Micro-level discursive strategies for constructing shared views around strategic issues in team meetings

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Abstract

Management scholars have explored how certain actors in meetings – especially leaders – shape social processes of interaction and use different linguistic ploys, as methods, to affect how sense is made of strategic issues. Less attention has been paid to interactions between members of the team as a whole and the repertoire of discursive strategies, or goal-directed behaviours, that they deploy to create shared views around issues. We analyse rare empirical episodes of team discussions of strategic issues in board meetings to inductively conceptualise how this is achieved. We do this by deploying the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to critical discourse analysis (CDA), an approach ideally suited to the task but not used in management. We reveal five discursive strategies teams use to develop shared views around strategic issues (Re/defining, Equalising, Simplifying, Legitimating, and Reconciling) and demonstrate how they are skillfully operationalised through a range of linguistic ploys or means.

(150 words)

Key words: Strategic issues, shared views, meetings, discursive strategies, linguistic ploys, Discourse-Historical Approach, Critical Discourse Analysis

Introduction

Early empirical studies of strategy development such as that by Mintzberg (1973) demonstrated managers spend more than 70 per cent of their time in discussion in different forms of meetings. More recently, scholars have studied meetings as a central arena for decision-making and strategizing by focusing on social processes within them and how they affect attention given to strategic issues. Empirical work on strategy meetings has examined enacted practices and patterns of interaction (e.g. Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Johnson et al., 2010) and sensemaking (e.g. Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005). Meanwhile, other researchers have focused on the linguistic ploys or means used to achieve a particular end (e.g. Bartel and Garud, 2009; Cornelissen et al., 2011) and especially how leaders use language (e.g. Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Taylor and Robichaud, 2007; Wodak et al., 2011) to shape understanding. What we know less about, is how teams of managers skillfully and dynamically interact with one another, through conversation, using goal-directed practices or 'discursive strategies' to achieve particular outcomes (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001, p.44-5), such as a shared view of a strategic issue.

Our paper directly addresses this gap in understanding by showing how a shared view is constructed using systematic strategies of language use within team meetings. We analyse rare empirical episodes of discussion within a senior management team of a multinational defence corporation to inductively conceptualize the process of shared view formation. This is achieved using a novel form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Phillips and Hardy, 2002; van Dijk, 2012; Wodak, 2011b) – the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009) – which provides researchers with a range of theories and methodologies for examining the discursive practices through which managers powerfully shape the views of others (Clarke et al., 2012; Wodak, 2001; Wodak et al., 2011). The paper's central contribution is to help to unpack 'strategy as discourse' by developing a model of how shared views are formed using discursive strategies and demonstrating how these strategies are achieved using a variety of linguistic ploys. In so doing, we also make additional contributions to research on strategy meetings in terms of conceptualising discursive struggle as a process of intricate synthesis rather than overt conflict, and by revealing the discursive mechanisms practitioners need to become aware of as 'tools' that are central to strategy work.

We structure our argument and analysis in four parts. In the next section, we position our study with reference to strands of literature that emphasise how the outcome of interactions within meetings is affected through use of language, especially by leaders. This reveals a poor understanding of how conversational interaction occurs at the *team* level and how it influences the formation of shared views around strategic issues. We then introduce the DHA to highlight how it can help fill this gap in understanding, prior to using empirical episodes of discursive interaction drawn from a senior management team to develop a conceptual model of the discursive strategies that are central to shared view formation. Finally, we elaborate the contributions of the paper.

Approaches to developing shared views around strategic issues in meetings

The process of forming shared views has been explored from different research perspectives and is variously referred to as the 'framing' of issues (e.g. Kaplan, 2008), developing shared 'accounts' of issues (e.g. Maitlis, 2005), the 'diagnosis' of issues (e.g. Dutton and Duncan, 1987), and the development of 'shared schemata' around issues (e.g. Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Here, we coin the term 'shared view' to refer to the collective understanding generated through managerial interactions. Scholars have used various approaches to investigate this question, approaches that can be categorised as focusing on: (a) sensemaking, (b) practice, (c) discursive strategies, and (d) their achievement using linguistic ploys.

Sensemaking studies of management meetings have analysed how managers interact to develop shared views as 'accounts' of strategic issues. Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) ethnographic study of top management team meetings for example, found that the way in which a chief executive conducts a meeting and encourages phases of sensegiving and sensemaking, plays a pivotal role in the success of strategic change initiatives. Maitlis

(2005) showed how the degree to which both leaders and stakeholders engage in sensegiving has a formative influence on views and the extent to which organizations acts on them as a result.

Practice-based studies have focused on the importance of the social context of interactions in reaching shared views. Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) for example, showed how certain meeting structures, particularly those established by the person who chairs the meeting, can either encourage stability or trigger agreement for a change in strategic direction. Johnson and colleagues (Bourque and Johnson, 2008; Johnson et al., 2010) demonstrated that the use of ritualistic scripts helped encourage substantive discussion of strategic issues in away-day meetings. Conversely, Hodgkinson and Wright (2002) showed that practices to encourage shared view formation can be thwarted by the intransigence and defensiveness of other executives. Finally, Kaplan (2008) identified how executives engage in socio-political practices to frame particular issues in order to help their particular stance gain dominance over other competing views.

Studies that have focused on the influence of specific linguistic ploys in conversation have demonstrated how they can impact shared view formation. For instance, scholars have identified how macro-narratives help express dissenting views about strategic change (Brown and Humphreys, 2003; Brown and Jones, 1998; Dawson and Buchanan, 2005; Thomas et al., 2011) or alternatively provide the 'thread' that makes a proposed change memorable to participants (Bartel and Garud, 2009; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Other researchers have examined the role that metaphors and analogies play in compressing, legitimating (Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010) and embodying group understanding (Heracleous and Jacobs, 2008).

Finally, scholars working within and between the disciplines of linguistics, management and organizational communications have described how leaders of management teams use a range of discursive strategies and linguistic ploys to shape shared views of strategic issues. Leaders practically influence meaning-making by the way they orchestrate and chair discussions, a role that has been likened to a 'switchboard' in terms of how they open and close meetings, enable participant turn-taking, and ensure suitable progression of discussions (Asmuss and Svennevig, 2009). Samra-Fredericks (2003) used an ethnomethodological and conversational analytic (CA) perspective to undertake a fine-grained, turn-by-turn analysis of how a managing director influenced the perception of his management team on a new strategic direction by using six relational-rhetorical mechanisms together (e.g. speaking forms of knowledge, mitigating and observing the protocols of human interaction, questioning and querying, displaying appropriate emotion, deploying metaphor, and putting history to 'work'). With reference to Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative rationality, Samra-Fredericks (2005) developed this approach to indicate how a range of discursive ploys were used by a senior manager to reconstitute power relations within strategy discussions. Cooren et al (2007) employed a similarly fine-grained CA based method, to examine how the main representative of a non-governmental organization leveraged broader discourses to establish and defend his position in negotiations within meetings. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) examined

how leaders influence shared views using a combination of four linguistic-pragmatic ploys across meetings (e.g. pronominalisation, metaphors, discourse markers, professional terminology) to chair, control and 'weave' together voices of respective parties so as to achieve agreement. Holmes and Marra (2004) also showed how leaders managed conflict within meetings by deploying a particular repertoire of discursive strategies to affect 'good leadership', and how individuals' chairing styles varied between different contexts (see Angouri and Marra, 2010). More recently, Wodak et al (2011) identified five discursive strategies used by leaders to stimulate members of their teams to engage in the development of consensus around issues.

