

**POLITENESS IN INTERACTIONS BETWEEN  
MIDDLE-AGED MALAYSIAN CHINESE AND THEIR  
AGING PARENTS**

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**2018**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF LINGUISTICS**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

**2018**

**UNIVERSITI MALAYA**

**ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION**

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Name of Degree: MASTER OF LINGUISTICS

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# POLITENESS IN INTERACTIONS BETWEEN MIDDLE-AGED MALAYSIAN CHINESE AND THEIR AGING PARENTS

## ABSTRACT

The study examines politeness in the interactions between middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents. It aims to investigate the employment of politeness strategies between middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents during mealtime conversations. The realisation of the different politeness strategies used in the interactions between middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents are explored. This study also investigates the types of politeness strategies that appear in the illocutionary acts of directives and commissives used by the participants of the study. Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness and Searle's (1969) classifications of speech acts are adopted as the theoretical framework of the research. A qualitative approach is employed to analyse five sets of mealtime conversations. The findings reveal that the most commonly used politeness strategies among the family members of the study are bald-on-record and positive politeness strategies, whereas negative politeness and off-record strategies are less often used. The aging parents employed more bald-on-record strategies to their middle-aged children, while middle-aged children employed more positive politeness strategies to their aging parents.

KESOPANAN DALAM INTERAKSI DI ANTARA ORANG DEWASA  
PERTENGAHAN UMUR CINA MALAYSIA DAN IBU-BAPA BERUSIA MEREKA

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian in mengkaji kesopanan dalam interaksi di antara orang dewasa pertengahan umur Cina Malaysia dan ibu-bapa berusia mereka. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meyelidik penggunaan strategi kesantunan dalam perbualan waktu makan di antara orang dewasa pertengahan umur Malaysia Cina dan ibu-bapa berusia mereka. Realisasi strategi kesantunan yang pelbagai di antara orang dewasa pertengahan umur dan ibu-bapa berusia diselidik. Selain itu, kajian ini juga menerokai penggunaan strategi kesantunan dalam pelbagai jenis aksi ilokusionari, iaitu direktif dan komisif. Brown dan Levinson (1987) Model kesopanan dan Searle (1969) aksi perbualan klasifikasi digunakan sebagai kerangka teoretikal untuk kajian ini. Kaedah kualitative digunakan untuk menganalisis sebanyak lima set perbualan waktu makan. Penemuan yang telah diperoleh menunjukkan strategi kesantunan yang paling kerap digunakan oleh ahli keluarga kajian ini adalah kesantunan berekod and kesantunan positif. Manakala kesantunan negatif dan kesantunan tanpa rekod didapati kurang digunakan oleh kalangan ahli keluarga kajian ini. Ibu bapa berusia Cina Malaysia menggunakan lebih banyak kesantunan berekod kepada orang dewasa pertengahan umur mereka, manakala orang dewasa pertengahan umur Cina Malaysia menggunakan lebih banyak kesantunan positif kepada ibu-bapa berusia mereka.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study would not have been possible without the support of many individuals to whom I am most grateful and thankful.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Puan Siti Nurbaya Mohd Nor for her patience and unceasing effort in helping me for the completion of this thesis. Her views and comments have always opened my mind to new aspect of research.

I would also like to thank the panel for my Proposal and Candidature Defence, Dr. Veronica Lowe and Dr. Mohsen khedri for their suggestions and insights.

I would also like to thank my father, Koh Beng Loo, and my mother, Ang Poo Khuan for their unlimited love and support which helped immensely throughout this journey. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to all my family members and friends who have always provided me emotional support and encouragement throughout these years.

Last but not least, I am sincerely grateful to have people who always stand by me through all the ups and downs. Thank you.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This study investigates the politeness strategies used in the interaction during mealtime among middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents. The aim is mainly to look into the various types of politeness strategies that emerge in the interaction of middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents when performing different kinds of illocutionary acts.

Politeness is significant in social interaction. People from different social cultural backgrounds may have different understanding, assessment and response to politeness. Social interaction is therefore a skill developed based on one's belief system which has been shaped by one's experience of observing and interacting with others since childhood, a system that encompasses norms and regulations of socially acceptable behaviours, manners, conversational styles, etc.

The way we observe and perceive our surroundings is influenced by the kind of experiences that we go through in our families. The understanding of politeness will then be demonstrated in the way we respond and communicate with people around us. According to Beebe, et al. (2002, p.358), "...families are a basic cultural unit". Interactions amongst family members would develop a common understanding of in-group politeness rules. Besides, different religions and practices may influence what is expected of each family. According to Pan (2000), social factors such as age, rank, in-group identity and setting should also be taken into consideration when an investigation of politeness is carried out. The way a person uses and manipulates language to

communicate thoughts and emotions is surely influenced by factors such as "...gender, ethnicity, age, class, and regional background..." (Tannen, 2005, p.4). Besides, there are also social factors that might influence one's conversational style such as who he or she is speaking with, the setting or social context, the purpose for speaking as well as the topic (Holmes, 2001, p.8). While there are socially prescribed acceptable behaviours that every speaker adheres to when approaching an interaction, this evaluation of behaviours will constantly be negotiated by the participants, both hearer and speaker, during the social interaction.

This chapter is made up of six sections. They consist of the statement of problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study and lastly a summary.

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

Politeness is important in family interaction. Being polite results in cooperation and promotes satisfactory relationship among family members. However, being impolite can cause much strain in the relationships. This may result in dissatisfaction and the breakdown of relationships when the interaction ends in a threatened face in one of the participants. Therefore, when the participants are placed in a communicative event, each will approach the interaction with their pre-existing perceptions of politeness. When perceptions clash, misunderstandings and conflicts might occur, endangering the face. These might threaten the face "... the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself..." (Goffman, 1999, p.308) of the participants involved.

Numerous scholars around the world such as Geoffrey N. Leech (1983); Robin Lakoff (1973); Yule (1996) and etc. have been concerned over polite behaviour. Politeness is given great importance as the consequences of being rude are great. Being rude can cause participants to lose face resulting in conflict. Subsequently, there will be a need for all

individuals who are involved in the conversation to try and resolve the conflict without sacrificing, or at least with the least amount of damage to anybody's face. This is of course based on an assumption, that face maintenance is "a condition of interaction" Goffman (1999, p.309), and every individual shares the same need for their 'face' to be preserved and the want to protect the face of others as well.

In addition, the use of bald-on-record is common among family members. This is because less mitigation is needed in the close social distance which is experienced by family members to allow solidarity and informality. "...such solidarity and informality in family interaction tend to be verbalised by high level of directness" (Blum-Kulka, 1990). Besides, Pillai's findings also show that more direct styles are used among family members because of the intimate nature of family relationships (Pillai, 2008). However, this assumption may unfortunately result in politeness being taken for granted; something not to be taken lightly. Family members who are used to talk in a direct form among themselves, form an internal interaction 'norm'. However this similar interaction norm use in workplace domain can cause misunderstanding. It is imperative because the way we communicate in a larger community is a reflection of the way we communicate at home.

The way middle-aged children and their aging parents interact and manage face needs is explored in order to understand how face threatening act (FTA) can be minimised through politeness strategies. The needs of both generations are realised through how middle-aged children and their aging parents approach the conversations. This is important because people negotiate face needs in everyday interactions. Face needs is important as Goffman (1967, p.7) explained that "individuals have emotional attachment to their faces." Therefore, if one of the 'face needs' of the participants is ignored, misunderstanding might occur. "To lose one's face can cause one to lose internal emotional and self-esteem" (Hogg and Vaughan, 2005). This problem could lead to



ineffective interaction among middle-aged children and their aging parents. It is important because the higher the quality of parent-child interaction the higher the degree of contentment with each other.

Besides that, when participants are in a close relationship with one another, then they ought to share a common understanding of the 'politeness rules' that govern the interaction. If this is so, then members of the same family ought to have the least or no conflicts at all. Zuraidah's (2008) findings revealed that there were more use of bald-on-record face-threatening acts and direct requests during father-daughter interactions in Malay requests but no conflict occurred. However, it is to be understood that people from different cultural backgrounds ought to emphasise different speech functions. "Different speech communities emphasise different functions and express particular functions differently" (Holmes, 1992, p.283). Problems of misperception might occur when people from different social cultural background interact. This is because people from different cultural background may have different perceptions of what politeness is and this may influence the way they express certain speech acts.

Conversations that take place at the dinner table are "governed by a host of explicit and implicit norms" (Brumark, 2006, p.174). In other words, the conversations that take place at the dinner table are ruled by a form of social behaviour. These norms govern not only how to perform the activity of having dinner but also the verbal and nonverbal means of acceptable dinner routines. Brumark explains that the family dinner talk is like any other social dinner conversations where there is the presence of unequal power relationships. Therefore, Brumark (2006, p.172) explains that "there seems to be a conflict between the need to display the unequal power relation for socialization purposes on the one hand and the desire to create an atmosphere of solidarity by avoiding face-threatening directives on the other". Thus it would be interesting to

identify how the participants employ the politeness strategy to maintain the “atmosphere of solidarity”.

In addition, Kuang (2008, p.121) explains that politeness is a “culturally defined phenomenon”. Thus, what is considered significant in the Western culture may not be relevant or even applicable to the Asian culture and would also differ in each individual family. Hence, this study aims to investigate a more personal area of family interaction at home.

Besides that, communication among family members could have implications on the familial relationship. Thus, it raises much concern because the quality of interaction and relationship in the family is reflective of an individual’s interaction and relationship with the society at large.

Middle-aged children and aging parents’ relationship studies from the linguistic perspective are scarce. This study attempts to add to this relatively less-explored area of pragmatics. Besides, it is hoped that readers will gain much insights through this research. This will help them to understand the importance of politeness and at the same time enable them to foster better relationships and promote social harmony.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study is to explore the politeness strategies used in the interaction during mealtime among middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents using the model of politeness provided by Brown and Levinson (1987). This study strives to examine the various kinds of politeness strategies that appear in the interactions between middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents when performing different kinds of illocutionary acts of directives and commissives.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

There are two research questions in this study.

1. What are the politeness strategies used by middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents in mealtime conversations?

Research question 1 intends to examine the various types of politeness strategies that emerge in the interaction between middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents during mealtime conversations. The study explores how the two generations demonstrate various kinds of politeness strategies during their mealtime conversations. In this study, the dominant types of politeness strategies are analysed. This section is crucial as it reveals the interlocutors' preferred politeness strategies. In this study, the realisation of different types of politeness strategies will be analysed and categorised according to Brown and Levinson's politeness model (1987).

2. What politeness strategies are used in directive and commissive speech acts?

The analysis includes the identification of the politeness strategies in directives and commissives speech acts in the conversations of middle-aged children and their aging parents. The analytical framework will be based on Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness model and Searle (1969) general classification system of speech acts.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

In family discourse, conversations among family members often occur spontaneously. In the process of sharing, discussing or even criticising in daily conversations, family members always demonstrate the use of politeness strategy regardless of whether they agree or disagree about an issue (Lim, 2012). Furthermore, the employment of politeness strategies in conversations maybe done consciously or unconsciously by the interlocutors (Hoebe, 2001). Hence, it is interesting to explore the politeness strategies

used in the Chinese family interaction because the Chinese community emphasizes the importance of saving and giving face when interacting with each other. *Mian zi* (face) in Chinese community is regarded as a vital aspect to take care of when interacting with each other (Haugh and Hinze, 2003).

Besides, the way middle-aged children and aging parents interact with each other may also differ when at home or when in public and whereby this study's scope is to investigate interaction at home, a more personal zone, might yield rich and interesting data for analysis. This study hopes to discover the mechanisms behind familial interaction; how the rules and norms that govern interaction are manifested in their conversation with one another.

This study looks into the interaction in the family setting of the Chinese community in Malaysia. Ling (1995) shows that Malaysian Chinese are linguistically more direct in expressing their view during their interaction. Hence, it is interesting to explore how Chinese culture determines the choice of politeness strategies and how they demonstrate it.

The use of kinship terms is one of the ways to express politeness in Asian culture, especially among the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The use of kinship term expresses respect for one's seniority (Kuang, 2008, p. 4). In the Malaysian context, every child is brought up to follow this rule of politeness. If they do not comply to the rule, they are labelled as impolite. As politeness is not only culturally but contextually dependent, this study is narrowed down to increase the validity of the data. Therefore, this study is looking at the interaction within family setting among the Chinese community which is a more personal zone. This might reveal interesting data for analysis.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

As politeness is both culturally and contextually dependent, three areas of this study namely, the participants, the setting as well as the type of data focused on, will be narrowed down to increase the validity and reliability of the data and also to facilitate data collection. Firstly, both the middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and the aging parents must be Malaysian and Chinese because different cultural backgrounds will have different perceptions on politeness. Secondly, while the researcher takes part in the daily lives of the participants, data is collected during mealtime conversations at home. Mealtime conversations in this study refer to conversations that take place during any meals. This study's interest is to analyse how politeness and face-work is linguistically expressed, therefore the main data for this study is the verbal communication of the participants which is collected via audio-recording.

The limitation of this study is that the presence of the researcher may cause the participants to be more cautious with their interaction thus causing an 'unreal' representation of the actual event. Consequently, this study adopts the 'ethnographical approach' where "the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people" (Creswell, 2007, p.68). The researcher stayed with the families throughout the data collection period so that they would be accustomed to the presence of the researcher thus maintaining the spontaneity of interaction.

The second limitation is the inevitability of the researcher being invited to participate in the conversation. While the researcher may try to reduce her contributions to a level which does not disrupt spontaneity, the presence and contributions of an outsider may influence the interaction –for example, both the aging parents and the middle-aged children would turn to the third person in their interaction. Nonetheless, this limitation could fall under the "emergent design" characteristic of qualitative studies as

highlighted by Creswell (2007, p. 39), in that there may be a different pattern that emerges from the data outside of that provided by the theoretical framework.

The third limitation is that since the data for this study covers only mealtime conversations which may result in a limited range of FTAs and politeness strategies used, its findings cannot be generalised to other situations as well as families.

## **1.6 Summary**

This study is conducted with the aim of exploring the politeness strategies used in the interactions during mealtime conversations among middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents. By investigating the use of politeness strategies in a more private form of communication that is family interaction, some rich and interesting data for analysis might emerge. Besides, it is interesting to explore how these family members maintain their social relationship through family talk. Overall, this study hopes to add to the current pool of literature on Chinese family interaction within the specified scope of study.

This study comprises of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background of the research. Important aspect such as objectives and research questions are discussed in this chapter. The second chapter provides discussions and critical review of the related studies. It is followed by the third chapter which discusses the methodology of this research. Significant elements such as instruments, data collection and theoretical framework are discussed. The fourth chapter presents the findings and discussions of this study. Lastly, the fifth chapter comprises summary, implications of the study and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The literature review comprises of a few sections which provide background information about the study. These sections consist of speech acts, politeness in speech acts, literature on speech acts, the various notions of politeness proposed by researchers, review of politeness theories, factors that influence politeness, politeness and culture, studies on politeness and lastly face threatening acts.

#### **2.1 Speech Acts**

The foundation of speech acts theory was laid by Austin (1962). Austin (1962, p.12) defined speech acts as “the actions performed in saying something.” He views language as actions which performed when an utterance is formed. According to Austin (1962) speech acts can be analysed in three different forms of act which are locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. The locutionary act is the basic form of an utterance. The illocutionary act is performed when a speaker forms an utterance with a specific purpose in mind. The perlocutionary act is the effect of an act on the hearer. Austin further explained the different forms of acts by providing the following examples:

Locutionary act: He said to me, ‘You can’t do that.’

Illocutionary act: He protested against my doing it.

Perlocutionary act: He pulled me up, checked me.

(Austin, 1962, p.102)

Meanwhile, there are researchers like Searle (1969), Yule (2014), and Finegan (2014) who studied the concept of speech acts. According to Yule (2014, p.131), speech act is defined as “the action performed by a speaker with an utterance.” On the other hand, Finegan (2014, p.304) defined speech act as “actions that are carried out through language”. Drawing inspiration from Austin’s (1962) theory of speech act, Searle (1969) categorised five types of illocutionary acts namely representatives, expressives, declaratives, directives, and commissives. The classification of speech act by Searle (1976) is represented below:

1. Representatives are those kinds of speech acts that express the truth of proposition for example, affirming, and concluding. Yule (1996, p.53) states that in using representatives, the speaker attempts to make the words fit the world.
2. Directives are the illocutionary acts which are intended to produce some effect through action by the hearer. Directives speech act occurs when the speaker expects the hearer to do something as a response, for example, questioning, ordering, suggesting, inquiring, requesting, or inviting. Ervin-Tripp (1976) states that any utterances that are intended to affect hearer’s behaviour are categorised as directives. Meanwhile, Leech (2014, p. 143) defines directive as “the communicative means we use when trying to get someone to do something they would probably not do of their own accord.” For Yule (1996, p. 54), directives are viewed as “those kinds of speech acts that are used to get someone else to do something.” It expresses what the speaker wants. By using directives, the speaker attempts to make the world fit the words.
3. Commissives are speech act that commits the speaker to some future action for example, promising, threatening, refusing, and offering. Yule (1996) viewed commissives as speech acts that express what the speaker intends. In using



commissives, the speaker undertakes to make the world fit the words. (Yule, 1996, p.54)

4. Expressive are those speech acts that state what the speaker feels, such as thanking, apologizing, encouraging, regretting, comforting, opposing, sympathizing, welcoming, complaining, congratulating. According to Yule (1996, p.53) they can be caused by something the speaker/hearer does, but they are about the speaker's experience which is associated with what he/she has gone through in life.
5. Declaratives are speech acts that change the reality in accord with the proposition of declaration for example declaring war, firing from employment.

Speech acts can be categorised into direct speech acts and indirect speech acts. Different types of speech acts are distinguished based on the three structural forms of; declarative, interrogative and imperative. Yule (1996, p. 54) explains that, when the structural form of a speech act has a direct relationship with its function, it is called a direct speech act. When the structural form of a speech act has an indirect relationship with its function, it is called an indirect speech act. The examples of the relationship between the structural form and the functions of speech acts are listed in the table below:

Table 2.1: The syntactic structures and the functions of speech acts. (Following Yule, 2014, p.131)

Utterances	Structures	Functions
Did you eat the pizza?	Interrogative	Question
Eat the pizza (please)!	Imperative	Command (Request)
You ate the pizza.	Declarative	Statement

Searle (1969) explained that speaker uses an indirect speech act to communicate a different meaning from the actual literal meaning. On the other hand, the hearer is expected to perceive the speaker's intention when performing FTAs. Kadar and Haugh

(2013, p. 23) claim that the hearer will also perceive that the speaker used this indirect approach in order to decrease the impact of the request on the hearer's negative face.

In short, as in social interactions, people communicate in different ways. It is essential to acknowledge the cultural variations which reveal the communicative profiles of different speech communities.

## **2.2 Politeness in Speech Acts**

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p.201) explain that "a speaker can choose among various degrees of (in) directness when formulating a speech act." For example, when a speaker wants to be perceived to be more polite, he/she will choose to formulate an indirect speech act. However, there are some factors that a speaker needs to be aware of when formulating a speech act. Speech acts require different degree of 'directness' when different contexts take place. Blum-kulka (1989, p. 197) claims that, the realization of different patterns of speech acts depend on the circumstances of a social context. Moreover, Blum-Kulka (1989, p.197) argues that different individuals might differ in their speech act realization patterns, depending on the variables such as sex, age, or level of education. Therefore, in order to determine the variability of the of speech act used, the study of speech act realization in a variety of situations within different cultures is required.

In the study of politeness in speech act, Kadar and Haugh (2013, p. 26) suggested that there are some factors that influence the 'directness' of speech acts. They argue that, the realisation of speech acts are "depending on the relationship between the participants, as well as depending on the type of imposition that the speech act involves". (Kadar and Haugh, 2013, p.26) For example, requests made towards someone's superiors might tend to be expressed less directly than request towards someone of social inferiority, or vice versa. (Kadar and Haugh, 2013, p.26) Besides, one's culture might tend to express

a request more or less directly than members of another culture. To that, Kadar and Haugh (2013, p.23) state that focusing on the speech act which is associated with politeness enables the researcher to define certain aspects of linguistic politeness in a systematic way.

Further, according to Leech (1983), indirectness is often associated with politeness in Pragmatics as it increases optionality for the hearer and it lessens the face-threat. In Searle's (1975) work on indirect speech acts, he proposes that "in directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness" (Searle, 1975, p.64).

