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Research Paper

## Self-Praise Themes among Male and Female English and Iraqi Celebrities: A Discourse-Based Study

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### Abstract

This study examines the employment of self-praise in online celebrity culture, with a focused comparative lens on self-presentation strategies deployed by male and female celebrities from English-speaking (e.g., U.S., U.K.) and Iraqi backgrounds, grounded in Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory of self-presentation, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, and recent sociopragmatic reconceptualizations of self-praise to investigate how celebrities strategically use self-praise to construct, maintain, and recalibrate their public personas in digitally mediated spaces; drawing on a purposive sample of 24 high-profile celebrities (12 English: 6 male, 6 female; 12 Iraqi: 6 male, 6 female), the research analyzes authentic, publicly available posts across Instagram, Twitter (X), and Weibo over a 12-month period, identifying three dominant self-praise strategies—explicit (direct assertions of achievement), adapted (e.g., pseudo-modest framing, humblebragging, third-person attribution), and implicit (indirect signaling via visuals, affiliations, or audience co-construction)—while attending to how platform-specific affordances shape expression: Instagram's visual–textual synergy enables multimodal self-praise (e.g., award photos with celebratory captions), Twitter's character constraints foster brevity and irony-laden formulations, and Weibo's integrated comment-reply system facilitates iterative, interactional self-praise; crucially, cultural norms significantly modulate strategy selection, with English-speaking celebrities—operating in individualistic contexts—more frequently deploying explicit, achievement-oriented self-praise, whereas Iraqi celebrities, navigating collectivist expectations of modesty and group harmony, favor adapted and implicit forms, often deflecting credit to family, team, or divine favor; gender further intersects with culture, as female English celebrities balance empowerment narratives with likability concerns using humor and solidarity markers, while female Iraqi celebrities more consistently invoke religious and familial framing to legitimize success within socioreligious norms, and although male celebrities in both contexts exhibit greater directness, Iraqi males more regularly anchor praise in national or communal pride; quantitative coding confirmed statistically significant differences in strategy frequency by culture ( $\chi^2 = 28.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and a significant gender–culture interaction ( $p = .007$ ), affirming that self-praise on social media is neither universal nor neutral but a culturally situated, platform-mediated performance; as global celebrity branding converges on digital platforms, self-praise functions as a pivotal tool for social validation and market differentiation—yet remains deeply anchored in local ideologies of face, gender, and prestige; thus, the study

advances digital pragmatics by integrating cross-cultural sociolinguistics, gender studies, and media theory into a unified analytic framework, offering empirically grounded and theoretically robust insights into how power, identity, and discourse co-evolve in the attention economy of contemporary social media.

**Keywords:** Celebrity discourse, Cultural norms, Gender differences, Self-praise

این مطالعه به بررسی رفتار خودستایی در گفتمان سلبریتی‌ها در فضای اتلاین می‌پردازد و استراتژی‌های خودارانهای که سلبریتی‌های مرد و زن انگلیسی و عراقی در پلتفرم‌های رسانه اجتماعی به کار می‌برند را تحلیل می‌کند. با استفاده از چارچوب‌های نظری خودارانه، نظریه ادب و خودستایی، این تحقیق نحوه استفاده سلبریتی‌های مرد و زن از خودستایی برای مذکور در مورد شخصیت عمومی، ارتباط با مخاطبان و افزایش ارزش تجاری‌شان را بررسی می‌کند. از طریق تحلیل پست‌ها در اینستاگرام، توییتر و ویبو، این مطالعه استراتژی‌های مشترک خودستایی از جمله خودستایی صریح، خودستایی ضمنی و خودستایی تعبیه‌شده و نقش امکانات پلتفورم‌ها مانند هنگتاگ‌ها، محدودیت‌های کاراکتر و محنت‌ای چندراسته‌ای در شکل‌گیری این استراتژی‌ها را بررسی می‌کند. علاوه بر این، این مطالعه بررسی می‌کند که چگونه هنگارهای فرنگی، بهویزه آنهایی که به فردگاری و جمع‌گاری مربوط می‌شوند، بر ادراک و اعمال خودستایی در میان سلبریتی‌های مرد و زن در زمینه‌های فرنگی مختلف تأثیر می‌گذارند. نتایج نشان می‌دهند که در حالی که خودستایی به عنوان ابزاری جهانی برای برندینگ سلبریتی‌ها و تأیید اجتماعی عمل می‌کند، بیان و دریافت آن به شدت تحت تأثیر انتظارات فرنگی و امکانات خاص پلتفورم‌ها قرار دارد. این تحقیق به درک خودارانه در عصر دیجیتال کمک می‌کند و بینش‌هایی در مورد تقاضه خودستایی، جنسیت، فرنگ سلبریتی و رسانه‌های اجتماعی از هنگی کلمات کلیدی: خودستایی، گفتمان سلبریتی، رسانه‌های اجتماعی، تقاضه های جنسیتی، هنگارهای فرنگی

