Discourse Analysis of Decision Making Episodes in Meetings: Politeness theory and Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

Many management activities (e.g. negiotiation, meetings, decision making, presentation and so on) depend on the chair's use and control of language. Therefore, the asymmetric relation between interactants in meetings needs to be considered. Participants in meetings have different positions and interests to defend and they used different ways to express and negotiate their points. The chairperson, on the other hand, is entrusted with the responsibility of managing the discussion and most importantly in making decision. This provides the chairperson with control of topics and turns, expressed through the exercise of power in language use. The present study will examine this asymmetric relations using the politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987) employed by the chairperson and the chair's display of power (Fairclough, 1992, Van Djik, 2001, 2006). The unit of analysis in this study is decision making episodes, using the notion of frame (Goffman, 1974), which involves shared understandings of certain conventions and norms that operate and facilitate participants to make appropriate interpretation of each others. The findings revealed that the chair in meeting 1 preferred to use negative politeness strategies, while the chair in meeting 2 tended to use bald- on- record politeness strategies. With regards to display of power, the chair in meeting 1 displayed power subtly by acknowledging the significant contributions made by members of the meeting to the final decision. The chair in meeting 2, however, was more bold and direct.

Keywords: discourse analysis; politeness strategies; critical discourse analysis; discourse and manipulation theory; meetings.

Introduction

In any organization, effective workplace communication is very essential for smooth and efficient functioning of an organization. Proper communication between the manager and his employees is essential, or else it will lead to undesirable consequences such as absenteeism amongst workers and lower productivity in an organization (Juneja, 2009). Communication at the workplace takes place all the time through various channels in order to communicate the organization's rules, views, missions and others. One of the main channels to deliver the information is during meetings. In fact, workplace meetings have become a common occurrence in daily business activity, especially in larger organizations where communication needs to be regularized. Issues are discussed, information is disseminated, opinions are canvassed, and decisions are made in meetings.

People within any organizations have determined roles and responsibilities, and these roles resulted in certain positions of power within the organization, with managers and leaders having inevitably significant and influential role in the workplace. Therefore, discourse analysis of everyday workplace provides valuable insights into how managers constructed and use language in order to maintain their position (Holmes, Schnurr and Marra, 2007). The positions of managers and leaders are continually renegotiated as power is asserted, defended and redefined in the course of everyday workplace discourse. This implies that language use is very much related to social position, role, identity and relationship between participants in a discourse (Foley, 2010). Meetings discourse display how managers and leaders take actions and command actions in seeking to establish and strengthen their position as chairs of meetings and to establish the

organizations' ideology. In addition, other members of the meetings bring with them different positions and interests to defend, which are communicated and negotiated in different ways. Therefore, meetings involve interactions which reflect asymmetric relations between participants.

The asymmetric relation can be analysed using different discourse approaches. The present study will examine the realization of the asymmetric relations by examining the use of politeness strategies employed by the chairperson and whether the politeness strategies threaten the hearer's face or not, in a given face threatening act context (FTA). Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is applied for this purpose. Furthermore, this study also intends to analyze the chair's display of power in order to determine if it is linked to the social practice of the organization because the chair's position also provides him with the opportunity to exercise power over the participants in the meeting. In this sense, power is seen as the ability of an individual to intentionally control or dominate other individuals. Fairclough's (1992) three dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Van Djik's discourse and manipulation theory (2001, 2006) are used to examine instances of language use which portray power.

Review of related literature: Politeness theory and CDA in meetings

One of the main subjects of investigation in the field of discourse has been on examinations of workplace meetings. This section will review related literature on workplace meetings, focusing on investigation of the chair's discourses, based on politeness theory and CDA.

Foley's (2010) study showed how participants of unequal work status undertake their roles in a meeting. The results showed that the two most dominant participants in the meeting were the ones with senior position, and consequently, senior roles in the meeting. The main discourse functions utilized by both were interruption, seeking clarification, expressing agreement and disagreement and making suggestions. These discourse functions displayed clearly how both participants achieved their goals in the meeting by utilizing their power. There were only few instances where both participants gave opinion or justified their opinions, compared to the other members of the meeting. The extent to which workplace roles may affect language choices in meetings has also been examined by Housley (2000). He states that different meeting members "act as filters for external discourses of distinct knowledge" (Housley 2000: 83).

