

# International Journal of Educational Innovations

ISSN 3078-5677

International Journal of Educational Innovations  
 Volume 2, Issue 2, 74-91  
<https://doi.org/10.46451/ijei.260127>

Received: 15 August, 2025  
 Accepted: 15 December, 2025  
 Published: 27 January, 2026

## When Humility Meets Bragging: The Expressions of Humblebragging in Reality TV

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### Abstract

With the rapid development of media, humblebragging as a communication strategy that balances self-promotion and social recognition has become increasingly prominent. Nevertheless, the current study has mainly resorted to the interpersonal communication and social media, and little has been done on the order of the expressive forms and cultural flexibility of humblebragging in the dynamic media like the Chinese reality shows. In this manner, this study seeks to investigate the impact of humblebragging in different situations within the context of Chinese reality shows, to explore how humorous language is used to ease interpersonal tensions and improve relationships, and to examine cases where a lack of sincerity leads to unforeseen consequences. To this end, the research will draw the politeness theory and impression management theory of Brown and Levinson. It applies a case study of examining six representative excerpts that represent various contexts of two popular Chinese reality shows: *Trump Card* and *Keep Running*. The findings indicated that humblebragging offers an effective means of attaining self-promotion and enhancing solidarity within a group because of humor and self-depreciation. However, if one fails to articulate things in the right way, such as using discordant expressions or being too self-centered, it may create tension in relationships, since it is perceived as a mismatch between the outward appearance and the actual situation. The study emphasizes the significance of proper expression in measuring the effectiveness of humblebragging.

### Keywords

Humblebragging, reality TV shows, self-promotion, group solidarity, misalignment and relational tensions

### Introduction

Humblebragging is the act of hiding self-promotion in modesty or complaint. It is a common communication strategy today. Some individuals engage in direct bragging, while others use

humblebragging to mask the intention of flaunting through complaints or self-deprecating remarks (Yan et al., 2025). Direct boasting shows admiration for achievements and understanding of complaints, but it is not the same as humblebragging. This unique form of self-presentation—humblebragging—seemingly allows actors to highlight positive qualities (being nominated for an award, graduating from two universities) while attempting to elicit liking and sympathy by masking these positive qualities in humility (disbelieving the nomination) or in a complaint (feeling annoyed) (Sezer et al., 2018).

This phenomenon appears clearly in collectivist societies like China. There is tension between traditional modesty and modern individualism, so humblebragging becomes a strategic way to communicate. This confluence of factors likely creates a conflict that could push individuals to adopt a self-presentation strategy that allows them to meet both the requirements of traditional values and the requirements of modern, Chinese life (Li et al., 2025). But existing research has mostly looked at Western contexts or everyday social media. This leaves a gap in more complex and performative settings. Reality programmes produced high viewing figures, suggesting a strong appetite for the form; critics dismissed the programmes as mindless and the participants as desperate for fame; and scholars assessed the formats, audiences and meanings of reality television, offering a complex, if rarely celebratory, account (Klein & Coleman, 2022).

Therefore, this study investigates humblebragging in Chinese reality television to understand how contestants show both relatability and self-promotion. By exploring the connection between cultural values and strategic performance, this study clarifies the role of humblebragging in the contemporary sociocultural context of Chinese media.

## **Literature Review**

Humblebragging, a distinct self-presentation approach blending humility or complaints with self-promotion, has attracted attention due to its frequent occurrence in social interactions. The review will emphasize humblebragging's characteristics, applied theories, cultural comparisons, and research gaps.

## **Characteristics of humblebragging**

The concept of humblebragging revolves around a kind of self-presentation technique in which people incorporate self-promotion in the humility or complaint statements. Two primary types of humblebragging are identified in research: complaint-based and humility-based (Paramita & Septianto, 2021). Sezer et al. (2018) consider both humblebragging and indirect bragging to be generally perceived as less effective than direct bragging, often due to the perception of insincerity. This tactic frequently has unintended consequences, provoking annoyance instead of admiration (Klein, 2018).

