

# ***Pragmatic Strategy Analysis of Humorous Language in I Can I BB from the Perspective of Politeness Principle***

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**Abstract:** *I can I BB*, a debate talk show, seeks to discover the "most talkative people" in the world of Chinese discourse, those with distinctive perspectives and exceptional eloquence, in order to integrate a topic close to life and a fresh and diverse language style, thereby attracting the affection of a large number of youthful audiences. This paper examines the pragmatic principles reflected in the debate discourse of the *I can I BB* by beginning with pragmatics theory. Using the politeness principle of American philosopher Leech, this paper analyses *I can I BB* from the perspective of violation of the principle, and uses the actual corpus reported by the programme to analyse its specific reflection in the debate strategy.

**Keywords:** pragmatic strategy, *I can I BB*, politeness principle, language programs

## **1. Introduction**

*I can I BB* is a debate talk programme hosted by Ma Dong, with tutors including Gao Xiaosong, Cai Kangyong, Jin Xing, and others. It seeks to identify the "most talkative people" in the world of Chinese discourse, those with distinctive perspectives and exceptional eloquence, in order to integrate a topic close to life with a fresh and diverse language style, thereby attracting the affection of a large number of youthful audiences [1]. As a debate and speech variety show, language is the most prominent aspect of the programme. *I can I BB* is distinguished by three characteristics: the notoriety of the contestants, the vivacity of the debate, and the use of contemporary language. Consequently, it is highly worthwhile to investigate how to use language to accomplish the goals of speech and debate while taking into account the comedic effect of the variety show.

Current academic research on *I can I BB* is primarily concentrated on the perspective of film and television, communication science, including an overall analysis of *I can I BB*'s success, its innovative models, and its communication strategies and characteristics. Examples of representative papers include: Zeng Wanxin's master's thesis, "Innovative Inspiration of Online Homemade Programs on Traditional TV Programs", first introduces the development status and direction of online homemade programmes. Tian Yunze's "Analysis of the Success of Online Homemade Programs *I can I BB*", he pointed out that the primary reason for the success of *I can I BB* is the precise positioning of the program, and elaborated on the integration of various aspects achieved in the production of However, there are few papers that employ pertinent linguistic theories to analyse and research *I can I BB* from the perspectives of conversation, pragmatics, and language style, among others. Representative examples include: Sun Xiaojiao's master's thesis, "Discourse Research on Network Debate Type Talk Show *I can I BB*", which analysed and explored the

conversational structure, discourse characteristics, and discourse strategies of the programme discourse using 18 episodes from the first season of *I can I BB*; The paper by Feng Xia titled "The Generation of Ma Dong's Humor Mechanism from the Perspective of Linguistic Fuzziness" investigates Ma Dong's fuzzy language strategies for forming humorous patterns from the phonological, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives [2].

To sum up, the research conducted for the programme *I can I BB* concentrates primarily on film and television, news communication, and other topics. However, research merely from the linguistic perspective is relatively scattered, and there has been no exhaustive and in-depth discussion of the debate discourse in the talk show *I can I BB* from the pragmatic strategies perspective. Consequently, this paper uses the inductive method to comb the debate segments in the program, the literature analysis method to summarise previous views, collects and analyses classic sentences from the host and debater from a pragmatic perspective, discusses the pragmatic strategies used by contestants in the program, and attempts to make relevant pragmatic explanations, providing some reference for the language research of online variety shows as well as providing some pragmatic explanations.

## 2. Politeness Principle

The American philosopher Grice introduced the principle of cooperation in 1976. He believed that people will be affected by certain factors that are acknowledged by both sides of the discourse in communication; these factors, which can guarantee the smooth and meaningful progression of verbal communication, are known as the cooperation principle. On the premise of the cooperative principle, Leech, Levinson, and Brown have expanded and advanced the politeness principle, dividing it into the following maxims: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approval maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim [1].

As a variety program, *I can I BB* cannot simply debate the topic like a traditional debate competition, but must also achieve the purpose of the debate in a humorous manner. Therefore, the debaters or hosts of the programme produce humorous effects through various means. The violation of the civility principle is the most significant aspect of the discourse from the perspective of the politeness principle. This paper examines the production mechanism of humorous language in *I can I BB* based on the six principles of civility [2].

### 2.1. Violation of the "Tact Maxim"

"Tact Maxim" means that the discourse user chooses appropriate pragmatic methods for verbal communication according to different pragmatic environments such as communication object, time, place, and psychology and adopts more appropriate verbal communication to satisfy both parties. For example [3]:

(Background: In the week before the Spring Festival, the finals opened, and the program was set to send red envelopes.)

Cai Kangyong: The amount in this red packet is one yuan, and it is sent to Lord Huang Bo. Lord Huang Bo, I wish you a new start and a new life.

