

# MALAY SAYINGS AS POLITENESS STRATEGIES

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## Abstract

This paper will elaborate on aspects of Malay culture that form the basis for politeness strategies in Malay. An attempt will be made to link the rationale behind Malay politeness strategies to their cultural norms and values. In this paper I will present values important in Malay politeness strategies through an elaboration and analysis of the cultural values disseminated through, or are evident in Malay cultural practices, everyday life and idioms.

## Introduction

The need to maintain a cordial relationship with one's interlocutor/s is largely based on the verbal exchanges that take place between oneself and others. The meaning of speech in human society is not just regulated by what is said but more crucially, how it is said. In pragmatics, this is called politeness strategies. These strategies are strategies that minimize the threat certain demands might have on one's interlocutor. As social creatures living in a relationship of interdependence with other humans we face desires and demands that may not be in line with our own or that of the others' at one time or another. As a result, once these desires are made known, they might generate some amount of stress on us and others. However as socially dependent beings, we cannot forsake not meeting all the wants of others but we also need to meet our own wants.

Social intelligence calls for a way in which these differences in desires (i.e.wants) be channeled by society in such a manner that does not fracture the existing harmony. If this is absent, catastrophic dissension would result

and might ultimately lead to a complete breakdown of cooperation amongst the members of the society

The fundamental requirement for every functional member of an interdependent society is to be liked or wanted by another member of that society. If this precondition is not met, then he or she will be an outcast or a non-functional member of the interdependent society. The opposite of this basic desire to be liked or wanted is the freedom to do as one wishes or to be unimpeded by others and this is known as negative face. These two basic wants are characterized by the positive face which results from the positive need to feel appreciated and approved of and the negative face which results from one's desire to have at least some degree of freedom. Because of the mutual vulnerability of face between the interlocutors "*any rational agent will seek to avoid these Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) or will employ certain strategies to minimise the threat.*" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:68).

Goffman's (1967) definition of face-work and that of interaction ritual becomes relevant here. He describes face-saving actions as often becoming habitual and standardised practices (which are today known as politeness strategies/discourse behaviour/communicative competence). He believes that each person, subculture and society has their own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices. It is as if face, by its very nature, can be saved only in a certain number of ways, and as if each social grouping must make its selection from this single matrix of possibilities (Goffman 1967:13). It is the motivations of politeness strategies in Malay that this paper investigates such as the values of power, distance and imposition an act carries in Malay

### Malay Culture and Politeness Strategies

The role of culture in politeness deals with the performance aspect of language which is affected by its environ. Social order is one such source of cultural pressures which function as on the performance aspect of language. In Malay it is linked to t (and Distance) and can be further refined into a triadic relationship of *hormat* (respect), *sabar* (patience) and *budi* (gratitude). This paper will also discuss the role of tact in Malay (i.e. to whom and when will frankness operate?). Asmah (1984) proposed that in Malay politeness the choice of politeness strategies adopted by S is additional to basic politeness (cultural values deemed appropriate to the community). The combined entity of basic politeness and politeness strategies is seen as constrained politeness or *kesopanan berkendala*. It is constrained by the consideration of who speaks what to whom, where, why and how. I see similarities in the construct of politeness by Asmah as a

combination of discernment and volition as proposed by Hill et.al.(1986) as complementary factors in any system of politeness.

The notion that the linguistic forms of a speech community exhibit cultural notions is well known. In the case of Malay, Khadijah (1993) has argued that "language is represented by sound, writing and gesture of the concepts produced in the operation of thinking. Therefore, forms of language expression are a key to the study of forms and ways of thinking" (Khadijah 1993 1-2). Language being the vehicle of cultural expression and itself being a tool of enculturation in Malay is maintained by Tham (1990) According to Tham "language is not merely communicative but cognitive as well. Language plays the surrogate for culture, maintaining and reinforcing cognitive patterns and preferences" (Tham 1990: 24).

