Reconfirming (In)directness Preference of Request Strategies among the Malays

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ABSTRACT

Studies have established a correlation between indirectness and politeness; one of them being that a higher level of indirectness indicates a higher level of politeness. Among traditional Malaysian Malays as an instance, indirectness is highly valued as it reflects a cultured and refined upbringing which has been upheld as a way of living at every level of the society. However, Malaysia has seen changes and transformations in many ways - in its physical and cultural development, in the values and in the way of speaking, though the latter has not been much documented empirically. This sets the aim of this paper, which is to empirically document this transformation in the way of speaking that involves indirectness, by focusing into the production of requests by a group of 36 young Malay native speakers. Request is one of the common speech acts in interactions, yet highly face-threatening therefore requiring certain politeness strategies for its execution. Writings about the Malay norms pointed to indirectness as the popular style of this speech act among the Malay speakers. For this paper, the participants of the study were asked to role play nine types of requesting scenarios which were then analyzed following the framework by Blum-Kulka *et al*. (1989). The results showed that the participants adopted all three super strategies of request. However, there was a significant preference for Direct Strategy at all of the settings despite power-control and social distance factors. The speakers' directness in performing requests was delivered through three sub-strategies, which are Want statement, Hedged performative and Mood derivable. Overall, the findings of the study indicated that there is a change in the pattern of discourse from the conventional Malay speaking style. The findings empirically signify a wave of transformation in the Malay cultural values among the new generation of Malay and call for further research to establish a more

extensive discussion on the implications for such indication to modern Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Directness and indirectness are verbal strategies that have been proven to be vital in many contexts of interactions. For students at tertiary educational institutions, it is important that they acquire the soft skills in the art of communication in order to be effective in their work. Communicative functions in the workplace environment such as negotiating, handling a customer complaint, eliciting knowledge from people, soliciting customer requirements are among common examples where the strategies are at play in determining the outcomes of the communications. The strategies chosen are also influenced by the societal values that one embraces, which may contribute to the communicative styles in work environment. If inappropriately applied, the strategies or styles could badly affect an employee's reputation and job performance.

Taking on the pragmatic challenges that one has to face at the workplace, a research was carried out on a group of young Malays to find the strategies that they employ in doing requests at a workplace domain. The speech act of request was chosen as it is an illocutionary act that commonly occurs yet highly face-threatening at both social and workplace settings. In addition, the participants involved in this study were graduates to be, who later would be placed in a real working environment. Generally, graduates who are prospective employees are expected to be conversant and aware of workplace interactional nuances and expectations. For instance, they would be expected to show deference politeness markers when interacting with superiors and potential clients; and less formal discourse within the norm that is usually practiced by that particular community when interacting with colleagues and subordinates. This is supported by studies within Malaysia and from abroad as referred in Singh and Singh (2008), Nurita, Shahrudin and Ainon (2006), and Medsker and Fry (1997).

Hence, in order to achieve this aim, the study thoroughly examined utterances containing request strategies produced by the participants which allowed for a detail linguistic and pragmatic analysis of the politeness strategies employed by the young Malays in formal and informal settings.

RELATED THEORIES

Some illocutionary acts produced by the Speaker (hence with, S) are sometimes capable of damaging the reputation of others. Those acts are not seen as desirable and face threatening, in which Brown and Levinson (1987) classify them as Face Threatening Acts (hence with, FTA). There are two types of FTA; one which could damage Hearer's (hence with, H) positive face and the other could threaten negative face. Utterances like requests, orders, and warnings can be considered as acts that potentially threaten H's negative-face wants but promise and thanks could infringe S'

negative-face. Disagreements, criticisms and complaints could damage H's positive-face wants, meanwhile apologies and compliment acceptance might violate S' face wants. Due to this, politeness strategies are developed in order to counter FTA and shape interpersonal relationship. Bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record/ indirect strategy and opting not to do any FTA are the strategies that aim to mitigate or soften the force of FTA, so that it would appear desirable to H's face.

