REVIEW ARTICLE

Communication in organizations: An overview and provocations

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Abstract

The role that communication plays in social organization and processes of organizing has received considerable scholarly attention from multiple disciplines over several decades. This paper provides a review of the diverse literature that has sought to contribute to the understanding of communication and its implication for management and organization studies. An analysis of the SCOPUS database for the period 1980–2022 enabled us to cluster reference material and identify five perspectives which emerge from a review of the literature: *communication as transfer*, *discourse*, *conversation (analysis)*, *narrative*, and *Communicative Constitution of Organizations*. These categories are not intended to be exhaustive, but they do provide a useful critical heuristic for navigating a field of study that might otherwise appear overwhelming. To map the terrain's theoretical underpinnings, our study also adopted a problematizing approach to the review which revealed various conspicuous conceptual and empirical absences at a 'field level' which merit further attention. The paper offers provocations and suggestions that we expect will inform future studies of organizational communication. Possibilities for developing the field include paying attention to: (a) *paralinguistic* dimensions of communication; (b) communication in relation to actual *work practices*; (c) *monologic* communication and (d) organizational communication in *non-Western contexts*.

INTRODUCTION

The historical record is replete with thinkers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines who make the claim that the capacity for high-level communication—particularly through language—is what characterizes humans and human interaction (Dunbar, 2009; Hauser et al., 2022; Ristau & Robbins, 1982; Wittgenstein, 1953). Human communication in manifold forms is *the* medium of social and imaginary possibility. Signs and signifiers that comprise the myriad language systems across the globe are what afford human intention, interaction, identification and reflection; mediating just about every aspect of psychological and social life, laying foundations for argumentative exchange and potentially facilitating concerted and cooperative 'communicative action' (Habermas, 1984). Such capacity for coordinated action enabled by communication is vital for creating the conditions of possibility for the basic exchange mechanism underpinning 'the social'. From basic dyadic exchanges through to the most complex

forms of organization and international governance, the facets of society are underpinned by communication: its scientific activities (Popper, 1972), institutions it builds (Berger & Luckman, 1966), and schemes of perceptions which it shares (Bourdieu, 1977). Beyond the increasingly suspicious foundational mythology of *homo economicus* (Fleming, 2017), if we accept that the individual is bound to society (Durkheim, 1956) and is under obligation to fulfil social roles through interdependent interactions with others (Weale, 1992), communication conduct must be taken as the defining feature of *homo sociologicus*. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that communication processes have garnered a great deal of attention from scholars and researchers working in diverse fields: from ethnology and anthropology (Geertz, 1973; Hymes, 1974) through to linguistics (Chomsky, 1965) and, as such, it also imposes itself as a fundamental consideration for management and organization studies. As this review will demonstrate and evidence, considerable effort has been expended on seeking to understand the nature, forms and implications of human communication in organizational contexts.

Organizational scholars take a sustained interest in communication work from a variety of theoretical angles, each adopting specific conceptual vocabulary and building on their own basic principles to generate insight (see, e.g., Vaara & Langley, 2021). Based on an extensive exploration of the literature, we begin by mapping the central approaches to studying communication in the field of management and organization research. The aim is to assist scholars orient themselves within this complex field, providing a novel perspective that acknowledges: (a) the significant breadth and richness of research domains in this area, and (b) noteworthy patterns of exclusion across the field that imply and invite further development. Despite an extensive search, we have been unable to locate a previous review that addresses these particular objectives, or sets out a strategic platform to support future research (Gatrell & Breslin, 2017). Our review identifies five streams of cross-disciplinary work (see Greenslade-Yeats et al., 2023), consolidating multifarious forms of research and scholarship on organizational communication into broad categories. Given the inevitable permeability of 'borders', any attempt to 'categorize' is fraught with difficulty but, nonetheless, we hope that our work provides a set of 'placeholders' that can be used heuristically by colleagues. Our endeavours also revealed areas of study which appear to have been overlooked, neglected, or are otherwise missing from the picture. The intended contributions of our review are threefold: (1) to provide an overview and set of literary resources that will prove valuable to Early Career Researchers and scholars new to the field of organizational communication; (2) to develop an heuristic—summarized in Table 1—that will help orient researchers and provide a conceptual device to guide further enquiry; (3) to develop a strategic platform, comprising conceptual provocations and agendas for future studies of communication in organizational contexts, to assist newcomers and experienced researchers alike.

Our contributions are aligned with the *International Journal of Management Reviews*' ambition to publish articles which trace developments in the field, identify the gaps in knowledge through a methodologically strong review process and thorough analysis of findings in order to go beyond the synthesis by presenting 'new conceptual insights to enable leaps forward in knowledge' and developing 'an agenda for future research' (Allegre et al., 2023, p. 234). The analysis presented below goes well beyond synthesizing the different perspectives on communication in that it identifies explicit conceptual criteria, thus enabling comparison between them (in Table 1). In the second part of the paper, we identify four distinct areas within the field which are relatively under-represented and four corresponding agendas for future research. In pursuit of these contributions, we are committed to providing a clear account of overlaps as well as divergencies in the field (Allegre et al., 2023, p. 237). For example, in the analytic section of the paper ('Five Perspectives') we offer new conceptual insights that afford improved study of organizational communication from the perspective of five categories we advance (Table 1). We trust, therefore, that our article will serve in some measure as a reference point for future work in this field (Allegre et al., 2023, p. 237).

The paper unfolds as follows: we begin by setting out the methods used to conduct and expand our survey of the literature as a prelude to presenting five perspectives—*communication as transfer*, *discourse*, *conversation*, *narrative*, and lastly the *Communicative Constitution of Organizations* perspective—under which we cluster and review relevant source material. Our analysis of the principal literature on communication in organizational settings leads us then to postulate and investigate key areas that we consider have thus far been overlooked; lacunae that, we contend, provide fecund opportunities for future research. The paper concludes with a recapitulation of our study and the way the review and research agendas provide a strategic platform on which to build and expand the study of organizational communication.

METHOD

The initial search involved accessing the SCOPUS database and searching the terms 'communication'; 'communication' and 'organization'\'organisation' and 'organizational

TABLE 1 Core characteristics of the five perspectives summarized in relation to selected conceptual criteria.

Perspective criterion	Transfer	Discourse	Conversation analysis	Narrative	Communicational Constitution of Organizations
Main aim of studying communication	Identifying the efficient/inefficient ways to reproduce meaning	Understanding how language constructs and mediates social realities	Analysing how interlocuters are accountable to each other in the mutual accomplishment of shared social and organizational realities	Understanding how experiences can be conveyed and made sense of by means of stories people tell	Understanding how organization happens in and through communication
Importance of the actor and non-human agents/actants	Minimal, other than facilitating the transfer	Significant—actors and actants construct and are constructed through discourse	Crucial—interlocutors and interactants (members) play central roles in processes of mutual accountability and accomplishment of organizing and organization	Crucial—actors are active meaning-makers and hold the key to understanding their individual worlds	Crucial—but actors and actants are construed in ontologically permissive terms: anything and anyone who can be deemed to represent/materialize organization
Noise/interruption	Minimized, consciously removed	Accepted as an inescapable characteristic of communication	Occurs naturally in interlocution and interaction. Mutual accountability for, and attempts to remediate, hiatuses are topics of study and explication	Vital part of the context in which stories are told and which may contribute to the stories themselves	Accepted as an inevitable consequence of the fact that actors are prone to equivocation and error, rendering communication precarious and indeterminate
Language is perceived as…	A conduit	A mediator in the making of social realities	Key medium of interlocution and interaction; alongside non-linguistic utterances, pauses and non-verbal cues/gestures.	A core social medium that enables stories to be imagined and articulated in communication contexts	A core medium through which communication and, by definition, organization is socially achieved.
Organization is seen as…	Factor/site enabling or obstructing the transfer	The ongoing accomplishment in, or outcome of, discursive action; or, can also represent a site, entity or institution in which discourse occurs	An on-going, moment-by-moment social accomplishment to be studied and understood micro-sociologically	A dynamic nexus of interpretations which can be accessed by exploring stories told and read within them	Coextensive with communication—that which both *emerges from* and *is* communication

