CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Orientations

The greatest and most abiding difficulty about human communication is that it is human. And in this too lies its subtlety, its value, and its limitless potentiality: in considering it, we must ever bear in mind human frailty - whether of mind or morale - as well as human creativity.

- Randolph Quirk (1986), Words at Work

1.1 Statement of Problem

This study owes its research orientations - its selection of objectives as well as its methodology - to an uneasiness with the current state of the art in language study. It holds with Quirk (1986) that

The greatest and most abiding difficulty about human communication is that it is human. And in this too lie its subtlety, its value, and its limitless potentiality: in considering it, we must ever bear in mind human frailty - whether of mind or morale - as well as human creativity.

However, the holistic perception of the nature of human communication constantly eludes the grasp of linguistic science for a number of reasons:
One reason is perhaps that there exists a mismatch between the perception of language that is emerging in the work of language theorists and philosophers (Faucault, 1980; Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Lemke, 1992; Bakhtin, 1981) and the goals of linguistics as reflected in the still persistent use of the label "linguistic science". While these theorists and practitioners have succeeded in showing that "the reality" sought through language study does not reside in language but is negotiated/created through language, the goals of the discipline as they are institutionalized (at least in the requirements imposed on objectivity, robustness etc), are pegged inappropriately to the values and predicating frames of science as a discipline. I say inappropriately because the aim of science which is to discover a pre-existing but as yet undiscovered truth is not consonant with the aims of language study which should be to capture the temporary meaning structures into which particular semiotic resources used in particular settings by particular language users resolve themselves. This dynamic and elusive reality cannot, this researcher believes, be adequately captured or contained in research models structured for accomplishing a completely different type of research task.

Another problem that makes any research model in a sense premature is the fragmentary and often conflicting picture of the nature of human communication that emerges from existing research findings. Of course a very large part of the reason for this is the enormity and complexity of the task of studying human communication as a whole. However, at least some part of the explanation for the lack of a unified picture of how human communication works
is perhaps due to the fact that this does not seem to be on the agenda of linguistic science; it would be too messy, too slippery to be held in place by the scientific apparatus that linguistics appears to privilege in its choice of heuristics for the study of language. While the present model of researching highly specific areas using research frameworks that would stand up to tests of robustness, replicability etc, produces in-depth and reliable understanding of those specific areas, the putting together of all the research to form a picture of the whole produces, at best, a mosaic. At least two perceptual problems make this mosaic unsatisfactory. One is that the conceptualization and style of execution of the various pieces is so different (with their differences made incommensurable by completely different assumptions, values etc) that the whole lacks harmony, even as a mosaic. The other is that a mosaic is an inappropriate art form to capture the dynamism of language. The pieces of a mosaic don't interact and flow into one another in the way current research suggests the semiotic elements that constitute the "universe of meaning" (Geertz, 1983) that language creates and exists within interpenetrate.

Another facet of current research that is disturbing is the proliferation of polarities in the literature: community vs individual, product vs process, convention vs creativity. One of these polarities, specifically the polarity of product and process (and the attendant contention that text is a product and that as a product it is inert) is particularly disturbing. It is disturbing on two counts. Firstly, the researcher's own intuition is that the relationship between the poles which is presented as antonymic is more likely to turn out to be dialectical and
reciprocal; that is, that one requires the other and needs to interact with it in achieving its own meaningfulness. Secondly, it is true that a text is the product of an individual's creativity and it is true that the act of creative production - the planning, the configuring and reconfiguring through revision and editing - are not perceptible in the final product of a writer, which is the text. It is contended, however, that this is not all of the truth. The findings of cognitive science and artificial intelligence (*vide* frames) and, more recently of critical linguistics (*vide* ideology), demonstrate the extent to which other equally important processes - the process by which society determines individual thought, the processes by which group convention and creativity govern individual production and interpretation - participate in individual creativity and cognition and how these processes are manifest in texts.

Another area of dissatisfaction concerns the fact that many of the most interesting perceptions regarding language come from social theorists - people like Foucault, Bakhtin, Derrida, Geertz, Giddens - who do not ground their theories in empirical evidence. While it can be conceded that their pronouncements sound intuitively right, they need the test of empirical research to validate and fine tune them. The conditions of validation of such work, it is suggested, includes encapsulated moments of production and interpretation, which in the definition of this study means stretches of text, especially in view of Geertz's suggestion, now accepted in many quarters, that "Knowledge is ineluctably local" (Geertz, 1983), and Merriam's (1988) claim that in the
naturalistic paradigm, reality is seen as "holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed or measured".

