



Journal for Social
Science Archives

Journal for Social Science Archives

Online ISSN: 3006-3310

Print ISSN: 3006-3302

Volume 4, Number 1, 2026, Pages 70 – 88

Journal Home Page

<https://jssarchives.com/index.php/Journal/about>



Cross-Cultural Pragmatics in Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight

Sarosh Iqbal¹, Dr. Rafia Bilal² & Huda Tahir³

¹BS English, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Email: sarosh.bseng2917@iiu.edu.pk

²Department of English, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Email: rafia.bilal@iiu.edu.pk

³BS English, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Email: huda.bseng2911@iiu.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: October 13, 2025
Revised: December 02, 2025
Accepted: December 17, 2025
Available Online: January 06, 2026

Keywords:

Intercultural Pragmatics, István Kecskes, Socio-Cognitive Framework, Conversation Analysis, Animation, Identity, Cross-Cultural Communication, Shared/Common Ground, Cultural Salience, Pragmatic Transfer

Corresponding Author:

Sarosh Iqbal

Email:

sarosh.bseng2917@iiu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This research examines how intercultural communication unfolds in the animated series Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight (2022), focusing on the pragmatic processes that corroborate meaning-making across cultural boundaries. Drawing on István Kecskes' (2013) Intercultural Pragmatics as a socio-cognitive framework, the study investigates how both shared and personally internalized cultural knowledge influences character interaction as well as communicative strategies and interpretation in a dynamic intercultural setting. Employing Conversation Analysis to examine selected scenes, this research identifies how speech acts, politeness strategies, turn-taking, repair sequences, and implicit assumptions navigate intercultural negotiation. The findings suggest that the series serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a platform for the co-construction of meaning, cultural adaptation, and identity negotiation. Therefore, the research highlights the importance of context, salience, and prior experience in fostering intercultural understanding.



Introduction

Media often acts as a cultural connector in today's globalized world. It is essential for interlocutors to build meanings in multi-cultural discourse. Intercultural pragmatics through Kecskes' socio-cognitive lens provides important tool for finding that how speakers from different cultural background use language as they are influenced by both individual and societal knowledge. This research mainly focuses on "Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight" (2022), an animated series which is known for its rich characterization as well as for its rich storytelling. It gives an idea that how meaning is unpacked and negotiated in a multi-cultural context.

By using Conversation Analysis, it mainly focuses on step-by-step organization of conversation by examining the moment-by-moment construction of meaning that reflects cultural frames, as characters manage alignment, misunderstandings and accommodation. By employing Kecskes' socio-cognitive framework, this research also explains the multi-cultural communication through character's dialogues and this communication is also drawn on the personal as well as shared cultural knowledge. Using Conversation Analysis, Kung Fu Panda (2022) enacts diverse intercultural features. These features, including adjacency pair, politeness strategies and turn taking, reveal the negotiations of identity, construction of meaning, and the misunderstandings that emerged within the animated media.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To investigate how Kung Fu Panda (2022) reflects intercultural communication and norms by using conversational and pragmatic structures through the prism of Kecskes' socio-cognitive framework to emphasize the interplay between individual and shared knowledge.
2. To analyse how cultural salience, pragmatic transfer, as well as private or shared cultural knowledge shape character's discourse and negotiation of meanings in cross-cultural interactions.
3. To apply Conversation Analysis (CA) to evaluate how turn-taking, adjacency pairs, repair mechanisms, and politeness markers reflect deeper cultural assumptions and contribute to the dynamic, interactive co-construction of meaning.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. How does Kung Fu Panda (2022) illustrate intercultural communication and pragmatic negotiation through linguistic and interactional strategies grounded in both individual and shared cultural knowledge?
2. What roles do cultural salience and pragmatic transfer play in the emergence of misunderstandings or adaptations during character interactions?
3. How do turn-taking, adjacency pairs, repair mechanisms, and politeness markers uncover deeper cultural assumptions and reflect the dynamic co-construction of meaning, as analysed through Conversation Analysis (CA)?

Statement of Problem

While numerous studies have examined Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight (2022) through character analysis or from intercultural perspectives, there is a noticeable lack of research on intercultural pragmatics within the series. Existing studies have largely focused on the character analysis, politeness principles, deixis, directive speech acts and intercultural interpretation from the perspective of transculturation, often treating intercultural and pragmatic aspects separately. This research aims to fill this gap by systematically applying Kecskes' (2013) Intercultural Pragmatics as a socio-cognitive framework and conducting analysis at both micro and macro levels. It does not only contribute to intercultural research but also demonstrates that intercultural communication is not a one-way transfer of ideas, but a flexible, collaborative, and constantly evolving process, even in the animated fiction.

Significance of Research

This research explores how intercultural communication unfolds through the characters' dialogues in an animated series Kung Fu Panda (2022). This series emphasizes the pragmatic processes that guide meaning-making and depicts cultural negotiation, politeness, and identity development. This research demonstrates that animation is not just a form of entertainment but also an arena for the co-construction of meanings.

Literature Review

This section provides the review of related researches conducted on the intercultural communication in the animated series "Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight". The term "intercultural communication" refers to the communication process between people of different cultural backgrounds, whether from different countries or subcultures within the same country, (Shibata, 1998). Using Discourse Analysis, Siyuan, and Jiaming (2025), in their research article, "Analysing Cultural Translation in China's Intercultural Communication through Kung Fu Panda", used Physical-Behavioural-Spiritual triadic dynamic model. This approach offers a "resilient framework" for cultural exchange, balancing preservation. This study not only contributes to intercultural research but also demonstrates that intercultural communication is not a one-way transfer of ideas, but a flexible, collaborative, and constantly evolving process – even in animated fiction.

In "Analysis on Politeness Principle in Kung Fu Panda 1 (2008): The movie", Alfin et.al. (2019) employed a pragmatic approach to analyse "Politeness Principle", as proposed by Leech, in Kung Fu Panda 1. Leech proposed six types of politeness principles: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim. The researchers applied descriptive qualitative method on the data collected from YouTube. The results revealed that all the politeness maxims proposed by Leech are present in the movie.