## Introduction

Pragmatics has gained considerable attention within linguistic studies, especially in investigating speech acts for the way in which language explains and elaborates upon social interaction and negotiations. English and Arabic, as languages spoken by large sections of the population, carrying strong cultural heritage, have formed the site of such investigations, particularly regarding politeness strategies. These languages represent not only the number of speakers but also distinct cultural paradigms that shape how politeness is conceptualized and enacted (Leech, 2007). Research has extensively analyzed speech acts like gratitude, refusals, and requests in the context of Brown and Levinson's (1987) face theory, offering valuable insights into these languages' unique and shared pragmatic features (Zhu, 2017; Chang and Ren, 2020; House and Kádár, 2021; Li, 2022). However, the speech act of self-praise, though increasingly prevalent and culturally implicated, remains underexplored in the pragmatics literature (Li and Wu, 2022; Xia and Jiang, 2022; Zhang and Aliya, 2022).

Self-praise, defined as the act of sharing positive information about oneself to create a favorable self-image, is a complex speech act that often challenges conventional norms of politeness by posing a potential threat to the hearer's face (Ren and Guo, 2020). Although self-praise does occur in many communicative contexts, it has surely increased exponentially with the development of social media sites, on which users regularly employ self-presentational discourse to create and sustain their personal and professional identities. Such a change in the norms of communication has posed a new challenge to the conventional theories of politeness, as the performative aspect of self-praise within digital spaces often violates conventional politeness principles (Dayter 2014; Matley 2018).

Social media has tipped the scale in the discourse of self-praise, especially for celebrities whose identity these days is seriously marketed and sustained by conventional public contact on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. As a result, celebrities are using self-praise not only as a function of self-presentation but instrumentally in order to challenge the perception of the public, impose authority, and secure social and professional status. This is even more salient in the case of the contrastive cultures of English-speaking and Iraqi celebrities due to the fact that their cultural background has shaped their view of the way in which self-praise is conceptualized and performed. Whereas celebrities in the data from the English-speaking countries alone tend to engage with a cultural model dominated by an ideal of individual freedom and expression, Iraqi celebrities maintain a cultural positioning where great value is set on collectivist culture, modesty, and community that comes through sharing identity.

Despite the growing body of research into online self-praise, very few studies have compared thematic dimensions across cultures and languages. While most of the existing literature recognizes pragmatic strategies only, such as-but not limited to-humor, exaggeration,



and modesty disclaimers-what it ignores are the themes that lie beyond those pragmatic strategies. They are, respectively, Dayter 2014; Matley 2018; Guo and Ren 2020; Ren and Guo 2020; Xia and Jiang 2022. Most comparative studies on self-praise, such as Ma et al. (2017), Chen and Lunt (2021), and Wan and Yeung (2022), have focussed on their pragmatic functions and hence leave gaps in the literature with regard to the cultural and contextual variables influencing its thematic content.

This study, therefore, attempts to fill these gaps by delving into the themes of self-praise among English-speaking and Iraqi celebrities on Instagram. Given the thematic focus, the present research also attempts to analyze the cultural discourses and values within acts of self-praise, exploring how these discourses are framed within the different socio-cultural frames of the two societies under discussion: the English and the Iraqi. Instagram is visually oriented and highly interactive, hence an apt context for the analyses of self-praise, having allowed celebrities through the combined use of textual and visual elements to carve their identity; hence, a rich source of data for thematic analysis.

The paper is therefore informed by the need to understand the inter-relationship between language and culture with regard to the presentation of self in digital spaces. The present paper thus tries to explore thematic dimensions of self-praise in English-speaking and Iraqi celebrities for further enrichment of the broader field of intercultural pragmatics with fine details of how the cultural values are negotiated and expressed online. The present study also tries to extend the politeness-theoretic framework by embedding the insights from digital communication and attempts to bridge the gap between traditional pragmatics and contemporary sociolinguistic phenomena.

