

# Studies on Chinese Language and Linguistics in Italy

Edited by  
Serena Zuccheri

Studi Interdisciplinari su Traduzione, Lingue e Culture

**Bologna**  
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## Studi Interdisciplinari su Traduzione, Lingue e Culture

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# THE IDENTIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION OF EXPRESSIONS OF ANGER IN ITALIAN AND CHINESE USING EMOTIONAL SCRIPT\*

Valeria Varriano

*“L’Orientale” University of Naples*

Serena Zuccheri

*University of Bologna (Forlì Campus)*

## **1. Introduction**

The socio-pragmatic aspects regulating emotional communication are a neglected aspect in textbooks on Chinese language and culture targeting Italian-speaking learners. Correspondingly, we might anticipate a similar lack in textbooks on Italian language and culture targeting Chinese-speaking students. Yet, the correct use of expressions relating to emotional experiences is extremely important to avoid miscommunication. To address this gap, we have designed an experimental didactic activity focusing on anger as a primary emotion and inspired, in part, by Mrowa-Hopkins and Strambi (2005). The aim is to help Chinese and Italian language learners identify expressions of anger. We specifically target situations where existing emotional-lexicon rep-

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\* Although this paper was collaboratively produced, Sub-sections 2.2 and 3.2.2 were written by Valeria Varriano only and Sub-sections 2.1 and 3.2.1 by Serena Zuccheri only. Sections and Sub-sections 1, 2.3, 3.1 and 4 were written by both.



ertoires define an emotion (Varriano and Zuccheri 2022), but do not help teach how to communicate an emotional state.

This paper first reviews the experimental didactic activity we designed and simultaneously conducted among Italian and Chinese students from four universities (“L’Orientale” University of Naples, the University of Bologna, the Beijing University of International Business and Economics - UIBE, and the Zhejiang International Studies University - ZISU). Secondly, we focus on the identification, learning and communication of terms and expressions relating to anger through the compilation of emotional scripts. These scripts are based on the analysis of the verbal, non-verbal and paralinguistic elements observed in two television series, *L’amica geniale* (My Brilliant Friend) (2018-to present) produced in Italy, and *Yi jiārén zhī míng* 以家人之名 - *Go Ahead* (In the Name of the Family) (2020) in China.

The body of the paper is divided into three main sections. The first (Section 2) addresses the theoretical background underlying our experimental didactic activity. We specifically consider the reasons why we chose to study anger as an emotion from a psychological and linguistic point of view (Section 2.1). Secondly, we examine the concept of a ‘script’ as used in the fields of Psychology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well as linguistic research. We then present the script concept as used in our research activity (Section 2.2). Finally, we consider the Collectivism versus Individualism dimension within a culture. We see this dimension as forming the basis for a learner’s recognition of the main cultural differences which may exist between China and Italy. We also consider the ongoing validity of the hypothesis that cultures differ in their display rules regarding expressions of anger (Section 2.3) as raised by Matsumoto *et al.* (2010) and as based on Hofstede *et al.*’s cultural dimensions model (2010). The second section (Section 3) considers the students involved in the didactic activity, the selected television series and the script framework which the students completed. We also discuss the questionnaire we provided to help guide the students in analysing their selected scenes. The provisional findings based on the scripts collected from the students are then reviewed and discussed.

## 2. Theoretical and methodological background

### 2.1 Anger: the most frequently externalised emotion to be kept under control

Interest in emotions as a component of language has led philosophers, anthropologists, neuroscientists, linguists, psychologists and many others to speculate since ancient times, given emotions “seem to come from the most untamed, animal part of ourselves” (Whatt Smith 2015: 23). This has also led to thinking about the abstract concepts emotions refer to and trying to answer the naturally elusive question, “If different people have different ways of conceptualising emotions, might they feel differently about them as well?” (*Ibid.*: 25). One of the main reasons we chose to analyse anger as an emotion in this context is that it conceptually brings together a diverse range of knowledge. Anger is omnipresent in our Western mythological, literary and religious traditions. It is similarly a major factor in various aspects of Chinese culture, philosophy, literature and traditional medicine.

As a primary emotion, there are widely recognised, established and universal bodily expressions of and physical reactions to anger (e.g., gnashing of teeth, faster heartbeat, etc.). However, it cannot be taken for granted that different cultures or languages, like Chinese and Italian, have the same linguistic-metaphorical conceptualisations of anger<sup>1</sup>. Since the 1980s, metaphor has, in fact, been viewed as a cognitive

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<sup>1</sup> Santangelo’s research on emotions (2003) represents a pioneering effort in Chinese studies and involved in-depth, interdisciplinary, textual analysis of the perception of emotions in Chinese literary culture during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. Bond’s studies (1993) in the field of Psychology are also of particular relevance. These investigated how events giving rise to emotions are perceived in Chinese culture. Bond speculates that there are differences in perception between cultures, particularly in China and America, according to the mapping done by Hofstede *et al.* (2010). That is, perceptions of emotion in America are determined more by individualistic traits whereas Chinese culture is characteristically and contrastingly more hierarchical and collectivist in its interpersonal orientations. Thus, it is not useful to assume there is an established level of universality in reactions to a given emotion. Rather, upon considering the main aspects of Chinese culture (philosophy, literature, traditional medicine, etc.), it emerges that “what differs in Chinese culture is the lower frequency, intensity

as well as linguistic tool for organising abstract concepts around the tangible physiological reactions within human experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Kövecses 1987; Johnson 1987). A conceptual metaphor for anger, such as the idea that 'ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER' (Gevaert 2005; Kövecses 2010), exists in a number of languages. For example, in English there is the expression 'You make my blood boil' and its equivalent in Italian is the phrase '*ribollire di rabbia*' (be boiling with anger). In both cases, the idea is that the body is like a container of emotions and experiences an increase in temperature and pressure as the result of anger (defining a sensory-body experience).

