



## \* Corresponding Author

**Zahraa Rasheed Khaluhin**Educational Directorate of  
Wasit Province**Hashim Aliwy Mohammed  
Alhusseini**College of Education for  
Human Sciences**Ilfat Aliwi Mohammed**, Al-Mustaqbal University,  
Babylon**Email:**[zahraa.rasheed@uowasit.edu.iq](mailto:zahraa.rasheed@uowasit.edu.iq)[hilewi@uowasit.edu.iq](mailto:hilewi@uowasit.edu.iq)[Ilfat.Aliwi.Mohammed@uomus.edu.iq](mailto:Ilfat.Aliwi.Mohammed@uomus.edu.iq)**Keywords:** Suicide, Social  
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**A Socio-pragmatic Study of Suicide in Eto Mori's *Colorful*****ABSTRACT**

This study offers a socio-pragmatic analysis of suicide as depicted in the Japanese novelist *Eto Mori's Colorful*, aiming to present a nuanced understanding of its causes and its impact on individuals and their social relationships. While previous studies have extensively explored adolescent suicide in literature from psychological and sociological perspectives, linguistic approaches to this theme remain relatively underexamined. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts Milroy and Gordon's Social Network Theory (2003) and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) within a qualitative textual analysis framework. The analysis centers on three key narrative domains: familial dynamics, educational settings, and spiritual guidance. Findings indicate that dense social networks can restrict opportunities for open communication, emotional validation, and support, thereby reinforcing feelings of isolation and helplessness. Furthermore, the novel conveys two critical insights relevant to adolescent experiences: first, it frames suicide as a grave and irreversible act, underscoring its profound consequences; second, it highlights the impermanence and unpredictability of life, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and hope in the face of adversity.

## دراسة اجتماعية تداولية للانتحار في رواية الملون لأيتو موري

م.م./ زهراء رشيد خلوهن / وزارة التربية- مديرية تربية واسط  
ا.د. هاشم عليوي محمد الحسيني / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة واسط  
م.م. التفات عليوي محمد/ جامعة المستقبل، بابل، العراق

### المستخلص

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً اجتماعياً براغماتياً للانتحار كما هو موضح في رواية "الملون" للروائي الياباني إيتو موري، بهدف تقديم فهم دقيق لأسبابه وتأثيره على الأفراد وعلاقاتهم الاجتماعية. في حين أن الدراسات السابقة استكشفت على نطاق واسع انتحار المراهقين في الأدب من وجهات نظر نفسية واجتماعية، إلا أن المناهج اللغوية لهذا الموضوع لا تزال غير مدروسة نسبياً. لمعالجة هذه الفجوة، تتبنى الدراسة الحالية نظرية الشبكة الاجتماعية لميلروي وجوردون (2003) ونظرية اللباقة لبراون وليفينسون (1987) ضمن إطار تحليل نصي نوعي. يركز التحليل على ثلاثة مجالات سردية رئيسية: الديناميكيات الأسرية، والبيئات التعليمية، والتوجيه الروحي. تشير النتائج إلى أن الشبكات الاجتماعية الكثيفة يمكن أن تحد من فرص التواصل المفتوح، والتحقق العاطفي، والدعم، مما يعزز مشاعر العزلة والعجز. علاوة على ذلك، تنقل الرواية رؤيتين نقديتين تتعلقان بتجارب المراهقين: أولاً، تصور الانتحار كفعل خطير لا رجعة فيه، مما يؤكد على عواقبه العميقة؛ ثانياً، يسلط الضوء على عدم ثبات الحياة وعدم القدرة على التنبؤ بها، ويؤكد على أهمية المثابرة والأمل في مواجهة الشدائد.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الانتحار، نظرية الشبكات الاجتماعية، نظرية اللطف، المراهقة، أيتو موري "الملون".

### 1. Introduction

In 2015, Lythcott observed that adolescents have long faced numerous difficulties and challenges—an issue that persists to this day. They struggle in the pursuit of appropriate education, are burdened by friendship dynamics shaped by hierarchical structures within classrooms, and endure either excessive parental interference or outright neglect. They also struggle with how to meet the expectations placed upon them, as well as with bullying and foreign ideas propagated through social media platforms. These platforms often plant feelings of inadequacy in their minds, leading to excessive comparisons with what they see daily. As a result, they begin to despise the lives they lead, and the idea of suicide, in their view, becomes the only solution.

