CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter involves a probe into the scope of genre as a flexible and dynamic tool for discourse analysis. The discussion is based on theoretical perspectives derived from linguistic research in the last few decades.

2.2 THE SCOPE OF GENRE

Before the 70's, genre was essentially to classify the literary arts labelling them, for instance, a myth, legend, tale, ballad, or a sonnet. Todorov highlights the fact that persisting in

> "... discussing genres today might seem like an idle if not obviously anachronistic pastime. Everybody knows that they existed in the good old days of the classics – ballads, odes, sonnets, tragedies, and comedies – but today?" (Todorov 1976:159)

His reference to 'today' implies a change in the concept of genre as evident in linguistic research and language studies more recently.

The developments in linguistic research in the last three decades have broadened the scope of genre to the extent that it is now a recognized tool for linguistic analysis. The work of Halliday is a case in point. As a leading systemic linguist, he describes the relationship of language to the 'social context' and to the 'social

roles' to be understood and investigated holistically. He points out that it is through language that an individual, by virtue of his social role, becomes part of a social process in a group (1978:12). He remarks

> **"... language is the essential element in the process, since it is largely the linguistic interchange with the group that determines the status of the individuals and shapes them as persons."** **(Halliday 1978:14)**

Christie, in his work on genre as a social process supports the claim that the concept of genre derives its definition from the systemic linguistic theories of Halliday. He refers to three elements put forth by Halliday, namely,

> **"... that language is a resource to make meaning; that language is not vocabulary items but a text; that there is an intimate relationship of text and context."** **(Christie 1991:74)**

The analyst concurs with this view and recognizes that these tenets form the basis of the concept of *'genre'*. Genre is thus perceived

> **"... as social processes because members of a culture interact with each other; as goal oriented because they have evolved to get things done..."** **(Christie 1991:74)**

Systemic thinking is not, therefore, concerned with the mechanical aspects of language, as linguistic researchers have been in the past, but with what language can do. The focus is with the function of language in our life taking into account the *'context'* within which language operates. This concept of language as social semiotic has since become an accelerated force in the extension of the concept of genre reflecting its social implications as agreed upon by several analysts, (Martin

1984; Miller 1984; Faigley 1985; Ventola 1987; Swales 1990, 1998; Christie 1991; Littlefair 1991; Ongstad 1993; Kress 1993; Bhatia 1993; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1993; Devitt 1993; Kay 1994; Khoo 1994; Tickoo 1994); and as seen in the diversity of talk and written genres in discourse analysis.

Devitt's comment on the social implications for example, is to note,

> **"Whether through discourse communities or some other social frame, genre must respond dynamically to human behaviour and social changes." (Devitt 1993:579)**

The comment seems to be in tandem with the view of *'new genre'* (Todorov 1976:161) in the light of genres being more *'clarificatory'* and not *'classificatory'*, (Swales 1990:37). In the past genre theory focused on *'taxonomies or classificatory schemes'* based on the analysis of the features of written or oral text (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995:2). While these facilitated generalizations on the form, substance and context, they did not determine or clarify genres as embedded in the communicative activities of the members involved.

Since the 1980's the developments in the field of linguistic research reveal a shift from this tradition, especially in discourse analysis, thus reflecting Halliday's contention. As also noted by Tickoo

> **"In analyzing texts it takes into account insights from several disciplines. Importantly, it also relates each text to its role(s) inside a discourse community." (Tickoo 1994:31)**

Genre analysis involving text, now assumes a healthy resurgence drawing on a variety of disciplines in the social sciences like anthropology, psychology and sociology. The hope is to obtain data where language is studied in context so as to have an in depth understanding of language and behaviour in a given setting.

2.3   GENRE ANALYSIS

Genre analysis takes into account both the social sciences and linguistics. It has become an area of research in sociolinguistics which goes beyond the limited linguistic tradition of research. The hope is to arrive at a holistic interpretation of language use. Over a decade ago, Teun van Dijk focused on this trend which is evident today when he pointed out that,

> **"Together with psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, discourse analysis has definitely brought linguistics to the realm of the social sciences. So we now may expect some rather concrete requests for help by other social scientists in the account of social problems. As long as we dealt with abstract grammars, sophisticated formalism, or idealistic speech act theories, our preconceptions were possibly respected and admired, but further ignored, in the majority of the social sciences. Now that we claim to have better insights into the nature of actual language use, and into the intricate relations between discourses and social institutions, we may have to deliver more than just another sophisticated theory or fancy description." (Dijk 1985:2)**

To that extent, widening the scope of genre is to clarify text to gain insights into what language can do. Martin believes that

> **"genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them." (Martin 1985:250)**

Current theory amongst genre analysts suggests that genre is part of a whole system connecting sociological understanding with linguistics (Bakhtin 1981; Gumperz 1982; Martin 1984; Miller 1984, Hymes 1986; Kress 1989; Swales 1990; Littlefair 1991; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Wilson 1991; Bhatia 1994; Kay 1994; Tickoo 1994; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995; Swales 1998). Ongstad reinforces the general view of analysts stating that,

> **"... few actions are performed, independent of the genre regime in the given society ..." (Ongstad 1993:23)**

It means having to observe and understand the *'culture'* which affects *'practically everything'* in the functions and operations of the organization (Deal and Kennedy 1984). This sense of culture applies to genre where Martin points out that,

> **"virtually everything you do involves your participating in one or another genre." (Martin 1984:28).**

Both Martin & Rothery perceive genre as

> **"... the staged purposeful social processes through which a culture is realized in a language." (Martin and Rothery 1986:243)**

The broader concept of the *'new genre'* applies to a wide range of text types in the fields of literature, text linguistics, discourse analysis, cross-cultural studies, poetics, and semiotics (Ongstad 1993:18). They range from the literary to non-literary forms like in the case of poetry to making appointments. This study is concerned with non-literary forms where the concept of genre is applied to speech events in a business environment.

Analyzing genres as a social process poses several questions. These have been raised by Ongstad (1993:22-23), Kress (1993:33) as in

(a)   Who controls or creates genres which have to be used by others?

(b)   How does the set of genre reflect the nature of participation and power?

(c)   Who has the power to initiate turns and to complete them in discourse?

(d)   How might the processes of genre be role giving where genres are seen as social action?

These are sociolinguistic questions that need to be addressed in genre analysis to understand 'everything' that is going on. Such an analysis shows the coverage of data that is involved in a holistic interpretation of the production and reception of genre. It also means that while the object is to understand 'everything' in practice, the researcher would need to decide what components to focus on, while knowing what may be omitted. (Kay 1994:75).

The areas of social science and linguistics are too vast to be able to include every detail. The researcher has to identify some areas relevant to the study.

2.4   GENRE STATUS

One predominant concern that preoccupies analysts is the question of 'properties' that gives a text the status of genre. A property that looms large in the recognition of a genre is 'purpose' or the shared 'goal' of a communicative event. Miller believes that genre must

"involve situation and motive ... because human action is interpretable only against a context of situation and through attributing of motives." (Miller 1984:152)

She differentiates between individual motive (intention), and social motive (exigence) which represent the community. This is equivalent to *'purpose'* at the individual level of *'intention'* and *'shared goal'* in relation to *'exigence'*. For Martin (1984), genre is a

"staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture." (Martin 1984:28)

He believes in the development of generic structure of the beginning-middle-end of a text to realize the goal.

Swales shares the views of Miller and Martin where *'purpose'* is the *'primary determinant of genre-membership'* (Swales 1990:46). However, he asserts caution in that, in some texts, as in poetic genres and in genres of conflicting purposeful elements, the criterion of purpose may be unsuitable. Swales, like Christie and Martin, believes that achievement of goals is realized through genres as communicative vehicles. 'Purpose' he argues is less overt and in some communicative events would need open-minded investigation by analysts. But in the main, he stresses that shared communicative purpose for the achievement of goals is the *'privileged property of a genre'.* The identification of *'purpose'* therefore provides the basis for the rationale of a genre with its *'constructing conventions'* of lexical and syntactic choice (Swales 1990:53). It is the difference in rationale that distinguishes one genre from another.

Another property that Swales alludes to is the loosely interrelated defining features that allow for a naming facility. These features as in form, structure, style, content, or audience would exhibit patterns or similarities. In the case of communicative events such patterns or similarities allow for ethnographic descriptions. The confusion seems to lie at the level of genre. For instance, Swales argues that 'correspondence and letter' are not genres as there is no coherent set of shared purposes. However, a 'pre-modifying nominal of purpose' (Swales 1990:55) as in 'administrative correspondence' or a 'good newsletter' would constitute a genre. Swales regards the former, namely, correspondence and letter as a 'supra-generic' assembly of discourse or 'macro-generic' according to Carter (Kay 1994:69).

Essentially the notion of text types, supra-genres, genres or sub-genres hinges on Miller's 'classes hierarchy' (Miller 1984) where the term genre means macro-genre and sub-genre means micro-genre (Kay 1994:68). For a genre to acquire its nomenclature means having to rely on a overall goal of a communicative event; a set of coherent shared communicative purpose; or even a label that signifies a 'pre-modifying nominal of purpose'. The purpose or goal resides in the text. The text, which constitutes the sub-genres, evolves to accomplish the purpose of the communicative event. The text, which fulfills the overall goal of the communicative event, acquires the status of a genre. The sub-genres might be considered 'staged' since they are a step in the series to achieve the goal of the communicative event.

