

THE ACQUISITION OF PRAGMATIC DIMENSION IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF MALAY: AN EARLY REVIEW

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Abstract

This study is focussing on the acquisition of pragmatic structure in the first language parameter, particularly in Malay. The pragmatic structure assumes that a speaker innately has a choice for Face Threatening Acts (FTA's) in his construction of sentences for a particular conversation. The structure of FTA's are Bald On-Record (BOR), Negative Politeness (NP), Positive Politeness (PP), and Off-Record-indirect strategy (OR). From the pragmatic perspective, each of the FTA's consists of a certain purpose. To look at the competency of pragmatic acquisition structure, subjects of this study were exposed through classroom interactions based on three learning outcomes. For each learning outcome, subjects were given six situations which totalling to 18 situations for all the three learning outcomes mentioned. Each situations demands subjects to discuss and interact using the FTA's that they have already acquired. The study shows that in regard of the acquisition of FTA's among subjects, BOR acquired the highest score, followed by PP, NP, and OR in all the six situations undergone by the subjects.

Keywords: *Face Threatening Acts (FTA's), language acquisition, pragmatic*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada akuisisi struktur pragmatis dalam parameter bahasa pertama, terutama dalam bahasa Melayu. Struktur pragmatis berasumsi bahwa seorang penutur memiliki pilihan untuk Tindak Tutur yang Mengancam Muka (Face Threatening Acts/FTA) dalam konstruksi kalimatnya dalam percakapan tertentu. Struktur FTA adalah Bald On-Record (BOR), Kesopanan Negatif (Negative Politeness/NP), Kesopanan Positif (Positive Politeness/PP), dan strategi tidak langsung Off-Record (OR). Dari perspektif pragmatis, masing-masing dari FTA mengandung tujuan tertentu. Untuk melihat kompetensi akuisisi struktur pragmatis, subyek penelitian ini mengikuti interaksi kelas berdasarkan tiga hasil belajar. Untuk setiap hasil belajar, mata pelajaran diberi enam situasi sebanyak 18 situasi untuk ketiga hasil belajar yang disebutkan. Setiap situasi menuntut subyek untuk membahas dan berinteraksi menggunakan FTA yang telah mereka peroleh. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dalam hal akuisisi FTA, BOR memperoleh skor tertinggi, diikuti oleh PP, NP, dan OR dalam semua enam situasi yang dialami oleh subyek.

Kata kunci: *Tindak tutur mengancam muka (FTA), penguasaan bahasa, pragmatis*

INTRODUCTION

*Sebab pulut santan binasa
Sebab mulut badan merasa*

Because of glutinous rice, the coconut milk is destroyed
Because the mouth says something not nice, the body is devastated.

The teaching of Malay language in Malaysia is one of the subjects which aim to bridge good relationship between races in Malaysia. The language is taught in such a way that every student will engage in activities that will enable them to use language in the good context plus with appropriate language register. This has been a good practice especially after the post independent era in the early '70s where Malay language has been adopted as the language for unity. Among the curriculum values which is embedded in the teaching of Malay is the element of FTA's which is known as politeness.

Children's production and comprehension of polite forms of language has received considerable research attention (Robert, Sanson, and Wales; 2004 cf review by Snow, Perlman, Gleason & Hooshyar, 1990; see also: Baroni & Axia, 1989; Bates, 1983; Ervin-Tripp, 1976, 1977). The development of requesting is an area of politeness that has received this attention, because any speech act that has clear interactive consequences may be seen as a request for a response of a certain kind (Robert, Sanson, and Wales; 2004 cf Labov & Fanshel, 1977: 93). Thus, the handling of requests is a key aspect of conversational competence, particularly in a developmental context where the child speaker is frequently at a power disadvantage compared with the hearer. Further, according to Labov & Fanshel (1977), many of these requests are employed to accomplish other purposes, which strongly affect the social and

emotional relations of the persons involved. Thus, requests have been identified as having a significant social-interactive role.

