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## Politeness and impoliteness in social network service communication in Korea

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### Abstract

With the technological benefits and challenges computer-mediated communication provides, interactants in social network service (SNS) communication are driven to use language creatively, overcoming the disadvantages and exploiting advantages. This creative language use leads to innovative language change that often extends beyond SNS environments. In this regard, the medium is not merely a restrictive but also a facilitative factor. Communicative acts are fundamentally bound by the interactants' desire to express politeness, especially in face-threatening acts, well articulated in Brown and Levinson's (1987) model. In recent research, however, the issues of the norms of politeness and impoliteness as well as those of appropriateness have been highlighted (Locher & Watts 2005, Locher & Bousfield 2008). Interactants employ not only mitigating strategies to alleviate face-threatening but also use impoliteness strategies, which are often disguised politeness. Drawing upon the data from a 26-million-word corpus of synchronous SNS communication, involving two or more participants, in 3,836 instances, developed by the National Institute of the Korean Language, this paper addresses how SNS interactants make use of diverse elements of language to show their polite and impolite stances in interpersonal negotiation. For instance, interactants use fragments, interjections, letter-based ideophones and emoticons, exaggerated punctuations for emotiveness, omission of regular punctuation marks, intentional violation of orthographic rules, prolific slang expressions, deviated spelling to create cuteness or intimacy, among numerous others. All these creative strategies lead to language change at lexical, grammatical and discourse levels.

**Keywords:** *im/politeness, social network service (SNS), face-threatening act, creativity, innovative language change, Korean*

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## Вежливость и невежливость в корейских социальных сетях

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### Аннотация

Технологические преимущества и сложности компьютерно-опосредованной коммуникации побуждают пользователей социальных сетей применять язык творчески, преодолевая неблагоприятные факторы и используя благоприятные. Творческий подход к языку становится источником языковых изменений, часто выходящих за рамки социальных сетей. Соответственно, данная среда не только накладывает ограничения, но и обладает развивающим потенциалом. Коммуникативные акты осуществляются в соответствии с желанием коммуникантов быть вежливыми, особенно в «угрожающих лицу актах», что хорошо описано П. Браун и С. Левинсоном (Brown & Levinson 1987). В исследованиях, проводимых в последнее время, особое внимание уделяется нормам вежливости и невежливости, а также уместности их применения (Locher & Watts 2005 Locher & Bousfield 2008). Участники коммуникации используют не только стратегии смятения угрозы лицу собеседника, но также и стратегии невежливости, которые часто являются замаскированной вежливостью. Автор опирается на данные корпуса Национального института корейского языка, включающего 26 миллионов слов и 3836 ситуаций общения в социальных сетях двух или более человек. Цель исследования – проследить, как коммуниканты выражают не/вежливость с помощью различных единиц языка. Среди них были выделены междометия, орфографические идеофоны и эмотиконы, избыточная эмоциональная пунктуация, опущение знаков препинания, преднамеренное нарушение орфографических норм, в частности для создания эффекта интимного общения, обильное использование сленга и т. д. Все эти стратегии приводят к языковым изменениям на уровне лексики, грамматики и дискурсивных норм.

**Ключевые слова:** не/вежливость, социальные сети, угрожающий лицу акт, языковая креативность, инновационные языковые изменения, корейский язык

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### 1. Introduction

With the technological benefits and challenges computer-mediated communication (CMC) provides, interactants in social network service (SNS) communication are driven to use language creatively, exploiting advantages and overcoming disadvantages. This creative language use leads to innovative language change that often extends beyond SNS environments. In this regard, the medium is not merely a restrictive but also a facilitative factor. Communicative acts are fundamentally bound by the interactants' desire to express politeness, especially in face-threatening acts (FTAs), as well articulated in Brown and Levinson's (1987) model. In recent research, however, the issues of the norms of politeness and impoliteness as well as those of appropriateness have been highlighted (Locher &

Watts 2005, Locher & Bousfield 2008). Thus, interactants employ not only mitigating strategies to alleviate face-threatening but also use impoliteness strategies, whereby they take a stance more boldly than in face-to-face communication. Drawing upon the data from a corpus of synchronous SNS communication, this paper addresses how SNS interactants make use of diverse elements of language to show their polite and impolite stances in interpersonal negotiation.

The objectives of this paper are threefold: (i) to describe the manifestations of (im)politeness in SNS in Korea, (ii) to analyze them in terms of communication strategies, and (iii) to discuss the implications in language use and language change. This paper is organized in the following manner. Section 2 presents the theoretical background and review of the literature; section 3 addresses a few preliminary issues such as typological and typographical characteristics of Korean that are relevant to the discussion, and describes the data and methodology; section 4 illustrates (im)politeness strategies; section 5 discusses the implications of the findings focusing on the influence of the SNS interaction on the language and creativity as a driving force of language change; and section 6 summarizes the findings and concludes the paper.

## **2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review**

### **2.1. Theoretical Background**

Since all interactions, face-to-face or mediated, are situated, it is essential for interactants to consider the ‘face’ of others in the interaction. The notion of ‘face,’ first proposed by Goffman (1967), is defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [sic] by the line others assume he [sic] has taken during a particular contact” (p. 5). According to Goffman (1967: 16, 44), interaction ritual is a means a community uses for interactants to value each other’s face, i.e., to show respect and politeness. Grice (1975: 45–46) proposes the Cooperative Principle (CP) as a general principle of conversation, and four maxims relating to quantity, quality, relation and manner, the observance of which will guide the conversation to a mutually accepted direction. Building on previous research, Leech (1983) proposes the Politeness Principle (PP) in addition to Grice’s CP and elaborates the PP in interpersonal rhetoric with six maxims relating to tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy (Ibid: 131–151).

In their seminal work, Brown and Levinson (1987) further refine the notion of politeness and propose a model of politeness, in which the notions ‘positive face,’ ‘negative face,’ and ‘face-threatening acts’ (FTAs) are crucial. Positive face refers to the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants, and negative face refers to the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition (Ibid: 61). They further specify politeness strategies; fifteen positive politeness strategies, ten negative politeness strategies, and fifteen off-record strategies (see section 4).

Recently, a growing number of researchers began to study not only politeness but also impoliteness (Bousfield 2008, Bousfield & Locher 2008, Culpeper 1996, 2010, 2011, Culpeper et al. 2017, Eelen 2001, Haugh & Schneider 2012, Haugh & Bousfield 2012, Parvaresh & Tayebi 2018, Locher & Larina 2019, Kádár et al. 2021, among others). According to Culpeper (2011: 23), impoliteness is “a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts.” Impoliteness is manifested by face attacks, which, according to Tracy & Tracy (1998: 227), are “communicative acts perceived by members of a social community (and often intended by speakers) to be purposefully offensive.” These characterizations show that impoliteness is context-dependent and intentional, thus whether an utterance is impolite (or polite) depends not on the semantics of the utterance but on the interpretation based on the context and perceived intention. Thus, Fraser (1990: 233) notes that sentences are not ipso facto polite, which is echoed by Locher and Watts (2008: 78), who say that there is no linguistic behavior that is inherently polite or impolite. Culpeper (1996, 2005), building on Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, lists impoliteness strategies as bold on record impoliteness (direct and clear), positive impoliteness (damaging positive face wants), negative impoliteness (damaging negative face wants), off-record impoliteness (through implicature), withhold politeness (absence of politeness work), and impoliteness meta-strategy, sarcasm or mock politeness (insincere use of politeness strategies). He further lists conventionalized impoliteness formulae, in such categories as insults, pointed criticisms/complaints, challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions, condescensions, message enforcers, dismissals, silencers, threats, and negative expressives (Culpeper 2010: 3242–3243).