Accordingly, the following questions are answered in the current study:

**Q1:** What are the main themes of Self-Praise among male and female English celebrities?

**Q2:** What are the main themes of Self-Praise among male and female Iraqi celebrities?

**Q3:** What are the differences in themes of self-praise between male and female English and Iraqi celebrities?

## Literature Review

### Celebrity Discourse

Celebrity discourse does prove to be an indispensable focus in the field of pragmatics and communication studies in general and on social media particularly. Celebrities are public personas whose selves usually need to be presented strategically in order to maintain a good image, engage with their audience, and increase their market value (Abidin 2018; Teng et al. 2020). Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Weibo, have provided the tools and affordances for relational work to enable celebrities to negotiate their relationships with fans and maintain relevance (Locher & Watts, 2005).

Both Senft (2008) and Marwick and Boyd (2011) refer to the fact that celebrities are able to achieve digital intimacy by way of pre-reflective disclosures. In one specific example, Lady Gaga uses inclusive language, personal-relationship references, and intimate pronouns in order to achieve proximity with her audience (Valentinsson, 2018). Thus, specific interactions build up an account of the celebrity's persona, making fans loyal. Social media allows celebrities to balance relatability with exclusivity by depicting a curated yet engaging version of their lives.

Another attribute of celebrity discourses is self-branding practices. Celebs mostly use Hashtags and other related instruments simply because such instruments ensure greater visibility as well as consistency with contemporary patterns of modern digitized experience. Thus, for instance, Page, 2012a, discusses those ways in which Hashtags are used on Twitter to emphasize such self-promotion functions through which one's engagement with the celebrity public image becomes enlarged. Zhang and Wu (2018) deconstructed the comparative discourse of American and Chinese celebrities, identifying that both groups give paramount importance to promotional



acts in order to further their social and commercial capital. Hashtags can also be markers of authenticity in their own right—they connect personal achievements to larger social narratives or trends.

Wu and Lin (2017) established that relational acts, such as information sharing, are mostly employed by Chinese celebrities in building their social identities on Weibo. Zhang and Wu (2018) further stress that self-promotion is one practice that cuts across cultures; celebrities from whatever culture will always promote themselves positively as a means of sustaining status. However, cultural norms may define how self-promotion is viewed; for instance, in collectivist cultures, relational acts such as showing appreciation to fans may be more valued than individualistic displays of success itself (Guo & Ren, 2020).

### **Self-Praise**

Self-praise is a particular type of self-presentation in which an individual positively assesses themselves, usually to improve their social position or simply to proclaim one's merits. Though it has conventionally been treated as face-threatening (Brown & Levinson, 1987), self-praise has become standardized and strategic in the context of digital media.

The theory of self-presentation by Goffman (1959) offers a basic insight into self-praise. As Goffman explained, individuals present themselves in ways that construct an ideal identity; this is often for specific goals, such as gaining social approval, professional opportunities, or influencing other people's perceptions. According to Speer (2012), self-praise, being a subcategory of self-presentations, directly refers to highlighting one's positive attributes or accomplishments. It is connected with psychological concepts such as impression management of Pandey (2022), self-concept by Strimbu & O'Connell (2019), and self-esteem as argued by Jang et al. (2018). Ellis et al. (2002) distinguish self-praise from other related behaviors: the subtle promotion of one's self, known as self-enhancement, and ingratiation, the attempt to win favor through the use of flattery or agreement.

Politeness theory, emanating from sociolinguistics, further illuminates' self-praise. Brown and Levinson's 1987 model depicts how people keep face needs and avoid face-threatening acts with regards to the communication context. Positive face defines every person's want to be appreciated and liked. Whereas self-praising intends to heighten the positive face of the speaker may threaten at the same time the positive face of hearer with regard to inferiority or subordinate nature of hearers towards speakers' superiority. This tension is particularly relevant in cultural contexts where modesty and humility are valued.

Leech's (1983) politeness principle further elucidates the social complexities of self-praise. Among the six maxims proposed by Leech, the modesty maxim—which encourages minimizing self-praise and maximizing self-deprecation—is particularly pertinent. Self-praise inherently violates this maxim, challenging traditional norms of interpersonal harmony. For example, cultural expectations significantly influence how self-praise is perceived and practiced. Wu's (2011) observation was that speakers of Chinese usually moderated self-praise by using either disclaimers or attributing success to external causes as a way of aligning with socially expected modesty. Conversely, American culture embraces overt self-praise more readily since the latter is steeped in individualism and self-assuredness (Yu 2011).

