CHAPTER TEN

VISUAL COMPOSITIONAL RESOURCES (VCR) OF TEXT COHESION

10.0 Introduction

Multimodal texts are composite products of the combined effects of all the resources used to create the meaning of the text as a whole (Baldry and Thibault, 2005). The combined effects are achieved through the different types of cohesive ties that integrate the different elements in texts which not only give meaning to texts but also provide them shape and substance (Bearne, 2001). In this chapter, the study introduces the **visual compositional resources (VCR)** of multimodal text cohesion as resources to establish cohesion in texts based on visual composition and visual perception principles. The chapter starts with a brief account of the sources from which the resources were drawn (Section 10.1). The section will also describe each resource of the visual compositional resources which will be accompanied by examples of its realization in the Malaysian b2b brochures. A system network of the visual compositional resources of text cohesion is introduced in Section 10.2. The chapter ends with a summary in Section 10.3.

10.1 Visual Compositional Resources of Text Cohesion

Cohesion involves connections among the different elements within the discourse (Campbell, 1995) such that they bind the text together as a 'unified whole' (Eggins, 2004). According to Halliday and Hasan:

> Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into the text.
>
> (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:4)

With regard to multimodal texts, such elements would comprise of both verbal and visual resources and relations need to be established between the different semiotic resources to create cohesion within the texts. Van Leeuwen (1993) has long recognized that the different signs, which combines to create multimodal text, is integrated spatially by means of composition as in a magazine layout. This statement brings to the fore the need to analyse cohesion of a text based on visual and compositional perspectives which can actually describe what makes a text, a coherent whole. This would thus complement analyzing semantic connections between the different modes that is between visual and visual, verbal and verbal and visual and verbal as explored by most studies in cohesion of multimodal texts.

This study proposes that cohesion in multimodal texts can be established based on *visual-compositional resources (VCR).* The resources are based on three sources of visual and compositional principles namely 1) Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) composition principles, Gestalt visual perception principles (Wertheimer, 1938) and the visual resources of colour (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2005) and typography (van Leeuwen, 2005). An analytical framework that identifies seven resources for analysis namely the resources of information value, salience, framing, colour, typography, proximity and similarity has been described in Chapter 4. The rest of this chapter is devoted to exemplifying the analysis in the business brochures of the study.

10.1.1 Cohesion based on Information Value of Elements

Cohesion based on information value of elements in the texts has been discussed in detail in Chapter 4 (Section 4.5.4) and it will be summarised here in the context of providing examples of analysis in the Malaysian b2b brochures.

Information value refers to the value endows to elements based on their spatial positioning in a semiotic space (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). The placement of elements on a horizontal axis (left-right placement) and on a vertical axis (top-bottom placement) will accord these elements with different information values. The placement of the elements on the horizontal axis accord elements placed on the left as 'given' and on the right as 'new'. Therefore, being the 'new' message, message on the right will receive the attention of the viewer in relation to the 'given' message, message already known to the reader. As such, the right has greater informational value in a semiotic space (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

This relation can be exemplified in Brochure 6 (Figure 10.1) of the Malaysian business brochure. The middle section of the brochure is polarised into a left and right zone. The left, the 'given' is made up of the justifier cluster which basically states the objectives of the programme. The right, the 'new', is made up of more varied information which are the details of the programmes as well as the two kinds of incentives for participating in the programme. The right, therefore, consists of information that warrants attention of the readers and this is further enhanced by the manner in which the information is presented. For example, the incentives are presented enclosed within a kind of semi-circle graphic with embolden, italicised word ***'PLUS'*** to draw the attention of the readers. This makes it

more salient in relation to the information on the left (objective cluster) in which its long phrases are presented in a linear form. The repeated use of bullet points in the textual block of this left section also adds to the monotony of its presentation and therefore, could be considered as being less salient.

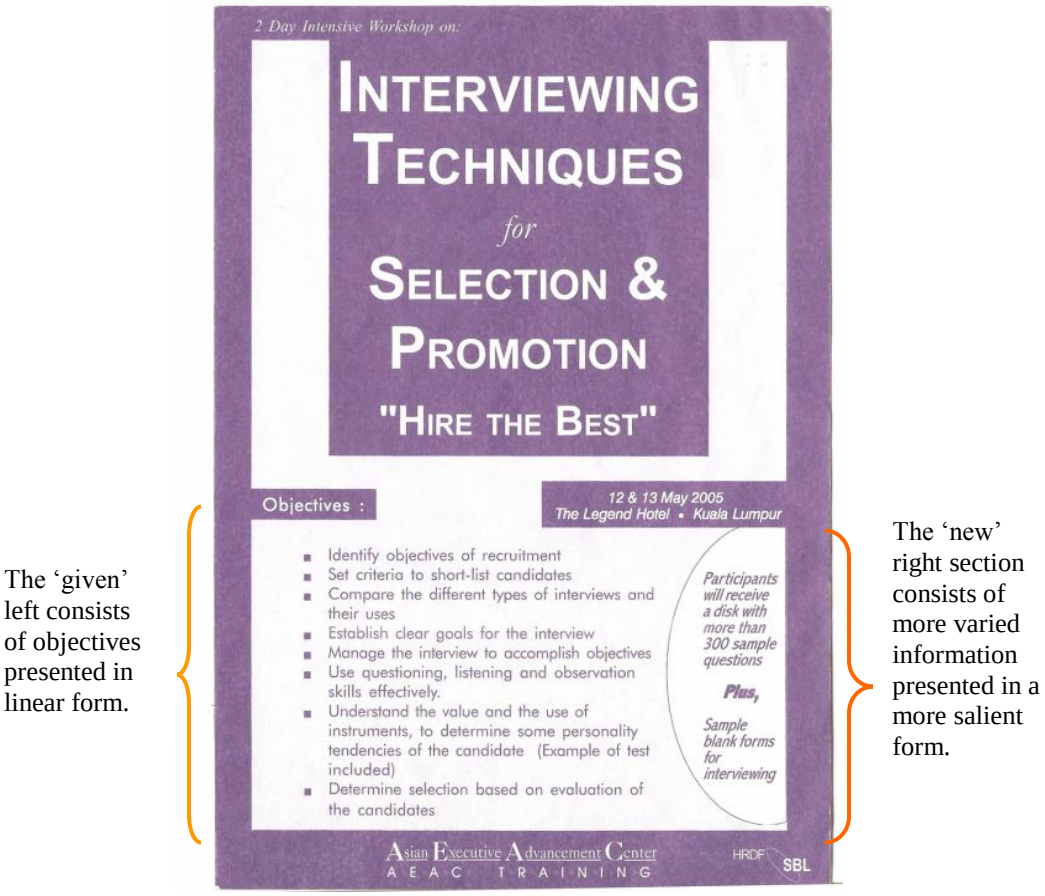


Figure 10.1
The relatively more salient 'new' right section of Brochure 6

The vertical placements of elements also accord different information values for elements placed on the top of the page and on the bottom of the page. The top is where the element that posits the 'ideal' message is placed in relation to the relatively 'real' message which is usually placed at the bottom. In this structure, the idealised is the more salient element (van Leeuwen, 2005). This realisation can be seen in Brochure 1 (Figure 10.2) where the title cluster of the brochure is the 'ideal' message announcing to the readers the training programme to be conducted. The message takes up the entire top section of the brochure

and due to the title's large, capitalized, bold font and its placement in the center of the top half of the page makes it very salient in comparison to the bottom section.

