

Language, Knowing, and the Architecture of Organisational Blindness: Declarative and Enacted Knowing, Inverse Difference, and Umbra Cones in Learnable Theory

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Abstract

Why do organisations systematically reproduce the blind spots they most urgently need to overcome? This article proposes that the answer lies not in information deficits or motivational failures but in the semantic architecture of the communicative fields through which organisations constitute their collective perception. Drawing on Learnable Theory, the article develops a theoretical integration between the epistemological distinction between declarative and enacted knowing and the linguistic-cognitive constructs of the Umbra Cone (Cono d'Ombra) and the Inverse Difference (Differenza Inversa) [1-3]. The article situates these constructs within the theoretical traditions of organisational learning, specifically the literatures on sensemaking, double-loop learning, and the espoused/enacted gap, before arguing that Learnable Theory advances those traditions by providing a precise linguistic mechanism for the production and maintenance of the gap between what organisations say they do and what they actually do. The Umbra Cone is the structural zone of non-pertinence constitutively produced by a dominant frame; the Inverse Difference is the formal mechanism that generates it. Together they explain not merely that enacted knowing exists and resists revision, what the prior literature has established, but why it has the specific architecture it does: why certain domains are constitutively unavailable to deliberate revision while others remain accessible. The article makes the epistemological argument for why standard diagnostic tools, including 360-degree feedback instruments, are structurally incapable of accessing enacted knowing, and directly addresses the counter-argument that subordinate observers can and do see leadership contradictions that leaders cannot: the observer is not blind, but the instrument's linguistic architecture forecloses their capacity to express what they perceive. A single theoretical illustration applies all five steps of the Inverse Difference procedure to an archetypal pattern of corporate communication, demonstrating the analytical sequence from frame identification to regeneration. Five theoretical propositions close the article. The central theoretical contribution is a structural account of the mechanism by which organisations learn not to see, and a theoretically grounded procedure for identifying the architecture of that unseeing in the language organisations use to describe themselves

Keywords: Enacted Knowing, Umbra Cone, Inverse Difference, Double-Loop Learning, Learnable Theory

1. Introduction: Learning not to see

Organisation Theory has been consistently preoccupied with a puzzle that, once noticed, seems to be everywhere: organisations do not merely fail to perceive things they could in principle see. They reliably fail to perceive specific things, in specific domains, with specific regularity. The strategist who misses the same competitive signal cycle after cycle; the leadership team that talks fluently about psychological safety while enacting its systematic suppression; the organisation that has declared itself committed to learning from failure for a decade while its systems continue

to treat failure as evidence of personal inadequacy. These are not cases of information shortage, they are cases of structured, reproducible, patterned not-seeing. And that pattern demands a structural explanation, not a cognitive one.

The dominant theoretical resources for addressing this puzzle are well-established. Argyris and Schön's (1978) concept of the gap between espoused theory and theory-in-use names the phenomenon with precision and attributes it to defensive routines that protect the governing variables of theory-in-use from examination [4].

Weick's (1995) account of sensemaking shows how organisations actively constitute the environments they perceive, selecting cues consistent with the ongoing narrative and discarding others as noise, with the result that organisational perception is always, in a deep sense, self-confirming. Feldman and Pentland's (2003) distinction between the ostensive and performative dimensions of organisational routines captures the systematic divergence between what a routine is understood to be and what it actually does, and shows that this divergence is generative rather than incidental [5,6]. What these accounts share, and what this article addresses, is a gap at the level of mechanism. They establish that the espoused/enacted gap exists and that it resists revision through normal means. They do not provide a detailed account of why it has the specific architecture it does: why some domains are reliably unavailable to deliberate change while others remain responsive, why the pattern of not-seeing is not random but structured, why the governing variables that defensive routines protect are always these rather than those. The missing mechanism is linguistic, and Learnable Theory provides it.