In terms of politeness in speech act, Yule (2014, p.132) claims that the use of indirect speech acts such as requesting in an indirect way are considered more polite than direct speech acts. Likewise, Kadar and Haugh (2013, p.32) explain that "the notion of indirect speech acts fits nicely with the claim that politeness serves to avoid conflict by minimising imposition." It is to be noted that a speaker uses the indirect approach in order to decrease the impact of request on hearer to avoid any possible conflicts that might occur. On the part of hearer, he/she is expected to perceive the act as being polite when "indirectness" is used by the speaker. However, according to Cutting (2002, p. 19), the classification of utterances into indirect and direct speech acts is not an easy task as what we say in the utterances "often have more than one of the macro-functions of representative, commissive, directive, expressive and so on." Furthermore, Birner (2013, p.175) explains that the context of an utterance must also be considered when trying to understand a speaker's intended meaning.

Meanwhile, in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, there are super-strategies representing different levels of in/directness which reflect different level of politeness. For example, employing speech act by using the off-record strategy, such as hints, are

less direct and is considered to be more polite. The most direct and face-threatening acts of bald on-record strategy is considered less polite.

In short, the way speech act is performed and the role of the participants contribute to the expression of politeness in daily interaction. The interlocutors rely on a certain degree of politeness to ensure that the interaction goes as smoothly as possible.

### **2.3 Literature on Speech Acts**

Studies on speech acts in specific contexts are numerous. In his study on speech acts, Bayat (2013) employed the content analysis approach to explore the use of speech acts among the participants of 155 teacher candidates who are pursuing their education in the Faculty of Education in Akdeniz University. Bayat's (2013) study aimed to determine the strategies used while performing the different types of speech acts such as thanking, refusing, apologizing and complaining. Data was collected through participants' response in the written form in the language structure they perform in apologizing, complaining, refusing and thanking. The data was categorized according to strategies used in each of the speech acts. In the findings, Bayat (2013) revealed that the speech act of apologizing was performed explicitly being that, the participant did not want the mistake they made to ruin the relationship. Same goes for thanking which was also explicit. The act of complaining is mainly performed implicitly as the act of complaining is under the risk of relationship. As for the act of refusing, it was conducted nearly to the same degree in terms of explicitness and implicitness.

A study by Simon and Dejica-Cartis (2015) explored speech acts in written advertisements. They approached speech acts from an interdisciplinary perspective. In their paper, they identified, classified and analysed the different types of speech acts used in written advertisements from newspapers and magazines. A quantitative analysis was used on a corpus of eighty-four written advertisements selected from various

newspapers and magazines for example, The Times, Business, People, Elle, Marie Claire, woman and Home, Parents, In-style and so on. The findings showed that the advertisers prefer certain speech acts over the others with the purpose of obtaining an intended effect on the target audience. Simon and Dejica-Cartis (2015) concluded that the function of speech acts in written advertisements is to persuade the audiences to purchase the products or inform the audience about the benefits of products and services. They also concluded that besides the used of persuasive and informative speech acts, written advertisements may also employ other types of speech acts such as accuse, warn, assert, suggest, advise, claim, offer, promise, evaluate, deny, thank, express surprise, bring arguments and give directions. In addition, results also proved that the use of speech acts in written advertisements is genre-defining.

Chen et al. (2013) compared the requests pattern used by Chinese against those used by the American and Japanese. The researchers attempted to investigate Chinese requests using Hill et al.'s (1986) methodology. Their findings revealed that Chinese requests revealed similar results with American and Japanese requests as reported in Hill et al. (1986). Chinese requests were found to be as indirect as American request and it was related to speaker's effort to mitigate the face threat. The findings of their study were against the claim that Chinese requests were typically direct. Besides that, the researchers found that Chinese requests were determined by Brown and Levinson's concept of power and distance, similar with Japanese and American English requests as reported in Hill et al. The findings supported Brown and Levinson's universal theory of politeness. The paper emphasized on the importance of social distance, social power, and rating of imposition as stated in Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness.

## 2.4 The Notion of Politeness

Numerous opinions have surfaced over the years to define the notion of politeness. For example researchers like Geoffrey N. Leech (1983), Robin Lakoff (1973) have opted for the term 'politeness' in their models of politeness. In the field of pragmatics, politeness is regarded as linguistic politeness where it is expressed verbally when people communicate in a conversation. Yule (1996, p. 60) described politeness as "the means employed to show awareness of another person's face." He claimed that politeness can be achieved in the circumstances of social distance or closeness. When the interlocutors are socially distant, the showing of awareness of other's face is described as "respect or deference" whereas when the interlocutors are socially close to each other, it is described as "friendliness, camaraderie, or solidarity" (Yule, 1996, p. 60).

On the other hand, Lakoff (1990, p. 34) asserted that politeness "facilitates interaction by minimising the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in human interchange." Lakoff (1973, p.298) stated that there are three 'rules' to politeness: 'Don't impose' (rule 1), 'Give options' (rule 2), and 'Make A feel good, be friendly' (rule 3). To that, Lakoff explained that what makes the difference among different cultures is that some cultures emphasize one rule while other cultures emphasize other rules. For example, the Asian culture is more likely to employ rule 1, 'don't impose' in order to show deference, while Australian culture tends to emphasize rule 3, 'make A feel good, be friendly' as a way to show camaraderie.(Lakoff, 1973, p.298)

In accordance with what has been suggested by Lakoff, Leech (1983) looked at the function of politeness in terms of cooperative and conflict avoidance. The aim of Leech's (1983) politeness principle is to "maintain the social equilibrium" and to show "the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (Leech, 1983, p. 82). Leech's (1983) theory described

politeness as, lesser imposition and the increase in the 'benefit' for the hearer is said to be more polite. For example, 'have another sandwich' is more polite than 'make the sandwiches' because the former implies something of benefit to the hearer (i.e. something is offered), while the latter implies cost to the hearer (i.e. hearer is requested to do something). Hence, Leech (1983) stated that the more the cost is to the hearer, the more the need to compensate.

For Kuang(2008, p.121), politeness is defined as “ to exhibit behaviour both in manner or speech which shows a considerate regard for others.” Popular terms which are used to characterize polite behaviour include 'virtue', 'humble' and 'indirect'. She highlighted several studies to show that politeness is actually “culturally specific” and “what is considered polite in one culture may be seen as strange in another culture.”(Kuang, 2008, p. 121) Politeness as practiced in the Western context may not be practiced or accepted in Asian families.

Meanwhile, Holmes (1995, p. 5) termed politeness as “behaviour which actively expresses positive concerns for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour.”

More specifically, in the Chinese culture Gu (1990, p.238) stated that, the core of modern Chinese politeness remains “denigrating self and respecting other”. Chinese politeness is called '*limao*', and this essential element underlying the conception has remained unchanged despite its long history. The elements include, 'respectfulness', 'modesty', attitudinal', 'warmth' and 'refinement' (Gu, 1990, p. 239).

## 2.5 Review of Politeness Theories

A growing number of politeness theories introduced over the years by researchers such as Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1987), Leech (1977), Gu (1990) who advocated politeness theories.

Lakoff (1973) proposed three politeness rules which are “don’t impose”, “give options”, and “make A feel good- be friendly”. Later, she came up with three different rules regarding politeness theory. They consist of “distance”, “deference”, and “camaraderie”. She states that these rules may have different degrees of importance depending on different culture.

Leech (1983) being one of the researchers who advocate politeness theories, developed the theory of politeness principle and six conversational maxims. The Politeness principle emphasises on: “Minimize the expression of impolite beliefs; maximize the expression of polite beliefs” (Leech, 1983, p. 81). The conversational maxims are explained in the following:

1. Tact - to minimize the cost and maximize the benefits to the others.
2. Generosity -to minimize the benefit to self and maximize the cost to self.
3. Approbation - to minimize dispraise of other and maximize approval of other.
4. Modesty - to minimize the praise of self and maximize dispraise of self.
5. Agreement - to minimize disagreement between self and other and maximize agreement.
6. Sympathy - to minimize antipathy between self and other and maximize sympathy.

(Leech, 1983, p.81)



Leech (1983) explains that these maxims might differ in different cultures. There have been critics on Leech theory (1983) of maxim as it emphasises only the Western culture (Wierzbicka, 1991). Because of the critics, Leech (2007) revised his theory and proposed Grand Strategy of Politeness (GSP). It explains, “In order to be polite, a speaker communicates meanings which place a high value on what relates to the addressee, and a low value on what relates to the speaker” (Leech, 2007, p. 167). Leech (2007) uses the theory of Grand Strategy of Politeness to explain politeness phenomena in English and other Eastern culture such as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. The Grand Strategy of Politeness (GSP) is illustrated in the following:

1. Vertical distance between speaker and other (power, role, age, and status)
2. Horizontal distance between speaker and other (degree of familiarity)
3. Weight or value of what is being transacted
4. Strength of social rights and obligations
5. “Self-territory” and “other-territory.”

(Leech, 2007, 168)

In their theory of politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce 5 politeness strategies which are used for the purpose of face saving. They encompass bald-on-record politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record politeness and not to perform FTA. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.62) assert that it is necessary to preserve the faces of interlocutors when communicating in order to show respects on each other. The employment of face-threatening acts (FTAs) can threaten the speaker's and the hearer's face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.68) face threatening act can be minimized by employing one of the politeness strategies below:

1. Perform the FTA on record - To perform the speech act directly and clearly. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.94) state that this strategy can be explained by using Grice's Maxims. A brief explanation on Grice's Maxims (1989) is illustrated below:

Maxim of quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

Maxim of quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required.

Maxim of relevance: Make your contribution relevant.

Maxim of manner: Be perspicuous.

(Grice, 1989, p.26-27)

2. Perform the FTA on record using positive politeness - This strategy is employed when speaker emphasizes on the hearer's positive face wants.

3. Perform the FTA on record using negative politeness - This strategy is oriented on the negative face of the hearer. The speaker does not interfere with freedom of action of the hearer. This strategy includes hedges, apologizing and so on.

4. Use an off record strategy- "It is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 211). In other words, the speaker formulates a speech act in an indirect way for the hearer to interpret the possible meaning. This strategy includes hints, association cues, rhetorical questions, metaphors, contradictions and so on.

5. Not to perform the FTA at all, to avoid it.

(Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.68-70)

It should be noted that this study employs Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of politeness theory in its analysis of politeness in Malaysian Chinese family interactions. This model of politeness is considered most fitting given the fact that this research is

concerned with how politeness is used by the participants to perform their mealtime conversations. Brown and Levinson (1987) theory of politeness has been used extensively as framework of analysis by many studies for example, Watts (2003), Kuang (2008), Pillai (2008) and so on.

Watts (2003) for instance have argued that Brown and Levinson failed to consider cultural aspect of politeness. Different cultures may have different perceptions of politeness. Despite that, the politeness model by Brown and Levinson (1987) as stated by Jiang (2012, p.131), is “the most influential and comprehensive work on pragmatic politeness to date.”

There are a few reasons to why this study adopts Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory. Firstly, Brown and Levinson’s theory has presented the importance of ‘face’. They termed ‘face’ as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself”, and the basic wants of every individual in social interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) improved on the concept of face and introduced negative and positive politeness. Negative politeness is “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves and rights to non-distraction” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61) while positive politeness is “the positive consistent of self-image ‘personality’ claimed by interactants” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61). Kadar and Haugh (2013, p. 18) explain that the notion of face has enabled politeness to be modelled universally as it allows the researcher to make distinctions between cultures and smaller group of language user on their preferred politeness strategies, i.e. positive politeness or negative politeness. Further, Ji (2000) claimed that the positive and negative faces which were introduced by Brown and Levinson are justifiable. The ‘positive face’ and the ‘negative face’ are the two basic wants of an individual. ‘Positive face’ refers to one’s want to be appreciated while ‘negative face’ refers to one’s claim to freedom of action. An individual’s positive and negative faces can be threatened by face threatening acts (FTAs). Hence, dealing with

the two basic wants of an individual in social interaction, potential face threatening act could be avoided.

Secondly, this theory of politeness suggested possible options available in managing face threatening acts (FTAs) for self and other. The politeness strategies such as 'positive politeness' and 'negative politeness' which are introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987) is used when a certain act threatens the 'face' of the interlocutors involved. In view of the fact that, these politeness strategies have redressive (conflict avoiding) function.

Subsequently, Brown and Levinson (1987) created the notion of 'model Person' who owns the universal characteristic of 'rationality' and 'face' in order to explain politeness in different culture. Every speaker and addressee is labelled as "model persons". "Model persons" would choose certain strategies to save each other's face wants when trying to build rapport. Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness model is a comprehensive guide because it is demonstrated by examples in different contexts. The extensive examples and descriptions provided are sufficient in elaborating and analyse the findings of this research.

In sum, Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness is applied throughout this research as it covers the different types of politeness strategies. It is important as the focus of this study includes how politeness strategies are used by the participants as well as to explore the occasions where the interlocutors counter the threats to their faces.

## **2.6 Factors that Influence Politeness**

Zuraidah (2008, p.22) highlighted findings from several studies that showed the influence of relational power, social distance and ratings of imposition when assessing politeness and determining the strategies to be used in the family. The person with the

power role could then by choice, impede on the face of or show rapport with the one with less power, for example, he or she may also opt to use direct strategies while the one with less power should use indirect strategies as a form of respect for the power status. While this is true, the power role is also contextual and therefore may change based on factors like topic, experience, participants or settings, urgency of the matter, etc.

Brown and Levinson (1999) propose several factors that influence the choice of politeness strategies. They claim that while the employment of politeness strategies are dependent on the desire to express the content of the act, the urgency of the act as well as the desire to preserve the hearer's face, there are also other factors such as social power, social distance and rating of imposition that must be considered (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p.326). The discussion on the three factors namely social power, social distance and rating of imposition is in the following:

Social power (P) refers to the power status of the interlocutors. There are three possible P relations: speaker has more power than hearer, speaker has less power than hearer, and speaker and hearer have equal power (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.80). Brown and Levinson (1987) model of politeness explain that interlocutors consider power and distance when performing different types of speech act to avoid possible conflicts during the interaction. The concept of power is crucial. The definitions of the concept of power were proposed by some researchers. Brown and Gilman (1972), Brown and Levinson (1987) and Cansler and Stiles (1981) explain the concept of power. Below are the explanations for the concept of power quoted by Brown and Gilman (1972, p.255):

"One person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behaviour of the other. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of

behavior. There are many bases of power – physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalized role in the church, the state, the army or within the family."

(Brown and Gilman, 1972, p.255)

Social distance (D) refers to the social relationships of the interlocutors. It is based on "an assessment of the frequency of interaction and the kinds of material or non-material goods (including face) exchanged between speaker and hearer" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 77).

Imposition (R) is "a culturally and situationally defined ranking of impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with the agent's wants of self-determination or of approval" (Brown and Levinson, p. 80).

## **2.7 Politeness and Culture**

In Chinese culture, the notion of 'face' is associated with politeness. Mao (1994) proposed the notion of 'face' in Chinese. In order to describe the notion of face in Chinese, Mao (1994, p. 457) came up with specific Chinese terms to argue that Chinese concept of 'face' is conveyed through '*mianzi*' and '*lian*'. "*Mianzi* stands for prestige or reputation" and "*lian* refers to the respect of the group for a man with a good moral reputation" (Mao, 1994, p.457). He claims that in Chinese culture, the notion of 'face' and politeness are "very much related" and they "go hand in hand". To be polite in Chinese discourse, it is important "to know how to attend to each other's *mianzi* and *lian*" (Mao, 1994, p.463). Mao (1994, p. 460) further explained that "Chinese 'face' emphasizes not the accommodation of individual 'wants' or 'desires' but the harmony of individual conduct with the views and judgement of the community". This idea is in contrast with Brown and Levinson's formulation of 'face' which emphasizes on "an ideal individual autonomy" which "the individual can preserve and celebrate his or her

freedom of action without fear of becoming an outsider” (Brown and Levinson, 1994, p. 472).

Meanwhile, Zuraidah (2008) has found that Malay culture seems to be more in line with Chinese culture in performing request where indirectness is less preferred. Zuraidah’s (2008) study also revealed that the use of Malay requests in family tend to have higher percentage of bald-on-record and less mitigation.

Scollon and Scollon (1995) explained that Asians such as Chinese and Korean tend to use negative politeness strategies more frequently, whereas positive politeness strategies are preferred by Westerners. However, Lee-Wong (1994) findings show that there is higher possibility for Chinese to be direct when performing requests as compared to Westerners. To that, Ling (1996) explained that Chinese community are likely to be more direct because they emphasise the value of time and sincerity. Pan (2000, p. 12) explained that the Chinese community views direct suggestions as “a display of good will instead of making an imposition on the hearer.” In her study of Politeness in Chinese face-to-face interaction, Pan (2000) revealed that in Chinese culture, especially in the family context, the use of directness in performing speech acts is also significant as it is a way for family members to show solidarity and establish good relationship among them. In her data, the use of hedges was hardly found in family setting as they were direct in communicating with each other. Moreover, Pan (2000, p. 7) emphasised the influence of the “relational and hierarchical dimensions” and different social power between participants could influence the way people perceive politeness as well as the use of politeness strategies. However, the reasons for the use of politeness strategies lacked justification, which is a gap this study hopes to fill by gaining first-hand insights through observation.

## **2.8 Studies on Politeness**

The empirical studies into politeness in specific contexts are numerous. Sifianou and Bella (2012) explored how native Greek university students construct e-mail requests to their teachers. The researchers collected a corpus of 200 e-mails which they received over the last two years. They revealed the type of requests and the linguistics realisation which are employed by Greek university students. Besides that they also explore the politeness devices used by the participants. Based on what they found, Greek university students construct their requests based on formality. The context is the university which is more formal as compared to the context at home. Besides, teacher and student relationship is socially distant compared to parent-child relationship which is closer. The further the social distance, the higher the level of formality in the request. Sifianou and Bella (2012) found that the university students tend to construct lengthy e-mails including formal openings and closings as well as other supportive moves. On the other hand, it was found that the lesser the imposition, the used of negative politeness decreases.

A study by Koc (2011) demonstrated the request strategies used by Turkish learners of English as a Foreign Language and British native speakers of English. The Participants of the study were 35 Turkish language learners of English and 21 British natives. A multiple- choice task questionnaire was used to collect data related to the request strategies used by both Turkish learners of English and the British natives. The findings revealed that Turkish learners do not differ from British natives in their request strategies. Both groups used direct request strategies. This research is relevant as it investigated the factors such as social distance, power and degree of imposition that are affecting the politeness in request.



Another study done by Aimi (2012) explored politeness strategies used by speakers of two Malay dialects, Standard Malay and the Kelantanese Malay. The researcher investigated six female students, two of them spoke the Kelantanese dialect while the other four spoke Standard Malay. An audio recording was used to collect the data. This study involved the interaction among university students while the current study examines interaction among family members. This study is relevant as it investigated the politeness strategies according to the framework of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies (1987). The findings revealed that the participants of this study employed bald-on-record strategies the most. The second strategy that was employed was positive politeness while the third one was negative politeness. The occurrences of off-record strategies were minimal. This study revealed that even though the high numbers of the utterances made were direct, it did not affect the rapport.

Jiang's (2012) study presented the notion of politeness and the concept of 'face' in Chinese culture which is related to this study. However, Jiang study targeted Chinese native speakers in their performance of the speech acts and merely focused two specific speech events of inviting and offering. Jiang aims to reveal the way facework is performed by Chinese native speakers and how politeness is achieved in the speech act of inviting and offering. Jiang's study revealed that the participants tend to protect their own face, at the same time also maintain other's 'face' wants. Besides that, the Chinese native speakers tend to show the politeness by the mean of 'humbleness', 'modesty', respectfulness with the use of linguistic behaviours such as self-denigration, insistence, imposition, and reluctance.

In his study of politeness, Lee-Wong (2000) analysed speech act and politeness in relation to the Chinese concept of 'face' and other social variables which influence the use of politeness. Various speech activities and the realisations of politeness in relation to speech acts were explored.

The role of politeness is important in various contexts. Hedayat and Kazemi (2018) investigated the pragmatic role of politeness in the interactions between employers and clients in governmental offices. The study was carried out on one hundred government office clients. Data were collected through Questionnaire and field note. The findings showed that clients expect that their face to be preserved. In order to have an effective communication, staff offices are required to employ politeness as well as face saving strategies in order to save the negative or positive face of the clients.

In their study on politeness, Maros and Rosli (2017) explored the use of politeness strategies in Twitter updates among the undergraduates of female English Language Studies. They investigated on the politeness strategies used by the undergraduates and the realisation of potential threats. The participants of the study were 9 female undergraduates. A total of 776 Twitter updates were collected within two months. Open-ended questionnaire responses were also collected for in-depth findings. This study is relevant as it investigated on the politeness strategies according to the framework of Brown and Levinson's theory of Politeness Strategies (1987). The findings revealed that the participants employed positive politeness the most. The second highest strategy was bald-on record, followed by off-record and negative politeness. The researchers concluded that positive politeness was the most used politeness strategies as it promotes interpersonal communication among the users. The use of profanity, ambiguous indirect strategy and failure to comply with the 140-character limits in Twitter were some of the reasons that cause misunderstanding among the users.