Arriving at a name recognition of a genre needs flexibility to allow for the coining of new labels for the multivariate assembly of communicative events in the spoken or written medium. Swales subscribes to flexibility when he suggests that genre-naming can be *'generative'* and *'event categories can at times create substance and structural act of an amorphous background ...'* (Swales 1990:56). The provision however, is that event categories should lend themselves to genre status which means going back to the realm of *'purpose'*.

A third and significant property for genre status is to establish genre as a class of communicative events,

> **"... conceived of as comprising not only the discourse itself and its participants but also the role of that discourse and the environment of its production and reception, including its historical and cultural associations." (Swales 1990:46)**

The *'role'* of a discourse reinforces the aspect of *'purpose'* in the communicative event created in a given context. The social, cultural or linguistic aspects of the *'environment'* contribute to the production of a genre. The concept of a *'class'* eliminates *'activities in which talk is incidental'* (Swales 1990:46). Swales suggests that casual conversation, chat or ordinary narrative do not qualify as genres as they are incidental.

What does emerge in the discussion of genre status is the need to identify the *'purpose'* or the *'goal'* of the text; to provide a name for recognition, and to ensure that the text represents a class of communicative events, to be defined as a genre.

An adjunct to the forgoing discussion is the interest in genre as a social process. Genres establish roles and role relationships because of the defining features of genre status. They form the essential elements, which determine the status of individuals and shape their actions. In addition, the study of sociolinguistic aspects of setting, culture, form or structure to know *'everything'* that is going on, renders genre as a *'very powerful system of analysis'* (Bhatia 1995:39) to understand social action.

2.5   TALK

Given the discussion on genre analysis and genre status, the researcher takes a position with regard to the data on face-to-face interactions in this study. The talk occurs between the executive secretary and any others in the particular business environment. Viewed as an institutional setting, the business environment represents the formal office unit of the executive secretary and her boss at the top management level of a business organization.

While Swales (1990:50) has raised issues of genre status about conversations, the researcher believes that talk-interactions of the executive secretary which seem casual, have to do with business matters or the personal matters of her boss in a formal business setting. Talk would then potentially have a purpose so as to accomplish various duties and responsibilities stemming from her position as an executive secretary. Her position usually evokes *'unequal encounters'* in relation to her boss and probably more *'equal encounters'* with others. (Swales 1990:59).

To allow for an event category, the researcher perceives the *'supra-generic'* assembly of discourse in the office environment as the *'speech events'*. The rationale is based on the premise that a *'speech event'* is a social process emerging from the properties of a genre subscribed to by the sociolinguistic and ethnographic descriptions. By the same token a speech event in the business environment would earn the *'membership'* of a genre by meeting the determining features of genre status.

A distinctive feature of speech events in this study is its informality. This is a departure from the structural, procedural interaction as between doctor-patient, lawyer-client, and teacher-student in the respective occupational settings. The text of the speech events of executive secretaries in a formal business environment are diverse, informal, and casual and do not comply with rigid procedural rules. As Berkenkotter & Huckin suggest

> **"... it makes more sense to take a more articulated approach in which individual texts are seen to contain heterogeneous mixture of elements, some of this are recognizably more generic than others." (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995:17)**

So, while informal talk interactions of executive secretaries run the risk of being refuted as genres, they do create *'substance in an amorphous background'*. It is the informality that makes talk in such circumstances not only 'distinctive', but also illustrates that there is *'not a threshold'* to genericness as such (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995:17). Although the informal nature of speech events, in a formal setting for the formal accomplishment of goals suggests an inherent contradiction, nonetheless, it is *'generative'* and may claim the validity of a genre.

Another distinctive feature of genres of speech events is its anonymity until the text evolves and takes form to create meaning. As pointed out at the time by Bakhtin, when they were being perceived as clarificatory in the early '80's,

> **"The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as a language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance." (Bakhtin 1981:272)**

It is only at the end of the text production and reception in a given environment that there is recognition of the type of genre produced. In the written medium, there are identifiable forms, for instance, of reports as in a laboratory report, police report or a medical report. But the unlimited varieties of genre in speech events do raise issues of *'classifications'*. The aim of this study, however, is not to classify the genre in speech events but to clarify them to investigate the role of the executive secretary. Besides, as previously mentioned, the focus of genre studies has shifted from classificatory to clarificatory functions.

The researcher's position in this study however, is also not to dwell on the levels of genre as pre-genre, supra-genre or micro-genre because it is clear in Bakhtin's discussion on primary and secondary genres that it is the basic level of talk as in moves, speech acts, utterances or primary genres that matter. They

> **"...legislate permissible locutions in lived life and secondary genres are made up out of these ...... constitute not only literary but all text types." (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995:10).**

In a sense, it is a way of resolving the complex issues of *'genre status'* according to Swales (1990) or *'genre integrity'* according to Bhatia (1993). The researcher's concern therefore is to recognize the genre of a speech event as a social process to determine the role and role-relationships of the executive secretary in the business environment. As Swales himself points out,

> **"The interesting question for the genre analyst is not so much whether conversation is a genre; instead the interest lies in exploring the kind of relationship that might exist between general conversational patterns, procedures and rules." (Swales 1990:59),**

at the linguistic level and the role relationships of the participants at the structural level. His view seems to suggest a contradiction when he claims that casual, ordinary talk which is incidental is not genre. This holds true only in situations where talk has no purpose except to create a conversation for the sake of it. This may be described as empty talk with no specific purpose.

The potential of genre as a tool for analysis has been widely acknowledged. In this study, speech events within the ethnographic *'thick'* descriptions, aim to illustrate the *'clarificatory'* 'function of genre as a *'social process'*.

2.6   FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

2.6.1 Ethnography Of Communication

Ethnographic research by anthropologists generated interest among discourse analysts because it meant meeting the aspirations of studying language in natural settings. It has, therefore, become a mode of research for genre analysts. In the

field of sociolinguistics it became known as ethnography of speaking where the emphasis was on human groups but that did not mean 'a *neglect of careful linguistic analysis*' (Hymes 1982:37). Troike supports Hymes' emphasis

> **"that what language is cannot be separated from how and why it is used and that considerations of use are often prerequisite to recognition and understanding of much of linguistic form."** **(Troike 1989:3)**

In that context, Troike points out that ethnography of communication considers language as a socially situated cultural form and claims that

> **"To accept a lesser scope of linguistic description is to risk reducing it to triviality, and to deny any possibility of understanding how language lives in the minds and on the tongues of its users." (Troike 1989:3)**

Much of the early work, however, has been with the rules of speaking. This is because the diversity of speech was the main focus of sociolinguistics. Such studies, for example, by Labov, Sacks, Schegloff and Fisher discussed in the collection of sociolinguistic studies (Gumperz and Hymes, 1986) show speech varieties which indicate status subordination and social power in a relationship. In addition, the work of Dell Hymes and others like Ervin Tripp, Bernstein and Garfinkel (Gumperz and Hymes, 1986) have been significant in providing a broad based analysis of speech varieties. Their concern has been

> **"the ways in which speakers associate particular modes of speaking topics or message forms with particular settings and activities." (Hymes 1986:36)**

A more recent language study in Belfast by Milroy (Nichols 1984) provides insights into social relationship and social networks. This is evidence of the current growing interest in recognizing that

> **"A general theory of the interaction of language and social class must encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning. The relations within a particular community or personal repertoire are an empirical problem calling for a mode of description that is jointly ethnographic and linguistic." (Hymes 1986:39)**

The rationale for the ethnographic approach for data collection to support genre analysis is summarized by Gumperz J J and Gumperz J C as follows

> **"We must focus on what communication does, how it constrains evaluation and decision making, not merely how it is structured. We therefore begin with materials or texts collected in strategic research sites which exemplify the problems we seek to deal with. Rather than concentrating on ethnography, grammar, semantics or linguistic variation alone, we want to find ways of analyzing situated talk that brings together social, sociocognitive, and linguistic constructs, and to develop relevant analytic methods that build on the perspective of sociolinguistic theory ..." (Gumperz JJ and Gumperz JC 1982:1)**

Evidently, the trend which had already been set has relevance today in the study of language use in natural settings by observing and analyzing the various factors which affect its creation and production. It means that research in language is not to do with just surface level features but also has to do with macro socio-cultural concerns.

The interest in sociolinguistic research has encouraged renewed approaches in the study of language. The contribution by Hymes through his framework of

analysis in the ethnographic approach is significant. Troike supports Hymes framework stating that

> **"Ethnographic models of observation and interviews are most useful for a macro-description of community structure, and for determining the nature and significance of contextual features and the patterns and functions of language in the society ..."** (Troike 1989:133)

This statement holds true even today in the current trends to study language use in natural settings. Swales, however, expresses reservations about ethnographic research but nevertheless, relies on it for want of a more clearly defined holistic approach to research. (Swales 1998)

Bearing in mind the claims for ethnographic research, an attempt is made in this study to provide a holistic, if not a macro perspective of language as used by executive secretaries at the work place. The purpose is to understand the genres of language use in an integrated manner to determine the role and status of the executive secretary in relation to the social and communicative network within the organization.