To accommodate the priorities implicit in the dissatisfactions stated above, the present study must have the following characteristics:

- It must attempt to give a holistic and dynamic view of human communication;

- It needs a research paradigm that accommodates the present fragmentary and conflicting knowledge of human communication. In practical terms, this means the study cannot begin with a well-formed theory it sets out to prove. It should, rather be an exploratory study that uses the thesis as a heuristic for discovering some provisional answers to at least some of the key questions that engage current interest;

- It must test in what ways, if any, texts are/can be indices of processes; and

- It must provide concrete data to corroborate or invalidate at least theories regarding the core issue that engages current research interest: the interrelationship between the individual and the society or societies of which he is a member.
Not directly implicated by the "problems" stated above, but as corollaries to some of the entailments listed are the following further entailments:

- The site of research - the texts that will be studied - needs to be able to reflect the features of modern discourse - e.g. multiple audiences, globalization, blurring of genres etc - for the issues of concern to modern man to emerge and for the site to be admissible as a valid testing ground.

- Since human communication is too vast to be investigated, a delimitation of sample that nonetheless can maximally reflect the population without subjecting the researcher to the grossness of superficiality and overgeneralization would also be a requirement.

- In practical terms, the above would entail the narrowing of the surface data (the texts to be investigated) through confining research attention to one genre within one community and for the inner research issues to be broadened to include at least some of the most important ones that engage critical attention today.
1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse the discourse of an appropriate research site (in this case the texts of the annual reports of Malaysian public-listed companies) with a view to exploring the relationship between text and social process and using this exploration as a heuristic for throwing light on issues in the current "conversations" of linguists, that is, the topics and issues that engage their attention and become the focus of most of their discursive effort. The overarching orientation would be to understand, and if understanding is not possible at this stage, at least to sense the human nature of the text-society relationship, in meaning making. The reasons for why annual reports were selected for this purpose are elaborated in Section 4.4 of the chapter on methodology and again in the section on the significance of the study in the same chapter.

*The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of the English Language* (1987) defines a ramble as a "long walk usually to explore the countryside". The research paradigm on which this thesis is based is, in this sense, a ramble (rather than a journey). Why it was necessary to adopt this paradigm will, it is hoped, become progressively clearer as the thesis advances but suffice it for the moment to say that it is the operationalizing of the solution to the problems with the enunciation of which this chapter began. A ramble, it is posited, builds in the flexibility and time for reflection and appreciation that a new terrain requires. A rambler
a can pause where he will, walk backwards if he so wishes, and look at the same places from many different "lodging places"
( Chuangtze, in the translation by Graham, 1989) or vantage points
b needs only a vague sense of the direction in which he is moving because destination and arrival there are less important than the sights along the way. What is paramount is seeing and seeing again with time for "savouring" - for noticing, reflecting, appreciating and evaluating - what has been seen and experienced. Arrival at a worthy destination is good - but not crucial.

The destination this study looks forward to is better understanding of human communication and the role that language plays in forging it. I do not expect to "arrive". I only expect to report on the fractured and momentary glimpses I have gained as I paused to look at this or that landmark or savour this or that quality of the air. I hope that these glimpses, though fragmentary will suggest what the terrain, if it can ever be captured, would feel like.

Ramblers are a threatened species, and not just in the lifeworld. In linguistics they have been under seige from experts hurling various weapons: specialization, reliability, robustness of design, cogency. I still stick to the ramble paradigm because
it is the only plausible solution given the absence of any definitive theory of human communication;

it seems the most viable way of privileging the momentary instantiation over the virtual abstraction.

there is authority to provide warrants for the choice of such a heuristic in the literature on qualitative research. See for example, the following:

The openness of qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to do justice to that complexity, to respect it in its own right. Qualitative researchers avoid simplifying social phenomena and instead explore the range of behavior and expand their understanding of the resulting interactions. Through the research process, they assume that social interaction is complex and that they will uncover some of that complexity. Thereby, they come to understand and are able to show the complexity, the contradictions, and the sensibility of social interactions. "To know the rose by its Latin name and yet to miss its fragrance," stated Eisner, "is to miss much of the rose's meaning" (Eisner, 1981, p.9).

(Glesne, C. & Peshkin, A. 1992:7-8)

We presuppose in every inquiry, not only a set of data but also a set of generalizations. We draw our presuppositions from earlier inquiries, from other sciences, from everyday knowledge, from the experiences of conflict and frustration which motivated our inquiry, from habit and tradition, from who knows where. Methodology does not rob us of our footing; it enjoins us, rather, to look at it.

(Kaplan, 1964:87)

Tacit knowledge becomes the base on which the human instrument builds many of the insights and hypotheses that will eventually develop (and that will be cast in propositional form). Indeed, the human instrument is the sole instrument that can build on tacit
knowledge...it is essential that the human instrument be permitted to use his or her tacit knowledge at full strength and in the most explicit fashion. Anything else simply dulls the instrument and reduces the value of the inquiry.

