A Typology of Address Forms Used in Malaysian Government Agencies

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Abstract:

Multiethnic societies have a variety of address forms to use due to the mixed nature of their society but does each ethnic group converge or diverge from the addressees needs may be dependent on some social factors. This descriptive study aims to provide some evidence of the Malaysian context by focussing on data collected from four government agencies. The study will provide a typology of address forms used by the Malaysian public in addressing those serving at the immigration office, inland revenue department, police stations and court houses located in an urban area within the Klang valley. Data were extracted from public transactions occurring between parties who are of Malaysian Chinese, Malay and Indian (Tamil Speakers) descent. The demography is also representative of the country. Orthographically transcribed, data were then analysed by focussing on the formality of these address forms which may be articulated in the respective languages (Chinese – dialects including Mandarin, Malay and Tamil). Analysis shows that Malaysians of the three ethnic groups tend to use Malay address forms particularly when addressing Malay civil servants serving in these government agencies. Although data serve as a typology of address forms, they will be beneficial to course designers (education) and researchers working in language and communication as the findings can enable them to see the power structure of the Malaysian society. This knowledge can also be used for the benefit of tourists and expatriates in this country.

1. Introduction:

Change is inevitable in any plural society which comprises people of diverse ethnic backgrounds practising different religions and having different cultures, beliefs and values. Consequently,

assimilation occurs due to the long period of exposure and interaction. In that process different ethnic groups may borrow language, food, tradition, habit and customs from each other, modifying these along the way before adapting them into their own culture (Tan 2004). Studies show that descendants of immigrants adopt the cultures of the host countries (see Hazuda et al. 1988; Moon 2003) with some having more success in adjusting than others. Bond and Hwang (1986) observed that migrants not only adapt but also change in the way they interact with others while living in a migrant country. They claim that this could be due to the acquisition of host country values which become intertwined with the migrants' original values. Additionally, education and travel can also affect the way people talk or interact among themselves (Lailawati 2005).

Malaysia is a multicultural and multiethnic society, comprising three dominant ethnic groups: Malays (64%), Chinese (26%), Indians (9%) and other minority groups (1%). Malay is the national and official language (Malaysian Constitution, Article 152) but there are variations in spoken Malay as Malays come from various descents (Radiah 2007). Likewise, there are variations in spoken Chinese which are of different dialects (Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew, Hakka, Hainanese, Foochow). Over the years, Mandarin has also become a commonly heard language within the Malaysian society. Among Indians, Tamil still predominates as the most commonly used language. Other sub-dialects are Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi. English is widely spoken in Malaysia as the second most important language in this country. It is taught in schools and tertiary institutions and used widely in international settings such as conferences, hotels, banks, big shopping centres and in cosmopolitan locations where foreigners and tourists congregate. Malay is mainly used in government agencies or in formal contexts such as in the opening and closing of functions or during parliamentary debates.

This study focuses on the use of address forms which are of interest to sociolinguists as it reflects the social development of a particular ethnic group or society. Rules of behavior may be man-made but societies have a choice of adhering to or deviating from a certain set of norms. Abiding by these set of norms allow members of society to have a sense of security and acceptance and it becomes an act of convenience where no one's feathers is ruffled and so can seem to reflect harmony. The Malaysian society is a traditional one which not only emphasises on traditions but also on hierarchy and social status to the point of placing high regard for authority (Hofstede 1984; Asma and Gallaher 1995). In that light, using appropriate address forms and titles in public interactions is important. Malaysia is also a group oriented society and people tend to place harmony above conflicts (Asrul 2003; Syed 2008). Harmony is accomplished by adhering to the social norms and where possible show respect by addressing others appropriately. Politeness is highly valued (see Kuang et al. 2012) and is an expected feature of communication both at home and in public but politeness varies from culture to culture. It can be conveyed in many ways whether verbally or non-verbally. In the Malaysian context, politeness is assessed by an

individual's behaviour, speech and attire. In speech, politeness may also be assessed via utterances which may be direct or indirect and whether or not address forms are used.

1.1 Aim:

Many studies have looked at the use of address forms but thus far, few emphasise on how the three dominant ethnic groups interact in formal contexts. As such, this paper focuses on the use of address forms by Malaysians of Chinese, Malay and Indian descent in four government agencies namely immigration office, inland revenue department, police stations and court houses. It aims to explore how Malaysians address those who are holding positions in these government agencies.