On top of that, there are also numerous studies done on politeness in family interaction. In a study by Eva Ogiermann (2015), video-recordings were used as the method of data collection to examine how a group of Polish children request to obtain objects at the dinner table. Ogiermann's (2015) study highlighted the different use of performative

request in Polish homes and child-adult interactions. In her study on children request pattern, the data was collected during mealtime conversations. Family mealtimes do not only bring the family together but is also a crucial time when conversation takes place. “Not only are they one of the few activities bringing all family members together, and thus play a central role in constructing the family as a unit, they are also important sites for the socialisation of children into competent members of a social and cultural group.” (Ogiermann, 2015, p. 67) The findings showed that Polish children have produced a wide range of request forms across all levels of directness and indirectness. They tend to use direct forms in over half of the request they made. On the other hand, it is observed that their choice of indirect request is not related to high imposition. The use of imperative is less among the children’s form of request, they were used in order to express the urgency of the matter which was also mirrored in the responses they received. While the want statements were the most frequently used form of request by the children as they were frequently asked for what they want and is reflected in the responses they give.

Another study that looked at the interactions among two generations of family members is Kuang’s (2008) study. Kuang’s (2008) study is relevant to this study as it explored the politeness strategies used in the interactions between grandparents and grandchildren. Her study aimed to explore the politeness strategies used by the grandparents while making request to their grandchildren. In her findings, Kuang revealed that the grandparents were more likely to employ direct politeness strategies when making request as their main concern was the safety of the children as compared to “save the face” of the grandchildren. In short, Kuang’s study involved grandparents and their grandchildren where the age gap is wider as compared to this study.

Moreover, a study conducted by Fisher C.L. et al. (2014) is related to this study. The researchers used politeness theory to develop ways in which adult children incorporated

facework to start a conversation with their aging parent about eldercare. Openers were coded for politeness strategies. This study is relevant as it involved the study of the interaction between middle-aged children and aging parents.

Another study by Pillai(2008), is also of relevance to this study as it examined politeness strategies on Indian family discourse across three generations. She found that differences in age, gender and social status were factors influencing the use of politeness in family interaction. The differences in the relative power showed that the adults tended to use direct politeness strategies to exert power on children. It also showed that what indicated politeness or the lack of politeness was the tone of voices and facial expressions but not the use of directness in the interaction.

In her study, Pan (2000) also emphasized that in Chinese communities, especially in the Chinese families were direct in their speech acts as a way to show rapport and solidarity. The younger family members, such as daughters or sons, tend to show respect to the senior family members. This study is related to this research as this research study on the difference on age and family hierarchical differences.

A qualitative study by Lim (2012) is relevant to this study as it looks into the politeness strategies used among family members in casual conversation. Lim (2012)'s study explored politeness strategies used by family members. Lim (2012)'s study comprised seven sets of conversations with 35 subjects involved. Lim's study involved the interaction among family members regardless of the age group. In her findings, Lim revealed that the family members tended to employ bald-on-record and positive politeness, whereas off-record and negative politeness were minimal.

In short, there are limited studies on the use of politeness strategies in performing different types of speech acts. Furthermore, studies have not looked at family interaction between the middle-aged children in the age of 50's as well as the aging parents in the

age of 80's. Therefore, the use of politeness strategies between middle-aged children and their aging parents as well as the types of politeness strategies used in performing certain illocutionary acts are the research gaps that this study hopes to fill by gaining first-hand insights into analysing the data for the study. Overall, this study hopes to add to the current pool of literature on family interaction within the specified scope of study.

## 2.9 Face Threatening Acts

The notion of face was first introduced by Erving Goffman (1967, p. 5) as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” To explain the notion of face, Goffman (1967) pointed out that every person's face is a “public self-image” and it is realised in the social interaction. Meanwhile, Brown and Levinson (1987, p.61) claim that ‘face’ is something that is “emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction”. ‘Face’ is important as it seems to underlie every individual's verbal and non-verbal actions. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.61) further developed this notion to introduce two concepts: (1) positive face, which is the desire of every individual for their wants to be desired by others and (2) negative face, which is the desire of every individual to be free from imposition. In their discussion of face, Brown and Levinson (1999) categorized speech acts into those which threaten the positive or negative face of both the hearer and the speaker.

They proposed that these face-threatening acts (FTAs) could be avoided or its effect minimized by employing one of the five politeness strategies as shown below:

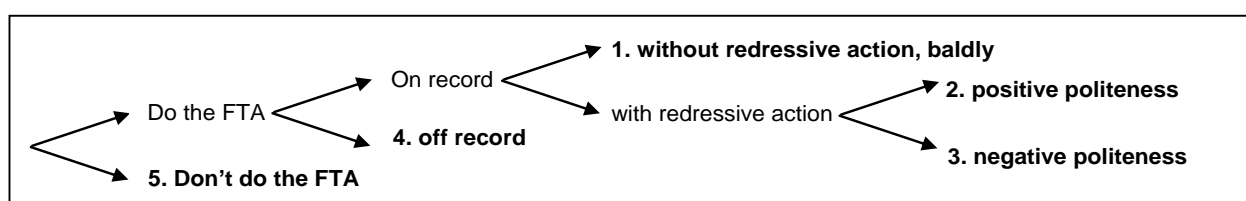


Figure 1: Politeness strategies for doing FTAs (Brown & Levinson, 1999, pg. 327)

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) “face” is one of the universal features of politeness where they recognized the types of face into those that threaten the negative face and those that threaten the positive face. The acts threaten the hearer’s negative face wants when the speaker does not intend to avoid impeding hearer’s freedom of action, whereas the acts threaten the hearer’s positive face wants when the speaker does not care about he/she feelings, wants, and so on. Below are the summary of the examples of Face-Threatening Acts proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987, pp.65-68).

1) The acts that threatened the Positive Face of the hearer:-

- Expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults
- Contradictions or disagreements, challenges
- Expression of violent (out-of-control) emotions
- Irreverence, mention of taboo topics including those that are inappropriate in the context
- Bringing of bad news about H, or good news (boasting) about S
- Raising of dangerously emotional or divisive topics
- Blatant non-cooperation in an activity
- Use of address terms and other status-marked identifications in initial encounters

2) The acts that threaten the positive face of the Speaker (S)

- Apologies
- Acceptance of a compliment
- Breakdown of physical control over body, bodily leakage, or falling down.
- Self-humiliation, shuffling or cowering, acting stupid, self-contradicting
- Confessions, admissions of guilt or responsibility
- Emotion leakage, non-control of laughter or tears

3) The acts that threaten the negative Face of the hearer:-

- Orders and requests
- Suggestions and advice
- Reminders
- Threats, warnings, dares
- Offers
- Promises
- Compliments, expressions of envy or admiration
- Expression of strong (negative) emotions towards H

4) The acts that threaten the negative Face of the speaker:-

- Expressing thanks
- Acceptance of H's thanks or H's apology
- Excuses
- Acceptance of offers
- Responses to H's faux pas
- Unwilling promises and offers

### 3.0 Summary

This chapter shows the review of the relevant literature as well as the main terminology related to this research. Studies have been conducted on politeness strategies and the research in this field continues to increase significantly. However further study is required as research is carried out to the very minute details in order to extract valuable data. A general study in this field will not produce critical data as what a focused study can yield. Besides, the works presented by numerous researchers such as Pan (2000), Kuang (2002) prove that the literature on politeness strategies is developing from time to time, thus allowing new research to fill in the gap and add to the current pool of literature.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The methodology chapter of this dissertation covers the research design, data collection procedures, participants, instruments, procedures of data analysis, theoretical frameworks-- Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model and Searle (1969) classification of speech acts and lastly a summary.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A qualitative research design is implemented to explore the politeness strategies used in the conversation between five families of middle-aged people and their aging parents. This study adopts the qualitative research design which is described by Creswell (2007, p.73) as concerning "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)". The issue in this study is what and how politeness strategies are used. In addition to the descriptive analysis of the data, a simple frequency count of the number of occurrence of each politeness strategy is carried out.

#### **3.2 Participants**

This study involved a total of five families of middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents thus, allowing in-depth analysis of the issue while having sufficient data for cross-case theme analysis (Creswell, 2007, p.76, 128). The participants which were involved in this study were recruited based on convenience sampling and the family



members were known to the researcher. They were selected based on their willingness to be observed and recorded. Both children and parents must be Malaysian and Chinese. This is because different cultural backgrounds may have different perceptions on politeness. Besides, the participants involved must be living together. As the issue of politeness is highly dependent on culture, the race of the participants was controlled to increase the accuracy of the findings. For example, the relational power between middle-aged children and their aging parents may differ according to cultural belief systems and this will affect not only the execution of politeness strategies but also the interpretation of the data. In addition, different cultures may also have different rules and norms that govern table conversations which may affect the interaction. The table below shows a detailed description of the participants in this study.

Table 3.1: The descriptions of the participants.

Family	Participants	Gender	Age	Kinship Role
Family 1	Middle-aged Child	Female	59	Daughter
	Aging Parent	Female	83	Mother
	Aging Parent	Male	86	Father
Family 2	Middle-aged Child	Female	53	Daughter
	Aging Parent	Female	76	Mother
	Aging Parent	Male	81	Father
Family 3	Middle-aged Child	Female	58	Daughter
	Aging Parent	Female	79	Mother
Family 4	Middle-aged Child	Female	46	Daughter
	Aging Parent	Female	73	Mother
	Aging Parent	Male	78	Father
Family 5	Middle-aged Child	Male	63	Son
	Aging Parent	Female	84	Mother
	Aging Parent	Male	82	Father

Four of the families comprised of one aging father, one aging mother and one middle-aged child (Daughter or son). The 5th family comprised only a single aging parent (mother) and a middle-aged child. All the aging parents were no longer employed, and between the age of 70 to 80. Two of the middle-aged children were a working female and a working male, and the other three were middle-aged housewives. The participants were Malaysian Chinese who conversed in Penang Hokkien. The aging parents in this study were those who had completed their primary education and those who were not formally educated. The middle-aged children in this study had completed their secondary education or were diploma or degree holders.

### **3.3 Instruments**

Audio recording was employed as the research instrument. Audio recording was used as the main data collection instrument because the focus of this study was on the verbal output. The Mp3 recorder was placed close to both middle-aged children and the aging parents in order to obtain a clearer recording of the interaction between them as only the recorder's internal microphone was used.

This study comprised five sets of conversations, with 14 participants involved and each set of the conversation lasted between 50-60 minutes. The duration of the recorded data was approximately 5 hours in total. A total of 20 mealtime conversations of families were recorded. In some recordings, there were instances where other interlocutors besides the aging parents and their children were recorded. They were the grandchildren and the domestic helpers of the families. The occurrences in the conversation were However, the analysis only focused on the discourse of aging parents and their children. The summary of the recorded conversations can be seen in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: The summary of recorded conversations.

Date (period of recording)	Conversa- tion code	Number of interlocutor	Participant codes	Lunch (No. of mealtimes)	Dinner (No. of mealtimes)	Duration of recording (Approx- imately)
4.1.2014- 7.1.2014	Family 1	3	MC1, AF1, AM1	2	2	60 minutes
11.1.2014 - 14.1.2014	Family 2	3	MC2, AF2, AM2	2	2	62 minutes
18.1.2014 - 21.1.2014	Family 3	2	MC3, AM3	2	2	62 minutes
25.1.2014 - 28.1.2014	Family 4	3	MC4, AF4, AM4	2	2	58 minutes
1.2.2014- 4.2.2014	Family 5	3	MC5, AF5, AM5	2	2	58 minutes
<b>Total:</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>300 minutes/ 5 hours</b>

Legend: 'MC1'='Middle-aged child family 1'; 'AF1'= 'Aging father family 1';  
'AM1'= 'Aging mother family 1'

### 3.4 Procedures of Data Collection

To begin with, the researcher recruited the participants who met the purpose of this study. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants and permission to stay with them for a week as well as consent for their dinner table conversations to be audio recorded was obtained. For ethical purposes, the participants were required to sign the consent form provided (see Appendix B). Participants were also informed that they could request to stop the recording anytime throughout the duration of the study.

The collection of data took place at the homes of the middle-aged children and their aging parents but audio recordings were taken only during meal time conversations. Limiting the scope of the setting would reduce the richness of the data on family interaction but on the other, this step could facilitate the recording of data. The participants of the study may be more willing to be recorded because firstly, it does not intrude too much into their daily activities and secondly, they may be less anxious being recorded at home than outside their homes.

As explained in the previous section, the researcher was immersed in the lives of the participants because “we cannot separate what people say from the context” (Creswell, 2007, p.40) and also to reduce the observer’s paradox. Therefore the researcher lived with each of the participant’s family for one week. Recordings were made between 1<sup>st</sup> of January to 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2014. Throughout this duration, the researcher also participated in the family’s daily activities but recording was only carried out during mealtimes. However, the recording was not carried out on the first day as the data collected might be less naturalistic. Once the researcher had familiarised with the normal activity of the family members, the recordings were started on the third day in order to create a more natural setting. Several mealtime conversations were recorded, however only 4 mealtimes conversations within the duration of 50-60 minutes were selected for analysis. The reasons for the selection of the 4 mealtime conversations from each family were based on the higher number of face threatening act. As only mealtime conversations were recorded, a longer duration is also needed to ensure sufficient data as there were situations beyond the researcher’s control, for example the family members not having meals together or presence of visitors who did not want to be recorded. After data was collected for all five families, only the content was transcribed in order to carry out the analysis of data.

### 3.5 Procedures of Data Analysis

After the data was collected, it was transcribed based on content analysis. For every set of conversation, transcription was made according to turns. Every turn taken by the participant was numbered on the left margin of the transcript. This was to enable the researcher to cross-check when a particular section of a conversation is extracted for analysis. All conversations were transcribed in Penang Hokkien dialect. However there were some instances where the Malay language was used. This was transcribed directly in Malay language in italic font. Literal translations was done in '[ ]', translation of dialect into Standard English was done in brackets '( )'. The example of the stages of translation is as follows:

Penang Hokkien: *Lai tam pok mee.*

Literal translation: [Come some noodles.]

Standard English translation: (Give me some noodles.)

The translation in this research was further verified by Dr. Chong Hoong Yin who is a proficient speaker of both Hokkien dialect and English language. Moreover, each set of conversation was coded differently according to the different pair of family. The following coding will be used:

'MC1' = 'Middle-aged child family 1'

'AF1' = 'Aging father family 1'

'AM1' = 'Aging mother family 1'

Tag expression = '(Loh, ah, lah, erm)'

In order to answer the first research question, the data analysis involved analysing the types of politeness strategies used by the participants in their mealtime conversation. The analysis of the politeness strategy is divided into: (1) the aging parents' usage of politeness strategies and (2) the middle-aged children's usage of politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) model of politeness which consists of four super-strategies

is used as the analytical framework. The data analysis for the first research question involved:

- (i) First, the identification of the FTAs.
- (ii) Second, the identification of the politeness strategies used to mitigate the FTAs by using Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness model.

It should be noted that the original Hokkien exchanges was being analysed instead of the English translation. After all the politeness strategies have been identified, the frequencies of occurrences of the type of politeness strategies used across the five families of middle-aged children and their aging parents were tabulated. This was done to investigate the participants' preferences in using the strategies. The participant's choice of politeness strategy was then explained in terms of its function in the discourse. There co-occurrences of politeness strategies was not analysed in this research.

For the second research question which concerned the types of politeness strategies used in directive and commissive speech acts, the data analysis involved:

Firstly, the identification of the illocutionary acts of directives and commissives. Secondly, the particular type of speech act (such as request, order, advice, suggest, and so on) under each illocutionary act was identified. Searle (1969) classification of speech act was used as the analytical framework in identifying the various speech acts.

Thirdly, the type of politeness strategies used by the aging parents and the middle-aged children in each particular speech act was identified by using the politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Subsequently, the frequency of the type of politeness strategy occurring under each speech act used by the aging parent and the middle-aged children were tabulated separately. The examples of politeness strategies identified under each speech act are

included in the table. The examples were given in the form of original Hokkien exchanges with English translations in brackets. The two tables provided below are the samples of data analysis conducted:

Table 3.3: Samples of Aging Parents' Acts of Request

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	1	i) Turn 69; Speaker AM2: ' <i>Em si kong coh pulut pisang?</i> ' (Aren't we making banana glutinous?)
Negative politeness	2	ii) Turn 60; Speaker AM2: ' <i>Teng gui hia bui MC2?</i> ' (Have you heated up the soup?) iii) Turn 58; Speaker AM4: ' <i>Ma cai ee kong bi kua lo kun tapi ji diam eh ee kong cha ki lan kee eh hu oh?</i> ' (Tomorrow Grandpa needs to see the doctor at two. He asked if we will have enough time to go in the morning.)
Off-record	1	iv) Turn 44; Speaker AM4: ' <i>Tama wa khua pulut kin jio.</i> ' (I saw the glutinous rice banana just now.)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4</b>	

Table 3.4: Samples of Middle-aged children's acts of request

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Example
Bold-on-record	2	i) Turn 63; Speaker MC3: ' <i>Kuak, dan lu ki kua</i> ' (It's wide, go and have a look later.) ii) Turn 65; Speaker MC3: ' <i>Dan lu ki kua.</i> ' (You go and have a look later.)
Positive politeness	1	i) Turn 67; Speaker MC3: ' <i>mak, nah nah nah tissue.</i> ' (Mum, take the tissue.)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3</b>	

Lastly, the analysis involved the identification of the most common types of politeness strategies appearing under different speech acts of directives and commissives. The findings will also reveal the level of the politeness of the participants in the mealtime conversation.

After data analysis stage, the realization of different politeness strategies used by the Malaysian Chinese middle-aged and aging parents were compared and discussed in detail.

### **3.6 Theoretical Framework**

Two models were utilized as the theoretical framework in this study. The first was Brown & Levinson (1987, pp.91-227) politeness model. The second was Searle's (1969) classifications of speech acts.

#### **3.6.1 Brown and Levinson (1987) Model of Politeness**

Types of politeness strategies were identified based on Brown and Levinson (1987) model of politeness. Under the politeness model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), there are several sub-categorises under each strategy, the descriptions for each category will be discussed. The example given for each sub-strategy was based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) example.

##### **1. Bald-on-record**

The first politeness strategy of Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness model is bald-on-record. Brown and Levinson(1987) mention that bald-on record strategy is a way for interlocutors to express their opinion explicitly. This strategy is employed in the cases of urgency where the maximum efficiency is more important than satisfying the face of



the hearer. “Where maximum efficiency is very important, and this is mutually known to both S and H, no face redress is necessary.” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.95) The example below illustrates bald-on-record strategy.

*Example: Watch out!*

## **2. Positive politeness**

Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that positive politeness is a face saving act which is concerned with the person's positive face. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that positive politeness is also known as “the desire of an individual to be approved of.” This strategy is employed to minimise the distance between groups of friends, or people who know each other fairly well by expressing friendliness and solid interest (Lean, 2009). Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed 15 sub-strategies under positive politeness. The strategies are identified as follow:

**Strategy 1:** Notice, attend to Hearer's interests, wants, needs and goods

Hearer's desire is approved/noticed by speaker. The speaker pays attention to the hearer's condition for example “noticeable changes, remarkable possessions, anything which looks as though H would want S to notice and approve of it” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.103). The example below from Brown and Levinson (1987) shows the FTA is redressed to save the positive face of the hearer.

*Example: Goodness, you cut your hair! (...) By the way, I came to borrow some flour.*

**Strategy 2:** Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)

This strategy is realised by ‘exaggerated intonation, stress and other aspects of prosodics as well as intensifying modifiers’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.104). Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: What a fantastic garden you have!*

**Strategy 3:** Intensify interest to H

To intensify the interest of speaker’s contributions to the conversation, by ‘making good story’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.106). Speaker would invite the hearer into the discussed events so that the hearer would raise their notice of the speaker. The example of this strategy is provided below.

*Example: I come down the stairs, and what do you think I see?- a huge mess all over the place, the phone’s off the hook and clothes are scattered all over...*

**Strategy 4:** Use in-group identity markers

This strategy is employed to convey in-group membership, as well as for the speaker to claim common ground with the hearer. These include in-group usages of address forms, of language or dialect, of jargon or slang, and of ellipsis (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.107). Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: Liz, darling*

**Strategy 5:** Seek agreement

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose that the employment of “repetition as well as save topics as ways to claim common ground” should be included in a conversation as “A way for S to stress his agreement with H and satisfy H’s desire to be right” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.112). In a conversation, the repetition of words or phrases shows that

the speaker is able to understand the messages that have been conveyed. “By repeating part or all of what the preceding speaker has said in a conversation.” (brown and Levinson, 1987).

