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1 Introduction

In conducting learning activities with children with intellectual disabilities, navigation among different demands, tasks, goals and considerations is essential. The children have a need to practise and improve their communicative and verbal skills not merely as a technical exercise – even though there are, of course, technical aspects involved in pronunciation – and certainly not as traditional linguistic exercise in syntactic and grammatical rules of language. Instead, their verbal exercises are often combined with another social activity, namely that of playing various card and board games. Learning to play a game involves general social skills such as paying attention to the other participants, being alert, concentrated and involved. At the same time children are potentially benefiting from the general experience of playing games, namely competing and having fun. Moreover, by obeying the rules of the game the children also have to deal with challenge of rule-following behaviour as well as social conventions of waiting for your turn, speaking up at the right moment and so forth. In other words, conducting a learning activity through playing a game is in many ways a challenging task for speech and language therapists and assistant teachers in that it requires sensitivity to the changing nature of different and sometimes competing tasks.

Furthermore, the body plays a vital role in the communication and social interaction of children with intellectual disabilities. Indeed, the bodily dimension often seems to dominate over verbal communication when children with intellectual disabilities interact. The children use their bodies as a primary communicative resource for carrying out social actions. Emotional communication is especially closely intertwined with bodily movements and actions. The generally accepted observation that the body is a primary medium for the communication of emotions (Planalp 1999; Ekman 2007, Maiese 2011) seems even more pertinent when it comes to children with intellectual disabilities. This probably has to do with the fact that delay in oral language development is one of the features that characterise intellectual disability (Harris 2006). Still, children with intellectual disabilities clearly have the same urge for communicating their emotions as anyone else; the means by which they do so may simply have another character. It is the balancing of these two different dimensions – rule-following behaviour and embodied emotional communication – that is the focus point of the investigations in this article.

The aim of the article is, then, twofold. Firstly, it investigates the dilemmas of practising verbal skills through card games on the basis of detailed analyses of empirical data. Secondly, and following from this, it focuses on the role and impact on the embodied emotional communication. It concludes that a re-thinking is necessary of embodied emotional communication as a valuable part of the learning activities.

The article is divided into four parts. This introduction is followed by a theoretical second part, presenting a brief overview of elements of emotional communication in interpersonal settings. This section concludes with a proposal for a new interactional account
on emotional communication. In the third part the data are presented and the transcription system explained. The fourth part consists of in-depth analyses of three different examples of learning activities combining the different approaches to emotions and interpersonal communication. The fifth part discusses the prospects and dilemmas facing further integration of embodied emotional communication in learning activities involving children with intellectual disabilities.

2 Emotions and emotional communication

2.1 Communication studies and emotions

Studies of emotions can, roughly speaking, be divided into two major, and contrasting, conceptions of the nature of emotions. Within neuroscience and evolutionary psychology emotions are understood as an essentially biological phenomenon rooted in neurobiological structures in the brain, manifested in our body and shaped by evolutionary processes (Barkow, Cosmides & Tooby 1995, Damasio 1994, Ledoux 1996, Panksepp 2004). On the other hand, within constructionist studies, emotion is viewed as a profoundly social phenomenon that is negotiated, constituted and maintained by social norms and cultural traditions and constructed in social relations (Harré 1986, Gergen 1994 and 2009, Parrot 2001). From the vantage point of this article, however, the key ambition is to present a study of how emotions can be analysed \textit{in situ} without committing to either a biological or a social standpoint that excludes the other. Instead the argument is here that it is crucial to seek to overcome this dualistic division by viewing emotions as \textit{both} an embodied, biological as well as a social phenomenon. The focus in the following is therefore on how emotions are communicated through embodied practices embedded in social settings.

Within communication studies (Planalp 1999, Andersen & Guerrero 1998, Knapp & Daly 2011), emotions have been investigated as communicative devices divided into different cues. The various emotional cues include physiological, bodily, vocal, and facial cues. \textit{Physiological cues} are largely communicated involuntarily and are based on physiological arousal resulting in bodily reactions. They include cues such as facial redness, goose bumps, heavy sweating, fast breathing and tears in one’s eyes, and they are often considered more or less uncontrollable physiological reactions rather than strictly communicative devices.

\textit{Bodily cues}, on the other hand, are to a greater extent considered intentionally communicative. They include phenomena such as being physically energetic, bouncy, jumping up and down, clapping, clenching hands or fists, throwing or touching things, walking heavily, holding the body rigidly, trudging, walking rhythmically or having a slumped, droopy posture (Sandlund 2004).