The interlocutor's selection of politeness strategies can be both cultural and situational dependant. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), situational factors such as (a) the power held by the H with respect to S, (b) the social distance between S and H, and (c) the degree of imposition, determine the amount of face work in expressing requests. These factors however, are commonly seen as collectively practiced by people across cultures. For instance, people tend to be more indirect when asking for a huge favour compared to requests which are viewed as less troubled. Brown and Levinson also believe that S tends to use more indirectness when requesting people who have higher power and further distance as compared to close friends who are in the homogeneous social class. In terms of the cultural factor, politeness strategies might also be accepted and interpreted differently. For instance, the Korean regarded direct strategies as ineffective but they are considered the most effective among the Americans (Kim, 1994, in Rue *et al*., 2007). In other words, what is commonly observed and highly valued in

a particular culture would also determine the amount of face work required and the types of politeness strategies employed by the interlocutors.

This study focuses on the speech act of request because it ranks high as a FTA to both S' and H's face. From H's view, the request could be perceived as an intrusion to his/her freedom of action since there are the elements of demand and force. On the contrary, requests could also threaten S' face in the sense that S is afraid of exposing a need, or the tendency of making H lose face (Blum-Kulka *et al*., 1989). In many cultures, (Hebrew, Canadian French, Spanish, English, Japanese) being indirect is common in order to sound less imposing. Meanwhile, direct strategy is frequently perceived as impolite and coercing. Cross-culturally, lacking the awareness of politeness in communication might lead to misunderstanding and ineffective communication.

MALAY REQUESTS AND MALAY POLITENESS STRATEGIES

In the Malay culture, request should be expressed in a very courteous manner since it is considered as causing trouble to the other party to perform the demand. 'Courteous' in traditional Malay means, the request occurs in stages that start with lengthy introduction or any irrelevant topics concerning the request before it is implicitly made. In the process, H can always disregard the requests if he/she is not willing to entertain them by simply ignoring the topic or the implicatures. However, S can

always repeatedly mention the requestive topic and usually the request is never rejected directly (Teo 1996). In other words, this strategy is seen as face saving for both H and S; that is H could take the request not as a request, and S could avoid being rejected and embarrassed since there is no blunt request imposed. Commonly, higher levels of indirectness are used when talking to older people and those who are empowered such as teacher, employer, and parents.

When talking about face saving notion, it is worthwhile to discuss how the Malays perceive 'face' or '*air muka*' (water of face) concept. According to Asmah Hj Omar (1996) *air muka* is reflection of an individual's upbringing, inclusive of influential people in the individual's life such as parents, teachers and family, and as well as the dignity of the individual him/herself and his/her family. It is a complicated, comprehensive and multisided concept where expressions in verbal interaction must be mindfully expressed, in order to prevent dishonor to both S' and H's face, which is described as *menjatuhkan air muka seseorang* (to cause somebody to lose face). The use of offensive and harsh words is forbidden since it leads to aggravated conflicts either intentionally or unintentionally. In other words, the concept of *air muka* varies from 'face' coined by Brown and Levinson as 'face' is rooted from one's want of achieving something in the immediate context of interaction but *air muka* embraces both culture and 'face' which represents pride and dignity.

In the Malay context, requests are done for several purposes that is requesting for information, action, and permission (Asmah Hj Omar, 1996, p. 34, pp. 56-57). The common linguistic features of requesting for information are *saya ingin bertanya* (I would like to ask), *saya ingin minta penjelasan* (I would like to request for clarification) and *saya ingin tahu* (I want to know). Meanwhile, the use of *mohon* and *minta* (request) are more distinctive in requesting for actions and permissions. Hedging *kalau boleh* (if can) is another feature frequently used in doing request. Hedging is employed since it produces "gentle and polite effect to the request…" and also regarded as *bahasa halus* (refined/ educated language) (Asmah Hj Omar, 1996, p. 57).

