



What Do Korean Speakers Know About Politeness?

Soung-U Kim and Lucien Brown

Abstract This chapter explores how Korean speakers understand and talk about “politeness” and related metaconcepts. Data is drawn from qualitative interviews with 20 Korean speakers (10 students in their 20s and 10 professors aged 40 and above). We asked them to provide their own personal definitions of six metaconcepts: *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’, *yeyuy epsta* ‘lack civility’, *concwunghata* ‘be respectful’, *musihata* ‘be disrespectful’, *chincelhata* ‘be courteous’, and *pwulcincelhata* ‘be discourteous.’ We analyse how the participants defined these six concepts, and then look at four other important metalexemes that emerged in the data: *phyenhata* ‘comfortable’, *thayto* ‘embodied attitude’, *paylye* ‘consideration’ and *inceng* ‘recognition’. Through analysis of these different concepts, we are able to construct an emic (participant-oriented) picture of what politeness means across two different generations of Korean speakers. We conclude by discussing how the results compare to previous descriptions of politeness in Korean, and also to the models of politeness offered in previous politeness theories.

Keywords Politeness · Metapragmatics · Politeness metaconcepts · Korean Politeness · Metalinguistic knowledge · Politeness and multimodality · Qualitative interviews

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1 Introduction

Politeness is not only something that we perform during interaction, but also something that we think and talk about (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). In every language and culture, speakers have their own lexicon for talking about politeness and related concepts such as civility, respect, kindness, rudeness and so forth. These lexical items are to various extents culture specific, and may have quite different semantic mappings in different languages (Pizziconi, 2007). They may also be understood in different ways by people from different social groups and generations (Fukushima & Haugh, 2014). Investigating these metapragmatic understandings of politeness across different cultures is increasingly becoming recognized as an important goal for politeness research given the shift towards researching politeness from an emic (i.e., participant-oriented) perspective (Eelen, 2001). As noted by Verschueren (1999, p. 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.”

In the context of Korean, various politeness-related metaconcepts have been proposed in previous literature (see Section 2.2 for full discussion). The term politeness has frequently been translated into Korean as 공손 *kongson* (see L. Brown, 2011b), whereas the concept of face has been equated with 체면 *cheymyen* (Lim & Choi, 1996). Studies have also talked about the importance of 존대 *contay* ‘deference’ (Hwang, 1975; Sohn, 1986), and the centrality of showing respect to status superiors (윗사람 *wissalam*) according to neo-Confucian slogans such as 경로사상 *kyenglosasang* ‘respecting the elderly’ (Yoon, 2004, p. 198). However, to date, discussions of politeness metaconcepts in Korean have relied almost exclusively on the intuitions of individual scholars. What is therefore missing is a study that asks non-expert speakers of Korean for their insights into how they understand politeness.

The current study addresses this gap in the literature by carrying out interviews with two groups of Korean speakers (university professors and university students) to explore their understandings of politeness in Korean. Our analysis focusses on how these speakers understood six interrelated metaconcepts: *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’, *yeyuy epsta* ‘lack civility’, *concwunghata* ‘be respectful’, *musihata* ‘be disrespectful’, *chincelhata* ‘be courteous’, and *pwulcincelhata* ‘be discourteous.’ We also discuss other politeness-related concepts that emerged during the conversations that we had with these speakers. Our primary goal is to establish perspectives of what politeness means to Korean speakers, and, secondarily, to show how these perspectives might contrast with the claims made by researchers in previous studies.

2 Background

Before discussing the data collection, we pause briefly to set up the background of the study. Section 2.1 explains the notion of politeness metaconcepts, with a subsequent overview of previous research on Korean politeness metaconcepts in Section 2.2. In Section 2.3, we summarise the core Korean metaconcepts that we focused on during data collection.

2.1 *Politeness Metaconcepts*

Early theories of (im)politeness that adopted a universal perspective assumed that “politeness”, or a concept closely analogous to it, existed in all cultures. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 60), for instance, began their universal account of politeness by noting “extraordinary parallelism in the linguistic minutiae ... in quite unrelated cultures” which relate to the isolated motive of politeness. In such early proposals, two properties underlying politeness are assumed to be universal across cultures: rationality and face. The latter, defined in terms of “public self-image”, became a key concept in pragmatics and subjected to various analyses and critiques (see Haugh & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010).

However, the idea that politeness was a universal concept that existed with little variation across different cultures was soon challenged, as did the ideas that politeness relied on individual rationality and face. Most vocal in their critiques were scholars of Japanese including Ide (1989) and Matsumoto (1988) who claimed that the focus on individual rationality in the Brown and Levinson framework was incompatible with languages that feature grammaticalised politeness systems, the usage of which was controlled by social convention rather than individual rationality and face. Ide (1989) proposed that the practice of using polite behaviour according to social convention corresponded to the Japanese concept of *wakimae* ‘discernment’, which involved the appropriate understanding and expression of one’s place or role in given situations (p. 230).

Although the idea that Japanese politeness relied on social convention more than strategy was criticized in subsequent studies (e.g., Pizziconi, 2003), the work of Ide (1989) and Matsumoto (1988) laid the foundations for culture-specific investigation of emic politeness related concepts. Subsequent studies went on to propose a vast number of culture-specific politeness concepts for Japanese (e.g., Haugh, 2005 - *basho* ‘place’), Chinese (Gu, 1990 - *limào* ‘polite appearance’), Thai (Intachakra, 2012 - *k^hwa:mkre:naj* ‘fear of hearts’), and Persian (Koutlaki, 2002 - *tæ’arof* ‘ritual politeness’), among many others. More broadly, politeness-related practices started to be analysed as culturally-embedded rituals enacted to maintain the moral order in social interaction (Kádár, 2017).

In recognition of the need to further explore the emic ways that politeness is perceived and talked about across different cultures, a number of recent studies have adopted empirical methods to establish what politeness means to speakers of different languages, and to tap into speaker intuitions of the meanings of politeness metalexemes. Pizziconi (2007) used a questionnaire that asked British English and Japanese participants to judge the level of similarity of ten politeness metalexemes in their respective languages. 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.

Our own paper belongs to an emerging group of studies that have resorted to interviews to investigate speakers’ metapragmatic knowledge of politeness. While Ogiermann and Suszczyńska (2011) interviewed speakers of Polish and Hungarian to explore how notions of politeness were changing after the fall of the iron curtain, Su (2019) explored the conceptual understanding and semantic field of *limào* ‘politeness’ among Taiwanese living in China. Moreover, Fukushima and Haugh’s (2014) study explored the metaconcepts of “attentiveness, empathy and anticipatory inference” in Japanese and Chinese (see also Fukushima, 2020).

