# BETWEEN COMMUNICATIVE FLOWS AND DISCURSIVE SYSTEMS: REFLECTIONS ON THE COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATIONS

ENTRE FLUXOS COMUNICATIVOS E SISTEMAS DISCURSIVOS: REFLEXÕES SOBRE A COMPOSIÇÃO DAS ORGANIZAÇÕES

ENTRE FLUJOS COMUNICATIVOS Y SISTEMAS DISCURSIVOS: REFLEXIONES SOBRE LA COMPOSICIÓN DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This theoretical essay explores the approaches of Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) and Sociological Discourse Analysis (SDA), investigating how each contributes to understanding communication as a formative and transformative element in organizations. The analysis discusses the different theoretical and epistemological layers of these approaches, highlighting SDA as a tool for investigating power relations, identity, and culture in organizational discursive practices.

**Methodology:** Based on epistemological perspectives stemming from the Linguistic-Pragmatic Turn, the study offers a theoretical analysis, emphasizing the diversity of the CCO and SDA approaches and how they can complement each other in illuminating distinct aspects of discourse and organizational communication.

**Results:** The discussions reveal that both CCO and SDA provide valuable perspectives for understanding organizational communication. CCO examines organizations as formed from communicative activity, while SDA allows an in-depth examination of the symbolic and relational layers of discourses, evidencing how communicative practices shape and are shaped by organizational structures.

**Theoretical and practical implications:** This essay contributes to Organizational Studies by expanding analysis of organizations as discursively constituted phenomena. By proposing a reflective and multifaceted perspective, the study invites researchers to explore the interplay between communication and power in various organizational contexts.

**Originality:** By integrating SDA into the study of organizational communication, the article proposes an original theoretical approach that encourages the development of new questions and the continuity of critical debate, expanding paths of investigation into communicative phenomena in organizational settings.

**Keywords:** Organizational communication. Communicative Constitution of Organizations. Sociological Discourse Analysis. Organizational Studies.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Este ensaio teórico explora as abordagens da Comunicação Constitutiva das Organizações (CCO) e da Análise Sociológica dos Sistemas Discursivos (ASD), investigando como cada uma delas contribui para a compreensão da comunicação como elemento formador e transformador das organizações. A análise discute as diferentes camadas teóricas e epistemológicas dessas abordagens, destacando a ASD como uma ferramenta para investigar relações de poder, identidade e cultura nas práticas discursivas organizacionais.

**Metodologia:** Com base nas perspectivas epistemológicas oriundas da Virada Linguístico-Pragmática, o estudo oferece uma análise teórica, enfatizando a diversidade das abordagens CCO e ASD e como elas podem se complementar ao iluminar aspectos distintos do discurso e da comunicação organizacional.

**Resultados:** As discussões revelam que tanto a CCO quanto a ASD fornecem perspectivas valiosas para a compreensão da comunicação organizacional. A CCO examina as organizações como formadas a partir da atividade comunicativa, enquanto ASD permite um exame aprofundado das camadas simbólicas e relacionais dos discursos, evidenciando como as práticas comunicativas moldam e são moldadas pelas estruturas organizacionais.

**Implicações teóricas e práticas:** Este ensaio contribui para os Estudos Organizacionais ao expandir a análise das organizações como fenômenos constituídos discursivamente. Ao propor uma perspectiva reflexiva e multifacetada, o estudo convida pesquisadores a explorar a interação entre comunicação e poder em diferentes contextos organizacionais.

**Originalidade:** Ao integrar a ASD no estudo da comunicação organizacional, o artigo propõe um enfoque teórico original que incentiva o desenvolvimento de novas perguntas e a continuidade do debate crítico, ampliando os caminhos de investigação em fenômenos comunicativos no ambiente organizacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Comunicação organizacional. Constituição Comunicativa das Organizações. Análise Sociológica dos Sistemas Discursivos. Estudos Organizacionais.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Este ensayo teórico explora los enfoques de la Constitución Comunicativa de las Organizaciones (CCO) y el Análisis Sociológico del Discurso (ASD), investigando cómo cada uno de ellos contribuye a la comprensión de la comunicación como un elemento formador y transformador en las organizaciones. El análisis discute las diferentes capas teóricas y epistemológicas de estos enfoques, destacando el ASD como una herramienta para investigar relaciones de poder, identidad y cultura en las prácticas discursivas organizacionales.