There are some different factors influence on the humblebragging. Specifically, we argue that while bragging (vs. humblebragging) by reviewers with low level of expertise leads to more favorable brand evaluation, humblebragging (vs. bragging) is more effective among expert reviewers (Chen et al., 2020). According to Paramita and Septianto (2021), celebrity humblebragging tends to improve brand attitudes, but this behavior often generates unfavorable reactions.

## **Co-effect between facework and impression management**

Humblebragging can be analyzed through Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. This theory suggests that individuals strive to manage their image as perceived by others. They aim to

balance two objectives: maintaining a positive self-image (such as being liked) and respecting others' negative face (such as allowing them to feel independent). Speakers blend boasting with humble language to achieve two goals: showcasing their positive face to appear competent while maintaining modesty to meet social expectation. Moreover, it will protect the face needs of others. This aligns with Goffman's concept of impression management. People adopt identities that meet with expectations and social norms in a given context. Humblebragging exemplifies the tension between the desire to appear admirable and the norms of humility. It attempts to strike a balance between them. These dynamics explain why humblebragging can sometimes foster closeness but may also make individuals seem insincere if the audience perceives the behavior as inauthentic. This discrepancy highlights the delicacy required in managing one's image in social settings.

### **Different cultural views**

Cross-cultural studies show that people have different views on how humblebragging is used and understood. In China, "Versailles humblebragging," a local form of this behavior, reflects strong values related to modesty and social harmony. This suggests that collective beliefs play a pivotal role in determining humblebragging's social acceptability and its overall impact (Wang & Xie, 2023). But scholars like Sezer et al. (2018) say that humblebragging in Western cultures as consistent with individualistic self-presentation norms, which often elicit skepticism due to perceived inauthenticity.

### **Gaps in the literature and research questions**

There are still several gaps in humblebragging research. First, many studies look only at single examples of humblebragging and do not look at the wider conversation. Second, Chinese reality TV shows do not have enough detailed pragmatic studies. Third, the relationship between humblebragging and media settings has been underexplored. For example, while online humblebragging has been studied, its implications in evolving media environments, such as influencer marketing, remain under-investigated (Feng et al., 2023).

Humblebragging is a complex behavior shaped by cultural, contextual, and interactive factors. Its wide impact shows that the current research gaps need further study on its function and effect. It is important to explore humblebragging in active and interactive settings.

To address these research gaps and to explore broader issues, several study questions were created to help deepen the understanding of humblebragging in different contexts. These questions link basic ideas and practical use, and they point to areas that have not been studied enough:

1. What is the main function of humblebragging in Chinese reality television?
2. What positive roles does humblebragging play in fostering group cohesion?
3. Under what conditions does humblebragging in Chinese TV celebrity shows result in unintended consequences?

### **Methods**

This study employs a case study approach, using discourse analysis to examine humblebragging in Chinese reality television. This method is ideal for in-depth investigation of communicative practices within their specific sociocultural contexts, allowing for a detailed understanding of linguistic strategies and social behaviors that quantitative methods might overlook.

### **Data source and sampling**

The primary data consists of episodes from two of China's most popular reality TV shows: *Trump Card* and *Keep Running*. These shows were selected as they represent mainstream entertainment, feature high-profile celebrities, and blend competitive and collaborative tasks, creating an environment for strategic self-presentation. *Keep Running*, *The Voice of China*, and *Where are We Going, Dad?* garnered significant attention from Chinese scholar due to their high audience ratings (Zhang et al.,2023).

A multi-stage purposive sampling strategy was employed. First, a broad sample of episodes aired between 2021 and 2024 was collected to reflect contemporary communication norms. The other media forms shared the same characteristics of contemporary communication. In contemporary Chinese TV series, interpersonal communication is affected by many contents that make up character's image, including appearance, language, non-verbal and different scenes (Dai et al.,2024). Second, these episodes were systematically screened to identify segments focused on celebrity games and personal storytelling, as these contexts are most likely to elicit humblebragging.