2.2 Politeness Metaconcepts in Korean

Traditional descriptions of politeness in Korean (Dredge, 1983; Hwang, 1975, 1990; Sohn, 1986) claim that Korean has a clear distinction between “politeness” (which is typically translated into the Korean term 공손 *kongson*) and “deference” (존대 *contay*) (see also A. H.-O. Kim, 2011 for discussion). The former basically refers to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of politeness based on rationality and face, which is described as “an open pattern of language usage” including “prosodic means, modal elements, softening adverbials, etc” (Sohn, 1986, p. 411) that speakers can employ strategically. The latter, *contay* ‘deference’ basically refers to the use of honorifics, which Sohn (1986, p. 411) notes is “a closed, language-specific system”. The distinction between politeness and deference is exemplified in these studies by examples such as the following that are claimed to show that these two concepts work as independent systems (Hwang, 1990, p. 48):

- (1) a. *apenim, ikes chiwu-si-psio*
 father this clear-SHON-HHON-IMP
 ‘Father, put this away.’
- b. *inswu-ya, ikes com chiwe cwul-lay?*
 Insoo-VOC this please clear BEN-SUG
 ‘In-soo, will you put this away for me?’

Sentence (1a) contains subject honorifics, but is a bold imperative. According to Hwang, this sentence is “deferential but impolite”. In contrast, (1b) contains no honorifics, but is a benefactive suggestion rather than an imperative. This makes it “non-deferential but polite.” Hwang (1990, p. 42) sees politeness as “a matter of speaker’s psychology”, but deference as “a matter of social code which is imposed upon the participants in communicative interactions.”

Previous studies model the importance of honorifics and “deference” as being embedded in the hierarchical structure of Korean society. Yoon (2004, p. 194) points out that “Koreans believe they are not equal in status, either in the family or in other social groups to which they belong”, and that Korean ideologies regarding social relations focus on the need to exhibit respect when dealing with elders. Respecting elders is said to be tied up with pervasive neo-Confucian social slogans such as 경로사상 敬老思想 *kyenglosasang* ‘respecting the elderly’ (Yoon, 2004, p. 198) and 장유유서 長幼有序 *cangyuyuse* ‘the old and the young know their place’ (Lee & Ramsey, 2001, p. 267). Yoon (2004, p. 194) notes that “Koreans believe that people are not equal in status, either in the family or in other large social groups to which they belong”, whereas Brown (2011a, p. 80) notes that disagreeing with or causing discomfort to elders is taboo in Korean culture. With this emphasis on the importance of respecting elders, previous studies rarely if ever mention how politeness or respect might work in horizontal relationships, or for the more powerful or older party in hierarchical relationships. As we will discuss later on, our study witnessed an emergence of horizontal layers of understanding politeness by our interviewees, which may either point to a need to differentiate views such as Yoon’s (2004), or to the need to study possible societal changes that may have occurred during the last decades.

Scholars working on Korean followed Brown and Levinson (1987) in seeing face, or 체면 *cheymyen*, as the underlying motive for politeness (De Mente, 1998; Lim & Choi, 1996; Oak & Martin, 2000). According to Lim (1995), *cheymyen* involves the adherence to form and

societal expectations, which are identified as being key Confucian values. Behind the need to conform to social expectations is a high concern for how others perceive one’s behaviour, or “the eyes and ears of others” as Kim (2001, p. 123) puts it.

In sum, studies that have described Korean politeness metaconcepts have foregrounded the division between strategic politeness (*kongson*) and deference (*contay*), as well as the importance of respecting elders and adhering to social expectations. However, it is unclear whether the distinction between politeness and deference is substantiated in the actual ways that Korean lay people understand politeness, nor whether they view elder respect and social conformity as the driving forces behind politeness. In fact, the terms *kongson* and *contay* are both rather infrequent in everyday conversation (see L. Brown, 2013) and there is no evidence beyond the invented examples of linguists (see example 1, above) that the concept of *kongson* is separated from the use of honorifics. There is therefore a need for us to consult with Korean speakers and explore the ways in which they talk about politeness.

2.3 Focal Concepts Explored in This Study

In order to address the need to explore Korean politeness metaconcepts from the perspective of Korean language users, we carried out interviews with two groups of Korean speakers (university professors and university students; see Section 3 below). We asked them to provide their own personal definitions of six focal metaconcepts, which we will introduce in this section. These six metaconcepts formed three pairs of terms, where one of the two terms related to politeness and one was the lexical opposite that referred to impoliteness (see Table 1). These six metaconcepts were selected since they are all frequently used terms in everyday speech, and since they reflect three distinct dimensions of (im)politeness.

Table 1 Focal metaconcepts we investigated

	Politeness concepts	Impoliteness concepts
1 st pair	예의 바르다 <i>yeyuy paluta</i> ‘possess correct civility’	예의 없다 <i>yeyuy epsta</i> ‘lack civility’
2 nd pair	존중하다 <i>concwunghata</i> ‘be respectful’	무시하다 <i>mwusihata</i> ‘be disrespectful’
3 rd pair	친절하다 <i>chincelhata</i> ‘be courteous’	불 친절하다 <i>pwulcincelhata</i> ‘be discourteous’

The first two metaconcepts that we explored were *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’ and the closest lexical opposite *yeyuy epsta* ‘lack civility’. These commonly used terms were chosen for investigation since they appeared to us to represent the idea of upkeeping social norms for the purposes of general courtesy. The term *yeyuy* captures the idea of politeness as decorum (Jung, 2005), whereby both senior and juniors contribute to the preservation of socially desirable norms of interaction.

We then explored the notion of respect via the metalexemes *concwunghata* ‘be respectful’ and *mwusihata* ‘be disrespectful’. These two items were selected since respect is commonly discussed in previous accounts of Korean politeness (see L. Brown, 2011a), and these two lexemes are frequently used in everyday speech. Previous studies tend to equate respect in Korean with displaying deference to status superiors, which is also captured in the dictionary definition of *concwunghata* as 높이어 귀중하게 대하다, ‘elevate one’s counterpart and treat them as very important’ (which in turn is a rather literal translation of the Sino-Koreanic origin of this word, 尊重)¹. As for *mwusihata*, in addition to a lack of respect for a superior’s rank, Kim and Brown (2019) note that this term also refers to failure to maintain a certain minimum level of respect for someone’s position, even if their social position is relatively low.

Finally, *chincelhata* ‘be courteous’ and *pwulcincelhata* ‘be discourteous’ are high frequency lexemes that refer to politeness as kindness, friendliness or hospitableness. According to Yang et al. (2013), *chincel* is a multimodal phenomenon comprising of the control of speech, facial expression, behaviour and appearance, which characterizes service industry interactions. The improvement of this public face of politeness has been encouraged on the national level by public campaigns such as the 2015 친절한 대한민국 캠페인 *Chincelhan Tayhanminkwuk Campaign*, ‘The Friendly South Korea Campaign’ (Han, 2015), which utilized the slogans “Korea smiles on you.”

3 Method

In this Section, we explain our data collection methodology (Section 3.1), present some important details about our participants (Section 3.2) and explicate our analytic procedure (Section 3.3).