Individually, each of these approaches contributes to our understanding of how shared views are constructed around strategic issues. Sensemaking and practice-based studies demonstrate that the frequency, mode and structure of interactions affects the construction of a shared view. However, by overlooking what is actually *said* by managers within these interactions, they understate the role that language plays in influencing outcomes. Scholars have studied how individual linguistic ploys such as narratives and metaphors play a part in forming shared views, but underplay how these ploys work together. This is addressed by discourse scholars who look at the repertoire of linguistic ploys used to influence shared views through discursive strategies, but here too there is a tendency to concentrate almost exclusively on leaders rather than the teams of which they are a part.

Collectively then, these studies still leave us with a number of unanswered questions. What is the nature and dynamic of this discursive process of interaction between team members that underlies the formation of shared views around strategic issues? Is it possible to identify systematic strategies of language use within the conversational interactions of senior management team meetings? Moreover, are there salient linguistic ploys used within teams to realise these discursive strategies? Below we outline the DHA approach to CDA that we use to answer these questions.

Using the Discourse-Historical Approach to analyse conversational interaction

We address the discursive strategies and linguistic ploys used in team interactions in this section by first outlining the DHA approach to CDA, which provides a comprehensive set of validated linguistic constructs and a detailed context theory that enables scholars to systematically, and abductively, analyse conversations in terms of context, power and language.

Not all CDA approaches deal with empirical phenomena at the level of ethnography and naturally occurring conversation. In order to analyse and explain any fragment of conversation, users of the DHA contend (in contrast with ethnomethodologists) that researchers need to be able to draw upon, and articulate knowledge of, the event and its context in a methodologically consistent manner. For example, how did the respective actors arrive at their current positions on the issue? What is the background to the issue itself? What are the wider cultural and resource constraints within the organization that affect how the issue is perceived? The DHA conceives such contextual factors as the

'history' of past events and the social structures, cultural norms and physical legacies that discourse occurs within, and that the researcher needs to understand, in order to comprehend how language is being used in a given context. Such socio-historical factors constrain and enable what organizational actors can, or cannot, say and do at a given moment, such as within a meeting. DHA provides a structured analytic approach that helps researchers to do this so that the focal text can be analysed inter-textually (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). Unlike most other approaches to CDA, it does this by drawing on other related documents (e.g. other meeting minutes, presentation slides), interviews and other data gathered through ethnographic observation (Clarke et al., 2012; Wodak, 1996, 2000, 2011b).

Social, cultural and physical legacies do not enable or constrain equally, as some organizational actors are able to better leverage the past to advance their own interests, and are therefore more 'powerful' than others. Because power is inherently a relational process (Faubion, 2000), DHA researchers contend that the exercise of power needs to be theorized in specific contexts, such as within meetings. Since meetings "function as one of the most important and visible sites of organizational power, and of the reification of organizational hierarchy" (Mumby, 1988, p.68), we follow Holzscheiter (2012) and conceive power as working in three dimensions in the context of meetings: (a) through actors struggling with different interpretations *in* discourse and using certain codes of interaction to establish hegemony (e.g. different conceptions of a strategic issue); (b) through influencing control over who gets 'access to the stage', and when, to influence the evolution *of* discourse (e.g. who speaks when and where); and (c) through influence *over* wider discourses institutionally and in society within which actors find themselves (e.g. actors being involved within external discussions as part of industry associations, or lobbying government) (see also Wodak, 2011b). Given that power struggles are obviously not always reflected in observable behaviour, a central purpose of the DHA is therefore to examine the complex and subtle ways in which power is simultaneously deployed through discourse along these three dimensions.

The DHA is therefore particularly well suited to examining empirical episodes of conversational interaction within management team meetings. Uniquely, the DHA addresses the tendency to conflate the *intent* of actors displayed through the discursive strategies they utilise with the linguistic *ploys* through which these strategies are realised (Kwon et al., 2009; Mueller and Whittle, 2011; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). By 'discursive strategy', we mean a more or less intentional plan of discursive practice, influenced by habitus and internalised dispositions (Bourdieu, 1972) employed to achieve a particular social, political, psychological, or linguistic outcome (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001, p.44-45). Strategies in this context are goal-directed behaviours used to leverage knowledge and communicate persuasively (Wodak, 2007). For example, Vaara and Tienari (2008) drew upon Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) to identify and analyse how managers in a multinational corporation used four discursive strategies to legitimate a factory closure. The strategy of 'authorisation' was used to help make sense of the controversial decision, which was justified on the basis of organizational competitiveness through a 'rationalisation' strategy. A 'moralisation' strategy was deployed to further argue the need

to make workers redundant abroad in order to protect those at home. These three strategies were embedded within a fourth 'mythopoetical' strategy, which provided an overall narrative of inevitability to the decision and subsequent actions by the company. More recently, Wodak et al (2011) identified five discursive strategies (bonding, encouraging, directing, modulating, and re/committing) used by leaders to stimulate members of their teams to engage in the development of consensus around issues. Given that discursive strategies such as these are almost always implicit, however, their identification necessitates a systematic linguistic and interpretive analysis of *both* contextual information *and* the linguistic ploys through which these strategies are realised (Bell, 2011; Wodak, 2011a). The organizational context of meetings, for example, are a particular genre or 'stable type' (Bakhtin, 1986) of interaction that is associated with particular speech characteristics and social protocols. In such a genre, actors have at their disposal a range of linguistic ploys, varying skill levels to operationalise them, and a choice of how to react to discussion as it emerges (Clarke et al., 2012; Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). Hence, it is crucial to theorize about actors' tendencies to behave in given ways in certain contexts, rather than try to establish inviolate causal relationships about the linguistic ploys they use and their affect. In any given situation, while actors may attempt to invoke particular discursive strategies to advance their respective interests, there is a range of linguistic ploys that can be used to realize the same discursive strategy.

We now briefly discuss two common categories of linguistic ploys used within the genre of meetings: '*topoi*' of argumentation, and rhetorical means (see Table I).

[INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE]

'Topoi' (as a salient part of argumentation) are often contained in utterances as content-related warrants or conclusion rules in the form of a condensed argument (i.e. *enthymeme*) which refer to commonsense or implicit presupposed knowledge that every participant understands within certain groups in specific contexts (see Kienpointner, 1992; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001, 2009; Rubinelli, 2009; Toulmin, 1958; van Eemeren, 2010; Walton, 2008; Wengeler, 2003; Wodak, 2011b; Wodak et al., 2011). They are constructed as warrants as "if p, then q follows". Based on presupposed knowledge that appeals to common sense, their logic is based on one or more premises. For example, in a management team considering the acquisition of a new business, an actor might say something like "we really do need to buy Company A as Bob is keen for our business unit to use its assets to meet agreed growth targets". Here the speaker is legitimating the need to buy Company A by using the group MD's name to 'guarantee' that the acquisition will make sense, as if it has been mandated by that individual.

Rhetorical means, including tropes such as metaphors, synecdoches, metonymies and personifications, are used for manifold functions when persuading others. For example, in the same illustration of a company making an acquisition, the speaker might say ,"Company A is a peach and ripe for the picking, so we need to do so before someone else gets there". Here, the speaker is using an extended metaphor to help make the case for

the acquisition by asserting that Company A is a 'peach', embedding this in a metaphorical phrase that suggests 'ripeness' and further implying that Company A has to be 'picked' off before a competitor does so. In deploying this metaphor, the notion of a ripe peach suggests the urgency of timely action. Another key rhetorical means used to persuade hearers is narrative (stories), but defined and used differently than in the management literature. In linguistics, a narrative is a specific *micro*-account, within an utterance or series of utterances, of a *past* series of events with a unique or *unexpected outcome*. Narratives are often used in discussion to establish an individual's legitimacy to speak on a topic as 'background' to a situation (Georgakopoulou and De Fina, 2011; Schiffrin, 2003 for a comprehensive overview). In contrast with narratives, scenarios and metaphorical scenarios are future-oriented accounts about *what might happen* from the speaker's point of view (Lalouschek et al., 1990; Musolff, 2006; Semino, 2010; Wagner and Wodak, 2006), which are also used for persuasion. By providing a unified plot line and connecting causalities and conclusions, narratives and scenarios make a story feel natural by orienting the listeners with context, helping them to evaluate the situation, and suggesting action (Labov and Waletzky, 1967), while also simultaneously building the identity of the speaker (Ochs, 1997; Schiffrin, 1996; Wagner and Wodak, 2006) and allowing a generalization from the specific to the general. In other words, they argue by example, and imply that one story about X stands metonymically for all experiences about X (*argumentum ad exemplum*).