communication'↘'organisational communication' for the period 1980–2022. The search using simple terms 'organization' and 'communication', perhaps unsurprisingly, returned a plethora of entries in the 'Business, Management, Accounting' area alone (nearly 10,000) using title, abstract and keywords as field codes. A more focused search using keywords 'organizational communication' and 'organisational communication' returned 865 results. This wealth of material, however, was deemed largely irrelevant to the scope of this review due to multiple publications using the term (in one or more field codes) in the contexts of such disciplines as, *inter alia*, linguistics, mining, public health, psychiatry and environment studies. Closer scrutiny, involving a more focused reading of the title and, if and when still needed, the abstract and list of keywords, revealed that these articles were not of immediate interest or relevance to our study. The focus on the review of theories of, and approaches to, communication in organizational and managerial contexts, by contrast, enabled us to identify a much smaller range of publications. On reviewing these materials, we discovered that they were largely published in a relatively small number of academic journals which frequently attracted and published articles on themes that fell within the scope of interest. The following academic journals were identified as main sources for our review: *Organization Studies*; *Human Relations*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Management Learning*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Review* and *Communication Theory*. We also identified a relatively small number of books, which we include in this review. At this point, a further search using the SCOPUS database was deemed no longer practical or necessary; instead, we turned our attention towards reviewing the outputs published in the identified outlets with the aim of identifying the main discussion threads. The content search involved researching the journals and terms identified above for the period 1980–2022 wherever practical.[1] As a result, we identified publications—peer-reviewed academic articles as well as books—which explicitly identified themselves with a conceptual and/or methodological perspective on communication in organizational context. The journal which turned out to be most prolific in offering such theoretical and empirical positioning appeared to be *Organization Studies*, which is unsurprising taking into account the aims and scope of this publication. Accordingly, much of the material in our review is sourced from this journal.

The process of selecting the main perspectives was not linear. At the inception, the pool of identified resources

was analysed in order to determine the underlying threads: theories of, or positions taken towards communication. The process involved all three authors and multiple iterations of study. Some initially promising themes were later discarded as fully fledged 'perspectives' due to the fact that they either: (1) turned out to constitute a relatively insignificant body of work in terms of volume and followership; or, (2) could have been readily regarded as subsets of broader perspectives. For example, we discarded 'polyphony' as a separate category, mainly because it contained a relatively small number of papers directly relevant to it, which also showed significant overlap with the 'Conversation (analysis)' perspective. Therefore, we decided to include this body of work within the latter cluster). Similarly, although we acknowledge certain divergence between storytelling and narrative perspectives, significant conceptual overlap between them motivated our decision to subsume the former under the 'Narrative' perspective. The resulting set of five perspectives on communication in organizational settings—transfer, discourse, conversation (analysis), narrative, and Communicative Constitution of Organizations—results from the iterative refinement of emerging clusters deriving from collected data, analysis, and our authorial judgment based on subject knowledge. For example, in our view, while there are reasons to distinguish between Conversation Analysis (CA) and dialogue perspectives, introducing them jointly and explaining their interrelationship is helpful in terms of juxtaposing them against alternative perspectives. We fully recognize, however, that different decisions could have been made with respect to clustering.

In sum, we engaged in an inductive procedure through which the five perspectives on the topic emerged from a 'bottom-up' process. The motivation for our review was not influenced by theoretical-foundationalist sentiments which otherwise often inform literature reviews, that is, starting from an unquestionable premise (Hartwig, 2007). Ours was a broad scope review of the field without resorting to any pre-defined perspective or viewpoint (although we acknowledge that analytical subjectivity and inter-subjectivity will inevitably have coloured our choice of clusters). The review process was informed by pragmatism (Rorty, 1979) and conceptual economy, enabling the consolidation of related themes or exclusion of certain perspectival possibilities from the final set. Within each of the identified perspectives we discovered basic premises which, in our reading, informed the conceptual and methodological framing of each approach. Our analysis involved employing a version of 'immanent critique' (Bhaskar, 2016), that is, identifying a premise or premises widely accepted within each of the perspectives we induced (Isaksen, 2018).

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[1] Some journals, such as *Management Communication Quarterly* started their operation after 1980.

As there was no ready-made template for such an analysis, the process of identifying the premises was non-linear in that it involved numerous discussions between the authors in order to capture the main thread of reasoning within each perspective. As the main goal was to identify the set of dominant assumptions driving the perspectives, the less central threads were—after exchange between the authors—removed from the consideration or downplayed (e.g., as a result of this process the discussion of rhetorical devices was confined to a minor mention in the 'Discourse' perspective section).

Our approach aims to combine the synthesizing qualities of an integrative literature review (Cronin & George, 2023) with the questioning qualities of the 'problematizing review' model (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020; Dzhenghiz et al., 2023), in which the review is 'broad and selective' (Strader et al., 2023, p. 1) yet simultaneously critical and inclusive. That said, we did not seek to engage critically with each of the respective theories that we reviewed but, rather, to reveal patterns of conceptual relationship. In the spirit of the 'mapping review' (Grant & Booth, 2009), we categorized the existing literature on a particular topic in order to identify gaps in it and set the agenda for further research. We subsequently generated systematic reflection on the map of the terrain in order to afford identification of generic, or 'field-level' analytical gaps that, we contend, merit further attention and investigation (as recommended by Allegre et al., 2023). In other words, the consolidation of themes enabled us to identify topics that were conspicuous by their absence; various lacunae which we discuss towards the end of the review. Having explained our approach, we are now in a position to outline each of the five perspectives under which we cluster relevant literature on communication in organizational settings.

COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS: FIVE PERSPECTIVES

Communication as transfer

Derived from the natural sciences, the classic model of 'communication as transfer' (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) assumes that meaning is the property of the message itself and thus is 'irrelevant to the engineering problem' (Shannon, 1948, p. 379). Rather than being, for example, embedded in the sensemaking of actors participating in the communication process, the elements of the communication process are aligned in linear fashion (Mengis & Eppler, 2008) from the sender at one end to the receiver at the other. The rationale underpinning the Shannon and Weaver model of communication is effectiveness of this transfer: 'reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point' (Shannon, 1948, p. 379). Noise, such as static, affecting the signal as it transfers between the transmitter and the receiver, is an unwanted addition to the signal not intended by the information source and causing errors and distortions (Shannon & Weaver, 1949, p. 7). The model's aim is to attain 'a noiseless channel transmitting discrete symbols' (p. 17) at the expense of the amount of information transmitted, as information can be 'spurious'. It is the model's ambition to capture the mechanism by which 'spurious and undesirable information [that] has been introduced via the noise is [...] subtracted, [in order to keep only] the useful information' (Shannon & Weaver, 1949, p. 19).