Previous studies on requests in Malay language have revealed findings which are both against and supportive of the traditional theory of Malay speaking rules. A study by Suraiya Mohd Ali (2003), for instance, showed that the Malay speakers did not exhibit a consistent pattern of politeness strategies concerning to power relation and imposition size. However, the participants were inclined towards Conventional Indirect strategy. This type of strategy also occurred in a variety of situations including high power and huge imposition, as compared to Nonconventional Indirect strategy. Meanwhile, Mohammad Fadzeli, Marlyna and Maslida (2009) who had examined sociopragmatic features among Malaysian students in the Malay request discovered that the participants

preferred direct strategies along with various politeness markers to manifest their requests, as follows:

Politeness markers	Samples of sentences
Imperative	*Tolong pinjamkan buku saudara..* Please lend me your book…
explicit performative	*Saya mintak menu lain* I ask for another menu
hedged performative	*Boleh tak minta pen-angguhan…?* Can (I) ask for extension…?
want statement	*Saya mahu meminjam buku ini* I want to borrow this book

With respect to the Malay requests and politeness strategies discussed above, this paper aims to present findings that highlight the notion of directness and indirectness of request performances among a group of young Malays nowadays. The findings will shed light to the traditionally believed value of indirectness that may have been going through change and transformation after the society's experiences with modernization and global enculturation.

METHODS

Participants

The participants were selected through convenience sampling. They were a group of 36 students, consisting of 16 males and 10 females and aged between 20-22 years old who studied English proficiency course as a part of their programme requirements at a local polytechnic. The students were doing their certificates and diploma in engineering and commercial courses. They had undergone a 22-week industrial attachment (practical training) at various private companies and government bodies during their 3rd and 4th semesters.

Instrumentation and Procedures

The data were collected through role plays. The roles plays are described in this section. A pilot study was conducted first before proper data were gathered. The observation from the pilot study indicated that the context of the scenarios for the role play (initially focused on academic setting) needed to be broadened to workplace setting. Also, precise instructions and explanations needed to be provided so that it would not impede the flow of the role plays.

Role play was employed as it allows the researchers to observe the whole part of interaction including the opening and closing of a conversation (Felix-Bradsefer, 2008). In addition, it has been highlighted by many (McDonough, 1981; Rue *et al.,* 2007; Felix-Brasdefer, 2005, 2008) that this method does not only elicit almost-natural spoken data but it also facilitates examination of actual S' pragmatic ability in social interactions. Nine role play situations were designed based on three politeness systems, formulated by Scollon and Scollon (1995). The three politeness systems are hierarchical (which one of the interlocutors has higher power and distance), deferential (interlocutors equal power and status but

they are not familiar with one another) and solidarity (both interlocutors know each other very well, and have equal power and status). Due to space constrain, 9 scenarios of the role plays which were designed in two domains (workplace and academic), which are common to the participants and simplified, as follows:

- Hierarchical politeness system (+Power, + Distance)

A student asks a newly met lecturer for a lift to a bus station. (Lift)

A trainee asks his/her supervisor for a leave. (Leave)

- Deferential politeness system: (- Power, +Distance)

A student asks his/her classmate (who is not close to him/her) to borrow some cash. (Cash)

A trainee requests his/her colleague to use the photocopy machine first while the colleague is using the machine. (Xerox)

A student requests an unknown student from another class to borrow a dictionary. (Dictionary)

A student requests few sheets of papers from an unfamiliar student sitting next to him/her in a lecture hall. (Paper)

- Solidarity politeness system (- Power, - Distance)

A student asks his/her roommate to borrow a pair of shoes to attend a function. (Shoes)

A student requests notes from a friend as he/she misses the morning lecture. (Notes)

A student requests his/her roommate to clean unwashed dishes left by him/her. (Dish)

The participants were assigned according to the scenarios but they were allowed to select their own partners. Rationally, it was considered that the most natural spoken discourse could be elicited if participants talked to people they were comfortable with. In order to produce a total of 28 interactions, about 10 of the participants participated in more than one role plays. Each politeness system consisted of two domains; one situated in academic setting and the other set in workplace. Each situation was acted out by pairs, in both mixed and similar gender. This was done to see if there were any emerging patterns or attributes in doing requests that were inclined by gender factor.