2.6.2 Ethnomethodology

The contribution of Garfinkel and his work on ethnomethodology complements ethnographic studies and has relevance today in the sense that he takes

> **"a much broader and consequently also a less formal approach to communicative acts. His main concern is with the processes which underlie these acts be they verbal or non verbal. Meaning for this is 'situated meaning' that is, meaning constructed in specific contexts by those who must actively**

interpret what they hear for it to make sense" (Garfinkel 1986:302)

His view concurs with Gumperz (1982:1) on situated talk, and Hymes (1982:133) that methodology is more than the way a study is carried out and there is a need to be concerned with *'situated meaning'*. More recently, Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) emphasize the same need for analyzing *'situated talk'* from both the sociological and linguistic constructs. Their contention is not to rely on shared knowledge and descriptions alone but to note the kind of situation participants are involved in each particular speech event since that influences the production of genres.

The case for *'situatedness'* in analyzing talk is significant. According to Garfinkel (1986) analyzing rules of speaking and shared context is not adequate to obtain a complete understanding of the discourse (Harris 1989; Hymes 1986:33; McGregor 1983:271; Jacob 1987; Troike 1989). He claims that research methodology

"refers to modes of practical reasoning used by researcher and subject alike." (Garfinkel 1986:304)

and should be the first interest of social research. This has to be a primary concern to realize that a study of speaking entails issues central to an integrated view of language.

In empirical research this seems almost daunting and impossible. However, Hymes (1986:41) notes that well-documented data would help resolve this issue. Garfinkel (1986) also adds that is would help to arrive at general universal

processes through which meaning is conveyed. Ethnography and ethnomethodology are therefore not perceived as separate entities of discourse analysis but are rather more complementary, sharing connections between linguistic descriptions and behaviour. However, Berkenkotter and Huckin have reservations about ethnomethodology on the basis that genre studies are not ethnomethodological in the sense that Garfinkel uses the term. Nevertheless, they do claim that ethnomethodology and ethnography do coincide with regard to the aims of empirical research which would provide information on the general universal process. (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1993:19)

Although both approaches contribute to empirical research to study discourse analyses, the more viable and more popularized form is ethnography of communication where communication and the related interaction *'is patterned and organized as systems of communicative events'* (Troike 1989) befitting culture. The conclusion to draw from ethnography and ethnomethodology is to show how far genre has evolved from Bhatia's (1993:5) descriptions of the surface level of linguistic analysis based on lexico-grammatical features to the *'thick description'* of Geertz (1973).

2.6.3 Structuration Theory

Since the researcher's interest in this study has to do with organizational communication of executive/senior level secretaries, it is relevant to draw on the definition of Giddens' structuration theory (1984) and its application to

organizational genres. Giddens' structuration theory according to Yates and Orlikowski's discussion on genres of organizational communication

"involves the production, reproduction and transformation of social institutions, which are enacted through individual use of social rules. These rules shape the action taken by individuals in organizations; at the same time, by regularly drawing on the rules, individuals reaffirm or modify the social institutions in an ongoing, recursive interaction." (Yates and Orlikowski 1992:299)

Giddens' view of language as a social institution as expressed by Yates and Orlikowski supports the view that language is a form of holistic manifestation of genres as *'social institutions'* that both shape and are shaped by the individual's communicative actions. By situating genre in organizational structures, it demonstrates how one enacts one's role, and role relations, through

"interaction between human communicative action and the institutionalized communicative practices of groups, organizations, societies." (Yates and Orlikowski 1992:300)

The point Giddens makes is that in a study of language, human action and structures are not separate. His argument is that *'structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices'* suggesting the reciprocal relationship to be the *'duality of structure'* concept (Giddens 1979:5). The duality of structure is Giddens' conceptual move to argue that social life is essentially recursive. This concept is used, as Yates & Orlinowski have done, to depict reciprocal relationship between social structure and rule governed communicative activity. Giddens' structuration theory has parallels with Scotts argument of 'social order' which is *'based fundamentally on a shared social reality which in turn is a human construction being created in social interaction"*. (Scott 1987:495). To Scott, social

order represents individuals who *'take action, interpret that action and share with others their interpretations'* (Scott 1987:495).

The notions of shared reality, human construction and social interaction depict a close association with Swales' (1990) definition of genre and Giddens' reciprocal relationship between social structure and human action. These have implications for the production of genre where he describes interpretations as *'typifications'* where actions repeat over time, which is similar to Miller's rhetorical recurring situations (1984). When actions repeat over time assigning similar meanings they become institutionalized. Institutionalization, according to Berger and Luckman

> **"involves processes by which social processes, obligations or actualities come to take on a ... status in social thought and action." (Berger and Luckman 1967:54).**

Such thinking has implications for genre in terms of emerging patterns of discourse arising out of social action. Yates and Orlinowski, for example, refer to genre rules shaped by socialized habitual use of communicative form and substance (Yates & Orlinowski 1992:303).

These parallels between language and sociological thought involve the trend towards *'marrying'* language with the social sciences in a renewed attempt to study language in a holistic manner. This is a quantum leap in terms of evolving sociological thought. Berkenkotter and Huckin have noted that according to traditional sociological theory of Parsons (1949) and Durkheim (1964), human action is separate and external to social structure.

Scholars and researchers in recent times, however, conform directly or indirectly with Giddens' structuration theory (1984). It is seen as a more holistic approach for discourse analysis where human action and social structure are not viewed as being separate. Teun van Dijk, for example, comments on discourse analysis now as a study that

> **"provides us with rather powerful, while subtle and precise insights to pinpoint the everyday manifestations and displays of social problems in communication and interaction. It is here that we witness the realization of the macrosociological patterns that characterize our societies." (Teun van Dijk 1985:7)**

Yates and Orlinowski (1992) have been among the researchers to pull together the 'macrosociological patterns' of reciprocal relationship to point out the more holistic orientations. In their discussion on the evolution of the memo as organizational genre, they explain the way in which business practices and modern technology has influenced and 'shaped' genres of memos and business letters within organizations.

The discussion so far has shown the extent to which genre has evolved from 'labelling' and 'classification' to being a form of discourse analysis drawing on various features of anthropology and sociology. The role of ethnography and ethnomethodology and the development of genre conventions as an outcome of Giddens structuration theory illustrate the way in which the study of language has brought linguistics to the realm of the social sciences. The concern with the

multidisciplinary approach to language has given genre a dynamic role in the study of language.

2.7   PERSPECTIVES

There are several perspectives which have emerged as a result.   In focus has been the reciprocal relationship between social structure and social interaction.

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1993) have eloquently synthesized the interpretations of several researchers (Yates and Orlinowski 1992; Drew & Heritage 1992; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Ongstad 1993; Kress 1993) to point out the *'reflexive, reciprocal relationship between social structure and social interaction ...'* (1993:495).   Schegloff's (1991) concern with social structure in relation to institutional talk is even more illuminating in social interaction. He, agreeing with Zimmerman and Boden, points out that talk-in-interaction includes structural features of the wider institutional domain, such as power, status and its distribution in social formations like professional relations, gender or ethnicity (Zimmerman and Boden 1991:5; Drew & Heritage 1992:103). Evidently, there is no argument about the interaction process seen in this light.

Berkenkotter and Huckin draw on Mehan (1991) for an additional perspective in recognizing the comment that institutional forces *'are contingent outcomes of people's practical activity'* and therefore according to Mehan

"**this constructionist tradition attempts to locate social structure in social interaction... The constructionist line of investigation, studies the situated artful practices of people and the ways in which these are employed to create an objectified everyday world without losing sight of institutional and cultural context.**" **(Mehan 1991:75)**

Berkenkotter and Huckin summarize Mehan's comment to say then that the use of genre is both *'constitutive of social structure'* and *'generative as situated, artful practice'* (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1993:495).

While social structure in the context of an institutional setting is the area of study in the production of genre profile it does not mean that the basic mechanisms of ordinary conversation is irrelevant. In fact, there is shared agreement that such conversations can be *'central'* to the understanding of social structure and social interaction according to Wilson, Garfinkel and Sacks (Zimmerman and Boden 1991:4) and can, therefore, lend itself to details of analysis.

2.8 FOCUS OF STUDY

The focus of this study is to explain genres as social action arising out of its use in naturally occurring speech events in the work place of the executive secretary. The study tries to show that talk amounts to actions where action projects the outcome of structure, the interactional mechanisms and the kind of setting this constitutes.

2.8.1 Social Action

Genres, as observed in the speech events during field investigations, confront the relationship between features of social structure and social interaction. The relationship, in reflexive terms, is when the configurations of speech genres generate structure of social action. Following Giddens, it may be said that it is therefore, not just a matter of the institutional setting creating or causing distinctive spoken interaction but rather that the configurations, as deployed in the interaction, also prepare and shape the settings in which they occur. At the heart of the talk, genres are the structures of social action which emerge as repetitive, recurrent, specialized or particular configurations specific to particular episodes of situated activity.