*Example: A: John went to London this weekend!*

*B: To London!*

#### **Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement**

A message could be twisted to avoid from disagreement. The example below illustrates how disagreement can be avoided to lessen the impact of FTAs.

*Example: A: That's where you live, Florida?*

*B: That's where I was born.*

#### **Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground**

Unrelated topics are introduced and discussed before the real conversation takes place. This is to show that the speaker isn't there simply for the purpose of doing the FTA. The speaker needs to spend some time and effort on being with hearer and assert his interest as well as presuppose knowledge of hearer's wants, tastes, habits. Therefore this strategy is used for redressing an FTA by softening the impact of the speaker's request. Below is the example of how this strategy is demonstrated.

*Example: A: Oh this cut hurts awfully, Mum.*

*B: Yes dear, it hurts terribly. I know.*

#### **Strategy 8: Jokes**

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 124) state that jokes are based on “mutual shared background knowledge and value.” This strategy is useful when the speaker would like to put the speaker at ease for the purpose of minimising the imposition of FTAs. This is useful in breaking the dullness of the situation while making the hearer more at ease.

This strategy is employed to minimise an FTA of requesting. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: Okay if I tackle those cookies now?*

**Strategy 9:** Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants.

This strategy indicates that both the speaker and hearer are co-operators and supporters for each other in a conversation. In this strategy pressure is put on the hearer to co-operate with the speaker. Speaker asserts concern for hearer's wants. The example of this strategy is provided below.

*Example: I know you want the car back by 5pm, so should I go to town now?*

**Strategy 10:** Offer, promise

Speaker's wants for H's wants and will help to obtain the wants. This strategy demonstrates speaker's good intentions in satisfying hearer's positive face wants. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: I can assist you with that.*

**Strategy 11:** Be optimistic

In this strategy, the speaker assumes that the hearer will cooperate. The speaker assumes the hearer wants the speaker's wants and will help him to obtain them. The example of this strategy is provided below.

*Example: You'll lend me your lawnmower for the weekend, I hope.*

**Strategy 12: Include both S and H**

This strategy includes the use of 'we' form. Therefore this strategy is used for redressing an FTA by assuming cooperation. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: Let's have a cookie, then.*

**Strategy 13: Give/ask for reasons**

This strategy is employed by the speaker to explain why and what is desired. "To give reasons as to why he wants what he wants." (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.128). By implying what help is needed, the hearer is invited to see the reasonableness of speaker's FTA. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: Why don't we go to the seashore?*

**Strategy 14: Assume or assert reciprocity**

This strategy emphasises the cooperation between speaker and hearer. The example 'I'll do X for you if you do Y for me', or 'I did X for you last week, so you do Y for me this week.' By pointing out the mutual right of doing FTAs to each other, speaker may soften his FTA by negating the face-threatening aspect of speech acts such as criticisms and complaints. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: I'll cook for you if you wash the dishes for me.*

**Strategy 15: Give gift to H**

Speaker may satisfy hearer's positive-face want by giving goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: I'm so sorry for your loss.*

### 3. Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is “the desire of an individual not to be imposed on” (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that this strategy is employed by the speaker when he/she has no intention to interfere with the addressee’s freedom of action. By focusing on the concerns for the imposition, negative politeness performs the function of minimizing the imposition of FTA. Negative politeness reflects the hearer’s wish to be independent and respected. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose ten sub-strategies under negative politeness. The strategies are as follows:

#### **Strategy 1:** Be conventionally indirect

This strategy is employed when the speaker wishes to be direct and indirect to hearer at the same time.

*Example: He is searching for printer urgently.*

#### **Strategy 2:** Question and Hedges

This strategy is realised via the use of words or phrases like ‘sort of’, ‘quite’, ‘suppose’, ‘guess’, and so on. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: A swing is sort of a toy.*

#### **Strategy 3:** Be pessimistic

This strategy shows concern for the imposition by giving redress to hearer’s negative face.

*Example: I don’t suppose there would be any chance of a cup of coffee?*

**Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition**

When the speaker is trying to minimise the imposition of FTAs and not to impede on the hearer, this strategy can be employed to save the hearer's face.

*Example: I just want to ask you if I can borrow a tiny bit of paper.*

**Strategy 5: Give deference**

This strategy is employed when the speaker intends to humble himself and treats the hearer as the superior. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: We look forward very much to eating with you.*

**Strategy 6: Apologize**

This strategy is employed by the speaker as a way to communicate regret and his reluctance to do a face threatening act. The speaker may apologize for impinge hearer's negative face. "By apologizing for doing an FTA, the speaker can indicate his reluctance to impinge on H's negative face" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 187). Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: I don't want to bother you, but...*

**Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H**

Brown and Levinson (1987) state that one of the ways of showing that the speaker doesn't want to impede on the hearer is to phrase the FTA as if the agent were other than the speaker. "Addressee were other than H or only H" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 190).

*Example: It is so.*

**Strategy 8:** State the FTA as a general rule

When the speaker doesn't want to impinge on the FTA, he can choose to state the FTA as some general rule.

*Example: Passengers will please refrain from flushing toilets on the train.*

**Strategy 9:** Nominalize

This strategy suggests the continuum from verb through adjective to noun. It means the formality of an utterance is associated with the use of noun, where the degree of negative politeness is parallel with the degree of nouniness. The example below illustrates this strategy.

*Example: Your good performance on the examinations impressed us favourably.*

**Strategy 10:** Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebteding H

The speaker "can redress an FTA by explicitly claiming his indebtedness to H" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.210). For example:

*Example: I'll never be able to repay you if you...*

**4. Off-record**

The speaker performs FTA in a way that he can avoid responsibility for performing it. The speaker will choose to perform the FTA in the indirect way by saying something which is more general and different from what she/he means. Therefore, the hearer will have to interpret the message conveyed by the speaker. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed 15 sub-strategies under off-record politeness. The strategies are described below:



**Strategy 1: Give hints**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) in this strategy, the speaker would provide hints for hearer to seek possible interpretation. Below is the example this strategy.

*Example: It's cold in here.*

**Strategy 2: Give association clues**

Mentioning something associated with the act required of hearer. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: My house isn't very far away...*

**Strategy 3: Presuppose**

An utterance can be wholly relevant in context, yet violate the relevance Maxim. It is done when the speaker says something not related to the context.

*Example: I washed the car again today.*

**Strategy 4: Understate**

Speaker intends to be indirect by violating the Quantity of Maxim. By being indirect, the speaker is saying something less than or something different from what he actually intends to convey (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The example is below:

*Example:       A: How do you like Josephine new haircut?*

*B: It's ok.*

**Strategy 5: Overstate**

The speaker is violating the quantity of maxim, when he/she says more than what is necessary. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: I tried to call a hundred times, but there was never any answer.*

**Strategy 6: Use tautologies**

This strategy violates of quantity maxim while saying a necessary truth, where speaker encourages the hearer to interpret the non-informative utterance. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: War is war.*

**Strategy 7: Use contradictions**

This strategy is realised when the speaker makes it appear that he/she is not able to tell the truth by saying two things that contradict each other. The hearer has to find the possible interpretation for the two propositions which are contradictory (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: Well, John is here and he isn't here.*

**Strategy 8: Be ironic**

The speaker can indirectly convey the message by saying the opposite of what he means.

*Example: John's a real genius.*

**Strategy 9: Use metaphors**

This strategy reflects that speaker's use of metaphors is on record, however the inferences of the metaphors maybe off-record. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: Harry's a real fish.*

**Strategy 10: Use rhetorical questions**

This strategy is used when the speaker comes up with a question to get a response from the hearer. "To ask a question with no intention of obtaining an answer" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 223).

*Example: How many times do I have to tell you...?*

**Strategy 11: Be ambiguous**

The ambiguity of the message conveyed can be achieved by using metaphor. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.225) this strategy is used to describe the "ambiguity between the literal meaning of an utterance and any of its possible implicatures." Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: John's a pretty sharp/ smooth cookie.*

**Strategy 12: Be vague**

The speaker will try to be vague in his/her utterances to avoid the FTA. "Vague about who the object of the FTA" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 226). Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: Looks like someone may have had too much to drink.*

### Strategy 13: Over-generalize

This strategy is used when the speaker states his utterances generally by trying to leave the object of the FTA vaguely off-record. Thus, it allows the hearer to decide. Below is the example of this strategy.

*Example: If the door is shut completely, it sticks.*

### Strategy 14: Displace H

When the speaker is intending to avoid the imposition on the hearer, he/she may address the FTA to someone whom it wouldn't threaten. For example:

*Example: Will she be able to post this letter for me?*

### Strategy 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis

This strategy is realised when the speaker leaves the FTA half undone. For example:

*Example: Well, if one leave one's tea on the wobbly table*

A summary of the politeness model by Brown and Levinson (1987) used to analyse the data is shown in table 3.5.

Table 3.5: A Summary of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model. (Brown and Levinson, 1987)

Politeness Strategies	Sub-strategies	Examples
<b>Bald-on-record</b>  A way for interlocutors to express their ideas explicitly.		i) Watch out! ii) Don't burn your hand!

<b>Positive politeness</b>  A face saving act which is concerned with the person's positive face.	S1 Notice, attend to H( his interest, wants, needs goods)	You must be hungry; it's a long time since breakfast. How about some lunch?
	S2 Exaggerate	What a fantastic garden you have!
	S3 Intensify interest to H	There were a million people in the Co-op night.
	S4 Use in-group identity markers	Liz, darling
	S5 Seek agreement	(i) Nice weather. A: John went to London this weekend! B: To London!
	S6 Avoid disagreement	That's where you live, Florida? B: That's where I was born.
	S7 Presuppose/raise/assert common ground	A: Oh this cut hurts awfully, Mum. B: Yes dear, it hurts terribly. I know.
	S8 Jokes	Okay if I tackle those cookies now?
	S9 Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants.	I know you want the car back by 5pm, so should I go to town now?
	S10 Offer, promise	I can assist you with that.
	S11 Be optimistic	I've come to borrow a cup of flour.
	S12 Include both S and H	Let's have a cookie, then.
	S13 give/ask for reasons	Why don't we go to the seashore?
	S14 Assume or assert reciprocity	I'll cook for you if you wash the dishes for me.
	S15 Give gift to H	I'm so sorry for your lost.
<b>Negative Politeness</b>  A face saving act which is concerned with the person's negative face and show concerns for the imposition.	S1 Be conventionally indirect	He is searching for printer urgently
	S2 Question and Hedges	I wondered, if you could help?
	S3 Be pessimistic	I don't suppose there would be any chance of a cup of coffee?
	S4 Minimize the imposition, Rx	I just want to ask you if I can borrow a tiny bit of paper.
	S5 Give deference	It's my pleasure.
	S6 Apologize	I don't want to bother you, but...
	S7 Impersonalize S and H	I tell you that it is so.

	S8 State the FTA as a general rule	Passengers will please refrain from flushing toilets on the train.
	S9 Nominalize	Your good performance on the examinations impressed us favourably.
	S10 Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H	I'll never be able to repay you if you...
<b>Off-record</b>  Speaker performs FTA in a way that he can avoid responsibility for performing it.	S1 Give hints	It's cold in here.
	S2 Give association clues	Are you going to market tomorrow?
	S3 Presuppose	I washed the car again today.
	S4 Understate	A: How do you like Josephine new haircut? B: It's ok.
	S5 Overstate	Why are you always smoking?
	S6 Use tautologies	War is war.
	S7 Use contradictions	Well, John is here and he isn't here.
	S8 Be ironic	Lovely neighbourhood, eh?
	S9 Use metaphors	Harry's a real fish.
	S10 Use rhetorical questions	What can I say?
	S11 Be ambiguous	John's a pretty sharp/ smooth cookie.
	S12 Be vague	Perhaps someone did something naughty.
	S13 Over-generalize	The lawn has got to be mown.
	S14 Displace H	Will she be able to post this letter for me?
	S15 Be incomplete, use ellipsis	Well, I didn't see you...

### 3.6.2 Searle's (1969) Classifications of Speech Acts

Searle's (1969) classification of speech act was used as the analytical framework to identify the 2 classes of speech acts and the particular types of speech acts listed on table 3.6 were supported by various definitions given by various researchers such as (Wierzbicka 1987, Green 1988, Turner and Sbisà, 2013, Al-Eryani 2007). The reasons for the selection of the 2 classes of speech acts namely directive and commissive were because this study is a comparative study and one of the groups did not use expressive

and assertive speech acts. The particular types of speech acts listed in table 3.6 were chosen because they appeared more frequently compared to others. The table below shows a summary of various speech acts definitions used to analyse the data.

Table 3.6: Summary of definition for different types of speech acts.

Illocutionary acts	Speech acts	Definition/explanation
<b>Directives</b>  Speech acts that take place when the speaker expects the hearer to do something.	Request	Speaker does not have authority to ask the addressee to do the desired action, and the addressee does not have the obligation to do it (Wierzbicka, 1987). The speaker is not insistent and will not be enraged by a refusal (Green, 1988, p.121).
	Question	An attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to answer (Searle, 1969, p.66).
	Advice	Speaker believes that the act will benefit the hearer (Searle, 1969, p. 67).
	Suggest	Suggestions are speech acts that are made to help the listener toward some goal that the latter desires or is assumed to desire (Turner and Sbisà, 2013).
	Order	“An attempt to get hearer to do A in virtue of the authority of speaker over hearer.” “Orders have the preparatory rule that speaker must be in a position of authority over the hearer” (Searle, 1969, p. 66).
<b>Commissives</b>  Speech acts that commit the speaker to some future action.	Refuse	Refusal arises when a speaker directly or indirectly says ‘no’ to request or invitation. (Al-Eryani, 2007)
	Promise	A pledge to do something ‘for’ the hearer and requires some sort of occasion or situation. promise wishes (needs, desires) something be done, and the promisor is aware of the wish (Searle, 1969).
	Offer	“Acts that predicate some positive future act of speaker toward hearer, and in so doing put some pressure on hearer to accept or reject them, and possibly to incur a debt” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.66)

### **3.7 Summary**

This section describes the research design, the selection of participants, the setting of the research, the research instruments, the duration of data collection and also the analysis procedures used to analyse and interpret the data. The conversations were chosen to be recorded during mealtimes of the participants as they were more comfortable and for the researcher to get the most natural recording as possible. In conclusion, the suitability and appropriateness of the method employed were determined in order to increase the accuracy of the findings.



## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis of the transcribed data from the interactions of five Chinese families who speak Hokkien. This qualitative study throws light on the two research questions as stated in chapter one. The research questions are 1) What are the politeness strategies used by Middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents in mealtime conversations? 2) What politeness strategies are used in directive and commissive speech acts?

Thus, this chapter analyses the politeness strategies used in the interactions between middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents. The use of different types of politeness strategies will be analysed and categorised according to the politeness model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The researcher also looked into the types of politeness strategies that appear in the illocutionary acts of directives and commissives based on Searle's (1969) classifications of speech acts.

#### **4.1 The Politeness Strategies used by Middle-aged Children and Their Aging Parents.**

This section aims to answer research question one to reveal the politeness strategies used by middle-aged children and their aging parents. To answer this research question, two distinctive but important aspects are analysed. They consist of (1) the politeness strategies used by aging parents to their middle-aged children and (2) the politeness strategies used by middle-aged children to their aging parents. This section provides substantial examples of spoken data which illustrate the employment of different kinds of politeness strategies used by middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents. The results will reveal the preferences of both generations in using politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) model of politeness is adopted for the data analysis.

The politeness strategies found based on the transcribed data are a) Bald-on-record b) Positive Politeness c) Negative Politeness and d) Off-record. The analysis begins with the politeness strategies used by aging parents to their middle-aged children and followed by the politeness strategies used by middle-aged children to their aging parents.

##### **4.1.1 Bald-on-record strategy used by the aging parents.**

Bald-on-record strategy is a way for speakers to express their ideas or opinions directly. This section discusses bald-on-record strategies identified in the data used by the aging parents during their mealtime conversations.

The first extract shows the use of bald-on-record strategy in the illocutionary act of directives.

### Extract 1

AM3: Aging mother family 3; MC3: Middle-aged child family 3

- 1 AM3: Lai tam pok mee.  
[Come some noodles.]  
(*Give me some noodles.*)
- 2 MC3: Mee ah?  
[Noodles?]  
(*Noodles?*)
- 3 AM3: Hmm...  
[Yes.]  
(*Yes.*)

The speech act of order is evident in the utterance ‘give me some noodles’, in turn 1. In this example, the speaker (aging parent) has more authority than the hearer (middle-aged child). As claimed by Searle (1969), an order is “an attempt to get hearer to do A in virtue of the authority of speaker over hearer” (p. 66). The act of order has impinged on the negative face of the middle-aged daughter to perform some actions. According to Keenan (1974, p.132), “the use of speech acts of ordering and requesting or asking create active confrontation situation”. However, bald-on-record strategy that is used by the aging parent shows no redress in performing the FTA. The aging mother (AM3) orders directly by using the direct imperative which is observed in the phrase ‘*Lai tam pok mee*’ (give me some noodles) in turn 1. The order is made explicitly and unambiguously. The aging mother (AM3) performs the order in a direct and explicit manner because she is more superior. It is obvious that the aging mother (AM3) wants to convey the message efficiently without any mitigation.

The following extract shows another example of the act of directives performed by the aging parent.

## Extract 2

AM2: Aging mother family 2; MC2: Middle-aged child family 2

- 64 AM2: *Lu jia hamik che ji lok ui?*  
[You eat what sit here?]  
(What can you eat sitting here?)
- 65 MC2: *Ai...yoh aneh ceh mi kia jia.*  
[So many things eat.]  
(So many things to eat.)
- 66 AM2: *Ki gia kao-i.*  
[Go take chair.]  
**(Go and take the chair.)**

In this context, the aging parent (AM2) advises the middle-aged child (MC2) to take a chair and sit nearer to the table, out of concern that the middle-aged child will not be able to reach the food. As claimed by Searle (1969) speech act of advice takes place when “speaker believes that the act will benefit the hearer” (Searle, 1969, p. 67). Even though the advice made is for the benefit of the middle-aged child, the act of advice has threatened the negative face of the middle-aged child. Without any usage of any politeness strategies, the aging parent directly advises the middle-aged child to get a chair and sit nearer to the dishes. Bald-on-record strategy is realised with the used of the imperative, ‘*Ki gia kao-i*’ (Go and take the chair) in turn 66. This is realised that, the aging parent expresses her intention clearly and explicitly in order to get the middle-aged child to perform a certain action. Bald-on record strategy takes place in this context as the aging parent has no intention of minimizing the face threat towards the middle-aged child and the face threatening act is mainly in the hearer’s interest. Lean (2008, p.66) explains that bald-on-record strategy is commonly found with people who know each other very well, such as family members.

In the following example, the strategy of bald-on-record is illustrated in the act of refusal.

### Extract 3

AM1: Aging mother family 1; MC1: Middle-aged child family 1

84 MC1: *Eh zoheh, zoh tam pok. Eiong roti zoh hor ah ma.*  
[Can make one. A little. Use bread make give grandma.]  
(Can make a little. Can use bread to make it for grandma.)

85 AM1: *Wo mai, men chor, wa beh jiak eh.*  
[I don't want. Don't make. I can't eat.]  
**(I don't want. Don't make. I can't eat.)**

Initially, in turn 84 the middle-aged child (MC1) promises to make the aging parent (AM1) some pizza. However, in turn 85 the aging parent refuses directly by employing bald-on-record strategy. The refusal act is realised “when a speaker directly or indirectly speaks ‘no’...” (Al-Eryani, 2007). The direct form of refusal which illustrates the aging parent use of bald-on-record strategy is realised in turn 85, ‘*Wo mai*’, ‘*men chor*’, ‘*wa beh jiak eh.*’ (‘I don’t want’, ‘don’t make’, and ‘I can’t eat’). According to Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory, bald-on-record strategy is employed when the speaker wants to convey his/her intentions with maximum efficiency rather than satisfying the hearer’s face.

Extract 4 shows the use of bald-on-record strategy in the illocutionary act of directives.

#### **Extract 4**

AF4: Aging father family 4; MC4: Middle-aged child family 4

- 1    **AF4:**    *ki tek bui.*  
                  [Go get rice.]  
                  **(Get the rice.)**
  
- 2    **MC4:**    *Ha.Ai huan jiu jiang or?*  
                  [Alright. Want chilli sauce?]  
                  (Alright. Do you want chilli sauce?)