The linkage between culture and language is explained by Tham (1990) as follows. "in any society, there are more or less permanently ordered systems. social structure, institutions, values, modes of exchange and communicative patterns. These collectively give character and direction to social life. Indeed it is the existence of such ordered systems, which makes possible sociological abstractions. Ordered systems exemplify among other things stability, identity and purposefulness" (Tham 1990:24). As such language features prominently in the maintenance and propagation of cultural norms and values. It is postulated that the value orientations of the Malay culture will influence the way the Malays look at the world around them. Hence this orientation of the Malays to their surroundings will feature prominently in Malay politeness strategies indicating and also indicated by the values deemed important to the Malays. This inevitably leads to the interconnectedness of politeness strategies with cultural values, whereby whatever facets of human relations that are valued by a culture will be manifested and given prominence in the politeness strategies of the speakers.

With this view in mind, I believe that the language of the Malays can be fruitfully examined through explicit and implicit cultural values and patterns deemed important to them. Thus any elaboration on the culture of the Malays will have to investigate the linguistic devices used to disseminate its values. In this instance the Malay language is rich in such devices viz. devices represented by Malay idioms (*Kata-Kata Melayu*) and proverbs (*Peribahasa*). Proverbs as vehicles for the cultural values of the Malay society have been researched extensively since colonial times. Malay sayings are a window to the soul of the Malays *hati budi* (viz. their culture and values) as claimed by Winstedt (1950) and others. In this regard, Tham (1990) has also explained that the *Peribahasa* of the Malays offer the most perfect examples of aesthetic and cognitive uniqueness associated with the use of the language for the categorization of reality as observed. Collectively *Peribahasa* represent an awareness of life:

beauty and ugliness including the order of things (man, nature, animate and inanimate things as ordained) and man's role is one of harmonious adaptation. Equally, the *Peribahasa* represents not only a repertoire of cognitive ingenuity, but also a compendium of existential concerns associated with the non-literate tradition of the Malays." (Tham 1990:46). Finally, Brown, in his book "Malay Sayings" has agreed that the image used in each Malay saying is drawn from characteristic Malay life (Brown 1959: ix). He further elaborates that the rationale for the common everyday practices of the Malays can be found in the language used.

It is conceded that this short paper will not exhaustively describe all the facets of Malay culture that is central to its politeness. However it is hoped that this paper will effectively elucidate relevant aspects of Malay culture and its values as manifested in their everyday life. For instance the contents of Malay proverbs and sayings as contained in several major collections of Malay proverbs as in the *Kitab Kiliran Budi* (1963) and the Malay Proverbs by Winstedt (1950) analyses aspects of Malay life with topics such as Man and the Universe, Society, Government and Law, Economic Life, Morality and Intellect. These topics very much cover the day to day activities of the Malays. Certain key cultural concepts like *Budi* (mind, reason, right thinking)<sup>1</sup> and *Adat* (custom, tradition, manners and proper behaviour) will also be explored. Hence, collectively they present us with a window into the Malay conception of their world. It is perhaps timely to state that there have been few attempts at studying Malay speech acts in terms of their cultural significance. It is anticipated that the data elicited by this paper can best be interpreted against the backdrop of its significance in terms of the relevant ideational, textual and above all its interpersonal metafunctions in Malay speech. The context of culture is seen as the superset where the communicational patterns of Malay politeness strategies can best be explained.

Malay culture and customs or *Adat* (customs) are rules or conventions that basically comprise of three types. (1) *Adat Istiadat*, (2) *Adat Yang Diadakan*, (3) *Adat Teradat*, in a descending order of formality and fluidity (Asmad 1990:8). *Adat* has been generally defined by Wilkinson (1908) as "the right procedure. In all matters there is a right way of doing things and a wrong way of doing things, adat is the right way" (Wilkinson, 1908 13). Thus according to Wilkinson "if a man obeys the laws of nature and the customs of

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<sup>1</sup> The importance of *Budi* can be extrapolated from the following Malay proverb:  
Hilang bini bolch dicari, hilang budi badan celaka

'If you lose a wife a replacement can be found but if you lose your *Budi* you will  
sure face destruction

society he is likely to get on, ” (Wilkinson, 1908:13). Here we see “*Adat*” as the right way of conducting affairs and life for the Malays. The first subgroup of *Adat* is *Adat Istiadat* which are rules or conventions that must be adhered to or carried out formally. These customs are prescribed by the community and must be strictly observed, for instance in state ceremonies (e.g. coronation or the installation of a new head of state). The performance of the required rites must be carried out with strict adherence to the rules.