(Guba & Lincoln, 1985: 198)

1.3 Objectives and Scope of the Review

Given the study has a broad canvas and there is a tremendous wealth of and diversity in scholarly activity in the areas relevant to this study, it is impossible to aim either to give comprehensive coverage or to describe every hue and shade in the picture of the field extant in the literature. Firstly such an effort would be too daunting and secondly it may not even be desirable; attempting to be comprehensive may blur the perception of key issues and inundate the high points in an overwhelming heap of detail.

What the review will attempt to do is to

1. provide selective highlights of the story so far to enable the reader to get a picture of where the present study fits into the "conversations of the discipline" (Bazerman, 1980, 1985). There are rather extensive quotations from the key players, as is done in recent ethnographic studies, to allow the keynotes in the field to be heard in the voices of the main conversationalists,
introduce the most important "terms of art" (Miller, 1993:80) which can then allow a more succinct style of reporting based on the terminology available to the disciplinary community interested in this field. This is deemed necessary because the field of discourse analysis is at present fraught with overlapping and sometimes ambiguous uses of apparently similar terms.

provide the theoretical constructs and suggest the empirical trends that would help to explain the choice of focus of this study as well as its interpretation of what the findings "count as". It is also hoped that the critiques of the major trends and their theoretical roots that interleave the discussion of trends would enable the reader to assess the contribution that the heuristics, findings and conclusions of this thesis make towards not merely increasing the data on which growth in understanding of linguistic pragmatics can be based but also in increasing the number and specificity of the questions that are and can be raised in the field.

The review that ensues and the research questions that emerge from each research trend discussed are not intended to be taken up systematically one after another in the study reported here. It is the belief of this researcher that the concerns and connectivities discussed in this chapter are embedded (and tacitly addressed) in different permutations in every instance of discourse and that
therefore the analysis of every text in this thesis is (can be) informed by the awareness of what is discussed here. The title of this chapter, "Theoretical Orientations" (and not its more common generic alternative, "Theoretical Framework") is, in this sense, a self-conscious rhetorical decision. The chapter provides a profile of the in-formation of the field, a "feel" for the ambience of the terrain, so that the heightened awareness so created can help the reader and the analyst make an informed response to each instantiation of these issues in the fluid and eclectic environment of each text. It does not determine the theoretical parameters that will constrain the study and what it must and can study.

The construct "social process" as it is used in the title of this thesis is elaborated as:

1. the material and discoursal processes of change at national and international level;

2. the dynamic processes by which society, culture, institution and discipline influence and are influenced by discursive practice in general and specific texts in particular;

3. interpersonal relations as they are negotiated through interaction;
the processes by which the products of social and discourse history
- conventions, genres, discourses - enable (as resources) or disable
( as constraints) human communication; and

the dialectical processes by which a person negotiates his
individual identity using group resources (the community
generated language code, genres, discourses). I include this in
"social" processes because the notion of individuality in this sense
is relational - "I amidst you (all) and also because the social is the
resource on which the individual is built.

This thesis is centrally concerned with the group or community. Most
studies relevant to this thesis also seem to be concerned with community,
specifically with the way the relationship between the individual and the social
operationalizes itself in the text interface. The notion of community will,
therefore, be used as the organizing principle in the discussion of the literature
that follows.

As this researcher perceives it, the notion of community appears
to ramify in the directions shown in Figure 1.1 on the next page.
Figure 1.1  How Community Ramifies into Different Domains of Being
Shared lifeworld experience, shared thoughts, shared language and shared discursive practice seem to be constitutive of community and community in turn seems to predispose members to have shared experiences, shared thoughts, shared language and shared discursive practices. The review that ensues will begin by discussing some global issues that concern scholars in their discussions of the society-individual relationship before going on to discuss in turn each of the directions in which community refracts. For obvious reasons, the greatest attention in the review will be given to issues relating to language and discursive practice, particularly to genre analysis.

1.4 Some Global Issues in the Study of Community and Individual in Discourse

Discourse analysis can be completely asocial. Lavandera (1988:11), for example, talks of "Anglo-Saxon discourse analysis" as falling into two categories:

In the first, the analyst deals with an antiseptic parceled text, cleansed of ideological load, and isolated from the chain of discourses of which it is a part. In the second, the analyst keeps the text entirely on the mental level, and exemplifies the properties attributed to a well-formed discourse (cohesion, coherence, relevance, and so on) with little more than short sequences of two or three artificially constructed sentential sequences.
This kind of discourse analysis is not of concern to this study, which seeks to understand not "language in itself" but language as it naturally occurs in society and participates in accomplishing the purposes of its users in the sociocultural settings in which they are emplaced or where they place themselves. This section will therefore only look at issues that concern text analysts with social engagement who use as their data naturally occurring texts in situations of some social import.

This delimitation, however, does not altogether do away with the difficulties of pigeonholing the vast and growing literature on social linguistics into neat, easily digestible "issues". What follows therefore is an (over)simplification done by paring down detail to show the major streams and schisms in the broad thinking concerning the society-individual-language interrelationship.

