

## Case 11 – Rheda-Wiedenbrück - Research questions answered

### Case:

- 3 learners in a 1 to 1 setting with one coach (one dropped out when deported)
- Up to six sessions of 30 – 70 Minutes
- Coach and learners did not know each other before.
- Background and Language level of learners:
  - Learner 1: Between 20 and 30 years old, originated from Afghanistan, educational background is unknown. Her first language is Farsi. Reading and writing skills were not indicated as her main problem, her main problem is speaking (A2).
  - Learner 2: In his twenties from West Africa. His main focus lies on improving his speaking abilities and learning about grammar. Reading and writing are not perceived as main problem by the learner. He wants to improve his speaking abilities.
- The pilot took place in a vocational school. The school offers beside a broad field of vocational subjects like structural engineering, wood engineering, health and social-service, nutritional research, domestic science, food-engineering also German as a second language courses. The two learners attended in one of those language courses and were offered to participate voluntarily in the coaching program. The learners were identified by the teacher in advance. In a preparatory meeting the coach presented, what learners can expect from coaching.

### Collected and analysed data:

- Transcript of the audio recordings of learner L2 from all sessions
- Coaching reports
- Two interviews with the coach (after the first three sessions, after the last session)
- One interview with the learner L2 (after the coaching)

### Section A. Questions concerning the coach

#### 1. Did the coaches show an appropriate, relevant coaching behaviour<sup>1</sup> during the pilot?

Two coaches worked with the same learners. Coach 1 led the first session with each participant. She was working strictly non-directive, using techniques like summarizing, paraphrasing, accentuating, asking open behaviour-focussed questions, and listened carefully to the learners,. Consequently the proportion of speech was much higher on the learner's side.

**Coach 1:** Okay. /eh/ What would you like to do here?

**Learner 2:** I would like do how I can speak, when we are here together. //[Hm]// For example, when we both are here and you speak, I can understand everything. //[Hm]// What /eh/ you mean. But for me this is a little difficult. I cannot /eh/ talk like you. //[Hm]// Everything I can say a little bit /eh/ but I cannot /eh/ speak so fast. Or I cannot /eh/ speak so correct.

**Coach 1:** [Hm] So, you are saying, you do understand everything. //Yes// Yes?  
[...]

**Learner 2:** [Hm] Not completely everything, but I understand /eh/ ninety percent I understand. // [Hm] // But I can also speak ninety percent good, but not so fast und not everything is correct. A bit difficult for me. Because of this, I want to do that.

**Coach 1:** Okay, that means ‚speaking‘. Right? It’s about ‚speaking‘ here // Yes // . Okay, right.

**Learner 2:** Because I can /eh/ write well. (.) I can read well. // [Hm] // And then, when only I am: how can I say, when we are together // [Hm] // when I am with my team for example (.) me alone /eh/ (.) how can I say this? For example I play in a team and in this team, everybody is German. // [Hm] // I am French speaking, But I understand everything // [Hm] // But how I can talk with the others so fast – and therefor I want this.

Coach 1 clarifies what coaching is, asks the learner about his expectations and makes it very clear, that it is not a German lesson:

**Coach 1:** Okay. /ehm/ (2s) I would further like to know (.) when you say, I want to work with articles, with prepositions here, what sort of help do you want from me? What should I do?

**Learner 2:** (5s) I can answer this?

**Coach 1:** [laughing] Why not? I have said: I am not a teacher. // Yes? Yes // Yes? German lessons you have got (.) upstairs. I am not your teacher. // Yes // Okay? So I don’t want to show up here every week with copies and papers, okay? And exercises for articles. // [Hm] // /ehm/ (.) we should do this a little different. In a conversation. // Yes // I have also told you, I want to speak little. And you shall speak a lot, because it is about you // Yes // (.) /ehm/ (.) Can you imagine, how we work together on this problem?

**Learner 2:** (2s) I also have an idea. When it works (3s). Last time I have already said it, the question. // [Hm] // I would like /eh/ to speak well. // [Hm] // Yeah. (2s) My problem is this (.) really important that is. // [Hm] // Yes.

**Coach 1:** Okay. // [Hm] // Mh (3s) imagine, we start with the holidays today, okay? The coaching is over. The holidays started. // Yes // /ehm/ How do you know, that the coaching was good? That it helped?

The clarification of what coaching is, has evidently proved to be significantly important throughout all pilots.

The second coach worked partly non-directive and partly directive, she also gave advices and made suggestions. The proportion of the speech of the learner was less here. Furthermore, coach 2 controlled the learning process and used coaching materials to structure the learner’s resources and plan the learning. She worked along the coaching process until the learning plan had been developed and then switched into a teaching mode, letting the learner know, that they will now work on the language. The focus immediately changed from (reflexion) of behaviour to linguistic issues.

## 2. Did the training help the coaches to show a relevant coach behaviour?

The coaches took part in a language-coach-training, extern the ALL-SR project. Both coaches have proved to have coaching knowledge (procedure, contents etc.) and skills (methodology). They have

shown significant differences in their behaviour, especially in terms of directiveness. While coach 1 felt confident with the approach, coach did not entirely, and expressed that she was not sure if coaching questions were helpful for the learners and how to proceed any further. She then switched into directive conversation (telling, instructing) and helped the learner to achieve his goal regarding the grammar. A closer look on the data reveals that the coaching part was more directive, too.

