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Translating Politeness: Mapping the Characterisation of Klara the AI from “Klara and the Sun” and its Indonesian Translation

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ABSTRACT

Politeness strategies are crucial in literary characterisation, yet their role in the characterisation of AI characters remains underexplored—especially considering the rising concerns about the dangers of AI. Thus, given the speculative nature of concerns surrounding AI’s potential dangers, often situated in a distant future, this research examines a fictional narrative set in a similarly futuristic context. Based on Brown and Levinson’s framework on politeness strategies, this study investigates how politeness strategies shape an AI character and whether these features are retained in its translation. Using the Pragmatics approach, this qualitative research analyses “*Klara and the Sun*” by Kazuo Ishiguro and its Indonesian translation, “*Klara dan Sang Matahari*” by Ariyantri E. Tarman. It examines Klara, a human-shaped AI, through her politeness strategies that construct her identity. The study also evaluates translation techniques and quality to determine whether her characterisation remains intact in the Indonesian translation. Data were collected via document analysis and purposive sampling, then validated through Focus Group Discussion. Findings reveal that Klara’s characterisation employs all of Brown and Levinson’s politeness strategies, which are effectively preserved in the Indonesian translation according to the high quality of the translations analysed. The study highlights how Klara’s use of politeness showcases her consistent kindness alongside growing confidence and awareness in human interaction, which adds depth to her character. By bridging pragmatics and translation studies, the research offers fresh insights into how politeness strategies shape AI characterisation and how such nuanced traits can be successfully conveyed through translation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Characterizations; Politeness Strategies; Translation Techniques; Quality of Translation

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1. Introduction

At present, artificial intelligence (AI) represents the pinnacle of technological advancement. AI applications permeate daily life, from search engines like *Google* to writing assistants such as *ChatGPT* and financial forecasting tools like *SimInvest*. Despite its benefits, AI's rapid evolution has sparked a number of concerns about its potential adverse effects. Notably, in May 2023, approximately 11,500 American screenwriters and playwrights protested AI's role in screenplay creation. Similarly, in April 2023, Eliezer Yudkowsky, head researcher at the *Machine Intelligence Research Institute*, led an international seminar advocating for a global halt in AI development. In literary works such as novels and movies, opposition to artificial intelligence (AI) has long been discussed. Oscar-winning director James Cameron conveyed his concerns about AI through *Terminator* (1984), while bestselling author Dan Brown explored similar themes in *Origin* (2017). Both works depict the catastrophic consequences of hyper-intelligent systems spiralling out of control.

The call for AI regulation gained momentum following cases of AI-driven misinformation^[1]. *NewsGuard*, a technology platform monitoring false information, found that 80 out of 100 AI-generated articles using *ChatGPT* contained misleading content. Consequently, there are also experts who advocate for AI regulations not as a means to stifle creativity but to maximize its benefits while minimizing its risks. While these experts may not share such apocalyptic views on the dangers of AI, they agree that the unregulated use of AI poses significant risks in terms of misinformation. Ultimately, it is agreed that it is not AI itself that poses a fatal threat, but rather the individuals who exploit it irresponsibly—just as any powerful technology can be weaponized for harm.

Japanese-born British writer Kazuo Ishiguro has his own perspective on artificial intelligence (AI). It is reflected in his novel *"Klara and the Sun"*, which aligns with expert opinions emphasizing that AI itself is not inherently harmful—rather, it is human intervention that determines its ethical implications. As a Nobel Prize-winning author, Ishiguro conveys through his protagonist, Klara the AI, that advanced technologies such as AI are designed to assist human life and only become dangerous when misused. In the novel, he presents a nuanced portrayal of AI-human relationships,

illustrating that AI can serve as a loyal and compassionate companion rather than a threat. Thus, *"Klara and the Sun"* was selected for this study due to its contemporary relevance, particularly in the discourse surrounding AI ethics at the time of writing.

Published in 2021, *"Klara and the Sun"* has received a number of critical accolades, including nominations for the 2021 *Booker Prize* and the 2022 *Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction*. It was also featured in *The Washington Post's* 10 Best Books of 2021 and *The Times's* 33 Best Books of 2021. The novel's timely exploration of AI's societal implications, coupled with the limited scholarly attention to its themes, makes it an ideal subject for this research. By conducting a linguistic and literary analysis of Ishiguro's narrative, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on AI's role in society. Notably, the dystopian concerns surrounding AI's potential dangers are often projected onto a distant future, rendering them speculative and hypothetical. Therefore, in this context, *"Klara and the Sun"* offers a thought-provoking framework for exploring the complexities of human-AI relationships, the importance of responsible technological development, and the agency-driven ethical implications of AI.

"Klara and the Sun" narrates the story of Klara, a humanoid robot equipped with sophisticated AI, designed as a companion for children and teenagers—referred to as *Artificial Friends* (AF) or *Teman Artifisial* (TA) in the Indonesian translation. Acting as both the protagonist and narrator, Klara recounts her experiences accompanying Josie, a 14-year-old girl suffering from a mysterious illness. Ishiguro carefully constructs Klara's role not as a mere caregiver or subordinate of Josie, but also as a friend, albeit in an asymmetrical relationship. The novel subtly portrays Klara's lower social standing through her speech patterns, particularly in conversations with human characters, which reveal her politeness strategies and reinforce her role as an AF.

