex sentences. This might be due to the publication needs of the newspaper. However, there are also evidences of local slang such as the particle *lah* which is a politeness marker that does not carry any specific meaning (Asmah Omar, 1982). Thelma's tone of advice varies accordingly to the issues discussed. For example, Thelma uses more formal and indirect tone when giving advice on a serious issue and adopts a more informal, laid-back and direct tone when discussing more trivial issues. Although the analysis is successful, it would have been more helpful if the researcher manage to get Thelma's feedback on the forms and functions used in the advice texts.

### 5.1.2 Research Question 1

In the advice texts, there are basically three forms of directives identified which are imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives (hints). However, since a lot of imbedded structures surface in the analysis, this study expands Ervin-Tripp's (1976) imbedded imperative form to include more imbedded forms such as the *if-statement* and *imbedded linkers* which are prominent in the advice texts.

Significantly, imperatives are used most frequently in the advice texts. This is followed by hints, imbedded forms and interrogatives. The positive imperative (PIM) structure is extensively applied while the negative imperative (NIM), you positive directive (YPD) and you negative directive (YND) are also regular in the advice text to complement

PIM. PIM is frequently used in the advice texts probably because of its directness that eliminate ambiguity, its positiveness which is due to the positive verbs used and the optimism that questioners' problems can be solved when the structure is used. Although direct, the positive tone of the PIM structure is less threatening than the prohibiting tone of NIM and the confrontational tone of YPD and YND. This is probably the reason that the NIM, YPD and YND structures are used less frequently than the PIM structure. In general, imperatives enable Thelma's advice to be expressed sincerely and spontaneously which is important in building good rapport and gain the questioners' trust. The spontaneity of PIM also helps to make the advice texts seem interactive and conversation-like instead of purely rigid and formal written text.

The second most frequent structure in the advice text is hint which is an indirect declarative form. It is used as frequently as PIM to play multiple functions such as; preparing the questioners for advice, justifying given advice, gauge the questioners' emotions and feelings on the issues discussed and inherently leading the questioners to take certain actions to solve their problems. When used, hints do not force the questioner to do the actions, but simply state facts, which gives the liberty of deciding to the questioners.

Together with hint, the imbedded form helps to balance directness in the advice texts. The most regularly used imbedded forms are the *if-statements* and *imbedded with linkers*. Other imbedded forms include imbedded imperatives, imbedded + PIM, imbedded + hint and so forth. The use of if-statements and other imbedded forms give some degree of formality and high degree of politeness to illustrate respect for the questioners' personal autonomy as well as to suit the publication need of newspapers.

Finally, the interrogative is the least frequent appearing form in the advice texts. There are three structures of interrogative which are the *yes-no question directive*, *wh-question* and *modal interrogative*. The interrogative form is rarely used in this study probably because the purpose of advice texts is to provide advice to the questioners which is more commonly done in the imperative, hint and imbedded form rather than question forms. However, when used, the interrogatives point out issues and indirectly prompt the questioners to think about the possible situation and solution to solve their problems. Similar to hint and imbedded form, the interrogative acts as a preparator before an advice is given.

The four types of directives play the functions *advice* and *hint* in the advice texts. The function *advice* is used more frequently than *hint* as advice text is the context of interaction.



The function *advice* is constructed with a variety of imperative and imbedded forms while the function *hint* includes the variety of interrogative and declarative forms. The function *advice* predominates the advice text probably because of its high pragmatic clarity that intensifies and makes explicit the meaning of the advice (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Along with *advice*, the function *hint* lends support to highlight and justify the directives used in the advice texts.

The advice texts provide advice to solve questioners' problems. The forms and functions used in the advice texts are a balance of directness and indirectness. Although a high frequency of imperatives is applied in the advice texts, findings show that indirect forms are used as extensively as the direct form. The ratio of the direct and indirect forms is 44:55 which indicates a balance between directness and indirectness. However, it is clearly evident that Thelma prefers the imperative structures when advising the questioners. Imperative is the direct form while hint is a non-conventionally indirect form. Interrogative and imbedded form are conventionally indirect structures. Although modal interrogative is one of the most polite structures in the act of giving advice, the finding shows otherwise, as it is rarely used in the advice texts. Meanwhile, hint and imperative which are categorised as less polite structures by previous researchers are used extensively in the advice texts. This contradicts previous findings that imperative and hint are impolite while modal interrogative and imbedded form are more polite and desired in interactions (Ng, 2008).

The regularity of imperative and hint occurrences in the advice texts demonstrate the high degree of appropriacy and politeness of the directives. In interactions, a society rationally applies the most appropriate form recurrently to avoid threatening each others' face. This is because polite forms are the ones that are regularly used in interactions (Terkourafi, 2005). Therefore, in the context of the *Dear Thelma* advice column, the imperative and hint are the norm among the society that includes Thelma, the questioners and other readers as the structures are acceptable and unchallenged. Furthermore, the repetition of similar issues in the problem and advice texts (see Table 12) provide Thelma, the questioners and other readers' with prior experience in dealing with the problems. This rationalizes and permits the imperative and hint structures to be used repeatedly in the advice texts.