This article develops that mechanism through two bodies of work within Learnable Theory [1-3]. The first is the epistemological distinction between declarative and enacted knowing: a distinction with roots in the philosophy of mind that Learnable Theory extends and respecifies in organisational terms [7,15]. The second is the pair of linguistic-cognitive constructs through which the boundary between declarative and enacted knowing is produced and maintained: the Umbra Cone (Cono d'Ombra), the zone of structured cognitive invisibility that every dominant frame constitutively generates; and the Inverse Difference (Differenza Inversa), the formal mechanism through which that invisibility is produced. The central theoretical argument is that these two bodies of work are not parallel constructs to be considered in sequence but a single integrated system: the Umbra Cone is enacted knowing described at the structural-linguistic level, and the Inverse Difference is the formal account of how the boundary between what can and cannot be known in an organisation comes to have the specific content it does.

The article makes no empirical claims and presents no data. The illustrative material in Section 6 is offered in the tradition of the worked example in theoretical writing, as Weber used ideal types, or as Goffman (1974) used illustrative everyday examples, to demonstrate the analytical movement of a procedure rather than to advance a data-driven claim [9]. The argument is structural and epistemological throughout: it concerns the conditions under which organisational knowing is produced and constrained, not the measurement of outcomes. The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 situates the declarative/enacted distinction within existing organisational learning theory and specifies how Learnable Theory advances established accounts. Section 3 introduces the Umbra Cone and the Inverse Difference, anchoring them in cognitive linguistics and frame analysis before specifying their precise function within the framework. Section 4 develops the theoretical integration between the two bodies of work and its implications for the double-loop learning problem. Section 5 makes the

epistemological case for the structural inadequacy of standard diagnostic tools and directly addresses the observer counter-argument. Section 6 offers a theoretical illustration applying all five steps of the Inverse Difference procedure. Section 7 closes with five theoretical propositions.

2. Declarative and Enacted Knowing: Situating the Framework

2.1. The Espoused/Enacted Gap in Organisation Theory

The gap between what organisations say they do and what they actually do is among the most persistent and practically consequential phenomena in organisational research. Argyris and Schön (1978) named the underlying structure with their distinction between espoused theory, the values, strategies, and assumptions that members invoke to explain and justify their behaviour, and theory-in-use, the implicit programmes that actually govern action and that can be inferred from behavioural patterns rather than verbal accounts [4]. The decisive insight was that theories-in-use are not merely imperfect realisations of espoused theories but structurally distinct: they are organised around governing variables, typically face-saving, winning, and rational self-interest, that are defended against examination precisely because examining them would require the kind of double-loop revision that organisational defensive routines are designed to prevent.

Weick (1995) reframed the same phenomenon through sensemaking theory. Organisations do not perceive their environments; they enact them: they actively constitute the meaningful environments to which they then respond [5]. Sensemaking is retrospective and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy: actors select from available sensory data those cues that are consistent with the ongoing account and that can be made actionable within it, discarding the rest as irrelevant or anomalous. The result is that organisational perception is constitutively self-confirming: the narrative through which the organisation makes sense of its situation determines, in advance, what counts as a signal worth attending to. Weick's concept of enacted environment captures the active, constitutive character of this process. Feldman and Pentland (2003) brought the espoused/enacted gap into the analysis of organisational routines through their distinction between the ostensive and the performative dimensions [6]. The ostensive is the abstract, generalised ideal of the routine. The performative is the specific, situated enactment. The gap between these dimensions is not simply slippage; it is the generative site at which routines change, as performative deviations accumulate to revise the ostensive ideal. But it is also the site at which organisational blindness is maintained: when performative enactments consistently diverge from ostensive ideals without revision, it is typically because the governing logic of the routine's embedding frame makes those divergences invisible as divergences.

What all three frameworks share is a precise description of the phenomenon and a sophisticated account of its consequences, but an underspecified account of its mechanism. Argyris and Schön attribute the persistence of the espoused/enacted gap to defensive routines but do not fully specify how defensive routines acquire their specific targets. Weick explains that sensemaking

selects but does not specify the selection criterion at the level of semantic structure. Feldman and Pentland show that performative enactments diverge from ostensive ideals but do not explain why certain performative patterns consistently fail to revise certain ostensive ideals. Learnable Theory supplies the missing specification, and it does so through a linguistic rather than a psychological or structural argument.

