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Change as Shifting Identities: A Dialogic Perspective

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Abstract

Narrative and dialogic modes of theorizing identity are both premised on textuality. However, theories of narrative identity tend towards unity and coherence (in accordance with the notion of narrative as constant and pre-given), whereas the dialogic mode is more aligned with the postmodern novelistic literature (thus drawing heavily on dispersion, voice, disorder, and otherness). In accordance with the approach of Mikhail Bakhtin, the present study attempts to remedy the shortcomings of narrative identity by proposing change as involving shifting identities that are achieved through the transposition of utterances. Only through the recognition of the undecidable, unfinalizable nature of utterance can change be conceived as being shaped and reshaped through shifting identities. Such an approach reveals the interlocking relation between change and the varied texts people inhabit as they contemplate change.

Keywords: identity; narrative; utterance; dialogue; Bakhtin

Introduction

Change management has traditionally been guided by an epistemology derived from Cartesian concepts of the 'certainty of the mind'—*Cogito ergo sum* ('I think therefore I am'). Change efforts have thus assumed a personal identity largely guided by order and coherence. The Cartesian conception strengthens the dichotomy between self and other, and fails to provide guidance in managing identities and relationships, how identity and change are mutually constitutive, and how the border between them can be made more permeable.

There is a need for change management to revise its assumptions by understanding change in terms of shifting identities and relationships accomplished through utterances (words or sentences; spoken or written), rather than in terms of identity based on order and coherence fixed in narratives. Such a need arises from recent developments in postmodern management and organization theory (e.g., Boje, 2001c), and critical postmodern views (including critical social science theories) (Boje, *et al.*, 1996; Gergen and Thatchenkery, 1996). In general terms, these developments challenge change management by decentralizing the Cartesian notion of identity and the rational agent. However, these developments also pose certain questions:

* To what extent do identities continuously change, and how do they do so in the 'new dispensation' (that is, not so much in an orderly evolution, but in some disarray driven from within by language)?
* How should change managers allow for shifting identities (among organization members) that are dependent on an ongoing process of mediated self-reflection, accomplished through speech?
* How should change managers allow for the increased levels of uncertainty that organization members will feel as they attempt to cope with varying interpretations of identities and events that impact on their particular situations?

In accordance with the work of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), the present paper questions the place of narrative in the formation of identity. The main focus of the paper is to argue that change should be construed in terms of shifting identities achieved through the utterances. If the formation of identity is understood as being contingent on utterances, rather than on narrative, identity becomes dependent on an infinite and recursive 'stretch' of conversation, rather than on a fixed point of meaning. The narrative and dialogic theories of identity are both premised on textuality. However, narrative identity tends towards unity and coherence (in accordance with the organizing principles of traditional narrative formation), whereas the dialogic mode is more aligned with postmodern novelistic literature (thus drawing heavily on dispersion, voice, disorder, and otherness).

Many scholars have relied on Bakhtin's concepts to understand the role of language in organizations. Valuable insights have been gained from Bakhtin's conception of language (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Boje, 2001a; Matthews, 1998), the role of Bakhtin's notion of polyphony in understanding organizations as being comprised of multiple discourses (Hazen, 1993), and the role of utterances in the process of creating meaning (Putnam, 1996; Kellett, 1999). The interest in Bakhtin's work is growing in the West as scholars in many areas are coming to realize its significance (Mandelker & Emerson, 1995).

The paper begins with a broad outline of the role of narrative in the formation of identity. In doing so, it examines the limitations inherent in conceiving change management in terms of identity achieved through narrative. Section two examines change in terms of shifting identities situated relationally in speech (Bakhtin, 1984; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Gergen, 1991). Bakhtin's conception of dialogue is then explored, and its relevance to change as shifting identities is examined. In this respect, several Bakhtinian concepts are presented, including the

notions of utterance, framing context, and dialogue. The paper then considers the Bakhtinian notion of 'transgredience'—that is, the self as dialogical, and thus 'saturated with otherness'. This notion is central to a dialogic understanding of the negotiation of meanings between one change participant and other change participants. Because utterances of change participants are made within an ever-changing context, and because utterances affect the way in which change is co-constructed (as shifting identities in speech), this notion of transgredience is especially pertinent to the focus of this paper. The paper concludes by highlighting the pertinent tenets of Bakhtin's thinking and their implications for the central thesis of this paper—change as shifting identities accomplished through utterances.

