CHAPTER 8

Content As Mirror of Material Processes

While Chapter 7 focused primarily on interpersonal and textual aspects of the discourse of the CR, this chapter focuses on the ideational or referential aspects of the same discourse. It has a number of important orientations:

1 to discover at least partial answers to the questions about the social processes discussed in Chapter 3:

(a) the ways in which the challenges posed by Vision 2020 and The Challenge to the South are being met.

(b) what the discourse shows of the orientations of the Malaysian business community and what it shows of the process of transformation from second wave to third wave economy

2 to focus on how the discourse processes largely viewed as separate strands in Chapter 7, weave together to texture the fabric of the CR's discourse.

This chapter is predicated, as indeed this thesis is predicated, on the intuition that macro and micro social (and discoursal) processes interfuse in texturing discourse, whether the discourse discusses large material processes like the
transformation of a traditional society into a modern industrial society or the day-
to-day decision-making that a specific businessman makes regarding his particular
company. The chapter is also predicated on the belief that the instance in its
organic wholeness rather than any pre-disposing theoretical and abstract view of
what an instance can be expected to reflect, should form the basis of analysis.
These two intuitions have had their corollaries in the organization of the Chapter
and the method of analysis employed.

This chapter is divided into four sections in descending order of social scope.
Section 8.1 discusses how the companies whose Annual Reports form the corpus
of this study have responded to Vision 2020 and in what ways the text reflects
this. Section 8.2 examines the business zeitgeist in Malaysia, with a special
emphasis on comparing the culture of Malaysian business with the descriptions of
modern business cultures as described in Chapter 3. Section 8.3 looks at the way
in which multiple material, logical and discoursal processes conjointly configure
the discourse within a single sector. The sample analysis done in this section
concentrates on the plantation sector. The final section (8.4) attempts to capture
the microsocial processes that simultaneously operate in the decision-making
processes of a single company.

8.1 Reflections of Vision 2020

Vision 2020 is reflected in the CRs in many ways. The most obvious way is
through direct reference as in these excerpts from two CRs in the corpus:
TS 8.1
In a growing nation like Malaysia, longterm national objectives are often seen as the big plan, and the big plan is, of course, Malaysia’s industrialization programme in Vision 2020. As an electricity supply company whose product is fundamental to the realization of an industrialized Malaysia, TNB continues to look much further into the future... (TNB, 1995)

TS 8.2
In line with the country's Vision to be an industrialized nation by the year 2020, the manufacturing sector continued to be the main engine of growth in 1995 (Golden Hope, 1996)

The most common way in which the process is reflected, however, is through the prominence the CRs give to the phenomena the national document gave prominence to. As has been repeatedly pointed out, this thesis does not seek to explore any issue exhaustively. It is much more concerned with etching out broadly and briefly the kinds of information that the Annual Report is capable of giving, to delineate in what ways this information is given in the text and to describe some of the heuristics that may be used in teasing out such information. This section will provide an overview of the response of the business community to the various issues raised by Vision 2020. After the overview, the section will confine itself to illustrative analyses of what the CRs reveal of the response of the Malaysian companies to three issues raised by Vision 2020: technology, government action and environment.
8.1.1 Issues in Vision 2020 that have been given prominence in the CRs

There are many ways in which the actual presence of a notion and its influence on a community can be established. We could use a non-verbal way. For example, we could study the actions of a company and infer from the actions whether these actions count as instances of the operation or application of the notion. Or, we could use a multiplicity of different verbal ways. For instance we could think of all the possible ways in which a notion can be referred to (e.g. through erecting an array of possible synonyms for the word) or connoted (e.g. through metaphors and other figures of speech). As there are so many alternative ways of evoking ideas in a text, for the sake of convenience, the heuristic that is used in this section to indicate the extent of penetration of the notions of Vision 2020, is reliance on the analyst's memory of occurrences. A simple frequency of the adjectival, verbal, adverbial forms (i.e. the lemmatized form of words) in which a notion is habitually referred to was attempted but proved extremely cumbersome, slippery and not cost-effective.

The most frequently mentioned Vision 2020 issues are the following: government action, overseas operations, diversification, joint ventures, technology, training, competitive standing. The purpose of citing the findings of this admittedly unreliable method of data collection is merely to give some indication of the fact that Vision 2020, or at least its ideas, are present in the thinking of the business community.
8.1.2 Reflections of Social Processes in Three Topic Areas

This section will attempt to

1. demonstrate the ways in which these ideas have been assimilated into the thinking of the business community;

2. unpack the actual processes involved in the translation of policy into practice;

3. speculate about the discoursal relations between Vision 2020 and the CRs.

These objectives for the section will be concurrently dealt with as it is felt that these three aspects are intertwined inextricably in the discourse. Separating them would heuristically pre-empt the perception of any relations that may exist between them. The section looks at three specific concepts: technology, government action and environment.

8.1.2.1 Technology

*Vision 2020* aspires to "An economy that is technologically proficient, fully able to adapt, innovate and invest, that is increasingly technology-intensive, moving in the direction of higher and higher levels of technology" (paragraph 34). The following text collage will be used as the textual reference for the discussion of the ways in which the discourse of the CR reflects the current status of this transformation process:
TS 8.3
To ensure higher productivity and more efficient utilization of the division's resources, more systematic and innovative approaches towards the management of these resources were adopted. Through computerization, critical resource information such as manpower, field yields and expenditure utilization levels have been measured and monitored to supplement existing control and supervision systems (Golden Hope, 1994)

TS 8.4
To enable us to serve our larger number of clients better and maintain our competitive edge, a state-of-the-art Electronic Investor Services package will be introduced...to enable clients to obtain information on the stock exchange and to monitor their accounts via their home telephones or computers on a real time basis (RHB, 1994)

TS 8.5
...Information Technology Plan...to develop its business operations, procedures and products to take advantage of the significant processing techniques offered through advanced technologies...to meet the increasing sophistication and demands of the market place...Technology has also been the catalyst for many of the improvements in the manual processes, and this will serve towards reducing overhead costs and increasing overall efficiency (Public Bank, 1995)

TS 8.6
The Group continued to maintain and develop its electronic on-line databases on personalities, companies and countries. In addition, in the course of the year, a fast facts database on elections, crime, education, children, fires, dadah and population was developed....The NSST Group needs to adapt to the changing IT environment and tap the surge in IT demand in the country.(NSTP, 1995)

TS 8.7
The implementation of the RM100 million modernization programme to equip the tyre manufacturing plant with the latest state-of-the-art technology and pression equipment has enabled DMIB to introduce premium quality products into the market, which had been the domain of imports in the past (DMIB, 1994)
TS 8.8
With the abolition of sales tax on computer and related equipment and also the increasing popularity and importance of Internet and multimedia application, the IT industry is poised for greater growth in the near future (NSTP, 1995)

TS 8.9
The Company registered a reduction in staff strength...but yet experienced a growth rate of 23% of business volume and an increase in branch network. This is the result of...increasing staff productivity through an expansive computerization programme. (AMFB, 1994)

TS 8.10
...greater cost efficiency and higher productivity through...extensive mechanization in the plantation as well as the palm oil mill operation (Kulim, 1991)

A number of observations can be made regarding both the material process of the spread of technology in the business world and the discoursal process by which the material process is reported.

At the material level, it can be seen that the use of technology is widespread. It is used by companies in different kinds of business: plantations (Kulim, Golden Hope), newspapers (NSTP), securities companies (RHB), banking (Public Bank). The NSTP's reference to the surge in IT demand in the country, and the increasing popularity of Internet and multimedia applications indicates that technology has spread not just within the business community but also among Malaysians as a whole. While in most occurrences of the word, technology appears to be synonymous with computerization, the Kulim report makes clear that technology can and does also mean mechanization.
Another interesting observation can also be made about the material process of technology spread. The same interdependencies that exist in the material world of business for its normal and routine operation - market forces such as supply and demand and government intervention - become the conduits through which the power that energizes change in the direction and volume of technological spread flows. This can be seen in Figure 8.1 on the next page.

As this thesis is mainly about discourse, the focus of the rest of this section will be on how discourse in particular can be used to discover the nature and direction of the social process of technology spread.

The thematic formations that are characteristic of technology use in Malaysia, it is suggested, can be looked at in terms of the different grammatical and lexical threads that weave the linguistic fabric of the CRs. Technology is not just an index of change, it is also an agent of change. This is reflected in the large number of agentives in the discourse:

i. To ensure higher productivity
ii. Through computerization
iii. ...to supplement existing control and supervision systems
iv. To enable us to serve our larger number of clients...
v. ...to develop its business operations, procedures, products
vi. ...to take advantage of ...
vii. ...to adapt to the changing IT environment
viii. (to) tap the surge in...
ix. via home telephones
x. will serve towards...
Figure 8.1  Material Processes of Technology Spread and Use
The dynamism of change through technology and its on-going nature are also reflected in the more than usual frequency of participial adjectives and gerunds:

\[\begin{align*}
i & \quad \text{...increasing staff productivity} \\
ii & \quad \text{...increasing sophistication} \\
iii & \quad \text{...changing IT environment} \\
iv & \quad \text{...increasing overall efficiency} \\
v & \quad \text{...towards reducing overhead costs} \\
\end{align*}\]

Its on-going nature - both within a company and in the different degrees of technologization experienced by different companies at the point the CR's were written- is also mirrored in the verb tenses. While the choice of past tense (e.g. were adopted) indicates that technological features are already in place in these companies, the use of the present perfect (e.g. have been measured and monitored, has been a catalyst) suggests continuing involvement. The use of expressions indicating the future (e.g. will be introduced, will serve towards, is poised to) show the flow of the present trend into the future.