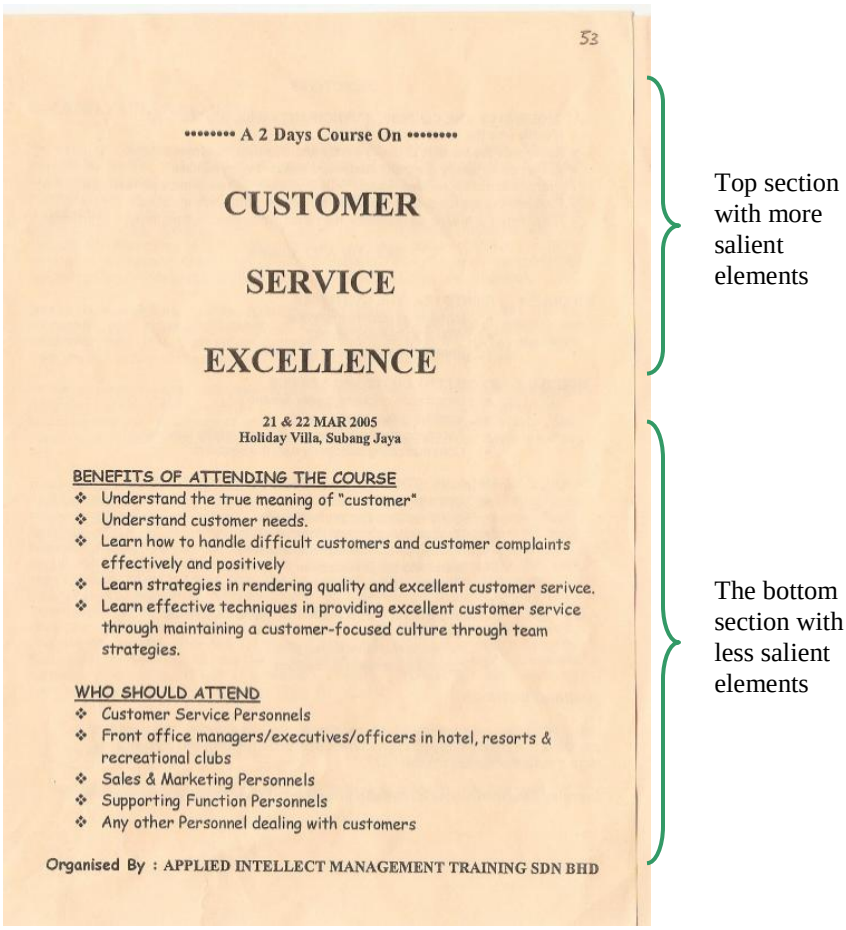


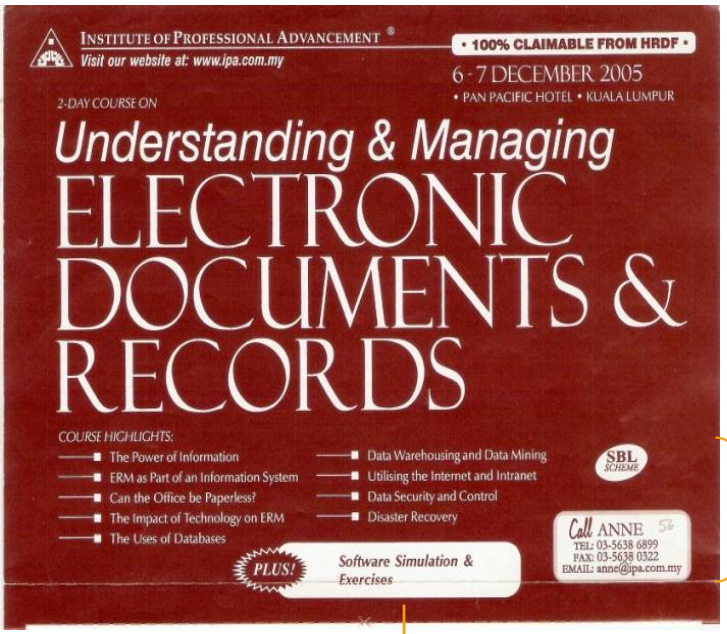
Figure 10.2
The relatively more salient 'ideal' top section in Brochure 1

On the other hand, the bottom relays 'real' information that is the dates and venue of the programme (programme information super cluster), the benefits (justifier super cluster), the target audience (programme information super cluster) and the company (signature super cluster) conducting the programme. The information is presented in a less salient linear form with bullet pointed long phrases in a much smaller font size.

Elements can also be placed in a centre-margin arrangement. Elements in the centre of such a placement have a relatively higher information value in relation to the elements

placed in the margins since these elements are in a subordinate relationship with the centre, the focus of the text (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Combinations of given and new with centre and margin could result in a horizontal triptych where the center is flanked by the given on the left and new on the right. In such a structure, the left is "regarded as a slightly less important position" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:197).

This is evident in Brochure 19 (Figure 10.3) where the bottom left consists of the course highlights cluster which is comparatively less salient to the bottom middle and bottom right zones. The bottom middle zone has a focuser highlighting the methodology (programme information super cluster) printed in bold and framed against a white background while the bottom right has two focusers highlighting the incentive super cluster and call and contact information of the programme (response solicitation super cluster) which are also framed against a white background.