Although talk is examined for the discoveries they permit, they are investigated in their own right as concrete interactions with two determining features. The first is the concern with the social structure of the broader institutional domains, which include the structured relationships comprising the social organizations, the settings, occupational roles, the situated identities or the professional relations. The second is the enabling mechanism of sociolinguistics, which includes syntactic analysis of procedures like turn taking, insertion sequences, or interrogation accountable for the structure in action. It is recognized that syntactic analysis of the interactional encounter would provide insights into the behaviour of the executive secretary.

The genres are drawn from the episodes of talk interaction that the executive secretary is engaged in. They involve analyzing the practices, which comprise the minute-by-minute observation of routines, duties and tasks at the time of investigation. (See Appendix 6). The participants in the setting recognize the practices and orient to it during the course of interaction as in the reflexive reciprocal relationship discussed so far.

2.8.2 Data Selection

There are two reasons why the concern of this study is on talk. First, in terms of the relationship between language, structure, and human behaviour, it is talk interaction that reflects ways of life. This is not in the abstract sense of isolated utterances or sentences but as a whole in what goes on in actual human lives as discussed in 2.2 to 2.4. Secondly, the subject of this study which is the role of the executive secretary, dictates a focus on talk interaction because more than 70% of her time at work has to do with telephone conversations and face-to-face interactions (See 2.5). Thirdly, the findings of the pilot interviews of twelve executive secretaries prompted the need to change the initial direction of research from written communication to talk, because in every case, it was noted that the language use was primarily in the area of talk. Besides, much of the written communication generated is undertaken on the bosses' instruction. The exceptions include routine communications involving travel arrangements or hotel reservations. Language use in the written medium therefore, would not represent or reveal the role and status of the executive secretary as required by the study.

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Out of 70% of work time on talk interaction, there is a high frequency of telephone conversations which represent 40% of the talk interaction as compared to face-to-face interactions which make up 30%. However, they could not be included in this study. This is because only the speaker response of the executive secretary could be recorded. The absence of one speaker in the observed talk interaction meant an incomplete exchange for the researcher during the observations. This posed a limitation in the recording of a complete exchange between the two parties which is needed to enable it to fall within the framework of a speech event. When attempts were made to redeem the situation by asking what the speaker at the other end of the telephone said, two problems were noted. One was the reluctance to give such details and the other was that it meant disrupting the busy work schedule of the executive secretary. These limitations of the telephone interactions hindered the availability of data concerning the speech event. Nevertheless, insights gleaned from these exchanges were incorporated where appropriate, in the analysis of their interactions.

2.8.3 Face-To-Face Interaction

Given these shortfalls, the focus of this study rests squarely on face-to-face interactions. Face-to-face interaction is perceived as

> **"the bedrock out of which all forms of interaction are built, whether the formal mechanisms of courteousness and tribunals, or the intrinsically mediated setting ..." (Zimmerman and Boden 1991:18)**

Studies in recent decades on face-to-face interactions have looked at different formal institutional talk and informal ordinary conversations (Schegloff 1991; Zimmerman and Boden 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992). Formal talk, as agreed by several theorists, are those in settings such as courtrooms, classrooms or settings for medical encounters. Informal talk, on the other hand refers to talk between neighbours, family and friends. For a genre analyst, formal institutional talk is more clearly defined and structured for analysis. This is not the case in informal talk which is less predictable and less structured. Nevertheless, informal talk does contribute to the understanding of social interaction.

In the case of the business environment of the executive secretary in this study, a clearly defined distinction between formal and informal interaction is less apparent. (See 2.5). This is because, in her position as executive secretary, she has to deal with a wide range of duties and responsibilities. In keeping with that role, she interacts with people within the company, outside of the company and with those linked to the personal life of the boss. This means the interactions in the business environment of the executive secretary is seen as a fusion of formal content with informal talk.

Secondly, this study recognizes that talk is orderly as shown in the conversational analysis in the last two decades. While there may seem to be an apparent incompleteness and incoherence in speech genres, there does exist, however, a sequential organizational of the interactions. For example, there are openings and

closings to genres, requests made and granted, questions asked and answered. Consequently, the initiation of talk and the related response create the sequential context of the interaction.

2.8.4 Speech Event

A speech event is where speakers share knowledge of the interactional constraints and the options which govern a number of social situations. The event is also

> **"... restricted to activities or aspects that are governed by rules or norms of speaking." (Hymes 1974:52)**

These rules (See 2.6.2; 2.9.3.5) are ways in which participants in a talk interaction apply modes of speaking, topics or message forms with particular settings and activities. This has implications for behaviour because the data being investigated is based on the use of language in interactional roles between participants. In other words, rules and norms applied in context suggest social conventions in relation to the shared values of the community.

Swales suggests a relationship between speech events and genres in that they are not analytically separate entities as claimed by Hymes (1972:1) and need not be kept apart (Swales 1990:39). What would differ are the situations and genres and the communication purposes of speech events (See 2.4, 2.5).

A speech event consists of a specific activity mediated through a genre or several instances of speech acts or moves, which are governed by the social structure and the rules, and norms of interaction. The regularities or patterns that emerge serve as guidelines for interpretation of social meaning, feelings and social action. According to Hymes

> **"Speech event analysis focuses on the exchange between speakers, i.e. how a speaker by his choice of topic and his choice of linguistic variables adapts to other participants or to his environment and how others react to him." (Hymes 1986:17)**

A unit of description for analysis of a speech event goes beyond a sentence or text to emphasize on interaction between participants engaged in talk. The features of interactions depict relationships among the components like language variety, choice of topic, the role relationship, purpose and setting. At the level of ethnographic description, according to Gumperz (1982:164) speech events offer a way of categorizing verbal behaviour bound in time and space in any community.

2.8.5 Speech Acts

The notion of speech act developed by linguistic philosophers first originated with Austin (1962) who noted that utterances conveyed the performance of an act. The speech act or several speech acts mediate between linguistics and rules and norms of the speech event.

In that sense, genres as social action has a parallel to utterances as speech acts. This explains how the evolution of genre as action was influenced by speech act

theory which emphasizes *'doing things with words'*. It means that utterances convey meaning when they accomplish an action intended by the speaker. The status of the utterance will depend on the role relationship that exists between the speakers engaged in the speech event.

The merit of analyzing speech acts embedded in genres of speech events is its feature of indicating the role played by participants in talk in a naturally occurring phenomenon. They produce action through talk. Understanding the social context that surrounds the speech act becomes an important aspect of the analysis of genres of speech events.

Further, the two aspects of speech act, illocution, i.e. act committed by producing an utterance and perlocution, i.e. the effect that the utterance has on the listener have a bearing on the status and role of the interactants. Besides, they also indicate who wields power in the speech event. It is relevant to include the *'deductive analytical'* facility of speech act in analyzing genres.

The speech act thus forms a *'sub-genre'* of a speech event (Kay 1994), or a move (Swales 1990), and is a necessary component for analysis. As pointed out by Hymes

> **"From one standpoint, the analysis of speech into acts is an analysis of speech into instances of genres." (1986:65)**

He recommends that more empirical work be undertaken to clarify the interrelations between events, acts and genres and the other components of Hymes framework of the ethnography of communication. Berkenkotter & Huckin make a similar claim by pointing out that speech act has

> **"... heuristic power when used as a deductive analytical framework for describing the moves that actions make in texts ..." (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995:65)**

The aim of the researcher is therefore to draw on the empirical data of this study to provide clarity on the relationships between cognitive, linguistic and sociological constructs of genres to gain insights into the social processes.

2.8.6 Limitations

The discussion helps to recognize the scope of genre as a powerful tool for a multidisciplinary analysis of language. This is in the light of qualitative research on the ethnography of communication. Although some theorists on ethnomethodology and the structuration theory recognize ethnography as a form of sociolinguistic research, it is not without its limitations.

Swales for one is not comfortable with the label ethnography. He describes the ethnographic type of research as

> **"something more than a disembodied textual or discoursal analysis but something less than a full ethnographic account." (Swales 1998:1).**

As has been previously mentioned, the researcher has to decide on what components to focus on and what to avoid for this study. The researcher shares the view of Swales (Kay 1994; Swales 1998) and gives examples of the kind of problem that can affect ethnographic accounts.

One such problem is the complexity of definitions and then interpretation like discourse community, social structure culture, or settings. For example, the term 'natural' with reference to 'settings' can have different interpretations. The researcher has to decide what language in 'natural settings' mean, by describing what is meant by 'natural'. Some researchers like Miller (1984) may consider rhetorical recurring situations producing identifiable patterns within a setting as 'natural'. Other researchers like Ventola (1987), Devitt (1993), and Kress (1993) may consider spontaneous dialogue in a service encounter or between colleagues in the workplace as 'natural'. Another is in relation to the 'naturalistic context' referred to by Odell and Farina where

> **"The behaviour of an individual can be understood only in terms of the whole social group of which he is a member, since his individual acts are involved in large social acts which go beyond himself and which implicate the other members of that group." (Odell & Farina 1985:506)**

The ambiguity of interpretations compels the researcher to try to clarify the complex socio-cognitive factors, the cultural and social norms and rules of conduct, the role definitions, status and power according to perceptions and perspectives relevant to the study.