The co-occurrence of certain nouns in the co-text in which technology features is again reflective, this time of the material processes with which technology is habitually associated. Look for instance at the recurrence of the words productivity, resources, information, efficiency in the text collage above. This co-occurrence, it is suggested, is indicative of the integral connection between technology, productivity, efficiency, and resource management in the action semiotic.
The orientational aspect of the discourse, the way in which the writers think of and evaluate technology, is reflected in the frequent use of certain adjectives and usually in their comparative form: higher (productivity), more efficient, better, more systematic and innovative. Other adjectives used directly to describe technology - state-of-the-art, expansive, extensive - again reveal the writers' evaluative stance.

An overall speculation that perhaps can be made on the basis of the cumulative force of the above microlevel observations about the discourse-action relationship is that their very regularity may be an index to the probability that the lexicogrammatical configuration is the way in which the discourse responds to as well as creates "structures of expectations" among users about the collocates of technology both in the action semiotic as well as in the text semiotic. In both universes of meaning, the frame for technology contains the same thematic expectations: improvement, productivity, resource management, systematic and innovative approaches etc.

8.1.2.2 Government

One of the primary agents of change in the modern world, particularly in the Third World, is the government. In this section we will look at the ways in which this process of change is effected by the Malaysian government, using the private sector as its "primary engine of growth" (Vision 2020: paragraph 36 ).

373
Government is a ubiquitous presence and almost every CR mentions the Government or a statutory body or a legislation instituted by the Government at least once in the course of its "conversation". However, it is not possible to deal with every mention of the Government in the CRs. The technique used to circumvent this problem here is to give a collage of a few different statements made in the CRs in the corpus to give the reader what the researcher hopes is an accurate overall impression of the kind of mentions that the Government gets in the CRs and to serve as the basis of discussion of directions in which the analysis of the forty CRs in this corpus have lead the researcher to think.

Table 8.1: Collage of texts which refer to Government action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Issue in Vision 2020</th>
<th>Referred to by Company ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...this total investment in training and development of human resources exceeds the quantum of 2.5% as stipulated by Bank Negara ((Public Bank: xvi)</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Development of human resources (64&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
<td>To show the degree of its concern for staff development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impressive performance of the manufacturing sector has largely been the result of continuous implementation of strategies and policies to create an efficient, broad based, export-oriented value-added sector. (Golden Hope, 1994)</td>
<td>Plantation</td>
<td>Efficiency (43) Broad-based development and export-orientation (53) Value-added (49)</td>
<td>As part of an economic review of national development as a backdrop against which to make a prediction of the outlook of the Company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup>ers to the paragraph in Vision 2020 that specifically addresses this issue)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Responsible liberalization (57,58)</td>
<td>To show the strong financial position of the Company and the expansion of its business opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Role of small and medium scale industry</td>
<td>To give an account of its operating policy and to link it to national objectives as a means of promoting an image of itself as a responsible corporate citizen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantation</td>
<td>Modernization of agriculture (76)</td>
<td>To link company policy with government policy. To show company's toughness and willingness to deal with &quot;daunting&quot; challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the two-tier regulatory system implemented by Bank Negara Malaysia, banking institutions with tier 1 status are allowed to carry out a wider range of banking activities and to conduct certain aspects of their operations under a more liberal operating environment (Public Bank, xii)

The Company further extended its services in March 1994 to offer loans to hawkers and petty traders under the Loan Fund for Hawkers and Petty Traders ....This is in support of the Government's effort to ensure greater access to loans at reasonable cost for these business groups which have in the past experienced difficulty in financing their business needs

Modernizing the agricultural sector as advocated in the recently revamped National Agricultural Policy, should be the task of all, no matter how daunting it might be (Kulim)
| Plantation | Development of entrepreneurial skills (61, 68) fair and equitable distribution of wealth (14) Creation of a fully competitive Bumiputera community (23, 27) Privatization and its role in reducing burdens on Government and at "expediting attainment of national distributational goals" (43) | To project an image of itself as a key player in the achievement of national aspirations. |
| Locally, demand has been boosted by the Malaysian | Property | Judicious government intervention (40) | To assure shareholders that outlook for |
| Government's continued efforts to promote the wood-based industry (Bandaraya) | Banking | Curbing inflation (69-71) | industry is good by reporting the Government's active promotion of it.
To explain company policy which may be contingent upon many things (including profitability) as if it were a solely altruistic decision based on national need. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bank, in support of the Government's determination to curb inflationary pressures and to narrow the savings-investment gap, would continue to promote products and services to encourage domestic savings. The thrust of lending and financing would be geared towards privatization projects, infrastructure development, manufacturing, housing, other capital intensive, and productivity and quality-driven activities in line with the National Development Policy objectives and targets envisaged under the Seventh Malaysia Plan, 1996-2000. (Public Bank, 1994)</td>
<td><strong>Finance</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Although the Government is not mentioned here, this policy decision has been)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantation</td>
<td>Fostering inflow of foreign investment (21)</td>
<td>included to show how the same set of circumstances that obtained in the country for the year 1994, has spawned diametrically opposed conclusions in terms of action plans.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Caring Society (13)</td>
<td>To explain the factors in play in the determination of outlook. Government action <em>Inter alia</em>, augurs Well for the industry's future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional measures aside, the Government's decision to grant up to $600 million credit facilities to the few targetted palm oil importing countries is a laudable move. It is anticipated that if such facilities are utilized by targeted countries, a minimum of 1.5 million tonnes of palm oil will be guaranteed for export. <em>(Kulim, 1991)</em></td>
<td>Other contributions made by the Arab-Malaysia Banking Group include donations made ... towards a Fund for Construction of Low Cost Houses proposed in the 1994 Budget by the Finance Minister in aid of the poor. <em>(AMFB, 1994)</em></td>
<td>To show that the Company is a caring corporate citizen which cooperates with the Government in sharing its wealth with the less fortunate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8.1 above makes possible a number of observations about the process of social change being engineered by the government and the ways in which this process is mirrored in the CRs:

1 Occasionally a CR may take a broad-lens view and present an evaluation of the economic processes against which the outlook for a specific Company can be evaluated (as the Golden Hope's CR does). In such cases the socioeconomic processes are the explicit focus of rhetorical attention. However, generally this is not the case. More typically, CRs only tangentially, in the process of talking about their own specific concerns, interweave talk about social processes. This can be seen when we look at column 1 and column 3 of Table 8.1 in tandem. The patterns of citation only come into sharper focus when several CRs are viewed together as in the text collage above. For example, we can begin to notice that mention of Government policy or action performs several different rhetorical functions in the CRs, only when we look at the various purposes for which each of the CRs use mention of government ( See column 3).

2 The action of the Government operates at several levels from policy (that inflation should be curbed) and regulation (that only tier 1 banks can be involved in certain kinds of banking activity) to specific action ( the giving of RM600 credit facilities to foreign investors to boost the oil palm industry).
The private sector in performing its habitual line of business is nudged, regulated and supported by the Government through the above policies, regulations and actions into achieving national objectives. This can be seen from the fact that the purposes spelt out in Column 3 indicate that in performing its national roles each Company is simultaneously also achieving, or attempting to achieve its own corporate objectives.

While this engine-of-growth role is an ancillary role for most companies, there are also Companies whose raison d'être is the achievement of national aspirations. This can be seen in Pernas's statement of objectives. In the case of this Company, its primary function appears to be that of the master craftsman who takes on apprentices into his well-run business in order to teach them how to manage a business - a sort of teaching apprentices how to make wealth by involving them in the process of wealth-making.

The way the CRs mention Government involvement, indicates that whether the Company in question actually is in agreement with its assigned role or not, it is good business policy to appear to do so. The multiple occurrence of statements that indicate agreement - in support of the Government's determination to curb inflation, This is in support of the Government's effort to..., The Group will support the government's
commitment to...the government's decision to...is a laudable move... suggest that in today's Malaysian business zeitgeist working with the government counts as laudable behaviour.

The actions of the government are not all driven by the economic imperative. Many are socially prompted. The actions on behalf of the Bumiputera and the promotion of the Caring Society concept indicate at least a dual concept of progress: progress as economic well-being and progress as a movement towards greater social justice and equity. As revealed in the CRs the two are intertwined and interdependent. A sort of a multiplier effect is suggested. Wealth needs to be made in order that it can be shared; one means of diminishing class related power disparities is not merely by increasing total wealth but also by ensuring that everyone shares in the making and using of wealth. For example, the banks need to make money so as to remain available for the petty traders and hawkers to borrow from them to make their own money.

