What if we don't actually match? The construction of genuineness in metadiscourse about online dating

Users of dating apps are caught in an epistemic conflict when designing their linguistic self-presentation online (Tagg, Seargeant & Brown 2017) to create a favourable impression without appearing inauthentic and, thus, insincere. Deception is, indeed, very common in online dating(Markowitz & Hancock 2018); conversely, credible app profiles are decisive for drawing potential matches' interest (Wotipka & High 2016).

This study explores conceptualizations of this epistemic conflict in metadiscourse on online dating, analyzing focus group interviews with Vienna-based university students of English and an open question survey among 30 British students. Applying tools from microlinguistically-oriented discourse pragmatics (Simon-Vandenbergen 2015) and conversation analysis (Heritage & Clayman 2010), the texts and transcripts are analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to identify patterns of epistemic modification of functionally distinguishable co-texts. This provides empirical insights into notions of trust in reflexive representations of dating platforms (Byron, Albury & Pym 2021) and young people's understanding of the relationships created online (Locher & Bolander 2017).

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