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## Strategic Self-Praise in Anonymous Language Service Platforms: A Pragmatic Study of Dating Advertisements on QQ Zone Confession Wall in China

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### ABSTRACT

The development of the internet has made online socializing and partner seeking possible, thereby enabling single individuals to communicate and match with one another across temporal and geographical boundaries within virtual spaces. The rise of online dating has drawn scholarly attention from fields such as sociology, psychology, and linguistics, giving rise to a growing body of research on the topic. Digitally mediated communication, marked by reduced contextual cues, requires users to invest greater interpretive effort to reach mutual understanding. This study employs a combined pragmatic and language-service perspective to analyze self-praise strategies in dating advertisements on China's QQ Zone Confession Wall. It explores how these strategies are utilized within the platform's anonymous and community-mediated setting to build favorable identities and attain relational objectives. Results show that the distribution of unadorned explicit self-praise (47.22%) and modified explicit self-praise (47.22%) is the same, while the frequency of the implicit strategy is the lowest (5.56%). The study illustrates how users tactically make use of the platform's language service features, which include anonymity, public communality, and multimodal affordances, to initiate relationships. This highlights the role of digital platforms not only as communication channels but as active mediators that influence pragmatic behavior in online courtship.

**Keywords:** Online Dating; Self-Praise; Language Services; Pragmatic Strategy; QQ Zone Confession Wall

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#### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 20 November 2025 | Revised: 3 February 2026 | Accepted: 10 February 2026 | Published Online: 17 February 2026  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63385/jlss.2i1.411>

#### CITATION

Yang, J., Chen, Q., Yang, M., 2026. Strategic Self-Praise in Anonymous Language Service Platforms: A Pragmatic Study of Dating Advertisements on QQ Zone Confession Wall in China. *Journal of Language Service Studies*. 2(1): 28–38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63385/jlss.2i1.411>

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## 1. Introduction

The continuous and deepening development of online social platforms has facilitated the gradual rise of digital dating. In China, it is reported that the number of online dating users had reached 28.129 million since June 2021 ([https://www.sohu.com/a/516794976\\_120855974](https://www.sohu.com/a/516794976_120855974)). Scholars argue that in the digital era, virtual romance and online dating have become significant ways of constructing new types of social relationships<sup>[1]</sup>. Currently, research on online dating is primarily conducted within fields such as sociology and psychology. These studies largely focus on how dating platforms facilitate user participation<sup>[2]</sup> or explore users' emotional experiences during the online dating process<sup>[3]</sup>. However, the discursive practices through which users negotiate identity and connection on these platforms—particularly through the lens of language services—remain underexplored.

Language Service encompasses a range of activities through which countries, communities, and individuals use language as a resource to provide support and assistance to society and its members<sup>[4]</sup>. Online dating platforms inherently function as language service ecosystems: they provide the structural environment, semiotic tools, and interactive frameworks that enable users to perform strategic self-presentation aimed at relational goals. These platforms thus facilitate communication, transmit personal and social information, and mediate cross-cultural or cross-subcultural understanding<sup>[5]</sup>.

Among these platforms, QQ Zone Confession Wall is a campus-based language service platform designed to facilitate emotional expression, public confessions, blessings, lost-and-found notices, and friend-seeking. As a form of online language service, it provides users with a structured communicative environment where linguistic and textual resources are strategically employed to achieve interpersonal goals. Users of the platform can engage through comments, private messages, and shares. This study selects dating advertisements from this platform as its data source, precisely because its interactive and anonymous nature, popular among Chinese university students, creates a unique context for examining strategic self-presentation. We analyze the pragmatic strategies of self-praise embedded within these advertisements. Crucially, we explore how these strate-

gies are facilitated and shaped by the platform's features, thereby investigating the nexus between individual agency and the language services provided by the digital medium in the youth community.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Self-Praise as a Pragmatic Strategy