2. Methodology:

To gain an understanding of how Malaysians address each other in the formal contexts, we took on roles as observers in the respective places. Our stakeholders were Malaysians of various age groups and may be males and females. No other criterion was determined for the participants except that they were Malaysians of Chinese, Malay and Indian (Tamil-speaking) descent. Address forms used by the "public" in addressing the service providers during public transactions were given focus.

A sociolinguistic perspective was taken in this study to examine the use of address forms. Traditional and conventional structures of address forms used in Malaysia were used as the benchmark to analyse the data. This helps to determine whether or not the address forms used followed a particular culture (see Gorrill 2007; Alloexpat n.d.). Non-English address forms were translated into English after confirmation with language experts. They were then categorised into three columns under Chinese, Malay and Indian addressers.

3. Address Forms and Research:

Address forms have been used throughout history but usage has evolved over the years due to technology, education system and ecology. A study of address forms used within a particular community can contribute to the field of sociolinguistic research. This is because a community is enveloped in several layers of differences such as its social structure, cultural pattern and geographical setting. A transformation at each level offers insights into how that society has changed. Hwang and Bond (1986) mention that a society and its changes can be determined by how the people living in it address each other. Address forms can depict a particular society's socio-economic status, literacy level, caste, age and sex (Manjulakshi 2004). As a society strives for development, the social relationship of the individuals as members of various groups also becomes highly dynamic and such a phenomenon can spur linguistic behavioral changes.

Malaysian culture is an amalgamation of many consisting of Malay, Chinese, Indian and minority others. One practice commonly observed is in the way Malaysians give respect to authority and seniority or elders and this is seen in address forms and behaviour. Another practice is the avoidance of conflicts in order to maintain good relationships/harmony. To maintain harmony indirectness in speech is preferred (Ezhar et al. 1997; Asmah Haji Omar 1992a; Jamaliah Mohd. Ali 2000; Asrul 2003; Lim and Syed 1997; Ling 1995) over directness, especially in giving direct answers which could be viewed as "face threatening" (Brown and Levinson 1987). Goffman (1955), a sociologist, mentions that "face" is the value an individual sets for him/herself during a particular contact with others, thus "a positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he/she has taken during a particular contact" (1955: 213). This position could become destabilised if he/she is unprepared for the respective individual's communication style. Brown and Levinson (1978: 66) describe "face as something that is emotionally invested" and it can "be lost, maintained, or enhanced" thus it has to be constantly attended to in interactions" while Carr (1993: 90) says that "face" as a lexical hyponym of words which means "prestige, dignity, honour, respect and status" " refers to "social dynamic valuation". From another perspective, "face refers to the respectability and or deference he/she receives from others by virtue of the relative position he/she occupies in his/her social network; it also refers to the degree to which he/she is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as be acceptable in his general conduct" (Ho 1976: 883). Huang (1987: 71) adds that "face" as "a sense of worth that comes from knowing one's status and which reflects concern with the congruency between one's performance or appearance is one's real worth". From the various definitions derived, it can be seen that "face" can be construed in many ways but "face" is most concerned with the way an individual perceives his/her value when among others.

Linking an individual's sense of "face" as the individual's perceived sense of respect given by others, it cannot be dismissed that respect can be shown in different ways. For example, respect among the Chinese can be conveyed by attending to the other's face i.e "*mianzi*" or "*lian*". By doing so, we submit to his/her needs by treating that "face" as a kind of social standing or position. When respect is conveyed, politeness is also manifested. Lee-Wong (1999) links Chinese politeness to the word "*limao*" which was explained as coming from the word "*li*" which means ceremony, courtesy, etiquette and the word "*mao*" which refers to a person's appearance. He explains that when a person shows "*limao*" he/she is showing a high regard for the other by refraining from committing a social offence and by taking care of the "face" or "*mianzi*" of the other party.

In this paper, we deduce that Malaysians use appropriate address forms in the formal contexts not only to show high regard, thus respect and politeness, for those serving in the government agencies but also to maintain harmony by addressing the "face" of service providers carefully. In

other words, they take great care to avoid offence and this intention is accomplished through the strategy of using appropriate address forms.

As mentioned earlier, respect for authority and seniority/elders is a norm in Malaysia. One way to assess this is through the use of address forms. Much emphasis has been put into this practice among Malaysians because doing so denotes good upbringing and it eliminates ill feelings (Asmah Haji Omar 1992b; Asma and Pedersen 2003) among participants. Radiah (2007) and Kuang (2009) have also illustrated how Malaysian Malays and Malaysian Chinese conform to using traditional kinship terms in the home domain while David et al. (2007) have provided newspaper evidence to show that titles are still widely used in the Asian context.