The less salient bottom left zone

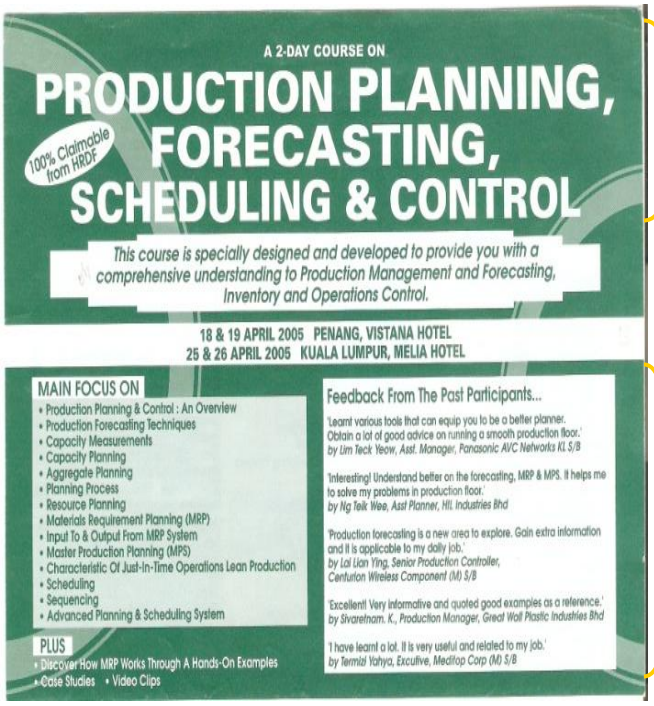
The more salient bottom right zone

The more salient bottom center

Figure 10.3
The position of the zones in the horizontal triptych of Brochure 19 and their relative salience

The use of focusers, colours and framing are resources which bring about salience in the elements and subsequently render them to be more important in relation to the elements placed on the left.

A vertical triptych is formed when a centre exists between the 'ideal' top and the 'real' bottom. In this structure, the center is the mediator of the 'real' and the 'ideal' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Brochure 61 in Figure 10.4 shows that the middle section (texts of smaller font compared to the title section and not presented in columns like the bottom section) consists of the justifier and programme information super clusters which provide general information about the programme announced in the title at the top section. Similarly, the middle section provides the background for a more detailed description of the programme found in the 'real' bottom section of the brochure. Thus, relations are established through the vertical triptych structure of the text.



The 'ideal' top section with a generalised statement of the title

The 'mediator' centre with general information about the programme

The 'real' bottom section with specific details of the proramme

Figure 10.4
The relative positions of the 'ideal', 'mediator' and 'real' sections in Brochure 61 and their elements

Figure 10.5 provides a visual summary of the relations based the information value theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006).

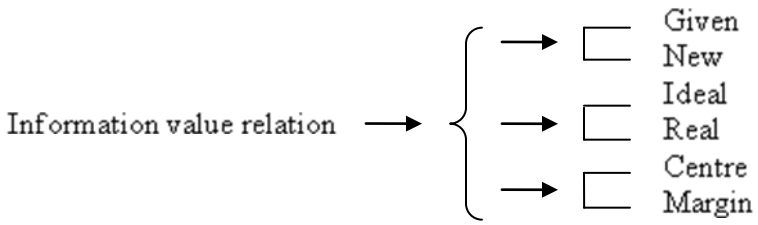


Figure 10.5
The information value relation

10.1.2 Cohesion Based on Salience

Salience refers to the way elements are determined to have more weight in relation to others. The weight is derived from its perceptual salience (van Leeuwen, 2005) where the "viewer's spatial composition are intuitively able to judge the 'weight' of the various elements of a composition, and the greater the weight of an element, the greater its salience" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 212). Salience can be determined by a complex interaction of several factors or it may make use of only some of the factors: size, sharpness of focus, colour and colour contrast and perspective with placement in visual field adding weight to the element (van Leeuwen, 2005). This can be exemplified in the title of Brochure 23 (Figure 10.6) of the Malaysian business brochure.

The title of this brochure is made salient by the interaction of factors like size, colour and its placement in the brochure. Not only does it have the biggest font size in relation to the other font on the page, the letters in the title cluster are also capitalized and red in colour. The fact that the title is placed at the top of the page makes it even more salient. Thus, salience as a visual compositional resource in text cohesion highlights relations of

elements in a space in terms of how elements are more salient in relation to others in the same space.

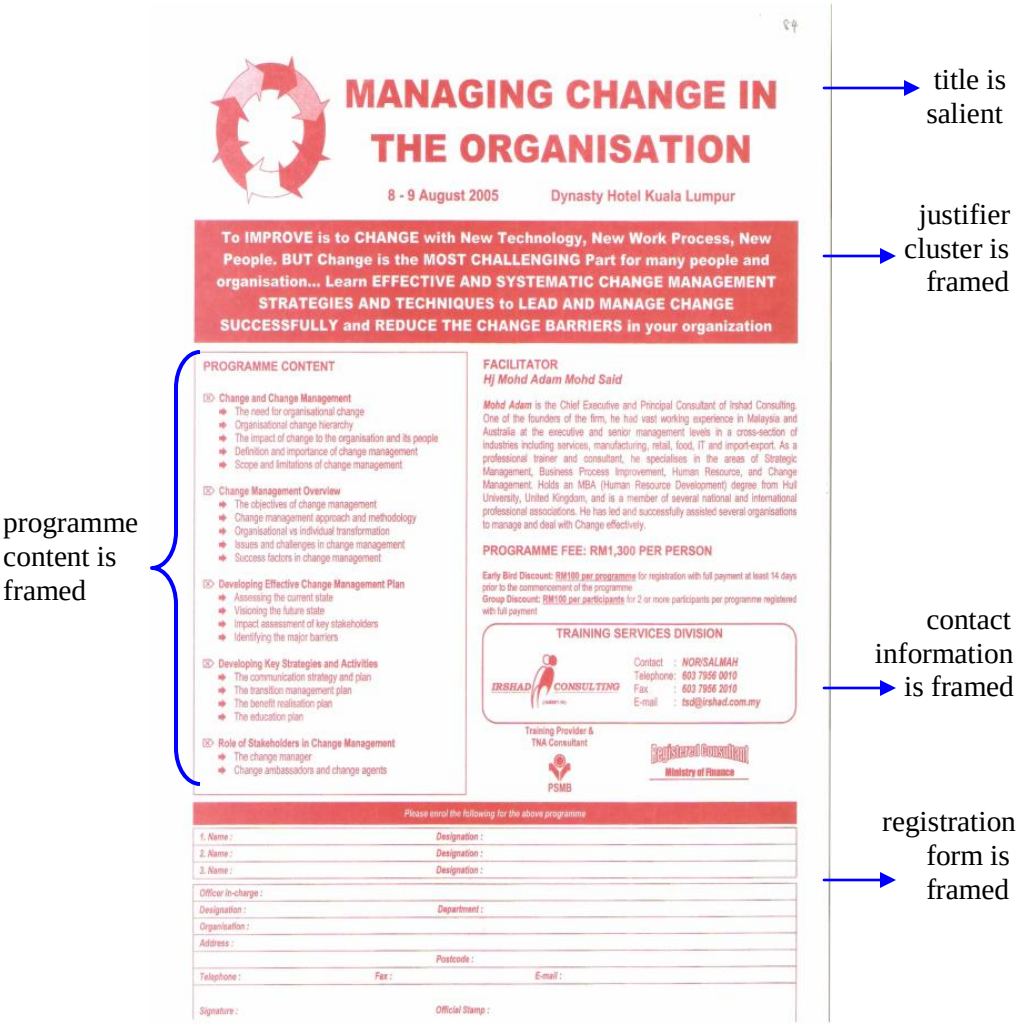


Figure 10.6
Salience of the title and framing
of the textual blocks as cohesive devices in Brochure 23

Figure 10.7 is a summary of the elements that can be discussed in terms of their salience in relation to other elements within the texts.