While it is uncommon to see any 'pure' or unmodified version of this model in recent academic writing, it is nonetheless possible to discern traces of its basic premises in the management and organization studies corpus, particularly in that body of work concerned with knowledge transfer between individuals (e.g., Tasselli, 2015) and organizations (e.g., Muthusamy & White, 2005). The focal point of this perspective is concentrated on identifying obstacles to an optimal transfer of knowledge due to the tacit nature of organizational knowledge (Lam, 1997), for example, or predictors of a 'good transfer' that would derive from occupying a central position within the network (Tasseli, 2015). The perspective also informs studies that propose ways in which 'better knowledge transfer' can be achieved through, for instance, securing 'reciprocal commitment' (Muthusamy & White, 2005). How to optimize the knowledge transfer (Lam, 1997), therefore, and how to identify factors directly enhancing knowledge and learning (Muthusamy & White, 2005) are among the typical questions posed in the context of this perspective, while the impact of social media culture on the effectiveness of this transfer is actively researched (Berditchevskaia et al., 2017) and often treated with suspicion (Van Osch et al., 2019). The transfer perspective is well-embedded in the mainstream approaches to communication in the context of business and organization, through an emphasis on 'effectiveness' and 'communication skills' (e.g., Guffey & Loewy, 2022, p. 3). Equally, it is present in the contexts such as science communication to broader audiences, in which, by definition, the position of the actors participating in the process is unequal. Typically, for instance, scientists communicate to lay audiences (Schäfer & Fähnrich, 2020) through planned and managed communication activity (Zerfass et al., 2018), as well as in creating blueprints for e.g., efficient innovation and technology adoption by employees in the organization (Schibany et al., 2000). This classic perspective on knowledge and communication serves well as a critical springboard from which to consider the other four perspectives we introduce.

Discourse

Instead of assuming that language is a tool used to clarify and report on reality—that is, a conduit for transferring information—a discourse perspective builds on the assumption that language communicates socially and subjectively construed realities. Rather than treating language as a conduit for communicating information which accurately or inaccurately reflects reality, language is then seen as producing and mediating social realities (Phillips & Oswick, 2012). An analysis of discourse highlights the ways in which language 'constructs organizational reality, rather than simply reflects it' (Hardy et al., 2005, p. 60). Discourses, defined narrowly as focusing on all written and spoken texts or, more broadly, as all symbolic forms of manifestation (words, objects, pictures, gestures, and so forth), provide 'a language for talking about a topic and … a particular kind of knowledge about a topic' (du Gay, 1996, p. 43) and, thereby discourses, 'systematically form the object of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Through studying words, acts and objects as the medium of, and resource for, meaning-making in organizational settings, this perspective conceives and analyses social realities as talked into existence. This point is emphatically declared by Mumby and Clair (1997, p. 181): 'organizations exist only in so far as their members create them through discourse'.

Although the 'constitutive-ness' of language often lends a measure of concreteness and factuality to the concepts that words embody, a discourse perspective resists such reification, punctures the appearance of 'matter of fact-ness' and prefers to conceive phenomena as discursive constructions. It may, indeed, analyse how such textual claims represent subjectively construed phenomena *as if* they are solid facts and objective truths; a natural, inevitable, or necessary state of affairs. For instance, politicians, policymakers and administrators may strive to achieve 'more efficient healthcare', 'high-quality teaching' or 'better chances of organisational survival', firmly believing these objectives represent or create a non-linguistic reality. However, they know such 'realities' only as text, in the form of reports, numbers or by word of mouth (Feltmann in Kaulingfreks, 1996, p. 58). They know them in and through these discourses. Instead of regretting the subjectivity language confers on realities, a discourse analyst takes a keen interest in it; zooming in on, for instance, selective attention or political bias in actors' micro discourse, as well as the effects of institutional categorization or regulation of subjects through macro discourse. A discourse perspective analyses how language constructs and mediates realities, 'using' objects, events, actors, relations, and situations to provide a point of view within which organizational members 'know' reality and orient their actions (Boje et al., 2004).

Highlighting how social actors frame social realities *in* discourse, or are framed *by* discourse, 'the study of organizational discourse is about understanding the processes of construction that underlie organizational reality…' (Philips & Hardy, 2002, p. 3). To study organizational discourses, 'including the identities that populate them, the knowledge that informs them, and the power relations that permeate them' (Hardy, 2022a, p. 3), means to remain sensitive to the ways in which dominant meanings emerge from the power-laden nature of organizational contexts and to be able to identify, for example, rhetorical devices that are used in struggles over contested meanings (Grant & Hardy, 2004, p. 5). By paying close analytical attention to metaphors (Oswick et al., 2002), rhetoric (Symon, 2005), frames and framing (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014) and the like, it becomes possible to gain insight into the construction of identities (Ybema, 2020) and to shed light on the processes of organizational change (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007), mergers and acquisitions (e.g., Vaara & Monin, 2010), inter-organizational relationships (e.g., Ellis & Ybema, 2010), power (Mumby et al., 2004), identities (e.g., Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004) or cross-cultural communication (Ybema & Byun, 2011). Although organizational discourse research has been accused of failing to address materiality by prioritizing textual information (Hardy, 2022b), discourse scholars have taken up the challenge of addressing organizational practices (Iedema & Wodak, 1999), multimodality (Iedema, 2003), and discursive-material entanglements (e.g., Phillips & Oswick, 2012). It engages empirically with visual data (e.g., Hardy & Phillips, 1999; Iedema, 2003), corporeal dimensions (Coupland, 2015; Courpasson & Monties, 2017), and sociomaterial or material-discursive assemblages (Hultin et al., 2022; Paring et al., 2017). Therefore, irrespective of which of many different theoretical standpoints is adopted as a point of departure for studying discourse (e.g., sociological, psychological or linguistic), the research questions typically address the ways in which meanings travel, are transposed in the process, and what they are transformed by. To this extent, these variegated studies of discourse constitute a unique perspective on organizational communication.

Conversation (analysis)

The perspective on communication focused on conversation and dialogue is deeply, if heterogeneously, rooted in post-war era developments in sociology and philosophy of language, which—albeit for different reasons—converged upon attempting to investigate shared patterns of understanding of communicational codes. If 'language games' can only be played according to the rules of interaction from which individual words derive their meaning

(Wittgenstein, 1953) and utterances are socially performative (Austin, 1976; Searle, 1977), then the task of those trying to understand how social order is produced and maintained becomes to analyse programmatically the minutiae of rules governing interlocution. By recovering how people make what they are doing 'instructably observable' and how others act upon the basis of such 'instructions' (Garfinkel, 2002), the localized rational accountability of interaction is revealed. In this regard, ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) provided a particularly germane rationale for the ever-closer scrutiny of 'singled out specific discrete interactions'—conversations—through which orientations are displayed, for other parties and analysts alike (Sacks et al., 1978, p. 44). Crucially, as access to individual worlds of experience is barred (Wittgenstein, 1953) the focus of such analysis is not on an individual, but instead on reasonings which are publicly displayed and thus lend themselves to intersubjective examination (Llewelyn & Spence, 2009). Communication's aim—in the broader perspective we map here—is therefore not to convey objective information, but rather to understand how interlocuters relate to each other in pursuit of a socially shared reality (Goffman, 1967) and mutual accountability (Garfinkel, 1967). When such conversational exchanges open up multiple perspectives and contestation, it becomes necessary to explore the whole among the parts and see the connections between the parts (Mengis & Eppler, 2008). At this point, the exchanges become 'dialogues' (Argyris, 1996). Such 'living conversations' brim with 'relational moments' which entwine 'anticipations, responses and relationships, by the interplay of multiple and contested interpretations and intentions that both generate and impede possibilities for moving on' (Cunliffe & Locke, 2020, p. 1080). Whilst there are various approaches that take conversation and dialogue as their focus—some of which we address in other sections of this review—in what follows, we shall concentrate our attention on Conversation Analysis as it is, arguably, a perspective that has had a strong influence in the field of management and organization studies.