2.2. The Declarative/Enacted Distinction in Learnable Theory

Learnable Theory grounds its account of knowing in a distinction that runs through both the philosophy of mind and the sociology of practice [1]. Ryle's (1949) classic argument in *The Concept of Mind* established the irreducibility of knowing-how to knowing-that: propositional knowledge is structurally distinct from the practical competence deployed in skilled action [7]. Polanyi (1966) extended the insight: 'we can know more than we can tell.' Schön (1983) brought this into professional practice through knowing-in-action: the spontaneous, pre-reflective competence that experienced practitioners exercise and that only becomes available for reflection at the moments when it breaks down [8].

Learnable Theory retains these insights but adds a dimension that the philosophical tradition does not provide: an account of how the boundary between declarative and enacted knowing is produced and maintained by language. The boundary between what can be declaratively known in an organisation and what is relegated to the enacted level is drawn, and continuously redrawn, by the organising frames of the organisation's communicative field. What falls on the enacted side of that boundary is not there by cognitive accident; it is there because the dominant frame's constitutive logic places it there, because acknowledging it declaratively would require the frame to transform itself. This is the learnable gap: the domain of experience processed at the enacted level and unavailable to deliberate revision, not because it has not been noticed but because the frame through which it would have to be noticed pre-classifies it as non-pertinent. The learnable gap is not a deficit of attention or information; it is a product of semantic architecture.

2.3. Advancing the Prior Literature

The advance that Learnable Theory makes on the prior organisational learning literature can be stated precisely. Argyris and Schön show that the espoused/enacted gap exists and that it is defended. Learnable Theory explains why it has the specific content it does: the governed variables that defensive routines protect are precisely the Inverse Differences of the operative frame: the structural conditions the frame requires but cannot thematise. Weick shows that sensemaking selects cues. Learnable Theory specifies the selection criterion: the semantic logic of the dominant frame, whose Umbra Cone determines in advance which cues will be registered as signals and which as noise. Feldman and Pentland show that performative enactments diverge from ostensive ideals. Learnable Theory explains why some divergences fail to trigger revision: the performative information that would require ostensive revision falls within the Umbra Cone of the routine's governing frame, and is therefore not registered as divergence but as exception. In each case the advance takes the

same form: a structural-linguistic specification of the process that the prior literature has described but not explained at the level of semantic architecture, not a new finding, but a new account of why an established finding has the specific form it does.

3. The Umbra Cone and the Inverse Difference

3.1. Framing Theory and the Limits of Backgrounding

The proposition that language actively organises rather than passively describes the perceptual field is firmly established in cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated that the conceptual metaphors through which abstract domains are structured do not merely describe those domains but shape what can be perceived and reasoned about within them: the structural highlighting of certain features is simultaneously the structural hiding of others, not as a contingent side-effect but as a constitutive feature of metaphorical framing. Fillmore's (1982) frame semantics specified this at the level of lexical structure: to activate a frame is to foreground certain semantic roles and background others, not through the speaker's choice but through the frame's internal logic [10,11]. Goffman's (1974) sociologically inflected account showed how frames function as the interpretive schemata through which social actors determine what kind of thing an event is and, by the same operation, what kinds of response are appropriate, expected, or even conceivable [9].

Weick (1995) drew directly on this tradition, treating the vocabularies of precedent that organisational actors use as their primary sensemaking resource [5]. Frames, in Weick's usage, enacted environments, determine not only what is noticed but what can be noticed: they operate as the perceptual infrastructure of organisational life, so pervasive and so taken-for-granted that they are experienced not as interpretive choices but as transparent windows onto reality.

What Learnable Theory contributes, through the concept of the Umbra Cone, is a theoretically more precise category than simple backgrounding [2]. The backgrounding that any framing involves is, in principle, reversible through reframing: what is background in one frame can become figure in another. The Umbra Cone designates a qualitatively different phenomenon: the domain that a frame cannot accommodate without transforming itself. This is not content that is merely unhighlighted; it is content that the frame's constitutive logic pre-classifies as non-pertinent, as the absence of relevant signal rather than the presence of a different one. The distinction is theoretically decisive because it determines what kind of intervention is required to surface the excluded content.