Self-praise refers to the act in which speakers employ various discursive strategies to make positive self-evaluations<sup>[6]</sup>. As a speech act, it is characterized by the implicit or explicit attribution of merits, such as achievements or skills, to the speaker themselves or their potential audience<sup>[7]</sup>. Research has investigated self-praise speech acts across a variety of contexts, including online learning<sup>[7]</sup>, political communication<sup>[8]</sup>, entertainment<sup>[9]</sup>, and digital interaction<sup>[10]</sup>. For instance, Dayter<sup>[8]</sup> examined Russian and English political discourse along with its simultaneous interpretation to explore how speakers utilize self-praise to secure audience support. In another study, the same author explored ballet students' Twitter posts, identifying a range of pragmatic strategies employed in self-praise, such as the use of disclaimers, shifting focus, self-deprecation, and references to hard work<sup>[7]</sup>. Similarly, Rüdiger and Dayter<sup>[9]</sup>, through an analysis of "pick-up artists" on online platforms, reported that their subjects primarily employed self-praise speech acts via direct self-statements, invoking third-party compliments, and providing corroborating evidence. Further cross-cultural comparisons of self-praise on English and Chinese social platforms (Twitter and Weibo) have revealed that Twitter users tend to adopt more explicit and unadorned self-praise, whereas Weibo users are more inclined toward implicit strategies<sup>[10]</sup>.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the pragmatic strategies of self-praise are complex and varied. Implicit self-praise or that expressed with mitigation tends to be more readily accepted by audiences<sup>[11]</sup>, and strategies like invoking third-party compliments can effectively reduce face-threat and foster acceptance<sup>[12]</sup>. However, existing research has yet to explore self-praise within the genre of online dating advertisements and its communicative practices from the perspective of language services—which crucially facilitate cultural exchange and social interaction<sup>[13]</sup>.

## 2.2. Online Dating Discourse

The advent and expansion of the internet have transformed traditional approaches to mate selection<sup>[14]</sup>. Research indicates that a growing number of individuals are turning to online social platforms in search of marriage partners, romantic relationships, and other forms of intimate connection<sup>[15, 16]</sup>. In response, a substantial body of scholarship has emerged focusing on the phenomenon of online dating, particularly examining how digital matchmaking platforms serve as intermediaries that shape contemporary courtship behaviors. For instance, Duguay et al.<sup>[17]</sup> examined the transformation of dating apps during the COVID-19 pandemic, arguing that platforms, through the introduction of features such as video calling and through discursive guidance, position themselves as spaces for intimate interaction. In doing so, they reshape users' interaction practices and reinforce a digitally mediated courtship model. Brand et al.<sup>[18]</sup> studied the relationship between photo and textual attractiveness in men's online dating profiles. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation, with perceived confidence in the text mediating this association, suggesting that physical attractiveness may enhance self-presentation and reinforce attractiveness advantages in online dating. In a related vein, Thomas et al.<sup>[19]</sup> investigated the psychological effects of "matches" as a form of social feedback on dating apps. They found that the number of matches does not significantly reduce women's loneliness or fear of being single, but a higher probability of receiving matches increases partner choice overload. Meanwhile, for users who actively accept more profiles, receiving matches can alleviate loneliness to some extent, indicating that platform-mediated social feedback may exert emotional reinforcement under specific conditions. As evidenced by the literature, current research on online dating has been conducted primarily from sociological, psychological, and managerial perspectives, examining facets such as platform management mechanisms, user interaction patterns, and emotional experiences. However, scant attention has been paid to the pragmatic strategies of online dating from a language services standpoint. Language is a crucial resource for interpersonal communication, consumption, and product creation<sup>[20–22]</sup>, and language services specifically employ linguistic and textual means to provide support to individuals and social groups<sup>[23]</sup>. This perspective allows us

to see online platforms not as neutral containers but as active agents that provide specific affordances (e.g., anonymity, multimedia tools, and feedback loops) which users then leverage through pragmatic strategies like self-praise to perform a service for themselves: attracting a partner.

The present study bridges the above gaps. It argues that on platforms like QQ Confession Wall, self-praise transcends being a simple speech act, it becomes a strategic language practice enabled by the digital medium. From this approach, the present study adopts a framework of self-praise strategies<sup>[24]</sup> to examine how self-praise strategies are operationalized within and because of the platform's anonymous, text-and-symbol-mediated environment, thus illuminating the intersection of pragmatic strategy, technological affordance, and language service in digitally mediated courtship.