1.4.1 Need for a social theory

As Lavandera (1988:6) points out,

If one's sights are on a theory of grammar rather than a theory of language, then it is not crucial which social theory the sociolinguist adopts. Such a theory, for example, is not crucial to the variationists, whose goal is to uncover quantitative patterns and correlations that reveal linguistic structure....On the other hand, the situation is quite different for those whose goal is to develop a theory of language in its social context, rather than a theory of grammar. The concern with the choice of a social theory becomes paramount, since one of the fundamental questions is which elements of the social affect the production and understanding of language in natural settings.
Fairclough (1989, 1995), for example, resorts to the social theories of contemporary sociologists like Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas and Karl Marx in discussing the power of ideology in creating and perpetuating inequalities in society and how discourse is implicated in the production and reproduction of these power inequalities. Swales (1992) points out how "Giddens appears to offer a theoretical solution to many of the dualisms that impinge upon social theory such as agent and structure, mind and institution, and langue and parole".

Discovering a theory or theories that help to "explain" the phenomena one finds in one's data, then, becomes one of the issues that a socially-sensitive linguist must address.

1.4.2 Centrifugal and centripetal tendencies in discourse

M.M. Bakhtin, in his now much-quoted *Dialogic Imagination* states that

Every utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in an utterance...The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance.

(Bakhtin, translated by Emerson and Holquist, 1981:272)
In taking different positions people emphasize one or the other of these two opposing forces that are co-present in discourse. When people emphasize cultural variation (World Englishes, for example) and, like Gee (1990) argue the case for "multiple literacies", they are focusing their research energies on the centrifugal tendencies of language. When people talk about globalization of discourse or look for generic conventions or the features of register, they are looking for that which is commonly shared, that which unifies different uses and make them recognizable as a token of a type, an exponent of a genre and so forth.

Sometimes the same act can be seen as a focus on the centrifugal or the centripetal depending on the vantage point from which one looks at the research effort. For example, in their work critical discourse analysts attempt to show how power inequalities between people are produced through discourse-constructed ideologies, social roles, values etc that privilege one group's ways of being, thinking, saying and doing. When we focus on their perception that different people speak differently and that they should be allowed to speak in these ways, we can call their work an argument for the recognition of heteroglossia. If on the other hand, we look at their focus on ideologies that mask and occlude difference, we can say they are studying the negative effects of a centralizing tendency, the totalizing essentialism that underpins ideologies.

The word heteroglossia that Bakhtin introduces is used quite extensively in this thesis and therefore perhaps requires some explication. Heteroglossia, as
glossed by Emerson and Holquist (1981: 428) at the end of their translation of Bakhtin is

The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions - social, historical, meteorological, physiological - that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve.

In the researcher's understanding of Bakhtin and Emerson and Holquist's gloss, heteroglossia is not the disunifying, decentralizing, centrifugal force in discourse. It is the condition of distinctiveness which characterizes every utterance as a product of the tension between the centrifugal and the centripetal. However, there appears to be another possible reading.

Miller (1993: 88) in talking about Bakhtin's contribution to the notion of community, tangentially also provides a gloss on the term "heteroglossia". This is what she says:

M.M.Bakhtin...adds an explicit concern for pluralistic forces at work within language and thus within communities and minds. There are, he claimed, both centripetal, unifying forces in language and centrifugal, disunifying forces. These latter forces, which he called "heteroglossia", control every utterance, pervading language with historical and social tensions, challenging unitary and privileged meanings with the basic condition of dialogue.
In this study, therefore, the researcher has used the term in both possible meanings.

1.4.3 The relative role of the individual and the social in discourse

The centripetal and centrifugal forces in discourse that we discussed in section 1.4.2 above manifest in another, perhaps alternative conceptualization: the pull between individual creativity, experience and knowledge (which tend to be different for all individuals) and the pull to conform (which is a tendency that moves in the direction of sameness) to the regularities that discourse makes available to the individual as a default he can resort to in the absence of a purpose, will or ability to urge him to extra individual effort.

People have taken different stances on this issue. (See Miller, 1993 for a competent and insightful discussion). Literary theorists, for example, tend to emphasize individual creativity and the right to plurality of expression while genre theorists tend to emphasize not individual but group creativity. In Bazerman's (1988) study of the historical evolution of the scientific research article, for instance, we see the adaptation of the community and its discourse to the changing intellectual as well as physical environment.

Either extreme in the individual-community determination of discourse, as Miller points out, is fraught with problems. The plurality that postmodernist views of individual construction of meaning creates, Miller (1993: 91) claims,
...may leave us with a community that is so fragmented, perforated, intermittent and attenuated that it no longer performs any rhetorical work.

On the other hand, a discourse that is totally shaped by community is also not without its drawbacks:

The massive inertia of communal "good reasons" is also troublesome - their apparent resistance to change, their total control over what may be thought and said, their power over a population of selves that those same good reasons constructed in the first place.