## **2.2 Literature Review**

A large body of literature addresses diverse issues in CMC and it is beyond the scope of this research to provide a comprehensive review thereof. Locher (2010) presents a diachronic change of CMC research trends in three stages (‘waves’), introduced by Androutsopolous (2006), i.e., (i) computer/technical determinism, (ii) the interplay of technological, social, and contextual factors, and (iii) the role of linguistic variability in the formation of social interaction and social identities on the internet.

Indeed, early research focuses on the restrictive aspects of CMC, and some studies on CMC language by Korean researchers are critical of the ‘deterioration’ of language through blatant violation of orthographic rules (Kim et al. 2008, Lee & Lee 2010). On the other hand, Koo (2002a) views the seemingly erratic language use in CMC as a characteristic of the postmodern ideology, manifested in the form of anti-formalism, non-conformity, pursuit of variety, and claim of distinction (see also Koo 2016 for discussion on post-colonial language change). Adopting a value-neutral perspective, some studies address how technological resources are exploited in CMC, focusing on the use of emoticons (or emojis) (Park 2004, Dresner & Herring 2010, Maíz-Arévalo 2014, 2015, 2016, Ahn 2019) and of CMC language,

called the netspeak (Crystal 2001) or net-lingo (Park 2002) with respect to patterns of neologism (Shin 2004, 2018, Daniel 2010, Ahn 2019). More recently, a growing number of studies address the issues of social interaction and social identities, often focusing on the speaker's stance-taking (Langlotz & Locher 2012, Maíz-Arévalo & Sanchez-Moya 2017, Konrad et al. 2020, Fetzer 2021, Dainas & Herring 2021, Zappettini et al. 2021 and works therein, Yus 2022, among many others).

Despite the large body of research on Korean SNS, a comprehensive study on politeness and impoliteness based on a large corpus and the influence of SNS language use on language change is largely underrepresented, and this paper intends to fill the research gap.

### 3. Preliminaries

#### 3.1. *Typological and Typographical characteristics in Korean*

Korean is a head-final SOV language with agglutinating morphology. Case markers, information particles, and sentential constituents (even argument NPs) may be omitted, and such omission is often preferred. These typological characteristics make nearly everything in a sentence omissible except for the verb, which is necessarily marked by a number of morphological trappings for tense, aspect, mood, modality, politeness and honorification. These verbal morphologies, especially politeness, honorification and formality markers, known as *hwakyey* 'speech levels', are highly grammaticalized and exist in a complex and elaborate system, modulated by four to six different levels, whose use is mandatory (Rhee & Koo 2017). Thus, one cannot say even very simple sentences like 'How are you?' or 'I'm fine,' without marking the level of their speech, such as [deferential], [polite], [semi-formal], [familiar], [intimate], [plain], etc., depending on to whom the speech is directed (Song 2005, see also Sohn 1999, Rhee & Koo 2017).

The typological characteristics of agglutinating morphology have consequences in linguistic forms in that grammatical forms often show variable degrees of erosion, and when they are stacked, which is often the case, their internal composition can be opaque to variable degrees. Gradience of erosion of grammatical(izing) forms is closely related to the orthographic regulation of interlexical spacing, i.e., words are written with their dependent morphemes as a single unit (called *ecel* among Korean linguists) and these units are written separated by a space between them. Interlexical spacing is a unique orthographic practice in Korean in the light that neighboring Asian languages, such as Japanese and Chinese, do not have such rules. Among the most frequent deviations of orthographic rules in popular writing is auxiliary verbs, which, according to the rule, are written as a separate unit from the host verb but, in popular writing, are frequently written together with the host verb without a space, forming a single *ecel*. A similar situation is observed with complex postpositions. The gap is caused by the fact that, while the rules are conservative, these grammaticalizing forms are conceptualized as a part of their host.

Korean has its own writing system, known as *hangeul* (or *hankul*), invented by King Sejong the Great in 1443. It has 24 characters each with unique phonemic value (e.g., ㅍ for /p/, ㅏ for /a/, ㄴ for /n/, etc.), thus an alphabetical system, and the letters are written in combination to form a rough square consisting of C(C)V(C(C)), each square (character) representing a syllable (e.g., 반 *pan* /pan/ ‘class(room)’, thus a syllabic system. When a syllable does not have an onset consonant, the syllable-initial C may be written with a circle-shaped letter (o), a placeholder with no phonemic value (e.g., 안 *an* /an/ ‘inside’; 예 *ey* /e/ ‘at, in’), which, however, has the phonemic value /ŋ/ as a syllable-final consonant. Syllabification in writing is also conservative as compared to speech and may try to be faithful to the word origins, whereas in speech the coda of a preceding syllable may be pronounced as the initial consonant of the following syllable. Thus, an expression ‘in the interior of the classroom; in the class,’ pronounced as *pa.na.ney* [pa\$na\$ne] (바나네), is written as *pan.an.ey* /pan\$an\$e/ (반안에), to show the roots *pan* (반) ‘class(room)’ and *an* (안) ‘inside,’ by keeping the phonemic letters within unbroken syllabic characters.<sup>1</sup> Since Korean writing has syllabic representation in the form of characters, acronyms are normally syllable-based, unlike the common letter-based acronyms in the languages using Latin alphabet (see 4.1.4 for examples). Along with spacing, Korean orthography also uses a full range of punctuation marks, in contrast with other Asian languages, e.g., Japanese and Chinese using them to a lesser extent and Thai and Burmese with no or nearly none at all.

Keyboards for Korean characters on smartphones come in a few different forms. The most commonly used system is the qwerty keyboard, in which doubled consonants are inserted by pressing the shift key and most vowels have their unique key. The less frequently used system known as the *chenciin* (*cheonjiin*) keyboard, which has much fewer keys, each with multiple consonant letters that can be selected by pressing the key multiple times until the desired letter can be selected, and has only three keys for vowels (a dot, a horizontal line, and a vertical line, known as *chen* ‘heaven’, *ci* ‘earth’, and *in* ‘person,’ respectively, in the philosophy behind the invention of the Korean writing system, hence the name *chenciin*), by which all vowels can be inserted either alone or constructed by combining them. The qwerty keyboard requires fewer strokes but the keys are smaller on the screen because of the multiplicity of keys, whereas the *chenciin* keyboard requires more strokes but keys are bigger on the screen because of the fewer number of keys. There are a few variations of the two major keyboards.

### 3.2. Data and Methodology

The data used in the present study is taken from a 26-million-word corpus of synchronous SNS communication (the NIKL-SNS Corpus), involving two or more participants, in 3,836 events with 691,535 messages, developed by the National

<sup>1</sup> When the syllable boundary indicated by the character is relevant, a dot will be used to indicate the boundary.

Institute of the Korean Language in 2019 and made available in 2020. A caveat is that the ‘word’ used here is based on spacing in the texts, and a unit separated by spaces may contain multiple dependent grammatical affixes. Thus, the actual number of ‘words’ would be greater if the dependent morphemes are counted as words (cf. prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries constitute individual words in English). Furthermore, as shall be discussed in 4.1.5, SNS interactants are largely erratic in spacing, some not using it at all, and thus the corpus size is much larger than the number indicates. The text of each interaction scenario in the corpus has a unique ID and is tagged with the speaker ID, the number of participants, date and time, device, keyboard type, topic, and participant’s demographic information including age, occupation, gender, birthplace, principal and current residences, relationship between interactants, intimacy level (0–5), and contact frequency. Personal names are redacted and replaced with [name1], [name2], etc.