Another problem as Stubbs cautions is one of relying on speech acts for discourse analysis because it is not always that speakers

> "... say in so many words exactly what they mean on any occasion of utterance." (Stubbs 1983:147)

So, one problem seems to be the distance between what is said and what is meant, and the multiple layers of meaning which might be literal, inferential, propositional or the social act which speech act produces in context. As such, in an utterance the speaker could be performing simultaneous speech acts. It is left to the listener to interpret meaning literally and inferentially to take into account what is said and what is implied.

To understand the behaviour of the individual in this study therefore involves

> "... a complicated matrix of linguistic, social and psychological processes which mesh interactionally and determine the nature of verbal interactions." (McGregor 1983:27)

Stubbs notes that for these reasons there is, for instance, the need to identify what it is, a hearer understands in the sequencing of taking a turn in a speech event among members of a particular setting.

Given the limitations, however, Odell and Farina refer to Denzin's (1970) comment that no one method of data collection is superior to another. Each one has its own strengths and weaknesses (Odell and Farina 1985:509). Sociolinguistic research has been seen to provide more insights into the relationships between language,

social action and behaviour (Kreckel 1981; Mcgregor 1983; Brown & Yule 1983; Hopkins & Evans 1988; Swales 1990; Flower 1989; Drew & Heritage 1992; Kress 1993; Renkema 1993). This is evident in the application of Greetz's elaboration's of 'thick descriptions' (1984) which has been widely quoted in several studies. It means accumulation of empirical data made possible through ethnography of communication.

The researcher records these limitations in this study on the ethnography of communication, in relation to genre. Nonetheless for holistic interpretations of language studied in context, the ethnographic approach seems applicable for language analysis in natural settings. Natural setting in this study refers to the business environment (See 2.5). This involves the behaviour of the individual (the executive secretary) which is viewed in the context of her interactions with other members in the social group of the business environment (See 2.8.6).

In the next section, the researcher develops the model for analysis for this study based on the foregoing theoretical discussion.

2.9   MODEL FOR ANALYSIS

The model developed by the researcher for purposes of this study presents a matrix of three parameters for analyzing speech events. They are the social structure, the sociocognitive factors and the sociolinguistic concerns highlighted in the previous sections. The interface of linguistics and sociology supported by sociocognitive factors of the observed empirical data, is intended to explain, clarify

and more importantly, reveal genres as a social process. The empirical data is drawn from the business environment and the circumstances pertaining to the role of the executive secretary.
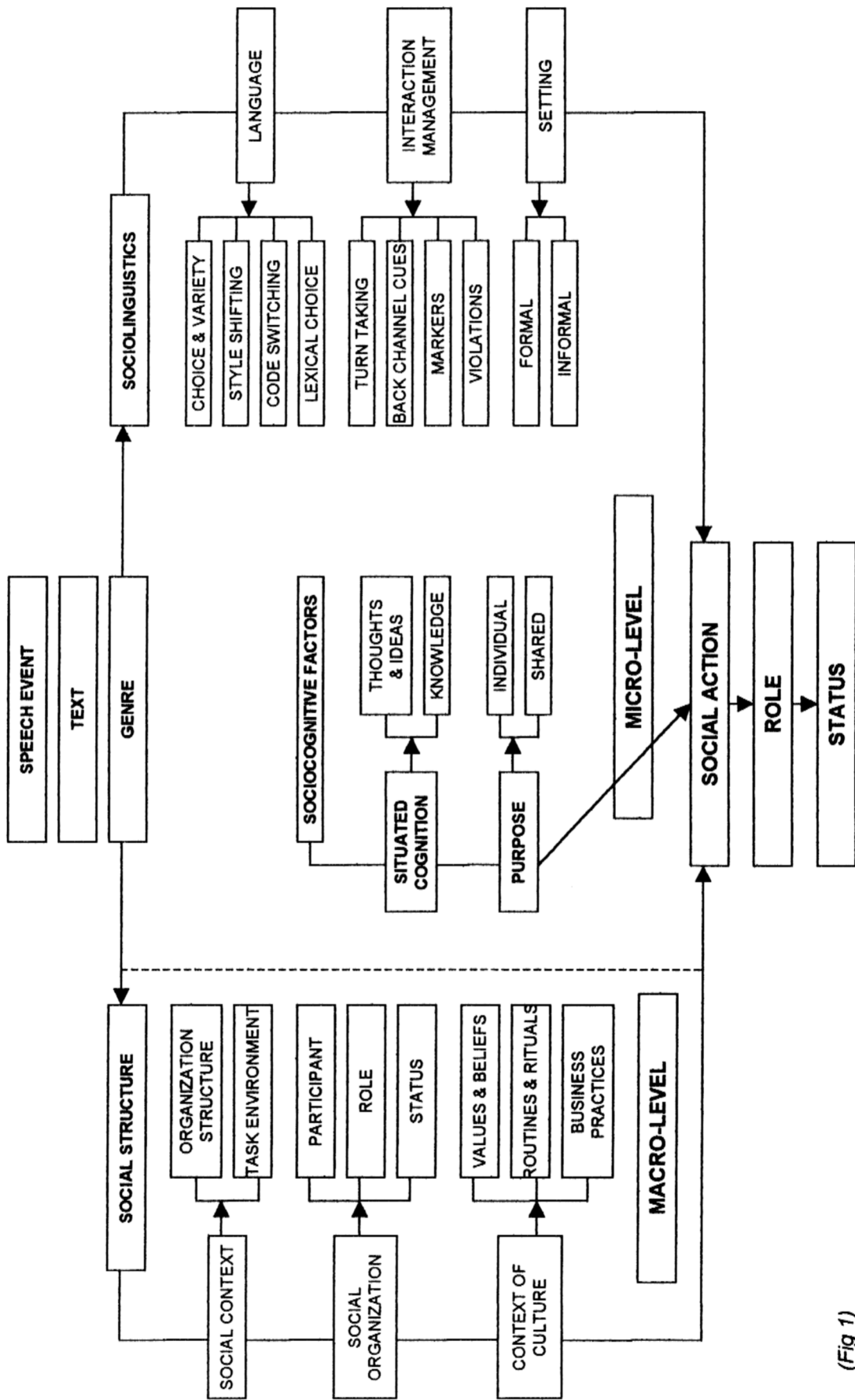
The three parameters are based on several concepts and components developed by researchers who are concerned with genres and the ethnography of communication detailed in the previous section. Whilst a broad based approach is currently the desired form of research for a holistic interpretation of language use, such research has inherent problems (See 2.8.6). However, it is hoped that the broad range of data accumulation would provide some meaningful insights.

The model by its very nature is complex. Each parameter comprises components that overlap. This feature reveals the interrelatedness between the components. The interrelatedness is a particular feature of the model contributing to an integrated, holistic study of speech events.

The main features of the model represent modifications or variation of Hymes' ethnography of communication and Giddens' structuration theory (1984) relevant for this study. (See Fig I)

The model comprises an interrelated matrix of the social structure, the sociolinguistic factors and the sociocognitive factors. The social structure or the norms of interpretation (according to Hymes' model 1986:35-72) deals with the business environment and provides the ethnographic descriptions. The focus is

GENRE AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

MODEL FOR ANALYSIS

SPEECH EVENT

TEXT

GENRE

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

LANGUAGE
- CHOICE & VARIETY
- STYLE SHIFTING
- CODE SWITCHING
- LEXICAL CHOICE

INTERACTION MANAGEMENT
- TURN TAKING
- BACK CHANNEL CUES
- MARKERS
- VIOLATIONS

SETTING
- FORMAL
- INFORMAL

SOCIOCOGNITIVE FACTORS

SITUATED COGNITION
- THOUGHTS & IDEAS
- KNOWLEDGE

PURPOSE
- INDIVIDUAL
- SHARED

MICRO-LEVEL

SOCIAL ACTION

ROLE

STATUS

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

SOCIAL CONTEXT
- ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE
- TASK ENVIRONMENT

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
- PARTICIPANT
- ROLE
- STATUS

CONTEXT OF CULTURE
- VALUES & BELIEFS
- ROUTINES & RITUALS
- BUSINESS PRACTICES

MACRO-LEVEL

(Fig 1)

43a

on the social context, the social organization and the context of culture. The social

context describes the organizational structure and the task environment. The task

environment describes the executive secretary's office and the way in which

technology has influenced the job functions of the executive secretary. The social

organization provides details of the executive secretary and the role and power

inherent in her job functions. The context of culture highlights the values and

beliefs, the routines and rituals, and the business practices in relation to the

executive secretary.

The sociocognitive factors helps to establish situated meaning of the speech

event. They consist of situated cognition and purpose. The sociolinguistic factors

analyse the genre of speech events. They are based on Hymes' (1986), and

Troike's (1989) rules of interaction. They include language, interaction

management and setting. The sociocognitive and sociolinguistic factors interrelate

with the analyses of the data concerning the social structure in Chapter 4.

