Organizational Decision-making, Discourse, and Power:
Integrating across contexts and scales

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Abstract:

Research has downplayed the complex discursive processes through which decisions are constructed and blurs the relationship between macro- and micro-levels. The paper argues for a critical and ecologically valid approach that articulates how discourse is influenced by, and in turn shapes, the organizational settings in which it occurs. It makes a methodological contribution using decision-making episodes of a senior management team meeting of a multinational company to demonstrate the insights that can be obtained from embedding the Discourse-Historical (D-H) Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis within a longitudinal ethnography. The approach illuminates the latent power dynamics and range of potentials of agents, triangulating micro-level discursive strategies with macro-level historical sources and background knowledge on the social and political fields. The paper also makes a theoretical contribution by demonstrating the dependency of decision outcomes on often unpredictable and subtle changes in the power-context relationship.

Keywords:
Decision-making, Discourse Analysis, Ethnography, Macro-Micro, Power, Management Teams.