3.1 Malaysian Chinese and their Address Forms:

Making up 26% of the entire population, Malaysian Chinese people are descendants of immigrants who came to the country in the 17th and 19th centuries. As family oriented people, they also maintained certain values derived from Confucianism (Lee 1986; Ling 1995) with many using traditional kinship terms in addressing the various lineage among family members (Yang 2007; Kuang 2009). Paternal and maternal relatives are distinguished by different address forms while lineage or seniority is identified through respective generation address forms such as aunt or grandaunt. Each family member is addressed according to birth, gender and seniority in the family although it is also common to address outsiders in similar respectful terms (see Radiah 2007; Kuang 2011). Malaysians generally address older people of their parents' age as "Uncle" or "Aunty" in casual settings but in formal settings or contexts, they usually conform to the respective norms of the people in that institution or organisation. This trait follows the hierarchical norms typically followed by Malaysians. However, there are variations among the three dominant ethnic groups. In short, address forms used within the Chinese community are dependent on seniority, age and gender but it is possible that the impact of education and exposure to foreign values could have influenced how the Chinese address others (Yang 2007).

3.2 Malaysian Malays and Address Forms:

Malaysian Malays make up 64% of the entire population (including aborigines) and they have been described as being the most traditional among the three ethnic groups. Radiah (2007) explains that specific kinship terms are used to distinguish sanguine relationships among themselves although others related by marriage, adoption or fostering may also be addressed similarly. She also clarifies that dialects among certain Malay families may incur variations but the important factors determining the use of Malay kinship terms are dependent on birth order, total number of children in the respective family and the dialect used in the respective family.

Asmah Haji Omar (1992a, 1997) and Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (2000) explain that the Malay community observes hierarchy at home and in the corporate world (Asma and Gallagher 1995).

This phenomenon may be linked to the historical background where sultans were often revered and respected so much that their subjects would never commit treason or turn "*derhaka*" (Syed Husin Ali 2008). Ultimately, it became a trait of the Malays to be known as loyal to their 'race' ("*bangsa*"). Another characteristic of the Malays is their refined manners of being "*berbudi bahasa*" ('gentle manners') an attribute that has been passed down from the sultanate days where people were divided into the "*bangsawan*" ('aristocracy') classes and the "*rakyat*" ('subjects') (Syed Husin Ali 2008). Hence, addressing others appropriately would depict welcome, respect and good upbringing. Although professional terms are used in the workplace even among Malays, it is observed that certain kinship terms such as "*kak*" ('elder sister') or "*dik*" ('younger brother/sister') may also be used in professional settings but this is usually confined to the Malay community.

3.3 Malaysian Indians and Address Forms:

For the purpose of this study, only Tamil-speaking Indians are referred to hence only Tamil address forms will be used in comparison with the Chinese and Malay address forms. Indians in this country constitute about 9% or 1.5 million of the population (Schiffman 1996) with around 85% (Schiffman 1996) of them being Tamil speakers. The use of kinship terms within the Tamil community portrays a strong affinity among members of a family and like the Chinese, all the family members previously lived together in a single house. In traditional Tamil culture, marriage between cross cousins is a common custom i.e. a man can marry the sister's daughters provided there is an allowable age difference between the man and the girl. Consequently, relatives of one's own generation are all classed as parallel-cousins or cross-cousins. Parallel cousins are considered siblings, therefore not potential spouses whereas cross cousins are perceived as potential spouses. Whether a cousin is parallel or cross is determined by looking at the linking relatives, that is, the line of people through whom one traces one's relationship with.

In the public domain where social interactions take place frequently, address forms used by Tamil speaking participants depend on the level of familiarity between the parties concerned. Thirumalai (2002) mentions that the choice and use of address forms and referee terms in encounters in public spheres can be instigated by three factors such as the language used by the addressees, specific nonlinguistic factors closely associated with the appearance and behavior of the addressees, and other factors impinging on the speakers such as speakers' emotions and attitudes. Such a claim has been confirmed by Holmes (1995) who mentions that any form of language use is dependent on the uses, users, topics, contexts and relationships. In the observations made of the Tamil-speaking Indians in the public domain, it appears that in the formal contexts formal address forms like "Sir" or "Mr" were employed.

