Many people believe that language is a tool used to describe and report on reality. Accordingly, the scientific imperative confronting organizational scientists is to discover the independent reality of organizations and to improve the instrumentality of their management. But this is a limited view of language.

Language is not only content; it is also context and a way to recontextualize content. We do not just report and describe with language; we also create with it. And what we create in language "uses us" in that it provides a point of view (a context) within which we "know" reality and orient our actions.

The purpose of this special issue is to expand on the second point of view of language by looking at organizations as phenomena in and of language. Rather than consider organizations as some "thing" that exists independent of language and that is only described and reported on in language, the contributors to this issue start from the point of view that organizations can be understood as collaborative and contending discourses. As such, we can consider organizations as material practices of text and talk set in currents of political economy and sociohistory--in time and space. From this point of view, what an organization is and everything that happens in and to it can be seen as a phenomenon in and of language. There are, however, differing ways of engaging with organizations and organizing as linguistic/discursive phenomena. These forms of engagement can be encapsulated within several discernible but nevertheless interrelated and interpenetrating strands:

• foci of engagement--we can use language as a vehicle for analyzing and exploring organizations and organizing (language as a means to an end) or treating organizations as sites for language analysis (language as an end in itself);

• methods of engagement--there is a rich array of methodological alternatives available, including conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, content analysis, deconstruction, narrative analysis, intertextuality, and critical discourse analysis;

• levels of engagement--it is possible to think of analyses operating at different levels, ranging from "micro" (e.g., discrete organizational episodes or conversations) through "meso" (e.g., broader patterns and networks of organizational interaction) to "macro" (e.g., grand narratives and metadiscourses with wider social implications); and

• modes of engagement--we can interrogate organizations and organizing processes by privileging monologic, dialogic, or polyphonic perspectives.

In terms of methods and levels of engagement, we endorse methodological diversity and multilevel analyses. In particular, we wish to encourage more work that integrates

differing language-based approaches and that seeks to connect micro and macro discursive phenomena. That said, our eclecticism does not extend to either the focus or mode of engagement. For management scholars, we believe the primary focus should be on developing insights into the nature and complexity of organizations (through language), rather than insights into language (through organizations).

Equally, a mode of engagement that treats organizations as sites of monological coherence and univocal harmony is, in our view, an unrealistic and untenable position. In short, there is always more than one possible reading of any organizational event or situation. For this reason, we view discourse as the intermingled play of differences in meanings mediated through socially constructed language practices (some of which are hegemonic), especially in genres of verbal utterances such as stories and conversations, as well as in material inscriptions in other texts. We also see this as encompassing the ways in which texts are intertextual, collectively produced and reproduced, and distributed and redistributed for consumption and reconsumption across discursive divides. Within this point of view, organizations are heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981): diverse and constantly emerging and changing fragments of contending multivoiced discourses and speech forms with local and more macro situated contexts.

Our call for papers states, "We are looking for articles that reconceptualize accepted ideas of organizations and their management inside a language perspective, as well as the application of language-based perspectives to the understanding of phenomenon in organizations." Also, it states, "If we view language as context, then what happens to our understanding of organizations and their management?"

To frame the Special Topic Forum on Language and Organization, we briefly summarize here "a debate on discourse" in volume 7, issue 3, of Organization. The organizers, participants, and commentators of the debate raise questions that contributors to the current AMR seek to address. Oswick, Keenoy, Grant, and Marshak set out the debate question as follows: "What is the relation between discourse, organization, and epistemology?" (2000: 511-512).

Chia takes one extreme by proposing that phenomena such as organizations "do not have a straightforward and unproblematic existence independent of our discursively-shaped understanding" (2000: 513). For Chia, organizations are constructed in discursive acts of material inscriptions and verbal utterances occurring in space-time (2000: 513). In short, organizations are linguistic, discursive ontological activity. However, invoking Whitehead's (1929) "Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness," Chia asserts a duality between social objects called "organizations" and socially constructed discourse mistaken for those objects. He sidesteps the choice between discourse about organization and discourse within organization and decides discourse is organization.