2.9.1 Social Structure

The social structure refers to the norms or rules of Hymes' (1986:35-72) model.

This is to identify the factors that influence actions or behaviour of participants in

the speech event. The social structure is significant in the interpretation of social

action and is therefore important in the analysis. It deals with factors which relate

to the social context, the social organization or as the 'context of situation' and the

'context of culture' according to Halliday (1978).

"The norms of interpretation component should provide all the other information of the speech community and its culture which is needed to understand the communicative event. Even the most detailed surface level (linguistic) descriptions is inadequate to allow interpretation of the meaning conveyed." (Troike 1989:155)

Within an organization this means having to be informed about the organizational structure, the social organization of roles and the network of relations, the culture which refers to the beliefs, attitudes, the routines and rituals of the organization. As Garfinkel points out

"The basis of culture, is not shared knowledge, but shared rules of interpretation; not common substantive information, already acquired, but 'common sense' knowledge of what can count as reasonable, factual, related, and the like." (1986:304)

There are three primary considerations for the interpretation of genre in the social structure in talk interactions with regard to this study. These include the organizational structure, the social organization and the context of culture, all of which influence the roles and functions of the executive secretary.

2.9.1.1 Organizational Structure

Organizational structure as defined by Keeling

"refers to the arrangement of functions - the framework - that must be constructed in order to achieve the organization's goals". (1992:38)

Keeling's concept of an organization expresses Parsons' view that an organization is a special type of social system driven by the attainment of goals (1970:76).

Therefore the form or design of an organization is determined by the goal it sets. To accomplish these goals organizations establish a set of procedures and systems to constitute a structure that

"creates the conditions which allow concrete steps to be taken towards the realization of a goal." (Sills 1970:29)

The special type of social system focused on in this study are the business organizations which are in general, interactive and functional within society. They reflect institutional patterns which *'link the structure of the organization with the structure of the society as a whole'* (Parsons 1970:82). In this context language provides for the vital link with society both in intra-organizational and inter-organizational communication. These processes clearly support the views of Troike, Gumperz, Hymes, and the genre theorists mentioned earlier. They emphasize the need for a macro-description of community structure so as to determine the patterns and the functions of language in society.

An organizational chart in an organization is a graphic presentation of key functions along the principal lines of authority. They indicate the flow of work, the span of control, the chain of command and the main responsibilities of work in each functional division or department. The responsibilities of work in each functional division or department vary at the different hierarchical levels beginning with the top management level of the functional structure of the organization to the first line of the supervisory level. According to Troike

> **"the hierarchy or the lines of authority has to be first understood in order to explain language use within an organization." (Troike 1989:14)**

2.9.1.2 Social Organization

The structure of an organization based on each line of authority depicts the nature

of the social organization. One aspect is the mobilization of power which operates

at the different levels to

> **"mobilize resources in the interest of attainment of a system goal." (Parsons 1970:79)**

The higher the level, the more the power, authority and responsibility within the

four major functions of the business unit. Nichols (1984:41), like French and Bell

(1978) is of the view that the one factor that has a central role in depicting power

relations is *occupation*.

Where the occupation has to do with being a professional, then it is perceived in

terms of power and autonomy, as pointed out by Goldner and Ritti (1970). They

outline the criteria to be a professional as having

> **"...(1) specialized competence (2) autonomy in exercising the competence (3) commitment to a career in this competence and (4) influence and responsibility in the use of special competence." (Goldner and Ritti 1970:466)**

In the structure of an organization, there are various levels of competencies linked

to the occupational roles. While these have a bearing on power relations, they do

not depict complete autonomy because of the interdependence between the levels

of authority in the attainment of organizational goals.

Occupation or positions held by individuals, therefore, have a bearing on roles and their relationships and the communication networks which prevail within the organization. French and Bell define role as being

> **"... a set of behaviour enacted by a person as a result of his occupying a certain position with the organization in terms of the level of authority." (French and Bell 1978:56)**

The relationship between position and power shows that roles are not just *'linkages'* between positions but involve relations which

> **"link the entire collection of actors and positions throughout the network." (Wasserman & Faust 1994:349)**

The relationship between individuals and the business organization, therefore, rely on a social network based on multiple relations.

These roles, relationships and power with regard to the social aspects of the organization have profound implications for the use of language amongst individuals in the communication network. Language is a *'form of social practice'* which is *'not an external relationship between language and society, but an internal and dialectical relationship'* (Fairclough 1992:23). The language one uses reflects the power and position one holds. In a sense, who says what, to whom, indicates who holds what position within an organization.

Based on such relationships the production of genre in communication, whether spoken or written, would reveal the status, role and position one has within an organization. Ongstad's (1993:23) premise that genre is *'role-giving'* is meaningful and relevant to this research as he explains that by role-giving

"we mean that the use of the pattern of a certain genre prescribes a role, or better, a set of roles. .... by using the genres the users are constantly forced to take positions in their own utterance." (1993:32)

All researchers and genre theorists quoted, so far in this study suggest and even state the scope of genre and the extent to which the concept has evolved.

2.9.1.3 Context of Culture

Culture is defined in several ways because of the interest in the term by anthropologists, linguists, sociologists and psychologists. According to Adler and Jelinek, it is

"... a set of taken for granted assumptions, expectations, or rules ... emphasizes the shared cognitive approaches to reality". (Adler and Jelinek 1986:74)

Deal and Kennedy base their definition on Webster's New Collegeate Dictionary which takes into account all the aspects of expectation, cognitive approach and behaviour. It means that

"integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, speech, action and artifacts ..." (Deal and Kennedy 1982:4).

This includes the individual and others in the organization who subscribe to norms and values, beliefs and attitudes which in the final analysis respond to *'the way things are done around here'* (Schneider 1988:232; Ventola 1987:61). This means having to conform to the norms and expectations of the business organization.

Deal & Kennedy outline the main elements of culture to include the business environment, values, routines and the cultural network all of which contribute to behaviour patterns within the company. These elements have implications for organizational communication and the use of language.

To understand and analyse culture means having to study language use within the organization as pointed out by Troike where

> **"The very concept of the evolution of culture is dependent on the capacity of humans to use language for purposes of the social organization." (Troike 1991:32).**

The form and content of language is a reflection of the beliefs, values and cultural norms that exists within a community.

The next section refers to the sociocognitive factors underlying the production and reception of any text in the written or spoken medium.

2.9.2 Sociocognitive Factors

2.9.2.1 Situated Cognition

The situated cognition factors form the basis of text development of genre at the level of 'intention', and 'exigence' (Miller 1984), 'prior knowledge' (Flower 1989), 'purpose' and 'class of communicative events' (Swales 1990), 'social structure' (Zimmerman and Boden 1991), 'genre knowledge' (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995) and 'cognitive structuring' (Bhatia 1993). The preceding terms and expressions by genre analysts reflect semantic variations but they signal similar meaning. Essentially, they mean encoding a thought, purpose, intention or perception at the

individual level and realized at the contextual level by the rules of speaking. There is evidently a consensus amongst genre analysts on the *'intersubjective phenomena'* illustrating the dynamic relationship between the cognition of prior knowledge, genre knowledge and the *'external conditions'* (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995:5).

Situated cognition continues to develop as members of a culture participate in activities in the spoken and written medium thus contributing to a 'stock of genre knowledge'. Genre knowledge has a bearing on new events and experiences in recognizing the similarities. The *'recurring'* similarities perceived as *'typifications'* reveal the stability of genres in certain ways and to certain degrees. But the variations that emerge in response to the user's sociocognitive needs reveal that *'typifications'* also change owing to changing perceptions and changing external conditions. In other words, the concept of recurring rhetorical typifications refer to genres as social constructions (Miller 1994) or social institutions (Zimmerman and Boden 1991). They are a product of stability and change, shaped by rule-governed activity, which may be the same, similar or different. They do not refer to the factors of cognition or to the recursive reciprocal relations of social structure, which are unique from moment to moment and from person to person.

In the context of genre as a social process, situated cognition refers to the development of genre knowledge which influence the expectations of participants in realizing the goals of various interactions.

In the model for analysis *'purpose'* falls in the framework of situated cognition. Since purpose has already been dealt with in the section on *'genre status'* (See 2.4) it would be redundant to discuss these aspects here. The discussion on *'purpose'* in this section is in the context of interpretation.

2.9.2.2 Purpose

Any genre or speech act within a speech event is determined by the specific purpose of the interaction. This is, in the context of a discourse community, governed by shared communicative purposes and goals. The use of language is to realize the purpose at an individual level or in relation to the group or community as a whole. The interpretation of purpose depends on a multiplicity of factors such as situated cognition, genre knowledge, the culture, role or position as previously discussed.

Therefore the purpose of the event may not be identical to the purpose of those engaged in it. It is noted that at the individual level, there can be a degree of mismatch between the speaker's purpose and the listener's interpretation owing to inevitable variations of several factors like background knowledge and experience, position or roles.