From this focused dataset, an initial pool of potential humblebragging instances was identified. According to Jabar et al. (2025), the identification was based on established linguistic and social cues, such as a boast embedded within a complaint or a statement of humility. These instances were then subjected to a rigorous review to ensure they met the core definitional criteria of humblebragging. The final selection of 6 distinct verbal excerpts, ranging from 5 to 30 seconds in length, was guided by the principles of thematic saturation and maximum variation. This means that after analyzing these 6 cases, no new significant patterns or strategies of humblebragging emerged, and these excerpts represent the diverse techniques observed (e.g., humor-based, complaint-based). This process ensures the cases are representative examples of the phenomenon within the dataset.

### **Data analysis and coding**

The analysis was conducted using qualitative discourse analysis, which incorporated both contextual and linguistic elements. The coding scheme was created in two stages.

The first step we undertook involved applying the framework provided by Sezer et al. (2018) to sort humblebrags into the following categories: complaint-based and humility-based. Secondly, the interactional dynamics and cultural context of Chinese reality TV was considered by extending the first classification with an inductive analysis that resulted in two other dimensions (1) communicative function (to demonstrate superiority, to generate relatability, or strategic self-promotion); (2) context (competitive task and collaborative activity).

Considering the limited number of the sample, it was decided to use a negotiated agreement to make sure it is reliable. We conducted an independent analysis of the data and reached an agreement rate of 83.3%. Any discrepancies were debated and resolved by referring to the coding scheme, which led to a final consensus of 100%.

The analysis of the excerpts in the study was subjected to a detailed discourse analysis in the wake of the coding. Based on the theory of impression management by Goffman (1959), the analysis focused on a multimodal approach, both verbal and non-verbal, considering both the applicant connections in the tone of voice, face expressions, bodily movements. The method played a crucial role in the capture of the role of these cues in the creation of the perceived sincerity of a given humblebragging. In particular, we used the politeness theory by Brown and

Levinson (1987) to examine how contestants employed humblebragging as a form of face-work to: (1) negotiate between the twin requirements of self-promotion and modesty; (2) establish a social relationship with the competitors; (3) create a positive image to the audience. This study goes beyond description and seeks to present a more rigorous analysis of humblebragging as a complex communicative tool in the context of the performative and cultural environment of Chinese media, by examining the *Trump Card* and *Keep Running* case studies through the systematic application of this integrated framework.

## Results

This study analyzes six instances of humblebragging drawn from two popular television shows. It aims to reveal the humblebragging that happens in different contexts below.

### Humblebrag as self-presentation

The interaction shown in Figure 1 occurred during an interactive activity in *Trump Card*, where two teams were in competition. The rule of this activity that requires two team members to accurately guess the classical music pieces that are played. When a team member correctly guesses the melody immediately upon hearing it, the team earns the scores. This demonstrates their personal skills and their application of music knowledge. They listen attentively to quickly identify the pieces. Collaboration enhances their success, making it easier to find the correct music in the game. The anticipation and excitement surrounding their ability to quickly and accurately guess the right melody adds an element of suspense and intrigue to the program, making it an interesting and compelling segment to audience.

Figure1  
*Lying on the Piano*



Before the music played, Sheng Teng(ST) said a few sentences in humblebragging style. ST: “When i was a kid, my family was really poor. ↓I didn’t even have a bed. I grew up lying on the piano.↑”

From the above sentence, a Chinese comedy actor said these sentences with a strong contrast. The first and second sentences showed that his family situation was really poor, while the third sentence expressed his musical background and affluent childhood. In the sentence, he made a self-promotion that was even mixed with boasting.

Figure 2 illustrates a scenario from a promotional video for *Keep Running*. The context is set in VR, where they are situated in a place as high as the clouds, and some members are humblebragging about their superiority to get the only parachute. Self-praise can be seen as a face-threatening act to hearers' positive face, since it implies speakers' superiority over others (Wu et al., 2023). In this case two members are chosen for analysis.