Narrative identity approach

Traditional ways of thinking about identity have been developed in terms of narrative (Ricoeur, 1984; Somers, 1994; Somers and Gibson, 1994). Mair (1988: 127) has noted that we "... are *lived* by the stories of our race and place ... locations where the stories of our place and time become partially tellable". Polkinghorne (1988: 11) emphasized how narrative displays purpose and direction, and thus makes our lives more orderly and coherent. Narrative verbalizes and localizes the experiences of organization members as they interpret and share work situations. McAdams (1985) emphasized that identities can be described in narrative terms in searching for coherence and consistency. A narrative understanding (Bruner, 1990; MacIntyre, 1996; White & Epston, 1990; Ricoeur, 1992) perceives identity through reason and action as "enacted narratives" (MacIntyre, 1996: 211) based on a "narrative unity of a life" (MacIntyre, 1996: 215)—whereby people *inhabit* and *live* their own stories.

MacIntyre's (1996) conception of identity as "enacted narratives" echoed Ricoeur's (1984) full-blown narrative model, which has been described by Pucci (1992: 192) as "the deepest

nucleus where the subject finds and rediscovers itself as a human being". According to Ricoeur (1992: 147–8), "the narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told". In this conception, the narrative identity is based on a social life that is *itself storied.* According to Ricouer (1984, 1991), narrative identity involves two notions—(i) the notion of *sameness* (which limits the transparency of the subject to itself); and (ii) the notion of *selfhood* (which takes on board new inhabitations of lived experiences by relying on narrative language as a medium).

Through narratives, organization members make sense of change as they recall stories from the past and juxtapose them with narratives in the present. Ford and Ford (1995) clearly demonstrated the role of conversation in producing intentional change in organizations. Based on conversations that tap *lived* accounts of change and change management, organization members come to inhabit their own narrative experiences of change and change situations. Such change situation might involve, for example, the implementation of total quality management (TQM) or downsizing. If a change participant resists such change, and if that change participant recites his or own reasons for resistance to change, that participant is participating in a narrative of the past and is relating it to a narrative of the present. Narrating reasons for commitment, or a lack of commitment, is a very important aspect of meaning-making in change management because such meaning-making provides people with a personal rationale for embracing or resisting change.

For Ricoeur (1984: 82–7), such an act of narrative involves a hermeneutic—that is, it involves an "interpretation" that uses narratives to depict what is real and relevant in the person's experience of the world. Such an act of narrative is emergent and developmental. It is accomplished through an *ongoing* interpretation of past change events *in parallel* with what is

really happening in the actual experience of change. The interpretation of change events thus involves a dialectic between what is illuminating and controversial from the past (for example, previous experiences of changes in process and/or structure) and the present actual experience of the person in a new change situation. Narrative makes connections between past events and the experience people inhabit in the present. Events in the present help a person relate to past events. In turn, past events help the person to relate to events in the present. Narrative identity is the *output* of such a hermeneutic cycle of meaning-making.

Ricoeur's work on narrative identity has been instrumental in moving the conception of identity from the rational mind to a text of narratives of meanings, desires, and aspirations. According to Ricoeur, people derive their identity by streamlining narratives about people, objects, and situations in a process of progressive self-clarification—guided by the organizing and orderly properties of narrative. However, this narrative identity approach does not focus on the relation between people. It basically relies on a substantive notion of selfhood. Identity achieved through narrative thus pays little attention to plurality. In particular, it fails to address the role played by utterances and the way in which utterances provide freedom from the domination of an integrated text formed by narrative coherence. Identity understood through narrative thus tends to mask changes in the co-construction of meaning—particularly the co-construction that occurs when utterances are brought to bear on changing meanings, desires, and aspirations.

There is, therefore, a need to re-evaluate the process of narrative identity—on the grounds that it fails to grapple with the multi-vocal nature of discourse. It tends to ignore an important function of speech, whereby meaning-making is a joint production involving more than one change participant. The present study attempts to remedy the shortcomings of narrative identity

by proposing change as involving shifting identities that are achieved through the transposition of utterances. In what follows, Bakhtin's language theory is presented as a useful epistemological approach for showing how change as shifting identities can be co-constructed through utterances, rather than through narrative formation.