This study examines Klara's characterization through the analysis of her politeness strategies by employing the Pragmatic Approach. Specifically, it applies Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which is rooted in the concept of 'face'—the social value an individual claims in interactions^[2]. This framework provides insight into how politeness mitigates conflict and preserves interpersonal harmony, by analysing Klara's utterances using the series of politeness

strategies Brown and Levinson proposed. By investigating Klara's use of politeness strategies, this research aims to determine whether her dialogues effectively construct her identity as an AI and reinforce the novel's central argument: that advanced technology, including AI, poses no intrinsic threat unless it is misused by humans.

Additionally, the study examines the Indonesian translation of the novel, "*Klara dan Sang Matahari*", to assess whether the original characterization is preserved in translation. The translations of Klara's politeness strategies are analysed using the theory proposed by Molina & Albir, which consists of 18 types of translation techniques^[3]. This set of techniques is chosen because it can transfer messages at all levels (words, phrases, clauses and sentences). Meanwhile, the quality of translation is measured by looking at all related aspects. These assessment aspects consist of: (1) accuracy of message transfer (*accuracy*), (2) accuracy of message expression in the target language (*acceptability*), (3) naturalness of the target language (*readability*)^[4]. In assessing the quality of a translation, for each aspect, the highest score is 3, and the lowest score is 1.

In regard to the relationship between politeness strategies and characterisation, this research studies Klara's characterization based on the theory proposed by Kenan, which states that politeness strategies form the characterization of a character in a literary work^[5]. Furthermore, Karkulehto et al. stated that as characters in the story, human and non-human characters need to be studied separately to learn how the roles of the two types of characters influence the world in the story in question^[6]. The nuances in the politeness strategies employed by Klara make her character more complex and dynamic. Therefore, based on the theories mentioned, Klara's characterization is studied with the intention of determining Klara's behaviour and nature, especially when it comes to her interaction with humans.

Several prior studies have explored translation in relation to this research. One category of relevant studies focuses on speech acts and their translations^[7–11]. These studies primarily examine the translation techniques used in rendering speech acts and assess translation quality, particularly in relation to shifts occurring during the translation process. However, they often do not extend their analysis to broader aspects of speech acts or the impact of these translation shifts on overall translation quality. As a result, such studies may

provide only limited insights.

Another category of research investigates the politeness strategies within speech acts and their translations^[12–27]. These studies analyse how the translation of source texts influences politeness strategies in speech acts, often resulting in detectable shifts within the translated version. Additionally, this body of research extends its focus to impoliteness, face-threatening acts (FTAs), and power dynamics among characters, offering a broader and more in-depth discussion compared to studies solely focused on speech act translation.

A third category of relevant research examines characterizations through politeness strategies in speech acts^[28–33]. These studies reveal that politeness strategies and speech act types contribute to character development, influenced by factors such as gender, social status, and cultural background. Some also assess how translation affects the portrayal of a character's traits in the translated text. This category of research presents a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis than the previous two. However, it is notable that these studies exclusively focus on human characters; no prior research has examined how politeness strategies contribute to the characterizations of non-human entities.

The gaps identified from the previous studies present opportunities for further exploration. Few studies have examined how politeness strategies represented by the character's utterances influence characterizations in literary works, particularly in cases where the character is non-human. Specifically, two key research gaps emerge from the existing literature: (1) the development of politeness strategies in the utterances of the character under analysis, and (2) the exploration of a non-human character, particularly an AI-driven entity.

This study addresses existing gaps by analysing the politeness strategies of Klara, the AI protagonist in "*Klara and the Sun*" by Kazuo Ishiguro. It aims to explore how the characterization of a non-human entity is shaped through politeness strategies, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on AI representation in literature. By focusing on the Indonesian translation, "*Klara dan Sang Matahari*", this research further examines how these politeness strategies are recontextualized across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Given the differences between the English and Indonesian languages—particularly in terms of pronoun usage, levels of formality, and indirectness—the translation provides a

rich site for exploring how programmed and evolving politeness is adapted. This dual focus not only sheds light on Klara's constructed humanity but also reveals how interpersonal dynamics and affective communication are negotiated in translation, offering insights into pragmatic equivalence and the localization of voice in contemporary literary texts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Politeness Strategies

Goffman introduced the concept of 'face' as a public image central to politeness strategies, defining it as an individual's self-image negotiated during interactions^[34]. The concept of face facilitates smooth social interactions through mutual respect and acknowledgment. Lakoff further described politeness strategies as a set of preferred linguistic choices reflecting variability and context-dependent flexibility^[35]. These strategies, rooted in societal norms of interpersonal etiquette, aim to minimize friction during communication.