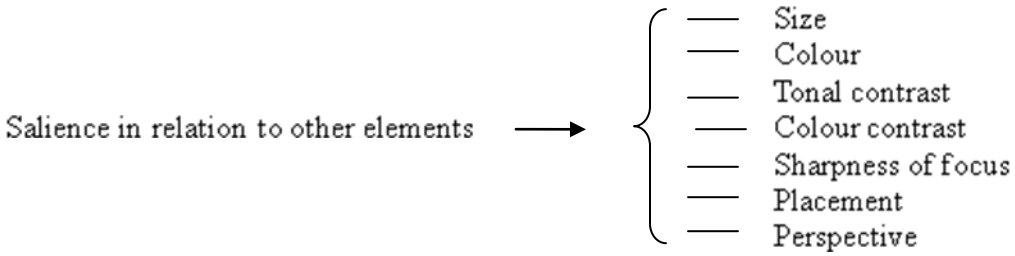


Figure 10.7
The salience relations

10.1.3 Cohesion Based on Framing

Framing refers to how elements are perceived as being disconnected or connected such that viewers can determine what elements are connected or disconnected when looking at the page. The sense of connection between elements on a page is created by means of similarities between elements and the absence of framing devices such as frame lines, empty space between elements or discontinuities of various kinds such as discontinuities of colour and shape (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:204).

The sense of connection and disconnection can be exemplified in Brochure 23 (Figure 10.6). In this brochure, framing is realised through the background colour of the justifier super cluster which forms the frame for the text. Framing is also realized through the frame lines present around the programme content cluster, the company contact information (signature cluster) and the registration form (response solicitation super cluster). These framing devices thus disconnect these elements from the other elements in the text and placed the elements within the frame as belonging to each other. Empty spaces between the information about the facilitator (credibility super cluster) and the programme fee (value super cluster) and between the programme fee with information about fee discounts (incentive super cluster) similarly disconnects the two kinds of information. Nevertheless, the space between them is comparatively small showing that there is a sense of connection especially that between the information about programme fee (value super cluster) and discounts (incentive super cluster) as the information are also semantically linked.

However, connection exists between all the elements on the page as they share similar semiotic space with white as the unifying background colour. The page thus becomes the

frame for all the elements. This is further enhanced by the colour rhyme throughout the text like in the typography where the title of the programme and the verbal texts are of similar colour and in the graphics and the background of the framed textual block which also make use of the same colour as in the typography. Figure 10.8 summarises the resource of framing and its realizations in establishing cohesion in texts.

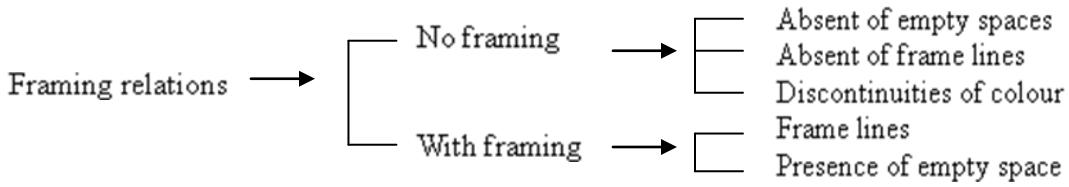


Figure 10.8
The framing relations

10.1.4 Cohesion Based on Colour

Colour as a visual compositional resource in printed text cohesion is derived from Kress and van Leeuwen's research (2002) that recognizes colour as being a resource that could establish links across different elements. Colour has been used to create coherence in texts, for example, in science books to provide topical unity and in magazines, when colour coding is used as a means of establishing cohesion (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Other researchers have also included colour as a resource for compositional meaning in multimodal text using the semiotic perspective (Lemke, 2002; O'Halloran, 2005; Thibault, 2000).

In the Malaysian business brochure, colour rhyme (the use of similar colour) and colour coordination (the use of colour from the same scheme) are the usual means of promoting cohesion across modalities. Thus, colour rhyme and colour coordination provide the realizations for promoting cohesion in texts that use colour as a resource (Figure 10.9).

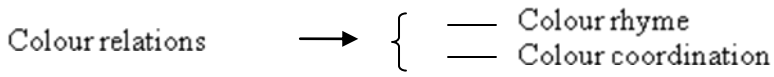


Figure 10.9
The colour relations

The resource of colour as a cohesive device can be exemplified in Brochure 23 (Figure 10.10). In Brochure 23, red is repeatedly used in different elements of the text. Red is used not only in the typography but also in the graphics, frame lines and also as the background colour of the justifier cluster.