Bakhtin's approach

Dialogue

The concept of *dialogue* has been invoked by many scholars of general management theory (Senge, 1990), as well as by those working within more specific areas of management intervention, including action research and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastra, 1987). Two mainstream lines of thinking about dialogue can be identified—(i) the prescriptive approach; and (ii) the process approach. The *prescriptive* approach to dialogue, which concentrates on the methodology and epistemology of dialogue, includes the work of Bohm (1996) and Buber (1970). Bohm (1996: 2) emphasized the need for dialogue to be conceived as a fully conscious effort that aims to "create something new together". Buber (1970) emphasized dialogue based on the conscious and continuous management of the tension between monologue and dialogue.

The *process* approach to dialogue, as exemplified by the work of Bakhtin (1981, 1984), affirms the ontological and the linguistic aspects of dialogue, rather than its methodological features. Bakhtin's notion of dialogue (1984: 110) requires "a plurality of consciousness, one that cannot in principle be fitted within the bounds of a single consciousness". Elsewhere, Bakhtin (1986: 138) observed that: "Just as the body is formed initially in the mother's womb (body), a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness". Such an interest in the ontology of identity is a recurrent theme of Bakhtin's work: "I live in a world of others'

words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others' words" (1986: 143).

Bakhtin's notion of dialogue is consistently concerned with how language simultaneously constructs and reflects the relationship between individuals and their immediate setting. Bakhtin discarded the dualism of transmissions between an active speaker and a passive listener in favour of utterances that are made in anticipation of the other's active response. Rather than seeing meaning-making in change management as being based on ready-made subject-centered codes, Bakhtin's approach sees meaning-making as irreducibly dependent on a complex unity of differences in utterances, or heteroglossia, whereby meaning comes to be constituted. Implicit in Bakhtin's conception of heteroglossia is a privileging of speech under centripetal forces (forces of meaning that unify utterances, tending towards the center) and centrifugal forces (forces of meaning that disturb, tending to flee the center). It is from within his conception of heteroglossia that Bakhtin saw utterances as being completely 'unfinalizable'—there is no such thing as 'strictly speaking'. Other characteristics of utterances that are at the core of Bakhtin's thinking, and to which he refers frequently, include innovation, "surprisingness", the genuinely new, openness, freedom, and creativity (Morson & Emerson, 1990: 36–7).

Viewing the formation of identity as dependent on an infinite and recursive chain of utterances is tantamount to viewing identity as dependent on an infinite and recursive 'stretch' of talks in which identity is formed and reformed based on an intersection of utterances, rather than a fixed point of meaning. Every utterance is at least a double-voiced one. "This change is good". "This change is good". Both utterances enter each other. They embody each other and at the same time allow for further utterances. The same applies with two non-identical statements. "This change is a sham". "This change is good". Through such utterances context is formed and

reformed through multiple opposing positions (subjectivities), thus leading to a dialogical tension that transcends the organizing property of any narrative. These utterances (centripetal and centrifugal) influence the way people come to co-inhabit their own experiences of the change situation in the light of the inhabitation of other members. This leads to a lessening of the centripetal tendencies—a freedom of identity from being configured into a relatively coherent whole.

Dialogue and language

An important notion in the work of Bakhtin is dialogue, but it is an 'unusual' form of dialogue because it relies on making room for both the addressor and the addressee to meet, whereby each becomes the other. Bakhtin's form of dialogue is unusual because it sees dialogue as being ingrained in people's being and consciousness through language. This is an important feature that distinguishes Bakhtin's approach to dialogue from the more prescriptive mode (Bohm, 1996). For Bakhtin, it is the 'stretch' of utterances, and not the abstract system of *langue*, that explains the fundamental reality of dialogue through language. Originally, it was Saussure (1983) who divided language into langue and parole (speech) in order to exhibit language as something fixed. He wanted to sketch out something that is essentially shifting and fluid. He recognized this in his influential idea that the semiotic linguistic sign is arbitrary. However, he later moved away from the full implications of this idea.

Bakhtin expressed his dismay with Saussure's structuralist approach to language. He saw langue and parole (speech) as representing a false dichotomy—resulting in an approach that refuses to take into account the shifting nature of language. He therefore called for a synthesis between *langue* and *parole*, which prompted him to advance his views of language as a living thing—dependent on an infinite and recursive chain of transmissions.

