

Translation Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Directive Speech Acts in *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes politeness strategies in directive speech acts performed by the main characters in *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the data consist of directive utterances from two main characters, supported by document analysis and informant input. The research is grounded in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Searle's (1979) classification of directives, Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques, and Nababan et al.'s (2012) model of translation quality assessment. The findings reveal three types of politeness strategies: bald on record (46.23%), positive politeness (30.19%), and negative politeness (23.58%), with no instances of off-record strategies. Thirteen shifts in politeness strategies were identified due to translation techniques, with reduction being the most influential. Despite these shifts, the overall translation quality remained accurate and acceptable, aligning with the cartoon's humorous and friendly tone.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is central to human interaction, enabling individuals to share thoughts, emotions, intentions, and information (Kurniatillah et al., 2022; Arafah et al., 2023). More than just a communication tool, language also reflects cultural identity, social relationships, and individual personality. It not only conveys meaning but also performs actions such as requesting, commanding, or apologizing through speech acts. Effective communication thus relies on mutual understanding and cooperation between speaker and listener (Rais et al., 2018), and the social context of an interaction plays a significant role in shaping how messages are interpreted.

In translation studies, rendering speech acts particularly directive ones poses additional challenges. Translators are required not only to transfer the literal meaning of an utterance but also to retain the tone, politeness level, and cultural subtleties embedded in it. Among various types of speech acts, directive speech acts are particularly sensitive to politeness considerations, as they often involve giving orders, requests, or suggestions that may threaten the hearer's face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, in Osama, 2023), politeness strategies are shaped by cultural norms, and these must be carefully preserved in translation to ensure pragmatic equivalence and avoid miscommunication across cultures.

Cartoons, as audiovisual media consumed widely by children, offer a rich source for analyzing the use of language, particularly in how politeness is expressed and perceived. They reflect not only humor and entertainment but also convey implicit moral and social lessons. As Mulyono (2016) and Haque (2013) argue, cartoons support linguistic and social development, helping young viewers internalize appropriate ways of speaking and interacting. Moreover, the translation of cartoons plays a significant role in shaping how children in different linguistic and cultural contexts interpret those values.

This research focuses on *The Amazing World of Gumball*, a globally recognized British-American animated series that has gained international acclaim and is widely broadcast in Indonesia (Chiu & Chang, 2018). Known for its creative storytelling and humorous tone, the series presents a wide range of directive utterances that make it suitable for analyzing politeness strategies in a casual, family-oriented context. Due to its broad accessibility and popularity among young viewers, *The Amazing World of Gumball* offers a valuable opportunity to investigate how politeness strategies are used in English and how they shift during translation into Indonesian.

The present study investigates how politeness strategies in directive speech acts are preserved, adapted, or lost in the Indonesian translation of *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2. Reduction techniques used in translation often lead to shifts in politeness, which can affect how a character's intention is conveyed to the audience. While previous studies have examined politeness in animation (Osama, 2023; Narayana et al., 2024), wordplay translation (Prihatini, 2022), and cultural pragmatics (Fitri, 2022), few have integrated politeness analysis with translation strategies and quality assessment. Therefore, this study contributes a more comprehensive view by combining Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Searle's (1979) classification of directive speech acts, Molina and Albir's (2002) and Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality assessment model. By doing so, it highlights the linguistic and cultural implications of translating politeness in children's media and offers insights into how pragmatic intent is managed across languages in a multilingual media context.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a product-oriented focus, analyzing how politeness strategies in directive speech acts are rendered in the Indonesian translation of *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2. A case study design is applied, centered on the utterances of Gumball and Darwin. The theoretical framework is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, Searle's (1979) directive speech act classification, Molina and Albir's (2002) translation techniques, and Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality assessment.

Data were collected from two sources: (1) documents, in the form of English subtitles and their Indonesian translations; and (2) informants, specifically two qualified raters who assessed the accuracy and acceptability of the translations through questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). A purposive sampling technique was used to select directive utterances containing politeness strategies.

The data analysis followed Spradley's (1979) ethnographic method, including domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analysis. Triangulation was employed through the use of multiple data sources (documents and raters) and methods (document analysis and FGD) to ensure validity and reliability.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

This study identified 106 directive utterances in *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2, revealing three of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies: bald on record (49 occurrences), positive politeness (32), and negative politeness (25). The off-record strategy was not present.