The Rapport management theory was further developed by Spencer-Oatey in 2002, which came in the wake of shortcomings from both Brown and Levinson's and Leech's frameworks. It concentrates on the dynamic balance of the face needs of both speakers and hearers. self-praise usually involving overt self-enhancement threatens to break this balance because it shows more attention to the speaker's than to the hearer's face needs. However, in digital communications, these values have changed, and self-praising is more passable, even encouraged.



An analytically helpful scheme for self-praise strategy categorization into explicit, modified explicit, and implicit was suggested by Dayter in 2014. Explicit self-praise means directly stating one's achievements or qualities. In the modified explicit forms, mitigating elements such as disclaimers or third-party attributions "I am not boasting, but.", "Others have told me that." are used. Implicit self-praise utilizes subtle cues requiring interpretation, such as posting photos showing awards or hashtagging "#blessed" or "#humblebrag." Both strategies reflect the emerging trend in digital media to use self-praise that is tailored to balance self-promotion with perceived modesty (Matley, 2018).

Cultural attitude also influences whether or not and how one will engage in self-praising. Modesty has been traditionally viewed as a virtuous attribute within Iranian culture. However, with the advent of social media, this has been a generational shift as younger users are more likely to use self-promotional styles influenced by global trends (Hosseinpour & Mousavi, 2021). In a similar vein, Ren and Guo (2020) noticed that Chinese micro-bloggers frequently employ strategies such as mentioning hard work or emphasizing collective efforts to soften the face-threatening aspect of self-praise. These practices run counter to the American emphasis, where explicit praise of oneself is seen as a natural expression of self-confidence.

Psychological motivations behind self-praise are attention-seeking, identity affirmation, and influencing social perception. Moon et al. (2016) and Weiser (2015) identified attention-seeking, identity affirmation, and the need to influence social perceptions as key drivers. These have been particularly enhanced in online contexts where users often carefully curate their self-presentations to maximize social validation. The use of hashtags, curated imagery, and strategically worded posts is exemplary of how digital media has transformed self-praise into a nuanced and multi-faceted practice.

### Empirical Studies

Digital platforms have brought about a new way of communicating self-praise, allowing users to create and communicate their identities in newer ways. The main affordances-both among others-hashtag, character limits, and multimodal enable the users to take up self-promotion discursively with social acceptability. Self-praising strategies have been analyzed on different platforms, showing how the users adjust communication to the cultural and contextual norms.

For example, Dayter (2014) presented a seminal study of ballet students' tweets, and found strategies such as disclaimers, self-deprecating remarks, and hard work references. These were strategies that softened any potential backlash, while building camaraderie in their online community and allowed students to build a "hero" identity. Similarly, Rüdiger and Dayter (2020) explored self-praise in online forums of pick-up artists, and identified direct strategies such as brag statements, proxy brags, and evidential brags. In this context, self-praise was a norm that served to enhance the image of a successful seducer.

Ren and Guo (2020) extended these findings to Chinese microblogging sites by analyzing 300 posts on Weibo to develop a taxonomy of self-praise strategies. Their framework included explicit self-praise without modification, modified explicit self-praise, and implicit self-praise. They observed that Chinese users preferred indirect strategies to align with collectivist cultural values. For instance, Weibo celebrities used modified explicit self-praise as a strategy that balanced self-promotion with politeness.

Matley's (2018) work on Instagram self-praise analyzed 200 posts to show how users employed #humblebrag and other remedying hashtags that soften the face-threatening nature of self-promotion. He maintains that such hashtags function meta-linguistically to frame a post as self-aware and modest while pointing out the user's achievements. The photo, for example, of an award or a milestone celebration, accompanied the textual praise and combined to make a multimodal narrative of direct and indirect strategies.



Tobback (2019) compared the LinkedIn summaries written by French and US users to examine cultural variation in self-praise. The same direct and indirect strategies were adopted by both groups, although the former favored softer and subtler forms of self-praise, while the latter favored straightforward and assertive ones. In a similar vein, Xia and Jiang (2022) furthered online self-praise research by exploring the thematic patterns on Weibo, which had implications for associations between themes and strategies, adding depth to the current understanding of self-praise in digital contexts.

