The Development of Emotional Intelligence
A Case Study

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SAMPLE CHAPTER
Contents

Foreword xi
Acknowledgements xv

PART I
Overview of the literature on emotional intelligence (EI) 1

1 Introduction 3

Overview 3
Background to the study of emotional intelligence 4
EI in the context of emotional development 5
Novel approach to studying the development of EI 5
Emotional discourse and EI 6
Emotion socialization and EI 6
The case study 7
The importance of the father and EI 7
EI in infancy 8
Labelling emotions in the context of EI growth 9
Teasing and EI 10
EI and cognitive development 11
EI and death 11

2 Emotional intelligence: models and controversies 13

What is emotional intelligence? 13
How is emotional intelligence measured? 17

3 The language of emotional intelligence 21

Recognizing emotions in facial expressions: is there a developmental progression? 22
Pitch of voice and emotional intelligence 25

4 Regulation of emotional expression 29
   Self-regulation of emotions in infancy 31
   The effects of maternal mental health as the basis for emotional intelligence 32
   Socialization of positive emotions 33

5 Emotional intelligence: the ability to interact emotionally through empathy 37
   The development of empathy 37
   Trait and ability EI and empathy 39
   EI and understanding jokes 41

6 Emotional intelligence, health and negative emotions 45
   Negative emotional experience and coping strategies 45
   Other people’s negative emotions: how nurses or carers cope with negative emotions and violence in the workplace 46

PART II
Case study 51

Introduction to the case study 53

7 The language of emotions from the first months of life 55
   Socialization of emotion during the first four months 58
   Praising and reinforcing desirable emotions during the first four months 59
   Talking about fear and using humour in the fifth month 61
   Learning to talk about objects from 6 months onwards 63
   Learning to talk about emotions in the second year 65
   Conclusion 67

8 Acoustic aspects of emotion talk 71
   The influence of sound on the appraisal of emotion 71
   The meaning of the message is carried by sound 72
   Questions about feelings and questions about thoughts 77

9 On the changing table: the use of rhetoric with an infant 81
   The mutual influence of parent and infant 81
   The function of question 83
   The use of ‘I’ and ‘you’ 85
Putting on socks: what routines can tell us about development 87
Emotional intelligence in communicative frames 89

10 Teasing and emotional development
How does teasing relate to emotional development and the development of emotional intelligence? 93
Teasing involving innuendo 96
Teasing involving sleep 97
Teasing involving language or physical limitations 99
Teasing involving appeasement 100
Verbal teasing can involve nicknames 101
Toto ‘teasing’ Daddy 102

11 From ‘social smile’ to laughter: how positive emotions develop
How to explain a smile 107
The problem with labelling emotions 108
The function of smiles 109
The changing context of a smile 112

12 Toto’s experience of her father’s death
Death and how to explain it 119
Death and life after death 124
Passage to heaven 125
Practical ideas about life after death 126
Cognitive development and changing ideas about death and life after death 127
Conclusion 131

13 Conclusion 133

14 Emotional intelligence for parents 137
Websites 137
Books 140

References 143
Index 161
9 On the changing table
The use of rhetoric with an infant

Toto, 5 months 23 days old, cries.

*Father:* One second, here’s your song Toto. ‘I just want to warn you if our paths should cross, my name is Toto and I’m the boss.’