The CA perspective arguably offers a highly distinctive, if not unique, methodological approach to studying talk in workplace and other 'settings' (e.g., inter alia, Holmes et al., 2011; Koester, 2004, 2006; Svennevig, 2012; Wee, 2015). CA is radically empirical, if not empiricist, in orientation, insisting on the careful interpretive interrogation of situated talk. It is worth noting in this regard that CA's emergence as a post-war methodology was dependent on the availability of relatively inexpensive and portable recording technologies (and, in more recent years, video technologies) that enabled interactions in natural settings to be recorded and repeatedly replayed. For example, audio recordings and transcriptions—typically using the specialist method pioneered by Gail Jefferson (see Hepburn

& Bolden, 2012)—have figured strongly as data sources. These have typically included recordings of telephone conversations, verbal interactions in courtrooms, therapeutic and healthcare interactions, and so forth (Mondada, 2012). Likewise, the Internet has given CA research access to a range of Computer Mediated Communication data sources, such as, Facebook and YouTube, which, as with direct video recording, widen the scope of CA research (Giles et al., 2015; Lester & O'Reilly, 2018; Meredith, 2017; Stommel & Meijman, 2011).

CA's preoccupation with the structure of talk and interaction can be understood in large measure as a methodological reaction to Parsonian and Mertonian theorization and study of *social structure* which, according to CA's proponents, all too easily 'glossed' and abstracted the components of social order to the neglect of moment-by-moment *production* and *accomplishment* of the very structures it was concerned to articulate. These structures of organizing, according to CA, are implicated in talk itself. As 'competent members' of society, we each routinely invoke particular social identities and orientate ourselves to settings or organizational contexts *in the talk and communication* we do. It is the task of professional social scientists to *analyse and reveal* that organizational work by closely scrutinizing situated talk. As Schegloff (1992, p. 128) puts it, 'the issue is how to convert insistent intuition [our common sense understanding of "what is going on"] ... into empirically detailed methodic analysis', and to address the question: 'How can we show that what seems inescapably relevant, both to us [social scientists] and to the participants, about the "context" of the interaction is demonstrably consequential for some specifiable aspect of that interaction?'.

In these formulations of CA's problematic, one witnesses a direct inheritance of the concerns of ordinary language philosophy and, in particular, the *performative* possibilities of socially situated interlocution. As a result of this general preoccupation, CA set itself the task of paying rigorous attention to the organization of turn-taking in conversations and to interpreting the work that is being done in and through turn taking. Sacks et al. (1978) published a seminal article that set the stage for this form of analysis and also, importantly, developed a specific form of transcription designed to assist conversation analytics (see Hepburn & Bolden, 2012). Conversation analysts' research questions are typically orientated toward analysis of the organization of sequences, formats of communicative exchange and the mutual work that is done by interlocutors and interactants in making each other socially accountable. They are also interested in acts of remediation or 'repair' that occur interactionally when misunderstandings occur (e.g., Henke, 1999; Heritage et al., 2019).

Given the express interest in the structures of talk and exchange, it comes as expected that much empirical work in CA has focussed on relatively ordered social settings, such as those found, inter alia, in: doctor-patient interactions (Atkinson, 1995; Gill & Roberts, 2012; Heritage & Robinson, 2011; Maynard & Heritage, 2005; Peräkylä & Silverman, 1991; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999; Stivers, 2002); mental health settings (Hutchby, 2007; O'Reilly & Lester, 2017; Thompson & McCabe, 2016); the legal profession (Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Kompter, 2012; Stokoe & Edwards, 2020); the education profession (Gardner, 2012; Reddington & Waring, 2015; Waring, 2015) and policing (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987, 1990). There are also many studies that focus on situated workplace talk. This includes research that explores the boundaries between task-orientated and domestic talk that occurs during workplace interactions (Drew, 2002), as well as 'small talk' and mundane exchanges (Holmes, 2000; Stefani & Horlacher, 2018). In recent decades, certain researchers have also been using a CA lens to examine gender and other diversity issues in workplace contexts (Antaki & Wilkinson, 2012; Holmes, 2005, 2006; Holmes & Fillary, 2000; Holmes & Marra, 2004).

CA may be viewed as complementing other approaches to communication we have reviewed in terms of providing the means by which radically detailed attention may be afforded to the moment-to-moment construction of institutional and organizational life. Such focus on the accomplishment of social organization is, arguably, unique to CA and therefore, by definition, absent in the other perspectives we review in this paper. Whilst sharing an interest in meanings, contexts and the *production* of social order with the 'discourse', 'narrative' and 'CCO' perspectives, CA conducts research from a different vantage point. Viewed from other perspectives that interrogate meaning and context, many examples of CA do not engage in an explicitly *critical* assessment of organizational interlocution and interaction. Indeed, its purported apolitical stance was a source of early criticism of the ethnomethodological and interactionist sociology from which it emerged (Gouldner, 1971).

That said, social critique and such issues as power, control, and domination have been addressed by some CA authors who seek to transcend the micro-macro dualism of social scientific enquiry (Thornburrow, 2014). Hilbert (1990), for instance, adopts Collins' (1981) concept of 'interaction ritual chains' to advance a theoretical case that CA may collapse differences between social structure and the moment-by-moment accomplishment of micro-sociological order. Concepts of 'state', 'economy' and 'social class' serve as gestalts that are 'microtranslated' within an empirically observable interactional order that can be analysed using ethnomethodology and CA (Hilbert, 1990, p.

802). Similarly, in a review essay of feminist psychology literature, Speer (1999, p. 471) offers a rebuttal to critiques of CA that claim it 'cannot account for the ways that "wider, macro power structures" exert a determining effect on action' and that it 'leads to apolitical and reductionist forms of analysis'. The 'CA approach', she maintains, 'can be applied to a whole range of feminist concepts and issues' (1999, p. 476). Acknowledging these arguments, it seems to us, nonetheless, that the treatment of social critique within the CA tradition remains relatively scarce and that this may, in part, reflect the difficulty faced in surmounting barriers of paradigm incommensurability (Hassard, 1988). In other words, by virtue of CA's unique empirical research focus and integrity, it encounters limits in seeking to address wider structural issues associated with power and politics.

Narrative

The narrative approach to communication has been variously defined (Czarniawska, 1997; Gabriel, 2004). It might be helpful, however, to begin by considering the specific ways in which this perspective diverges from transmission-oriented theories of communication (see our account of 'communication as transfer' above) the better to understand its key characteristics. The focus of narrative communication is *not* on conveying or imparting information by means of ever more efficient channels and signs but, rather, on how people's experiences can be conveyed and made sense of by means of stories they tell. Conversely, attention is also paid to how the recipients of these stories decode or 'reflexively reconstitute' accounts of the world (Macbeth, 2001), recognizing in them (or not) familiar narrative tropes. Thus, events, as they are experienced, are assembled and reassembled into 'meaningfully temporalized narratives' which enable meaning to be accessed and conveyed (Rhodes & Brown, 2005, p. 72). Thus, unlike in the CA perspective, the focus is *not* on how analysing the situated talk can enlighten us with regards to the implicit contexts in which they unfold; rather, attention is drawn to the broader processes of creation of narratives and the meanings they convey. Such processes do not necessarily emerge directly from mutual interactions.