\footnote{The distinction between biological involuntarily reactions on the one hand and conscious social phenomena on the other hand is by no means an easy one to make. Blushing, for instance, is under very little conscious control. Nevertheless, it is often triggered by certain social situations involving the knowledge of a violation of social norms. The blushing seems to communicate that the person breaking a social code is aware of exactly that. In other words, blushing is both an uncontrollable physiological reaction rooted in bodily arousal and at the same time deeply embedded in a norm-driven decoding of a complex social setting. Only rarely do people blush when alone (Planalp 1998; Sandlund 2004).}
**Vocal cues** are mainly identified in relation to three perceptual dimensions: loudness, pitch and time. Behaviourally, vocal cues include communicating emotions through screaming, yelling, speaking with a trembling, smiley, singing voice, using a low, quiet or monotonous voice or talking rapidly or on the other hand talking very slowly. Studies have shown that the human voice is a vital and sophisticated emotional ‘instrument’ capable of communicating a vast range of emotional states with a high level of sophistication (Andersen & Guerrero 1998, Sandlund 2004).

The human face is often conceptualized as a sort of ‘mirror’ of our emotional states, and so, ever since Charles Darwin’s seminal work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872/2009), *facial cues* (or facial expressions) have been widely considered the most reliable source for studying emotions. More recently, the psychologist Paul Ekman has completed several studies on the alleged universal correspondence between basic emotions and specific facial expressions (Ekman 2006 and 2007). An important subcategory within facial cues is gaze. In order to appreciate the impact of gaze on emotional communication, we only need to think of such everyday expressions as ‘a flirtatious/angry/warm/loving/cold look’. Studies have similarly indicated that gaze is used in various ways to establish joint attention, so constructing embodied alignment in interaction (Goodwin 2007).

Nevertheless, this article argues that a central and questionable feature of Ekman’s approach is that it renders the relation between distinct facial expressions and specific emotions as to some degree fixed and standardized. This belies the fact that both facial expressions and emotions are in a constant state of flux most of the time. Indeed, results from communication studies indicate that the human face often expresses or communicates more than just one distinct emotion at a time, such as combinations of joy and surprise or of anger and shame (Metts & Planalp 2003; Sandlund 2004). Such observations allow it to be argued that emotional communication in naturally occurring interaction can be seen to a much greater extent as a phenomenon that is dynamic and in constant flux, one that is constituted by developing combinations of emotions that only rarely can be reduced to a single type. Furthermore, it is deeply problematic that the Darwinian tradition of emotion research has developed a sharp division between inner emotional state and outer emotional expression. According to this, the expressive or communicative part becomes merely an outer by-product of the inner source – the emotions. This, of course, has to do with the primacy of psychological and individualistic research interest that is inherent in this field of research. What is at the heart of investigations made by Ekman and other psychologists is the relation between the inner emotional experience and the outer expression, not the way the emotions are embedded in interaction as embodied social phenomena.

### 2.2 Emotional expression vs. emotional communication

In coming closer to an interactional definition of the notion of emotional communication, it is important first of all to make a distinction between *expressing* emotions and *communicating*

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2 Today there is general agreement among emotion researchers on the validity on cross-cultural facial expressions and their correspondence to basic emotions, at least when it comes to the universality of distinguishing between negative emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety on the one hand and positive emotions as surprise and joy on the other.
emotions. In the 2003 edition of Handbook of Personal Communication Planalp and Metts touch on this issue:

The fact that people can and do alter the expressions of even the primary emotions suggest that emotion display or emotion expression may be more aptly termed emotional communication, in the sense that emotional information, like other types of information, is shaped for audiences. (...) Emotions may (or may not be) be activated internal states, but when they are communicated, they are packaged in ways that are consistent with other communication practices. (Metts & Planalp 2003: 348-49)

From the vantage point of this article, Metts and Planalp are on the right track in their distinction between the two notions and in particular in their endorsements of the term emotional communication in favour of emotional expression. Nevertheless, the ambition here is to take this ‘communicational stance’ a bit further, or rather to develop it into an interactional stance. The reason for this is that a great deal of interpersonal communication literature that deals with emotion (Andersen & Guerrero 1998, Bartsch & Hübner 2005; Metts & Planalp 2003 & 2011) only seems to go half the way in its dissociation with the Darwinian tradition, in the sense that emotional communication is still understood and conceptualized in terms of a sender and a receiver. Indeed, the whole idea of emotions being communicated by means of different channels and cues still entails a conceptualization of emotions as some sort of entity originating within the individual and then being brought into the public domain through different devices. Emotions are still viewed as “information” which is then “shaped for audiences” when being communicated. This way of looking at emotional communication draws on the basic conceptualization of communication as information exchange that stems from classic communication models in which a sender (speaker) is sending a message (content) through a channel (language) to a receiver (listener) (Donsback 2006). According to this paper, however, this is an insufficient and problematic view of interpersonal communication – verbal as well as non-verbal – and thus an interactional counter-position will now be presented.