A briefing on the purpose of the activity as well as the requirement of the task was given in Malay language before the participants started acting. Handouts describing the scenarios and the characters were distributed. The participants were also reminded to use their 'daily-discourse' during the role play in order to be as natural as possible. The researchers felt that it was important for the participants to be comfortable and natural during the interaction so that authentic spoken discourse could be produced. For research ethical purposes, the participants were also informed that their role plays would be videotaped and their consents were obtained verbally before the session started. The average recording time for each of the 28 interactions was 20 minutes. Each

interaction was then transcribed using a broad transcription style adapted from Schiffrin (1987a, cited in Schiffrin, 2001, p. 431).

Data Analysis

After the transcription process, the sequence of head act was identified. First, the Head acts from all interactions were extracted. Then, they were examined at word level to determine which request strategies they belonged to. Blum Kulka *et al*.'s (1989) framework and local studies on Malay request were closely referred to when classifying the strategies. After the head acts had been categorized according to Direct, Conventional Indirect and Nonconventional Indirect strategies, the sub-categories of each super strategy were identified. Meanwhile, the quantitative process involved the following steps: first, the total number of requests was counted

according to the types of strategies (Direct, Conventional Indirect and Nonconventional Indirect). Then the numbers were converted into percentage. The percentage obtained determined the participants' preference on the types of strategies employed. Next, the frequency of each type of strategy was compared according to the three politeness levels. This was done to see if there is any correlation between the selected strategies and power-distance factor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fig.1 displays the distribution of types of request strategies employed by the participants across three politeness systems. The participants employed all super strategies which were Direct, Conventional Indirect and Nonconventional Indirect. They were also inclined to use Direct strategy to manifest their requests regardless power and social distance factors (refer to Fig.1).
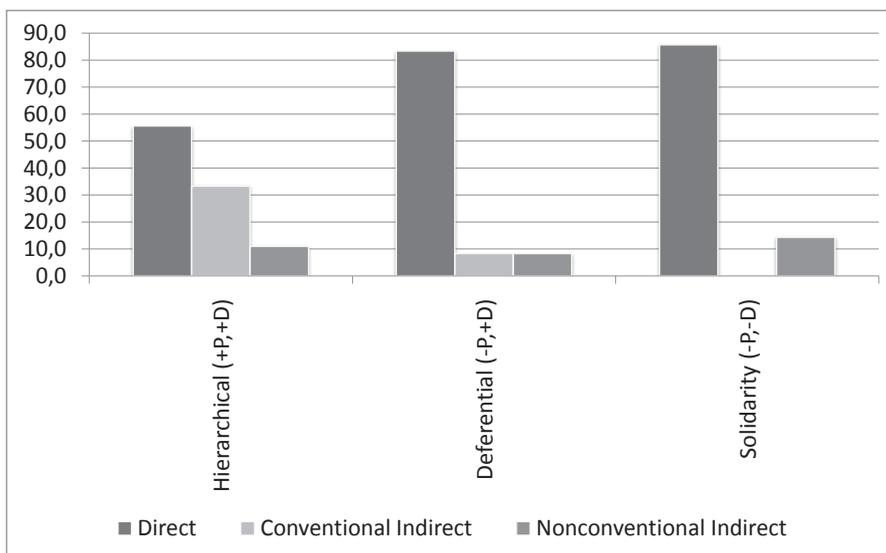

Fig.1: Frequency of request strategies according to politeness systems

On the contrary, Nonconventional Indirect, which was thought to be their preference judging from the writings on the norms of Malay culture on doing requests, was the least preferred in hierarchical and deferential levels. Interestingly also, at all politeness systems, although Nonconventional Indirectness showed a consistent occurrence, it was the least preferred strategy chosen by the participants, i.e., only one occurrence in each politeness level.

Head Acts

As many as 28 head acts were identified across 28 interactions (already mentioned) from 9 scenarios. The analysis showed that these head acts were manifested through five types of internal modifications. It was found that the participants manifested Direct strategy through three types of sub-strategies. A frequent selection of want statement was evident in 14 interactions, followed by hedged performative and mood derivable respectively in six and one interactions. Altogether, Direct strategy was counted as 21 occurrences consisting of three types of sub-strategies. Meanwhile, Conventional Indirect was conveyed mainly through one sub strategy that was query preparatory, which appeared in four interactions. Finally, the participants manifested Nonconventional Indirect through hints that occasionally occurred in three out of 28 interactions. In other words, Direct strategy was manifested through all the 3 sub-strategies (want statement, hedged performative, mood derivable). Meanwhile, Conventional Indirect was conveyed mainly through query preparatory and Nonconventional Indirect was manifested through hints.