This is a complex kind of metaphor, as Kövecses (1995) reminds us, which actually contains three sub-metaphors: (1) the body is like a container for emotions, (2) anger is like heat, and (3) emotions are like fluids. It is, therefore, really a set of conceptual metaphors that refers to the humoral theory of emotion and medicine, whose roots lie with Hippocrates (c. 460-375 BC). According to him, the body is a container for anger and the liquid inside the body, be it blood or bile, is affected by anger. Thus, the expression 'You make my blood boil' exists in English. Commensurately, in Italian there are the expressions '*farsi il sangue amaro*' (make your blood bitter) and '*rodersi il fegato dalla rabbia*' (let your liver be eaten away by anger). The general idea is that pressure in the body builds as the result of anger, causing its fluids to overheat, and so on. Some studies (King 1989; Yu 1995, 2002) show that metaphorical expressions of anger in Chinese are similar to the conceptual metaphors proposed by Lakoff and Kövecses (1987). However, in Chinese, the substance within the 'container' is construed in a relevantly and culturally distinct way. In Chinese, 'Anger is the hot gas in a container', echoing the concepts of *yīn* 阴 and *yáng* 阳 and of the five elements of traditional Chinese medicine (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water)<sup>2</sup>. Anger is also metaphorically conceptualised and apparent in metonymic connections made within Chinese culture and language (Kövecses 2000), e.g., the notion of having an excess of *qi*

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and duration with which emotions are typically experienced" (Bond 1993: 245).

<sup>2</sup> In traditional Chinese medicine anger is related to the liver and wood element (Yu 1995).

气<sup>3</sup>. Kornacki (2001) analyses anger in terms of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage theoretical model proposed and extended by Wierzbicka and others. This analysis focuses on identifying five Chinese terms (*nù* 怒, *shēngqì* 生气, *nǎohuǒ* 恼火, *fèn* 愤, and *tǎoyàn* 讨厌) and their potential equivalence with the English words ‘angry’ and ‘anger’. It describes cognitive scenarios in which such concepts either differ or are similar in both languages. Alternatively, Xu and Tao (2003) see anger as belonging to a sub-category of psychological emotions (*jīyú xīnlǐ gǎnshòu de qínggǎn* 基于心里感受的情感) identified by 12 terms: *fènnù* 愤怒; *fènghèn* 愤恨; *jīfèn* 激愤; *shēngqì* 生气; *fènghèn* 愤懑; *fènkǎi* 愤慨; *fèn nù* 忿怒; *bēifèn* 悲愤; *wōhuǒ* 窝火; *bàonù* 暴怒; *bùpíng* 不平; *huǒ* 火. More recently, a study by Lee (2019) has developed a more highly articulated classification of primary emotions using previous taxonomies proposed by Plutchik (1980) and Turner (2000). This more recent classification considers the various intensities (high-medium-low) with which a primary emotion can be expressed and how it combines with other primary emotions. In the case of anger, this classification turns out to be linked to 34 nouns, verbs and adjectives.

From a psychological perspective, anger “is a central and prototypical emotion because in it – perhaps more than in other emotional states – it is possible to identify a clear functional origin, characteristic antecedents, constant expressive and physiological displays, and predictable tendencies to action” (D’Urso and Trentin 1998: 309). Anger is seen as a primitive emotion because it is detectable in humans from an early age. As an emotion, it is visceral, short-lived, animal-like and pathological in origin and triggered by numerous physical and psychological factors (*Ibid.*: 309-328). In cognitive psychology, psychophysiology and neuroscience, recent studies have confirmed that emotional states arise when a goal of fundamental importance to individual survival or well-being is either not achieved or compromised (Poggi 2008: 17). Similarly, Ortony *et al.* (1988), focusing on the cognitive aspect of emotions, divides them into three main groups: (1)

<sup>3</sup> In this regard, Yu (1995) asserts that anger is conceptualised as a destructive force capable of harming the angry subject and those in their vicinity in both Chinese and English.

emotions arising from reactions to events experienced in a positive or negative way, (2) emotions arising from approved or unapproved agents and (3) emotions arising from objects that may be pleasant or unpleasant to a person. Scherer *et al.* (1986) have conducted a related cross-cultural study of emotional experience and reactions in seven European countries and Israel. This research shows that in situations eliciting a primary emotion like anger, responses to it can be traced to factors including: (1) the failure (of friends, relatives and strangers) to conform to social norms and rules, (2) inconvenience or inappropriate rewards, and (3) failure to reach one's goals. A study by D'Urso (2001: 38-39) identifies four main common situations that generated anger: (1) perceiving an unpleasant situation of a physical or material nature (e.g., threats to personal integrity and material goods); (2) encountering disturbances or obstacles in one's activities (e.g., hindrances to the achievement of one's aims); (3) experiencing psychological frustration (e.g., unpleasant experiences, the interruption of or deprivation from pleasant experiences or suffering harm to one's image, self-esteem, dignity or that of loved ones); (4) injustices (e.g., either suffered or envisaged against oneself or others).

By defining anger as one of the most socially based of all emotions, Matsumoto *et al.* (1989) recognise that it is the most frequently externalised of all primary emotions. Furthermore, expressive reactions to anger, whether verbal or non-verbal, are also greater than the related physiological ones. Displays of anger as a negative emotion in any social context depends on the degree to which it is controlled by the established social norms and rules existing in every culture (Matsumoto *et al.* 2010). Cultures may thus differ in their display rules (Ekman and Friesen 1971) in terms of expressing anger. As a result, different cultural groups or languages involved in a communicative exchange may express and control anger in varying ways at diverse levels.

## 2.2 The script-based approach

The script concept (Schank and Abelson 1977; Fehr and Russell 1984; Shaver *et al.* 1987) has been developed in the fields of Psychology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in order to define the shared, culturally specific knowledge that lets people think about, express and regulate emotions. According to Galati, the script model has been "particularly

useful in explaining the internal structure of emotion [...] as a causative sequence of events rather than a list of components, capturing the dynamic and processual characteristic that makes it an event rather than a state” (1993: 171). The script model ‘recounts’ a cultural view of the distinctive phases of an emotional experience. That is, it reflects a procedural knowledge whereby we can distinguish three distinct stages comprised of (1) emotional ‘antecedents’ (the circumstances which elicit a certain type of emotion), (2) ‘responses’ (the representations of reactions related to the antecedents) and (3) ‘controls’ (the actions that moderate the emotional reaction).