In summary, then, we propose that the simultaneous emphasis on context, power and language, makes the DHA appropriate and useful for examining how strategic issues are discussed in team meetings to develop shared views. It provides the 'scaffolding' for such analysis by setting out a systematic process through which theory can be abductively developed (see Clarke et al., 2012). Having now briefly summarised extensive literatures that inform our approach (see Culpeper et al., 2009 for a more comprehensive linguistic discussion and overview), we turn to the practicalities of examining how organizational actors engage in conversational interaction to construct shared views through the skillful use of discursive strategies and linguistic ploys.

More specifically, we reformulate our research aim as three guiding questions:

1. What discursive strategies are used by actors engaged in team-level conversation to shape shared views of threats or opportunities posed by strategic issues?

2. What are the principal linguistic ploys used to realise these strategies to affect the formation of shared views?

3. What is the overall nature and dynamic of this process of conversational interaction?

Case setting and analysis

We applied these questions to data gathered from field research in the aerospace firm Defence Systems International (DSI), a multinational company responding to substantial

environmental change in the form of major cuts in governments' defence budgets around the world. Like Bourgeois and Eisenhardt (1988) and Kaplan (2008), we chose a 'high-velocity' environment to conduct our research. Examining how strategic issues are handled during periods of uncertainty allows for the deep exploration of one firm to reveal micro-mechanisms at work (Pettigrew, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1997). In our case, however, since the unit of observation was team-level sensemaking, we identified multiple cases of episodes of discussion around particular strategic issues within the firm.

We collected the data over a six-month period in 2006-07 in DSI's Australian subsidiary. We interviewed each member of the senior management team and observed all monthly meetings, creating a transcribed dataset of over 150 hours in length. This comprised 45 hours of individual interviews and more than 100 hours of board meetings. We also collated confidential company documents and compiled detailed notes of researcher field observations. A list of participants in the meetings is shown in Table II.

[INSERT TABLE II ABOUT HERE]

Analysis was carried out recursively in three stages, drawing continually on a dialogue between the researchers to factor in the contextual insights provided by our ethnography during the fieldwork phase (Krzyanowski, 2011). In the initial stage, based on observations of all the meetings, five substantive episodes were identified, representing either threats or opportunities to the company. By analysing the discursive interactions involved in these episodes and the linguistic ploys used, we were able to theorise how a senior management team came to terms with, and addressed, strategic issues through the formation of shared views about them.

In the second stage, we worked abductively, backwards and forwards between our theory-led research questions and empirical data in order to initially identify the linguistic ploys used in discussions of all five strategic issues. Two of the authors, whom observed both meetings, worked together with the third author, to identify salient linguistic ploys used to develop shared views. In doing so, we were able to discuss and address minor interpretative differences as they arose, making us more aware of, and sensitive to, the often subtle use of various linguistic ploys. In the third and final stage, we examined how linguistic ploys worked together to reveal a pattern of discursive strategies that led to the formation of shared views. We capture and articulate this pattern and dynamic in a 'generalisable theory' (Cohen et al., 2000; Hammersley, 1992; Lewis and Richie, 2003; Maxwell, 1992) later in our paper.

Before outlining our theory, we demonstrate some of the most salient linguistic ploys used by participants with detailed reference to two episodes of discussion which occurred in DSI in November 2006 and April 2007 respectively: the first concerned the Advanced Fighter Platform (or AFP); the second Avionics.

Constructing a shared view around an opportunity: the Advanced Fighter Platform (AFP)

The November episode was an agenda item within a strategy away-day meeting, concerning one of several acquisition and alliance options for developing new lines of business. The team separately discussed each option, in this case an opportunity to bid for the manufacture of tail fins for the Advanced Fighter Platform (AFP), a major Australian government procurement project. After a brief opening by Mike, the Managing Director and meeting chair, the episode properly begins with Henry (Director of Manufacturing) introducing the AFP project. AFP tail fins are manufactured from expensive titanium in a complex precision milling process that produces large quantities of metal shavings or 'swarf', and the early part of the introduction is interspersed with interchanges on how the swarf might by used to provide further benefit to all those involved, before turning to discussion of the timeline, potential, and requirements of the project. Will (Director of Osprey) then shifts discussion to technical challenges and how they might be overcome. This leads to consideration about where the tail fins might be manufactured and environmental concerns before the episode concludes with discussion and ideas about swarf as a new business opportunity. Figures 1-3 are excerpts drawn from the beginning, one-third and two-third points of the episode.

The excerpt shown in Figure 1 is drawn from the start of the AFP episode. Henry, the manufacturing director, begins by using a scenario to describe and contextualise the project. He embeds this in milestones, deadlines and projected revenues [lines 6-12], all of which focus on numbers, which he uses to emphasise the size, significance and long-term nature of the contract, which extends to the year 2034. By joking that they "might understand it by then!" [13], Mike draws attention to the potential complications of such contracts. Adam then draws attention to the enormous wastage [15] (or 'swarf') from manufacturing with very costly titanium, to which Bradley quips that they could use it to make expensive golf clubs [18] and, in a rapid but short interchange, others acknowledge the point by constructing a fantasy scenario in which as a result the team buy "red Ferraris" [19] and "racehorses" [20] for their children for Christmas. This is an inside joke, which depends on participants' presupposed knowledge of the organization's tradition of funding the annual DSI children's Christmas party through sales of steel and aluminum swarf from the machine shop. Exaggerating and using extreme examples of what they could buy with titanium rather than steel waste, Henry refers to "red Ferraris", a colour carrying connotations of luxury and masculinity, rather than Ferraris or even a new car, and "racehorses" rather than simply horses or ponies. The effect of the scenario is to generate emotion that helps underline the salience of the issue and bond the team around the AFP opportunity.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 2 is an extract from the middle of the AFP episode. It starts with Henry detailing project milestone dates [106-7], using the *topoi* of numbers combined with a sense of urgency as a warrant for the need to act soon: he says "we've really to start... somewhere

in '08" [107]. By telling the team that the Government Cabinet is politically committed to the project, because it was "passed first pass yesterday" [108-9] at the National Security Committee and that government is putting "significant political effort behind this" [108], he creates a scenario. Reinforcing it, Mike notes that having government support they are not 'alone' in this venture. In this way, he seeks to 'gel' the team around AFP. Only he can really say this: not only because of his position as MD, but also because he is a trained lawyer; and the team knows he was recruited to DSI for his political lobbying skills. Hence, Henry backs Mike up in his assertion that winning contracts like this one is "just a case of who you know" [114-5].

