

**”You insulted everybody on this forum”:  
metapragmatic negotiation of insults in an online student community**

Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen (University of Helsinki)

Research on discussion forums has revealed that in this type of computer-mediated discourse “metacommunication is an important argumentative resource in the negotiation of norms and expectations” (Kleinke & Bös forthcoming; see also Tanskanen 2007). This study looks at metapragmatic comments, which are not concerned with the topic of discussion but comment on the communicative act itself; participants use them in order to make visible their assessment of their own and their fellow participants’ contributions (Hübler & Bublitz 2007; Tanskanen 2007). With material from The Student Room (thestudentroom.co.uk), which advertises itself as the “world’s biggest online student community”, the present study shows how the members of the community use metapragmatic comments for negotiating insults.

The analysis will reveal what qualifies as an insult in this community and how the members (re)negotiate the norms of appropriate online behaviour. According to Herring (2004), “criticism, conflict, and the emergence of means of conflict resolution” are among the characteristics of an online community; the negotiation of insults may include all of these characteristics, which is why studying this type of metacommunication will help shed light on the intricacies of an online community.

### **References**

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