According to Harris, Grainger, and Mullany, (2006; cf Meier, 1998: 216), work in applied linguistics and pragmatics has often attempted to identify a speech act set of semantic formulas of identifying a speech-act specific 'sociopragmatic set' of social and contextual factors (cf Olshtain, 1989; Olshtain and Weinbach, 1987). Citing Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Harris, Grainger, and Mullany, (2006) adopts a face-needs perspective, seeing the apology as a pragmatics basically a negative politeness strategy which is aimed mainly at the redress of Face Threatening Acts (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Goffman, 1971; Holmes, 1995, 1998).

According to Zhu (2012), pragmatic competence is roughly divided into two components: pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatics competence. According to Zhu (2012, cf Leech, 1983), pragmatics is composed of pragmalinguistic (the more linguistic end of pragmatics) and sociopragmatics (the sociological interface of pragmatics). Therefore, pragmalinguistic competence refers to speakers' ability to infer the communicative intention of purpose of an utterance beyond the most literal meaning. On the other hand, sociopragmatics competence refers to speakers' knowledge of adapting speech act strategies to the situational or socio-cultural variables in a communicative event.

Politeness as a form of pragmatics, is a phenomenon that exists only between social actors—those who are presumed to have intentionality and goals and the ability to give or take offense (Robert, Sanson, and Wales, 2004;cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Dennett, 1989). All actions have the potential to threaten "face" or, roughly, the "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself" (cf Goffman, 1967, p. 5).

If one takes the action “baldly”—that is, without any form of mitigation, apology, or “redress”—then one may be implying that he or she has the right or power to make that intrusion. What is typically regarded as politeness behaviors—the use of please, thank you, apologies, honorifics, and so on—are “redressive acts” that are used to offset the face threat inherent in interaction whenever one does not wish to convey such a message.

According to Micheal (2009; citing Brown and Levinson, 1978) if a face-threatening act needs to take place, there are four possibilities:

1. To perform the face-threatening act *on record* without any redress: the speaker expresses his/her utterance baldly, with little or no concern for face.
2. To perform the face-threatening act using *positive politeness* strategies: with redress directed to the addressee's positive face, which appeals to the hearer's desire to be liked and be approved of.
3. To perform the face-threatening act using *negative politeness* strategies: with redress towards the hearer's negative face which appeals to the hearer's desire not to be impeded or to be left free to act as he/she chooses.
4. To perform the face-threatening act using *off record* strategies: the speaker expresses his/her utterance ambiguously (formulated as a hint, for instance), and its interpretation is left to the addressee. Such strategy is used when the risk of loss of face is great but not too great as absolutely to prohibit the face threatening act.

The research questions for this study are as follows;

R1: What is the pattern of FTA's among the Malay speaker 7-12 years old?

R2: Is there any significant different in FTA's between race and gender of respondents?

R3: What is the utmost category of FTA's among sample?

METHOD

This study adopts the following methodologies as described below. This is a preliminary study to attempt to demonstrate how the element of FTA's could be inculcated among the samples through Malay Language learning outcome. This section constitutes of design, samples, data collection, and data analysis.

A questionnaire is design to get the kind of FTA's the sample adopt when facing a certain situation. The questionnaire is constructed based on the learning outcome 1.1 to 1.6 as stated in the Malay Language Syllabus for Primary School. Each of the learning outcomes become a construct and under each construct, three situations were created with four types of politeness response that they could choose from; which are Bold On-Record (BOR), Positive Politeness (PP), Negative Politeness (NP), and Off-Record (OR).

Samples are given a FTA's questionnaire that contains situations which they have to answer. Construct and item construct were constructed based on the learning outcome 1.1 Engaging in conversation regarding everyday life matters by using suitable words, phrases, sentences, pronunciation, intonation and pitch, 1.2 Question and answers regarding a certain matter in a decent way, 1.3 To give and to understand instruction as well as order regarding a certain matter, 1.4 To express needs in a frank and convincing manner with an appropriate intonation and paralinguistic for the purpose of strengthening the demand, 1.5 To give clarifications about something in a explicit and implicit way, and 1.6 To express a certain desire when doing transaction in everyday business for getting merchandise and service. All these learning outcomes

had been taught by teachers during the term semesters. For the purpose of this research, teachers were asked to carry out their teaching with these 6 learning outcomes for 8 weeks.

