

## Emotion in Intercultural Communication— A Sociocultural Model

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### Abstract

Emotion has been widely studied in multiple disciplines which include but are not exhaustive to cognitive psychology, neurobiology, anthropology and linguistics. However, emotion in the context of intercultural communication has received far less well-deserved attention. On the other hand, although certain social factors such as context, common ground, formulaic language use and salience are deemed as indispensable helping us to understand the nature of and challenges in intercultural communication, a key concept such as emotion and its role in shaping people's perceptions, interpretations, attitudes and language use in intercultural contexts is in effect neglected or taken from an intuitive departure<sup>1</sup>, despite a burgeoning growth of literature contributing to conceptualising intercultural communication theories. In this paper, I intend to fill this overlapping gap in the emotion studies and in the intercultural communication research, drawing on findings on the nature of emotion in cognitive psychology, anthropology and linguistics to develop a sociocultural model theorising emotion in intercultural contexts. Naturally occurring intercultural interactions, where Mandarin is used as the language of communication, are employed to illustrate how the model can be applied to analysing emotion, language and culture in intercultural encounters. It is hoped that this paper can contribute to interdisciplinary efforts on theorising emotion in the area of intercultural communication.

**Keywords:** emotion, overlearned cognitive habits, culture, value constructs, volition, discernment

### 1 Introduction

The Chomskian view of language readily dismisses bilingualism and multilingualism as irrelevant to the study of language in the belief that there is not a sharp difference between monolingualism and bilingualism. Such a view continues to dominate traditional communication studies and the development of major theoretical frameworks in the field. Nevertheless, with an increasing population speaking two or more languages as the result of globalisation, migration and education, bi/multilingualism has gradually found its way into the studies of language and mind (Pavlenko 2014, Dewaele 2010), second language acquisition (Carhill et al. 2008), and cognitive linguistics (Schrauf & Rubin 2000).

Another key development following such a bi/multilingual wave was the establishment of the field of intercultural pragmatics as a move away from traditional monolingual pragmatics research (Kecskes 2014). Intercultural pragmatics investigates language use in the context of two or more interlocutors with different native languages employing a common language for communication. Concepts such as 'context', 'common ground' and 'salience' are identified as the crucial factors determining how people view and think about intercultural communication because they do not work in intercultural communication the way they do in intracultural communication due to interlocutors lacking common prior experience. Nevertheless, few studies so far have investigated the crucial role of emotion influencing the way we communicate in intercultural encounters. Our emotions are invariably shaped and influenced by the culture we live in. Expression of emotions, management of emotions and perceptions of expression of emotions vary according to cultural norms and value beliefs. Therefore, it is important to explore and understand the role of emotions in intercultural contexts. To conceptualise emotion in intercultural encounters, I shall link studies on emotion from multi-disciplines, namely cognitive psychology, anthropology, and linguistics, with intercultural communication research with a focus on language use.

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<sup>1</sup> Several studies broach upon the topic of emotion in language (Wang & Collins 2016, Snow 2016, Schut et al 2015, Beeman 2014, Langlotz & Locher 2013, Hsiao & Su 2010). However, when discussing emotion, they do not engage with the wider debate on the nature of emotion and, instead, emotion is seen from an intuitive departure.

## 2. Conceptualising Emotions – Universal Versus Culture-Dependent

Defining and understanding the nature of emotions, the most prevailing, intuitive and self-evident subjective experiences which seem to require few explanations, cause significant difficulties for and disagreements among scholars, i.e., what are emotions; do we experience emotions the same way in one culture compared to another? As an intellectual topic, emotion is multidisciplinary. It has been studied in affective neuroscience, cognitive psychology, anthropology, and linguistics. In this paper, I shall review, critique and draw from the varied conceptualisations and approaches existing in those disciplines, and propose a new conceptualisation of emotion from the sociocultural perspective that offers the capacity to examine emotions in intercultural contexts.

### 2.1 Cognitive Psychology Perspectives

Cognitive psychologists have been occupied with the relationship between emotion and cognition. Zajonc (1980) proposes that emotion is completely independent of cognition. To counter the argument, Lazarus (1982) highlights that cognitive evaluations precede and constitute a prerequisite for any emotional reactions. Following a series of heated debates, Bornstein (1992, p.252) concludes that “a certain amount of cognitive processing is required to respond to any [emotional] stimulus”. To resolve this difficulty, psychologists conducted several experiments (Clore & Parrott 1991, Schwarz & Bless 1991, Oatley 1992, Bless et al. 1996) to test the ‘affect-as-information’ hypothesis and none was able to explain how emotions can influence cognitions without being cognition to a certain degree. Therefore, an increasing number of psychologists have started to abandon the distinction and to subscribe themselves to the belief that “emotions and cognitions are inextricably intertwined (O’Rourke and Ortony 1994, p.283). A new word “cogmotion” was even invented to represent “the interactive and inseparable nature of emotions and cognitions” (Barnett and Ratner 1997, p.303). Establishing the relation between emotions and cognitions is a fundamental stepping-stone to conceptualising emotions. Examining emotion’s effect on automatic, and conscious cognitive processes, Isen and Diamond (1989) conclude that emotions are not always automatic, but rather, they resemble overlearned cognitive habits that may be learned, altered, or unlearned over a period of time by conscious decisions. To understand their viewpoint, it is worth quoting the remarks in full.

To the extent that affect can have an influence automatically – without attention or intention and seemingly irresistibly – it can be understood as a deeply ingrained, overlearned habit, or as a process of chunking and organizing the situation. Thus, . . . seemingly irresistible feelings might be addressed in much the same way that other overlearned processes are understood, or in the way that other broad constructs or conceptualisations are refined.