This is another example of the speech act of order in which the bald-on-record strategy is employed. In this context, the aging father (AF4) orders the middle-aged child (MC4) to get some rice. It is observed in turn 1, 'Get the rice'. The act of ordering is realised as the aging father is in a more powerful position compared to the middle-aged child. By ordering his middle-aged child, the aging parent (AF4) threatened the negative face wants of the middle-aged child. The imposition threatened the middle-aged child's negative face wants, i.e. the want for freedom of action (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Without usage of any politeness strategies, the aging parent employs the bald-on record strategy in ordering his middle-aged child by the use of the imperative form '*Ki tek bui*' (Get the rice) as realised in turn 1. By using the imperative form, the aging parent is doing the act baldly, in the most direct and concise way possible in order to get MC4 to do the action. It is observed that the aging parent uses bald-on-record strategy as he unambiguously expresses his intention of ordering his middle-aged child.

In the following example, the strategy of bald-on-record is illustrated in the act of order used by the aging parents.

### Extract 5

AF4: Aging father family 4; AM4: Aging mother family 4

- 27 AF4: *Lu gia ki ee eh kak ha bui eh hoe ah ma kua ji eh.*  
[Take up its shell that one let grandma see awhile.]  
**(Take up the shell of [that crab] and let grandma see.)**
- 28 AM4: *Heh ni ni ni tek heh.*  
[Prawn here here here take prawn.]  
**(Get the prawn.)**
- 29 AF4: *Tek lai ji jiak heh, heh gor wa boh ai jiak la.*  
[Take come one prawn, mantis shrimp I don't want eat.]  
**(Get me a prawn, I don't want mantis shrimp.)**

In this context, both the aging father (AF4) and the aging mother (AM4) order their middle-aged child to get some prawns. Subsequently, the middle-aged child takes the shrimps without saying anything. There are three occurrences of speech act of order realised in this extract, “take up the shell of that crab and let grandma see” in turn 27, “Take the prawn” in turn 28 and “get me a prawn...” in turn 29. The speech act of order has the preparatory rule that speaker must be “in a position of authority over the hearer” (Searle, 1969, p. 66). The speech acts of orders threaten the negative face of the middle-aged child. However, the face threat is ignored as both the aging parents employ the bald-on record strategy. When the aging parents order their middle-aged child, they use the imperative forms of, ‘*Lu gia ki ee eh kak...*’ (Take up the shell...), ‘*Heh ni ni ni tek heh*’ (Get the prawn...) and ‘*Tek lai ji jiak heh...*’ (Get me a prawn...) which are realised in line 27, 28 and 29. The utterances are in the imperative form without the use of any mitigation strategy. The aging father (AF4) and aging mother (AM4) order the middle-aged child (MC4) directly and baldly. It is obvious that, both the aging parents speak with maximal efficiency rather than saying more than is required. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.94) “We can treat bald-on record strategy as speaking in

conformity with Grice Maxims”. The findings are in line with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) arguments that the threat to face is ignored when the speaker wants to do the FTA with efficiency and where the danger to hearer’s face is very small. Besides, both the aging parents are being direct because it is common to use bald-on-record when employing directive speech acts such as ordering the hearer to perform some kind of actions.

#### **4.1.2 Bald-on-record strategy used by middle-aged children.**

This section discusses the middle-aged children’s use of bald-on-record strategy to their aging parents. The following extract shows the use of the directive act of advice in which the bald-on-record strategy is employed.

##### **Extract 6**

AF1: Aging father family 1; MC1: Middle-aged child family 1

1 MC1: *Gia khao-i lai jeh la.*  
[Take chair come sit.]  
(Get a chair and sit down.)

2 AF1: *Mai-ar*  
[No]  
(No)

The speech act of advice is used by the middle-aged child (MC1) to get the aging father to perform an action, which is realised in turn 1, ‘*Gia khao-i lai jeh la.*’ (Get a chair and sit down). This utterance is considered an advice because the act benefits the aging parent. As stated by Searle (1969, p.66), “speaker believes that the act will benefit the hearer”. The advice performed by the middle-aged daughter (MC1) threatens the negative face of the aging parent as she places some pressure on her aging father to perform the act of getting a chair and take a seat. Bald-on-record strategy is employed



by the middle-aged child. It is evident from the use of imperative form '*Gia khao-i*' (Get a chair) and '*lai jeh la*' (sit down) in turn 1. By advising using the imperative form, for example 'do X!' middle-aged daughter (MC1) is doing an act baldly, in the most direct and concise way possible. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) an FTA will be done in bald-on-record only if the speaker does not fear retribution from the addressee, for example in the circumstance of the speaker's desire to express the content of the act. They explain that, speaker and hearer both tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended when (a) in the interests of urgency or efficiency (b) where the danger to H's face is very small, as in offers, requests, suggestions that are clearly in H's interest and do not require great sacrifices of S (e.g., 'Come in' or 'Do sit down'). This statement supports that the advice made is for the benefit of the aging parent and the impingement is minimal.

Extract 7 shows the use of the directive act of advice in which the bald-on-record strategy is employed.

#### **Extract 7**

AF5: Aging father family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

- 72    AF5:    *Pao buah sikut pun shih eh ti.*  
                  [Make buah sikut(a type of Malaysian dry biscuit) also can sweet.]  
                  (Making buah sikut (a type of Malaysian dry biscuit) can be sweet.)
- 73    MC5:    *Jiak da da. Giam pia.*  
                  [Eat dry dry. Biscuit.]  
                  **(Eat something dry. Biscuit.)**

Extract 7 shows the use of bald-on-record strategy by the middle-aged child (MC5). The use of bald-on-record strategy with a direct form of imperative '*jiak da da*' (eat something dry) is realised in line 73. The middle-aged child advises the aging parent to

eat something dry which he thinks is for the benefit of the aging parent. By employing bald-on-record strategy, the middle-aged child does not afraid of the possible face threatening act. Instead, by giving advice directly, the middle-aged child (MC5) tends to show that he is being sincere with the aging parent as it is for the benefit of the aging parent. “By going on record, a speaker can potentially get the advantages such as credit for honesty; and avoid the danger of being misunderstood” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.71).

The following example illustrates the use of an act of advice by the middle-aged child in which bald-on-record strategy is employed.

#### **Extract 8**

AF4: Aging father family 4; MC4: Middle-aged child family 4

10 MC4: *Jiak jim la.*

[Eat crab.]

**(Eat the crab.)**

11 AF4: *Mai mai mai, jim wo boh jiak.*

[No, no, no. crab I no eat.]

(No, no, no. I don't eat crab.)

The middle-aged child (MC4) advises the aging father (AF4) to eat the crab as evident in turn 10. The direct form of suggest '*Jiak jim la*' (eat the crab) is employed by the middle-aged child. The act to get some crab is presumed to benefit the aging father. A face threatening act occurs when the middle-aged child impinges on the aging parent to accept her advises. There is no politeness strategy taken by the middle-aged child to soften the FTA. She uses bald-on-record strategy in advising which is realised with the use of imperative form 'eat the crab'. The employment of bald-on-record strategy shows that the middle-aged child has no intention of minimizing the FTA. This strategy is

employed as the middle-aged child wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency without any mitigation as this act is performed for the best interest of the aging parent. The directly formulated request is also a way for the middle-aged child to show her intention.

An act of advice which is performed by the middle-aged child is shown in the next extract.

### Extract 9

AF5: Aging father family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

104 AF5: *Liao ee char chai pun heh keh jeng la.*  
[Then she fry vegetable also put .]  
(Even when she cooks she adds food essence.)

105 MC5: *Jiak sak sak o . iu iu mai jiak anne ceh.*  
[Eat steam steam . Oily oily don't eat too much.]  
**(Eat steamed food. Do not eat oily food.)**

This excerpt shows the middle-aged child's use of bald-on-record strategy in giving advice to the aging parent. Initially, the aging parent complains about the helper who added food essence to the food. The act of giving advice is realised in turn 105 when the middle-aged child says 'eat steamed food' and 'do not eat oily food.' The usage of direct imperatives is an example of bald-on-record strategy. In this utterance, the middle-aged child uses a bald-on-record strategy without any formulaic polite expression. Besides, there is no evidence of the usage of linguistic politeness markers in this utterance. As we can observe, in this case the advice is given directly as it concerns of the health of the aging parent. Thus, MC5 employs the direct strategy when the message is important. "In cases of great urgency or desperation, redress would actually decrease the communicated urgency" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.96). This strategy

is commonly found among people who are in a close relationship and in very familiar surroundings, such as within the family and among close friends (Lean, 2008, p.66).

The following example illustrates the use of the act of advice by the middle-aged child in which bald-on-record strategy is employed.

#### **Extract 10**

AF1: Aging father family 1; MC1: Middle-aged child family 1

- 6    **MC1:**    *Ki gia Khao-i lai che cheng.*  
                  [Go take chair come sit here.]  
                  **(Get a chair and sit here.)**
- 7    **AF1:**    *Mai-iao. Wo ai jia iok liao*  
                  [No. I want eat medicine already.]  
                  (No. I wanted to take my medicine.)
- 8    **MC1:**    *Gia sit lo, kua sit u oo, jia sit.*  
                  [Take chicken wings, see chicken wings have not, eat chicken wings.]  
                  **(Take the chicken wings. Eat the chicken wings.)**

The direct form of advice is realised in turn 6 '*Ki gia Khao-i lai che cheng*' (get a chair and sit here) and '*Gia sit lo, kua sit u oo*' (take the chicken wings) and '*,jia sit.*' (Eat the chicken wings) in turn 8. The speech act of advice is realised as the act is for the benefit of the aging parent. The advice seems to be made directly and unambiguously with the use of imperative form. However, it is realised that even though the utterance is made without any usage of politeness features, it is perceived positively by the aging parent. It is common for the participants to use imperative form in the act of advice. This is in line with Blum-Kulka's (1990) findings that the "...unmodified directness is neutral, or unmarked, in regard to politeness" (Blum-Kulka, 1990, p. 269). She argues that in family discourse less mitigation is needed.

#### 4.1.3 Positive politeness strategy used by the aging parents.

This section illustrates the aging parents' use of positive politeness strategies during their mealtime conversations. The context shows the conversation between the middle-aged child and the aging parent who are discussing the skin treatment that the middle-aged child had undergone.

##### Extract 11

AM5: Aging mother family 5; AF5: Aging father family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

11 MC5: *Nor le pai. Teng,teng,teng,teng. Laser ee giu laser.*

[Two weeks. It call laser.]

(Two weeks. It is called laser.)

12 AF5: *Oh.*

[Oh.]

(Oh I see.)

13 AM5: *Boh tia ar?*

[Not pain?]

**(Isn't it painful?)**

14 MC5: *Buak bar ieok.*

[Apply pain killer.]

(Apply pain killer.)

The aging parent was trying to find out whether the middle-aged child was experiencing pain after the laser treatment. The act of questioning employed by the aging parent threatens the face of the middle-aged child. For the reason that, the act of asking for information requires the middle-aged child to give a respond. Therefore to mitigate the FTA, the aging parent employs positive politeness strategy of assert common ground. It is observed that the aging parent tries to show concerns and empathy to what have been gone through by the middle-aged child by asserting the common ground. Besides that, by employing the positive politeness strategy, the aging parent tends to show concern to

the middle-aged child's positive face. Therefore, positive politeness is used to allow the aging parent to build solidarity with the middle-aged child.

The following example illustrates the use of an act of suggest by the aging parent in which positive politeness strategy is employed.

### Extract 12

AF5: Aging father family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

- 25      AF5:      *Liao beh hiao ta teng dui ki ua loh*  
                         [Then why don't later back change.]  
                         **(Why don't you go back and change later.)**
- 26      MC5:      *Biao kin la.*  
                         [It's all right.]  
                         (It's all right.)

In this context, the aging father (AF5) suggests that the middle-aged child (MC5) goes home and change his clothes. It is observed in turn 25. The act of suggesting takes place because the speaker wishes that the addressee could change his clothes later. As stated by Turner and Sbisà (2013) the speech act of suggesting is performed "to help the listener toward some goal that the latter desires or assumed to desire". Making a suggestion can threaten the negative face of the hearer because the hearer may have to accept the suggestions given. To soften the face threatening act, the aging father employs the positive politeness strategy. This form of an indirect suggestion of 'why don't you go back and change later' is considered a demand for the hearer to perform some future act. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) this indirect suggestion is known as a demand as they state that "indirect suggestions which demand rather than give reasons are a conventionalized positive politeness form" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 128).

In the following example, the strategy of positive politeness is illustrated in the act of indirect request.

### Extract13

AM2: Aging mother family 2; MC2: Middle-aged child family 2

- 69 AM2: *Em si kong coh pulut pisang?*  
[Not say make pulut pisang?]  
**(Aren't we making glutinous banana (A type of Malay dessert)?)**
- 70 MC2: *Tu ai cho liao.*  
[There want make already.]  
(Start making already.)

In this excerpt, the aging parent makes an indirect request to the middle-aged child to make glutinous banana (A type of Malay dessert). This is realised in turn 69. The structural of 'Aren't we making glutinous banana?' is in the interrogative form, however the ultimate function is to request. Indirect speech act is realised 'when the structural form of a speech act has an indirect relationship with its function' (Yule, 1996, p.54). Kadar and Haugh (2013, p.24) also claimed that "indirect request is accomplished via interrogative or indicative". The indirect request of the aging parent impinged on the negative face of middle-aged child. To mitigate the FTA, positive politeness strategy of including both S and H in the activity is used. The strategy is realised in line 69 by the use of the third person pronoun 'we'. The 'we' form is used to soften the indirect request made by the aging parent. By including both the hearer and the speaker in the activity, the speaker thereby redresses the FTAs (Brown and Levinson, 1987). "By using an inclusive 'we' form, when speaker really means 'you' or 'me', he can call upon the cooperative assumptions" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.127). The aging mother includes herself in the action even though only the middle-aged daughter will be

performing the action. One can observed that, family members tend to show cooperation and establish good rapport among each other through the use of 'we'.

In the following example, the strategy of positive politeness is illustrated in the speech act of offer.

#### Extract 14

AF2: Aging father family 2; MC2: Middle-aged child family 2

- 1    **AF2:**    *MC2 (middle-aged child 2) ai ke iao, ai ki jiak hai xian oh? Qi jiak.*  
                  [MC2 (middle-aged child 2) want go already, want go eat seafood? Go eat.]  
                  **(MC2 (middle-aged child 2) you are leaving. Do you want to eat seafood?**  
                  **Let's go and eat.)**
- 2    **MC2:**    *Ha mik su ni?*  
                  [Why?]  
                  (Why?)
- 3    **AF2:**    *Cha jit lui lai iao*  
                  [Yesterday money come already.]  
                  (Yesterday I have received the money.)

The aging parent is about to have a meal and he notices that middle-aged child is leaving. Therefore, the aging father (AF2) intends to offer the middle-aged child (MC2) some seafood. The aging father puts himself under the commitment of giving the middle-aged child a treat. As stated by Fraser (1975, p. 193) speech act of offer occurs when "the speaker intends to place themselves under an obligation to bring about the state of affairs..." The act of offer impinged on the negative face of the middle-aged daughter. For the reason that, it imposes pressure on the middle-aged daughter to accept it. To mitigate the face threatening act, the positive politeness strategy of including both S and H in the activity is employed by the aging parent. It is realised by the use of 'let's go and eat' in turn 1. As Brown and Levinson (1987, p.127) states, the use of "let's in English is an inclusive 'we' form". To soften the offer, the aging parent shows he is as



keen as the middle-aged child in performing the act. Besides, by including both the speaker and the hearer in the act of offering, the aging parent is assuming the cooperation from his middle-aged child.

#### **4.1.4 Positive Politeness used by the middle-aged children.**

This section discusses the use of positive politeness strategies by the middle-aged children.

##### **Extract 15**

AF1: Aging father family 1; MC1: Middle-aged child family 1

- 58 MC1: *Tu kong Kentucky.*  
[There Grandpa Kentucky.]  
**(Grandpa, here is the Kentucky (fried chicken).)**
- 59 AF1: *Mai.*  
[No.]  
(No.)

In turn 58, the middle-aged child (MC1) offers the aging parent some fried chickens (Kentucky). Brown and Levinson (1987) explained that speech act of offer is the “act that predicate some positive future act of speaker toward hearer, and in so doing put some pressure on hearer to accept or reject them...” The middle-aged child’s act of offering threatens the negative face of the aging parent. It imposes pressure on the aging parent to accept the offer. To lessen the impact of FTA, the middle-aged child employs the positive politeness strategy of in group address form. This is realised in turn 58, with the use of ‘*kong*’ (grandpa). By including the term of address ‘grandpa’, the middle-aged child tends to show the in-group relationship between herself and the aging parent to soften the FTA. Besides that, the use of address term could establish solidarity and closeness among the interlocutors. As stated by Gu (1990), addressing an interlocutor

with an appropriate term is based on the concepts of attitudinal warmth as well as respectfulness.

An act of suggest by the middle-aged child is observed in the following extract.

### Excerpt 16

Interlocutors: AM1: Aging mother family 1; MC1: Middle-aged child family 1; RH: Helper

Turn

- 29 MC1: (referring to the coconut) *Kalau pasar malam ada jual lah.*  
[If night market have sell.]  
(They sell this in night market.)
- 30 RH: *Hmm...*  
[Ya.]  
(Yes.)
- 31 MC1: *Kalau kita pi lain kali kita bagi duit la. Beli lah dengan ah yee. Ambil selalu nanti diapa tak suka.*  
[If we go next time we give money. buy with aunty. Take every time later they don't like.]  
**(If we go again next time, we should give that aunty (their neighbour) money and buy from her. They might not be happy if we keep on taking their things.)**
- 32 AM1: *Bagi sikit-sikit boleh la. Orang tua tua. Tak ambil pun boleh bagi. Nak ambil rebung pun boleh bagi.*  
[Give a little can. people old old. Don't take also can give. Want take bamboo shoot also can give.]  
(It's ok if they give a little to old people. Even if we don't ask for it. Even if we want bamboo shoots, she will give it to us.)

In this context, the middle-aged child (MC1) and the aging parent (AM1) are talking about the coconut given by their neighbour. The middle-aged child suggests that the aging parent to pay their neighbour the next time they take a coconut. The FTA of giving suggestion is realised in turn 31. When the middle-aged child suggests that the aging parent pays for the coconut next time, a face threatening act is produced.

Suggestions are speech acts that are made presumably in the best interest of the listener, usually to help the listener toward some goal that the latter desires or is assumed to

desire (Turner and Sbisà, 2013). In mitigate the FTA, positive politeness strategy of including both speaker and hearer is realised by the use of '*kita*' (we) in line 31. To decrease the impact of the FTA on the hearer's negative face, the middle-aged child politely suggests that the aging parent should pay their neighbour. It is observed that, the middle-aged child gives suggestion with the use of 'we' in order to save the aging parent's negative face wants.

Extract 17 illustrates the use of questioning by the middle-aged child in which the positive politeness strategy is employed.

### **Extract 17**

AF1: Aging father family 1; AM1: Aging mother family 1; MC1: Middle-aged child family 1

- 25 AF1: *Pizza dua Pharmacy dui bin em shi ar?*  
[Pizza at Pharmacy opposite no?]  
(Is the pizza restaurant opposite the pharmacy?)
- 26 AM1: *Chao bi. Chao bi. Jiak kun ah meh pun bi kok. Adui, kia wa.*  
[Smelly. Smelly. Eat sleep night also smell. Scared I.]  
(It smells bad. It smells bad. The smell of butter is bad. After eating the pizza the smell remains until night. I'm so scared.)
- 27 MC1: *Ha mik su? Ah kong iao hor?*  
[Why is it? Grandpa hungry is it?]  
**(Why? Grandpa (AF1), are you hungry?)**
- 28 AF1: *Boh lah, mui nia. Boh iao la.*  
[No, ask only. Not hungry.]  
(No. I'm just asking. I'm not hungry.)

Initially the aging parent (AF1) asks the middle-aged child (MC1) whether the pizza restaurant is opposite the pharmacy. Upon hearing that, the middle-aged child assumes that the aging parent would like to have some pizza. The middle-aged child asks the aging parent '*Ha mik su? Ah kong iao hor?*' (Why? Grandpa (AF1), are you hungry?) in

turn 27. The speech act of questioning is evident when the middle-aged daughter tries to seek an answer from the aging parent. Questioning is “an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to answer” (Searle, 1969, p.66). The middle-aged child expects the aging parent to respond to her question. Asking the question may impose on the addressee, committing him to answer, and as such, is considered a face threatening act (Turner and Sbisà, 2013). Therefore, the middle-aged daughter’s act of questioning threatens the negative face of the aging parent. To soften the impact of the face threatening act, the positive politeness strategy of in group address form is used. The positive politeness strategy of address term is realised by the use of ‘*Ah kong*’ (Grandpa) in line 27. The middle-aged child assumes that the father wants to eat pizza because the question imposed by the aging father earlier was about the location of the pizza restaurant. One of the ways to establish good rapport between family members is through asking questions. It was also observed that, the middle-aged child’s linguistic choice of politeness signalled her recognition of the power differences between them.

