Revised Abstract

Language and the Construction of Connection in Mediation:
An Interactional Linguistic Perspective on a Psychotherapy-Related Practice

This presentation forms part of a joint reflection with Traudl Heupgen, whose contribution is based on a role-played mediation in a learning context. My own analysis focuses on a modelled mediation video (Höch, 2018), where a mediator uses emotion cards ("Gefühlsmonster") as visual prompts. Although the mediation analysed here is modelled rather than naturally occurring, it provides valuable insights into how connection is constructed through language and interactional practices.

In this setting, the mediator uses visual prompts to facilitate access to feelings and initiate talk (Schnarrenberger, 2021). However, our findings show that language remains the central resource for constructing connection. Through sequential organization, turn design, and formulations, the mediator aligns with each participant, links their discourses, and creates a shared interactional space. The analysis highlights three main practices:

1. Positioning oneself as an enunciative subject while inviting the other's perspective.
2. Linking contributions across turns to establish continuity between opposing viewpoints.
3. Creating opportunities for reciprocal address, allowing participants to be recognized as subjects.

While the work is informed by Benveniste's view of language as constitutive of intersubjective presence, the focus here is empirical: we analyze how mediators use interactional resources to manage participation, negotiate meaning, and enable affiliation. By adopting the vocabulary of interactional linguistics, the study shows that connection is not a psychological given but constructed moment by moment through linguistic practices.

This approach highlights mediation as a related practice to psychotherapy, where language similarly plays a pivotal role in building relationships and facilitating change.