*Adat yang diadatkan* as defined by Asmad (1990) can best be summarised as everyday cultural practices passed on from generation to generation. These practices are susceptible to changes and may be abandoned. However for the Malays *Adat yang diadatkan* or *Adat Resam* as it is commonly known among the Malays is of great importance and its observance is strictly maintained as reflected in the Malay saying *Hidup dikandung adat, mati dikandung tanah* ‘in life, by customs hedged around, in death we lie wrapped in the ground’. These *adat* practices include marriage rites and ceremonies, funeral rites, the coming of age of children.

Khadijah (1993) has explicated several other aspects of Malay culture which she deemed important to an understanding of certain manifestations of Malay politeness strategies. Among the cultural themes proposed by Khadijah are *Adat Resam Berumah Tangga* ‘household customs’, *Adat Resam Berkampung Halaman* ‘village customs’ and finally the socialisation of Malay children.

In *Adat resam berumah tangga* ‘the code of conduct between family members’, children must be filial to parents and behave respectfully in their presence. Children must respect their elders and never raise their voices at them or look them straight in the eye. It is stressed that if one loves one’s parents then one will be *diberkati* ‘blessed’. Parents and grandparents are consulted over matters related to the family like weddings and matters related to property (Khadijah 1993:9-11).

In *adat resam berkampung halaman* ‘the code of conduct between fellow villagers’, members must render assistance, show sympathy to others, welcome newcomers and give assistance to the sick and old. Values such as interdependence and reciprocity, unity and caring among community members are stressed. It is also a hallmark of a Malay village that mutual help and communal effort *gotong royong* is practiced (Khadijah 1993:11-15).

The socialisation of Malay children plays an important part in determining their language use. The relationship between socialisation and language use has been propounded by several prominent researchers, among them is Lakoff (1973). This particular phenomena is especially true as regards gender roles as much of socialisation occurs at home where gender roles are clearly portrayed and learned. Parents and elders consciously act as models and teach

their children to behave in certain ways especially how males and females should speak. The Malay household is no exception (Khadijah 1993:20-21).

Khadijah observes that in the case of the Malays "there is generally this formal attitude towards the father. Children seem to speak tersely and with reserve with their father as compared to their mother. The father is always the target or referent of polite speech." (Khadijah 1993:21-22). This observation is also borne out by Smith-Hefner (1988) for the socialisation of Javanese children. Smith-Hefner quotes from the other researchers of Javanese society that as soon as the child begins to speak he is taught to develop a formal attitude towards his father...on the other hand, only in very exceptional cases does a family teach the children to address the mother in Kromo (High Javanese). Children speak high Javanese, to the best of their ability to their father, who answers in low Javanese, tersely and with reserve. Familiarity is seen to breed disrespect, or at least less formality (Smith-Hefner 1988:543).

An earlier study into the Javanese family and socialization of children by Hildred Geertz (1961) yielded strikingly similar patterns of socialization for Javanese children. Cultural concepts and notions deemed essential to Javanese society were disseminated to the young through the socialization process above. Children were regarded as *kurang jawa* or 'not yet Javanese' as they are thought to be unable to possess and project the required qualities of a mature Javanese. The salient features of these qualities are to be able to control one's emotions in an adult manner and to speak with the proper respectful circumlocutions appropriate to different occasions (H.Geertz 1961 105). If an adult is unable to project the two qualities above then s/he is likely to be considered *kurang mengerti* 'unable to reason'. The term *kurang jawa* is mentioned by H.Geertz (1961) to be applicable to children, the mentally unstable and to adults who are not properly respectful to their elders (H.Geertz 1961:105). Concepts similar to *kurang jawa* and *kurang mengerti* can be found in the Malay society as well, where one who behaves in ways contrary to the culturally prescribed norms are considered *tak tahu adat*.