Overall, it was apparent that the participants had higher preference for Direct strategy compared to other strategies. It was observed that as many as 75% (n=21) of this strategy was employed by the participants when doing their requests from all 28 interactions (see Table 4.3 and Fig.4.2). About half of the requests (50%) were conveyed through want statement, 21.4% through hedged performative and the least was through mood derivable (3.6%). This type of internal modification appeared in all politeness systems and in almost all scenarios, except for DISH and LEAVE.

Want statement is the most frequently occurred sub-strategy, where S expressed his/her desire, intention or wish to H. Direct requests were manifested with the use of helping verb *nak*, which is the short form of *hendak* that means 'want' in English. According to Mohammad Fadzeli Jaafar *et al.* (2009), the helping verb *nak/hendak* which carries similar meaning to *mahu* (also English equivalent of 'want'), are Malay words that indicate intentions and regarded as less polite because it connotes inconsideration towards H's condition, availability or consent. In other words, when *nak/hendak* and *mahu* (want) are used in Malay requests, there is an expectation from S to H that H would perform or accomplish S' intention and expectation. The data below exemplify how the requests were made with the use of the verb *nak* which appeared in all the requests that belong to the Direct strategy.

[XEROX2]   *Saya nak fotostat kertas ni.*
                  I want to photocopy this paper.

[DICTIONARY1]   *Ah Saya ingat saya nak pinjam kamus la.*
                  Ah I think I want to borrow dictionary la.

[NOTES1]   *Kira er: aku nak pinjam nota pagi tadi la.*
                  Consider er: I want to borrow this morning's notes.

Hedged performative was the next highest substrategy featured in Direct strategy category. The data showed that the requests were explicitly made where S overtly stated the illocutionary intent of *minta* (request). However, the imposition of the request was mitigated by the use of the modal verb *nak* (want). The examples below show how direct requests are expressed using the hedged performative strategy.

[LEAVE1]   *Saya nak mintak cuti la cik.*
                  I want to request for a leave, miss.

[LEAVE2]   *Puan, saya nak mintak kebenaran boleh tak?*
                  Maam, I want to request for your permission, can (not) I?

[PAPER1]   *Ha. nak mintak selai.*
                  Ha. I want to have one sheet.

The least preferred sub-strategy under the direct category was mood derivable as it only appeared once from 28 scenarios. In mood derivable, the utterance contains requestive verb which implicitly marks its illocutionary force as a request (Blum-Kulka *et al*., 1989). Mood derivable strategy contains imperative features, where requests are expressed in the form of instruction and contain directive element (Suraiya Mohd Ali, 2003). Typically, it is used with the verb

tolong (please/ help), although sometimes it can be without it.

[DISH1]   *Hang pi la basuh.*
                  You go and wash (the dish).

Another interesting pattern found from the data was the occurrence of the modal verb *boleh/ boleh tak* (can/cannot), as it appeared in 10 or more than half of the direct requests. According to Mohammad Fadzeli Jaafar *et al*. (2009), *boleh/ boleh tak* (also known as the helping verb or request marker) could have two indications; one means ability or capability, the other is asking for permission from H. In contrast to the modal verb *nak* (want), *boleh/ boleh tak* (can/cannot) is considered as more polite since it carries the meaning that S demonstrates concerns of H's condition and is aware of H's choices for complying with the request. In other words, *boleh/ boleh tak* could tone down the imposition of a direct request which makes the requests appear more polite and acceptable from H's perspective. Another identified feature was the use of hedging to minimize the threat of direct requests. Hedging *kalau boleh* (if can/ if possible) was recognized in the following scenario;

[NOTES2]   *Err: kalau boleh aku nak pinjam nota kau.*
                  Err..If possible, I want to borrow your notes.