The search engine used is UNICONC, developed by Jinho Park. The source texts in the NIKL-SNS Corpus are encoded by JSON (UTF-8 encoding), and the texts were converted into txt-format files to enable UNICONC search, by Tae-ik Sohn. The search engine is convenient for word-based searches, but since most functions are context-dependent and not retrievable from word-based concordance hits, no meaningful quantitative analyses were available. However, certain keywords or strings such as expletives, interactional routines, or letter-based graphicons could be retrieved. Therefore, most exposition in this paper is based on examining the actual data while quantitative analysis is limited to the instances involving keywords. Drawing upon the SNS corpus data, this paper addresses how SNS interactants make use of diverse elements of language to show their (im)polite stances in interpersonal negotiation.

## **4. Im/politeness strategies in Korean SNS**

### **4.1. Positive Politeness strategies**

Brown and Levinson (1987) list fifteen positive politeness strategies, ten negative politeness strategies, and fifteen off-record strategies, as summarized in (1) through (3):

- (1) Positive Politeness strategies
  - (A) Claim common ground: (i) Notice, attend to H; (ii) Exaggerate; (iii) Intensify interest to H; (iv) Use in-group identity markers; (v) Seek agreement; (vi) Avoid disagreement; (vii) Presuppose/raise/assert common ground; (viii) Joke
  - (B) Convey that S and H are cooperators: (ix) Assert or presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants; (x) Offer, promise; (xi) Be optimistic; (xii) Include both S and H in the activity; (xiii) Give (or ask for) reasons; (xiv) Assume or assert reciprocity
  - (C) Fulfil H’s want for some X: (xv) Give gifts to H

- (2) Negative Politeness strategies
  - (A) Be direct: (i) Be conveniently indirect
  - (B) Don't presume/assume: (ii) Question, hedge
  - (C) Don't coerce H: (iii) Be pessimistic; (iv) Minimize the imposition on H; (v) Give deference
  - (D) Communicate S's want to not impinge on H: (vi) Apologize; (vii) Impersonalize S and H; (viii) State the FTA as a general rule; (ix) Nominalize
  - (E) Redress other wants of H's: (x) Go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebted H
- (3) Off-record strategies
  - (A) Invite conversational implicatures: (i) Give hints; (ii) Give association clues; (iii) Presuppose; (iv) Understate; (v) Overstate; (vi) Use tautologies; (vii) Use contradictions; (viii) Be ironic; (ix) Use metaphors; (x) Use rhetorical questions
  - (B) Be vague or ambiguous: Violate the Manner Maxim: (xi) Be ambiguous; (xii) Be vague; (xiii) Over-generalize; (xiv) Displace H; (xv) Be incomplete, use ellipsis

A microscopic analysis of the SNS interaction may reveal many, if not all, of the politeness strategies listed in (1) through (3), but for reasons indicated above (see 3.2), we will discuss only prominent strategies with exemplification.

Among the most fundamental motivations of communication, whether mediated or face-to-face, is the need for social affiliation, because we understand who we are in relation to the world around us through social affiliation (Cohen & Metzger 1998: 49). There are a number of types of SNS practices that are intended to solicit common ground and show positive politeness, and we will illustrate such strategies in turn.

#### 4.1.1. Fragments

A common strategy for building an emotional common ground is to use fragments, a strategy particularly prominent in F-F interaction. This is exemplified in the following excerpt (note that utterances not highlighted are given in the form of English translation within square brackets):

- (4) (A: M in 20's, soldier, smartphone; B: F in 20's, office-worker, desktop; relationship acquaintance from online community, intimacy level 3, contact frequency 3+ weekly, interaction time 15:09)
 

B: [I've been to Thailand twice already, and this will be my third time, (aren't you jealous)?]

A: ☹  
o  
INTJ:oh



- A: 모아  
mo-y-a  
what-be-END  
'no!'
- A: 부러워  
pwulew-e  
be.envious-END  
'(I) envy you.'
- A: 나 해외  
na hayoy  
I abroad  
'I abroad'
- A: 나간적 한번두 없는데  
naka-n cek hanpen-twu eps-nuntey  
go.out-ADN time once-even not.exist-END  
'have not been even once.' (id: MDRW1900000003)

In the excerpt, A sends messages in five fragments, all within the span of one minute. Obviously, the major motivation for sending fragments is to reduce the gap between messages in synchronous communication, whereby the sender A can signal his engagement in and enthusiasm for the interaction with B. In the physical absence of the interlocutor, reception of the message is the only cue for the interlocutor's sustained attention to the interlocutor and interaction. Sending messages in fragments, rather than a complete sentence, confirms in shorter intervals the sender's presence in the scene, displays the sender's enthusiasm, and forges or promotes the sense of sharing epistemic and emotional common ground.

Use of fragments is prominent when the interlocutor uses a hand-held device, like a smartphone, as A does in the above (note that B uses a desktop and her message in line 1 is a complete sentence), when the interlocutors are of high intimacy level, when the interlocutors are young, and when the interlocutors are both female. All these aspects cannot be statistically confirmed, but the patterns are clear from the examination of the corpus data.

#### 4.1.2. Ideophones

The strategies to indicate common ground solicitation include the use of ideophones for initiation of SNS interaction. Korean has a large inventory of ideophones (Rhee 2019b, Koo & Rhee 2018), which carry diverse functions. One of such functions is exemplified in the following:

- (5) (A: F in 20's, homemaker, smartphone; B: F in 20's, occupation unspecified, smartphone; relationship friends; intimacy level 5; contact frequency nearly every day; interaction at 15:30)
- B: 짜잔  
ccacyan  
IDEO: 'ta-da!'

- A: ㅋㅋㅋ  
 khkhkh  
 EMO:laugh
- A: [Today I left home at 8 a.m. and all I ate was a pack of soy milk,  
 so]
- A: [Finished?]
- B: 아이구 힘들었겠다 ㅇㅇ  
 aikwu himtul-ess-kyes-ta ㅇㅇ  
 INTJ:oh.no difficult-PST-INFR-DECL EMO:tears  
 ‘Oh, no. It must have been a rough day for you.’  
 (id: MDRW1900000008)

In the above excerpt, Speaker B initiates the interaction by sending a message containing only an ideophone *ccacyan*, one used to announce an appearance of something or to exclaim triumph or pride. In face-to-face communication, using such an ideophone to initiate a discourse would be inappropriate, or awkward at best. The message-sender is dramatizing her appearance on the device or availability to exchange messages by way of a fanfare ideophone. Such a usage would be potentially face-threatening because of surprise element but is clearly of a good intention with the presumption that her initiation is desirable on the part of her interlocutor. The presumption is corroborated by A’s response ㅋㅋㅋ *khkhkh*, a letter-based emoticon for the laughter ideophone describing the multiple bursts of air in laughter, clearly signaling that B’s message is well received (see 4.1.3 below for more on emotion usage). Indeed, A is likely to have been waiting for B to contact her as soon as B finishes her work for the day, as shown in the question ‘(Are you) finished?’ Furthermore, as part of her initial response, A tells B content-rich information as if the interaction had been ongoing for some time already. The playful exchange of ideophones for initiation and response to initiation carries the function of soliciting and acknowledging emotional common ground.