3.2. The Linguistic Exorcism and Its Function

The linguistic exorcism is the specific linguistic structure through which the Umbra Cone is generated and maintained. It belongs to the class of phenomena studied in discourse analysis under the labels of paradoxical framing and oxymoronic structuring: the pairing of semantically incongruent terms that generates an attentional short-circuit. Learnable Theory provides a functional account of what this incongruence accomplishes in the context of organisational

frame-management that extends the standard discourse-analytic description [12]. A linguistic exorcism is a noun-adjective pairing whose semantic incongruence is functionally significant rather than merely stylistic: the adjective imports a semantic network that is structurally incompatible with the noun's original field, and the collision between the two does not produce ambiguity but resolution: a determinate new semantic orientation in which the noun's original field is suppressed and the adjective's field installed as the relevant one. The Umbra Cone is precisely the suppressed content of the noun's original network: not the opposite of what is meant, but the semantic field that the pairing renders invisible as a condition of the new orientation's coherence.

3.3. The Inverse Difference: A Precise Construct

The Inverse Difference is the formal operation that identifies, from the structure of a linguistic exorcism, the specific content of the Umbra Cone it produces. It must be distinguished from two constructs with which it might be confused. Logical negation remains within the same semantic field as the proposition it negates and leaves the frame's constitutive logic intact. Popperian falsification is similarly closed: it tests whether the frame's predictions survive empirical confrontation but does not surface what the frame presupposes as the condition of its predictions' coherence [13]. Both are operations on the frame's content; neither is an operation on its form. The Inverse Difference is an operation on the frame's form, on the conditions of possibility that the frame requires in order to cohere. It identifies the element that contradicts the frame not in its specific content but in its form of possibility: the structural feature whose existence is required for the frame to make sense but which the frame cannot acknowledge without undermining its own constitutive logic. Where negation and falsification close a model by contesting its outputs, the Inverse Difference opens a perceptual field by surfacing the presuppositions the model cannot name [1].

Three analytically distinguishable levels of the Inverse Difference can be specified. At the first level, it is a structural relation: the element that cannot coexist with the frame's defining presuppositions. At the second level, it is a condition of possibility: the feature whose existence is required for the frame to be coherent but that the frame cannot acknowledge without losing that coherence. At the third level, the level at which genuinely double-loop work occurs, it is a negative necessity: the content whose structural absence is enforced by the frame's constitutive logic, such that engaging with it requires the frame to reorganise itself. It is the governing variable, in Argyris and Schön's terms, that the defensive routine is organised to protect [14].

4. The Integration: One System, Two Registers

4.1. The Umbra Cone as Enacted Knowing Described Structurally

The central theoretical claim of this article is that the Umbra Cone and enacted knowing are not two constructs in a relationship of analogy or illustration. They are two descriptions of the same theoretical object, the zone of constitutive exclusion at the boundary of what a frame can accommodate, from different

analytical registers [8]. The Umbra Cone is the structural-linguistic description: it specifies the mechanism of exclusion, its architecture, and the procedure for identifying it. Enacted knowing is the cognitive-epistemological description: it specifies the status of what is excluded: processed at the implicit level, unavailable for deliberate revision, organised in ways that are not accessible to the declarative field through which deliberation occurs.

This integration resolves the explanatory gap identified in Section 2.1. The prior organisational learning literature establishes that enacted knowing exists and resists revision: this is the contribution of Argyris and Schön, Weick, and Feldman and Pentland. It does not fully account for the specificity of its architecture: why these domains and not others, why these governing variables and not those [16]. The Inverse Difference provides this account: the specific content of enacted knowing that is unavailable for deliberate revision is precisely the Inverse Difference of the operative frame: the third-level negative necessity that the frame's coherence requires to remain unacknowledged. The pattern of not-seeing is not random; it is the inverse structure of the dominant communicative frame, and it can be read from the frame's semantic architecture.