There are also subtle, but important, differences between the narrative and discourse perspective. While discourse emphasizes the mutually co-constitutive relation between social actors and varieties of *texts* surrounding them, narrative attempts to access *meanings* as they are conveyed by actors. Thus, the focus on the actors' sensemaking and sense-giving inherent in the narrative perspective may be contrasted with the discourse perspective's focus on how grander political and institutional

narratives interplay with or manipulate 'lower level' narratives, potentially privileging some of them at the expense of others (e.g., van Ooijen et al., 2018).

In narrative terms, therefore, organizations are perceived as a multifaceted and dynamic nexus of interrelated interpretations (Phillips & Brown, 1993), spawning perspectives and stories, which can be variously told and read (Gergen & Gergen, 2006). The intersubjective co-construction of this organizational 'story' (Rhodes & Brown, 2005, p. 178)—by organizational actors and researchers alike—is the focus of attention for narrative studies. Organizational research is therefore meaningful if it brings their subjective experience into focus (Gabriel, 1995). Sensitivity towards interactions between, for example, employees, researchers, or external actors, avoids reducing multifaceted communication to a single narrative (Salzer-Morling, 1998).

Importantly, the outcome of such communication processes hinge upon the narrative resources possessed by the actors engaged in it; and since there can be as many narratives as there are actors (Boje, 1995), establishing a universal rule for how meanings should be understood is not feasible. This shift in perceptual orientation—that is, moving away from universalizing claims and towards exploring how people create meaning, knowledge and identity through narrative—is known as the 'narrative turn' (Czarniawska, 2004). Language holds the key not only to understanding the text itself (Propp, 1928/1968), but also the modes of social production of those meanings (Wittgenstein, 1953). Therefore, grasping the processes of narration promises to better comprehend vital aspects of socially mediated communication, such as the (narrative) constitution of identities (Carr, 1986), innovation (Maclean et al., 2021), sensemaking (Bruner, 1991) and perception of time (Boje, 2001). For example, analysing (fictional) narratives may reveal the emotional underpinning of communication in organizations (Boudens, 2005), such as envy (Patient et al., 2003), indignation (Sims, 2005), nostalgia (Gabriel, 1993) or 'postalgia' (Ybema, 2004). Similarly, understanding how narratives are made helps explore individual identity work that motivates life-changing decisions (Tomlinson & Colgan, 2014) and can offer insight into how the status of individuals is preserved in organizations (Ren, 2021). Close analysis of narrative may also reveal how individual reputation is gained and careers are nurtured through the careful re-framing of life stories (Maclean et al., 2012). As a consequence, this perspective is often used in academic contexts in which 'telling a good story' can have a tangible impact, for example, in studies of change, identity, strategy and entrepreneurship (Vaara et al., 2016).

The narrative perspective is by no means uniform or limited to 'people in organizations speaking'. After all, whole organizations can be perceived as storytellers (Boje, 1991), as can those researching them. For example, the narrative approach can shed light on the processes of narrative construction of legitimacy (Golant & Sillince, 2007), formation of organizational identity (Ernst & Schleiter, 2021), rationalizing action in complex and ambiguous environments (Abolafia, 2010), and re-establishing sensemaking patterns in a post-crisis context (Boudes & Laroche, 2009). Recent analyses have delved into the situatedness of 'speaking' and 'storytelling' (van Hulst & Ybema, 2020) and extended investigation beyond live 'physical' exchanges to embrace, for instance, visual (Daskalaki et al, 2015) and digital means of communication (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010).

The theme of 'narrative identity'—perceiving oneself as a kind of a story (Eakin, 2005)—further pushes the boundaries of the role of narrative in research and what could be construed as a narrative in the first place. Narratives may therefore be perceived as a means to identify ourselves in front of ourselves, so to speak, and for the benefit of others (Bruner, 1991; Gergen, 1999). They also serve as vehicles for endowing our lives with a sense of unity and purpose (McAdams, et al., 2006). Well-developed life stories 'speak for themselves' (Watson, 2009, p. 448). While certain fragments of those broader narratives may be identifiable as, for example, 'professional or work identities', it is the larger individual narrative that is deemed to hold the key to situating and understanding them (Watson, 2009, p. 450). Arguably, it is the larger life narrative that, first and foremost, needs comprehending by narrative scholars.

As Fenton and Langley (2011) usefully point out, there exist at least three substantially different approaches to communication in the context of the (post) narrative turn, perhaps reflecting different sets of 'stories' shared among different research communities: those that perceive narrative as a certain form of (or paradigm for) communication; those that focus on macro and micro narratives, for instance, grand narratives (Deuten & Rip, 2000) or ante-narratives (Boje et al., 2016), respectively; and, finally, those that—whilst aligning with a shared goal of deconstructing dominant narratives about communication at work (Lundholt & Boje, 2018)—see narrating as an act of *organizing* itself (Humphreys & Brown, 2008). This latter view is one of the core tenets of the Communicative Constitution of Organizations perspective to which we now turn our attention.

Communicative constitution of organizations

The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) perspective has become a popular model for understanding organizational communication in the last two decades

(e.g., Brummans et al., 2020; Castor & Cooren, 2006). This body of work can be broadly characterized by its strong commitment to two main assumptions. Firstly, by its own admission, CCO is not interested in exploring aspects of communication as they unfold within organization—instead it is focused on 'how organization happens in communication' (Schoeneborn et al., 2019, p. 475). In CCO's view, any attempt to decouple *organization* from *communication* is a futile effort, because both are 'variant expressions for the same reality' (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 28) and it is in communication processes that organizations are experienced, realized and identified (Cooren et al., 2011). Through people speaking (Bencherki & Cooren, 2011), organizations are 'communicated into being' (Cooren, 2020, p.177). Actors are constantly interacting and capable of creating meanings: in no way are they passive recipients of pre-conceived contents; on the contrary, they co-create them (Castor & Cooren, 2006; Saludadez & Taylor, 2006; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Since organizational emergence is portrayed in inherently agentic terms entailing communication events between the actors, communication is deemed 'precarious and ultimately indeterminate' (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 304). Hence what counts as communication extends well beyond the transfer perspective characterized above.

To study communication, and therefore to study organization (Taylor & Van Every, 2000), involves investigating both texts and reciprocal interactions (Blaschke et al., 2012). While texts, such as reports or documents enable researchers to describe organizations, comprehending them is possible only by focusing on interactions which constitute them (Ashcraft et al., 2009). Importantly, the communicational modality is productive of the textual one, as texts result from exchanges of declarations and viewpoints, as well as from misunderstandings (Ashcraft et al., 2009). The events of such conversation are translated into a narrative representation and objectified (transcribed) thus creating a text (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Dialogue thus becomes a focal point of analytical attention for the CCO perspective (Izak et al., 2022).

The epistemological claim that communication is synonymous with organization extends into an ontological one (Schoeneborn, et al., 2019, p. 476). Since organizations are realized, experienced and identified in communication processes (Cooren et al., 2011), 'organization' and 'communication' are simply different 'expressions for the same reality' (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 28). In other words, the two become 'equivalent' (Smith, 1993). CCO breaks away from perceiving communication as something happening *in* organization (a 'container metaphor'). Likewise, it distances itself from seeing the communication-organization interrelationship as a process of 'coproduction' in which communication is a discrete factor of organizational real-ity rather than a commensurate aspect of it (Smith, 1993). This 'equivalency' means that communication, rather than being one of many organizational modalities (Giddens, 1984), is rendered here as the *essential modality* for organizing (Taylor & Van Every, 2000) and, therefore, inquiring into its properties becomes imperative for organization studies (Cooren, 2000).

