CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

11.0   Introduction

This chapter summarises the present study and draws conclusions arrived at based on the various analyses undertaken by the study. The chapter starts with an overview of the study before presenting the conclusions of the study based on the research questions posed. It then proceeds with the implications of the study and ends with suggestions for future research.

11.1   Overview of Study

The impetus of this study came about from the fact that Malaysian business-to-business brochures that advertise human resource training programmes have become important texts in this country as a consequence of Malaysia's Vision 2020. However, literature shows that no previous studies have carried out a multimodal analysis of the brochures be it in Malaysia or elsewhere. Much has been written about guidelines on how to write brochures, yet the verbal and visual components of the brochure, its layout and how these various resources are made cohesive are not fully identified. Therefore, this pioneering study aims to bridge the gap by investigating sixty-three Malaysian business-to-business brochures adopting the systemic functional multimodal framework in the verbal and visual analyses. Unlike other frameworks of text analysis, systemic functional theory has the resources for analysing verbal as well as visual elements. From the analyses, the study identifies the semiotic resources of the business brochures and proposes a six-step procedure in managing semiotic

elements in a large corpus. A system network of the genre which complements the generic structure potential established for the business brochures is included in the findings of the study. Finally, the study proposes an analytical framework that focuses on visual and compositional resources in analysing cohesion in multimodal texts.

11.2   Addressing the Research Questions

The following discussion will be based on the research questions posed in the study to present conclusions of the study. The research questions are:

1.   What are the functions of business-to-business brochures in Malaysia and how are the functions reflected in the verbal and visual elements of the brochures?

2.   What are the components that constitute the generic structure of business-to-business brochures and is the generic structure of business brochures similar to that of other print advertisements? Can a system network for the genre be established?

3.   How are the components placed in the layout of the front pages of the business brochures and does placement of the components of business brochures adhere to the information value system proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) and to the hierarchy of effects model of advertising proposed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961)?

4.   How important are visual elements in Malaysian business brochures and what are their roles in the brochures?

5. Can cohesion of the various semiotic resources in the business brochures be established based on visual-compositional resources?

11.2.1 Question 1: What are the functions of business-to-business brochures in Malaysia and how are the functions reflected in the verbal and visual elements of the brochures?

The information regarding functions of the Malaysian business brochures was elicited from the literature about brochures and from interviews with the discourse community of the genre namely the training providers who produced the business brochures and with the personnel from the human resource department of the companies who are the readers of the brochures. The discourse community identified three main functions of business-to-business brochures about training programmes in Malaysia. They are:

1. to provide information about the training programme

2. to promote the training programme to a targeted audience

3. to establish relations in the discourse community

The functions outlined by the discourse community of the Malaysian business-to-business brochures are similar to the purposes discussed in the literature written about brochures in various parts of the world. Therefore, it can be concluded that the functions of the business brochures are universal regardless of where and by whom they are produced.

The study also seeks to determine whether the functions of the Malaysian business brochure identified are reflected in the verbal and visual elements of the brochures. In analysing the components of the brochures and the verbal texts, it is found that the verbal and visual components mirror the functions identified by the discourse community of the genre.

The verbal analysis found the dominance of material processes, processes that describe concrete tangible actions carried out by the actor, the subject of the clause who are participants of the programme. Thus, the brochures are concerned with action that participants of the training programme will accomplish during and after the training programme. In other words, in an attempt to present information about the programme, the brochures chose to focus on actions carried out mostly by potential participants, that is, about what participants will benefit from attending the programme. The benefits highlighted are a form of promotion as agreed by the producers of the brochures. There is also evidence of relational processes used to relate the company to positive attributes such that the company can be perceived as qualified and reputable. This would encourage potential clients to establish relations in terms of engaging their services to provide training or in other future partnerships with them.

Similarly, the functions are reflected in the visual images of the business brochures. The images are mostly 'offer' images that project a narrative process, the process of 'doing' or 'happening'. Thus, the images are offering themselves as sources of information, about the activities the represented participants will undertake in the programme or after participating in the programme. This is in tandem with the function of conveying information of the business brochures. The analysis of the images also reveals that there is no power difference in the relationship between the viewers and the represented participants and that usually a distant personal relationship is established between them. This kind of relationship promotes a conducive environment in establishing relations between the producers and the readers of the brochures as 'subjects of personal interests and involvement' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:130) could be discussed. Establishing relations is another function of the brochures. The mere presence of the images and that some of them are actual photographs of

participants, thus images of high modality, shows evidence of persuasion. These are photographs that potential clients can relate to and as such can draw them to the brochures. The function of promotion is, therefore, described as a function of the brochures. As a conclusion, the three functions of informing, promoting and establishing relations outlined for the Malaysian business brochures are reflected in the verbal text as well as in the visual images.