A study by Hanak (1998) based on two meetings chaired by two women showed how both chairs used politeness strategies to mitigate impositions, which confirms the assumption that communication is marked by power differences. Furthermore, the use of politeness strategies to downplay imposition helped both chairs to persuade members of the meeting to accept their opinion. Similarly, power can also be studied in the role of indirectness and common politeness strategies in obscuring a message that needs to be conveyed (Huttunen, 2005).

Stubbe et.al (2003) used multiple discourse analysis, which included politeness strategies and critical discourse analysis to analyse episodes of interaction between a superior and his co-worker. The hierarchical relationship between the superior and his co-worker is an important factor which accounts for selection of politeness strategies used

by both. Although politeness strategies does not explicitly takes into account the construction of power and status, the findings revealed that both participants take into account the weight of imposition on each other's face of a given FTA. As for enactment of power and dominance, the findings showed that the superior used interruption as the main discourse function to reinforce his power and other argument structures that further reinforces and supports the hierarchical relationship between them. Fung (2010) found that those with power have the opportunity to exploit their influential position and adopt a more assertive style, in relation to politeness, in order to make members of the meeting accept their viewpoint.

A review of politeness theory

Politeness is an essential part of human language in conversation, whereby the sociological norms of the speakers affect the politeness strategies used by the speakers (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The concept of face is essential in Brown and Levinson's framework of politeness, which enables them to describe and analyse a wide range of linguistic features relevant to politeness.

The underlying assumption in the study of politeness is that talk is governed by the concept of face. The notion of face was proposed by Goffman (1967) who states that face is a mask that changes depending on the audience and the social interaction. This concept was expanded by Brown and Levison (1987) in their politeness theory. Face is understood as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). It "can be damaged, maintained or enhanced through

interaction with others" (Thomas, 1995: 169). A threat to a person's face has been termed face threatening act (FTA). Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that an FTA often requires a mitigating statement or some sort of politeness, otherwise the line of communication will break. With this understanding of face, a definition of politeness can be understood in relation to face. Face is negotiated in the interaction process as participants construct their identities.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) define face as 'wants" and made a distinction between negative face and positive face. Negative face concerns the desire to be independent and not to be imposed upon by others, while the positive face is the desire to be liked, approved of and appreciated by others. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), both speakers and hearers try to maintain their face as well as each other's. Therefore, two face concerns emerged in interaction, the positive and negative face wants of both the hearer and the speaker. Although both the speaker and the hearer have interest in protecting their own face as well as each other's, committing face threatening acts (FTAs) is unavoidable. FTAs are "illocutionary acts (that) damage or threaten another person's face" (Thomas, 1995: 169).

Critical discourse analysis

There is no specific or single theory on CDA or one specific methodology on how to conduct CDA. Wodak (2002: 7) argues that "studies in CDA are multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards very different data and methodologies". Titsher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter (2000: 147) state that "CDA sees

itself as politically involved research with an emancipator requirement: it seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationship". It follows that CDA is about understanding the connections between language, power and ideology as CDA sees "language as social practice" (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Wodak, 1997), whereby the context of language use is crucial (Wodak, 2000). The investigation of the enactment, exploitation and abuse of power is the basis of CDA investigation because "for CDA language is not powerful on its own – it gains power by the use powerful people make of it" (Wodak, 2002: 10). Therefore, CDA is useful in analyzing interactions in contexts that involve power asymmetry.

The investigation into how the chairs of the two meetings in this study used their position to enact power in this study is guided by Fairclough's (1992) three dimensional model. Based on Fairclough's three dimensional model, every instance of language use is a communicative event which consists of 3 dimensions: (1) text (analysis of linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax and sentence coherence), (2) discursive practice (focuses on text producer and people who consume the text) – the focus is on whether discursive practice reproduces, restructures or strengthens the existing order of discourse and the consequences of these on social practice and (3) social practice (the wider social practice to which the communicative event belongs). In addition, Van Djik's (2006) manipulation theory is also used to illuminate how power is exploited in decision making process.

Van Djik (2001) considers manipulation as a form of abuse of social power. A triangulation of manipulation theory explicitly links discourse, cognition and society.