Suicide is an act that touches all human lives and engages with the incomprehensible and unsayable. Numerous studies have focused on the reasons behind committing suicide in the adolescent literature through different lenses but none have provided a linguistic study

of this issue. Apseloff (1991) focused on the idea that the increased public awareness of adolescent suicide has led to its more frequent depiction in contemporary young adult novels. She stated that while a child's death from illness or accident is tragic, the suicide of a young person exerts a deeper psychological impact on family and friends, who not only grieve but also wrestle with guilt for not having foreseen or prevented the tragedy. Bennett (2017) showed that literary texts from the last hundred years are "*exemplary of a consistent but varied configuration of a critical concern in human affairs', namely, suicide*" (p. 1). He referred to suicide as not only a "*pervasively human impulse but also a pervasive literary theme that demands critical attention*" (p. 19). To explore the place where reasons end, in addition to traditional and clinical suicidology studies, fictional literature is considered to be an invaluable resource to address this issue and to shed light on the social, existential, and psychological causes of suicide among adolescence (Velasco, 2021).

*Eto Mori's Colorful* has indicated a serious subject with a comical touch and it has widely spread all around the world in different forms, whether it is a movie, a stage play, an anime, a manga, and much more. It has attracted those who read and those who did not enjoy and understand what are the consequences and the real reasons behind committing suicide and making bad decisions in life. The novel has transformed into one new shape after another, continuing to expand and grow. The novel sheds light on the issue of young people struggling and growing tired of the world before they have the chance to truly know it isn't limited to Japan but all around the world. Neither is the draining fight against a closed-off society in which the air grows more stagnant with each passing year (Green, 2021).

As for the language, one can state that a sentence can reveal different meanings and underlie different propositions from one context to another. The ambiguous sentence might be interpreted in more than one way (Audi, 1999). Thus, language can be considered a weapon that can destroy someone's life or vice versa. This article provides a socio-pragmatic analysis of some selected speeches mentioned in *Eto Mori's Colorful* and discusses some of the linguistic features used in selected dialogues in the novel which eventually reveals the indirect directions behind them.

## 2. Literature Review

Throughout the history of linguistic inquiry, languages have rarely been examined in isolation from their historical development, social contexts, or regional variations. Instead, they are inherently linked to real-world speakers and their lived experiences. Notably, society and language are deeply interconnected, with one shaping and influencing the other. This mutual dependence is evident in the very definition of language, which often references society as an essential factor (Holmes, 2013). Therefore, society can be broadly understood as any organized group of individuals who coexist for specific purposes, whereas language serves as the primary communicative tool through which members of a society interact and express their identities.

Moreover, the definitions of society and language are not independent as one depends on the other and in the definition of language there is a reference to society. If to look at the history of linguistics, it is rare to find language which is entirely cut off from current investigations in the history of that language, or of its social and/or regional distributions, or of its relationship to ideas, objects, events and actual speakers and listeners in the real world (Zaidan & Mohammed, 2020). From a theoretical perspective, language plays a pivotal role in shaping human interaction, facilitating communication, and structuring social relations. Simultaneously, social theorists, particularly sociolinguists, examine how societies function and how individuals navigate their social environments. In doing so, they draw upon key sociolinguistic concepts such as identity, power, class, solidarity, accommodation, status, face, politeness, and gender (Wardhaugh, 2010). These elements are crucial in understanding how language not only reflects social structures but also reinforces or challenges them.

Expanding on this, Kess (1992) highlights that speech is not merely a means of transmitting information; rather, it serves as a powerful tool for conveying intentions, emotions, and social positioning. This perspective is especially relevant when considering the characters in *Eto Mori's Colorful*, whose dialogues and inner monologues reflect deeper existential and societal concerns. By examining the socio-pragmatic dimensions of language

within the novel, one can gain insights into how individuals express psychological distress, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and seek validation within their social environment.

To further delineate the socio-pragmatic functions of language, it is essential to define the terms involved. Holmes (2013) describes sociolinguistics as the study of the intricate relationship between language and society, explaining why individuals alter their speech patterns depending on the social context in which they find themselves. More specifically, sociolinguistics investigates the social functions of language and how it conveys social meaning (Weigand, 2008). Within *Eto Mori's Colorful*, sociolinguistic analysis can shed light on how different social groups perceive and react to suicidal behavior, emotional distress, and social reintegration, thereby illuminating the broader social norms and taboos that shape interpersonal interactions.