During the 8 weeks of teaching, students were given situations that were related to the learning outcomes. Samples were required to get involved in a conversation based on the situation given. They were encouraged to talk freely and in this regard, focuses were given to the elements of FTA's that they are using and their prosody in the conversation.

Teachers were encourage to use various types of learning stimulus such as literature materials, videos, audios, pictures, real situations, etc..In each of the lesson, students were given the space by teacher to use their own way of saying things based on the situations given. At the end of the lesson, teacher summed up of what they have learnt and touched on the way students use their sentences to describe situations given to them.

At the end of the duration, samples were given questionnaires based on the situations that they have experienced for 8 weeks. Samples are required to answer all the items for all constructs. They have to read the situation of the items and have to choose the manner that they think they want give their responses according to the situation given. Samples have to choose only one choice by making a circle to the number that they have chosen.

Samples for this study are primary school students' age group of 10-12 years old. They are students from the National Type School. The number of students taken as sample for this study is 40. They come from various backgrounds and for the purpose of this study, their background details such as gender, language spoken at home, race, age and year of study are taken as the background variables.

Samples were given questionnaires. Samples were required to give one respond to the related items. The answer from the sample is then coded into Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Each answer will noted as '1' and the other options will be given '0'.

Statistical test Frequency will be carried out to see the frequencies of Face Threatening Acts (FTA's). Other than that, statistical test descriptive rankings will be carried out to see which FTA's is the most dominant among the samples. Anova test will be carried out to if there is any significant different between samples of different language spoken at home, age, and year of study. Last but not least, correlation test will also to carry out to see the direction of relation between these FTA's.

Samples conversation will be transcribed and then analyze on the elements of FTA's present in their conversation. At the same time, this study also analyzes the usage of lexical item and prosody that influence politeness. These data of conversation will be coded into FTA's before coded into spss. The prosody data will also be analyzed by using SPSS to see the pattern of their intonation in politeness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned above, respondents were given questionnaire seeking their opinion on the proper way that they think best to say something based on situations. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A dealt with the background of the respondents and section B looked into the option that the respondents think best to say something based on a given settings. Findings for the research are as described below.

Section A: Respondents' background

Respondents' background looked into for this study is their school location, gender, age, language spoken at home, and race.

Respondent's Location

All the respondents were from Kuala Lumpur. They were students from National Type School which is fully sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

Table 1: Respondent's Location

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid KL	35	100.0	100.0	100.0

These respondents were following the National Malay Language Curriculum and Malay Language is taught to them 6 times a

week with each session lasting thirty minutes.

Table 2: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	10	28.6	28.6	28.6
Female	25	71.4	71.4	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

10 or 28.6% of the respondents were male and 25 or 71.4% of them were female. This can be observed from the table above.

Table 3: Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 12 years old	35	100.0	100.0	100.0

All the respondents were 12 years old. They were in Year Six of Primary School.

Table 4: Language spoken at home

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Malay	34	97.1	97.1	97.1
Others	1	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

34 or 97.1% of the respondents speak Malay at home whereas only one or 2.9%

respondent speaks other languages at home.

Table 5: Race

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Malay	33	94.3	94.3	94.3
	Indian	1	2.9	2.9	97.1
	Others	1	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

33 of the respondents or 94.3% of them are Malay, 1 or 2.9% is Indian and 1 or 2.9 of them are other races. Crosstabs statistics

regarding the language spoken at home and race is shown in the table below.

Table 6: Cross tabulation: Language spoken at home * race

		Race			Total
		Malay	Indian	Others	
Language spoken at home	Malay	32	1	1	34
	Others	1	0	0	1
Total		33	1	1	35

Out of 35 respondents, 32 of them are Malays and they speak Malay at home, 1 of the respondent is Indian and speaks Malay at home, and 1 of the respondent is of other ethnic does not speak Malay at home.

Section B: Respondent's response to Questionnaire

In order to get the view of respondents regarding the type of FTA's that they undertake, item were constructed based on the learning outcomes of the Primary Malay Language Syllabus. From each construct, three items were formulated in order to answer research questions.

