

Lucien Brown\*, Soung-U Kim and Hyunji Kim

# The embodied enactment of politeness metapragmatics

<https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2021-0033>

Received August 17, 2021; accepted April 12, 2022; published online September 28, 2022

**Abstract:** Whereas previous research on metapragmatic talk has tended to focus on *what* people say about politeness, the current paper additionally explores *how* people talk about politeness. More specifically, we extend our analysis to the embodied resources, including gestures and nonverbal behaviour, that people use when enacting politeness talk. The data comes from two semi-structured interviews that we conducted with South Korean participants, both of whom were middle-aged university professors. We subjected the data to three rounds of analysis. First, we thematically coded the content of the narratives, revealing important differences in how these two participants from the same language background conceived of politeness. Second, we analyzed the appearance of verbal and non-verbal markers of deferential politeness. This analysis revealed that the overall bodily comportment of the two participants closely matched the different politeness narratives that they inhabited. Third and finally, we examined how the participants used bodily movements when evoking specific embodied practices related to politeness, and used embodied behaviours to represent abstract politeness-related concepts and map them onto spatial locations. Overall, the analysis shows that metapragmatic talk about politeness is an embodied achievement and thus needs to be treated within the remit of the multimodal turn in politeness research.

**Keywords:** embodiment; gesture; Korean; metapragmatics; politeness

## 1 Introduction

Politeness is not only something that we perform in everyday interactions, but also something that we are able to think and talk about (Kádár and Haugh 2013: 181).

---

**\*Corresponding author: Lucien Brown**, School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, Menzies Building, 20 Chancellors Walk, Monash University, Clayton 3800, Australia, E-mail: [Lucien.brown@monash.edu](mailto:Lucien.brown@monash.edu)

**Soung-U Kim**, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, SOAS University of London, London, UK, E-mail: [sk138@soas.ac.uk](mailto:sk138@soas.ac.uk)

**Hyunji Kim**, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA, USA, E-mail: [hkim138@kennesaw.edu](mailto:hkim138@kennesaw.edu)

The ways in which we talk about politeness take various forms. These may include in-the-moment comments about whether we find another participant's behaviour polite or otherwise ("How nice of you to say that?", "How rude!"), right through to poster campaigns promoting better levels of public civility, and whole books devoted to the "rules" of etiquette. The study of metapragmatics has attracted increasing attention in post-2,000 politeness research due to the need to adopt an emic perspective whereby the perceptions and evaluations of participants are foregrounded (see Eelen 2001). As stated by Verschueren (1999: 196), "there is no way of understanding forms of behaviour without gaining insight into the way in which the social actors themselves habitually conceptualize what it is they are doing."

One limitation of previous research on the metapragmatics of politeness is that the focus has tended to be restricted to the content of these metadiscourses. In other words, the research has focussed on *what* people say about politeness (e.g., Fukushima 2020; Fukushima and Haugh 2014), or the meanings of politeness-related metalexemes (e.g., Pizziconi 2007). The question of *how* people talk about politeness – including embodied action – has not been studied in detail. Beyond the politeness metalexemes themselves, we know little about the resources (verbal, nonverbal and conceptual) that speakers use to talk about politeness.

In recent years, a growing body of research has shown that politeness is a multimodal phenomenon (see Brown and Prieto 2017). In this paper, we aim to bring the study of politeness metapragmatics within this multimodal approach to politeness, by examining how speakers use embodied resources to enact different metapragmatic understandings of politeness. As with other forms of social action, we posit that politeness metadiscourse (as well as politeness-related interaction in general) is inherently multimodal and "built through the mutual elaboration of diverse semiotic resources with quite different properties" (Streeck et al. 2011: 4).

The current paper also addresses the need for more studies into variation in metapragmatic understandings of politeness. To date, studies have tended to look at variation across different cultures, either socio-culturally more remote (e.g., Pizziconi's 2007 study of Japan and Britain) or more closely related (e.g., Su's 2019 study of Taiwanese people in Mainland China). Fukushima and Haugh (2014) also looked at different generations of speakers in two cultural contexts (Japan and Taiwan). In contrast, the current paper focuses on the micro-level context of a qualitative interview, analyzing the enactment of politeness metapragmatics by two speakers of the same language, Korean. They are both female, similar age, professors at the same university in Seoul, and speakers of Seoul Korean. Despite this, the two participants displayed

contrasting metapragmatic understandings of politeness, with one emphasizing the need to use correct language, and the other the need to show mutual attentiveness and active listenership.

Whereas previous studies that have used interview data would stop at analyzing the content of the participants' conceptualizations of politeness, we conducted two further analyses of the multimodal ways in which the participants enacted their narratives. First, we quantified the appearance of a range of "politeness markers" (Kádár and House 2020) in the data, focussing on verbal markers of deference (Haugh et al. 2015), namely honorifics, and non-verbal cues that are known to be suppressed in deferential speech (manual gesture, head movements, gaze avoidance, self-touch) (Brown and Winter 2019). Finally, we qualitatively explored instances in which the participants used embodied resources to enact specific features of politeness metapragmatics, including to evoke nonverbal behaviours that they referred to, and to map more abstract concepts of politeness onto three-dimensional spaces. Our multimodal analysis reveals how the contrasting metapragmatic understandings of the two participants are reflected in two different modes of linguistic behaviour and bodily comportment.

Through explorative analysis of the narratives provided by these two participants, the goals of the current paper are twofold. First, the paper aims to demonstrate how politeness metadiscourse is enacted in an embodied fashion during qualitative interviews. The second goal is to show how metapragmatic understanding of politeness, including embodied aspects, varies even between speakers of the same language and with similar backgrounds. This study aims to take the study of metapragmatics beyond the verbal and embed the field within the emerging view that language is an intrinsically multimodal, and therefore embodied, phenomenon.

## 2 Background

We now provide important background information on politeness metapragmatics (Section 2.1), the embodiment of politeness (2.2) and politeness in Korean (2.3).

### 2.1 Politeness metapragmatics

Metapragmatics refers to "the study of awareness on the part of ordinary or lay observers about the ways in which they use language to interact and communicate with others" (Kádár and Haugh 2013: 181).

Politeness metapragmatics exists on four different levels: metalinguistic, metacommunicative, metadiscursive and metacognitive (Kádár and Haugh 2013). Here, “metalinguistic” refers to the metalanguage used to talk about politeness (e.g., lexical items such as “courteous” or “rude”). “Metacommunicative” refers to explicit acts of commenting on politeness (e.g., “how polite!”, “how rude!”), whereas the “metadiscursive” level refers to supra-individual discourses on politeness, including media discourse. Finally, “metacognitive” refers to cognitively grounded states such as attitudes and expectations regarding polite behaviour and their presentation through discourse or pragmatic markers.

A number of studies have explored the metapragmatics of politeness across a range of languages. On the metalinguistic level, Pizziconi (2007) explored the semantic domains of politeness in British English and Japanese by measuring native speakers’ judgments of similarity between different politeness-related metalexemes. The results showed important cross-cultural differences, for example, “friendliness” was homologous with politeness in British English, whereas Japanese speakers associated politeness with modesty and restraint. Meanwhile, Fukushima and Haugh (2014) used qualitative interview data to compare understandings of “attentiveness, empathy and anticipatory inference” in Japanese and Chinese (see also Fukushima 2020). Su (2019) explored the conceptual understanding and semantic field of *limao* ‘politeness’ among Taiwanese living in China. On the metacommunicative level, Haugh (2010) analyzed Computer Mediated Communication data for conflicting views of an “offensive” email written by a New Zealand professor to an overseas student, while Chang and Haugh (2011) used interview data to explore Australian and Taiwanese perceptions of an intercultural apology. Politeness metadiscourse was the focus for Brown (2021), who looked at media discourses surrounding the perceived “overuse” of honorifics in Korean.