The mutual influence of parent and infant

Long before children can speak, adults perceive infant vocalizations to have different meanings. They interpret cooing sounds as more communicative than other, less speech-like, infant sounds (Beaumont and Bloom 1993). Hence, an infant’s increasing cooing or vocalizing results in more active engagement with adults (Lavelli and Fogel 2005). Particularly in the early years, affective interactions in everyday experiences with others influence understanding of information about ourselves and others (e.g. Malatesta 1990) and lead to the ability to perceive, understand and manage emotions (Salovey and Mayer 1990) and behaviour (Bruner 1982). According to Brackett et al. (2004), higher emotional intelligence is related to positive outcomes such as pro-social behaviour, parental warmth, and positive peer and family relations. The question of the differentiation of ego from alter in the context of emotional development is unclear. The change of focus from the baby’s own emotions to the baby’s ability to incorporate other’s emotions is the topic of the present study. In what follows I report and analyse an everyday encounter which caused some friction, namely getting dressed, in order to follow Toto’s emotional development in terms of how she made sense of her own emotions vis-à-vis her father’s expression of emotions. According to Fogel et al. (2002), the infant’s intrapersonal self-dialogues are intertwined with inter-personal dialogues from the first days of life. Consequently, modern
research on infancy tends to reject the notion of an ‘autistic’ or ‘individual’ sense of self in early infancy, as postulated in some early versions of psychoanalytic theory (e.g. Stern 1985).

From the first months of life there is an increase in mutual influence between an infant and the caregiver’s behaviour (Lavelli and Fogel 2005). The infant’s enhanced ability to engage and reciprocate in dyadic interaction alters how parent and child interact in terms of not only quantitative changes, such as increased vocal input by the child, but also the qualitative changes in caregiver–infant interaction. This dialogical process can be understood in terms of regularly recurring routines or frames, which are defined as either rigid and unchanging or creative and changing behavioural interactions. Fogel et al. (2002) analysed these frames in a case study of one child and her mother’s behavioural interactions during three periods, namely, 0–6 months, 6–12 months and 12–18 months.

This mutual influence of parent and infant is manifested not only behaviourally but also verbally. Basic to development is the child’s ability to distinguish the self ‘I’ from the other ‘You’, as it allows the child to make sense of his or her emotions vis-à-vis the other’s emotions. In the negotiation of meaning that is always present between the person issuing a message and the person receiving the message, one of the key elements is the reference of personal pronouns. The first and second person pronouns are especially important for communication because of the implications they have for both participants in the speech event. Among the pronouns that refer to elements of the environment, it is assumed that ‘I’ and ‘we’ represent the speaker or writer, and ‘you’ the addressee (hearer or reader). However, the referent of these pronouns is not always so clear. As Biber et al. (1999: 329) point out, ‘the meaning of the first person plural is often vague’ or ‘the second person “you” is similar to “we” in being used with different intended referents’. This vagueness has led these authors to state that it is usually left to the addressee to infer who is included in the reference. According to Fortanet (2004), the use of these personal pronouns is an important indicator of how audiences are conceptualized by speakers. She argued that the use of ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘we’ is especially marked as a rhetorical indicator, which clarifies the level of attempted rapport and involvement of the speaker with the audience. Fortanet (2004) analysed the inclusive and exclusive use of ‘we’. Using ‘we’ inclusively is a rhetorical device which establishes a common concern, interest or responsibility, whereas when ‘we’ is used exclusively, it distances the speaker from the audience. Relating the
choice of pronouns to the intended creation of distance between the speaker and the receiver of the message, Kamio (2001) highlights the gradation of closeness from ‘we’, which is psychologically the closest through ‘you’ to ‘they’, which he considers as ‘psychologically very distant’ (Kamio 2001: 1120–1121).

Research indicates that in speech to babies and young children, parents use ‘you’ most frequently followed by ‘I’ followed by ‘we’ (Laakso and Smith 2004). Mirroring child-directed speech, the use of ‘we’ in the child’s own language occurs relatively late compared to ‘I’ or ‘you’. Nelson (1975) found when analysing spontaneous speech of twenty-four 2 year olds, that only five of the twenty-four children used ‘we’ a total of seven times. Hence, only very few children said ‘we’ and those who uttered ‘we’ did so only very infrequently. Children, however, do understand that when they are addressed as ‘you’ it means that the ‘I’ is requested to respond. This becomes clear when one analyses the use of ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘we’ in a corpus of child language, where, according to Nelson’s (1975) findings, the use of ‘I’ (231 times) is much more prevalent than the use of ‘you’ (45 times) or ‘we’ (7 times).