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

The coaches only took part in a short introduction of our approach as they were both familiar with language coaching. Coach 2 expressed that the most important information was that ALL-SR coaching is strictly non-directive.

**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?)**

The introduction regarding the materials.

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

Coach 2 felt that a strictly non-directive approach is not working too well with this target group. Furthermore she said that this was frustrating for one of her learners. For coach 2 it was important to include own ideas into the coaching sessions, too. From her perspective this was the moment, when the sessions gathered momentum. The work on specific linguistic issues she considered to be very motivating for the learner (she brought materials into the sessions/ resource enrichment).

**Section B. Questions concerning the learner**

**1. Do the learners show increased autonomy in literacy learning?**

One of the three learners had to leave the country long before the coaching ended, so it is not possible to say anything about her development.

Learner 1: Learner 1 from Afghanistan did not show much development. Coach 2 argues in the interview that the learner's environment was so difficult, that talking about personal resources was rather frustrating (she reported about no support from the family, full responsibility for all family affairs and house-keeping). According to her, in this specific case the approach was not helpful. The question that we came up with is a hypothetical one: Is a development of alternatives (resources) possible through strictly non-directive coaching? Would learner 1 find her own solutions with the methodology of coach 1?

Learner 2: The audio transcripts of the learner 2 are showing a development in learner autonomy. There is an evidence for a development through more consciousness/ awareness for the own

learning behaviour. Coaching questions, paraphrasing, accentuating, scaled questions and summarizing helped to reflect on this.

**Coach 1:** Okay /ehm/ you always say: I can speak German well or I cannot speak it well, right? // [Hm] // ehm, I'd like to know (2s) // Yes? // when your German is that, and I say zero – this is zero – zero means bad. // Bad, yes? // Yes? And ten (.) means, my German is very good. I am happy with it. What would you say, where are you now? (3s)

**Learner 2:** From zero to ten.

**Coach 1:** Exactly. From zero to ten. Zero: My German is bad. Ten: my German is very very good.. I am happy with it. (.) Where are you?

**Learner 2:** I can say, zero to ten? // [Hm] // (2s) I am (3s) there. // [Hm] // (.) Between the middle and here.

**Coach 1:** Yeah, just make a cross here or something.

**Learner 2:** I am here.

**Coach 1:** Okay. That is quite high. // [Hm] // Yes? More than half? [...]

**Learner 2:** Yes. That's my opinion.

**Coach 1:** That is at about six or seven, yes? What do you think, your friends would say where you are?

**Learner 2:** For my friend (.) for my honest friend (.) I think (.) I have no problem with the language. // [Hm] // Good. (.) for now. I talk like her or him. But she believes, I am there [writes something].

**Coach 1:** At ten.

**a. What behaviour can be taken as evidence for increased autonomy?**

This learner found it very helpful to think about resources and how he could structure them into a learning plan. This learning plan was not for a particular learning project, but for learning German in general. To see the learner's evoked consciousness, it being developed throughout the coaching, is an important source for any further autonomous behaviour. What we know about this learner is, that he pinned his learning plan into his room, as a resource reminder. Further he started to use other learning material independently, material he did not use before (a book on grammar for example).

**b. Which strategies were attributed to increased autonomy?**

Thinking about learning (metacognitive strategies) and the use of new materials.

## 2. Where there was increase in autonomy,...

### a. what role did coaching play?

Metacognitive strategies were supported through reflective questions, especially with Learner 2. The positive result was a learning plan that included visible resources, such as learning materials, places where one can learn well, an ideal time for working as well as personal traits and cognitive resources, such as knowledge and skills. The learner found it very helpful to be aware of these resources and structure them. As coach 2 also reports, the learner has expressed his satisfaction about the new state of consciousness and found it very helpful to have a clear idea about this. However, the question arises, what makes the approach very helpful for one learner (learner 2), while another learner (learner 1) does not feel supported by the approach. Our discovery highlighted the need for more research in the area. In particular this means to investigate the correlation between coaching success and learner's expectations towards this kind of support, the language level as well as coaching methodology.

### b. did any literacy learning strategies respond to coaching more? (Which ones, evidence)

The use of helpful learning materials as well metacognitive strategies (planning).

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

- materials to reflect on personal resources (social resources, time management, materials for learning, traits, social resources) and the development of a learning plan

**Coach 2:** Well. Have a look at this paper (shows learning plan) once more and tell me, if that is okay for you.

**Learner 2:** Yes.

**Coach 2:** Yes?

**Learner 2:** It /eh/ makes me happy that (.). I think that is really good. Very interesting.

**Coach 2:** Yes, that you have such a structure, //yes, yes// and can follow this plan.

**Learner 2:** This is my opinion, when somebody does not know, what he has to do, for learning German, it doesn't work. It doesn't work so fast. //Sure.// But when someone /eh/ knows, what he should do, with the time /eh/ it works faster.

**Coach 2:** That works faster.

**Learner 2:** I am happy. Very good!

- learning materials, particularly books and online material

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

Learner L2 was very satisfied with the approach and expressed his optimism about an expected learning access (speaking).

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

Yes. The teacher experience as well as the coach training have influenced the two coaches' behaviour. However, even though both coaches were teachers and took part in the coach training, their behaviour differed. Consequently other factors, such as confidence as coach as well as the attitude towards non-directive coaching need to be considered in further research.