Lemke (1992:83) claims that

There are multiple social semiotic realities because all social communities are heterogeneous: there are multiple practices and systems of interrelated practices that do not agree. According to different semiotic codes of construal, there are always alternative ways to interpret what the "present context" is, and there are different patterns of redundancies between contexts and the actions deemed appropriate or meaningful in those contexts (generalized heteropraxia)
This heteropraxis is seen even here. Government action is not always interpreted in exactly the same way by different corporate entities. It is seen in evidence, for example, in the diametrically opposed policy decisions taken by AMFB and Public Bank vis-à-vis their lending policy. The "present context" the two CRs are reviewing is Malaysia in 1994 and so the country's need and the Government's injunctions as to what monetary policies are best for the achievement of national aspirations are presumably the same for both. Yet, one bank chooses not to give loans for personal consumption, the other concertedly makes personal loans its specific priority area. The deviance, it is suggested, is not the result of one institution being more responsive than the other to national needs but rather of each company choosing that national objective that best fits its own growth trajectory. The market niche the Public Bank seems to want to carve for itself is large-scale business while AMFB seems to want to hitch its fortunes with the SMIs and individuals. Privatization and infrastructure development as part of Accelerated Industrialization Drive (Vision 2020, paragraph 88) and the curbing of inflation are just as much national priorities as the development of SMIs.
8.1.2.3 Environment

The last topic that will be dealt with in this section will be the environment. It is discussed as a means of introducing an important caveat concerning the use of textual reference as an index of social process. It is not the intention of the researcher to suggest that there is a causal link between the pronouncements of Vision 2020 regarding various topics and the occurrence of these same topics in the CRs. It would be naïve to do so. The discussion of the prominence of the environment in the CR of Esso(M) Bhd, and Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), it is hoped, will illustrate why.

The environment is a topic that was given some prominence in both Vision 2020 (paragraph 78) and in The Challenge to the South (p. 134). If frequency of mention is a measure of responsiveness to the call to be environmentally sensitive, then the Malaysian business community appears generally unconcerned. Those that do, however, seem to indicate an integral relationship between relevance, image and topical prominence in the discourse of the CR. Who mentions environment, what interpretation the word environment is accorded in each CR, what issues in relation to the environment are given prominence and what kind of image the industry has vis-à-vis environmental issues in the world as a whole appear to be the most discoursally relevant factors.
The word environment occurs 52 times in the corpus of 40 Annual Report and generally its semantic range is narrow; the word generally triggers economic frames:

\[ i \quad \text{operating environment} \]
\[ ii \quad \text{economic environment} \]
\[ iii \quad \text{business environment} \]

Only six out of the forty CRs in the corpus actually raise the issue of the physical environment at all, and those that do, not necessarily do so because Vision 2020 enjoins them to do so. The analysis of the discussion of the environment in the CR of Esso (M) Bhd illustrates this:

**Mention of the Environment in Esso (M) Sdn Bhd's CR**

Safety, - in all its forms (safety, safely, safe) - is the most frequently mentioned aspect of the environment in this CR. The word recurs many times:

\[ i. \quad \text{projects were accomplished safely} \]
\[ ii. \quad \text{The refinery safely and successfully completed the regeneration of...} \]
\[ iii. \quad \text{The refinery has progressed safely} \]
\[ iv. \quad \text{Improve distribution and promote safe operations} \]
\[ v. \quad \text{Safety is always a number one priority. We maintain our excellent safety record by operation without any employee lost-time accident...} \]
\[ vi. \quad \text{In recognition of their achievement of an accident free safety record, the Retail group in our Marketing Department was recognized by Exxon Company, International (ECI) with a 1994 Retail Vehicle Safety Award} \]

384
vii. ...we have one of the most aggressive road safety programmes in the country,...and apply safety improvement incentives to improve contractor vehicular safety performance.

(Essao Malaysia Bhd. 1994)

Oil spills merit special mention too:

**TS 8.11**

*In the area of oil spill response (OSR) preparedness, we were actively involved in the establishment of the industry's oil spill response organization*

Balance between economic and environmental needs is another keynote:

**TS 8.12**

*It is the Company's policy to conduct its business in a manner that is compatible with the balanced environmental and economic needs of the communities in which it operates. This entails strict adherence to established environmental protection operating procedures, continuous efforts to evaluate and improve environmental performance throughout our activities...*

The fact that the Company has been involved in several environment-related projects that are specifically geared towards the preservation and appreciation of the environment is also highlighted:

**TS 8.13**

*... As part of these priority activities, we engaged UPM to survey and map out the environmentally sensitive areas...We also completed a study of the riverine and marine environment around the Refinery which helped us and others to better understand the environment in which we operate.*

*The company also encouraged employees' concern and respect for the environment and emphasized their responsibility in environmental performance. During the year we supported several employee-led community projects on the environment and continued the paper recycling programme...We also launched a*
very visible car pool programme to support the government's call for the reduction of single occupancy vehicles on the roads to improve the traffic situation and to reduce pollution from car emissions.

It is suggested that a number of extra-textual, psychosocial features need to be brought into the process of understanding the semiotic import of this CR's focus on the environment. Firstly, we need to take note of the fact that among the Malaysian business Community, the physical environment is almost a non-issue; most Malaysian CRs only mention the physical environment - e.g. the weather - when it directly affects their productivity.

This absence or near absence of the environment in the usual textual environment, makes its prominent presence in this CR attention-worthy in the interpretive process. The Company protests too much. Why it protests so much perhaps can be better understood when we import into the interpretive context the fact that this is an oil company and oil companies have had bad press from environmentalists. If we further import into the interpretive environment the fact that oil spills (e.g. the one in Alaska) are one of the reasons for this international villification of oil companies, then the specific mention of OSR preparedness becomes comprehensible. The recognition that Esso is the Malaysian subsidiary of the international Exxon Company which was directly involved in the Alaska accident and that in the international context, the environment is a highly politicized issue and part of the semantic field for "good company", would explain why this Company goes to such pains to vindicate itself.
The Company chooses to take the stance that it seeks a balance between economic and environmental needs. It chooses to represent itself as a good company by invoking international environmental buzz words like paper recycling and car pooling. It tries to appear to fulfil the environmentalists’ lobby for more environmental research and education. All these can again only be understood by recognizing that the locus of operation (and therefore the audience for its report) is the world, not just Malaysia.

The following quotation from the Shell parent company’s 1989 CR encapsulates the company’s international orientations. The orientations from which the specific orientations of Esso (M), it is claimed, appear to draw:

TS 8.14
No responsible company cuts corners on safety in pursuit of profit. Not only is safety right and proper in itself; but also an operation which is interrupted by breakdown, injury or worse, is inherently less efficient and less profitable than one which is well-managed and safe.

The speed with which environmental issues have become a major importance has been another feature..., and there is no doubt that environmental protection now presents a special challenge to governments and to industry.

A vital part of environmental protection is the prevention of accidents which cause environmental damage...Risk can, however, be foreseen and the potential for damage reduced. The principal factors are good design and operating procedures, good management and training.

I believe an attitude of risk avoidance, rather than risk management, would not be in anyone’s long-term interest.

To return to the discussion of the link between references to topics in Vision 2020 and the mention of these same topics in the CRs. The Esso CR illustrates the fact that something discussed in a CR which has been mentioned in
Vision 2020 does not automatically establish a causal link between the two. There could be any number of reasons why a topic gets mentioned in a CR. The point the researcher wishes to make here is that the heuristic of looking for references to the issues mentioned in Vision 2020 in the CRs is not founded on the assumption of a one-to-one causal correspondence between the two documents. Rather, it is founded on the belief that, whether they have been guided into these orientations and manner of development by Vision 2020 or not, their direction of growth, if the topics they valorize and the activities they engage in are those that Vision 2020 valorizes, are reflections of the degree to which national aspirations are on track.

Two further points become apparent in the discussion of the environment in the CR of the national electricity company (TNB). The first is that although the private sector as a whole seems not overly concerned about the environment, the government does attempt to nurture concern for the environment and that this must account at least in part for Esso's concern with the environment. This is apparent in the existence of the Department of Environment (DOE) mentioned in TNB's CR and the mention of regulations in that document:

TS 8.15
...developing an environmental management system to meet the specifications set by the Department of Environment (DOE) of the Malaysian Government.
...the Company has also complied with the Factory and Machinery Act 1967 with regard to safety and industrial health.
The second point is really a speculation about semiotic formations. There is, it appears to the researcher, sufficient similarity between the actions that the two companies deem to count as demonstrations of their concern for the environment, to suggest the existence, or at least signs of the evolution of, "standard practice". Table 8.2 attempts to illustrate this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>on Type</th>
<th>Esso’s token(s)</th>
<th>TNB’s token(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>concern with environmental act Measurement</td>
<td>engaged University Pertanian to survey and map out environmentally sensitive areas</td>
<td>TNB is concerned with the environmental impact of producing power and seeks to minimize and mitigate effects wherever possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment management</td>
<td>continuous efforts to evaluate and improve environmental performance through our activities</td>
<td>lead role in the industry in managing its emission. Levels of environmental pollution have been closely monitored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference to safety regulations</td>
<td>Safety is our number one priority</td>
<td>at the forefront of safety management in the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Government and environmentalist groups</td>
<td>launched a car pool programme in support of the Government’s call to...</td>
<td>developing an environmental management system to meet the specifications set out by DOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>continued the paper recycling programme</td>
<td>the Company has complied with the factory and Machinery Act, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and awareness programmes</td>
<td>supported several employee-led community projects on the environment</td>
<td>involved the participation of independent environmentalist organizations (in environmental impact assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and training programmes, posters and bulletins would continue to be provided to improve the safety and individual health of all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2 Business zeitgeist

Malaysia recorded a growth figure that was one of the best among the economies of the world for nine consecutive years starting from three years before 1991 (the year in which Vision 2020 was published) to 1997 when the economic crisis hit Asia. This statistic alone is perhaps sufficient to indicate the level and pace of business growth in Malaysia. However, though the fact that this is the single most frequently mentioned statistic in the CRs is an intimation of the discoursal relevance of this statistic, this section will not be primarily concerned with this phenomenon. Gross statistics of growth, while they may be economically significant are less interesting than the study of the specific hyponyms of growth in Malaysia and the manner and direction in which this growth is taking place.