4. Data Analysis:

Our data were manually noted as we placed ourselves as observers in the respective government agencies. This section will attempt to discuss the choice of address forms used by the addressers (seeking services in these agencies) and we focus on the formality of the forms before comparing them. It will thus look at the various ethnic kinship terms, professional terms, respective names, and specific titles (see David et al. 2007). In this context address forms were categorized in terms of gender only. We identify the service providers as those serving at the respective agencies while the "public" refers to the typical Malaysian visiting these agencies for their respective purposes.

4.1 Address Forms in Government Agencies:

Observations show that most government agencies as specific departments are manned by Malay staff whether at the higher management or ground levels. Only a minority, depending on job positions are Chinese and Indians. Category A, the first collection of data, is presented in Table 1 which encompass the Inland Revenue Departments and Immigration Departments located in the Klang Valley. It was observed that the address forms used in these settings were formal. It was also noted that age was no longer a factor for considering the use of address forms particularly for the non-Malays as it is perceived that the "men or women in uniform" or those in government services ought to be revered as their services were also "government–based" i.e.it involves some kind of protocol.

Table 1. Address forms used at government agencies (Inland revenue and Immigration)

A	Government offices	Chinese addressers	Malay addressers	Indian addressers
1	Addressing Male Officers/Clerks	Sir, *Encik*, *Cik* (for non-Malay)	Sir, *Encik*, *Cik* (for non Malays)	Sir, *Encik*, *Cik* (for non-Malay)
		Encik, Cik (for Malay)	*Encik*, *Cik* (for Malays)	*Aya* (for Indian)
				Encik, *Cik* (for Malay)
2	Addressing Office Boys	Boss (for Indian)	Boss (for Indian)	*Aya* (for Indian)
		Bang, *Dik* (for Malay)	*Bang, Dik* (for Malay)	*Bang, Dik* (for Malay)

3	Addressing Female Officers/clerks,	Madam, Miss *Puan, Cik* (for non-Malay) *Puan, Cik* (for Malay	Madam, Miss, *Puan, Cik* (for non-Malay) *Puan, Cik* (for Malays)	Madam, Miss, *Puan, Cik* (for non-Malay) *Puan*, *Cik* (for Malay)
4	Addressing Lower Level Helpers (tea ladies or cleaners)	*Bang, Kak* *(*for younger Malay*)* *Pak Cik, Mak Cik* *(*for older Malay*)*	*Bang, Kak (for younger Malay)* *Pak Cik* and *Mak Cik* (for older Malay)	*Anni, Akka, Thangachi* (for Indian) *Abang, Kakak* (for younger Malay) *Pak Cik* and *Mak Cik* (for older Malay)

Discussion of address forms used at government agencies (Inland revenue and immigration)

Data in Table 1 show that Malaysians are generally respectful of their addressees in formal settings. In row 1, data showcase that all three ethnic groups use formal terms like "Sir", "*Encik*" and "*Cik*" for Malay as well as non-Malay addressees in the two government agencies. The absence of other ethnic cultural address forms was construed as a Malaysian behaviour which shows respect for the people and the settings. Ultimately, addressers (Malaysian public) accommodated by adopting the address forms of the official language, Malay. When addressing Malay male officers/clerks, Malay cultural address forms like "*Encik*" ('Mr.') and "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") were used. We note that no Chinese address forms were used although the Tamil term "*Aya*" ('father') was used by Indian addressers on Indian officers/clerks. The western address form of "Sir" was also used but only on non-Malay male officers/clerks.

In Row 2, male staff who were on the lower rung of the organisation were addressed by all the three ethnic groups with similar address forms. This action is possibly influenced by the status of the addressees who lacked authority. Where they are concern endearing kinship terms such as "*Bang*" ('elder brother') and "*Dik*" ('younger brother') were used on Malay male addressees. Note that the Chinese and Malays may also use the western term of "Boss" for Indian addressees who were alternatively addressed as "*Aya*" ('father') by Indian addressers. The absence of Chinese address forms in this regard suggests that such an ethnic group is rarely seen in these work environments or in this work position. Data show that the Chinese addressers respect the workplace and this is manifested via the Malay address forms adopted.

In Row 3, female officers were given due respect by all the three ethnic groups. They used mainly Malay address forms of "*Puan*" ('madam') and "*Cik*" ('miss'). It appears that "Madam", "Miss", "*Puan*" and "*Cik*" could be used by Chinese, Indian and Malay addressers to address non- Malay female officers only. Data indicate that the western address form of "Miss" or "Madam" were not addressed to Malay female officers. This shows that all the three ethnic groups of addressers knew their respective roles when it involves one's place in society. This behaviour suggests that the addressers knew what was appropriate, reserving "*Puan*" and "*Cik*" for Malay female officers only, an attempt construed as showing respect and maintaining social harmony.