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

At this point, Mike interjects, "Baseline – baseline, Harris" [116], a humorous reference to Harris (Director of Finance) and his habit of asking for 'baseline' numbers and the 'financial case'. Will inquires about the nature of the manufacturing process, asking mockingly if it is only a matter of "whacking" the titanium in the machine, and follows this with the metaphorical phrase "press[ing] a button, and away she goes!" [117-8]. He redefines and simplifies the issue using colloquial language instead of technical terms. Understating the process in this way, provokes a laugh from other team members. This allows Greg (Director of Procurement) to continue the banter by adding, "Larry's [as Engineering Director] buying the kit for idiots!" [119]. Simplification of the process in this light manner gives Ted the opportunity to identify the crux of the issue by asking rhetorically if it is a "niche skillset" [120] they need. The wider impact of using metaphors, exaggeration, banter and jokes to simplify and understate the AFP opportunity is that it establishes a contrast with the actual challenge of milling titanium, which in reality is a highly complex and expensive task.

Henry then subtly underlines the complexity of the AFP opportunity to reassert control and authority over the discussion through a display of his expert knowledge by agreeing with Ted that a "very niche" expertise [121] is required, and then notes that the company in the UK is "still struggling" [122] with how to mill "walls to 60 thou" [i.e. thousandths of a centimetre] "without any flaws" [123]. When Harris asks if it is a "manning skillset" [125] they will need going forward, Henry further establishes his legitimacy to speak as an authority on the issue by skillfully turning around the metaphorical contrast used by Will earlier, saying, "Yeah, not a button pushing one... there are very few such people in Australia" [126-8]. Henry's joke that DSI Australia could make this scenario come about by "stealing" the expertise from their UK parent [129] then gives Mike the opportunity to redefine the issue as one in which skillset scarcity is an opportunity for DSI Australia to leverage the UK parent's technological expertise to provide them with "a significant advantage" [131] over competing bidders.

Later, the issue is refined further (see Figure 3) when Will returns to an earlier line of argument by asking who own the titanium swarf created by the milling process [230]. Henry says that this is not yet decided, so Will comes back with a variation on his previous

'dumb' question (see Figure 2 [117-8]) by asking what happens if they make a mistake in the milling process [232], and continues, asking rhetorically, do you just "Go back and ask for another chunk of titanium..." [234]? This subtle metaphor invokes images of a student returning to the teacher to request another piece of iron after making a mistake in high school metalwork class, and prompting Henry to play along with the condescending, "we try not to do that!" [235]. This interaction underlines the financial value of the contract by stressing that raw titanium is too expensive to make mistakes with. These concerns are mitigated by Mike who figuratively urges Will and others to visit and "go round" [236] a supplier plant in Texas which routinely recycles titanium, and he uses the metaphor of a "sort of hockey puck size" [237] to describe how it does so. The effect is to imply that the process is simple, and therefore feasible. Henry then elaborates the hockey metaphor, saying that in the UK, DSI compresses swarf in this way and then "shoots it back" to America [239] for reprocessing. This metaphorical extension makes the process of titanium recycling sound not only simple, but also quick, an impression reinforced by Mike's comment that compression into 'pucks' aids the tracking and tracing of the waste swarf [240]. When Will says in response that the "swarf could be owned by whoever provides the titanium" [242], Henry retorts with "We haven't got to that argument yet... the people in the UK who are doing the titanium machining are keeping the swarf for themselves and selling it... I'd be happy to be [in that position]" [243-5]. The continuation of the humorous reference to the swarf being 'free' and a source of additional revenue serves to reinforce the lucrative nature of the AFP contract itself.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The end result of the discussion in this episode is that the team coalesces around a scenario based on a shared view about how rich and happy the AFP opportunity might make them. Central to this shared view is the construction of a line of argument that uses the titanium swarf by-product and who 'owns' it as a surrogate for the attractiveness of the AFP contract as a whole, thus serving to 'lure' team members. Taken as a whole, the humorous exchanges of this episode also serve to reinforce and strengthen social bonds between team members by creating a further shared experience.

Constructing a shared view around a threat: Avionics

The April episode occurred in a regular monthly executive board meeting. It concerned a threat to business arising from competition between two of the company's business units (the 'Osprey' and 'Peregrine' aircraft programmes) for specialized avionics systems engineering expertise. Central to the discussion was a tension between Will as Director of Osprey – DSI's largest project by revenue but behind schedule – and Charlie as Director of Peregrine – representing an important future income stream. Fearing delay to the completion of his project, Will shows himself reluctant to release key avionics engineers to Peregrine, and this draws Charlie and Larry (Director of Engineering) into the discussion. The interaction begins with Larry and Charlie recounting a meeting with their government customer and the danger that government might not sign the new Peregrine contract if it

feels that the shortage of avionics expertise at DSI might jeopardise completion of Osprey. The team debates this threat and how avionics systems capabilities might be better managed across both projects. Figures 4-6 are extracts from the beginning, middle and end of the episode, which we now examine.

The discussion about the risk posed by avionics begins with Mike as MD gently instigating discussion (see Figure 4). As compared with other observed episodes, here he noticeably uses more politeness terms and hesitates in the first utterance, as if to downplay his position as leader: he uses the collective term "can we" three times [1] to encourage the team to focus and bond around a single issue: avionics. Larry responds to Mike's introduction by defining the discussion as being about "resources" [5]. In a prior interview Larry had emphasised to us the importance of team leaders – like Will and Charlie – sharing project management resource between them in a more "mature" way. In particular, several interviewees had referred to Will's hogging of this resource as a problem for the organization. Note however, that in the discussion Will's behaviour is not mentioned directly; instead, Larry defines and focuses the discussion using two metaphors, suggesting they talk about the "big picture" before they "drill down" [8] into the detail.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Maintaining his informal style, Mike performs a frame shift by encouraging the team to discuss resource sharing, with the words, "All right, knock yourself out there" [10] and "Go ahead" [13]. Charlie describes a meeting with the customer, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) to contextualise the debate [14-22] from his perspective as one of the main users of avionics expertise. He uses three metaphors to help build a picture that no technical problems "flow down at all" [16] from Osprey to Peregrine, and that the "bottom line" [17] is that there are no "showstoppers" [18] to the signing of the Peregrine contract. He then emphasises the effort made by his people to downplay any concerns that the Peregrine project would not be able to meet its initial deadlines, cueing Larry to elaborate further [26-35]. Larry explains his belief that the RAAF might refuse to sign the already negotiated Peregrine contract if it suspects that DSI lacks adequate capability to both manage Osprey production and start up Peregrine within the agreed timescale [36-47]. His description reinforces the idea of avionics as a threat to the organization, which can be overcome if they can find a way to share expertise across the company's main projects.

This initial extract from the discussion constructs common ground by setting the tone and focus for the team to shape an understanding of the factors affecting resource sharing. Towards the middle of the discussion the team compares the situation with company experience of sharing resources between two other projects, FSG and UDFG (see Figure 5).

[INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Mike asks the team whether the sharing between FSG and UDFG is working, to which Charlie replies in the affirmative [219]. But Will – who we know from confidential

interviews is clearly aware of why the comparison is being made – acts both to distance himself from the comparison and play the comparison down by using the metaphorical, "It's real low on my radar screen... nothing's rippling up to me" [221], and employing the *topos* of numbers to argue that avionics is "three orders of magnitude more significant" than FSG/UDFG [223]. Larry concedes this difference [225], but then uses the *topos* of history in the form of the FSG/USFG experience as providing a warrant that provides "precedents for doing it" [227] again in avionics. HR Director (Adam) mediates between the views of Will and Larry. His analogy undermines the validity of the comparison with FSG/USFG by expressing the thought that if they were going through it again now, they "could spend time working with people and getting them to that common view" [231]. Here, he is implying they have learned from the earlier experience (*topos* of history) that such situations "force [...] people's behaviours to perhaps not be in the best interest of the company" [232-3]. Adam thus de-personalizes the issue away from Will by focusing on the task-related nature of the issue itself.