The communication-organization equivalency assumption similarly distances CCO from the narrative, conversation (analysis) and discourse perspectives in terms of problematizing the distinction between ontology and epistemology. In other words, *knowing* a story carries several analytical implications. It entails *knowing* (part of) an organization; *decoding* hidden aspects of interaction in order to reveal previously hidden aspects of organization; and, finally, *accounting for* the struggle for meaning taking place within organization becomes tantamount to *accounting for what organization is* (Putnam et al., 2016). The act of partially blurring the onto-epistemic distinction is characteristic of CCO. Where other perspectives intend to *know something about* organization (emotions underpinning, contexts obscuring or discourses shaping it), CCO extends *knowing* organization into being *it*. Organization is thus portrayed in ontologically permissive terms. It is deemed to be constituted by 'anything or anyone that can be recognized as representing it' including its physical architecture, logos by which it is identified, products which it manufactures' (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 292), as well as technologies and other artifacts which materialize organization (Rennstam, 2012). These elements, in addition to people and texts, contribute to the emergence of an organization because they are 'spoken in the name of' and thus made to 'speak' on the organization's behalf. A famous building—for example, Harrod's of London—may be used to symbolize the organization, but it equally means that the organization itself becomes attached to the symbol it uses, and therefore is 'animated' by it in a certain way. CCO refers to such mutual animation as 'ventriloquism' (Cooren, 2012, p. 5). Organization thus communicates to itself and of itself in an effort to become extant.

Following CCO's logic, envisaging productive ways to study organizations beyond communication is a moribund enterprise, because the latter is not understood as representative or reflective of deeper underlying organizational phenomena. On the contrary, organization is where and what communication *is*, so all that needs to be done in order to 'understand organization [is to] look at communication' (Schoeneborn et al., 2019, p. 476).

This analytical stance unlocks a broad field of inquiry for this perspective including, inter alia, leadership, CSR, globalization, memory, sensemaking and diversity studies (Basque et al., 2022), in addition to other recently emerging fields of inquiry where CCO is applied, such

as, communicative understanding of forced migration (Albu & Štumberger, 2022) and the study of digital media (Saludadez, 2022).

This concludes our overview of the five perspectives revealed by our review of the literature. One of our principle aims in this review article is to offer a map of the field to orientate scholars who are relatively new to the topic. To this end, we have created a table that attempts to summarize key aspects of each perspective in relation to a set of criteria derived from the review (see Table 1). Any endeavour to capture such a diverse array of approaches, each with its own theoretical and methodological variation and nuance, will inevitably be partial and 'incomplete'. We trust, however, that it may serve as a starting point for further enquiry and provide useful signposts in terms of navigating and thinking about the organizational communication literature.

Having outlined and summarized the five perspectives, we now turn our attention to aspects of studying organizational communication that appear to be relatively neglected within the field. This critique problematizes the subject in broad terms, representing our reflections on the review we have undertaken.

UNDER-REPRESENTED AREAS OF STUDY AND FUTURE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AGENDAS

In what follows, in line with the recommendations of Allegre et al. (2023), we identify and briefly introduce four under-represented areas of study and outline corresponding research agendas.

Paralinguistic aspects of organizational communication

With certain exceptions that are noted below, the communication perspectives identified above—transfer, discourse, conversation (analysis), narrative and CCO—tend to neglect a crucial aspect of organizational communication; namely, the 'unsaid'. The lacuna consists in what cannot be put into words, what is implied, unspoken or taken-for-granted, what is un(der)communicated or communicated outside or beyond words; merely 'told' in a wink, a glance, a gesture or any other non-verbal exclamation. Such silences direct our attention to what is omitted, forgotten, inexpressible, circumvented, negated, suppressed or tabooed. Communication embodied in gestures, looks, dress and other non-verbal cues, as well as intricacies of different types and aspects of interactional presence (in-person and virtual) during and within

organizational communication processes, except for some noteworthy exceptions, remains a conspicuous silence in journals in the field of management and organization.

By listening carefully to silences or terseness, non-verbal ejaculative utterances (Goffman, 1981) as well as subtexts in people's talk and texts, studies of organizational communication may more effectively probe into what remains unsaid, concealed, evaded, distorted, denied or taken-for-granted in everyday communications. In each of the five perspectives we have identified and reviewed, we found studies that did attend to the moment-to-moment detail (e.g., Iedema, 2003). Arguably, the 'conversation (analysis)' perspective and, more particularly, CA offers the most elaborate means to attend analytically to non-verbal aspects of organizational communication in direct interactions. Audio studies of talk take into account the function of pauses and CA innovations with respect to the study of video interactions facilitate analysis of a range of non-verbal gestures and cues, such as, the role of gaze, nodding, shrugging etc. (see, e.g., O'Reilly et al., 2017).

Considering the narrative perspective, stories, may fail to materialize due to political agendas that their potential tellers are immersed in, thus inhibiting ability to voice them (e.g., Daskalaki et al., 2015). On the other hand, perceived lack of narrative resources ('nothing to tell a story about') may become an obstruction for any communicational engagement, especially for certain social groups, such as, the unemployed (Boland & Griffin, 2015). And even when narratives are expressly managed, supressed or distorted (Tourish & Robson, 2004, 2006), the 'untold stories' of chaos, disorder and violence roaming in the organizational unconscious may underpin the coherent images created for the benefit of the public. Untold stories may be studied, for instance, by analysing fiction (Lait, 2015), communication through symbols (Pratt & Rafaeli, 2001) and metaphors (Koçoğlu et al., 2016). Communicating and 'telling' is also a way of un-telling. Telling a story may preclude the meaning from another story emerging (Sims, 2015) as the appearance of communicational content is always premised on its context. Other attempts at communication—other stories, if successfully 'told'—may provide criteria normalizing ways to communicate and rules for the meanings to occur. As demonstrated by Tourish and Robson (2004, 2006), such renderings may exclude certain stories. Constructing organizational feedback processes that privilege and reinforce positive messages at the expense of criticism may preclude negative content ever being created or conveyed (Tourish & Robson, 2004). The riverbed of thoughts may shift (Wittgenstein, 1969) and, as our review of perspectives on communication shows, it certainly is shifting. Therefore, those silent realities may not merely be important through their conspicuous absence, but rather through

being present merely in the background; left below audible range, either unintentionally or deliberately (Izak et al., 2015). The problem with silence and white space is that it presents itself as insignificant, inexpressible, unobtrusive, unintelligible or unremarkable. Hence it often goes unnoticed. Means and methodologies which promise some manner of access to it include deep field ethnography (Hitchin, 2014), poetry (Armitage, 2014) and intertextuality (Izak, 2014).

Work and organizational communication

In keeping with management and organization studies at large (Barley & Kunda, 2001), studies of organizational communication tend to overlook the actual work people do and the organizational processes set in motion to manage the work. Arguably, the conceptualization of organization as discursively enacted and communicated into being has opened new vistas in the field of organization studies, but equating organization with, and reducing it to communication, invited organizational scholars to prioritize symbolic over material, practice-based dimensions of organizing. The work-distant aspects of organization are emphasized over work-near aspects of it. It could be argued that placing communication at the centre of analytic attention in organizational analysis has pushed organizational scholars' traditional interest in work and work practices to the periphery.