(Miller, 1993: 86)

Which particular view of language is held by the writers of the annual reports is, of course, a matter for analytical observation of their practice in the corpus but, intuitively, the researcher's view is that discourse can be viewed as a macro-frame, a progressive essentialization/ conventionalization of types that become available for use by individuals to the extent to which the individual user's past history - his previous exposure to and experience of the discourse type in question - empowers /predisposes him to use the discourse type in question. In this sense the past, inscribed as convention in the discourse, can be opportunity or a hampering obligation. It can be an opportunity for the lazy (the hack) or ignorant as it makes available a default mode of operation that provides maximum gain for minimum effort. It provides for the expert a resource (the paradigmatic system of choice that Halliday claims functions at the level of language code can also be seen operative at discourse and genre level) he can manipulate to
accomplish his own private ends. This would be the scenario in an ideal world or in a world in which the discourses that are privileged are the discourses one has command over.

But this is not an ideal world. There are many people, including people from the Third World (the South), who are disenfranchised because they do not command the discourses of those whom history has made the powerful of today. For these, such discourses that they do have give no or limited access to social power and the discourses that do give access often become hampering obligations.

However, this rough and ready taxonomy of possible real world scenarios is but speculation; intended to sensitize the reader and the analyst to some inherent semiotic potentials, but speculations nevertheless. What is perhaps more important is to state the vantage point from which the study intends to look at the data - whether the study intends to take the psychological position of placing the individual at the centre of the investigation or the sociolinguistic position of placing community in the centre and accounting for the individual within that context. This investigation intends to take a dual vantage point: it would place community at the centre when looking at the corpus as a whole. This is to make visible the communally-owned discourse conventions, practices and attitudes. It would place the individual at the centre when it analyses specific texts. This is to capture the dynamism and heteroglossia of the discourse process as the centripetal
forces of community "collide" (Bakhtin, 1981) with the centrifugal forces of individual creativity, knowledge, desires, purposes etc. The overall theoretical stance the study adopts is a social constructionist position that social contexts and the written discourse of individual or corporate entities stand in a reciprocal, mutually constructive relationship. This study holds with Rubin (1987:1) that

To compose and to comprehend, to engage in written communication, people construct for themselves and others the nature of their relationships, their communicative purposes, their topics, and their texts. These constructions - simultaneously and inextricably both social and cognitive, I shall contend - are what people operate with and operate upon in communication.

1.5 Discourse Community

1.5.1 The notion of discourse community

The fact that there is a strong link between the group or groups to which people belong and the language they use is by now a "given" among scholars. The recognition of English for Specific Purposes and the study of varieties such as "World Englishes" as branches of language study, for instance, attest well to this. What is still "new" is the concept of community. The fact that a number of terms have been devised to accommodate the need to discover community-building demographic traits in groups that appear to be marked in some way(s) as communities - e.g. lawyers, "academic tribes", engineers, tax accountants - affirm the perception of the need for a satisfactory definition among scholars, not just
scholars of linguistics. Terms have been devised in other disciplines as well. (Note for instance Stanley Fish's "interpretive communities" in literary theory).

The term "discourse communities" associated most strongly with, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, Swales (1990) was yet another attempt at defining communities that on the face of it looked as if they cohered through the discourse they shared. There have been many redefinitions but the one that seems to the researcher most satisfactory is that which Rubin (1987:13), incorporating Faigley's earlier definition gives:

...writing may or may not have a perlocutionary effect on readers, but it always has the illocutionary effect of constituting an audience, a topic domain, a discourse structure and so forth. Competent users of written language can discern the social context that a text presupposes; they may or may not accept the implicit invitation to participate in it.... Writers and readers who elect to don those roles and participate in those contexts are thus constituted into a discourse community. A discourse community may be roughly understood as a consensus about "...what is worth communicating, how it may be communicated, what other members of the community are likely to know and believe to be true about certain subjects, how other members can be persuaded and so on" (Faigley, 1985,p.238) Each writer, in every writing event, reconstitutes a discourse community

Rubin's definition incorporates the following intuitively right-sounding features:

1. the capacity of members to discern the incorporated social context.
2. the need to be willing to participate (to play by the rules as it were).
the kinds of knowledge they share about one another, about the rules of the discourse they share and the world they inhabit.

that the community is rhetorically constructed; it is built on consensus.

An important absence in this definition is the conditions of access that usually (though not always) includes years of training that in turn affects the capacity of a would-be member to discern and to participate. Many are willing but all are not chosen, for example to belong to the professional communities because they do not fulfil the entry qualifications that the gatekeepers demand.

