

# Research on pragmatic value in art films with character discourse in Wang Jiawei's films

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**Abstract:** *This paper focuses on the pragmatic analysis of the characters' discourse in Wang Jiawei's films, from which four types of pragmatic values are obtained: semantic value, relational value, emotional value and style value. Pragmatic value were applied to the discourse of movie characters, through the analysis of discourse, the relationship between characters in the movie could be effectively figured out, also the theme of the movie, and the director's creative intention. Meanwhile, the author puts forward personal opinions on the setting of characters' discourse in art films.*

**Keywords:** *Wang Jiawei; Pragmatic value; utterance*

## 1. Introduction

Wang Jiawei's films have built a "Wang Jiawei-style" film aesthetics with its extraordinary visual expression and spiritual postmodern style. Wang-style movies unfold plots and explain themes through unique artistic techniques, giving audience unique aesthetic feelings. In addition, the characters' discourse and the construction of discourse field in the film should not be underestimated. When Charles William Morris, an American logician, first using the term pragmatics in his book *The Basis of Symbolic Theory*, pragmatics became a branch of linguistics in art film.<sup>[1]</sup> Up to now, there is no uniform definition of value in pragmatics. Through the study of Wang's films, the author agreed that pragmatics embodies four kinds of values in his films: semantic value, relational value, emotional value and style value.

## 2. The Pragmatic Value of Wang Jiawei's Character Discourse

### 2.1. Monologue introduces the context, and draws the maximum semantic value of the film

Wang Jiawei's film language is always concise, and it is often expressed by monologues. Movies are usually narrated in the first person of the main character. Although the language is not communicative, it constructs the plot, introduces the development of the story and shows the conversational context. The form of monologue provides the audience with the context cognition, which was necessary to show semantics. In order to get enough semantic information, the audience needs to deduce the specific discourse, which is always rooted in the specific context. Only by analyzing and meaning of the specific context and acting on the audience's mind can the semantics be highlighted intentionally. The purpose of Wang's films is to let the audience get the closest meaning of dialogue by receiving the discourse information. From the perspective of whether it is close to conversational implicature, the author believes that the semantic value can be divided into large and small. The closer it is to the conversational implicature of movie characters, the larger the semantic value will be, and vice versa. To some extent, the semantic value is restricted by the movie context. Audiences have to combine the content and mobilize their own cognitive to understand the film's own context field, so the meaning of characters' words could be inferred. For most audience, Wang Jiawei's films often need repeated pondering and constant scrutiny in order to get the maximum semantic meaning which movie characters want to express, so the dialogue is always brief but far-reaching in meaning expression

As for the semantic value of pragmatics, the concept of context has been mentioned repeatedly. In the movie *Ashes of Time*, Ouyang Feng's monologue is often accompanied by the explanation of the background of the story, and it is also the key context of the conversation between the characters. "The fourth day in beginning of spring, the east wind thaws", in the movie, is a crucial sentence to tell the story between Murong Yan and Huang Yaoshi, and it is also the contextual factor of the following dialogue between Ouyang Feng and Murong Yan, which is mapped to the audience's mind and serves

as a cognitive context for all the words between them. The closer the cognitive context factor is to the real context of the film, the more audience could understand that Murong Yan's emotional factors of love and hate, and uncertainty lead to her repeatedly asking Ouyang Feng to kill Huang Yaoshi with her split personality. If the audience doesn't realize this contextual factor, they will be biased in semantic acceptance of the meaning of the dialogue between them, so it is difficult to accurately grasp the content of the film. The following chart is to show the relationship between context and semantic value:

The value of semantics is closely related to the amount of information that can be used to deduce the conversational implicature, and is closely related to contextual factors. For audience, to figure out the conversational implicature when they are completely different from the times, backgrounds, regions and customs of movies, which requires directors to implant corresponding cognitive contexts in movies, as a result, the audience could comprehend the conversational implicature conveyed by movies.

**2.2. The application of pragmatic principles reflect the value of the relationship between close relatives and distant relatives**

The value of pragmatic relationship means that language users can reflect the relationship between them through language use, which is more common in movies. Obscure relationship between characters in movies not only shows through pictures and plots, but also shows the love and hate between them through language. There is no difference in pragmatic relational value. However, the utilization of the relational value can make the relationship between communicators and the purpose of conversation much clearer.