As mentioned in the introduction, so far studies have tended to look at the “content” of politeness metapragmatics rather than the techniques or resources through which it is achieved. Brown (2021), however, notes that the Korean media uses multimodal resources for elevating the level of moral concern about the overuse of honorifics. Despite Kádár and Haugh’s (2013) recognition that politeness metacommunication and metadiscourse constitute social action themselves, the linguistic and multimodal resources used during the very act of talking about politeness have not been extensively analyzed as yet.

## 2.2 Embodiment of politeness

In this paper, we explore politeness metadiscourse as a type of social action that is fundamentally multimodal and embodied. Our recognition of the embodied

nature of politeness metadiscourse fits in with the increasing recognition that “face-to-face interaction is, by definition, multimodal interaction in which participants encounter a steady stream of meaningful facial expressions, gestures, body postures, head movements, words” (Stivers and Sidnell 2005: 1).

The word “embodiment” here refers to the use of the body as a semiotic location for producing socially embedded meanings. We use the term to incorporate both gesture (i.e., message-conveying bodily action, typically performed by the hands – Kendon [2004: 7]) and non-verbal behaviour (posture, gaze, facial displays, etc.), as well as bodily adornment (dress, makeup, jewellery) and grooming (see Withey 2015). Speech-accompanying body movements are coordinated to varying extents with verbal production, and bodily action is co-constructed between multiple participants (see Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2017; Goodwin 2018; Mondada 2016: 344).

During everyday interaction, participants use various embodied resources to display politeness-related meanings. Some gestures that are considered culturally taboo will be avoided for the sake of politeness. For instance, in Ghana some people consider it taboo to point with the left hand (Kita and Essegbey 2001), whereas in Yoruba culture it is impolite to point at an elder with the index finger (Ola 2009). Speakers will also suppress various other casual bodily behaviours, including various facial cues (e.g., eyebrow movements, nose wrinkles, head tilts) and bodily cues (gestures, self-touches), adopt more compact body positions, and use ritualized politeness behaviours (bows, open-hand points, etc.; see Brown and Prieto 2017).

## 2.3 Politeness in Korean

Korean politeness is characterized by the use of an intricate system of grammaticized honorifics. These forms can be divided into two categories: (1) addressee honorifics that mark the speaker’s relation to the hearer, and (2) referent honorifics that mark the relationship with the sentence referent, who may be the hearer or a third party (Lee and Ramsey 2000). The main devices for addressee honorifics are the verbal suffixes *-yo* and *-supnita*. Referent honorifics include the suffix *-si*, and suppletive forms (e.g., *cinci* vs. *pap*, ‘meal’). There are also honorific terms of address, as well as a distinction between the plain first-person pronoun *na* and the humble *ce*, among others. Honorific speech is referred to as 존댓말, *contaysmal*, ‘respect.speech’, whereas non-honorific speech is 반말, *panmal*, ‘half.speech’.

Honorifics work alongside other modalities to index social meanings such as deference and respect. *Contaysmal* speech addressed to status superiors is lower

pitched, quieter, slower and more monotonous (Winter and Grawunder 2012). It is accompanied by direct bodily orientation, the maintenance of gaze, more erect and compact postures, the suppression of gestures and touch, and iconic deferential behaviours such as bows (Brown and Winter 2019).

The use of honorifics and other associated behaviours to communicate respect to elders and status superiors is believed to occupy an important position in Korean politeness metadiscourse. Yoon (2004) notes that Korean social relationships are broadly based on the distinction between two groups: people who are “above” the speaker (in Korean, *윗사람* *wissalam* ‘above.person’) who need to be addressed in *contaysmal*, and people “below” (*아랫사람* *alayssalam* ‘below.person’). People “above” need to be treated with “respect” (*concwung*), which has been assumed in previous literature to be a hierarchical concept (i.e., “respect for elders/superiors” rather than “respect for fellow human beings” – Brown 2010: 260).

The ideology of respecting elders has faced increasing competition from other conflicting politeness-related metadiscourses. Already Kim-Renaud (2001: 42) observed that being overtly power-conscious, subservient or self-effacing has been falling out of favour in South Korea, and is being replaced by what she refers to as a “friendlier” and “nicer” mode of politeness. As traditional power hierarchies are challenged, the meaning of “respect” may be shifting away from the simple meaning of “elder respect”. Kim and Brown (2019) argue that even outside of clear social hierarchies, Korean speakers are increasingly concerned with their status being afforded a certain minimum level of respect.

### 3 Methodology

We now present more information about the data collection (3.1) and our research participants (3.2), including a reflexive statement on our own backgrounds and epistemological positions (3.3). Subsection 3.4 describes our analytic procedure and situates it within the nexus of previous studies.

#### 3.1 Data collection

The data used in this paper consist of two hour-long semi-structured interviews with two Korean speakers. Interviews have been widely used in previous studies exploring metapragmatic understandings of politeness, including Chang and Haugh (2011), Fukushima and Haugh (2014), and Fukushima (2020).

The interviews, conducted by the second author, focussed on the metapragmatics of politeness in Korean. They were video recorded with the help of two student assistants, using a Canon XA-11 camera with a top-mounted Rode NTG-2 mic, accompanied by parallel audio recordings on a Zoom H2n recorder. The questions used for the interview can be found in the Appendix.

## 3.2 Participants and researchers

Both participants were female professors at a large university in Seoul. The first participant, who emphasized the correct use of honorifics, shall be referred to by the pseudonym Dr Lee. Born and raised in Seoul, she had lived in the United States for approximately a decade to pursue postgraduate studies and was in her fifties. The second participant, who viewed politeness as residing in mutual attentiveness and active listenership, will be referred to as Dr Song. Also born and raised in Seoul, she had lived in France for several years while she completed her PhD and was in her forties. We expected that the individual backgrounds of the two participants, including the fact that both had lived overseas for extended periods of time, would influence their metapragmatic understandings of politeness.

The other participant in the data is the interviewer, who is the second author of the paper (referred to herein by his initials “SC”). Although the analysis that follows will focus primarily on the productions of the interviewees, we acknowledge that these productions are in fact co-constructed by the interviewer, and that the methodology and analysis are unavoidably coloured by the academic and personal biases of our three-person research team. All three of us see politeness as multiplicitous and contested, and as metapragmatic talk as a type of situated and stylized multimodal performance, and this perspective was inevitably reflected in the kinds of questions we included in the interview. Whereas the first and third authors are pragmaticians, the second author is a documentary and descriptive linguist. The second and third authors are both native speakers of Korean (who were raised and educated in Germany and South Korea, respectively) whereas the first author speaks Korean as an additional language.

## 3.3 Analysis

The interviews were transcribed in ELAN (Version 5.7; 2019), which is a tool for the multimodal annotation of video resources.

We carried out three rounds of coding. First, we thematically coded the content of the politeness narratives adopting a methodology based on grounded theory (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). This approach involves an iterative, bottom-up procedure whereby so-called “repeating ideas” in the data are coded and increasingly broader themes and concepts are abstracted from them in an inductive approach.

Whereas previous studies of metapragmatic interview data tend to stop at analyzing the verbal content, we performed two further analyses. The second analysis involved analyzing the data for its pragmatic characteristics, specifically coding and quantifying the appearance of established verbal and non-verbal indices of Korean politeness. On the verbal level, we coded addressee and referent honorifics, as well as plain (i.e., non-honorific) addressee forms. We also coded the humble first-person pronoun *ce* and its plain counterpart *na*. For the embodied side, we annotated the behaviours listed in Table 1, based on a synthesis of previous findings of Brown and Winter (2019). Although these verbal and non-verbal markers may be considered pragmatic rather than metapragmatic, we follow Kádár and Haugh’s (2013: 187) observation that discourse or pragmatic markers are part of a speaker’s repertoire for conveying metacognitive awareness, defined by Kádár and Haugh (2013: 187) as “cognitively grounded states, such as attitudes, expectations and so on.”

For the third analysis, we coded instances in which the participants used embodied resources to enact specific features of politeness metapragmatics. We approach body movements in a holistic and interconnected fashion as *complex multimodal gestalts* (Mondada 2014) whereby different nonverbal behaviours and linguistic resources are packaged together in a temporal and interactional fashion, adopting a transcription method broadly based on Mondada (2016).