2.3 Embodied emotional communication in social interaction

Within Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, Hutchby & Wooffit 2008, Heritage & Clayman 2010), language is viewed as a means for social action rather than as a channel communicating an already existing ‘mental content’ or piece of information. Conversation analysts are interested in the ways in which people accomplish various social activities, goals and tasks by using language, and increasingly other material resources such as bodily movements as well (Streek, Goodwin & LeBaron 2011). A basic assumption within CA is the idea of intersubjectivity as a joint achievement that is structured by an organization of action implemented on a turn-by-turn basis in the ongoing interaction. This entails each new turn building on aspects of prior talk, and through the production of a new turn speakers exhibit their understanding of the state of talk. Notwithstanding, such understanding is made publicly available and can therefore be studied by means of a thorough analysis, which is at the heart of CA. Thus, inspired by recent tendencies within CA dealing with emotions in talk-in-interaction (Sandlund 2004, Pudlinski 2005, Ruusuvuori 2005 and 2007, Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2006, Barnes and Moss 2007, Rasmussen 2010, Voutilainen 2010, Wiben Jensen in press), embodied emotional communication can be seen as a form of social action. In other
words, embodied emotional actions figure in ordinary talk-in-interaction as a tool for performing social actions in the same way as talk does.

Using this line of thought, emotions can be analysed as a primarily interactional phenomenon:

Emotions that are made relevant in interaction are *socially organized* phenomena. Emotions are made visible as a consequential event through systematic practices that are lodged within the processes of situated interaction, and displayed emotions, such as joy, embarrassment, frustration, are resources for orientation that tell interactants something about a speaker’s analysis of the state of ongoing talk and actions and what an appropriate next action would be. (Sandlund 2004: 315)

The point of departure for this article is to elaborate on this interactional view of emotions as *socially organized* as well as *embodied* phenomena, on the basis of the assumption that the way our bodies move and act in engaging in social interaction is part of a joint sense-making activity (Hougaard & Hougaard 2009).

Consequently, in the coming analyses the analytical focus is on how emotional communication is achieved both as embodied and as mutually managed social actions. Recalling Gergen’s statement on emotions as a sort of public action: “It’s not that we have emotions, a thought, or a memory, as much as we do them” (Gergen 1999: 132), the focus here will be on how the body is used as a sense-making resource by children with intellectual disabilities on the one hand and by speech and language therapists on the other in order to ‘do’ emotions. However, in contrast to the radical constructionist stance, the approach this article adopts does not depreciate the value of research in the neurobiology of emotions or deny physiological correlates of emotional states. Instead, an interdisciplinary view is pursued that approaches emotions as biological and social at the same time. When we are in the company of others, our bodily actions are coordinated in relation to the patterns and structures of the on-going activity. In this sense one can speak of *social embodiment* as a particularly relevant term in the case of emotional communication as a practice of bodily actions that are socially embedded in the on-going interaction.

### 3 Data and transcription

The data has been collected at a Danish school for children with special needs, i.e. Down syndrome or other types of intellectual disabilities. This means that the school is specialized in working with different kind of intellectual disabilities. The data consist of video recordings of various types of learning activities involving both children and professional adults. Before the recordings took place, permissions and assurances of anonymity were signed by all the parties involved. Furthermore, high priority was given to the children actually being willing to be recorded at the given time; if not, the recordings were cancelled. Confidentiality and handling of collected data are key issues in the following transcriptions and analyses. All the names used, both in terms of the pedagogical staff and the children, are therefore pseudonyms.

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3 The data has been made available to me by my colleague, associate professor and center director of SoPraCon Gitte Rasmussen, on condition that the anonymity of all the persons involved was upheld. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Gitte Rasmussen for the opportunity to work on these data.
The primary research interests have acted as the guiding principles in determining the extent of detail that the transcription should depict. For this reason, substantial weight has been given to thorough depiction of bodily actions, it being of the upmost importance that they are caught in situ during the interaction and described in the following transcription. As previously described, embodied actions of all sorts: posture, gaze, gesture, facial movements, voice quality – as well as pauses and aspirations – are all important resources in emotional communication. However, there can be no such thing as all-encompassing transcription. The notation of facial movements and gesture in the present work is, for example, by no means as detailed as is to be found in studies that focus solely on these phenomena and use techniques such as close ups of each participant’s face and hands. In this case, only one camera for each recording was used. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the primary research questions for this work concern the social role of emotions in social interaction and not the specifics of facial movements or gesture as such. A basic model of the transcription system developed by the conversation analyst Gail Jefferson (Jefferson 2004) is employed here, supplemented with detailed descriptions of embodied activities. The verbal utterances are presented in the Danish original first and then translated into English in the following line. A complete overview of the transcription symbols is attached as an appendix to the article.

4 Analyses

4.1 Emotional communication in interaction

Martin and Erich are six years old, twins, and both diagnosed with Down syndrome. They attend a Danish school for children with special needs and seem to enjoy participating in the various learning activities there. One of these activities consists of playing a memory game with different cards depicting various objects, animals, social situations (like getting on the bus or going to the dentist), and the like. The pedagogical objective of the game is to teach the children to recognize, verbalize and describe what is illustrated on the cards, thereby training their verbal skills as well as their social knowledge. In the sequence below Martin has just drawn a card and is now supposed to say what is on the card.

