

# Language and Organizational Communication as Drivers of Well-Being in School Organizations

Maria Anna Formisano<sup>1\*</sup>, Prof. Assoc. Dr. Jonida Bushi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School Principal, Psychologist, and PhD in Educational Research Methodology

<sup>2</sup>University of Tirana, Head of German Language Department.

Received: 25/12/2025 | Accepted: 10/02/2026 | Published: 04/03/2026

**Abstract:** Language plays a constitutive role in shaping the relational, cognitive, and cultural dynamics of school organizations. Moving beyond its traditional function as a medium for information exchange, language emerges as an epistemic and organizational resource that actively contributes to the construction of well-being among school leaders, teachers, staff, and students. Drawing on the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO), sense making theory, symbolic-interpretive approaches, and intercultural communication frameworks, this article examines how discursive practices influence psychological safety, professional engagement, social capital, and trust within educational institutions. The analysis highlights the dual nature of language as both a technology of coordination and a technology of power, capable of enabling or constraining organizational development. The article concludes by proposing a transdisciplinary understanding of language as the structural bridge linking individual identity, collective cognition, and the social infrastructure of schools, positioning it as a central determinant of organizational health.

**Keywords:** Language; School Organizations; Well-Being; Organizational Culture; Psychological Safety.

## Introduction

School organizations operate within complex social, regulatory, and emotional environments where communication is not merely instrumental but constitutive of organizational life. Contemporary organizational theories emphasize that institutions are shaped through discourse rather than existing independently of it. The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) framework (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009) conceptualizes language as the primary mechanism through which organizational structures, identities, and relationships are produced and sustained. Specifically, in educational settings, this discursive construction involves a diverse array of stakeholders—teachers, administrative staff, students, and families—each bringing distinct expectations and emotional investments. The constant negotiation among these diverse voices creates a dynamic web of interactions that ultimately defines the school's climate and cultural identity. Unlike corporate entities, schools are fundamentally moral and pedagogical ecosystems where the primary focus is human development. Consequently, the discourse within these walls carries profound ethical weight. The language used in staff meetings, the phrasing of institutional policies, and the informal narratives shared in the teachers' lounge all actively construct the 'hidden curriculum' of the organization—dictating not only how professionals interact, but also implicitly modeling relational norms for the student body. (Bushi & Neçaj, 2024)

Cognitive science reinforces this perspective by demonstrating that meaning emerges from the interaction of neural, social, and environmental factors (Cangelosi & Turner, 2002). Embodied

cognition further highlights the somatic and emotional resonance of communicative acts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), suggesting that supportive and inclusive language can enhance motivation and professional well-being (Bushi, 2021), while conflictual or devaluing communication may contribute to stress and burnout. Similar findings highlight the role of motivational factors and communicative interaction in sustaining engagement in educational environments (Bushi & Themeli, 2024). Furthermore, from a psychological standpoint, the cognitive appraisal of workplace communication directly influences emotional regulation and coping mechanisms among educators. When leadership and peer interactions establish a climate of psychological safety, professionals are more likely to exhibit resilience, collaboration, and innovative pedagogical behaviors. Organizational identity and adaptation processes are similarly shaped through communicative negotiation and cultural reinterpretation within institutions (Prifti et al., 2025). Conversely, a toxic or ambiguous communicative environment can trigger emotional exhaustion, which is a key precursor to teacher attrition and systemic dysfunction. Supportive communication enhances emotional regulation among educators (Formisano, Bushi, & Caivano, 2025). Teaching is intrinsically an act of profound emotional labor, requiring constant empathy, behavioral management, and affective attunement to students' needs. When educators are embedded in an administratively supportive communicative matrix, this emotional taxation is significantly buffered. A principal's language of validation and constructive feedback acts (Bushi, Kristo, & Papajorgji, 2022) as a psychological scaffold, enabling teachers to manage classroom complexities without depleting their internal cognitive and

### \*Corresponding Author

Maria Anna Formisano\*

School Principal, Psychologist, and PhD in Educational Research Methodology.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license



emotional reserves. Dialogic feedback practices have also been shown to strengthen professional reflection and communicative trust in educational settings (Bushi & Aliaj, 2024). When leadership communication is perceived as purely bureaucratic or punitive, however, the resulting cognitive dissonance erodes the psychological contract between the institution and its educators.

