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Abstract

Deconstruction is a post-structuralist approach to language, most often associated with Jacque Derrida. Deconstruction has to-date received little attention in the information systems (IS) literature. In this paper, we consider how deconstruction might contribute to language-based approaches in IS research and practice. We first discuss deconstruction in light of the linguistic turn in social science research. We review the small body of IS research that has employed deconstruction and then consider other possible ways it might be applied in the study of information systems texts, such as information systems per se, IS methodologies, and IS research publications. In doing so, we argue that IS texts do not simply describe the social and technical past but also prescribe and circumscribe the future of IS practices and technologies by what is not written. Using deconstruction, we suggest IS texts may serve as maps to future IS practices, by "de-centering" the limited meanings that accrue to any text.

Keywords: Deconstruction, post-structuralism, discourse analysis, information systems practice

Introduction and motivation

It would not be unusual in literary circles to subject a work of literature to deep scrutiny, examining not only what it says, but also what it does not say, and thus to reveal a variety of possible interpretations. Nor would we expect all readers to interpret the text in the same way or even as the author may have intended, although we often believe that the author had an intention that should be accessible to the reader. To apply a similar analytic approach to information systems (IS) texts – that is, to the written artifacts of IS practitioners, commentators, and researchers about IS systems practices – would seem by comparison

rather odd. Typically when we read IS texts, we are concerned primarily with what the authors intended to say, whether what they said is right, or accurate, or useful, and perhaps whether we agree or disagree with what is said.

In this paper, we suggest that what may appear to be a whimsical approach to IS texts might be intellectually productive. This approach is deconstruction, most often associated with the works of Jacques Derrida (2002), despite his own disregard for the term (Royle, 2003). We draw on the metaphor of "texts as maps" to illustrate this possibility. Like maps that provide abstracted but potentially useful models of the physical world, IS texts depict the complexities of information systems and the socio-technical worlds they inhabit through technical jargon, models, diagrams, theories and so on, to direct the reader (or user) along certain intellectual paths toward predefined destinations. A map is instrumental precisely because it draws attention to some things while ignoring others: a road map details the roadways by ignoring the countryside (except as the space between roads). IS texts similarly *suppress* much about information systems and practices in order to *express* something of use or interest about them. Like the unexpected destinations we sometimes find in the countryside ignored by map makers, we suggest that IS researchers and practitioners might fruitfully explore new IS terrain by looking more deeply, critically, and playfully at IS texts, by using deconstruction as an approach.

In the next section, we discuss deconstruction as a post-structuralist approach to language within the broad domain of discourse analysis. We then review the small body of IS research that has used deconstruction and consider how deconstruction might be applied more widely and productively to other texts. We conclude by considering how deconstruction might contribute to IS research generally and to language-based approaches to research.

Deconstruction and the linguistic turn

The "linguistic turn" refers to broad changes in philosophy and social science towards the study of language and interest in how language constructs and produces our subjective and inter-subjective worlds, before, during and after our arrival (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000; Heracleous, 2006). Commenting on the linguistic turn in organizational studies, Alversson and Karreman (2000, p. 137) comment that humans use language not to represent reality accurately but to accomplish goals, and they employ a variety of linguistic means to do so. The implications of these linguistic turns are being felt across various disciplines, still dominated by materialist and realist philosophies that follow a correspondence theory of language, that is, the ontological belief that words reflect an independent world that exists beyond language

Despite sharing a focus on language as the foundation of social life and meaning, various linguistic approaches address basic questions about language quite differently: What is our purpose in studying language? What is the role of language in constructing our world? How and what do we analyze about language? What is the role of the social scientists in this research endeavor? Various approaches fall broadly into interpretive and critical approaches, with the first appreciating how language is constructed by and constructs individuals, and the second addressing how power and domination is implicit in language.