**Metodología:** Basado en las perspectivas epistemológicas originadas a partir del Giro Lingüístico-Pragmático, el estudio ofrece un análisis teórico, enfatizando la diversidad de los enfoques CCO y ASD y cómo pueden complementarse para iluminar distintos aspectos del discurso y de la comunicación organizacional.

**Resultados:** Las discusiones revelan que tanto la CCO como el ASD brindan perspectivas valiosas para comprender la comunicación organizacional. El ASD, particularmente, permite un examen profundo de las capas simbólicas y relacionales de los discursos, evidenciando cómo las prácticas comunicativas moldean y son moldeadas por las estructuras organizacionales.

**Implicaciones teóricas y prácticas:** Este ensayo contribuye a los Estudios Organizacionales al expandir el análisis de las organizaciones como fenómenos constituidos discursivamente. Al proponer una perspectiva reflexiva y multifacética, el estudio invita a los investigadores a explorar la interacción entre comunicación y poder en diferentes contextos organizacionales.

**Originalidad:** Al integrar el ASD en el estudio de la comunicación organizacional, el artículo propone un enfoque teórico original que incentiva el desarrollo de nuevas preguntas y la continuidad del debate crítico, ampliando los caminos de investigación sobre fenómenos comunicativos en el entorno organizacional.

**Palabras clave:** Comunicación organizacional. Constitución Comunicativa de las Organizaciones. Análisis Sociológico del Discurso. Estudios Organizacionales.

# INTRODUCTION

Communication is fundamental to human experience, allowing the expression of ideas and the construction of meanings, which shapes relationships and enables the development of shared identities. In the organizational context, various theories focus on studying this phenomenon, each offering its perspective on the functions it performs in establishing social, cultural, and power dynamics (Cluley & Parker, 2023; Cooren, 2012; Gond & Carton, 2022; Nicotera, 2020). Among these approaches, the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) and Sociological Discourse Analysis (SDA) stand out, providing distinct perspectives on how communicative activity shapes groups, regardless of their size or scope.

These theories investigate communication, discourse, and the ways these concepts intervene in organizational practices. To a large extent, they perceive communicative activity as an event that transcends the mere exchange of information, given its embedding in complex social processes imbued with shared meanings, norms, and symbolic constructions (Bastos & Candiotto, 2007; Cornelissen et al., 2015; Lowenstein, 2019), as well as relations of power and influence (Zoller & Ban, 2020). Communication is considered the foundation for actions, rule establishment, and the coordination of cooperation (Putnam & Mumby, 2014), with discourse acting as a tool for persuasion and the construction of perceptions (Castor, 2022).

Relying on the perspectives of academics such as Conde (2009), Kuhn and Putnam (2014), Marcondes (2017), and Ruiz and Herzog (2019), I start from the premise that, while communication is a term encompassing forms of interaction and information exchange, discourse refers to practices that occur in these interactions, aimed at specific outcomes. Communication not only facilitates organizational interactions but constitutes them at an ontological level. Discourse, in turn, concretizes this practice, while communication redefines it through its dynamic patterns of interaction and meaning (Castor, 2022; Putnam et al., 2016). Thus, discourse is shaped by communication while simultaneously executes it, assuming, therefore, the function of its pragmatic materia-

lization (Schoeneborn et al., 2019; Teixeira Júnior, 2020).

In this essay, I provide an overview of theories related to Organizational Studies that, based on the linguistic-pragmatic turn of the 20th century, focus on phenomena of communication and discourse. I outline the CCO framework, emphasizing the relevance of communication in the configuration and functioning of institutions (Castor, 2022; Cooren & Seidl, 2022). I also reflect on SDA, a methodology for social investigation developed by Spanish researchers in the 1960s and 1970s (Conde, 2009; Serrano, 2008) and applied in Brazil by academics such as Christiane Kleinübing Godoi (Godoi et al., 2020; Godoi & Uchôa, 2019).

Thus, this discussion aims to explore how SDA and CCO, as distinct ways of understanding reality, can reveal layers of organizational practices and allow for a critical analysis of the power dynamics, identity, and culture that sustain organizational structures. The objective of this essay is, therefore, to investigate how both offer their tools, distinct yet complementary, for studying communicative phenomena, contributing to the theoretical deepening of Organizational Studies by highlighting the constitutive role of discourse in forming the structures that are their primary objects of analysis. Rather than providing a summary, I aim for a grounded analysis that illuminates the particularities of each approach and demonstrates how they could enrich the understanding of communicative practices in organizations, either through the application of one or the other in investigations or through the possibility of epistemological and methodological dialogues between them.