Similarly, pragmatics plays a fundamental role in analyzing how meaning is constructed beyond the literal interpretation of words. Mey (2001) defines pragmatics as the study of language use in context, focusing on how speakers navigate meaning through speech acts, implicature, presupposition, and deixis. This dimension of language is particularly relevant in *Eto Mori's Colorful*, where communication is often layered with implicit meanings, unspoken emotions, and contextualized expressions of distress or hope. Pragmatics, therefore, provides a framework for understanding how language functions as a tool for negotiation, persuasion, and self-expression, especially in emotionally charged conversations.

Furthermore, Grundy (2008) describes pragmatics as a discipline concerned with how meaning is performed in interactions and negotiated between interlocutors. In *Eto Mori's Colorful*, this negotiation of meaning is evident in the protagonist's evolving relationships, as he must carefully interpret social cues, adjust his speech accordingly, and navigate the expectations imposed by society. The pragmatic dimension of politeness is particularly relevant in understanding how characters communicate their struggles while adhering to or resisting social norms.

### 3. Suicide in Literature

Suicide is a voluntary act by which one causes one's death. It is self-decreed, intended, and hoped for (Mandle, 1984). Suicide in recent children's novels is part of the diminished but continuing "new realism" that was at its height in the sixties and seventies. These novels focus on such problems of the maturing adolescent as lack of communication with parents, abuse of drugs and/or alcohol, sex, abortion, and physical and mental disabilities, sometimes including death. The subject of death in modern children's books has evolved from earlier in this century when a death in a book for children was most often of a pet or wild animal. Gradually, death occurred first to the old, as in "*Annie and the Old One*" (Miles & Parnall, 1971), or to adults, usually because of an illness "*Where the Lilies Bloom*" (Cleaver & Cleaver, 1969). Now, with the increasing public awareness of suicide among adolescents, that subject with its repercussions has been appearing in more recent novels for adolescents (Apseloff, 1991).

Teenage suicide has reached epidemic proportions in the United States an important issue in contemporary and is therefore society. The novel acts as a valuable vehicle for an exploration of this complex problem by the teenage population. Since many contemporary novelists have incorporated current thinking and research findings on suicide into their novels, their works serve as a useful device for the discussion and understanding of this problem by teenagers who are the primary victims of this self-destructive act (Berger, 1986).

Research indicates that the representation of suicide in YA literature can have both positive and negative effects. A study analyzing twenty-five YA novels featuring suicide found that these stories often reflect real-life statistics concerning race, gender, and settings, thereby providing relatable contexts for readers. However, the study also emphasizes the importance of how these narratives are framed, cautioning against depictions that might inadvertently romanticize suicide or present it as a viable solution to problems (Sloat, 2016).

#### **4. Eto Mori's Colorful: Thematic Concerns**

The novel of *Eto Mori's Colorful* addresses various significant thematic concerns, particularly focusing on the complexities of adolescence and the search for meaning in life. The protagonist, Makoto Kobayashi, is given a second chance at life in a new body after his

death, which serves as the foundation for exploring themes of redemption, identity, and personal transformation. The novel deals directly with the theme of suicide, both through Makoto's history and his interaction with other characters who are grappling with similar emotions.

Self-discovery is also prominent in the novel, with Makoto's return to life in another person's body symbolizing a quest to understand who he truly is. The conflict between societal expectations, personal desires, and familial relationships plays a crucial role in this journey. Mori portrays the challenges of teenage life, including academic pressure, social rejection, bullying, and strained family dynamics. The protagonist's journey reflects the universal experience of young people facing the overwhelming pressure to conform while seeking their place in the world.

Moreover, the theme of art is explored through Makoto's involvement in the art club, using painting as a form of emotional release and personal expression. The usage of color types and color expressions throughout the novel as in the text *"It wasn't some simple change, like things that I thought were black were actually white. It was more like when I looked closely, things I thought were a single, uniform color were really made up of a bunch of different colors. That's maybe the best way to describe it."* (p.99) reflects the broader theme of creativity as a way to process complex emotions and how art can serve as a refuge from life's difficulties.

Furthermore, the novel also delves into the intricate relationships between friends, family, and peers, showing how these connections can both heal and hurt. The portrayal of characters like Hiroka and Shoko, each dealing with their issues, underscores the messiness of human interaction and the need for empathy.