We are reminded of the way in which little boys have often been taught to keep from crying by substituting anger for sadness: “When something bad happens don’t get sad, get mad.” Thus, people may be able to regulate their feelings, through their focus and through changing what they learn in given situations. Similarly, they may be able to change the impact of certain kinds of feelings, again by directing thoughts along certain lines. In this way, problem emotions, even though they feel automatic and uncontrollable, may be alterable. This does not mean that unwanted affective reactions will be easy to change (old habits die hard), but it does suggest that change may be possible and that the very sense of inevitability may be misleading. (Isen & Diamond, 1989, p.144)

Much research since then (e.g., Strayer & Kramer 1994; Greenwald et al. 1995; Cohen & Schooler 1997) has illustrated the complex relation and interactivity between automatic and conscious processes, confirming Isen and Diamond’s theory. However, the learning and/or unlearning processes of emotions must involve deep goal activation (Clore 1994) and mental control (Wegner 1994). Psychologists believe that emotions have both valence and intensity that are oriented towards particular goals. Emotional valence refers to the pleasantness or unpleasantness of emotional reactions to things, events or situations and is considered the origin of all goals (Frijda 1994). Reddy (2001, p.22) argues that “every emotion is either pleasant or unpleasant, and that every emotion has a certain intensity variously regarded as either shaping one’s goals or reflecting one’s goals”. In terms of mental control, Wegner (1994, p.42) postulates that “any processes of control that are represented in consciousness during the exertion of control must be compatible with the state of mind that is the goal of the control mechanism”.

Cognitive psychology research contributes to better our understanding of emotion by informing and affirming its relationship with cognition and its dynamic evolution through goal-oriented shifts and mental control. These are useful informing the conceptualisation of emotion in this study which will be introduced later. Nonetheless, there are serious limits to the approach to emotion in this discipline and therefore to the universalism view of emotion drawn. Firstly, cognitive research on emotions focuses on particular emotion lexicons without contexts rather than on discourse-centred approaches examining large naturally occurring stretches of language use. The pitfall of such an approach is that experimental results drawn from it lack reliability and tend to yield varied findings when repeated (e.g. Mogg et al.’s study on nonclinical, anxious and depressed subjects using five types of words). Secondly, experiments are conducted solely with English-language speaking subjects, which does not take into account multilingual variables, but research results are

accepted as universally valid. This significantly undermines its generalised claims and its applicability to other linguistic contexts/languages. As Ye critiques (2001), researchers may not be aware that their own language, along with its built-in norms and concepts, constitutes a frame limiting their views beyond it. Thirdly, the research by no means considers multicultural influence over various cognitive habits. For instance, Isen and Diamond's example of teaching little boys to refrain from crying by replacing sadness with anger constitutes a typical Western approach because the sentiment of anger is inherently associated with negative evaluations in the Far East cultures and, therefore, such an approach to sadness is seldom adopted in the Asian cultures. According to Ots (1990, p.40), "Chinese culture emphasises inhibition of strong emotional expressions. Little children are scolded by their mothers for aggressive behaviour". Therefore, Chinese boys are more likely to be encouraged to show strength over sad situations rather than anger, as strength is the default perception of a positive male quality in China and other Asian cultures. In other words, the overlearned cognitive habits, which cognitive psychologists believe make up our emotions, are shaped to a significant degree by the diversified cultures we live in. In my model elaborated in part 3 of this paper, I shall draw on the core definition of emotion conceptualised in cognitive psychology but will also address these shortcomings.

### *2.2 Neurobiological Approaches*

Neurobiological scientists make up the other major universalism camp. In this field, emotions are considered biologically based, veridically referential to an internal state, rising from within our physiological mechanisms. For example, neurologists (LeDoux 1996, Rosenthal 2002, Liden 2007, Dalgleish, Dunn & Mobbs 2009) focus on studying the neurobiological mechanisms underlying physiological processes of emotion. In these cases, similar to cognitive experiments, investigations are undertaken in predominantly English-speaking environments and the research results are accepted as universally applicable. Taking this universalism view even further, Panksepp (1998) suggests that at a genetic and subcortical-brain organizational level, all mammals are strikingly similar and useful general principles for the whole class of animals can be revealed by devoting a great deal of research effort to a single convenient species, such as rats. He identifies seven basic emotions (seeking, lust, play, care, panic, rage, and fear) purported to be universal for all mammals, and experiments with methods of understanding the physiological mechanisms of rats' emotions with a view to developing medications for human mental illnesses. Such an exclusive focus on the neurobiological and physiological aspects of emotions studied solely with English-speaking subjects and the controversial approach to human emotions via understanding animal emotions provide little insight into understanding emotions in social contexts and the impact on language use. Hence, studies in this field will not be further examined in this paper.

### *2.3 Anthropology of Emotions*

Anthropologists, using the special kind of evidence they collect, have been adamant and loud in denouncing the biologically focused conceptualisations of emotions. Michelle Rosaldo, one of the pioneers developing anthropological conceptions of emotions, studied Ilongot hunters and farmers of a mountainous region in Philippine over several years. Her work demonstrates that "what individuals can think and feel is overwhelmingly a product of socially organised modes of action and of talk" (Rosaldo 1984, p.147), and people's most intimate emotional experiences are shaped by the emotional expressions in their language, and the practice and the behaviour associated with the expressions. For example, the concept of 'liget' was found to be the most important in Ilongot language. Its meaning encompasses English notions of anger, energy, envy and heat. Having liget provided the motivation to hunt and to protect, and therefore was highly valued and admired. Central to liget was the male activity of headhunting. Upon the return of a successful raiding party, a community would celebrate it with dancing and singing to express the joy brought by liget's fulfilment. Rosaldo's constructionist approach, i.e., emotions are locally, socially and culturally constructed, illustrates that when psychologists and neurobiologists in the West thought they comprehended universal characteristics of the human psyche, they were merely conceptualising the local particularities/characteristics of Western emotional culture. The self, emotions, and expressions are constituted rather differently in other cultures.

