POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC DIGITAL DISCOURSE

Gabriela Miššíková

Abstract
The paper explores the discourse strategies used in academic discourse in the informal setting of a personal web page. The aim is to study a digital variation of academic discourse that blends features of spoken and written academic discourse. It typically provides spontaneous responses using direct ways of expressing ideas. Unlike scholarly discussions at conferences, academic etiquette and diplomatic language are not always maintained and personal attacks and emotive statements occur; participants tend to express their preferences, professional standpoints, ideas and personal attitudes frankly and openly. Expressing criticism and disagreement, the participants may or may not use politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening responses. Mapping the variety of these strategies, I work with those parts of academic web pages that are devoted to vivid and uncensored discussions of the subject matter. The analysis is theoretically rooted in the conception of interpersonal rhetoric as defined by Leech (1983). The research draws from a corpus of articles and related responses randomly chosen from personal and institutional academic web pages.

Keywords
academic digital discourse, implicating vs. explicating, expressing and taking criticism

1 Introduction
In this paper the academic discourse used in academic personal websites is viewed as digital discourse in the sense of being presented via computer. The academic digital discourse used in web pages is to a certain extent less restricted by the norms and standards of academic writing commonly required in research articles. Complex research on popular and professional science (cf. Hyland 2010) has revealed a variety of important aspects of academic discourse and the need for consistency with the norms of the given scientific community. My assumption is that certain aspects, such as proximity and interpersonality, will slightly differ in the informal setting of academic digital discourse. However, the recognition of scientific value and desire for certain academic prestige also play a role. Online discussion provides alternative voices and the participants themselves often support their professional stance via referencing or directly inviting experts to contribute. The analysis shows that the most characteristic