Within this framework, language becomes a strategic resource for cultivating well-being in schools. Through discursive practices, individuals negotiate expectations, construct shared meanings, and regulate relational dynamics. When communication is grounded in active listening, clarity, and mutual recognition, it strengthens the psychological and organizational conditions necessary for a healthy educational environment. Therefore, analyzing and improving the micro-dynamics of school communication is not merely a theoretical exercise, but a practical necessity for educational leadership. By prioritizing emotional intelligence, empathetic dialogue, and communicative competence, school leaders can transform routine administrative interactions into powerful catalysts for collective efficacy, systemic resilience, and holistic organizational well-being. Given this intricate interplay between discourse, cognition, and organizational health, it is imperative to apply rigorous educational research methodologies to study these phenomena. Studies on organizational transformation further indicate that communicative alignment supports institutional resilience and performance outcomes (Prifti, Bushi, & Vrusho, 2025). By empirically investigating how specific communicative patterns correlate with indicators of school climate and teacher efficacy, educational leaders can transition from intuitive management to evidence-based practice. Ultimately, redefining communication from a mere transmission of information to a transformational leadership tool is essential for cultivating schools that are not only academically effective, but also psychologically sustainable. Studies on foreign language pedagogy demonstrate that dialogic feedback and communicative interaction contribute significantly to teachers' professional confidence and classroom well-being (Tarusha & Bushi, 2024). Recent psychoeducational research further confirms that linguistic interaction in educational environments directly mediates emotional engagement, professional motivation, and learning sustainability (Mojumder, Formisano & Bushi, 2025; Bushi, 2026).

The aim of this article is to explore how language functions as an organizational mechanism shaping psychological safety, professional engagement, and collective well-being in school organizations.

## **Language and Organizational Culture in Schools**

School organizations are embedded in dense networks of narratives that shape how actors interpret uncertainty and coordinate collective action. Sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995; Boje, 2001) highlights the centrality of shared meaning-making processes in navigating the continuous reforms and ambiguities characteristic of educational systems. In an era of rapid pedagogical shifts, digital transformations, and evolving accountability metrics, school leaders serve as the primary 'sense-givers.' How a principal frames a new directive can determine whether teachers perceive it as a bureaucratic burden or a pedagogical opportunity. Transparent communication and coherent interpretive frameworks are therefore essential for preventing work-related stress and fostering psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). Similar dynamics have been observed in pedagogical environments where communicative

feedback practices influence teachers' instructional decision-making and professional self-efficacy (Bushi, 2026).

Language also reveals the tacit assumptions that underpin a school's cultural identity. Groups such as departments, class councils, and teaching teams function as symbolic micro-contexts where cultural norms are negotiated and transmitted. Often, these sub-groups develop distinct localized subcultures that can either seamlessly align with or quietly resist the broader institutional vision. Symbolic-interpretive approaches (Smircich, 1983; Alvesson, 2013; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2019) conceptualize organizations as discursive systems constituted through narratives, metaphors, rituals, and meaning-making practices. In this sense, schools can be understood as narrative structures in which communication is not peripheral but central to educational and organizational functioning. For instance, the recurring rituals of staff meetings, the language used in disciplinary policies, and the collective storytelling in the teachers' lounge are the very spaces where a school's ethos is continuously constructed and reaffirmed.

From a psychosocial perspective, the quality of communication influences key dimensions of school life, including psychological safety, emotional engagement, social capital, and trust (Putnam, 2000; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995). When educators feel secure enough to voice concerns, share failures, or propose unconventional ideas without fear of reprisal, the entire system's capacity for innovation increases. Clear, respectful, and coherent communication acts as a protective factor against stress, dysfunctional conflict, and professional disengagement (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). The pragmatics of communication (Watzlawick et al., 1967) underscores that every communicative act conveys both content and relational meaning, shaping the emotional equilibrium of individuals and groups. This relational pragmatics is particularly critical during performance evaluations, classroom observations, or conflict mediation, where the meta-message of 'how' something is said often outweighs the 'what,' directly impacting a professional's self-efficacy and sense of belonging. (Prifti et al., 2025, Gjuzi-Bushi & Kristo, 2021)

Language also functions as a technology of power (Foucault, 1970; Fairclough, 1989), shaping what can be said and structuring communicative hierarchies within schools—for example, between leadership and teachers or between teachers and students. Administrative jargon, rigid meeting agendas, or strictly top-down policy announcements can implicitly silence dissenting voices or marginalize grassroots pedagogical expertise. Discursive practices can either reinforce or challenge existing power relations, influencing participation, voice, and decision-making. Educational research further indicates that evaluative discourse, classroom observation practices, and institutional feedback mechanisms may either empower or constrain teacher agency depending on communicative framing (Tarusha & Bushi, 2024; Bushi, 2024, Bushi & Kosova, 2025)). By intentionally shifting towards collaborative discourse—such as adopting models of distributed leadership—principals can democratize dialogue, empowering teachers to co-author the school's trajectory rather than merely executing mandates.