According to Van Djik (2006) discourse takes place through text and talk. Cognition is the manipulation of the minds of human beings, while social approach concerns power and power abuse in society. Since manipulation is viewed specifically as "abuse of power" (Van Djik, 2006: 360), manipulation implies "the exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse: manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated" (Van Djik, 2006: 360). On the other hand, Van Djik (2006), asserts that "manipulation could be a form of (legitimate) persuasion"(361), if it is without the negative connotations such as abuse and illegitimate influence. This means that as a form of legitimate persuasion, the recipients are free to believe or act as they please, depending on whether or not they accept the arguments of the persuader.

For the purpose of this study, manipulation theory is viewed as a form of (legitimate) persuasion because the participants in the meetings are not victims. They are allowed to express their opinions and ideas, argue, negotiate and perform various speech acts. In other words, the chair asked for responses from members of the meeting before any decision is made. Furthermore, the decisions made represent the 'interests' of the participants in the meeting (though not all the time) and in the best interest of the organization (which refers to members of the organization from all levels). This study also intends to analyze the chair's display of power in order to determine if it is linked to the social practice of the organization.

To reiterate, the purpose of this study is to analyse how two chairpersons managed a meeting, focusing on decision making episodes. Discourse analysis with a

focus on politeness strategies and display of power and ideology are used to study two meetings in one organization. It is hoped that the present study will contribute to the body of knowledge on politeness and power and the link between the two.

The study

The research site involved an organization which is a government-owned company incorporated under the Ministry of Finance. The organisation deals with standardisation and quality and is the main player in developing the industrial research and development of standard documents in Malaysia. The organization is affiliated to a few international bodies that deal with standard and quality issues.

Participants in Meeting 1 are members of the Technical Committee on Identification Cards and Related Devices. Meeting 1 was attended by 10 people: the secretary, six other executives from the organisation, one representative from the government sector and two representatives from the banking sector; and was chaired by a Senior Executive of the organization. The objective of Meeting 1 was to determine a document which specifies the acceptable standard measures for Mycard (the Malaysian identity card), the Malaysian electronic passport and bank cards.

Meeting 2 discussed technical matters on concrete and concrete products. The issues discussed were on producing documents for an acceptable standard measure on various types of concrete products and the cost of construction projects. It was chaired by a Senior Executive Engineer of the organization and there were ten other participants. There were two secretaries, three engineers from the organisation, two accountants from

the organisation, two lecturers from a public university and a representative from JKR (Jabatan Kerja Raya Malaysia). The objective of Meeting 2 was to establish a document that specifically indicates the acceptable standard measures on various types of concrete products.

Two meetings were observed in the organization, which was made possible through personal contacts with several executives at the organizations. However, the usual procedure of writing letters to the respective Heads were followed as required. Letters were written to the Head of Department of the organization, in order to obtain permission to conduct observations of meetings at the organization. After permission was obtained, the executive whom the researcher knew personally arranged for the researcher to observe the two meetings in the organization. Permission to audio-taped the meetings were not obtained, and hence as such, the researcher recorded field notes and used an observation scheme to gather information during the observations. The researcher took the role of non-participant observation during the meetings. The researcher was seated together with the participants of the meetings, but positioned herself at the end of the table in order not to disrupt the meetings. Saville-Troike (2003) asserts that it is better for the researcher to refrain from getting involved actively in a group's proceedings if the researcher wishes to understand the group's dynamics in a meeting or other gathering. Furthermore, Graham (1990) indicates that confidentiality in business frequently prevents access to authentic data. Therefore, field notes taken were used in the data analysis where necessary. The researcher also included observations of linguistic features and

characteristics of spoken interaction, such as paralinguistic features, which proved useful in analysing the data.

Methodology

Discourse analysis of language use in decision making episodes from the perspectives of politeness and power are examined in this study. Two meetings in an organization were observed, to form the speech data. This study is qualitative in nature and data was collected from written documents of the observed meetings and field notes. From the researcher's observation, the meetings proceeded in a relaxed manner and no reference was made to the presence of the researcher. The first meeting lasted for one hour and thirty minutes, while meeting two lasted for one hour and ten minutes.