Saussure's ways of thinking about language leads to a certain reduction in the interpersonal, and a reduction in the social elements needed for defining change as shifting identities accomplished through speech (utterances). In accordance with his conception of language as a homogeneous system, Saussure's separation of langue from speech places a limit on identities. It precludes the ability to see oneself. It masks the potential for understanding change as shifting identities because it emphasizes language as the basis for generating fixed meanings (word as a code). In the absence of a fluid and shifting understanding of speech, fixed meanings are more likely to lead to an assumed sameness and evenness of the self with social others across more than one setting.

By adopting Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, it is possible to reverse the reductionist tendency inherent in the Sausserean approach. Dialogue can be conceived as being based on utterances that are 'unfinalizable', rather than as being a process of transmission of codes that are fixed and prescribed by Saussure's separation of langue from parole. Through a Bakhtinian notion of language, identities are co-constructed through an ongoing exchange of utterances.

Utterances

An utterance can be a word or a sentence, spoken or written. It is a real unit of speech because it reflects a real speech situation (Bakhtin, 1986: 67). Each utterance is infused with intentions. The word spoken as utterance is necessarily a word that is infused with the speaker's awareness of his or her listener, and with the speaker's awareness of the influence of other speakers heard in the speaker's life. This notion of the addressor becoming aware of the addressee and of the addressee becoming aware of the addressor allows utterances to interanimate each other, even in silence.

In each speech act, utterance is an expression of subjective experience. It is firmly situated within a framing context, or dialogic space (discussed in greater detail below). Voloshinov (1986: 97) described an utterance as "a fact of the social milieu". At any given point in time,

there is a particular change situation, and this ensures that the meaning attached to a word uttered at a particular time is different from the meaning attached to that same word under other conditions. Whether communicated verbally or in silence, utterances emerge as an active expression of meaning. An utterance eventually generates another statement. Utterances, therefore, can produce what might be called a 'stretch of interaction' in given social contexts.

According to Bakhtin, there is always a constant dialogue between change participants—a situation in which every utterance predicts and relationally changes the one that follows it. Through speech, people experience an endlessly internalized exchange of utterances. Recognition of the undecidable, unfinalizable nature of utterances permits an understanding of change being shaped and reshaped through shifting identities, and an understanding of the interlocking relationship between change and the intertextuality of people's accounts of change. The interlocking relationship between change and the intertextuality of people's accounts of change is never complete and final. This is what Bakhtin means by "carnival"—that identity is fluid, playful, intermingling, and ambiguous. For Bakhtin, no single interpretation, meaning, or definition of an identity achieved through narrative can stand as more than a momentary manifestation.

Framing context

Utterances develop from within a socially specific framing (or dialogic space). Within a framing context, in which each person holds a unique place, utterances are simultaneously constituted and interpreted. Utterances thus implicate one another as each is formed and reformed through an ongoing process of linking and transposing the meaning of one utterance into another. An utterance responds to utterances that have come before it—in a sense, utterances come to be inhabited by others. It is important to recognize that the context within which all utterances are framed and reframed remains subject to further changes as more utterances follow, and as frames

become 'populated' by various opposing positions. A frame continues to change in the course of speaking as meaning is carried over from one utterance to another. Bakhtin (1981: 293) stressed that no word can be neutral.

> There are no 'neutral' words and forms. All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and the hour … all words and forms are populated by intentions.

All intentions are subjectivized. This gives utterance a colorful real meaning that allows identities to be implicated in speech, rather than by the mere application of a narrative closure. Language thus emerges not as an abstract system of forms (*langue*), but rather as a "concrete heteroglot" (Bakhtin, 1981: 293)—a heterogeneous reflection of a world infused with contradictory intentions.

Shifting identities

Identities achieved through utterances

Bakhtin's work is fully grounded in a dialogic ontology in which the self is not substantive, but relational, which brings a very crucial insight to change as shifting identities accomplished through utterances. This insight flows from the formation of identity based on utterances that are made in anticipation of the other's active response. Writing under the censure of the Stalinist regime, Bakhtin (1984) enacted a radically subversive theory of the "carnival" (Boje, 2001b). Bakhtin's theory emphasizes the profound ever-changing nature of identity (language) in a festival atmosphere of shifting meaning-making that is anchored in social interaction. This is an

epistemology in which the external and internal being of the subject is inextricably related with those of others.