Even more interesting perhaps is the way each growth phenomenon is represented in the discourse. Where possible, these phenomena will be seen in the light of world business trends, specifically the move from modern to postmodern business values and practices as indicated in the discussion on business trends in Chapter 3.
8.2.1 **Overall operating environment**

Information about the overall economic situation in Malaysia lies in splinters all over the CRs but mainly in explanations of the Group's performance or predictions of its prospects in the coming years.

A number of keynotes are heard. The most dominant is the great economic optimism prevailing in the environment as revealed by the jubilant note hit, for example, by the Chairperson of I & P:

**TS 8.16**

...large infrastructure development in line with Malaysia's rapid industrialization programme provides the catalyst for new growth areas ...Major infrastructural projects such as Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), North-South Expressway Central Link and Light Rail Transit System (LRT) provides the impetus for further growth.  
(I & P, 1995)

This note is repeated in at least 70% of the CRs in the corpus. Look, for example at the breathless frequency of words that refer to growth, joy, continuity of good fortune in this excerpt from Bandaraya's 1995 CR:

**TS 8.17**

*For the second year in succession, I am delighted to report excellent results with a new record being set for the group...the Board and Management remained focused on achieving the Group's strategic aim - to chart further growth tapping on the opportunities presented by our nation's economic and social progress...It is therefore with great pleasure that the Group...I am also pleased to report other significant milestones...*

and the more sedate but nonetheless optimistic note of Johan Holdings:
TS 8.18
For the current year, I am optimistic of the economic outlook in Johan’s major markets. The Malaysian economy is expected to remain buoyant providing trading conditions which will help sustain the continued growth of many of our Malaysian companies.
(Johan Holdings, 1992)

The number of CRs reporting the achievement of records and milestones is yet another index of the sense of wellbeing that the business community felt - or at least reported as felt - in the period spanned by the corpus:

TS 8.19
George Kent (Malaysia) Bhd achieved a pre-tax profit of an all time high of... (Johan Holdings, 1992)

TS 8.20
The record performance in 1995 was achieved on the back of another year of high growth of 9.5% in the country
(Public Bank, 1995)

The words used to describe the Malaysian economy also reflect the general feeling of confidence in the economy:

i Improved overall Group performance again reflected the continuing buoyancy of the Malaysian economy
(Idries Hydraulic, 1995)

ii AMFB is well-placed to benefit from the new opportunities for growth in an expanding economy
(AMFB, 1994)

iii ...the Malaysian economy continued to record overall strong growth...
(Tanjong plc, 1995)
The Malaysian economy is expected to remain buoyant
(Johan Holdings)

...increasingly affluent Malaysian society
(Tanjong plc, 1995)

The resilient Malaysian economy has culminated in recording the world's highest Gross Domestic Product growth...
(Kulim, 1991)

Other than this general ethos of optimism that is so clearly evident in the CRs, there are also indications of specific business trends. For example, the texts reveal the expansionary policies adopted by the government in encouraging business development. These manifest themselves, usually in the explanations that banks and other financial institutions give to their stakeholders. The deregulation and liberalization of the money market that the CRs below talk of are examples of this:

TS 8.21
During the year, the scope of business expanded through further deregulation by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). The restriction on unsecured lending was relaxed whereby finance companies are allowed to provide credit facilities without collateral up to RM150,000 under the New Principal Guarantee Scheme. Previously all unsecured loans extended were subjected to a maximum limit of RM10,000. (AMFB, 1995)

TS 8.22
Under the two-tier regulatory system implemented by Bank Negara Malaysia, banking institutions with Tier 1 status are allowed to carry out a wide range of banking activities and to conduct certain aspects of their operations under a more liberal operating environment.
(Public Bank, 1995)
The sites of greatest economic activity are also tangentially mentioned in the course of explaining the company's strategies:

**TS 8.23**

*We have recognized the shift of development to suburban and city fringes mainly drawn by the growth in these areas and at the same time driven by escalating land costs and the unavailability of sizeable land within the city centre.*

(Bandaraya, 1995)

**TS 8.24**

*Its location in the midst of the development area in the Klang Valley has resulted in a strong demand for its granite aggregates for building and infrastructure projects.*

(Sime UEP, 1995)

### 8.2.2 The Modernizing Process

In Chapter 3 we discussed a number of ways in which the Third Wave companies of which Toffler and Toffler as well as other business gurus speak are distinctive. In this section we will take a brief look at some of the ways in which Malaysian companies seem to valorize these values in their activities and in the way they represent themselves. Generally, at least in their talk and intention, if not already in actual fact, most cutting edge companies in Malaysia seem to be moving in the direction of the postmodern companies that Toffler and Toffler, Peters and other business gurus seem to indicate as the direction of the winners of the future. As this is not an economic study, but a study of the potential of text to reflect social processes, no attempt is made here to be comprehensive. The focus

394
is on the demonstration of what kinds of social processes texts can (not do) mirror, how they mirror these and what text analysis procedures can be adopted to make visible both what is mirrored and how it is mirrored. We will therefore focus on only three areas for the discussion of the direction and extent of transformation: knowledge as the primary factor of production, demassification and globalization of business.

8.2.2.1 Knowledge as the primary factor of production

Some of the information on this issue comes indirectly. For example, the development of literacy and interest in reading material mentioned by NSTP point in the direction of the knowledge-based economies that are replacing the factors of production-based economies of the Second Wave companies:

TS 8.25
The rising per capita income and the education system’s emphasis on reading have increased the volume of reading materials. Literacy levels for both Bahasa and English sectors has exceeded 80% and 50% respectively.

(NST, 1995)

In the talk about technology, particularly in the CRs of the large companies, there is a definite move in the direction of seeing knowledge as necessary infrastructure for business success.
TS 8.26
To ensure higher productivity and more efficient utilization of the division's resources, more systematic and innovative approaches towards the management of these resources were adopted. Through computerization, critical resource information such as manpower, field yields and expenditure utilization levels have been measured and monitored to supplement existing control and supervision systems

(Golden Hope, 1994)

TS 8.27
To enable us to serve our larger number of clients better and maintain our competitive edge, a state-of-the-art Electronic Investor Services package will be introduced...to enable clients to obtain information on the stock exchange and to monitor their accounts via their home telephones or computers on a real time basis

(RHB, 1994)

TS 8.28
...Information Technology Plan...to develop its business operations, procedures and products to take advantage of the significant processing techniques offered through advanced technologies...to meet the increasing sophistication and demands of the market place...Technology has also been the catalyst for many of the improvements in the manual processes, and this will serve towards reducing overhead costs and increasing overall efficiency

(Public Bank, 1995)

There is even talk of databases and on-line newspapers:

TS 8.29
The Group continued to maintain and develop its electronic on-line databases on personalities, companies and countries. In addition, in the course of the year, a fast facts database on elections, crime, education, children, fires, dadah and population was developed....The NSST Group needs to adapt to the changing IT environment and tap the surge in IT demand in the country.

(NSTP, 1995)
8.2.2.2 Demassification

The notion of economies of scale in production is not quite extinct in the business ecology as can be seen from the explicit mention of economies of scale in the Tradewinds CR below:

**TS 8.31**
The investment in Indonesia is spurred by favourable economies of scale in terms of land and labour

(Tradewinds, 1995)

And advertising is still largely mass-advertising as implied in the mention of outdoor advertising in the excerpt below:

**TS 8.32**
Outdoor advertising is one key to today's marketing demands for broader reach and greater frequency

(NSTP, 1995)

Creation of market niches is also another feature of demassification. Some property development companies like those discussed in section 9.4 in the next chapter attempt to create market niches. Media companies like NSTP talk of products for different market niches:
Metro Ahad offers content suitable for weekend reading. Citra is fast gaining popularity among readers in their late teens and early twenties. An Education Unit was set up to strengthen the contents of Didik and Minda Pelajar. Both newspapers are popular with school children.

(NSTP, 1995)

However, as a rule market niches do not feature as conscious aims which Malaysian companies strategize and strive to achieve.

There is one important way, however, in which the impulse away from diseconomies of complexity that massification brings is seen. Every one of the companies in the corpus is part of a group and each company in the group specializes in a different business or in a different geographical location of the same business. So, although there are few mentions of "adhocratic" teams like the ones the Tofflers mention, the companies within each group do appear to be functionally differentiated in the way "adhocratic" project teams would be differentiated.