Through studying a Bedouin group of the Egyptian desert by fully integrating herself into her Bedouin hosts, Abu-Lughod (1990) was able to witness how women used poetic performances to express sentiments of resistance to the elders' wishes and to achieve the ideal of honourable independence. She concludes that there is not a split between culture and the self, and people's feelings are already in conformity with the community's values. Here as with the Ilongots, an individual's most private and deepest emotional experiences are shaped by social values and norms, and are therefore cultural. Another constructionist anthropologist Lutz (1988) openly criticises that the biological-based notion of emotions constitutes part of a larger, insidious and gender-biased Western masculine approach that privileges male rationality over female emotionalism. She claims that emotions are a product of social interactions, and that emotions are generally not distinguished from thinking in other parts of the world.

Despite uncovering a wide array of varying emotional practices, expressions and conceptions of emotions around the world, the anthropology of emotions has been baffled by one major controversy, which is that anthropologists disagree

profoundly over precisely how and to what extent emotions are shaped, constructed and influenced by culture. This is particularly so because the concept of 'culture' itself has in recent years come under serious challenge in anthropology (Lutz 1988, Gegeo and Gegeo 1990, Besnier 1995, Collier 1997). Anthropologists' prior idea of culture was related to "the production of knowledge" (Marcus 1992, p.8) that no longer seemed tenable (Reddy 2001). This leads to many anthropologists being frustrated with the lack of a refined analytical tool of culture to make their arguments clear, and it forces them to turn to Foucault's work on discourse to bypass this problem. Other anthropologists go further to question constructionist approaches by postulating that emotions have a force independent of culture. For example, Renato Rosaldo (1989) claims emotions like grief and anger have inherent linkages regardless of cultural contexts. Wikan (1992) proposes nonverbal resonance enabling empathetic communication across the cultures. Lyon (1995, p.96) argues that emotions derive from the way in which bodies are linked in a social structure irrespective of culture, and that "any action by one person or group of persons that is interfered with by another group or person can give rise to anger". However, she does not explain what interference exactly constitutes without cultural references. On this point, Kleinman and Kleinman's (1995-1997) work finds that repressive regimes relying on violence and torture to maintain their power (one form of severe interference) leads to emotional consequences that are manifested in physiological disorders such as dizziness, headaches and depression, which are culturally specific and cause misdiagnosis in the American clinics. Leavitt (1996) claims that the concept of feeling will enable anthropology to find a way out of the constructionist dilemma. Nonetheless, Leavitt's definition of feeling is fuzzy and unclear as he claims that feeling is about the body in the same sense that meaning is about the mind. This clearly cannot offer researchers a refined analytical tool to calm the debate between constructionist culturalism and pan-culture universalism. In summary, although concepts of 'force', 'resonance', 'interference' and 'feeling' are proposed and purported to offer an extracultural dimension to help us conceptualise emotions across cultural contexts, they lack the proper elaboration and necessary sophistication to either offer analytical frameworks for ethnography research or ward off the danger of ethnocentrism. Therefore, anthropology of emotions cannot answer the very question at the heart of the debate: what is the nature of emotion.

Anthropology of emotions, in spite of being riddled with such a fundamental and debilitating issue, is illuminating in that the ethnographic evidence from studies of the emotional expressions, practices and behaviour of diversified communities around the world presents a powerful challenge to the traditional cognitive and neurobiological introspective perspective that emotions are determined by and manifested through physiological processes only, i.e. that they are a strictly biological mechanism. It opens our eyes to those expressions and practices that are so different from the conceptions and categorisations of emotions in a way taken for granted in the West, and sends a strong message to researchers from all disciplines that community traditions, beliefs, values, and sociocultural constructs cannot be ignored if we hope to develop an inclusive non-ethnocentric conceptualisation of emotions. This is the key message that this study will draw from anthropology of emotions, and I shall depart from it to formulate an effective analytical tool that can theorise emotions in intercultural communication. Another important contribution from anthropology is that anthropologists do not confine their focus on emotional expressions to single words or phrases. Instead, the ethnographic evidence and materials range from poems to songs and to non-verbal communication such as facial expression and body language. Such a varying array of genre of emotional expressions offers rich and enlightening information on how emotions are shaped and expressed across the communities and cultures. This is the approach that will feature in this study on emotions in intercultural communication.

#### *2.4 Perspectives from Linguistics*

Research focusing on examining emotion and language in sociocultural contexts comes from linguistics. In contrast to the anthropology of emotions, which suffers from painful disagreement on culture influence among anthropologists, linguists believe that emotions must be examined in multilingual and multicultural contexts. For example, Dewaele (2010) argues that emotions constitute an assortment of socially and culturally shared scripts, through which members of different cultures differentially interpret similar physiological, subjective and behavioural processes. Following this stance highlighting the inseparable relationship between emotion, language and culture, numerous linguists set out to understand how similar emotion terms in two different cultures, one of which usually involves the terms in English language, are in fact underpinned by varied sociocultural scripts. Comparing two closest Polish counterparts of the English emotion 'anger' – *złość* and *gniew*, Wierzbicka (1999) concludes that a seemingly basic concept such as anger is inherently associated with a certain cultural model and therefore cannot be taken for granted as culture-free or as a universal standard for describing human emotions. Focusing on ancient Chinese literature originating over 1000 years ago, Ye (2001) investigates three Chinese words 悲 (bei), 哀 (ai), and 愁 (chou) which she claims are often translated indiscriminately into English as either sadness, sorrow, or grief. She argues that these three sadness-like emotions do not have exact semantic equivalents in English, and she therefore questions whether sadness constitutes a universal emotion at all. Employing bilingual informants to enquire how bilinguals make sense of English 'guilt' and

Greek 'ntropi', and their translations in Greek as enohi and in English as shame, Panayiotou (2006) claims that the translation equivalents of these terms are not cultural equivalents, and therefore some terms are unique to certain languages and cultures. Moore et al. (1999) find that English speakers evaluate 'envy' as a negative emotion, while its Chinese translation equivalent, 羡慕 (xian mu: a feeling of admiration for someone who has something you want but do not have) is associated with a much more positive connotation. There are many similar studies and findings on emotion lexicons or phrasal expressions (e.g., Gerber 1985, Katriel 1985, Pavlenko 2002a, Semin et al. 2002, Panayiotou 2004a, Sachs and Coley 2006) illustrating varied implicit sociocultural scripts across different languages. However, there are three fundamental issues in the methodology, theoretical framework and data selection of these studies.