The transcribed data was divided into segments of talk, with decision making episode being the criteria for analysis. The transcribed data entailed a close reading in order to determine whether the interaction involved linguistic acts which lead to decision making or not. This was accomplished using the notion of frame, which is described by Goffman (1974: 8) as a "definition of the situation". Goffman (1974) futher defines frames as "principles of organization which governs events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them" (Goffman, 1974: 10-11). Principles of organization specify who can take part in the activity, the role relationships between participants, what can be said, when can it be said, how it is to be said and so forth. Listeners and speakers must be aware of the principles of organization of the activity that they are engaged in, in order to interpret utterances so that certain outcomes are produced. This means that the

concept of frame involves shared understandings of certain conventions and norms that operate and facilitate participants to make appropriate interpretation of each others' intentions. In addition, other terms used to refer to frame are "scripts' and "schemata"(Tannen (1993: 15). Frame in the present study is structured activity in the development of discussion, which leads to decision making.

The speaker-interlocutor response patterns in the meeting was analysed to examine how decision making took place, where and how the politeness strategies occurred and how the strategies shaped the decision making process. In addition, Fairclough's (1992) three dimensional model of CDA and Van Djik's (2001, 2006) manipulation theory are used to gauge how power is used or exploited in decision making process. The interaction in the decision making episode was analysed with regard to the issue discussed, how and with what effects power was enacted through language use.

Results and findings

The results of the study are presented in two parts, beginning with findings on politeness strategies, followed by analysis of power display. To reiterate, the main purpose of this study is to investigate how a chairperson employed politeness strategies and exercised power through language and how the exercise of politeness and power contributes to the decision making process.

Politeness strategy

The examples were taken from two meetings (referred to as meeting 1 and 2) in the same organization. Each meeting was chaired by a senior staff from two different departments. The analysis begins with the use of politeness strategies employed by the chairperson (in meeting 1) in decision making episodes and whether the politeness strategies threaten the hearer's face or not.

Examples from Meeting 1

Example 1

RoCS1	How it operates we leave to the secretariat. But I think there's one consequence because it open ourselves to interrogation. The password is available to others. We need to vote and comment on other projects too.	8 9 10
RaS4	***What about giving ID card?***	**11**
RoCS1	Normally how long for this? <question addressed to the secretary	12
SecSS3	I'd like to remind that lets' say if we don't comment… respond to the emails three times if we didn't comment, they can downgrade because when they give IP, they expect comment… respond.	13 14 15
RaS4	So we have to decide now?	16
RoCS1	***Well*** *if that's the case **I propose** we vote for comment **Any comments?***	**17**
	(silence)	
RoCS1	**No Comment? Continue next agenda**	**18**

The topic which was discussed at this juncture in the meeting was on whether the members of the meeting should vote on projects managed by the organization electronically, via email. RaS4 was not in favour of the ruling (line 11) and he proposed another option for the voting process, which is to cast votes in meetings. Despite RaS4's question on whether a decision on the matter has to be decided in the meeting, the chair

appeared to ignore his question and made his decision. However, the chair minimized the imposition of the negative politeness strategy with the use of hedging phrases: *well, I propose*, which acknowledged the hearer's (RaS4) face wants. The use of hedging phrases implies the chair is seeking advice. This is further strengthened when the chair ended his utterance by asking for response from the members of the meeting as displayed in the utterance *any comment* (line 17). Nevertheless, none of the members of the meeting responded because they may have interpreted that the chair has made a final decision on the issue. Therefore, the Chair assumed that everyone agreed and moved on to the next agenda (line 18)

Example 2

NS7	Its about the command set. How the biometrics function in the command set	107
KS10	I think MyCard is fine. If we want to adopt the international standard, MyCard shouldn't stop it. I don't know. That's my opinion.	108 109
RoCS1	Two issue here. For industry we open up the system. On our part, whether we want to adapt or follow a standard.	110 111
AzS8	If we adopt we go back to the proposal	112
CS5	I prefer that we follow the department standard procedure	113
RoCS1	So that's the thing Let the industry thrive while the government take care of the security and standard issue which MAA champion kan? <looked at MAA representative>	114 115 116
NS7	But later they may question	117
RoCS1	*I think let's not prolong the issue I think it's best…the issue is whether we want to… we want to adapt or not It's better we hold on this issue and move to next part*	**118** 119 120

Example 3

RoCS1	O.K. number four. We hold on till we get feedback from MAA and	120
	JAA. Number five…some constraints on this crypto part	121
AdS6	I spent the whole year doing this and I still find it difficult to understand	122
RoCS1	This crypto is the crypto engine within the card, *kan*?	123
KS10	It is the card crypto but we didn't follow their standard.	124
RoCS1	*I think*=	125
KS10	= I don't think we can adapt this standard because we already have ours.	126
RoCS1	*I think we* can still change. *Nanti* the organization will appear not to	**127**
	support Malaysian banking card *pulak* <followed by laughter>	128

