Managing Organizational Change

Process, Social Construction and Dialogue

Second Edition

Lecture Notes Chapter 11

11 COMMUNICATING CHANGE

Learning objectives

By the time you have completed your study of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss the role of language in change communication.
- Explore models of communicating change.
- Discuss the role of communication in co-constructing change.
- Explore Bakhtin's notion of dialogue.
- Become aware of the pitfalls of aiming for monologic consensus.
- Advance the notion of 'surplus of insight' achieved through communication.
- Explore the role of communication in organizational learning.
- Elaborate on the role of the change agent in communicating change.

In this chapter we explore change communication under conditions of 'chang*ing*' as a continuous process.

Building on Weick's 1979) use of 'organiz*ing*' that ends in '*ing*', we move towards a more dynamic way of understanding the active verb '*Communicating*' in the belief that communication should remain 'in the making', namely always and ongoing.

Also, in this chapter . . .

We discuss models of communication and that of communication as a social constructionist process driven by responsive interactions.

We explore Bakhtin's work and his notion of speech. Bakhtin rejected Ferdinand de Saussure's view that all meanings are created *inside* language.

We explore the notion of '**surplus of insight**' and that of **organizational learning.**

Bakhtin rejected the idea that language is a fixed system of signs and that all meanings are created inside speech, namely *parole* as in the actual use of language.
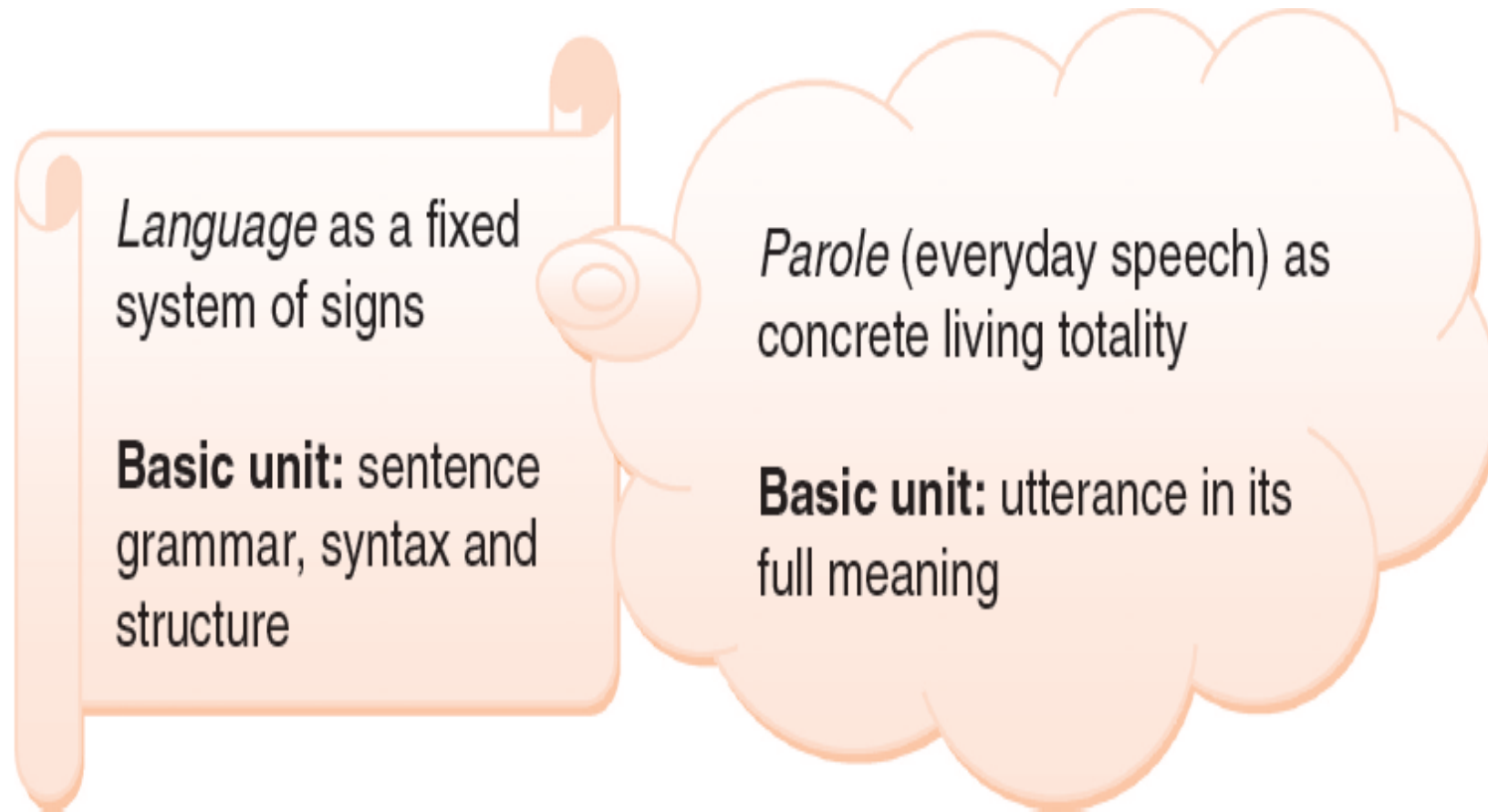
Language as a fixed system of signs