Row 4 highlights how lower level helpers were addressed and data show that all the three ethnic groups did not deviate very much. The Chinese, Malays and Indians all used "*Bang*" ('elder brother'), "*Kak*" ('elder sister'), "*Pak Cik*" ('uncle') and "*Mak Cik*" ('aunty') respectively, depending on age and gender of the addressers. However, the Indians may add fraternal Tamil terms like "*Ane*", "*Akka*" and "*Thangachi*" all of which meant sister, on Indian female helpers. No Chinese address terms were noted and this suggests that there were no Chinese working at this level of the organization.

It is also apt to mention that Malaysian government agencies are formal settings and these are places where people visit because of a need to do something formal such as applying for a passport, checking on income tax status, applying for birth or death certificates and various other legal matters. These places are generally managed by people who have been vested by the government with the power to provide citizens with certain legal documents. Such services require payments which are paid by the citizens or public seeking these services. Depending on the goodwill of these officers, even though there are rules and regulations, such services can be obtained easily i.e. in one visit or it can be made difficult i.e. in more than one visit. By easy it also means lesser waiting time as procedures in getting things done in government agencies are known to be lengthy and complicated. For many citizens, it will be to their advantage if they can leave the premise with a sense of accomplishment. The waiting issue is a cultural phenomenon in this country. Nonetheless to promote goodwill, many who seek those services will attempt to show respect and deference by addressing the individual officers respectfully and appropriately. In that regard, formal address forms such as "*Encik*" ('sir') or "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") if male and "*Puan*" ('madam') or "*Cik*" ('miss') if female were used on authoritative figures. Kinship terms such as "*Pak Cik*" ('uncle') or "*Mak Cik*" ('aunty'), "*Bang*" ('elder brother') or "*Kak*" ('elder sister') may be applied on less authoritative figures. We note that even though the addresser may have more prestige socially (i.e qualification, financial background, profession) many chose to be modest by lowering their social status (Gu 1990) and in doing so flatters the addressee. These address forms used on the addressees were perceived as empowering as they empower the addressees whose self regard or "face" (Goffman 1955; Watts 2003) is elevated, hence his/her personal value of self in the eye of the public is increased and enhanced. Likewise,

the same usage of address forms is empowering for the addresser who in lowering his/her own social status through modesty and he/she gets to fulfil the mission he/she sets out to do.

Table 2. Address forms used in police stations

B	Police Stations	Chinese addressers	Malay addressers	Indian addressers
1	Addressing Male Officers	Inspector, Sir, *Encik* (for non-Malay)	*Tuan Inspektor*, *Encik* (for non-Malay)	Inspector, Sir, *Encik* (for non-Malay)
		Encik, Tuan, Inspector (for Malay)	*Encik, Tuan, Tok (for Malay),*	*Aya, Thiru* (for Indian)
				Encik, Tuan, Inspector (for Malay)
2	Addressing Female Officers	Inspector/Madam, *Puan, Cik* (for non-Malay)	Inspector, *Puan, Cik, Puan Inspektor* (for Malay, Chinese and Indian)	Inspector, Madam, *Puan, Cik* (for non-Malay)
		Puan, Cik, *Inspektor* (for Malay)		*Thirumathi* (for Indian)
				Puan, Cik, Inspector (for Malay)
3	Addressing Helpers/Cleaners	*Bang, Kak* *(for younger Malay)*	*Bang, Kak* *(for younger Malay)*	*Bang, Kak* *(for younger Malay)*
		Pak Cik, Mak Cik (for older Malay)	*Pak Cik, Mak Cik (for older Malay)*	*Pak Cik, Mak Cik (for older Malay)*

Discussion of address forms used in police stations

Table 2 focuses on settings of police stations. Data show that the address forms used by the three ethnic groups are almost similar. In row 1, all male officers were addressed by formal address forms or terms like "Inspector", "Sir" and "*Encik*" ('sir') by the Chinese and Indian addressers who used these address forms on non-Malay officers only. In contrast, they reserved Malay cultural terms like "*Encik*" ('Mr.'), "*Tuan*" ('master') and "Inspector" for Malay officers. Additionally, Indian addressers also address Indian officers as "*Aya*" ('father') or "*Thiru*"