8.2.2.3 Globalization of Business

There is ample evidence of this in the corpus. Almost every one of the companies in the corpus, except the small ones like Sampoorna Holdings, has overseas activities. A number of points can be made. One point to note, is that cumulatively, the texts show which Malaysian companies engage in overseas activities, involving what domain of economic activity and where, as is clear from even a cursory look at Table 8.3 on the next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idries Hydraulic</td>
<td>Logging</td>
<td>Gabon, Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumpulan Guthrie Bhd</td>
<td>Oil palm plantation</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rubber processing</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur-Kepong Bhd</td>
<td>Plantation</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Hope</td>
<td>Palm-oil based products:</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooking oil manufacturing</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oil refining</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruit juice marketing</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promet</td>
<td>Marine contracting</td>
<td>India, Pakistan, Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil engineering &amp; construction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ship building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanjong</td>
<td>Lottery</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab-Malaysia Development Bhd</td>
<td>Hotel development</td>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Bank</td>
<td>Branch Offices</td>
<td>Vietnam, Laos, Yangon, Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance company</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashid Hussein Bhd</td>
<td>Stock-broking</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Branch bank</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second point worth observing is that, in keeping with the injunctions of Vision 2020, the Malaysian companies have begun to show a greater awareness
of the Third World as a possible source of business opportunities. This can be seen by looking at Table 8.3 for who the trading partners and joint venture partners of the Malaysian companies are. Perhaps this can be seen as an index of the changing economic orientations of these countries and perhaps also as an emerging mechanism for economic and political sovereignty in the face of the challenges from the developed world. A third point worth noting is that the texts show change in progress. While many companies are engaged in overseas activities, all of them are not in the same stage of progress in this globalization bid. While some companies like Promet are established as experts in the international business arena:

**TS 8.34**

*With the expertise and track record built up in these core areas, we intend to position the Group regionally - and internationally - as a leading infrastructure developer and investor...*  
*Undertaken on a turnkey basis, this project (in Balochistan) combines the skills and expertise of the Group in such core competencies as marine contracting, civil engineering and steel fabrication.*

other companies like Island & Peninsular are still only teetering on the brink of overseas ventures:

**TS 8.35**

*...the Group is looking into several possibilities of acquisition to well position the Group in securing continuous growth in plantation beyond the year 2000. To this end, the possibility of venturing beyond the shores of Malaysia is not being ruled out.*
While some, even large companies like Public Bank, have narrow, very specialized interests overseas (Public Bank only has banking operations), others like Golden Hope have several irons in the fire:

TS 8.36
The year under review has been an eventful one for our overseas operations. Golden Hope's first venture in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam continued to show improvement....Our cooking oil, sold under the brand name "MARVELA" is gaining wider acceptance by consumers in Vietnam. Similarly, in Tanzania, our cooking oil Under the name of "MAAMA" is being well-received....In China our first refinery in Jiangyan is expected to be commissioned by the end of 2006....With regard to our fruit juice business overseas, our company, Planters' Pride Inc., in the USA, embarked on an aggressive marketing campaign....

Of course globalization has many other meanings than merely the liberalization of economic attention, effort and even imagination from narrow confinement to national boundaries to their spread to larger horizons. At least one area that has received much critical attention has been the globalization of discourse. However, as this chapter is concerned with material processes and the globalization of discursive practices and processes has received some attention in Chapters 6 and 7, there will not be any discussion of the discourse concomitants of globalization here.

8.3 Reflections of Social Processes in a Sector: The Plantation Sector

The focus of this section will be on the kinds of social processes that characterize the talk within a sector. The intent of this section is to illustrate not
the way (the corpus does not seem to indicate the privileging of any particular way over others), but some of the ways the discourse reflects the social processes embedded in the text that discusses this sector.

From the evidence of co-occurrence in the CRs that report on the performance of their Plantation Division, the following seem to habitually inhabit the topical landscape in the plantation sector: the state of the world economy, the Malaysian economy, production related issues, demand related issues, price, labour shortage,anson of business activities overseas and diversification. While discussion of all of these will probably be interesting from an economic point of view, for the purpose of understanding the discourse characteristics of the CR, it seems unnecessary to discuss all these topics.

This section will, therefore, confine itself to four broad topics, each dealt with in four different subsections. The first section will provide an overall perspective on the plantation sector's topics of conversation through a diagrammatic representation of the overall topical landscape. The second section will investigate the ways in which the CR functions as a simultaneous mirror of multiple social processes. The third subsection will discuss the type-token relationship that exists between the disciplinary/social configuration of problem-solving and the particular instantiation of a problem-solving situation reported in a CR of this sector. The fourth section will investigate the interplay of fact and discourse in the representation of outlook. It will do this through a
microlevel discourse analysis of a segment from a CR of this sector to illustrate the way discourse and sociological data complement and reinforce one another in the creation of a vantage point.

1 Topical landscape of the Plantation Sector

Only six CRs in the corpus had interests in the plantation sector. Figure 8.2 on the next page is a diagrammatic summary of the interdependent entities and their relationships as they revealed themselves in the researcher’s analysis of these six CRs. The diagram is offered as testimony of the kinds of process-related information that lie embedded in the CRs but the characteristic patterns found in the data and their conversational import are not discussed here. A discussion of such relationships is the main focus of the following section. In this section, therefore, this diagram is only offered as a means to provide the reader with an overview of the multiple microprocesses that jointly shape the socioeconomic reality within which the specific topics that will be discussed in this section are lodged.
Figure 8.2  Topical Landscape of Oil Palm Industry

Demand:
- Change in US laws regarding palm oil products
- Expansion of new markets in non-OECD countries
- Worldwide acceptance of palm oil
- Increased prices for palm oil
- Increased advertising of palm oil

Supply:
- Increased price of palm kernels
- Increased price of crude palm oil
- Increased price of palm oil products
- Increased price of palm kernel oil

Production:
- Mechanization
- Vacuum loose-fruit picker
- Milling

Exports:
- Malaysia and Indonesia
- New planting in Tanzania
- New planting in China and Thailand

Refineries:
- China

New Markets:
- For palm kernel
- For palm kernel oil
The CR as a simultaneous mirror of multiple social processes

A text fabric is an interweaving of several societal strands. This section will look at how the very same text and the sociological information its discourse provides can mirror at one and the same time several processes.

We will examine how looking at an issue as it is discussed in several CRs can help the analyst (and by extension any student who wishes to take a short-cut through the lengthy process of accumulating knowledge through work experience) reconstruct the array of choices with which the experts work when they make their choices. The specific decision-requiring juncture at which we will look at is the issue of labour shortage that all six exponents in the corpus discuss. To demonstrate the kind of information available, the researcher will create a text collage upon which she will base all subsequent discussion.

Text collage of references to labour shortage in the CRs

It is ...of paramount importance that the welfare of the workers on the estates be adequately looked after in order to secure and retain the loyalty of the diminishing labour force which is so acutely felt in the plantation industry.... In this regard, the Group is equally committed to the Five Year Development Plan for Basic Amenities for the Plantation Sector (1992 to 1996) signed recently between the United Planters' Association of Malaysia and the Human Resource Ministry. (Kulim, 1991)

With shortage of workers becoming a major issue in nearly all the sectors, Government and business entities alike intensified their efforts at enhancing
human resource development, increasing the use of labour-saving technology and encouraging greater female participation in the workforce (Golden Hope, 1996)

...rubber yield per hectare declined...due to... the adverse effects of tappers shortage which is becoming acute in the more urban-located estates....Jacket stimulation with low intensity tapping were implemented on a wider scale and these helped to minimize the labour shortage problem as well as enabling our tappers to earn higher wages. (Kuala Lumpur - Kepong, 1994)

Due to large quantity of uncollected loose fruits because of labour shortage, fresh fruit bunches (FFB) crop declined....As a result yield pr mature hectare declined... (Guthrie Ropel, 1994)

The long spell of continuous economic buoyancy has taken its toll on the labour market in Malaysia, producing an acute labour shortage in all economic sectors. Maintaining an optimum number of workers on the estates, mills and factories was a critical issue the Group had to address to sustain productivity and profitability (Guthrie Ropel Berhad, 1994)

Guthrie Ropel's parent company, Kumpulan Guthrie Berhad, has set up the Foreign Labour Centre (FLC) to address the labour shortage plaguing plantation operations. FLC assesses the extent of the shortage and sources directly the required workers from labour-exporting countries (Guthrie Ropel, 1994)

To ensure availability of an optimum workforce at Group units, Foreign Labour Centre continued to bring in workers from Indonesia and Bangladesh. At present, the Group provides employment to 3,479 foreign workers....With labour shortage continuing, efforts to further mechanize estate operations continued to raise landman ratio and reduce cost of production. Machinery introduced included hooklift, infield collection, machine and vacuum loose-fruit picker (Guthrie, 1995)

Mechanically assisted in field collection of FFB recorded 27% labour reduction. Mechanical loading of FFB into trailers showed labour savings of 66% while fertilizers spreading recorded 72% less workers. (I & P, 1995)
The following are some observations that may be made about the response of the chairpersons regarding the issue of labour shortage:

3.2.1 CRs as Mirrors of Value Orientation

The fact that labour shortage is a continuing problem is perceivable from the fact that the issue is discussed in all the CRs starting from 1991, through 1994, 1995 to 1996. There is also a rich source of information about the way the business sector perceives the problem in the Chairpersons' discourse. The expressions the Chairpersons choose to describe the problem are telling. Kulim's Chairman refers to the need to attend the problem as of paramount importance; the Chairman of Golden Hope refers to shortage of workers as a major issue while Guthrie Ropel's Chairman refers to it as an acute problem and a critical issue. That its effects are adverse are recognized by all. Kuala Lumpur-Kepong's Chairman reports that rubber yield per hectare declined...due to...the adverse effects of tappers shortage. Guthrie Ropel states that Due to large quantity of uncollected loose fruits because of labour shortage, fresh fruits bunches (FFB) crop declined...As a result yield per mature hectare declined... He goes on to bour shortage as a toll taken on the labour market in Malaysia. He also refers to labour shortage plaguing plantation operations. A further assessment made by the Chairpersons that labour shortage is a continuing problem that needs continuous strategizing. Apart from the use of the word continued - continued to bring in workers, continued to raise -articiples, gerunds and the use of the present continuous tense are the primary carriers of its meaning: diminishing labour force, enhancing human resource development, With
labour shortage becoming a major issue, increasing the use of labour-saving technology, encouraging greater female participation. With labour shortage continuing.