At the same time, action-research traditions (Argyris & Schön, 1978) show that organizational learning and development occur primarily through communicative processes grounded in negotiation, feedback, and double-loop learning.

While single-loop learning might involve using communication to adjust a school schedule to fix a minor inefficiency, double-loop learning requires the psychological safety and discursive space to question the underlying educational values and systemic paradigms driving that schedule. Communication thus becomes a regulatory mechanism that supports adaptation, resilience, and reflective practice.

In increasingly diverse school environments, language plays a crucial role in mediating cultural differences. Vygotsky (1934) conceptualized language as the primary psychological tool for organizing thought, while Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2011) provide a framework for understanding how value differences influence decision-making and emotional responses. Applying this to the school context helps decode how differing cultural attitudes toward authority, individualism, or uncertainty avoidance can complicate parent-teacher dynamics and staff collaboration. Recent studies confirm that linguistic-cultural diversity can hinder communication if unmanaged, but when consciously mediated, it enhances cooperation, motivation, and team functioning (Dhital, 2023; Tum Kole, 2025). Empirical studies in foreign language education contexts highlight that intercultural communicative competence functions as a stabilizing factor in collaborative educational environments (Bushi et al., 2024). Therefore, cultivating intercultural communicative competence is no longer an optional soft skill, but a foundational requirement for modern educational leadership to ensure systemic cohesion and equity.

## Conclusion

A linguistic-organizational perspective reveals that schools are not merely places where communication occurs but ecosystems that are constituted through communication. Language serves as the matrix through which schools interpret environmental challenges, construct and institutionalize knowledge, regulate relational dynamics, learn from feedback, and sustain ethical and human well-being.

The integration of linguistic pragmatics, cultural anthropology, well-being psychology, and organizational theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding language as the structural bridge between individual identity, collective cognition, and the social infrastructure of school organizations. Recognizing language as a central determinant of organizational health is therefore essential for designing educational environments that are resilient, inclusive, and capable of fostering the well-being of all their members.

From an educational perspective, fostering communicative awareness within school organizations requires systematic integration of dialogic leadership, reflective feedback cultures, and intercultural communicative competence in teacher development programs. Evidence from foreign language education research demonstrates that structured communicative practices enhance institutional trust, professional engagement, and organizational resilience (Formisano & Bushi, 2025; Bushi & Kristo, 2025).

Recent studies further demonstrate that communicative academic environments strengthen students' engagement and research participation, contributing to sustainable educational development (Gjetani, Bushi, & Kristo, 2026). Future empirical studies should investigate measurable relationships between communicative leadership practices and indicators of teacher well-being and institutional resilience.

## References

- Alvesson, M. (2013). *Understanding organizational culture* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2000). Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis. *Human Relations*, 53(9), 1125–1149.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Addison Wesley.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands-Resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328.
- Boje, D. (2001). *Narrative methods for organizational and communication research*. Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Bushi, J. (2021). *Motivation in the learning of foreign languages*. In *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Conference on Social and Natural Sciences – Global Challenge 2021* (pp. 150–161).
- Bushi, J. (2024). *The educational transformation in Albania and an analysis of the teacher role*. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*, 24(G4), 21–26.
- Bushi, J., & Aliaj, A. (2024). A review on the role of feedback in foreign language teaching. In *Proceedings of the 10th International European Congress on Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences* (pp. 705–715). IKSAD Institute.
- Bushi, J., & Kosova, A. (2025). *Teaching strategies for writing admission reports in German language classes*. *ISAR Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Studies*, 3(8), 34–42.
- Bushi, J., & Meta, A. (2026). *Error correction and its role in foreign language learning*. *European Journal of Contemporary Education and E-Learning*, 4(2), 60–77. [https://doi.org/10.59324/ejceel.2026.4\(2\).06](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejceel.2026.4(2).06)
- Bushi, J., & Neçaj, L. (2024). *Curriculum development and the challenges of foreign language teachers in pre-university education in Albania*. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 7(12), 9327–9332. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i12-74>
- Bushi, J., & Themeli, I. (2024). The impact of motivational factors on foreign language learning. *International Linguistics Research*, 7(3), 55. <https://doi.org/10.30560/ilr.v7n3p55>
- Bushi, J., Kristo, E., & Papajorgji, E. (2022). *Correction of speaking mistakes when learning a foreign language: Analysis of the most common mistakes and their correction in learning the German language*. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 12(2), 63–76. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2022-0035>
- Bushi, J., Likaj, M., & Kristo, E. (2024). *Overcoming barriers in intercultural communication: An analysis of linguistic, content and relational challenges*. In *Proceedings of the International Conference Multilingualism, Innovation and Digitalization in the Light of European Education Policies* (pp. 146–157).