Excerpt 1

Participants: S: Speech and language therapist; M: Martin; E: Erich.

1: S: hva fik du der↑
   what did you get there↑
%com  M stretches out his right arm with a card in his hand – S gazes at M’s card
2: (2:0)
%com  S continues gazing at the card while M turns around the card with his hand
3: S: hva er det for noget
what’s that

%com M makes a gesture turning the front of the card towards S - S continues gazing at the card

4: M: RRCH RRCH

%com M kicks his right leg back and forth while smiling, looking directly at S and moving his upper body energetically back and forth on the chair - S gazes at M

5: S: ☺JA HVA HEDder den↑ >hva hedder den↓<

☺YES WHAT IS IT CALLED↑ ☺ >what is it called↓<

%com S smiles, eyes widen, moving fingers up and down touching her chin twice - M looks at the card, smiles, kicking both legs up and down

6: S: (0:2) [en:] (. ) gris men det er faktisk et vildsvin

(0:2) [a:] ( . ) pig but it’s actually a wild boar

7: M: [°xx°]

%com S makes small circular movements with her right hand in front of her nose

8: S: =>hvem har den<

=>who’s got that one<

%com S quickly stretches out her right arm and hand - M looks down at his cards on the table

9: (1:2)

%com S stretches her right arm and touches M’s cards on the table - M looks down at his cards

10: M: har je::g

me::

11: S: §DE:T ( . ) HA:::R ( . ) JE::Gi$ ik oss↑ ( 0:4 ) så må du jo igen

§I: ( . ) HA:::VE ( . ) I:Ti$ right↓ (0:4) so now you can go again

%com S points to M’s cards with right hand - then opens her hand with palm facing upwards - then points at the cards with little finger while pointing at M with index finger - M looks down at his cards

PICTURE 1A

PICTURE 2B

PICTURE 3B
In line 4 M does something else than might be expected: instead of delivering a verbal answer to the two questions by S (in line 1 and 3) so as to reveal what is on the card, M suddenly performs a variety of bodily actions. Up until that point M has been sitting still and holding out the card with his right hand for both him and the other participants to see. But all of a sudden he shifts activation mode. He becomes highly energetic, moving his torso back and forth, kicking under the table, smiling and moving his head while at the same time uttering two distinct sounds at high volume (RRCH RRCH), resembling the sound of pigs. Of course these different bodily and vocal actions do not occur at a random place in the interaction; they are delivered at exactly the point in which a traditional verbal answer would be expected. But instead of stating verbally what is on the card, M is acting the depicted content by uttering pig-like sounds. Furthermore, at the same time he adds a certain emotional value to his vocal activity by smiling, kicking his right leg back and forth under the table and energetically moving his upper body back and forward, thereby displaying emotions of excitement and joy. In doing so, he manages to do several things at once. (1) He completes a predefined task by acting the answer, (2) he redefines the rules in a creative way by acting rather than saying, (3) he displays emotions of excitement and joy in a way that goes beyond what words alone can do. Thus, he manages to integrate social rules in situated emotional bodily dynamics.

Immediately the speech and language therapist treats this bodily action as relevant by changing her activation mode as well in the first half of line 5 (:☺YES WHAT IS IT CALLED☺☺). She widens her eyes and gazes directly at M while smiling and speaking with a distinct smiley voice, high volume, emphasis and rising intonation. Through the use of vocal, facial as well as bodily cues, an immediate inter-bodily interaction evolves between the child and the speech and hearing therapist. What is particularly worth noticing here is how the vocal and bodily actions of the boy permit the speech and hearing therapist to act in a specific way. She acts out, albeit only momentarily, the potential of interacting on an emotional and bodily level. That is, the co-ordination of bodily, vocal and verbal actions by M and S constitute the emotional communication as a shared activity creating an intersubjective understanding in situ. The two bodies interact quickly and efficiently by jointly developing an animated activation mode in which they seem to advance and share emotions of excitement and joy.