From a linguistic point of view, the script-based approach (Kövecses 1986, 1990, 2000; Lakoff 1987; Wierzbicka 1994) has made it possible to conceptually evaluate emotions by adopting, on the one hand, a universalistic view of them, and, on the other, an awareness of the experiential nature of emotional concepts. This involves embracing the idea that emotional conceptualisation, rather than physiological reactions, may vary between different languages and cultures. Script-based semantics stems from Raskin (1985) who considered jokes as texts made up of two overlapping and opposing scripts. According to Raskin, a semantic script is a collection of concepts related to a particular task or event which are thus, causally linked. Scripts are then very useful in the semantic analysis of emotional expressions. Presuming there is a specific knowledge about emotions within a culture, it is essential to understand the emotional-knowledge structures these cultures may transmit. Such knowledge structures are currently referred to as emotional scripts because they conceive of emotional episodes as unfolding over time between two or more actants (Shaver *et al.* 1987; Fehr and Baldwin 1996; Fitness 1996, 2000). Furthermore, these scripts can be explained using the learned patterns which form part of the reality in which one lives. Understanding people’s emotional scripts is important since the script model plays a decisive role by shaping and influencing perceptions, expectations, judgments and memories of emotional episodes as social cognitive research has shown (Smith 1995; Fitness 1996). Inspired by Corno and Pozzo (1991), in the context of our didactic activity, we refer to a ‘script’ as a framework created to describe a specific, ordered and predictable sequence of events which are part of a stereotypical emotional scenario. This scenario, in turn,

is perceived as natural by second language learners. It is embedded within their memory and evoked in their thinking whenever a similar linguistic situation presents itself.

### 2.3 Cultural differences in displaying and expressing anger and the cultural dimensions model

Anger has been described as one of the most ‘active’ of primary emotions because it is expressed using a relatively wide and varied range of verbal expressions (threats, insults, swear words, violent expressions, interjective forms, short and imperative sentences and indirect forms of communication), non-verbal expressions (facial expressions, gestures and body orientation) and paralinguistic signals (voice volume, tone, etc.). Since the 1990s, many of Matsumoto’s studies<sup>4</sup> have focused on investigating cultural similarities and differences in facial expressions of anger. The assumption is that if “cultures can produce universality in emotional responses (...), [they] can also differ in their display rules regarding angry expressions” (Matsumoto *et al.* 2010: 130-131). In exploring “how the expression and perception of anger is at once universal, biologically-based, yet also influenced by culture” (*Ibid.*: 134), Matsumoto *et al.* consider the scale of cultural values found in the cultural dimensions model developed by Hofstede *et al.* (2010)<sup>5</sup>.

The aspect of this cultural model we focus on in our research is the

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<sup>4</sup> The studies conducted by Matsumoto alone, or with other scholars, are numerous and we mention only a few here. Please refer to Matsumoto’s website for a complete bibliography of his work (<https://www.davidmatsumoto.com/>, visited 2023/02/20).

<sup>5</sup> Hofstede became interested in national cultural differences, in particular value differences, in 1974, after gaining access to an extensive body of survey data on IBM branch-office employees from over 50 countries. He considered values as at the core part of a culture and understood them as “broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others”, such as ‘evil versus good’, ‘decent versus indecent’ or ‘forbidden versus permitted’ (Hofstede *et al.* 2010: 9). The empirical findings based on the IBM data revealed comparable and measurable aspects of national cultures. Hofstede *et al.* (2010) refers to these aspects as ‘cultural dimensions’, defining them specifically as: Power Distance (from small to large); Collectivism versus Individualism; Femininity versus Masculinity; Uncertainty Avoidance (from weak to strong); Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Orientation; and Indulgence versus Restraint.

dimension of Collectivism versus Individualism, for which Italy and China have significantly different scores (Italy scores 76 and China 20 with respect to this dimension). From the perspective of our experimental didactic activity, the Collectivism versus Individualism dimension may first represent a starting point for understanding learner recognition of some main cultural differences between the two countries. Secondly, it may serve as the basis for the identification, learning and communication of anger in all its expressions.

Focusing on Collectivism versus Individualism involves considering that in individualist societies, where “everyone is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family”, individual interests prevail over group interests; in contrast, in collectivist societies, group interests prevail over personal interest and “people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede *et al.* 2010: 92).

Some of the key differences between collectivist and individualist societies identified by Hofstede *et al.* in relation to general and family norms are of interest to our research. One important difference relates to being in harmony with one’s social environment. In most collectivist societies, maintaining this harmony is a fundamental virtue that extends to other spheres beyond the family. For this reason, open and direct discussions with other people are avoided as well as use of the word ‘no’, since saying no could mean starting a conflict. On the contrary, in individualist societies to speak one’s mind is a virtue and handling conflicts is part of everyday life both within and beyond the family.

The concepts of shame and guilt are strictly related to harmony. Indeed, in a collectivist culture, if a group member breaks a social rule, the remaining group members feel shame because the collective sense of duty has been betrayed. In contrast, in individualist societies, guilt prevails in a similar situation. The difference between the two concepts is that:

Shame is social in nature, whereas guilt is individual; whether shame is felt depends on whether the infringement has become known by others. This becoming



known is more of a source of shame than the infringement itself. Such is not the case for guilt, which is felt whether or not the misdeed is known by others (Hofstede *et al.* 2010: 110)<sup>6</sup>.

Based on this theoretical model, Matsumoto *et al.* (2010) assume that members of collectivist cultures should show more positive emotions towards members of in-groups and more negative emotions towards members of out-groups with regard to emotional displays. Vice versa, members of individualistic cultures should show more negative emotions towards members of in-groups and more positive emotions towards those of out-groups.

### 3. The experimental didactic activity

#### 3.1 The television series, recipients and script framework

We aim to answer several research questions based on the theoretical and methodological issues discussed above. Firstly, given that cultures can differ in their display rules regarding anger, we speculate on which didactic activities may help learners articulate the linguistic expressions (in terms of syntactic and lexical structures) that convey anger. A related issue is how to teach subjects to identify expressions of anger when lexical repertoires only define the emotion itself (Variation and Zuccheri 2022), which alone is insufficient for teaching how to communicate an emotional state. Secondly, we question if Matsumoto's hypotheses are still valid in light of our comparisons of verbal, non-verbal and paralinguistic displays of anger in Chinese and Italian.

The term 'script' is a word borrowed from the world of cinema and television. As previously mentioned, a script describes what happens

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<sup>6</sup> When speaking of shame, we must mention the concept of losing or saving face. These are deeply rooted in many collectivist groups and highly representative of Chinese culture. These concepts are linked, respectively, to either expressing individual honour and prestige (honouring someone/saving face, *gěi miànzi* 给面子) or the feeling of being humiliated (losing face, *diū miànzi* 丢面子).

in a given scene. In the context of our research, then, what is the aim of compiling scripts to identify expressions of anger? Will this help students understand the different ways of expressing anger in Italian versus Chinese culture? To put it another way, will compiling these scripts help address the current gap on the socio-pragmatic-cultural factors regulating the intercultural communication of emotion as evident in Chinese and Italian language textbooks?