First of all, these studies base their claims and conclusions on the fact that direct translational equivalents at the lexical/word level of certain emotional terms in one language are not readily available in another language and culture. Such a method does not validate the claim that those emotional terms or expressions are unique to a particular culture and are not shared by other cultures. Rather, it only demonstrates that the translation process is not understood correctly. Thus, relying on direct translational equivalents to reach any sort of conclusions is methodologically flawed. In the discipline of translation studies, direct equivalents are seen as rare and futile attempts to understand effective transference of meanings, interpersonal features and sociocultural references, which constitute the spirit and the goal of translation. That is why various translation strategies are devised to achieve successful communication of explicit or implicit interpersonal and sociocultural meanings in a different language and culture. When direct equivalents do not exist at the word level, appropriate paraphrasing, addition and explanation strategies enable adequate and accurate transference of meanings connoted in the words, including emotional words. For example, studies show that some languages, such as Ifaluk of Micronesia (Luts 1988) and Tahitian (Levy 1973) do not have a superordinate term for 'emotion'. However, this absence does not suggest that speakers of these two languages do not or cannot experience what we see as 'emotion'. Instead, the Ifaluk, for example, expresses 'niferash' (our insides), and talk about 'nunuwan' (thought/will), both of which are located within a complicated network of physiological experiences and social relations (Luts 1988). In other words, it requires more elaborate efforts to discuss innate experience of what we consider to be emotion when using Ifaluk language as a medium of communication. When Ye (2001:396) attempts to argue for a cause-and-effect relationship between her findings that the three Chinese "sadness-like" emotion words "do not have exact semantic equivalents in English", and the validity of sadness as a universal emotion, this methodological problem becomes particularly evident and troubling.

Secondly, many linguistic studies on emotions use the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) (Wierzbicka 1996, 1999) framework as their theoretical model for data analysis, and its validity and effectiveness deserve our attention here. NSM purports to seek to break the dependence on any one natural language, particularly English – a linguistic "Trojan horse" (Tollefson 1995), as the source of common sense insights, and to rely on the 'semantic primes' or 'primitives' that Wierzbicka (1996, 1999) identifies as cross-cultural universals. These semantic primes include a small number of basic semantic components such as substantives 'you', determiners 'this', mental predicates 'think', 'want', 'know', and 'feel', actions 'do', evaluators 'good' versus 'bad', and so on (see Wierzbicka 1996 for details). She claims that these semantic primes are universal and can be assembled into 'metalinguistic' statements in order to construct the mental maps of local emotion terms. For example, in line with NSM, the emotion of 'terrified' can be broken down into the following semantic components regardless of culture:

Terrified (X was terrified)

- (a) X felt something because X thought something
- (b) sometimes a person thinks:
- (c) "something very bad is happening
- (d) something very bad can happen to me now because of this
- (e) I don't want this to happen
- (f) I want to do something because of this if I can
- (g) I can't do anything now"
- (h) when this person thinks this this person feels something very bad
- (i) X felt something like this
- (j) because X thought something like this

(Wierzbicka 1999, p.77)

Wierzbicka claims that by uncovering such cross-linguistic universal semantic blocks which underpin cognitive scripts or mental maps of emotion terms locally, the particularistic and universalist dichotomies can be reconciled. However, Wilce (2010) challenges that Wierzbicka's notion of 'naturalness' differs fundamentally to naturally occurring human discourse. Claiming that her metalanguage is able to represent all of the thousands of human languages, Wierzbicka uses NSM as though it constitutes a metalanguage of a completely different kind from human languages. This is rather paradoxical. Moreover, despite claiming to be "language independent" (Wierzbicka 1996, p.22), particularly with a view to breaking from the confinement of English language and its built-in rules and norms, Wierzbicka and the researchers who follow NSM, nonetheless, detail the semantic primes for the relevant emotion words under discussion in English. A legitimate question arises: how can Englishness be transcended when it is relied upon as the fundamental building elements to explain and represent putative language-independent emotion terms? For example, when the English word 'feel' is used as a mental predicate in NSM, it automatically assumes that the word 'feel' indexes a universal concept. However, Wilce (2010) argues that Bengalis use a totally different syntactic and grammatical framing of experience when speaking of feelings, and that neglecting such crosslinguistic differences can threaten NSM's putative capacity for universal representations.

Thirdly, linguistic research on emotions, including NSM, focuses exclusively on decontextualised lexicons, and ignores larger stretches of language use in the context of naturally occurring interactions. Rosenberg (1990) stresses the value of examining emerging interactional patterns of discourse-in-context where emotions are inherently embedded. The loci of emotion in language are suggested to be in – besides lexicons – metaphorical expressions (Kövecses 2000), phonology (Fichtel et al. 2005), discourse-level genre such as poems (Silverstein 2004), context of situation (Hoffman 2002), and embodied affect (Matoesian 2005). Therefore, research on emotions from the linguistic perspective needs to go beyond the lexicocentric approach, and to pay particular attention to emotions embedded in a larger stretch of natural language use unfolding over a course of interactions.