('Mr.'). This shows that they may revert to their cultural terms when within their own community. Malay addressers used "*Encik*" ('Mr.'), "*Tuan*" ('master') and "*Tok*" (short for "*Datuk*", a title – see David, et al. 2007) for Malay officers, omitting "Inspector" from their utterance. From this practice, it is deduced that Malay addressers unofficially confer titles (such as "*Datuk*") on the Malay officers. Although there may not be sufficient evidence to support our claim, observations indicate that Malaysians tend to do this in banters. In this context, information acquired from interviews of selected participants support our observations. However, "*Datuk*" was reduced to "*Tok*" a term which is understood by most Malaysians as a respectful term. In reality, the "*Datukship*" is a title conferred by the state, sultan or king. When addressed as a "*Datuk*" or "*Tok*" a person's social status is naturally elevated even if only for a moment. In this context, it was observed that the Malay male officers were addressed as "*Tok*". This practice suggests that the addresser was using it as a strategy to empower these officers so as to fulfil his/her personal tasks. However, how is this perceived by the officers has not been verified.

In Row, 2, female officers were addressed in similar address forms by the three ethnic groups. The terms "Inspector", "Madam", "Miss", "*Puan*" ('madam') and "*Cik*" ('miss') were used to address non-Malay female officers. Only the Malay cultural terms of "*Puan*" ('madam') and "*Cik*" ('miss') were used on Malay addressees. It appears that Malay addressers may use western terms on non-Malay female officers but not on their own ethnic group. This implies that they are traditional as well as conventional. The Indian address form of "*Thirumathi*" ('Mrs.') may be used among the Indians only. No Chinese address forms were detected indicating that either Chinese female officers were a rarity or that the Chinese addressers we observed were more accommodating.

In Row 3 where helpers in police stations were involved we note that similar terms were used across the three ethnic groups. Data show that older Malays were addressed with kinship terms like "*Pak Cik*" ('uncle') or "*Mak Cik*" ('aunty') depending on gender whereas younger ones were addressed as "*Bang*" ('elder brother') or "*Kak*" ('elder sister') depending on gender too. From this data, it appears that the use of Malay address forms permeates in such settings.

Table 3. Address forms used in courthouses

C	Court Houses	Chinese addressers	Malay addressers	Indian addressers
1	Addressing Male Judges/Magistrates	*Yang Arif,* *Tuan Hakim,* *Tuan,* Sir (for all races)	*Yang Arif, Tuan Hakim*, *Tuan*, Sir (for all races)	*Yang Arif, Tuan Hakim*, *Tuan*, Sir (for all races)

2	Addressing Female Judges/Magistrates	*Yang Arif, Puan Hakim, Puan,* Madam *(for all races)*	*Yang Arif, Che Puan, Che Puan Hakim, Puan,* Madam (for all races)	*Yang Arif, Puan Hakim, Puan*, Madam (for all races)
3	Addressing Male Registrars	*Encik, Cik,* Mr. with/out name (for non-Malay) *Encik, Cik* with/out names (for Malay)	*Encik, Cik,* Mr. with/out name (for non-Malay) *Encik, Cik* with/out names (for Malay)	*Encik, Cik,* Mr. with/out name (for non-Malay) *Thiru* with/out names (for Indian) *Encik, Cik* with/out names (for Malay
4	Addressing Female Registrars	*Puan, Cik* with/out name, Madam (for non-Malay) *Puan, Cik* with/out names (for Malay)	*Puan, Cik* with/out name, Madam (for non-Malay) *Puan, Cik* with/out names (for Malay)	*Puan, Cik* with/out name, Madam (for non-Malay) *Thirumathi* (for Indian) *Puan, Cik* with/out names (for Malay)
5	Addressing Male Interpreters	*Encik, Cik,* Mr with/out name , Sir (for non-Malay) *Encik, Cik* with/out names (for Malay)	*Encik, Cik, Mr with/out* name (for non-Malay) *Encik, Cik* with/out name (for Malay)	*Encik, Cik,* Mr with/out name , Sir (for non-Malay) *Encik, Cik* with/out names (for Malay)
6	Addressing Female Interpreters	Miss, , *Puan*, Cik with/out name (for non-Malay) *Puan, Cik* with/out name (Malay)	*Puan, Cik,* with/out name (for all races)	Miss, , *Puan, Cik* with/out name (for non-Malay) *Puan, Cik* with/out name (Malay)