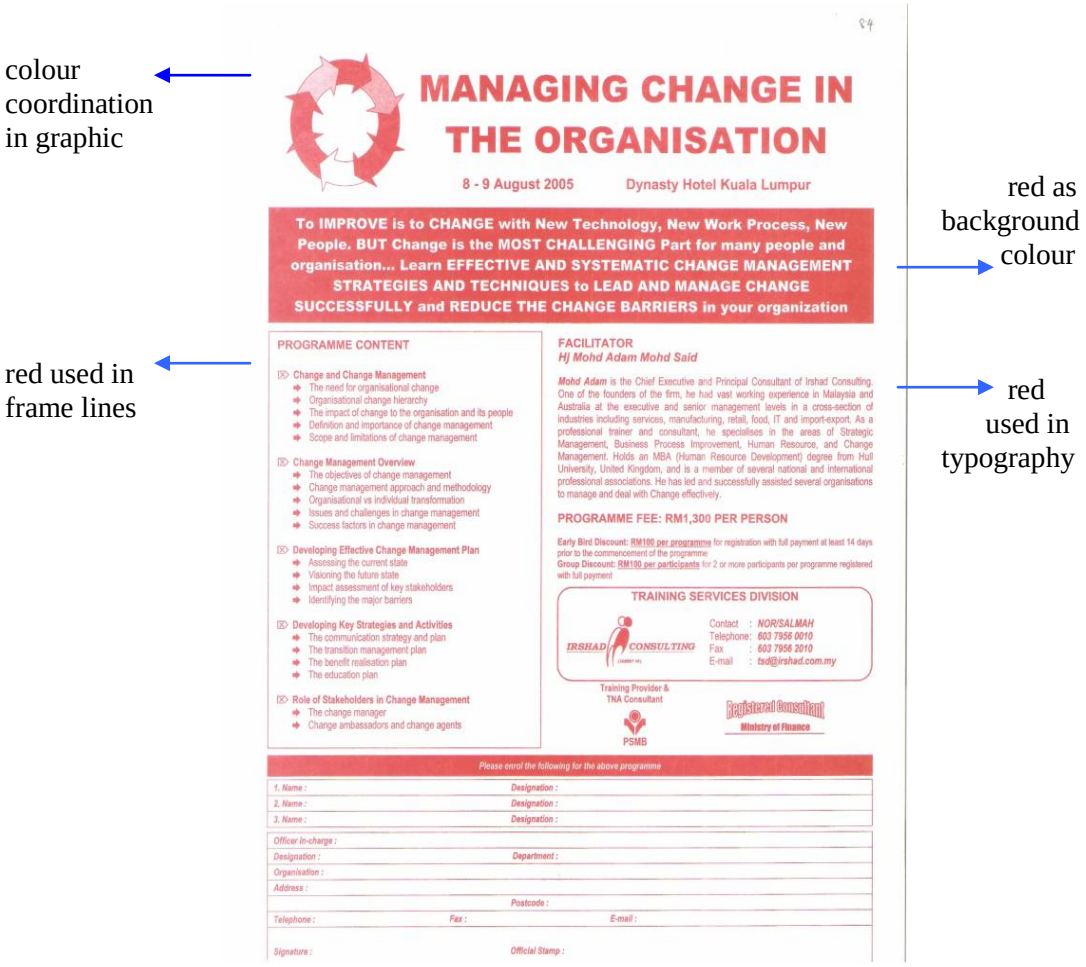


Figure 10.10
Colour rhyme and colour coordination as cohesive devices in Brochure 23

Similarly, colour coordination, where a range of colours in a particular colour scheme or various colours that have a similar degree of brightness and/or saturation, can also be used to create cohesion in multimodal texts (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). This is evident in the graphics of Brochure 23 (Figure 10.10) where variations of red are used. Thus, colour can be described as one of the important cohesive devices to promote cohesion.

10.1.5 Cohesion Based on Typography

Typography is termed as 'visual language' (Stöckl, 2005) as it is usually associated with letter forms, number forms and involves visual judgments of the elements. It also includes (typo)graphic signs like punctuation marks, bullet points, lines, arrows and new non-letter signs like emoticons that have emerged and used in email messages (van Leeuwen, 2005). Furthermore, graphic signs of writing can assume pictorial forms, form shapes which stand for objects from reality or illustrate emotions (Stöckl, 2005).

Typography can be described in terms of their distinctive features such as weight, expansion, slope, curvature, connectivity, orientation, regularity, and non-distinctive features like serifs (van Leeuwen, 2005) or in terms of their graphic qualities like type, size and colour (Stöckl, 2005). Similarities found with regard to any or some of these features of the typography throughout the text would create cohesion.

Cohesion could also be created by meanings or functions realised through graphic signs such as bullet points and arrows. In analysing an advertisement, van Leeuwen (2005) proposes that the grammar of a text could be realised visually where participants are

marked by framing and colour while the process is realised by an arrow, a graphic sign. Thus, cohesion is achieved by the visual-verbal relation. This can be exemplified in Brochure 51 of the data (Figure 10.11).