The following example illustrates the use of an act of promise by the middle-aged child in which the positive politeness strategy is employed.

### Extract 18

AM1: Aging mother family 1; MC1: Middle-aged child family 1

- 79 AM1: *Ee kong teng jit sembang pizza, wa kong pizza wa jiak ka gia ki liao, jiak liao am meh koh bi ha leh gu you kok.*  
 [Her Grandpa that day chat pizza. I say pizza I eat until scared go already. Eat already at night also smells that butter.]  
 (The other day grandpa chats about pizza. I said I am scared of eating pizza. After eating pizza, the smell of butter remains until night.)
- 80 MC1: *Lang tiao ti ai heh je je eh oo.*  
 [People purposely want put a lot one.]  
 (Some people still put it so much.)
- 81 AM1: *Wa kong wa mai eh, liao ee saja, ee kong ee pizza dian ee pun em chai. Wo kong mai men ki beh la, wo boh ai jiak eh.*  
 [I say I don’t want. Then he simply. He say pizza restaurant he also don’t know. I say no, don’t go buy. I don’t want eat.]

(I told him I don't want it, but he didn't hear me. He said he didn't know where the restaurant was located. I told him there was no need to go and buy it. I didn't want to eat it.)

- 82 MC1: *Eh zoheh, zoh tam pok. Eiong roti zoh hor ah ma.*  
[Can make one. A little. Use bread make give grandma.]  
**(Can make a little. Can use bread to make it for grandma (AM1)).**
- 83 AM1: *Wo mai, men chor, wa beh jiak eh.*  
[I don't want. Don't make. I can't eat.]  
(I don't want. Don't make. I can't eat.)

Initially, the aging mother talks about how she and the aging father were discussing the location of the pizza restaurant. Assuming that the aging parent (AM1) would probably want to eat pizza, the middle-aged child (MC1) promises that she will make pizza for the aging parent which is realized in turn 82. An act of promise is seen as “a pledge to do something ‘for’ the hearer and requires some sort of occasion or situation” (Searle, 1969). The aging parent is expected to accept the promise. Hence, the act of promise threatens the negative face of the aging parent. In order to mitigate the face threatening act, the middle-aged child employs positive politeness strategy of in-group identity markers. The use of the term of address ‘*ah ma*’ (grandma) is seen in line 82. This example demonstrates in-group solidarity between the speaker and the hearer. The use of positive politeness recommends that in any speech act, a person's need to be liked and understood must be paramount (Kuang, 2008, p.124).

Extract 19 below shows the use of an act of advice by the middle-aged child in which positive politeness strategy is employed.

#### **Extract 19**

AF5: Aging father family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

- 57 AF5: *Khen jit rasa ka juak tampok. Jiak hale beh eh ieok cha meh*  
[Today feel more heat a bit. Eat bought medicine last night.]  
(Today I feel a little heaty. I took the medicine you bought yesterday.)

- 58 MC5: *Liao en cua beh hiao ci tao jiak ha le ioek ar?*  
 [Then how come never just eat that medicine?]  
**(Then why don't you just take that medicine?)**
- 59 AF5: *Jiak ceh gui tao boh hoe ha leh ieok.*  
 [Eat too much not good that medicine.]  
 (It's not good to take too much of that medicine.)

In this excerpt, the act of giving advice is employed by the middle-aged child (MC5) in turn 58. The middle-aged child advises the aging parent (AF5) to take the medicine. In this context, the middle-aged child advises the aging father to take the medicine for the benefit of his health. The act of giving advice however, threatens the negative face of the aging parent. In order to decrease the impact on the hearer's negative face, positive politeness strategy of asking for reasons is realised in turn 58, '*Liao en cua beh hiao ci tao jiak ha le ioek ar?*' (Then why don't you just take that medicine?). By including hearer in his practical reasoning, and assuming reflexivity, hearer is thereby led to see the reasonableness of S's FTA." Therefore, in this context the speaker is including the hearer in the activity by implying that taking the medicine is the best solution.

The extract below shows the use of questioning by the middle-aged child in which positive politeness strategy is employed.

#### **Excerpt 20**

AM4: Aging mother family 4; MC4: Middle-aged child family 4

- 20 AM4: *Ci leh tok ui eh cim.*  
 [This where crab?]  
 (Where are the crabs from?)
- 21 MC4: *Sri lanka. Ai o? wa pek hor lu nor.*  
 [Sri Lanka. Want or not? I peel for you.]  
**(Sri Lanka. Do you want? I'll peel it for you.)**
- 22 AM4: *Mai ah. Wa mai. Hamik lai? Heh kor ar?*

[No. I don't want. What is it? Mantis shrimp?]

(No. I don't want. What is it? Is it mantis shrimp?)

In this context, the aging parent (AM4) and the middle-aged child (MC4) talk about the crab which the middle-aged child bought. In turn 21, the middle-aged child questions the aging parent whether she want to eat the crab '*Ai o?*' (Do you want?) When a question is given, a response is expected. Therefore, the act of question threatens the negative face of the aging parent as it imposes pressure on the aging parent to give a respond. To redress the FTA, the use of positive politeness of offer and promise is observed in line 21 '*wa pek hor lu nor.*' (I'll peel it for you.) . In this case, the middle-aged child realises the need of the aging parent for the crab to be peeled as the aging parent is unable to peel it by herself. Therefore, the middle-aged child attends to her needs by employing the politeness strategy of offering.

#### 4.1.5 Negative Politeness strategies used by the aging parents.

This section discusses the use of negative politeness strategies by the aging parents. In the following excerpt, the middle-aged child (MC2) and the aging parent (AM2) are talking about why the baby cried at night.

##### Excerpt 21

AM2: Aging mother family 2; MC2: Middle-aged child family 2

- 50 AM2: *Ha mik su an ne? ai chiak? Ki lai jiak?*  
[why like that? Want drink? Wake up drink?]  
(Why is it like that? Does she (the baby) want to drink [the milk]? Does she wake up and drink?)
- Jiak ar.*
- 51 MC2: [Drink.]  
(She drinks.)

- Luang hor ee boh par kut?wa gak jiu kui tao. Bo gao par.*
- 52     AM2: [You give her no full maybe?I think too little. No enough full.]  
              **(Maybe you didn't feed her enough. I think it's too little. She is not full.)**

In turn 52, it is observed that the aging parent (AM2) is suggesting that MC2 feeds the baby more milk so that the baby won't wake up at night. To suggest is "...to help the listener toward some goal that the latter desires or is assumed to desire" (Turner and Sbisà, 2013). The act of suggesting threatens the negative face of the middle-aged child. The negative face of an individual is "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61). Negative politeness strategy is employed by the aging parent to soften the impact of suggesting. This strategy is illustrated in the use of hedges. Hedging is one of the sub-strategies of negative politeness. It occurs in turn 52, where the aging parent employs the hedging device 'kut' (maybe) and 'wa gak' (I think) to soften the impact of the imposition. According to Holmes (1996, p. 74) hedging is a way of softening the impact and the force of an utterance. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that hedges are used to avoid the commitment to the threat. Therefore, one can observe that, the aging parent employs hedges in giving suggestion in order to save the negative face of the middle-aged child without sounding too direct in her speech.

An act of request by the aging parents is observed in the following extract.

#### **Extract 22**

Interlocutors: AM2: Aging Mother family 2; MC2: Middle-aged child family 2

- 60     AM2: *Teng gui hia bui MC2?*  
              [Soup heated or not MC2?]  
              **(Have you heated up the soup, MC2?)**
- 61     MC2: *Yes.*  
              [Yes.]  
              (Yes.)



In turn 60, it is observed that the aging parent makes an indirect request through the form of a question, '*Teng gui hia bui MC2?*' (Have you heated up the soup, MC2?) with the intention to indirectly request the middle-aged child to heat up the soup. The act of indirect request is an act in which the actual function is to require some kind of action from the hearer. The act of requesting would threaten the daughter's negative face. Therefore, the aging parent employs the use of the question form in order to soften the FTA. Negative politeness strategy of question is used by the aging parent in requesting the middle-aged child to heat to the soup. The politeness strategy of question is used by the aging parent to lessen the imposition of the indirect request.

Extract below illustrates the use of an act of advice by the aging parent in which the negative politeness strategy is employed.

### Extract 23

Interlocutors: AM5: Aging Mother family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

- 13 AM5: *Boh tia ar?*  
[Not pain?]  
(Isn't it painful?)
- 14 MC5: *Buak bar ieok.*  
[Apply pain killer.]  
(Apply pain killer.)
- 15 AM5: *Ee bo or wa gak or dao iu beh sai jiak.*  
[It no black I think black soya sauce don't eat.]  
**(It won't become black. I think you shouldn't eat black soya sauce.)**

This excerpt shows the use of the negative politeness strategy of hedging in the speech act of advice. In this context, the aging parent and the middle-aged child are talking about the skin condition of the middle-aged child as he had just undergone laser skin treatment. In turn 15, the aging parent is giving advice by saying, '*Wa gak or dao iu beh sai jiak*' (I think shouldn't eat black soya sauce) to the middle-aged child as she thinks that not eating black soya sauce is for the benefit of the middle-aged child. The speech act of advice however threatens the negative face of the middle-aged child. To redress

the face threatening act, the aging parent employs the hedge ‘*Wa gak*’ (I think) to soften the force of the speech act of advice. An advice can be made more indirect by using the mitigating strategy of hedges such as ‘I think’ to show uncertainty. Showing uncertainty gives the hearer a chance to challenge the advice given. The use of hedges does not change the content of the speech act of advice.

#### 4.1.6 Negative politeness strategies used by the middle-aged children.

The following extracts illustrate the use of negative politeness strategies by the middle-aged children. In the following excerpt, the occurrence of negative politeness strategies of question and hedges is realised in the speech act of advice.

##### Excerpt 24

Interlocutors: AF5: Aging father family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

- 80    AF5:    *Jit leh nor sha jit kiam jiak*  
                  [This two three days eat less.]  
                  (Eat very little these few days.)
- 81    MC5:    *Kiam jiak kah hor noh. Ah kong wu rasa giam jiak pat thor beh char oh?*  
                  *Jiak cheh pai oh.*  
                  [Less eat better. Grandpa have feel less eat stomach no disturb? Eat more bad.]  
                  **(If you eat less it will be better. Do you have less stomach discomfort when you eat less? If you eat more you will fall sick.)**

A face threatening act is produced when the middle-aged child (MC5) advises the aging parent (AF5) to eat less as she believes that eating less will benefit the aging parent.

Speech act of advice occurs when “speaker believes that the act will benefit the hearer” (Searle, 1969, p. 67). In accomplishing the speech act of advice, the middle-aged child uses the negative politeness strategy of question to mitigate the FTA. It is realised in turn 81, ‘*Ah kong wu rasa giam jiak pat thor beh char oh?*’ (Do you have less stomach discomfort when you eat less?) In order to gain solidarity and to decrease the impact of the advice on the hearer’s negative face, the middle-aged child politely indicates that the

aging parent should eat lesser. Advice can be made more indirect by using the mitigating strategy of question forms. Considering the relative power between the interlocutors, it is clearly rational for the middle-aged child to give advice with the use of question in order to appeal to the aging parent's face.

#### 4.1.7 Off-record strategies used by the aging parents.

The following excerpts illustrate the used of off-record strategies by the aging parents.

##### Excerpt 25

Interlocutors: AM4: Aging mother family 4; MC4: Middle-aged child family 4

44 AM4: *Tama wa khua pulut kin jiu.*  
[Just now I see glutinous banana.]  
**(I saw the glutinous banana just now.)**

45 MC4: *Ai hor?*  
[Want is it?]  
(Do you want it?)

In turn 44, the aging parent (AM4) requests for glutinous banana indirectly by using the off-record strategy of giving hints. The off-record strategy is employed by the aging parent to mitigate the FTA produced through a direct request. The off-record strategy of giving hints is evident when the aging parent provides a hint for her intention of requesting for a glutinous banana. Indirect request such as this is accomplished by raising 'the issue' of the act which the aging parent desires. "Many cases of truly indirect (off-record) speech acts are accomplished by hints that consist in 'raising the issue of' some desired act A" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 213). By providing hints the aging parent allows her daughter to seek possible interpretations of her intention "If speaker says something that is not explicitly relevant, he invites hearer to search for an interpretation of the possible relevance." (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 213) In turn 45,

the middle-aged child understands the aging parent's intention by asking if the aging parent wants the glutinous rice banana as evident in the utterance 'Do you want it?'

An act of request by the aging parents is observed in the following extract.

### Excerpt 26

Interlocutors: AM3: Aging mother family 3; MC3: Middle-aged child family 3

- 48 MC3: *Ai jiaak ee o?*  
[Want eat glutinous ball?]  
(Do you want to eat the glutinous ball?)
- 49 AM3: *Leng an jua jiaak.*  
[Cold how eat?]  
**(How should I eat if it's cold?)**
- 50 MC3: *Ai hor cho siu hor? lai wa cho siu.*  
[Want reheat?]  
(Do you want to reheat it? Let me reheat it.)

Turn 49 shows an example of the speech act of request in which giving hints (off-record strategy) is employed by the aging parent (AM3). The middle-aged child offers the glutinous rice ball to the aging parent (MC3). The aging parent indirectly requests the middle-aged child to reheat the food by providing a hint that she can't eat it as it is cold. It is evident in the utterance '*Leng an jua jiaak*' (how to eat if it's cold?) By doing this, the aging parent wants to avoid the responsibility of requesting the middle-aged child to reheat the glutinous rice. Hence, the aging parent provides a hint of her intention to request the middle-aged child to heat up the food. The aging parent has raised the issue of what she actually desires and expects the middle-aged child to interpret it and take action. This is observed in the utterance 'how should I eat if it's cold?' in turn 49. By providing hints, the speaker "leaves it up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 211). According to Ervin-Tripp (1976), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Harrison and Barlow (2009), hint is viewed as a polite form of directive. Subsequently, the middle-aged child seems to have interpreted the situation correctly and apparently knows by offering to reheat the food as illustrated in turn 50,

‘do you want to reheat it? Let me reheat it.’ According to Brown and Levinson (1987), “If S says something that is not explicitly relevant, he invites hearer to search for an interpretation of the possible relevance.” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 213).

#### 4.1.8 Off-record strategy used by the middle-aged children.

The following excerpts show the used of off-record strategies by the middle-aged children.

##### Excerpt 27

Interlocutors: AF5: Aging father family 5; MC5: Middle-aged child family 5

25 AF5: *Liao beh hiao ta teng dui ki ua loh*  
[Then why don’t later back change.]  
(Why don’t go back and change later.)

26 MC5: *Biao kin la.*  
[It’s all right.]  
**(It’s all right.)**

Initially, in turn 25, the aging parent (AF5) suggests the middle-aged child (MC5) go back and change his clothes. However, in turn 26 the middle-aged child uses off-record strategy of understatement which is realised as, ‘*Biao kin la*’ (it’s all right) to reject the suggestion. An understatement is produced by the middle-aged child in rejecting the suggestion given by the aging parent. It is observed that by saying ‘it’s all right’, the middle-aged child tends to convey something less than or different from what she intends to say. By saying ‘it’s all right’ when what she actually means is ‘I don’t want to’. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 217) an understatement is “saying something less than or something different from what he actually intends to convey.” By employing off-record strategy, some aspects of the intention are not explicitly conveyed.

#### 4.1.9 The frequency of occurrences of the type of politeness strategies used.

This section discusses the frequency of occurrences of the type of politeness strategies used by middle-aged children and their aging parents during mealtime conversation.

**Table 4.1:** Politeness Strategies employed by middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents during mealtime conversation.

No.	Politeness Strategy	Middle-aged Children		Aging Parent	
		Total No.	%	Total No.	%
1	Bald-on-record	12	25%	30	65.2%
2	Positive Politeness	34	70.8%	9	19.6%
3	Negative Politeness	1	2.1%	5	10.9%
4	Off-record	1	2.1%	2	4.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1 shows the politeness strategies used by middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents during their mealtime conversation. There were 48 instances of politeness strategies used by middle-aged children and 45 instances of politeness strategies used by the aging parents found in the data. There were 4 strategies all together performed by the participants. The highest number of politeness strategies used by the middle-aged children was positive politeness with the total of 34 (70.8%).

Whereas the most frequent type of politeness strategy used by the aging parents was bald-on-record with the total number of 30 (65.2%).

The second highest type of politeness strategy used by the middle-aged children was bald-on-record with the total of 12 instances (25%). Whereas, positive politeness recorded the second highest type of politeness strategies used among the aging parents with the total of 9 (19.6%). Negative politeness strategies as well as off-record were the

least used in both generations. There was a total of 5 (10.9%) negative politeness strategies used by aging parents; while there were only 1 (2.1%) instances of negative politeness was used by middle-aged children. Off-record strategies used by both middle-aged children to their aging parents and aging parents to their middle-aged children had a total of 1 (2.1%) and 2 (4.3%) respectively. As one can observe, the middle-aged children employed more positive politeness to their aging parents while the aging parents employed more of bald-on-record to their middle-aged children in performing certain kinds of speech acts. This shows that the aging parents are more direct in performing speech acts as compared to their middle-aged children.

#### **4.2 The politeness strategies in directive and commissive.**

This section aims to reveal the politeness strategies that appear in middle-aged children's and the aging parents' use of illocutionary acts of directives and commissives in their conversation. In this study, two classes of illocutionary acts: directive and commissive are analysed. The speech act classes of representatives, declaratives and expressives are not included in the analysis of this study.

This discussion is divided into two main sections of directives and commissives. The frequencies of politeness strategies used as well as examples are provided in each type of speech act. Each speech act that occurs in the middle-aged children's data as well as the aging parent's data are analysed separately. The result will disclose the degree of politeness in the mealtime conversations. The identification of politeness strategies is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model and the categorisation of speech acts is based on Searle's (1969) speech acts classifications.

#### 4.2.1 The Illocutionary Act of Directives

The speech acts identified under directive in the conversations are requests, orders, advice, suggests, and questions. Directives speech acts are a good choice of data for analysis because they make up an extensive part of interaction in family conversation.

##### 4.2.1.1 The Speech Act of Request

One of the speech acts found under directives is request. Types of requests chosen for analysis are requests for action and information. Speech act of request found are examined separately: (1) the aging parents' use of requests and, (2) the middle-aged children's use of requests.

##### 4.2.1.1.1 Aging Parents' Acts of Request

The table below shows the frequencies and examples of politeness strategies used in speech act of request by the aging parents.

Table 4.2: The speech acts of request with the strategy of politeness employed by the aging parents.

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	1	i) Turn 69; Speaker AM2: ' <i>Em si kong coh pulut pisang?</i> ' (Aren't we making banana glutinous?)
Negative politeness	2	ii) Turn 60; Speaker AM2: ' <i>Teng gui hia bui MC2?</i> ' (Have you heated up the soup?)  iii) Turn 58; Speaker AM4: ' <i>Ma cai ee kong bi kua lo kun tapi ji diam eh ee kong cha ki lan kee eh hu oh?</i> ' (Tomorrow Grandpa needs to see the doctor at two. He asked if we will have enough time to go in the morning.)



Off-record	2	i) Turn 44; Speaker AM4: ' <i>Tama wa khua pulut kin jio.</i> ' (I saw the glutinous rice banana just now.)  ii) Turn 49; Speaker AM3: ' <i>Leng an jua jiak.</i> ' (How should I eat if it is cold?)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5</b>	

The analysis shows that the politeness strategies use by the aging parents were positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategies in performing speech acts of request. There were a total of 5 requests identified in the data. The findings revealed that no bald-on-record strategy was use in the requests made by the aging parents. Positive politeness strategies used by aging parents when requesting were merely 1 instance, whereas negative politeness and off-record were 2 instances in both strategies. The occurrence of the aging parent's act of request is minimal. Requests which focus on the minimization of face threat by the employment of politeness strategies suggest that the aging parents appear to show solid interest in the hearer's wants to be respected. The requests made by the aging parents illustrate various structural forms which perform different functions of indirect request. The difference between order and request is that orders are pragmatically marked forms which use imperative structures while request may take on a variety of verbs (Haverkate, 2002). As one can observe, the utterances made by the aging parents in request are not in the form of imperative but they are indirectly uttered. Hence, these utterances are categorised under speech act of request instead of orders.

#### 4.2.1.1.2 Middle-aged children's acts of request

The table below illustrates the frequencies and examples of politeness strategies used in speech act of request by the middle-aged children.

Table 4.3: The speech acts of request with the strategy of politeness employed by the middle-aged children.

