

Yasmin Aksu

**Using the micro-level perspective of
conversation analysis to improve
communication in supervision**



Structure

1. One-on-one supervision in Germany: History, target groups, topics and functions
2. Implications
3. How can conversation / discourse analysis be of use in supervision (and coaching) research?
4. Example: Showing empathy - making the supervisee's issue ,supervisable'
5. Questions / discussion

One-on-one Supervision

Target groups: therapists, counsellors, social workers; people in the medical field; teachers, pastors / pastoral caregivers... **also: managerial staff**

trained supervisor

~ 60-90min



professional
(= supervisee)

once a month / biweekly

Purpose:

- self reflection, decrease of burnout risk
- work through / solve intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts
- monitor work quality? increase skills / enhance performance?

History and values

- two roots: social work and psychotherapy
- open for complex intra- and interpersonal problems
- socio-critical
- loyal to the supervisee's goals

How goal- and efficiency-oriented can or should supervision be?

Implications or What makes a supervisor's job so difficult?

- open for complex intra- and interpersonal problems and lots of different target groups
=>
- a supervisor doesn't know what a supervisee will bring up and what he/she expects
- a supervisor wants / has to provide supervision, not psychotherapy – nor training or coaching
- a supervisor wants / has to demonstrate empathy, but there needs to be a 'supervisable' problem

Conversation and discourse analysis

Conversation / discourse analysis

- looks closely at transcripts of authentic conversations
- identifies communicative tasks
- identifies forms and functions of micro behavior

Example:

‚back-channel behavior‘: „hmhm“, „yeah sure“, nodding...

‚turn-claiming behavior‘: „I see, I see, I see“

How supervisors handle this challenge: transcript

Demonstrating empathy and understanding

[1]

SE [v] Aber das ist nicht jetzt das Problem. Mein mein Problem... jetzt komm ich zu
 SE [vE] But this is now not the problem. My my problem... now I'm moving on to

[2]

SE [v] meinem Problem • ja, ((ea)) ähmm • • • es ist so dass ähm... ((1,4s)) Es gibt ne Gruppe
 SE [vE] my problem • yes, ((ga)) umm • • • the fact of the matter is that um... ((1,4s)) There is a group of

[3]

SE [v] von Mitarbeitern unter den neunzehn • • die ähmm ((5s)) ((ea)) die einerseits...
 SE [vE] staff members among these nineteen • • who um m m ((5s)) ((inhales)) who on the one hand...

[4]

SE [v] Die wollen gerne die Veränderung aber wenn es um Veränderung dann geht,
 SE [vE] They want PTCL the change but when it is about change then,

[5]

SR [v] Wasch mir den Pelz aber mach mich nicht nass.
 SR [vE] Let me have my cake and eat it, too.
 SE [v] dann • sind sie • ähm ((1,2s)) ja...
 SE [vE] then • they are • um ((1,2s)) yeah...

[6]

SR [v] Die wollen dass es anders ist, aber die
 SR [vE] They want it to change, but they
 SE [v] Jaa, jaa, also die wollen dann doch nicht. • • So. • • Ja. • nicht s... • •
 SE [vE] Yeah, yeah, PTCL then they don't want it after all. • • Like that. • • Yes. • not s... • •

[7] +

SR [v] wollen sich nicht verändern. • • Hm.
 SR [vE] don't want to change themselves. • • Hm.
 SE [v] Genau. ((ea)) Unnd es ist so dass die auch ähmm • •
 SE [vE] Exactly. ((inhales)) Annd the fact of the matter is that they also um • •

How supervisors handle this challenge: summary

Supervisors demonstrate openness, empathy and understanding...

They

- use open invitations, sometimes even incomplete phrases
- accept interruptions, give the turn up quickly
- prefer ,hm' as back channel signal
- invite ,speaker continuation' by maintaining long pauses
- support supervisee's utterances: offer metaphors, rewordings, ...