Using a film or a television series to determine emotions is something Ekman *et al.* (1972) has already considered given that the interplay between characters creates easy-to-analyse interactions. Moreover, the emotions displayed and expressed in certain scenes are more intense than in real life (*Ibid.*). From our perspective, another fundamental reason to consider a television series for didactic purposes is related to the recent pandemic period. This event has forcibly distanced us from our affections and interests as well as freely travelling to other countries. As a result, intercultural exchanges have clearly decreased. At the same time, television and its fictional stories, despite their artificiality, stand as some kind of concrete and reliable example of intercultural and interpersonal interaction (Washburn 2001; Quaglio 2009: 148-149).

Therefore, the script-based approach, alongside considering the cultural dimension of Collectivism versus Individualism, constitute the theoretical and methodological framework on which the proposed didactic activity in a classroom setting is based.

The subjects involved in the activity were fifty-three Italian and Chinese MA students majoring in Chinese or Italian, respectively, as a second language at four universities: “L’Orientale” University of Naples (Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies), the University of Bologna (Department of Interpreting and Translation), the Beijing University of International Business and Economics - UIBE (Department of Italian Language), and the Zhejiang International Studies University - ZISU (Department of Italian language). We selected two television series for consideration which were both well known in their home country and which recount realistic stories. Programmes based on fictional situations or distant cultural-historical ones far removed from the present, e.g., costume dramas, were excluded from consideration.

The Chinese series chosen for the Italian students was *Yì jiārén zhī míng* - *Go Ahead* (In the Name of the Family), a 46-episode drama series aired on Hunan TV in 2020. Watched by nearly 30,000 viewers, it came in 24<sup>th</sup> on the Top-Ranked Programme List on MyDramalist.com, a website for fans of Asian TV shows, dramas and films. It also had a 9/10 rating among 13,399 users. This Chinese series recounts the story of three children growing up in an atypical family. Their family is atypical because the three children, Ling Xiao, He Ziqiu, and Li Jianjian (the youngest) are not siblings. However, they end up in the same household after a series of unfortunate events. Ling Xiao, the eldest of the children, moves in with his parents, Ling Heping and Chen Ting, who reside in the same building where Li Jianjian and his father, Li Haichao, a widower, live. A resourceful neighbour introduces Li Haichao to the third child in the story, He Ziqiu, and his mother. He Ziqiu's mother is eventually forced to go to prison and thus, leaves her son in the care of Li Haichao. Meanwhile, Chen Ting, unable to get over her daughter's death, decides to abandon her son and husband (Ling Xiao and Ling Heping). As a result, the three children (Ling Xiao, He Ziqiu and Li Jianjian) find themselves living under the same roof with Li Haichao and Ling Heping, who afterwards become their main parental figures.

It was more difficult to choose an Italian series for the Chinese students. This is because Italian programmes purchased by Chinese broadcasters for Chinese television are rare if non-existent<sup>7</sup>. One exception is the first season of the series *L'amica geniale* (My Brilliant Friend). This series is based on the novel by the same name by Elena Ferrante and is one of the very few Italian television programmes to have achieved extraordinary international success. It is also highly appreciated in China, where it won the Magnolia Award for best foreign series at the 26<sup>th</sup> Shanghai Television Awards

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<sup>7</sup> The National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) is the mainland China agency in charge of controlling and administrating exchange activities between Chinese and foreign television companies and controls their content by regulation. As a result, there are restrictions on the number of successful foreign programmes which are accessible in China.

in 2020. The series tells the story of the close and controversial friendship between Elena 'Lenù' and Raffaella 'Lila'. The story is set in a poor neighbourhood on the outskirts of Naples and depicts the history of Italy over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as its characters experience the historical, political, and social dynamics of the country at the time.

In both of the series, the characters establish their interpersonal relationships in social and family environments where numerous verbal and non-verbal conflicts occur. These programmes thus, constitute excellent source material for identifying anger and expressions of it.

The key focus of our analysis was to unravel the wide array of words and expressions used to convey anger. That is, we intended to catalogue these expressions as well as thoroughly understand the shades of meaning a second language learner attributes to them. By 'comprehending a meaning' we refer to the cognitive way mental images are formed. This idea spurred our decision to analyse texts within situations and contexts. Based on these, we infer the representative patterns that most strictly and rigorously correspond to how people construct meaning (Rumelhart 1980). To that end, the analysis carried out by our students relied on a syntagmatic framework based on a script (Schank and Abelson 1977). More specifically, the students defined all the factors involved in the identified scenes of anger. Here we relied on them exploring the terminology used to define the intimate relationships between actors and the antecedents to becoming angry. We asked our students to form four groups, watch the first four episodes of each TV series, and then identify different scenes that they could perceive as anger scenes (see Table 3). The aim was to come up with a description of all of the elements linked to anger and outline the emotional expressions of anger present in the selected scenes. These elements ranged from verbal and non-verbal signals (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, etc.) to paralinguistics (voice, intonation, etc.). The script framework used is described in Table 1 below.

Episode number
Initial timecode of the scene
Final timecode of the scene
Relationship of intimacy between the actors
Type of antecedent: according to D'Urso (2001) or Scherer <i>et al.</i> (1986)
Emotional expression through body orientation (towards the interlocutor; distance from the interlocutor; remaining in place, etc.) [Screenshots are highly suggested]
Emotional expression through non-verbal signals (facial expressions or gestures) [Screenshots are highly suggested]
Emotional expressions through paralinguistic signals (voice volume, elocution speed, pauses, hesitations, etc.)
Emotional expressions through verbal signals (interjections, swear words, insults, violent expressions, short and imperative sentences, forms of indirect communication, etc.)

Table 1. Script framework designed for the experimental didactic activity.

As shown in Table 1, we suggested students take screenshots to document facial expressions, gestures, and, where possible, the body orientation of subjects when expressing anger. When selecting the scenes, we also suggested ensuring that the expressive elements referred only to those aspects of speech that convey information to the receiver about the speaker's (or angry subject's) state during the verbal communication of anger. Finally, as shown in Table 2 below, we provided the students with a short, guiding questionnaire to help them analyse their selected scenes.