At this point Mike interrupts and applies pressure to force a change in resource-sharing behaviour by using a metaphor coupled with the *topos* of threat to imply that the situation is really dangerous. Asserting that "there's nothing like a burning platform to get people to [work in the interests of the company]" [234-5], this is a thinly veiled threat to Will which has the effect of blocking his counter argument and allowing Adam to call for a shift of organizational mindset so that they can incentivize people to share resources across the company as a whole [236-7]. Larry positions himself alongside Adam [238-9] and Mike with the idiom and metaphorical comment, "So are we talking about Hobson's Choice here, really" [240], as a forceful statement that there is *no* alternative. With respective positions clearly drawn, Will is forced to concede and change his position by agreeing that sharing resources is fundamental, using the *topos* of reality combined with the *topos* of threat, and admitting that "If we don't do that, we will fail" [243-4]. Having obliged Will to agree with the rest of the team. Mike uses two more metaphors to signal their agreement by calling for a "cast-iron" and "concrete" [246] plan to share avionics expertise. By expressing the sharing as a duty or obligation, he signals he wants the team to move on to agreement on specific actions.

The last section of the avionics discussion (Figure 6) begins with Mike demanding, "Well then let's see a plan to do that" [590] (i.e. share resources). Will and Larry then launch a rapid exchange in which they identify the crucial stakeholders who will need to be involved in order to develop a practical solution. Will appears to make one last effort to maintain control over avionics resources saying that "if the PMs (project managers) are not involved in owning part of that [the solution]" [602-3], then the problem will remain unresolved (*topos* of threat), but Larry immediately squashes this suggestion by responding, "They're part of the problem" [604], at which Will, deftly recovers and without losing face replies, "which is why they've got to be part of the solution" [605].

[INSERT FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE]

Having established the need to consult with stakeholders, Bradley uses a scenario to outline what needs to be done: "We ought to let Larry get on and have the time to get on with proposing a plan that includes stakeholder engagement" [606-8]. This shifts the mode of the discussion and the frame into rapid staccato interchange with declarative language regarding who is going to do what to address it. Mike then directs Larry to develop an initial plan that they can discuss: he responds by joking that it is an "easy action... give me something hard" [612]. With a shared view formed and tasks allocated to address what they perceive as a real risk to the business, discussion ends with a humorous reference to the British television soap opera 'Coronation Street', which is very popular in Australia, an oblique attempt to describe the avionics issue as 'saga-like' [627-8].

The avionics episode of discussion resulted in a shared view of the risk being created by project leaders in the company if they failed to share the expertise. Central to this shared view was the construction of a line of argument about appropriate corporate behaviour that cajoled Will into alignment with the emergent group view without an overt loss of face.

Discussion and implications

Developed through fine-grained analysis of episodes of discussion, our model of conversational interaction identifies and conceptualises how five discursive strategies are dynamically realised through linguistic ploys to develop shared views around strategic issues in team-level discussions (see Table III). We have demonstrated how: *Equalising* involves actors encouraging participation by relaxing protocols and power structures to provide the space for participants to come forward and express viewpoints; *Re/defining* involves participants developing and expressing relevant new information and viewpoints on the issue (*defining*) for others to react to, and refining and adjusting existing viewpoints (*re-defining*) so as to provide a platform for sensemaking; *Simplifying,* involves team members attempting to reduce the complexity of competing definitions by narrowing down understanding and making the issue 'felt' by participants at an emotional and visceral level; *Legitimating* involves team members establishing control by justifying underlying assumptions and building up the credibility of particular views; and finally, *Reconciling* involves participants separating out individuals from issue positions to encourage task oriented conflict and enable the perspectives of different speakers to be aligned around a shared view. The identification of five discursive strategies in a model that explains shared view formation as an outcome of their interplay achieved by team members using particular linguistic ploys, represents the main contribution of the paper.

[INSERT TABLE III ABOUT HERE]

Our conceptual model captures how these strategies work together dynamically. It shows that the formation of shared views around issues is significantly more complex than establishing salience and urgency and assessing a way to deal with it (c.f. Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton and Duncan, 1987). Rather, shared views are the resultant outputs

of discursive 'movements' between team members in which *Re/defining* and *Simplifying* establish the boundaries of discussion, *Equalising* and *Legitimating* combine to balance the opening-up and narrowing-down of understanding of the issue, and *Reconciling* serves to decouple participants from their positions on an issue by resolving differences and minimising inter-personal conflict. The interplay of these discursive strategies is central not only to developing a shared view of an issue, but also to creating an imperative to address it through action.

We demonstrated how the discursive strategies we have identified are realised through four linguistic ploys. For example, *Defining* an issue involved constructing and proposing scenarios to foreground and background different dimensions of the issue. In the AFP episode, Henry employed a future-oriented account to construct an imaginary but credible situation; while in the Avionics discussion, Charlie told a story that focused on his and Larry's meeting with the government customer to imply how the latter was likely to react in the future. These initial views were then evolved through *Redefining*. In the AFP episode this was achieved by considering the implications of machining for resources and capabilities, and then reformulating it using humorous discussion of a seemingly trivial matter of titanium swarf waste from machining potentially becoming a 'core business'. In the Avionics episode this was achieved by participants transforming Larry's initial portrayal of the issue as relating to 'resources' and 'technicalities' to a need to 'incentivise' people to adopt 'appropriate behaviour'. Different forms of humour were a critical linguistic ploy that enabled *Redefining* to work as a discursive strategy, because they helped speakers to save 'face' of other team members that they themselves were criticising, thus mitigating inter-personal conflict and stimulating an atmosphere in which the team could bond socially.

We showed too, how linguistic ploys such as metaphors and the scenarios were used to construct hedonistic and indulgent images of issues, thereby realising the discursive strategy of *Simplifying* the issue and making it felt by other team members. In the discussion of AFP, Henry said, "our kids are all getting racehorses for Christmas", creating a fantasy scenario that underlined the lucrativeness of the contract. In the discussion about Avionics, metaphors such as a "burning platform" were used to construct a future scenario that invoked emotions, making the issue visceral and implying a need for urgent action.

Equalising acted to 'level' participants and create an environment that encouraged debate, and was achieved through a number of linguistic ploys: irony and sarcasm as forms of joking to make light of difficult topics; politeness to help particular participants save face; and by replacing technical expert terminology with colloquial language to downplay the speaker's authority. Examples occurred at the start of the avionics episode, where Mike carefully and politely introduced the issue and played down his authority as MD, but moments later used his position to ask rhetorical questions that forcefully encouraged others to come forward. In the AFP episode a fantasy scenario was deployed to play on presuppositions about the lucrative nature of the contract and invite involvement. Overall, what *Equalising* did was to reduce power gradients across the team and encourage contributions by other members.

We demonstrated, too, how the discursive strategy of *Legitimising* was put into practice linguistically. In the AFP episode, Henry used future scenarios several times to articulate why his view was 'correct', first using quantitative arguments via the *topoi of numbers* to build salience and later using expert technical language and specialist knowledge to legitimate his authority. In the Avionics episode this was achieved by Charlie and Larry recounting a narrative in which they named experts to establish their authority on the issue and make it difficult (if not impossible) for other team members to dispute, and thus question, what they had said.

Reconciling was deployed in the AFP episode through use of self-deprecating and mocking humour, combined with code switching between colloquial and expert language, to help overcome and smooth over differences and maintain professional authority. In the Avionics episode, the entire team encouraged Will to responsibly share the avionics resource and thus helped him to save face.