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Example
Bald-on-record	2	i) Turn 63; Speaker MC3: ' <i>Kuak, dan lu ki kua</i> ' (It's wide, go and have a look later.) ii) Turn 65; Speaker MC3: ' <i>Dan lu ki kua.</i> ' (You go and have a look later.)
Positive politeness	1	i) Turn 67; Speaker MC3: ' <i>mak, nah nah nah tissue.</i> ' (Mum, take the tissue.)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3</b>	

The politeness strategies that were employed by the middle-aged children when requesting were bald-on-record strategy and positive politeness strategy. There were 2 instances of bald-on-record used by middle-aged children when requesting, whereas there was merely 1 instance of positive politeness used. There were a total of 3 requests identified in the data. The bald-on-record strategy was identified by the use of the imperative form. The examples of the usage of imperative form are, '...go and have a look later.' and 'mum, take the tissue.' "Direct imperatives stand out as clear examples of bald-on-record usage" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.95). Family members tend to use a more direct style of communicating with each other as it is related to the familiarity among family members. Besides, it is realised that family members tend to communicate in a more direct style where there is no face redress and less mitigation is needed. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that, speaker and hearer both tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended when (a) in the interests of urgency or efficiency (b) where the danger to H's face is very small, as in offers,

requests, suggestions that are clearly in H's interest and do not require great sacrifices of S (e.g., 'Come in' or 'Do sit down').

#### 4.2.1.2 Speech Act of Order

An order means “an attempt to get the hearer to do A in virtue of the authority of speaker over hearer” (Searle, 1969, p. 66).

##### 4.2.1.2.1 Aging Parent's Acts of Order

The table below shows the speech act of order with the frequencies of politeness strategies used by the aging parents. It is observed that, speech act of order is only employed by the aging parents.

Table 4.4: The speech acts of order with the strategy of politeness employed by the aging parents.

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Example
Bald-on-record	15	<p>i) Turn 1; Speaker AF4: '<i>Ki tek bui.</i>' (Take the rice.)</p> <p>ii) Turn 75; Speaker AM2: '<i>Gia gin jio hiuk lai ga ga.</i>' (Take the banana leaves and cut it.)</p> <p>iii) Turn 32; Speaker AM3: '<i>Lai tam pok mee.</i>' (Give me some noodles.)</p> <p>iv) Turn 70; Speaker AM3: '<i>Eh MC3, hor ee mee tam pok.</i>' (MC3 (middle-aged child), give her some noodles.)</p> <p>v) Turn 27; Speaker AF4: '<i>Lu gia ki ee eh kak ha bui eh hoe ah ma kia ji eh.</i>' (Take up the shell of that crab and let grandma see.)</p> <p>vi) Turn 28; Speaker AM4: '<i>Heh in tek heh.</i>'</p>

		(Get the shrimp.)
		vii) Turn 30; Speaker AM4: <i>'Tek lai ji iak heh,heh gor wa boh ai iak la.'</i> (Get me a prawn. I don't want mantis shrimp.)
		viii) Turn 32; Speaker Am4: <i>'Tek ki MC4.'</i> (Move it there, MC4 (middle-aged child).)
		ix) Turn 34; Speaker AM4: <i>'An tak ki la jim.'</i> (Bring the crab there.)
		x) Turn 28; Speaker: <i>'hor BL.'</i> (Give it to BL (granddaughter), MC4 (middle-aged child 4).)
		xi) Turn 41; Speaker AM4: <i>'Tolong gia hor HF, lu hia hor ee ji deh.'</i> (Help to give it to HF(Grandson). Take him one piece.)
		xii) Turn 14 ; Speaker AM2: <i>'MC2 lu gia ki tek ki cu la GD lai iak. Gio GD lai iak. Kesian GD.'</i> (MC2 (middle-aged 2), you bring the bamboo shoot home and cook for GD(granddaughter).)
		xiii) Turn 76; Speaker AM3: <i>'Boh kiok liao la.'</i> (Keep the thing.)
		xiv) Turn 71; Speaker AM2: <i>'Eh,lu kua gin jiu teng jit eh eh iong beh iong.'</i> (Go and check on whether the banana still can be eaten.)
		xv) Turn 74; Speaker AM3: <i>'Oi eh sai pek ki liao,hor ee kiok kiok.'</i> (Get up and let her clean the table.)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>15</b>	

The only politeness strategy employed by the aging parents when ordering was bald-on-record with a total of 15 instances. In the conversations, the middle-aged children didn't use the speech act of order. The aging parents used direct strategies when giving orders

to their middle-aged children to perform some kind of actions. It is realised from the use of imperative forms such as ‘take the banana leaves and cut’, ‘keep the things’ and so on. The difference between orders and request is that orders are pragmatically marked forms which use imperative structures...” (Haverkate 2002). Besides that, Leech (2014, p. 135) claimed that, orders or commands occur when “speaker tells hearer to do something without countenancing disobedience.” The data here suggest that the aging parents did not attempt to minimise the FTAs. They tended to use bald-on-record with minimum mitigation while giving orders. The aging parents are more superior than the middle-aged children. Farmer (1970, p. 48) explained that, parents occupy the higher position in the family hierarchy, whereas the children occupy lower position and their role is to act as subordinates to their parents. Hence, even though, the orders made by the aging parents in the imperative form, it did not cause any conflict.

#### **4.2.1.3 Speech Act of Advice**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), advice is regarded as “intrinsically threatening to negative face wants”, want of an individual for their freedom of action. Advice is the speech acts that take place when the “speaker believes that the act will benefit the hearer” (Searle, 1969, p. 67).

##### **4.2.1.3.1 Aging parent’s Acts of Advice**

The table below shows the speech acts of advice with the frequencies of politeness strategies used by the aging parents.

Table 4.5: The speech acts of advice with the strategy of politeness employed by the aging parents.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Bald-on-record	1	i) Turn 66; Speaker AM2: 'Ki gia khao-i.' (Go and take the chair)
Negative politeness	1	i) Turn 15; Speaker AM5: ' <i>Ee bo or wa gak or dao iu beh sai jiak.</i> ' (It won't become black. I think don't eat black soya sauce)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2</b>	

The data suggest that the use of speech acts of advice was minimal among the aging parents. The politeness strategies employed by the aging parent in advice were bald-on-record and negative politeness with merely 1 respectively. There was no record of positive politeness and off-record strategies used. It is observed that, the aging parent employed bald-on-record with the use of direct imperative '*Ki gia khao-i*' (Go and take the chair). The aging parent also employed negative politeness strategy of (using hedges) in speech act of advice. It is realised by the used of '*wa gak*' (I think) in the utterance, 'it won't become black. *I think* don't eat black soya sauce.' The aging parents in this study tended to use more of the speech act of orders as compared to the speech act of advice.

#### 4.2.1.3.2 Middle-aged children's Act of advice

The following table shows the frequencies of politeness strategies used by middle-aged children in giving advice. The politeness strategies employed by the middle-aged children when advising are bald-on-record, positive politeness and negative politeness.

Table 4.6: The speech acts of advice with the strategy of politeness employed by the middle-aged children.

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Example
Bald-on-record	10	<p>i) Turn 1; Speaker MC1: '<i>Gia Khao-i lai jeh la.</i>' (Get a chair and sit down.)</p> <p>ii) Turn 10; Speaker MC4: '<i>Jiak jim la</i>' (Eat the crab.)</p> <p>iii) Turn 6; Speaker MC1: '<i>Ki gia khao-i lai che cheng</i>' (Get a chair and sit here.)</p> <p>iv) Turn 8; Speaker MC1: '<i>Gia sit lo. Kua sit u oo jiak sit</i>' (Take the chicken wings. Eat the chicken wings.)</p> <p>v) Turn 29; Speaker MC5: '<i>am meh mai jiak anne par. Liao jiak kun zhui ka giam pia.</i>' (Don't eat too full at night. Drink some plain water and eat some biscuits)</p> <p>vi) Turn 73; Speaker MC5: '<i>Jiak da da. Giam pia.</i>' (Eat something dry. Biscuits.)</p> <p>vii) Turn 75; Speaker MC5: '<i>Ti pun cha o.</i>' (Eat something sweet will also cause problem.)</p> <p>viii) Turn 85; Speaker MC5: '<i>Jiak keh jeng liao hoe ee tambah tenaga.</i>' (Chicken essence helps you increase energy.)</p> <p>ix) Turn 105; Speaker MC5: '<i>Jiak sak sak o. iu iu mai jiak anne ceh.</i>' (Eat steamed food. Don't eat oily food.)</p> <p>x) Turn 68; Speaker MC2: '<i>Jiak lah, jiak liao kun. Lu u zui liao ems i ho? Jiak ka jeh jui tam pok.</i>' (Take the medicine and sleep. Drink more water.)</p>
Positive politeness	5	<p>i) Turn 73; Speaker MC1: '<i>Tapi dua pua pun ta ma. Jiak mai jiak an ne je. Duo pua oo tama.</i>' (But grandma's rice was a</p>

		<p>lot just now. Actually we shouldn't eat so much. Just now was quite a lot.)</p> <p>ii) Turn 46; Speaker MC5: '<i>Ah kong jiaq giam pia.mai jiaq chi leh liao.try kua.wa jiaq hor giam pia.</i>' Grandpa eats biscuits. Don't eat this anymore. Try to eat. I feel better when eat biscuits.'</p> <p>iii) Turn 56; Speaker MC5: '<i>Boh lah kiam hu lah. Kiam hu cheng oh. Ma lu cai oh wa lai jiaq Maggie lian sua nor jit cheng oh kar. Saya makan Maggie dua hari ar bengkak.masin.</i>' (It's salted fish. Legs will swell if eats salted fish. I ate Maggie for two consecutive days and my leg swell. It is salty.)</p> <p>iv) Turn 74; Speaker MC5: '<i>Ti pun cha.</i>' (It will cause problem when you eat sweet.)</p> <p>v) Turn 77; Speaker MC5: '<i>Diok ai jiaq giam pia ka gun chui nia. Chak lai heh pia loh kun eh si amme ah.Chak jit kuan eh jui kah giam pia no sa pao. Wa heh dua pia o. iau kui ha le pia liao ka ha leh chui jiaq jiaq lok ki. Bui ah, bui ti eh ya, ah kong koh ki heh teng ,ti double. Shua-I jiaq liao kang khor.ah kong kena makan roti empat segi. Jiaq giam pia eh kong.</i>' (Need to eat biscuit and plain water. Take it and put it at your side when you are going to bed at night. Take a bottle of water and a few packets of biscuit. I put it by my side. If you are hungry eat the biscuit and drink the water. Rice is also sweet and grandpa adds sugar to it making it double. So if you eat it you will suffer. Grandpa has to eat crackers. Eat crackers grandpa.)</p>
Negative politeness	1	<p>i) Turn 81; Speaker MC5: '<i>Kiam jiaq kah hor noh. Ah kong wu rasa giam jiaq pat thor beh char oh? Kiam jiaq oh ma. Jiaq cheh pai oh.</i>' (You eat less it will be better. Do you feel more comfortable when you eat less? Eat fewer grandpa. If you eat more it will fall sick.)</p>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>16</b>	



The speech acts of advice employed by the middle-aged children to their aging parents were a total of 16 instances whereas the advices employed by the aging parents to their middle-aged children were only 2 instances. Bald-on-record strategy occurred the most in middle-aged children's speech act of advice with 10 instances. Bald-on-record was followed by positive politeness with a total of 5 instances, whereas negative politeness occurred in only 1 instance. Most of the advice employed by the middle-aged children being direct and even bald-on-record, there were also some instances where the middle-aged children articulated their advice indirectly expecting their parents to understand their intention. The middle-aged children appeared to use positive politeness in advising their parents in order to get their parents to understand their intentions. For example, 'Grandpa eats biscuits. Don't eat this anymore. Try to eat. I feel better when eat biscuits' and 'It's salted fish. Legs will swell if eats salted fish. I ate Maggie for two consecutive days and my leg swell. It is salty.' However, in certain cases, they would be sterner by employing bald-on record strategy. The middle-aged children uses bald-on-record strategy when they feel the urgency of the matter, for example when asking the aging parents to take some medications. As shown in example (vi), 'Take the medicine and sleep. Drink more water' is categorised under bald-on-record strategy. The findings is in-line with Brown and Levinson (1999, p.326) points that the employment of politeness strategies are dependent on the desire to express the content of the act as well as the urgency of the act. Taking the medicine is something crucial for the parent's well-being and needs to be taken seriously. Therefore the middle-aged children employed more direct strategy and see face saving as less important. On the other hand, Leech (1983) similarly regards advice as violating politeness rules because a speaker's superiority in knowledge, experience, or judgment to the hearer is taken for granted in advice giving.

#### 4.2.1.4 Speech Act of Question

In Searle's (1969, p.66) taxonomy, "questions are a subclass of directives, since they are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to answer, i.e. to perform a speech act". The act of questioning falls under the directive where questioning is the act of eliciting information from the hearer. The act of questioning is used for different functions and purposes in different context.

##### 4.2.1.4.1 Aging parents' acts of questioning

The table below shows the frequencies and examples of politeness strategies used in speech act of questions by the aging parents.

Table 4.7: The speech acts of question with the strategy of politeness employed by the aging parents.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Bald-on-record	4	i) Turn 42; Speaker AM2: ' <i>An chua, manisan lagu mana?</i> ' (What kind of dessert?)  ii) Turn 24; Speaker AM3: ' <i>Chui chui beh gu bak? Ti si beh?</i> ' (Who bought the beef? When?)  iii) Turn 69; Speaker AM4: ' <i>ti shi?</i> ' (When is it?)  iv) Turn 38; Speaker AM3: ' <i>Zhui zhui cha ar bak in?</i> ' (Who fried the beef?)
Positive politeness	1	i) Turn 13; Speaker AM5: ' <i>Boh tia ar?</i> ' (Isn't it painful?)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5</b>	

The strategies employed by the aging parents when questioning are bald-on-record and positive politeness. The data here suggest that the aging parents tended to use more direct strategy in questioning. By questioning directly the aging parent appear to demonstrate the superior role relationship to enlist public pressure against the middle-aged children. It is also observed that there was 1 instance of positive politeness strategies used by the aging parents. Questions and answers are related to each other in a conversation in which question requires a response from the hearer (Fishman, 1996). Family members would use strategy of questioning to elicit information from other family members as well as to keep the conversation going. Therefore, questioning can be one of the way to create solidarity among family members.

#### 4.2.1.4.2 Middle-aged children's acts of questioning

The table below shows the frequencies and examples of politeness strategies used in speech act of questions by the middle-aged children.

Table 4.8: The speech acts of question with the strategy of politeness employed by the middle-aged children.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	18	i) Turn 5; Speaker MC1: ' <i>Ah ma hamik su anne lu wak? Sambal luwak?</i> ' (What is it so spicy grandma? Is the sambal (a type of Malaysian dish) spicy? Why are you choking?)
		ii) Turn 13; Speaker MC1: ' <i>Cho mik? Ah kong ai beh hor?</i> ' (Why? Does grandpa want to buy it?)
		iii) Turn 43; Speaker MC3: ' <i>Ai jiaak iok o?</i> ' Do you want to take medicine?'
		iv) Turn 10; Speaker MC3: ' <i>AM3 ai</i>

		<i>jiak gu bak hor?</i> ’ (Do you want to eat beef?)
v)	Turn 15; Speaker MC1:	<i>‘Xiao bi jiak hor?’</i> (Do you feel like eating?)
vi)	Turn 27; Speaker MC1:	<i>‘Ha mik su? Ah kong iao hor?’</i> (Why? Grandpa (AF1), are you hungry?)
vii)	Turn 40; Speaker MC1:	<i>‘Ah ma mai jiak Kentucky ar?’</i> (Grandma, don’t you want to eat Kentucky?)
viii)	Turn 69; Speaker MC1:	<i>‘Ah ma jiak beh liao lah. Ah ma jiak bui beh lok hor?’</i> (Grandma you can’t finish the food. Grandma, you don’t have appetite?)
ix)	Turn 71; Speaker MC1:	<i>‘Jiak ha mik ni cha ki?’</i> (What did you eat this morning?)
x)	Turn 4; Speaker MC2:	<i>‘Hamik? Diok ji eh lui ah?’</i> (What is it? Did you get the money from winning the lottery ?(laughter)
xi)	Turn 41; Speaker MC2:	<i>‘Manisan. Ai yo?’</i> (Do you want dessert?)
xii)	Turn 21; Speaker MC3:	<i>‘Mak ai chai ai-o?’</i> (Mother, do you want vegetables?)
xiii)	Turn 30; Speaker MC3:	<i>‘Ha, ai jiak hor mak?’</i> (Yes. Do you want to eat mum?)
xiv)	Turn 37; Speaker MC3:	<i>‘Ho jiak oh mak? Gu bak.’</i> (Is it tasty? The beef.)

		<p>xv) Turn 46; Speaker MC3: '<i>Lu bo suka hor? Lu ai an jua eh liao?</i>' (Don't you like it? What kind of sauce do you prefer?)</p> <p>xvi) Turn 50; Speaker MC3: '<i>Ai hor cho siu hor? lai wa cho siu.</i>' (Do you want to reheat it?)</p> <p>xvii) Turn 75; Speaker MC3: '<i>Cho mik sun mak? Ai kit tok?</i>' (Why is it mum? Where do you want to go?)</p> <p>xviii) Turn 21; Speaker MC4: '<i>Ai o? wa pek hor lu nor.</i>' (Do you want it? I'll peel it for you.)</p>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>18</b>	

The only politeness strategy used among middle-aged children in questioning their aging parents was positive politeness strategy in 18 instances. There were no evidence of bald-on-record, negative politeness and off-record in the act of questioning used by the middle-aged children. There were a total of 18 speech acts of questioning identified in the data. By using positive politeness in questioning, the middle-aged children minimised the distance with their aging parents by showing interest and intimacy when attending to their aging parents' face wants. Positive politeness is used here for the function and purpose to show interest in maintaining the relationships among the interlocutors. The middle-aged children demonstrates friendliness and solidarity in the parent-child interaction by attending to the positive face needs of the aging parents as well as focusing on the redress directed to the addressee's positive face wants. As shown in the example 7, (Grandma, don't you want to eat Kentucky?) and example 8, (Grandma you can't finish the food. Grandma, you don't have appetite?) and example 15, (Don't you like it? What kind of sauce do you prefer?)

#### 4.2.1.5 Speech Act of Suggestion

Suggestions are “speech acts that are made to help the listener toward some goal that the latter desires or is assumed to desire” (Turner and Sbisà, 2013). According to Brown and Levinson (1987) this speech act is considered a face threatening act (FTA) as the speaker is in some way impeding the freedom of action of the hearer when the speaker expects hearer to do something. Therefore, speech act of suggesting is regarded as negative face threatening act.

##### 4.2.1.5.1 Aging Parent’s Suggestions

The table below shows the frequencies and examples of politeness strategies used in suggestions by the aging parents.

Table 4.9: The speech acts of suggest with the strategy of politeness employed by the aging parents.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	3	i) Turn 23; Speaker AF5: ‘ <i>Ta teng dui ki ua.</i> ’ (Why don’t you go back and change later.) ii) Turn 17; Speaker AF5: ‘ <i>Liao ancua boh ki mandi.Ki la.Mandi bianbian ki.</i> ’ (Then why don’t you bath?) iii) Turn22; Speaker: ‘ <i>cho mik su mai hor ee gu bak?</i> ’ (Why don’t you give them the beef?)
Negative politeness	1	i) Turn 52; Speaker AM2: ‘ <i>Luang hor ee boh par kut,wa gak jiu kui tao.Bo gao par.</i> ’ (Maybe you never feed her enough. I think it’s too little. She is not full enough.)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4</b>	

Based on the data, politeness strategies that were employed by the aging parents in suggesting were positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness occurred in 3 instances, followed by negative politeness which occurred only 1 instance.

There was no evidence of the use of bald-on record and off-record strategy. It is observed that, there were a total of 4 suggestions made by the aging parents. To satisfy the positive face wants of the middle-aged children, the aging parents tended to employ positive politeness strategy to minimize the FTAs of giving suggestions. Besides that, the aging parents also try to minimise the distance with the middle-aged child by expressing friendliness and solid interest in the hearer's need to be respected.

#### 4.2.1.5.2 Middle-aged Children's Suggestions

The table below shows the speech acts of suggestions with the strategy of politeness used by the middle-aged children.

Table 5.0: The speech acts of suggest with the strategy of politeness employed by the middle-aged children.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	2	i) Turn 56; Speaker AM2: ' <i>Siang bawa dia pi garden lah.</i> ' Bring her to the garden during day time.' ii) 'If we go again next time, we should give aunty money and buy from her. They might not be happy if we keep on taking their things.'
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2</b>	

The only politeness strategy used by middle-aged children in speech act of suggestions was positive politeness. The middle-aged children employment of suggestions was minimal with only 2 instances. As a type of directive, suggestion is also a way to get someone to do something (Searle, 1979, p.13). Thus, suggestions require a future effort by the listener (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.12). To minimize the face threatening act, the employment of positive politeness is needed. The use of positive politeness strategy among both the aging parents and the middle-aged children reflect the way they establish good relationship as well as seeking to be included in the group. It is also realised that, suggestions are sometimes made in the interest of the speaker as well.