<b>In the scenes you selected, anger seems:</b>
(a) not expressed
(b) over-expressed
(c) expressed more verbally than non-verbally
(d) expressed less verbally (screenshots are recommended in the case of non-verbal expression through facial expressions, gestures, and body orientation)
<b>If you answered (c), anger seems to be expressed through:</b>
- terms/words
- metaphorical or metonymic expressions/phrases
- indirect, oblique or unspoken forms
- syntactic structures
- other (specify).

Table 2. Guiding questionnaire for the analysis of the scenes selected.

## 3.2 Preliminary analysis of data collected

### 3.2.1 *Yǐ jiārén zhī míng* - Go Ahead: *scripts and data*

The television series *Yǐ jiārén zhī míng* - *Go Ahead* is characterised by many tense situations that are well suited to analysing expressions of anger. The first important step in the analysis was to identify the scenes of anger. The results obtained reveal the interesting fact that the two Italian groups identified a different number of scenes (Table 3) in each episode.

Episode number	Number of scenes selected (University of Bologna)	Number of scenes selected ("L'Orientale" University of Naples)
One	8	12
Two	6	3
Three	7	4
Four	9	4

Table 3. Number of scenes selected from *Yǐ jiārén zhī míng* - *Go Ahead*.

This difference is partly due to the fact that the students in Naples identified all the scenes in which there is a verbal reproach, such as that stemming from a concerned parental figure in the story. An example of this can be found in the first episode when Li Haichao scolds his daughter because she has not finished eating the food on her plate (Ep. 01, 4:24-4:28). Based on Li and Meng's study (2007), the students stated that the selection of this, and several other similar scenes, makes sense since the Chinese written communicative mode, which is by nature reserved, implicit and indirect (*hánxù* 含蓄), may conceal an expression of anger or even a mild reproach. Not directly and explicitly expressing oneself can be traced back to ancient Chinese philosophy (Fang and Faure 2010). In any case, recognition of this led the students to indicate that a display of anger could also be concealed in the expression *dà rètiān de* 大热天的 (Ep. 1, 03:39) ("it's boiling today"). This is evident by their proposing translations for this phrase such as "Will you hurry up?", "Can't you see we're busy?" or "Will you stop wasting time?". In the case of identifying reprimands, the student observations may be limited, however. This is because a television

series cannot be considered just as written discourse. Rather, it must also be seen as the result of “prefabricated orality” (Baños-Piñero and Chaume 2009). Chen Ting’s declaring her annoyance over the hot day in addressing another character, however, is rightly identified by the students as a manifestation of anger expressed at a low level intensity (Plutchik 1980).



Figure 1. A facial expression usually not associable with anger.

The students’ willingness to ‘unmask’ the anger behind some presumed indirect expressions contrasted with their frequent disregard for the character’s facial expressions in the same scenes. According to the students, Chen Ting’s response to little Li Jianjian (*Tā bù chī xuěgāo, xièxiè* 他不吃雪糕, 谢谢, He does not eat popsicles, thank you), when the little girl tells her that she bought a popsicle for her son, should also be understood as a display of anger despite the fact that her facial expression is not one of anger (Figure 1). The students, however, indicated there was a hidden meaning behind Chen Ting’s words which should be understood as meaning “Go away. I don’t want you to meet him or approach him”.

These observations arose after students, acting on their own initiative, reviewed several related essays addressing intercultural communication and Hall’s anthropological theory of high-context and low-context cultures (1976). However, these comments on hidden meaning are at odds with the communicative reality. As the image shows (Figure 1), the students miss the facial expressions accompanying what the characters say. This necessarily leads to some gaps in detecting expres-

sions of anger through facial expressions. These facial expressions were considered by the students at the University of Bologna, but often discounted by the other student group. This group instead preferred to consider specific contexts, focusing only on subtitles, which led to underestimating the relevance of non-verbal expression. Focusing more on the subtitles than on the other components characterising scenes of anger, however, led the Italian students from Naples to make another observation. They noted that a discourse marker such as *wǒ gàosù nǐ* 我告诉你 'I tell you', which is widely used in numerous contexts, when found at the beginning of a sentence in the series generally signalled the start of an expression of anger (Ep. 2, 9:19).

In some cases, especially when the three children were fighting, their expressions of anger were not identified because cheerful music was playing in the background. It is as if the programme creators wanted to soften the anger between the characters with the music. This anger, however, is confirmed by other verbal and non-verbal expressive elements, especially the character's facial expressions and gestures (Ep. 3, 40:18-40:50). Still, the choice of accompanying music misled some students.

Another interesting aspect emerged in the identification of the scenes. Most students in the Naples group considered the frustration felt by a paternal figure (Ep. 4, 36:09) as another way to display anger, for example, when a parent recognised the child had grown up or was facing a series of problems.

While compiling the scripts, we also asked the students to evaluate the relationship of intimacy that existed between the actors in the selected scenes, which in most cases involved characters who were family or knew each other. As a result, the anger was, therefore, expressed mainly towards members of the in-groups. As previously mentioned, this contradicts Matsumoto *et al.*'s assertion that members of a collectivist culture should show more positive emotions towards members of in-groups and more negative emotions towards those of out-groups<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> In the four episodes examined, the students from Bologna University, for instance, identified 20 scenes in which anger is directed towards in-group members and 10 in which it is directed towards out-group members.



As asserted elsewhere (Varriano and Zuccheri 2022), very few occurrences refer directly to the emotive lexicon of anger (Xu and Tao 2003; Lee 2019). The words *shēngqì* 生气 and *qì* 气 ('get angry' and 'anger', respectively) are only used to describe one's state (not necessarily at the exact moment when anger is displayed) or another person's state (Ep. 2, 6:46). At the sentence level, students in both groups noted that interrogative, imperative, prohibitive<sup>9</sup> and declarative sentences can be vehicles for anger, with examples of these given in Table 4 below<sup>10</sup>.