- Cangelosi, A., & Turner, H. (2002). L'emergere del linguaggio. In A. M. Borghi & T. Iachini (Eds.), *Scienze della mente* (pp. 227–244). Il Mulino.
- Dhital, R. (2023). Applying Hofstede's cultural dimension theory to analyze intercultural communication differences. *Journal of Linguistics and Communication Studies*.
- Edmondson, A. C. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Longman.
- Formisano, M. A., & Bushi, J. (2025). *Adolescent development between educational processes, linguistic mechanisms and psychosocial aspects*. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(10), 33–37.
- Formisano, M. A., Bushi, J., & Caivano, C. P. M. (2025). *The socio-emotional effects of social stories in preadolescents*. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(9), 42–47.
- Foucault, M. (1970). *L'ordre du discours*. Gallimard.
- Gergen, K. J. (2001). *Social construction in context*. Sage.
- Gjetani, N., Bushi, J., & Kristo, E. (2026). Beyond language skills: How students experience scientific research in foreign language education. *Acta Scientiae*, 27(1), 130–141. <https://doi.org/10.22178/acta.27.1.11>
- Gjuzi-Bushi, J., & Kristo, E. (2021). *Bewertung und Selbstevaluation in der Lehre*. *Balkan Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 7(1), 210–216.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. Bantam Books.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society* (Vol. 1). Beacon Press.
- Hatch, M. J., & Cunliffe, A. (2019). *Organization theory* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (2011). *Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context*. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*.
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692–724.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh*. Basic Books.
- Luhmann, N. (1979). *Trust and power*. Wiley.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. (1997). *The truth about burnout*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709–734.
- Mojumder, A. H., Formisano, M. A., & Bushi, J. (2025). *Psychoeducational implications in contemporary schooling: Emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and environmental dimensions*. *Journal of Scholarly Studies in Arts and Human Development*, 1(1), 4–9.
- Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(2), 242–266.
- Ostroff, C., Kinicki, A., & Muhammad, R. (2013). *Organizational climate*. In *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. APA.
- Prifti, K., Bushi, J., & Vrusho, B. (2025). Navigating cultural change in organizations: Strategic HRM insights. *International Journal of Ecosystems and Ecology Science*, 15(3), 403–408.
- Prifti, K., Bushi, J., Vrusho, B., & Golgota, A. (2025). The cultural turnaround: Reimagining organizational identity for the future of work. In *Proceedings of the 41st RSEP International Multidisciplinary Conference* (pp. 33–41).
- Prifti, K., Vrusho, B., Toci, Ç., Prendi, L., & Bushi, J. (2025). *Strategic human resource management and its impact on organizational performance: Empirical insights*. *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Interdisciplinary Sciences*, 8(3), 550–594. <https://doi.org/10.15157/IJITIS.2025.8.3.550-594>
- Putnam, L. L., & Nicotera, A. M. (2009). *Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication*. Routledge.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone*. Simon & Schuster.
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069–1081.
- Smircich, L. (1983). Concepts of culture and organizational analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(3), 339–358.
- Tarusha, F., & Bushi, J. (2024). *The role of classroom observation and its impact on improving teachers' teaching practices*. *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences*, 2(2), 718–723. [https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2024.2\(2\).63](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2024.2(2).63)
- Tschannen-Moran, M. (2014). *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Tum Kole, J. K. (2025). Applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions in education. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1934/1990). *Thought and language*. MIT Press.
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J., & Jackson, D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication*. Norton.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.