The word *kalau boleh* (if can/if possible) produces hesitant effect from S, which is immensely positive politeness oriented. Indirectly, *kalau boleh* (if can/ if possible) in [NOTES2] provides H with

more options on whether or not to lend the S the notes. It also modifies the request to sound more polite although it is made straightforwardly. According to Asmah Hj Omar (1996, p. 57), *kalau boleh* (if can/if possible) is a type of hedging that is used in request of information. This type of hedging softens the request and makes it appear less threatening. In fact, *kalau bo*leh (if can/if possible) is also regarded as *bahasa halus* (refined language). Similarly, the politeness marker *tolong* (please/ help) also helps the request to appear polite as in the situations below:

| [LIFT5] | *ah: Saya nak mintak tolong puan hantar saya ke Tg Malim boleh?* Can I request you to take me along to Tanjong Malim? |
| [CASH4] | *Boleh tak mintak tolong um pinjamkan duit saya nak bayar makanan?* Can I (not) request for your help to loan me cash I want to pay for my food? |

Being polite and refined has always been a concern by the typical Malay society, not only in how they behave but also in the discourse they use. In other words, what Malays say and do may reflect their upbringing, which relates to the concept of *air muka* (face). To conclude, although the participants opted more Direct strategy, a variety of mechanisms were found to be employed to minimize the threat and convey politeness, such as politeness marker and hedging.

Unlike Direct strategy, Conventional Indirect illustrates a much lower occurrence. Conventional Indirectness was expressed via query preparatory which occurred in only two scenarios (LIFT and CASH). When using this strategy, S initiates request with modal verb *boleh/ boleh tak* (can/ cannot) which appears at the beginning of the request. The following examples detail the description above:

| [LIFT2] | *Boleh saya tumpang cik sampai stesen bas?* Can you give me a ride to the bus station? |
| [CASH3] | *Boleh tak aku pinjam duit kau?* Can I (not) borrow your money? |

Commonly, the word *tak* (not/ no) emerges immediately after *bole*h (can). However, the data also show that in certain conditions, *tak* may emerge at the end of utterance, which is an indication of negative can/ cannot (Suraiya Mohd Ali, 2003). The emergence of the modal verb *boleh/ boleh tak* (can/ cannot) was evident in both Direct and Conventional Indirect strategies. However, it might affect the illocutionary force of the request differently. In Conventional Indirect strategy, the modal verb generally appears at the beginning of the head act, which functions as asking H's permission to fulfil the request, thus making the request sound more formal. Meanwhile, in Direct strategy, *boleh/ boleh tak* are used as a peripheral device which modifies request and minimizes the threat of direct strategies.

Nonconventional Indirect was employed in only three interactions which made it the least preferred strategy. It occurred once in each politeness level and appeared only in LIFT, XEROX and DISH. The head acts

below illustrate how the requests were indirectly delivered and they were implied through strong hints provided by S.

[XEROX1]   *Bos suruh fotostat. Abang banyak lagi ke?*
             The boss asked me to photocopy. Do you still have many?

[DISH2]   *Wei. hang tengok pinggan hang tak basuh wei.*
             Hei you see the dish, you did not wash them.

Reflection

The study confirmed that the participants in the present study employed all super strategies, which are Direct, Conventional Indirect and Nonconventional Indirect to manifest their requests. A substantial preference for the Direct strategy, along with various mitigating mechanisms, was applied to soften the direct requests. Thus, hedging *kalau boleh* (if can), modal verbs *boleh/ boleh tak* (can/ cannot) and *tolong* (please) were frequently identified. Direct strategy was mostly used in all politeness levels despite power-distance factors. This contradicts Brown and Levinson's theory, which claims that more indirectness will be used in the contexts of higher power and social distance.

The high occurrence of the Direct strategy could be contributed by several reasons. First, the straightforward feature of the Direct strategy facilitates S' communicative intention to be easily conveyed through this particular strategy. Less interpretation is required from H's side, thus miscommunication and confusion could be avoided. Second, the features of

this strategy also made it more practical to be used, perhaps among Malay youngsters nowadays who preferred uncomplicated and immediate responses in their spoken discourse. Due to its effectiveness and functional features, the Direct strategy was the one practically employed by the participants.