Constructs 1: Engaging in conversation regarding everyday life matters by using suitable words, phrases, sentences, pronunciation, intonation and pitch.

Under construct 1, three situations were given to the respondents. For the first situation, respondents were asked to choose how they would say to their friends about their favourite TV programme, situation 2 requires them to choose on how to tell people about their parents' work and finally for the third situation, they were require to choose the way they would say when they want to request for something.

Table 7: FTA’s Learning Outcome 1.1

1.1 Engaging in conversation regarding everyday life matters by using suitable words, phrases, sentences, pronunciation, intonation and pitch.					
	b1.1.1 Situation 1: How would u say when you want to tell your friend your favourite TV show?	b1.1.2 Situation 2: In which way would you tell people about your parents’ work?	b1.1.3 Situation 3: In which way would you say when requesting for something?	Total	Percentage
BOR	1	9	13	23	22
PP	20	15	2	37	35
NP	12	7	19	38	36
OR	2	4	1	7	7

For the three situations, 22% percent of the answer were BOR, 35% were PP, 36% were NP, and 7% were OR. The majority of the responses were on PP and NP.

Constructs 2: Question and answers regarding a certain matter in a decent way.

Construct 2 is looking into the manner which respondents were to choose if they were to be asked by others regarding some matters and in what way they would answer the questions framed unto them. In this matter, respondents were reminded to

answer the questions given to them in the most decent way.

Under construct 2, three situations were given to respondents. The first situation was how would they frame their question when they want to know someone’s name, situation 2 was how the respondents would ask their friend regarding the number of siblings that their colleagues have, and the final situation was how would respondents described their favourite game. As did mention above, samples were given during the teaching and learning session situation that was similar to the question framework that they have to choose.

Table 8: FTA’s Learning Outcome 1.2

1.2 Question and answers regarding a certain matter in a decent way.		
b1.2.1 Situation 1: In which way would you say to ask for somebody’s name?	b1.2.2 Situation 2: In which way would you ask your friend about the number of siblings that they have.	b1.2.3. Situation 3: In which way would you describe your favourite game?

	Count	Count	Count	Total	Percentage
BOR	4	5	16	25	24
PP	1	25	16	42	40
NP	15	3	2	20	19
OR	15	2	1	18	17

From the table above, for all the three situations; 24% of samples choose BOR, 40% which is the majority choose PP, 19% choose NP and 17% choose OR.

Constructs 3: To give and to understand instruction as well as order regarding a certain matter.

For construct 3, samples were given situations where they have to understand situations as well as order regarding a

certain matter. These situations were instructions about a certain process, directions, manual etc. In such situations, samples were required to interact based on the stimulus given. They were engaged in simulations, short drama act out, conversations, and normal communication. At the end of the 8 weeks duration, they were required to give their responds based on the questionnaires given.

Table 9: FTA's Learning Outcome 1.3

1.3 To give and to understand instruction as well as order regarding a certain matter					
	Count	Count	Count	Total	Percentage
BOR	11	2	4	17	16
PP	13	27	10	50	48
NP	9	2	17	28	27
OR	2	4	4	10	9

From table above, 16% of the respondents choose BOR as their means of conversation, 48% choose PP, 27% choose NP, and 9% choose OR. Going into the details of the situations b1.3.1 and b 1.3.2, the majority of the respondent choose PP followed by NP but not situation b 1.3.2 where NP dominates other FTA's with 17 choose NP, 10 choose pp, 4 choose each for BOR and OR. For situation b 1.3.3, for BOR; take me that book, for pp; please take that book for me, NP; there should be no problem for you

to take that book for me, and for or; take that book.

Constructs 4: To express needs in a frank and convincing manner with an appropriate intonation and paralinguistic for the purpose of strengthening the demand.

Construct 4 is looking into how samples would react when they are required to express their needs in a frank and convincing manner to strengthen their

demand. In this regard, samples were given three situations (i) how would they say to their friends when they want to borrow books, (ii) the way they would say when

they need their friends to clear rubbish, and (iii) the way they would adopt when they need someone to call friend for them. The findings were as follows.