#### 4.1.3. Common ground markers

Another popular positive politeness strategy is the use of diverse markers signaling shared common ground, such as interjections, discourse markers, and, most notably, graphicons. For instance, interjections such as 아 *a* ‘oh’, 아하 *aha* ‘I see’, 오 *o* ‘oh’, 옹 *ong* ‘oh’, 앓 *as* ‘I’m surprised’, 헉 *hek* ‘How surprisingly embarrassing!’, 헬 *hel* ‘How surprisingly bad!’, 오잉 *oing* ‘I’m surprised’, 으잉 *uing* ‘It’s surprising’, 와아 *waa* (‘wow!’), 악 *akh* ‘ouch’ for screaming, etc. are frequently used to signal the sender’s feeling, mostly surprise, toward the information just received. Incidentally, some of these interjections occur as letter-based contractions, e.g., ㅇㅎ for 아하, ㅇㅇ for 으잉 or 와아, etc. (see 3.1 for typography). Similarly, backchannel signals are frequently used as a signal of listenership and approval. Among them are 웅/웅웅 *wung/wungwung* ‘yes’, 그니까/그니까 *kunikka/kunikkey* ‘That’s right’, 마자/마자 *maca/macya* ‘You’re right’, 그래 *kulay*

‘yes’, 당근 *tangkun* ‘of course’, 음/음음 *um/umum* ‘yes’, etc. Receipt of a backchannel signal while composing a message encourages further elaboration and promotes the feeling of shared common ground between the interlocutors.

A similar effect can be achieved by the use of discourse markers in response to a received message. For instance, discourse marker 대박 *taypak*, literally ‘a big gourd’ from a fairy tale in which a poor but kind-hearted man gets treasures and becomes rich after opening a super-sized gourd, is a common intensifier and a response token to a message that contains noteworthy information. Discourse markers of a similar, though not identical, function include 진짜 *cincca* ‘true/truly’, 강 *kyang* ‘just’, 겁나 *kepna* ‘awesomely, tremendously’, 막 *mak* ‘just, fiercely’, 하긴 *hakin* ‘indeed’, 아니 *ani* ‘no way’, 짱 *ccang* ‘superb(ly)’, etc.<sup>2</sup> Each of these have diverse functions developed across time, observable from in-depth research, but a brief mention is in order for some of them. The discourse marker 하긴 *hakin* ‘indeed’ often involves the nuance of self-resignation, thus signaling agreement with the interlocutor who describes the situation as not preferred but with no alternatives (see Koo 2012). The discourse marker 아니 *ani* ‘no way’ is not directed to the interlocutor but to the absurd situation described by the interlocutor, thus carrying the meaning of ‘you gotta be kidding me’ (see Koo 2008). The discourse marker 짱 *ccang* ‘superb(ly)’ originates from the Sino-Korean morpheme *cang* ‘head of an organization’, a bound morpheme used as a suffix. The suffix acquired morphosyntactic freedom in the course of its development into a discourse marker, an instance of ‘degrammaticalization’ (Norde 2009).

The use of graphicons, emoticons, in particular, deserves special attention. Baumer and Rensburg (2011: 36–37) observe that in CMC, the physical absence of interlocutors is replaced with language and its multimodal, semiotic systems. Diverse audio-visual cues in face-to-face communication, e.g., tone of voice, gestures, facial expression, etc., that carry emotion signal functions are absent in CMC. Graphicons fill the gap in a creative and powerful way in the form of images. In early CMC graphicons were generated by means of keyboard-based symbols (emoticons), but recently still images (emojis, stickers) and animated images (animojis), known as *ccal* in Korea, are more commonly used.<sup>3</sup> Graphicons not only give information but also signal the emotional state of the sender. Kakaotalk, the most widely used SNS platform in Korea, provides a basic repertoire of emojis for free which can be supplemented by more novel and attractive sets of emojis and animojis available for a fee.<sup>4</sup> An extreme case is the known as ‘Solitude Room,’

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of the development and functions of the discourse markers, see Rhee (2021) for *cincca*, Ahn & Yap (2020) for *kyang/kunyang*, Yae (2015) for *kepna(key)*, Rhee (2020) for *mak*, among others.

<sup>3</sup> The global popularity of emojis is well confirmed by the fact that *Oxford Dictionaries* announced that the 2015 Word of the Year is the emoji “the face with tears of joy” (PBS news, Nov. 17, 2015, pbs.org/newshour).

<sup>4</sup> The NIKL-SNS Corpus, however, does not show stickers or animojis as they involve image files. Simple graphicons like certain emojis, such as smileys, are included in the corpus texts.

a multiple-party SNS site, where interactants can use emojis and animojis only and are not allowed to use texts. When the use of texts is necessitated, they need to convert the text into an image file, called ‘textcon’ before posting it (Bae & Kwon 2020).

The use of graphicons in SNS carries a common ground function closing the psychological gap arising from the physical absence. This is well illustrated in the initiation of an interaction, as shown in the following:

- (6) a. (A: F in 30’s, professional, smartphone; B: F in 30’s, other-unspecified, smartphone; relationship no acquaintance, intimacy level 0, contact frequency first time, interaction time 10:14)

A: 안녕하세요~^^  
 annyenghaseyyo~ ^^  
 ‘Hello~ EMO:smile’  
 A: [What is it that you want to have the most these days?]  
 B: 많죵ㅎㅎ  
 manh-cyo hh  
 be.many-END EMO:smile  
 ‘Of course, there are many of them. hh’ (id: MDRW1900006856)

- b. (A: F in 20’s, professional, smartphone; B: M in 20’s, service-provider, smartphone; relationship no acquaintance, intimacy level 0, contact frequency first time, interaction time 10:21)

A: 안녕~^\_^  
 annyeng~ ^\_^  
 ‘Hello~ EMO:smile’  
 B: 안녕  
 annyeng  
 ‘Hello.’ (id: MDRW1900005561)

- c. (A: F in 30’s, professional, smartphone; B: F in 20’s, office-worker, smartphone; relationship no acquaintance, intimacy level 0, contact frequency first time, interaction time 11:15)

B: 안녕하세요ㅎㅎ  
 annyenghaseyyo hh  
 ‘Hello EMO: smile’  
 A: 와야 안녕 안녕  
 waa annyeng annyeng  
 INTJ:wow hello hello  
 ‘Wow, hello hello’ (id: MDRW19000006861)

Emoticons, such as ^^, ^\_^, \*^^\*, \*^\_^\*, etc., and letter-based ideophones, such as ㅎㅎ *hh* (a syllable-initial consonantal abbreviation, i.e., a letter-based contraction (3.1), from the hearty-laughter onomatopoeia 하하 *haha*), ㅋㅋ *khkh* (see (5) above), and many others, are used in the initiation of SNS interaction. In a situation where the friendly facial expression that would be visible in face-to-face interaction is absent, the interlocutors are conveniently resorting to emoticons as a

supplementary means. It is notable that the interlocutors exchanging the messages above are of the intimacy level 0 and these exchanges are the very beginning of their first interaction. In (6a), A initiates the interaction with a casual greeting, marked with a smile emoticon, and immediately asks a question of a personal nature. To signal shared feeling, B also responds with a letter-based ideophone of a hearty-laughter  $\text{ㅎㅎ}$  *hh*. In the ensuing exchange, they talk about owning a SUV for convenience of picnicking.