Using Discourse Analysis, Susanti (2025), in her research entitled "AN ANALYSIS OF DEIXIS IN KUNG FU PANDA 4: MOVIE" analysed the movie using Levinson's theory (2019). The study employs a qualitative method, with data collected from Kung Fu Panda 4 (2024). It concludes that there are five types of deixis and thirteen deictic functions present in the movie.

While the above-mentioned researches examined either the intercultural perspective or the pragmatic perspective of the movie Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight (2022), this research specifically applies discourse analysis on the intercultural communication in the movie with a focus on pragmatic processes. It also emphasizes that this series does not only entertain its audience but also functions as a site for the co-construction of meanings.

Methodology

The theoretical framework for this research is Kecskes' (2013) Intercultural Pragmatics. Although, it combines both cognitive perspective and intercultural pragmatics.

The analytical framework that is chosen to analyze this data is Kecskes' theory of Socio-cognitive approach. These frameworks help to analyze how meaning is built and constructed in the selected movie.

By integrating these frameworks, this research critically investigates that how characters from different cultural backgrounds-built understanding and negotiate their identities.

Theoretical Framework

Kecskes' Intercultural Pragmatics

In his paper on intercultural communication, Kecskes (2013) explains that Interlocutors determine the interpretation of the language and how it is influenced by individual and shared factors. This process is considered as bidirectional because it works in two ways, i.e. one is from context to utterance and other is from utterance to context. This is the dynamic process where multi-cultural perspectives are intertwined into fictional interactions that reflect real world interactions. He examines two primary categories of contexts:

1. Private Context: This context involves the cultural knowledge, beliefs, background, previous experiences and intellectual history of individuals.
2. Situational Context: This context refers to the surrounding environment that influences and responds to the meaning that it unfolds.

From this perspective, communication is not simply about conveying messages, it is the collective process in which interlocutors adjust and interact according to everyone's cultural expectations and communicative intentions.

The Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA)

In Kecskes' theory of Socio-cognitive Approach, communication is two-way process; like a give-and-take process, it is between speaker's personal view and needs to adjust with others. In intercultural communication, speakers bring cultural and mental habits in conversations where misunderstandings also occur frequently. So, speakers need to adapt to others ways of speaking and thinking in multicultural settings.

Key points: its key points have been explained below:

1. Salient Meaning: This explains that sometimes the speaker's mental background may not align with the listener's interpretation.
2. Pragmatic Transfer: This means that people's communication reflects their cultural backgrounds as well as their native language.
3. Cultural Common Ground: This principle explains that communicators may rely in scope and content on the shared knowledge, depending on their cultural backgrounds

Formulaic Language and Politeness

Kecskes emphasizes that fixed expressions such as collocations, idioms, maxims and common phrases carry significant cultural meanings. These expressions have both positive and negative impacts in intercultural communication. While, it effectively conveys cultural norms, values and attitudes, but it also causes misinterpretation when used across diverse cultures.

Likewise, politeness strategies evolve through interaction, and are not fixed or unchangeable. This study explores how the selected characters use politeness strategies to navigate cultural variances and for bridging cultural differences. It also settles what is considered as rude or respectful in different cultural customs.

Analytical Framework

This research makes use of a qualitative Discourse Analysis since it applies Kecskes' (2013) Socio-cognitive Approach to intercultural pragmatics. It provides a detailed method to analyse how meanings are formed, negotiated or challenged within characters' dialogues from Kung Fu panda (2022) at two interconnected levels.

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features: At the micro level, this research explains the detailed process that meaning is built turn by turn in intercultural conversations:

- a) Speech act: In speech acts, the character's intentions and dynamics are uncovered by analysing apologies, requests and compliments.
- b) Politeness strategies: Politeness strategies, by Brown and Levinson (1987), investigate how characters soften their speech or use direct or indirect language to maintain social cohesion or harmony.
- c) Formulaic language and idiomatic expressions: It examines that misinterpretation in meaning is often caused by culturally specific proverbs, sayings and idioms.

According to Hall (1976), tone, gestures, facial expressions, and posture are considered significant in examining high-context vs. low context communicative styles. Therefore, this level explains that characters shape both individual and collective identities. They adjust to others norms as well as manage cultural misunderstandings.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

At the macro level, by examining, this research links specific dialogues to wide multi-cultural patterns:

- a) Cultural salience: It is based on speaker's mental ability and the situation that identifies cultural norms and values which are significant in multi-cultural settings.
- b) Pragmatic transfer: Sometimes misalignment is often caused when character's speech is influenced by their own cultural norms.
- c) Turn-taking and adjacency pairs: Interlocutors maintain the flow in communication by taking turns, as well as they can handle misunderstandings in conversation as well.
- d) Adaptive strategies and pragmatic accommodation: Characters sometimes shift their communicative styles in order to build their shared understanding and to construct their hybrid cultural space.

At this level the fluid negotiation of meanings is taken into consideration to signify that characters need to rely on both, the private and the shared knowledge during interaction. It also illustrates that the intercultural meanings are created through personal cultural knowledge and mutual situational context. This intercultural meaning has been created in alignment with bidirectional meaning-making Socio-cognitive Approach (context-to-utterance and utterance-to-context). Together these layers indicate that intercultural communication is not one-way transfer of ideas, but a flexible, synergic, and constantly evolving process where meaning is co-created in culturally diverse interactions even in animated fiction.

Data Collection

This research draws its data from specific episodes of Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight (2022), accessed via Netflix. The data encompasses the selected characters' dialogues from six purposefully selected episodes, from season one. One scene from each episode was transcribed and subsequently analysed.