Interactions do have *'hidden agendas'* where a participant may not say what he or she means in an explicit way, but rather may rely on what Grice (1975) refers to as conversational implicature or inference. According to Grice, spoken interaction is

a cooperative activity where the listener may infer what is intended by aiming to reconcile what is said and what is understood to be the purpose of the interaction. (Wilson and Sperber 1981:155-156).

The sociocognitive perspectives of genres shed light on the social process shaped by the linguistic interchange. The discussion on the sociocognitive factors is relevant insofar as gaining insights into social action. It is not the purpose of this study to provide an in depth analysis of sociocognitive factors but rather to illuminate the role and status of the executive secretary based on the nature of her relationships.

2.9.3 Sociolinguistic Factors

The sociolinguistic factors suggested in the model have been identified for their relevance to the role-defining concept of genre. Language as has been discussed earlier, is a reflection of behaviour, role and status of an individual. Five components that influence the sociolinguistic parameter will be discussed in this section.

2.9.3.1 Language Choice and Variety

At the outset the distinction between language choice and language variety needs to be drawn. In this study, language is determined by two considerations. The first is seen as the language which participants choose to engage in to negotiate 'meaning' given the context which include the speech event, the setting, purpose

or the topic and whether or not it is formal or informal. Some of these components or all of them influence the language choice. The second consideration is the choice or variety which takes into account the context mentioned above as well as the dialect, register or style. Variety then has a bearing on the various forms of speech in a community.

The relevance of language choice as a component for analysis is that some varieties signal social meaning. Scotton points out that

> "Language has not only a referential but also a relational function. That is, speakers use linguistic choices to index the social situation and to encode their attitudes about their relations to it as well as to convey information. The tacit knowledge that social meaning is encoded by using one linguistic variant rather than another is part of the communicative competence of speakers about their linguistic repertoires and their speech community." (Scotten 1985:103)

This is evident in the big business houses and commercial firms where English is still the predominant language as pointed out by Asmah Haji Omar. She adds that

> 'the diglossic situation in Kuala Lumpur up to the 1970's was one which had English as the higher status language (H) and the other language in the lower status (L)." (Asmah Haji Omar 1992:45)

The aspect of language choice and language variety is more pronounced in bilingual societies like Malaysia where using more than one language code is inherent in the local culture. According to Asmah Haji Omar

> **"........ Malay-English bilingualism is part of a larger context of a bilingualism within a trilingualism." (Asmah Haji Omar 1992:56-57)**

This is important to note in the analysis because speaking in more than one language suggests two things - first, the existence of various social categories where topics and settings influence the choice of language and secondly, a high level of social acceptance of code switching. This is usually supported by equivalent lexical choices in both languages.

The relationship between language choice and language variety is indicated by code markers. Code markers identify language to belong to a particular variety evident in the dialect, register or social category. Features of markedness such as grammar, or vocabulary distinguish varieties of language and render social meaning in terms of the interactions. For example, the relative status and role relationships between participants in a speech act is reflected in the choice of address, the use of pronouns or other linguistic forms. As Troike notes

> **"Roles are often marked by different pronouns or terms of address, and may require different levels of formality corresponding to different levels of prestige or deference which they are assigned." (Troike 1989:88)**

All these differences suggest that speakers are multidialectal or multistylistic. Language choice and variety show that a holistic study of language use in speech events takes on a broader domain where data relies on the linguistic tenets as well as the paralinguistic, sociolinguistic and non-verbal features of communication.

For instance, it has been shown that in a Malaysian business setting

> **"The first point to note is the dominance of English at the top level, and Malay at the shop floor. Equally striking is the almost equal use of both these languages at the middle level in the form of heavy English-Malay code switching." (Morais 1994:346)**

Language choice which includes language variety is therefore a significant component of the ethnography framework of analysis. Language choice and language variety provide the descriptive and explanatory purposes of behaviour which in this study is recognized as *'social action'*.

2.9.3.2 Style Shifting

Language styles are wide and varied considering the innumerable possibilities of language choice. But in the main, styles of speaking are very specific to an individual's personal repertoire of communicative competence. This means to choose those styles befitting a particular context. The context or the social structure refers, for example, to a task environment, the culture and values, the role relationship or shared norms and expectations. The reference to style then would be job-related while at the same time implicating behaviour. As Stubbs points out

> **"All speakers are multidialectal or multi stylistic, in the sense that they adapt their style of speaking to suit the social situation in which they find themselves." (Stubbs 1983:45)**

Style shifting refers to changes in language varieties in a speech event which involves changing code markers. Code markers include a variety of features. For

example in the social category this could be associated with social class or role relationships between speakers. In that sense style shifting could mean a *'downward style shifting from formal to informal'* as when the executive secretary interacts with her personal assistant and shifts from a note that is serious to one that is friendly. With reference to behaviour patterns a downward style shift or an upward style shift indicates social distance between or among participants. As Scotton has noted

> **"The dynamic factors affecting style choices refer to both the speaker and the talk exchange. In reference to the exchange, the style chosen depends on the parameters of the individual exchange regarding most crucially topic, medium and participants." (Scotton 1985:107)**

Style in a talk exchange, illustrates among other forms of behaviour, those who wield status or control in the speech event by the nature of the participant's contribution. This is in terms of directing what is said, and evaluating the talk by opinions, judgements, interpretations or by posing leading questions and challenges.

Analyzing styles in this study has a direct relevance to meaning as generated through the production of genres in speech events and speech acts.

2.9.3.3 Code Switching

Language code has implications for language choice especially in a multilingual community like Malaysia where code switching is a common phenomena in formal institutional settings as in firms, companies, corporations and government agencies. (See 2.9.3.1).

There are various definitions of code which refer to verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication. In this study code represents a verbal code which is defined as the different languages or varieties of language. Code switching is to change the language in a speech event arising, for example, out of a topic change or change of setting. It could also mean 'intrasential' code switching which is changing the language within a sentence or 'intersential' code switching which is changing the language between sentences.

As in style shifting, code switching is influenced by the various components which make up the ethnographic framework of analysis. These have functional implications on interactional behaviour. For example, code switching could mean solidarity, social distance, confidentiality, humour, a lexical need, a 'repair strategy' which is to change when an inappropriate code has been used or 'avoidance strategy' which is to switch language when a speaker is not very conversant in one of the languages or, perhaps, prefers to avoid recognizing social status where formal titles of address have to be used. In these circumstances it is not always a conscious effort. In fact it maybe that code switching is a naturally occurring

phenomena in a speech event with implications for the researcher to be able to recognize the solidarity or the social distance of the relationship.

Based on the shared perception that code shifting has functional interpretations of a speech event, these occurrences could contribute to patterns and regularities that shed light on human behaviour in relation to their roles, status and functions in a contextual setting. (See 2.9.3.1).

2.9.3.4 Lexical Choice

From the point of view of choice of language and choice of language variety, it is pertinent to note that styles, codes and lexis together provide for 'how' the speaker speaks referring to message form and what the speaker says in terms of the message content.

Lexical choice functionally is related to style and to meaning by implying a value laden context. It does not, however, involve a change in style or evoke style shifting. Deictic forms such as 'I', 'we', 'you', 'here', 'now', may be lexical choices to formulate context. In the corporate environment the practice is to usually use 'we' when speaking as a representative of the organization. Using 'I' instead, would mean referring to a personal identity.

Lexical choice contributes towards organizing and creating language patterns which is an interest in discourse analysis. This has to do with how spoken and

written text fit together to form patterns to negotiate meaning. One such patterning is lexical cohesion when words repeat in terms of meaning by offering equivalents. The reiteration in a talk exchange fix the context by creating a lexical environment with variation in lexical choice.

In other words lexical cohesion markers do not just exist. They are salient and provide 'situated meaning' based on expectations of the interaction.

These patterns of lexical cohesive signals have several levels of meaning. At the literal level the speech act could mean what it says but at the contextual level the speech act would be open to several interpretations depending on who is saying what to whom and why. As Gumperz points out

"Conversation is a cooperative activity where the participants in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand the immediate purpose of the activity to be." (Gumperz 1982:94)

He clarifies that message then conveyed is a function of what he refers to as *'literal'* meaning as understood by semanticists and *'indirect inferences'* based on Grice's *'cooperative principle'* (Gumperz 1982:94). It is this relationship between the components of participants, topic, purpose and setting, for example, that contributes to lexical choice in the production of genres in a particular speech event.

The outcome of genres integrating styles, codes and lexis in language choice or language variety are an expression of social behaviour, status, role and role relationships, power, control, consistent with the description and explanation of the overall interaction.

2.9.3.5 Interaction Management

There are a variety of interaction strategies available to participants. The choice of strategies depends on two factors, in particular the speaker goals which may be to maintain, to establish or to manipulate role relationships, and the norms and rules of a specific context which govern interactions within that context.

Norms and rules of interaction provide the unwritten guidelines for behaviour in a speech event. The speech and behaviour in the interaction may conform in varying degrees to the rules and norms associated with that particular context. In the linguistic tradition, the notion of rules is associated with grammar, but in the rules of interaction the concern is with regularities of behaviour in a specific community. In speech interactions the rules or norms are both situational and culture bound. They reflect the patterned behaviour compatible to the participant's role and position. They also depend on shared norms established in the community.