Basic unit: sentence grammar, syntax and structure

Parole (everyday speech) as concrete living totality

Basic unit: utterance in its full meaning

Figure 11.1 Differentiating between *langue* and *parole*

Although we speak of 'changing' and 'communicating' as if they are separate, managing change is closely intertwined with communication as an on-going act.

- Communication is always in the driver's seat of change and chang*ing*.

- Communicating should remain 'in the making' hence, ongoing.

Bakhtin (1986: 147) rejected language as a system of codes by noting that: 'A code is only a technical means of transmitting information; it does not have cognitive, creative significance.'

Bakhtin provides a distinctive way of understanding communication because he offers a different way of seeing the role of conversations in thinking change as ongoing.

Models of Communicating Change

- Transmission Model
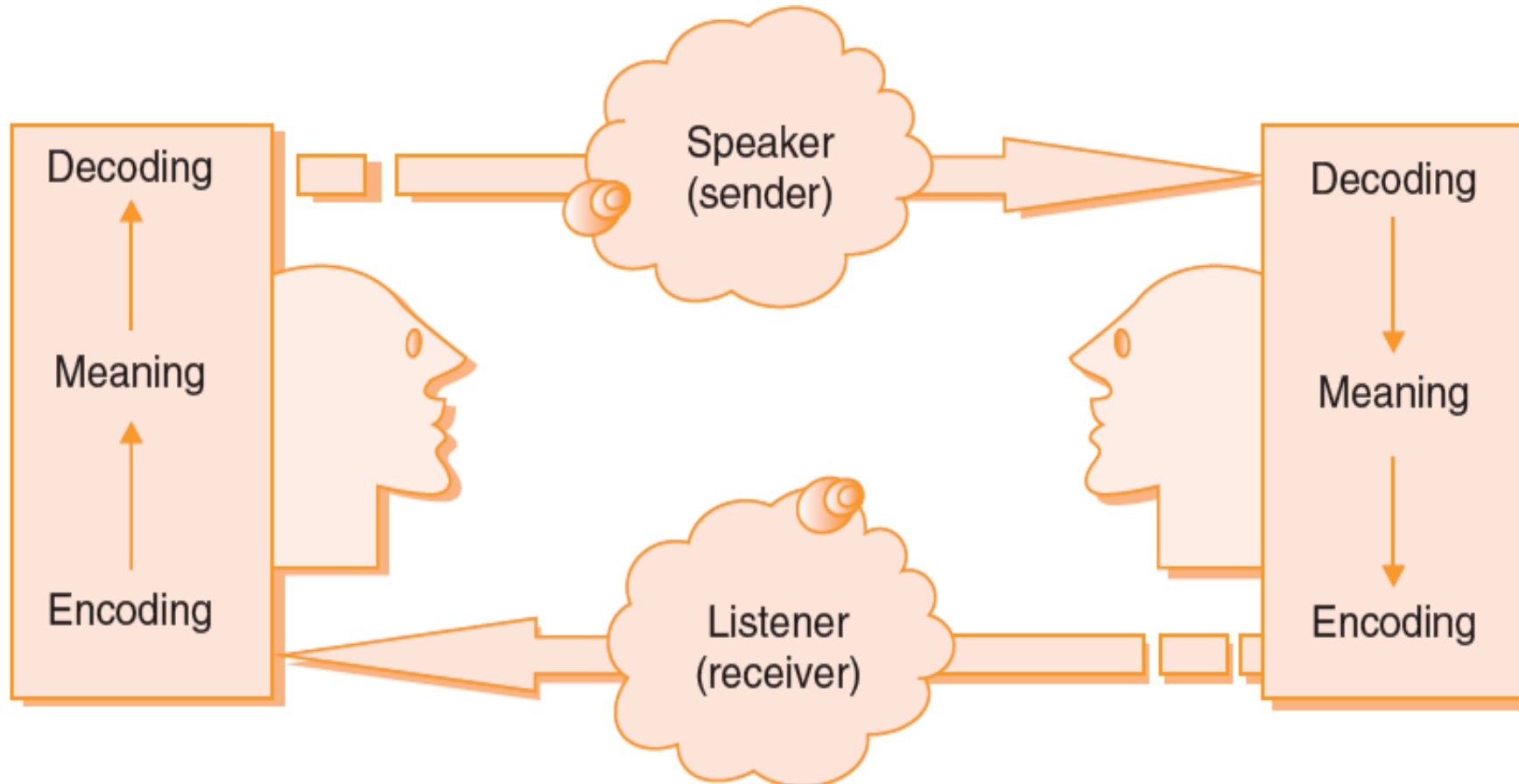- Social construction Model
- Dialogic Model