Sample Size & Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used to select scenes that were rich in intercultural content, and they including moments of misunderstandings, conflicts, humour, negotiation, or culturally loaded expressions. The dialogues have been analysed from the following selected episodes:

1. Season 1, Episode 1 "A Cause for The Paws"

2. Season 1, Episode 4 “The Legends of Master Long tooth”
3. Season 1, Episode 08 “A Thread in The Dark”
4. Season 1, Episode 9 “Slow Boat to England”
5. Season 1, Episode 10 “The Knight’s Fall Part 1”
6. Season 1, Episode 11 “The Knight’s Fall Part 2”

This research focuses on the characters from different cultural backgrounds in a shared interactive space, in the selected movie. The analysis mainly focuses on the dialogues that exhibit conflict, humour, politeness, or metaphorical language tied to cultural frames. The dialogues of the following characters have been analysed in this research:

1. Po: The central character, Po, is a Panda and Kung Fu master whose wisdom and Eastern collectivist norms are reflected in his discourse. He mainly uses metaphors, humour, and storytelling in his dialogues, which are actually the pragmatic tools.
2. Wandering Blade: A foil to Po, Wandering Blade (Luthera of Landreth) is the daughter of The Saxon Guard, Knight of England, portraying western hierarchical and individualistic norms. Her discourse is often characterized by direct, literal and formal speech patterns.
3. Mr. Ping: A grounding figure, Mr. Ping, is a goose and Po’s adoptive father who is the epitome of cultural ritual of hospitality, emotional expression and familial bonds.
4. Rukmini: A cultural outsider, Rukmini is an Indian character whose metaphor-rich and indirect speech style reveals South Asian pragmatic conventions.

The transcripts of the dialogues of key scenes were taken from “The Dragon Knight Transcripts: Category Page”, which encompasses the transcription conventions modified to suit animation, where relevant. The features that have been transcribed include tone, pauses, overlapping speech, paralinguistic cues such as facial expressions and gestures.

Data Analysis

In this research, the data comprises of dialogues from the movie Kung Fu Panda (2022). Through the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) lens, this research aims to investigate how intercultural communication is present in interactions between Po and characters like Blade, Rukmini and Mr. Ping. Furthermore, this analysis also explains that different cultural values shape communicative styles such as humour, conflict and resolution. Eventually, this section highlights the complexities of real-world intercultural communication in an animated conversation, which offers insights into language identity and cultural intersection in both meaningful and entertaining ways.

Analysis of Scene 1: Po’s Cultural Storytelling

This dialogue has been taken from Season 1, Episode 4 “The Legends of Master Longtooth”, and the transcript of the conversation has been given below:

Blade: What makes you think this story is based on the Tian-Shang weapons?

Po: Oh, man, I’m glad you asked

Po: “For the answer is in the pages. It was the time before times, when the old world was still newer than old and new.”

Blade: “This sword... it was my brother’s. It’s all I have left.”

Po: “That’s... heavy. My dad gave me a soup ladle. Different vibe, same

feels.”

Blade: “It’s not just a story. It’s how I remember him.”

The micro and macro level pragmatic and linguistics analysis of this dialogue has been done in the following lines:

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

In this dialogue between Po and Blade, meanings have been created together through speech acts, politeness strategies and culturally rich expressions.

- a) Speech Acts: Blade follows interrogative communicative pattern in her difficult question “*What makes you think this story is based on the Tian-Shang weapons?*” This conveys doubtfulness aligning towards results and fact-based reasoning. After that, she also uses expressive statement, “*this sword... it was my brother’s. It’s all I have left*”, which grounds meaning in personal loss and memory.
On the other hand, Po’s answer is in the form of an assertive speech act, “*for the answer is in the pages. It was the time before times, when the old world was still newer than old and new.*” This narrative interpretation has been framed as a mythical, dreamlike story, which is embedded in traditional Chinese narrative forms. Po also uses an expressive and affiliative act, “*that’s... heavy. My dad gave me a soup ladle. Different vibe, same feels,*” rooted with humour to show compassion and unity with Blade.
- b) Politeness Strategies: Positive politeness is employed by Po as he authenticates or validates Blade’s grief by sharing a personal parallel memory. It highlights empathy through shared emotional resonance. In contrast, Blade starts on record which is emotionally reserved without directly opening up.
- c) Formulaic Expressions: Po’s use of mythic frame, “time before times,” demonstrates Chinese folklore style invoking oral storytelling traditions. In addition, his use of modern colloquialism, “different vibe, same feels,” makes it approachable across traditions. This lighter or metaphorical contrast enables them to show compassion and empathy.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

In the broader socio-cultural patterns, this segment highlights how meaning is negotiated through characters.

- a) Cultural Salience: Through mythic storytelling, Po’s discourse depicts cultural memory. His discourse mainly focuses on community values rather than materialism. In contrast, Blade’s literal views basically explain kingly ethos of individual’s honour and remembrance.
- b) Pragmatic Transfer: The mystery of Tian-Shang weapons is unwrapped by Po, because he transfers the conventions of Chinese oral story into casual dialogues. Furthermore, he employs both humour and empathy by adopting Blade’s tone which explains multicultural accommodations.
- c) Turn-Taking and Adjacency Pairs: The conversation between Po and Blade begins with Blade’s inquiry. Blade’s story grounds in his individual grief, and this personal grief is similar to Po’s humor and empathy. It encourages her to reassert meaning and legacy, when say says, “*it’s not just a story...*” This multi-cultural interaction highlights the negotiations in culture and also explains how memory and myth intertwine to form shared moral values.

- d) Adaptive Strategies and Pragmatic Accommodation: Po responded to Blade's grief by adopting epic and mythic discourse, and moves from storytelling to humor and assures to maintain emotional connection in this story. This shift basically functions to avoid cultural dissonance.

Interpretation

In the conversation between Blade's factual skepticism and Po's mythical Chinese storytelling, cultural conflict has been demonstrated, and different illuminative frames have been disclosed. In building solidarity and empathy, adaptive strategies are used like Blade's grief over his brother's sword in contrast with Po's humour. Each character comes up with private or shared models. Po's humorous storytelling is embedded with metaphor and relational framing to show positive politeness. Brown and Levinson's scheme is fused with formulaic storytelling to represent cultural difference. In contrast, Blade's answers with resistance exemplify shared cultural common ground and hoe limits of immediate alignment. In line with Kecskes' Socio-cognitive approach, their turn making explains that in intercultural setting meaning is not automatic; rather it can be co-constructed in real time. Finally, this conversation explains the mutual recognition that reduced the impact of intercultural distance, because empathy, humour and narrative style foster partial but meaningful recognition in this scene.