The choice to highlight CCO and SDA among the many possible approaches for studying organizational communication (Bisel & Adame, 2017; Mease, 2017; Mumby & Ashcraft, 2017; Putnam & Banghart, 2017) is supported by the contributions they offer to understanding organizational dynamics (Coelho et al., 2012; Godoi & Uchôa, 2019; Putnam, 2022; Schoeneborn et al., 2014). I do not intend to juxtapose or integrate them simplistically but to offer an analysis that highlights how each approach, with its own ontologies and epistemologies, sheds light on different aspects of the constitutive role of commu-

nication and discourse in organizations (Conde, 2009; Putnam & Mumby, 2014). By doing so, I aim to expand the horizons for future investigators by emphasizing the possibility of a more nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in communicative practices and their structural and relational implications within institutions (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2019; Kuhn et al., 2019).

The work is organized into sections. First, I explore language as an object of scrutiny for philosophers and scholars, highlighting how their conceptions have influenced the understanding of communication and discourse. Next, I address administrative theories that touch upon these topics in their premises, providing an overview of the various ways investigators can observe and interpret them. In the third section, I delve into CCO, emphasizing its foundation for institutional structuring. The fourth section discusses discourse as social praxis, linking its analysis to power dynamics, identity, and culture. Finally, I present SDA as an investigative methodology directed at understanding the concealed intentions within speech practices. This structure aims to provide a perception of the role of communication and discourses in the constitution of organizations, in addition to offering some conceptions – far from exhaustive – of methodologies aimed at analyzing these phenomena.

## LANGUAGE AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

Language has been considered one of the central elements of human experience, playing a constitutive role in interactions and in the formation of organizations. The so-called linguistic-pragmatic turn, particularly throughout the 20th century, propelled its framing not merely as a means of transmitting information but as a process that constructs and transforms social realities (Faria, 2022; Teixeira Júnior, 2020). This theoretical shift marked a departure from traditional views that limited language to a static system of symbols, recognizing it as a dynamic and creative practice, active in the construction of identities, meanings, and actions in the social world. This opened new avenues for studying communicative and organizational phenomena.

The linguistic-pragmatic turn not only influenced disciplines such as philosophy, socio-logy, and linguistics but also became present in organizational studies. By shifting the focus to the use of language in social practices, authors such as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Foucault highlighted how communication shapes interactions on ontological and epistemological levels. For Wittgenstein, language is inseparable from the practices that give it life, being essential for understanding how individuals act and organize themselves (Alves & Adamoglu de Oliveira, 2017). Heidegger, in turn, emphasized its position as a means of opening to being, situating it at the center of human and social experiences. Foucault positioned discourse as a social practice that not only reflects but constitutes relations of power, knowledge, and identity, underscoring its role in delineating norms and regulating dynamics of exclusion and control (Foucault, 2008).

These ideas laid the groundwork for approaches that came to understand communication and discourse as formative elements of organizational structures. From this perspective, language transcends its instrumental function to become an active force that organizes practices and interactions in specific contexts, directly influencing organizational behavior and the construction of norms (Putnam & Mumby, 2014). This perspective changes the focus from fixed structures to continuous processes, suggesting that organizations are not only formed by communication but are continuously redefined through it.

The understanding of language as the foundation of reality is central to theories such as the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) and Sociological Discourse Analysis (SDA). Both investigate how communication and discourse accommodate organizational structures and help sustain collective identities, values, and power relations. They recognize that organizational discourses operate in negotiating meanings, adapting to complex social contexts, and transforming institutional practices (Godoi et al., 2020; Kuhn & Putnam, 2014).

Language, therefore, provides a foundation for organizational practices. Through narratives, metaphors, and other discursive structures, organizational actors create and reinforce identities, legitimize actions, and construct symbolic boundaries that differentiate groups and indivi-

duals (Keyton, 2017). This perspective expands the understanding of organizations as discursive spaces where each interaction communicates, reinforces, or contests shared norms and values. Thus, communicative exchange is not merely a means of articulation but a continuous process of reality construction.