3.3.2.2 CR as a mirror of evolving frames

The second observation concerns the possible relationship that texts may have with the evolution of frames among members or would-be members of a business domain. Multiple encounters with a problem space (e.g. shortage of labour), and the perception of regularities within this space, are often regarded as the means of acquisition of frames. Taken cumulatively, the CRs do provide opportunities for multiple exposure. It is therefore suggested they may provide alternative or complementary routes to the acquisition of professional knowledge that is generally thought to accrue mainly or solely from field experience. Frames for 'choice' is a case in point. The meaning of any choice in the choice-making process can only be understood in the context of the circumstances that make choice necessary and in the knowledge of the array of choices from which a particular alternative is picked. One aspect of professional competency, it is contended, is awareness of these choice arrays for each routine or long standing problem within that professional domain. Taken cumulatively the CRs from the plantation sector make available to the reader, an array of alternative solutions to the labour problem. These alternatives are discussed in section 8.3.2.3 below.
3.3.2.3 CR as a Mirror of Evolving Knowledge

In looking at the actual choices made over time, one gets the opportunity to see the plantation community's evolving knowledge of and response to this problem. Whereas in 1991, problem solving space is occupied solely by the existing notion of how labour can be provided i.e. through use of human effort, and problem solving attention is entirely focused on increasing the attractiveness of plantation work for the human source of labour, the CRs of 1994, 1995 and 1996 seem to have spread their attention span to include alternative sources of labour. Three alternatives sources of labour and with them possibly the semantic range of the word labour seem to have evolved: (1) the notion of local labour has now been extended to include females, (2) the geographical location of human labour has been extended to sites beyond Malaysian shores to include importing labour from Indonesia and Bangladesh, (3) the notion of labour itself has extended beyond human labour to explore the potential of technology as a source of labour. The relationship between the material process of deriving alternative solutions to the problem of labour shortage and the discoursal echo it produces in extending the semantic range of the term labour - the material catalyst for discoursal evolution - hardly needs elaborating.

3.3.2.4 CRs as Mirrors of the Knowledge-Making Process

The CRs also serve as mirrors of the process of knowledge-making within a domain. We see in the historical evolution of solutions to the problem not only a
proliferation of alternative solutions, we also see one of the solutions - mechanization - becoming the preferred alternative; all the Companies mention technological solutions from 1994 onwards. More importantly perhaps, the CRs show in labour shortage the impetus to propel the plantation sector from being primarily a traditional sector to transforming itself into the work patterns of modern and post modern business. We see in the talk on labour shortage an evolution from traditional paternalistic solutions to a labour problem (keep labour loyal by tending to its welfare e.g. Five year development plan for Basic Amenities for the Plantation Sector) to a wider array of solutions including technological solutions (Government and business entities alike intensified their efforts at enhancing human resource development, increasing the use of labour-saving technology and encouraging greater female participation in the workforce). This transformation has entailed not just immediately relevant tangible products (hooklifts, infield collection machines and vacuum loose fruit picker) but also more long term intangible outcomes; not just alternative ways of solving the labour problem but also a research attitude (as revealed in the keeping of statistics on labour savings, the production of the different custom-made plantation implements to improve the production process) and an orientation to technological solutions as possible ways to sustain productivity and profitability.

8.3.2.5 CR as a Mirror of Demographic Change

The discourses on the shortage of labour also serve as mirrors of the sociohistorical process of demographic change in Malaysian society. In the CRs of
Guthrie and Guthrie Ropel, mention is made of the setting up of a Foreign Labour Centre (FLC) to address the labour shortage problem. The Guthrie report in fact mentions providing employment for 3,479 foreign workers. The setting up of the FLC implies a fairly permanent arrangement. The same report also refers to the *acute labour shortage in all economic sectors*. This could imply that other sectors may also bring in foreign labour. While import of foreign labour is a response to a specific economic problem, it can also be seen as the start of the wider social change in the demographic structure of Malaysian society in general and estate work in particular.

3.3.2.6 CRs as Mirrors of the Nature of Human Progress

The domino effect of economic progress is also referred to and implied in the discourse of these CRs. While the ramification of rapid industrialisation - full employment, higher Gross National Product - is the usual developmental rhetoric, the obverse side of the economic trajectory (Rapid industrialization - full employment - labour shortage - diminishing productivity of the plantation sector) is presented in the plantation sector CRs. The CRs also suggest the strategies for the solution of the problem spawned by economic progress e.g. through greater mechanization, in the use of human labour for less routine, more skilled work (*intensified efforts at enhancing human resource development*). In this the CRs mirror the perennial process of human progress: change that is a response to an earlier problem bringing in its wake new problems requiring further change which itself brings new problems to be solved and so on *ad infinitum*. Shortage of labour which is presented as the bane of economic progress is
also presented as the spearhead for new changes (mechanization and research) that would, by implication, bring about greater economic progress.

13.3. Structure of a Problem Solving Situation: Replacing Cocoa with Bananas

One of the options available for a Company that has sustained losses in growing any one crop, is to switch its attention to some other crop. In this section the focus will be on analysing the discourse explaining an instance of such a routine practice. The focus here will be on the way in which the process of solving a particular but recurrent problem serves as a token of a type of problem solving process common in business. The text below is an instance of such a text and will form the basis of the discussion that ensues.

TS 8.36
In view of the widespread damage caused by cocoa pod borers coupled with the low cocoa prices and uncertainty of a price recovery, the Board has decided to phase out the cocoa planting. (Kulim, vii)

I have mentioned in my last year's review of the 70-hectare pilot project involving cultivation of banana (mainly Pisang Emas), papaya (mainly exotic), and carambola (starfruit). As the initial assessment of the project has proven to be viable, I am pleased to advise that the planted area has since been increased to 236 hectares. Your Directors and I are confident of the prospects of fruits cultivation as an alternative crop as replacement for...cocoa. (Kulim xi)

Indeed it is with this conviction that the Board has decided to venture into the commercial planting of cavendish banana on the 400 hectares ex-cocoa area in Nam Heng Complex. Although the initial outlay will be high at $16.95 million inclusive of both planting and infrastructure costs, I am confident that the payback period will be shorter than the conventional oil palm planting.(Kulim,xii)
I am aware of the labour intensive nature of banana planting. However, various innovative means including a house ownership scheme for long-serving employees, will be considered in order to attract workers onto the banana cultivation area. (Kulim, xiii)

3.3.1 The specific token as a general discourse type

The first observation that may be made is that the semiotic formation of this instance of problem solving appears generic to problem solving in most disciplines; it does not seem peculiar in any way to management or to plantations. It is only in a referential sense particular to the plantation sector. This is demonstrated in Figure 8.3 on the next page.

3.3.2 The CR as a mirror of persuasive strategies

A further point that can be made is one that has been made several times before in this thesis. While the semiotic formation may be socially-derived, the assent to this particular instance of problem solving is individually negotiated in the sense that it is the particular writer who decides what information needs to be given prominence, what decisions need fresh persuasion and how this persuasion needs to be manoeuvred so as to remain acceptable to the readers. Let us take for instance, the decision to phase out cocoa.
DESCRIPTION
OF
STATUS QUO

GENERAL
DECISION

TESTING
ALTERNATIVES

DECISION
ON
PREFERRED
LANDUSE

POOR
PROSPECTS
FOR COCOA

Many years of
uninterrupted
decline in cocoa
planted areas
uncertainty
of
recovery
low
cocoa
prices
threat of
disease (damage
caused by
cocoa borers

Phase
out cocoa

Replace
with new
crop

Pilot project
in fruit
cultivation

viability
assessed

Choice of
Cavendish
bananas to
replace cocoa

short term

long term

initial capital
outlay
length of
pay back
period
labour
intensive

planting
costs
infrastructure
costs

Figure 8.3 An Example of the Process of Problem Solving
Let us look at the strategies employed by the CEO to make this decision acceptable to his readers.