Bakhtin did not see identity as an autonomous Cartesian subjectivity—that is, as a monad guided by order and coherence. Identity, for Bakhtin (1984: 287), is always involved in dialogue: "I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another". For Bakhtin, every internal experience ends up on the boundary, where it encounters another experience in a tension-filled encounter. Identity is always shifting and always 'looking into the eye' of another. This is because the word a person speaks as utterance is necessarily a word that is infused with that person's sense of self as addressee, the influence of other addressors that the person has heard in the past, and the *heteroglossia* of that person's particular change situation. Utterances and the shifting context within which utterances are made affect the way in which change is co-constructed as shifting identities.

Rather than seeing change as a phenomenon outside selfhood, change conceived in terms of shifting identities is a shifting phenomenon because of the variety in utterances and the fluidity and dispersion that result from the collision of centripetal and centrifugal forces operating in language. For example:

> Centripetal: "The merger will help us all."
> Centrifugal: "I don't think it will. I just don't see how."

Each utterance can stand in a heteroglossia with other utterances—in the sense that an utterance can change the course of the conversation. Meaning-making is thus understood as being accomplished through utterances that are constituted within centripetal forces (forces that unify utterances, tending towards the center) and centrifugal forces (forces that disturb, tending

to flee the center). From Bakhtin's general principle of heteroglossia it is possible to deduce, and allow for, all possible particulars within a conversation. It allows a participant to see change as a project that is relational (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Gergen, 1994; McNamme, Gergen & Associates, 1999). Change thus becomes, fundamentally, an act of co-authoring in which desires and aspirations are transposed.

Surplus of meaning

Bakhtin advanced the notion of "transgredience" to emphasize the self as dialogical, and thus saturated with otherness. By transgredience, Bakhtin (1981) meant that elements of the self or the self's culture (identity) can cross over —that is, aspects of the self cross over to other selves (or other identities). Each takes an element of the other, and each comes to illuminate the other. Transgredience is a phenomenon of being 'outside' the other and yet being able to 'tele-transfer' elements of one's own culture or social language to social others. Through this the idea of "surplus", change can be seen in a new light. This can be referred to as "outsideness". The fact that I am "outside" my students means that I can see things about them that they cannot see, and the fact that they are outside me means that they can see things about me that I cannot see.

Commenting on Bakhtin's notion of transgredience, Morson and Emerson (1990: 185) noted that, as each side takes on aspects of the other, an "illumination" is achieved, which allows each side "to complete and finalize an image of each other". This produces what might be termed a "surplus of meaning"—a sort of surplus of seeing or capability that manifests itself through speech, by which identities are enriched by insights being unveiled in the light of simultaneous differences (outsideness) through utterances situated within the framing context. Trangredience develops in a back-and-forth manner within a 'stretch of talk' as people exchange utterances, and as words are transposed among contexts and situations. It has two important implications for change management.

First, transgredience is crucial if true relationality is to occur between an active addressor and an active addressee (Bakhtin, 1981; Baxter, 1991; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Without transgredience, relationality remains muted by implicit bias towards synthesis, integration, and coherence. Identity thus remains a property rather than a joint production based on the involvement of the other. Transgredience is also important because it promotes a surplus of meaning (akin to capability, or the notion of double-loop feedback), whereby things are enriched by insights being brought to bear on the handling of change from more than one angle.

Secondly, transgredience is of significance to change conceived in terms shifting identities because it basically sees change as transgressions of utterances (texts) that are simultaneously constituted and interpreted. Change as shifting identities achieved through the transgression of utterances is, therefore, not that of an immutable substance, nor that of a fixed structure. Change as shifting identities is continuously influenced by the surplus of insight achieved through seeing what the other cannot see. Change as shifting identities is "identities in surplus of seeing" at changing levels in space and time. Without transgredience, it is difficult for identities to incorporate change tendencies, new encounters, dispersion, voice, disorder, and otherness. People stand to benefit from transgredience as they see change every time an utterance is made. Through utterances, people come to know more about expectations, suffering of change recipients, joy of participation, and the like.

Change as shifting identities is, therefore, never-ending on the boundaries of selfhood and otherness. There is no limit to the extent to which utterances are unfinalizable—thus drawing an ever-changing view of intentions and orientations. A dialogic approach to change, as shifting identities, avoids gliding over intentions and orientations of organization members, and thus allows for a more involved outlook as to how they are situated linguistically and relationally

through transgredience. The narrative approach to the formation of identity stands to benefit from approaching utterances as constitutive of meaning-making and as "identities in a surplus of seeing". Such benefit can be largely derived from taking into account the role of transgredience and the transposition of utterances between an active addressor and an active addressee.