### 3. Emotions in Intercultural Encounters– A Sociocultural Framework

Drawing on the above reviews, the notion of emotion in this paper departs from a 'binary' stance, i.e., emotion is *both* universal as it involves physiological and cognitive processes, *and* culturally relative in its construction, expression and practice, and perception/interpretation. It is important to note that the physiological and cognitive processes associated with a particular emotion are also culture-specific. In particular, emotion in this study is conceptualised as constituting overlearned cognitive habits that are constructed, shaped and influenced by shared values and norms within a cultural community. The process of emotion is accompanied by physiological changes, visible or otherwise. It is manifested and communicated via verbal and/or nonverbal language, specifically in phonology, prosody and pitch, semantic components, syntactic structures, discursal genre, facial expression and body language. Interpretations of emotional expression and practice are informed and influenced by cultural values and norms. In intercultural communication, the greater the distance between interlocutors' cultures, the more diversified or varied will be the expressions and practice of emotions between them, the higher the probability of miscommunication, and the greater the efforts required to build common ground for successful interactions.

The notion of culture deserves a clear definition in this study in view of its key role in understanding the concept of emotion. Sociolinguist Spencer-Oatey (2008b, p.3) defines culture "as a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour". To theorise emotion in intercultural contexts, I propose the following model to explain what and how sociocultural factors shape and influence emotions and language.

In the model, emotions – the overlearned cognitive habits – are influenced by three types of scripts shared within a group of people: social, cultural and linguistic. The social scripts refer to the common social factors that shape and influence emotions. In particular, the social scripts encompass 'goal' and 'face'. The concept of 'goal' in this study is drawn from both sociolinguistics (Spencer-Oatey 2008) and cognitive psychology. We often have goals, conscious or subconscious, prior to entering interactions, and these goals determine our emotional valence, i.e., the pleasantness or unpleasantness of emotional reactions, and emotional intensity which in turn shapes or reflects our goals in interactions. In particular, we may hold goals to arouse positive emotions to enhance rapport or good relations with others (e.g., joy and excitedness), to maintain existing emotional connections for continuing social relations (e.g., respectfulness and consideration), or to provoke negative emotions to alter or end relations with others (e.g., anger and fear).

The notion of 'face' is drawn from sociolinguistic politeness studies (Spencer-Oatey 2008, Yuan 2012, Brown & Levinson 1987), and is conceptualised as the public self-image an individual presents or claims for him/herself, i.e., face wants, and the fundamental personal/social entitlements that every competent adult member effectively claims for

him/herself in the interaction with others. Face is emotionally invested and induces certain emotional reactions in line with social members' behaviour and interpretations of each other's behaviour.

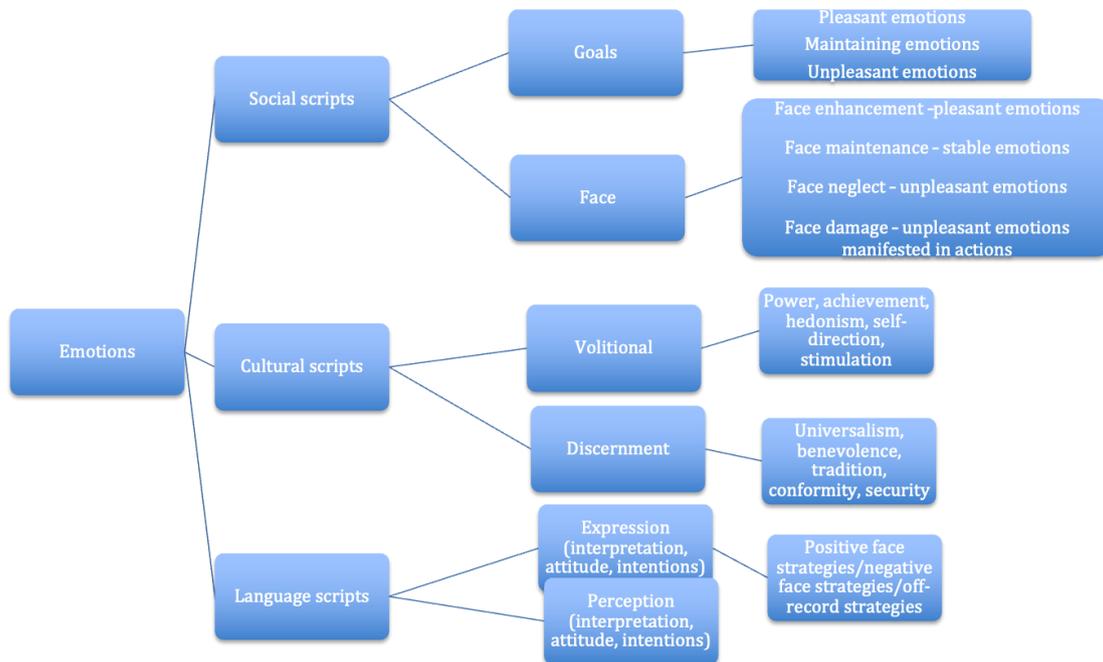


Figure 1. A sociocultural model

Face consists of two related aspects: positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to the fundamental desire for people (1) to appreciate and approve of our wants; (2) to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities; (3) to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles; and (4) to respect our entitlement to an association with others that is consistent with the type of relationship that we have with them (Spencer-Oatey 2008). Negative face encompasses the fundamental desire (1) for freedom of action and freedom from imposition; and (2) for our entitlement to not being overwhelmed by others and disassociating ourselves from others with appropriate distance that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them (Spencer-Oatey 2008). Face is dependent on others to be maintained due to people's mutual vulnerability (Brown & Levinson 1987). For example, losing face in public can lead to a range of salient emotions along the spectrum of embarrassment, guilt, anger, stress, anxiety, panic, to depression or distraught, dependent on to what extent one believes that one may have lost face. Face is culturally relative. Some cultures, such as the Anglo-American culture, emphasise the individual and individuality where the person is defined by independent and unique properties, separate from his or her social context (Spindler and Spindler 1993; Naylor 1998). In these cultures, values skewed towards negative face are upheld. In contrast, in other cultures, the ideal of in-group interdependence and cooperative relations with others are valued as more important than preserving individuality or personal space (Matsumoto 1988). In these cultures, positive face prevails, and behaviour of focusing on personal interests while neglecting the group's collective will can cause unpleasant emotions. In interactions, we may hold any of the following four types of face orientations that contribute to particular emotional states or reactions: 1 face-enhancement orientation: a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors; 2 face-maintenance orientation: a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between the interlocutors; 3 face-neglect orientation: a lack of concern or interest in the quality of the relations between the interlocutors; 4 face-challenge orientation: a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations between the interlocutors (Spencer-Oatey 2008).