In the first few months of life, infant vocal behaviours are temporally coordinated with the adult (Jaffe et al. 2001). This has the effect that the parent engages with the infant in communicative acts in which the infant is seen as a partner in conversation. Parental perception of the infant as a communicator results in variations of pitch of voice when addressing the preverbal baby. This can be illustrated with the use of ‘real’ and ‘rhetorical’ questions.

The function of question

When analysing the pitch of voice in real and rhetorical questions addressed to an infant aged 1–16 months, as shown in Chapter 8, Reissland (1998) found that around 15 months of age real and rhetorical yes–no questions were distinguished through pitch of voice. Hence, by 15 months of age, parents take into account what they believe the child to be capable of ‘understanding’ at some level not only by modifying their infant-directed speech generally (e.g. Ferrier 1978), but also, more specifically, by varying the pitch of voice depending on the type of question asked. At this age rhetorical questions were asked more playfully, indicated by the higher pitch. Given that a question will usually indicate a switch of roles (Schlegloff 1979), one function of the difference in pitch between real and rhetorical
questions at 15 months might be to indicate turns or non-turns in conversations.

Regarding older children, Bergin and Bergin (1999) argued that adults influence the child’s emotional interpretation by the control strategies they use in everyday discipline encounters that occur during routines. These routine interactions or frames provide the context for development of self-control, which leads not only to compliance by the child when being asked to do something, but also to internalization of societal values. Bergin (1987) found that reasoning with children during discipline is correlated with compliance and pro-social behaviours even in preverbal toddlers. Bergin (1987) argued that the most important component of the discipline encounter is how the child interprets his or her feelings.

How does language change over time during emotional exchanges between the father and his daughter? In order to answer this question, the father’s conversations with his daughter, while she was on the changing table, were examined. Furthermore, the ability and willingness to comply with a request develops over time. The question of how this effective dialogic interaction is established at birth and followed up in the preverbal period is discussed in this chapter. Although speech varies as a function of infant age and communicative abilities (Stern et al. 1982; Broerse and Elias 1994; Kitamura and Burnham 2003), suggesting that the use of child-directed language is motivated by a desire to feel in communication with the infant (Brown 1977; Snow 1977), certain tasks such as getting dressed have to be accomplished from birth. The use of language in order to persuade a child to comply with demands has to reflect the child’s language skills. However, in spite of her virtually non-existing language ability, the father uses rhetorical devices from birth in order to persuade his daughter to comply with his demands.

In order to determine the way in which the father uses rhetoric to induce the baby to cooperate with the task of getting dressed, the frequency of the use of pronouns was analysed over the first 15 months. Instances in which the father talked to his daughter about the task of getting dressed and used the pronouns ‘I’, ‘you’ or ‘we’ were counted as a percentage of utterances used while getting her dressed. Furthermore, the frequency of the first person plural, given its rhetorical use to mean either ‘I’, ‘you’ or ‘we’, was analysed. Lastly, taking as an example ‘one frame’ or ‘interaction ritual’ (e.g. Fogel et al. 2002) in which the father talked about socks, will be followed in terms of the infant’s development from passive recipient to an interested conversational partner.
The use of ‘I’ and ‘you’

The development of Toto’s ability to distinguish the self ‘I’ from the other ‘you’ was tested by analysing her father’s changing use of ‘I’ and ‘you’ in conversation with her from 1 to 15 months of age. There was a significant positive correlation between the mean frequency of using ‘I’ as a percentage of the text analysed and the age of the baby. As Toto grew older so there was more use of ‘I’, indicating that Toto’s father referred more often to himself as his daughter matured. In contrast there was no significant correlation between Toto’s age and use of ‘you’. Hence, the father’s use of ‘you’ did not change over time. Rather comparing the use of ‘I’ with the use of ‘you’, the ‘you’ is used by the father significantly more often at all ages of his daughter. The ‘I’ was used a mean percentage of 1.13 times per conversation while speaking to his daughter whereas ‘you’ was used with a mean percentage of 6.12 times per conversation, indicating that Toto’s father addressed his daughter more often than he referred to himself while talking to her.