4.2 Alignment and affiliation

In order to investigate this interactive coordination in greater depth, the conversational analytic concepts of alignment and affiliation (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig 2011; Steensig in press) will now be addressed. These two newly developed notions concern two different levels of cooperation in conversations. Steensig defines alignment as attending to the “structural level of cooperation” (…), to actions that “cooperate by facilitating the proposed activity or sequence (…) accepting the interactional roles involved in the activity” (Steensig, in press). On the other hand, the related but distinct activity of affiliation involves:

... the affective level of cooperation, in that affiliative responses are maximally pro-social when they match the prior speaker’s evaluative stance, display empathy and/or cooperate with the preference of the prior action. (ibid)

In this case one can argue that the bodily and vocal action of the boy in line 4 is in disalignment with the previous action of S that directly requested a verbal answer. The same
action can simultaneously be seen as affiliative in the sense that it certainly involves the affective level in matching the evaluative stance of the prior speaker by showing or performing what is on the card. The response is not delivered as a verbal answer but is instead displayed in an emotional involvement that thereby becomes “maximally pro-social”. Furthermore S’s treatment of M’s action in the first half of line 5 appears as both aligning and affiliating. The initial ‘YES’ aligns by recognizing M’s action as recognizable and relevant, while the speech and language therapist seems to cooperate in similar fashion by accepting, for the time being, the interactional role as the one verbally confirming the action as legitimate by directly confirming the nature of M’s action. Now since the predefined purpose of the card game is to both recognize (as M evidently has) and to verbalize what is on the cards, strictly speaking these bodily and emotional actions do not live up to the standard of how the learning game should be played out. The predefined goal is first and foremost to practise verbal skills (and secondly to test the children’s memory and social knowledge), by verbalizing and describing what is on the cards and by speaking up when a trick is won. But, since the game is played by people – and not the least children with special needs – it sometimes develops in unforeseen ways. In this case the spontaneous bodily action by M changes for a while the interactive flow in the sequence.

Looking (or listening) more closely to the development in line 5, however, a slight but significant difference between the first and second half of the utterance emerge. It is a difference of prosodic features, even though at the verbatim level they are close to identical. As described above, the initial part (ċYES WHAT IS IT CALLed♩☺) is uttered with high volume, emphasis and a distinct smiley voice as S is smiling and looking directly at M. The second part of line 5 (>what is it called♩<), by contrast, is uttered very quickly, with lower volume as the smiley look on S’s face disappears. The social function of the first utterance seems primarily to be an emotional communication of (shared) excitement and enthusiasm – affiliating – while the second is more literally a request for an actual (verbal) answer – dis-affiliating – and dis-aligning as well, without the initial ‘Yes’.

4.3 Focus on getting a verbal answer

Subsequently the speech and hearing therapist only waits 0.2 seconds before in line 6 she herself provides the answer to the questions she herself posed in line 5. Again it is worth noticing the tiny details of how the answer is performed interactively. While uttering (a:) with a prolonged sound followed by a micro-pause, S initiates an iconic gesture by making two distinct circular movements with her right hand in front of her nose apparently depicting the round nose of a pig (or a wild boar). What is more, this visual dimension that S adds to M’s previous bodily and vocal actions comes close to projecting a verbal answer from M. So that in line 7 M actually initiates an utterance with a low voice, but since it is in overlap with S’s turn in line 6 it is impossible to distinguish what is actually said. Instead S continues and in effect answers her own question immediately after M’s subdued attempt at uttering something. Still, this emotional embodied communication lasts less than two seconds in the interaction. As described previously S asks for the name of the animal twice in line 5, the second time without the same bodily and vocal cues. Not receiving the desired verbal answer from M, she delivers it herself in line 6, apparently overhearing M’s attempt at uttering something at the same time. The embodied, emotional communication is quickly replaced by a focus on getting the right verbal answer according to the rules of the card game, and the
joint embodied and emotional activity is not pursued. Instead S answers herself (with a self-correction) in line 6 and just after, in line 8, requests confirmation of the ownership of the card in question (who’s got that one). Along with that, she changes her gesturing now, pointing to and even touching M’s cards on the table, thereby putting emphasis on a stance that seeks a (verbal) answer. Likewise M’s bodily mode of activation changes completely. He suddenly sits still and looks down at his cards with full attention and finally in line 10, after a pause of 1.2 seconds, he delivers a very brief verbal answer (me::) – his first and only one in the sequence.

Furthermore, in line 11 S responds to M’s single-word utterance with a display of ‘the proper linguistic answer’ in a full-fledged grammatical sentence uttered with high volume, prolonged vowels and an overly correct pronunciation (§I: (.) HA::VE (.) I:T↓§ right↑). She thereby stresses her orientation towards a ‘proper linguistic performance’ in a clearly didactic manner. Likewise the ending ‘right’ reinforces the demonstrative and normative aspect of the utterance as an evaluation of how the boy performed his answer, which is also shown by S’s pointing gesture first towards the card and then at M, highlighting his ‘obligation’ (according to the rules of the game) to verbalize his ownership of the card. But, by giving the answer herself, S makes sure that the learning activity is ‘on the right track’ according to the rules of the game. Finally, it allows her to follow an essential imperative of the game – namely that it must follow a due process. In order for the game – and not just this game but games in general – to work as a game it has to move on continuously. Thus in line 11, after having demonstrated how the proper answer sounds, she can now tell M to go on in order for the game to proceed (so now you can go again).