Sentence type	Source text examples
Interrogative sentences (57%)	(1) 你到家有半个小时吗 <i>Nǐ dào jiā yǒu bàn gè xiǎoshí ma</i> Have you stayed at home over half an hour? (2) 你是不是想太多了 <i>Nǐ shì bú shì xiǎng tài duō le</i> That is just your speculation
Imperative and prohibitive sentences (22%)	(1) 今天哪都别去 我告诉你 <i>Jīntiān nǎ dōu bié qù wǒ gàosù nǐ</i> Tell you what, you cannot go anywhere today (2) 闭嘴 <i>Bì zuǐ</i> Shut up
Declarative sentences (21%)	(1) 真是觉得搬到哪都一样 <i>Zhēnshì juéde bān dào nǎ dōu yíyàng</i> No matter where we move, it is all the same (2) 那是我身上掉下来的肉 <i>Nà shì wǒ shēnshang diào xiàlái de ròu</i> It is my daughter! I gave her birth!

Table 4. Sentence type examples in *Yǐ jiārén zhī míng - Go Ahead*.

<sup>9</sup> Our groups considered imperative and prohibitive sentences even if most of them appeared to be without the final modal particles *le* 了 and *ba* 吧 (Paternicò *et al.* 2021: 495-498).

<sup>10</sup> The official English subtitles accompany the examples given in the source text columns of the following tables in order for the non-Chinese reader to understand the meaning of the original lines.

In addition to nouns and phrases indicating offense, insults and idiomatic expression (Table 6), the use of the final modal particles *ya* 呀 and *a* 啊, and especially *ne* 呢, *ma* 吗 and *ba* 吧, in association with the interrogative substitutes, were also found to be vehicles of anger (Table 5).

Parts of speech	Source text examples
Nouns (6%)	(1) 坏人 <i>Huàirén</i> bad guy (2) 猪八戒 <i>Zhū Bājiè</i> Zhu Bajie <sup>11</sup> (3) 神经病 <i>Shénjīngbìng</i> You psycho (4) 小兔崽子 <i>xiǎo tù zǎizi</i> Little bastard
Adjectives/verbs (1%)	好气哦 <i>hǎo qì ò</i> It is so annoying!
Final modal particles (93%)	(1) 陈婷你过分了啊 <i>Chén Tíng nǐ guòfēn le</i> Chen Ting you have crossed the line (2) 是我疯了 <i>Shì wǒ fēng le</i> Yes! I am crazy! (3) 大姐 你有病吧 <i>Dàjiě nǐ yǒu bìng ba</i> Hey, what is wrong with you?

Table 5. Parts of speech in *Yǐ jiārén zhī míng - Go Ahead*.

Finally, among the syntactic structures conveying anger, the students identified, albeit relatively infrequently, the constructions ‘shì 是... de 的’ and ‘lián 连... dōu 都/bù 不’ and the resultative complement (Table 6).

<sup>11</sup> Zhu Bajie is one of the main characters from the Wu Cheng'en (1510-1580) novel *Xīyóu jì* 西游记 (*A Journey to the West*). He is part human and part pig and extremely fat and ugly.

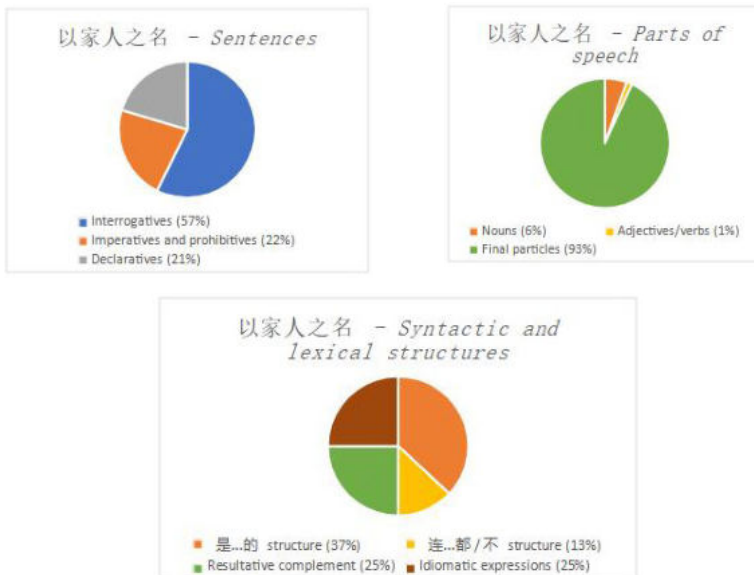
Syntactic and lexical structures	Source text examples
是...的 structure (37%)	<p>(1) 都是他 是他害死的  <i>Dōu shì tā shì tā hài sǐ de</i>            It is him! He killed his sister!</p> <p>(2) 都是你惯的  <i>Dōu shì nǐ guàn de</i>            It is your fault</p> <p>(3) 李爸不是为了钱 才照顾我的  <i>Lǐ bà bù shì wèile qián cái zhàogu wǒ de</i>            Dad Li does not take care of me for money</p>
连...都/不 structure (13%)	<p>(1) 平常 不给他外婆 打电话也就算了            现在你看 连电话都不接了  <i>Píngcháng bù gěi tā wàipó dǎ diànhuà yě jiù suànle xiànzài nǐ kàn lián diànhuà dōu bù jiē le</i>            He does not call his grandma himself, but now he even refuses to answer the phone</p> <p>(2) 这么多年不管不顾的 连电话都不打一个  <i>Zhème duō nián bù guǎn bù gù de lián diànhuà dōu bù dǎ yī ge</i>            She has been gone for years without even calling him</p>
Idiomatic expressions (25%) <sup>12</sup>	<p>(1) 你觉得我莫名其妙是吗  <i>Nǐ juéde wǒ mò míng qí miào shì ma</i>            A mystery to you?</p> <p>(2) 你这皮糙肉厚 没心没肺  <i>Nǐ zhè pí cāo ròu hòu méi xīn méi fèi</i>            You are totally a heartless man!</p> <p>(3) 我真的不知道你 为什么要回来            还要对我的家人指手画脚  <i>Wǒ zhēn de bù zhīdào nǐ wèishéme yào huílái hái yào duì wǒ de jiārén zhǐ shǒu huà jiǎo</i>            I do not know why you came back and judge my family</p>

<sup>12</sup> Given the elusive nature of Chinese *chéngyǔ* 成语 (four-character idiomatic expressions), at this stage of the research, we decided to include them in this table, mainly considering the syntactic or lexical function they may perform within a sentence.

Resultative complement (25%)	<p>(1) 走开 <i>Zǒukāi</i> Get out!</p> <p>(2) 再上我揍死你 <i>Zài shàng wǒ zǒusǐ nǐ</i> I will beat you if you do it again!</p> <p>(3) 饿死你 <i>Èsǐ nǐ</i> Starve to death!</p>
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Table 6. Examples of syntactical and lexical structures in *Yǐ jiārén zhī míng - Go Ahead*.