The impact of emoticon usage is immediately visible in (6c) as well. In response to greetings with a smile/laughter emoticon, A responds with an interjection *waa* ‘wow’ and repeated intimate greetings, which show her enthusiasm in the interaction. Among the letter-based contractions, the most frequently used one is  $\text{ㅋ}$  *kh* for laughter (from the ideophone  $\text{ㅋ후}$  /k<sup>h</sup>u/), which often occurs in a string in which it is repeated at a greater length.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the longest occurrence in the corpus consists of  $\text{ㅋ}$  *kh* repeated 135 times in an unbroken string, by a female professional in her 20’s, using a smartphone, with her female interlocutor, a homemaker in her 20’s also using a smartphone, intimacy level 5, contact frequency less than once a month (id: MDRW1900003392). As a consequence of proliferation of  $\text{ㅋ}$  *kh*, its single occurrence is considered an unenthusiastic, situationally forced agreement to the message; its repetition  $\text{ㅋㅋ}$  *khkh*, a mild agreement, its triple-repetition  $\text{ㅋㅋㅋ}$  *khkhkh*, a medium-level of agreement, and only four or more will be considered a whole-hearted acknowledgment of the message being funny.

Another emoticon commonly used in Korean SNS is the vowel letter  $\text{ㅠ}$  [yu], which cannot constitute a syllabic character for the lack of initial consonant, and thus requires a place-holder ‘o’ as in  $\text{ㅠㅇ}$  *yu* (see 3.1). As is the case with other emoticons, its function is based on its shape not others, i.e., the shape resembling the tears streaking down the face from the eyes. This emoticon is used in a wide spectrum of negative situations, from being merely not agreeable to being disconcerting or even to being extremely embarrassing, etc. Depending on the degree of displeasure, interactants modulate the number of the emoticon, just as they do with  $\text{ㅋ}$  *kh*, described above. In the corpus, the longest occurrence of the emoticon  $\text{ㅠ}$  is 60 of them in an unbroken string by A (a female in her 30’s, office-worker, desktop) and her interlocutor B also uses as many as 52 (a female in her 30’s, managerial worker, desktop), with their intimacy level 4 and contact frequency nearly every day (id: MDRW19000002563). The extraordinary multiplicity may have to do with using a desktop computer (note, however, that even the greater repetition of  $\text{ㅋ}$  *kh* is observed in the use of smartphones, as indicated above), but prolific use of  $\text{ㅠ}$  is a general characteristic of SNS

<sup>5</sup> The symbol  $\text{ㅋ}$  *kh* may be a letter-based contraction (3.1) from the ideophone  $\text{ㅋ후}$ , but most SNS users also think that it depicts the air-puff from the mouth unintentionally released from a restrained laughter, thus an emoticon.

communication in Korea. A manual survey of the corpus data shows that there is not even a single interactional episode that does not involve the use of  $\pi$  *yu* or  $\equiv$  *kh*.

#### 4.1.4. In-group language

The next positive politeness strategy is the use of in-group language. A prominent aspect of SNS language is the use of ‘distorted’ spelling and ‘deforming’ the word shape into popular vernacular forms. Many of them involve simplification but some of them are those that started as a spelling mistake through metathetic keystrokes, which later became popularized for their novelty. Since the inventory of the SNS words is constantly evolving in interaction, none of the forms have been fully developed into exclusive SNS jargon. When the innovative forms are used, the sense of in-group membership is created or promoted. For instance, the conditional connective *anim* (from *ani-myen* [be.not-if] ‘if not’) occurs 1,166 times, exceeding its ‘standard’ form occurring 1,083 times. The emphatic sentence-ender *canha* (<*ci-anh-a* [NOMZ-be.not-END] ‘isn’t it?’) occurring at 3,782 times has its vernacular counterparts *ca.na* (2,199 times) and *can.a* (55 times). Similarly, the interrogative pronoun *mwe* ‘what’ is often in simplified forms as *mo* (e.g., *mwehay* ‘what are (you) doing?’ for 493 times and *mohay* for 92 times; *mweya* ‘what is (it)?’ for 980 times and *moya* for 161 times); and *coha* ‘it’s good’ (10,534 times) is typed as *coa* (691 times), which saves one stroke. All these instances involve simplification, which increases the typing speed and reduces the gap between interactions.

Another type of spelling variation is based on the infantile pronunciation, which is considered ‘cute’ in informal contexts (see 4.1.5 for baby-talk). For instance, the adverb *ellun* ‘quickly’ (occurring 562 times) has its vernacular counterparts *ennung* (145 times), *enneng* (50 times), and *elleng* (34 times). A very similar case is the interrogative adverb *e.tteh.key* ‘how’ (1,324 times), which is typed as *e.tte.khey* (13 times) and *o.tto.khey* (6 times). Another characteristic of slang or vernacular counterparts is the use of tensed consonant in place of a lax one (as *pp*, *tt*, *kk*, *cc*, *ss*), a phenomenon motivated by the iconic force dynamics (Koo 2009), as shown in examples such as *com* ‘a little’ (8,793 times) occurring as *ccom* (414 times), and *tangkye* ‘(it) attracts my appetite’ (18 times) occurring as *ttayngkye* (181 times). Using these alternative forms is often denounced by prescriptivists as a practice of the uneducated, but they are well received as forms used by SNS-savvy users, thus promoting the ‘covert prestige’ of an in-group (Labov 1966).

Another interesting type of in-group language coinage is related to an initial typing error, which, however, was later popularized for its novelty. For instance, a sentence-ender frequently used by early CMC users was ending with  $\square$  *m* instead of a long, cumbersome ending of [+deferential] speech level,  $\text{-}\equiv$  *nikka* (pronounced as  $\square$  *nikka* *mnikka*) for an interrogative sentence and  $\text{-}\equiv$  *nitada* *pnit*

(pronounced as □ 니다 *mnida*) for a declarative sentence (see 3.1 above). Thus, the new sentence-ender □ *m* was the sound-based innovation for economy. Around 2005, some typing errors of the sentence 뭐임 *mweim* (< *mwe-i-m* [what-be-END] ‘what is (it)?’ [typing order: □ -ㅏ -ㅣ -ㅇ -ㅣ -□ ]) through a wrong stroke order resulting in 뭉미 *mwengmi* [typing order: □ -ㅏ -ㅣ -ㅇ -□ -ㅣ ] received much attention, and SNS-users began to use the mistake as a SNS jargon for a question ‘what is it?’ (note that the letter o changed from the mute placeholder to the coda /ŋ/, as illustrated in 3.1; also see 4.1.6 and section 5 for more discussion on sentence enders). Similar neologisms from a typing order mistake are 오나전 *onacen* [typing order ㅇ -ㅏ -ㅣ -ㅣ -ㅏ -ㅣ -ㅣ ] from 완전 *wancen* ‘completely, very’ [typing order ㅇ -ㅏ -ㅣ -ㅣ -ㅏ -ㅣ -ㅣ ], 살마 *salma* from 사람 *salam* ‘a person’, and 시판 *siphat* from 싶다 *siphta* ‘desire, feel like to’, which, however, lost currency after a short period of popularity, thus occurring at a negligible frequency in the copus.