3.1 Data Collection

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 Korean speakers at a large university in Seoul.² 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 were conducted by the first author and recorded using a Canon XA-11 camera with a top-mounted, directional Rode NTG-2 mic, accompanied by parallel audio recordings on a Zoom H2n recorder. The average length of the recordings was 44 minutes and 44 seconds.

Our interviews relied on a questionnaire for semi-structured interviews, which was developed to include three thematic areas of questions. In the first, we asked general questions regarding factors that were important in human interaction in order to encourage participants to talk about politeness using their own terms. In the second section, we invited participants to

¹ See Phycowunkwuketaysacen (Standard Korean Language Dictionary): <https://stdict.korean.go.kr> [last accessed 2022-07-22]

² A sub-set of the data presented in this paper was previously analysed in Brown et al. (2022) where we looked at just two of the participants, and focussed on the embodied ways that participants enacted their politeness narratives rather than on their understandings of metaconcepts).

reflect on their personal understandings of the six politeness metaconcepts described above in Section 2.3, using the following questions as a guide:

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 _____?

The first author of this paper took on the role of the interviewer. The objective was to create a conversational atmosphere, during which all questions of the questionnaire were supposed to be covered yet leaving room for participants to steer the interview into individual directions, highlight what was meaningful to them, and to engage in deep description of their metapragmatic understanding. Accordingly, our questionnaire was taken as a rough guide for orientation for the interviewer, rather than a strict, tasked-based template.

Finally, in the third section we asked about their perceptions of politeness variation across different generations, genders and dialect areas. In the current paper, we focus on the answers provided in Section 2. A full list of interview questions can be found in the Appendix.

3.2 *Participants and Researchers*

All 20 participants worked or studied at a large university in Seoul, with 10 of them being students at this university and 10 of them being professors. We collected data from two different generations of speakers in order to include possible cross-generational differences in understandings of politeness, inspired by Fukushima and Haugh (2014).

The average age of the students was 21 (range: 20 to 24) and for the professors it was 51 (range: 44 to 62). There were equal numbers of males and females in each group. All participants self-reported that they were speakers of Standard South Korean, including two speakers who said that they also spoke a regional dialect (one student spoke Jeolla dialect and one professor spoke Gyeongsang dialect). All of the professors had experience living overseas (eight in the US, one in France and one in China), as had four of the students (four in the US and one in New Zealand). In the subsequent analysis, participants are referred to by “S” for “student” and “P” for “professor” followed by their participant number (e.g., S1 = participant 1, who is a student).

The other participant in the data is the interviewer, who is the first 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 research team. Both authors see politeness as multiplicitous and contested, and metapragmatic talk as a type of situated and stylized performance, and this perspective was inevitably reflected in the kinds of questions we included in the interview. Whereas the second author is a pragmatician who speaks Korean as a second language, the first author is a documentary and descriptive linguist and a native speaker of Korean (raised and educated in Germany).

3.3 *Analysis*

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

The data was then coded thematically, adopting an inductive methodology based on grounded theory (Auerbach & 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.

For the current paper, we focus on two types of codes that emerged in the data. First, we look at codes that relate to the six focal metaconcepts of this study: *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’, *yeyuy epsta* ‘lack civility’, *concwunghata* ‘be respectful’, *musihata* ‘be disrespectful’, *chincelhata* ‘be courteous’, and *pwulcincelhata* ‘be discourteous’ (see Section 2.3 above). These codes mostly emerged in the second section of the interview, during which we explicitly asked participants to define these terms. Second, we look at codes that relate to four other metaconcepts that occurred frequently during the interviews and which emerged as key ideas in the way that our participants understand politeness: 편하다 *phyenhata* ‘comfortable’, 태도 *thayto* ‘embodied attitude’, 배려 *paylye* ‘consideration’ and 인정 *inceng* ‘recognition’. We grouped together codes that related to these terms, and abstracted from these codes the underlying ways that our participants understood them. For the six focal metaconcepts, given the importance of hierarchy and respect for elders noted in previous research on Korean politeness, we began by quantifying how many of our participants understood each concept as hierarchical or vertical.

4 Data Presentation

We begin by presenting findings for the six focal metaconcepts (Section 4.1) in pairs (politeness related term and corresponding impoliteness term). Then, in Section 4.2, we examine the other politeness-related terms that emerged in the data.

4.1 Focal Metaconcepts

4.1.1 *Yeyuy Paluta* ‘Possess Correct Civility’ and *Yeyuy Epsta* ‘Lack Civility’

Twelve of the twenty participants (seven students and five professors) viewed *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’ as a vertical concept that is performed towards elders or superiors, whereas five saw it as horizontal, and three saw it as working both vertically and horizontally. Interestingly, *yeyuy epsta* ‘lack civility’ was viewed in less hierarchical terms – only seven of the participants viewed it as vertical (five students and two professors), whereas nine saw it as horizontal, and two as both (a further two participants failed to provide a definition for this item). Participants therefore do not seem to view *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’ and *yeyuy epsta* ‘lack civility’ as exact conceptual opposites.

Table 2 Understandings of *yeyuy paluta*

	Students	Professors	Total
Vertical	7	5	12
Horizontal	1	4	5
Vertical and horizontal	2	1	3
Total	10	10	20

Table 3 Understandings of *yeyuy epsta*

	Students	Professors	Total
Vertical	5	2	7
Horizontal	4	5	9
Vertical and horizontal	1	1	2
Total	10	8	18*

* = Two participants did not provide a definition for *yeyuy epsta*

Participants saw *yeyuy paluta* as involving being careful (조심하다) and controlled with your own behaviours in order to show respect (존중) to others and avoid making them feel bad (언짢다). Participant P2 described *yeyuy paluta* as ‘exhibiting self-censorship’ (스스로 센서십을 발휘하는 것), while Participant S13 conceptualized it in terms of suppressing certain behaviours, such as yawning or taking out your phone when interacting with a status superior. S20 noted that exercising *yeyuy* was uncomfortable and required perseverance and endurance to maintain: ‘when we say that someone is *yeyuy paluta*, we mean that someone knows how to endure things (그래서 더 예의 바르다라는 표현을 하려면 그 애긴 그냥 더 참을 줄 아는 거고).’ P6 explained how 예의 바르다 arises when you listen respectfully (경청하다) to what the other person is saying and respond appropriately (적절하게 호응을 하다). On the other hand, *yeyuy epsta* is a result of not knowing when to speak and when to listen (participant S9), inconveniencing other people (participant S14) and hurting the feelings of others (participant S1).

As noted above, whereas some participants viewed *yeyuy paluta* as involving a general consideration for other human beings, others connected it specifically with elder respect, with this hierarchical understanding of the concept being more common among the students. Participant S1, for instance, explicitly linked *yeyuy paluta* to the use of honorifics and to placing yourself beneath status superiors (자신을 낮춘다). By using honorifics, elders are said to feel more comfortable (편안하다). On the other hand, as noted by S5, reckless behaviour towards elders, including using inappropriate language results in *yeyuy epsta*.