7	Addressing Male Lawyers	Mr with name (for non-Malay)	Mr with name (for non-Malay)	Mr with/without name (for non-Malay)
		Encik, *Cik* with/out name (for Malay)	*Encik*, *Cik* with/out name (for Malay)	*Encik*, *Cik* with/out name (for Malay
		Name + profession (for Chinese)	Respective names (depending on relationship – all races)	Respective names (depending on relationship – all races)
		Respective names (depending on relationship – all races)		
8	Addressing Female Lawyers	Madam,	Madam,	Madam,
		Miss with name (for non-Malay)	Miss, *Cik* with name (for non-Malay)	Miss with name (for non-Malay)
		Puan, *Cik* with/out name (for Malay)	*Puan*, *Cik* with/out name (for Malay)	*Puan*, *Cik* with/out name (for Malay)
		Respective names (depending on relationship – all races)	Respective names (depending on relationship – all races)	Respective names (depending on relationship – all races)

Discussion of address forms used in courthouses

Table 3 shows courthouses which are not only formal but also somber settings. In that regard, the use of address forms may differ slightly from government agencies and police stations. It has to be emphasized here that Malay is now the language of courts so address forms inevitably accommodate Malay terms. Not everyone has the opportunity or reason to be in the courts but those who do need to know how to behave. Appeal courts, high courts and low courts are settings with powerful ambience for they are places where the law sits and gives judgments through the "agents" via judges and magistrates. They are also connected to the police and the law where people are given fines, jail sentences, or even death sentences. It is also noted that non-Malay staff are more commonly seen in court houses as lawyers and legal assistants may be of various ethnic groups.

Data indicate that in court houses address forms were set, rigid and also limited. Row 1 indicates that male judges/magistrates were addressed as "*Yang Arif*" ('Wise one'), "*Tuan Hakim*" ('Master Judge'), "*Tuan*" ('Master') and "Sir". In this setting, all the three ethnic groups of addressers do not differ from each other. All the stakeholders appear to use: "*Yang Arif*", "*Tuan Hakim*" and "*Tuan*" similarly. We note that "Sir" may only be used by older generation lawyers

who were mostly trained in Britain and on judges who may be senior in their practices as they too were trained overseas.

Row 2 highlights female judges/magistrates being addressed in female versions although "*Yang Arif*" is a term that is clearly not gender-bias. While the stakeholders apply "*Yang Arif*", "*Puan Hakim*", "*Puan*" or even "Madam", it was noted that the Malay addressers may also use "*Che Puan Hakim*" ('Madam Judge') and "*Che Puan*" ('Madam'). We observed that Malay addressees do not use "Madam" for Malay judges/magistrates whereas both the Chinese and Indians may use "Madam" to address Malay and non-Malay female judges/magistrates.

Row 3 focuses on how male registrars were addressed. Although many registrars were trained to manage court cases with some having legal qualifications, they were not addressed like the judges/magistrates but like ordinary professionals via address forms such as "Mr.", "*Encik*" ('Mr.') or "*Cik*" (short for '*Encik*'). We note that few females are in this position, hence there was no female address forms located. It is noticed that Chinese addressers may use these formal terms with or without the registrar's personal name for Malay and non-Malay male registrars. Likewise the Indians also do the same in addition to using the address form of "*Thiru*" ('Mr.') for Indian male registrars. This occurrence indicates that the Chinese used Malay and western address forms as a form of respect while the Indians showed respect by using their cultural terms, a clue displaying traditional ways. No Chinese address forms were detected in our context and this could be contributed by our limited study which only focused on settings in the Klang Valley. It was further noted that Malay addressers may use "Mr", "*Encik*" ('Mr.') and "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") for non-Malay male registrars but they would omit the use of "Mr." for Malay male registrars suggesting that they are traditional and conventional. It is possible that using "Mr." on Malay addressees is something not acceptable between Malays.

In Row 4, female registrars were similarly addressed in the female version of "*Puan*" ('madam'), "*Cik*" ('miss') and "Madam". Our observations indicate that most were matured women hence no address forms of "Miss" was used as it may carry a negative connotation of being inexperienced. It was also noted that the Chinese and Indian addressers used all three address forms mentioned with or without names for non-Malay registrars. However, "Madam" was omitted when addressing Malay female registrars. Likewise, Malay addressers used all three address forms with or without names on non-Malay female registrars but when approaching Malay female registrars, "Madam" was omitted. Such an occurrence suggests that the practice could be a habit acquired through traditional and conventional upbringing. It is also possible that all three ethnic groups observed the routine of Malay politeness by accommodating to the Malay cultural address forms, thereby maintaining decorum in formal settings.