The dynamic of conversation in strategy meetings

By developing a model of shared view formation resulting from discursive strategies in the context of discussions in meetings, the paper makes a second contribution, in terms of how strategy is developed in meetings. We do this by revealing how particular forms of speech shape can the outcomes of strategy conversations – in this case through the development of shared views around strategic issues. The DHA helps to reconcile and integrate other approaches to research on strategy meetings by revealing precisely *how* social practices are influenced, through discursive strategies (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Johnson et al., 2010; Kaplan, 2008), in the process of making sense of strategic issues (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005). We overcome the inadvertent tendency of some research to simplify the role of language by examining linguistic ploys like narrative (Bartel and Garud, 2009; Brown and Humphreys, 2003), metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Heracleous and Jacobs, 2008) and rhetorical ploys (Mueller and Whittle, 2011; Sillince, 2005) in isolation from one another. By focusing on the team as the unit of analysis, our research helps to redress the predominant emphasis on leaders (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Holmes and Marra, 2004; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Wodak et al., 2011) and individual linguistic ploys, at the expense of other team members involved in the sensemaking process who use a variety of linguistic ploys interactively.

In terms of helping to better understand the affect of discourse in strategy meetings, our analysis illustrates how language is drawn upon and utilised by actors as a 'resource' to advance self interest or construct coalitions (Hardy et al., 2000; Kaplan, 2008; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003). We have demonstrated how team members make almost instantaneous decisions over which linguistic ploy to use in response to what other speakers have said moments previously. Much like the member of a jazz ensemble improvising their turn in relation to the context set by the melodies and rhythms used by other players, we found management team members discursively improvising, sensing *when* to use certain discursive strategies and *how* to realise them within the context of utterances made by

other team members. In so doing, our episodes illuminate the skilled way in which actors use language to leverage knowledge and modulate discussion of issues. As a result, the model outlined in our paper helps to unpack the notion of 'discursive skill' (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011) by revealing how linguistic means affect subtle contentions, conflicts, and displays of power over understanding at the micro-level.

The nature of discursive struggle

A third contribution of the paper is that it reveals how 'discursive struggle' (Grant and Hardy, 2003) takes place, because it demonstrates the linkage between language use and the collective understanding. By showing how discursive strategies and linguistic ploys are used in meetings to construct shared views, we are able to provide new insights into how strategizing occurs, blow-by-blow, through interactions between managers. The theoretical implications of such an approach are likely to be significant. Existing conceptions of sensemaking are still based largely on meso-level analysis of Foucauldian type discourses (Heracleous, 2006; Knights and Morgan, 1995), frame conflicts (Kaplan, 2008), or narratives, counter-narratives and stories (Brown and Humphreys, 2003; Buchanan and Dawson, 2007). As a result, they tend to conceive of sensemaking as a process in which one frame of understanding comes to dominate or win out over others. Looked at from a micro-level discursive perspective, however, conceptions such as strategic consensus (Dess and Origer, 1987; Markoczy, 2001) may well overstate agreement and underplay how tensions between different actors are surfaced and resolved through mechanisms of discursive interaction. Our micro-level analysis of how shared views are constructed through discursive strategies, realised via linguistic ploys, paints a potentially different view of sensemaking – as a subtle and intricate process in which shared views are gradually synthesized through discussion.

Discursive practice and strategy work

The fourth contribution of the paper stems from the intricate view of shared view formation as a discursive process that we have revealed and conceptualised, and relates to the implications for strategy practitioners. It was clear from our illustrations that actors display incredible behavioural dexterity and skill in team-level discussion. Thus, our illustrations revealed discursive behaviours that we might expect of leaders, such as Mike in the capacity of MD *Redefining* via continuous reframing of issues; *Simplifying* via topos of threat; *Legitimating* by implicitly leveraging his hierarchical position; and *Equalising* by occasionally downplaying his power. Rather less expected was the way in which our analysis revealed how his power was countermanded by other team members using different discursive mechanisms to exercise power. At the beginning of the avionics episode for instance, Larry used *Legitimating* and subtly leveraged his position as Engineering Director and expertise in aerospace engineering to carve out his right to speak, and then by *Redefining* the topic of discussion as one of 'resource sharing'. Mike as MD similarly used his legal background to brush aside technical issues raised by the majority of team members who were engineers. Humour was also used to modulate and

mitigate authority being exerted, as in the AFP episode where Will played the role of the 'fool' by asking Henry 'dumb' questions while remaining confident of his authority and expertise.

The DHA we have utilised here allows us to highlight the key discursive skills required of practitioners to strategize effectively in team-level discussions. Since, in most respects strategizing and organizing occur through discourse, we show how language is consequential for individuals and the organizations in which they work. By revealing the discursive strategies and linguistic ploys that are central to team-level work, we provide a more granular explanation of how the linguistic division of labour (Putnam, 1973; Schildt et al., 2011) unfolds through real-time conversation to dynamically exclude (Laine and Vaara, 2007; Samra-Fredericks, 2005) or include (Mantere and Vaara, 2008) others from participation in strategy work (Whittington, 2006).

Our paper therefore holds direct implications for the practice of strategy by highlighting the discursive mechanisms that practitioners need to be aware of, and more practiced in, as the central 'tools' of strategy work. Our approach has the potential to extend the practical importance of strategy research in a number of promising directions. What bearing, for instance, does context have on strategic discourse? Although there has been some research on cross-cultural differences in conversational interaction (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997) and some evidence that non-routine contexts, such as strategy away-days, affect the quality of interaction and outcomes (e.g. Johnson et al., 2010), a DHA approach, such as the one we have deployed here, has the potential to help practitioners understand not only how their discursive practices have affect on others, but also how their own influence is in turn conditioned by the situation within which they act.

The key insight of this paper for practitioners is that it reveals a different way of looking at, and putting into practice, the wisdom of 'good' strategic discussion: that to be efficacious, consensual discussion needs to deepen understanding, balance empowering others to join in with discussion with control *over* discussion, and simplify understanding to integrate perspectives and provide a basis for constructing common ground. By undertaking a detailed micro-level analysis of discourse, we have been able to highlight for practitioners the core discursive strategies that are central to stimulating the creation of shared views around issues in team discussions. Practitioners need to become aware of, and skilled in, the art of using these discursive strategies and linguistic ploys, within strategic discussion. Just like a craftsman needs to be practised in using certain tools, and can use a particular chisel to make a variety of cuts, so too can strategy practitioners make use of discursive strategies and deftly affect them using different linguistic ploys such as topoi, scenarios, metaphors and humour, to shape the outcomes of discussions.

Conclusion

The overall value of our study is that, through a micro-level DHA approach applied to relatively rare meeting texts of a senior management team engaged in real-time discussion over strategic issues, we have been able to develop a conceptual model of how shared

views of strategic issues are constructed. We have shown how perceptions of issues are influenced and molded using a small number of discursive strategies that can be readily conceptualised, understood, mastered and put into effect when leading or participating in team discussion, by speakers skillfully using a range of linguistic ploys. Going forward, the value of this theoretical and methodological approach to the discourse of strategy is that it has the potential for stimulating not only novel scholarly insights into different organizational phenomena, but also to provide practitioners with the means to influence shared views, thereby helping them to prevent the potential abuse of power by other actors that is a central feature of political discussion involved in the process of organizing and the management of strategic change.