## 3. Research Design

### 3.1. Research Questions

Based on the literature review and pragmatic framework of self-praise<sup>[24]</sup>, this study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) What are the predominant pragmatic strategies of self-praise employed by users in dating advertisements on the QQ Zone Confession Wall, and how are they distributed?
- (2) How do these self-praise strategies, as facilitated by the anonymous, platform-mediated language service environment, function to construct desirable identities and achieve dating objectives?

### 3.2. Data Source and Collection

China's online landscape is notably characterized by a substantial student population, making their social behaviors on digital platforms highly indicative of contemporary youth trends ([https://www.cac.gov.cn/2024-03/25/c\\_1713038218396702.htm](https://www.cac.gov.cn/2024-03/25/c_1713038218396702.htm)). In this context, QQ Zone Confession Wall has emerged as a prominent feature within academic communities. This platform serves as an anonymous channel for students to express emotions, seek social connections, and engage in public discourse. With QQ

maintaining a significant user base—reportedly 554 million monthly active mobile accounts in 2023 and 1.1 billion registered users according to Sohu.com’s 2024 ranking ([https://www.sohu.com/a/779856757\\_121894855](https://www.sohu.com/a/779856757_121894855))—its “Confession Wall” embodies a unique blend of anonymity and community interaction. On this platform, Operators curate and publish user-submitted content, fostering participation through comments, private messages, and shares. Particularly in dating advertisements, users strategically employ self-praise as a key discursive resource to enhance their appeal and achieve relational objectives.

To construct a representative corpus, dating advertisements were collected from the QQ Confession Wall of three major universities in Southwest China during the period from July to December in 2024. A systematic sampling method was employed: from the daily posted advertisements meeting our criteria (clearly seeking romantic partnership), every fifth advertisement was selected. Because the Confession Walls not only publish dating advertisements looking for a romantic partner, but also provide information such as employment, it is necessary to establish clear criteria when collecting dating advertisements. Specifically, the initiator of an advertisement must have an explicit intention to seek a romantic partner. Accordingly, all 50 dating advertisements selected for this study contain expressions such as “seeking romantic partnership”. Furthermore, since this study focuses on the pragmatic strategies of self-praise in dating advertisements, as well as the pragmatic effect of partner-seeking goals, the advertisements were carefully examined during data selection to determine whether the initiators genuinely intended to seek a partner. As a criterion for sincerity, this study required that the advertisements include expressions such as “rejecting unfaithful men” or “mutual commitment.”

This yielded a final corpus of 50 anonymous dating advertisements.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in two phases. First, following the classification framework of self-praise speech acts<sup>[24]</sup>, this study first categorized the collected corpus into three primary types: 1) unadorned explicit self-praise strategies; 2) modified explicit self-praise strategies (subtypes: citing third-party compliments, highlighting hard work, shifting focus); 3) implicit self-praise strategies (subtypes: through sharing, through self-deprecation).

Second, to ensure reliability, three researchers with linguistic backgrounds independently coded the data. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen’s Kappa, yielding a score of 0.84, indicating a high agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and thus a consensus was reached. It should be noted that some dating advertisements contained two or more types of self-praise speech acts. Therefore, each occurrence of a self-praise strategy was counted separately, resulting in a total of 144 instances identified across the 50 advertisements. The analysis then moved beyond mere classification to interpret how each strategy functioned pragmatically within the platform’s service environment.

## 4. Results

As mentioned earlier, the collected 144 instances were annotated and categorized according to the classification framework of self-praise speech acts<sup>[24]</sup> to address RQ (1). The results are presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Self-Praise Strategies in Dating Advertisements.