Analysis of Scene 2: Formality vs. Informality in Naming Conventions

This dialogue has been taken from Season 1, Episode 9, "Slow Boat to England", and the transcript of the conversation has been given below:

Po: "Can I call you Bladey?" "Slow Boat to England"

Po: "Po and Blade! Po-lade!" (while in excitement of leading way to blade once again out of China) "Blade-Po! Blo!"

Blade: "Oh! Please don't mash our names together."

Micro-Level Analyses: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

This section evaluates how cultural markers such as politeness strategies and speech acts build meanings in Po and Blade's conversation.

- a) Speech Acts: Po playfully creates a nick name for Blade, "*Can I call you Bladey?*" Here, Po uses affiliative and expressive speech act, and playfully requests Blade, which signals his lively affection. In addition, he creates reduplicated playful invention "*Po and Blade! Po-lade!*". "*Blade-po! Blo!*", which not only strengthens their friendship through humour but also contributes to a heightened sense of informality. It illustrates his emotional excitement as well as his desire for relational play. Conversely, Blade's refusal to Po explains directive speech act "*Oh! Please don't mash our names together.*" Her refusal demonstrates her shift towards a formal relationship, and this refusal also restores the personal boundaries.
- b) Politeness Strategies: Positive politeness is employed by Po as he uses nicknames. The aim of this act is to construct solidarity in the group. On the other hand, negative politeness is employed by Blade, as she restores personal boundaries and maintains a formal relationship by using the word "*please*", which minimizes the possible face threatening act.

- c) Non-Verbal Cues (inferred): Po's tone has happiness or thrill in it because, he wants to reaffirm friendship. While, Blade has exasperated intonation, because she wishes for personal identity.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This section explains how characters negotiate meanings through broader cultural patterns and interactional dynamics.

- a) Cultural Salience: In this conversation, Po playfully creates names for Blade. This explains relational closeness and informality which are important in collectivist communication. While, Blade introduces herself as "*Luthera of Landreth...*" which is a European Knightly code, and demonstrates her formal and honourable status?
- b) Turn-Taking and Adjacency Pairs: The conversational exchange between Po and Blade starts with Po's playful mash-up of names, "*Can I call you Bladey?*" He blends the names of Blade and Po "*Po-lade, Blade-po, Blo!*" Blade refuses because she doesn't not like mashups or nicknames, "*Please don't mash our names together*", as she wants to restore her identity. Here in this conversation, turn taking is prominent because of the Po's unsuccessful attempts at alignment, ending with the reassertion of Blade's preferred interactional frame.

Interpretation

This conversation explains a cultural clash because of Po's use of nicknames and Blade's formal refusal to these names. In terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Po employs positive politeness because he wants to build the relationship by reducing the distance. While Blade employs negative politeness, she declares her personal boundaries, and her response is gentle but firm. This contrast illustrates pragmatic transfer, as both rely on their own cultural expectations. Po assumes that informality signals warmth, while Blade assumes that structure conveys respect. According to Kecskes' Socio-cognitive approach, this moment highlights egocentric processing, where each interlocutor starts by drawing on private cultural knowledge before negotiating shared meaning. Hofstede (1980), talks about communicative style of British nobility which characterized both hierarchical sensitivity and structured politeness. This communicative style which is given by Hofstede is prominent in Blade's refusal which gives formal interaction. She basically refuses Po for calling of nicknames as it is characterized as informal. Eventually, this misalignment is not a conflict, but represents a real-time intercultural negotiation, underlining that what feels friendly in one culture may feel uncomfortable in another. Thus, intercultural communication is emergent, messy, and built through adjustment.

Analysis of Scene 3: Humour in High-Stress Contexts

This dialogue has been taken from Season 1, Episode 9, "Slow Boat to England", and the transcript of the conversation has been given below:

Po: "In the meantime, just look around! What better place to spend your last day in China? It's fun. I know, knights don't "fun." Not even when they're surrounded by it. But, come on! ... They're tied up. Try to relax." (Po being from a friendly up bring by ping and eastern customs, he wants to say good bye with good memories thus took her to moon festival to make her last day memorable)

Blade:

"Knights don't relax, either."

Po: "Okay, let's compromise." "How about 50% relaxed, 50% vigilant?"

Blade: "How about 99% vigilant, 1% relaxed?"

Po: "You can't leave China without learning to play erhu!" "You can't leave China without poking a mummy."

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

This section highlights how culturally marked expressions construct the meanings in Po and Blade's conversation.

- a) Speech Acts: Directive statement is used by Po, "*In the meantime, just look around! What better place to spend your last day in China? It's fun,*" which encourages Blade to engage, framing the suggestion positively as enjoyment rather than obligation. In addition, self-deprecation and humorous assertion, "*I know, knights don't 'fun.'* Not even when they're surrounded by it," explains the cultural differences by developing tension. Moreover, this movie blends cultural traditions with humour by using exaggerated playful directives, "*You can't leave China without learning to play erhu! You can't leave China without poking a mummy,*" prepositional act is also used by Po as he says "*Okay, let's compromise. How about 50% relaxed, 50% vigilant?*" to settle compromise and to seek a middle ground. In contrast, counter personal is used by Blade as she says "*How about 99% vigilant, 1% relaxed?*" This is acknowledging Po's terms and to maintain her knightly discipline
- b) Politeness Strategies: Positive politeness is used by Po as he lowers his stress to prevent Blade from recognizing his suggestions as a threat to her authority. On the other hand, mitigated refusal is used by Blade, "Knights don't relax, either," Her refusal is delivered with formulaic identity. In addition, Po's cultural fusion "*erhu + mummy*" highlights his friendship.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This section examines how characters negotiate meaning in broader cultural patterns and interactional dynamic.