8.3.3.3 Importing existing warrants

It is suggested that the need to persuade the readers that phasing out cocoa is a good decision is made redundant by the fact that the readers are already persuaded. Placing the reasons in a subordinate clause - *In view of...* - and using the definite article - *the widespread damage, the low cocoa prices* - assign the information contained in the first clause to what legal practitioners would call "the agreed bundle", the realm of mutual knowledge and consensus. Even a brief glance at other CRs in the plantation sector would show that price uncertainty and disease have plagued the cocoa industry for many years and that many, if not most, plantations were phasing out cocoa. The source of persuasion for this section of the report, then, is imported because the warrants for its persuasiveness have already been rehearsed in a well-known elsewhere. This phase of the argument is "homoglossic". The rest of the report, however, is a terrain of possible heteroglossia and debate because there are alternative positions that one could hold. For example, while it may be agreed that cocoa must be phased out; it may not be agreed what it should be replaced with. There may be other options in the array of alternatives that may be preferred by some among the readers. For example, it is common practice among the estates to replace cocoa with oil palm. This creates the need to argue the case for cavendish bananas.
8.3.3.4 Establishing a scientific basis for discussion

The last three paragraphs are good sites for the exploration of the kinds of semiotic resources available to, and actually harnessed by the writer in effecting persuasion. First the Chairman takes recourse in the universal practice of pilot testing as a means of scientifically determining the viability of the new form of cultivation and declares that the initial assessment of the project has proven viable.

8.3.3.5 Using subject position as reason for trust

Next, he brings into play the power that his and the Board's subject position give them. He, as Chairman, is the person in charge, the expert; the Board, comprising both officers of the Company as well as independent experts, holds a watching brief for the stakeholders (hence Your Board). The writer declares, not just I, but Your Directors and I, are confident of the prospects of fruits cultivation as an alternative crop as replacement for...cocoa. His choice of the Board as the grammatical subject of decided in the next sentence has the same rhetorical force.

8.3.3.6 Commercial viability as a warrant

In the next phase, where he argues the commercial viability of cavendish bananas as an alternative to cocoa, the frame he invokes is a semiotic formation familiar to, and expected to be used by, management experts and includes such concepts as initial capital outlay, payback period, availability and cost of factors of production (like labour). It also
invokes the scenario of labour shortage (hence the negative connotation of labour-intensive in the use of however as a linking device after the mention of the fact that Cavendish banana cultivation is labour-intensive). In using this familiar semiotic formation, the Chairman is not merely presenting the facts of the case, he is simultaneously reinforcing the readers' concept of him as an expert (I am aware...) by anticipating and accommodating all possible misgivings (the initial capital outlay will be high) and counter-propositions (why not replace cocoa with oil palm) and suggesting practical solutions (ways of attracting and retaining workers) to undeniable problems (shortage of labour). The resources of grammar are garnered in assigning different weightages to different salient entities. In the weighing of initial capital outlay against shortness of payback period, the importance of the former is downgraded through its being assigned to a subordinate clause Although the initial outlay will be high. The significance of this from an argumentative point of view can be seen by the rhetorical effect of an alternative phrasing of the same facts e.g. by the entities being transposed as in Although the payback period will be shorter, I am confident that the initial outlay will be high.

8.3.4 The Interplay of Fact and Discourse in the Representation of outlook

The various diagrammatic re-presentations of the referential information that is given in the text make possible the perception of the way facts in a related set of texts make possible the perception of not only large patterns of action typical of a domain, they also make possible the perception of several microlevel processes that are subsumed in
these processes. However, the CR is not merely a concatenation of facts from which the reader perceives what relationships he will and from which he draws what conclusions he feels inclined and able to draw. As a particular company’s and CEO’s account of past processes, a CR is really a particular representation of those processes. It is discourse through which this perception is made acceptable to the reader. The writer uses a number of orientational devices not only to enable the reader to see how the facts are related but also to constrain him to see these relationships in the way the writer wants him to see them and to evaluate them in the way the writer wants him to evaluate them.

To concretize and examine these claims we will look at the way the CEO of I & P exploits the resources of modality, subordination, tense and thematization in the text below which is the sub-section on plantations under the section entitled 1995 Outlook. The purpose of the analysis is to illustrate the interplay of discourse and fact in the portrayal of social processes in the annual reports by showing how the verbal discourse complements and reinforces the message coming through the sociological data.

PLANTATION DIVISION

In 1995, world palm oil production is expected to register a 9% increase to 15 million tonnes. Malaysia is expected to contribute 7.5 million tonnes or 50% of that total. The other major oils and fats such as soyabean, rapeseed and sunflower seed oils are also expected to register significant increases in production. Notwithstanding the above, the world’s stocks of oils and fats is expected to remain tight in the near future due to demand increases from Eastern block countries such as Russia and Poland whose economies are showing positive signs of recovery. The world population

418
growth of about 93 million this year will also increase the oil demand.

In the longer term, the implementation of the agreements for trade liberalization under GATT such as reduction in Government subsidies etc. should further increase market competition. Since palm oil enjoys significant advantage over other oils, market share of palm oil is anticipated to increase.

This should augur well for prices of palm oil which should remain above RM900 for the rest of the current financial year.

The Chairperson begins the section with a number of statements with is expected to. World oil palm production is expected to...increase; Malaysia is expected to contribute ...50% of that total; The other major oils...are also expected to ...In using the passive form the Chairperson avoids the need to state the sensor. She leaves who the sensor/actor (the Company, the world, the CEO) ambiguous and with this ambiguity she inclines the reader to regard the expectation to be a universal one. People who should know expect. Production increasing and Malaysia contributing 50% of this high productivity figure is good news. The Chairperson therefore chooses expect rather than one of the other possible options in the cline of probability to suggest this.

However, high production figures also augur poor price to those with economic savvy who know the rule “The higher the supply, the lower the price”. So, the Chairperson intervenes in this possible thought track of the knowledgeable reader who may come to the conclusion that an oversupply condition may arise and bring with it lower oil palm prices and the possibility of lower profits leading to lower dividends for the reader/shareholder. She intercepts
this possible line of reasoning, therefore, with Notwithstanding the above, implying that the fears of the reader are unfounded.

She then proceeds to implicitly reassure the reader with the "good news" that the supply situation would remain tight. In the process she asserts phenomena as facts which are in fact only estimates, matters of judgement. While the recovery of the economies of Poland and Russia is a matter of economic judgement, emplacement of this information within a subordinate clause (Russia and Poland whose economies are showing positive signs of recovery...) transforms it from being a judgement into a universally accepted fact. This is immediately followed by another fact that is intended to keep the readers' view positive. The world population growth (an estimated figure presented as a fact) is asserted to certainly raise the oil's demand by the choice of the modal will (The world's population growth this year...will also increase the oil's demand). The Chairman then goes on to make the projection that the GATT agreements and government subsidies should further increase market given the fact that oil palm enjoys competitive advantage over other oils. Through the use of the present tense, palm oil enjoys significant competitive advantage over other oils, she appropriates the status of universal acceptance for the competitive advantage of oil palm over other oils which, if the advertising hype for corn oil, canola or soybean is to be believed, is merely a personal opinion, not the incontestable fact that it is asserted to be.
The next move of the Chairman is a "Given X, therefore Y" statement. She establishes the given status of X (that palm oil enjoys competitive advantage over other oils) through subordination (Since oil palm enjoys...). She attaches attentional salience for this given by thematizing it (Since oil palm enjoys significant competitive advantage over other oils, market share of palm oil is anticipated to increase rather than Market share of palm oil is anticipated to increase since oil palm enjoys significant competitive advantage over other oils.)

8.4 The Process of Establishing a New Company: A Sample Analysis

Bakhtin (1975,1981:85) borrows a concept, chronotope, from Physics and Mathematics, in order to explain a feature of the literary genre, the novel:

We will give the name chronotope (literally "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term (space-time) is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space).

In this section the notion of chronotope is imported to describe the action space that is the subject matter of the 1994 Chairman's Statement in the Annual Report.
of the first Malaysian automobile company, Proton. This concept is seen as particularly
suitable in capturing the motion-in-stasis state that is constitutive of both the text-event
and the action space it describes as it is the contention of this thesis that the text product
that is generally maligned as static reflects the dynamics of action-in-process. The
ensuing analysis of the Chairman's Statement would therefore privilege a reading of it as
a mirror of the simultaneous interplay of factors that impinge upon and influence the
action space, that is it would enable us to see the contingency relationships that are
embedded in and constitute the process of establishing a new company and a new
industry.

As the text is a report of situated, actual problem solving, it is also studied as a
source of insights into the link between the action semiotic and the semiotics of language.
First let us look at the CR as referential discourse by reproducing the linearly presented
information in the CR in a non linear re-presentation (See Table 8.4 on the next page).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Conditions</th>
<th>Markets</th>
<th>Negative Conditions</th>
<th>Company Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wira more popular than earlier model of Iswara</td>
<td>UK.EIRE</td>
<td>Stiff competition - other car makers giving deep discounts</td>
<td>Develop LHD models. Appoint national dealer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EUROPE</td>
<td>LHD² So impenetrable to RHD³ Proton.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARGENTINA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHILE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SINGAPORE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BRUNEI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULT of EXIGENCIES and ACTION | Increase in Total sales \[Wider acceptance\]  

Table 8.4 Pattern of Facts in Proton’s Action Space 1994

---

Total industry volume (for automobile industry)  
Left-hand Drive  
Right-hand Drive
A number of observations can be made about the pattern of facts presented in Table 8.4. Although these observations are interrelated, they are presented separately. This is to increase the visibility, and therefore the interpretive salience of each of the phenomena mentioned.