IS research has seen a variety of language-based approaches, for example, hermeneutics (cf. Lee 1994), discourse analysis (cf. Heracleous and Barrett 2001; Swanson and Ramiller 1997), narrative analysis (cf., Alvarez and Urla, 2002; Brown and Jones, 1998; Davidson, 1997; Dubé and Robey, 1999; Wagner et al. 2004) and conversation analysis (cf. Alvarez 2002; Urquhart, 1999, 2001). Deconstruction differs from these approaches in that it is less concerned with the world "out there" than it is with the text and only the text:

> "The deconstructionists, like discourse analysts, look at the details of a text, but unlike discourse analysts, they tend to bracket its social effects. They flavor playfulness and imagination over rigor and empirical details" (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000, p. 143).

For instance, unlike critical hermeneutics and critical discourse analysis, deconstruction views the so-called emancipatory project of critical approaches to language with suspicion. To a deconstructionist, the context of a text is only other texts, because language is indexical – texts rely on other texts for meaning in a recursive manner. As a result the goal of detecting and alleviating linguistic distortions that disadvantage some individuals or social groups (the "emancipatory project") is impossible and naïve. Thus, deconstruction is sometimes considered to be conservative because it eschews the production of a revised text that claims additional legitimacy to the one it supersedes. To better appreciate how deconstruction might add to language-based research in IS, we next provide a brief outline to highlight key assumptions.

A brief introduction to deconstruction

Deconstruction is broadly considered a *post-structuralist* approach, arising from a long history of various approaches to the study of language (Agger, 1991). Its predecessor, *structuralism*, was a radical approach to social science for its time, because it assumed the world is produced *by* the relationships among words, and not simply how words imperfectly correspond to an external world. The purpose of the study of language is to uncover the hidden relationships among words, and to develop general rules behind its production, to uncover *langue*[1], according to Saussure:

> "[M]an is to be defined by his outward language rather than by his inward powers of mind. For how could ideas exist in the mind without words? And how could powers of reasoning operate without sentences?" (Harland, 1987, p. 11).

This search for the underlying structures among words was important to structuralists, as it housed the reality embedded in language and allowed them to claim scientific validity and neutrality (Prasad, 2005). Structuralism is functional, because it examines what language systems do for their speakers and focuses on the stable and harmonious relations produced through language (Schwandt, 2001). Many forms of structuralism are anti-humanist: individuals do not produce language, but are produced by it, because the author and the reader are largely absent from structural analysis. Structuralism is anti-essentialist because there is no material reality beyond language - i.e. a word (signifier) does not point to something objective in the world (signified). Structuralism is therefore a-contextual in its study of language, compared to ethnomethodology and critical discourse analysis.

Post-structuralist approaches to language such as deconstruction, differ from structuralism by casting suspicion on the stability, function and universal pragmatics of language and question its naturalness (Hardland, 1987). Post-structuralists instead examine language as unstable, rendered temporarily stable by various social and political forces, which render discourse powerful and dominating, but subject to collapse at any time (Marcy 2000). Foucault's work on genealogy, for instance, shows how language is produced from accidents and fractures in history, and renders "knowledge" and power through discourse, about such topics as insanity, crime, and human sexuality (Foucault 1990, 1995). The "truth" of language is a political accomplishment, which produces *knowledge* and *power*.

Recognizing a philosophical conundrum in defining the tenets of deconstruction, we suggest its primary purpose is to challenge the assumption that language and texts have a final and natural meaning – the *teological* myth about the progressive nature of language (Royle, 2003, p. 35). Without this challenge, *logocentricism*[2] privileges the centering of current texts, thereby excluding the many other linguistic and socio-political possibilities. To avoid this centering of language it is resisted through deconstructive play, according to Derrida: " Why would one mourn for the centre? Is not the centre, the absence of play and differance, another name for death?" (Royle, 2003, p. 16).

Deconstruction *decenters* the meaning of texts, by exposing the dominant interpretation to the potentially infinite ways a text could be interpreted (Martin 1990) and using analytic techniques to expose the numerous possible *con-texts* that could render different interpretations:

> "Every text is a contested terrain in the sense that what it appears to 'say' on the surface cannot be understood without reference to the concealments and contextualizations of meaning going on simultaneously to mark the text's significance (i.e., the use of specialized jargon). These concealments and contextualizations might be viewed as the assumptions that every text makes in presuming that it will be understood. But these assumptions are suppressed, and thus the reader's attention is diverted from them" (Agger 1991, p. 112).