Pragmatics can be used to express the gap between communicators. In *Mood for Love*, the same coffee shop, the same background music, and the same two people show almost the same conversation scene, but the relationship between them is completely different. The change of the relationship between them can be found through pragmatic principles. At first, when Zhou Mu Yun asked Su Lizhen to meet in the cafe, it was obvious that the relationship between them was not close at this time. The first thing Zhou said when he came up was, "I'd like to ask you out so boldly, but I have something to ask you." The speaker used such modest words as "taking the liberty" and "asking for advice" and deliberately followed the politeness principle, which obviously showed that the relationship between them was unfamiliar at this time. The second time in the cafe, Sue handed the menu directly and said, "You know what I like one the menu." Everyone familiar with the movie knows that the relationship between the two men has gradually become familiar at this time, so Su's words no longer deliberately follow the politeness principle, showing that the relationship between the two men has become closer. After that, the relationship between the two men has gradually become intimate. Su said on the phone that Zhou's "glib tone" directly violated this principle. The compliance and violation of politeness principle can reflect the change of the relationship between movie characters, while the fixed relationship between characters in movies can still be reflected by politeness principle. The author believes that the distance of expression in movies is mainly reflected by the way of speaking, that is, whether it is polite or not, as shown in the following table 1:

*Table 1: The politeness principle affects the distance of the relationship.*

Conversation occasion	Tongue	Relationship
Private occasion	Politeness	Alienate
	Misbehavior	Close
Public places	Politeness	Intentional closeness
	Misbehavior	Intentional alienation
Special occasion	Polite/impolite	Depend on situation

Generally, the distance of the relationships that often appear in movies can be judged by the above table 2, because pragmatics needs to be analyzed by context. Therefore, under special circumstances, it also needs to be determined by the context field at that time, which is not invariable.

*Table 2: context and semantic value relational graph.*

Contextual factor	Conversational implicature	Semantic value
Stay away from contextual factors	Less information is deduced.	Low
Close to contextual factors	The deduced information is large.	High

### 2.3. Analyze the conversational implicature and feel the complicated emotional value of the disturbance

In movies, hidden emotions can be displayed through the use of words in addition to the story and picture language, and the emotions expressed in words are always presented in an explicit and implicit way. When violating pragmatic principles, their emotional expression is relatively recessive; while the director complying with pragmatic principles, emotional expression is relatively dominant. The embodiment of implicit emotion needs to be deduced, while explicit emotion can be directly received from discourse. Wang Jiawei's movie emotions always appear alternately recessive and dominant, and the characters' words are directly revealed according to pragmatic principles, which can show their sincere feelings. However, it violates pragmatic principles, implicitly expresses emotions, and at the same time reflects the tearing of characters' hearts. In *Days of Being Wild* when Fei saw his mother being rejected, he said this: "When I left this house, I knew there were a pair of eyes behind me looking at me, but I wouldn't look back. I just wanted to see her and her appearance. Since she wouldn't give me a chance, I wouldn't give it to him." Fei's angry words actually directly describe the love-hate relationship between him and his mother. This sentence makes full use of monologues, directly venting emotions, and viewers can directly feel the bad feelings between mother and child through words. In *Mood for Love*, Zhou Muyun said, "If I had a boat ticket, would you come with me?" From the perspective of pragmatic principles, this sentence violates the cooperative principle. Actually, the meaning to be expressed is, "Would you like to be with me?" When Zhou asked this question, he actually knew Su Lizhen's feelings for himself. Vague words directly reflect the complex emotional entanglement between two people who like each other but can't be together for lifetime. Language shows pragmatic emotions in movies mainly in an invisible way.<sup>[2]</sup> Comparing the above two examples, the hero of *Days of Being Wild* expresses his emotions directly, while in *In the Mood for Love*, the emotional expression is more implicit, and whether the heroine want to be with Zhou Muyun or not is expressed by boat tickets. The comprehension of conversational implicature can effectively infer the emotional state of the protagonist or speaker, while the explicit and invisible expression of the characters is the main embodiment of emotional value in pragmatic value.

### 2.4. Standardize pragmatic strategies and show unique style value

The lines of Wang's films are mostly poetic, refined and concentrated, which embodies the unified pace of language structure.<sup>[3]</sup> Wang Jiawei said that his lines were often changed in the process of filming, so his language depended more on context than language itself, compared with fixed language. From the perspective of pragmatic rules, the language of movie characters mainly produces unique language style art by following the relevance theory and violating the principle of cooperation. Here, take *The Grand Master* as an example to see the emergence of Wang-style movie language style:

Follow the relevance theory. What is said has nothing to do with the topic itself, but the discourse can depend on the cognitive context and get the maximum or best relevance through processing. This can be regarded as metonymy or metaphor. The following three groups of dialogues are those between Ip Man and three masters:

1) *IP Man: Sister San, it's just practice. No need to smash the ancestral tablets.*

*Sister San: I've done that many times before. No big deal.*

2) *Fighter: each challenge leads to a higher peak. Xingyi is brutal. Don't underestimate it.*

*IP Man: Let's see how high the peaks get.*

3) *IP Man: And what have you got for me, Yong?*

*Brother Yong: A string of firecrackers.*

*IP Man: Yong, your fireworks have fizzled.*

The above three groups of dialogues are all from the dialogues of various sects during martial arts meeting. In fact, the nouns appearing in the conversations have nothing to do with kung fu, but through the context, all of them reflect the masters' understanding of martial arts and their exhortation to IP Man. In movies, following relevance theory is actually to make words meaningful and reasonable. There is not a word that has nothing to do with the film.