Classification of Self-Praise	Types of Strategies	Frequency	Proportion (%)	Subtotal (%)
Unadorned Explicit Self-Praise		68	47.22	47.22
Modified Explicit Self-Praise	Citing Third-Party Compliments	25	17.36	47.22
	Highlighting Hard Work	22	15.28	
	Shifting the Focus of Self-Praise	21	14.58	
Implicit Self-Praise	Self-Praise through Sharing	2	1.39	5.56
	Self-Praise through Self-Deprecating Humor	6	4.17	
In Total		144	100	100

As shown in **Table 1**, the self-praise in the dating advertisements on QQ Zone Confession Wall can be categorized into three types: unadorned explicit self-praise, modified explicit self-praise, and implicit self-praise. Among these, the frequencies of unadorned explicit self-praise and modified explicit self-praise are equal, accounting for 47.22% and 47.22% of the total, respectively. Within the category of modified explicit self-praise, citing third-party compliments is the most frequently used strategy (17.36%), followed by highlighting hard work (15.28%) and shifting the focus of self-praise (14.58%). Implicit self-praise constitutes the smallest proportion (5.56%). The following section will provide a pragmatic analysis of the different categories of self-praise speech acts to address RQ (2).

#### 4.1. Unadorned Explicit Self-Praise

Unadorned explicit self-praise is defined as the speech act in which speakers directly use positive or affirmative evaluative terms to praise themselves<sup>[24]</sup>. Corpus analysis reveals that in online dating advertisements, a substantial portion of advertisers employ overtly positive vocabulary to depict their skills, appearance, personality, and other attributes, thereby constructing a favorable self-image. The high prevalence of this strategy (47.22%) can be largely attributed to the anonymous language service provided by the platform. Liberated from the immediate face-threatening risks inherent in offline, real-name interactions, users leverage this affordance to present themselves in a direct and efficient manner, utilizing the platform's feature of risk-free self-disclosure. This is illustrated in Examples (1) and (2) below.

##### Example (1):

Relatively independent, respectful of others, able to meet emotional demands, and emotionally stable. (比较独立, 尊重对方, 能带来情绪价值, 情绪稳定。)

As demonstrated in Example (1), the advertiser employs a concise, list-like structure to present key personality traits (“independent,” “emotionally stable”). This exemplifies how the platform's anonymous textual service facilitates a transactional yet efficient form of self-promotion. By stripping away mitigating phrases, the user leverages the environment to deliver a high-density, positive self-assessment

that would risk appearing boastful in a face-to-face context. The platform thus serves as a buffer, allowing the direct provision of what is framed as factual personal data to potential partners.

##### Example (2):

Decent-looking, proficient in various ball games, generally an outgoing and positive young man. Enjoy traveling, with a preference for natural landscapes over urban environments—glaciers, deserts, and the Milky Way captivate me the most. Consider myself quite interesting; more extroverted among acquaintances. My family can provide the necessary material foundation. (长相还行, 球类都会些, 大体算个阳光男孩, 喜欢四处走走, 相比城市喜欢看自然风光, 冰川戈壁银河, 个人比较有趣, 熟悉的人里比较偏外向, 该有的物质基础家里都能支持。)

Example (2) showcases a comprehensive, portfolio-style self-presentation, where the user sequentially highlights physical appearance, hobbies, personality, and socioeconomic background. This approach is made possible by the platform's anonymity feature, which allows for a candid cataloguing of personal attributes across diverse domains without social repercussion. Notably, the mention of a family-provided material foundation leverages the platform's mediated trust-building function: within an anonymous setting, such declarations serve as a crucial channel for signaling stability and long-term potential to prospective partners.

#### 4.2. Modified Explicit Self-Praise

Modified explicit self-praise refers to a communicative strategy where speakers employ various means to mitigate the self-praising intent of their utterances<sup>[24]</sup>. The frequent use of these strategies (47.22% in total) indicates that even within an anonymous platform, users engage in sophisticated impression management by adapting their self-praise to the platform's public-communal language service. This environment, while anonymous, is still social and evaluative, prompting users to soften direct boasts through socially acceptable strategies. As shown in Table 1, the study finds that modified explicit self-praise strategies are frequently used in

online dating advertisements, encompassing the following three subtypes:

### Self-Praise through Citing Third-Party Compliments

Self-praise through citing third-party compliments is a strategy wherein speakers enhance their self-praise by invoking the opinions or evaluations of others. This serves to mitigate the directness of the act and present the praise in a more objective light<sup>[11]</sup>. Within the communication mechanism of the online platform, this tactic functions as a creative response to a core constraint of anonymity: the absence of readily verifiable social credentials. As illustrated in Examples (3) and (4), users adeptly leverage the platform's communal framework as a discursive proxy for social verification.