We provide several graphs below that indicate the overall articulation of occurrences at the sentence level as well as in parts of speech and syntactic and lexical structures. These show the frequency percentages for the specific forms and expressions identified with anger in the source text by the two student groups. We note these graphs and percentages aim to provide some indicative rather than exhaustive insight.



### 3.2.2 *L'amica geniale* (My Brilliant Friend): *scripts and data*

The first season of *L'amica geniale* intentionally shows a series of scenes of anger. As a matter of fact, Elena's narrative voice explains:

As a child, I imagined tiny animals that came out of ponds, the abandoned train cars, the stones, the dust, and made their way into the water, the food, the air, making our mothers as angry as starving dogs. The men were always getting furious, but then they calmed down, whereas the women flew into a rage that had no limit and no end (S. 01, Ep. 1, 25:37-26:34)<sup>13</sup>.

The incidents of anger recounted in the series deal with relationships within and beyond the family environment. They come from daily life as well as battles for supremacy in physical if not realistic spaces.

Like the case of *Yi jiārén zhī míng*, the analysis was carried out simultaneously by the groups at the two Chinese universities. We chose then to carry out this parallel analysis with Chinese students considering Italian texts in order to understand whether they reflected a different sensitivity towards expressions of anger. We then considered the results from the Chinese students alongside those of the Italian ones. Thus, these results do not comprehensively describe how anger is expressed in Italian (or the Neapolitan dialect). The results, however, do again reveal important differences in the number of scenes identified by the groups (Table 7).

Episode	Number of scenes (UIBE)	Number of scenes (ZISU)
One	6	9
Two	7	6
Three	6	4
Four	6	5

Table 7. Number of scenes selected in *My Brilliant Friend*.

The difference in the number of scenes identified can be traced back to the way the two groups identified anger. Some Chinese students considered a reproach as a manifestation of anger. In particular, one

<sup>13</sup> The minute count shown is taken from the HBO episodes subtitled in Chinese.

student group from ZISU interestingly indicated scenes involving the teachers (Ep. 1). In contrast, one student group from UIBE chose those involving parents or fights among siblings (Ep. 3). The teacher-student relationship is perceived as a reason for teachers to get angry since a pupil's negative marks and bad performance are considered a "hindrance to achieving one's goals" (an item shown in the script model). The reproachful tone and its paralinguistic markers (voice intonation, tone, etc.), the insults ("You're a donkey", Ep. 1), the slanders ("Look at the dunce!", Ep. 1), and other idioms ("and you can lead a donkey to water, but you can't make him drink", "Giving a donkey a bath is only a waste of soap and water", Ep. 1) are viewed as displays of anger rather than antecedents of anger. Imperative sentences uttered by teachers and parents have likewise been considered as expressions of anger, such as, "I won't hear of it. You have to go on to high school" (Ep. 3, 41:20). Teachers-parent tensions also represent another area where the groups slightly differed in identifying the same scenes. The following is an example of a scene where the teacher argues with Lila's mother, who says, "You think I'll speak to my husband, and he'll change his mind? [...] Do you think my daughter, who's a girl, will go to middle school like a lady while her brothers will go to work? Maybe things are like that in your house. But not in ours". This teacher-parent confrontation belongs to relationships that extend beyond the family environment where, in this case, a more controlled form of anger is noticed. This type of 'reined-in anger', almost gentle if you will, was perhaps unexpected by students and may explain why these expressions of anger are not always identified.

Paying great attention to gestures is a common trait among all the student groups. Gestures, in fact, were examined in detail in every scene, even when verbal expressions did not bear the same meaning, as in the final scene of Episode 4, where we witness a real war fought to the sound of fireworks. Each gesture was understood in terms of its meaning. As impressive as the explicit violence is in almost all its manifestations, we note that the link between the gestures, territorial disputes and efforts to assert domination was not noted. This is the case despite the narrator making this link explicit by saying, "The last night of the year was like a night of battle, in the neighbourhood and all of Naples. The smoke from the gunpowder made everything hazy. If there's a civil

war, I thought, [...] they would have the same faces as these, the same expressions, the same postures". Conversely, intimidating elements were always identified as an expression of anger in social situations and family relationships. In evaluating the relationships between the actors in the scenes of anger selected by the Chinese students, what is remarkable is that they have difficulty in clearly identifying relationships of intimacy in the Italian series. As previously mentioned, the relationship between a teacher and their pupils is perceived as sometimes intimate and sometimes detached. In some scenes, anger is expressed simultaneously by several characters. Here, it was notably difficult to establish whether an emotion like anger is addressed to in-groups or out-groups. This is because the social and cultural setting depicted in the television series represents a district of Naples that in many cases appears as a sort of extended family.

Regarding the overall results, it is worth pointing out that some expressions were assigned a fixed place in terms of anger. This is the case, for instance, with scatological words like *cazzo* (fuck) and *pezzo di merda* (piece of shit) or the interjection *basta* (enough). Such terms were seen as signalling annoyance and the idea of pushing to have that annoyance or a prolonged suffering end. In the case of the Chinese series, these kinds of terms were also linked to anger. Another element worth considering is that the Chinese students define the use of frequent repetitions of terms or phrases throughout the Italian series as a peculiar linguistic manifestation of anger. Emphatic repeated expressions such as "Go back home! I said get the heck back home!" (Ep. 1), for example, which are expectedly not subtitled in English, thus, become part of the emotional sphere.

Regarding the identification of syntactic structures, a predominance of interrogative forms is confirmed, even though imperative and prohibitive sentences are also frequently noted. Compared to the analysis of the Chinese series, the difference in the Italian one is mainly in the much larger number of insults, offensive remarks and obscenities, as well as emphatic structures. The Chinese students did not detect the presence of such expressions as a culturally specific, foreign element; instead, they deemed them appropriate in the various situations involved.

The use of dialect, however, also aroused interest, and the frequent switching into dialectal expressions in angry situations was noticed.