Figure2

*Tearing off More Than 100 Name Labels and Always Win*





Chinese male actor Li Chen (LC) first said some sentences in a humblebrag style.

LC: “Although i am strong and responsible,↑ just tearing off more than 100 name labels.↓”  
“I am ashamed of the title of “capable person”↓”

Based on the first sentence of the narration, LC also talked about one characteristic of Keep Running, which was tearing off the name labels, while boasting his personal superiority. Their unique self-presentation style can be traced to a sense of superiority accompanied by a concern that others fail to acknowledge that superiority (Delroy et al., 2013). In addition, he continued to humblebrag in the second sentence. He was proud of being a “capable person” in a humble way.

Compared to LC, Chinese actress Angelababy also expressed her view on the superiority.  
Angelababy: “And I always win when I play this game.↑ It’s time to give a little chance to everyone.↓”

Both sentences were full of humblebragging, intended to demonstrate their advantages.

Both examples, drawn from different reality TV shows, illustrate the intricate relationship between humblebragging and self-promotion. The speakers, whose internal attributes make them brag and praise themselves, are perceived relatively positively if they succeed in creating the right context for their boasts (Tal-Or, 2010). Humblebragging, a style of self-presentation that involves showcasing one’s achievements or advantages under the guise of modesty, serves as a strategic tool for self-promotion in both cases. Many authorities have argued that self-presentation success is determined less by the direct effect of personality variables than by the

fit of the personality to the context (Hogan et al., 1996; Ng et al., 2008; Roberts & Hogan, 2001; Tett & Burnett, 2003). Looking at the interaction in Figure 1, sourced from *Trump Card*, Sheng Teng skillfully connects his modest background with the extraordinary experience of having been raised “lying on the piano.” This points to his advantageous access to music, seamlessly extending this supposed modest gesture to reveal his superiority. This is consistent with politeness theory’s stress on redressive behavior, defusing the boast while leaving intact positive face (his quality as a capable person) without detracting much at others’ negative face (his impression of being better than them). At the same time, Goffman’s theory helps to clarify how this story is actually performed by Sheng Teng to present an audience-identifiable but ideal role that matches their perception about reality programming on television.

As seen in Figure 2 above, obtained from *Keep Running*, this VR environment heightened the promotional aspects involved in humblebragging. Speaking about his impressive experience of removing more than 100 name labels, Li Chen introduced himself as a capable but modest person, feeling “ashamed” of being called a “competent person.” This is consistent with politeness theory’s negative politeness strategy wherein he showed deference to the audience’s autonomy. As observed above, Angel Baby also emphasized her superiority in playing the game by announcing that it is about her winning consistently, which is actually a manifestation of her generosity to give other contestants a chance to win. It avoids direct face threats while asserting competence. Goffman’s dramaturgical lens clarifies how both performers adapt their self-presentation to the show’s competitive yet collaborative tone, balancing self-aggrandizement with communal norms.

Both individuals used humblebragging not only to assert their superiority but also to connect with their audience in a manner that feels relatable and less overtly boastful. These examples show that humblebragging is a communicative way for individuals to self-promote while appearing humble, making it an entertaining and impromptu action in reality television. The prominent feature of reality television is blending formalised and impromptu actions (Hájek et al., 2021).

### **Humblebrag as humor and group solidarity**

An interesting program called guess by others body language is on the *Trump Card*. In this program, participants can experience different expressions that convey not only cultural connotations but also the team’s satisfaction and group solidarity. Solidarity, therefore, may be understood as the collective good of being bound together in order to provide mutual assistance through what we perceive as some form of common interest (Tomasini, 2021).

Figure3  
*Full of Beauty and Talent*





In this context, there were two members demonstrating through their performance, while two teams of members were guessing.

GXT: "Weird and unsettling vibes are spreading around.↑"

“I am really full of beauty and talent.↑”

JL: "Xiaotong"

Chinese actress Guan Xiaotong (GXT) guessed it correctly upon seeing the demonstration. After she boasted about her success, her team's comedy actress Jia Ling(JL) cheered Xiaotong.