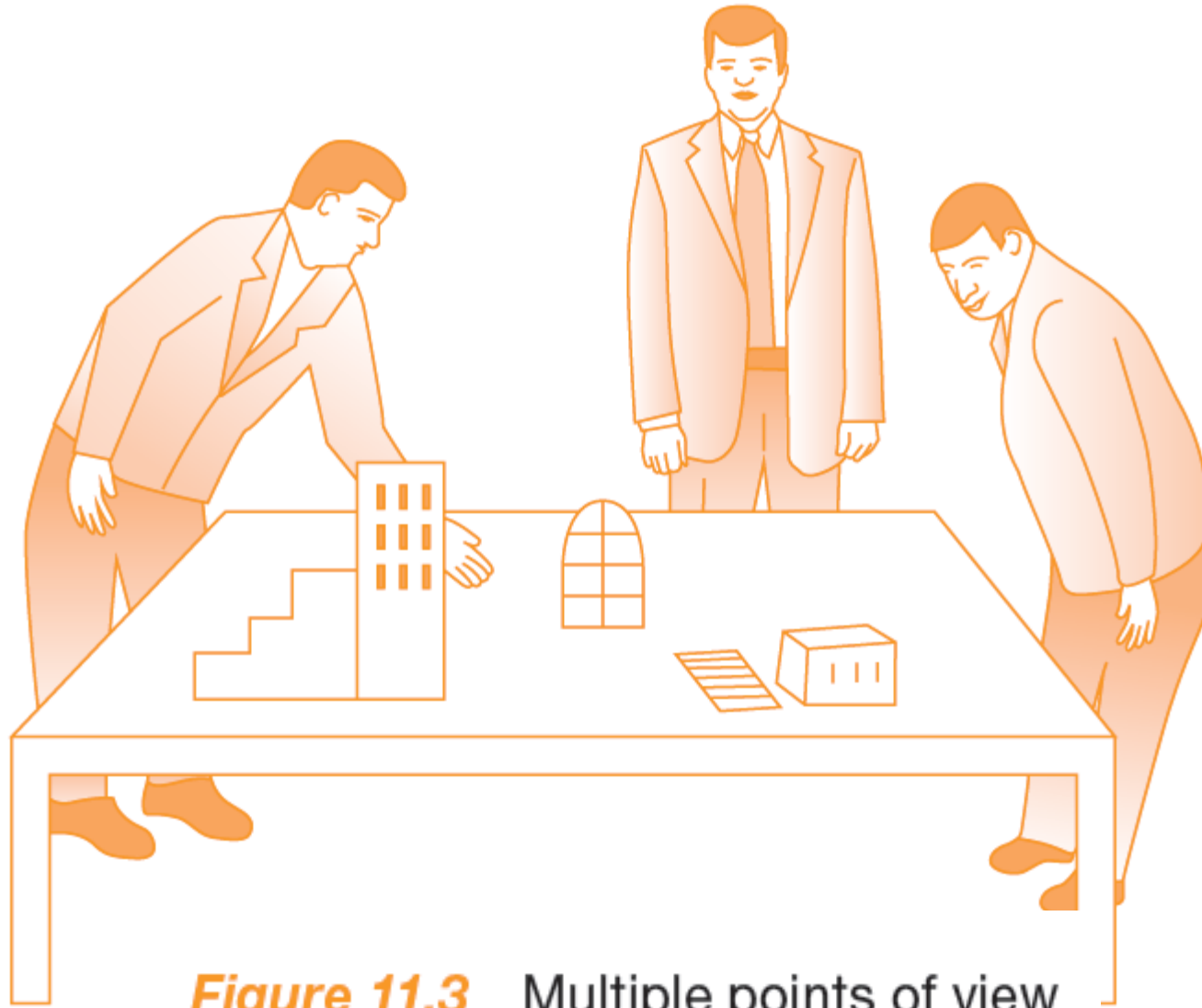**Figure 11.2** The transmission (information-processing) model