Traditionally, the central focus in organization and management was on how work was organized and how organizational processes entailed organizing people. From Weber's ideal type bureaucracy to empirical studies of the functioning of bureaucratic organizations, and from Taylorist management principles to 'humanistic' and cultural alternatives, the field's main interest was in the control, coordination and structuring of work. Studies analysed such topics as the (ir)rationality of organizational arrangements and decision-making processes (e.g., Dalton, 1959; Gouldner, 1954; Jackall, 1988), the standardization of work processes or specialization of tasks and responsibilities (e.g., Burns & Stalker, 1961; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), and the significance or insignificance of formal lines of authority versus informal factions and friendship groups (e.g., Mayo, 1933; McGregor, 1960). In his popular textbook *Structure in fives*, Mintzberg (1983) tried to capture the field's key insights by introducing a typology of the components and characteristics of work organizations and their environments. The organization of work was the field's bread and butter, so to speak. Insofar as the field was interested in communication at work, it was viewed *as a means to an end*: it served to understand how work was organized.

Since then, the focus of the discipline has slowly shifted and the ideational, institutional and political dimensions of organizational communication have emerged more clearly in its analyses. The dominant interest in work and organization and its machine-like or organic characteristics began to give way to alternative readings that conceptualized organizations as cultures, instruments of domination or psychic prisons (Morgan, 1986) and, with that, the focus on work and organization tended to fade into the background. While scholars previously studied a topic like organizational stories in order to analyse work and organization, organizational storytelling (or discourse, communication, etc.) now took centre stage. For instance, Gouldner (1954) analysed the telling of the 'Rebecca myth' in a gypsum mine to illustrate a shift from one pattern of bureaucracy to another. This was a seminal work that marked the beginning of a trend that witnessed the study of stories and storytelling increasingly becoming an end in itself (see, e.g., Boje, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Although these studies added meaningful layers of interpretation to our reading of organizational life, this tendency in organizational analysis introduced increasing degression or distance from the earlier problematic concerning 'how work is organized'.

Some studies do provide a detailed analysis of work (Barley & Kunda, 2001) or argue for revaluing material dimensions of organizing. Literature on strategy-as-practice (e.g., Fenton & Langley, 2011; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009) or sociomateriality (Jarzabkowski & Pinch, 2013) militated against, and mitigated, the neglect of materiality and material practices, but even in this stream of literature the analytical focus is hardly on the work that people do and empirical accounts of work practices remain scarce. In a similar vein, organizational scholars' theorizing of the intersection of discourse and materiality (e.g., Phillips & Oswick, 2012) or communication and materiality (Ashcraft et al., 2009), whilst filling a gap in the literature, does not aim to put the actual work that people do on the agenda. It seems like a trade-off—organizational communication research draws close to meaning-making processes whilst remaining at a distance from the work itself and, as a consequence, is less well-equipped to account for how people organize work and how work organizes them. Arguably, however, there exist viable methodological alternatives for various aspects of communication to be explored while remaining closely attuned with work and how work is done. Both classic ethnographic analysis of 'informal organization' (e.g., Dalton, 1959; Kaufman, 1960; Roy, 1960), as well as more recently emerging methodologies including visual research methods such as pattern analysis (Shortt & Warren, 2019), for instance, serve these purposes. To ground the analysis of organizational communication

empirically in the fine grain of everyday work, workplace studies can provide inspiration. Although they do not necessarily focus on organizational communication per se (perhaps for this reason—a different focus or framing—they go unnoticed in this field), they can inform its analysis by, for instance, revealing the workings and effects on everyday interactions of tools and technologies (Heath & Luff, 1991; Luff et al., 2000), organizational hierarchy (Jackall, 1988), workplace culture (Ho, 2009), organizational protocols (de Rond & Lok, 2016) or the physical layout of the workplace (Pachirat, 2011).

Monological communication

The significant orientation towards words and texts in the studies on communication is complemented by another relative lacuna in organization and management studies. An overwhelming majority of publications lean towards a dialogical framing of communication, thus emphasizing polyphonic interlocution and interaction between active human sense-makers and construing dialogue between those active voices as a fitting representation of organization. As argued by Izak et al. (2022) such a view emphasizes a romanticized social landscape and is ill-equipped to make sense of unified and agency-deprived organizational and societal contexts in which such 'dialogue' is not encouraged.

The alternative monologic perspective (Izak et al., 2022) differs from 'communication as transfer' view in terms of its objective. Whereas the transfer perspective intends to outline the most efficient manner to pass the signal between the sender and the receiver and offers reflections on how to minimize any disturbance, here the key asymmetries within organizational communication are highlighted instead. The monologic perspective points out that the picture described by 'transfer' emphasizes those aspects of communication which are crucial yet, nowadays, almost entirely ignored in social sciences: the reproduction of the status quo during communication acts, the dominant role of the speaker, passivity of the listener (in a sense that the latter does not contribute anything to the communication process other than what has been expected of them), and fixed meaning flowing from the former to the latter (Izak et al., 2022).

Four perspectives presented above—discourse, conversation (analysis), narrative and CCO—emerged historically after and, in various measures, as critical reactions directed against the mechanistic functionalism of communication models, such as, 'transfer'. The dialogic turn, premised on the presence of plural voices reciprocally navigating fluid organizational environments, captures the dynamic meaning-making processes that play out

between heterogeneous subjects (Izak et al., 2022). Its strength, however, may turn into weakness when it no longer matters who speaks or what is being said. When there is no room for anything but a perfect overlap of meanings between the speaker and listener, when considerable effort is invested in removing any 'noise' between them, and when the possibility of interpretative agency is occluded, dialogical organization loses its explanatory power. Neglect of the basic descriptive elements of the transfer model makes silent, mechanized (e.g., bureaucratic organizational realities) hard to access. To accommodate these elements, the monologic model of communication is premised upon singularity (instead of plurality), unilaterality (instead of reciprocity) and solidity (instead of liquidity). These principles serve as heuristics that enable more insightful engagement in communicational analysis under monological conditions.

The monologic mechanism is impervious to the turnover of actors or the variability of meanings they attempt to communicate. Organizational communication under such conditions is recalcitrant to 'talking back' and is therefore 'solid', in a certain sense. Utterances are purposefully aligned and intertwined in the iterative process in which the speaker knows exactly what reaction is expected from the listener for this unidirectional game to be played. Finally, monologic organization imposes singular, disambiguated meanings, synchronized with existing relations of power. Such communication's purpose is to impose and assure the system's unchangeability and durability (Izak et al., 2022). Some examples of the principles of monologic organization should help clarify the processes and characteristics we are referring to.

Monologic language games relate to asymmetrical communication acts and take various forms. In psychoanalytical therapy, for instance, a statement made by the patient may be interpreted by the analyst as signifying a 'true' meaning or desire 'hidden behind' the words. In an analogous therapeutic situation in which no words are uttered by the patient, the outcome could, nonetheless be the same. The patient's silence can still be 'read' as meaningful. Another example would be the use of organizational communication prompts (such as orders) to elicit a standardized scripted response (confirmation that an order was received). This is common in military or other uniformed service contexts (Izak et al., 2022). Similarly, the scripted prompts and responses that typically animate call centre exchanges are monological in character. Under such circumstances, an interlocutor (e.g., recipient of an order) might have opportunities, in principle, to respond in an unscripted or unexpected way. They may be disinclined to do so, however, because of a perceived lack of empowerment (Tourish & Robson, 2006) or paucity of semantic resources (Case & Śliwa, 2020).