**Table 1:** Coding of nonverbal cues.

| Cue             |                   | Findings from Brown and Winter (2019)      |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| Manual gestures |                   | Less frequent in polite speech             |
| Facial cues:    | Smiles            | More frequent in polite speech (for women) |
|                 | Eyelid movements  | –  |
|                 | Eyebrow movements | Less frequent in polite speech             |
|                 | Nose wrinkles     | –  |
|                 | Lip movements     | –  |
| Head movements: | Nodding           | More frequent in polite speech             |
|                 | Shaking           | –  |
| Gaze avoidance  |                   | Less frequent in polite speech             |
| Self-touch      |                   | Less frequent in polite speech             |



## 4 Data presentation

We begin by presenting the analysis of the content of the politeness narratives (4.1). We then present the quantitative analysis of the verbal and embodied resources used by the participants (4.2), before focussing in on qualitative analysis of instances where the participants used embodied resources to enact specific features of politeness metapragmatics (4.3).

### 4.1 Politeness narratives

Dr Lee and Dr Song offered different metapragmatic understandings of Korean politeness, including different preferences in how they used honorifics.

For Dr Lee, a recurring theme in her narrative was the importance of using honorifics correctly. Maintaining correct honorifics use was important in order to avoid situations where the speaker hurts the feelings of others (*kipwun sanghata* 기본 상하다) through impolite language. According to Dr Lee, since language speaks for you (*taypyenhata* 대변하다) as part of your identity (*cengcheyseng* 정체성), your language needs to be accurate. Dr Lee associated politeness with careful (*cosimsulepta* 조심스럽다) vocal qualities, the suppression of gestures, and upright and tidy (*pantushata* 반듯하다, *kacilenhata* 가지런하다) bodily comportment.

However, Dr Lee was clear to differentiate incorrect honorifics use from intentional impoliteness. She reported that her students frequently misused honorifics, but that this was not malicious and did not hinder communication. She actively corrected the mistakes that her students made with honorifics in order to prepare them for life after graduation.

Dr Lee reported that she always used honorific speech towards her students, even after students complained to her during a fieldtrip that this was too distancing for informal out-of-class interaction. This blanket use of honorifics thus somewhat disrupted traditional modes of hierarchical language usage that some students expected in interactions with professors.

As for Dr Song, she reported a clearer distinction between honorifics and intentions, and a more explicit opposition to the conventions of honorific language. Dr Song said that she did not feel any actual respect (*concwung* 존중) in the use of honorifics. Instead, she tended to see it as a hegemonically imposed formal convention (*hyengsik* 형식) that was an impediment to communication, since it created a feeling of distance (*kelikam* 거리감).

Whereas Dr Lee implicitly challenged traditional patterns of honorifics usage by applying honorifics in a blanket fashion, Dr Song explicitly challenged convention by deliberately avoiding honorifics at times. She saw this as a way of breaking down (*thaphahata* 타파하다) social hierarchies. In her family, she purposefully used non-honorific *panmal* towards older male family members, including her father and a cousin who was now in his 70s. Below, Dr Song questions the actual benefits of using honorifics:

(1) SONG (00:51:01)

- 1 SONG 어렸을 때는 그래서 엄마가 시키는 대로 썼거든요? [...]  
'When I was a child, I used to do as I was told by my mother, you know?'
- 2 그 극존칭이 누구를 위한 것인가?  
'[but at some point I wondered] Who are those high honorific forms for?'
- 3 그러면 아빠는 그 얘기를 들어서 기분이 좋은가? [...]  
'Does it make our dad feel better if he hears us talk like that?'
- 4 그렇지 않은 거 같더라고요. [...]  
'I could see that it didn't.'
- 5 그래서 일부러, 의도적으로 안썼던 부분도 있는거 같거든요.  
'So I think at times, I intentionally avoided using [those forms], too.'

Instead of seeing politeness as residing in the way people talk (*malhanun pangsik* 말하는 방식), Dr Song saw it as residing deeper in one's 태도 *thayto* 'embodied attitude', a term that includes embodied demeanour in addition to cognitive or emotional disposition. In particular, she placed emphasis on displaying attentiveness (*cipcwung* 집중), and active listenership and engagement (*houng* 호응) via multimodal channels such as bodily orientation. When teaching, Dr Song used explicit strategies to uphold attentiveness in her classes such as proscribing note taking to ensure that students would keep their heads raised and maintain gaze on her.

In contrast to Dr Lee, Dr Song would only use honorifics towards students when addressing the class as a whole, but would otherwise use non-honorific speech. She was dismissive of the innovative pattern (used by Dr Lee) whereby seniors reciprocated honorifics with juniors, which she saw as akin to treating someone like a stranger (*cheum ponun salam*; 처음 보는 사람). However, it should

be noted that since she still expected students to address her in honorifics, her use of non-honorifics towards students perpetuated a hierarchical pattern of interaction (the students use honorifics, but Dr Song does not). Therefore, even though Dr Song more explicitly rejected traditional hierarchical standards, her use of language with students was ultimately more hierarchical than that of Dr Lee.

We therefore see commonalities, but also important differences between the two narratives. Both participants viewed politeness as being somewhat divorced from language and involving embodied dimensions, with Dr Song more explicitly locating politeness in the “embodied attitude” mentioned above and, specifically, in mutual attentiveness and active listenership. Dr Lee alone talked of the importance of “correct” honorifics usage, whereas Dr Song explicitly saw herself as someone who breaks down traditional hierarchies of honorifics use. In tension with this, it was Dr Song rather than Dr Lee who used honorifics in more traditional and hierarchical ways with her students. Ultimately, both participants valued consideration and nurturing of their students, but tried to achieve this goal in different ways.

## 4.2 Verbal and non-verbal analysis

In addition to differences in their politeness narratives, Dr Lee and Dr Song also employed distinct use of verbal and nonverbal pragmatic markers. In this section, we provide a quantitative overview of these behaviours, before moving to a more detailed analysis of how these behaviours embodied specific metapragmatic features in the next section.

Dr Lee was consistent and uniform in her use of honorific speech towards the interviewer, whereas Dr Song switched between honorific and non-honorific language. Table 1 shows that referent honorific forms were used more frequently by Dr Lee (0.8 occurrences per minute, compared with 0.4 for Dr Song), addressee honorifics more by Dr Song (4.5 per minute, compared with 2.6) and the humble 1P pronoun was used at the same frequency by both speakers (0.6 per minute). However, as shown in Table 2, non-honorific addressee forms and the plain 1P pronoun *na* were only used by Dr Song, and never by Dr Lee. Dr Song thus mixed between honorific and non-honorific speech, whereas Dr Lee only used honorific language (and indeed only ever used *-yo* as an addressee honorific, never *-supnita*). The uniformity of Dr Lee’s speech is remarkable, given that studies of conversational data show that speakers of Korean tend to dynamically switch between different honorific levels (Brown 2015; Strauss and Eun 2005) (Table 3).

Moving to nonverbal behaviours, Dr Lee’s default body position throughout the interaction was compact and erect (Figure 1a). She sat forward in her chair,

**Table 2:** Frequency of verbal honorific forms.

|                      |            | Dr Lee | Dr Song |
|----------------------|------------|--------|---------|
| Referent honorifics  | <i>N</i>   | 33     | 24      |
|                      | Per minute | 0.8    | 0.4     |
| Addressee honorifics | <i>N</i>   | 103    | 255     |
|                      | Per minute | 2.6    | 4.5     |
| Humble 1P pronouns   | <i>N</i>   | 25     | 35      |
|                      | Per minute | 0.6    | 0.6     |

**Table 3:** Frequency of non-honorific forms.

|                             |            | Dr Lee | Dr Song |
|-----------------------------|------------|--------|---------|
| Non-honorific speech styles | <i>N</i>   | 0      | 35      |
|                             | Per minute | –      | 0.6     |
| Plain 1P pronouns           | <i>N</i>   | 0      | 113     |
|                             | Per minute | –      | 2.0     |

without using the backrest. The resting position of her hands was in her lap or clasped on the desk, and her feet were planted close together. In contrast, Dr Song sat in a reclined position with her arms often folded and her left leg crossed so that her left foot rested on her right knee (Figure 1b). The resting position of her hands was around chest height, and she held a pen in her right hand that she often clicked. Dr Song was less consistent in maintaining eye contact: we counted 673 occurrences (12 occurrences per minute) when she withdrew eye contact, whereas Dr Lee only withdrew eye contact on 201 occasions (5.2 per minute). Dr Song touched her own body or face on 113 occurrences (2 times per minute), whereas Dr Lee only did so 41 times (1.1 per minute).