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	Definition	References
Topoi of Argumentation (Topos of...)	Topoi are utterances that contain content related warrants or conclusion rules in a condensed argument referring to common sense or implicit presupposed knowledge. Topoi contain conclusion rules in condensed form ("if p, then q").	Kienpointner (1992); Reisigl & Wodak (2001; 2009); Walton (2008)
... Authority	An action is legitimate if mandated by someone in authority.	
... Burden	A problem needs to be acted on if a person or institution is burdened by it.	
... Numbers	An action should / should not be performed if supported by sufficient numerical evidence.	
... Reality	A particular action needs to be performed given the way reality is as it is.	
... Threat	An action should be performed to mitigate the consequences of a specified threat.	
... Urgency	A decision / action needs to be made if an event requires such a response.	
Rhetorical Tropes	A range of tropes such as metaphors, synecdoches, metonymies, personifications and narratives, which are used to establish legitimacy in discourse and for persuasion.	Mueller & Whittle (2011); Sillince (2005)
Metaphor	The use of language in which a 'target' term or idea is compared to another 'source' term that originates in a field or domain of discursive practice not typically associated with the target.	Cornelisson (2005); Cornelisson & Clarke (2010); Goatly (2007); Heracleous & Jacobs (2008); Semino (2008); Schiffrin (2003)
Narrative	An account of a past series of events with a unique or unexpected outcome. In this study, we focus on its use by speakers for explanatory and/or persuasive purposes.	Brown & Jones (1998); Brown & Humphreys (2003); Dawson & Buchanan (2005); Georgakopoulou & Fina (2011); Labov and Waletzky (1967); Ochs (1997); Schiffrin (1996, 2003); Thomas, Sargent & Hardy (2011)
Scenario	A future oriented account or narrative, based on explicit and tacit assumptions held by the speaker, about what may or will happen, which is used for explanatory and/or persuasive purposes.	Musolff, (2006); Semino (2010); Wagner & Wodak (2006)

Table I – Linguistic Ploys

Mike	CEO
Bradley	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Harris	Director of Finance
Adam	Director of Human Resources
Larry	Director of Engineering
Greg	Director of Contracts and Procurement
Will	Director of the Osprey Programme
Charlie	Director of the Peregrine Programme
Henry	Director of Manufacturing
Ted/Joe*	Director of Aircraft Maintenance

* Ted was represented by Joe, his deputy director, in the April meeting.

Table II – The Board of Directors of DSI Australia

Equalising	Involves actors encouraging participation by relaxing protocols and power structures to provide the space for other participants to come forward and express additional viewpoints.
Re/defining	Involves participants developing and expressing relevant new information and viewpoints on the issue (defining) for others to react to, and refining and adjusting existing viewpoints (redefining) so as to provide a platform for sensemaking.
Simplifying	Involves team members attempting to reduce the complexity of competing definitions by narrowing down understanding and making the issue 'felt' by participants at an emotional and visceral level.
Legitimating	Involves team members attempting to establish control by justifying underlying assumptions and building up the credibility of particular views.
Reconciling	Involves participants separating out individuals from issue positions to encourage task oriented conflict and enable the perspectives of different speakers to be aligned around a shared view.

Table III – Micro-level discursive strategies for constructing shared views

1   Mike: AFP: thinking of the Lockheed thing, shall we just give us a quick – I talked a bit about this
2   yesterday, but – AFP machining?

3   Harris: Uh, AFP machining?

4   Mike: And then the angles –

5   Bradley: It's all yours.

6   Henry: This is some work that isn't currently in the IBP. It's the manufacture of 722 sets of vertical
7   fins for the AFP into the global market, commencing deliveries at LREP3, which is about 2009.
8   Ramps up reasonably slowly, but we're talking about somewhere in the order of 320+ new dollars
9   worth of work, with around a $45 million capital investment in machinery required to do this in-wall
10 titanium machine, expended between about 2008 and 2012, and then a mid-life refurbishment of the
11 machines in around 2020. The contract itself would run through till 2029, and the volume of count
12 can extend out to, you know, 2034. We have limited information at the moment –

13 Mike: We may understand it by then! [laughter]

14 Henry: We'd better!

15 Adam: Actually it's a hell of a lot of titanium. How much ends up as wastage?

16 Mike: 90%!

17 Henry: 90-95% of the weight of material ends up as swarf –

18 Bradley: – make golf clubs? [laughter]

19 Henry: If we could sell that titanium we'd all be getting red Ferraris for Christmas [laughter]

20 Mike: Yeah, our kids are all getting racehorses for Christmas.

Figure 1 – AFP Episode (Lines 1-20)

106   Henry: Formally the RFT for this will be out from the UK in the middle of next year, with a decision
107   made by the end of '07, because we've really got to start, you know, cutting metal somewhere in '08.

108   Mike: – and there will be, I think, significant political effort behind this. AFP passed first pass
109   yesterday, day before yesterday, at the National Security Committee at Cabinet, and I think the only
110   unsatisfactory – really unsatisfactory element of it is the industry components, so – one of two real
111   biggies, this and pyrotechnics – I think this is much more realistic than the pyrotechnics, to get a, sort
112   of, biggish number in the public domain.

113   Henry: – and Lockheed and DSI have come to Australia and committed to this 550 million now in
114   front of the Government and the other stakeholders, so – I think it will happen. It's just a case of who
115   you know –

116   Mike: Baseline – baseline, Harris! [some laughs]

117   Will: Excuse me, but is this just mostly you've got a lot of titanium, whack it in the machine, press a
118   button, and away she goes! [laughter]

119   Greg: Larry's buying the kit for bloody idiots!

120   Ted: Is that a niche skill set, in terms of the machines that we need?

121   Henry: Yeah, very niche in the finishing side, and co-ordination on the measurement side. The UK is
122   still struggling with how to co-ordinate measurements on their existing equipment. And because of
123   the length and value– how do you mill, how do you shape walls to 60 thou without any flaws. It is
124   difficult to maintain dimensional integrity over that sort of length with that determined mode.

125   Harris: It's essentially a manning skill set that you need?

126   Henry: Yeah, not a button pushing one! [laughter] The area where you're going to struggle, are you
127   not, any of this UK work, is this 5-axis machining, programming side of it, which is quite intensive, a
128   lot of man-hours, and there are very few people in Australia with the skill sets to do that. But the
129   intention here is to mirror the machinery that the UK has, or steal it – but best do the software off
130   them.

131   Mike: Which gives us a significant advantage over anybody else.

Figure 2 – AFP Episode (Lines 106-131)

230 Will: I was just wondering about wastage. If we are being provided with the titanium, what does it –

231 Henry: Well, we haven't factored the value of the small pin; it's significant –

232 Will: What if you get a hunk of titanium in your machine and the measurements are wrong?

233 Henry: Yep.

234 Will: Go back and ask for another chunk of titanium from –

235 Henry: Yep, but we try not to do that! [laughter]

236 Mike: Go round the Lockheed Martin plant in Fort Worth and see how they're doing compressing all
237 of their titanium swarf back into like, sort of hockey puck size –

238 Henry: The UK has a factory attached to their machine shop that reprocesses titanium swarfs and
239 shoots it back to America –

240 Mike: Other people have tried to improve the traceability of the stuff in some other industry –

241 Henry: Yeah, it has very high resale value.

242 Will: And that swarf could be owned by whoever provides the titanium –

243 Henry: We haven't got to that argument yet! [laughs] Currently the people in the UK who are doing
244 the titanium machining are keeping the swarf for themselves and selling it, but not saying it's
245 factored into the numbers. So, you know, would we get to that position? I'd be happy to be.