4.2. Implications for the Double-Loop Learning Problem

Argyris and Schön (1978) observed that double-loop learning, revision of the governing variables rather than mere adjustment of strategies within fixed governing variables, is systematically rare in organisations [4]. They attributed this rarity to defensive routines that protect governing variables from examination but could not fully specify the mechanism by which defensive routines acquire their specific targets. The integration developed here supplies that specification. Defensive routines are most intensively maintained at exactly the points where the frame's Umbra Cone is most densely produced: the domains where acknowledging the enacted knowledge would require the frame to revise its constitutive logic [17]. The linguistic exorcisms through which the frame is communicated in organisational life are simultaneously the acts of Umbra Cone maintenance through which those domains are rendered invisible. This is why double-loop learning cannot be produced by communicative interventions that operate within the existing vocabulary: they are, structurally, acts of single-loop adjustment that reinforce rather than revise the frame's constitutive logic.

What is required is engagement with the linguistic architecture itself: identification of the exorcisms, formulation of the Inverse Difference, and development of the complementary semantic structure in which the frame and its previously excluded complement coexist. This is not a communicative strategy; it is a structural operation on the vocabulary through which the organisation's sensemaking field is constituted. In Weick's terms, it changes the enacted environment; in Argyris and Schön's terms, it revises the governing variables; in Feldman and Pentland's terms, it reconstructs the ostensive dimension of the routine so that previously invisible performative patterns become registered as divergences requiring conceptual revision.

4.3. Complementary Semantics as the Topology of Regeneration

Complementary semantics is the structure of the regenerated communicative field: the organisation in which every meaning is held alongside its structurally necessary complement rather than against it [2,3]. A dominant frame that has been regenerated through Inverse Difference work does not abandon its original orientation, the illuminating power that the frame provided is retained, but it now holds the Inverse Difference alongside it, as the acknowledged structural condition of the frame's own coherence. The recursive character of this process is important: the regenerated frame will itself generate a new Umbra Cone, requiring continued engagement. This is consistent with Argyris and Schön's understanding of double-loop learning as a capacity rather than an achievement: something an organisation can develop the capability to do repeatedly rather than a terminal state it reaches once.

5. The Structural Inadequacy of Standard Diagnostic Tools

5.1. The Epistemological Argument

The claim that the Inverse Difference procedure is required, and not merely useful, for accessing enacted knowing depends on establishing that conventional diagnostic instruments are not merely less effective but structurally incapable of the access they are designed to provide. This argument is epistemological rather than empirical: it rests on the structure of the phenomenon, not on comparative data. The dominant instruments for accessing enacted knowing in organisations, such as 360-degree feedback surveys, engagement tools, culture assessments, and structured reflection exercises, share a single structural feature. They ask organisational members to articulate their beliefs, evaluate their environment, or describe their experience using language: specifically, using the language that the organisation's dominant communicative frame has made available as the relevant vocabulary for these topics. They operate, that is, entirely within the declarative field. They ask the frame to supply the vocabulary through which its own limits will be described.

The structural problem is not a matter of question quality or survey design. The Umbra Cone is defined as the domain that the frame pre-classifies as non-pertinent input. A 360-degree instrument that asks respondents to evaluate a leader's 'openness to challenge' or 'learning orientation' is deploying the vocabulary that the leader's exorcisms have established as the relevant conceptual space for these topics. Asking the frame to evaluate its own permeability using its own vocabulary is, structurally, asking the shadow to illuminate itself: it is precisely the frame's constitutive logic that determines what counts as 'openness' and what counts as 'challenge' within the declarative field, and therefore what will be registered by the instrument's categories.