- a) Cultural Salience: Po's familial connection explains eastern hospitality. As Blade departs, her departure reflects a chance for collective joy. Blade's act of being vigilant explains western attitude. The moon festival setting not only symbolizes cultural richness but also signifies farewell traditions. Po's festive spirit is contrasted with Blade's duty bond restraint.
- b) Pragmatic Transfer: Blade transfers her knightly norms into a festival setting. While Po transfers his celebratory or festive norms into a kingly context. Po adopts by reframing vigilance as compromise, while Blade offers humorous counter proportion of "*99% vs 1%*".
- c) Turn-Taking and Adjacency Pairs: Po's humour functions as a pre-emptive repair mechanism, when emerged within adjacency pairs. He uses humour to soften the potential friction of divergent worldviews. In systematic interaction, upon encouraged and self-mocked by Po's saying, "*knights don't fun*", Blade asserts that "*knights don't relax, either*".

Interpretation

The interpretation of this scene is that humor is not only used as comic relief, in fact, it acts as strategic tool in intercultural communication. Po maintains both team spirit and friendly relationship in his utterance. His use of formulaic expressions foregrounds relational bonding and hospitality. In contrast, Blade maintains low context and formal responses. She basically foregrounds her goal focused values. Both Blade and Po begin the conversation by incorporating their individual cultural norms into a communication and their approach explains pragmatics transfer. But Po slowly shifts to shared common grounds through frequent humorous or strategic turns like he says “*let’s compromise*” and “*poking a mummy.*” While, Blade is disconnected from these humorous interactions but then she gradually encouraged those utterances and she permits the discursive settings. This act highlights that the nature of intercultural communication is evolving, and is not static, and this evolving nature is influenced by both interlocutor’s comprehension and the developing nature of the situation. This linguistic progression strengthens Kecskes’ claim that through frequent engagement cultural meanings are mutually constructed and are not fixed or static. In adjacency pairs, Po’s humour act as a pre-emptive repair mechanism, which regulates misalignment, mitigate cultural friction and develop rapport this is from CA perspective. So, this interaction highlights the flexibility in cross cultural communication where meaning is often negotiated to build identities. Humorous expressions are also used in intercultural communication to reduce the potential tension.

Analysis of Scene 4: Rukhmini’s Indian References

The following dialogue has been taken from Season 1, Episode 10 “The Knight’s Fall Part 1”

Rukhmini: “Oh, yes. But nothing comes free.”

Rukhmini: Well, at least it’s a fair fight. Get on with it then!

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

In this section Po and Blade’s conversation is scrutinized to decipher how meaning is co-constructed via distinct speech acts, politeness strategies and culturally marked expressions.

- a) Speech Acts: Rukhmini’s proverb, “*Oh, yes, but nothing comes free,*” encapsulates a cultural ethic rooted in transactional understanding. Additionally, she said, “*Well, at least it’s a fair fight,*” in her directing act, that suggests aggressiveness and directness while maintaining a sense of competitive decorum.
- b) Politeness Strategies: Rukhmini used blunt-on-record directness in her stern order, “*get on with it then!*” which translates to a heated argument. Furthermore, brutal realism is lessened by indirect politeness through the adage “*nothing comes free*” by grounding it in societal wisdom rather than personal judgment.
- c) Formulaic Expressions: Rukhmini’s use of the formulaic statement “*nothing comes free,*” emphasizes karma, exchange, and consequences, which are the reflections of Indian proverbial folk wisdom. Her statement that “*at least it’s a fair fight*” also relates to South Asian heroic traditions, which gives a high value to justice, integrity and dignity during times of conflict.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This section examines how characters negotiate meanings in broader cultural patterns and interactional dynamic.

- a) Cultural Salience: Rukhmini emphasized that Indian culture has standards for fairness, karma, and transactional truth while emulating South Asian views of justice. Her definition of conflict as “*fair*,” in which the morality of an action is assessed by fairness rather than outcome is basically, exemplified dharma-inspired ethics.
- b) Pragmatic Transfer: Rukhmini uses Indian proverbial language to express her ethnicity through speech patterns in a tense conflict setting. In contrast to the Western knightly traditions embodied by Blade and Colin, her conflict with pragmatic realism blends Eastern honor-based martial ideals.

Interpretation

According to Kecskes’ Socio-cognitive approach, Rukhmini’s metaphorical statement, “*but nothing comes free*,” exemplifies the function of culturally salient expressions in an intercultural communication, which is based on a dynamic interaction between egocentric processing and mutual adaptation. This demonstrates that Rukhmini’s Indian cultural background shapes her private cognitive habits, exemplifying pragmatic transfer, as for her, it expresses depth and concepts like economic imbalance and unpredictability. However, the expression lacks a shared ground and provokes confusion for Po and Blade, consequently, generating an interpretive gap. The misunderstanding stimulates clarification and repair mechanisms. This not only enables the characters to co-construct the meanings collaboratively and engages with the figurative expression beyond its literal interpretation, but also adjusts their conceptual lens to accommodate Rukhmini’s symbolic language through intercultural negotiation. Rukhmini’s identity is asserted by her language, whilst challenging interlocutors to foster intercultural understanding in meaning-making.

Analysis of Scene 5: Mr. Ping’s Food Diplomacy:

The following lines comprise of the transcript of the dialogue from Season 1, Episode 11 “The Knight’s Fall Part 2”

Ping: “Hm, sounds promising. Uh, too bad we’re heading home. We’re late for the dinner rush.” “Try this noodle soup, made with love.”

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

In this section Po and Blade’s conversation is scrutinized to decipher how meaning is co-constructed via distinct speech acts, politeness strategies and culturally marked expressions.