## 5. Research Methodology

Language is an important means of social communication. How language is used can affect people negatively or positively, especially when discussing sensitive issues like suicide, bullying, and family issues. This study is dedicated to investigate the suicide issue



in Eto Mori's '*Colorful*' in terms of socio-pragmatic theories, i.e., according to social network theory and politeness theory. The research follows a qualitative method which presents statements that offer a broad diversity of perspectives and opinions on the investigated phenomena. (Kitzinger, 1987). Moreover, a qualitative study is described as a process of inquiry that is based on methodological traditions to explore human or social problems (Creswell, 1998)

Sampling for qualitative research is not the same as sampling for quantitative analysis since researchers are not concerned with statistical generalization but with intentional or strategic sampling. As a result, one might conclude that what matters most in data gathering is the sample size and the depth of the data (Nakhilawi, 2016). The research data, represented in the novel, was deliberately and carefully selected to ensure it reflects the social and pragmatic dimensions embedded in key dialogues within the novel. Since these aspects are specifically manifested in three distinct contexts in the novel, i.e. ***the family, the school, and the role of the angel***, the analysis is accordingly structured into these three categories, each of which encompasses both linguistic and contextual features are directly or indirectly related to the suicide case and finally discussing the findings of the analysis.

### 5.1 Sociolinguistic Features

In examining the sociolinguistic function of language in *Eto Mori's Colorful*, this study employs Milroy and Gordon's Social Network Theory (2003), a framework primarily developed by sociolinguist Lesley Milroy. This theory posits that linguistic variation and usage are profoundly shaped by the structure and density of social networks, emphasizing that an individual's position within these networks influences language maintenance and change (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). Essentially, how individuals interact within their social circles plays a fundamental role in shaping linguistic practices, fostering or inhibiting language evolution.

According to Milroy and Gordon (2003), Social Network Theory categorizes social structures into two distinct types: dense networks and loose networks.



1. **Dense Networks:** These networks consist of tightly interconnected groups in which individuals maintain frequent and strong social ties. Due to the high level of interaction and social monitoring within such communities, linguistic variation is minimized, and language remains relatively stable. Members of these networks often adhere to established linguistic norms, as deviations from conventional speech patterns may be subject to social sanctions.

2. **Loose Networks:** Unlike dense networks, loose networks are characterized by weaker interpersonal connections and infrequent social interactions. The reduced intensity of these interactions allows for greater linguistic innovation and change. Since linguistic norms are not as strictly reinforced, new language forms or variations are more likely to emerge and spread among individuals who are less socially interconnected.

Milroy's framework underscores that a person's social network structure directly impacts their linguistic choices, influencing both the way they communicate and their likelihood of either preserving or deviating from linguistic norms. This theory is particularly relevant in analyzing *Eto Mori's Colorful*, as the protagonist must navigate complex social relationships while inhabiting a new identity. His interactions within different social groups—whether tight-knit (family, classmates) or loosely connected (casual acquaintances, outsiders)—directly affect his speech patterns and communicative strategies. The novel, therefore, provides a compelling case for exploring how social networks influence language use in the context of psychological struggles, social reintegration, and identity reconstruction.

## 5.2 Pragmatic Features

Furthermore, the pragmatic function of language in *Eto Mori's Colorful* can be analyzed through Politeness Theory, originally developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987). This theory explores how individuals manage social relationships and mitigate face-threatening situations through various politeness strategies. The concept of "face" refers to an individual's social self-image, which they seek to maintain in interactions. Brown and Levinson identify two primary aspects of the face:

1. **Positive face:** The individual's desire to be liked, appreciated, and included in social interactions.
2. **Negative face:** The individual's need for autonomy, freedom from imposition, and respect for personal boundaries.

In *Eto Mori's Colorful*, the protagonist's linguistic choices reflect various politeness strategies that facilitate his interactions and aid in his emotional and social reintegration. Politeness strategies are categorized into four types:

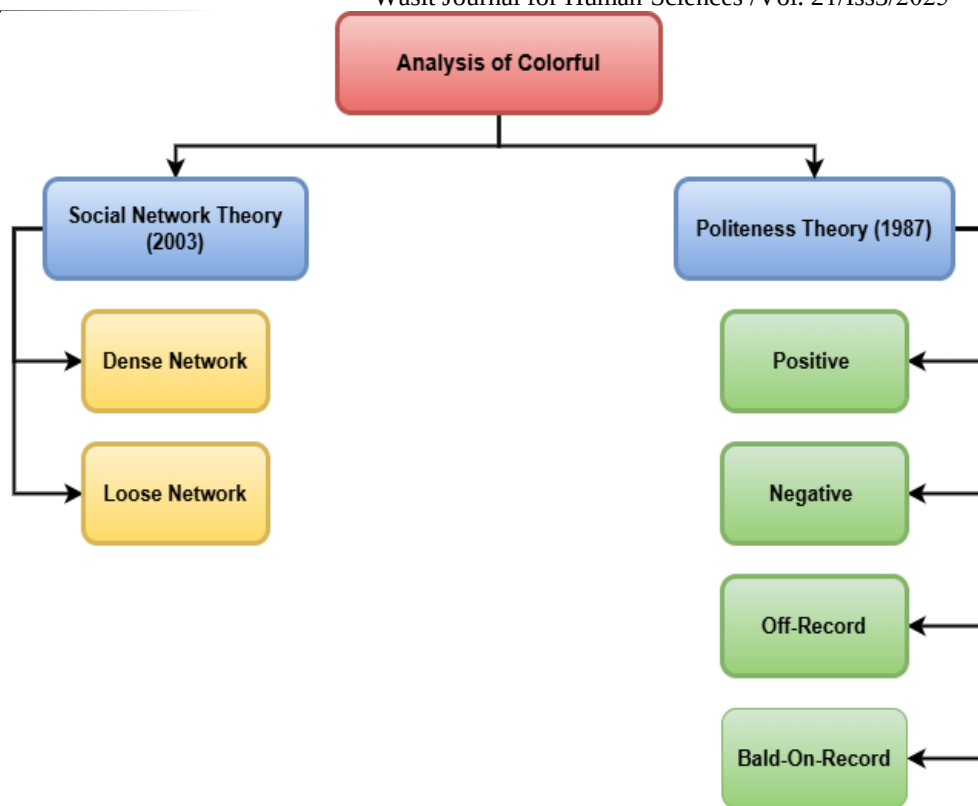
1. **Positive Politeness Strategies:** These strategies aim to strengthen social bonds and demonstrate solidarity. Examples include giving compliments (e.g., "You're really talented at this"), seeking agreement (e.g., "We all feel that way, don't we?"), offering assistance (e.g., "Let me help you"), and expressing empathy (e.g., "I completely understand what you're going through"). In *Eto Mori's Colorful*, the protagonist employs positive politeness strategies to foster friendships and gain social acceptance, particularly as he attempts to navigate new relationships with classmates and family members.
2. **Negative Politeness Strategies:** These strategies focus on minimizing imposition and respecting an individual's autonomy. Examples include hedging statements (e.g., "I'm not entirely sure, but perhaps..."), indirect requests (e.g., "Could you possibly...?"), apologizing (e.g., "Sorry to bother you, but..."), and using formal expressions (e.g., "Would you mind...?"). Such strategies are particularly evident in the protagonist's early interactions, where he is hesitant to assert himself, often attempting to avoid conflict and prevent social rejection.
3. **Off-Record Strategies:** These involve indirect communication, requiring the listener to infer meaning. Examples include hints (e.g., "It's getting late, isn't it?"), metaphor or irony (e.g., "That was an amazing idea" when it wasn't), and understatements (e.g., "I don't mind too much" when the speaker does). In *Eto Mori's Colorful*, off-record strategies emerge in situations where the protagonist

struggles to articulate his emotions directly, reflecting his internal conflict and social uncertainty.

4. **Bald-On-Record Strategies:** These are direct and unambiguous statements with little concern for politeness. Examples include commands (e.g., "Shut the door"), blunt statements (e.g., "You're wrong"), and assertions (e.g., "I don't like this"). In the novel, characters such as the protagonist's peers and family members often employ bald-on-record strategies, especially in emotionally charged moments. Such interactions highlight tensions, power dynamics, and moments of confrontation within the story.

The selection of this novel is based on the recurrence of suicide as a critical issue during adolescence, which is heavily influenced by societal factors and interpersonal interactions within a teenager's environment. **Social Network Theory** and **Politeness Theory** were chosen for the analysis over other linguistic or psychological frameworks due to their particular effectiveness in addressing the social and pragmatic dimensions of language use within the text. Unlike theories that primarily examine individual psychology or emotions in isolation, these frameworks emphasize the social dynamics that shape and influence emotional experiences. The adopted theoretical framework of the current study is represented in the figure below.

**Figure: 1** *Theoretical Framework of the Study adopted from Milroy and Gordon's (2003) and Brown and Levinson's (1987).*



## 6. Data Analysis

The analysis of the novel will be organized into three main sections.