Leech's politeness theory builds on Grice's work, linking meaning and social power to politeness principles^[36]. Leech emphasized the preservation of face, where speakers maintain their own 'negative face' while attending to the 'positive face' of others. Brown and Levinson elaborated on this concept by introducing the notion of face-threatening acts (FTAs), where speakers decide whether to perform or avoid FTAs^[2]. These frameworks collectively illustrate the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of politeness strategies in social interactions. When the speaker aims to avoid FTAs, the focus of the speech is on non-confrontational strategies that minimize potential threats. When the speaker is left with no choice but to perform FTAs, Brown and Levinson proposed four strategies:

1. *Bald on-record*: Direct and explicit communication used in urgent or high-risk situations where politeness is unnecessary.
2. *Positive politeness*: Strategies aimed at preserving positive face by emphasizing intimacy, solidarity, and social bonds between interlocutors.
3. *Negative politeness*: Strategies to safeguard negative

face by demonstrating deference and maintaining social distance.

4. *Bald off-record*: Indirect and ambiguous communication designed to mitigate the perception of threat.

These frameworks establish the theoretical basis for understanding how politeness functions in dialogue, which becomes particularly significant when examining characters in fiction. Since characterization is often revealed through dialogue and interaction, politeness strategies directly shape how a character is perceived, especially in narratives involving non-human entities like Klara.

2.2. Character and Characterizations

In a work of fiction, there are several terms that refer to the actors in a story. The first term is 'character', which refers to the person or actor in the story. A character is a fundamental intrinsic element of a novel, representing the individuals who drive the narrative. Closely linked to characterization, this element provides insight into a character's identity, traits, and role within the story, offering a clear depiction for readers. Gill defines a character as a figure in a literary work, while characterization refers to the method by which the character is portrayed^[37]. Gomba further describes characterization as the distinct identity that defines each character^[38].

Kenan identifies two dimensions of characterization: static and dynamic^[5]. Static elements include name, age, gender, physical appearance, attire, possessions, profession, and environment, whereas dynamic elements encompass actions, behaviour, gestures, speech patterns, and internal thoughts. Chaghervand & Toroghpeima emphasize that dialogue and politeness strategies in literary works significantly contribute to characterization^[29]. Additionally, Karkulehto et al. highlight the importance of analysing both human and non-human characters to understand their impact on the narrative world^[6]. This means that examining Klara's politeness strategies through her dialogue enables an understanding of her traits and behaviour, ultimately shaping her characterization as an AI representative. Therefore, it is imperative that the messages conveyed in Klara's dialogues in the source language are preserved in the target language.

2.3. Techniques of Translation

In translation studies, key concepts must be understood for a comprehensive grasp of the field. Molina and Albir define translation methods as overarching approaches that influence the entire text, whereas translation techniques and strategies serve different functions within the process^[3]. Strategies pertain to decision-making during translation, while techniques directly impact the final output. Techniques are determined based on the chosen method and strategy, shaping how meaning is transferred from the source to the target language.

Molina and Albir propose 18 translation techniques applicable across linguistic levels, from morphemes to clauses, including specialized units such as dialects and proper names. These techniques are: *adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalent, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation*. Identifying these techniques allows for a systematic analysis of how politeness strategies are transferred across languages. The use of translation techniques significantly affects translation quality, as higher-quality translations preserve the message more effectively and ensure it is conveyed accurately from the source language to the target language.

2.4. Quality of Translation Assessment

The quality of a translation is measured by examining all relevant aspects. These assessment aspects consist of: (1) accuracy of message transfer, (2) accuracy of message disclosed in the target language, (3) naturalness of the target language^[4]. The three aspects collectively determine the overall quality and effectiveness of a translation. The following is a description of these aspects:

1. Accuracy assesses the fidelity of message transfer. A translation is considered accurate if it fully preserves the original meaning without omission or unnecessary addition. Any modifications should be minimal and serve to enhance comprehension.
2. Acceptability is determined by linguistic norms, cultural context, and structural conventions of the target language. It ensures that the translation adheres to both

- macro-level (text structure) and micro-level (terminology, sentence patterns, expressions) linguistic rules.
3. Readability measures how easily the translated text can be understood by the target audience. A high level of readability ensures smooth communication between the source text's author and the target readers, even if they lack proficiency in the source language.

In sum, the reviewed literature highlights how politeness strategies underpin characterization, and how translation techniques and quality assessment frameworks provide tools to evaluate their transfer across languages. While these studies establish valuable foundations, few have focused on how politeness strategies shape the characterization of a non-human entity and how such nuances are preserved in translation. Addressing this gap requires a methodological approach that not only identifies the types of politeness strategies employed but also examines their translation and evaluative reception in order to investigate how Klara's politeness strategies in "*Klara and the Sun*" and their rendering in the Indonesian version, "*Klara dan Sang Matahari*", contribute to her depiction as an AI character.

3. Methodology

This study employs a Pragmatic approach, focusing on the politeness strategies of a non-human character to examine its characterisation. The research also includes an analysis of the translated version of the novel. Methodologically, this is a descriptive qualitative translation study conducted as a fixed case study, as the research problem was pre-defined^[39]. The study is descriptive in that it analyses the politeness strategies of Klara's utterances in "*Klara and the Sun*" and its Indonesian translation, "*Klara dan Sang Matahari*", to explore her characterisation as an AI-driven entity. It is qualitative because it investigates an underexplored phenomenon—the phenomenon being how politeness strategies in a non-human character's utterances are translated^[40–42].