Also frequent is the use of SNS jargon, often created by means of, among others, syllable-based acronyms, i.e., taking the first syllable (‘character’) of words in a phrase. For instance, 갑분싸 *kap.pwun.ssa* ‘a situation/person spoiling joy; a wet blanket’ is such acronym constructed from the phrase 갑자기 분위기가 싸늘해지다 *kapcaki pwunwikika ssanulhaycita* [suddenly atmospheres chill] ‘the atmospheres suddenly becoming cold’, 소확행 *so.hwak.hayng* ‘small but easily attainable happiness’ from 소소하지만 확실한 행복 *sosohaciman hwaksilhan hayngpok* [small.but definite happiness] ‘happiness seemingly too small but attainable easily’, and numerous others (see 3.1; note that English acronym is letter-based, so these examples may be KPS and SHH, respectively). For their mysterious nature, the degree of knowledge of this type of acronymic jargon is often considered to represent one’s SNS proficiency.

#### 4.1.5. Baby-Talk

In addition to the instances of ‘cute’ spelling deformation based on child language, alluded to in 4.1.4 above, there is another interesting positive politeness strategy, i.e., the use of baby-talk (CDS; child-directed speech). This is prominent in the use of the addressee’s name instead of a personal pronoun. Koreans have a general tendency of avoiding address terms for the sake of politeness (Rhee 2019a). However, when addressing a social inferior or an equal, the use of a personal pronoun is less inhibited. In face-to-face interaction, names are frequently used as a vocative, but not as a referring expression in non-vocative positions. In baby-talk, names are frequently used as a referring expression and children refer to themselves with their own names, because proper names have stable reference as compared to pronouns, which are shifted depending on speech situations (Moyer et al. 2015, Maillart & Parrisé 2019). In SNS messages adult interactants often use the

addressee's name in the non-vocative position, where a 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun would be normally used. This is exemplified in the following:

- (7) (A: F in 20's, homemaker, smartphone; B: F in 20's, occupation unspecified, smartphone; relationship friends; intimacy level 5; contact frequency nearly every day; interaction at 15:56)
- A: [ah, let's do it this way.]  
 A: [(of the two meals) let's eat one meal at a restaurant and]  
 B: [let's talk about the detail when we meet on Thursday]  
 A: [the other meal at my house]  
 A: [that]  
 A: [salad]  
 B: [no, what are you talking about..]  
 A: [eat]  
 A: [if you don't like (it), that's OK, too]  
 B: 설거지하고 name1 이힘드러노노 π π  
 selkeciha-ko [name]-i himtul-e no no π π  
 wash.dish-and [name]-SUFF be.hard-END no no EMO:sad  
 '(you have to) do dishes and (other chores), it is troublesome for  
 [name=you], no no.. (sad)' (id: MDRW190000008)

The context of the interaction is that A says that she is using her mother's credit card and is reluctant to spend a lot for buying food for other friends, to which B suggests that A not buy any food for her (not shown in the excerpt). They already decided to hang out on Thursday and eat two meals together, and thus B suggests that they pay for one meal each (not shown in the excerpt). Realizing that she made B uncomfortable by talking about paying for food, A suggests, at the beginning of the excerpt, that they eat at a restaurant for one meal and eat salad at her home for another. In response to A's suggestion of eating at A's place, B shows concern that it is not a good idea because that will trouble her with chores. B's response is very enthusiastic as shown by the fact that she does not space words at all, and is adamant as shown by the repeated 'no no' and repeated emoticon 'π π'. The most notable aspect here is that she uses the name of the addressee, and the redacted name occurs with the hypocoristic suffix *-i*, an instance of intense affective display. Evidently, this practice of using the addressee's name with a hypocoristic suffix is signaling her affective stance, effectively saying that she cares about her interlocutor as a mother does toward her child.<sup>6</sup> The frequent use of this strategy is well illustrated in the fact that there are as many as about 16,732 such instances in the corpus. From a manual survey, this is particularly frequently observed between female interactants and when one is empathizing the other (see 4.1.7 for more discussion on empathy).

<sup>6</sup> Even though it is less frequent, using a proper noun in place of 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun also occurs intentionally imitating child speech, a strategy to increase emotional bonding.



Other baby-talk features include pronunciation. For instance, 알았어 *al.ass.e* /aras'ə/ is often written as 아라또 *a.la.tto* /arat'o/ or 아라똥 *a.la.ttong* /arat'oŋ/. In children's speech, a tensed sibilant /s'/ is often pronounced as a tensed stop /t'/, and the mid-vowel /ə/ tends to occur as a rounded back vowel /o/ (id: MDRW1900000438, MDRW1900000428).

#### 4.1.6. Friendly tone of voice

Among the disadvantages of SNS, as compared with face-to-face interaction, the most seriously restrictive features include the absence of the voice quality. The sound-based paralinguistic features such as tone, stress, speed, intonation, rhythm, volume, etc. carry information beyond what the linguistic forms provide, especially with respect to (im)politeness (see Culpeper et al. 2003 for discussion of prosody). In friendly face-to-face interactions, nearly anything can be said without offending the interlocutor by means of modulating these paralinguistic features. As briefly alluded to in 3.1, sentence-enders signal the levels of politeness and formality. However, even informal and intimate enders, when written, tend to sound blunt. In order to overcome this seemingly insuperable obstacle, SNS users have created ways of typographically displaying their friendly tone of voice in the messages, most prominently in the sentence-enders (see 3.1 for mandatory use of politeness and formality marking).

The avoidance of regular endings is manifested in a number of ways. One of them is the contraction to □ *m*, briefly illustrated in 4.1.4. But a much more common means is to add a nasal consonant at the end of the regular ending, as shown in the following list of examples, contrasted with regular forms:

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| (8) a. 헛갈렸당<br>heyskallyestang | cf. 헛갈렸다.<br>heyskallyessta<br>'(I) got confused.'       |
| b. 알아냈웅<br>alanayswung         | cf. 알아 냈어.<br>ala naysse<br>'(I) found out.'             |
| c. 신난당<br>sinnantang           | cf. 신난다.<br>sinnanta<br>'I am excited.'                  |
| d. 노는거딩<br>nonunketing         | cf. 노는 거지.<br>nonun keci<br>'(We will) have fun, right?' |
| e. 머잇징<br>meiscing             | cf. 뭐 있지?<br>mwe issci<br>'What (else) is there?'        |

Koo and Rhee (2013), in their discussion of the emergence of new sentence-final markers that are created by adding a nasal stop, note that these endings in CMC carry some positive nuance such as 'cute' or 'polite' flavor to the sentence (Ibid: 85). They further note that the use of nasality is typically associated with feminine

speech in Korean, especially when a girl tries to win a favor from a male or a social superior (using a *khossoli* ‘nose sound’) (Ibid: 86). This observation is also consonant with those by Koo (2002b), Park (2002, 2003), Jeong (2003), Kim (2004), and Um (2006). In particular, Park (2002:12) and Um (2006: 30) associate the strategy with the user’s intention to create the impression of being ‘soft’ and ‘cute’, especially when they are addressing social superiors. Evidently, the trailing of resonance from a nasal is reducing the bluntness of the regular sentence-enders. The effect of trailing in reducing bluntness is also observed in the use of multiple emoticons at the end of a sentence or fragments. Furthermore, the feeling of being engaged in deviance in that they are using the new forms that do not conform to the imposed rules and regulations may give them a sense of shared in-group membership and promote solidarity.