In the socialization of children there are different models of behavior for boys and girls and these differences become evident when the child reaches around the age of five. According to Smith-Hefner (1988) there is a more formal and distant relationship between Javanese fathers with their sons and this was also observed by Khadijah (1993) in Malay families. Smith-Hefner (1988) believes that this initial pattern of interaction becomes a model for later interaction. In Malay as in Javanese it was reported that fathers initially are indulgent and affectionate in the early years of the child's life. But after the age of 5 or 6 the father's affection is withdrawn from the male child and appropriate behavior is demanded from him, including appropriate respectful speech. It was also found that the distance between boys and their fathers tend to be

both physical and verbal and hence they develop an aversion for contact with the father. As boys grow older they also stay away more from the home while girls tend to stay at home and help their mothers. This observation is also supported by the study of H. Geertz (1961) who reported that it is one way of teaching boys how to be mature and respectful (viz. to whom he should show respect) particularly the older male relatives, "who formerly were indulgent and affectionate, now seem to withdraw and expect a polite relationship which verges on avoidance (H. Geertz 1961 110)" However girls are more consistent in their linguistic and social development, as their model, their mother, is more consistent (Smith-Hefner 1988.545-546).

*Adat Teradat* is the last and most subtle of enculturation a Malay will experience. These cultural nuances associated with it are embedded in one's everyday interaction within the Malay society. It forms the backbone for group cohesiveness, identity and mores. *Adat Teradat* is seen as something that is essential in the Malay community and there are many Malay sayings to testify to its prevalence. For example *lain padang, lain belalang* 'there are different grasshopper in different fields' or *lain lubuk lain ikannya* 'fish in one pond differs from that of another', *masuk kandang kambing mengebik, masuk kandang kerbau menguak* 'Moo in a cattle pen while we bleat like a sheep in a paddock' and *Dimana bumi di pijak, di situ langit di junjung* 'Where one stands, there one will hold up the sky' these sayings indicate that there are differences between one society and another and we have to adapt to the prevailing values when we are in the society. The three divisions of *adat* are perhaps found in many cultures. Their importance to the Malays cannot be overemphasized as a person who does not conduct himself according to *adat* will be branded *biadab* 'uncouth' which is a very serious social rebuke. On the other hand a person who acts in accordance to the norms of Malay cultural practices will be considered *tahu adat* 'cultured'. In the following paragraphs I will explain the importance of *adat teradat* and other pertinent concepts central to Malay culture.

Let us now discuss some of the values and semantic primes that form the basis of the politeness strategies valued by Malays and these are best discussed within the context of the cultural values stressed by the Malays in their everyday interaction. The notion of *sabar* 'forbearance' and 'patience' within the family is prominently promoted. This central concept of *sabar* in Malay is directly linked to the concept of *hormat* 'respect'. Quarrels and disagreements among relatives are seen to be transient and harmony would prevail among family members after some time e.g. *carik-carik bulu ayam, lama-lama ia bercantum pula* 'dissensions do not break up a family', *Air dicincang tiada putus* 'familial bond is never severed by a quarrel'. Quarrels among relatives are rationalized *Gigi dan lidah ada kalanya bergigit juga*

'Even close relatives may bicker' The futility of conflict is stressed particularly within the family or community *Kalah jadi abu, menang jadi arang* 'vanquished, one is reduced to ashes, victorious to charcoal' where both sides suffer in a conflict.

### **Ramifications of cultural values on Malay Politeness Strategies**

All the above point to the value placed on forbearance and temperance. Mahathir (1970) insists that the Malay character abhors disagreement and is always prepared to forgive and tolerate and that these *adab* 'manners' and *sabar* 'patience' self-effacing habits are unnatural and always find expression in a number of ways. "The first and most important result is withdrawing into oneself and one's race. One is never frank (because frankness is not valued but courtesy is) except with those whose sympathy he can rely on absolutely. And he can rely absolutely only on his own people. His opinions as expressed to those not of his own kind are therefore different from those expressed to his own kind. Of course the difference only occurs when what he has to express to others is unpleasant or unpalatable" (Mahathir 1970: 116-117). This observation is particularly revealing in the politeness strategies employed by the Malays when communicating with members of their own race (i.e. in the Malay language). In Mahathir's opinion "It is therefore fallacious to accept the Malay at face value. It is far better if his politeness is understood for what they really are" (Mahathir 1970:117). This dualism moving between courtesy to an outsider and a free expression of feelings to members of the Malay race further reinforces the need for research to categorise and describe Malay politeness strategies in cross-cultural communication as different sets of politeness strategies might be used when speaking to a Malay and a non-Malay as different sets of standards are claimed applied by the Malays depending on the ethnicity of the hearer.