Huang Bo: Thank you. Actually, 100 can also express this meaning.

Cai Kangyong: No, only one yuan.

Ma Dong: Actually, 100 million is the most accurate expression.

Huang Bo: Hmm!

In the preceding example, according to the programme settings, there is a link for sending red envelopes for the New Year. When Cai Kangyong gave Huang Bo a red envelope and a blessing, Huang Bo expressed his gratitude and then sang with Ma Dong to convey the sentiment more

effectively. According to the Tact Maxim, the expression of gratitude should be used during the formal occasion and time of the programme's opening in order to gratify both parties. In the program, the host and guests choose to violate the Tact Maxim in order to activate the atmosphere of the scene, convey blessings, and accomplish a certain humorous effect. Although it appears to violate the rules and only benefit and satisfy itself, it actually achieves the variety effect and enlivens the scene's atmosphere, so that both parties are not embarrassed by such programme settings, the distance between them is reduced, and a humorous variety effect is achieved.

## 2.2. Violation of the "Generosity Maxim"

"Generosity maxim" means that we should benefit others as much as possible, make ourselves suffer more at the verbal level, and give benefits to others as much as possible. It requires the speaker of the speech to give more benefit to others in the speech expression so as to compromise his own interests in the communication. For example [4]:

Wu Zongxian: *I can I BB* is a program that I personally like very much. I quit all programs for this program. So I hope that I can do my part in this program and serve you, which is my blessing.

Madong: We won't raise your money.

Wu Zongxian: It's not about money. It's about a lot of money.

According to the Generosity Maxim, the host and guests should praise each other more for giving benefits to each other during the dialogue. As can be seen from the example, the guest Wu Zongxian only modestly expressed his love for the programme at the beginning, while the host Ma Dong reversed his painting style and stressed that he would not add money, and the guest immediately replied that more money should be added. If the Generosity Maxim is followed, after the guests express their love for the programme and reject other programmes because they want to participate in it well, the host should express gratitude and give the benefits to the other party. The dialogue in the programme violates Generosity Maxim and deliberately emphasises personal interests. This strong contrast effect also makes the audience laugh.

## 2.3. Violation of the "Approbation Maxim"

Sometimes the speaker will deliberately generate humorous language by expressing words that are harmful to others, that is, deliberately deviating from the Approbation Maxim. Approbation Maxim refers to the idea that in the process of language communication, both parties should praise the other party as much as possible, and the speaker should choose as many compliments as possible in the communication. For example [5]:

Big Wang: In my eyes, people with high intelligence are annoying. Those with high IQ are more annoying. Kang Yong, a nuisance; Teacher Ma, a nuisance; Mr. Dan, lovely. It's true that everyone can become a nuisance, for example, my opponent Liao Zheyi. You have a high IQ, and I don't like you, because if you are a weak chicken, I don't have to worry so much.

There are two types of violations of the Approbation Maxim. The debate is: "If there is a chance to make a new choice, do you want to be a nuisance with high intelligence?" The debater, Da Wang, takes the square as the square, that is to say, she wants to be a nuisance with high intelligence. First of all, in her opinion statement, she emphasized that her friends around her had very high IQs and she was not smart, so these high IQs made her "hate". This is the first type of violation. Secondly, the second type is to use irony to express that Li Dan does not have a high IQ after saying that Cai Kangyong and Ma Dong are both high-IQ annoyances. Therefore, through the above two deviations from the Approbation Maxim, the expression of this paragraph seems to be a satire and sarcasm to the high IQ, but in fact, it expresses his admiration for them. While fitting in with his argument, it

also creates a humorous atmosphere on the spot, so that the audience will not feel bored and achieve the humorous variety effect.

#### 2.4. Violation of the "Modesty Maxim"

Modesty Maxim is to praise yourself as little as possible in daily communication and to be modest so as to give more respect to the hearers. In our traditional cultural education, humility and respect for others are very important, and many classics have been handed down since ancient times. The Modesty Maxim is an important rule and means to maintain the harmonious development of discourse communication relations. In daily communication, we will more actively use the method of self-modesty to make the listener respectable in communication, thus generating a sense of satisfaction in discourse communication. For example [6]:

Ma Dong: In the first season of "The Summer of the Band" just passed, we were very lucky to invite back Mr. Big Zhang Wei to bring back some fun of doing band programs. Then, the second season of "The Band's Summer" will be broadcast next summer, and we will officially invite Mr. Big Zhang Wei.

Big Zhang Wei: That's great. Yes, friends, the price negotiation is very good.