#### 4.1.7. Empathy

The use of baby talk, briefly discussed in 4.1.5, is, among other things, an instance of empathy display. Empathy is an extreme form of positive politeness in that the distance between the interlocutors is minimized, i.e., the sender is temporarily identifying with the recipient. It is the personal-center switch from S to H, in the sense of Levinson and Brown (1987). One noteworthy positive politeness strategy involving empathy is co-construction, i.e., an interactant is completing the other interactant’s message.

(9) (A: F in 20’s, homemaker, smartphone; B: F in 20’s, occupation unspecified, smartphone; relationship friends; intimacy level 5; contact frequency nearly every day; interaction at 15:42–15:43)

A: [we went to the restaurant]

A: [just.. on the meat]

A: [strange]

B: [yes, yes, it’s long time ago that you went there last time]

5 A: [powder, some kind of dirt was on it]

B: [oh, my.. on the food?]

A: [at first, just frost]

A: [we thought it was that]

A: [and put everything in the hot pot and boiled]

10 B: [yes, yes, it must have looked like it]

A: [then, as we ate, we realized]

B: [gosh, everything was mixed together] (id: MDRW1900000008)

The exchange between the two interactants is fast-paced, and B continuously gives a go-sign by saying ‘yes, yes’. At the last line of the excerpt, B completes A’s unfinished message from A’s viewpoint, as if she is the one who experiences the bad incident. This type of co-construction is commonly found in SNS interaction. Also called ‘collaborative completion’ (Lerner 1992, Lerner & Takagi 1999), co-construction is a good interactional device to confirm the interlocutors’ mutual understanding and achieve intersubjectivity (Koo 2002b: 12).

#### 4.2. Negative Politeness strategies

Since most instances of SNS involve casual and/or familial discourse, deliberate distancing to support the negative face is not prominently found in the corpus. Most interactional scenes between relatively aged interlocutors with low intimacy level use polite and honorific forms in their choice of address forms and verbal inflection. Our discussion, therefore, is rather limited in negative politeness strategies and, for the same reason, and impoliteness (4.3).

Jokes are commonly used as a positive politeness strategy, i.e., to build interpersonal solidarity. However, certain instances of jokes are intended to increase the distance and attribute superiority to the other interactant, i.e., self-derogating jokes. Since the one sending jokes is fundamentally motivated to create a positive atmosphere between the interlocutors, self-derogating jokes perform a double-duty, negative and positive politeness.

(10) (5) (A: M in 20's, soldier, smartphone; B: F in 20's, office-worker, desktop; relationship acquaintance from online community, intimacy level 3, contact frequency 3+ weekly, interaction time 16:24–26)

B: [I don't like to work]

B: [I want to go home.]

A: [come on, I want to go home, too]

A: [I have a colleague working together and]

5 B: [oh, I see]

A: [he just bothers me all the time]

B: [cheer up]

B: [oh, no]

B: [my senior, too]

10 B: [loses his temper on small things]

A: [on what kind of things?]

B: [he doesn't give me clear instructions and]

B: [becomes mad at me saying why I don't know, so]

A: [I see, I see]

15 B: [I am very sad]

A: [why on earth is he doing that?]

B: [but I should work hard]

B: 돈이없으면 나도없으니까

ton-i eps-umyen na-to eps-unika

money-NOM not.exist-if I-too not.exist-CSL

'because without money, I'm nothing (lit. if there's no money, there's no me)']

B: [hew!]

20 A: [kh (x 19 times)]

A: 나도 우리 관리자분한테

na-to wuli kwanlica-pwun-hanthey

I-too our supervisor-HON-to

'I, too, to my supervisor'

- A: 맨날 알랑방구 꾸 | 는걸^^...  
 maynnal allangpangkwukku.i-nunkel ^^...  
 every.day flatter-END EMO:smile  
 ‘I brown-nose him every day (lit. I flatteringly fart to him every day)’
- A: 나부르면 쏘르르 달려가서 네?^^  
 na pwulu-myen ccolulu tallyeka-se ney? ^^  
 I call-if IDEO:rolling run-and yes? EMO:smile  
 ‘if he calls me, I roll and run to him, (say) ‘yes, sir?’’
- B: [wow, you used to fart so much and]
- 25 B: [you still fart much, it seems] (id: MDRW1900000003)

In the excerpt above, A and B are complaining about their work. A is complaining about his work, where he is not well treated by his senior colleague. In an attempt to cheer him up, B says she also has a problem with her senior who does not give clear instructions and then scolds, and then makes a self-derogating joke in line 18. Obviously, she wants to make A feel better with such an extreme joke. The joke seems to work well, and in reciprocation, A, in lines 21–23, makes even more seriously self-derogating joke, describing graphically his subservient attitude using an ideophone of a small rolling object (*ccolulu*) and a vulgar expression brown-nosing (‘flatteringly fart’). Again, this joke seems to have produced good effect, as shown in lines 24 and 25, where she is cracking a pun associating brown-nosing with fart.

The whole exchange clearly shows that by using a self-derogating joke, an interlocutor wants to make the discourse partner feel better, i.e., by effectively saying ‘I am bad,’ but the overall effect is drawing the interlocutors closer by the sign of support, which contributes to emotional solidarity.

In rare occasions, interactants switch from intimate or polite sentence-enders to a higher-level sentence-enders in the politeness-formality scale. It is when the message sender gives full authority to the interlocutor. For instance, while the ongoing speech style is informal polite, a formal polite utterance like *알겠습니다* *alkeysssupnita* ‘I understand’ is used in response to a superior’s suggestions, informing the willingness to comply with them (e.g. MDRW19000005264), or *아닙니다* *anipnita* ‘No, not at all’ (formal polite) is used in response to the interlocutor’s apology for a delayed response, in order to signal definite nature of the negation of the necessity of apology (e.g. MDRW1900005639).

### 4.3. Impoliteness strategies

Impoliteness is not frequently observed in SNS because one-on-one synchronous interaction tends to be of a polite nature. Furthermore, the data collection procedure, i.e., volunteer-based data collection with all participants’ consent, also makes it nearly impossible to include a message showing conflictual interaction. There are, however, certain cases that are amenable to an impoliteness

strategy analysis, i.e., other-derogating jokes, banter, and puns, burdensome requests, name-calling, and even reproach, among others.

In one scenario, an interactant requests his interlocutor, in the context of discussing vacation plans, to take him with her in a trip abroad, an instance of direct and clear (bold on record) impoliteness in Culpeper's (1995, 2005) sense (see 2.1). Being a conscripted soldier without income, taking a vacation is impossible, and their relationship is such that the two, man and woman, cannot vacation in a foreign country together without arousing suspicions among their acquaintances. But he texts 나좀데려가조... *nacomteylyekaco* 'please take me with you' to his interlocutor. The message is written without proper spacing, and childish spelling of the benefactive as 조 *co*, instead of the formal 줘 *cwe*. This style suggests that he is playing the senseless baby (see also 4.1.5 for baby-talk features). On the part of the recipient, accepting the request is sure to incur a great burden, financially and socially, and most of all, it is not possible. She, then, responds to the insincere, jocular request with a joke, 캐리어에 넣어줄까..? *khaylieey nehecwulkka..?* 'Should I put you in my carry-on baggage?' (id: MDRW1900000002). This type of seemingly impolite interaction is in fact based on the assumption that the imposer is insincere and that the request should not be taken seriously, an assumption based on their knowledge of each other's personality and situation. Thus, this is a positive politeness strategy with a mask of impoliteness strategy (cf. 'mock impoliteness' Haugh & Bousfield 2012).