5.2. The Observer Counter-Argument: The Tool Constrains, the Observer Perceives

This argument invites a counter-argument that must be addressed directly. If the Umbra Cone blinds the leader to their own enacted patterns, what about the subordinates and peers who observe those patterns from outside the leader's frame? In practice, observers

very often perceive the enacted contradiction with considerable clarity: the subordinate knows exactly when psychological safety is being preached and punished simultaneously. The counter-argument is empirically correct. Observers do frequently perceive enacted contradictions that leaders cannot access through their own declarative frameworks. The epistemological argument against the 360-degree instrument does not rest on the claim that observers share the leader's blind spot. It rests on a different and more specific claim: that the linguistic architecture of the instrument systematically forecloses the observer's capacity to express what they perceive. Consider what happens when a direct report, who observes with clarity and consistency that dissenting views are punished in meetings despite communications celebrating candour, is asked to complete a 360 survey.

The instrument requires the observer to encode their enacted knowledge, which is rich, textured, situational, and specific, into a predetermined declarative vocabulary: typically a set of abstract competency descriptions rated on a Likert scale. This encoding operation forces the observer's perception through the conceptual categories that the organisation's dominant frame has established as the relevant vocabulary. The observer's enacted knowledge, that a pattern is systematic, not incidental, becomes, after processing by the instrument's linguistic architecture, a score on a scale anchored by 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree' in relation to an item formulated in the frame's own vocabulary. The observer has not failed to perceive what matters. The instrument has prevented them from communicating it. The Inverse Difference procedure is not subject to this structural limitation because it does not ask observers, or anyone else, to describe what they know. It analyses the linguistic structure of the organisation's own communicative field, its strategic documents, leadership addresses, performance management language, and from that structure reads the architecture of the Umbra Cone that the frame produces. The primary analytical object is the communicative field itself, available as text and analysable without requiring anyone to transcend the frame's vocabulary.

5.3. The Five-Step Procedure

The Inverse Difference procedure comprises five steps. Each step is grounded in the theoretical architecture developed above and connects directly to a specific aspect of the integration between enacted knowing and the Umbra Cone [2,3].

Step 1: Frame Identification: Identify the dominant semantic frame organising the relevant communicative field: the sensemaking vocabulary through which ambiguous organisational situations are made interpretable and actionable.

Step 2: Exorcism Identification: Locate the linguistically significant noun-adjective pairings: those whose incongruence produces an attentional short-circuit that reorganises the semantic field and marks active Umbra Cone maintenance.

Step 3: Semantic Complementarity Analysis: For each exorcism, map the semantic counter-field: the domain that the noun's original network presupposes or requires but that the adjective's network suppresses. This counter-field is the content of the Umbra Cone generated by the exorcism.

Step 4: Inverse Difference Formulation: Identify the third-level negative necessity: the condition of possibility that the frame requires but cannot thematise : the structural feature whose acknowledgement would transform the frame's organising logic.

Step 5: Regeneration: Develop the complementary semantic structure in which the frame and its Inverse Difference coexist as dimensions of a more adequate understanding. The regenerated frame does not abandon the original's illuminating power; it expands it to include what the Umbra Cone had excluded.

6. Theoretical Illustration: The Innovation-as-Control Frame

6.1. Purpose and Status

The following illustration applies all five steps of the Inverse Difference procedure to an archetypal pattern of contemporary corporate communication. It is offered as a theoretical illustration in the tradition of the worked example in theoretical writing: comparable to Weick's (1995) use of the Mann Gulch disaster to illuminate sensemaking, or Goffman's (1974) use of illustrative everyday examples to develop frame analysis [4,9]. Its purpose is to demonstrate the analytical movement of the procedure. It makes no empirical claim and presents no data. The communicative pattern it analyses recurs, in recognisably similar form, across a large class of contemporary organisations that have adopted the vocabulary of agility and disruption while simultaneously intensifying their governance and control architectures.

6.2. Step 1 : Frame Identification

The dominant semantic frame is 'disruptive innovation': the master narrative through which a significant class of contemporary organisations constitutes its competitive identity, allocates attention and resource, and evaluates performance. Its core semantic field is constituted by: speed, flexibility, creative risk, the rejection of established practice, and the claim that scale is not a constraint but an amplifier of these qualities.