The classification of culture in the model follows the dichotomy of volition versus discernment (Ide 1989). The volitional culture is governed by individual intentions and individuals decide what constitutes appropriate behaviour. In a discernment culture, social members are obliged to follow social values to discern appropriate on-going social interactional features and to behave in line with the social norms and expectations. Drawing from cultural psychologist Schwartz et al.'s (2001, p.270) studies on value constructs and their structured relationship, the following ten values are considered to underpin volition and discernment respectively, as listed in the table below:

Table 1. Schwartz et al.'s (2001, p.270) ten value constructs and their structured relationship

Value construct	Explanation	Illustrative component values
Power	social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources	social power, authority, wealth
Achievement	personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards	Success, competence, accomplishment
Hedonism	pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself	Pleasure, self-indulgence
Stimulation	excitement, novelty and challenge in life	variety ,daring adventurousness
Self-direction	independent thought and creating, exploring	freedom, independence, creativity
Universalism	understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature	equality, harmony, justice
Benevolence	preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact	helpfulness, loyalty, responsibility
Tradition	respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self	humility, respect for tradition
Conformity	restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms	obedience, self-discipline, proper behaviour, respect for elders
Security	safety, harmony and stability of society, relationship and of self	health and security for the family and the nation

I postulate that value constructs of power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation and self-direction are subsumed under volition; while those of universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security reflect discernment features. Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that people from volitional cultures do not have values underpinning discernment, or vice versa. Both discernment and volition concerns operate in all cultures, but when making decisions, people from different cultures will give different weight to value constructs subsumed under them. For example, marriage and having children constitute the case of personal choice showing the value of self-direction in a volitional culture. In contrast, in a discernment culture such as China, it falls under the values of tradition and conformity, in particular, the 'obedience' and 'respect for elders' aspects of conformity. Under such circumstances, personal preference must give way to or conform with the cultural tradition summarised by one of the most prominent Chinese philosophers Mencius in his masterpiece entitled 'Mencius Selection' as 不孝有三, 无后为大。舜不告而娶, 为无后也。(Among all the unfilial conducts, not behaving as an obedient son constitutes the worst. Shun married to a woman without his parents' approval. He is not a responsible son. Author's translation). The first sentence of his doctrine has survived as a household idiom and has been used widely for over 2000 years as a powerful social convention qualifying a person as a good son/daughter or otherwise. In intercultural communication, different orientations towards volition and discernment, and people's varied attachment and priority to value constructs can lead to their conflicting positions when confronted by the same issue, which arouses salient emotional reactions and use of language. This will be illustrated in the data presented in this study.

Moreover, people's different allegiance to value constructs shapes their varied emotion connotations across cultures. For example, the emphasis on a person upholding 'tradition' and 'conformity' value constructs in Chinese culture, as explained above, gives rise to a prerequisite for the person's claim of 'love' towards their elders (parents or grandparents). In other words, the emotion of 'love' for the elders connotes and demands, in China, the person's conformity and obedience to the elders' wishes regarding their personal life choices. Such a prerequisite is relevant in other discernment cultures including Japan and South Korea. But it is not expected as a compulsory characteristic of 'love' for elders in volitional cultures, for example, in Britain or in the United States. This explains how culture shapes emotions via its diversified value constructs and people's resonance with them.

With regards to understanding how people use language to express and interpret emotions, I draw on revised face management strategies (Yuan 2012) initially developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) as they are sufficiently sophisticated to analyse salient linguistic markers and features that communicate an interlocutor's attitude, emotions, and intentions in interaction. Before proceeding to the discussion of face strategies, it is important for me to point out that examples for these strategies will be highlighted in the following section on data analysis, as I have drawn attention earlier in this paper to the considerable drawbacks of using examples with decontextualized lexicons and/or sentences not produced in naturally occurring interactions. In contrast, the data in this study constitute authentic intercultural interactions that follow the natural flow of communication dynamics as it unfolds over a course of communicative turns. Therefore, they provide pertinent evidence for examining language use and emotions in intercultural communication.

In general, the strategies can be categorised into three types dependent on the face needs an interlocutor intends to protect or attack. The strategies that are devised to protect or attack a hearer's (H) positive face needs are classified as positive face strategies. Those protecting positive face include attending to, exaggerating or intensifying interest, approval, agreement, common ground or sympathy with H; using in-group identity markers; joking; making offers or promises; being optimistic; giving reasons; or giving gifts. Strategies attacking H's positive face may include insulting; defaming; denying H their wishes; criticizing; or being sarcastic. Strategies for protecting H's negative face entail being indirect; using questions or hedges; minimising impositions; giving deference; apologising, impersonalising interlocutors; or going on record as incurring a debt. Strategies to attack H's negative face may entail imposing; suppressing; or violating H's volitional values. Off record strategies enable an interlocutor to initiate an act to which more than one communicative intention may be attributed. They include giving hints or association clues; presupposing, under- or overstating; using contradictions; using metaphors; using rhetorical questions; being ambiguous or vague; or over-generalising. People may opt for off-record strategies when they find it difficult or are afraid of expressing certain emotions. The above enlists various verbal strategies that a speaker may employ to describe or express their emotions. In intercultural contexts, how those strategies are received, interpreted and perceived by the hearer is dependent on their engrained value constructs and preferred (or overlearned) face strategies.