Derrida employed a rigor and clarity in his uncovering of numerous metaphors hidden by the apparent objectivity and abstraction of text, to expose excluded possibilities (Norris, 2000, p. 81). For Derrida deconstruction and its methods could emancipate writers and readers from the constraints of dominant interpretations. Its broadest objective is to bring into account, in the sharpest detail, the limitless context referred to in the moment a text is understood, through

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[1] Instead of focusing on specific languages, or *parole* using Saussure's term, we focus instead on the rules that produce one or more languages. These rules are referred to as *langue*. See Harland, 1987, pp. 11-13.

[2] Logocentricism refers to the belief that words have an independent meaning, and therefore the meaning of texts is implicit in the words it contains.

recontextualization, with "an eye sharply trained to look for contradictions" (Norris, 1991, p. 137, quoted in Beath and Orlikowski, 1994, p 352).

Deconstruction assumes various things about the text, the author, and its interpretation. First, it is assumed that speech and writing are both *declarative* (i.e. descriptive) and *performative* (i.e. promises of something to come through action) (Royle, 2003, p. 110). Language *acts* as much as it declares an external world and there is an unstable relationship between the two, where language is as much about promises as facts (Royle, 2003, p. 27-28).

Second, it is assumed an author accentuates particular concepts, while pushing others to the background. This *differance* implies both the "differed" and "deferred" of terms to the foreground and background, often using the oppositional pairs found in structuralist analysis. Derrida's work suggests that *differance* is a part of writing, a requirement to produce meaning. Any text or mark is *supplemented* by techniques (i.e. writing), and references to other supplementary concepts or marks (text) that themselves point to other supplements. Derrida has suggested that attention to *supplements* is an alternative view of deconstruction. In a more critical vein, consistent with Derrida, others suggest that these differences are upheld by logical fallacies, tautologies, ideologies, and law-like assumptions (Beath & Orlikowski, 1994; Martin 1990).[3]

Some critics consider deconstruction to be a postmodern philosophy, as well as a post-structuralist view of language, given similarities in some ontological assumptions (Agger 1991). Critics such as Weiss (2000) consider deconstruction as just the latest manifestation of a relativist perspective that will fade away as "real scientists" continue with their work. We suggest that although deconstruction contests the possibility of "one truth," Derrida appears to believe in progress and in the unfinished product of modernity of Kant (Norris, 2000, p. 84). But he does so through deconstruction, challenging the stabilization and centrality of texts to explore the diversity of human possibilities.

Taking a somewhat more positive perspective on deconstruction, Alversson and Karreman (2000) categorize it as a type of "grounded fictionalism" and suggest that deconstructive inquiry grounded in close inspection of language, with an appreciation of its multiple meanings and possible interpretations, can enable researchers to bring insight to a specific situation but also extend insights to a broader social context. Kilfuff (1993) agrees, commenting on his deconstruction of a classic text in organization theory (*Organizations*):

> "Thus, deconstruction is used, not to abolish truth, science, logic and philosophy, but to question how these concepts are present in texts and how they are employed to systematically exclude certain categories of thought and communication … The implications of a deconstructive reading are, therefore, not limited to the language of the text itself but can be extended to the political and social context in which the text is placed" (pg. 15).

Agger (1991) posits that deconstruction can help us to open up our own scientific writing to multiple interpretations by readers who actively engage with the text:

> "Science written from the perspective of deconstruction avoids over-reliance on technical and figural gestures; instead, it continually raises its assumptions to full view and thus invites readers to join or challenge them" (Agger 1991, pp. 114-5).