Reed (2000) sees that Foucauldian discourse analyses (together with postmodern and linguistic turns) have had a deepening impact on organization studies in the past decade. As his debate move, Reed asserts that there are ontological, epistemological, and theoretical weaknesses in Foucauldian discourse analysis that need to be "repaired":

1. Radical ontological constructivism, where reality is literally "talked" and "texted" into existence, "asserts that there is nothing outside discourse but more discourse: all reality, natural and social alike, is discursively contingent and fabricated" (Reed, 2000: 525). This move marginalizes nonlinguistic aspects of political economy that constrain social action.
2. Radical epistemological constructivism/ relativism restricts itself to nominalist forms of theory and explanation. There are multiple and relative discourses that sustain meaning and knowing through talk and text.
3. Agency is downplayed in the construction, reproduction, and transformation of discursive formations. This leads to a problem of discursive determinism; the functioning of discourses is treated as largely autonomous and independent of human agency. Some agents have powerful advantages to manipulate others through discourse and language practices. They are not as passive as Foucauldian discourse analysis contends.
4. Localism--Foucauldian discourse analysis marginalizes power relations at institutional levels. The tactical, localized microlevel of power underestimates, for example, the impact of hierarchical structure and practices, as well as the force of marginal resistance groups to reappropriate language and discourse of official institutionalized power.
5. Ideologies get reduced to just discourse, which marginalizes the import of political, economic, and cultural processes that constitute and reproduce organizational and social practices in ways other than just talk and text. For example, racist and sexist ideologies are constructive and legitimating in nondiscursive forms of discrimination. While discursive and linguistic practices are a part of ideological socialization, wider political economy and historical contexts of hegemony come into play in material practices, such as physical segregation and profiling.

To repair these five Foucauldian discourse analysis deficiencies, Reed (2000) proposes realist discourse analysis. His critical realism discourse would begin with ontology that conditions, if not contains, linguistic and discursive practices. This is in direct counterpoint to social constructivist ontology, which either posits discursive relativism or reduces everything to linguistic and processual flows and flux. Organizations have flux and flow, but also permanence, which gives order and direction. Discourse and linguistic practices are, for Reed, "the objective effects and ontological referents of relatively stable material resources and durable social relations which bring them into existence, through the medium of agency, as constituent features of social reality " (2000: 528).

Parker disagrees with both Chia and Reed and argues instead that the debate over social constructivism and critical realism misframes a more important concern, beyond just "understanding" to "changing" organizations: "It seems to me that (at the present time) the interest in 'epistemology' and 'discourse' within organization theory has foregrounded problems of fact and tended to marginalize questions of value" (2000: 519). Discursive and linguistic epistemological relativism versus ontological realism debates in organization theory, in short, do not address matters of moral value. Parker, like Reed, objects to a fixation on language and discourse. Reed wants to focus on how texts and

talk function in the material condition, both sociohistorically and politicoeconomically. Parker, however, seeks to reframe the debate to "What discourse [do] we want to sponsor?" (2000: 523).

Tsoukas (2000), the fourth debater, takes a "both are right" compromise in the critical ontological realist versus social epistemological constructivist approaches to language and discourse. He starts by assuming such questions are undecidable. Tsoukas disavows the duality in which some critical realists think there is an extralinguistic reality beyond text and talk, while some social constructivists think there is just text and talk. Both have a part of the puzzle: there is social history and political economy beyond text and talk, and this "real" depends on how people talk about, text about, and thereby give meaning to markets, organizations, and culture. Discourse and language can have ontological existence and epistemological diversity (Tsoukas, 2000: 532). However, the relationship between being in the world of linguistic institutions and discursively knowing that world is not linear, such that while our beliefs, talk, and texts emerge in material practices, we cannot be certain about cause-effect relationships within and among organizations. And when we think we are certain, relationships drift and shift in historical situations across time and space.

Like Parker, Tsoukas wants to reject the rivalry between critical realism and social constructivism, and, without naming it, he poses a hermeneutic alternative. That is, organizations spiral through prestory (or prediscourse) through social constructed plots that get historically adopted (in time and space), only to be dislodged as resistance to institutionalized talk and texts keeps the spiral refolding. Keenoy, Oswick, and Grant conclude the debate by asking, "So what?" (2000: 542-544).

The articles in this AMR special issue on language and discourse sample different epistemological and ontological positions in the Organization debate. At one extreme are articles in which the authors assert that organizations are discursively and linguistically constituted. At the other are important institutional and political economy situations beyond text and talk. Beyond the extremes, there are dialectic positions. Discourse and language are forms of organization, and organization is a form of language and discourse. Beyond such debate, there are important questions concerning what kind of discourse we want to create and how free we are to constitute new discourses.

Perspectives in the issue range from social construction (Schwandt, 1994), to Foucault's (1972,1979) discursive power and control, to critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Kress, 1990, 1993; van Dijk, 1993), to Kristeva's (1980) contributions to intertextuality. The articles in the issue have differing perspectives on the relationship among language, discourse, epistemology, and the ontology of organizing.

We now briefly summarize how each article in this issue relates to the main discourse language theories and the unfolding debate over epistemology and ontology in management and organization studies.