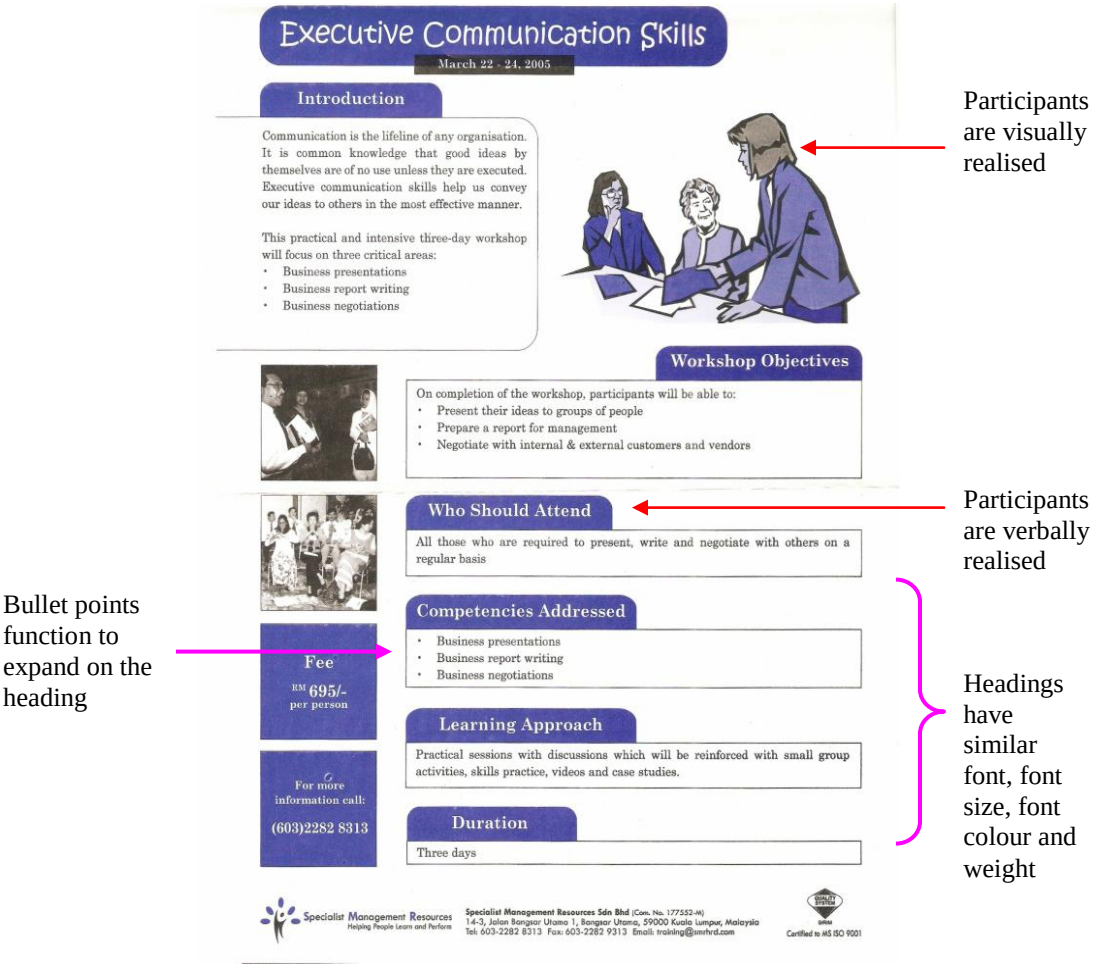


Figure 10.11
Cohesion realised through typography in Brochure 51

In this brochure, the participants of the training programme, are visually realised in terms of photographs and illustration and verbally realised in the text under the heading 'Who should attend'. Cohesive relations can also be seen in the headings of some textual blocks which are accompanied by texts which are bullet-pointed. The use of bullet points, a kind of graphic sign, functions to expand on the heading stated by itemising information with regard to the heading. This link between the heading and the information that accompanies it creates cohesion. Itemising information in the form of bullet-point is a

common realization in the data of this study. Similarly, clear and simple text type interspersed with bold and large font size and ample use of space to group information are also common typographical features of the data. These elements facilitate fast and easy reading for time constrained corporate customers, the readers of the brochures. Figure 10.12 is a visual summary of the elements used in realising relations for the resource of typography.

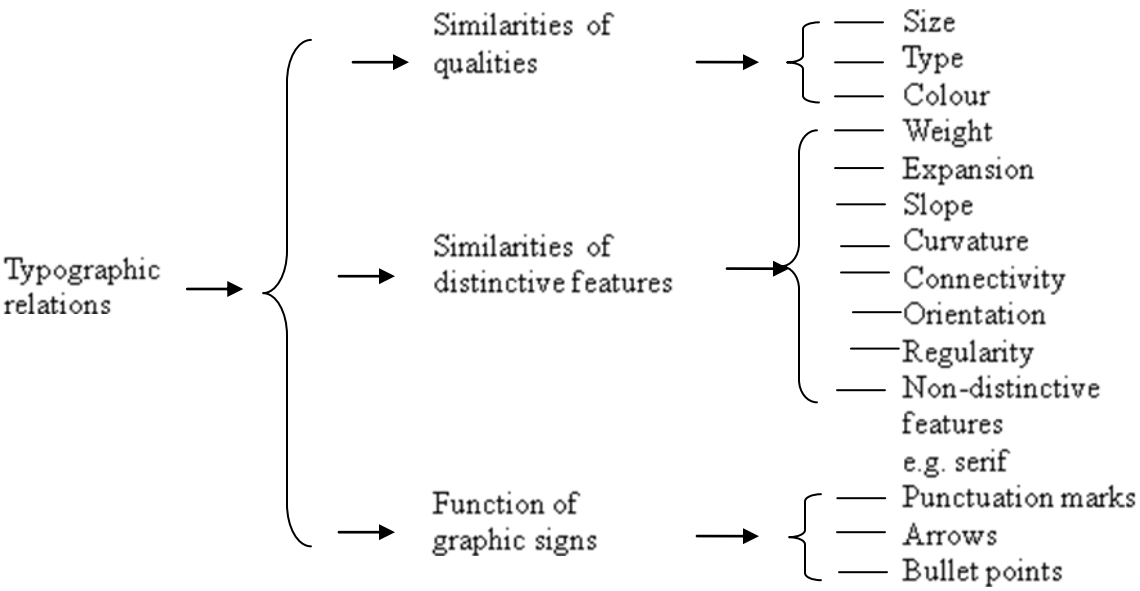


Figure 10.12
The typographic relations

10.1.6 Cohesion Based on Proximity

Proximity refers to the way elements are placed in relation to each other. The Gestalt principle of proximity describes the human preference to perceive items that are physically close to each other, as related to each other. The principle of proximity has also been recognized in typography. Walker (2000) states that typographers employ the proximity principle when they use space to group components.

In Brochure 51 (Figure 10.13), the dates on which the programme will be conducted are grouped together in the title super cluster as a portion of the information is already within the space of the super cluster. The relation between the two elements is further justified by the fact that both elements provide general information about the programme.