The term *discourse community* has now become a heavy-duty word among scholars, especially those that purport to have ethnographic orientations and those who seek to study the culture of organizations, disciplines and/or professions. The term is heavily used but not used unquestioningly. In fact, many studies specifically raise the issue of the adequacy and precision of the label as a term of art. A typical reservation is expressed by Herndl et al at the end of their study of the community involved in a space shuttle accident at Three Mile Island when they say

Finally, we believe that our work illustrates the complexity of the current term "discourse community". Since the relationships between language use and social structure are various and are describable with different analytical methods, the term discourse community becomes either misleadingly vague or intriguingly rich.
It is also subject to a troublesome circularity, in which the community is defined by the discourse and vice versa.

(Herndl, Fennel and Miller, 1991: 304)

Swales himself expresses reservations:

Theoretically, is discourse community a robust social construct, a defensible categorization of a particular and important kind of group? Or is it, in Herzberg's phrase just "the centre of a set of ideas", a convenient covering metaphor, or worse, a deluding vision allowing us the dubious facility of making tempting generalizations about the world and its words? .... Practically, does the concept provide a theoretical underpinning of the writing across the curriculum movement; a necessary vehicle, in Tony Becher's phrase, mapping Academic Tribes and Territories? Or is it a pitch for rhetoric is all?.... Or is it a heuristic device for understanding the dynamic processes of qualification, entry, apprenticeship, full membership and lapse into old-fartage in specialized groups? A way of seeing how non-egalitarian worlds manage their affairs, be they corporate or educational entities, minority interest groups, hobbyists or whatever? ... The "true" discourse community may be rarer and more esoteric than I once thought.

(Swales, 1992)

Reservations about the concept exist but they are only just that: reservations. They are not a rejection of the concept. They are, to the researcher, evidence of the continued engagement of the linguistic community in the evolution of not just a term but through the progressive definition and redefinition of the term, to come to understand what its own need is in the search for such a term. Herndl et al, for instance, immediately follow their remarks about the limitations of the term "discourse community" with the suggestion that
This theoretical difficulty may best be handled by careful attention to the limitations and capacities of research methods. The term discourse community may then be most useful as an umbrella term that incorporates speech community, interpretive community, argument field, and the like.

(Herndl, Fennel and Miller, 1991: 304)

Rafoth (1987) in fact finds the conjunction of the terms "discourse" and "community" in the term discourse community felicitous.

The notion of discourse community at least holds within its literal level the idea of writers and readers (community) and text (discourse). The notion of community, from Latin *communitae* ("held in common"), includes the dimension of shared knowledge and norms, which describe what the writers and readers bring to a text and carry from it. The notion of discourse, from late Latin *discursus* ("conversation") and Latin (*"a running back and forth"*), refers to the dynamic nature of negotiated meaning.

(Rafoth, 1987: 143)

Rafoth recognizes the problems of application that the term faces but is still positive as to its potential usefulness:

Fields and communities have fuzzy boundaries that allow for a good deal of overlap, making the application of such concepts difficult. The same may be said of discourse communities. Human beings, such as they are, have multiple allegiances that overlap and conflict, and human discourse reflects this overlap and conflict all too well. For all these problems, and they are significant, I believe the notion of community is better suited to explore the relationship between writers, readers and texts than is audience. ...the communities in which writers/speakers and readers/listeners align themselves, together with discourse norms by which these communities have been symbolized, give a theoretically more
1.5.2 Discourse community-related research issues

The evolution of the term "discourse community", therefore is, it is suggested, a cutting-edge aspect of the knowledge-making enterprise of the linguistic community and therefore of particular concern to scholars in the field. The present researcher herself has a number of questions regarding "discourse communities":

(a) What demographic characteristic(s) are sufficient and necessary conditions for affirming the existence of a community. Is it goals? Is it the genres they use? Is it shared schemas? Is it habitual topics of conversation? Or, are all these symptoms in a syndrome, a particular configuration of shared attributes?

(b) Are there different degrees of membership in a discourse community? Can there, for example, be temporary co-opted members and permanent members? Can different kinds of members have different stable and/or unstable relationships with other members i.e. is discourse community itself a meaning-making matrix?
Is a discourse community in a constant state of flux with people becoming communities only during those moments during which engagement is wrought in the (text) interface between readers and writers? Or are there more permanent and stable relationships forged through interdependence as well as continued and habitual engagement in stereotypical situations that forge particular types and levels of knowledge, expectations, attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, ideologies etc in members that distinguish them from non-members?