As the host, Ma Dong first expressed his satisfaction with the success of the cooperation with the guest, Big Zhang Wei, and sent an invitation for the next cooperation. Later, Big Zhang Wei answered directly with a good price. According to the Modesty Maxim and our traditional education, when others express their praise, the hearers should express themselves with a modest attitude. The self-flattering response of the guest, Big Zhang Wei, broke the audience's preset and gave us unexpected answers, resulting in humorous pragmatic effects.

#### 2.5. Violation of the "Agreement Maxim"

Agreement Maxim requires that both sides of the discourse tend to be as consistent as possible when communicating with each other. The Agreement Maxim is that in the process of verbal communication, both parties are required to be as consistent as possible in the topic and content of the conversation they choose, to reduce the interference of subjective or objective emotions, and to converge as much as possible in the use of pragmatic tendencies, views, emotions, and means to achieve discourse cooperation. For example [7]:

Kerry Liu: When breaking up, the biggest difference between meeting and not meeting is that sometimes it's time to meet, but maybe what you give me is too direct, and there is a particularly profound technique in literary creation, called blank. It is an article, I write the last and most wonderful part. I often don't write it out, giving readers a space for imagination. So is the love life. Why don't we leave blank instead of putting such naked reasons for breaking up in front of me? Maybe when she left me, she just left me a simple short message, which said: I'm going to leave when time is not enough, don't miss me! (interrupted)

Big Wang (Debater of the same party): Is life over?

He Jiong: This is not called blank, it is called suspense. (debate: whether to break up or not)

In the above example, the debater, Karry Liu, first explained what is "blank" through a description and then gave an example of this. But after hearing this example, the teammate and host He Jiong interrupted his statement by questioning and negating, creating a humorous effect. Generally speaking, when listening to others' opinions, it is rare to interrupt suddenly. Secondly, as a debating member of the same side, it is necessary to maintain consistency of views and better reflect the spirit of teamwork. In this case, the host generally tries not to directly deny the opinions of one side. Therefore, this disguised rhetorical question and negation of the teammates and the host

suddenly appeared in the minds of the listening audience, which made the audience burst into laughter.

## 2.6. Violation of the "Sympathy Maxim"

Sympathy Maxim is to reflect a "peace seeking" mentality in the communication between both parties. It means that in verbal communication, the two sides of the discourse should be as close as possible emotionally, and try to reduce the antipathy of both sides and enhance emotional resonance. For example [8]:

(Background: The Big Wang debate won)

Ma Dong: Just now (Li Dan), the logic of laughing is because you see the change of the king?

Li Dan: Yes, because when I knew her, she was really not like this. When I knew her, I felt that this girl was too funny and would play silly. But after a few days of contact, I found that she really seemed to have some problems.

In this debate, the debater Big Wang finally won. In his presentation, Wang stressed that she has always been less intelligent than others, so she can only work harder than others to learn and grow. When concluding, the host Ma Dong asked Li Dan, who knew Wang, to talk about the growth and changes in Wang. Li Dan did not focus on the efforts of the Wang to talk seriously and bitterly all the time when answering; instead, he kept roasting one after another. This is a violation of the Sympathy Maxim. It was supposed to follow Ma Dong's words and tell him the changes he saw. However, this contrast is contrary to the original preset answer, thus producing a humorous pragmatic effect.

## 3. Conclusion

The norms of the politeness principle function in concert with one another and should be viewed as a unified whole. The norms' connotation and scope have overlapping or interconnected connections [9]. Online variety shows are generally characterised by novel genres, words that follow the trend, a diversity of forms, and humor, all of which make them more lovable. Consequently, the study of the emerging discourse of online entertainment through the lens of the principle of civility can better analyse pragmatic discourse strategies.

*I can I BB* debaters, presenters, and guests create a variety of humorous languages by breaking the audience's presumption of the traditional programme's conversational style and violating the principle of politeness. As a result, the programme discourse achieves unexpected humorous effects, making the debate programme highly comprehensive and enhancing audience integration. Through the analysis of some discourse fragments in *I can I BB* through the six principles of politeness principle, it was discovered that the effect of humour in *I can I BB* is primarily achieved by violating these six principles, while violating the politeness principle, combining with the corresponding discourse environment, accompanied by hand and sound effects, so as to make the discourse achieve the humorous effect of variety more comprehensively and perfectly [10].

Obviously, due to the author's limited skill and energy, there are numerous flaws in the analysis and discussion of the entire text. The research on the argumentative discourse in *I can I BB* is still comparatively superficial, the research on pragmatic strategies is insufficiently in-depth and exhaustive, and the analysis and interpretation of classic pragmatic works is insufficiently clear and concise. As an emerging product in the era of online big data, the study of *I can I BB*'s pragmatic strategies is still uncommon in academic circles. The author only intends to use this article as a reference to encourage more linguistic experts to pay attention to and partake in the study of controversial variety shows.

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