4.4 Membership categorization in learning activities
In the first example a specific type of embodied emotional communication was treated as conflicting with an adherence to the rules of the game by the speech and language therapist. The embodied emotional actions did not match the orientation that was seeking a verbal answer, which was treated as warranted for the game to proceed. It is, however, not only the process-oriented nature of card and board games that can conflict with emotional communication. In the example below we will see how a distinct, and emotionally laden, way of performing one of the steps in the game can be treated as disputing the seriousness of the planned game activity by invoking a certain membership categorization.

Rune, 14 years old, is diagnosed with intellectual disability and is a very lively and cheerful adolescent also attending the school for children with special needs. In the extract below Rune is involved in a game activity in which he has been told by the assistant teacher to take some stickers lying on the table and put them on the blackboard

Excerpt 2

Participants: A: Assistant teacher; R: Rune

(7:0)

%com R walks around the table in a trudging way – he hangs a sticker on the blackboard and continues his shuffle touching the corner of the table with his right hand – A puts her glasses on the table
1: R: "jeg har lav æblekage ich min gruppe"
   "I made apple pie inch my group"
%com R shuffles around the corner of the table, stops and grabs the cards on the table
2: A: >prø PRØV lige at høre hva jeg siger til dig< (0:2)
   >lis LISTEN to what I am saying to you now< (0:2)
%com A gazes directly at R, points at him with her right index finger while pointing upwards into the room with her left index finger
3: A: du er en stor dreng ik å=
   you’re a big boy right=
%com A gazes directly at R and raises her right hand, stops the movement and holds her right hand flat in the air
4: R:=ja jeg har lavet æblekage
   =yes I made apple pie
%com A holds her gesture (0:5)
%com R starts walking again
5: A: du taler ligesom en stor dreng ik [oss
   you talk like a big boy [right
6: R: [jæ
   [yea
%com A continues gazing at R and lifts up her right hand holding her gesture
7: R: [ja jæ
   [yes yea
8: A: [må jeg høre†
   [can I hear†
%com A continues her gaze at R putting her head forward, holds her gesture and then lowers both her hands letting them rest on her stomach
9: R: æblekage
   apple pie
10: A: =jah:
In line 2 the assistant teacher stops the ongoing activity by demanding R’s attention. She uses high volume and a pointing gesture to stress the seriousness of her directive and furthermore she continues in line 4 by making the assessment (you’re a big boy right=) designed as a rhetorical question. The adverb (right) in the end of turn works as a rhetorical question marker, meaning ‘we are in agreement on this, are we not?’ Furthermore, by designing it as a rhetorical question, A also evokes a specific categorization, the category of ‘a big boy’. In investigating this issue further the notion of membership categorization becomes relevant.

Membership categorization within CA and Ethnomethodology stems all the way back to Harvey Sacks’ famous analysis of: “The baby cried. The Mommy picked it up” (Sacks 1972: 330). Most people will intuitively understand ‘the mommy’ as the mother of the child, and likewise the crying will likely be perceived as the reason why the mother picked up the baby. Still, neither pieces of information are actually contained in the two sentences. But due to the common sense expectations that are normally associated with the categories ‘mommy’ (that a mum will nurse her child when it cries) and ‘baby’ (that a baby needs caring from its mum), we infer a specific meaning for these sentences. The important point here is that these categories, and more importantly categories in general, are grouped in relation to each other. Categories like ‘husband’, ‘wife’, ‘housewife’, ‘career woman’, ‘European, ‘American’, ‘Afro-American’, ‘businessman’, ‘unemployed’, ‘Christian’, ’Protestant’, ‘atheist’ and so forth, all function and achieve meaning in and through their mutual relations. They are culturally available resources that enable people to point out, identify, describe and make sense of others as well as themselves. Furthermore, the “assignment of a person to a category ensures that conventional knowledge about the behavior of the person so categorized can be invoked or cited to interpret the actions of that person” (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 214). In other words, one way we make sense of our surroundings is to produce and invoke different versions of persons, actions, events and things. In that sense categorizing also works as a sort evaluation:

… some kind of action or evaluative stance is taken towards ‘that’ which is categorized and characterized. How the character of the social dilemma is constituted and understood in a specific context can thus be discovered through the ways categories are used to talk about it, organize it and handle it. Categories are thus employed in institutional activities to pursue concrete institutional tasks. (Mäkitalo 2003: 498)

So, when the assistant teacher in line 4 evokes the category of ‘a big boy’, the phrase achieves its meaning and function first and foremost in relation to its opposite category of ‘a little boy’. That category is probably by no means a desirable one for a 14-year-old boy to be included in and in this way the categorization entails a negative evaluation of the behaviour of R. On the other hand, being ‘a big boy’ is something worth striving for. Thus, the assessment also works as an indirect threat: ‘you seem and look like a big boy, but if you don’t speak and act like one you risk exclusion from this desired category.’ Consequently, the category of ‘a big boy’
seems to be invoked in this learning activity in order to do the job of maintaining a specific behaviour and way of talking – the behaviour of a big boy who speaks ‘properly’.