The linguistic-pragmatic turn also enabled the development of critical methodologies, allowing researchers to analyze discursive structures and their impacts on dynamics of power, exclusion, and inclusion (Schoeneborn et al., 2019). These methodologies investigate how discourses operate to legitimize practices, sustain hierarchies, or resist pre-established structures. By understanding that language organizes and regulates social practices, organizational studies become better equipped to explore the complexity of interactions in institutional contexts.

Therefore, the study of language has become a powerful tool for understanding contemporary organizations. Its discursive practices reveal not only how structures are formed but also how they are negotiated, transformed, and contested in response to constantly changing sociopolitical contexts.

## THE COMMUNICATIVE PHENOMENON IN THE UNIVERSE OF MANAGEMENT

In the field of Administration, the study of the communicative phenomenon has adapted to reflect changes in organizational conceptions over time. Classical theories, such as those proposed by Taylor and Fayol, understood communication in a functionalist and instrumental manner, prioritizing its efficiency as a tool for control and coordination within organizational hierarchies (Carvalho, 2020). From this perspective, communication was viewed as a technical means to ensure process predictability and productivity, emphasizing standardization and the division of labor.

With the advent of the Human Relations Approach, communication began to be analyzed through a new lens. This approach, which gained prominence with the studies of Elton Mayo and his colleagues in the early 20th century, highlighted the importance of human and social aspects within the workplace (Lacombe, 2009; Monego et al., 2021). In this context, communication gained the status of a central element for creating interpersonal bonds, fostering group cohesion, and maintaining a favorable organizational climate (Pordeus et al., 2023). Such ideas marked a transition: communication was no longer seen as merely a technical channel but as a mediator of relationships.

The development of more critical and reflexive approaches in subsequent decades consolidated an expanded view of communication, based on a social and constitutive perception. Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action was particularly influential in this context, proposing that organizational communication should be oriented toward mutual understanding and consensus, emphasizing transparency and participation in decision-making processes (Sánchez, 2015).

Another important contribution came from Critical Discourse Analysis, represented by authors such as Norman Fairclough, who highlighted the role of discursive practices in sustaining or contesting power relations (Fairclough, 1995). In this framework, organizational communication is not neutral; it operates to legitimize or challenge norms, ideologies, and practices that structure the work environment. Thus, discourse becomes an investigative tool for understanding how organizations reproduce or contest social inequalities and dynamics of domination.

The technological advancements of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, particularly related to the rise of the World Wide Web, added new layers of complexity to this field of study. With digital technologies, organizations were able to expand their communicative possibilities both internally and externally. Collaborative platforms, corporate social networks, and instant communication systems transformed information flows, enabling less hierarchical and more horizontal structures (Allard-Poesi & Cabantous, 2021). These technologies not only facilitate greater interaction but also challenge traditional forms of control and management while simultaneously creating new discourses around flexibility and innovation.

Contemporary practices also highlight

communication as a strategic element for reputation management, institutional narratives, and stakeholder engagement. Organizational discourse thus operates in campaigns for social responsibility, diversity policies, and sustainability practices, reinforcing the relevance of communication in constructing coherent public images (Driscoll et al., 2017). These developments directly connect theories from schools such as CCO and SDA to practical demands, allowing for the study of how organizational narratives shape and are shaped by broader social and cultural issues.

These transformations helped consolidate a view of organizational communication that positions it as a constitutive phenomenon, capable of shaping internal practices, regulating norms, and influencing change. Discourse assumes an active role in constructing organizations, being responsible for establishing collective identities, negotiating symbolic boundaries, and reconfiguring power relations (Conde, 2009). This understanding highlights that organizations are not merely functional spaces but also symbolic and discursive arenas where values, norms, and identities are constantly produced and reproduced (Kuhn & Putnam, 2014).

This scenario also brought practical implications for the field of Administration. In contemporary corporate environments, communication is understood as a strategic element for navigating the complexity and volatility of global markets. Digital communication tools, collaborative practices, and organizational narratives have proven imperative for building corporate images, managing crises, and fostering inclusive organizational cultures (Keyton, 2017). Such practices directly align with theories such as the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) and Sociological Discourse Analysis (SDA) due to their focus on the symbolic and structural layers of organizational practices.

With this evolution, Administration increasingly integrates communicative and discursive practices as central aspects of organizational studies. CCO and SDA thus emerge as approaches that enable more immersive critical analyses, fostering questions about the power dynamics, identities, and values fundamental to organizational functioning. These theories contribute to a broader understanding of communication, revealing how it shapes, regulates, and often challenges the practices and structures that define the organizational universe. The following sections are dedicated to studying these schools, maintaining a logical progression from the study of language to the value of discursive analysis in organizational studies.

## THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF ORGANIZATIONS

Following the reasoning established in the previous sections, I argue that the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) proposes a view of communication not as a means for exchanging information or supporting organizational functioning, but as the very process that constitutes and transforms organizations. CCO arises from a development initially influenced by the functionalist tradition of organizational communication theories, but it adapts by adopting a more dynamic and performative perspective (Cooren & Seidl, 2022; Putnam, 2022).

Functionalist thinking treated communication as an instrumental process, where it was supposed to ensure coordination, control, and efficiency, maintaining the organizational structure and facilitating the flow of information (Carvalho, 2020). From this perspective, the communicative act had a clear function: to ensure the effective and direct transmission of messages and instructions, establishing a basis for business success.

However, with the linguistic-pragmatic turn, emerges the notion that communication plays a more complex role than the functionalist model suggested. Instead of seeing it as a supporting element, CCO starts from the premise that organizations are constituted through communication. In other words, communication is not an activity that occurs within a pre-existing entity; it is the very substance that creates and defines the organization throughout discursive interactions (Putnam & Mumby, 2014). This transition marks a significant break with the functionalist view and positions CCO as a constitutive approach, where communication is active and generates realities.

Authors such as James R. Taylor and Linda Putnam follow this theory, arguing that organiza-

tions emerge from recursive communicative interactions and, therefore, must be understood as phenomena in constant construction (Bencherki et al., 2022; Schoeneborn et al., 2014). Similarly, it is argued that, through speech acts, narratives, and communicative flows, organizational members produce, contest, and revise identities, boundaries, norms, and practices, giving communication an active and performative role.

CCO presents different theoretical streams, which include the Montreal School, the Four Flows Theory, and Luhmann's approach to social systems, where each explores different aspects of communication as a constitutive practice. The Montreal School, for example, emphasizes that textual and material elements, such as documents and symbols, possess agency and contribute to the construction of the organization (Chaput & Basque, 2022). The Four Flows Theory, on the other hand, highlights four central processes – member negotiation, self-structuring, coordination of activities, and institutional positioning – that together constitute the organization as a system of coordinated practices (Schoeneborn et al., 2014). Luhmann's approach, in turn, interprets the organization as a self-referential system, where communication creates and sustains it independently of its individual members (Cooren & Seidl, 2022).

By moving away from functionalism, CCO adopts a conception of communication that goes beyond its utilitarian role and sees it as the foundational element of the organization. In this context, communication is not a static entity, but a continuous and interactive process of formation and transformation. This means that organizational identities, roles, and even the boundaries that distinguish one institution from another are continually (re)produced in exchanges. This performative understanding opens up space for organizational analysis that considers not only what the organization does, but how it becomes what it is through communicative doing (Putnam, 2022).

Thus, by positioning communication as constitutive, CCO transforms the study of organizations, shifting the focus from the analysis of static structures to dynamic and emergent processes. The approach offers a perspective for un-

derstanding organizations as phenomena that only exist and persist to the extent that they are continually constructed through the social practices of their members.

## DISCOURSES AS SOCIAL PRAXIS

Discourse is not a static representation of ideas but an active and dynamic practice that accommodates and transforms organizational realities. Drawing from Foucault (2008), we can understand it as constitutive of social practices that define and delimit knowledge and power, acting as a structuring force within organizations. Thus, discourse is an activity that, while reflecting a reality, simultaneously shapes it, serving as a vehicle for power negotiations, identity constructions, and the articulation of values and norms.

From this perspective, discourse analysis goes beyond a descriptive approach; it allows for the examination of how discursive practices sustain and legitimize organizational structures. Internal narratives, specific jargon, and institutional communications perform a performative function by defining what is permissible, who can speak, and which topics are addressed or avoided (Gee, 2015). This character reveals that discourse not only reflects reality but actively produces it.

In this vein, discourse is understood as a praxis that traverses and organizes organizational dynamics. Through discursive interactions, collective meanings are constructed, positions are established, and hierarchies are reinforced. For Wittgenstein, language is inseparable from social practices, and it is in communicative interactions that discourse plays a formative role in shaping realities (Alves & Adamoglu de Oliveira, 2017). Thus, discursive praxis manifests continuously and recursively, ensuring that organizations adapt to the contexts and challenges they face.