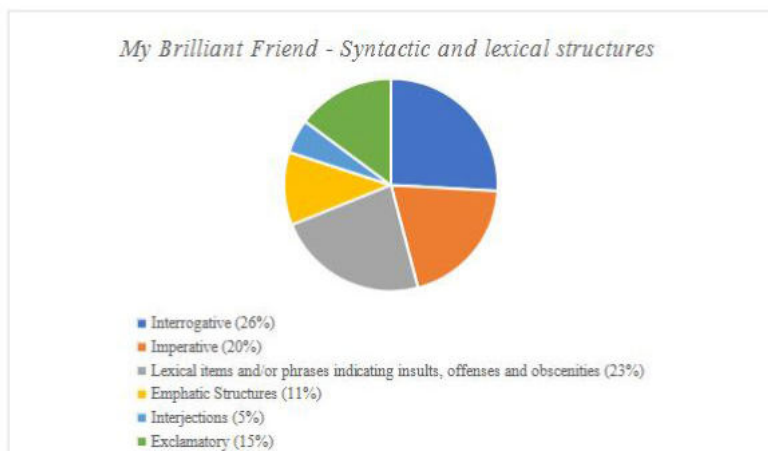
Confirming this is the scene when Elena's mother says, "Do I have to say it in proper Italian?" (Ep. 2), when she is angry about her daughter's wish to continue her studies.

Table 8 and the graph below show some of the possible expressions of anger in Italian by category. The English translation given generally comes from the subtitles provided they were adequate for analysis.

Syntactic and lexical structures	Source text examples
Interrogative sentences (26%)	(1) 'E capito levame 'e mmame 'a cuollo? <i>Get your hands off me!</i> (Ep. 1) (2) Ma chi te crire d'essere, famme capi? <i>Who do you think you are?</i> (Ep. 2) (3) 'O dialetto nun t'o ricuorde chhiù? <i>You've forgotten the dialect?</i> (Ep. 2) (4) Te spezzo 'e coscie si te faie truà nata vota faccia a faccia cu chillo, 'e capito? <i>I'll break your legs if I see you with him!</i> (Ep. 3)
Imperative sentences (20%)	(1) Ti devi stare zitta e devi parlare solo quando sei interrogata. <i>Keep quiet and speak only when you're questioned, is that clear?</i> (Ep. 2) (2) C'amma ribbellà a chilli strunzi. <i>We gotta do something, stand up to those assholes.</i> (Ep. 4)
Lexical items and/or phrases indicating insults, offenses, and obscenities (23%)	(1) 'A signora d' 'o cazzo! <i>Lady my ass!</i> (Ep. 1) (2) Si' 'na cessa! <i>Ugly bitch!</i> (Ep. 1)
Exclamatory sentences (15%)	(1) T'aggi" a accidere! <i>I'll kill you!</i> (Ep. 1) (2) E quante è vero Dio e levo da faccia da terra! <i>I swear to God, I'll wipe them off the face of the earth!</i> (Ep. 4)



Emphatic Structures (11%)	<p>(1) Gnè gnè gnè... <i>[English translation missing in the subtitles]</i> (Ep. 1)</p> <p>(2) Si' 'na cessa, si' 'na granda cessa! <i>Ugly bitch! Big ugly bitch!</i> (Ep. 1)</p> <p>(3) T'abbasta accussi? T'abbasta accussi? <i>Is that enough for you? Is that enough for you?</i> (Ep. 2)</p> <p>(4) Sorema è na zoccola? Sorema è na zoccola? Sorema è na zoccola? <i>My sister's a slut? - My sister's a slut? - My sister's a slut?</i> (Ep. 3)</p>
Interjections (5%)	<p>(1) E basta! <i>Enough!</i> (Ep. 2)</p> <p>(2) Maronna e ' sta Oliviero e comme me fa 'ncazza, ue! <i>God! That Oliviero pisses me off!</i> (Ep. 3)</p>

Table 8. Examples of syntactic and lexical structures in *My Brilliant Friend*.

#### 4. Conclusions

The development of a specific script model to identify expressions of anger in Chinese and Italian when interpreted as a second language has made it possible to identify two distinct learning steps, at least in this first phase of research. One is strictly connected to the syntactic as well as lexical and linguistic expressions observed by the second-language learners. This makes it possible to highlight that in Chinese, anger is expressed more at the sentence level, which is particularly the case with interrogative and imperative forms. Furthermore, final modal particles perform an important function as well in sentences expressing anger. Conversely, the Chinese students' analysis of the Italian texts highlights the importance of certain sentence types (interrogative and imperative), the use of swear words and the emphatic repetition of terms, entire phrases or sentences in expressing anger. These findings lead us to emphasise the importance of a didactic approach that, on the one hand, clarifies the value of expressions of anger at the sentence level. On the other, there is a need to go beyond just an obsessive search for the translation equivalents of Italian and Chinese phrases or terms. This is because anger is still expressed in a language or culture even if certain linguistic forms for it may not exist.

The second learning step, however, involves the cultural sphere. As previously mentioned, several studies consider anger as an area in which it is easier to observe how cultures achieve the goal of maintaining social order. They do this by calibrating the biologically-based emotional systems of their members. This occurs because emotions are a primary source of motivation for behaviour, and behaviour needs to be managed to maintain social order. This concern further stems from the idea that anger is a potentially destructive emotion in any culture. It may disrupt social bonds, cause physical and psychological harm and invite retaliation. This research has aimed to identify elements that would allow foreign language learners to be more aware of expressions of anger. To that end, we assert that Matsumoto *et al.*'s (2010) hypotheses prove to be somewhat outdated in terms of the direct analysis phase. Indeed, the students involved in this experimental activity were unanimously in agreement in establishing the antecedents eliciting anger and revealing that the control phase for a negative emotion such as

anger is rare in both cultures. The question that remains unanswered is if we can claim that an emotion such as anger tends to be expressed and displayed towards out-groups in a culturally recognised collectivist country such as China. Concurrently, in Italy, which is characterised by more individualism, is this emotion addressed more towards in-group members? This is not the place to draw a definitive conclusion in this regard, nor claim that Matsumoto *et al.* are entirely incorrect. However, it raises the issue of having a learning phase in the future that more extensively considers socio-cultural and pragmatics aspects. Thus, we entertain the possibility of collecting additional data at some point to investigate this aspect in more detail. It may involve combining this research with an analysis of the universality versus non-universality of facial expressions of anger. Moreover, another aspect we might further explore relates to non-direct verbal confrontations in which conflict takes on indirect and oblique forms. This is something which the students in the activity discussed here were unable to grasp, despite the fact it may sometimes be a fundamental part of the linguistic manifestation of anger.

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