Research questions answered: Leipzig

Case:

- 13 learners and 3 coaches took part in this pilot. Learners and coaches worked together in 1 to 1 sessions.
- Each learner was offered to take part in 6 up to 12 sessions maximum. With each learner, the actual number of taken sessions varied.
- The sessions lasted between 45 and 80 minutes.
- The teachers initiated the contact to the German classes, so the coaches could present the program to the whole class. Interested learners were asked to a preparatory meeting, where they received further information about the coaching. The first appointments were made within these meetings. Once a week, the coach and the learner met in the classroom after the last lesson had ended. Depending on the school's capacities coaches sometimes had to find a different room in the school, particularly in the second half of the pilot.
  The coaches all worked in different jobs, such as teacher and researcher, and joined the project team for coaching within the pilots.
- Background of the learners:
  The learner's language levels varied between A1 and B1 (estimated).
  Most of the learners were refugees between 18 and 27 years old, some found themselves to be in the condition of constant danger to be deported back into their country of origin.

Learner 1: Male, Somali, in his early 20s, refugee, 12 years in school in Somalia, is able to read and write in L1 and L2.

Learner 2: Male, Kosovar, in his early 20s, in Germany for 3 years, finished high school in Kosovo, wants to study, came to Germany with his family for health care reasons, speaks Albanian, English and German.

Learner 3: Male, Kurd, 25 years old, refugee from Iraq, 9 months in Germany with his little brother, speaks Arabic, Kurdish, English and some German.

Learner 4: Female, 19/20 years old, Albanian, 12 years of school in Albania, wanted to study but came to Germany instead with her family in the summer of 2015.

Learner 5: Male, Kosovar, 19 years old, finished high school in Kosovo, sufficient reading skills in L1, he came to Germany with his parents and 6 brothers and sisters and is responsible for one of the brothers who is chronically ill.

Learner 6: Male, Afghan, 23 years old, L1 is Dari, went to high school in Afghanistan, 1,5 years in Germany, Martial Arts are important to him, went to several championships with his Afghan team in Europe before.

Learner 7: Male, Syrian refugee, 19/20 years old, in Germany since 1 year and 4 months with his little brother, went to a vocational school (for medical technology) in Syria for 3 years, interested in further education, especially regarding the medical sector.

Learner 8: Female, Albanian, 21 years old, 9 months in Germany (without family), came to Germany for personal reasons, residential status is unsafe.

Learner 9: Male, Somali, around 20 years old, went to school for 11 years, learned how to read and write, but has problems in phoneme-grapheme-correspondence. In the beginning of the coaching, he had lived in Germany for about 16 months.

Learner 10: Male, Afghan refugee, 19 years old, no family in Germany, has lived in Germany for around 2 years, went to school in Iran for 4 years.

Learner 11: Male, Kurd from Syria, in his mid 20s, studied 3 years in Syria, married but came to Germany alone in June 2015.

Learner 12: Male, Syrian, in his early 20s, 9 years of school in Syria, in Germany since February 2015, lives here without family, worked as a car mechanic in Syria.

Learner 13: Male, Somali, 20 years old, went to school for 5 years, worked as salesman on a market in Somalia, came without family to Germany in 9/2014.

Collected and analysed data:
- Audio recordings of 52 coaching sessions
- 10 transcripts of audio recordings
- Written records of 47 coaching sessions
- 6 interviews with three coaches
- five interviews with five learners after completion of the pilot, Learner 5, 6, 10, 11 and 13

Section A. Questions concerning the <u>coach</u>

1. **Do the coaches deliver the appropriate, relevant coaching behaviour[1] during the pilot?**

- Coach 1 focused on the language learning behaviour of her coachees. She showed a very positive attitude towards coaching and built up a relationship with the learners very quickly. In her work, she followed the approach of coaching methodology, using various techniques to support learners in developing their self-confidence and self-awareness and tried to encourage them to keep on learning. She used common coaching techniques like active listening, coaching questions, paraphrasing, interpreting and giving feedback.

> **Coach:** And what would be a nice goal for you? What do you dream sometimes, when you look out of the window?
> **Learner:** Well. Did you know, I have seen /eh/ very poor people. Many, in the streets here. And /eh/ all people… I want to proceed, go on and on and on. Until I am a supervisor or many /eh/ like me. And I can help poor people.
> **Coach:** Yeah? That is your dream job?
> **Learner:** Yes [laughs].
> **Coach:** That goes straight to the heart? When you think about it, you can fill your heart?
> **Learner:** When I can do that, I am happy.
> **Coach:** What is an important feeling associated with it? Happiness?
> **Learner:** Yes, but when I work as a cleaner all the time... I can't do this.
> **Coach:** Then you'll be poor yourself.
> **Learner:** Yes, that's it.

The coach endeavoured to work non-directive with the coachees. She improved her techniques throughout the pilot and was constantly trying to find materials that supported learners in building up their self-awareness and self-confidence.