Similarly, there are many instances of name-calling, coarse language, and taboo terms, classifiable as conventionalized impoliteness formulae (Culpeper 2010; see 2.1). Frequently found terms include 바보 *papo* 'fool, stupid', 꺼져 *kkecye* 'get lost', 지랄 *cilal* 'freak', 염병 *yempyeng* 'to hell (typhoid)', 병신 *pyengsin* 'cripple', 씨팔 *ssiphal* 'f\*\*\*', 좃나 *cocna* 'f\*\*\*ingly', etc. Such avoidable words nearly always occur in the interaction of young males with a high level of intimacy, clearly suggesting 'covert prestige' among in-group members. Therefore, these instances are seemingly impolite interaction, but on their deeper side, they are instances of positive politeness strategy, i.e., 'mock impoliteness' (Culpeper 2010).

In this regard, it is also notable that the 'aggressor' uses a subtle supplementary device to weaken their negative illocutionary force. The most common devices include spelling variation to disguise them, a popular strategy to avoid cyber-policing in CMC, e.g., 시발 *sipal* (instead of 씨팔 *ssiphal*), 존나 *conna* or 즐라 *colla* (instead of 좃나 *cocna*), 봉신 *pwungsin* (instead of 병신 *pyengsin*), and adding a superfluous prefix 아 *a*, e.g., 아시발 *asipal* (instead of 씨팔 *ssiphal*), 아염병 *ayempyeng* (instead of 염병 *yempyeng*), etc. The origin of the prefix may be the interjection 아 *a*, which signals that the avoidable word is only a monological interjection, not directed to the receiver, a subtle strategy of reducing the force of aggression. As is the case with the impositive request, the deeper motivation of the use of avoidable words may be related to covert prestige and positive politeness.

Another instance of impoliteness strategy is reproach, a display of negative impoliteness (Culpeper 1996, 2005). Though not frequent, interactants present a reproach to the interaction partner, when they believe that it is beneficial to the partner and that they are close enough to tolerate such an impositive speech act. For instance, an interactant sends a message *넌왜케밥을잘안챙겨먹닝?????!!!* (*nenwaykheypapulcalanchayngkyemekning?????!!!* (< *nenun way kulehkey papulcal an chayngkye mekni* ‘How come you are not eating well, skipping meals like that?’) (id: MDRW1900000008). This type of blaming is in the common repertoire of mothers’ complaints toward their children. The reproach is usually not well received by the children, and this message has a high potential of being perceived as impolite, damaging negative face wants. Similar to other cases elaborated before, however, the message sender uses a range of mitigating devices, i.e., writing without interlexical spacing, using popular ‘incorrect’ spelling (compare with the source form above), adding a velar nasal (see 4.1.6 above), and adding multiple punctuation marks, all of which suggesting that the sender is claiming intimacy and intends to look ‘cute’ and not too serious. For this reason, this apparently impolite action is closely related to politeness strategy as well (cf. ‘mock impoliteness’ Haugh & Bousfield 2012).

### 5. SNS and language change

It is a truism that language is constantly changing, and the change is a cumulative effect of use. Since the language use is influenced and constrained by the context, including technology, the widespread use of SNS (and more broadly, CMC) leads to language change. Bolander and Locher (2020: 1) note that discourse analytic and sociolinguistic scholarship has increasingly highlighted the relevance of the blurring of borders between online and offline and the convergence of different modes for the ways individuals use resources. As elaborated in the above, language in SNS involves diverse strategies for interactional and transactional purposes.

Among the notable changes in Korean as a result of SNS is largely lexical, e.g., neologisms based on syllable-based acronyms. CMC-based neologisms are so vast that the National Institute of the Korean Language has published glossaries annually, each containing a large number of new words, many of which come from CMC. Since SNS has become inseparable from daily life, SNS neologisms have become a part of common vocabulary in the Korean language. This shows how the lexicon can be enriched by the language use in SNS.

Since Korean has a highly grammaticalized system of politeness, honorification, and formality, marked in the finite verb as inflected verbal morphology, the change is particularly prominent in sentence-enders (3.1). In early research, Jung (2010) already hypothesized that the notable increase in the use of a dependent noun followed by the politeness particle *-yo* is the influence of SNS, which was popularized in the 2010s. According to Jung (2010: 62–63), the operation is motivated by the desire for politeness marking in informal style as well

as the desire for economy and facility. Similarly, Lee (2011) suggests that the emerging *hanta-yo* construction, a combination of plain speech level and the politeness particle, as a sentence-ender, is an influence of Twitter language. Once these are recognized as full-fledged grammatical change, they will constitute instances of grammaticalization from SNS practices.

Some SNS practices have made way into more formal communication genres. In a more formal genre, such as argumentative essays and formal letters, an increasing number of instances of using multiple punctuation marks, emoticons, and incomplete sentences are observed. Obviously, these practices have originated from SNS language. Furthermore, since SNS interactants do not send messages in a form of complete sentences and neither do they wait for the partner's message before composing their own, messages are typically fragmented and their connections are not streamlined but are connected in a crisscross fashion. Even though it cannot be quantitatively proven, the impression that a recent speech style of multiple-floor gradually departing from the strict single-floor conversation style may be due to SNS language as well.

Most importantly, all the changes being made in SNS and moving into everyday language exhibit the creative use of language. Heine and Stolz (2008: 332) observe that language is essentially creative activity, and Lehmann (1987, as cited in Heine & Stolz 2008) also highlights the role of creativity in language change. Some creative practices may have been necessitated by the inherent limitations of SNS communication, such as physical absence of the interlocutor in the interactional scene, the absence of paralinguistic features, inevitable temporal gap between messages, etc. However, as it has been shown above, SNS interactants overcome such limiting factors through creative use of the given resources.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

Drawing upon the data from SNS communication in Korean, this paper looked at some of the (im)politeness strategies, from the perspectives of politeness and impoliteness theory, as elaborated in Brown and Levinson (1987), Leech (1983), Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2010), among others. Positive politeness strategies aim at reducing the distance between the interlocutors and forging common ground. A number of positive politeness strategies are found in the corpus, e.g., the use of fragments, ideophones, common-ground markers, in-group language, baby-talk, friendly tone of voice, and empathy. Negative politeness strategies, aiming at increasing the distance between the interlocutors in consideration of H's negative face, do not surface prominently in the corpus. Self-derogating jokes and intentional upward adjustment of sentence-enders in the politeness-formality scale in speech level can be regarded as strategies of negative politeness, but it was also argued that they may have been motivated by the desire to forge emotional solidarity. Impoliteness strategies are similarly not prominent in the corpus. Some instances, e.g., making a burdensome request, name-calling, reproach, etc., may be, in appearance, instances of impoliteness, but it was also argued that at the deeper level, such speech acts are likely to be positive politeness strategies.

All instances of strategies are creative work of language users in their attempt to overcome the limitations and to make the language use more pleasurable. It becomes increasingly apparent that these strategies in the SNS language make influence on the lexicon and grammar. This echoes what Rhee and Koo (2014: 334) observe: “speakers of a language are not mere consumers of linguistic forms but are active manipulators of the existing forms, and thus creators and innovators of language.”

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### Abbreviations

ADN: adnominalizer; CSL: causal; DECL: declarative; END: sentence-ender; H: hearer/addressee; HON: honorific; IDEO: ideophone; INFR: inferential; INTJ: interjection; NOM: nominative; PST: past; SUFF: suffix

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