A competitive episode of Keep Running was about two teams piling large balloons that need to be deflated into small bags. One team would win in the shorter time.

Chinese male singer Zhou Shen(ZS) with his partner piled the deflated balloon into the small bag to achieve a shorter time.

ZS: "We can zip it slowly. ↑We should do it graceful. It will be pretty.↓ If you don't do it well, I will wait for you.↓"

While they were piling the balloon almost finished, ZS said a few sentences in a humblebragging style to the other team members.

Humblebragging, a subtle form of self-promotion masked as modesty or self-deprecation, it also emerges as a humorous way that reinforces group dynamics and fosters solidarity. In addition, it's also related to gender. Research indicates that women share humor to build

solidarity while men employ humor to impress and emphasize similarities (Hay,2000). The excerpts provided illustrate how this form of humor operates within a collaborative and competitive context.

In the context of “*Keep Running*,” a variety show known for its light-hearted and interactive challenges, humblebragging serves a dual purpose. It not only adds a layer of humor but also emphasizes partner among participants. Humorous interventions may enable parties to re-evaluate the situation—put aside irreconcilable issues—and to make a fresh start (Kopper,2021). For instance, Zhou Shen’s comment, “We can zip it slowly. We should do it graceful. It will be pretty. If you don’t do it well, I will wait for you,” exemplifies how his humor infused with a subtle boast softens the tension of competition. His playful remark about doing the task “gracefully” while also offering to “wait” for others carries undertones of self-assurance about his own competence, yet it is delivered in a way that invites laughter rather than resentment. This approach effectively diffuses potential stress, creating an environment of mutual encouragement and support. Politeness theory explains his use of *negative politeness strategies*: by framing his competence as patience (“I will wait for you”), he avoids overtly threatening others’ negative face (autonomy) while subtly reinforcing his own positive face (skill).

Figure4  
*Zip It Slowly*





Both Guan Xiaotong and Jia Ling strengthen the team's unity and sense of pride through humblebragging in this scene. When Guan Xiaotong said "I am really full of beauty and talent," it shows positive facework in politeness theory. She uses humor to show her achievement, and this helps her get social approval and still stay within the group's modesty norms. According to Goffman's theory, Jia Ling's enthusiastic reply, or collaborative facework, supports Guan's self-presentation and helps build team unity through mutual face-saving. This interaction shows Goffman's idea of the interaction order, where people work together to shape identities that support shared norms. This situation shows how humblebragging can express confidence and still keep humor. Jia Ling's reaction supports the bond within the team and shows how humor and mutual support can build stronger solidarity.

Moreover, individuals could strike a balance between self-promotion and relatability by humblebragging. It offers a socially acceptable means to highlight one's achievements or skills while presenting them in a humorous or self-deprecating style. This balance is particularly effective in group settings where overt self-promotion might be frowned upon. By using humor, participants can share their accomplishments without alienating others, fostering a shared sense of pride and enjoyment.

### **Misalignment and relational tensions in humblebrag**

Humblebragging sometimes occurs in contexts of misalignment and relational tensions, aside from self-promotion and group solidarity. In these interactions, there is an inherent tension between trying to make a favorable impression while avoiding seeming arrogant and protecting

relationships (Sezer,2022). Misalignment in humblebrag refers to the incongruity between the attributed transactional intention and the explicitly expressed information. However, for ironic self-praise there is a significant difference between groups, suggesting that, in cases of text-image incongruity (humblebragging), hashtags influence the perception of the speech act (Matley,2020). In other words, the speaker's intended message (to boast) is not aligned with the surface-level message (to appear humble). This misalignment is crucial for the act to be interpreted as a humblebrag. Relational tensions arise from the perceived insincerity and the potential for miscommunication in humblebragging. Perceived insincerity is so critical for actors' interpersonal appeal that humblebragging is less effective than simply complaining or bragging; that is, both complainers and straightforward bratters are regarded as sincerer and thus more likeable than humblebraggers (Steinmetz et al.,2017). When a person humblebrags, they may be seen as trying to gain social approval or attention through a disingenuous means.