We would note that although deconstruction shares some analytic approaches with academic genre such as a literature review in an academic paper, it differs in important ways. For example, the academic author acknowledges the intertextuality of ideas and concepts through citations to other works, carefully examines terms and constructs to explore their possible meaning, and highlights missing insights in previous research to be addressed in the current text.[4] However, the author does so mainly to create a rhetorical argument that focuses the reader (and the reviewers) on the contributions of the current text. In contrast, we suggest the distinctive ontological and epistemological features of deconstruction are quite different. Derrida's work demonstrates a close attention to how language creates meaning, but also how it obliterates other possibilities in its construction of meaning by both authors and readers. This close attention to specific texts is not intended to produce broad conclusions about literature in order to motivate and support future research, such as a literature review.

Similarly, deconstruction differs from discourse analysis. The goal of discourse analysis is to investigate how humans construct and act in the world through language, by examining the linguistic world of participants so as to appreciate or

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[3] Appendix 1 provides several examples of deconstructive analytic techniques. We also refer the reader to Martin (1990) and Beath and Orlikowski (1994) for methodological details.
[4] We thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this issue.

critique it directly (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Deconstruction begins with the assumption that all texts construct meaning by suppressing other possible interpretations. It thus shares the appreciation of social construction through language in interpretive approaches of discourse analysis and of the dominating possibilities of language consistent with critical discourse analysis. However, unlike critical discourse analysis, deconstruction does not envision an ideal speech situation free of linguistic distortion. Instead the assumption is that every text requires constant questioning of assumed truths so as to keep language constantly "in play" and to avoid hegemonic concepts by admitting the many possibilities unrealized in the text.

We suggest that Derrida's approach to language – a close examination and appreciation of the writers' words as well as its fragile meaning through deconstruction -- offers possibilities for "creativity and inspiration" in IS research and practice. We turn now to ways in which these goals might be realized.

The short history of deconstruction in IS research

Deconstruction has rarely been employed in IS research but there are a few notable publications that highlight potential applications and insights for IS research and practice. Table 1 summarizes key examples. The articles we highlight here make explicit reference to deconstruction and to Derrida's work and employ to some degree the ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches of formal deconstruction.

Table 1: Summary of IS research articles that have used deconstruction or similar approaches

Author	IS Text examined	Key insights
Focus on Systems Development Methodologies		
Beath & Orlikowski (1994)	Systems development methodology	Exposes contradictions and ideological elements in systems development that privilege technical developers' role in methodology over users.
Truex, Baskerville & Travis (2000)	General discourse on methodologies	Exposes a-methodological systems development as a suppressed alternative to methodological development, by examining dichotomies in the discourse.
Watson & Wood-Harper (1996)	Academic paper on IS development methodology	Identifies conflicts within methodologies, references to other methods as self-description, asymmetrical oppositions, marginalization of context by methodologies
Focus on systems, architecture, protocols		
Coyne, R. 2000	General discourse of systems design	Reviews Derrida's work on deconstruction and post-modern approaches that inform philosophy of systems design
Robinson, Hall, Hovenden, and Rachel (1998).	General discourse of systems design	Critiques the technical/social divide and the privileging of the technical over the social in discourse on the "crisis in software development."
Davidson, Chiasson and Ruikar (2006)	*Harvard Business Review* article on web services	Reveals dichotomies in arguments promoting web services as a revolutionary new IT strategy, which also suggest privileging automation over human control in IS architecture.
Focus on texts in or of practice		
Huysman, (2000)	Literature on organizational learning related to IS designers' routines	Reveals biases in the literature on organizational learning that obscure other forms of learning evident in practice, i.e., cultural, mutual, unintended learning which is not directed towards instrumental improvements.
Panteli, N. (2002)	Text in email exchanges	A close examination of email texts reveals cues to social status and hierarchy, suggesting email is a rich medium rather than a lean one as suggested by theory

The most highly cited of these works, Beath and Orlikowski's (1994) deconstructive reading of a popular information systems development methodology (Information Engineering), highlights contradictory ideas about the role of users in IS development and their relationship to IS developers. They employ a variety of strategies for deconstruction, drawn from

Martin (1990), such as dismantling a dichotomy, attending to disruptions and contradictions in the text, scrutinizing naturalness claims and interpreting metaphors as a rich source of multiple meanings, to systematically examine the text. In this way, they reveal the suppressed but supplemental role of "users" in the development of information systems and challenge the "accepted wisdom" of the methodology, which privileges the role of technical analysts over system users in systems development.