Gestures and other body signals were applied more frequently by Dr Song. As shown in Table 1, Dr Song used an average of 9.8 manual gestures per minute, whereas Dr Lee only used 3.6. As for facial cues, Dr Song used these movements more than four times as frequently as Dr Lee (8.6 times per minutes, compared with 2.1). Eyebrow movements showed the largest distinction with Dr Song applying these 293 times (5.2 per minutes), but Dr Lee on only 25 occasions (0.6 per minute). Finally, whereas Dr Song used 580 head movements (nods and shakes) at 10.2 occurrences per minutes, these only occurred 262 times in Dr Lee’s data (6.7 per minute) (Table 4).

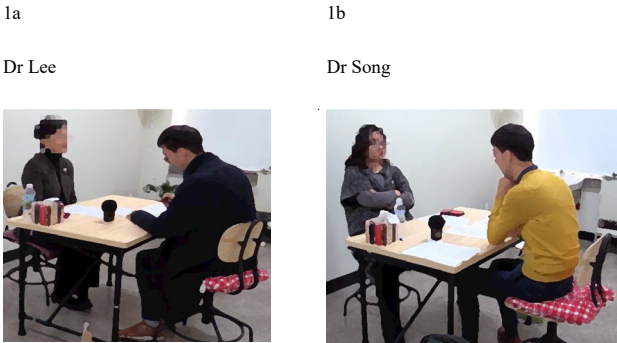


Figure 1: Participant body positions.

Table 4: Frequency of manual gestures and other body signals.

|                 |            | Dr Lee | Dr Song |
|-----------------|------------|--------|---------|
| Manual gestures | <i>N</i>   | 141    | 554     |
|                 | Per minute | 3.6    | 9.8     |
| Facial cues     | <i>N</i>   | 80     | 486     |
|                 | Per minute | 2.1    | 8.6     |
| Head movements  | <i>N</i>   | 262    | 580     |
|                 | Per minute | 6.7    | 10.2    |
| TOTAL           | <i>N</i>   | 483    | 1,620   |
|                 | Per minute | 12.4   | 28.6    |

In sum, Dr Lee and Dr Song enacted contrasting verbal and nonverbal behaviours. With her uniform honorific language and constrained postures and gestures, Dr Lee behaviour corresponds to the formal or deferential mode of comportment that marks social distance (Brown and Winter 2019; Brown et al. forthcoming). On the other hand, with her frequent excursions into non-honorific speech, relaxed posture and animated gestures, Dr Song’s behaviour displays more of the cues that are associated with intimate interactions, and/or that are permitted when interacting with a status inferior. The bodily comportment of the two speakers thus differed sharply, even though they were engaged in an identical activity with the same interviewer, who was not known to either of them.

One interpretation could be that the two participants calculated their relative social status with SC in different ways, with Dr Lee seeing him as a scholarly colleague, and Dr Song viewing him more as junior. But an additional interpretation,

which finds strong support in the interview data, is that the use of pragmatic markers by the two participants was simply consistent with the differing strategies for showing consideration to others that the two participants articulated during the interviews. Dr Lee's rigid adherence to deferential speech and behaviour is consistent with her descriptions of how she strictly preserves honorifics usage as default, including with people who may be junior to her. On the other hand, Dr Song's frequent use of non-honorific language is consistent with her claims that she would initiate non-honorific speech where possible in order to promote comity. Moreover, her animated use of various speech styles and nonverbal cues is in tune with her observations that she would use her voice and bodily demeanour to engage the attentiveness of others. The pragmatic cues are therefore manifestations of the participants' attitudes towards politeness, or what Kádár and Haugh (2013: 187) refer to as metacognitive awareness. The contrasting performances of the two participants illustrate the variable ways that speakers engage with politeness, as well as the important role of speaker agency in the application of pragmatic cues (see Mitchell and Haugh 2015).

### 4.3 The embodiment of politeness

We now look specifically at how participants employed the nonverbal resources quantified in the previous section when enacting politeness metapragmatics. Two main patterns are explored. We first examine how participants used bodily movements when evoking specific embodied practices related to politeness. Then, we look at how speakers used embodied behaviours when describing politeness concepts and, in particular, how they actively mapped these concepts onto spatial locations. We will see how the two participants enacted politeness concepts in different ways, reflecting their contrasting metapragmatic understandings of politeness. Since Dr Song used more animated nonverbal behaviours, she also used nonverbal resources to represent polite behaviours and concepts at a higher frequency.

As noted in Section 4.1, both participants rendered politeness as a multimodal phenomenon. When describing the embodied practices that they viewed as being polite or impolite, they would frequently physically enact the behaviours being described. Looking first at the enactment of positively valorized social practices, in Example 1, Dr Lee, when asked to define *chincel* 'kindness, courtesy', cited the embodied practice of helping someone who asks for directions by actually personally escorting them to their destination. The action of accompanying this imaginary person, who is referred to in honorifics as *ku pwun* 'that esteemed

person', is depicted with a movement of an open-palmed hand across the body. This gesture marks the path of movement towards the imagined destination, with the open-palmed hand shape suggesting the motion of guiding someone by placing the hand on or just behind their lower back. The use of this gesture (in line 2) and the verbal honorific *ku pwun* 'that esteemed person' (line 1) situate the embodied practice as a deferential one, even before the practice itself is mentioned in line 3. Just as pragmatic gestures may precede verbal content (see Mondada 2014), the sequential organization of this example whereby the gesture foreshadows the verbal description of the embodied practice, shows that the same can occur during metapragmatic talk.

(2) LEE (00:22:58)

- 1 LEE [...] 그 분을 끌고,  
that person.esteemed lead  
'[...] If you lead that esteemed person'  
lee \*hands below desk\*  
sc +writes+

- 2 LEE 예를 들어서  
example take  
'for example'  
lee \*raises right hand and sweeps across body\*  
sc +writes+  
fig #fig 2



2

- 3 LEE 목적지까지 데려, 데려- 모시고 간다든지  
destination.to take.or  
'and take them to all the way to their destination, perhaps'  
lee \*hands below desk\*  
SC +writes+

- 4 LEE 친절을 베푸는거죠.  
 Kindness bestow  
 ‘that would constitute bestowing kindness on them’  
 lee \*hands below desk\*  
 SC +writes+

The configuration of the gesture used in the example above (as well as the verbal marker *ku salam* ‘that esteemed person’) locate the embodied practice that Dr Lee is describing as a deferential one being performed towards a superior. Dr Lee’s selection of a deferential gesture is consistent with her use of deferential verbal and non-verbal behaviour as default.

Whereas Dr Song also uses gestures to enact politeness-related practices, her enactment does not show the same deferential qualities. In Example 2, Dr Song uses manual gestures to invoke the iconic polite practice of holding a door open for someone and the impolite counterpart of just letting it close, which she uses when asked to illustrate the contrast between *paylye* ‘empathic consideration (for others)’ and *yeyuy epsta* ‘a lack of civility’. The description of the polite action of holding the door open (line 2) is accompanied by a gesture of the hand reaching out to the right seemingly to represent holding the door and/or ushering the other party through it. But notably this is a gesture that is large on the lateral dimension, and also features splayed fingers. Brown et al. (forthcoming) note that laterally large gestures as well as open-handed gestures tend to be suppressed when gesturing deferentially. We also see that the verbal content of the utterance features the plain lexical item for person, *ku salam* (line 2). The embodied behaviour being enacted is therefore not a deferential one, but rather a basic form of civility required when interacting with other people, regardless of their age or rank.