Table 3.1.1. Types of Politeness Percentage

No.	Type of Politeness	Total data	Percentage
1.	Bald on Record	49	46.23%
2.	Positive Politeness	32	30.19%
3.	Negative Politeness	25	23.58%
Total data		106	100%

The most frequent type of positive politeness was "use in-group identity markers" (20 data), followed by "include both speaker and hearer in the activity" (10), with "give reasons" and "give gifts to hearer" each appearing once. In terms of negative politeness, the sub-strategies included "minimize the size of imposition on the hearer" (10), "question or hedge" (8), and "impersonalize speaker and hearer" (7). These strategies reflect the characters' efforts to maintain social harmony, even in a humorous and informal cartoon context.

a. Bald on Record

The bald on record strategy is a form of politeness strategy characterized by direct commands or requests that are delivered without any mitigation. It involves speaking plainly and explicitly, without regard for how the message may impact the hearer's feelings. Such utterances often carry a high risk of threatening the hearer's face.

Despite this, the strategy can be considered appropriate in specific contexts—such as when clarity and urgency are prioritized, or when the relationship between speaker and hearer is sufficiently close that the directness is unlikely to cause offense. In this study, 49 directive utterances were identified as employing the bald on record strategy.

Example 1

Source Text: Gumball: "Stay away from her!"

Target Text: "Jauhi dia!"

In this scene, Gumball instructs Lesley to stay away from Penny, the girl he has feelings for, out of jealousy. The directive is delivered forcefully and without any softening expressions, reflecting the use of the bald on record strategy. The utterance conveys urgency and strong emotion, with no hedging or politeness markers to lessen its impact, making the speaker's intention immediately clear.

Example 2

Source Text: Gumball: "Move aside!"

Target Text: "Minggir."

In this scene, Gumball and Darwin attempt to retrieve a watch from their elderly neighbor Marvin. Disguised as grim reapers, they enter Marvin's house, causing him to faint. Darwin tries to administer first aid but hesitates out of discomfort. Seeing that Darwin is struggling, Gumball steps in and instructs him to move out of the way.

The directive "Minggir" is delivered plainly and without any politeness markers, reflecting a bald on record strategy. The use of a direct and unsoftened command highlights the urgency of the situation. Marvin's condition requires immediate action. In this context, Gumball prioritizes efficiency and clarity over politeness, focusing on resolving the emergency rather than attending to Darwin's feelings. The absence of mitigating language aligns with Brown and Levinson's theory, which states that bald on record is appropriate when clarity is crucial and there is little risk of offending the hearer due to the pressing nature of the event.

b. Positive Politeness

Positive face refers to an individual's desire to be liked, accepted, and seen as part of a group. It reflects the wish to feel that one's goals and interests are aligned with those of others. To maintain or support another person's positive face, speakers often express friendliness, emphasize shared experiences, or highlight mutual goals or practices categorized as positive politeness.

In this study, 32 instances of positive politeness strategies were identified in *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2. Among these, the most frequently applied was Use in-group identity markers (20 instances), followed by Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity (10 instances). The strategies Give (or ask for) reasons and Give gifts to Hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation) were each found once.

Example 1

Source Text: Gumball: "**Dude**, wake up."

Target Text: "**Kawan**, bangun."

In this scene, Gumball wakes Idaho, a character promoting a simple lifestyle, after they both stay up all night secretly indulging in junk food and games. The term "dude" in Gumball's utterance functions as an in-group identity marker, signaling informality, friendship, and shared experience. It reflects Gumball's effort to maintain a sense of camaraderie while delivering a directive.

The Indonesian translation, "Kawan," retains this function by using a similarly casual and familiar term. This strategy aligns with Brown and Levinson's concept of positive politeness, emphasizing social closeness and solidarity between speaker and hearer.

Example 2

Source Text: Darwin: "**Anais!** Help me out!"

Target Text: "**Anais!** Bantu aku!"

In this scene, Darwin urgently calls for Anais's help because his hand feels like it's burning. Having previously been ignored by Gumball, Darwin turns to Anais, hoping she will assist him and relieve the pain.