Watson and Wood-Harper (1996) apply deconstruction to an academic article that presents a framework for methodologies (Lyytinen 1987) to highlight how methodologies limit our understanding of contexts for systems development. They focus on conflicting meanings in IS methodologies and references to other methods within the methodology, on which the methodology's meaning depends. Truex, Baskerville and Travis (2002) similarly use deconstruction to address methodology in general, and through their consideration of a supplemental and opposite development strategy identify a-methodological development. *Differance* and *supplement* in the discourse on methodologies suppresses but nonetheless depends on a-methodological development for meaning, for example, privileging structure over action, theory over experience, notation over process, and rationalized and controlled design over on-the-fly methods

Other researchers have utilized deconstruction to examine other genre of IS texts. Davidson, Chiasson and Ruikar (2006) examined a *Harvard Business Review* article promoting web services to explore predictions about the future of IS organizations and IT architecture. Focusing on the dichotomies of *differance* and *supplement*, they reveal how, in the text, the revolutionary and "new" IT strategy necessarily depends on and evolves from the "old" and now inadequate architecture and how the value of human ingenuity is discounted in favor of the elegance of automation. Coyne (2000) and Robinson et al. (1998), though not examining particular texts, consider how deconstruction and post-modern perspectives illuminate the technical and social divide that is pervasive in discourse surrounding software development.

Huysman (2000) examined use of the phrase "organizational learning" in the literature to reveal "biases" or dominant interpretations of what organizational learning is: an individual action bias, an active agency bias, a purposeful learning bias, and an improvement bias. In a study of how information systems designers actually learned, she identified cultural learning as an approach erased from the literature, which shaped learning as well as was the outcome of learning.

Addressing texts within information systems, Panteli (2002) examined e-mail exchanges among system users, revealing how status and hierarchy were evident in clues and cues of language use, syntax and format. Textual analysis suggested that email is a rich medium for conveying social distinctions, in contrast to its depiction in theory as a lean medium.
Many of these techniques focus on destabilization – claims to naturalness, contradictions, use of metaphors (as a form of inter-textuality), suppressed and silenced opposites, and dichotomies.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this brief review. There are few instances in which deconstruction has been used in IS research. As we reviewed publications presented here (and excluded others), we found that *deconstruction* is a loosely applied term, ranging from quite formal methodological approaches to something akin to a general form of critical discourse analysis. Researchers have also concentrated on systems development methodologies, and it appears there is much unexplored IS terrain in which deconstruction might be applied.

Exploring new IS terrain with deconstruction

Table 1 outlines the types of IS texts that have been the object of deconstructive analysis: development methodologies, IS research papers, general discourses in these areas, and IS-mediated interactions. Given the scant number of publications, more work in these areas is clearly possible. However, it may be fruitful to employ deconstruction in new areas as well. To consider these possibilities, we suggest a broad definition of "IS text" to include information systems per se, system design artifacts, IS protocols and standards, commentaries about IS practice, and pedagogical approaches in IS.

In addition to an examination of systems development methodologies, *information systems themselves (screens, databases, reports* and *software)* could be deconstructed to expose dominating and suppressed IS designs. Like text, information systems present a representation of organizational routines and practices. Deconstruction of information systems would focus on the many possible designs that could be achieved within and from current IS systems. In particular, database structures, user interfaces, and software algorithms are constructed to enable but also to disable and suppress other designs. Consistent with deconstruction, these software texts depend on other texts, and supplemented and hidden design possibilities. As one example, software prototyping could be seen as a text where the future is written and constructed for the organization.

Interestingly, the prototyping process itself may invoke a deconstruction into practices and business processes, revealed, produced and challenged through system design (Chiasson & Dexter, 2001).