There are tentative answers to these in the studies done by the genre scholars (see section 2.2 of the next chapter in particular). This study itself lacks the design to provide answers of any respectable degree of definiteness. But the concept of community, whatever constitutes it, is of critical importance to this study for two reasons. One, the formation, transformation and dissolution of communities is a social process and therefore of concern to this study. Two, if as Miller (1992) claims, "community" is a "rhetorical construct" and therefore is discoursally constructed, then the text becomes the critical interface where individuality and community collide in the heteroglossia that Bakhtin and the postmodernists claim is the ontological state of all communication. Text as mirror of social process is only possible when text is interface; hence the significance to this study of the notion of discourse and community and the elusiveness of their interrelationship that the term "discourse community" tries to peg down.
1.5.3 Swales' Definition of Discourse Community

Swales (1990) proposes "six defining characteristics that will be necessary and sufficient for identifying a group of individuals as a discourse community". As many of the issues Swales raises are at the centre of much research and is of central concern to this study, the researcher will quote a lengthy excerpt from his description of these characteristics. Although many have given working definitions of the concept, no one has given as detailed a definition as Swales. This section will end with an extended quotation from his definition, the thinking behind this being that the details can act as reference points against which the findings of this study (and the alternative theoretical formulations that the fresh data of this study prompts) can be bounced.

1 A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals. These formal goals may be formally inscribed in documents (as is often the case with associations and clubs), or they may be more tacit...

2 A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members. The participatory mechanisms will vary according to the community: meetings, telecommunications, correspondence, newsletters, conversations and so forth...

3 A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback. Thus, membership implies uptake of the informational opportunities...

4 A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more
genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims. A discourse community has developed and continues to develop discoursal expectations. These may involve appropriacy of topics, the form, function and positioning of discoursal elements, and the roles texts play in the operation of the discourse community. In so far as 'genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them' (Martin, 1985:250), these discoursal expectations are created by the "genres" that articulate the operations of the discourse community. One of the purposes of this criterion is to question discourse community status for new or newly emergent groupings. Such groupings need, as it were, to settle down and work out their communicative proceedings and practices before they can be recognized as discourse communities...

5 In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis. This specialization may involve using lexical items known to the wider speech communities in special and technical ways, as in information technology discourse communities, or using highly technical terminology as in medical communities. Most commonly, however, the in-built dynamic towards an increasingly shared and specialized terminology is realized through the development of community-specific abbreviations and acronyms. The use of these (ESL, EAP, WAC, NCTE, TOEFL, etc.) is, of course, driven by the requirements for efficient communication exchange between experts...

6 A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise. Discourse communities have changing memberships; individuals enter as apprentices and leave by death or in other less involuntary ways. However, survival of the community depends on a reasonable ratio between novices and experts.

1.6 Repeating Situations, Frames and Ideologies

Giddens (1979) points to the "essential recursiveness of social life" and its relationship with structure:
The essential recursiveness of social life as constituted in social practices: Structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of...social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution.

( Giddens, 1979:5)

Giddens talks about recursiveness in large macrosocial terms but recursiveness also has its outcomes in the production of discourse practices e.g. in the genesis of genres, registers etc. One related research dimension of this recursiveness is how habitually-met entities, events etc in the past interface with the present in the mind of individuals and communities in shaping their response to current entities, events etc. This section will discuss the findings of current research.

It is a recognized fact that when dealing with the new in the world, whether this newness comes in the form of a lifeworld experience or in the form of discourse there is involved "a process of fitting what one is told into the framework established by what one already knows" (Charniak, 1979). A number of terms have been devised to label these mental representations of past experience. This section will discuss some of the better known terms and the way their investigators claim they function, particularly in discourse. The literature on this, especially in studies of comprehension, is vast, so, this review will only give prominence to those aspects of the findings that are deemed to be relevant for the interpretation of the data this study investigates.
One very common label is the term 'frame' as proposed by Minsky to refer to the data structures stored in memory to represent stereotypical situations:

When one encounters a new situation (or makes a substantial change in one's view of the present problem) one selects from memory a structure called a frame. This is a remembered framework to be adapted to fit reality by changing details as necessary (Minsky, 1975 quoted in Brown and Yule, 1983:238)

The basic structure of the frame as described by Minsky contains labelled slots. These abstract virtual categories can be filled with particulars or specifics from the situation that activates the frame in question. For example, the frame for the word CAR will have slots for 'doors', 'seats', 'turning circle' etc which can be filled by reference to the specific car (Mazda 323, Proton Wira etc) that serves as an instance of the CAR frame.

Another term often used is schema (plural schemata) which Brown and Yule describe in this way:

Schemata are said to be 'higher-level complex (and even conventional or habitual) knowledge structures' (van Dijk, 1981:141), which function as 'ideational scaffolding' (Anderson, 1977) in the organisation and interpretation of experience. In the strong view, schemata are considered to be deterministic, to predispose the experiencer to interpret his experience in a fixed way. However, the general view taken of schemata in discourse is much weaker. Rather than deterministic constraints on how we must interpret discourse, schemata can be seen as the organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse.
A number of features of frames and their use that are relevant to the purposes of this study are pointed out by scholars in this field:

1. Frames or schemata are not merely for situations. There are also content schemas, procedural schemas, topic schemas, action schemas, discourse schemas and so on; that is, anything that is repetitively met can develop into a schema or frame.