One should not, however, presume that the preference for courtesy; self-effacement and tolerance by the Malays is a permanent feature. Malays do not take kindly to insults and should a Malay be dishonoured or if the disagreement is serious then one can expect *berkerat rotan, berpatah arang* 'a clean and complete break', which will bring about a complete rupture of relationship, that cannot be mended. Mahathir (1970) commented that for the Malays, there is always the possibility that courtesy may give way, as would anybody who has to bottle up feelings of dissatisfaction. Its release can reveal a cruel and callous side bent on destruction. The best description of this sudden seizure is described by the word *amok*, which is Malay in origin. This swing in the Malay character is reflected in the Malay propensity to pardon small



insults, but take exceptions to serious ones may lead the Malay to adopt fewer politeness strategies when making small impositions as they may perceive it to be socially condoned. On the other hand elaborate politeness strategies are undertaken, when performing serious impositions.

The Malays perceive familial ties as very important and believe that one should always be loyal to one's family. This may have the concomitant result that impositions among family members will be better tolerated and as such social distance may be differently perceived, compared to those of an Anglo-Saxon setting. One is always encouraged to feel for one's family and any misfortune that befalls one's family members is seen to also affect the other members of the family, for example "chubit paha kanan, paha kiri pun sakit juga" 'if one's right lap is pinched the left lap will also feel the pain'. The feeling of loyalty to one's family is further found in the Malay equivalent of the English adage 'charity begins at home' the Malay equivalent of *Daunnya jatuh melayang, buahnya jatuh ke pangkal* 'the leaves of a tree may be blown away, but its fruit will always fall to the root of the tree'. And if one favors outsiders over one's family then this foolish behavior is seen as *anak diriba kelaparan, keru dihutan disusui* 'one's child is left in hunger while the monkeys in the jungle are fed'. And one who acts spitefully against a member of his family is seen as hurting himself i.e. *potong hidung rosak muka* 'one harms oneself by speaking ill of one's family' or 'if one washes dirty linen in public then one is actually hurting one's own image' *tepuk air didulang, terpercik muka sendiri* 'smack water in a dish and your face gets splattered'.

The bonds of familial loyalty and responsibilities are also seen to extend to the nation and the community *Hujan emas di negeri orang, hujan batu di negeri sendiri, baik juga di negeri sendiri* 'though it rains gold and silver in a foreign land and daggers and spears at home it is better to be at home' and *Apa guna bulan terang di dalam hutan? Jikalau dalam negeri alangkah baiknya* 'What is the use of a bright moon in the forest? Is it not better in the (inhabited) country?' The concern for one's family and community is also modulated by the realization that ultimately it is we ourselves who are going to be responsible for our acts *Kita semua mati, tetapi kubur masing-masing* 'each person has his own dreams and is responsible for his own affairs'.

The Malay society being originally agrarian and feudalistic emphasizes social order, whereby there is order and propriety and one should act in accordance with it. As stated by Tham (1990) "...the social structure of the traditional Malay society made up of the aristocracy (royal and non-royal), the commoners, debt-bondsmen and slaves. Social divisions were clearly demarcated and the rigidity of the status system was given cognitive emphasis in the peribahasa as well (Tham 1990:49)". The nobles were seen as always being able to project their nobility of character *Adakah daripada telaga yang*

*jernih mengalir air yang keruh?* 'will a well with clear water produce dirty water', also 'there is no way a man of noble breeding can be put down' *Kalau benih yang baik, jatuh ke laut menjadi pulau* 'if a good seed falls into the sea, an island will spring from it' and *Ada pun manikam itu. kalau jatuh ke dalam perlimbangan sekali pun, tiada akan hilang cahayanya* 'a precious stone though it be dropped into a cesspool will not lose its brilliancy'

The maintenance of social order is stressed, whereby one should act in accordance with one's station in life *Berapa panjang lunjor, begitulah selimut* 'the length of the coverlet should be that of the stretched body' While one who acts beyond his station in life is seen as *cacing hendak menjadi ular naga* 'a worm wants to become a dragon' or *pacat hendak menjadi ular sawa* 'the leech eager to be a python' One is also not encouraged to marry a person of a higher social rank and a match of this kind is seen as *gajah ditelan ular lidi* 'the elephant is swallowed by the grass snake' Thus it can clearly be seen that the maintenance of the social structure is of importance to the Malay society and hence the need for its members to act in accordance to their station in life and to marry those who are of a similar station in life e.g. *pipit sama pipit, enggang sama enggang* 'sparrows must mate with sparrows and hornbills with hornbills' This prominence given to social order reinforces the centrality of *Adat* in Malay politeness.