Although half of the professors also defined *yeyuy paluta* in terms of showing respect towards superiors, they noted that status superiors as well needed to show *yeyuy* towards their juniors – an idea that never occurred in the student data.³ P17 described *yeyuy epsta* as a lack of respect (존중) towards younger generations, or others who are lower in status than oneself:

(1) P17 (22:50)

- 1 내가 더 지위가 높다든지
 ‘Whether you’re of higher status’
- 2 뭐 돈이 더 많다든지
 ‘or you have more money’

³ As noted by an anonymous reviewer, professors might have heightened awareness of the need to treat their juniors with more sensitivity due to receiving faculty training in these areas. Although this is certainly a possibility, this was never explicitly mentioned in the interviews.

- 3 내가 나이가 많다든지
'or you're older than I am'
- 4 어떤 그 권력을 가지고 억누르려고 하는 것들
'taking whatever social power you have and trying to push down on me'
- 5 그런 것들이 발현되는 때에 예의가 없다라는 생각이 드는 것 같아요.
'I think all of these manifestations are *yeyuy epsta*'

P09 noted that although you would not tell an elderly person to their face that they are *yeyuy epsta*, it would still be possible to refer to an elder in these terms when they are not present. Based on this, she concluded that *yeyuy epsta* was a term that could be used to describe the behaviour of elders as well as juniors.

Although some speakers mentioned linguistic devices in their description of *yeyuy paluta/epsta* such as the use of honorifics, more emphasis was placed on the content of speech, as well as on non-verbal aspects of politeness. Participants described *yeyuy paluta* as involving the avoidance of boasting, or asking inappropriate questions (P6). *Yeyuy* resides in *thayto* 'embodied attitude', which included correct posture and the control of facial expressions and the 'tone of the voice' (말투).

Some participants, particularly among the professors, saw *yeyuy* as a socially-imposed ritual or convention, as well as the adherence to a strict and complex set of rules, referred to by P16 as 예의범절 *yeyuyemcel* 'the rules of etiquette'. For P10, the driving force behind upkeeping these rules was self-presentation and the desire to avoid having yourself judged as *yeyuy epsta*:

(2) P10 (15:44)

- 1 저는 본질은 자기 보호라고 생각해요.
'I think the essence [of *yeyuy epsta*] is self-preservation'
[...]
- 2 '버릇 없다' 또는 '예의 없다' 뭐 이런 그 판단을 받을 수.
'you could be judged as *pelus epsta* ('rude') or *yeyuy epsta* ('lacking civility')'
- 3 그 상대로부터 어 받을 수가 있기 때문에-
'since you could receive [such evaluations] from the interlocutor...'

Both groups of participants noted that status inferiors were more susceptible to having their behaviour judged as *yeyuy epsta*, meaning that they had to exercise additional care in their behaviour. S20 described *yeyuy* as "an expression from the past" (옛날 말) and as a linguistic device used when older people are judging the behaviour of younger people. However, a more general interpretation of *yeyuy paluta* was that people adhered to show consideration (배려) for others and to avoid hurting their feelings (상대방이 기분 나쁘게 하지 않다 – P02). *Yeyuy epsta* occurred when your behaviour results in others being hurt (상대방의 마음이 서운하다 (S01).

4.1.2 *Concwunghata* 'Be Respectful' and *Mwusihata* 'Be Disrespectful'

As noted above in Section 2.2, previous accounts of politeness in the Korean context tend to emphasize the hierarchical aspects of respect, equating the concept with showing deference to

status superiors. In contrast to this, only three of our participants (one student and two professors) described *concwunghata* ‘be respectful’ as a hierarchical concept. The remaining 17 participants all saw it as something that was horizontal and mutual, and equated it with respect for fellow human beings (인격체). As for *mwusihata* ‘be disrespectful’, almost all (nine out of ten) the professors saw this too as being horizontal, that is, committing an act of *mwusi*, ‘disrespect’ meant that one disrespects the other’s intrinsic value as a human being. As for the students, five of the nine students who provided an answer on this item saw it as hierarchical.

Table 4 Understandings of *concwung*

	Students	Professors	Total
Vertical	1	2	3
Horizontal	9	8	17
Vertical and horizontal	-	-	-
Total	10	10	20

Table 5 Understandings of *mwusi*

	Students	Professors	Total
Vertical	5	1	6
Horizontal	4	9	13
Total	9	10	19*

* = One participant did not provide a definition for *mwusi*

Concwung involves treating others as you would want to be treated yourself and seeing things from the perspective of others, which is connected to the concept of consideration (배려) mentioned in Sub-section 4.1.1 above. As described by S20, “if you don’t want to suffer something yourself, then other people won’t want to suffer it either (내가 당하고 싶지 않으면 다른 사람이 당하고 싶지도 않다).” According to S03 and P06, *concwung* is not a matter of who is younger or older or elevating those of higher status, but recognizing (인정) or showing interest (관심) in others for who they are:

(3) S03 (20:39)

- 1 존중은 머윗사람 아랫사람 상관없이
‘concwung, it doesn’t matter whether you are the older party or the younger party’
- 2 어쨌든... 한 개인으로 이제 인정해 주는 거를 이야기할 수 있을 것 같아요.
‘I think it’s about recognizing someone else as an individual’

(4) P06 (17:43)

- 1 꼭 이렇게 상대방을 나를 뭐 높여달라 이런 차원이 아니라
‘it’s not about the interlocutor asking me to elevate them’
- 2 상대방에 대해 이제 관심을 가지고
‘it’s about showing interest in the interlocutor’

- 3 그 사람이 이제 어떻게 보면 굉장히 편안하게- 사람을 편안하게 해 줄 수 있는 것 같고
'it's about being able to make the other person feel comfortable'
- 4 그거가 저는 존중이 아닌가 이렇게 생각해요
'isn't that what *concwung* is really about?'

P06 further noted that taking an interest in others can be effortful in cases where their interests are different to your own. Nonetheless, for *concwung* to be achieved, your display of interest must not be fake (가식적).

Mwusihata, on the other hand, occurs when you fail to acknowledge the individual perspectives or positionality of others. As noted by P17, *mwusihata* is "thinking that people who are different from myself are wrong (나와 다른 것을 틀리다고 생각하는 거죠)", or, as observed by S08, "not respecting the values of others (그 사람이 가지고 있는 가치를 존중하지 않는다 그런 게 무시한다고 생각해요)." *Mwusihata* occurs "when we judge others based on our own standards (상대방을 제 기준에 맞춰서 판단하는 걸 – S19)", or "not showing consideration for the boundaries (경계, 선) of others (S20)". P18 notes that whereas *mwusihata* is similar to *yeyuy epsta* in that both involve inconsiderate behaviour (배려하지 않는 행동), *mwusihata* is a more extreme form of impoliteness.