The issue discussed in example 2 was on whether the organization wanted to adapt the standard given by the government or merely followed the standard with regards to the command set of the card. In example 3, the issue is on encryption in the card and once again, the issue of adapting or following the standard is brought up. In both examples, the chair used negative politeness strategy, which minimized threat to the hearers' face because he hedged his decision with the phrase, *"I think…"* (line 118 and line 127). In example 2, the chair decided to put the issue on hold and moved on to the next agenda, while in example 3, he decided that changes can still be made with regards to the adaptation issue. Although his decision in example 2 and 3 was direct, it was followed by a reason to justify his decision. The use of 3rd person pronoun 'we' was to emphasize solidarity because he was communicating to the participants in the meeting that they (the chair and the members of the meeting) are making decisions in the best interest of the organization.

Example 4

RoCS1	Hmm…tough. What I understand is upon adaptation testing *nak uji* test first then adapt or adopt the test. See *macam mana*	46 47
SecSS3	So far lets say chemistry. They do some test by member and given allocation by DSM (Department of Standards Meeting)	48 49
RoCS1	*Tapi* even if you test…you still need the benchmark, right?	50
MS2	That's the procedure but we have data.	51
RoCS1	*If it doesn't suit the requirement, then **we** propose and change. If **we** go for test, then there may be more problems. We don't want any problems because it'll create delay in submission…submission **you know***	52 53 **54**

Example 5

MS2	We're the stakeholders. It's a question of jeopardize… jeopardizing us or not.	63
RaS4	I see your point, but the standards are given by the department. I think they are common for all. And ah…may not be the greatest standard. For example if you see the standards for dynamics…that's the latest in any case. In my department the division of used and unused cards, dimensions, standards ah.. ah.. less stringent.	64 65 66 67
MS2	So certain standards are not taken care of in the new document. How to follow the document?	68 69
RoCS1	*So like macam tu, **we** adapt.* So if **we** conduct any test we do our own standard. *So while **we** comment on the other party, **we** work on ours to to enhance whatever the department propose.*	**70** **71** **72**

The chair used bald- on- record politeness strategy in example 4 and 5, whereby no attempt was made to use any mitigating devices in order to minimize the threat on the hearers' face. However, both decisions were made after considering the information and opinions from the hearers. In example 4, the chair uttered *'you know'* (line 54) which is a form of addressee-oriented discourse marker to imply shared understanding between the Chair and the hearer (MS2). In addition, the use of the pronoun '*we'* (line 70, 71 and 72)

implied solidarity, that the decision was not his alone, but that of participants in the meeting too.

Examples from Meeting 2

Example 1

Sec1SS2	Ok this project ah..ah..going to be tabled So I'll prepare the proposal	4
Sec2HS3	But they not confirm of the meeting yet	5
LCS1	Maybe next meeting we prepare the standard document So easier for member to know the standard Is the paper submitted yet?	6 7
Sec1SS2	Not yet in	8
LCS1	***It's mentioned in the brochure So submit don't delay***	**9**

Example 2

Sec1SS2	We're going to release public comment in August So we start with working group Sub group 1 and 2 I look into technical requirement 2 into procedures In next meeting sub group leaders present	59 60 61
AS9	Sorry I have a question JKK accepted that or not?	62
LCS1	Do you want to be in the team?	63
AS9	I travel a lot so better for someone to be there	64
SecSS2	Ok now part 3 and 4	65
LCS1	***No let's do part 1and 2 first Part 3 and 4 we form the group later***	**66**

The chair (LCS1) in example 1 and 2 did not try to acknowledge the hearers' face wants by means of redressive action. The politeness strategy used was bald- on- record. In fact he appeared to demand the secretary to submit the standard document (line 9) without further delay. But before he put forward his demand, he justified it in the utterance "it's mentioned in the brochure" which softened the effect of the demand.

In example 2, the chair rejected the secretary's suggestion to discuss parts 3 and 4. He retorted as displayed in the utterance 'no' and proceeded to steer the meeting into

discussing parts 1 and 2. Both are clear evidence of the interrelation between power and politeness, which will be discussed under CDA analysis.