The direct use of Anais's name in the utterance exemplifies the positive politeness strategy of using in-group identity markers. Referring to her by her first name, without any formal address, reflects the close sibling relationship between them and signals familiarity and emotional closeness.

This choice of address emphasizes their shared identity as family members and reduces social distance. By doing so, Darwin frames his plea not as a detached command but as a personal appeal grounded in solidarity. The request becomes less imposing, clearly aligning with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy aimed at reinforcing group membership and interpersonal connection.

c. Negative Politeness

Negative face refers to an individual's desire for autonomy, the freedom to act without interference from others. It also reflects the preference to avoid being pressured by others' expectations or demands. To respect this need,

speakers use negative politeness strategies that show deference, minimize imposition, and acknowledge the hearer's independence. This may include apologizing, hedging, or indirectly phrasing requests.

The analysis identified 25 instances of negative politeness strategies in *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2. These fall into three categories: Minimize the size of imposition on the hearer (10 instances), Question or Hedge (8 instances), and Impersonalize speaker and hearer (7 instances).

Example 1

Source Text: Darwin: "You better give that back!"

Target Text: "**Sebaiknya** kembalikan!"

In this scene, Darwin urges Gumball to return the leader badge after Gumball takes it away, believing Darwin has misused his leadership role. Instead of issuing a direct command such as *Kembalikan sekarang!*, the translated utterance employs the word *sebaiknya* ("it would be better if"), which functions as a softener. This phrasing transforms the directive into a suggestion, thus reducing its force and making it less confrontational.

The use of '*sebaiknya*' demonstrates the strategy of minimizing the imposition, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987). By presenting the request in an indirect and polite manner, Darwin acknowledges Gumball's right to decide, thereby respecting his negative face while still expressing his intention to reclaim the badge.

Example 2

Source Text: Gumball: "I think it's my turn to go to the front, OK?"

Target Text: "Aku rasa giliranku di depan, oke?"

In this scene, Gumball, Anais, and Darwin are fleeing from someone who is chasing them. Anais is leading the way but repeatedly chooses incorrect paths, prompting Gumball to suggest taking the lead. Although he is visibly frustrated, Gumball phrases his suggestion carefully.

The utterance is an example of a negative politeness strategy, particularly the use of hedges or questions to reduce imposition. The phrase "I think" acts as a hedge that makes the statement less assertive, signalling that the speaker is not imposing his will forcefully. The tag question "OK?" further softens the directive by inviting Anais's agreement and allowing for her input.

This linguistic strategy helps Gumball maintain politeness despite his irritation, showing respect for Anais's autonomy and avoiding a direct command. By incorporating hedging and a question tag, he balances his desire to take charge with a polite and cooperative tone.

Table 3.1.2. Translation Techniques Percentage

No.	The Techniques	Total Techniques	Percentage
1.	Established Equivalent	239	68.29%
2.	Variation	39	11.02%
3.	Implication	33	9.32%
4.	Pure Borrowing	11	3.11%
5.	Modulation	9	2.54%
6.	Reduction	8	2.26%
7.	Explication	5	1.41%
8.	Discursive Creation	3	0.85%
9.	Literal	3	0.85%
10.	Paraphrase	2	0.56%
11.	Generalization	1	0.28%
12.	Addition	1	0.28%
Total		354	100%

Twelve translation techniques were identified based on Molina and Albir (2002), with established equivalent being the most frequently used (239 times), followed by variation, implication, and pure borrowing.

Several shifts in politeness strategies occurred during translation, including four shifts from negative politeness to bald on record caused by reduction, four shifts from positive politeness to bald on record due to omitted in-group markers caused by reduction, three shifts from bald on record to negative politeness caused by discursive creation, and one shift each from bald on record to positive politeness, and from negative politeness sub-strategy minimize imposition to hedge caused by modulation. These shifts show how translation techniques influence the tone and interpersonal meaning of the dialogue. Despite the shifts, the overall translation quality remains high.