#### Example (3):

Friends of my age say I come across as a bit of a “cool and assertive sis,” while the older sisters I hang out with often comment that I have a childish side to me, haha. (同龄的朋友说我比较拽姐，不过一起玩的姐姐们又会说我有点小孩子，哈哈。)

In Example (3), the advertiser strategically avoids direct self-praise regarding appearance, opting instead to cite friends' evaluations to indirectly convey physical traits. This approach serves to construct a multi-dimensional and dynamic identity—portrayed simultaneously as “cool and assertive” yet “childish”. The strategy effectively utilizes the narrative simulation of an existing social network to compensate for the platform's anonymity, which inherently removes conventional forms of social proof.

#### Example (4):

Personal hobbies include photography, music, travel, and outdoor activities, etc., MBTI type is ENFJ, and friends often describe my personality as quite good. (个人爱好摄影、音乐、旅行，户外等，MBTI是ENFJ，朋友都说性格挺好的。)

In Example (4), the advertiser not only lists personal hobbies but also employs the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to foreground specific ENFJ personality traits. Following this, the appended statement, “friends often describe my personality as quite good,” serves a crucial function of so-

cial endorsement. By integrating an external, collective voice (“friends”) after a self-provided descriptor (MBTI), the user performs a discursive simulation of social consensus. This practice is fundamentally enabled by the platform, which provides a channel where users can strategically construct and project such consensus in the absence of face-to-face verification.

### Self-Praise through Highlighting Hard Work

Self-praise through highlighting hard work is a communicative strategy wherein speakers foreground their diligence, dedication, and sustained efforts toward accomplishments, thereby constructing an image of perseverance and achieving self-praise effects<sup>[24]</sup>. Within the context of the QQ Confession Wall, this strategy allows users to affiliate themselves with dominant values such as meritocracy and personal responsibility. The platform provides a narrative space that enables users to reframe personal histories into forms of socially recognized symbolic capital. As demonstrated in Example (5) and (6), advertisers strategically depict their diligent engagement in academic or professional domains to project qualities of industriousness and purpose, thereby advancing their self-presentational objectives through this platform.

#### Example (5):

Perhaps it's because my daily work and studies keep me quite busy, and my social circle is relatively small. Additionally, I prefer not to date individuals in medical fields, which is why I have remained single. (可能因为平时工作学习比较忙，圈子比较小，不想找医学相关专业的所以一直单身。)

As illustrated in Example (5), the advertiser constructs an image of a dedicated professional by stating that they are usually quite busy with work and studies. This assertion performs a dual pragmatic function within the platform's language service feature. First, it provides a plausible account for their single status. More significantly, it actively performs the act of signaling valued traits (dedication and ambition) to the audience. The platform's environment enables this strategic reframing, allowing a potential situational drawback (limited social availability) to be reconstructed as a positive personal credential (a strong work ethic and future-oriented commitment).

**Example (6):**

I graduated with a bachelor's degree and joined the public sector through a competitive examination. Now serving as a civil servant, I currently work in Chongqing. With an engineering background, my social circle is relatively limited, and my relationship history is similarly straightforward. (本科毕业考入体制, 现在是一名人民公仆, 现在在重庆工作, 工科专业的, 圈子简单, 感情经历简单。)

In Example (6), the advertiser foregrounds the advantage of job stability by explicitly detailing their career trajectory: graduating, succeeding in a competitive public-sector examination, and ultimately securing a position as a “civil servant.” Within an anonymous context that lacks traditional, verifiable credentials, meticulously outlining both the merit-based process (“through competitive examination”) and its respected outcome (“civil servant”) supplies quasi-verifiable evidence of the advertiser’s competence, diligence, and stability. Consequently, this narrative performs an essential trust-building service for prospective partners, effectively compensating for the absence of social proof.