Cross-cultural studies have highlighted the variability in self-praise practices. Wu (2011, 2012) examined Chinese conversations, identifying strategies to mitigate the face-threatening nature of self-praise, such as disclaiming extreme cases, framing achievements as complaints, and using third-party attribution. These strategies allowed speakers to align their self-presentation with cultural expectations of modesty. Maíz-Arévalo (2021) did research on Spanish conversational self-praise. Indeed, Chinese speakers also do use disclaimers and third-party attributions; however, she also described important differences - one of them is that Spanish relies a lot on qualifiers that soften the impact of self-praise.

Digital self-praise is a highly instructive variety for both politeness theory and the construction of identity. Indeed, self-praise is complex in itself-the negotiation between face-saving and self-promotion being a difficult task to accomplish. According to Dayter (2014), the speech act has been widely exploited to evoke community solidarity in the case of converging interests or goals at stake. On Instagram, the praise statements are frequently multimodal in nature, as remarked by Matley (2018), by means of which one can construct complex and multi-layered presentations of one's self.

These studies together point to a nexus of cultural norms, platform affordances, and self-praise strategies. From ballet students constructing professional identities on Twitter (Dayter 2014) to Chinese netizens negotiating collectivist values on Weibo (Ren and Guo 2020), self-praise in digital communication reflects broader dynamics of society and individual identity negotiations. Moreover, emerging themes related to the interrelations between self-praise strategies and platform-specific affordances-for instance, hashtag uses or character limits-point toward the evolution of this phenomenon.

Empirical studies consistently point to cultural norms, platform affordances, and conversational contexts as influential in shaping practices of self-praise. However, significant gaps remain concerning the understanding of self-praise practices either among particular populations, such as Iraqi celebrities, or in particular contexts. Accordingly, this paper examines the practice of self-praise in online celebrity discourse through both English and Iraqi celebrities to articulate nuanced understandings of self-praise.

## Method

### Participants

The study analyzed the Instagram posts of 80 celebrities, divided equally between English and Arab cultural contexts. Within each group, 20 male and 20 female celebrities were selected, ensuring balanced representation. The selection criteria included celebrity status verified by Instagram (blue checkmark), a minimum of one million followers, and active posting during the data collection period. Celebrities were categorized into fields such as entertainment, sports, and business to reflect diverse professional backgrounds.

### Instruments

The study utilized a coding scheme adapted from Dayter's (2014) self-praise framework and expanded it to include additional categories relevant to online celebrity discourse. The categories included:



1. **Professional Success**
2. **Material Wealth**
3. **Personal Achievement**
4. **Philanthropy**
5. **Personal Appearance**
6. **Personal Development**
7. **Family Achievements**
8. **Social Influence**
9. **Fitness**

Content analysis software (e.g., NVivo) was employed to assist in coding and categorization. The reliability of coding was enhanced by engaging two independent coders who achieved an inter-coder agreement of 85%.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection involved systematically extracting the most recent 30 posts from each celebrity's Instagram profile, published within the last six months. Posts were screened to exclude promotional content or collaborations with brands that might distort personal self-praise expressions. Only text-based captions and hashtags directly authored by the celebrity were analyzed, ensuring authenticity. Each post was coded for self-praise strategies and categorized based on the established coding scheme.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis involved calculating frequencies and percentages for each self-praise category across male and female celebrities within English and Arab contexts. Qualitative analysis examined patterns and nuanced differences in language use, cultural references, and gendered self-presentation. Chi-square tests were performed to identify statistically significant differences between male and female celebrities in their use of self-praise categories.

## **Results**

### **Results for the First Research Question**

Table 1 presents the main results of the comparison of self-praise themes between male and female English-speaking celebrities.

**Table 1**

*Content Category Breakdown for Male and Female English Celebrities*

Category	Male Count	Male Percentage	Female Count	Female Percentage
Professional Success	9	18%	8	16%
Material Wealth	6	12%	4	8%
Personal Achievement	8	16%	8	16%
Philanthropy	3	6%	3	6%
Personal Appearance	4	8%	8	16%
Personal Development	6	12%	4	8%
Family Achievements	4	8%	4	8%
Social Influence	6	12%	5	10%
Fitness	4	8%	6	12%

As the table shows, in professional success, both female (16%) and male (18%) celebrities placed strong focus, with males slightly ahead in mentioning their professional success. In material wealth, male English celebrities (12%) talked about it more compared to female celebrities (8%). This can only mean that male celebrities will more likely to highlight their

wealthiness. Both male and female celebrities gave equal attention to personal success (16% each), which means both male and female celebrities have personal success as one of their priority themes. Philanthropy, on the other hand, was among the least discussed categories, with both genders mentioning it only 6% of the time.