As depicted in Figure 5, a segment from *Trump Card* places participants in a situation where they adopt specific roles while retaining their celebrity personas.

Figure5  
Earn 20Billion



The context was about Shen Teng(ST) played the role is evident, and he answer Jia Ling(JL)'s question was so boast.

JL: "When I talked with brother Teng about professional ethics.↑"  
ST: "Why can I earn 20 billion?↑"

JL initiates the conversation by mentioning a discussion about "professional ethics." This sets a tone of seriousness and focuses on ethical behavior in the profession. ST responded with a

question that seems to boast about his earnings, “Why can I earn 20 billion?” This response is a clear example of misalignment. The shift from a discussion about ethics to a boast about earnings creates this misalignment. Conversely, some minor or major changes from one utterance to the next may create different patterns of resonance, leading to different stance work, that is, divergence in stance and misalignment (if it concerns the intersubjective element of stance) (Dori-Hacohen,2017).

Figure 6 presents a moment from *Keep Running* where participants reflect on the length of their professional careers.

Figure 6  
*May Be Is the First Day*



When the other stars responded with their working years to the question, Chinese male star Cai Xukun (CXK), however, humblebragged that he is a boss.

CXK: “May be is the first day. ↑So i don’t work for others.↓ Right, generally, i am the boss.↑”

Cai Xukun's reply has the potential to cause misunderstandings due to its divergence from the straightforward inquiry about years of work experience. Rather than directly addressing his background, he redirects attention to his status as a boss, a shift that could lead to ambiguity or unease in the dialogue. Although his remark fits the framework of a humblebrag, it may foster relational tensions. Those tensions are noticeable by participants and at times, as Stohl and Cheney (2001) note, may cause discomfort. Such tensions are likely to stem from the audience perceiving a lack of sincerity and interpreting his words as an attempt to garner attention in an insincere manner.

Humblebragging involves misalignment when there is a discrepancy between the speaker's intended message and their outwardly expressed statement. This misalignment stands as a key feature of humblebragging, where an apparent display of modesty conceals a deeper intention to boast. In the *Trump Card* segment shown in Figure 5, Shen Teng's behavior offers a clear illustration of this misalignment. The conversation, initiated by Jia Ling (JL), centers on "professional ethics," setting a reflective and serious tone. ST, however, suddenly shifts focus by asking rhetorically, "Why can I earn 20 billion?" This abrupt change disrupts the ethical discussion, making his response appear incongruent with the conversation's initial theme. By derailing the ethical discourse, he prioritizes self-promotion over communal face needs, risking perceptions of insincerity. Goffman's framework frames this as a *mismanaged performance*—ST's attempt to project competence clashes with the interaction's scripted tone, exposing a disconnect between his "frontstage" persona and the audience's expectations. As a result, his seemingly humble statement veils an underlying boast, creating a clear instance of misalignment. With the term misalignment we refer to the way in which participants to an interaction in a given moment steer their interaction in diverging directions (Voutilainen et al., 2010).

In Figure 6, Cai Xukun demonstrates a similar pattern of humblebragging that could create relational tension. When prompted about his work years, instead of addressing the topic directly, he emphasizes his role as a boss, diverting from the question's intent. This digression might cause others to view him as evasive or overly self-centered. His diversion threatens others' autonomy (negative face) by disregarding the topic's relevance, while his self-aggrandizement seeks *positive face* validation. Goffman's theory interprets this as a flawed *role alignment*: by refusing to adhere to the interaction's implicit "script," Cai Xukun disrupts the reciprocal nature of impression management, fostering relational tension. This perceived insincerity would violate Grice's (1975) notion of quality—"Try to make your contribution one that is true" (p. 46) and relation—"Be relevant" (p. 46), and hence be judged as uncooperative and unlikable. Both examples underline how humblebragging, with its intrinsic misalignment and lack of genuineness, can disrupt conversations and strain interpersonal interactions.