Some participants referenced that this model of respect was perhaps somewhat different from stereotypical notions of politeness in the Korean context. S03 noted that since Korea was originally an "elders first" (연장자 우선) culture that *concwung* might be equated by some people with something that was performed to elders, but that she did not view this as being the case since it's also not acceptable to display *mwusihata* towards status subordinates:

(5) S03 (21:24)

- 1 이제 존중이라는 건 윗사람들한테 존중한다 이럴 식으로 많이들 생각 할 수 있는데
'many people may think that *concwung* is about showing to status superiors'
- 2 그렇다면은 그 반대로 아랫사람을 무시해도 되는 건가?
'but if so, wouldn't that mean that we can be disrespectful (*mwusihata*) towards status inferiors?'
- 3 이런 건 아니잖아요.
'I don't think that's the case.'

Similarly, participant S01 referenced the rather hackneyed saying that elders need to be respected because they have lived longer and therefore amassed more knowledge, but contrasted it with the observation that juniors may at times have more knowledge than elders and be more mature (성숙하다) and grown up (어른스럽다). Whereas some participants equated more hierarchical aspects of politeness with Korea's Confucian tradition, it's notable that S01 positioned the idea of *concwung* as respecting the individuality of others as a Christian concept:

(6) S01 (27:59)

- 1 이제 성경 같은 거에 본다면
'If you look in the bible'

- 2 이제 네가 이웃에게 받고 싶은 대로 네가 이웃에게 행해라 라는 말이 있는데
'it says that you should treat your neighbour how you want to be treated yourself'
- 3 그런 거라고 생각해요.
'that's what I think [*concwung*] is about'

Somewhat in contrast to this notion of respect as a horizontal concept, some of the students saw a hierarchical side to *mwusihata*, with five out of nine students viewing this as a vertical concept. Although these hierarchical understandings of *mwusihata* at times specifically referenced age- or rank-based social hierarchies (e.g., P13 observed that *mwusihata* would occur when you don't follow the instructions of status superiors such as professors), more commonly these vertical notions of *mwusihata* were less closely mapped onto traditional notions of hierarchy. Rather, as in the following extract from S11, students noted that *mwusihata* involved placing people in a position below you (낮은 위치, 하등) in quite general or abstract terms. In fact, S11 links this more to someone's ability rather than necessarily their status.

(7) S11 (14:50)

- 1 그 사람을 인정하지 않고
'if you don't recognise someone'
- 2 그 사람을 저보다 이제 낮은 위치에 있는 사람으로
'if you treat someone as beneath yourself'
[...]
- 3 그 사람이 저보다 인제 하등하고
'if you treat someone as an inferior'
- 4 약간 저보다 못한 그런 존재
'as being inferior to myself'

Based on this example, *mwusihata* appears to involve a lack of respect or recognition (인정) for someone's value as a human being in general, irrespective of how high or low their social position might be.

The striking finding in this section is that the concept of *concwung* 'respect' seems to be rather divorced from notions of deference or "elevating" superiors. Given that there are multiple Korean words that might correspond to the English word 'respect', readers who are familiar with Korean politeness metaconcepts may wonder whether this horizontal account of respect applies only to *concwung*. In recognition of this, we also asked two participants from each group to provide definitions for *conkyeng* (존경; 尊敬) 'reverence, esteem'. All four participants saw *conkyeng* as being a non-reciprocal concept, but one which targeted famous people or other role models on the basis of their deeds or talents rather than on their age or status. As stated by P16, whereas we should show *concwung* to everyone, this is not the case for *conkyeng*:

(8) P16 (28:16)

- 1 모든 인간은 존중 받아야 되는 어떤 그런 권리가 어차피 있는 거잖아요
'After all, all humans have the right to receive respect (*concwung*), don't they?'
- 2 그렇다고 해서 우리가 꼭 모두 이를 존경해야 될 일은 없는 것 같아요
'But on the other hand, this doesn't mean that we have to revere (*conkyeng*) everyone.'

There may be other words for respect such as *contay* ‘deference’, which has been widely theorized in previous literature (see Section 2.2 above). However, these were never mentioned by the participants. As expanded below, our explanation is that the use of honorifics and other deferential behaviour towards elders is more commonly conceptualized as “elevating” (높이다) elders rather than necessarily as an act of respect.

4.1.3 *Chincelhata* ‘Be Courteous’ and *Pwulcincelhata* ‘Be Discourteous’

There was almost uniform concurrence across our participants that *chincelhata* ‘be courteous’ and *pwulcincelhata* ‘be discourteous’ were horizontal concepts. There was just one student who defined *chincelhata* along vertical lines, but all other participants saw both concepts as horizontal.

Across both the students and the professors there was a high level of consensus that *chincelhata* is a mode of politeness that is aimed at people you don’t have a personal relationship with, and which is most closely associated with working in customer service industries. Participants associated *chincelhata* with a smiling expressions (웃는 표정 – S19), a ‘sweet smiles’ (상냥한 미소 – S13) or bright facial expressions (밝은 표정 – P06), particularly those produced by sales assistants. Similarly, when participants described *pwulchincelhata*, they would evoke episodes from service industry encounters. Since *chincelhata* does not require an established relationship, P09 noted that judging someone as *chincelhata* can sound somewhat distancing. You could not describe someone you are close to as *chincelhata*, but rather as 자상하다 *casanghata* ‘thoughtful and considerate’.

Some participants, particularly among the professors, described *chincelhata* as an extra, optional layer of politeness, which went beyond what was normatively required or what was demanded by the interlocutor. P15 explained that *chincelhata* involves “going one step beyond the “line” of expected behaviour (지켜야 할 선 보다도 더 한 걸음 앞서 나가서)”. *Chincelhata* does not just protect the feelings of others, but “actually boosts their emotions and makes them feel better (감정을 오히려 북돋아 주는 부분인 것 같아요)”. For example, whereas it might be enough to answer someone’s request for directions verbally, *chincelhata* might involve physically escorting someone to their destination (P12). Or instead of just saying thank you to a delivery driver, you might offer them a glass of water (P15). Ultimately, *chincelhata* involves treating others with a high level of consideration (배려, see Sub-section 4.1.1 above), plus an additional layer of kindness (상냥함 – P18).

Although *chincelhata* was associated with smiling and friendliness, it was also viewed by participants as being inauthentic and affectatious, particularly when it occurred in the service industry. *Chincelhata* can be performed even if you don’t really respect the other party, explained S11:

(9) S11 (15:45)

- 1 친절은 굳이 존중하지 않아도
‘with *chincel*, even if you don’t respect (*concwung*) [the other person]’
- 2 그냥 처음 보는 사람이나
‘because it’s someone you’re meeting for the first time’
- 3 다른 사람들에게 내가 그냥 따뜻하고 상냥한 태도로
‘you just use a warm and kind embodied attitude (*thayto*)’

- 4 그런 태도로 대해주는 것이 친절이라고 생각합니다
 ‘treating people with that attitude is *chincel*, I think’

This example illustrates an important difference between *chincelhata* and *concwunghata* – the latter relies on consistency between feelings and actions, whereas the former does not. Since *cincelhata* is an affectation, there are cases where people overdo it – what P10 refers to as ‘overdone *cincel*’ (지나친 친절).