(3) SONG (00:28:59)

- 1 SONG 문  
 ‘The door’  
 song \*gestures and turns gaze to right’  
 SC +writes+  
 fig #fig 1





- 2 SONG 뒤에 오는 사람 잡아주고 하는[게]  
 behind.coming.person hold.open  
 ‘holding it open for the person coming behind you’  
 song \*gesture stroke\*——\*gesture hold——\*  
 sc +writes—————+  
 fig #fig 2a #fig 2b



2a



2b

- 3 SC [여]  
 ‘yes’  
 song \*returns hand to rest\*  
 sc \*reciprocates gaze\*  
 fig #fig 3



3

- 4 SONG 배려잖아요  
 ‘is *paylye* (consideration), right?’  
 song \*open palm gesture\*  
 sc +adjusts glasses+  
 fig #fig 4



4

- 5 SONG      탁                      놓고 가면  
                  carelessly              let.close  
                  ‘if you just left it to close on someone’  
 song        \*gestures upwards\*  
 sc            \*looks at notes\*  
 fig           #fig 5



5

- 6 SONG      아,                      진짜 예의없다!  
                  Wow                      really.rude  
                  ‘[one would then say] wow, that was really rude!’  
 song        \*grimaces in contempt\*———\*shakes head to side\*  
 sc  
 fig           #fig 6a                      #fig 6b



6a



6b

- 7 SC    아  
          ‘Ah’
- 8 SONG    이렇게 얘기하는 거죠.  
                  Like.this.say  
                  ‘this is when you would say it’  
 song        \*nods\*  
 sc            +writes+  
 fig           #fig 8



8

Looking more closely at this example, we see that the multimodal resources are temporally and spatially organized. In lines 1 and 2, the “polite” movement of holding a door open is enacted with a right-handed gesture extending to the side of the speaker, whereby the door (Figure 1), the movement of the people through it (Figure 2a) and the act of holding it open (Figure 2b) are closely coordinated to the verbal content. Dr Song elongates the end of the utterance in line 2, inviting SC to look up from his notes (line 3), utter a response token and meet her gaze. Her next utterance (line 4), where she defines this embodied movement as signifying *paylye* ‘consideration’, is accompanied by a palm-up presentational gesture and, on the verbal level, the *-canha* suffix. Both this suffix (Yeon and Brown 2019: 440) and palm-up gestures (Cooperrider et al. 2018) are known to mark obviousness (“How could it be otherwise?”). From line 5, for the contrasting behaviour of letting a door slam, Dr Song produces a rigorous upward gesture synchronized with the ideophone *thak*, which depicts letting the door close in brash manner, and which Dr Song delivers with volume increase and heavy aspiration. In line 6, Dr Song enacts the purported reaction that people would have to this gesture using direct reported speech, which is enacted and contrasted with the rest of the sequence by the adoption of a lower pitched voice and a grimacing facial expression.

Dr Song also uses bodily behaviours to enact the concept of embodied attentiveness, which as noted in Section 4.1 was crucial to her understanding of politeness. In Example 4, when asked about nonverbal aspects of social behaviour, Dr Song enacts the ways in which she applied embodied attentiveness while listening to other presentations on a conference panel in which she participated. The panel members were seated in a line facing the audience, so during presentations made by other members, Dr Song could only maintain gaze by craning her head to the side, a bodily movement that she enacts in line 2. Dr Song’s enactment of neck craning occurs during a pause in interaction (i.e., when no verbal content is produced), and nothing in her verbal description specifically mentions the neck, or the motion of craning it. In other words, the embodied movement here carries the main content of the utterance. We also note that Dr Song’s enactment of this behaviour is described not as something she perceived at the time of the conference, but something that she realized later when looking at photographs of the event (line 1).

(4) SONG (00:17:04)

|   |      |                                   |        |        |
|---|------|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|
| 1 | SONG | 근데,                               | 내 모든   | 사진이    |
|   |      | but                               | my all | photos |
|   |      | ‘But, all photos with me in them’ |        |        |

song        \*beat-----\*\*beat-\*  
 sc        \*maintains gaze-----\*  
 fig        #fig 1a        #fig 1b



1a



1b

- 2     SONG    [pauses]  
 song    \*rotates head and torso to right\*  
 sc       \*maintains gaze-----\*  
 fig       #fig 2



2

- 3     SONG        이렇게                되어 있는 거예요  
                  like.this                were  
                  ‘they were like this, can you imagine’  
 song        \*rotates head and torso back to center\*  
 sc        \*maintains gaze-----\*  
 fig        #fig 3



3

Dr Song also used bodily movements when evoking the embodied practices that she used to uphold embodied attentiveness from others, including while

teaching. These practices include moving around the classroom, which she depicts with a large transversal hand movement (Example 5, line 1), maintaining her own gaze on the students, which she depicts with a pointing gesture originating at eye level (Example 6, lines 1, 2), and using a loud voice (Example 7, line 1), which was embodied via an upward movement of her right arm (thus equating “higher” volume with “higher” space):

(5) SONG (00:03:15)

- 1 SONG 많이 움직이고  
a.lot move  
'You have to move a lot'  
song \*moves hand transversally\*  
SC \*maintains eye contact  
fig #fig 1



1

(6) SONG (00:03:17)

- 1 SONG 계속 이렇게  
whole.time like.this  
'and like this, the whole time'  
song \*hand point to right\*  
sc \*maintains eye contact\*  
fig #fig 1



1

- 2 SONG 이렇게 [시선을] 내가 줘야  
 like this gaze I have.to.give  
 ‘you have to look at them’  
 song \*hand point to left—————\*  
 sc \*maintains eye contact\*  
 fig #fig 2



2

- 3 SC [시선을]  
 ‘gaze’  
 sc \*nods\*

- 4 SONG 또 그들도 주니까  
 also they give  
 ‘so that they reciprocate it’  
 song \*gestures towards self\*  
 sc +touches glasses+  
 fig #fig 4a #fig 4b



4a



4b

- (7) SONG (00:01:13)

- 1 SONG 목소리가 더 크죠  
 voice more big  
 ‘my voice gets louder’  
 song \*gestures up\*  
 sc \*writing\*

fig #fig 1



1

In addition to using embodied actions to enact specific examples of politeness-related bodily movements, Dr Lee and Dr Song also used bodily movements for enacting politeness-related concepts, and for mapping them onto imaginary and physical spaces. Both of the participants used gestures on the vertical dimension to signal the honorific level of speech, as well as the associated concepts of relative age and status, and also the intensity of the voice (Example 7, above). Gesturing upwards was used to refer to higher forms of honorifics as well as advanced age or social standing and a louder voice, with these excursions often accompanied by rising pitch and/or increased intensity. In the following example, when asked about the relative importance of age and social status, Dr Lee gestures upwards when referring to elders who deserve respect since they have “lived a long time” (line 1), and then downwards when stating that this respect for elders should be maintained “even if their social standing is low” (line 2):

(8) LEE (00:20:02)

- 1 LEE 오래 살았기 때문에  
 long.time live since  
 ‘Since they have lived for longer’  
 lee \*raises right hand\*  
 SC +retains eye contact+  
 fig #fig 1



1

[...]