## Discussion

The study examines the topic of humblebragging as a complex communicative pattern in the Chinese reality TV. After using the politeness theory and the impression management theory of Brown and Levinson on six examples of *Trump Card* and *Keep Running*, the part unveils the insightful understanding of humblebragging.

A primary function identified is strategic self-promotion while maintaining an appearance of humility. As noted by Michalec et al. (2023), humility is often linked to positive social attributes and cohesion. This can be illustrated in *Trump Card* where the supposed expression of Sheng Teng, saying he is lying on the piano is a good way of mitigating a possible face-threatening act (FTA). Likewise, the wish to establish a favorable reputation without being too

proud also evidences that humblebragging, as seen in the Li Chen and Angelababy competitive comments in *Keep Running*, can train a positive image without making one overly proud of oneself. These behaviours can be correlated with Goffman concept of role alignment in which the actors improve their presentations to conform to collaborative expectations. According to Sezer (2018), the prevalence of humblebragging suggests a widespread belief in its effectiveness as a self-promotion tool. The given examples highlight the significance of the subtlety and awareness of context in the implementation of this strategy. Moreover, it emphasizes such an adaptive technique as humblebragging as a way to achieve the necessary level of humility and self-promotion in the contemporary society where Chinese collectivism and individualism are present at the same time.

Humblebragging also serves to introduce humor and enhance group camaraderie. Zhou Shen's witty comment in *Keep Running*—“We can zip it slowly. We should do it graceful”—at the same time, his competence is emphasized and humor is utilized in order to relieve stress. This aligns with the idea that humorous laughter can release tension and build a foundation for future rapport (Dziegielewski, 2003). More over, the fact that Guan Xiaotong boasts in a playful manner, stating that she is full of beauty and talent, and then Jia Ling emboldens her, demonstrates how humblebragging can be adapted into a means of improving the team spirit. With these examples, humor and humility as theorized by Brown and Levinson have the potential to make self-promotion less threatening and more of a bonding process that helps an individual align his or her own interests with what the group anticipates. The examples provide good means of how to improve personal relations and associate with positive influences in the contemporary society.

However, the strategy is not without risks. When misaligned with the context, humblebragging can cause relational tension. In *Trump Card*, the politeness maxim of relevance that Shen Teng boasts of his income in a serious ethical discussion is out of order, which involves a clash of an unmitigated FTA. Likewise, Cai Xukun's emphasis on his “boss” status in *Keep Running* can appear insincere and alienate others. The success rate of humblebragging significantly depends on the fact that it should be executed in a proper manner, as it is seen in the comparison between Figures 1-4 and Figures 5-6. Inappropriate use of humblebragging can lead to misunderstandings or strained relationships, emphasizing that such expressions require careful consideration of context and their impact within the modern media industry.

## Conclusion

As it has been shown by this study, humblebragging is a very complex and multi-dimensional approach to communication in the new media that helps to keep the fine line between self-promotion and humility. Regarding the factors that have been analyzed with the help of the examples of *Trump Card* and *Keep Running*, it is possible to conclude that the practice of humblebragging can successfully help one improve his or her image, add certain humor, and build more solidarity within the group when used with the specific techniques. But when it is incompatible with the conventions of conversation, it will get social friction and thus can be considered insincere.

The results provide a number of implications. They also lead to a deeper conceptualization of self-presentation in pragmatics and social interaction researches especially in terms of the Chinese media. Another practical significance of this research is the need to match communicative strategies to the social context, which is one of the primary needs of cross-cultural communication.

This study is subjected to a number of limitations. It is also limited by its scant focus on a few excerpts of two shows. Reality television is semi-scripted and thus may not necessarily be a true-to-life interaction. Further studies can thus improve future researches by the analysis of humblebragging in more diverse media and in more realistic scenarios, including daily conversation. Moreover, the use of quantitative techniques may be added to the qualitative current approach in the present study to offer a clearer picture of such a wide-spread social phenomenon.

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