On the contrary, indirectness is not a preference perhaps due to the tendency of miscommunication and misunderstanding between the two parties. In other words, if H is pragmatically aware of and understands the indirect request, then he/she may carry out the request. However, if H is not familiar with the hints used, then the expected actions would not be performed. The following are additional drawbacks of using hints which have been highlighted by Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989). First, the ambiguity of hints may not help H to recognize S' intention, which will lead to miscommunication. Second, there is a possibility that H may distinguish the hints as a request, but pretends to understand only the literal meaning of S' intention. Finally, H might as well disregard the requesting intention of the act.

To conclude, the findings on the types of strategy that the participants used did conform to other previous studies done on Malay requests (Suraiya Mohd Ali, 2007; Mohd Fadzeli Jaafar *et al.*, 2009), whereby the participants used all the super strategies, which are Direct, Conventional Indirect and Nonconventional Indirect to manifest their requests. However, they were varied in terms of the preference on the strategy found in the studies. The findings of the present

study support the result of a more recent study by Mohd Fadzeli Jaafar *et al.* (2009), whose participants demonstrated a high preference on the Direct strategy, but are in contrast with the study done by Suraiya Mohd Ali (2003) that conclusively supports indirectness in Malay requests. The findings of the present study also contradict the traditional belief of the Malay speaking style and indirectness shown by the requestive act. The direct strategy became the participants preferred selection to manifest their requests due to its uncomplicated features which are simple, direct and easy to express. The findings provided an evidence of change in the Malay cultural values and deserve more speech act studies to further substantiate evidence of a deeper transformation that the Malay might be experiencing in their norms and patterns of speech.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since speech act of requests is highly face-threatening, the participants in this study typically employed certain strategies that could minimize the imposition. In addition, certain moves are used to modify the risk of infringing the hearer. At the same time, modifications and strategies also helped requests to appear more polite and less forceful, not only to the hearer's negative face but also the speaker's positive face. From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that the preference for the Direct strategy should not be claimed as impolite. Speakers may use assortment of devices to help reduce impositions of direct requests.

Similarly, indirectness does not always count for its effectiveness in transmitting messages. It substantially depends on H's personal interpretation to construe the intended message. In certain cases, it may result in miscommunications. As for the factors affecting request strategies, past studies have marked significant connection between the selection of request strategies and the variety of factors such as power control, social distance, weightage of imposition, age and culture.

The findings of the present study are anticipated to benefit both teacher and students in helping them see the importance of the pragmatic part of language learning. The vitality of having "desirable" interpersonal skills (where speech act of request is inclusive) should be emphasized since it would result in effective communication specifically at workplace. In addition, the crucial aspect of pragmatic competence should also be stressed to students, whether through formal teaching or natural adaptation. Students should also be able to distinguish the impact of having ineffective strategies when communicating, thus avoiding unnecessary conflicts.

For future research, further investigation on employers' perceptions (from places where students undergo their industrial attachment) towards their trainees' pragmatic ability is worth investigating. Supervisors and employers could shed a light on issues at workplace in terms of communication skills in general and interpersonal issues specifically. Further research can also be extended to real-life situations, where

comparison between the patterns of speech production obtained from the role play and real life could be observed. Finally, future studies could also be done perhaps with different age group of people in order to see the relationships between age factor, indirectness and request behaviour with regards to the bigger notion of linguistic transformation and language change in the Malay society.