4.5 Shuffling as emotional communication

Looking more closely at the interactional development in the sequence, it becomes apparent that the membership categorization is not just about how the boy speaks. It is about the way he walks; his way of walking is an emotional bodily cue. In line 4 R orients towards what he believes is the cause of the trouble, namely his pronunciation. This self-repair is then followed by a pause in which A is standing, still holding her gesture, and then the assistant teacher consequently follows up on the issue of pronunciation. But until then, A does not say anything about pronunciation; it only becomes a topic after R’s own indirect orientation towards it due to his self-repair in line 4. Thus, initially A’s directive and following assessment (and membership categorization) in line 2 and 3 seem to be directed at something other than pronunciation. Indeed, what led to the strict assessment is more likely the initial embodied actions of R before line 1. That is, the first 7 seconds in which R is walking around the table.

At the very beginning of the sequence, R is walking around the table in a particular manner. That is, he is shuffling in a distinctly playful way, sometimes touching the table with his right hand as well. Furthermore, he chooses to walk around the table instead of just walking back and forth to the blackboard despite the fact that the walk around the table is somewhat longer. Moreover, instead of taking all the stickers at once he creates his own ‘little game’ out of the task by continuously shuffling around the table taking the stickers one by one at his own pace. It is an embodied social action with no obvious practical function other than that of having some fun while performing the task. Still, by doing so he manages to (1) perform and prolong the task given to him, (2) redefine the rules of the activity by making his own little ‘walking-game’, (3) display emotions of joy and a bit of silliness. But as the membership categorization testified, this playful way of walking is not endorsed as an acceptable part of the learning activity. Thus the membership categorization also applies to his way of using his body, i.e. a big boy does not walk around the table in such a manner. Again the embodied emotional communication is treated as a nuisance rather than as an alternative way of performing the learning activity.

4.6 Voice dynamics as an emotional tool

In the first two examples we witnessed how emotional communication was treated as being in conflict with the tasks of playing a game and the demands inherent in learning activities. In this way the emotional communication ended up complicating the learning activity. Yet, this is not always the case. This last example, another extract from the recordings of the twins, shows how yet another type of emotional communication contributes to both advancing the game and achieving active learning.

In this sequence Martin has drawn a card that matches one of Erich’s picture cards (one with a sad teddy bear on it), and the speech and language therapist therefore initially wants Martin to ask who else has this particular picture card.
Excerpt 3

Participants: S: Speech and language therapist; M: Martin; E: Erich.

1  S: så skal du *speek* (0:2) hvem *hair* (0:4) en bamse >der er ked af det<=
   S: then you should *ask* (0:2) who *has* (0:4) a teddy bear
   >who is sad<=
   %com Gazing at M, S strikes two fingers of her right hand against her left palm – then she makes small circular movements with both hands and performs iconic gestures of tears falling down her cheek

2  M:=dig Erich
   M:=you Erich
   %com M holds up his cards in front of him and kicks with his right leg under the table

3  (1:5)
   %com S turns and gazes at E – E leans forward, raises his right arm upwards, stretches it and then touches his card several times with his right fist – S smiles at E

4  S: ja:(h)a: h h det har du® >kan du sige< (.). $det HAR JE:G↑
   S: ye:(h)a: h h that’s you® >can you say< (.). $I: HAVE IT;$
   %com S smiles and gazes at E – then she briefly touches E on his shoulder with her left hand

5  E: $det har je::g$
   E: $I:: have it$
   %com E moves back and forth on his chair gazing at M

6  S: $ja ja ja::$ *det var godt* (.). nå:îh (0:2) SÅ↑
   S: $yeah yeah yea::h $ that’s good* (.). we::ll (0:2) NOW↑
   %com S shakes her upper body and head back and forth in small rhythmical movements and then makes a brief gesture with her right hand – M reaches over the table and hands the card to E who grabs it – S collects some cards and turns them on the table
In line 1, S verbally requests M to ask for the ownership of the card but at the same time she also performs different embodied actions using sign supported speech. She makes several gestures; the last one an iconic gesture depicting tears running down her cheeks visualizing the emotional state of the teddy bear. However, instead of aligning with the verbal side, i.e. providing a question of the type “who has a sad teddy bear?”, M immediately provides an answer (=you Erich) to the question inherent in S’s turn in line 1 (who has (0:4) a teddy bear > who is sad <=).