6.3. Step 2 : Exorcism Identification

The disruptive innovation frame is characterised, in organisations that have adopted it alongside increasing governance intensity, by a recurring linguistic exorcism: the pairing of agile, and its synonyms (nimble, dynamic, fluid), with standardised and its cognates (unified metrics, mandatory frameworks, compliance architecture, governance cadence). Representative constructions of the form 'our agile units will operate within our standardised reporting architecture' are characteristic of this exorcism structure. 'Agile' activates a network of: organic responsiveness, the irrelevance of predetermined procedure, local decision authority, and the tolerance of improvisation. 'Standardised reporting architecture' imports: predetermined procedure, centralised definition of what counts as relevant performance data, and the elimination of local discretion. The pairing generates the short-circuit: agility is installed as the declared orientation while the governance apparatus that makes agility structurally impossible is rendered invisible.

6.4. Step 3 : Semantic Complementarity Analysis

The semantic counter-field includes: the discretion to define what

constitutes a relevant signal in a novel situation; the freedom to delay or qualify reporting when the situation is ambiguous in ways the existing categories cannot capture; and the acceptance that genuine innovation will sometimes make current metrics temporarily meaningless as guides to action. This counter-field is not absent from the organisational reality of firms that deploy this exorcism. Practitioners in such organisations typically have enacted knowledge of exactly this content. It is invisible at the level of strategic communication because the exorcism pre-classifies it as non-pertinent.

6.5. Step 4 : Inverse Difference Formulation

The Inverse Difference of the 'disruptive innovation' frame is not 'bureaucratic control'; that would be the obvious opposite, available within the same conceptual space. The Inverse Difference, at the third level of negative necessity, is the structural condition the frame requires but cannot acknowledge: that the standardised reporting architecture is not a tool in service of the agility strategy but a competing strategic logic, a bet on predictability, investor confidence, and operational control: that stands in a constitutive and irresolvable tension with the conditions that genuine disruptive innovation requires. To acknowledge this would require the frame to reorganise its central distinction: between an organisation that genuinely tolerates the ambiguity and failure that disruptive innovation requires and an organisation that uses disruptive innovation language for competitive positioning while managing its actual operation according to the logic of governance and control.

6.6. Step 5 : Regeneration

A regenerated communicative frame does not require the organisation to choose between innovation and governance. It requires the two to be held in explicit, theorised tension rather than resolved through an exorcism that suppresses one term. A regenerated frame produces constructions that explicitly name the structural relationship: not 'our agile units within our standardised framework' but 'our governance architecture creates the bounded conditions within which localised experimentation is possible': a formulation that names both terms and makes their relationship explicit rather than suppressing one. The linguistic signature of regeneration is detectable as a qualitative shift in communicative pattern: a decrease in the frequency and incongruence intensity of exorcism structures in the relevant semantic domain, and a corresponding increase in explicitly complementary constructions that acknowledge both the original frame and its structural condition. In Argyris and Schön's terms, the governing variable, the tension between innovation logic and control logic, has been brought into the organisation's sensemaking vocabulary, making it available for deliberate examination rather than defensive protection.

7. Theoretical Propositions

The following propositions are derived from the integrated theoretical framework developed above. Each is a claim about a structural relationship logically derivable from the framework and specifying the conditions under which its central mechanisms

operate. Where propositions carry implications for future empirical research, those implications are noted as logical consequences of the theoretical argument.

Proposition 1: The Architecture of the Learnable Gap Is Determined by the Inverse Differences of the Operative Frame

The content of an organisation's learnable gap, the specific domains in which espoused theory and theory-in-use persistently diverge, is not randomly distributed but is architecturally patterned by the Inverse Differences of the dominant communicative frame. The governing variables that defensive routines protect (Argyris & Schön, 1978) are precisely the third-level negative necessities of the operative frame: the conditions of possibility the frame requires but cannot thematise. It follows that the learnable gap can, in principle, be predicted from the semantic architecture of the organisation's dominant communications, and that interventions addressing content within the existing frame will leave the gap structurally undisturbed.