- a) Speech Acts: To frame food as gesture of goodwill, to offer relational being and care, to reflect his internal beliefs and values, Ping has used directive speech act. “Try this noodle soup, made with love.”
- b) Politeness Strategies: When serving noodle soup, Ping has employed positive politeness to show inclusivity, affection, and solidarity. This complies with the social harmony and hospitality standards of collectivist culture.
- c) Formulaic Language: Po’s surrogate father’s formulaic phrase, “*made with love*,” has been used to elevate an everyday meal into a symbolic act of love and sincerity. Such idiomatic composition combines sustenance with emotive yet tactful discourse to emphasize on relational warmth.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This section examines how characters negotiate meanings in broader cultural patterns and interactional dynamic.

- a) Cultural Salience Ping uses food in this exchange to demonstrate the important Chinese ancestral norm of yingjiē (迎接), or reception ceremony. This functions as a conventional emblem of relational harmony, welcome, and negotiation through shared experiences.
- b) Pragmatic Transfer Ping negotiates the cultural conventions of Chinese food diplomacy in a cross-cultural context. The act of providing soup transcends verbal negotiating. The worldwide recognized cultural semiotics of food as a symbol of promoting peace is invoked by this activity.

Interpretation

Mr. Ping's presentation of "noodle soup" could be interpreted as a culturally significant act of hospitality and this act aligns with Kecskes' Intercultural Pragmatics premise. The Chinese ancestral tradition of yingjiē (迎接) is the origin of this act. His gesture basically functions as a symbolic speaking act that conveys his internalized values, experiences, and ideas about care for others and forming bonds with them. It uses formulaic language to convey meaning across cultural boundaries and carries emotional and symbolic weight. The offer might first be seen via a different cultural lens for a character like Wandering Blade, who represents a more formal, independent cultural posture. This could lead to pragmatic transfer and a misalignment in salient meaning. From the standpoint of a CA, Mr. Ping's gestures are a subtle kind of pragmatic accommodation through an indirect statement that helps to reduce societal boundaries and promote transparency without overt confrontation in order to establish shared ground through affective expression. This demonstrates how symbolic gestures that reflect both cultural identity and adaptive effort are used to mutually build cross-cultural interpretation.

Analysis of Scene 6: Po's Adaptation of Chinese Proverbs

The following lines comprise of the transcript of the dialogue from Season 1, Episode 4 "The Legends of Master Longtooth"

Po: "The obstacle is the path." – Master Oogway."
"Everything unfolds as it's supposed to." – Master Spider

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

In this section Po and Blade's conversation is scrutinized to decipher how meaning is co-constructed via distinct speech acts, politeness strategies and culturally marked expressions.

- a) Speech Acts: By using wise sayings like Master Oogway, who once said, "*the obstacle is the path*," and Master Spider, who once said, "*everything unfolds as it's supposed to*," Po bolsters his argument and reaffirms acceptance and fate as guiding principles. Philosophical authority serves as the foundation for Po's strong statement.
- b) Politeness Strategies: Po uses positive politeness to expertise the knowledge to Master Spider and Master Oogway. Po rather than imposing his will, shows his respect for custom and conformity to common cultural ideals.
- c) Formulaic Language: Because these terms are culturally rich with wisdom and traditions like Toast and Zen, Po's invocation of his master's ideology functions as instructive

expression. These realities clarify how challenges and struggles lead to the acceptance of natural order.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This section examines how characters negotiate meaning in broader cultural patterns and interactional dynamic.

- a) Cultural Salience: Traditional Eastern ideas like Buddhism and Daoism serve to enhance the Kung Fu narrative's cultural grounding. Po's use of Chinese maxims demonstrates how these ideas are still relevant in an intercultural animation.
- b) Pragmatic Transfer: Po's communication style incorporates Chinese cultural knowledge into his own pragmatic framework. Here, his character's informal and hilarious conversational style is woven with philosophical sayings.

Interpretation

As the Chinese maxim used by Po provides a striking example of international pragmatics in action, representing the socio-cognitive approach, Kung Fu Panda's (2022) story becomes more relevant to the broader audience. This exchange supports how cultural expression is changing and how it helps people to create their identities in cross-cultural settings. From the standpoint of the **CA**, it is evident that Po's application of cultural maxims, which are consistent with pragmatic processes, serves as a guideline for meaning-making across cultural barriers. His adaption is a prime example of pragmatic transfer, which upholds traditional integrity while mediating cultural interpretation and encouraging inclusivity and cross-cultural interaction. This method emphasizes the significance of context, salience, and past experience in intercultural understanding and is consistent with the series' overarching subject of co-constructing meaning.

Analysis Scene 7: Contrasting Training Styles

The following dialogue has been taken from Season 1, Episode 8 "A Thread in The Dark"

Po: Now, what's the move to get the glove off?
Blade: That was the move. You ruined it.
Po: Well, you said to give it all I've got, so I...
Blade: Let's reverse roles. Remember, do exactly as I did. Ready? Not bad. For a page. But you see, I can still....
Po: Ursa Major! Was that right?
Blade: No! No, that was not right. What's with the gut check? That's not how the move works.
Po: Well, your move didn't totally work, so I threw some mustard on it. And a little belly bump, a little catchphrase, kapow!
Blade: Is that even a kung Fu move?
Po: If a kung Fu master does it, then it's a kung Fu move.
Blade: Will you please just do as I've asked? Let's go again, Page. How... How did you... (Blade was amazed by the skill of Po)

Po: Threw my voice.

Blade: Ventriloquism lessons as a boy. It's useless. (but still was in the trance of self-perfection and state of denial to admire his skill, though it is amazing)

Po: Hey! Maybe you're just too in your head about it. You've been planning it for 15 years, but nothing ever goes the way you plan it. Sometimes you've just gotta bust a move and find a new way.

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

This section scrutinizes how meanings are co-constructed through specific speech acts, politeness strategies, and culturally marked expressions in Po and Blade's conversation.