In terms of the use of ‘we’ as rhetorical device meaning ‘I’, ‘you’ or ‘we’, her father used the inclusive ‘we’ from the start of the recordings. In fact, the ‘we’ meant ‘I’, at the earlier ages.

When trying to dress his daughter in a shirt at 1 month, her father says:

Now we have to put another hand in there. Oh, come on now. A little bit of cooperation would be great. It takes two to put on a shirt, you know.

At 5 weeks of age he told her:

Yea, I know it’s always a terrible war, mm. But I think that this time you might be a bit more cooperative, OK. Last time we got ourselves tied into knots, I admit. But this time maybe . . . ; so I hope you’re going to be in good spirits.

It is only at around the age of 6 months that the father started to use ‘we’ with the meaning of ‘you’. For example, at 6 months the father said after dressing Toto:

Mission accomplished. We’re all dressed now.

Another example is at 8 months where the father uses ‘we’ in terms of ‘you’ when he says:

That’s it. I was interested to hear you practising your German this morning, Toto. Yes, you were saying nein, nein, nein. I heard you in bed this morning. Toto you don’t have much to say this morning. Shall I turn the tape off until you’re more loquacious? OK, let’s get dressed first OK and then we can crawl around, huh. Yea, well perhaps not crawl; we can manoeuvre ourselves, can’t we? That’s what we do. You’re a little manoeuvrer.

Six months is also the age at which the father started to use ‘we’ as a first person plural referring to him and his daughter or him and her mother, such as when talking about what is there for breakfast in the house:

Yeah, yeah, got to get ready for breakfast now. Want some breakfast? We have stodge, uh hum.

Another example at 6 months of age is:

OK, shall I turn it off Toto? Anything you’ve to add, to your memoirs before we go back to the kitchen? Anything you wish to add? I’ll take some of the crumbs with us, m?

When talking about the need for dressing, the father says:

Yea, these are called clothes Toto and they keep us warm in winter; and it indicates that we’re civilized. Yea, unless we’re in St Tropez; perhaps we could holiday in St Tropez this summer. Would you like that?

The father used ‘we’ in three different senses. First, the use of ‘we’ meaning ‘I’ depending on age in months could be observed in 65 per cent of the tape recordings, starting from the first recording at 4 weeks of age with 108 times in which the father said ‘we’ but meant ‘I’. The second most frequent use of ‘we’ meaning ‘we’ as the first person plural started at around 6 months of age and could be observed at all following ages in 38 per cent of the recordings. Third, the use of ‘we’ meaning ‘you’ was least frequently observed starting from 6 months of age in 30 per cent of the recordings. In sum, in the first few months the personal pronoun plural ‘we’ took on the meaning of ‘I’. Only later at around 6 months did the father change the meaning of ‘we’ into either meaning ‘you’, or indicating the first person plural in terms of ‘you and I’ or ‘Mummy and I’.

Putting on socks: what routines can tell us about development

The following analysis concerned changes in the father’s use of personal pronouns occurring in a dyadic context in order to identify changes in the child’s emotional maturity through the father’s comments. Specifically, the father’s speech referring to his daughter’s actions were analysed in what Fogel et al. (2002) called a frame of interaction, namely while the father was engaged in dressing his daughter’s feet with socks.

The father referred to Toto’s socks from the first days of dressing her and hence made ‘socks’ an interesting topic of conversation. For example, when she was just 2 months old, he referred to her socks as shown in the following conversation:

We’ve got the teddy bear (her jump suit with a bear motif ) to put on and then your zero sized socks.