Proposition 2: Exorcism Density Is a Structural Index of Frame Rigidity and Learnable Gap Size

The density of linguistic exorcisms in an organisation's characteristic communications, the frequency and semantic incongruence intensity of noun-adjective pairings whose function is to suppress one semantic field while installing another, is a structural index of the rigidity of the operative frame and the size of the corresponding learnable gap. Higher exorcism density indicates a more intensively maintained Umbra Cone and a larger zone of constitutively excluded enacted knowledge; lower density indicates a more permeable frame and a smaller gap.

Proposition 3: Standard Diagnostic Instruments Are Structurally Incapable of Accessing Umbra Cone Content, Irrespective of Observer Awareness

The structural inadequacy of standard diagnostic tools, including 360-degree feedback instruments, engagement surveys, and culture assessments, in accessing Umbra Cone content is not a function of observer blindness or insufficient data collection. Observers may have clear and accurate enacted knowledge of the contradictions the Umbra Cone conceals. The inadequacy arises because the instrument's linguistic architecture deploys the dominant frame's vocabulary as its conceptual system, and in doing so reproduces the constitutive exclusions of the frame it is supposed to diagnose.

Proposition 4: Regeneration Has a Detectable Linguistic Signature Distinct from Reframing

Genuine frame regeneration, the integration of the Inverse Difference into an expanded communicative frame, is distinguishable from superficial reframing by a specific and detectable linguistic pattern: a reduction in exorcism density within the relevant semantic domain, and a corresponding increase in explicitly complementary constructions that name both the original frame's orientation and its structural Inverse Difference. This proposition provides a theoretical basis for distinguishing double-loop revision from single-loop adjustment at the level of communicative practice.

Proposition 5: Ecology Saturation Determines the Level at Which Intervention Must Occur

The effectiveness of Inverse Difference-based intervention at the individual level is moderated by organisational ecology saturation: the degree to which the daily micro-communicative practices of the organisation, feedback conversations, performance management language, task assignment framing, narrative conventions, reproduce the same exorcism structures as the dominant organisational frame. Where ecology saturation is high, individual-level frame revision will be reabsorbed into the dominant frame; intervention must operate at the level of the communicative field itself. Where saturation is lower, individual-level work can produce more durable revision. Taken together, these propositions constitute a research programme that moves from the description of the espoused/enacted gap toward the structural-linguistic explanation of its architecture, its persistence, and the conditions under which it can be genuinely revised. Each proposition specifies the variables involved, the relationships predicted, and the conditions under which those predictions should hold.

8. Conclusion

The question this article has addressed, why organisations reliably reproduce the specific blind spots they most need to overcome, has been answered, within the prior literature, in terms of defensive routines, self-confirming sensemaking, and the gap between ostensive and performative routine dimensions. What those accounts lack is a structural mechanism that explains why the gap has the specific architecture it does: why these governing variables and not others, why these enacted patterns and not those. Learnable Theory provides that mechanism. The dominant communicative frame of an organisation generates, through the specific linguistic operation of the exorcism, a structured zone of constitutive invisibility, the Umbra Cone, whose content corresponds precisely to the enacted knowledge whose availability would require the frame to transform its constitutive logic. The Inverse Difference names the formal structure of that correspondence: the third-level negative necessity that is simultaneously the content of the learnable gap and the condition of possibility that the defensive routine is organised to protect. And complementary semantics names the structure of the regenerated field: the expanded communicative vocabulary in which the frame and its Inverse Difference are explicitly held together rather than resolved through suppression.

The argument does not challenge the prior literature's descriptive categories. It adds a mechanism, a structural-linguistic account, that makes those categories explanatorily more complete. The espoused/enacted gap has an architecture; that architecture is produced by language; and that architecture can, in principle, be read from the language organisations use to describe themselves. If this argument is sustained, it has implications for how theory-building in organisational learning proceeds: systematic linguistic analysis of communicative fields becomes an integral rather than peripheral part of understanding the gaps and resistances that the prior literature has identified. The pieces are not missing from the

board. They are in the shadows that the board's own rules have cast. Learnable Theory provides both the account of how those shadows are produced and the procedure for reading their shape.

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