#### 4. Data Analysis

Data composed of naturally occurring intercultural interactions are presented in this section to illustrate how this framework can be applied to analysing emotions and language use in intercultural contexts. The data constitute extracts from two episodes of a live streaming TV programme on a major Chinese channel – Tianjin TV. The purpose of the programme, entitled *Fight for Our Love*, is to help troubled couples in intercultural romantic relationships to understand the problems besetting their relationships and to reach a decision on their own as to what actions to take. In each episode, there are six interlocutors involved: one Chinese host (CH), one couple from different cultural backgrounds who speak Mandarin as their native or non-native language, and three Chinese panel members (P) observing the couples' interactions and giving their opinions. Mandarin is used as the working language throughout the programme. The turns of communication naturally follow the dynamics and the flow of interactions among the interlocutors. The two couples are Yucheng (male, 21) from Russia and Xiujing (female, 21) from South Korea; Jerry (male 28) from France and Wang Shuang (female, 26) from Mainland China. Both couples have been in a relationship for at least 12 months. Yucheng, Xiujing and Jerry have lived in China, speaking Mandarin for more than 18 months. They demonstrate proficient ability to express and discuss their emotions and views in Mandarin in the programme, and have shown no difficulty understanding or communicating with the host or the panel members. The interactions in Mandarin are transcribed in the appendix, accompanied with my translations into English. In the analysis, utterances are represented by the numeral index in front of them for clarity and to avoid repetition. 'Love' entails the shared emotion under discussion, and it is noteworthy that 'anger', 'unhappiness', 'frustration' and 'sadness' emerge over the course of interactions as the salient emotional reactions during the exploration of what constitutes love for the parties involved.

Shown in the data, parents' power and the women's great concerns over parents' reactions to their being in love relationships with men from outside of their home cultures play a considerable role influencing their perceptions of the relationships, their feelings towards their partners, their behaviour and decision-making, and the ensuing impact on their partners' interpretations and emotions. With Yucheng (Y) and Xiujing (X), Y is seen upset that X has not shown willingness to inform her parents of their relationship despite their having been together for a year. On the other hand, Y has introduced X to his parents during their visit to China. The lack of reciprocity from X in this respect, and probably even worse, the lack of acknowledgement of Y's existence in X's life because X has been careful not to tell her parents of the relationship, let alone creating opportunities for Y to meet her parents, arouses strong dissatisfaction in Y (lines 1-3). In many cultures, introducing one's date to their parents symbolises recognition of the relationship, a serious attitude and the intention of commitment towards the relationship. Y summarises his deep frustration and unhappiness in the introduction as 我等到花儿都谢了 (Now even the flowers have withered, how much longer do I still have to wait?). The metaphor and hyperbole vividly depicts his heartache of feeling having waited too long to be acknowledged, and of not knowing how much longer the wait will have to continue. The off-record utterance, accompanied with the body language of his hand aimlessly rubbing his hair up and down, his lowered eye lids, his tightly closed lips and his solemn facial expression, sends a salient message to X: 'Don't make me wait any longer! You don't reciprocate me in this relationship, so do you really love me?!'.

Y's unhappiness is also expressed via his marked interruption (line 18), following the Chinese host's (CH) question (line 17) to X, denying her the opportunity to talk. The bald on-record statement in the form of a negative sentence without any hedges or mitigation (line 18) 她没有这个打算 (word-for-word translation: she doesn't have this plan), answers CH's question on X's behalf, communicating Y's deep frustration and belief that he already knows the answer,

indicating the probability that this issue has been discussed between them before, even many times, without attaining a satisfying answer or solution, and it has become his sore point.

In response, X explains the dilemma she is facing, mainly adopting the positive politeness strategy of giving reasons to elicit Y's, CH's, the panels' and audiences' understanding and empathy. When explaining the dilemma and giving reasons (lines 4-7), X uses overstatements such as 他们会担心死的 (line 6: they will be worried to death), and 真的想象不了 (line 7: I really cannot imagine) to highlight her parents' profound concerns about her should they learn of the relationship and of Y's identity (as a non-South-Korean), and in turn the unbearable pressure on her derived from worrying that her parents will become so worried about her, leading to her reluctance to reciprocate Y at this time of the relationship. X offers a further reason why this is not the right time to inform her parents (line 16) and explains when a good time might be (lines 22-23). It is clear from her answers that her parents' views on the identity of her partner (line 7), when they see as the appropriate timing for her to develop a relationship (line 16), and even the special condition that may qualify her for having a relationship at a time when they usually do not approve (lines 22-23), play an overwhelming role determining her decision-making, i.e., deciding it is not the right time to tell her parents now; and her behaviour, i.e., not following what Y wants her to do in spite of Y's frustration and his repeated prompts (line 2).

This constitutes the key issue besetting their love relationship. Indeed, X's reasons, manifesting the other-oriented values of following traditions, obedience, proper behaviour, respect for elders and security for the family, may appear almost incomprehensible to an individual who upholds beliefs of self-direction, independence and freedom. How could one not even have the freedom to decide who to choose as their partner and when to have a relationship? In contrast, how could one not be guided by the parents' thoughts and feelings on so important a personal matter? They represent two distinct approaches over the same issue, underpinned by contrastive value systems of other-orientation versus self-direction. Within the two value systems, highly varied weighting is given to parent's power and influence.

According to Riley (1994, p.802), in China, marriage and one's love relationship involve a level of interdependence between parents and children that does not exist in many Western societies and "decisions are made in a context that encourages the continuing influence of parents in the lives of their children". This explains the immediate and great empathy (lines 29-30, 32, 36-38) that CH and P (the Chinese panel member) develop for X due to cultural similarity between China and South Korea, as well as their trust (lines 26, 39-41) of X's good intention to protect their relationship. It is also noteworthy that during P's elaborate comments, X, on three occasions, confirmed P's analysis as 对 (line 31: Correct.); 嗯, 对 (line 33: Yes, correct.); and 对 (line 42: Correct), without being asked to. The repeated confirmations without any prompts, accompanied with her body language of nodding her head eagerly, communicate her relief of having her intentions deciphered correctly and trusted.

