

*A 'Dialogue between Equals':
The Role of Agenda-Setting Questions in Coaching*

The popular, relatively new helping format executive coaching has recently drawn the interest of academics looking to solidify its theoretical foundations with empirical verifications of its experience-based practice literature. The path followed by applied linguists for this purpose has partly been paved by linguists with a focus on a close, widely analyzed helping format, psychotherapy: in fact, our investigation of questioning practices in coaching – of central importance in practice literature but only superficially explored until the start of the “Questioning Sequences in Coaching” project – is guided by insights from the examination of psychotherapeutic conversations with *Gesprächsanalyse* (Spranz-Fogasy 2020). In psychotherapy, questions are used for elucidation, explanation-finding and solution-orientation purposes; in coaching, professionals also seem to make use of questions to explicitly negotiate the coaching agenda with their clients. This (tentative) coaching-specific finding can be explained by coaching’s rationale conception of the process as a ‘dialogue between equals’ (Jautz 2017).

In this talk, I explore how agenda-setting questions, through the collaborative negotiation of the coaching agenda in the framework of the basic activity ‘Defining the Situation’ (Graf 2019), contribute to constructing expert positions for both coach and client. To illustrate, I draw upon examples from authentic conversations from Emotional Intelligent Coaching (Graf 2019) and analyze these with *Gesprächsanalyse* (Deppermann 2008).

References

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