- a) Speech Acts: Blade uses directive statements to correct and instruct. Her statement, "[t]hat was the move. You ruined it," serves as corrective feedback asserting authority and control. Likewise, her directive, "Will you please just do as I've asked? Let's go again, Page," reinforces the hierarchy and demands compliance. Assertive speech act is used by Po "Well, you said to give it all I've got, so I...." Here he reaffirms his mistakes as creativity. The declarative speech act is also used by Po when he says, "if a kung Fu master does it, then it's a kung Fu moved". Here, he resists and redefines authority and self-confidence. In addition, declarative speech is used when he says "maybe you're just too in your head about it... Sometimes you've just got to bust a move and find a new way," this statement gives flexible advice and offers encouragement.
- b) Politeness Strategies: Blade on record directness is used by Blade as she says "you ruined it", "No! No, that was not right." Here, her judgement reveals little mitigation that is followed by hierarchical training system. In contrast, positive politeness is used by Po, as he uses humour to soften his disagreement and re-evaluates his mistakes. This act shows that he is protecting his own self from Blade's authority.
- c) Formulaic Language and Idiomatic Expressions: The idiomatic expressions are used by Po as he says "bust a move". This expression expresses spontaneity because it is linked with improvisational style. Metaphorical idioms are used by Po as he says "threw some mustard on it", which explains another spark on intensity. In addition, formulaic language transforms move on performance by saying "Ursa Major."

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This section examines how characters negotiate meaning in broader cultural patterns and interactional dynamic.

- a) Cultural Salience: Po represents adaptability, spontaneity, and individuality, whereas, Blade's perfectionism and reliance on "the move" for fifteen years highlights her discipline, mastery and tradition –culturally significant rigid principles in West.
- b) Pragmatic Transfer: To highlight obedience and replication conventions of hierarchical martial instruction, which are reflected by Blade's communicative behaviour. In contrast to this, creativity and innovation serve to redefine conventions via Po's discursive approach that manifests norms of improvisational performance.
- c) Turn-Taking and Adjacency Pairs: Po's question initiates this dialogue between Blade and Po. It is succeeded by Blade's guidance and correction. Po used humour to minimize his failure. His light-hearted authority with the line, "if a Kung Fu master does it,...." ends

with a piece of advice. As Blade shouted, “*how, how did you?*” the interaction shifted from confrontation to resistance, making turn-taking significant in this instance. This represents a slow balancing of power.

- d) Adaptive Strategies and Pragmatic Accommodation: Po uses comedy to adjust Blade’s rigidity. It reduces the tension and redefines errors as acceptable alternatives. Blade also integrates accuracy and self-perfection. Po’s provisions are met with resistance from her. This indicates a shift towards acknowledging a different skill set by displaying a moment of surprise and hesitant respect. This discussion offers a case study of training philosophies in contrast. These studies contrast Blade as a rigid and hierarchical pedagogical structure, while Po as a democratic and improvisational approach.

Interpretation:

This exchange contrasts with Po’s spontaneous technique in keeping with Eastern experiential learning with Blade’s structured practice, which is firmly anchored in Western, rigorous discipline. While Blade’s corrective imperatives demonstrate a robust, rule-based approach, Po uses humour and idioms to reframe errors as creative. Each interrogator brings their own cultural models into a shared training space, and it causes temporary disarray. This collision basically exemplifies pragmatic transfer. Blade’s severity is lessened by Po’s comedy and this flexibility frames turn-taking, which highlights her astonishment at his extraordinary talent. This instance demonstrates how different cultural frameworks can co-create creative hybrid practices in which both intentional softness and rigidity blend together.

Analysis of Scene 8: Conflict Resolution Strategies

The following dialogue has been taken from Season 1, Episode 4 “The Legends of Master Longtooth”

Blade: “This is serious. We’re being chased, and you’re cracking jokes?”

Po: “Hey, if we’re going to be crushed by a sandstorm, might as well go out with a smile!”

Po: “I got oodles of sayings.”

“Try surrendering to what is” Master dolphin

“The obstacle is the path,” Master Oogway

“Po, if you relax, it’ll pass faster.” My doctor

“Meaning is in the eye of the beholder.”

“Everything unfolds as it’s supposed to,” Master Spider

“sometimes the answer appears when you stop looking for it.”

Micro-Level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

In this section Po’s and Blade’s conversation is scrutinized to decipher how meanings are co-constructed via distinct speech acts, politeness strategies and culturally marked expressions.

- a) Speech Acts: Declarative speech act is used by Po as he says “*This is serious. We’re being chased, and you’re cracking jokes?*” This statement works as an advice because Po expresses urgency and disapproval. In contrast, Po responds with an expressive act, “Hey,

if we're going to be crushed by a sandstorm, might as well go out with a smile!" Using humour, he downplays the situation and shifts the emotional tone. His use of a sequence of proverbial quotes, attributed to his masters, comprises a philosophical assertion intended to reframe the situation from a broader, more reflective perspective.

- b) Politeness Strategies: Positive politeness is employed by Po as he uses humour, and common cultural knowledge to remain positive or optimistic under pressure. On the contrary, Blade's response is unambiguous and direct, and records politeness. Because, her style is western and it is task oriented, so this explains practical action and it overcomes direct efficiency.
- c) Formulaic Language and Idiomatic Expressions: Formulaic philosophical sayings from Sages are misused by Po, as these proverbs are connected with Chinese history and philosophy.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This section explains that meanings are co-constructed through specific speech acts and culturally rich expressions in Po and Blade conversation.

- a) Cultural Salience: A culturally salient Eastern approach to conflict is contemplated through Po's use of humour and philosophical proverbs. These culturally ingrained sayings work to maintain emotional balance and harmony even in danger. In contrast, Blade's goal-oriented approach reflects western culture's salience of prioritizing directness and immediate action.
- b) Pragmatic Transfer: By using Kecskes' (2013) socio-cognitive Intercultural Pragmatics, Po and Blade's interactional dynamics in Kung Fu Panda (2022) explain intercultural pragmatics that helps in constructing meanings, and building problem solving strategies. Po's approach is based on cultural models that are indirect, and metaphorical, which highlights acceptance through resilience. On the other hand, Blade's approach is direct and goal oriented. Her style explains directness and immediate action.