Now, at this point S could have chosen to correct M for performing an illegal action (giving the answer away) according to the rules of the game, but instead she does something completely different. She turns her upper body and looks directly at E, the person deictically appointed by M in the previous turn. In other words M’s untraditional and, strictly speaking, rule-breaking action in line 2 is treated as a legitimate answer and furthermore utilized as an opportunity for a shift in orientation towards E. E instantly reacts to the focus directed at him by shifting activation mode – leaning forward, raising his arm and with a distinct movement touching his card with his fist several times. Immediately S smiles and replies by laughing and verbally confirming his embodied actions with a smiley voice (ye(ha:h h that’s you☺). Following from that, she now changes her tone of voice into a ‘singing mode’ asking E to repeat after her and thereby confirm his ownership of the card (> can you say< (.)∮I: HAVE IT ∮). In doing so she manages to perform several actions at the same time; 1) she displays emotions of joy and compliance, 2) she aligns and affiliates with E’s embodied actions, 3) she treats E’s embodied actions as a valuable contribution to the learning activity.

The primary vehicle for displaying and coordinating these actions and emotions is, in this particular instance, the distinctive voice-dynamics that come into play between the speech and language therapist and Erich. A number of times during the sequence S alters the pitch, intonation and quality of her voice, and these dynamic actions have a crucial impact on how the interaction proceeds. Firstly, the singing quality of her voice in line 4 is immediately adapted by E in line 5, where he not only repeats her words but elaborates on the singing articulation as well (∮I: have it∮). Consequently, the singing quality is continued by S in the first half of line 6. In other words, these voice-dynamics contribute to the continuation of the game in a joyous and playful way that adds a new dimension to the game fitted to the communication patterns of the participants. This prompts E to progress and use his own voice in this new and creative way thereby training his verbal and vocal skills. Furthermore, the vocal actions of E allow S to display alignment and an audible affective cooperation by extending this ‘singing’ part of the sequence in line 6.

Subsequently, in the second half of line 6, S changes the direction of her voice-dynamics twice; first she slightly alters her voice by using a quirky articulation (*that’s good*) in evaluating the performance of E, while at the same time bridging to the next part, in which she changes back to a ‘normal’ vocalization. Finally, she marks the end of this sequence and emphasizes the transition to a new activity by using rising intonation, high volume and stress (we↑ll (0:2) NOW↑). These voice dynamics constitute the end of this ‘playful sequence’ and a progression to a new type of learning sequence. In this way, S uses

4 Sign-supported speech is a visual communication method. By the use of hand movements, it attempts to represent or support the language used. It is a variant of simultaneous communication in which speaking and signing (or gesturing) occur at the same time. (Gorman 1990)
her voice as an emotional tool, not only for ‘having fun’ but also for progressing in sequence and thus following the rules of the game. It is a delicate act of balancing different but, as this sequence has shown, not necessarily incompatible types of tasks.

5 Conclusions

The examples analysed emphasize the importance of incorporating the emotional dimension into learning activities involving children with intellectual disabilities, though in different ways. In the first example, the embodied emotional actions of the boy seemed to accommodate opportunities for active learning, but these were not pursued. The paradoxical result is that the active participation of the boy in the learning activity is reduced to a minimum. To put it crudely, the rules of the game are obeyed at the expense of active participation and learning. Now, when various skills are being taught and practised by playing a game, the ‘teacher’ cannot, of course, avoid paying attention to the rules, since they are a necessary condition for actually playing a game. But this does not necessarily mean that obeying the rules is essential to fulfilling the learning objectives. Some sort of adherence to the rules is mandatory for playing a game, but acting in strict accordance with the rules of this card game does not necessarily contribute to the aim of the activity – namely practising the children’s verbal skills as well as their ability to recognize objects and social situations. In that sense, this can serve as an illustrative example of the dilemmas inherent in structured learning and game activities. Sometimes people, and in particular children with intellectual disabilities, neither fit into nor achieve active learning through schemes that insist on rule adherence, such as games, even though they may be pre-designed to enhance learning.

In the second example, the tendency to conceive of the embodied emotional communication as a sort of ‘noise’ is evident. The adolescent’s distinct way of walking was interpreted as challenging the seriousness and goal of the learning activity. Indeed, his behaviour was treated as something to be corrected; as an opportunity for reprimand. By contrast, in the third example the distinctive and emotionally weighted voice dynamics that come into play between the speech and language therapist and the boy actually accommodated active learning and progression of the structured learning activity at the same time. It seemed to make a new and creative advancement of the learning activity possible. In that way it pointed to the potential of integrating emotional communication in learning activities.

The embodied nature of emotional communication often generates learning processes less structured and more unpredictable than pre-designed activities based on verbal language. That, of course, offers a significant challenge to pedagogical staff. Still, it is vital to attempt to incorporate these embodied emotional actions in learning activities because the emotional communication can accommodate a development and enhancement of active learning processes in new ways. This is especially important in working with children with intellectual disabilities since they only rarely use verbal language to communicate emotions. Greater acceptance towards the important role of embodied emotional actions in learning activities can thus contribute to higher level of motivation and involvement among children with intellectual disabilities.
References