Table 3.1.3. Shifting in Politeness Strategies

No.	Politeness Strategy Shift	Data	Percentage
1.	Negative into Bald on record	4	30.77%
2.	Positive into Bald on record	4	30.77%
3.	Bald on record into Negative	3	23.08%
4.	Bald on record into Positive	1	7.69%
5.	Shifting types of Negative	1	7.69%
Total		13	100%

a. Negative Politeness Shifting into Bald on Record

Source text: Gumball: Please don't tell her!

Target text: Jangan beri tahu!

In the source text, the utterance employs a negative politeness strategy, specifically the sub-type that minimizes the imposition on the hearer, as shown by the inclusion of the word *please*. This reflects Gumball's intention to be courteous and less assertive, driven by his embarrassment and desire to keep Teri from informing Penny, the girl he likes.

However, in the Indonesian translation, the word *please* is omitted through the use of the reduction technique, resulting in the more direct phrase *Jangan beri tahu!* This removal of the mitigating element leads to a shift in politeness strategy from negative politeness to bald on record, where the directive becomes clear and unsoftened. A more suitable translation would be *Tolong, jangan beri tahu*, which would preserve the polite tone and reduce the imposition. This example illustrates how the omission of *please* leads to a shift in strategy, making the utterance more direct and less polite in the target language.

b. Positive Politeness Shifting into Bald on Record

Source Text: Gumball: "Dude, give me that!"

Target Text: Gumball: "Beri aku itu!"

In Darwin's dream, both he and Gumball are naked in a supermarket, but only Darwin is censored. Feeling embarrassed, Gumball demands the censor from Darwin. In the source text, the phrase "Dude, give me that!" reflects a positive politeness strategy, specifically the use of in-group identity markers. The term "dude" functions as a sign of familiarity and solidarity, helping to soften the directive by emphasizing the close relationship between the characters.

In the Indonesian translation, however, the utterance becomes "*Beri aku itu!*", omitting the word "dude" through the reduction technique. This omission removes the element that signals camaraderie, resulting in a shift from positive politeness to bald on record. The directive thus becomes more abrupt and less mitigated, increasing the potential for a face-threatening interpretation.

A more effective translation would be "*Kawan, beri aku itu!*", which retains the politeness marker and better conveys the original tone and interpersonal dynamic.

c. Bald on Record Shifting into Negative Politeness

Source Text: Gumball: "Tell us about it."

Target Text: Gumball: "Coba ceritakan."

In this scene, Gumball and Darwin approach Tobias to apologize. When Tobias expresses his anger toward them, Gumball urges him to explain the reason behind his frustration so they can reflect on their behavior. The source utterance represents a bald on record strategy, as it is delivered as a direct instruction without any mitigating elements.

In the Indonesian translation, however, the addition of the word '*coba*' serves as a hedge that reduces the directive's imposition. The presence of '*coba*' implies a suggestion rather than a strict command, signaling a more polite tone. This results in a shift from bald on record to negative politeness, as the translation attempts to acknowledge the hearer's autonomy and minimize potential face threat. The use of this hedging device makes the request appear more considerate and less coercive.

d. Bald on Record Shifting into Positive Politeness

Source Text: Gumball: "Go take a shower!"

Target Text: Gumball: "Ayo mandi!"

In the opening scene of Season 2, Gumball's family is busy cleaning the house to prepare for a visit from Penny, Gumball's crush. Covered in cookie dough, Gumball's father is told to take a shower so he can appear presentable. The source utterance "Go take a shower!" is a direct and unmitigated command, representing a bald on record politeness strategy.

In the target text, the directive becomes "Ayo mandi!", where the use of 'ayo' introduces a more inviting and inclusive tone. Though the speaker is not actually joining the activity, the word 'ayo' suggests shared involvement and functions as a marker of positive politeness, specifically the strategy Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity. This translation softens the imperative, reducing the sense of imposition and making the directive appear more friendly and cooperative.

e. Shifting Types of Negative Politeness

Source Text: Gumball: "Then let me hear you roar!"

Target Text: Gumball: "Coba kudengar kau mengaum!"

The source utterance is a directive speech act that employs negative politeness, specifically the strategy of minimizing the imposition. The phrase "let me" functions to soften the request by framing it as a personal wish rather than a direct command, thereby reducing pressure on the hearer and making the action seem like a small favor.