Tact is very highly valued in the Malay society as shown by the proliferation of sayings concerning it. A person who is tactful is seen as one who acts before he is called upon by circumstances, hence he is someone who anticipates the turn of events and is adept at predicting the necessary response before s/he is prompted to e.g. *Belum disuruh sudah pergi, belum dipanggil sudah datang* 'before you could send him on an errand he was gone, before you could call him he had come' A tactless person on the other hand is seen as socially inept and clumsy. S/he is seen as a person who is uncouth and uncultured e.g. *kapak naik pemedang, kapak masuk meminang* 'an axe conducts the marriage negotiations' Actions which are tactless are seen as dangerous *bagai aur ditarik songsang* 'pulling the bamboo the wrong way' A tactful person is seen as one who exhibits the qualities of a diplomat, who is yielding and supple, as in *lemah liat kayu akar, dilentur boleh dipatah tak dapat* 'one who can bend easily but not break' Tact can also be seen in that one is also encouraged to let others down gently and not abruptly *bila jatuh terletak, jangan jatuh terhempas* All these sayings indicate the centrality of adopting appropriate politeness strategies in Malay discourse.

The importance of tact is further evidenced in everyday life, for example in the governance of a household *pukul anak sindir menantu* 'by indirect means one shows up the flaw of others' The importance of keeping a secret and to be ever conscious of the sharpness of one's tongue is also emphasized.

One is encouraged to keep secrets *Tahu makan, tahu simpan* 'if you know how to eat, you better know how to tidy up' While one is also reminded of the power of words *berapa tajam pisau parang, tajam lagi mulut manusia* 'knives and machetes are not as sharp as tongues' The practice of wrongful speech, is also seen as detrimental to oneself *Terdorong kaki, badan merasa; terdorong lidah, emas padahnya* 'the body pays for a slip of the foot and gold pays for a slip of the tongue' and also in *sebab santan pulut binasa, sebab mulut badan binasa* 'as the glutinous rice cake is spoilt by the coconut milk, so is the body by the indiscretion or foulness of the mouth' The impetuous, who gives little thought to tact is bound to suffer *Ikut hati, mati, ikut rasa, binasa* 'follow your heart and death awaits, follow your tastes and destruction awaits' The importance of tact and correct behaviour is emphasised by the fact that the responsibility for a misdemeanor is borne by the perpetrator *siapa makan cabai, dialah yang merasa pedas* 'he who consumes chilli will experience a burning sensation himself', *siapa makan nangka kena getahnya* 'he who consumes the jackfruit will be smeared by its gum'

The aforementioned *adat* sayings are directly relevant to the study of politeness strategies in Malay. It must be stressed here that the observance of *adat* is of grave importance to the Malays as clearly shown in their sayings *Adat bernegeri memagar negeri, adat berkampung memagar kampung* 'the customs of the state enfold the state, the customs of the village enfold the village' It is one of the main cornerstones of Malay behavior and community living (Hamid 1988: 74-75).

The other concept central to community living in Malay society is that of *budi*. As stated by Tham (1990) "At the societal level, the whole Malay ethical system on social relations rests on the concept of *budi*. Within the concept of *budi* rests two further related aspects, which might be translated as the individual centering around the words *rukun* 'harmony and consensus', denoting the existential viz. *rukun hidup* and *muafakat* 'agreement or consensus, denoting the contractual aspect' Outwardly an individual must perforce demonstrate *adab* 'courtesy in the spoken word as well as in action and deportment. To contravene the complex of expectations revolving around the term *adab* is to be labeled *biadab* 'crude; coarse in manners, uncultured, uncivilized' or *kurang ajar* 'lack of breeding' (Tham 1977). As such *budi* is critical in socially sanctioned intercourse, that is to say an essential component of ethical behaviour where the actions of interactants can be judged to be moral or not. This relates also to the notion of one's reputation *nama* which results from one's actions. Thus if one is lacking in *budi* then one inevitably has a bad name *nama buruk/jahat* which is to be avoided. This is because Malays place a high degree of emphasis on one's *nama* or 'name' e.g. *Baik mati dengan nama yang baik, jangan hidup dengan nama yang jahat* 'it is better to die with a