- 2 LEE 사회적인 지위는 낮아도  
 social standing low.even.if  
 ‘even if their social standing is low’  
 lee \*lowers right hand\*  
 SC +retains eye contact+  
 fig #fig 2



2

Our participants’ knowledge of politeness metaconcepts showed a threefold localization into the body, mind and verbal content, which they referred to by means of spatial references. In Example 8, when asked to define *concwung* ‘respect’, Dr Song points at the head to locate *concwung* as being located in the mind (line 2). She contrasts *concwung* with *paylye* ‘consideration’, which she sees as an outward expression that resides in *thayto* ‘embodied attitude’ and which she marks with a sagittal movement away from the body (line 3). Note here again that in the first instance (line 1) the manual gesture precedes and foreshadows the verbal content in that the hand point to the head co-occurs with the discourse marker *ccom*, which is then followed by the verbal context *simsengcekin pwupwun* ‘the mental part’:


(9) SONG (00:30:19)

- 1 SONG 존중이  
 ‘concwung (respect)’  
 song \*raises chin\*  
 sc +makes eye contact+
- 2 SONG 썬 좀 심성적인 부분이라면,  
 ssup a bit mental component.if  
 ‘[inhales] if it is a more mental component’  
 song \*hand point to head\*  
 SC +adjusts glasses+



fig

#fig 2



2

3

SONG

배려는

약간

태도적인

부분인 거 같아요.

Paylye

somewhat

thayto

component.is

'I think *paylye* (empathic consideration) then is more part of

*thayto*

(embodied attitude)'

song

\*hand lowers to chest level\*

\*sagittal movement of hand\*

SC


+nods+


+nods+

fig

#fig 3a

#fig 3b





3a

3b

In other cases, participants would point to the mouth in order to locate politeness-related concepts or behaviours as residing at the verbal level. In Example 9, Dr Lee points to her mouth when discussing how some of her students are not in the habit of using honorifics correctly (line 3). The gesture to the mouth is sequenced with the word *pelus* ‘habit’ thereby locating the perceived habit of misusing honorifics as occurring at the verbal level, rather than coming from a lack of manners or consideration. Consistent with this, Dr Lee goes on to talk about how students’ infelicities in the use of honorifics do not come from any conscious attempt to be impolite, but are unintended mistakes coming from a lack of competence in the usage of complex politeness markers (not shown in extract). Importantly, it is the gesture alone that is working here to locate the habit of using honorifics correctly as

residing in the mouth since this connection is not explicitly made in the verbal content of the utterance.

(10) LEE (00:03:08)

- 1 LEE 존댓말을 제대로 쓰지 않거나, 좀  
 contaysmal properly use not FILLER  
 ‘Either they don’t use *contaysmal* (polite speech) properly’

lee \*palm up gesture\*

sc \*writing\*

fig #fig 1



1

- 2 LEE 아예 안 쓰거나 안 쓰는 학생들도 있는데-  
 at.all not use not using students exist  
 ‘there are in fact students who do not use *contaysmal* at all’

lee \*two-handed gesture\*

sc +writing+

fig #fig 2



2

- 3 LEE 그게 이제 버릇이 안 돼 가지고  
 that now habit not.in  
 ‘it’s because, like, they are not in the habit.’

Lee \*hand point to mouth\*

SC +writing+

fig #fig 3



3

In this section, we have demonstrated that embodied movements play an important role in the politeness narratives delivered by both of the participants, at least in this interview context. These bodily movements are used both for enacting embodied politeness practices, and also for mapping politeness-related concepts onto physical spaces. Although these embodied movements most typically accompany verbal content, at times the content of the gestural part of the utterance is not explicitly encoded on the verbal level, or occurs temporally later than the bodily movements. We also saw that these embodied movements played vital roles in the realization of the contrasting enactments of politeness metapragmatics offered by Dr Lee and Dr Song.

## 5 Discussion

Previous studies of politeness metapragmatics, including those using interview data (e.g., Chang and Haugh 2011; Fukushima 2020; Fukushima and Haugh 2014), have tended to focus only on the conceptual content of speaker narratives, and have not analyzed in depth the verbal and nonverbal means via which speakers achieve metapragmatic talk. In contrast, we have shown that talk delivered during metapragmatic interviews features rich use of multimodal features, that play an important role in the way that this talk is enacted.

The three different layers of our analysis all make their contributions to politeness research, both as separate analyses and in their contribution to the study as a whole. Whereas previous empirical studies of metapragmatics may give the impression that individuals from the same culture possess similar metapragmatic understandings of politeness, the qualitative analysis in Section 4.1 of this paper has shown that this is not necessarily the case, even for speakers who share very similar backgrounds. The analysis also showed that speakers' metalinguistic awareness of politeness includes not only awareness of verbal features, but also of nonverbal elements, an area of metapragmatic knowledge

not captured in previous studies. Although we only looked at two participants, our paper nonetheless contributes to our understanding of how metapragmatic knowledge shows intra-language variation, and encapsulates knowledge of multiple modalities of politeness. Indeed, the variation that we found between our two speakers was very pronounced, as was the importance of embodiment.

For the study of the metapragmatics of Korean in particular, as well as other so-called honorific languages such as Japanese, the results call into question studies that equate honorifics with politeness in a fairly direct fashion, as well as claims that speakers value the existence of honorifics as important vestiges of their cultures. For instance, Yoon (2004: 191) described a “shared understanding” in Korean cultural scripts underpinning the use of honorifics, including an assumption that Koreans believe “it is good to think about people [in a hierarchical fashion]” (Yoon 2004: 194). Meanwhile, Ide (2005: 61) claims that honorifics are markers of dignity and elegance, and that a person who uses honorifics according to the social norm “is likely to be judged as a nice person”. Even though the current paper only presented data from two participants, we see that metapragmatic understanding of honorifics is more nuanced and variegated than what these previous studies suggest. Dr Song positioned herself as someone who deliberately breaks down the conventions of honorifics usage, and Dr Lee also challenged them somewhat with her horizontal use of honorific language with her students. The findings call into question Ide’s (2005: 46) blanket claim that “East Asians cannot think of abolishing honorifics from their systems of language” and point towards the need for a more differentiated perspective on politeness in East Asian cultures. The way that Dr Song describes politeness in terms of attentiveness (*cipcwung*), however, is in line with Fukushima (2020) and Fukushima and Haugh’s (2014) claims that attentiveness is an important metapragmatic concept in East Asia.

In Section 4.2, we quantified the verbal and non-verbal pragmatic markers of (non-) deferential talk that appeared in data collected from the two speakers. This analysis revealed that Dr Lee adopted a deferential mode of linguistic and embodied behaviours, whereas Dr Song displayed more of the cues that are associated with intimate interactions. The way that the linguistic and embodied behaviours patterned together (i.e., constrained nonverbal behaviour with strict use of honorifics for Dr Lee; animated non-verbal behaviour and frequent excursions into non-honorific language for Dr Song) confirms the findings of previous studies that these nonverbal behaviours are indeed markers of the same stances (Brown and Winter 2019; Brown et al. forthcoming). But, on the other hand, the fact that our two participants adopted contrasting modes of behaviour (i.e., Dr Lee was more deferential and Dr Song was more intimate) in an identical interview situation show us that the application of these behaviours does not

necessarily pattern onto specific contexts in a straightforward way. Various factors may be at work here including the two participants' contrasting "readings" of the social situation of the interview and their own beliefs about politeness, as well as the effects of a multitude of individual factors that were not controlled for, including participant age (Dr Lee was 8 years older than Dr Song). The contrasting performances of Dr Lee and Dr Song support claims that speakers exercise a degree of agency in how they apply politeness-related behaviours and interpret pragmatic meanings (see Mitchell and Haugh 2015).

Although our data is only from two participants, we see a high congruity between the content of Dr Lee and Dr Song's narratives and their verbal and, perhaps more interestingly, their non-verbal performances during the interviews. Our analysis indeed suggests that these nonverbal cues are used for embodying metacognitive awareness (Kádár and Haugh 2013: 187), in other words, cognitively grounded attitudes towards politeness. Whereas Kádár and Haugh (2013: 187) see these cognitive states as being manifest in "discourse or pragmatic markers", the current study shows that nonverbal politeness markers can also play a role in displaying the speaker's feelings, thoughts and beliefs. Indeed, it is well known in studies of nonverbal behaviour in social psychology that bodily movements reveal the emotional attitude of the speaker, even in cases where the speaker attempts to conceal it ("non-verbal leakage" – Ekman and Friesen 1969). In politeness research as well, we see that analyses of non-verbal as well as acoustic cues are crucial to the resolution of cases where speaker language contains mixed polite and impolite messages (see Brown 2013; Xu and Gu 2020). In the current study, rather than manifesting stances that the participants were trying to conceal, the nonverbal behaviours of our two speakers embody metacognitive states that are highly consistent with their metapragmatic talk. Dr Lee's constrained nonverbal behaviour with strict use of honorifics was consistent with the emphasis that she placed on correct use of honorifics, whereas Dr Song's animated non-verbal behaviour and frequent excursions into non-honorific language were consistent with her preference for using non-honorific speech to promote intimacy and engagement. Since this occurred in an interview setting, it remains to be explored whether this would also happen in naturalistic interactions where speakers' attention is not focussed on metapragmatics.