Violation of the principle of cooperation. Grice believes that both parties involved in the conversation should temporarily identify with each other's conversation interests, and continue in an appropriate way when the remarks are consistent with each other. However, it violates the cooperative principle, that is, the conversational communicators do not provide the information needed for the

conversation, which makes the conversation impossible. The most representative way of violating the cooperative principle in Wang's movies is the extensive application of his monologues. Besides, the answering mode of actors also shows this pragmatic feature.

*IP Man: Do you know this opera?*

*Gong Er: I think I heard it before in Foshan. Something about a dream.*

*IP Man: A Dream of Love.*

*Gong Er: Love is just that, a dream. It's said, no instrument is as lovely as a voice. It's far better to sing than to speak. Words always sound better sung.*

*IP Man: Has Miss Gong studied opera?*

*Gong Er: Just the basics. Back then if I'd put my mind to it, I'd be an opera star. All those tales, happy and sad. If I tired of Yang Family Women Generals, I'd sing Waking from a Dream. Think of it - me on stage, you in the audience, meeting that way. Wouldn't that be something?*

*IP Man: But what if it was sold out?*

*Gong Er: You flatter me. If you came, I'd save you a seat.*

*IP Man: In fact, life is like a play. You've performed well in the opera of life. You have both timing and skill. Unfortunately, you never saw beyond your role.*

*Gong Er: I'd no idea you watched me like an opera. This opera of mine, applauded or not, will play on to the end. I asked you here to bring things to a close and say what needs to be said.*

*IP Man: Mr. Are you going somewhere?*

*Gong Er: We have a saying in the North - a tiger never quits the mountain. We've both been living on foreign soil. I'm so very tired. I want to go home. But I wanted to return this to you first. As for the 64 Hands, I've already forgotten them. I was lucky to meet you in my prime. Sadly, my time is running out. To say there are no regrets in life, is just to fool yourself. How boring it would be without regrets. Mr. Ip, to tell you the truth, I cared about you. I don't mind telling you that. It's not a crime to love. But that's all it can ever be. I never said that to anyone before. Seeing you tonight, I don't know why, it just came out. Let's say we suspend this game of chess between us. Take care.*

*IP Man: In life, as in chess, a move once made stays on the board. What we have is simply fate. Your father once said, never give up the faith. Keep the light burning. I'll see the 64 Hands once more.*

At the end of the film, the dialogue between the two protagonists, Gong Er violated the principle of cooperation. From the beginning of "drama", Gong Er provided a large number of information that was not related to the conversation, in order to explain the inner struggle. This language expression technique made the unique language style of Wang-style films.

### 3. How does art build character language

From the perspective of the origin and development of art films, art films pay more attention to the expression of personal ideas, the excavation of human nature and philosophical discussion, and focus on the ideological content of themes, and have strong personal opinions. Movies always break the routine and create a series of new creative techniques, including narrative techniques and expressive techniques. Wang Jiawei's films are often considered to be more cinematic, with more delicate and profound meaning, and the character discourse is built on the camera language to sublimate the existence of characters and themes. From the perspective of pragmatics, it is not difficult to find that the characters' discourse should complement each other. As a master of art films, Wang's films can be used for reference. The characters' discourse in art films should do the following four things: first, get the maximum semantic value. For semantic value, context plays an important role. Movies intentionally describe the time, place, background, customs and habits of the story, etc., so as to provide the audience with cognitive context. Sufficient contextual factors can effectively provide audience the ability to deduce meaning and get the maximum semantic value. Second, pragmatic principles can show complex relationships between characters, which needs to be emphasized in language setting. Conversations can be set by using politeness principles, and conversational situations can also be deliberately rendered to emphasize conversational styles. Third, revealing and concealing spread the emotions of the characters. The explicit expression is like the surging waves, which can directly grasp the inner feelings of the characters without reasoning, while the implicit expression is like the surging of the dark river, which sublimates the emotions of the characters through reasoning

and resonates. Finally, the language style should be expressed directly. Language style can be the characteristics of the characters' discourse style in the movie, and it can also be the characteristics of language style that runs through many movie directors. Relevance theory used in the film could get the best relevant metaphorical style, and directors could also make an exploratory attempt on language style by violating the cooperative principle.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From the academic research in recent years, there are many articles that analyze art films from the perspective of pragmatics in many academic works, but there are few excellent articles that study films from the perspective of pragmatic value. The author hopes this paper can provide some help for the research of art films, help people better understand art films and get better aesthetic pleasure from them, and expand relevant research angles and enrich people's aesthetic perspectives.

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