This conception of discourse is supported by methodologies such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Rhetorical Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Mumby & Ashcraft, 2017). CDA, for example, examines discourse within its social and political context, allowing the identification of discursive structures that sustain inequalities and perpetuate control dynamics. Rhetorical Analysis,

on the other hand, explores how organizational leaders use discourse to influence perceptions, promote cohesion, and legitimize decisions.

By adopting a view of discourse as social praxis, a social researcher can approach organizations in a multifaceted way, where each discursive practice contributes to the constitution of organizational identity and the maintenance of power relations. This understanding opens the door to an integrated analysis, in which discourse organizes and sustains the internal processes of organizations, shaping not only practices and interactions but also the very structure that underpins them. In this way, new pathways are opened for studying organizational complexities, revealing the invisible forces that guide behavior and development within organizations.

## SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE SYSTEMS

Sociological Discourse Analysis (SDA) emerges as a theoretical and methodological approach that seeks to investigate discursive practices in their structural and social complexity. To address the multiple dimensions of organizational discourse, SDA incorporates varied influences, ranging from structuralism and post-structuralism to phenomenological and critical approaches. This epistemological diversity is justified by the very nature of the object of study: organizational discourses are not simple and one-dimensional phenomena, but complex and dynamic social practices, constituted by historical, ideological, and symbolic elements (Conde, 2009; Godoi et al., 2020).

The structuralist influence, inspired by Lévi-Strauss and Saussure, provides a foundation for understanding the underlying structures that organize cultural practices and systems of meaning within organizations (Collins, 2021). Post-structuralism, represented by authors such as Foucault and Derrida, introduces a critical perspective, allowing SDA to analyze how discourse organizes power relations, legitimizing certain practices and excluding others, while challenging

fixed notions of truth and identity (Alonso, 1998; Foucault, 2008).

Phenomenology, on the other hand, contributes to SDA by introducing the idea that discourses are subjectively experienced and interpreted. With the concept of intentionality, phenomenology leads to the investigation of how subjects construct and reinterpret meanings as they interact with organizational discourses, offering an additional layer for understanding the construction of identities and relationships (Serrano, 2008). Additionally, by incorporating methodological behaviorism, SDA includes an empirical dimension that allows for the examination of discourses based on observable evidence, enriching the analysis with data that helps validate interpretations (Godoi & Uchôa, 2019).

This epistemological combination, though multifaceted, is consistent with the goal of revealing the complexity of discursive practices and their social implications. SDA does not seek a complete integration of different epistemological schools, but rather an interdisciplinary dialogue that enables the exploration of the structural, subjective, and critical layers of discourse. This arrangement offers methodological flexibility, making it capable of analyzing multifaceted discursive phenomena, revealing hidden practices, power struggles, and identity dynamics.

That said, it is impossible to talk about an isolated discourse. Each discourse is the result of many others, spoken in previous moments, gradually fading from consciousness, forgotten by objective memory, but attached to mental models, internalized as parts of the individual and collective construction of reality (Godoi et al., 2020). This subjective and unconscious chain is referred to by Conde (2009) as a discursive system, and it is this system that the analyst focuses on: like a spiral, through speech acts, discourses articulate, interact, are re-signified, and reformulated. Michel Pêcheux (1978) names this construct interdiscourse. As illustrated in Figure 1, a discourse analyzed at a given moment becomes the focal point of a spiral that connects it to others, increasingly distant in time and space.

**Figure 1**

*Interdiscursive spiral*



Note. Prepared by the author (2024).

Pêcheux and Fuchs (1997) observe that past discourses are forgotten by cognitive activity, but they remain alive in the unconscious: they refer to this as enunciative forgetfulness – what leads someone to use one sign rather than another when communicating? – and ideological forgetfulness – what conditions made a communicator the way he/she is so that he/she could communicate something in one way and not another? It is within this interdiscourse that communicative action occurs, and it is through the archaeology of discourses, as advocated by Foucault (Dias & El-Jaick, 2021), that we can understand the social and institutional conditions that lead to a particular state.

In contrast to other forms of discourse analysis, such as Pêcheux's (1978) Automatic Discourse Analysis or Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995), SDA theorists propose three levels of approach. According to Ángel Gordo (2008), this framework seeks to fill gaps identified in other methods, as he believes the French school took an overly internalist approach—cognitive and conceptual—while the critical school was too externalist, prioritizing political, social, and economic contexts.