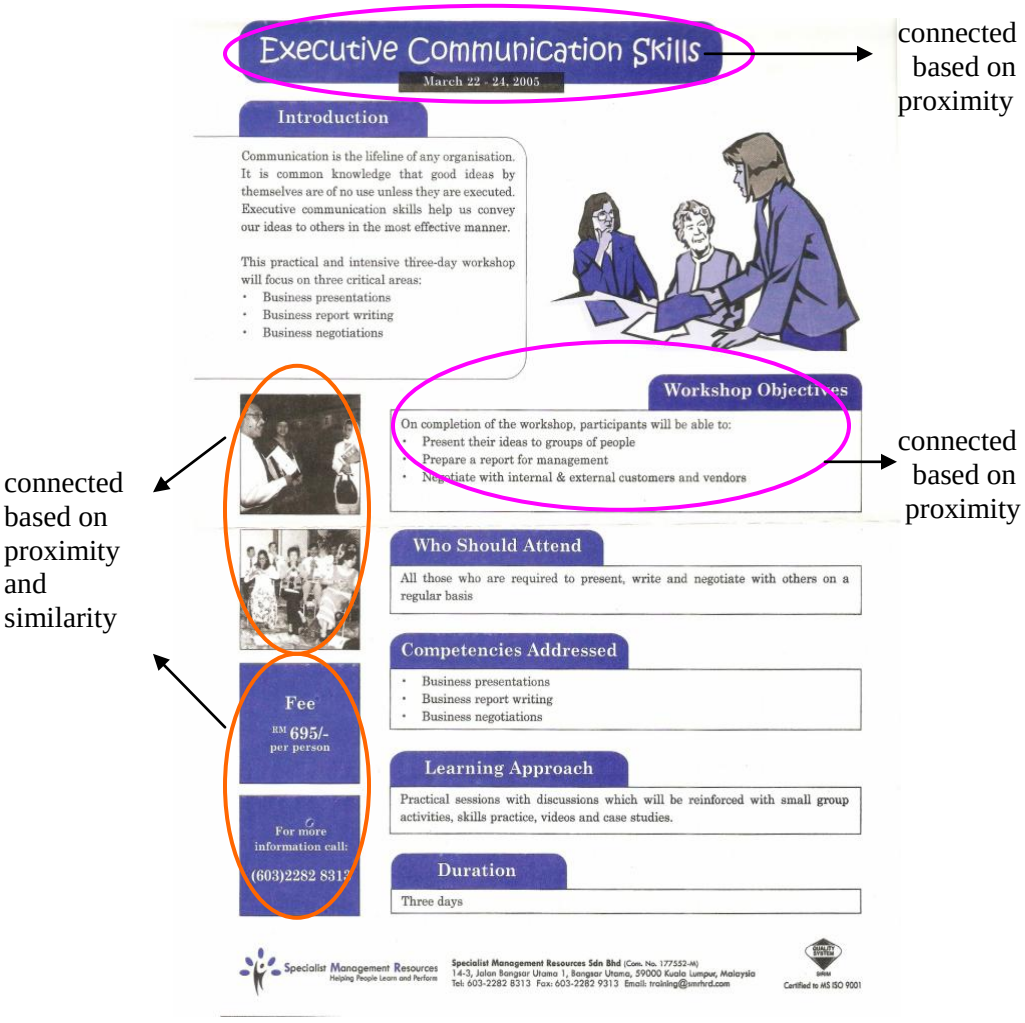


Figure 10.13
The principles of proximity and similarity as cohesive devices in Brochure 51

Similarly, all the headings in the brochure form connections with the textual blocks they are closest with as they are found 'attached' to the texts. Both the headings and their

textual blocks form clusters of specific information about the training programme. This further emphasises their relations.

Studies on semiotic modes within the systemic functional theory have proposed other terms synonymously to mean proximity such as ‘co-patterned relation’ (Thibault, 2000); ‘juxtaposition’ (O’Halloran, 2005); ‘spatial adjacency’ (Thibault, 2000) and ‘thematic grouping’ (Moss, 2003). These studies show that the notion of proximity is an important element in discussing relations between the modes.

10.1.7 Cohesion Based on Similarity

The Gestalt principle of similarity posits that when we see things that are similar like similar size, shape, colour, spatial distance (proximity) we naturally group them together thus establishing relations (Walker, 2000; Arnston, 2007). Van Leeuwen (2005) acknowledges that similarity in the form of repetition of colours and shapes could be a key connection device. Therefore, the use of similarities produces acceptable continuations, thereby creating a sense of visual cohesiveness. This resource can be exemplified in Brochure 30 (Figure 10.14).

In Brochure 30, similar colour is used in the typography of the right column, the background of the signature super cluster and the background of the left column. Green, therefore, creates the connection between the elements mentioned. There is also similarity in the visual shape of the framing of the headings, the font size and font type of the headings, the size of the right and left columns and the use of similar bullet points in the textual blocks of the right column.

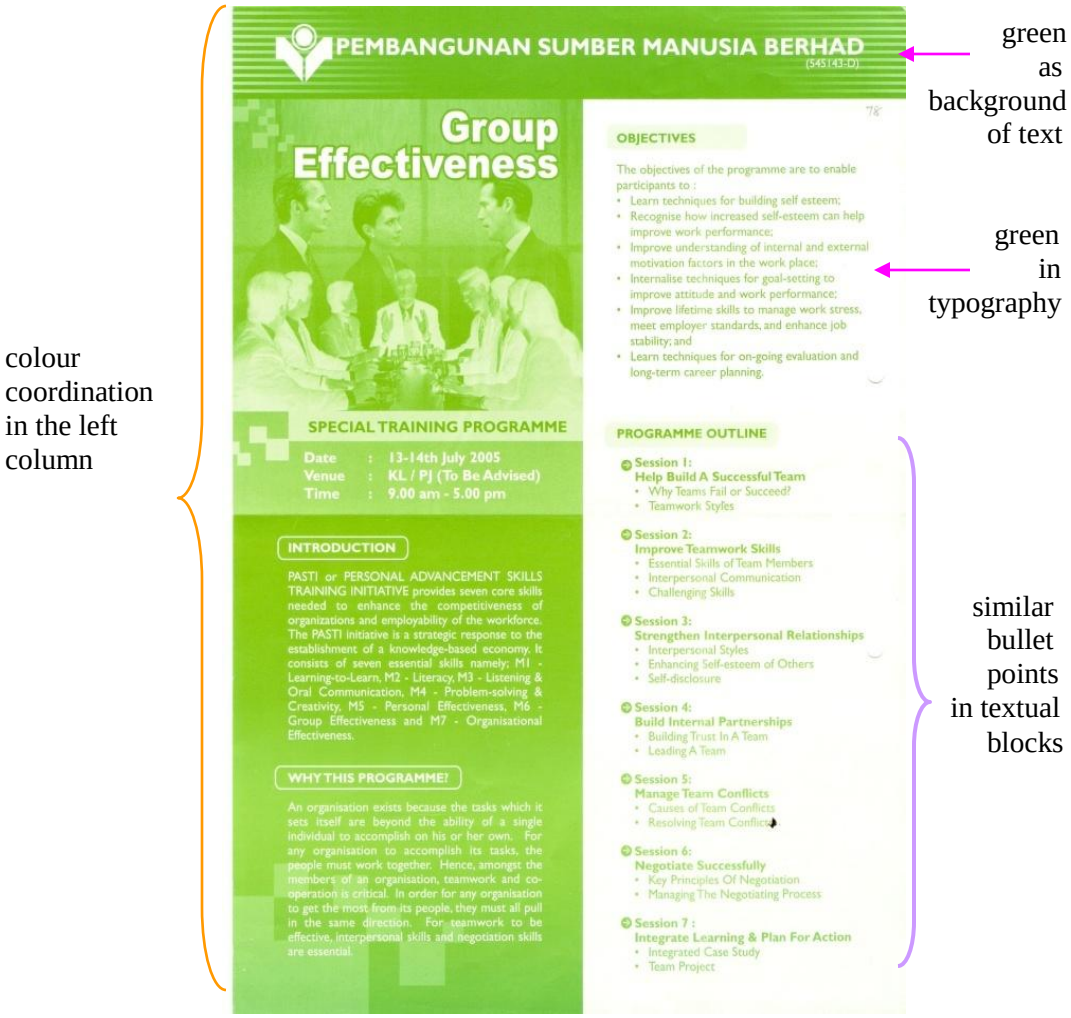


Figure 10.14
Similarity across modalities in Brochure 30

There is also evident of colour coordination in the left column where different shades of green are used thus also establishing cohesion. Therefore, similarity across modalities is the visual resource that establishes cohesion in the brochure. This is depicted in Figure 10.15.