1. The first section focuses on an examination of *the family* which significantly influences Kobayashi's behavior and decisions.
2. The second one is to give an exploration of *the school setting* which can be portrayed as a more appropriate environment for Kobayashi to express his emotions.
3. Finally, the analysis will address the role of *the angel* who serves as a guide and evaluator of Kobayashi's actions and responses.

Within each of these sections, Social Network Theory and Politeness Theory will be applied independently to investigate the use of language and its impact on the characters throughout the narrative.

### 6.1 The Family

In *Eto Mori's Colorful*, the family plays a pivotal role in the way suicide is discussed, or rather, avoided. The adopted theories provide insights into how the family's structure and linguistic choices shape their response to Makoto's suicide attempt.

Makoto's family represents a **dense** social network, with strong ties and close relationships. However, this network is disrupted by the cultural stigma surrounding suicide. Rather than providing an open, communicative space for Makoto's struggles, the family attempts to maintain social harmony by avoiding the direct discussion of his suicide attempt. The avoidance of the term "suicide" within the family demonstrates the pressure to preserve the family's positive face and maintain appearances. Makoto's family, despite their emotional concern, does not openly acknowledge the gravity of his suicide attempt. This is typical of dense social networks, where strong bonds often lead to an inclination to avoid uncomfortable topics that might disrupt social cohesion.

In the family, the father uses **positive politeness** strategies, often attempting to boost Makoto's spirits after his return. His language reflects his joy and relief, even though he doesn't address the underlying issues. His cheerfulness and frequent expressions of happiness, such as, "*I'm really so happy you came back to life, Makoto,*" and "*I've never thanked God so much before*" (p.13) are attempts to reinforce familial bonds without delving into the trauma Makoto has endured. His avoidance of serious topics shows a lack of willingness to confront the emotional burden his son carries.

Makoto's mother employs **negative politeness** strategies, where she focuses on indirect communication. She avoids addressing the suicide directly and speaks instead about Makoto's physical recovery, asking, "*How do you feel?*" or "*Should I turn on the TV?*" (p.12). This avoids confrontation and keeps the family environment polite, maintaining the appearance of normalcy. However, her hesitation is evident, as she seems to be tiptoeing around Makoto's emotional state, aware that addressing the suicide directly could disrupt the family's facade of harmony. She also uses **off-record strategies**; while she expresses concern, she refrains from directly discussing the emotional damage caused by the suicide.

attempt and that's represented in the letter she delivered to him instead of confronting him directly.

When it comes to his brother, Mitsuru's behavior can be interpreted through **negative politeness** as well, but it is more aloof and distant. When Makoto tries to engage with him, Mitsuru's response is cold and distant, epitomized by his reaction: "*Idiot. Can't even manage to die right*" (p.21). His communication is harsh, with a clear emotional distance, illustrating the **loose social network** of sibling relationships in which confrontation is avoided through emotional detachment. This emotional withdrawal from the family dynamics adds to Makoto's sense of isolation and emotional pain.

Generally speaking, **negative politeness** is evident in the family's reluctance to discuss the suicide directly, using avoidance and indirect language to shield both Makoto and themselves from the discomfort of confrontation. By avoiding explicit mention of suicide, the family can preserve social harmony and avoid the risk of being judged. Makoto's mother, for example, when talking to him, uses language that avoids any direct mention of suicide, which helps preserve both Makoto's face and the family's face. After Makoto's return from the hospital, his mother asks, "*How do you feel?*" rather than probing into the deeper, more troubling aspects of his recovery. This shows her discomfort with directly addressing the suicide attempt, preferring instead to focus on his physical health without acknowledging the trauma he's endured.

When Makoto asks about his family dynamics, especially why they don't speak of suicide, Prapura, the angel, explains: "*No one talks about it,*" *the angel says. "Not in that house. They won't even say the word. It's an unspeakable thing, you see."* This dialogue underscores how the family employs **off-record** strategies, avoiding direct reference to suicide to prevent confronting the moral and emotional complexities tied to the act. In their eyes, even mentioning the word may expose them to societal judgment or suggest they have failed as a family.

Makoto's family uses **positive politeness** in more subtle ways, such as comforting him with actions that emphasize care and affection. For example, his father repeatedly says,

“I’m so happy you came back!” which shows an attempt to maintain a positive family atmosphere and reinforce familial bonds, even though the emotional depth of the situation is not fully acknowledged. The positive politeness here is aimed at supporting Makoto’s emotional recovery but doesn’t directly confront the issues surrounding his mental health.