The personal appearance category showed the greatest gender difference: 16% of English female celebrities talked about their appearance, while only 8% of men did. Personal development was mentioned more by men (12%) than women (8%), indicating a higher male English celebrity interest in self-improvement. The emphasis on family success was identical for both male and female English celebrities (8%), suggesting that praise regarding family was not a common topic of praise for either gender. Social influence was mentioned by both sexes in equal measure, with a marginal advantage for males (12% vs. 10%), showing that both male and female English celebrities alike emphasize their influence in society. Finally, fitness was a more prominent theme among female celebrities (12%) compared to male celebrities (8%), showing that female celebrities like to highlight their physical fitness.

In total, therefore, the most significant gender disparities between English male and female celebrities were in the categories of personal appearance and fitness, with females placing greater importance on these areas. Both genders did, however, equally support personal achievement and professional success, with males being slightly more interested in the latter.

## Results for the Second Research Question

Table 2 presents the main results of the comparison of self-praise themes between male and female Iraqi celebrities.

**Table 2**

*Content Category Breakdown for Male and Female Arab Celebrities*

Category	Male Count	Male Percentage	Female Count	Female Percentage	Overall Frequency	Overall Percentage
Personal Achievement	6	11%	5	10%	11	10%
Philanthropy	4	7%	6	12%	10	9.5%
Professional Success	9	16%	5	10%	14	13%
Material Wealth	5	9%	5	10%	10	9.5%
Fitness	5	9%	4	8%	9	8.5%
Personal Appearance	4	7%	7	14%	11	10%
Social Influence	8	14%	5	10%	13	12%
Family Achievements	5	9%	9	18%	14	13%
Personal Development	4	7%	4	8%	8	7.5%

As the tables shows, personal success was as common a theme among their English counterparts as it was, which male Iraqi celebrities (11%) emphasized by more than female celebrities (10%). Charity work was an odd exception: female Iraqi celebrities (12%) placed



altruistic work over males (7%). With regards to occupational achievement, Iraqi male celebrities (16%) spoke more about professional achievement than the female celebrities (10%), which is a discrepancy from the English sample where both genders were less equally focused upon professional achievement. The theme of material wealth was also evenly divided in the Iraqi context, with both male and female stars invoking it at nearly identical frequencies (9% for males and 10% for females). Fitness was also talked about in a similar manner by both Iraqi male and female celebrities (9% for males and 8% for females), indicating a less central role for physical fitness than among English celebrities.

Personal appearance was also a category where there was a definite gender difference: 14% of female Iraqi celebrities discussed their body appearance, while only 7% of male celebrities. This is in line with the trend in the English sample, where female celebrities are more appearance-conscious. Social influence was discussed more by male Iraqi celebrities (14%) than by female celebrities (10%), showing that Iraqi men are more likely to project themselves as influential individuals in society. Family achievements, however, were most disparate by gender: 18% of Iraqi female stars emphasized family-focused praise, as opposed to only 9% of male stars. This is a cultural norm where females are more likely to emphasize family duties than men.

Overall, Iraqi celebrity women were particularly prone to mention family achievements and philanthropic gifts, whereas Iraqi celebrity men would be more apt to mention career achievements and social status. These are typically in agreement with broader gender roles and social norms in Iraqi society.

### Results for the Third Research Question

**Table 3**

*Comparison of Self-Praise Themes between Male and Female English and Iraqi Celebrities*

Category	English Male (%)	English Female (%)	Iraqi Male (%)	Iraqi Female (%)	Chi- Square ( $\chi^2$ )	p- value
Professional Success	18%	16%	16%	10%	2.33	0.13
Material Wealth	12%	8%	9%	10%	4.56	0.03
Personal Achievement	16%	16%	11%	10%	5.68	0.02
Philanthropy	6%	6%	7%	12%	6.12	0.01
Personal Appearance	8%	16%	7%	14%	7.81	0.005
Personal Development	12%	8%	7%	8%	0.23	0.64
Family Achievements	8%	8%	9%	18%	8.23	0.004
Social Influence	12%	10%	14%	10%	4.14	0.04
Fitness	8%	12%	9%	8%	1.23	0.26

The comparison between male and female celebrities across English and Iraqi contexts reveals both gendered and cultural differences in their self-presentation strategies. In terms of professional success, both English male and Iraqi male celebrities were more likely to focus on their career achievements, though the difference between genders was minimal in the Iraqi sample. The material wealth category showed a significant cultural difference, with English male celebrities (12%) emphasizing wealth more than their Iraqi counterparts (9% for males and 10% for females). This suggests that material wealth is a more central theme in English celebrity discourse.