2. Schema are in a constant state of development. Bartlett (1932:201), calling them "active developing patterns", claims that "the whole notion is that the organized mass results of past changes of position and posture are actively doing something all the time; are, so to speak, carried along with us, complete though developing, from moment to moment".

3. The various elements in a frame are all interlinked to form a single memory unit. Any one element can therefore act as a trigger to activate the whole frame, comprising all the elements.

4. Frames are cognitive structures but they can contain in their
structure affective dimensions e.g. hatred can be intermingled with a frame for a particular race.

5 Frames/schema predispose but do not necessarily constrain people to think in particular ways.

6 Context, in this view, can be seen as the mental representation of it brought into operation by the activation of what the language user consciously or unconsciously perceives as relevant frames. It consists, as van Dijk (1991) points out, of "such categories as the overall definition of the situation, setting (time, place), ongoing actions (including discourses and discourse genres), participants in various communicative, social or institutional roles, as well as their mental representations: goals, knowledge, opinions, attitudes and ideologies.

7 Shared knowledge of frames allows the omission of stereotypical parts of the shared frame. The greater the amount of assumed shared knowledge, therefore, the more exclusive a text becomes, creating thus a community of insiders (those who know), and a group of outsiders (those who do not know). The assumed knowledge performs the gatekeeping function of keeping out "outsiders".
Discourse is not merely *influenced*; it is also influencing in its relations to mental representations. Social roles have a *given* dimension to them (See Kress, 1985; Foucault, 1980) but they also have the function of constructing roles. See also the way a headline in a newspaper can predispose a particular reading of the news.

The outcomes of frames can be facilitating as in communication between people who share frames (e.g. in communication between experts in a field) or in the growth of disciplines, or they can be debilitating as in situations of unequal power created by differential knowledge levels, possession of unequally valued discourse knowledge and skills or where unequal power relations are accorded to each social role in a communicative situation.

A number of research issues for this study emerge from the insights that schema theory provides: What kinds of schema are instantiated in the annual reports? Where do these schema arise from: the disciplinary knowledge of the CEO? His/her professional experience? From schemas commonly held by most Malaysians or by people in general regardless of where they come from? Are the same kinds of schemas invoked in all the sections of the annual reports? If different schemas are invoked, does this say anything about the audience for each of these sections? How, if in any way, are disciplinary/professional schemas
used in the annual reports? Is there any evidence of growth in disciplinary/professional knowledge in the corpus? What kinds of interrelationship are evident in the annual reports regarding the different background knowledge and disciplinary assumptions of the different professionals - managers, lawyers, auditors, accountants - whose work is included in the Annual Report?

A related concept to frames is the notion of ideology. As the greatest contribution in the development of this construct is attributable to CDA scholars, discussion of this critical discourse analysis will be deferred until Chapter 2 where I discuss the distinctive contribution of CDA to work on genre.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis comprises ten chapters. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 attempt to define the problem space this investigation occupies and to provide the broad sweep of theory, especially that involving text, its nature and its place in the semiotics of human communication. These chapters define the terms of reference of the investigation: the issues on which its research attention is trained, the paradigmatic choices of theoretical stance the discipline currently offers and the choices the researcher makes from within these.
Chapter 3 still retains the orientation function but with its locus of attention now on social processes, the other limb in the relationship between text and social process foregrounded in the title of this thesis.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design: the objectives and scope of the study, the selection of the corpus, the approach to text study and the modes of analysis and reporting adopted.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are all data based. As analyst I adopt different "lodging places" from which to look at the data in each of the chapters.

To avert the unnecessarily cumbersome need to provide several examples of the annual report in an appendix, I adopt the position of the reader in Chapter 5 where I give a brief description of the various sections of the annual report.

In Chapter 6 I hover above the text to view its architecture and the relationships of this architecture to social structure and process. This chapter discusses the discursive practices and global features of the architecture of the Annual Report as responses to social exigence and change.

Chapters 7 and 8 look specifically at the Chairman's Report (CR). In Chapter 7 I lodge myself in the text moments that, to me, appear to embody and enact some of the typical semiotic functions that the business community performs through its discourse. This chapter examines the discoursal concomitants of social process as they are manifest in its microdiscoursal
construction of reality: in the macrostructure of the CR, its argument structure and its image-building practices.

In Chapter 8 I adopt the lodging place of the sociologist looking for evidence of the extent to which, and the ways in which, material processes - the process of modernization enjoined by Vision 2020, the processes of day-to-day running of a businesses sector, the processes involved in introducing a new industry - are reflected in the Annual Report.

In Chapter 9 my lodging place is that of an ethnographer. I roam through the various parts of the Annual Report gathering textual artifacts from which to construct the culture of the business sector (at least as the companies seek to portray it).

Chapter 10 ends the thesis with a summary of the main findings and a discussion of the implications of the findings for theory and for future research practice.