Row 5 illustrates how interpreters were addressed. Data show that non-Malay male interpreters were addressed by the Chinese and Indians as "*Encik*" ('Mr.'), "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") and

"Mr." with or without their respective names. Additionally, "Sir" is also used. Data indicate that Malay interpreters were addressed only as "*Encik*" ('Mr.') or "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") whether with or without their names. On the other hand, Malay addressers may use "*Encik*" ('Mr.') "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") and "Mr." on non-Malay interpreters but "Mr." was omitted when addressing Malay interpreters, suggesting that they abide by cultural norms. No Chinese or Indian address form was detected.

Row 6 suggests that the three ethnic groups share a similarity. Female non-Malay interpreters were addressed as "Miss", "*Puan*" ('madam') or "*Cik*" ('miss') with or without their names. Malay interpreters were however addressed formally as "*Puan*" ('madam') and "*Cik*" ('miss') only. The occurrence suggests that all three ethnic groups adhere to the Malay cultural norm with "Miss" only used on non-Malays. Similarly, no Chinese or Indian address form was detected.

Row 7 shows that male lawyers were addressed as "Mr" with names if the individual was non-Malay. If the individual was a Malay he would be addressed as "*Encik*" ('Mr.') or "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") with or without names by all three ethnic groups. However, our observations indicate that some Chinese addressers may address a Chinese lawyer by his profession such as "*Zhang Li Sze*" or "*张律师*" if his surname is "*Zhang/张*" . Note that this address form is not gender bias. If the two parties' rapport was close, some lawyers, irrespective of ethnic background, may be addressed by their respective names regardless of addressers being Chinese, Malay or Indian. It was noted that the Indians addressed all non-Malay lawyers as "Mr." with names but they addressed the Malay lawyers as "*Encik*" ('Mr.') or "*Cik*" (short for "*Encik*") either with or without their names. No Indian cultural term was detected in this context. Malays addressed non-Malay male lawyers as "Mr." with names but Malay lawyers were addressed specifically as "*Encik*" or "*Cik*" with or without their names. Nonetheless, depending on rapport, respective names may be used across the three ethnic groups. This line of usage suggests that lawyers are not as "regal" as judges/magistrates possibly because their services are different from the former.

In the case of female lawyers we observed that all the three ethnic groups may address non-Malay female lawyers as "Madam", "Miss" or "*Cik*" ('miss') with or without their names but they would only address Malay female lawyers either as "*Puan*" ('madam') or "*Cik*" ('miss') whether with or without respective names. Among the closer ones, we noted that respective names may also be used on its own. Among the Chinese it was noted that a female Chinese lawyer may be addressed by her profession by Chinese addressers as in "*张律师*' or 'Lawyer *Zhang*' if her surname is "*Zhang/张*" . Note that this is not gender-bias. We noted that no Indian address form was detected and we attribute this to our limited study.

5. Conclusion:

The data analysed here are not comprehensive but they highlight the way Malaysians address each other in formal settings, in this case in government agencies. From the analysis it appears that Malaysians tend to adhere to certain traditional norms of addressing others such as using kinship terms even for outsiders.

In formal settings, all three ethnic groups conform by employing similar address forms. Data indicate that the address forms employed had some connection to power. For instance, when an individual enters the immigration office, inland revenue, police station, or court, it is with the hope of accomplishing some kind of formal service. The immigration officers, inland revenue officers, police officers and court personnels were perceived to be agents of the government who have been vested with certain powers to offer specialised services to citizens and as such they have the power to determine that the services required by the ordinary citizen can be rendered in the best way possible. Citizens are ordinary people who may or may not have social status, financial means or professional titles. Some peculiar services required in places such as immigration departments, inland revenue departments, police stations and courts are not at their pleasure even though they need to be paid for. In addition, services in such venues are often time-consuming and we conclude from our data that Malaysians opt to use the relevant and appropriate address forms so as to ensure that their tasks could be accomplished without any undue delay. One way of doing so was to ensure that high regard for the service provider is maintained via the first meeting and this, it appears, could be conveyed through the more formal but polite address forms. In other words, distance is maintained. Future studies may want to focus on what the service providers in these four government agencies think when these address forms were used on them so that there is some congruity in what we have analysed here.

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