Conclusions

As it stands, change conceived in terms of coherence of narrative identity clearly limits the horizon of scholarship. Bakhtin's alternative, in contrast, draws on the role of utterances between people as promoting more possibilities for change.

Change and identity are so tightly interwoven that a dialogic approach to utterances seems to offer a promising perspective for change management. Coping with change in terms of shifting identities is largely dependent on how researchers position themselves in relation to those about whom writing takes place. Given that change requires an ongoing commitment to utterances, researchers need to become more skilled in perceiving language apart from the traditional connotations of the word as code. They need to research utterances by working out the conditions that give rise to these utterances and the way in which they are framed and reframed in time and space. New research initiatives could include a focus on how centrifugal forces shape and reshape change through identities, and how these shifting identities influence change.

If relationality is to be fully understood, the shifting nature of identity through transgredience and the unfinalizability of utterances has to be fully taken into account. Transgredience is not a neutral concept. Rather, it is an inherent aspect of what needs to be accomplished if dialogue is to occur. Although many prescriptive approaches to dialogue have emphasized relationality (Senge, 1990), unfinalizability and transgredience have been neglected. Individualism and the certainty of the self/other dichotomy remain prominent in change

management, albeit in subtle forms. Without transgredience, relationality remains inadequate as a concept in moving beyond stability and coherence. Utterances in heteroglossia (centripetal and centrifugal) are important from the perspective of making choices. 'Who is speaking' and 'who is to going to speak' are important issues that matter in terms of how change is co-constructed. Change management need to emphasize transgredience (boundaries, selfhood and otherness) and the unfinalizability of utterances in heteroglossia (centripetal and centrifugal) if the concept of relationality is to be apposite and useful.

Such a re-evaluation of relationality offers an opportunity for both change agents and change participants to reflect on three important issues: (i) that change efforts need to position identity as contingent on the boundary between selfhood and otherness; (ii) that the boundary between selfhood and otherness provides focus and content for change as shifting identities to be achieved through utterances; and, most importantly, (iii) that it is only through otherness that selfhood can define change. All three issues presume a continuing self-awareness of others, their subjectivities, and their sensibilities. For all three issues to be resolved and to succeed in providing effective interventions, it is necessary to presuppose an equal partnership between change agents and change participants. This is necessary if identity is to be prevented from being subordinated to coherence and order.

Change management must not only cast off the dualistic idea of the word as immutable code, but also cast off unhelpful dualistic concepts of relationship. Bakhtin's linguistic insights provide a means of doing this. Shotter (2000: 129) has noted that "we do not need any new theories. We need to elaborate critically the spontaneous theory of language we already possess." In this respect, certain theories of dialogue (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1970) are helpful in the light of Bakhtin's conception of relationality based on transgredience.

An approach to change rooted in a dialogic lingusitic model differs from models that are social constructionist. It differs in its emphasis on transgredience between the self and social others. A social constructionist approach, such as appreciative inquiry (AI), attempts to construct utterances based on deep understanding as well as an acceptance of other thoughts, including the affirmation of positive alternatives, but stops short of seeing self-affirmation based on transgredience between selfhood and otherness.

For change management, an emphasis on change conceived in terms of shifting identities will motivate management to become more open and responsive in involving themselves in self-analysis. Rather than encoding "sameness" and assuming conformity of the self with social others, efforts are more likely to be made to contest coherence and synthesis and to enfranchise those change participants whose voices have been silenced in the past through mismanagement. Change conceived in terms of shifting identities offers an opportunity to expand the horizon for empowerment and an opportunity for control to be located at the level where coordination is conducted. Dialogue from a Bakhtinian perspective provides for the possibility of change. It provides more options and opportunities—in itself an empowerment.

Too often, a failure to recognize the transposition of utterances results in poor communication, reduced effectiveness, and higher turnover rates. Attention to the retention and encouragement of heteroglossia in the workplace provides opportunities for building communication bridges between workers and management, and reduces the likelihood of unpleasant confrontations. Through such efforts, addressors and addressees can discover richer structures of meaning. Viewing change in terms of shifting identities achieved through utterances will motivate organization members to relate more of their experiences, and will involve all change participants in the transposition and the exchange of utterances.

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