The research location is defined by the focus of the study^[43]. In this context, the study adopts a document-based approach, with primary data derived from Kazuo Ishiguro's original novel and its Indonesian translation by Ariyantri E. Tarman. The analysis centres specifically on Klara, the AI protagonist and narrator. To ensure data relevance, purposive sampling is applied. The process began with the

identification of all utterances spoken by Klara in both the English and Indonesian texts, which were then compiled into a comprehensive corpus. From this corpus, utterances were screened to determine whether they contained indicators of politeness strategies, following Brown and Levinson's framework. Only those dialogues in which Klara directly interacts with other characters and displays identifiable markers of politeness (e.g., hedging, honorifics, group identity markers) were retained for analysis. This filtering produced a refined dataset consisting of two components: (1) a total of 404 linguistic data, namely Klara's utterances in the source text, and (2) a total of 1505 translation data, including the corresponding Indonesian renderings along with the translation techniques, shifts, and quality assessments.

Data collection is conducted through document analysis, which involves systematic reading, annotation, and comparison of Klara's speech acts in English and Indonesian. The relationship between Klara's politeness strategies and her characterisation is then examined. To evaluate whether the translation preserves Klara's characterisation, secondary data is also incorporated through expert validation. Informants serve as evaluators of translation quality, while a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with translation and linguistic experts is conducted to ensure reliability of the findings. The FGD method is employed in preference to questionnaires, as it provides more detailed and nuanced insights into how the translation reflects Klara's politeness strategies and, consequently, her characterisation as an AI.

4. Findings and Discussion

This study examines the types and functions of politeness strategies used by Klara in "*Klara and the Sun*", based on Brown & Levinson's framework. The analysis reveals that Klara primarily employs positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on-record strategies, while on-record politeness is absent. Her speech often reflects an effort to establish social closeness through group identity markers and maintain indirectness through hedging. Building on Molina and Albir's translation techniques and Nababan's translation quality framework, regarding the translation analysis, this study also evaluates how these politeness strategies are rendered in the Indonesian version, "*Klara dan Sang Matahari*". The findings highlight how translation choices shape Klara's

characterisation, ensuring that her identity as an AI and her social positioning are preserved. These insights underscore the role of politeness strategies in shaping Klara's depiction as an AI.

By combining politeness theory with translation quality assessment, this research is well-positioned within translation studies, contributing to ongoing discussions on how linguistic strategies are transferred across languages and cultures. At the same time, its impact can be further extended by situating the findings within current debates in pragmatics—particularly regarding the interaction between politeness, identity, and communicative intent—and in comparative literature, where questions of characterisation, narrative voice, and the representation of the non-human are central. This dual positioning underscores both the disciplinary relevance of the study and its potential to inform broader conversations about language, translation, and literary form.

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. Analysis of Klara's Politeness Strategies

'Don't do the FTA' is a fundamental principle that underpins Klara's approach to politeness in "*Klara and the Sun*", particularly in her interactions with humans. As articulated by Brown and Levinson, this strategy emphasizes the avoidance of face-threatening acts (FTAs)^[2], which Klara frequently achieves through silence and passive observation. Klara's self-restraint reflects broader pragmatic norms of non-imposition and respect, which suggests that Klara aligns her communicative behaviour with human values of deference despite her non-human identity. Klara's tendency to avoid bluntness is implemented in order to maintain harmony rather than confrontation. This tendency is especially prominent notably in her interactions with human characters such as the Manager of the store where she is initially displayed. However, when she does engage in conversation, she predominantly employs positive politeness strategies, demonstrating an intricate awareness of social bonds and relational harmony. Her use of such strategies mirrors the social expectation that community is reinforced through linguistic signals of solidarity.

Klara's use of positive politeness strategies spans 14 out of 15 super-strategy categories, encompassing a total of 238 instances. Among these, the most frequently employed

strategy is S4—using group identity markers—underscoring her efforts to foster solidarity. Notably, the only category absent from her speech is the strategy of confirming or implying knowledge and concern for the interlocutor’s desires (politeness strategy type 9). The absence of this strategy reflects both her characteristic restraint and her limited ability to demonstrate emotional attunement, which raises the question of how politeness strategies require both linguistic form and genuine recognition of others’ needs.

An illustrative example of her use of positive politeness appears in type 8—joking—when she interacts with Rosa, a fellow AI. In this context, Klara’s familiarity with Rosa that leads to their light-hearted banter allows her to adopt a more relaxed and informal tone, reinforcing camaraderie through humour. This nuanced use of politeness strategies reveals Klara’s adaptive communication style, one that shifts between observant detachment and strategic engagement depending on the social context. Her pragmatics-driven interaction patterns therefore shed light not only on how her liminal identity is constructed, but also on how politeness norms are reinterpreted when translated into Indonesian. Thus, this finding situates the analysis within both pragmatic debates about universality and comparative literary discussions of character across languages. The data below is an example of Klara’s use of politeness strategy type 8, joking.