In the translated version, "Coba kudengar kau mengaum!", the word 'coba' introduces a shift in the sub-strategy of negative politeness from minimizing imposition to employing a hedge. In Indonesian, 'coba' acts as a softening device that makes the directive sound more tentative and respectful, signalling that the speaker is aware of the hearer's autonomy. Although the method of softening differs, both versions maintain the overall politeness level while adapting the expression to fit the linguistic and cultural norms of the target language.

Table 3.1.4. The Average Level of Accuracy

No.	Translation Quality	Total	
1.	Accurate	94	2.88
2.	Less Accurate	12	
3.	Not Accurate	0	

Table 3.1.5. The Average Level of Acceptability

No.	Translation Quality	Total	
1.	Acceptable	99	2.93
2.	Less Acceptable	7	
3.	Not Acceptable	0	

Based on Nababan et al. (2012), Out of 106 data, the average accuracy score is 2.88, indicating that the meanings of most source utterances are well preserved. The acceptability score is slightly higher, at 2.93, demonstrating that the translations sound natural and appropriate for the target audience. These findings suggest that the translator effectively balanced meaning, tone, and cultural context in rendering politeness strategies across languages.

3.2. Discussion

This study finds that three of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies namely bald on record, positive politeness, and negative politeness are present in *The Amazing World of Gumball* Season 2, with bald on record being the most dominant. This reflects the show's informal tone and the main character Gumball's direct communication style, especially in interactions with family and peers. This contrasts with prior studies Fitri (2022), Azan (2024) and Annisaa & Mahmud (2023), which found positive politeness to be dominant in children's media due to their emphasis on warmth and indirectness, this cartoon relies more on straightforward, sometimes sarcastic language for comedic effect.

Compared to Narayana et al. (2024) and Restuadi & Ardi (2021), who also found bald on record as the dominant strategy in adult-oriented series, this study confirms that directness can be frequent even in animated content for younger audiences, especially when humor, sarcasm, or exaggerated characters are central to the narrative.

Positive politeness is frequently realized through "in-group identity markers" (e.g., nicknames like "dude") and inclusive expressions such as "let's," which emphasize solidarity and shared action. These features align with the show's themes of friendship and cooperation, making the dialogue more relatable to younger audiences.

Negative politeness, though less dominant, also plays a role in softening directives. Strategies such as “minimizing the imposition” and the use of hedges show an effort to reduce the force of a command and acknowledge the hearer’s autonomy. These forms help maintain social harmony while still achieving the speaker’s goals, even in informal settings.

In translation, some shifts in politeness strategies occur, mostly due to techniques like reduction, discursive creation, and modulation. Reduction, in particular, often removes politeness markers such as the word “dude” resulting in a more direct tone in the target text. These shifts can affect character portrayal and the perceived tone of interactions.

Despite these changes, most translated utterances successfully convey meaning and sound natural to Indonesian viewers. Translation techniques such as established equivalent and variation contribute positively to these results, highlighting the importance of technique selection in maintaining both meaning and pragmatic intent

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In examining the politeness strategies employed, the study identifies three of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) four proposed types: bald on record, positive politeness, and negative politeness. The off-record strategy was not found in the data. Among the three, bald on record emerged as the most dominant, indicating a preference for direct and unambiguous speech. This aligns with the casual tone and humorous nature of the cartoon, where straightforwardness is often used for comedic or practical effect.

The assessment of the Indonesian translation reveals a high level of quality. With an average score of 2.9, the translations are both accurate and acceptable. The accuracy scores 2.88 suggests that most translated utterances preserve the original meaning effectively, while the acceptability score 2.93 indicates that the language used feels natural and appropriate for Indonesian viewers, especially within the context of a children’s animated series.

Overall, the study shows how politeness strategies are adapted in translation and how translation techniques, particularly reduction, can shift the pragmatic tone of directive speech. Despite these shifts, the translation maintains a high standard of quality, preserving the cartoon’s intended humor, tone, and communicative function.

Future research may expand this study by analyzing other seasons, series, or genres to explore broader patterns, including off-record strategies. Additionally, these findings can support translation and pragmatics education, encouraging students to account for the function and context of speech acts in translation.

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