Example 3

LCS1	Ok Now there is deadline for outside bodies to submit their application…for us to review	36 37
Sec1SS2	No one submit yet We told them the clauses but no response	38
RuS6	But they have to comply Should we extend the deadline? Can we decide ah…now in the meeting now?	39 40
LCS1	***I think we** can extend deadline until this week **ok**? Now **we** move to 4.2*	**41**

Negative politeness strategy was used by the chair in example 3 with the hedging phrase, "I think". The use of the mitigating device "I think" (line 41) definitely minimized the threat to the hearer's face want. The chair's use of 'we' (line 41) implied positive politeness strategy as a means of emphasizing solidarity and that the decision was a collective decision. In fact, the discourse marker 'ok' appeared as a request for approval from the members of the meeting. However, the chair did not give the opportunity for the participants in the meeting to respond because he decided to move to agenda 4.2 (line 41).

Findings based on display of power

The sections that follow present findings pertaining to display of power.

Example 1

RoCS1	***O.K. number four. We hold on till we get feedback from MAA and JAA***. Number five…some constraints on this crypto part.	**112** 113
AdS6	I spent the whole year doing this and I still find it difficult to understand	114 115
RoCS1	This crypto is the crypto engine within the card, *kan*?	116
KS10	It is the card crypto, but we didn't follow their standard.	117

In example 1, the chair decided not to make any decision pertaining to item number 4 (line 112) because the 2 main players in this particular industry (*MAA and JAA*) have not given any feedback on the item yet. The participants of the meetings did not raise any objections about putting item number 4 on hold because the two key players were mentioned. It enabled the chair to proceed to the next item.

Example 2

AdS6	My concern is on whether it will jeopardize our position as stakeholder	150
RoCS1	***I know but to me we should push further. Can we agree on that? We push for one to eight. So I think we complete that.*** *Now we go to new item. Under this item*, ***we have a proposal on MSC Flagship application.***	**151** **152** **153**

Although the chair agreed with AdS6's concern in line 151 – "I know", as shown in example 2, his agreement, however, is considered as pseudo-agreement because he immediately justified why speaker AdS6 should not be too concerned about the matter

(line 151-152). The Chair then continued with a proposal that is much more important as it concerned another important player in the industry, i.e, the *MSC* (line 153).

Example 3

RoCS1	Now we go to new item a proposal on Malaysian Multi Purpose SmartCard Flagship application	152 153
SecSS3	For those who did not attend last meeting it's application of Malaysian ID	154 155
KS10	Does we come in?	156
SecSS3	Yes under application	157
KS10	So it doesn't come under banking MEPS?	158
SecSS3	No	159
KS10	May I know why we need to view ?	160
RocS1	*Yes we need to view the document I can elaborate on that **MSS** companies wanted to do more with **MyCard** and migrate from there There are issues of standards in **MyCard** A lot of industries need that info **MSC** feels there is a need to let industries use the document At least there's a guide…what do you call that ah…ah…standards and policy and code of practice for the industries So **our job** now is to view the standard document*	**161 162 163 164 165 166 167**
KS10	*I agree ok* <some members of the meeting nod their head to show agreement and there were also echoes of 'ok'>	**168**

Similarly, in example 3, the chair gave a lengthy explanation (line 161-167) in response to KS10's question. The chair mentioned again the important document, *MyCard* (line 162, 163 & 164) and the main player involved, i.e. *MSC* (line 164). The phrase "our job" (line 166) implied that the members of the meeting have significant role in producing a document which will contribute to the government's policy on ICT in the country. This prompted KS10 and the other members of the meeting to agree on the decision about viewing the document (line 168).

85

As a senior manager and the head of department in the organization, the chair is knowledgeable on the vision and mission of the organization. He was the one who called for the meeting in order to discuss issues which concerned his department and the organization. This means that he decided on the agenda and he knew what the goals to accomplish are. It follows that as the producer of the language, he is well prepared to deal with any issues raised by the members of the meeting. As displayed, the chair frequently referred to the key players in the industry (MAA, JAA, MSC) and the government, who obviously have authority over matters in the organization. Furthermore, being in the management position, the chair has to convey information and make decisions in the best interest of the organization. It appears that there is enactment of power, whereby the discourse of the organization and the social practice of the institution is reproduced and strengthened through the voice of the chair.