By 4 months of age, he told her to choose her socks by kicking the pair she liked best, such as:

Choose your socks. Red, yellow, blue, green. Yellow, OK. Yellow socks, how pretty.

At 6 months of age the father recorded:

Yea, so we have to choose our socks now, OK? So, if you have dark blue trousers and a bright red shirt; oh you have a lot of socks. You can have white socks. You can have yellow socks. You can have green socks, pink socks, dark blue socks and royal blue socks. What do you think? Green great! Fantastic choice: green with blue and bright red. Yes Toto, very original choice Toto.

At 8 months of age, this game turned around and Toto took control, as a recording testifies where the father complained:

Perhaps I’ll put different socks on, since I don’t know how I’m gonna get those off you.

Later he said:
Who took this sock off? Who took this sock off? I’ve got something for you. You don’t have to take yet another sock off, just play with your clown!

This was also the age (8 months) that the father reported Toto’s use of ‘nein’ meaning no when he said: ‘Yes, you were saying nein, nein, nein, nein.’ This game of taking the socks off lasted for several weeks and the father showed his impatience at times. For example, at 10 months her father said:

Shall we put some socks on, yea? That’s a sock. You don’t have to pull it off immediately. I know you can pull them off if you want to but you don’t have to Toto.

At 11 months the father remarked:

You’ve already taken your socks off. I put them on – you take them off, we’ll be here for hours Toto.

When Toto is 1 year old the father was not amused any more by her actions and asked:

Shall we start this silly ‘put the socks on’ routine? And you can take it off?

Just a few days later he was surprised and exclaimed:

Boy Toto, you’re actually trying to put socks on now. That’s clever!

Hence, this account of dressing his daughter’s feet with socks shows that the father introduced a topic of interest, which, in the present example, is her socks. In the first few months the father was well in control and happy to let his daughter influence the choice of socks to be worn by kicking her legs and apparently choosing their colour. Once she ‘understood’ that her father was interested in her socks, she herself showed that interest. At that time, namely at around 8 months of age, the ‘we’ of a common goal became a definite ‘you’ and ‘I’ as the father and daughter at that time had different goals, because she asserted her new-found interest by pulling her socks off. She was happy to play along with their conflicting aims until, at around 1 year
of age, she surprised her father by trying to put the socks on rather than pulling them off.

**Emotional intelligence in communicative frames**

The first conversations adults have with infants from birth relate directly to the differentiation of the ‘I’ from the ‘you’, by distinguishing verbally the ‘I’ from the ‘you’. This distinction is accompanied by the movement from being a passive recipient of the conversation at the earlier age to becoming an active partner in the communicative exchange. The present study followed this development of emotional intelligence in the context of communicative frames. Fogel et al. (2002) suggested that the dialogical self develops systematically over the first 18 months of life. In the present study the father’s comments to his daughter while getting her dressed were followed from birth to 15 months of age, that is the age when the child can utter ‘No’ and hence arguably has differentiated the aims of the self from the aims of the other.

A clear progression could be discerned in the topic of interest introduced by the father, her socks. Once she ‘understood’ that her father was interested in socks she herself showed that interest. In the first few months, this ‘frame’ was used creatively, in that the interactions were constructed by creatively building a consensus. Hence, the father as well as his daughter appeared well in control and happy with their roles: the father offering a choice by dangling the socks in front of his daughter’s feet and the daughter being free to choose by kicking her legs and apparently choosing their colour. However, this creative framing became rigid as time progressed, at around 8 months of age, when the ‘we’ of a common goal defined by the father as choosing socks and complied with by the daughter became a definite ‘you’ and ‘I’ having different goals. At this time, the daughter asserted a new-found interest, pulling off her socks, which was in conflict with her father’s goal of putting them on her feet. The conflict continued until around 1 year of age, when the daughter changed the rigid frame by surprising her father with a new ability that is, trying to put on the socks rather than pulling them off.