Interpretation

The conflict resolution exchange between Po and Blade in Kung Fu Panda (2022) explains how meaning is built or constructed within egocentric private context, where both characters bring individual or shared knowledge to understand their different communicational styles. Blade prioritizes action and Po uses conventional wisdom to regulate emotions. Socio-cognitive approach's points are highlighted through their conversations. Its key points are pragmatic transfer and cultural salience; these points serve to shape character's intentions. Po's approach is based on cultural models that are indirect. He uses this strategy to maintain social cohesion and emotionally connectedness. While, Blade's approach is cognitive because her response is more goal focused. This scene also highlights renegotiation of meanings at the same ground rather than the mere transmission of information.

Analysis of Scene 9: Adaptation to New Cultural Environments

The following dialogue has been extracted from Season 1, Episode 11 "The Knight's Fall Part 2"

Blade: Then we're off on a treasure hunt. Rukhmini: And that means we're leaving China. Po: Wait, what?

Micro -level: Pragmatic and Linguistic Features

In this section Po's and Blade's conversation is scrutinized to decipher how meaning is co-constructed via distinct speech acts, politeness strategies and culturally marked expressions.

- a) Speech Acts: Declarative statement is used by Blade as she says "*Then we're off on a treasure hunt,*" Here she showcases the mission and is setting the group for new action. Rukhmini adds meaningful information, "*And that means we're leaving China.*" This statement acts as a shock for Po because it is causing fear of leaving his own Homeland. Expressive speech act is used by Po as he says, "*Wait, what?*" This statement reflects his discomfort for leaving his Homeland, his own comfort place. This act explains his resistance to moving to an unfamiliar place.
- b) Politeness Strategies: Po's reaction explains positive politeness because he expresses his feelings openly that he doesn't want to leave his country. In contrast, Blade and Rukhmini's action is more goal oriented. Their approach is commonly associated with low-context and efficiency-focused communication.

Macro-Level: Interactional Dynamics and Cultural Salience

This part explains how characters negotiate meaning by exploring the broader cultural patterns and interactional dynamics

- a) Cultural Salience: Po has emotional connection with his home. He wants to stay in his place. That's why he says "*Wait, what?*" This statement is culturally significant as it mirrors emotional attachment with homeland. In contrast, Blade and Rukhmini are excited to leave. They want to go to new place. This explains goal-oriented worldview where relocation is necessary.
- b) Turn-Taking and Adjacency Pair: This conversation begins with Blade's dialogue, "*Then we're off on a treasure hunt,*" This conversation by Rukhmini as she says "*and that means we're leaving China*", Po strongly encounters this statement by saying "*Wait, what?*", Here turn taking is present and is followed by smooth progression with no interruptions.

Interpretation

This conversation highlights that Po is reluctant to go to new place, to adopt a new environment. He wants to live in his homeland. In contrast, Blade is enjoying this process of moving to new place. She is confident, her approach is goal oriented and these characteristics are more common in western cultures. Rukhmini is from south Asian region, where multiple cultures co-exist. She also understands the importance of relocation. However, this flexibility of cultural differences aligns with Kecskes (2013) intercultural adaptation via socio-cognitive negotiation; and explains significance of accepting new environment. Finally, this interaction reflects the natural tension that often arises when encountering unfamiliar cultural environments, and both characters must undergo the adaptation process.

Conclusion

In a nut shell, this research examined how Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight (2022), and explored intercultural pragmatics by using Kecskes' (2013) socio-cognitive framework and Conversation Analysis. The findings of this research reveal that meaning making is a dynamic process, and is not fixed. It highlights how characters adopt communicational behaviour, settle misunderstandings and negotiate identity across cultures.

In this research, the analysis is based on the conversation of Po and Blade which explains storytelling around Lunar new Year. Using conversation analysis, Kung Fu Panda (2022) enacts

inter-cultural features. These features such as adjacency pair, politeness strategies and turn taking reveal the negotiations of identity, construction of meaning, and the misunderstandings that emerge within animated media. This research also highlights renegotiation of meaning of same ground rather than the mere transmission of information.

In addition, Intercultural pragmatics through Kecskes' socio-cognitive lens gives important tools for finding how speakers from different cultural background use language as they are influenced by both individual and societal knowledge. Furthermore, it works as the model of effective inter-cultural strategies such as adaptive alignment and politeness negotiation, this framework is a prime example of how real-world cross-cultural communication also happens in animation. Therefore, this animated series contributes to understanding the role of intercultural pragmatics in fictional narrative.

References

1. Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, 1987.
2. Chen, S., & Pan, J. (2025). Analyzing cultural translation in China's intercultural communication through *Kung Fu Panda*. *Chinese Studies Monthly*, 3(1), 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.70731/7sqw5e45>
3. Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*. London and New York: Longman, 1989.
4. Fathi, Said. "Revisiting Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness." *European Journal of Language and Culture Studies*, vol. 3, no. 5, 4 Sept. 2024, ejlang.org/index.php/ejlang/article/view/137. Accessed 6 May 2025.
5. Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture*. Anchor Press, 1976.
6. Hofstede, Geert. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Sage Publications, 1980.
7. Kecskes, István. *Intercultural Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
8. Rosyidha, A., Afdiyani, I. N., Fatimah, A. D., & Nisa, I. (2019). Analysis on Politeness Principle in *Kung Fu Panda 1: The movie*. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 1(1), 23–29. <http://e-journal.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/jopr/index>.
9. Susanti, H. (2025). An analysis of deixis in *Kung Fu Panda 4* movie. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial dan Humaniora*, 4(2).
10. "The Dragon Knight Transcripts: Category Page" *Kung Fu Panda Wiki*, Fandom, last edited [n.d], https://kungfupanda.fandom.com/wiki/Category:The_Dragon_Knight_transcripts. Accessed 16th April. 2025.
11. Watson, Mitch and Peter Hastings. *Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight*. DreamWorks Animation, 2023. Netflix, www.netflix.com/title/81227574.
12. Wodak, Ruth, and Michael Meyer, editors. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Sage, 2001.