Source Language	<i>You’re making a joke, I know you are.</i>
Target Language	<i>Kau bercanda, aku tahu itu.</i>

In general, positive politeness strategies are used with someone with whom the speaker has a close or equal relationship. In Klara’s case, this applies to her fellow AI friends, with whom she is equal, or with those she is emotionally close to, such as the Manager and Josie, the human child she is responsible for. The use of positive politeness strategies also demonstrates Klara’s efforts to create closeness that reflects the human social norm of fostering belonging. This shows the broader pragmatic norms of solidarity, where language is used to reinforce intimacy and belonging. An example of this is Klara’s use of positive politeness strategy type 10, where she offers or promises something to Josie. Here, her linguistic choice demonstrates not only a personal bond but also her participation in human-like norms of caretaking and reassurance.

Source Language	<i>But...it’s now my duty to be Josie’s best friend.</i>
Target Language	<i>Tapi...sekarang tugasku menjadi sahabat Josie.</i>

Meanwhile, Klara’s use of negative politeness strategies in “*Klara and the Sun*” reveals her nuanced understanding of social hierarchy and deference, particularly in her interactions with humans. Negative politeness strategies typically are implemented to demonstrate caution and deference when addressing someone of higher status or less familiarity, and Klara follows this pragmatic convention in her conversations with adults in Josie’s life—such as her parents or household visitors. In total, 165 instances of negative politeness are identified in Klara’s utterances, which show Klara’s awareness of not imposing on others and thus respecting personal space and autonomy. These instances are distributed across seven out of ten super-strategy categories. Her most frequent choice, using questions or hedging (type 2), shows her effort to soften her speech and minimize imposition, reflecting human norms of linguistic restraint in unequal relationships. The absence of three strategies—providing explicit deference (type 5), conventionally accepted FTAs (type 8), and nominalization for formality (type 9)—underscores her partial alignment with human pragmatics: she can mimic deference but cannot fully embody it, revealing her constrained agency as an AI.

A compelling illustration of this occurs in her use of negative politeness type 6—apologizing—during an interaction with the Manager of the store. Her apology functions not only as an expression of remorse but also as a calculated prelude to voicing her opinion, thereby maintaining deference while cautiously inserting her perspective. This dual role reflects pragmatic norms of apology as both repair and mitigation, showing how Klara carefully balances subordination with self-expression. Beyond this moment, Klara predominantly employs negative politeness when conversing with adult humans, reinforcing her subordinate role and highlighting her positioning as an outsider navigating hierarchical human society. In the field of translation, these strategies acquire further cultural nuance, as Indonesian politeness conventions emphasize hierarchy even more explicitly. This shift situates Klara’s character differently for Indonesian readers, underscoring how her politeness not only shapes her characterisation. Below is an example of Klara’s utterance

that is considered negative politeness strategy type 6.

Source Language	<i>I'm very sorry, Manager.</i>
Target Language	<i>Aku sangat menyesal, Manajer.</i>

In regard to politeness strategies, perhaps most striking is Klara's reverence toward the Sun, the entity she respects above all others. In Ishiguro's narrative, the Sun assumes a quasi-divine presence, embodying an omnipotent force that Klara believes possesses the power to heal Josie. When addressing the Sun, Klara exhibits the utmost caution, employing careful phrasing and deferential behaviour that reflect a heightened level of respect. This dynamic not only highlights the depth of Klara's belief system but also underscores the adaptability of her politeness strategies, which shift in accordance with her perception of power and authority within her social environment. In pragmatic terms, this mirrors the way human speakers modulate politeness according to hierarchy and relational distance, situating Klara's language within broader debates about how politeness encodes social structure. This reverence can be seen through the politeness strategy Klara employed in the example.

Source Language	<i>Supposing I could do something special to please you.</i>
Target Language	<i>Mungkin aku bisa melakukan sesuatu yang istimewa untuk menyenangkan hatimu.</i>

In the example above, Klara engages in a one-way interaction with the Sun, which, within the narrative, occupies a revered position among AIs—analogous to the way humans venerate a deity. In other words, Klara is depicted as praying. Through her utterance, she appeals to the Sun to heal Josie, promising in return to assist in destroying the Cootings Machine, which she perceives as the root cause of pollution that she believes to be a threat against the Sun. This exchange illustrates another use of a positive politeness strategy, specifically type 14, wherein the speaker offers a reciprocal benefit. By framing her reverence as a relationship of exchange rather than subordination, Klara aligns herself with pragmatic norms of reciprocity and solidarity, but extends them into a spiritual register.

Klara's use of positive politeness strategies in this context signals a profound sense of trust, ease, and emotional intimacy with the Sun. Although the Sun is portrayed as

an extremely prominent figure—one that would typically elicit the use of negative politeness strategies to convey deference—Klara's choice to engage through positive politeness instead underscores the unique relational dynamic she perceives from her observation towards humanity. From a pragmatic perspective, this deviation highlights how politeness strategies are not fixed, but dependent on the speaker's conceptualisation of power and intimacy. This assumption echoes the ongoing debates about whether politeness functions universally or contextually.

Therefore, from a comparative literary perspective, Klara's prayer-like utterances contribute to her characterisation as an AI whose faith and humility blur the line between human and non-human. Meanwhile, in regard to translation, these passages take on additional resonance. When translated into Indonesian, where religious language is embedded in everyday speech and deference is linguistically marked, Klara's positive politeness toward a quasi-divine figure can be read as both familiar and estranging, reshaping how her devotion and voice are perceived across cultural contexts. The data below is an example of Klara's interaction with the Sun.