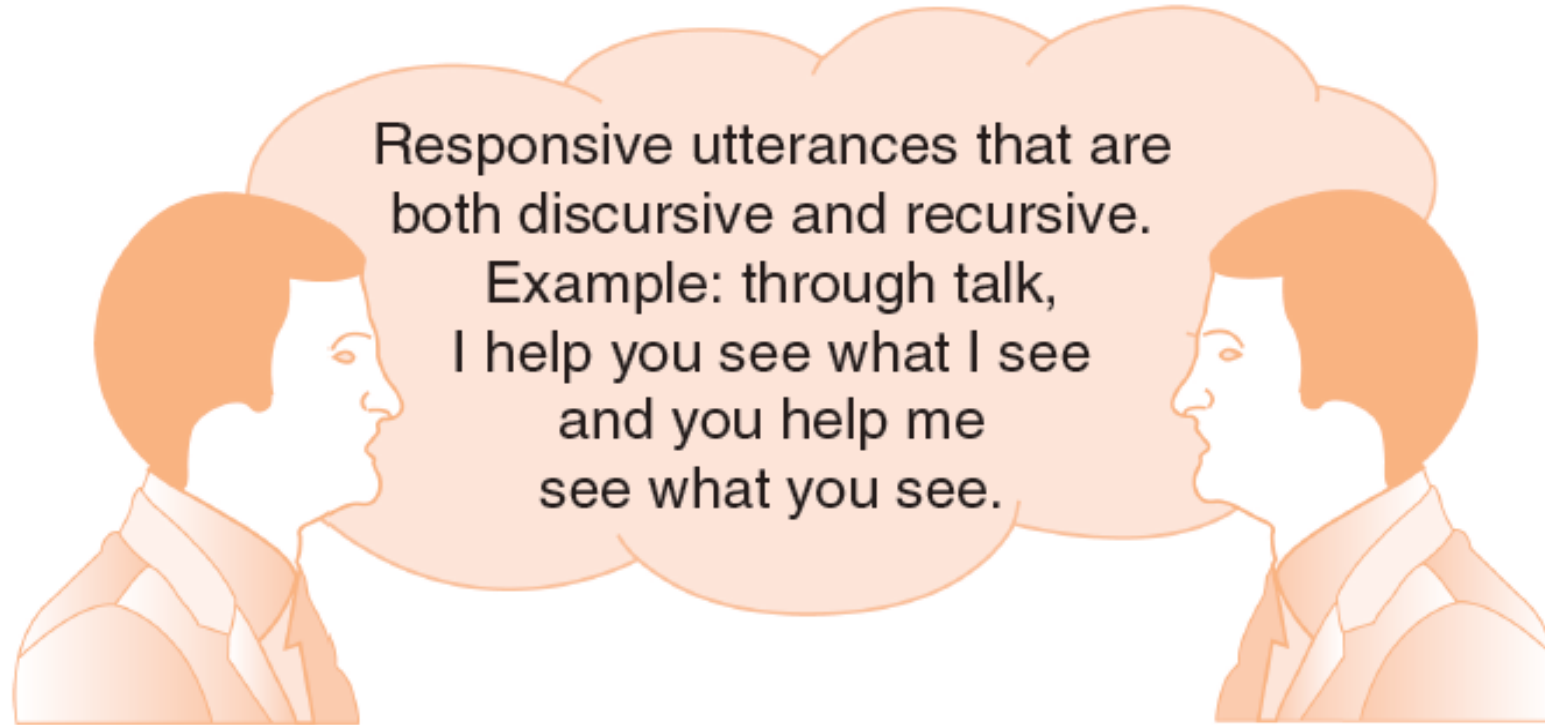**Figure 11.3** Multiple points of view achieved through social construction

Figure 11.4 The dialogic model

Authoritative forces of meaning that tend to communicate uniformity and the status quo