> [A learner talks about being afraid when he has to speak]
> **Learner:** Yes, for example I call a company, okay? The company doesn't say, but I think /eh/ the company believes I cannot speak well. Why do I call? This is how I think.
> **Coach:** You already think, what they think?
> **Learner:** Yes! What they think.
> **Coach:** You don't know it, but you think, they think, that you can't do it.
> **Learner:** Yes, and therefor I am insecure. Yes, yes!
> **Coach:** And is that right? That the company believes you cannot do it? Do you KNOW, what the company thinks?
> **Learner:** No, I believe it.
> **Coach:** It's in your head.
> **Learner:** Yes, in my head.
> […]
> **Learner:** But do you think, it is bad?
> **Coach:** You said something very important earlier. That was a very good thought. //Yes?// You said, when I say it to myself, in my head, I can do it, then it I CAN do it!
> **Learner:** Yes!

- Coach 2 showed an appropriate behaviour, such as active listening, paraphrasing and asking coaching questions. She also used coaching materials that help learners to reflect on their competences and resources (i.e. a drawn staircase for illustrating a reflection on goals and steps that need to be taken). Furthermore, she offered strategy training for those learners who made clear that they needed strategies for understanding and producing texts in vocational school in their regular classes.

> **Coach:** What, what would happen, if could speak German perfectly suddenly? // yes//over night. Tomorrow morning you speak German perfectly.
> **Learner:** In the morning? Okay.
> **Coach:** Yes, over night. Over night it happens: a fee is coming and says: German, from tomorrow on, you can speak German. What do you think what happens then?
> **Learner:** Then I make a vocational training and can speak German fluently then I will make this training and look for a job.

The learner's opinion on the coach:

She was always helpful: What can I learn on my own? She wrote much [on cards] and I have answered. She always asked questions. For example she didn't say: "do it that way". She always said: "That's good, and also that. But what is good for you? She encouraged me, but she didn't say "you have to!"

- Coach 3 used coaching techniques to elicit learner resources, such as valid goals, people to ask for information, learning partners and so on. He also encouraged learners to reflect on

the appropriateness of used strategies and learning materials. Whenever the learners had no idea on how to proceed, he suggested further strategies.

2. Did the coach training help the coaches to deliver relevant coach behaviour?

All coaches agreed that the training was indeed useful, but that it should supposed to be longer. They also suggested that the training should include as much practice and focus on the target group (examples) as possible.

a. Which aspects of the training were particularly helpful/unhelpful and why?

Helpful:
- Introduction to coaching
- Coaching methodology
- Tools for coaching (such as cards with coaching techniques, coaching questions)
- Video analysis
- Coaching cycle
- Tools for resource-oriented coaching
- Continuum of directiveness

Would have been useful to have:
- More time
- Authentic coaching videos representing the context
- Tool box (helpful materials, tools to extend the opportunities of action, like a drawing of a bridge) and regular and permanent supervision
- More extensive role plays

b. Which elements of the training are likely to be helpful to prepare coaches for coaching low literate learners in specific settings (i.e. workplace, further education or community settings?)

Coaches were provided with a reader, containing useful texts, tools for the coaching and exercises for the training. According to the interviews, the coaches considered the following elements to be helpful:
- videos and role-plays
- a clear guideline for conversational techniques (do's and don'ts)

3. How do the coaches feel while working with learners in the way the approach requires: do they enjoy it?

All coaches expressed their joy to experiment with the approach. However, not all learners received the kind of treatment, they had expected or wanted (teaching). The coaches in this approach kept up the non-directive methodology, unless the learner made it clear in the first session that she/ he needed strategy training (teaching) or information. The result regarding learners who matched well with the approach was very positive:

> *"Sometimes there are moments, when you feel understood and when you see a development. It is possible to gain an insight and it's great to be part of this process."*

Section B. Questions concerning the learner

1. Do the learners show increased autonomy in literacy learning?
The learners developed an increasing autonomy, when they had accepted the approach.
The coaches reported about the progress of some learners. It often took some time, until the learners started to change their own behaviour. One of the learners developed a learning plan and identified useful resources to help him organize his further learning (preparation for a vocational training) but did not activate these resources for several weeks. In a later follow-up session he reported about the steps he had taken and reflected on the results from his actions. That made the coach aware that it is part of non-directive coaching not to push learners into actions, but to prepare them for these actions, until the time is right and resources are finally available.
Another learner showed a significant progress when he was interviewed after the coaching. He reported on how useful the articulation of plans had been for him and that he had started to take steps:

> *She [the coach] has written, what I do during the week. Do I have a plan, or not? Without a plan, I cannot live. We've made many decisions on the whiteboard: what is important?*

> *I learnt what I can learn by myself.*

> *Learning German takes time. How can I learn better? You accept that it takes time. Now I read many books and also newspaper for example. She [the coach] encouraged me to read.*

a. What behaviour can be taken as evidence for increased autonomy?
Some learners said that they started to use learning materials (i.e. apps) and strategies more often. This was usually evoked by implemented training or suggested ways of learning. When coaches worked (strictly) non-directive, it was more likely that learners then started to reflect on their learning goals and plans:

> *Ms S. made a plan with me. What comes first? And then she asked questions. Coaching is like that: always questions and answers.*

Furthermore, coaching proved to evoke awareness.

b. Which strategies were attributed to increased autonomy?
It certainly was the articulation of plans that proved to be the most evident and useful strategy for the learners in this pilot. It was evaluated positively by a number of learners:

> *When you have no plan, then you can make a plan. It is good for learning the language.*

> *Everybody has a plan. A plan is good for me!*

Furthermore, social strategies and the awareness of the potential of learning with the help of other people were essential to some of the learners, as was the possibility to ask for problem-solving (i.e. helpful materials to prepare for language requirements in vocational training).

Some learners were reflecting on materials they had used before or got to know through the coaches (i.e. learning platforms or books, written in simple language, graphic novels). Resource enrichment can be useful for some learners.

Some of the participating learners intended to learn about new strategies to solve learning issues at school. Coach 2 (teaching background) supported the learners with strategy training (not coaching in its narrow sense). Commonly used strategies were reading strategies (i.e. finding key words) or to register at the library and use materials from it. The coach saw to it as a result of coaching.

2. **Where there was increase in autonomy,…**
   a. **what role did coaching play?**

The coaches tried to help learners to focus on their own resources ("What am I good at?", "How am I"). In the audio recordings, the learners mostly enjoyed talking about their strengths and focusing on personal traits. The coaches then tried to transfer this back to learning and the learning goal:

> **Coach:** When you are saying this, do you mean "helpful"? You want to help other people?
> **Learner:** Yes. Yes.
> **Coach:** And what about your friends in Damascus or here? Do they also say: I go to [Learner], if I have a problem?
> **Learner:** Yes, maybe. My friends, they call me.
> **Coach:** Are you a good friend?
> **Learner:** Yes. I have a friend from China, okay? I have met her twice here in Germany. And she said: [Learner], you are a good friend! Yes, twice.
> **Coach:** She was feeling good with you. You create a good atmosphere.
> **Learner:** Yes and she said, she feels very calm with me.

Coaching helped to set goals and reflect on whether a goal is realistic or not – which is an important step before planning can be initiated. Coaching was evoking awareness for social, material, financial and personal resources and it build up the learner's self-confidence. One coach concluded that speaking was most helpful for thinking.
Some learner quotes:

> *It was a chance for me, because I have spoken to a person who speaks German, who thinks different. I have learned: I can proceed. For example after our first meeting I was at 0% and then I have continued. But the other 50% I have to do by myself. Before I didn't know I could make it.*

> *I made contact in the coaching. In the beginning I was anxious. With the coach I am not anxious. She is very nice.*

> *The coach was very nice. My opinion becomes stronger through coaching, it helps me to speak – not always alone, and also to listen to another opinion [the opinion of the coach].*

b. what resources are appropriate to develop autonomous literacy learning behaviour?

Coaches agreed that materials were generally helpful, particularly
- visualisation,
- scales (two scales: one for "how important is it" and a second for "how secure do you feel doing it"),
- drawing of a staircase for self-evaluation
- a drawing of a bridge (where am I, where do I want to go?)

to illustrate connections and to support the reflection on the own learning process:

We talked about the staircase: where am I now? Before I have only done, but I did not know, where I was and where I want to be. With coaching I know better, where I go.

[A learner about the spiderweb] It's good, I live in Germany, I have to have a plan. We drew it on the blackboard.

Other helpful resources were considered to be materials that helped to identify resources (see tools for coaches).

3. What did the learners think about coaching as an approach to develop autonomy? (did they think it works, did they like it)

The coaches reported that the learners did not always understand what coaching is and what they could learn during the sessions. Expectations were differing and some learners were irritated in the beginning, especially because they had been asked many questions. Some learners expected assistance, ideas, information, advices, an opportunity to talk. It took some time before learners had a sense for the purpose. The coaches tried to explain, what coaching is and what it is not. When coaches had the feeling, that the learners understood what coaching is about, they decided, if they would continue or not. Those learners who finished coaching expressed their satisfaction and that they would try to make a clear difference to their classes in some quotes:

Coaching is a good idea! Coaching is not "you have to", but in coaching you're asked "what do you want?"

With coaching it is different. Coaching is a good idea, because I can talk with one person. It is better for learning. You can go on with a good idea. I was anxious in the beginning, because I did not know what to do. Now I know better what I have to do in school: for learning you need time. First thinking and then proceeding. That I have learnt in the coaching sessions.

4. Did the background of the coaches influence their approach? i.e. if they were teachers

Yes, the background and the general belief in coaching *as* an effective approach influenced the work of the coaches. They all worked mostly non-directive. Coach 2 (teaching background) was also switching to strategy training (only if indicated), while Coach 1 (no teaching background) did not change the mode.