Source Language	<i>I know I failed to perform the service I promised you in the city and I've no right to ask anything further of you.</i>
Target Language	<i>Aku tahu telah gagal memenuhi layanan yang kujanjikan Padamu di kota dan aku tidak berhak meminta lebih banyak darimu.</i>

This utterance exemplifies a negative politeness strategy, specifically type 3, as it reflects Klara's pessimistic stance. She conveys her belief that the Sun, as her interlocutor, is unlikely to grant her request—an attitude shaped by her sense of guilt over failing to fulfil a prior promise—which is to destroy the Cootings Machine that she believes to be an 'enemy' of the Sun. Motivated by this guilt, Klara adopts a distanced and deferential manner, showing marked respect toward the Sun. Although doubtful of the Sun's willingness to assist, she nevertheless continues to appeal for help in the hope of curing Josie's life-threatening illness.

All of the examples of the analysis on Klara's politeness

strategies in “*Klara and the Sun*” reveal a complete absence of bald on-record politeness strategies in Klara’s speech. This suggests that Klara, as an AI, consistently avoids direct, explicit communication that might impose on or challenge her interlocutors. Instead, her interactions are marked by indirectness, caution, and a strong adherence to maintaining social harmony.

Across the novel, all examples of Klara’s politeness strategies reveal a complete absence of bald on-record strategies. This absence suggests that Klara, as an AI, consistently avoids direct, explicit communication that might impose on or challenge her interlocutors. Instead, her speech is characterized by indirectness, caution, and a strong orientation toward preserving social harmony. In the case of off-record strategies—those relying on implication and ambiguity—they are also extremely rare in her dialogues. Only a single instance is identified, falling under super-strategy type 15. This instance involves an incomplete statement signalled by ellipsis, through which Klara cautiously conveys her thoughts while minimizing the risk of offense.

A compelling use of this strategy occurs in her interaction with Rick’s mother, whose mother is also friends with Josie’s mother just as Josie herself is friends with Rick. In her interaction with Rick’s mother, Klara employs ellipsis to subtly express her opinion without direct confrontation. This strategic use of an incomplete utterance underscores her commitment to politeness and deference in communicating with humans. Her linguistic choices not only highlight her careful navigation of social norms but also reinforce her role as an AI deeply attuned to the hierarchical dynamics of human interaction. The following excerpt illustrates Klara’s only

use of the off-record strategy, type 15, the use of ellipsis.

Source Language *Well, I...*

Target Language *Yah, aku...*

4.1.2. Translation Analysis of Klara’s Politeness Strategies

The findings of this study reveal the use of 15 distinct translation techniques in rendering Klara’s politeness strategies in *Klara and the Sun*, amounting to a total of 1,505 data points. These techniques align with Molina and Albir’s framework, offering a comprehensive picture of how politeness is transferred across languages^[3]. The most frequently employed technique is the established equivalent, appearing 985 times and proving particularly effective in preserving Klara’s original pragmatic intent. At the opposite extreme, the generalization technique occurs only once, underscoring its negligible role in maintaining the subtleties of politeness.

A closer examination of translation shifts further demonstrates the high degree of consistency in preserving Klara’s linguistic politeness. Out of the 1,505 data points, only three show a shift in strategy after translation, while two lose their politeness markers entirely. This negligible rate of disruption highlights the overall fidelity of the translation process and confirms the effectiveness of the techniques in maintaining pragmatic nuance. The following example in **Table 1** below illustrates one such shift in politeness strategy, offering insight into how the choice of translation technique can influence the transformation. At the same time, the case demonstrates the overall quality of translation—accuracy, acceptability, and readability—are all sustained in the rendering of Klara’s speech across linguistic boundaries.

Table 1. Translation Date Example.

Source Language	Target Language	Translation Techniques	Quality of Translation
<i><u>I think</u> Josie was hoping Rick would come in person to say thank you.</i> (Negative politeness type 2)	<i>Aku pikir Josie berharap Rick akan datang untuk mengucapkan terima kasih.</i> (Negative politeness type 1)	Variation, Established equivalent	3

In the utterance above, the underlined politeness marker serves as a key device in conveying the speaker’s level of mitigation and indirectness. In the source language, this marker appears as “I think”, which is rendered in the target text as “*Aku pikir*”. The translation involves two techniques: variation (“I” into “*Aku*”) and established equivalent (“think” into “*pikir*”). This choice results in a shift in politeness strat-

egy, specifically from negative politeness type 2—where hedging explicitly conveys deference—to negative politeness type 1, in which politeness is expressed more implicitly. The example illustrates how subtle translation decisions can influence pragmatic nuance, shaping the degree of deference, indirectness, and speaker positioning within an exchange. Thus, the translation is rated with a score of 3, the highest

level of quality.