Figure 3 – AFP Episode (Lines 230-245)

1 Mike: Alright then. Can we have a – can we just – Avionics. Can we talk about Avionics?

2 Will: Yep.

3 Larry: OK. Do you want me to –

4 Mike: Yeah [talking together, laughter].

5 Larry: Um – well – perhaps, my comments will be around resources / Mike: Resourcing? / rather
6 than the technical issues, which is a separate but related issue. So I'll address the resource issue –

7 Charlie: Are you going to have a meeting with us and then a meeting with Gerald?

8 Larry: OK, that might be the better way to do it. Get the big picture first and then drill down into it.
9 [talking together, laughter, joking]

10 Mike: Alright, knock yourself out there.

11 Adam: If we get the process right –

12 Charlie: [indistinct]

13 Mike: Go ahead.

14 Charlie: We got Ian to brief Jossey and Gerald on it last Thursday. The brief, the technical brief was
15 done by Bill Thomson and Sarah Milne, where they went through spec items on the OSPREY
16 technical issues with and whether they did or didn't flow into PEREGRINE. Some of them actually
17 didn't flow down at all, so they were not an issue. The bottom line was that there were no
18 showstoppers flowing down from OSPREY Avionics technically that would give you enough –
19 concern that you wouldn't sign a contract. The voiceover from Farad was that assembly shouldn't be
20 a worry and solutions coming up and they're just part of the normal engineering process. There
21 were no real major issues. The guys from OSPREY Avionics, the RAAF guys – David – help me out
22 Will. David –

23 Will: Uh. Sam Donaldson, the Wing Commander.

24 Charlie: – and David somebody?"

25 Will: David Johns, the transport and land –

26 Charlie: They all nodded – there was a general agreement that no real technical issues that would
27 stop PEREGRINE from signing the contract. So then when we were talking to the resourcing issues,
28 and when we took them through that, the end result of that was that we could do a a letter that was
29 basically a voiceover of Larry's presentation and material, he'll walk you through. At the end,
30 Gerald Daniels asked the OSPREY guys if they could comment that they don't have a schedule or
31 the resources. They said, "we can't comment on any impact." Gerald still wants to get the contract
32 signed, that's the perception that I had at that meeting. So once we've got the PEREGRINE contract
33 signed, like as soon as possible, the only bit would be whatever feedback he gets has to spec from
34 Leandro if it goes that far, on their availability of the OSPREY resources. And that was my summary
35 – Larry?

36 Larry: Yeah. Yeah. What I went through was the one-page summary that I think – at least all the
37 stakeholder group saw last Thursday. The immediate comment on the – uh – those in the transition
38 plan was – on the names in the transition plan was from the OSPREY guys, said, "hey these are the
39 guys that we deal with on an almost daily basis, on the technical issues." So obviously they were
40 critical, they were regarded as critical, for OSPREY. Or at least highly visible anyway in terms of
41 OSPREY, and I think if anything was to stop us, stop the signing of the contract now, it would be by
42 OSPREY and not by PEREGRINE. That is, if Rick Leandro got really nervous about seeing – or the
43 perception of losing capability through the resource transition planning process. Because what we
44 were careful to say was that we are transition capability, and in some cases it might be one-for-one
45 with the people on the list and in other cases it might be through multiple people and combinations
46 of people. But the capability – what we're managing – was the capability of those people on that list,
47 umm, uhh –

Figure 4 – Avionics Episode (Lines 1-47)

218   Mike: Well do we think it's working for FSG, UDFG?

219   Charlie: I believe it is. They've achieved their deadlines for the –

220   Bradley: If the complaint rate is any indication then it's working.

221   Will: It's real low on my radar screen, to be honest, so I'm like you – nothing's rippling up to me so
222   I'm assuming that it's OK. But if you look at it in terms of focal FSG to the Avionics, I believe we
223   talking about three orders of magnitude more significant / Larry: oh you are /, so it's a big step to
224   take the FSG and relate that to the Avionics issue.

225   Larry: Absolutely, there's no question. The scale is quite different.

226   Will: Significantly.

227   Larry: The point of saying it is just that there are precedents for doing it. I believe it can be done.

228   Adam: I think another factor is the critical time that this is happening. I don't know what happened
229   with that other group that was formed, but if you were forming this group again in real time and
230   building for a capability that hopefully would be deployed in a year or whatever time, you could
231   spend time working with people and getting them to that common view. For the time on the critical
232   projects like PEREGRINE and OSPREY, I think that forces people's behaviours to perhaps not be in
233   the best interest of the company.

234   Mike: Well, on the other hand / Adam: Well my / – there's nothing like a burning platform to get
235   people to –

236   Adam: My variation on Larry's thing would be to incentivise people on resources, to share resources
237   with the enterprise, not just on projects, to make them more responsible.

238   Larry: Oh, oh, OK, you mean incentivize managers. I thought you were talking about incentivizing
239   these individuals / Adam: no / OK.

240   Mike: So are we talking about Hobson's choice here, really? Do we have any other option what to
241   do, this way, other than saying we're not going to take the PEREGRINE contract? That's the two
242   options".

243   Will: I believe what Larry's saying about sharing the resources across the projects is fundamental. If
244   we don't do that, we will fail.

245   Mike: Right, and then at some level of abstraction I agree with that, and absolutely. But now we've
246   got this [bangs table for emphasis] cast-iron, concrete case that we have to do something about.

Figure 5 – Avionics Episode (Lines 218-246)

590   Mike: Well then let's see a plan to do that.

591   Larry: OK, yep.

592   Mike: And can we get these guys engaged so that – do they have the time to get engaged now, and
593   say "this is how we would do it?"

594   Will: There's a couple of key individuals that you'd want to get involved, you know people like John
595   Otterman, and Wesley Dickson in that area.

596   Charlie: Which is bloody worrying I tell you / Larry: I wouldn't get the PMs – I'd leave the PMs –
597   this is about getting – well, this is my understanding, it's about getting the Avionics specialists
598   together saying / Charlie: So who would that be?

599   Will: The project managers and the PMs are stakeholders in this. And maybe they've got to –

600   Larry: For those projects, in which case we have OSPREY and we get all the others as well, OSPREY,
601   OSPREY and PEREGRINE.

602   Will: If you get the Avionics specialists to go off and come up with something, but if the PMs and the
603   PMs are not involved in owning part of that...

604   Larry: They're part of the problem.

605   Will: I know, which is why they've got to be part of the solution.

606   Bradley: I think we really ought to let Larry get on and have the time to get on with proposing a plan
607   that includes stakeholder engagement, and engagement by the people that are going to execute this
608   capability.

609   Larry: Yep, understandably.

610   Will: He's meant to be in at it right now.

611   Mike: Right Larry / Larry: OK / straw man.

612   Larry: An easy action [laughs]. Give me something hard. [laughter]

613   Charlie: What are we going to follow up to Gerald? Just the voice over /Larry: OK/

614   Mike: We're going to forward the voice-over –

615   Larry: OK, in which case I'll take out the section number 7 that was in there, because I – I was going
616   to put a bit more meat to how we were – just an approach to resource sharing, but I think it would be
617   more appropriate just to leave that out, and uh so I've got a draft of it here. I'll circulate it to the
618   stakeholder group straight after the meeting.

619   Charlie: And then the new date as opposed to ED?

620   Larry: Yeah, August. So I'll circulate it to the stakeholder groups straight after the meeting.

621   Mike: And I believe we have to have a conversation with Jack at some time, you may remember
622   there's an action before we sign the PEREGRINE that we haven't – so that's likely to take place the
623   17th, the current – with Ian and Rick, isn't it?

624   Harris: I think it was next Tuesday.

625   Mike: I'm on my way back from Israel at that time. So they've asked us – the buffer is a change in
626   date I think. I had to change my flights so I wasn't flying that day as well [laughter]. Well sort that
627   out. One other subject I'd like to talk about before is the CRW. If Bradley can bring us up to speed
628   on the CRW / Bradley: Well I'll just try and keep it / and Coronation Street –

Figure 6 – Avionics Episode (Lines 590-628)