**Shifting the Focus of Self-Praise**

Shifting the focus of self-praise is a pragmatic strategy wherein speakers redirect praise toward people or matters associated with themselves, thereby achieving self-praise indirectly<sup>[11]</sup>. This practice is commonly observed in contexts such as parents praising their children or teachers commending their students. Our study finds that this strategy has also become prominent within online dating discourse. As illustrated in Examples (7) and (8), within the platform’s mediated environment, this strategy evolves into a channel of reframing and co-construction. It enables users to employ ostensibly objective or shared frameworks, such as psychological typologies or stated relational ideals, to endorse themselves indirectly. Advertisers thus skillfully utilize the platform’s affordances to engage in objective framing and relational positioning, transforming self-praise into a more socially acceptable and strategically embedded form of identity work.

**Example (7):**

In terms of personality, I am a high-level ESFJ-

A, which means I reduce internal conflicts and possess strong self-control, demonstrating greater stability and clear boundaries. Nonetheless, I remain an excellent supportive personality, offering high emotional intelligence and a strong sense of responsibility, with deep value placed on relationships. (性格方面, 我是高阶 ESFJ-A, 即减少内耗和控制欲, 更稳重且有边界感, 但依旧是很好的辅助人格, 情绪价值拉满, 责任感强重情义。)

In Example (7), the advertiser employs the authoritative framework of the MBTI, specifically identifying as a “high-level ESFJ-A,” and subsequently enumerates the positive traits associated with this personality type (e.g., “reduce internal conflicts,” “high emotional intelligence”). This discursive move exemplifies the strategy of shifting the focus of self-praise: rather than praising themselves directly, the user aligns with an external, descriptive typology, thereby engaging in self-endorsement. The platform facilitates this strategy by providing a community specifically for young people to communicate. After all, only a specific group can more accurately grasp the “authority” of MBTI. It enables users to express self-praise in a neutral and fact-based manner to present their identity.

**Example (8):**

I hope she possesses sound values and good character, is motivated, maintains a simple social circle, approaches relationships seriously, and has no detrimental habits or hobbies. (希望她三观正, 人品好, 有上进心, 圈子简单, 也会认真对待感情, 没有不良的习惯和爱好。)

In Example (8), the advertiser outlines expectations for a potential partner, stipulating qualities such as “sound values, good character, and approaches relationships seriously.” While ostensibly describing an ideal other, these requirements implicitly foreground the advertiser’s own alignment with such traits, thereby seeking recognition from a like-minded audience. Consequently, the platform’s public space is leveraged not merely for self-description, but for co-constructing the terms of connection—a nuanced service that shifts the discursive focus from promoting the self to proposing a mutual standard for engagement.

### 4.3. Implicit Self-Praise

Implicit self-praise is an indirect speech act that requires the audience to infer the speaker's true intention<sup>[24]</sup>. In this study, such strategies were the least frequently used, accounting for only 5.56% of all self-praise acts. This low frequency suggests that in the fast-paced, advertisement-like genre of the platform, self-praise strategies of clarity and efficiency often outweigh the strategy of subtlety. Nonetheless, corpus analysis reveals that when employed, implicit self-praise strategically utilizes the platform's affordances for multimodal and narrative engagement to achieve self-presentational goals in a more textured and relatable manner.

#### Self-Praise through Sharing

Corpus analysis reveals that self-praise acts implemented through sharing personal feelings, experiences, or images constitute the smallest proportion in online dating advertisements, accounting for only 1.39%. Although such self-praise strategies are relatively implicit, they vividly portray certain positive qualities or skills of the advertiser, as shown in Example (9).