Commitment, trust and parents' power re-surface as the key issues troubling Jerry and Wang Shuang's relationship. Wang expresses her emotion of anger right from the outset of her interactions with Jerry (line 43). Her intense anger is communicated via a direct question to Jerry 'do you love me', which is repeated five times (lines 45, 54, 59, and 65) demanding a definitive and unambiguous answer from him. She also deprives him twice of his turn of talking by interjecting the question repeatedly (lines 59 and 61) when he is trying to explain what marriage and love constitute and why they are separate issues in French culture (lines 58 and 60). Jerry, on the other hand, has the clear goal of reconciling with Wang and her mother. Therefore, although he does not have much chance to talk during the course of the interaction mainly due to Wang's heightened urge to express and elaborate her anger (line 43), insecurity (line 56), fear (line 57) and pain (line 66), when Jerry does talk he mainly adopts cooperative face strategies protecting their positive and negative face needs such as giving reasons (lines 51, 52 and 58), affirming and emphasizing his love for Wang (line 55), and making a promise (line 72) in order to appease Wang and her mother's anger and dissatisfaction with him. Although Jerry confides to the host, prior to Wang's entry on the stage, that he feels Wang seldom gives him any personal space, Jerry does not bring this up during his interaction with Wang and Wang's mother, mostly out of concern for their positive face needs and probable salient reactions.

Love in Chinese culture is underpinned by all of the discernment values identified in Schwartz's postulates: universalism (e.g., maintaining harmony by tolerance), benevolence (e.g., loyalty to each other), tradition (e.g., respect for tradition such as committing by marriage), conformity (e.g., following parents' wishes), and security (e.g., offering emotional and economic security to partner and family). Influenced by these values, Wang repeatedly highlights that Jerry would not marry her (lines 47 to 50) or give her and her family a sense of security (lines 56, 57 and 65 to 67), i.e., violating the values of tradition, conformity and security. Judging from that, she questions his love for her from the beginning until the end of the interaction. By the same token, Wang's mother accuses Jerry of failing to give her daughter and her family 'a correct answer' (lines 69 to 71), which is marriage, and interprets it as his lack of commitment and true love. This prompts her to resort to her legitimate power, bestowed upon her by Chinese tradition, as a responsible and dutiful parent to protect her daughter and to end their relationship (line 71). She does not show any concerns for Jerry's face needs, as she is direct and uncompromising in her language. Her message is strong: in Chinese

culture, love and marriage are inseparable. In contrast, when the host explores with Jerry his parents' views of the relationship, the comments are that it is his personal decision as to whom he chooses to be his partner and when he would want to get married, provided that he feels happy. This, again, reflects the value of self-direction and independence.

In world literature, love is characterised by biological representation of 'butterflies in your stomach' or 'the eyes have it', which may not require translations or explanations across cultures at all. However, without an informed understanding of local sociocultural values and norms underpinning this common emotion, the butterflies may be suffocated and the eyes may lose it. In these two examples, the value of conformity, the subsumed components of obedience and respect for parents in particular, guides the two Asian women in their approach to their personal love relationships, taking precedence over their own and their partners' wishes and feelings. This indicates that in intercultural relationships and interactions, being able to recognise and comprehend the varied sociocultural scripts serves as the first and fundamental step towards achieving successful communication. The data also show that interlocutors often experience several emotions simultaneously, such as love, sadness, pain, anger, fear, and insecurity. They are closely related, interact with each other and contribute to the mix of one's inner experience, rather than taking place in isolation or happening in the order of one after another. This suggests the importance of studying emotions in interaction with each other and with language use. It demonstrates that studying one emotion in isolation and relying on semantically equivalent translations are methodologically unviable.

## 5. Discussions and Conclusions

There are several contributions from this research to the investigation of emotions in intercultural contexts. Firstly, this research proposes a theoretical model from the sociocultural perspective that conceptualises the relationship between emotion, culture and language, and offers adequate sophistication to explain how emotions differ across cultures and what constitutes key sociocultural factors shaping and influencing varied conceptions of emotion. This addresses the key issue in research on emotion in anthropology where scholars disagree fundamentally over how and to what extent emotions are shaped and influenced by culture. It also resolves the problem in cognitive psychology where examination of the nature of emotion misses out the key sociocultural influence of the overlearned cognitive habits, and western norms are applied as universally valid without being questioned. Secondly, it is the first study to use data featuring naturally occurring intercultural interactions where Mandarin is used as the language in communication, presenting linguistic features underpinned by Chinese cultural norms and thus overcoming the dominance of English language as lingua franca in intercultural linguistic research<sup>2</sup>. Thirdly, unlike cognitive psychology focusing on lexicons, this research employs a discourse approach entailing natural interactions beyond a single turn of talking which provides textual and sociocultural contexts for understanding the construction of emotions. This research draws on sociolinguistics and cultural studies to examine shared and varied sociocultural factors underpinning emotion, which is particularly pertinent for intercultural communication where understanding differences and building common ground are key for successful communication and rapport/relationship management. These strengthen the methodological rigor and the findings of this research. Fourthly, it studies emotions in intercultural interactions from a sociocultural and cultural linguistic perspective, contributing to a significantly under-explored area. In future research, studies on identity, power and distance can be drawn on and incorporated into the model to enhance its capacity to theorise emotions in intercultural communication.

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<sup>2</sup> The data have to be translated into English for readers. However, this does not constitute a methodological problem of this research. Rather, the necessity of translations into English is due to a much larger issue of English as lingua franca in research and publication.

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