Table 10: FTA’s Learning Outcome 1.4

1.4 To express needs in a frank and convincing manner with an appropriate intonation and paralinguistic for the purpose of strengthening the demand.					
	b1.4.1 Situation 1: How would you say to your friend when you want to borrow his/her books?	b1.4.2 Situation 2: You need your friend to clear the rubbish. What’s the best way to say it to your friend?	b1.4.3 Situation 3: Which way do you feel is the appropriate way to ask somebody to call your friend?		
	Count	Count	Count	Total	Percentage
BOR	4	7	9	20	19
PP	11	17	18	46	44
NP	19	10	6	35	33
OR	1	1	2	4	4

In the three situations, 19% of the respondents choose BOR, 44% of the respondents choose PP, 33% choose NP, and 4% of the respondents choose or. For item b1.4.1, the majority of samples choose NP, for item b1,4,2, the majority of respondents choose PP, and for item b1.4.3, again the majority of the samples choose PP.

Constructs 5: To give clarifications about something in an explicit and implicit way.

For construct 5, respondents were asked the way they would choose when they

want to give clarifications about something in an explicit and implicit way. Three situations were given. The first was a situation whereby they need to clarify who is right and who is wrong, the second was the situation whereby they have tell their friends about someone doing something and finally, they were asked to choose the way when they could not come o school. As explained before, these three situations were carried out during the teaching of Malay language.

Table 11: FTA's Learning Outcome 1.5

1.5 To give clarifications about something in an explicit and implicit way.						
	b1.5.1 Situation 1: You need to clarify who is right who is wrong. How would you say it?	b1.5.2 Situation 2: You need to tell your friend about someone doing something. In your opinion, what is the best way to say it?	b1.5.3 Situation 3: You could not come to school. How would you explain to your teacher about it?			
	Count	Count	Count	Total	Percentage	
BOR	2	18	2	22	21	
PP	11	4	32	47	45	
NP	20	10	1	31	30	
OR	2	3		5	4	

21% of the samples choose BOR, 45% choose pp. 30% choose NP, and 4% choose OR. Looking into the details of the construct, NP dominates item b 1.5.1 followed by PP, BOR dominates item b 1.5.2 followed by BOR, and PP dominates item b 1.5.3. This finding shows a mix up of responses from the respondents.

Constructs 6: To express a certain desire when doing transaction in everyday business for getting merchandise and service.

The last construct required the respondents to choose the way for them to express their certain desires when doing transaction in getting merchandise and service. For this construct, respondents experienced three different situations. The first situation require them to choose the way they want to say when they need to get counter service, whereas the second situations required them to choose the way when they have to bargain, and finally they were asked they way that they want to choose when they have to exchange the item they have bought.

Table 12: FTA's Learning Outcome 1.6

1.6 To express a certain desire when doing transaction in everyday business for getting merchandise and service.						
	b1.6.1 Situation 1: You need the counter service to speed up their work. How?	b1.6.2 Situation 2: You would like to bargain in a shop. How would you say it?	b1.6.3 Situation 3: In a shop, you would like to exchange the item that you have bought. How would you say it?			

	Count	Count	Count	Total	Percentage
BOR	8	12	16	36	34
PP	17	4	6	27	26
NP	8	8	12	28	27
OR	2	11	1	14	13

34% of the samples choose BOR, 26% choose pp, 27% choose NP, and 13% choose OR. For the first situation, the majority of the respondent choose PP, followed by BOR as well as NP. For the second situations, 12

choose BOR followed by OR, and for the third situation, 16 choose BOR and 12 choose NP.

Answering Research Question

Table 13: R1: What is the pattern of FTA’s among the Malay speaker 7-12 years old?