### 5.1.3 Research Question 2

Contrary to popular belief, imperative and hint are appropriate, polite forms in the advice texts as they are regularly employed. Imperative is direct, forceful directive with strong illocutionary force and a high degree of imposition. It shows Thelma's confidence and certainty in the advice. The use of imperative in the advice texts might be very threatening to the questioners as it commands them to do something which might be against their will and shows their incompetence in handling their problems. However, Vine (2009) states that, when a request is directly solicited, the imperative is commonly used as a response. Therefore, since the questioners specifically solicit the advice from Thelma, the high frequency of imperatives in the advice texts is justified.

The high frequency of imperatives shows Thelma's positive politeness strategy to reduce the gap and achieve equality of power with the questioners in discussing personal issues. The positive politeness strategy illustrates Thelma's effort to enhance solidarity with the questioners and treat them as friends rather than strangers to ensure the acceptability of advice (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Yule, 1996). Thus, Thelma portrays herself as a reliable and truthful friend who sincerely wants to help the questioners (Mckinstry and Mckinstry, 1991; Locher, 2006). Sometimes, Thelma shares personal secrets and jokes with the questioner which is evident via agreement on certain matters as solidarity is enhanced by sharing similar jargons and slangs with each other (Yule, 1996). The positive politeness strategy thus helps to maintain the questioner's face from humiliation and embarrassment because even though the problems might be the questioners' fault, Thelma still tries to maintain the camaraderie between them.

Although the positive politeness strategy creates friendship and closeness between Thelma and the questioners, there is also an extensive application of the negative politeness strategy via the employment of hints, imbedded forms, interrogative forms and lexical hedges. While the positive politeness shows redress, the negative politeness strategy demonstrates deference to protect the questioner's face (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Yule, 1996). Thelma allows the freedom of deciding to the questioner, thus avoids imposing on their negative face. By having the liberty to choose, the questioner would be able to think about the advantages and disadvantages of their options, thus choosing the best decision for themselves. When Thelma simply sorts out the questioners' options without forcing them to take her advice, it portrays Thelma as someone who genuinely cares for the questioner's

feelings rather than only to solve the problem. This might help to influence the questioner to follow Thelma's advice.

The highly direct imperative is used together with hint that functions to balance the confrontational tone of imperative in the advice texts. Hint is a non-conventional indirect form and the least forceful directive but is low in pragmatic clarity (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1987, Jones, 1992; Rinnert and Kobayashi, 1999). Polite structure is high in pragmatic clarity, less coercive (Blum-Kulka, 1987) and is used regularly in interactions (Terkourafi, 2005). So, imperative and hint are considered as two polite structures that are regular and complement each others' degree of (in)directness and coerciveness in the advice texts which indicate their high level of politeness and appropriacy in the advice texts (Terkourafi, 2005). The application of hints gives the questioners liberty to make their own decision in solving problems to preserve their autonomy (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Vine, 2009; Georgalidou, 2008). Likewise, the imbedded form is also a marker of negative politeness and is used to mitigate the directness of the advice and create distance between Thelma and the questioners. According to Georgalidou (2008) and Vine (2009) it is a high level politeness and formality marker.

In the advice texts, hints and the imbedded forms are usually used as pre-sequences and grounders to prepare the questioner for the forthcoming advice and justify the given advice. As pre-sequences, the hint and imbedded structures precede the direct imperative structure to soften the impact of the advice. By having anticipated the advice, the questioner's face would be less-threatened, thus making them more accepting of the advice. Similarly, the grounders may come before or after the direct advice to rationalize the reason that the advice is given. The justification also serves to soften the illocutionary force of the more direct advice. By justifying the advice, Thelma shows her expertise and confidence in the validity of the advice.

In this study, it is observed that Thelma uses both the positive and negative politeness strategies in the advice texts. The positive politeness strategy is achieved via direct imperative structures while the negative politeness strategy is achieved via indirect forms. Thus, it can be assumed that in the *Dear Thelma* written advice column which is based on the Malaysian context, the advice-giver uses both positive and negative politeness strategies to achieve its purpose. The use of imperative, hint and imbedded structures are commonly found as preparators and grounders in the advice texts. Thus, the imperatives, hints and imbedded

forms that are used in the advice texts are appropriate and polite as they are accepted by the society and unchallenged by the public (Terkourafi, 2005). Plus, the positive politeness and the negative politeness are used to balance each other in the advice texts

Apart from the politeness strategies, Thelma also occasionally employs the marked behaviours when the questioners are being disrespectful in their problem texts and when the issues presented are trivial. The two marked behaviours are *downgrading descriptive terms* and *sarcasm*. These marked behaviours are considered as impolite because they are rarely applied in the advice texts (Terkourafi, 2005). When used, however, they humiliate the questioners' face and downgrade their status.