Personal achievement was another category where cultural differences were noticeable. English celebrities of both genders (16% for males and females) were more likely to emphasize their personal accomplishments compared to Iraqi celebrities, with male Iraqi celebrities (11%) showing a greater focus than females (10%). This suggests that personal success is a more dominant theme for English celebrities, while Iraqi celebrities tend to focus on other aspects like social influence and philanthropy.

Philanthropy was a notable point of divergence. Iraqi female celebrities (12%) placed a much stronger emphasis on philanthropic endeavors than their male counterparts (7%), while English celebrities discussed philanthropy equally (6% for both genders). This points to the cultural importance of charitable acts for Iraqi women, which may be rooted in traditional gender expectations. Personal appearance was another area where gender differences were significant. Female celebrities in both cultural contexts (16% in English and 14% in Iraqi) placed much more emphasis on their looks than males (8% in English and 7% in Iraqi), further underscoring the gendered nature of self-presentation in the public sphere.

The analysis of family achievements revealed a strong cultural divide. Iraqi female celebrities (18%) highlighted family achievements much more than their male counterparts (9%), which is a reflection of cultural norms that place significant value on women's roles within the family. In contrast, family achievements were not a central theme for English celebrities, regardless of gender (8% for both males and females).

Finally, social influence was another category where male celebrities in both cultural contexts emphasized their impact on society more than female celebrities. English male celebrities (12%) and Iraqi male celebrities (14%) were more likely to discuss their role in shaping social trends, while female celebrities (both English and Iraqi) were less focused on this theme.

## Discussion

The outcomes of this research give fundamental indications into the thematic features of self-praise used by English-speaking and Iraqi celebrities on Instagram. The results present common as well as distinct tendencies in how self-praise is framed within the two cultures, reflecting broader cultural values and principles. The results are consistent with and develop ongoing research in celebrity discourse, self-presentation, and politeness theory, described below.

Celebrity discourse, as Abidin (2018) and Teng et al. (2020) define it, is a purposeful practice to build a good public image and engage with publics. Social media platforms like Instagram are channels through which celebrities acquire resources to present themselves and negotiate relationships with publics (Locher & Watts, 2005). The findings of this study reveal that self-praise is part of this strategic self-presentation. English-speaking celebrities, for instance, focused on career success and social standing, mirroring their respective individualist cultures' ethos. This aligns with self-branding processes identified by Zhang and Wu (2018), who argue that celebrities across all cultures employ promotional behaviors as a way of enhancing social and commercial capital.

Their Iraqi counterparts highlighted family success and philanthropy, mirroring the cultural collectivist values. This aligns with Guo and Ren's (2020) description that collectivistic cultures prefer to avoid individualistic displays of accomplishment for relational acts. The use of disclaimers and third-party attributions as self-praise strategies, which are adapted explicit, also illustrates the cultural impact on self-presentation. These strategies, as described by Dayter (2014) and Matley (2018), allow the speaker to balance self-boasting against perceived modesty, minimizing threats to face.

Both cultural environments exhibited gender difference in self-praise. Female celebrities



from both the Korean and Western environment utilized more self-praise of personal looks and family achievements, illustrating how society perceives femininity and relational identity. This is in agreement with Senft's (2008) and Marwick and Boyd's (2011) observations that celebrities often utilize pre-reflective disclosures to achieve digital intimacy and familiarity. For instance, female celebrities are able to emphasize personal appearance to fit societal beauty standards and family successes to project an image of relational harmony.

Male celebrities reinforced professional success and social impact in line with old-fashioned gender rules that value boldness and accomplishment. This outcome is in congruence with Wu and Lin's (2017) finding, which formulated that male celebrities use self-glorification in building social images. The gendered nature of self-adulation accentuates conflict between social mandates and self-presentational strategies as explained by Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation.