Organizational contexts that lend themselves to being viewed through monologic lenses, rather than dialogic, share certain characteristics including, but not limited to: (a) having sensemaking mechanisms that are impervious to alteration; (b) lacking external pressures to change communication norms; (c) being populated by many relatively agency-deprived organizational actors and (d) the presence of pre-determined meanings reinforced by asymmetrical power relations (Izak et al., 2022). Examples would include rigid bureaucracies, uniformed service organizations, spiritual organizations directed by unchallengeable leaders, and autocratic political regimes (Izak et al., 2022).

This perspective marks a shift of emphasis compared with the other perspectives we have reviewed. Discourse may not be an obvious starting point for exploring realities when no meaningful exchange is possible. The living conversations accessible through 'situated talk' may be scripted and indexically played out in 'turns at talk' but their meaning, pace and unfolding may be pre-decided as they unfold in the here-and-now of closely scripted interaction. A CA study of such exchanges would yield different insights than a monologic organizational analysis. Narrative resources or protagonists' capabilities to tell stories may be too scarce and/or too stifled to warrant the attention of a narrative scholar; although, according to one view, even 'untold stories', when revealed, may be informative and analytically relevant (Izak et al., 2015). Finally, the monologic view on communication offers a perspective that contrasts markedly with that of the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) because in the latter the emphasis is on conversation (Cooren et al., 2008), exchange (Ashcraft et al., 2009) and speaking (Bencherki & Cooren, 2011), rendering communicative acts mutual and transactional. Conversely, the monologic perspective encourages the recalibration of epistemic lenses the better to apprehend organizational communication in which dialogue is compromised. It invites researchers to find a fitting analytic frame somewhere along the monologic-dialogic continuum.

Non-Western-centric organizational communication

Acknowledging that most of the source materials reviewed in this article were published in English and intended for an English-speaking readership, we would nonetheless wish to challenge the heavily Western-centric (or, at least, Global North) orientation of *most* publications that comprise the corpus of organizational communication scholarship and research. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule evident within each of the communication perspectives we have reviewed. In the field of Conver-

sation Analysis, for example, there are some studies of workplace talk in non-Anglophone settings (Stefani & Horlacher, 2018) and, if one moves beyond publications in the areas of management and organization, then there are further examples that result, for instance, from CA's influence on the discipline of anthropology (Clemente, 2012; Hopper, 1990; Philipsen, 1990; Stivers et al., 2009). Non-Western-centric examples of studies of organizational communication that focus on discourses and narrative would include Case and Śliwa (2020), Jepson (2010), Case et al. (2017a; 2017b), Gaggiotti et al. (2022), Schedlitzki et al. (2017b), Van Marrewijk et al. (2016) and Ybema and Byun (2011). Nonetheless, these exceptions prove the rule, and it is important to recognize the manner in which particular forms of knowledge are being privileged by extant research practices and publication policies. We are sympathetic to arguments advanced by management and organization studies scholars who, adopting a critical postcolonial perspective, point out that mainstream organizational analysis by and large exemplifies an enduring Western knowledge hegemony (Banerjee, 2004; Banerjee & Linstead, 2004). We also endorse entirely the sentiment of Bastien et al. (2021, p. 91) when they observe that the field of organization studies (OS) is: 'particularly deaf to discussions about organizations outside western nations' and that 'indigenous worldviews can offer a distinct perspective that so far has not been captured [within OS]'.

Such critique draws on the influential writings of philosophers, such as, Said (1978), Spivak (1988) and Bhabha (1994), who contend that Western knowledge not only fuelled colonial expansionism through various processes of authorization, but continues to exert power globally in the wake of Empire. The argument runs that authorized realities are perceived through the narrow ethnocentric lens of the colonizer and that equally significant worldviews of the colonized are not merely neglected but systematically occluded. Knowledge has historically been produced by those wishing to pursue Western interests, with the consequence that subjectivities of the Other are subsumed within a nexus of always-already colonized and colonizing epistemological power (Christophers, 2007; Dutton et al., 1998; McEwan, 2001). Our point is that writing in the field of management and organization, in general, and—in the context of this particular review—publications concerned with organizational communication, continue to contribute to this Western epistemological hegemony.

There are very few articles in the organizational communication corpus, for example, that speak directly to Global South contexts. Similarly, indigenous accounts of organizational communication hailing from the Global South are also conspicuous by their absence; occluded along-

side other forms of indigenous organizational analysis by the hegemonic forces that postcolonial critique is at pains to expose and deconstruct. An unpublished doctoral thesis by Musyoka (2023) which explores organization and organizing within the Upendo Women's Group—a collective located in Kenya and comprising women who are designated as 'people living with human immunodeficiency viruses'—provides examples of how communication conduct can be studied from indigenous and critical postcolonial perspectives. Musyoka's rich ethnography is particularly sensitive to the language, traditions and practices peculiar to the Akamba ethnic group from whom the Upendo membership is drawn. This representation of indigenous conceptualizations of communication and organizing practices is to be applauded; but studies of this nature remain relatively scarce in the organization studies field and, moreover, seem to be marginalized within the corpus of *published* organizational communication literature.

Each of the five communication perspectives we have reviewed maintain, in their respective ways, that language, narrative and dialogue are fundamental to—if not constitutive of—organization and organizing. If this is the case, then it behoves the organization and management studies community to pay closer attention to communication conduct practiced in parts of the world—inter alia, Africa, South America and South and East Asia—that have heretofore been relatively neglected. We therefore reiterate the call made by Schedlitzki et al. (2017a) for the academic and publishing communities to be more open to scholarship and research that takes as its focus organizational communication informed by indigenous knowledge and that explores communication enactments in non-Western and non-Anglophone settings.

CONCLUSION

We trust that the five perspectives on organizational communication identified in this review, together with the four lacunae and corresponding research agendas proposed, open new avenues for conceptualizing existing research (Gatrell & Breslin, 2017), offer a strategic platform for future research and scholarship, and, in line with the approach recommended by Allegre et al. (2023), provide new conceptual insights enabling further research from the perspective of the five categories we put forward. In particular, we sought to identify relatively uncharted areas of communication studies and provided a rationale for developing research programmes addressing them. Paralinguistic communication focuses our attention on those aspects of organizational communication which are omitted or supressed and is often elided due to such realities being considered unintelligible or 'untellable'. Yet, as outlined above, they could and should be accessed more systematically and earnestly by organizational researchers. The tendency for much of communication-focused organizational analysis to remain distant from work—its execution, organization and people's role in the organizing process—seems to be another blind spot. As with paralinguistic communication, there is good reason to include work practices in organizational analyses of workplace communication and to relate insights to communicational facets of organizational life. Another tendency in communication studies is to overemphasize the dialogical framing of communication, thus risking that agency-deprived, unified organizational contexts pass under the radar of organizational analysis. We set out a rationale for considering a set of monologic heuristics in order better to make sense of those organizational realities. Finally, there is a need more explicitly to support the exploration of non-Western communication contexts; research sites that are currently marginalized due to a relative dearth of organizational communication studies hailing from the global South or concerned to represent indigenous perspectives. Those four calls are underpinned by a common sentiment that the current field is ripe for fresh studies of communication conduct in organizations and that there are many unexplored possibilities. Our hope is that this review has not only helped to chart the extant terrain for the benefit of relatively junior scholars and those new to the field of communication studies, but also offered some modest provocations and proposals by which the field could be advanced.

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