SDA encompasses both (Godoi et al., 2020), and in this sense, Conde (2009) highlights its levels of approach: the informational-quantitative, which tends to prioritize the more denotative and manifest dimensions of utterances; this would be content analysis, often used in social research; the structural-textual, which views texts as the result of invariant and universal formal structures, whose unraveling can be achieved through semiotic analysis; and the social-hermeneutic, which sees texts in connection with the pragmatics of language, analyzing their social uses.

Echoing this division, Jesús Ibañez (2010) develops the idea of different perspectives for social investigation. The distributive points to the empiricism of functionalist approaches and their generalizations; the structural blends formalism and empiricism by focusing on content analysis methodologies; and the dialectical focuses on the study of the latent, the repressed in the manifest argument. The shallowest level belongs to the quantitative realm, with statistics and secondary data analysis (Godoi et al., 2020). The structural perspective allows for focus groups and in-depth interviews, but still maintains the researcher-researched separation, while in the dialectical perspective, the researcher immerses themselves in the research object to experience the formative context of communicative practices (Alonso, 1998).

All three perspectives are valid and useful for studying society, as each focus on a layer of the social structure with varying levels of provocation (Godoi & Uchôa, 2019). By bringing the latent to the surface at the deepest level, the researcher removes it from its hidden place in communication, bringing it into the open (Godoi et al., 2014). At the distributive level, this provocation is nullified, while in the dialectical perspective, it reaches its peak by targeting the unconscious, both individual and collective, and the formation of ideologies (Serrano, 2008).

Thus, SDA can simultaneously draw on all three perspectives to reveal structures that define the communicative formation of organizations (Coelho et al., 2012). Epistemologically, it aligns with the Four Flows Theory, one of the CCO schools cited in this work, due to its emphasis on how different types of communication constitute organizations (Cooren & Seidl, 2022). This theory examines how interactions shape and structure organizations (Schoeneborn et al., 2014), and similarly, SDA investigates discursive practices and how they shape social dynamics and power relations within organizations (Godoi et al., 2014).

From this perspective, neutrality is inconceivable for SDA (Godoi et al., 2014). Considering its epistemological elasticity (Conde, 2009), it is possible to analyze the discourse that led to the formation of a social structure or to reify an organization, understanding it as a pre-existing stable entity, thus focusing on an analysis of institutional discourses on specific topics (Alonso, 1998; Nicotera, 2020), but what the researcher cannot and must not do is erase themselves.

Bringing forth the spiral of interdiscourses that culminated in the one under scrutiny requires a process of back-and-forth between texts, contexts, and social practices, which Araceli Serrano (2008) refers to as social, hermeneutic, and pragmatic analysis. Rather than separating communications, the analyst must unite them into a whole where the discursive spiral becomes apparent, revealing the textual and social pragmatics intertwined within it (Godoi & Uchôa, 2019). In this way, discourse would only gain its full meaning in relation to those who enunciated it if the listener understands the social forces that originated it.

These lines have attempted to demonstrate that, although less known in academic circles compared to other conceptions of discourse analysis (Godoi et al., 2020), SDA, with its levels of approach and techniques for data collection and analysis, is a pertinent approach for studies of society. Table 1 presents a summary of this school, designed to offer an overview of its origins, definitions, paradigms, relations, and research methods.

**Table 1**
*Characteristics of the Sociological Analysis of Discursive Systems*

| | |
|---|---|
| Main influences | Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Pierre Bourdieu, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Langshaw Austin, Martin Heidegger, Michel Pêcheux, Edmund Husserl |
| Ontological dimension | Reality is determined by each social group that appropriates, transforms, produces and reproduces language, a collective product derived from the influences and discourses of other social groups (Conde, 2009) |
| Epistemological dimension | Plural, it is open to externalist and internalist analyses, although, under the influence of the Frankfurt School and French thinkers, it interprets that the study of social reality requires understanding interconnected communicative processes and hidden interests (Godoi et al., 2020) |
| Core paradigms | Importance of the obvious and the rare and the relationship between manifest and latent in discourses; role of the objective and subjective in interpretation; relationship between analysis and interpretation (Conde, 2009) |
| Materiality observation | The text, human or non-human, as a cultural product, gains social materiality, and it is its study that will allow us to enter the universe of intentions and power relations that originate it (Alonso, 1998) |
| Relationship between communication and discourse | Communication is a transmission and discourse is an activity, a social practice, a process of argumentation, communication, and tensions (Conde, 2009) |
| Social relationships | Groups construct and give meaning to what they experience by interpreting inter-subjective frameworks of interaction with other groups through communication (Godoi et al., 2020) |
| Research-appropriate methods | In-depth interviews, focus groups, participant and non-participant observations, study of documents, images, films (Conde, 2009) |

Note. Prepared by the author (2024).