Just as *chincelhata* involves an extra layer of politeness, *pwulcincelhata* ‘be discourteous’ represents a particularly acute form of discourtesy. P15 described *pwulcincelhata* as a being more extreme than *yeyuy epsta* ‘lack civility’ since it involves a higher level of *mwusihata* ‘being disrespectful’, thus bringing together all three of the impoliteness-related metalexemes examined in this chapter. She illustrates the difference in the following example: whereas *yeyuy epsta* might involve passing over a document in a rough manner, *pwulcincelhata* would involve practically throwing the document at you (note the ideophones in emphasis below):

(10) P15 (43:10)

- 1 공공기관에서 뭐 서류를 처리해서
 ‘if you’re at a government office and they process your documents’
- 2 저한테 이제 서류를 주는데, 탁!
 ‘and then when they’re giving them to you, *thak* [in an abrupt or aggressive fashion]!’
 [...]
- 3 한 손으로 탁! 주고 획 나가버렸어요.
 ‘they give it to you, *thak*, and then just leave abruptly, *hwik* [with an abrupt movement]’
- 4 그게 예의 없음이구요
 ‘that is *yeyuy epsta*’
- 5 저한테 이렇게 거의 던지듯이 획 던져놓고
 ‘but if they almost throw it at me, *hwik*’
- 6 빠르게 나가버렸어요
 ‘and then run out’
- 7 그러면 불친절
 ‘that would be *pwulchincel*’

We see here and in other previous examples that im/politeness-related concepts are often mapped onto actions and episodes rather than necessarily to verbal behaviour. In other words, rather than illustrating the concepts of *yeyuy epsta* and *pwulcincelhata* through reference to rude things that people say, P15 exemplifies the difference through reference to different layers of rude physical behaviours. The centrality of multimodal aspects of politeness to metapragmatic knowledge is something that we explored in more detail in our previous paper, Brown et al. (2022).

4.2 Other Metalexemes

Over the course of the interviews, participants used various other lexemes to refer to politeness and related concepts, beyond those that we asked them to define. Some of these lexemes have already appeared in the previous sub-section, and we believe that a subset of them is worth exploring separately since (1) they were deemed by us as being highlighted fairly often by interviewees and (2) they have not been described in previous accounts of politeness, particularly

in the Korean context. We consider four such concepts in this section: 편하다 *phyenhata* ‘comfortable’, 태도 *thayto* ‘embodied attitude’, 배려 *paylye* ‘consideration’ and 인정 *inceng* ‘recognition’. Table 6 shows how many participants in each group mentioned these metaconcepts. Seven of the 20 participants mentioned all four of the concepts, whereas a further seven mentioned three of them. All participants mentioned at least one of these concepts.

Table 6 Number of participants mentioning each metaconcept

	Students	Professors	Total
<i>Phyenhata</i>	9	9	18 (90%)
<i>Thayto</i>	5	9	14 (70%)
<i>Paylye</i>	6	8	14 (70%)
<i>Inceng</i>	5	6	11 (55%)

We now provide more details about *phyenhata* ‘comfortable’ (Section 4.2.1), *thayto* ‘embodied attitude’ (Section 4.2.2), and *paylye* ‘consideration’ and 인정 *inceng* ‘recognition’ (both covered in Section 4.2.3)

4.2.1 *Phyenhata* ‘Comfortable’

The term *phyenhata* ‘comfortable’ and the closely related lexical item *phyenanhata* ‘feeling comfortable and peaceful’ were mentioned by 18 of our 20 participants (9 students, 9 professors), often in relation to the focal metaconcepts *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’ and *concwunghata* ‘be respectful’.

The term primarily appeared in reference to interactions with close friends and/or in casual or informal contexts, whereas interactions with non-intimates status superiors were uncomfortable (불편하다). In “comfortable” interactions, you can act without care for formality (격식), politeness (예의, 공손) (S11, S20, P16) or fear that you will cause offense to the other party (S14). You can speak naturally (자연스럽게 – P10), freely (자유롭게 – P17), and frankly (솔직하게 S19), and you can also show your true personality (S05). Non-honorific speech (반말) can be used (P18), as well as slang (S07, P10), and you also don’t need to pay attention to your posture and non-verbal behaviour (S20). In contrast, an uncomfortable situation is one in which you have to follow a formal role (형식적인 역할 – P4), and when you’re unable to be perfectly honest. S19 noted that “if you can be 90% honest with friends, in front of professors you can only be 30% honest” and explained that differences in opinions have to be glossed over when talking with superiors. P4 noted that an uncomfortable person is someone who is authoritative (권위적이다) or official (사무적이다).

In addition, *phyenhata* ‘comfortable’ is something that can be created through showing appropriate respect (존중) and consideration (배려) to others, not just to friends but to superiors as well. In fact, S03 explained that politeness (예의) involved making elders feel comfortable (윗사람을 조금 더 편안하게 해주는 걸) through the use of more careful and considerate behaviours. Failing to do this (and just doing what is “comfortable” for you) results in impoliteness (P16). Meanwhile, the professors also noted that they could make relationships and interactions with students more “comfortable” by making efforts to lighten the atmosphere, such as by giving students tea and snacks when they visit during office hours (P15).

4.2.2 *Thayto* ‘Embodied Attitude’

Thayto was mentioned by 14 participants, including five students and nine professors. This term is commonly translated into English as ‘attitude’, ‘manner’ or ‘demeanour’, but we find that it has an explicitly embodied aspect not always present in the English counterparts. The term frequently occurred in relation to *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’.

Indeed, we observed that participants made an explicit division between polite words (말) and polite embodied attitude (태도), and placed more emphasis on the latter. In the following P09, describes how *yeyuy* ‘civility’ stems from *thayto* rather than the mere use of vocabulary (어휘):

(11) P09 (26:06)

- 1 예의는 태도에서 나오는 거지
‘*yeyuy* comes from *thayto*’
- 2 어휘에서 나오는 거는 아닌 거 같아서
‘I don’t think it comes from vocabulary’

Likewise, S20 noted that the difference between non-honorific speech and honorific speech depends on correct *thayto* rather than correct honorifics:

(12) S20 (27:30)

- 1 막 저 소파 위에서 팔 기대어서 누워 거의 반 누워있으면서 “아! 그러셨습니까?”
“저렇습니까?”
‘If you’re just stretched out on the sofa almost lying down and you say “is that so?” or “is it really?” [using honorifics]’
- 3 존댓말이라고 생각을 안 해요.
‘I don’t think that’s actually honorific language’
- 4 태도도 있다고 봐요.
‘we can’t forget about *thayto*’

As for the content of *thayto*, in addition to posture and body position noted in the example above, participants also made reference to avoiding crossing the arms or legs in front of superiors (e.g., S05, S14, S20, P02), using the open hand to point instead of the index finger (S11), reducing the number of gestures (S01, P12, P16), using more fixed facial expressions (S01), pretending to laugh when required (S07), clasping your hands in front of your body (P06, P17, P18) and appearing more docile and less animated in general (S01, P15). In sum, the frequent mentions of *thayto* in the data reveal the intrinsically multimodal view of politeness held by our participants.