FTA	Situation 1 (%)	Situation 2 (%)	Situation 3 (%)	Situation 4 (%)	Situation 5 (%)	Situation 6 (%)
BOR	22	24	16	19	21	34
PP	35	40	48	44	45	26
NP	36	19	27	33	30	27
OR	7	17	9	4	4	13

Based on the findings, the pattern of politeness among the respondents is illustrated as in table above. For situation 1, NP dominates the score, followed by PP, followed by BOR and OR. For situation 2, PP dominates the score, followed by NP, followed by BOR, and followed by OR. For situation 3, PP dominates the score, followed by NP, followed by BOR, and

lastly followed by OR. For situation 4, PP still dominates the score, followed by NP, followed by BOR and followed by OR. For situation 5, again, PP dominates the score, followed by NP, followed BOR, and followed by OR. Lastly for situation 6, BOR dominates the score, followed by NP, followed by PP, and lastly followed by OR.

Table 14: R2: Is there any significant different in FTA’s between race and gender of respondents?

Significance different between genders

	F	Sig
b1.1.1	.021	.886
b1.1.2	.003	.957
b1.1.3	.671	.419
b1.2.1	.559	.460
b1.2.2	1.424	.241
b1.2.3.	1.686	.203
b1.3.1	.858	.361
b1.3.2	1.160	.289
b1.3.3	.212	.648
b1.4.1.	.332	.569

	F	Sig
b1.4.2	2.775	.105
b1.4.3	.139	.711
b1.5.1	1.081	.306
b1.5.2	.592	.447
b1.5.3	10.040	.003
b1.6.1	.162	.690
b1.6.2	4.858	.035
b1.6.3	1.286	.265

Except for item b1.5.3 “You could not come to school. How would you explain to your teacher about it?” and b1.6.2 “You would

like to bargain in a shop. How would you say it?”, the rest of the items do not show any significant difference between gender.

Table 15: Gender * b1.5.3 Situation 3: You could not come to school. How would you explain to your teacher about it?

		BOR	PP	NP	Total
Gender	Male	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	0	10
	Female	0	24 (95%)	1	25
Total		2	32	1	35

As we can see, the different is significant as illustrated in table above. There is a great different in responses between genders when

they were asked about the situation. The female dominated the FTA’s with 24 (95%) giving their respond in the PP manner.

Table 16: Gender * b1.6.2 Situation 2: You would like to bargain in a shop. How would you say it?

		BOR	PP	NP	OR	Total
Gender	Male	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	10
	Female	11 (44)	2 (8%)	5 (20%)	7 (28%)	25
Total		12	4	8	11	35

Table 17: R3: What is the utmost category of FTA's among sample?

FTA	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 4	Situation 5	Situation 6	Jumlah
BOR	23	25	17	20	22	36	148
PP	37	42	50	46	47	27	249
NP	38	20	28	35	31	28	180
OR	7	18	10	4	5	14	58

The utmost category demonstrated by the respondents through all the questionnaire given to them is shown as in table above. PP is the highest score, followed by NP, followed by BOR, and lastly, OR.

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CONCLUSION

Language is a communicational system which with it embedded code that represents and clarifies idea about the surrounding. The surrounding is made up of rules and forms a kind of structure's agreement and parameters that has taken place (Bloom and Lahey, 1978: 8). How sound is combined to form word, and words to form sentences to illustrate ideas is being determined by the system that surrounding a language (ibid). Bauman and Sherzer (1974: 7) explained that language is an agreement that is shared among the language speaker. Speaker in such language community is bounded by norms, behaviour, principle undertaken, and the value of the society which is responsible to shape up the face of a language. In the facet of Malay Language teaching, the elements of FTA's is derives from the Malay culture in regards of pronunciation, intonation, and the choice of words.

In Malaysia, the teaching of Malay Language either in the primary (7-12 years old) or secondary (13-17 years old), and form six (18-19 years old) schools; besides

inculcating the 5P Principe which are combination , absorption, evaluation, remedial, and enrichment also stressing on values which encompass of politeness or FTA's. The importance of value as cited by Saedah Siraj (2008: 5) is as part of the curriculum to maintain the parenialism in the society. In another words, every lesson of Malay Language, should touch on the matter by teachers indirectly through activities conducted in the classroom.

Pukul anak sindir menantu

Beating a child, to insinuate in-laws

Kecil tapak tangan nyiru saya tadahkan

Little palms spread out with a sieve

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