Mary Ann Von Glinow, Debra L. Shapiro, and Jeanne M. Brett ask, "Can We Talk, and Should We?" Their analysis of managing conflicts in multicultural teams highlights linguistic-related challenges of the social construction perspective. Theirs is a "foci of engagement" using language and discourse to explore a site of language and discourse analysis. In this case, they take issue with "talking it out" in candid dialogue--a quite common recommendation said to repair conflict-strained and interpersonally sensitive relationships.

In some multicultural and stressed contexts, it can be impossible to find the words to socially construct a story. The authors explore their foci of engagement in the nonlinear, fragmented, image-driven qualities of emotional situations in multicultural teams. This can be described as postmodern narration--an event where the fragmentation of time and space is too shattered, as in the collapse of the World Trade Center; such situations leave storytellers too overwhelmed by all the bits and pieces to speak in a coherent narrative (*Boje*, 2001: 132). Dialogue follows language, the piecing together of fragmented experience, and then networking across polycontextual multicultural conventions. The authors conclude that forcing dialogue too early can do more harm than good. An alternative foci of engagement is to develop visual and aesthetic language through experiential ways of knowing so that the words will emerge to create dialogue.

In the next article Mary Yoko Brannen looks at what we call "methods of engagement," available methodological alternatives to language and discourse--in this case, intertextuality and critical discourse analysis. It is also an example of what Reed calls "realist discourse analysis" (2000: 527-528)--an ontology perspective that conditions or contains language and discourse practices. Brannen engages Mickey Mouse in an intertextual analysis based on Barthes' (1957,1970) and Kristeva's (1980) post-Saussurean semiotics--the study of how language as a system of signification conveys meaning in power-laden processes. She also applies Fairclough's critical discourse perspective to look at the "enhanced role of language in the exercise of power" (1995: 219) in achieving consent and transmitting ideologies, as well as social practices and meanings.

Brannen applies the "social semiotics" perspective (Boje, 2001; Fairclough, 1995; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Martin & Ringham, 2000) to extend the foreignness discipline by examining acts of recontextualization and semantic fit as language and power processes through which firm assets take on new meanings in new cultural environments. Her work explores the intertextuality (following Boje, 2001; Fairclough, 1992; Kristeva, 1980) of ongoing interactive dynamics, extending it to the often-contested nature of the transfer and recontextualization processes between and within the host and home contexts in Disney's enterprises. Her critical discourse looks at how language is power in establishing a new capitalism, Disney being a prime example.

Daniel Robichaud, Heélène Giroux, and James R. Taylor's article is an example of what we are calling "levels and modes of engagement." It also addresses Tsoukas's (2000) concern for discourse and language, which can have not only ontological existence but epistemological diversity. The authors do this by asserting that an analysis of language

and discourse can connect microepisodes of conversation to broader patterns of metaconversation. Their specific choice for a mode of engagement is to look at Bakhtin's polyphonic perspective. They also move beyond social construction perspectives to focus on discursive power and control by exploring how narrators become spokespersons representing their view of other conversations.

While sensemaking and storytelling are widely accepted forms of organizing, the authors also see them as instruments of power and hegemony. Hegemonic means that these language and discourse practices are invested with power processes and ideological relationships in ways that people are unaware of, such as how thought and action get shaped. The authors construct a metaconversation theory about the recursive property of language, which they assert is critical to organizing collective identity beyond the local communities of practice. A metaconversation, they say, is a conversation that embeds, recursively, another conversation. What we, as editors, call the "doing" of language and discourse controls local language games; it tames and incorporates them into collective dialogue (in this case, through metaconversation).

Theorists vary in assuming a unitary or more pluralistic and hybrid image of organization (*Boje*, 1995; Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998; Krippendorff, 1998; Linstead & Westwood, 2001; Putnam, 1983; Weick, 1985). Language, for example, according to Bakhtin (1981), is a heteroglossia--a polyphonic world--in which local language domains (vocabularies and forms of expression) operate within larger linguistic communities that constitute a pluralized or "polyphonic" world. The authors exploit this polyphonic language interpretation of sensemaking in language and conclude the doing of language and discourse in a multivoiced context is the production of metanarrative to enfold and transcend local narrating. The authors' idea is that the encompassing polyphonic and polyvocal conversations of organizations are continually regenerating organizational identity by reconstructing local conversation in metanarrative. For example, in the recent polyvocal Enron storytelling about corporate scandal, executives engaged in metaconversation with reporters and regulators about past conversations, reconstructing stories to transfer blame for betraying shareholders and employees into polyphonic narrations about the delinquent accounting firm practices of Arthur Andersen. The metaconversation keeps unfolding as more participants, from the White House to the business college, join in the metanarrative, the collective objective of which is reconstituting organizational identity, legitimacy, and accountability in multiple conversations.