Finally, the qualitative analysis in Section 4.3 showed that the two participants used bodily movements in various ways for enacting embodied politeness practices, and locating politeness-related concepts onto abstract or physical spaces during the interviews. The embodied aspects of the participants' narratives were important, particularly in cases where the gesture added extra meaning or contextualization to the verbal content of the utterances, or preceded the verbal content temporally. The analysis picked up on distinctions between the narratives

of Dr Lee and Dr Song that would not have been evident without this recourse to multimodal analysis, including the way that Dr Lee framed certain embodied politeness practices as being deferential, whereas Dr Song depicted them in a non-deferential manner.

The way that people talk about politeness via enacting the speech and behaviours of others displays obvious links with previous research on storytelling (Goodwin 1990; Kindell et al. 2013: 498; Streeck and Knapp 1992; Wilkinson et al. 2010). Like storytelling, metapragmatic talk is also “speech about speech” (Günthner 1999: 686) in that participants are talking about language usage that occurs or has occurred in other contexts. Indeed, our data features frequent instances of speakers describing their own past behaviours, as well as those of others, including the things that they or others said or thought. As such, metapragmatic talk features the same “layering of voices” and polyphony that can be found in storytelling (Günthner 1999). What the current paper shows is that this “talk about talk” does not only involve the verbal representation of verbal events, but also the embodied enactment of multimodal practices. In other words, politeness meta-discourse does not only involve speakers talking about polite words, but also acting out (im)polite gestures and bodily configurations. These might be embodied practices that speakers have observed themselves, or that have been relayed to them indirectly by other people or mediums (e.g., Dr Song talked of how she observed her own behaviour in a photograph). Although the current paper focussed on interview data, it seems reasonable to suggest that naturalistic talk about politeness will also feature this kind of polyphony.

Finally, the analysis showed that speakers use gesture to locate politeness metaconcepts regarding the “level” of speech, the planes of social relationships and the metaphysical locations of politeness-related concepts onto three dimensional spaces. Here, it was particularly noteworthy that the participants used the vertical gesture space to represent relative age and status, as well as the level of speech. These observations are consistent with a body of literature that has shown that speakers use vertical spatial metaphors and gestures to talk about power and status (see Winter et al. 2020). In Korean politeness metalanguage, such verbal metaphors include *wissalam*, ‘person above’ (i.e., status superior), *높임말*, *nophimmal*, ‘elevating language’ (i.e., honorifics) and *하대하다*, *hatayhata*, ‘speak down to someone’ (includes the use of non-honorific speech). Whereas the participants used the vertical space when talking about hierarchical social relationships, they used the lateral gesture space (i.e., they gestured to the side) when referring to symmetrical social relationships such as those with friends. Our analysis has shown that spatial gestures play an important role in evoking vertical and also horizontal relationships and speech patterns during metapragmatic interviews.

## 6 Conclusion

The current paper has established that embodied nonverbal behaviors play an important role in the ways that people speak about politeness during metapragmatic interviews. We have shown that speakers' nonverbal behaviours can be seen as indicators of their cognitively grounded states, and are used to enact embodied aspects of politeness and also more abstract politeness-related concepts.

Some limitations and unanswered questions remain. Notably, like many previous studies in this area, the current paper employed data that was elicited via qualitative interviews rather than naturalistic talk. This allowed us to compare how two different speakers replied to the same basic set of questions and embodied their narratives in this fairly controlled situation where the talk was focussed on the topic of politeness (although this focus was never explicitly mentioned to the participants *a priori*). However, it remains unclear, for instance, whether the embodied performances of our speakers are typical of their overall comportment, or were specific modes of behaviour that they enacted due to the topic of the interview, which would have heightened their awareness of their use of language and bodily movements. But our results show, at a minimum, that speakers are *capable* of recruiting embodied behaviours for the enactment of metapragmatic talk, and that they can tightly integrate these nonverbal resources into their talk. These embodied actions, which occurred even in the more controlled environment of the current study, may be much richer when they occur in everyday interaction. Future research will need to look more specifically at how politeness metapragmatics is enacted in naturalistic talk. In this way, we are hoping to more firmly cement the study of metapragmatics within the multimodal turn of politeness research.

**Acknowledgments:** We are eternally grateful to Grace Eunhae Oh at Konkuk University for her enormous help to make the data collection possible, and to Bodo Winter for his input during the early stages of the project. We also thank Heeju Song, Yiseul Won, Kumseon Choi and Lucy Park who worked as RAs on the project at different stages. We gratefully acknowledge the generous feedback of two anonymous reviewers, through which we were able to improve our manuscript substantially.

**Research funding:** This research was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and Korean Studies Promotion Service of the Academy of Korean Studies (<https://doi.org/10.13039/501100019898>) under the grant AKS-2016-LAB-2250003.

## Appendix: Interview questions (English translations)

The interviews were semi-structured and the following was used just as a guide.

### Part #1: General Questions

1. What is the most important thing for you when interacting with other people?
2. What do you have to be careful to do when interacting with older people?
3. What do you have to be careful to do when interacting with close friends?
4. How does the way you use language change according to the context?
5. How does the sound of your voice change according to the context?
6. How does the way you use nonverbal behavior change according to the context?
7. What does \_\_\_\_\_ (term used by participant) mean?
8. Can you give me an example of \_\_\_\_\_ (term used by participant)?

### Part #2: Questions about Concepts

We asked questions about the following Korean politeness-related terms: *yeyuy paluta* ‘polite’, *yeyuy epsta* ‘impolite’, *concwunghata* ‘respect’, *mwusihata* ‘disrespect’, *chincelhata* ‘courteous’ and *pwulchincelhata* ‘discourteous’.

1. What does \_\_\_\_\_ (politeness-related term) mean?
2. When do you have to pay attention to \_\_\_\_\_?
3. How do you talk when you are performing \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What nonverbal behavior do you associate with speaking in *contaysmal* and *panmal*?
5. Does your facial expression, posture or gestures change in *contaysmal* and *panmal*?
6. Is *yeyuy palum* ‘politeness’ and *contaysmal* a positive thing? Can too much of it be negative or burdensome?

### Part #3: Cross-perceptions of different groups

1. How does politeness differ between men and women?
2. How does politeness differ between older and younger generations?
3. Do you think speaking Seoul is more polite than speaking a regional dialect?

## References

Auerbach, Carl & Louise Silverstein. 2003. *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York: NYU Press.