4.2.3 *Paylye* ‘Consideration’ and *Inceng* ‘Recognition’

Paylye ‘consideration’ appeared in the data from 14 participants (6 students, 8 professors), whereas eleven of our participants (5 students and 6 professors) referred to the concept of *inceng* ‘recognition’. We deal with these two concepts together since they seem to be tightly connected.

Both *paylye* and *inceng* are closely related to the concept of *concwung* ‘being respectful’ described above in Section 4.13. On the most basic level, *concwung* relies on *inceng*

‘recognition’ of someone’s individuality (S03, S19, P17) and/or for their social position, no matter what that position may be. P15 mentioned that he took particular efforts to perform *insa* ‘greetings’ to everyone he saw in his daily life including those of lower social position in order to show recognition of them. This outward expression of *inceng* and *concwung* is where *paylye* emerges. In the following extract, P09 describes how *concwung* and *inceng* are located in *심* ‘mind’ and *마음* ‘heart’, whereas *paylye* resides in *thayto* ‘embodied attitude’ and action (*행동*).

(13) P09 (30:19)

- 1 존중이 심성적인 부분이라면
‘if *concwung* resides in the mind’
- 2 배려는 약간 태도적인 부분인거 같아요.
‘then *paylye* seems to reside in *thayto*’
- 3 그래서 그런 인정이 머리 속에 들어오면 그거는 태도나 행동으로 옮겨지는 것
같아요.
‘when *inceng* first occurs in your head, then that can translate into *thayto* and action’

According to P09, in order to show *paylye* for others through one’s actions, first of all you had to recognise and respect them.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we asked two groups of Korean speakers from different generations to provide definitions of six politeness metaconcepts, and also explored four other terms that appeared organically in the data.

As shown in Table 7, based on our sample, participants mapped the six concepts onto discrete aspects of Korean politeness. *Yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’ and its lexical opposite *yeyuy epsta* were described in terms of the exercise of care, constraint and consideration. The concept of *yeyuy* involves regulating your behaviours and showing consideration in order to make others feel comfortable and avoid hurting their feelings. As for *concwunghata* ‘be respectful’ and *mwusihata* ‘be disrespectful’, this dichotomy involved displaying genuine concern and interest in others, and showing recognition of someone’s social position. Finally, *chincelhata* ‘be courteous’ and *pwulchincelhata* ‘be discourteous’ were seen as modes of (im)politeness that were specific to encounters with non-acquaintances and/or in the service industry, and as additional or more extreme forms of (in)civility. In contrast to *concwunghata* ‘respect’ which was equated with genuine concern for others, *chincelhata* was viewed as inauthentic and affectitious.

Whereas previous accounts of politeness metaconcepts in Korean have tended to emphasize hierarchical, that is, vertical, aspects of politeness (e.g., Lee & Ramsey, 2001; Yoon, 2004) and treat these as “separate systems” from non-hierarchical and/or strategic aspects of politeness (e.g., Hwang, 1990; Sohn, 1986), our results suggest a more complex picture. The six terms that we investigated are certainly variegated according to relative social standing, but not in a way that maps directly onto a hierarchical understanding of politeness. Across the six different metaconcepts that we researched, it was only *yeyuy paluta* ‘possess correct civility’ that

was seen by the majority of our respondents as being a hierarchical concept, and this result was driven by the students. *Concwunghata* ‘be respectful’ and *mwusihata* ‘be disrespectful’ were viewed by most participants as horizontal, whereas (*pwul*)*chincelhata* ‘be (dis)courteous’ is sensitive to social distance rather than power since, according to our participants, these terms were only used to refer to strangers.

Table 7 Overview of findings

	Vertical or horizontal?	Key descriptions
<i>Yeyuy paluta</i> ‘possess correct civility’	Both	• Exercising care and constraint • Knowing when to speak and when to listen • Showing consideration for others • Making others (including elders) feel comfortable • Avoiding hurting the feelings of others • Socially imposed ritual or convention
<i>Yeyuy epsta</i> ‘lack civility’	Both	• Not knowing when to speak and when to listen • Inconveniencing others • Hurting the feelings of others • Reckless behaviour
<i>Concwunghata</i> ‘be respectful’	Mostly horizontal	• Treating others as you would want to be treated yourself • Seeing things from the perspectives of others • Taking a genuine interest in other people
<i>Mwusihata</i> ‘be disrespectful’	Mostly horizontal	• Dismissing the views and values of others • Judging others based on our own standards • Failing to show recognition for someone’s social position
<i>Chincelhata</i> ‘be courteous’	Horizontal	• Politeness towards strangers and in the service industry • Additional layer of politeness beyond what is required • Inauthentic and affectatious
<i>Pwulchincelhata</i> ‘be discourteous’	Horizontal	• Impoliteness towards strangers and in the service industry • More extreme level of impoliteness

It was particularly noteworthy that the concept of *concwung* ‘respect’ was viewed primarily as showing regard for someone as a human being (인격체) and treating others as one would like to be treated oneself rather than the “elder respect” emphasized in previous studies (L. Brown, 2011a; Yoon, 2004). Instead of using the term “respect”, the need to use honorific language and deferential nonverbal behaviours to elders was described as “raising” (높이다) the interlocutor while lowering (낮추다) the self, and as showing “recognition” (인정) for

someone's more advanced social standing. Some participants explicitly challenged the notion that elders needed to be respected more just because they had lived longer.

Participants acknowledged that interactions with elders came with specific sets of expectations, and also with distinct emotional qualities. Whereas interacting with friends was comfortable (*phyenhata*), interactions with elders were effortful and careful, and required endurance. However, the underlying principles that determined behaviour across different interactions were viewed as being the same. Namely, irrespective of the identity of the interlocutor, it is important to show recognition (인정) of their social position, and consideration (배려) for their emotional wellbeing. Participants saw it as socially unacceptable to ignore or disrespect (무시하다) someone as a human being, or cause them emotional pain (기분 상하다), irrespective of how low their social position might be. It was notable that the professors, who have a high social standing, talked frequently of the need to show consideration towards students, and to be careful with behaviour towards younger generations. Although this finding may be somewhat specific for the university context where we undertook our research, this is a fairly significant finding for the study of East Asian politeness. The need for elders to treat their juniors with care is a politeness-related concern that has scarcely been described in previous literature.