The interplay between discourse and institutions forms the focus of Nelson Phillips, Thomas B. Lawrence, and Cynthia Hardy's contribution. Through the integration of discourse analysis and institutional theory, these authors develop a model tracing the relationships among action, texts, discourse, and institutions. In doing so, they create a work that resonates with issues surrounding "levels of engagement." This is achieved by explicitly connecting local actions and texts (i.e., microphenomena) with the formation of wider discourses and institutional arrangements (i.e., macrophenomena). They also circumvent the kind of "localism" (Reed, 2000) that arises in Foucauldian discourse analysis through incorporating power relations at the institutional level.

Arguably, the most significant aspect of Phillips et al.'s article is the way in which it presents talk, text, and material practices as being mutually implicated. In this regard, their exposition reinforces Tsoukas's (2000) rejection of the dichotomization of critical realism and social constructivism by providing a nuanced account of a recursive process in which texts and discourse create and sustain institutional positions (a social constructivist view) while institutions, as extralinguistic entities, simultaneously constrain and prefigure actions and texts (a critical realist view).

Sandy Edward Green, Jr., proposes that the diffusion of managerial practices depends on the discursive justifications used to rationalize them and their subsequent acceptance. Although discourse is given a role in neoinstitutional theories of diffusion, Green contends that the role is passive and oversocialized, explaining the homogenization of the supraorganizational field while ignoring agency, deviance, or even political adaptation. Greens contests this position by proposing that it is through rhetoric that new practices are legitimated and institutionalized, thereby making discourse active (as opposed to passive) in the diffusion of managerial practices. Institutionalized practices, therefore, can be seen as a product of taken-for-granted discursive justifications, and the diffusion of new practices becomes an interplay between existing (hegemonic?) and new discourses. This interplay speaks to Reed's (2000) comments regarding radical ontological constructivism and the proposition that all is discourse. By focusing on rhetoric, Green also pushes us to look at the relationship between "micro" processes (talk) and "macro" outcomes (institutionalized practices) as an interplay of discourses, where one set of discourses is seen as constraining or being an obstacle to the introduction and acceptance of alternative discourses.

Violina P. Rindova, Manuel Becerra, and Ianna Contardo extend the institutional issues raised by Phillips et al. and Green by reconceptualizing the competitive interplay among organizations--as evidenced through strategies and competition "constrained" by industrial economics and strategic management--as a language game. Specifically, they contend that "competitive wars" are fully understandable in (and shaped by) the language of war that goes well beyond simply the metaphor of war. Like Green, Rindova et al. call into question the power of institutional forces devoid of the discourse they encapsulate. One is left with the question, "If industrial economic and other apparently extralinguistic factors have the constraining power proposed, then how is it that 'talk' can alter them?" The Rindova et al. piece provides a way of seeing how "strategy is constructed" and how organizations operate consistent with their enacted construction, including the justification of different practices through rhetoric (see Green).

Finally, we, too, can ask the "So what?" question. What does the interplay of language, discourse, and organization have to contribute?

In this infinite play of differences, some discourses and language practices are more hegemonic than others, and, thus, more exclusive discourses marginalize other discourses. Researching and theorizing an organization--of collaboration or revolution--that is situated in fragmented language conventions and wandering discourses, we believe, is a challenge for the many fields of management and organization studies.

The collective contribution of this issue, we believe, lies in paying attention to four aspects of engagement: (1) to the "foci of engagement" concerning how language and discourse do the work of organizing; (2) to "methods of engagement" that enrich our study of language and discourse, such as intertextuality and critical discourse analysis; (3) to the "levels of engagement" that network local dialogue and language practices to more macro metadiscourse, oftentimes resolute with hegemonic social and economic implications for the new capitalism; and (4) to "modes of engagement" moving to theories and methods that address more polyphonic perspectives.

What is left to be done? The authors in this issue have taken a refreshing look at texts and talk in the material condition of what Fairclough calls "new capitalism"--the social and political conditions of language and discourse. We as a field have yet to address Parker's (2000) concern about value, about the "doing of discourse" in ways we in the academic community would want to sponsor.

We conclude that language and discourse are both epistemological knowing and ontological being in material practices of talking and inscribed texts. We answer the "So what?" question as follows: there are a few official discourses and many marginalized discourses in every organization. The theory and research challenge is to ascertain and trace the dialogue across fragmented discourses from the local into the situated social, historical, and economic contexts. This issue addresses important and timely concerns that organizational theorists are raising regarding the need to craft organization theories on the basis of linguistic and discursive metaphors (e.g., talk, story, discourse, novel, poetic, and theater).

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