## 6.2 The School

At school, Makoto’s social network is **looser**, with fewer emotional ties compared to his family. His relationships with his peers are distant, and he feels alienated and disconnected, a feeling exacerbated by his suicide attempt. The school’s broader social network, consisting of classmates and teachers, is also affected by the stigma surrounding suicide, as seen in their avoidance of discussing the topic directly. The response from Makoto’s peers is a mixture of curiosity, discomfort, and distancing. They do not engage with him emotionally or ask questions about his condition, which highlights the disconnection and social isolation he experiences. His classmates’ whispers and stares when he returns to school indicate the awkwardness and confusion about how to interact with him after his suicide attempt.

In school, both **negative politeness** and **off-record strategies** are at play. The teachers and students do not address the suicide directly. Instead, they treat Makoto’s return with a mix of formality and avoidance. They avoid making him feel like an outsider by not mentioning the suicide attempt but simultaneously, they avoid acknowledging the emotional depth of the situation. For example, Makoto’s homeroom teacher, Mr. Sawada, handles the situation cautiously, even avoiding making any reference to the suicide attempt during their conversation about Makoto’s poor academic performance. Sawada addresses Makoto’s academic struggles in vague terms, saying: *“Kobayashi, I know you’ve been absent for a while... but we need to talk about your performance. You’re falling behind.”* (p.59). Here, Mr. Sawada avoids addressing the real cause of Makoto’s absence—his suicide attempt—opting instead to focus on academic issues, which is a negative politeness strategy aimed at not imposing the topic of Makoto’s emotional well-being on him. Later, during a conversation about Makoto’s school absence, Sawada awkwardly asks, *“Did you discuss this with your parents?”* (p.42) without bringing up the sensitive topic of mental health or



the actual reason for Makoto's hospital stay. The avoidance of suicide as a topic of discussion by both peers and teachers illustrates how off-record strategies function to maintain the social order without confronting the uncomfortable subject directly.

Hiroka's interactions with Makoto are laced with **positive politeness**. She is the only one who consistently engages with him without judgment or avoidance. Her speech, such as "I'm so glad you're all better," (p.29) is affirming, demonstrating an effort to connect with Makoto on an emotional level. She uses inclusive and encouraging language, reinforcing the warmth and affection she feels toward him. However, Makoto's mixed feelings about her involvement—especially after seeing her with a middle-aged man—further complicate their relationship and underscore his internal turmoil. Hiroka represents the warmth of a potential connection, but her relationship with Makoto remains tainted by his insecurities.

Finally, Shoko Sano's suspicion of Makoto's change in behavior and her **off-record strategies** to uncover the truth further illustrate the school's social dynamics. When she challenges Makoto, saying, "*I knew it. You've been acting strange all day. You're not the usual Kobayashi,*" (p.63) her persistence creates an uncomfortable atmosphere. She uses indirect strategies to get him to admit something, but Makoto's avoidance of her and the ensuing discomfort shows the alienation he feels. Shoko's sharp observation that Makoto has changed is contrasted with his inability to fully understand his transformation, illustrating the disconnect between his internal struggle and external perceptions.

### 6.3 The Role of the Angel

Makoto's interaction with Prapura represents an external network that provides him with guidance and an opportunity for self-reflection. Prapura is tasked with helping Makoto understand the consequences of his past actions. This external relationship is somewhat detached from the dense familial network or the loose school network, providing an objective perspective on Makoto's emotional state and his failed suicide attempt. Through Prapura, Makoto is encouraged to confront the reality of his situation. However, the relationship is strained as Prapura's blunt and often harsh delivery contrasts with the polite

avoidance exhibited by Makoto's family and peers. Prapura's role, while important for guiding Makoto's redemption, also forces Makoto to reckon with his past and the emotional and moral weight of his suicide attempt.

In their conversations, Prapura uses **bald-on-record** strategies, directly confronting Makoto with the truth about his life and actions. Prapura is unafraid to be blunt, often harshly pointing out Makoto's failures. One of the most poignant moments of bald-on-record speech comes when Prapura bluntly says: *"You're here for a do-over, but you won't succeed unless you truly face what you've done and change. You can't keep running away from this"* and when Prapura tells Makoto about the mistake he made in his previous life, he states: *"You made a pretty serious mistake in your previous life. You're not here by chance. This is your second chance."* Prapura's directness contrasts with the family's avoidance, serving as a jarring wake-up call for Makoto. This bald-on-record strategy is a direct approach, emphasizing the need for Makoto to face the reality of his situation without the usual avoidance tactics employed by his family or peers.