1. The whole is a momentary equilibrium. Any change in any of the participants in the circumstantial matrix will have a dominoes effect on the whole. If, for instance, World economic conditions change, the Yen-Ringgit exchange may change in Malaysia's favour and this would change the whole mathematics of profit and loss. The cost of parts would drop, the cost of production of Proton cars would fall consequentially and this in turn would increase the difference between selling price and cost price and this in its turn would cause profit margins to increase and make it possible for the Company to give higher dividends to the shareholders, who, being happy, would buy more Proton shares. This same "good news" from the point of view of costs, however, could be "bad news" from the point of view of sales. The lower Yen would make imported Japanese cars gain competitive edge in that the Malaysian car-Japanese car difference would diminish and therefore reduce the attractiveness of our cars with their value for money appeal. Given the innate interdependencies that this demonstrates, the internal heteroglossia that we have just witnessed in the discussion of the possible consequence of the fall in price of the Yen can be seen to be an intrinsic necessity in the professional life of a manager and therefore of the discourse of management as a discipline.
What any of these circumstances "count as" depends on the circumstances. For instance, the illocutionary force of the fact that Proton is aggressively pursuing new markets can only be fully understood by reference to the fact that its current local market share is already 74% and therefore further growth in the domestic market is probably limited, the fact that it is facing trying conditions in its existing foreign market in the UK and Eire and the fact that growth is arguably the single most important objective of all companies within the tradition of capitalistic materialism within which the Company obviously sees itself.

The perception of the connectivities between the participants in this matrix is MR dependent. The process of profit-making ramifies in several directions and operates at several levels. Underpinning the ramifications of these top-level objectives of making profits and informing the arguments of the CR is the entire network of interconnected axioms of current economic thought: maximization of profits in modern times includes not only cutting costs and increasing demand, it also necessitates appearing like a good corporate citizen by demonstrably participating in the "caring society" movement; price is a function of the interplay of supply and demand; the higher the price the higher the supply and the lower the demand; the more you are able to match or outstrip the advantages of your competitors, the greater your market share etc. These "special topics" (Toulmin, 1972) of economics are the products of historical evolution and observation of "market forces". But today, they are tools in the process of
argument and analysis. They are the framework of thought upon which the Chairperson draws in fabricating his or her arguments.

The pattern of facts reveals microsocial processes. The patterning of facts from the report, it is clear, not only configure the status quo of the company, it also reflects the tensions and interdependencies that characterize the workaday world of management. It reflects not just the macrosocial process of a developing country trying to establish a new industry locally and in the international arena, it is also a mirror of the microsocial processes that are subsumed in the macrosocial objective: the balancing of competing demands, the multi-pronged strategizing and planning to overcome setbacks.

As Table 8.4 attempts to capture, these microsocial processes are simultaneous and integrated but in order to see how deeply they penetrate the organizational matrix, we perhaps need to unravel the strands in the seamless fabric and study at least some of the ramifications in isolation. I shall discuss for this purpose the chains of consequential action that lie implicitly submerged in the facts and which are expected to be retrieved by the reader through elaborative inferences. The actual discourse processes by which such microsocial processes become comprehensible to the reader have been discussed in Chapter 7. For now, I shall merely articulate the action sequences so that the reader may get an intimation of the pervasiveness with which the CR mirrors social process.
My first example relates to one strand in the microsocial processes of problem-solving that are implicit in the Financial Performance Section of the CR. The Chairman begins his overview with the statement:

*The year in review poses great challenges to the Company to sustain profitability in the face of rising costs.*

The Financial Performance section is an account of the difficulties and the stratagems. On the surface, the rhetorical and social process involved are merely a cumulation of unrelated facts (*coupled with* is the expression the writer uses) resulting in a consequence:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Rise in Yen} & + \\
\text{higher cost of component parts} & + \\
\text{restraining selling prices} & \rightarrow \\
\text{reduced contribution margins.}
\end{align*}
\]

However, this is a discoursal truncation of a much longer process. This is consistent with discursive practice, and therefore normal expectation, in management circles. The elaborated version given below, it is hoped, reveals the cumulative cause-effect sequence of action and counteraction that characterize business management problem-solving:
As against this scenario of loss there is a countervailing scenario of short-term attenuation and long-term strategizing:

The Government gives reinvestment allowance \[\rightarrow\] Improvement in total short term Profit

The Company goes ahead with plans to construct casting plant (to build engine blocks) \[\rightarrow\] Cut in cost of parts. Long term improvement in profit

5 The full significance of the Company’s choices is only derivable by reference to current practice. Figure 8.5 on the next page taken from a textbook on business strategies presents the choices to be made in the launch of a product:
A comparison of the decision spectrum represented in Table 8.4 with the spectrum of choices made by Proton's management as revealed in Figure 8.4 makes possible the observation of at least two things. Firstly, it shows to what extent the practice of management draws upon the content and manner of thinking of its parent discipline. For example, it can be seen almost immediately that many of the moves the Chairman describes - what the products are, how and where they are manufactured, in what quantities they are made and sold, to whom, where, promoted or distributed how - are an integral part of the information the management community would expect to process and therefore report for the evaluation of the stakeholders.
Secondly the comparison of the particular instantiation (the token) with the generic model (the type) makes possible the perception of some absences that may be significant in the assessment of the transparency and wisdom of the moves taken by Proton. For example, while the Chairman seems to be tacitly following the moves prescribed in the model, he does not describe at what cost they are made and yet it seems standard practice to consider cost. However, while it is standard practice to consider cost, it is not standard practice to report cost. Intertextually-speaking, that is when we compare the Proton Chairman's failure to report on cost with the practice in other CRs, his behaviour is not extraordinary. Reporting on cost of moves they have made is not common practice.

Two alternative interpretation of this practice suggest themselves. The first is that it is standard practice among writers of CRs to obfuscate certain facts because they may tarnish the glowing picture they give of their and their company's performance, that is, they prioritize the promotional function of the CR over its information-providing function. The second possible interpretation relates to the nature of discourse. Since discourse ontologically requires choice - both in what is presented and how it is presented - the writers of the CRs have chosen not to include costs of moves they take because, given the constraints of space and possible lack of sufficient expertise among the readers to understand the information even if it is given, they feel it is sufficient to talk about the outcomes of their strategies (See Devitt 1991 for instances of this in tax accounting) as these
should vindicate the choices they have made. This interpretation turns on the
subject positions occupied by the readers and writers of the CRs. In a world
classified by segmentation according to knowledge differentials, the
Chairman as the expert is empowered to, in fact expected to, make such
discretionary decisions. The stakeholder has the right to decide whether he wants
to become or remain a stakeholder and this is the source of his power over the
Chairman. The Chairman has knowledge of management as a discipline and a
profession and he has knowledge of the internal and specific workings of the
Company or Group of which he is the chief executive and this is the source of his
power. In the tension between the two the CR gets forged. In the thinking that
shapes the specific choices a specific Chairperson makes, the text meets the limits
of its revelatory power and is silent.

Resources in the verbal semiotic complement those in the action semiotic.
While the patterning of facts does capture the multiple trends that crisscross the
action space, they do not do so alone. Some of the most crucial aspects of the
representation of social realities are discursively mediated. A number of these
discursive features that orchestrate the facts (and the reader's response) in the
direction the Chairman chooses are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs. As
discoursal processes were the special focus of the last chapter, only three features are discussed here.

Social realities are the source of exigencies, the provenance within which action takes place. Social realities also structure the frame that establishes the semiotic significance of action. However, the entrepreneurial function, that which not only responds to social realities but also re-creates it, cannot be conveyed solely by the presentation of these realities alone. For the entrepreneur/writer who is at once the sensor, actor and subject of the discourse of the CR, self-representation is a primary stratagem. He needs to evoke a script in the mind of the reader in which the Company is the chief player/hero. He performs this orientational function of evoking the attributes of the “hero” through locutions whose illocutionary force inflect the reader in the direction of forming positive evaluations of the Company/hero. The analysis on the next page attempts to illustrate how he does this:
The writer implicates that the Company is...

Successful
Proactive
Forward-looking
Able to strategize effectively
Able to detect and pursue opportunities
Well in control of circumstances
The Chairman also constrains the reader's interpretation of the facts by the use of evaluative expressions:

*The year in review poses great challenges*
*The projects...were successfully completed*
*The Company has diversified aggressively*
*The Company was affected by the drastic appreciation of the Yen*

The Chairman begins his report by setting up a tension between the *great challenges* the Company faces and the fact that the Company *did well* despite these challenges. Lexical chains resonate throughout the CR: the tension between *poses great challenges* and *the Company did well* that the Chairman sets up in the first two paragraphs of his Overview. The *did well*, of course, is far more resounding than the *great challenges*:

**Challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hyonyms</th>
<th>Did well</th>
<th>Hyonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rising costs</td>
<td>Increased its market share</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stiff competition from other car makers</td>
<td>Successfully completed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive climate</td>
<td>Handsome increase in turnover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying conditions</td>
<td>Domestic market rebounded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overwhelming response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gratifying support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loyal customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continued to make good progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining wider acceptance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales doubled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project is progressing smoothly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

434