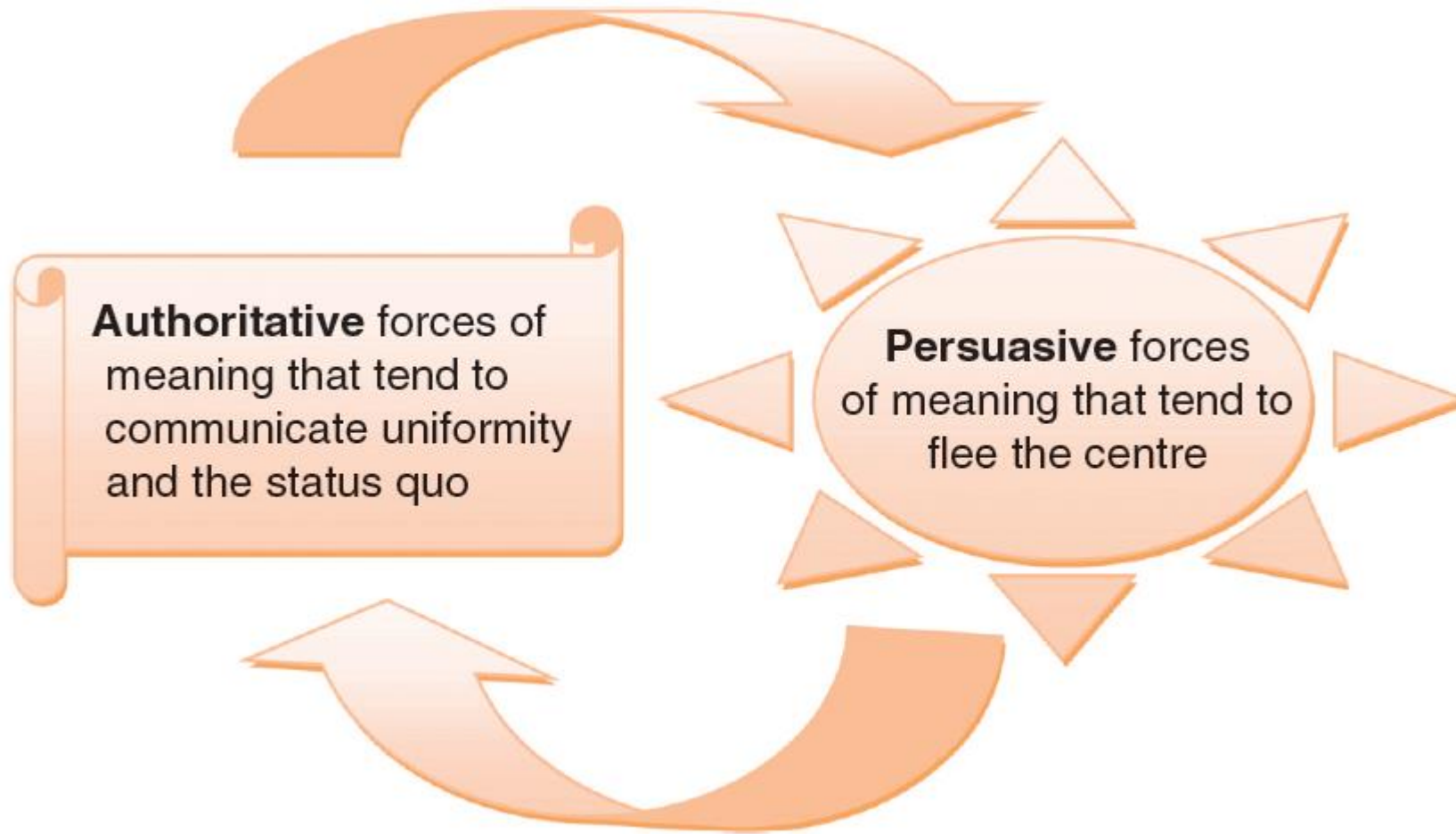**Persuasive** forces of meaning that tend to flee the centre

Figure 11.5 Centripetal and centrifugal forces in communication

A 'surplus of insight' develops in a back-and-forth manner within conversation, as people exchange utterances.

That is where insights held by oneself continue to *cross over* to other selves.

A 'surplus of insight' results in creating a learning culture.

Through responsive utterances we are enabled to obtain a new '**surplus of meaning or insight**' into the situation at hand.

That is because an utterance we make contains within it the trace of other utterances.

Let's discuss ...

Defining the Notion of Transgredience

Bakhtin advanced the notion of 'transgredience' (being outside the other) to show that any utterance we make contains within it the trace of other utterances.

Applied to managing change, we define 'transgredience' as the truly genuine exchange of insights.

Such insights results in a surplus of meaning giving way to new ways of thinking, learning and innovation.

An example on how trangredience works itself . . .

In team learning situations, a change leader can 'cross over' to team members. Each takes an element of the other, and each comes to illuminate the views of the other.

The fact that a change leader is 'outside' a work situation means that they can illuminate things about team members that they cannot see. Also, the fact that team members are 'outside' the change leader means that they can narrate things the change leader cannot see.

Thank you