In sum, there is a development from creative frame use to rigid frame use by the father. This change of creative to rigid frame use leads to the development of a creative frame use by the child and with that development to a resolution of the conflict. As the child started to perceive why the father was not amused by her opposition and that this opposition resulted in negative affect, she not only showed an
increasing understanding of another’s emotions but also found a way of gaining approval. She did this by indicating in her behaviour that she knew what was required of her, and she began to be able to act on this requirement as was expressed by the father’s approval when he said: ‘Boy Toto, you’re actually trying to put socks on now. That’s clever!’

Personal pronoun use has been analysed in terms of children’s cognitive development. Michael Lewis and Ramsey (2004) examined personal pronoun use in relation to pretend play and self-recognition, in young children. They found that at the age of 15 months, children who used personal pronouns were able to recognize themselves in a mirror, compared to children who did not use personal pronouns. Self meta-representation, sometimes referred to as the mental state or the idea of ‘me’, involves the knowledge of the recursive relation ‘I know that I know’ as opposed to the non-recursive relation ‘I know’ that defines the sense of agency present at younger ages (Lewis 1995, 2001). In the present study, the father used the second person pronoun irrespective of the infant’s age. In contrast, the use of the first person pronoun ‘I’ showed an age-related trend. As the baby grew older, so the father referred more often to himself as the ‘I’ as differentiated from the ‘you’. This tendency was analysed in terms of the use of the first person plural, which serves as a rhetorical device to create closeness or distance between the speaker and the listener. Trevarthen and Hubley (1978) argued that a young infant’s experience of ‘primary intersubjectivity’ is established in these proto-dialogues between adult and child and is reflected in the present study where from 1 to 6 months of age ‘we’ meant ‘I’, the father.

Trevarthen and Hubley (1978) suggested that in the second half of the first year, from around 6 months of age, ‘secondary intersubjectivity’ arises, in which the self emerges as part of a mutually regulated interaction. The onset of intentional communication, between 9 and 12 months of age, is marked by the emergence of so-called deictic gestures as well as by the use of word-like sounds for communicative purposes (e.g. Bates et al. 1975; Masur 1983). Deictic gestures such as pointing or showing are often used accompanied by word-like sounds (e.g. the baby points and vocalizes ‘da’ to direct attention to an interesting object), and subsequently by words. This secondary intersubjectivity was reflected in the present study by the use of ‘we’ meaning ‘you’ and hence distancing of the father when he spoke to his daughter, which occurred from around 6 months of age. The daughter’s use of ‘nein’ or ‘no’ was recorded at that time of most conflict between father and daughter.
After 12 months of age, this form of intersubjectivity becomes increasingly symbolic. Between 12 and 15 months of age children start using a new type of gesture, called representational or symbolic (e.g. Acredolo and Goodwyn 1988). Different from deictic gestures, whose referent can be interpreted only by looking at the context, these new gestures represent a specific referent and thus their meaning does not change with context (e.g. child waves her hand meaning ‘bye-bye’). Approximately at the same age range, children produce their first words in order to regulate social interaction, saying ‘hello’ and ‘bye-bye’ (Bloom 1973). This is also the time when in the present study the conflict concerning different aims in the wearing of socks seemed to subside, and instead of pulling off her socks Toto tried to put them on. In terms of emotional intelligence, according to Salovey and Grewal (2005) in their four-branch model of emotional intelligence, the skills needed to show emotional intelligence cannot exist outside of the social context in which they operate. Most importantly, in order to use these skills, a person must be aware of what is considered appropriate behaviour by the people with whom he or she interacts.

In summary, in this chapter the development of emotionally intelligent behaviour by Toto could be observed in two aspects of interaction, the changing use of personal pronouns in the father’s speech as he perceives her developing abilities and the child’s changing behaviour recounted by her father, in view of the father’s emotional reactions.