A deconstruction of information systems texts would highlight unrealized and oppositional outcomes for information systems, and the various constraints and directions shaped and imposed by both packaged and customized software systems (Chiasson & Green, forthcoming). The stabilization of current system texts would be shown to rely on other system and non-system texts. These other texts include manuals, documents, printed reports, and so on, which are referred to in system use. Beyond simply descriptions of the software, these texts are produced and used to justify particular system uses – "use this feature in order to keep track of the customers whose accounts are 30 days overdue." Consistent with deconstruction, texts are seen to be performative (i. e. they direct and indicate what should be done) as descriptive. The "trick" is to recognize the suppression and *supplement* of these other system possibilities.

In terms of *information systems development and implementation histories*, various texts and language can be captured and analyzed using deconstructive techniques. For example, the "requirements" in system design implies that the text in the "specification document" is dominant and essential to design of a system A deconstructive question would be how and why do particular texts represent requirements? What are the supplemental other texts (e.g. meeting minutes, system documents, etc.) referred to in attempting to stabilize these required items? Even the use of numbers in the margins can impose a certain priority on each requirement. The title "requirements" adds force to what may be recast through opposition, as a "wish list". Which names are indicated on the document to add legitimacy to the requirements – perhaps a list of people purported to be involved in the process? If we examined the minutes of these meetings, what texts would we find, and how would they be cross-referenced with these names and meetings? Which names are missing? What are the non-requirements absent from this text? What would these non-requirements be, and how would they destabilize these official requirements?

Practice commentaries about IS present idealized versions of the present and future. Their purpose is to guide IS practice, through the justification of approaches " that work" and that are stabilized through references to other texts and references. Work is often implicitly defined by what will technically work, while countervailing texts that highlight the alternative social and political influences absent from the text, could render these practice texts open to critique. For example, business process reengineering provides a direction for IT-enabled organizational change. In fact, Hammer's title "Don't Automate: Obliterate" (Hammer, 1990) was a call-to-arms in justifying and empowering information systems engineers to intervene in organizations. Perhaps the use of its opposition, "Don't Obliterate: Automate" or perhaps "Obliterating Automation" would have cast some important and oppositional doubt on the problems which plagued reengineering projects during the 1990s, as organization members discovered that business processes were in-fact very complex and nuanced, and business process diagrams (as texts) often failed to capture these nuances. Without this detailed map of business processes, obliteration often destroyed and simplified important nuances and produced business failure. The nuances were suppressed by the texts, but were later revealed to be essential to customer satisfaction.

IS education and pedagogy that incorporated deconstructive exercises for IS students, would be of great interest. This educational approach would differ from what is called "critical thinking" in some educational institutions, which often is restricted to the use of novel approaches to solve relatively well-defined technical problems. Instead, deconstructive techniques would focus students on the unrealized, absent and opposite approaches to system design. For example, the careful and cautious balancing of competing issues during system design through a *neo-humanist* approach to design, which focuses on the removal of distortions to communication, could be compared with business process reengineering or predominantly functional approaches to design which tend to be blind to these distortions (Hirschheim & Klein, 1989). Depending on the complexity and social cohesion of the organization, the neo-humanist approach will add complexity to the design process, but it will also explore dominant and competing texts arising from various groups in the organization. Regardless of which approaches are considered, a deconstructive approach to systems analysis could help students experience it as the construction of incomplete and unstable system texts – a form of post-modern system development (Robinson et al., 1998).

Finally, the deconstruction of *commentaries on IS research*, especially normative statements about the field and its future practices, would be worthwhile. For example, we would argue that the concept of "relevance" in the field has gone through various deconstructive efforts by IS researchers, without being called deconstruction. Questions like relevant for whom, the consumption of relevant research, open and restricted diversity, and other topics demonstrate oppositional logics that raise opportunities for further discussion. It would also be interesting to consider the opposite -- irrelevance -- and whether the field could be founded upon an irrelevant (and perhaps irreverent) approach. For example, we could argue that the process of abstraction from IS findings is a loss of specific relevance, but a source of future insight into its abstract and irrelevant form towards future settings and practices.