- Brown, Lucien. 2010. Politeness and second language learning: The case of Korean speech styles. *Journal of Politeness Research* 6(2). 243–270.
- Brown, Lucien. 2013. “Mind your own esteemed business”: Sarcastic honorifics use and impoliteness in Korean TV dramas. *Journal of Politeness Research* 9(2). 159–186.
- Brown, Lucien. 2015. Revisiting “polite” –yo and “deferential” –supnita speech style shifting in Korean from the viewpoint of indexicality. *Journal of Pragmatics* 79. 43–59.
- Brown, Lucien. 2021. Politeness as normative, evaluative and discriminatory: The case of verbal hygiene discourses on correct honorifics use in South Korea. *Journal of Politeness Research* 18(1). 63–91.
- Brown, Lucien, Hyunji Kim, Iris Hübscher & Bodo Winter. forthcoming. Gestures are modulated by social context: A study of multimodal politeness across two cultures. *Gesture*.
- Brown, Lucien & Pilar Prieto. 2017. (Im)politeness, prosody and gesture. In Jonathan Culpeper, Michael Haugh & Daniel Kádár (eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of linguistic (im)politeness*, 357–379. London: Palgrave.
- Brown, Lucien & Bodo Winter. 2019. Multimodal indexicality in Korean: “doing deference” and “performing intimacy” through nonverbal behavior. *Journal of Politeness Research* 15. 25–54.
- Chang, Wei-Lin Melody & Michael Haugh. 2011. Evaluations of im/politeness of an intercultural apology. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 8(3). 411–442.
- Cooperrider, Kensey, Natasha Abner & Susan Goldin-Meadow. 2018. The palm-up puzzle: Meanings and origins of a widespread form in gesture and sign. *Frontiers in Communication* 3. 23.
- Couper-Kuhlen, Elizabeth & Margret Selting. 2017. *Interactional linguistics: Studying language in social interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eelen, Gino. 2001. *A critique of politeness theory*. Manchester: St Jerome.
- Ekman, Paul & Wallace Friesen. 1969. Nonverbal leakage and clues to deception. *Psychiatry* 32(1). 88–106.
- ELAN. 2019. *ELAN (Version 5.2) [Computer software]*. Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. Available at: <https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/>.
- Fukushima, Saeko. 2020. *Metapragmatics of attentiveness: A study in interpersonal and cross-cultural pragmatics*. Sheffield: Equinox.
- Fukushima, Saeko & Michael Haugh. 2014. The role of emic understandings in theorizing im/politeness: The metapragmatics of attentiveness, empathy and anticipatory inference in Japanese and Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 74. 165–179.
- Goodwin, Charles. 2018. *Co-operative action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodwin, Marjorie. 1990. *He-said-she-said: Talk as social organization among black children*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Günthner, Susanne. 1999. Polyphony and the ‘layering of voices’ in reported dialogues: An analysis of the use of prosodic devices in everyday reported speech. *Journal of Pragmatics* 31(5). 685–708.
- Haugh, Michael. 2010. When is an email really offensive?: Argumentativity and variability in evaluations of impoliteness. *Journal of Politeness Research* 6. 7–31.
- Haugh, Michael, Wei-Lin Melody Chang & Daniel Kádár. 2015. “Doing deference”: Identities and relational practices in Chinese online discussion boards. *Pragmatics* 25(1). 73–98.
- Ide, Sachiko. 2005. How and why honorifics can signify dignity and elegance. In Robyn Lakoff & Sachiko Ide (eds.), *Broadening the horizon of linguistic politeness*, 45–64. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kádár, Daniel & Juliane House. 2020. ‘Politeness markers’ revisited – A contrastive pragmatic perspective. *Journal of Politeness Research* 17(1). 79–109.

- Kádár, Daniel & Michael Haugh. 2013. *Understanding politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kendon, Adam. 2004. *Gesture: Visible action as utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, Eunyong Ariel & Lucien Brown. 2019. Agency and impoliteness in Korean online interactions. *Internet Pragmatics* 2(2). 233–259.
- Kim-Renaud, Young-Key. 2001. Change in Korean honorifics reflecting social change. In Thomas McAuley (ed.), *Language change in East Asia*, 27–46. London: Curzon.
- Kindell, Jacqueline, Karen Sage, John Keady & Ray Wilkinson. 2013. Adapting to conversation with semantic dementia: Using enactment as a compensatory strategy in everyday social interaction. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders* 48(5). 497–507.
- Kita, Sotaro & James Essegbey. 2001. Pointing left in Ghana: How a taboo on the use of the left hand influences gestural practice. *Gesture* 1(1). 73–95.
- Lee, Iksop & S. Robert Ramsey. 2000. *The Korean language*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Mitchell, Nathaniel & Michael Haugh. 2015. Agency, accountability and evaluations of impoliteness. *Journal of Politeness Research* 11(2). 207–238.
- Mondada, Lorenza. 2014. The local constitution of multimodal resources for social interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics* 65. 137–156.
- Mondada, Lorenza. 2016. Challenges of multimodality: Language and the body in social interaction. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 20. 2–32.
- Ola, Ọlanikẹ Ọla. 2009. Pointing the Yoruba way. *Gesture* 9(2). 237–261.
- Pizziconi, Barbara. 2007. The lexical mapping of politeness in British English and Japanese. *Journal of Politeness Research* 3(2). 207–241.
- Stivers, Tanya & Jack Sidnell. 2005. Introduction: Multimodal interaction. *Semiotica* 156(1/4). 1–20.
- Strauss, Susan & Jong Oh Eun. 2005. Indexicality and honorific speech level choice in Korean. *Linguistics* 43(3). 611–651.
- Streeck, Jürgen, Charles Goodwin & Curtis LeBaron. 2011. Embodied interaction in the material world: An introduction. In Jürgen Streeck, Charles Goodwin & Curtis LeBaron (eds.), *Embodied interaction in the material world*, 1–27. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Streeck, Jürgen & Mark Knapp. 1992. The interaction of visual and verbal features in human communication. In Fernando Potayos (ed.), *Advance in non-verbal communication: Sociocultural, clinical, aesthetic and literary perspectives*, 3–25. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Su, Hsi-Yao. 2019. The metapragmatics of Taiwanese (im)politeness: Conceptualization and evaluation of *limao*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 148. 26–43.
- Verschueren, Jef. 1999. *Understanding pragmatics*. London: Arnold.
- Wilkinson, Ray, Suzanne Beeke & Jane Maxim. 2010. Formulating actions and events with limited linguistic resources: Enactment and iconicity in agrammatic aphasic talk. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 43(1). 57–84.
- Winter, Bodo, Sarah Duffy & Jeannette Littlemore. 2020. Power, gender, and individual differences in spatial metaphor: The role of perceptual stereotypes and language statistics. *Metaphor and Symbol* 35(3). 188–205.
- Winter, Bodo & Sven Grawunder. 2012. The phonetic profile of Korean formal and informal speech registers. *Journal of Phonetics* 40(6). 808–815.
- Withey, Alun. 2015. *Technology, self-fashioning and politeness in eighteenth-century Britain: Refined bodies*. New York: Springer.

- Xu, Chengwei & Wentao Gu. 2020. Prosodic characteristics of genuine and mock (im)polite Mandarin utterances. In *Proceedings of interspeech 2020*, 4153–4157. Shanghai, China.
- Yeon, Jaehoon & Lucien Brown. 2019. *Korean: A comprehensive grammar*, 2nd edn. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Yoon, Kyung-Joo. 2004. Not just words: Korean social models and the use of honorifics. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 1(2). 189–210.

## Bionotes

### Lucien Brown

School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, Monash University, Clayton, Australia  
[Lucien.brown@monash.edu](mailto:Lucien.brown@monash.edu)

Lucien Brown is Associate Professor in the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University. He has published extensively on multimodal politeness and pragmatics, both in native speaker and language learner contexts. He is the author of *Korean Honorifics and Politeness in Second Language Learning* (John Benjamins, 2011) and serves as Associate Editor for *Journal of Pragmatics*.

### Soung-U Kim

Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, SOAS University of London, London, UK  
[sk138@soas.ac.uk](mailto:sk138@soas.ac.uk)

Soung-U Kim is Research Fellow in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at SOAS University of London. He works on language description and documentation, with a special focus on Jeju, a Koreanic language of Jeju Province, South Korea. In his ethnographic work on South Korean language ideologies and linguistic marginalisation, he has been applying qualitative interviewing and grounded theory approaches.

### Hyunji Kim

Department of World Languages and Cultures, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA, USA  
[hkim138@kennesaw.edu](mailto:hkim138@kennesaw.edu)

Hyunji Kim is Assistant Professor in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Kennesaw State University. She received her PhD in East Asian Linguistics from the University of Oregon. Her research focuses on (im)politeness and analyzes its socio-pragmatic purposes through a multimodal lens.