In contrast, Prapura also uses **negative politeness** strategies to mitigate the imposition of these difficult truths. When he tells Makoto about his previous life, he tempers the delivery, saying: *"Look, I don't want to make you feel worse... but you need to understand what's going on. You don't get this kind of second chance without having done something pretty big to deserve it."* Here, Prapura softens the harsh reality with a degree of empathy, acknowledging Makoto's emotional state while still driving home the necessity of change.

In this context, the interaction between Makoto and Prapura reveals a tension between bald-on-record confrontation and negative politeness, reflecting the internal conflict Makoto feels about confronting his past actions and his struggle to reconcile his guilt with his desire to move forward.

## 7. Discussion

In *Eto Mori's Colorful*, Eto Mori presents a nuanced portrayal of suicide, its triggers, and the consequences it has on individuals and their relationships. The analysis of the novel through the lens of Milroy and Gordon's (2003) Social Network Theory and Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory helps us understand how the structure of social relationships and the linguistic strategies employed in everyday interactions contribute to Makoto's emotional state and, ultimately, his suicide attempt. The complex interplay of avoidance, indirectness, and confrontation in the family, school, and between Makoto and the angel (Prapura) illustrates how linguistic practices and social networks can significantly affect an individual's choices and sense of self-worth.

The family's **dense** social network plays a significant role in maintaining linguistic stability through negative politeness strategies. This indirect approach of avoiding the explicit discussion of suicide may initially seem protective, as it seeks to spare Makoto and the family from the discomfort of confronting such a taboo subject. However, this avoidance inadvertently isolates Makoto emotionally and prevents him from fully engaging with the gravity of his situation. When a topic as sensitive as suicide is not addressed openly, it fosters a culture of silence and shame. Makoto, unable to talk about his feelings or understand the reasons behind his emotional turmoil, internalizes his struggles and builds a sense of isolation. In the absence of open conversation, he feels alone in his pain, which can contribute to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. This avoidance is not just about what is left unsaid but also about what is implied: the family's reluctance to confront the issue signals a belief that suicide is not something to be discussed or addressed, reinforcing the stigma. This creates a cycle where Makoto might begin to believe that he is not allowed to express his pain or seek help. Such emotional repression can make an individual feel as though there is no outlet for their suffering, leading to the overwhelming perception that suicide is the only way to escape their internal conflict.

At school, the social network is **looser**, and while students and teachers avoid directly addressing suicide, this creates a broader form of social isolation. Makoto is not

only physically isolated (due to his absence from school after the suicide attempt) but also emotionally disconnected from his peers. The whispers and stares from his classmates signal their discomfort and lack of understanding. Instead of offering support or even engaging with him on a deeper emotional level, they passively ostracize him, deepening his sense of alienation. The use of **off-record** strategies—where no one talks about his suicide attempt, and everyone pretends that everything is "normal"—reinforces this isolation. Makoto, already struggling with a lack of meaningful social bonds, feels as though no one can understand his pain. This lack of connection, compounded by the avoidance of his emotional needs, deepens his feelings of worthlessness and exacerbates his desire to escape from a world that seems indifferent to his suffering.

The conversation between Makoto and Prapura (the angel) offers a different form of communication. While Prapura's directness expressed through **bald-on-record** speech might be harsh, it contrasts with the avoidance and indirection seen in the family and school. Prapura's words force Makoto to confront his past actions and the emotional consequences of his suicide attempt. While it is uncomfortable and jarring, it is also necessary for Makoto's growth. However, the angel's words also suggest that Makoto's path to redemption requires him to face the consequences of his actions head-on. Prapura's bluntness is a wake-up call for Makoto, emphasizing the need for self-reflection and a willingness to engage with one's emotional turmoil.

## 8. Conclusion

The subtle yet powerful impact of negative politeness strategies and off-record communication creates a culture of silence around difficult topics like suicide. The dense social networks decrease the opportunities for open dialogue, emotional validation, and support. These linguistic practices reinforce feelings of alienation and helplessness in individuals, like Makoto, who are already struggling with deep emotional turmoil. The analysed data reveals that the novel imparts two crucial lessons essential for navigating life and coping with the pressures faced by adolescents. First, it underscores the notion that suicide is a profound and irreparable mistake, highlighting the gravity of such a decision.

Second, it emphasizes the transient nature of life, reminding us that its duration is uncertain, and its conclusion is unpredictable. Furthermore, the novel encourages readers to view their bodies not as possessions, but as entrusted vessels, upon which they have a responsibility to safeguard and guide along the right course in life.

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