The overall quality of Klara's translated politeness strategies was further assessed through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) based on Nababan's framework, which assesses translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability^[4]. The findings indicate that the translation of Klara's politeness strategies is of exceptionally high quality, with nearly all instances receiving a perfect score of 3, signifying optimal performance across all aspects. Even in cases where a score of 2 was assigned, the impact on meaning remained negligible, ensuring that readers in the target language could still fully grasp the intended message. The only instances receiving a score of 1 correspond to the use of the deletion technique, where certain speech acts were omitted in translation. However, due to the strength of the surrounding narrative context, these omissions do not significantly alter the story's coherence or Klara's characterization. Ultimately, the findings highlight the translator's success in maintaining Klara's politeness strategies with precision, ensuring that the linguistic and interpersonal subtleties of the original text remain accessible to the target audience.

4.2. Discussion

Klara's communicative behaviour in "*Klara and the Sun*" exemplifies an intricate application of politeness strategies, beginning with positive politeness strategies, as proposed by Brown and Levinson. This strategy serves to establish social closeness and foster a sense of camaraderie^[2], and is particularly evident in her interactions with those she perceives as familiar or friendly, such as Rosa, another AI. Klara's use of positive politeness—expressed through humour, inclusive language, and markers of in-group identity—suggests her attempt to emulate human relational dynamics. This strategic employment of language not only strengthens her social bonds but also underscores her underlying programming: to foster warmth, reassurance, and human-like interaction.

Conversely, in conversations with human figures of authority or higher social status, Klara predominantly adopts negative politeness strategies, particularly hedging, apologizing, and indirect speech. This linguistic choice reflects her self-positioning as subordinate and cautious, indicative of her awareness of power asymmetry. For instance, when addressing Josie's mother or the Manager, Klara frames her

speech with careful mitigation, ensuring that her words do not impose or encroach upon human autonomy. This strategic politeness serves to reinforce her characterization as deferential, conscious of human hierarchies, and inherently programmed for servitude and respect.

In contrast, off-record politeness strategies are scarcely found in Klara's speech. The few instances present—such as the use of ellipsis or ambiguous statements—demonstrate her attempt to navigate delicate situations without directly asserting her own stance. This strategy is particularly relevant when she interacts with figures whose emotions she seeks to manage subtly, ensuring that her words remain open to interpretation rather than imposing a single definitive meaning.

When it comes to avoiding FTA (face-threatening act) altogether, Klara utilizes the '*Don't do the FTA*' in her interactions. This strategy underscores the notion that sometimes, the most effective way to maintain politeness is to withhold speech altogether. Klara frequently employs this approach, particularly in human interactions, where she remains silent and observant rather than engaging in dialogue that might pose a social risk. Her preference for this strategy highlights her deference to humans, reinforcing her characterization as an AI that prioritizes non-intrusiveness, careful observation, and respectful distance.

The interplay of these politeness strategies is integral to Klara's characterization. As a non-human entity, her speech patterns are meticulously designed to align with the expectations of human interlocutors, reinforcing her portrayal as an AI whose behavioural programming revolves around social harmony, deference, and careful navigation of conversational dynamics. Unlike human characters, whose politeness strategies fluctuate based on emotional states, personal relationships, and cultural conditioning, Klara's politeness remains remarkably consistent—signalling her static, programmed nature.

From a translation perspective, these findings offer crucial insights. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the use of politeness strategies and the translations, this study delves deeper into how translations of politeness strategies may influence characterization itself. The translation process must retain the intricate balance of Klara's politeness strategies to preserve her nuanced depiction. In previous research, politeness in translation has been examined primarily through human characters, where shifts in speech acts

were often analysed in relation to psychological, social, or cultural variables. However, Klara, as an AI, represents a unique case. Her politeness is not culturally ingrained but rather a programmed feature of her existence. Consequently, any deviation in politeness strategies during translation does not merely affect the perceived politeness level but also has profound implications for how Klara is understood as a character.

The results of this study contribute novel insights to the field of literary translation by emphasizing the interdependence of politeness strategies, characterization, and translation accuracy. While previous research has explored shifts in politeness due to linguistic transfer, few studies have considered the implications of these shifts on the portrayal of non-human characters. By ensuring the faithful transmission of Klara's politeness strategies, translators do not merely uphold linguistic accuracy but also maintain the integrity of Ishiguro's carefully constructed AI protagonist.

The characterization of Klara as an artificial intelligence in *Klara and the Sun* introduces unique challenges in translation, particularly in the preservation of her politeness strategies. Unlike human characters, whose linguistic politeness may be shaped by cultural norms, emotional states, or situational contexts, Klara's politeness is a programmed behavioural output. This static, consistent politeness—ranging from positive strategies used to mimic social warmth, to negative strategies that signal deference—constitutes a core aspect of her identity as a non-human entity designed to interact harmoniously with humans. Consequently, any modification to these strategies in translation does more than shift the tone of dialogue; it risks altering the fundamental portrayal of her artificial nature.

The translation process, therefore, is not merely a matter of linguistic transfer but one of character preservation. A human character's polite speech may vary without undermining their identity, but Klara's consistency is essential—it reflects her designed limitations, lack of emotional variability, and role in the narrative as a mirror to human interaction. When translated into a language such as Indonesian, which encodes politeness through different socio-pragmatic structures, the translator faces the challenge of maintaining the function of Klara's speech patterns rather than offering surface-level equivalence.