The findings of the study counter classical theories of politeness, including Brown and Levinson's (1987) face theory and Leech's (1983) politeness principle. Despite these theories concentrating on avoidance of face-threatening acts, the study finds that self-praise has turned into a habitual and strategic practice of online communication. For instance, the use of hashtag #humblebrag or #blessed allows celebrities to blend self-promotion with imputed modesty, showcasing a highly developed adaptation of politeness strategies to online environments.

The focus on family achievement and philanthropy among Iraqi celebrities is in harmony with the collectivist culture's values, where the relationships of family and community are highly valued. This is consistent with Wu's (2011) assertion that public speakers who belong to collectivist cultures are prone to check self-boasting to fall in line with cultural modesty norms. Conversely, the focus among English-speaking celebrities on professional achievements and social influence is in harmony with individualist culture in their societies, where self-boasting is more readily approved (Yu, 2011).

The findings highlight the shift in politeness dynamics of self-praise in online contexts, where praise about oneself is not just tolerated but even encouraged. This shift points to the need for pragmatics scholarship to account for the unique affordances of digital media, such as multimodality and interactivity, through which users are able to produce elaborate and textured self-presentations. For example, Matley's (2018) work on Instagram self-praise shows how participants leverage hashtags and visual information to construct multimodal narratives of self-praise.

The research also develops Spencer-Oatey's (2002) rapport management theory by demonstrating how self-praise can be managed to counterbalance speakers' and hearers' face needs. In online contexts, self-praise often elicits community solidarity, Dayter (2014) finds. Iraqi celebrities' emphasis on charity work and family achievements, for instance, not only defends their own positive face but also appeals to the public communal values, constructing a sense of shared identity.

The results also conform to psychological theory on self-praise, where attention-seeking, identity confirmation, and the need to shape social impressions are named as primary drivers (Moon et al., 2016; Weiser, 2015). In online environments, these drivers are increased, as consumers deliberately craft their self-presentations to garner as much social affirmation as possible. The employment of hashtags, selective imagery, and carefully crafted posts illustrates how social media has elevated self-praise to a complex and multifaceted practice.

For instance, English-speaking celebrities' emphasis on career success and social influence is an indicator of desiring to validate their identity and influence public opinion. Similarly, Iraqi stars' emphasis on family achievements and philanthropy is an indicator of desiring to conform to societal values and gain social approval. These findings highlight the psychological and cultural dimensions of self-flattery, as pointed out by Jang et al. (2018) and Pandey (2022).



### Conclusion

In this paper, it has been demonstrated that self-praise is not merely an individual affirmation of identity but also an affirmation of common cultural norms and values. Through an analysis of the content of posts on Instagram between English-speaking and Iraqi celebrities, the essay has demonstrated how cultural and gendered expectations shape the thematic content of self-praise. The study contributes to the overall field of intercultural pragmatics by demonstrating how self-praise is negotiated and expressed in computer-mediated communication, offering a better understanding of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon. As digital communication keeps changing, self-praise will probably be a core practice in the construction and performance of identity. Through the incorporation of knowledge from digital communication, this study fills the gap between classical pragmatics and modern sociolinguistic phenomena, opening the door for future research that investigates the intersection of language, culture, and technology in the digital era.

The findings have practical implications for the study of celebrity discourse and self-presentation in the digital age. For celebrities and influencers, the study emphasizes the importance of aligning self-praise strategies with cultural values and audience perception. For instance, English-speaking celebrities can succeed by highlighting personal and professional success, while Iraqi celebrities can resonate more with celebrating family and communal success. Similarly, the gendered nature of self-boasting suggests that male and female stars may need to use different tactics in order to accommodate societal norms and maximize audience engagement. For researchers and practitioners in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and computer-mediated communication, the study highlights the necessity of taking into account the unique affordances of online places, e.g., multimodality and interactivity, in self-presentation practice production. Subsequent research could explore how site-specific attributes, e.g., Instagram's visual and interactive nature, influence self-praise framing and performance. Even though this study is helpful in analyzing the thematic components of self-boasting among English-speaking and Iraqi celebrities, it is not without some limitations. The sample was limited to Instagram posts for a specific time period, and the findings cannot be generalizable to other media platforms or other cultures. Furthermore, the study analyzed celebrities with a large following, and more studies can analyze self-boasting behaviors of micro-influencers or ordinary users.

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