Turning to the theory of manipulation in which the researcher opts for manipulation as a (legitimate) form of persuasion, we can see that the chair manipulated the participants of the meeting into agreeing with him in a subtle way. The chair listened to their suggestions, opinions and arguments before he made the decision. The decision made is justified with the mention of the main players in the industry. Consequently, the decisions made in the meeting appeared to represent the 'interests' of the participants in the meeting (though not all the time) and in the best interest of the organization (which comprised members of the organization from all levels) (Van Djik, 2001, 2006).

Examples from Meeting 2

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AS9	I travel a lot so better for someone to be there	64
SecSS2	Ok now part 3 and 4	65
LCS1	***No let's do part 1and 2 first Part 3 and 4 we form the group later***	**66**

The enactment of power in meeting two based on the 2 examples, however, were not done subtly by the chair, compared to meeting one. Although the Chair in this meeting is one of the seniors in the organization, he does not hold any administrative position. He is bold and direct and he appeared to be more interested in getting on with the agenda of the meeting, instead of justifying the issue discussed (line 9 and line 66). He also did not appear to reproduce or strengthen the existing order of discourse of the organization and the social practice of the organization concerned. Hence, meeting two was shorter and disagreement appeared sparingly compared to meeting 1. The participants seemed to agree, for most part, with the decisions made by the chair. This is

a form of manipulation in which power is abused (van Djik, 2001, 2006), though not abused in the sense that the members of the meeting are victims who suffered mentally.

Discussion

It is evident that the hierarchical relationship between the chairs and the participants in the meeting is a significant factor in accounting for the type of politeness strategies selected in decision making episodes. The chair in meeting 1 tended to make use of negative politeness strategies whereby mitigating devices in the form of hedging (*well, I propose, I think*) were employed to counter threat to the hearers' face. The chair also used the collective pronoun '*we*' to emphasize solidarity. In fact, Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that the use of negative politeness is more polite than using positive politeness because negative politeness is useful for 'social distancing' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 130). Although the chair in meeting 1 used bald on record politeness strategy, for instance, in example 4; the discourse marker '*you know*' implied shared understanding between the chair and the hearer, and hence, the hearer's face is maintained. However, the chair in meeting 2 preferred to apply bald on record politeness strategy. It is clear that this approach involves no attempt to acknowledge the hearer's face wants. To sum up, the patterns of politeness strategy applied by both chairs is interpreted to reflect the differences between the chairs and the members of the meeting in power and status. As the chairs, the senior managers and the head of department (the chair in meeting 1 holds the position of the Head of Department), both chairs can afford to increase the degree of

social distance by means of negative politeness strategy and bald on record politeness strategy.

Fairclough (1998) in linking power and ideology states that power is not consciously exercised as it may be displayed unconsciously. This means that individuals are normally unaware that there is domination or exercise of power. In these circumstances, participants accept power as natural or part of social practice. In example 3 of meeting 1, the chair displayed 'power' by elaborating and providing a summary in order to support his decision. Stubbe et al (2003) argue that summarizing is a strategy adopted by those in a position of authority in workplace contexts to assist them in asserting and maintaining control of an interaction. Therefore, the chairs' superior position in decision making episodes helped them to reinforce the existing power relationship between them and the participants.

Based on theory of discourse and manipulation, Van Djik (2001, 2006) argues that the exercise of power does not only involve control of the actions of others, but also includes control of the mind. Participants in meeting 1 may not be aware that the chair displayed power because it was done subtly, while the participants in meeting 2 were more aware of the display of power by the chair. But the participants know that a chair in any meeting is entrusted with the responsibility of making decisions. Members of the meetings realized that meetings involve asymmetrical relations and making decision is part of social practice in meeting. In addition, the implementation of ideologies of the organization is emphasized by the chair in meeting 1 by making frequent reference to the key players in the industry and the significant role played by members of the meeting in

making decision on behalf of these key players. This concurs with Van Djik's (2006) suggestion, whereby the powerful position of the speaker may be further enhanced by mentioning authoritative resources.

Conclusion

This result of this study provides insights on how language is used to create domination in a particular context in order to contribute to our understanding of interaction in organizations. The findings on politeness strategies revealed that politeness is a critical aspect for accomplishing the act of making decision. Furthermore, the study has shown how power is displayed in language use for the purpose of enacting power and ideology of the chair and the organization. In conclusion, asymmetric power relations as displayed by both chairs in the two meetings are not limited to meetings only, but are found in other organizational settings.

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