Discussion and conclusions

In this paper, we have explored a little used approach to linguistic research in IS, deconstruction. Our purpose in focusing on deconstruction is to explore the reaches of the linguistic turn in social science. In doing so, we wish to open up new possibilities for the study of language in IS research. Our discussion of deconstruction as an analytical and critical stance towards text casts texts as maps, which through their rhetorical and logical path, both highlight and hide many possibilities for the future.

Following Weiss's (2000) critique of deconstruction in the organizational literature, we consider what, if anything, deconstruction has and could contribute to our knowledge of IS practices. For some IS researchers and practitioners, there is perhaps "not much new here." Yet pervasive and continuing problems with IS practice – conflicts between technology developers and system users, the failure of methodologies to guarantee effective and useful systems, the disappointment when revolutionary IS developments fail to deliver as promised – suggest that creativity and inspiration are perhaps needed. In particular we suggest that deconstruction could be used to look deeply into the many prescriptive IS texts that specify some idealized, desirable future – a new system, a new architecture, a new development method, and so on. While such analysis will often have a strong critical flavour, we suggest that inspiration might come not from creating new prescription through deconstruction but from recognition of limitations of any prescription to withstand deconstruction.

We further suggest that deconstruction allows us to view texts as political maps of the future, which demands a healthy suspicion and doubt, and the "de-centering" of them to reveal missing, absent and buried possibilities. The foundation of our future is in thus in our words, what they leave in, and what they leave out. We hope the use of deconstruction will increase by casting a vision for its use in the study of many IS texts: information system, methodologies, educational pedagogy, research and commentary. Through deconstruction, the various oppositional futures written between and within the texts can be revealed, thus producing a more balanced and rich consideration of IS futures.

To this end, we argue that deconstruction expands the production of alternative texts - ones that contradict current ones -- so as to produce a "con-vers-ation". In doing so, deconstruction allows what Alvesson and Karreman (2000) recommend – to unburden our texts from such high expectations of what they can accomplish, and be more modest in what we demand as we take the linguistic turn seriously and accept that language is not the map to reality. The conclusion is that the numerous future possibilities for IS research and practice need to be explored through counter-texts which challenge the singular directions produced in any IS text.

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Appendix 1: Examples of analytic techniques for conducting deconstructive readings of a text

Following are examples of analytic techniques used by Davidson, Chiasson and Suikar (2006) in their deconstructive reading of the text, "Your next IT strategy" (Hagel and Seeley-Brown 2001). These techniques were adopted from Martin (1990, p. 355, Figure 1) and Beath and Orlikowski (1994, p. 356, Table 2). The reader can find other examples and detailed explanations in these texts.

Analytic Strategy: Dismantling a dichotomy

Deconstruction focuses analytic attention on *differance* and *supplement*, which may be evident as oppositional pairs or dichotomies. Davidson, Chiasson and Suikar (2006) highlight the *differance* and *supplement* of old and new when discussing web services, pointing out the revolutionary "new" architecture depends on and grows from the existing, "old" architecture.

Analytic Strategy: Attending to disruptions and contradictions

Deconstruction focuses attention on points at which the dominant meaning in a text appears to break down. Analyzing the text statement, "Taking the people out of the network, the architecture will enable connections between applications--both within and across enterprises--to be managed automatically." (Hagel and Seeley-Brown 2001, p. 109), Davidson et al. comment that people create and operate "the architecture" and thus cannot be taken out of it.

Analytic Strategy: Scrutinizing naturalness claims or arguments

The dominant meaning of a text emerges in part from claims of naturalness by suppressing consideration of "unnatural" approaches. Davidson et al. note in the statement, "Shared meaning will naturally increase as the use of the Web services architecture expands." (Hagel and Seeley-Brown 2001, p. 113), "shared meaning" is synonymous with standardized definitions. These standards, and any meaning associated with them, emerge through concerted and often contentious debate and negotiations among people (vendors, users).