Sociological Discourse Analysis communicates with works from social researchers of various schools – it has been influenced by many of them, as previously mentioned – and seeks to innovate by considering both internalist and externalist aspects linked to its objects of study in order to uncover silences and sayings, whether intentional or unconscious, that reveal origins, destinies, struggles, interactions, and manipulations that were previously hidden deeper than what could be glimpsed in everyday life.

Based on the premise that communication creates organizations and that discourse is the materialization of this communication (Gee, 2015), discourse analysis through the lens of SDA is, therefore, the appreciation of the organizational formative process from a perspective focused on the social factors that, consciously and unconsciously, made it emerge in the observed form and not any other. Thus, understanding the organization enters a less apparent dimension, one more directed towards intentions and desires.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION

Throughout this essay, I aimed to illuminate the complex interactions between the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) and Sociological Discourse Analysis (SDA), exploring the ways in which discursive and communicative practices constitute and transform organizations. Instead of concluding the topic with a definitive interpretation, the reflections presented here open new research paths and encourage a critical and investigative stance. Thus, possibilities emerge to examine less explored aspects of communicative practices, which can enrich our understanding of power, identity, and structure in organizations, as well as broaden the potential contributions of approaches like CCO and SDA.

Although both provide a foundation for reconsidering the role of communication in organizational constitution, they also point to the need to recognize the limitations and potential of any theoretical approach. Understanding organizations as discursive and symbolic constructions opens paths for researchers to revisit the very foundations of their analyses, adapting methodologies to reflect the complexity of contemporary organizational practices. Given the multidimensional nature of communication, it becomes relevant to reconcile the robustness of these approaches with an openness to emerging aspects, often imperceptible to traditional analytical tools.

This openness extends beyond the theoretical realm, applying to the practice of organizational research. SDA, by integrating influences from currents such as structuralism, post-structuralism, and phenomenology, enables a fluid and adaptable approach, which can be applied to the analysis of current contexts in an inclusive way. Its theoretical foundations can also engage with emerging theories of digital communication and collaborative practices, fostering a richer examination of organizational phenomena. Meanwhile, CCO, with its constitutive focus, raises reflections on the boundaries of discourse as a formative element of the organization, considering organizational communication permeated by contextual forces—whether sociopolitical, economic, or cultural—that shape institutions.

By considering two seemingly distant schools of thought, such as CCO and SDA, new questions arise about methodologies that could expand the study of communicative practices in the organizational universe. These could include everyday practices, unstructured events, and resistance to organizational norms, potentially revealing dynamics that challenge the more conventional understanding of interactions and structures. In this sense, by broadening perspectives, discourse analysis becomes a tool to include marginalized voices, offering a richer understanding of power structures and diverse identities that permeate organizations.

The essay, therefore, does not aim to conclude the debate on the role of discourse and communication in organizations but to foster the ongoing reflective capacity of us, as researchers. Considering the constitution of organizations as an evolving phenomenon, the approaches discussed here, along with other emerging theories such as those studying digital communication, green communication, diversity, inclusion, or collaborative leadership, reinforce the need to keep the field open to the unexpected, the new, and the contradictory. Theoretical models that incorporate uncertainties and contradictions in organizational practices, without compromising analytical rigor, contribute to a more complete understanding of communicative dynamics and their implications.

Looking to the future of organizational studies, questions arise about how communicative and discursive practices will adapt to present and future challenges. With the transformations

in digital interactions and the configuration of organizations themselves, new forms of communication and management may modify discursive and symbolic constructions within institutions. These developments present an opportunity to expand the application of SDA and CCO, as well as to explore their limitations and potential, encouraging the development of methods that keep up with the fluidity of contemporary contexts.

Thus, the study of organizational communication remains in constant motion, confronting new practices and interpretative possibilities. In this essay, by analyzing CCO and SDA, I seek both to understand these approaches and to invite the reader to revisit and reinterpret organizational phenomena, keeping the reflection and debate on the nature and implications of communication in institutions alive.

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