

## Examining Communication in Penal Court Proceedings

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In this article, the conduct of hearings in criminal court proceedings in Slovenia was examined. The research question addressed which interrogation approach is more common; the information gathering approach or the coercive approach that seeks to establish dominance over the interviewee and forces him or her to provide the expected statements. For analysis, 93 transcripts of audio recordings of court hearings from various county and district courts were obtained. Hearings were analyzed using a customized technique for assessment of the quality of investigative interviews - the GQM (The Griffiths Question Map). Each interrogation question and comment was categorized, and chronological graphs with a typology of questions and comments were produced. Three qualified and independent evaluators conducted the analyses of hearings, which were classified into forced, unqualified, qualified into the category of witness hearings. The results showed that the examined court hearings mostly use inappropriate closed YES/NO questions, which may often lead to incomplete and inaccurate information. Coerced and qualified interrogations are a rarity. Most hearings belong to the group of unqualified hearings, where suggestive (leading) questions are too often used. It appears that interviewers are not sufficiently aware of the consequences of using risky questions and techniques, such as jumping between hearing topics, firing questions, asking multiple questions, and forced-choice questions. Such interrogation increases anxiety, lowers self-confidence and a sense of certainty in memory. It leads to confusion and contradictions in the statements of those interrogated and forces them to make statements that they consider expected by the interviewers. In this way, we obtain less information, the credibility of which is also usually more questionable.

**Keywords:** court interrogation, interrogation techniques, question types, Griffiths Question Map

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