Interactions rely on a variety of rule guided features which determine the talk strategies of participants. These are revealed, for instance, in turn taking and its

related strategies, such as interruptions, floor holding, silence, pauses, or back-channel cues, all of which require considerable speaker-listener coordination These will be dealt with in relation to turn taking procedures

2.9.3.5.1 Turn Taking

The speech exchange is based on the systematic organization of turns between interactants. In the turn design, there is one who is the speaker who initiates the opening segment and one who is a listener who initiates a response to that segment. Such an exchange presupposes the attentive listener who knows what is going on. Besides naming the next speaker, the current speaker can direct a question or remark to a particular person. In the case of self-selection where the current speaker has not indicated the follow on speaker, anyone can volunteer to speak. A range of detailed analysis on conversational analysis by Sacks and Schelgoff 1978; Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Boden & Zimmerman 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992, among others reveal a general consensus on the specific features of turn taking. The researcher will provide a brief discussion on those particularly relevant to this study.

Some determining features seem to have emerged in the several studies. First, is the interactional purpose which affects the way in which a participant takes a turn. Second is the phenomenon of intersubjectivity where a participant's cognition prior knowledge and experience in a given interactional environment accounts for the shared understanding of

"... what is being said, meant and, most importantly done in and through talk" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973)

as quoted by Zimmerman and Boden (1991:9).

A third feature is the way in which the participants apply the rules of conversation of topic, theme and linguistic features to ensure accountability in the interaction. These formal features of talk provide for an orderliness and coherence in the overall genre even where unit utterances seem fragmented and coherent. The relationship between rules and interactions is the

"... expectations that their co-interactants will take their behaviour, whatever it may be, as produced in reference to the rule." (Taylor and Cameron 1987:102)

Rules mean conforming to the expected patterns of a speech exchange thus adhering to the reflexive accountability in interactional behaviour.

Each turn has a point at which a speaker change can possibly occur. These are likely completion points such as a sentence, clause, phrase or a word labelled as transition relevance place (TRP). The TRP is where a turn can occur. The structural organization of stretches of talk comprise turns with distinctive functions termed as *'moves'*. In a turn there could be one or more than one move. The move is a particular component action of a speech event which characterizes a setting. The sequences of moves form the basis of speech acts.

The subsets of speech acts comprising unit utterances on a turn-by-turn sequence are central to the concept of a speech event.

The normative practice of a talk interaction is context sensitive and is context-shaped. The turn sequences would offer a limited understanding if they are not interpreted within the context in which they occur. The context refers to the social structure (See Chapter 4) as well as the prevailing linguistic configuration.

Departures from these sequential organization of turns are seen as violations. Violations of rules have a bearing on the interactional process and the role relationship between participants.

In turn taking, the next speaker can be selected by the current speaker, or is self-selected. The participation of the next speaker is indicated in the utterance which suggests who the next speaker might be and what form the utterance should take. For example, "I wonder if I should call for a meeting of senior managers. What do you think Johan?" suggests the next turn is Johan's.

Such an exchange presupposes the attentive listener who knows what is going on. Besides naming the next speaker, the current speaker can direct a question or a remark to a particular person. In the case of self-selection where the current speaker has not indicated who the follow on speaker is, anyone can volunteer to speak.

Although turn taking is not governed by fixed rules determining the order of turns there is an inherent orderliness which provides for the social organization of talk where speakers take turns at talking without gaps or overlaps. However, in speech events such norms of interaction can be influenced by those who monopolize speech events or are assertive. This is evident where there are recognizable *'violations'* of expected turn takings.

2.9.3.5.2 Back Channel Cues

Back channel behaviour happens when one speaker stops taking turns in extended codes but continues to participate in the interaction by letting the first speaker know that he/she should continue. Back channel behaviour includes nods and responses like, *'Uh' 'Ha'*, *'Hmm'*, *'Oh Yes'*, *'I see'*, *'Aha'*, *'yeah'* or other talk actions which include restatements, clarifications, questions or agreements.

It means also that the listener is not taking the floor from the speaker but by these vocal insertions indicates a turn which is not a speaking turn. Instead, they are considered to be demonstrations of continued, coordinated listenership where the continuing speaker is given the right to hold the floor. In that sense it is a form of talk exchange to signal an understanding or confirmation during the course of the interaction.

Back channel cues contribute to interpreting social behaviour in the context of the speech event and the role relationship of participants. What appears in the

literal sense to be agreement or understanding maybe intuitively inferred to have personal or latent meaning. It is for the discerning, intuitive analyst to interpret the back channel cues.

2.9.3.5.3 Markers

Markers or boundaries facilitate a continuity rule to maintain coherence and relevance of the topic. They may be found at the beginning and the end of the fragments of talk and there may not always be noticeable boundaries like 'have I told you what happened ...? or "Now, I want to say that ...' In the absence of explicit boundaries, the researcher has to rely on intuitive notions as to when talk begins and ends to ensure its overall coherence.

An interesting aspect of markers is the evidence it provides of topic shifts and deviations as in the case of 'Oh, by the way ...' or 'Coming back to what we were saying ...' or 'That reminds me ...' are markers which cut across cultures showing universal patterns of talk irrespective of the language code.

These markers in some instances may involve a code switch along with a topic shift in a community where bilingualism occurs. In the multilingual Malaysian context, code switching is very much part of the culture. So a topic shift may generate a code shift which can be noted as a marker in a speech event.

2.9.3.5.4 Violations

In a speech exchange the management of turns giving each speaker the right and respect to take a turn to the point of completion is perceived as the 'normative organization' of transition from one turn to the next (Atkinson & Heritage 1984:29). Any departure from this sequence through gaps, overlaps, silences, pauses, interruptions or 'floor-holdings' is a violation which has profound implications on interpreting configurations of interactional behaviour. The taking of turns defines an important element of interaction management which facilitate the control aspect of the interactions. The researcher refers to two turn taking models with relevant social functions which provide an understanding of the control or power relationship. These are the 'signalling' and the 'sequential production'. (Wiemann 1985: 89-93)

'Signalling' by its very characteristics rely on 'speaker turn cues' which are guided more by a set of rules. To that extent the control distribution is based on recognizing what signals pre-empt the 'conversational prerogatives' between or among interactants. The speaker who regulates the talk is said to enact control. However, these assumed 'rules' breakdown in the event of violations like interruptions, for example, an interactant can disrupt a talk with an interruption. Such interruptions suggest a behavioural response reflecting authority or control in the interactional roles.

The sequential production model of turn taking is more flexible compared to the signalling model in that the participants have an equal responsibility to respond. The rule of speaker-turn cues by selection or self-selection may be practised by anyone who wants to *'hold the floor'* without visibly depriving the current speaker of the opportunity of completing an utterance. Each interactant is consistent with the sequential production of utterances. The choices of how and when a speaker takes a turn may define who is in control. Interruption is when the current speaker is stopped short of a full turn before the TRP. This means the one who interrupts takes the turn.

Where there are interruptions these may be noted as a tactical move to accomplish an interactional goal in some situations like enthusiasm for a topic or interest in what the partner is saying. In other situations it could depict a relational function as between a superior and a subordinate or it could be a contest for control in each other's topic. There are again, agreement type interruptions showing empathy or supportive roles. Interruptions therefore have a wide range and need not, in the usual way, be classified as rude behaviour.

There are several other instances of interaction strategies depicting speech behaviours where the basic rules of interaction are applied to establish, maintain or manipulate a situation. It could be in the form of self-selection of a turn where periods of silence occur in the interaction or it could occur at the point of a pause

within a turn when the speaker holds the floor. When basic rules of interaction are managed in this way it could mean the advantage of one speaker over the other.

2.9.3.6 Settings

2.9.3.6.1 Formal

In the formal institutional settings of the courtroom and the classroom, aspects of interactions like turn taking are constrained by established procedures and expectations. The genres suggest compliance, and a departure from the procedures may be considered deviant. It is possible to recognize genres of talk interaction like interviews, law court procedures, debates, doctor-patient consultation or lawyer-client interactions because these talks take place in specific formal settings like a hospital or law court.

2.9.3.6.2 Informal

However, the researcher considers the business environment as an *'informal'* institutional setting. This is because patterns of communication have greater variety. The boundaries between official task-based interaction and ordinary casual spoken interaction are less distinctive. A significant finding in a study conducted in a natural business setting in Malaysia is

> **"..... the importance of both conversational and formal interactions for the smooth running of the firm."   (Morais 1994:366)**

This finding suggests that informal talk in the business environment is a common feature in accomplishing formal business goals. (See 2.5).

McCarthy attempts to make a distinction by referring to *'transactional'* talk to maintain, establish or consolidate roles and role relationships. However, in interaction talk, as in the case of executive secretaries, these distinctions are often not clearly defined as will be evident in the data. In these terms the settings for this study may be described as *'informal'* since they represent a business environment where the *'borders between transactional and interactional language are often blurred ...'* (McCarthy 1991:137). Analyzing such data means having to draw on inferences, implications and intuitions as attempted in this study.

The next chapter provides details on the research methodology of this study.