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APPENDIX

THE CODING AND DESCRIPTION OF SCENARIOS FOR ROLE PLAY

Scenarios	Participant	Description Of Scenarios
Hierarchical (+Power, +Distance) Lift (*Tumpang*)	Male-male (ML1) Male-male (ML2) Male-male (ML3) Female-female (FL4) Female-female (FL5) Female-male (BL6)	*Kamu adalah pelajar yang baru berpindah dari politeknik lain ke PSAS. Kamu hendak ke stesen bas di pekan. Kamu diberitahu yang ada seorang pensyarah akan lalu stesen bas tersebut pada waktu tengah hari. Minta seorang pensyarah yang baru dikenali itu untuk tumpangkan kamu ke stesen bas tersebut.* You are a new student in PSAS who has just transferred from other polytechnic. You desperately need to go to the bus station in town. Request a newly met lecturer for a lift to the bus station since you know that he/she will pass by the bus station in the afternoon.
Leave (*Cuti*)	Male-male (MH1) Female-female (FH2) Male-female (BH3)	*Kamu baru sahaja memulakan latihan industri di sebuah syarikat. Pada hari ke-3, bapa kamu dimasukan ke hospital. Mohon cuti dari pegawai penyelia kamu.* You have just started doing an industrial attachment at this particular company. On the third day, your father is hospitalized. Request for a leave from your supervisor.

Scenarios	Participant	Description Of Scenarios
Deferential (-Power, +Distance) Cash (*Duit*)	Male-male (MC1) Female-female (FC2) Female-female (FC3) Male-female (BC4)	*Kamu terlupa membawa dompet. Minta seorang pelajar (dari kelas sebelah yang tidak begitu kamu kenali) untuk pinjamkan sedikit duit.* You forget to bring your wallet. Request one of your classmates (who is not close to you) to lend you some cash.
Xerox (*Xerox*)	Male-female (BX1) Female-female(MX2) Male-female (BX3)	*Kamu baru menjalani latihan industri di sebuah syarikat. Kamu perlu membuat salinan beberapa dokumen penting untuk mesyuarat yang hanya akan bermula dalam masa 15 minit lagi. Namun, ada seorang staf lain yang sedang menggunakan mesin tersebut. Minta staf tersebut untuk membenarkan kamu menggunakan mesin fotostat tersebut.* You have just started training in this company. You urgently need to photocopy few documents for a meeting which will only start in 15 minutes. However, someone is using the machine. Now, request the colleague to let you use the photocopy machine first.

Scenarios	Participant	Description Of Scenarios
Dictionary (*Kamus*)	Male-male (MD1) male-female(BD2)	*Kamu perlukan kamus untuk kelas B. Inggeris pada hari tersebut. Minta seorang pelajar yang tidak dikenali dari kelas sebelah untuk pinjamkan kepada kamu kamus tersebut.* You need a dictionary for your English class on that day. Request an unfamiliar student from next door to lend you a dictionary.
Papers (*Kertas*)	Female-female (FP1) male-female(BP2)	*Kamu terpaksa menumpang kuliah yang mana pelajar-pelajar dalam kuliah tersebut tidak kamu kenali. Kamu terlupa membawa kertas untuk menyalin nota. Minta beberapa helai kertas dari seorang pelajar yang duduk di sebelah kamu.* You have to join a lecture which none of the students are familiar to you. You forget to bring papers to jot down notes. Request for a few sheets of papers from a student who's sitting next to you.

Scenarios	Participant	Description Of Scenarios
Solidarity (-Power,-Distance) Shoes (*Kasut*)	male and male (MS1) Female and female (FS2)	*Kamu dikehendaki menghadiri satu majlis rasmi yang dianjurkan oleh jabatan. Kamu tidak mempunyai kasut yang sesuai untuk dipakai ke majlis tersebut. Kamu tahu yang seorang rakan kamu mempunyai kasut yang diperlukan. Minta rakan kamu pinjamkan kasut tersebut.* You are required to attend a formal function organized by your department. You do not have proper shoes to wear to that function. You know that one of your housemates has the kind of shoes that you need. You make a request to borrow the shoes from him/her.
Notes (*Nota*)	Male-male (MN1) Female-female(FN2) Male-female (BN3)	*You missed the morning lecture. Request your friend notes from the lecture.* Kamu terlepas kuliah pagi tadi. Minta seorang rakan untuk pinjamkan kamu notanya.
Dish (*Pinggan*)	Female and female (FF1) male and male(MF2)	*Teman serumah kamu telah tinggalkan pinggan makanannya tidak bercuci. Minta rakan kamu bersihkan pinggan tersebut.* Your housemate has left her/his last night dishes unwashed. Request him/her to clean them.