good name than to live with a bad one'. This importance of one's *nama* is seen to extend beyond one's death *Harimau mati tinggalkan belang, manusia mati tinggalkan nama* 'the dead tiger will leave its stripes, a dead person will leave his name' *Budi* and *nama* extend beyond one's lifetime and the *budi* and *nama* of one's ancestors can sometimes reflect on oneself. Hence *budi* is seen as precious and as such a debt of honour cannot be easily repaid e.g. *Hutang emas dapat dibayar, hutang budi dibawa mati* 'a debt of gold can be repaid, kindness indebts till our dying days. The notion of *nama* 'name' may be seen in the context of Goffman's definition as the face a person possess. However, how one maintains face in interaction depends on what is deemed important by a society and we see this in what is deemed as polite behavior in that society (i.e. values emphasized by a society) which inadvertently reflect on what types of face work is valued. Here I would like to give an outline of what may be considered polite behavior besides the values elaborated above. For the Malays polite behavior hinges on the concept of *halus* 'refinement' and *kasar* 'coarseness / crudeness' whereby a person's action can be graded on an axis from being very *halus* to that of very *kasar*

The notion of *hormat* 'respect' is prominently featured and there seems to be a triadic relationship between *budi*, *sabar* and *hormat* as this will then lead to the maintenance of *adab* 'proper decorum/courtesy and behavior' among members of a community. A striking feature about *hormat* 'respect' in a Javanese society which is also prevalent among the Malays is that it does not matter whether a person actually feels respectful inside or merely acts as if he does. In fact, a significant aspect of all Javanese social relationships is that the important thing is not the sincerity of the action, but the successful concealment of all dissonant aspects of the relationship. And although in many social interactions both sides are aware that the true situation between them is not as it appears on the surface, all are happy as long as the superficial accord is not disturbed (H.Geertz 1961 110-111). This description of the expression of *hormat* 'respect' is indeed similar to the Malay outward expression of courtesy to outsiders and the concealment of true feelings as described in Mahathir's (1970) observation of Malay courtesy. This component of respectful behavior helps to maintain face, whereby each participant knows what lines to subscribe to (i.e. course of action) and hence what face to project. This indicates a high concern for the value of discernment (as defined by Hill *et al.*, 1986 as being determined by many factors but in the main by the type of addressee and the situation (Hill *et al.*, 1986:351). Thus I propose that the triadic relationship between *hormat*, *sabar* and *budi* are all interconnected to enable members of the speech community maintain values deemed important to it (i.e. highly organized politeness strategies for the effective maintenance of face). Hence

we have the manifestations of these values as *sopan-santun* 'manners' based on *adab* 'proper' behaviour subscribed to by the community.

To maintain the framework of interaction above, we find that the Malays value *sabar* 'forbearance' and 'patience'. The concomitant notion of emotional equanimity is also valued. These same values are also amongst the main features of Javanese linguistic strategies which are considered *halus*. To facilitate the aforesaid values in social interaction there is a special place for the use of indirection in speech - "people don't like to say what is on their minds" (H.Geertz 1961:244-245). Bluntness is not a virtue and by the time one comes to the point in a *halus* conversation everyone should be quite aware of what one is going to say (which is linked to preparing one's listeners to adopt the appropriate facework). However as mentioned by H. Geertz "often it is not necessary to come to the point at all, which is a great relief to everyone" (H.Geertz 1961:245).

To conclude, I propose that the triadic relationship of *Budi*, *Sabar* and *Hormat* anchors Malay politeness with their prominence in Malay culture. Any study into Malay politeness strategies will thus have to take account of the Malay Sayings that define, order, validates, affirms and justify behaviour at the individual and societal levels.

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