#### **5.1.4 Research Question 3**

In the advice texts, the external and internal mitigators are used to soften the illocutionary force of the advice. The external mitigators that are frequently used are the syntactic mitigation (hints and imbedded forms), the preparators and the grounders. While grounders provide justification for the advice given, the preparators precede the advice to prepare the questioners for the upcoming advice (Yule, 1996; Blum-Kulka, 1989; Skewis, 2003; Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008). Most of the advice are followed by grounders or preceded by the preparators. The grounders also appear before the advice, but the preparators only appear before the advice. Pre-sequences and grounders provide the questioners with options to either follow or dismiss the advice given (Yule, 1996; Searle, 1975).

The internal mitigations identified in the advice texts include lexical hedges and softeners such as the modal auxiliary verbs, the probability adverbs and the descriptive adverbs. The modal auxiliary verb is a negative politeness strategy that creates distance and marks a high degree of politeness. In the advice texts, the modal *should*, *will* and *must* are most frequently used to mark tenses, express Thelma's degree of confidence and mitigate or intensify the illocutionary force of the advice. Meanwhile, the use of probability and descriptive adverbs such as *perhaps*, *really* and *simply*, shows Thelma's degree of personal involvement in the matter (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Coates, 1983; Georgalidou, 2008; Leung, 2009).

The regularity of the modal auxiliary verbs are justified as Kohnen (2008) stated that they are more commonly found in written rather than spoken texts. The high occurrence of the lexical hedges and softeners in the advice texts illustrate Thelma's attempt to provide a balance between being distant and personally involve in the issues discussed.

## **5.2 Implication**

From this study, it is observed that the written advice texts in a local newspaper employs many direct imperative structures alongside indirect structures such as hints and imbedded forms. This proves that the written and spoken texts are constructed using different structures (Asmah Omar, 1982). However, due to the publication needs, there is a balance between directness and indirectness in advice texts. More importantly, taboo topics such as affairs and sexuality are being discussed openly in the advice texts that demonstrate a shift in the way Malaysians perceive private, personal issues and what is appropriate and inappropriate in the society. The society has probably realized that there is a medium for them to share any kind of personal problems and solicit advice should they feel as if they are at a dead end.

From this study, it is observed that the advice texts are loaded with directives. Thus, the advice texts can serve as an authentic material to be used in English language classrooms in Malaysia. It could help in creating a more interactive learning environment among the students if they are asked to generate ideas on how to solve problems. The structures used by the students in the construction of the advice could be analysed as a comparison to the findings of this study. However, extra precautions must be taken to ensure that only suitable issues are presented and discussed in the classrooms so as to avoid the negative influence to the young minds of the students.

### 5.3 Recommendation

There are a number of elements that can be improved for the betterment of similar studies in the future. Firstly, more advice columns could be gathered to find a more significant pattern of the form and functions of the directives. This is because, apart from collecting the advice column directly from the newspaper, there is an archive of the newspaper advice column that is available online. Thus, more advice texts can be gathered to generate more significant findings.

Secondly, instead of just focusing on the advice texts, both problem and advice texts could be studied for other speech acts to see the relationship between the problem and the advice texts. The relationship might be able to explain the reason that Thelma uses specific types of speech act to give advice.

Thirdly, in the study of advice columns, it would be tremendously useful if the researcher could conduct an interview with the advice-columnists to justify the forms and functions used in the advice texts. This would help the study to get a glimpse of the advice-columnists' personal view on the advice columns and the ways they choose to answer the advice columns.

Apart from that, two types of advice columns from similar or differing cultures could be compared and contrasted to see the similarities and differences. This could assist in the study of a society's norm and culture.

Another improvement that could be carried out is by analysing the speech act of the problem texts in relation to the advice texts. This means that both problem texts and advice texts should be analysed in pairs. It could be conducted qualitatively to include all the forms that appear in the problem and advice texts. However, the quantitative method could also be used to calculate the frequency of forms occurrence in the problem texts and advice texts as a complement to the qualitative method. This study would help the researcher to analyse the types of speech act that appear in both problem texts and advice texts.

## **5.4 Limitation**

This study as in other studies is not without its limitations. Firstly, the advice texts analysed is limited in number as the researcher only collected advice columns from the printed newspaper rather than using the online archive. Secondly, although a set of interview questions was sent to Thelma, the researcher failed to get any response to help justify the structures used in the advice texts. Thus, the justification of the structures is based on previous theories and analyst's prediction rather than from Thelma herself. Thirdly, this study does not analyse the structures in the problem texts in detail as there is limited directive presented in the texts. This disables any extended comparison to be carried out between the problem texts and the advice texts.