... while making the problem ,supervisable‘:

- after problem presentation: supervisors word supervisee’s goal / need / concern
 - => signal understanding – give the supervisee the opportunity to correct
 - => show their diagnostic competencies
 - => make sure the goal / need / concern can be worked with and met in and through supervision
- de-topicalize private emotions or make them part of the workplace problem
- implicitly (!) steer the conversation towards the supervisee’s options to actively influence / improve the situation
- develop suggestions that build upon these options

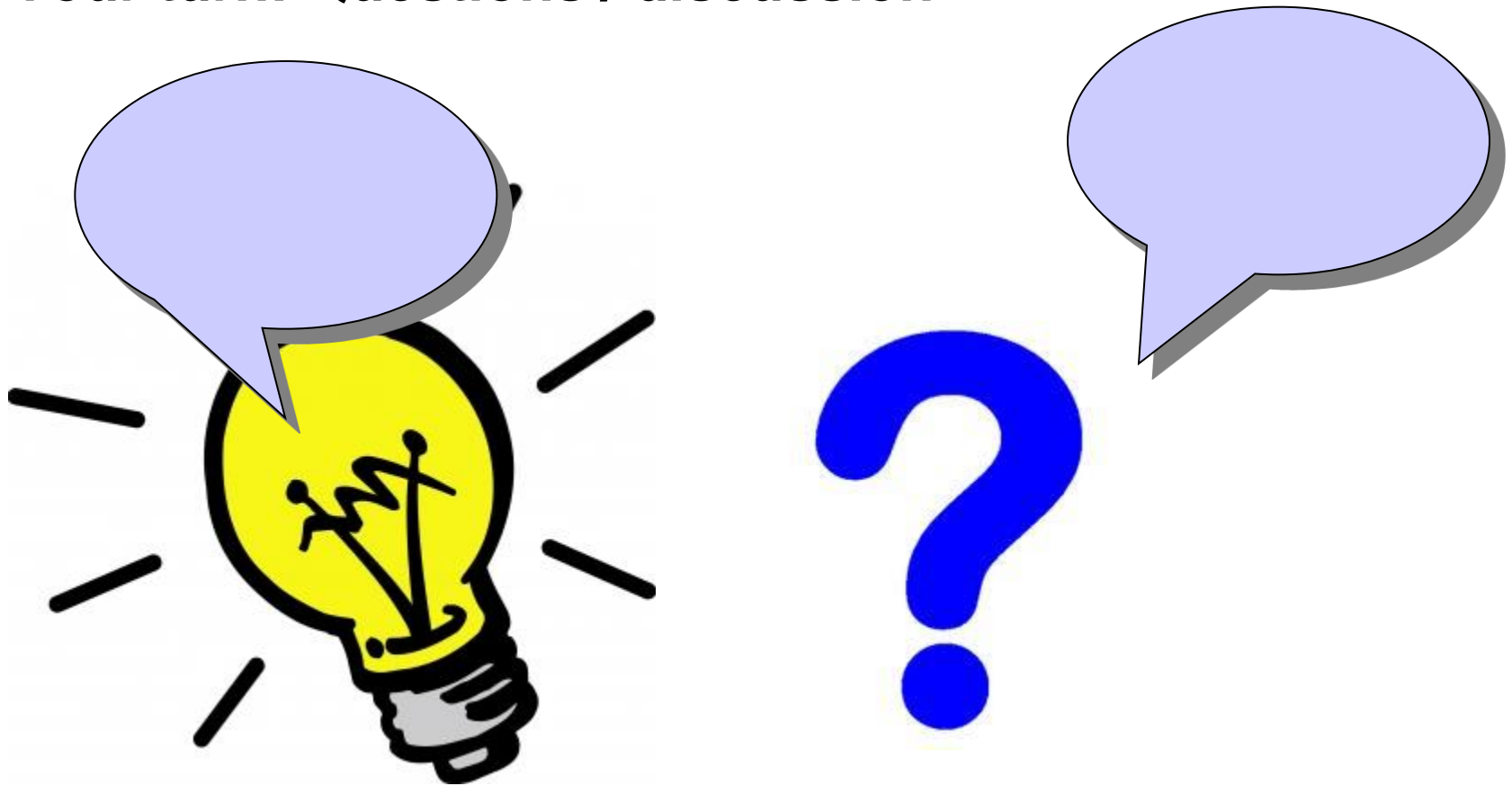
How supervisees (could) react

They either accept the supervisor's strategies...

... or they (secretly) try to ,push their own agenda':

- take up the suggestions in an only ,formally responsive' manner
 - steer back to problem presentation, oftentimes including dramatizing metaphors or stressing strong negative feelings
 - develop completely different ideas
 - stop audible back channeling; don't take up the turn
- ... but they never openly refuse the supervisor's ideas!

Your turn: Questions / discussion



Thank you very much for your attention!