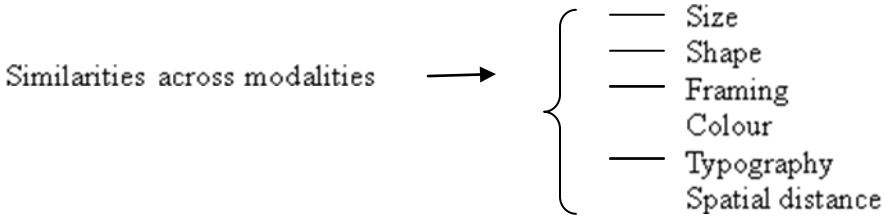


Figure 10.15
The resource of similarity

10.2 The System Network for the Visual Compositional Resources of Text Cohesion

This section summarises the discussion in the previous section in the form of system network (Martin, 1992) as discussed in Chapter 3. In the system network, the curly brackets signify 'both … and' while the square brackets signify 'either…or' choices. The system network works on the basis of a parallel system (van Leeuwen, 2005).

Based on this system network, all the seven resources proposed by this study in establishing cohesion need to be considered when analysing cohesion based on the visual compositional resources of text cohesion. Against each resource, there are realisations of cohesion that need to be taken into account when describing cohesion based on the particular resource.

Nevertheless, with regard to the information value resource, choices of realisations need to be made based on the placement of the elements. As with the resource of framing, it will be realised on whether there is framing or not in the semiotic space of the texts. Other resources do not have options with regard to their realisations. The system network thus visually diagrammed both syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations between the visual-compositional resources and their realisations (Figure 10.16).

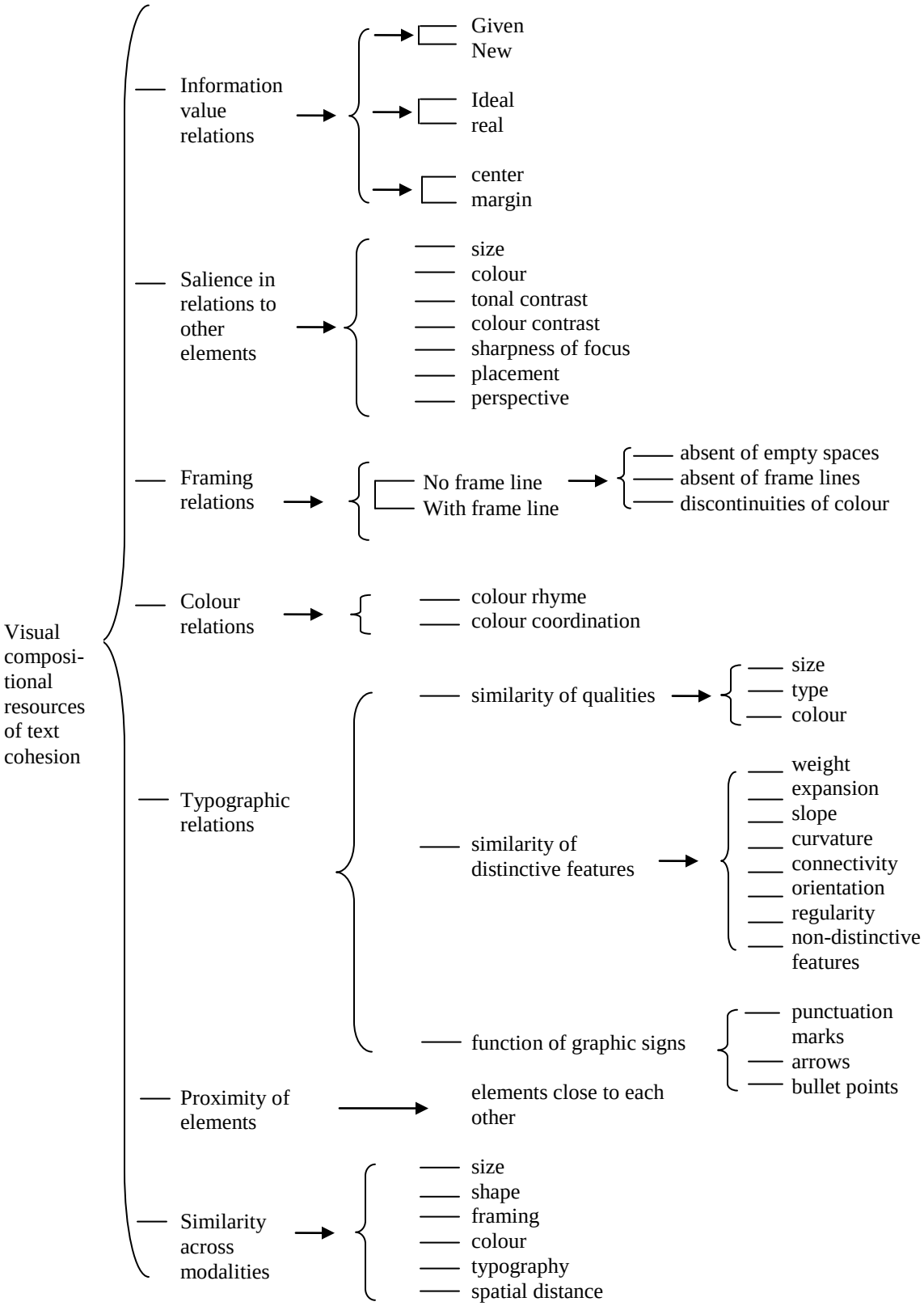


Figure 10.16
A system network for the visual-compositional resources of text cohesion

10.3 Summary

Semantic relations have been the focus of previous studies in cohesion in multimodal texts which employ the framework of systemic functional theory (Halliday, 1974). Therefore, this study shifts the focus to visual connections as an alternative perspective or one that complements existing perspectives in analysing cohesion between the various semiotic modes in multimodal texts. In doing so, this study proposes a set of resources which it terms as **visual compositional resources (VCR)** in analysing cohesion in multimodal texts. The resources are derived from 1) Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) principles of composition namely that of information value, salience and framing, 2) visual semiotic resources of colour (Kress and van Leuwen, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2005) and typography (van Leeuwen, 2005) and 3) Gestalt principles of proximity and similarity (Wertheimer, 1938). From these sources, seven resources are identified that is information value, salience, framing, colour, typography, proximity and similarity. The applicability of these resources in analysing cohesion has been exemplified in the various Malaysian business-to-business brochures. Thus, it can be concluded that visual compositional resources could be recognised as a means of analysing intrasemiotic cohesion. This means that cohesion within semiotic modes in multimodal texts can now be described in terms of semantic relations as well as visual relations.