#### 4.2.1.6 Frequency of Directive Speech Acts

The table below shows the occurrences of the different types of directives with the strategies of politeness used by both the middle-aged children and their aging parents.

Directives found were requests, orders, advice, questions, and suggestions.

Table 5.1: The occurrences of directive speech acts with the strategy of politeness used.

Directive speech acts	Politeness Strategies								Total no.
	BOR		PP		NP		OR		
	MC	AP	MC	AP	MC	AP	MC	AP	
Request	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	8
Order	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Advice	10	1	5	0	1	1	0	0	18
Question	0	4	18	1	0	0	0	0	23
Suggest	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	0	6
Total:	12	20	26	5	1	4	0	2	70

\*BOR: Bald-on-record, PP: Positive Politeness, NP: Negative Politeness, OR: Off-record, MC: Middle-Aged Children, AP: Aging Parents

Based on the data, the most common type of directive performed by the interlocutors was questions with 23 instances. It was followed by advice with a total of 18 recorded among the interlocutors. Besides, there were a total of 15 orders identified in the data. A lot of advices found were given by the middle-aged children to the aging parents with 16 as compared to only 2 advices present in the interaction of aging parents. Besides, a total of 7 requests and 6 speech acts of suggest identified in the data. As one can observe, under directives, bald-on-record was most used by aging parents with 20 instances recorded, whereas positive politeness strategy was most used by the middle-aged children with 26 instances recorded. It is also observed that for both the interlocutors, the use of negative politeness strategy and off-record was minimal in directives speech acts. One could deduce that, in directives the aging parents tended to be more direct, while the middle-aged children tended to be focus on the positive face



wants of their aging parents. To sum up, a total of 69 directives speech acts are recorded in the data

## 4.2.2 The Illocutionary Acts of Commissives

Commissives are those kinds of speech acts that commit the speaker to some future course of action. These speech acts express the speaker's intention to do something. In the data, the examples of speech acts found under commissives were refusals, promises, and offers.

### 4.2.2.1 Speech acts of Refusal

A refusal arises when a speaker directly or indirectly says 'no' to request or invitation (Al-Eryani, 2007).

#### 4.2.2.1.1 Aging Parents' acts of Refusal

The table below shows the speech acts of refusal with the strategy of politeness used by the aging parents to their middle-aged children during mealtime conversation.

Table 5.2: The speech acts of refusal with the strategy of politeness employed by the aging parents.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Bald-on-record	10	i) Turn 2; Speaker AF1: ' <i>Mai-ar.</i> ' (No.)  ii) Turn 18; Speaker AM1: ' <i>Wa bo ai jiaak la pizza.</i> ' (I don't want to eat pizza.)  iii) Turn 85; Speaker AM1: ' <i>Wo mai,men chor, wa beh jiaak eh.</i> ' (I don't want. Don't make. I can't eat.)

		<p>iv) Turn 44; Speaker AM2: '<i>Xiang ka zha hui. Wa mai.</i>' The same as yesterday, I don't want.'</p> <p>v) Turn 51; Speaker AM3: '<i>Mai liao.</i>' (Don't want.)</p> <p>vi) Turn 66; Speaker AM3: '<i>Mai beh ki lah.</i>' (No, can't go.)</p> <p>vii) Turn 8; Speaker AM4: '<i>Sua ki la sua ki la. Wa beh jia beh jia.</i>' (Move it there, I can't eat.)</p> <p>viii) Turn 9; Speaker AF4: '<i>Ni,ni,ni,che leh tek ki.</i>' (Here, take this away.)</p> <p>ix) Turn 11; Speaker AF4: '<i>Mai mai mai jim wo boh jia.</i>' (No, I don't eat crab.)</p> <p>x) Turn 48; Speaker AM4: '<i>Mai,mai, mai.wa ba ki liao loh.</i>' (No, I'm full.)</p>
Positive politeness	2	<p>i) Turn 76; Speaker AM1: '<i>Mai eh. Boh eh. Pizza wa jia ka gia ki liao gu cha.</i>' (I don't want. I have eaten pizza till I'm scared of it.)</p> <p>ii) Turn 83; Speaker AM1: '<i>Mai. Wa gia eh gu you oo.</i>' (Don't make it, I'm scared of the smell of butter.)</p>
Off-record	1	<p>i) Turn 7; Speaker AF1: '<i>Mai-iao. Wo ai jia iok liao.</i>' (It's all right. I wanted to take my medicine.)</p>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>13</b>	

Based on the data, the politeness strategies that were employed by the aging parents in refusing were bald-on-record, positive politeness and off-record. The data here suggest

that, compared to the middle-aged children, the aging parents tended to be direct in refusing. Therefore, the most commonly used politeness strategy among the aging parents in refusing their middle-aged children was bald-on-record strategy with 10 instances recorded. Bald-on-record was followed by positive politeness with 2 instances and off-record with only 1. The aging parents tended to use imperative form and minimum mitigation. For example, ‘*Mai*’ (No), ‘*Men*’ (don’t want), ‘*Gia ki*’ (move it there) and so on. As the data suggest, the aging parents tend to view direct refusal as a way to convey their intention without any ambiguity. Drawing attention from the culture specific dimensions of the act of refusing, Blum-Kulka et. al (1989) argue that social distance and power difference between the parties have a significant impact on refusal. Apparently, the aging parents, take on a superior role as compared to the middle-aged children, tend to refuse directly and baldly. By refusing directly the aging parents appear to ignore any redress to the possible face threat and enlist public pressure against the middle-aged children.

#### 4.2.2.1.2 Middle-aged Children’s acts of Refusal

The following table shows the frequencies and examples of politeness strategies used in the speech act of refusal by the middle-aged children.

Table 5.3: The speech acts of refusal with the strategy of politeness employed by the middle-aged children.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	1	i) Turn 22; Speaker MC5: ‘ <i>Beh Kong, gatal ka liao ni.</i> ’ (Can’t Grandpa, Itchy all over.)
Off-record	1	i) Turn 26; Speaker MC5: ‘ <i>Biao kin la.</i> ’ (It’s all right.)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2</b>	

There was only 1 instance of positive politeness and off-record that occurred in middle-aged children's speech act of refusal. The use of refusal was minimal in the middle-aged children's conversation with only 2 refusals recorded. Positive politeness is redress directed to the hearer's positive face. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that positive face is "the desire of an individual to be approved of." The demonstration of positive politeness in refusing is realised by giving reasons, for example, 'can't Grandpa, Itchy all over.' in order to minimize the FTA. The use of positive politeness strategy by the middle-aged children reflects the way how they build rapport in order to avoid any possible misunderstandings. Besides, the use of off-record strategy shows the indirectness in the use of refusal by the middle-aged child, for example, 'it's all right.' The use of off-record is realised when the middle-aged child says something that is less than required.

#### **4.2.2.2 Speech acts of Promise**

Promise is "a pledge to do something 'for' the hearer and requires some sort of occasion or situation. Promise wishes (needs, desires) something be done, and the promisor is aware of the wish (Searle, 1969). There was no evidence of the use of promise among the aging parents.

#### 4.2.2.2.1 Middle-aged Children's act of Promise

The examples below show the speech acts of promise with the strategy of politeness used by middle-aged children.

Table 5.4: The speech act of promise with the strategy of politeness employed by the middle-aged children.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	5	<p>i) Turn 57; Speaker MC4: <i>'Renew passport ar?Ki kayang zho lah ma cai lah.'</i> (You want to renew your passport is it? We will do it in Kangar (name of a place) tomorrow.)</p> <p>ii) Turn 61; Speaker AM4: <i>'Ha eh eh.ji eh nia.'</i> (Yes, can. It will only take a while.)</p> <p>iii) Turn 59; Speaker MC4: <i>'Ha eh eh.ji eh nia.ha leh xiao eng pun mian hip eh dua ee ui kha liao. Chak teng ki khi nia.'</i> (Yes we can. We don't even need to take picture; we can do it all there. We only need to take your Identity card along.)</p> <p>iv) Turn 63; Speaker MC4: <i>'Ma cai zha ki eh la cha cha bek diam anne wa ki ar.'</i> (We can go tomorrow early in the morning at eight.)</p> <p>v) Turn 84; Speaker MC1: <i>'Eh zoheh,zoh tam pok.Eiong roti zoh hor ah ma.'</i> (Can make a little. Can use bread to make it for grandma.)</p>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5</b>	

The only politeness strategy employed by the middle-aged children in promising their aging parents was positive politeness. A total of 5 promises were employed by the middle-aged children. Positive politeness occurred in 5 instances. The middle-aged children are observed to have demonstrated the good intentions in satisfying the aging parents' positive face wants.

#### 4.2.2.3 Speech Acts of Offer

Offers are defined as “acts that predicate some positive future act of speaker toward hearer, and in so doing put some pressure on hearer to accept or reject them, and possibly to incur a debt” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.66).

##### 4.2.2.3.1 Aging parents' act of Offer

The table below shows the speech acts of offer with the strategy of politeness used by the aging parents.

Table 5.5: The speech acts of offer with the strategy of politeness used by the aging parents.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	2	i) Turn1; Speaker AF2: ' <i>MC2 ai ke iao, ai ki jiak hai xian oh? Qi jiak.</i> ' (MC2 (middle-aged child 2) you are leaving. Do you want to eat seafood? Let's go and eat.)
		ii) Turn 8; Speaker AF5: ' <i>Chi leh lotion buak mai ah?</i> ' (Don't you want to apply this lotion?)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2</b>	

The only politeness strategies used by the aging parents when offering is positive politeness. The use of offering was minimal among the aging parents with a total of 2 offers recorded. It is found that in order to show solidarity and build close relationships, aging parents employed positive politeness strategies to their middle-aged children. For example, ‘MC2 (middle-aged child 2) you are leaving. Do you want to eat seafood? Let’s go and eat’ and ‘don’t you want to apply this lotion?’

### Middle-aged Children’s offers

The following examples show the politeness strategy used by the middle-aged children in offers.

Table 5.6: The speech acts of offer with the strategy of politeness used by the middle-aged children.

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Example
Positive politeness	2	i) Turn 53; Speaker MC3: ‘ <i>Lai wa cho siu hor?lai wa cho siu.</i> ’ (Let me reheat for you.) ii) Turn 58; Speaker MC1: ‘ <i>Tu kong Kentucky.</i> ’ (Grandpa, here is the Kentucky (fried chicken).)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2</b>	

From the findings, it is observed that, the use of offer was minimal among the middle-aged children. A total of 2 instances of positive politeness are employed by the middle-aged children in the act of offer. The offers by the middle-aged children illustrated the positive future act to the aging parents for example, ‘Grandpa, here is the Kentucky (food)’, ‘let me reheat for you’ and ‘eat’. However, it should be noticed that by offering, the middle-aged children executed a commitment upon the aging parents. Brown and Levinson (1987) claims that, an offer is a threat to the hearer’s ‘negative face’ because, by making offer, the speaker is imposing an obligation upon the hearer, not only

pressing the hearer to accept, but also challenging the hearer to announce a decision on the spot (Robinowitz 1993).

#### 4.2.2.4 Frequency of Occurrence of Commissive Speech Act

The table below shows the occurrences of the illocutionary acts of commissive with the strategy of politeness used by both the middle-aged children and their aging parents.

Table 5.7: The occurrences of commissive speech acts with the strategy of politeness used.

Commissive speech acts	Politeness Strategies								Total no.
	BOR		PP		NP		OR		
	MC	AP	MC	AP	MC	AP	MC	AP	
Refusal	0	10	1	2	0	1	1	0	15
Promise	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Offer	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Total:	0	10	8	4	0	1	1	0	24

\*BOR: Bald-on-record, PP: Positive Politeness, NP: Negative Politeness, OR: Off-record, MC: Middle-Aged Children, AP: Aging Parents

There were 24 commissive speech acts found in the data. It was found that, the highest number of commissive act performed by the interlocutors was refusal with 15 instances, followed by speech acts of promise with 5 instances and speech acts of offer with 4 instances. Under the speech act of refusal, the most frequently used strategy among the aging parents were bald-on-record with 10 instances recorded. In the conversation, the aging parent didn't use the speech act of promise. In the speech act of promise employed by middle-aged children, there were 5 occurrences of positive politeness. However, in the speech act of offer, the most frequently used strategy among both participants was positive politeness. Both the middle-aged children and their aging



parents recorded 2 instances of the usage of positive politeness in the speech acts of offer.

### **4.3 Summary**

This Chapter discusses the analysis of the transcribed data. The first research question analyses the politeness strategies employed by the middle-aged children and their aging parents during their mealtime conversations. The data analysis has revealed some interesting findings in relation to the interactions among the Chinese families. The analysis revealed that the most commonly employed politeness strategy among both the middle-aged children and their aging parents were bald-on-record and positive politeness strategies whereas negative politeness and off-record strategies were the least used strategy.

The findings suggest that the middle-aged children tended to employ positive politeness strategies in their utterances. However, the aging parents in this study tended to use direct utterances when they are interacting with the middle-aged children. Although most of the conversations were direct, certain instances of indirect speech was also used. This shows that even in very close relationships, certain extent of saving each other's face is needed.

Negative politeness and off-record strategy were less used by the participants of this study as the participants tend to construct their utterances directly. Negative politeness was employed with the use of questioning, hedging and etc, whereas off-record was demonstrated with the use of giving hints and using rhetorical question.

Besides, the aging parents and the middle-aged children use of politeness strategies in different types of illocutionary acts were different. The analysis revealed that the most

frequent type of illocutionary acts found in the data was the illocutionary acts of directives with the total number of 69, followed by the illocutionary act of commissives with the total number of 24. Besides, it is also realised that in the illocutionary acts of directives and commissives, the aging parents was consistent in using bald-on-record strategy the most. The aging parents were very direct in their speech when they were talking with their middle-aged children.

The middle-aged children employed positive politeness the most in the illocutionary act of directives and commissives. Hence, one can deduce that aging parents are constantly more direct in their speech as compared to the middle-aged children.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings of this study, as well as indicates gaps where future studies can be conducted. It is hoped that the recommendations as well as suggestions for enhancement and extension of some aspects in this area of study that are still lacking can be further explored. Subsequently, this chapter concludes the major findings of this study. In this study, two key elements of politeness in the context of Malaysian family mealtime conversations were discussed. To briefly review, they include (1) the types of politeness strategies used by the middle-aged children and their aging parents and (2) the identification of the politeness strategies which appear in directives, commissives and expressives speech acts.

#### 5.1 The summary of the politeness strategies employed by the middle-aged children and their aging parents.

Research question 1 seeks to examine the politeness strategies employed by the middle-aged Malaysian Chinese and their aging parents in mealtime conversations. The employment of different politeness strategies realised among two generations of family members are analysed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness. The findings showed that the participants employed different politeness strategies when communicating with other family members during mealtimes.

This study has provided substantial examples of spoken data which illustrate the employment of different kinds politeness strategies used by two sets of participants. In general, the results of this study ascertain that the middle-aged children and their aging parents' preferences in using politeness strategies are different. The findings revealed

that, the most common type of politeness strategies used by the aging parents was bald-on-record, whereas the most common type of politeness strategies used by the middle-aged children was positive politeness. It was also found that in both groups, the used of off-record and negative politeness strategies were minimal.

The most frequent type of politeness strategies used among the aging parents to the middle-aged children was bald-on-record with 65.2%. However, the findings show that the most frequent type of politeness strategies used by middle-aged children was positive politeness strategies with 70.8%. The second common type of politeness strategies used by the aging parents was positive politeness with 19.6%, while the second common type of politeness strategies used by middle-aged children was bald-on-record with 25%. Negative politeness strategies as well as off-record were the least used in both generations. There was a total of 10.9% of negative politeness strategies used by aging parents; while there were only 2.1% of negative politeness was used by middle-aged children. Off-record strategies for both middle-aged children to aging parents and aging parents to middle-aged children were a total of 2.1% and 4.3% respectively.

This study has shown that the aging parents tend to be more direct in their speech acts as compared to the middle-aged children. On the other hand, it is interesting to find out that the middle-aged children tend to focus on the positive face wants of the aging parents in their interactions. As the highest number of politeness strategies used was the positive politeness. According to the politeness theory, an increase in relational closeness commands a reduction in expected politeness. However, Baxter(1984) found that greater politeness is used in closer relationships.

Despite most of the politeness strategies made by the aging parents were direct and bald-on-record, there were also some instances where they articulate their speech acts indirectly, with the employment of positive politeness, negative politeness and Off-

record strategy. The analysis of the data shows clearly that the middle-aged children and their aging parents employment of politeness strategies were made to create solidarity.

## **5.2 Summary of Politeness Strategies in Directive and Commissive Speech Acts.**

The study identified the politeness strategies in the middle-aged children and their aging parents' use of directives and commissives.

This study has provided substantial examples of data. It was found that in directives and commissives, the aging parents were consistent in using bald-on-record the most whereas the middle-aged children employed positive politeness the most.

Under the illocutionary act of directives, when trying to get the hearer to do something, the aging parents were very direct in their speech as bald-on-record was the most employed strategy. However, the middle-aged children employed positive politeness strategies the most. There were five speech acts found in the data under the illocutionary act of directives, which were request, order, advice, question, and suggest. The most frequently used speech acts by both the participants were question, followed by order and advice, whereas the use of speech acts of request and suggest were minimal. It is interesting to realise that, the speech act of order was only used by the aging parents, as there was no evidence of the speech act of order found in the middle-aged children speech. The speech act of order was used by the aging parents as they are in the superior role relationship. In this case, we see that the aging parents express more authority over their children. This shows that when the aging parents were expecting the middle-aged children to do something, they tend to use a more direct form of speech. This is probably to avoid any ambiguity and the want of the maximum efficiency in expressing the speaker's intention to get the hearer to do something. However, when expecting something to be done by the aging parents, the middle-aged children tend to focus on the positive face wants of the addressees.

The politeness strategies that they employed show that the aging parents used more bald-on-record when interacting with the middle-aged children. It is suggested that there was no need for the aging parents to employ indirect politeness strategy as the speech acts made were focused more on the desire to express the content rather than to ensure that it is performed in an acceptable manner. This findings support the views of Pan (2000) that the use of directness in performing speech acts among family members show solidarity and establish good relationships among them. They seem to treat this as their common part of conversation. The aging parents seemed to enjoy using direct utterances where is it deemed most comfortable for their daily interaction with each other. Besides, it is also revealed that the aging parents are in a more powerful position compared to the middle-aged children. The person with power role may opt to use bald-on-record with the less power in order to show rapport. Hence, this study is consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1987) claims that the employment of politeness strategies are not only dependent on the desire to preserve the hearer's face, the desire to express the content of the message and the urgency of the act, it also dependent on social factors such as social power, social distance and rating of imposition. This study ascertained that there are indeed several factors that influence choice of politeness strategies to indicate the strategies to be use in the family.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study focuses on the politeness strategies used among the Chinese family members; however a cross-cultural study was not presented. While measures have been taken to increase the validity and reliability of the data, findings of this study will be valid only within its scope but perhaps this could pave the way for further work on parent-child interaction in Malaysia considering the multi-cultural nation that we are. Thus it would be interesting to compare this study with the different cultures within the Malaysian

context, for example the employment of politeness strategy among middle-aged children and their aging parents among the Malay community.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The study of family interaction can yield interesting and useful data as it offers insights on how face and politeness is negotiated in a more personal dimension of communication within the Malaysian context. Apart from that, different types of politeness strategies are deployed to achieve different communication ends.

This study serves as a guide and reference for future related research even though it may not be used as a benchmark to signify the whole community.

The awareness of the existence of face threatening act and the types of conversation that threaten speaker and hearer's face will help aging parents and their middle-aged children to be more aware of the use of language within the context of the family. It enables both aging parents and their middle-aged children to be more sensitive to the face wants and face needs of each other. This will help them communicate more effectively.

However, it is important for the middle-aged children and the aging parents to be aware of the use of politeness strategies and not to take it for granted that bald-on-record is sufficient to communicate without face threatening. It is hope that society in general can be educated on the acceptability of the language use in different context in regards to politeness. It is also hope that the fading mannerism in speech that has long been ignored will be highlighted for the betterment of society.

In conclusion, this study informs readers of many ways in which politeness is dealt in family discourse. Furthermore, this study also offers a different angle in politeness research by looking at raw and sincere way of interaction. Hence, the knowledge of

politeness strategies that is employed within the context of the family helps in creating awareness of the importance of being polite. With this knowledge that enhances solidarity, a harmonious relationship can be built in society.

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