##### Example (9):

...and then I woke up. There was a very unique feeling in the dream—my heart was racing, and I could no longer recall what she looked like. I sketched her appearance roughly, but with my modest drawing skills, I couldn't quite capture her likeness. It generally aligns with the description. (Followed by a meticulously crafted sketch of their own creation.) (.....然后我就醒了, 梦里有种很独特的感觉, 心跳的很快, 也记不清她长什么样了, 我粗略的画了画她的样子, 我画画一般, 画不出她的样子, 大概和描述一样。) (随即附一张自己创作的素描图。)

In Example (9), the advertiser crafts a vivid narrative of a dream, showcasing notable literary competence through descriptive and emotionally resonant prose. This written component itself performs a strategy of engaging storytelling. The strategy deepens when the user textually downplays their artistic ability ("my modest drawing skills"), only to immediately subvert this claim by utilizing the platform's embedded

image function to attach a meticulously crafted sketch. This creates a purposeful rhetorical dissonance between verbal modesty and visual evidence. Enabled by the platform's multimodal service infrastructure—which seamlessly integrates text and image—the advertisement shifts from merely telling to actively showing talent.

#### Self-Praise through Self-Deprecation

Self-praise through self-deprecation is a pragmatic strategy wherein speakers highlight their positive qualities or image by using self-disparaging remarks to accomplish self-praise<sup>[6]</sup>, as illustrated in Example (10).

##### Example (10):

I was in a relationship for several years, which ultimately ended with me being toyed with emotionally and then dumped. However, during that time, I learned effective communication, how to maintain a healthy relationship, the art of creating romance, and my photography skills have been recognized by my cousins. (谈过一段几年的感情, 最后作为工具人被斩, 但期间学会了有效沟通、如何相处, 会制造浪漫, 拍照技术得到家里老表们认可。)

In Example (10), the advertiser recounts an unsuccessful romantic experience using distinctly negative terms such as "being toyed with emotionally" and "dumped". However, this self-deprecating frame strategically serves to foreground subsequently listed positive qualities, including effective communication, the art of creating romance, and recognized photography skills. Beyond eliciting audience sympathy, this self-deprecation performs a deeper pragmatic function: it authenticates the advertised traits by presenting them as hard-won lessons from lived experience, thereby constructing a narrative of growth and resilience valued in relational contexts. Furthermore, structuring the narrative around lessons extracted from adversity enables a pragmatic strategy of identity reconstruction. The advertiser transforms a past setback into evidence of introspection, adaptability, and growth—qualities highly prized in a potential partner. The final reference to third-party recognition ("recognized by my cousins") incorporates a layer of external validation, subtly blending self-deprecation with social endorsement to amplify persuasive effect.

## 5. Discussion

Language services aim to facilitate purposeful, planned, and organized interventions by governments or social groups in the use of language, with the ultimate goal of addressing communication challenges and enhancing the role of language in serving society<sup>[25]</sup>. In the context of computer-mediated communication, a variety of online language service platforms have been developed to provide mediums for initiating relationships and establishing novel forms of social connection<sup>[1]</sup>. A notable example in China is the QQ Zone Confession Wall, an anonymous language service platform that enables Chinese netizens to break free from the constraints of offline social identity and express themselves more openly.

Based on the framework of self-praise speech acts<sup>[24]</sup>, this study set out to investigate the pragmatic strategies of self-praise within dating advertisements on China's QQ Zone Confession Wall through the integrated lens of pragmatics and language services. Our findings reveal a nuanced landscape of strategic self-presentation, where users dynamically employ unadorned explicit (47.22%), modified explicit (47.22%), and implicit (5.56%) self-praise to construct desirable identities. More significantly, the analysis demonstrates that these strategies are not deployed in a vacuum but are fundamentally shaped by and responsive to the platform's language service features: anonymity, public communality, and multimodal affordances. This discussion synthesizes these findings, elaborating on how the platform functions as an active service ecosystem that mediates pragmatic practice in computer-mediated courtship.

Some studies indicate that, unlike real-name social interactions, online daters feel less compelled to employ mitigating language to accommodate the social identities or popular preferences of their interaction partners<sup>[24]</sup>. This is directly facilitated by the platform's anonymity feature, which reduces social accountability and face-threatening risks. Particularly on language service platforms oriented toward dating and matchmaking, users often adopt specific rhetorical strategies, such as those used to describe personal attributes and appearance, to construct a more appealing self-image<sup>[26]</sup>. As a result, acts of explicit self-praise occur frequently in online dating contexts. This study finds that unadorned explicit self-praise is a common type identified

in online dating advertisements, accounting for 47.22% of all cases—a finding mainly underscored by the affordance of anonymous self-disclosure.