This makes Klara's characterization particularly vulner-

able to translation shifts. If her positive politeness becomes too casual, or if her negative politeness loses its cautious formality, readers may perceive her as more human or emotionally dynamic than intended. Thus, the translator must balance fidelity to the original linguistic tone with cultural expectations in the target language—all while maintaining Klara's programmed, affectively neutral persona. This dynamic illustrates the interdependence of politeness strategy, narrative function, and character construction in literary translation, especially when the character in question is not human but algorithmically governed.

5. Conclusions

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has ignited fervent discussions regarding the concerns of potential dangers AI might cause, often centred on dystopian scenarios situated in a distant future. These speculative concerns, while thought-provoking, remain largely hypothetical and are echoed in the futuristic narrative of Kazuo Ishiguro's *"Klara and the Sun"*. This novel provides a unique lens through which to examine the complexities of human-AI relationships, and this research capitalizes on this opportunity. By analysing *"Klara and the Sun"* and its Indonesian translation, *"Klara dan Sang Matahari"*, this study explores how the politeness strategies employed by Klara, a human-shaped AI, construct her identity and shed light on potential dynamics between humans and AI entities. This study not only enriches translation studies but also contributes to ongoing debates in pragmatics, comparative literature, and AI ethics. It underscores the centrality of politeness in shaping narratives of human-AI interaction and sets the stage for future research that bridges linguistic, cultural, and technological frontiers.

The findings make several key contributions. First, this study demonstrates how Klara's communicative behaviour is governed by systematic applications of politeness strategies, revealing her programmed adaptability and her alignment with human social expectations, reinforcing her identity as an AI built for social harmony and deference. This is different compared to the findings in previous research that have only focused on analysing human characters. As an AI, Klara employs positive politeness to foster camaraderie, particularly with familiar figures like her human Josie or her fellow

AI friend. She also uses humour, inclusive language, and in-group markers to emulate human interaction. In contrast, when engaging with authority figures such as Josie's parents, Klara shifts to negative politeness, utilizing hedging, apologizing, and indirect speech to acknowledge power asymmetries and reinforce her deferential nature. More subtly, Klara occasionally employs off-record politeness through ambiguity and ellipsis, allowing her to navigate sensitive interactions without imposing a definitive stance. However, one of her most distinctive strategies is '*Don't do the FTA*'—opting for silence and observation rather than speech, particularly in human interactions. This strategic non-engagement underscores her AI programming, emphasizing non-intrusiveness, careful observation, and respect for human autonomy. This finding shows that politeness strategies are central to Klara's characterization. Unlike human characters, whose politeness fluctuates in response to emotions and context, Klara's reliance on positive, negative, and occasional off-record politeness reflects a deliberate, stable design, underscoring the algorithmic logic of her social interactions.

Second, this research advances translation studies by showing that the preservation or alteration of politeness strategies is crucial because it directly influences not just stylistic tone but the very construction of Klara's AI identity, since her politeness is not culturally ingrained but algorithmically defined. Meanwhile, other previous research primarily examines politeness shifts in human characters, this study underscores how alterations in translation can directly impact Klara's portrayal. By maintaining Klara's intricate politeness framework, it reframes the act of translation as not only a linguistic task but also a safeguarding of narrative integrity in representing non-human consciousness. By situating these findings within pragmatics and comparative literature, this study illustrates how politeness is not only a communicative strategy but also a narrative tool that negotiates questions of hierarchy, intimacy, and cultural values across languages. However, the implications of this research also extend beyond translation studies, offering. By foregrounding the role of politeness in constructing AI identity, the study contributes to current debates on how artificial agents might be designed to interact with humans in ethically and socially acceptable ways. It also highlights the importance of translation in shaping global understandings of AI, as different languages and cultures encode politeness—and thus human expectations of

communication—in diverse ways.

While this study thus offers novel insights into the intersection of politeness, characterization, and translation, particularly in the depiction of non-human consciousness in literature, future research based on this foundation can be further broadened through several directions. Comparative analyses across multiple languages with highly codified politeness systems, such as Japanese, Arabic, or Javanese, could deepen our understanding of how algorithmic politeness is refracted through cultural lenses. Future researchers can also extend the analysis to different literary genres and contemporary narratives, which may reveal how politeness shapes broader representations of human and non-human agency. Another direction to expand this topic is by expanding into audiovisual translation, including subtitling and dubbing. Research done onto audiovisual translation could incorporate non-verbal politeness markers such as intonation, gesture, and facial expression, offering a multimodal perspective on how politeness is communicated and perceived. Finally, integrating insights from AI communication research could open interdisciplinary conversations about how fictional depictions of politeness may inform the real-world programming of AI interfaces and voice assistants.

Author Contributions

E.S.: conceived, designed, and conducted the study, collected and analyzed the data, and prepared the manuscript; M.N.: provided guidance on the translation analysis and offered critical feedback to strengthen the discussion of translation strategies; R.S.: advised on research design and methodology, ensuring the rigor and reliability of the study; D.: contributed expertise in pragmatics, offering insights that deepened the theoretical framing and analysis. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study area available from the author upon request. Therefore, to access the data, interested parties should contact the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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