Whereas politeness research has viewed "face" as an important construct underlying politeness (see Haugh & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010) and which is applicable to Korean via the notion of *cheymyen* (De Mente, 1998; Lim & Choi, 1996; Oak & Martin, 2000), this concept was practically absent in our data (it was mentioned in passing by just one participant). Rather than face, participants viewed emotional attunement as an important underlying motive for politeness. Achieving politeness lay in showing care for the emotions of others, and in the related concept of comfort (*phyenhata*). In intimate interactions it is important to maintain this feeling of "comfort" in a mutual way, whereas in interactions with elders the burden is placed on the status inferior to maintain the "comfort" of elders acting deferentially towards them and suppressing the kinds of "comfortable" words or actions that would be used with intimates. These results raise the question of whether *cheymyen*, a term that only appeared once in our data, actually has (or rather, *still* has) much currency as a politeness concept in Korean culture. They also raise questions for the wider practice in the politeness research field of theorizing on supposedly culture-specific emic concepts of politeness and face, without grounding such work in empirical data.

Our participant's understanding of (*pwul*)*chincelhata* 'be (dis)courteous' also sheds light on some previously unstudied aspects of politeness in Korean. In contrast to the focus on vertical politeness in previous studies, it was noteworthy that (*pwul*)*chincelhata* 'be (dis)courteous' was defined in terms of social distance: this is a term that is only ever used when referring to strangers. *Chincelhata* was also described by participants as being an extra layer of politeness that goes beyond what is normally required. In this way, our participants showed that metapragmatic knowledge of politeness may involve understanding of politeness in terms of different levels that may either meet normative expectations, or even surpass them. This distinction between a basic expected layer of behaviour and an extra layer of behaviour that goes beyond what is simply appropriate is reminiscent of some previous theoretical claims in the politeness research literature, particularly Watt's (2003) distinction between "polite" and "politic".

In addition, participants noted that *chincelhata* was distinct from other aspects of politeness, particularly *concwunghata* 'be respectful', due to its affectitious and inauthentic nature. Our participants thus held a distinction between sincere politeness (*concwunghata* as well

as *yeyuy paluta*) and insincere politeness (*chincelhata*). The potential for some aspects of politeness to be fake and deceptive occurs in previous studies of metapragmatics using interview data, notably Blum-Kulka (2005, p. 257) where Israeli interviewees described politeness simultaneously both in positive terms and “as something external, hypocritical and unnatural.” Similarly, Greek and Turkish informants in Bayraktaroğlu and Sifianou (2001, p. 7) distinguished politeness of manners” (where “real intentions” may be hidden) from “politeness of the soul” (“true politeness”). Future research will be needed to capture this distinction in more detail. It raises interesting questions about how “fake politeness” is used and perceived during interaction. Although our participants tended to see *chincelhata* in a more negative light due to its lack of authenticity, there could also conceivably be contexts where participants prefer the impersonal nature of “fake politeness” over the negotiation of personal emotions that might be required with “genuine politeness.”

Quite importantly, what our results show is that multimodality is essential to the very concept of politeness itself, at least in the Korean context. To talk of politeness is to talk not just of verbal strategies, but of an embodied experience that inhabits physical contexts and spaces. Whereas previous descriptions of politeness in Korean and beyond have tended to focus on morphosyntactic and lexical aspects of (im)politeness, our interviews showed that participants viewed (im)politeness as an intrinsically multimodal concept. Participants saw politeness as emerging from the content of speech, the sound of the voice and, most notably, from nonverbal behaviours. Politeness was described as an ‘embodied attitude’ (*thayto*) that was manifested in posture, body position, gesture and facial expression. In fact, a swathe of recent studies have argued for the importance of multimodal aspects of politeness (see L. Brown & Prieto, 2017), including in Korean (e.g., L. Brown & Winter, 2019; Winter & Grawunder, 2012). What is remarkable from our perspective was that participants’ metalinguistic and metacultural knowledge about politeness quite naturally included that very multimodality that researchers have only recently started to theorise (see our previous paper, L. Brown et al., 2022).

Although interviewees from both of our participant groups (students and professors) appeared to understand politeness in rather similar ways, there were also important differences. Most strikingly, students expressed more of a hierarchical understanding of politeness and showed more awareness of the need to upkeep politeness with elders. They were also more cynical towards the concept of politeness, with some students seeing it as a tool used by elders to judge younger generations. Professors, on the other hand, appeared less concerned with hierarchy and instead spoke of the need to exercise caution towards students and younger people. These contrasts seem to primarily reflect the different current ages and social positions of our participants. Put simply, the students are more sensitive to age and rank since adhering to such hierarchies is a more salient part of their everyday lived experiences. As university students they are constantly reminded of their relatively “low” place in the hierarchy of the university through daily interactions with those of higher status, not just professors and teaching staff but also other students who are their ‘seniors’ (선배). Although students might not necessarily agree with the hierarchical application of politeness in the university, at the same time they are aware of the need to adhere to these norms to cultivate a refined self-image for their own self-preservation and, ultimately, to strive for a higher status.

The professors, on the other hand, with their relatively high social positions, were less affected by such hierarchies (indeed, participant P02, a male professor in his 60s, noted in the interview that he doesn’t really have any status superiors these days). Instead, the professors are more concerned with the need to treat students and other social inferiors reasonably. Their high

awareness of this need appears to reflect the fact that elders or status superiors drawing out their power and abusing their authority is increasingly seen in a negative light in South Korean society (see Kim-Renaud, 2001), and indeed has become recognised as a social issue dubbed as *kapcil* ‘abuse of power’ (Cho & Yoon, 2017). The need to treat students with care was further magnified in recent years by the spread of the #MeToo movement in South Korea, which brought to light instances of sexual harassment by university professors and others in positions of authority (see Hasunuma & Shin, 2019). The question of what enacting politeness means for elders and status superiors in Korean and East Asian societies is a topic that calls out for further research, given that most research to date has focussed on modes of politeness enacted by juniors and status subordinates. It would be particularly interesting to find out how this awareness of the need to treat juniors reasonably extends to other contexts in Korean society beyond the university and professor-student interactions.

To conclude, our study has shown that the ways in which Korean students and professors talk about politeness metaconcepts in an interview setting differ in vital ways from previous claims about politeness, including studies on Korean and other Asian languages. For our participants, politeness was seen as an embodied attitude (*thayto*) that was applied in order to uphold emotional attunement during interaction. Respecting others (*concwung*) via acknowledging (*inceng*) their emotional needs and social position is needed in all interactions, even if the specifics of how this works differ depending on the identity of the interlocutor. These understandings of politeness were shown to be tightly linked to the social context of the interviews (i.e., university setting) and the relative positions of the student and professor participants, underlining the need for more empirical studies into politeness metaconcepts in Korean and other languages.

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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?

If participant mentions terms of their own:

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 Korean is more polite than speaking a regional dialect?

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