Furthermore, modified explicit self-praise (including citing third-party compliments, highlighting hard work, and shifting the focus of self-praise) also serves as a significant approach for online daters to engage in self-praise. Our findings indicate that such self-praise acts account for 47.22% of the total instances in online dating advertisements, a frequency equivalent to that of explicit self-praise. This prevalence highlights users' strategic adaptation to the platform's public communality. Even within an anonymous space, the environment remains socially embedded and evaluative. Studies have shown that self-presentation plays a crucial role in identity construction in online contexts<sup>[3]</sup>. To achieve this goal, users often actively and consciously build an ideal identity by articulating their beliefs, life events, or family backgrounds, thereby enhancing relatability with their target audience<sup>[27]</sup>. Therefore, within the context of anonymity and indirect, symbol-mediated interactions in online communication, strategies such as citing third-party evaluations, highlighting hard work, and shifting the focus of self-praise not only provide viewers with more imaginative space<sup>[24]</sup>, but also leverage the community framework to add credibility and social validation, thereby concretizing and objectifying the narrative subject and facilitating the achievement of dating objectives.

Finally, although implicit self-praise speech acts, such as self-praise through sharing and self-deprecation, occur less frequently in online dating advertisements, our corpus analysis reveals their distinctive rhetorical value. These strategies particularly exploit the platform's multimodal affordances and narrative potential. By embedding positive attributes within narratives that appear modest or humorous, and by complementing text with images (as in Example 9), these strategies construct a speaker persona that is both appealing and relatable. The use of self-diminishing expressions, in particular, not only projects an image of modesty and low-key confidence but also introduces levity into the discourse. This interplay of modesty and humor enhances the user's attractiveness while mitigating the potential social awkwardness associated with overt self-promotion. As a result, such indirectly realized self-praise tends to engage a wider and more receptive audience, underscoring the nuanced ways

in which language strategies, supported by the platform's multimodal and interactive services, shape social perception in digitally mediated dating contexts.

## 6. Conclusions

Driven by Internet technology, online dating has sparked heated discussions in fields such as sociology, psychology, and linguistics. The unique nature of digitally mediated communication, characterized by the contextual constraints and non-propositional effects<sup>[28]</sup>, requires users to expend greater interpretive effort to achieve mutual understanding. It is within this environment that online language service platforms function as essential mediators, structuring interaction and enabling meaningful self-presentation despite the limitations of the medium. The present study reveals that self-praise strategies on such platforms are not employed in isolation but are profoundly shaped by and responsive to the platform's language service features: anonymity, public communality, and multimodal affordances.

Theoretically, this study bridges a significant gap by integrating a language service perspective with pragmatic analysis of online dating discourse. It moves beyond examining self-praise as an isolated speech act to conceptualizing it as a platform-mediated language practice. In this approach, online language service platforms emerge as the crucial link that bridges individual expression and social connection. They provide the structural and interpretive frameworks necessary to navigate the ambiguities of online courtship, ultimately enabling users to achieve their interpersonal goals.

Admittedly, this study has limitations. The corpus is confined to a specific platform type (university-based QQ Confession Walls) within a particular cultural context. The sample size, though analytically sufficient for a qualitative-quantitative study, warrants cautious generalization. Future research could compare self-praise strategies across different platforms (e.g., real-name dating apps versus anonymous walls) to further disentangle the impact of platform design on pragmatic choices. Additionally, investigating audience reception and perception of these strategies would complement the production-focused analysis presented here. Despite these limitations, this study serves as a preliminary exploration, offering insights and references for future language service research focused on online dating.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, and supervision, J.Y.; validation, formal analysis, and data curation, Q.C.; writing—original draft preparation, J.Y. and Q.C. (the data processing section); writing—review and editing, J.Y., Q.C., and M.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Funding

This work was supported by the 2024 Chongqing Municipality Higher Education Teaching Reform Research Project (grant number 243177) and the 2024 Planning Program of the Chongqing Federation of Social Sciences (grant number 2024NDQN097).

## Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

## Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

## Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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