11.2.2   Question 2: What are the components that constitute the generic structure of business-to-business brochures and is the generic structure of business brochures similar to that of other print advertisements? Can a system network of the genre be established to complement its GSP?

This study identified nine super clusters or components of the generic structure potential of Malaysian business brochures. They are the super clusters of:

1. title
2. value
3. justifier
4. incentive
5. signature
6. credibility
7. attention-getter
8. response solicitation
9. programme information

Five of the components, the title, credibility, signature, response solicitation and programme information are obligatory that is they have to be present in order to realize the genre and the functions of the genre. The rest of the components namely the value, justifier, incentive and attention-getter are optional which means that even though they do contribute towards the functions of the genre, they could be left out without affecting the successful outcome of the functions. Thus, optional elements account for the variations within the genre.

In establishing the generic structure potential of a genre, the linear representation is adopted to identify the stages in the genre (Hasan, 1985). This study adopts similar representation but one that depicts a beginning-middle-end pattern rather than stages. The presence of the different types of salience in typography and framing and the used of attention-getters have affected the linearity in the reading of these multimodal business brochures that eventually blur the presence of stages. In the beginning-middle-end pattern, the most recognizable components of the brochures which are the title and the response solicitation components will form the beginning (title) and end (response solicitation) of the pattern while the rest of the components will form the middle of the pattern. Therefore, the GSP for business-to-business brochures can be represented as:

*Title + [programme info + (justifier) + credibility + (attention-getter)

+ (value) + (incentive) + signature +] + *response solicitation

In this condensed statement of the GSP for business brochures, * against the title and response solicitation stands for recognisable components in terms of placement and it must be noted that they are also obligatory components of the genre. The round brackets ( ) enclosing the justifier, attention-getter, value and incentive denotes optionality. In SFL, ^ is usually used after each element to denote sequence. This study argues that sequence and linearity seem to be suspended between the components of title and response solicitation in the genre, hence, ^ is replaced by + to denote possible combinations of elements. Square brackets ([ ]) denote that the super clusters enclosed in them are mobile, that they could come together in many possible combinations to form variations of the genre. These variations, however, must include the programme information, credibility and signature as these are obligatory components of the genre.

Comparison with the other GSPs of print advertisement within the systemic functional framework shows that there are similarities and differences between the GSP of this study and those it is compared with namely that of Hasan (1996) and Cheong (2004). The GSPs are similar for all the elements in Hasan's GSP can be found in Cheong's GSP and in the GSP of this study and all of Cheong's GSP elements except one can be found in this study. However, they are different for Hasan's GSP does not include some of the elements in Cheong's and Fauziah's GSPs. In addition, Cheong's study does not include three elements that are present in the GSP of print advertisement of this study namely the components of establishing credibility, highlighting value and providing incentives. These are, therefore, the three identifying elements of the genre of Malaysian business-to-business brochures not available in other print advertisements. The three elements reflect the characteristics of business markets which are especially concerned with relationship building, value focused and information loading to educate the target audience (Murphy, 2007) in their selling-buying process. It must be noted that two of these elements, relationship building and information loading reflect the functions outlined by the discourse community and are realised in the visual and verbal components of the brochures.

This study proves that it is possible to establish a system network for the genre as it accounts for all possible realisations of each of the components that made up the genre. The system network identifies each super cluster that made up the genre which in turn identifies the cluster that forms each super cluster. The system ends with the realisations of each cluster or combinations of clusters. Therefore, this system network provides detail information for the GSP of the business brochures.

11.2.3   Question 3: What is the layout of the business-to-business brochures and does placement of the components in the layout adhere to the information value system proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) and to the hierarchy of effects model of advertising proposed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961)?

The study identifies two types of layout of the brochures namely the vertical structure of top and bottom and the vertical triptych structure of top, center and bottom sections. Thus, the layout is usually structured along the **vertical axis.** The triptych structure (53.9%) is slightly more common in the brochures than the top and bottom structure which recorded 46.1% occurrence in the brochures. There are variations within the two structures and these variations are more commonly found in the brochures.

In terms of the **placement of the components,** or known as super clusters in this study, it is found that their placement can be fixed, restrictive or even arbitrary within the layout of the brochures. Table 11.1 provides a summary of the type of placement and its corresponding type of super cluster.

Table 11.1 shows that the value super cluster has a fixed position while the title, credibility, response solicitation, incentive and signature super clusters are restricted in their placements and as such are not freely placed in the layout. However, only the justifier, programme information and attention-getter super clusters can be arbitrarily placed within the structures and this type of placement is found in half of the brochures analysed.

Table 11.1
The super cluster and its type of placement

Type of placement	Type of super cluster
Fixed	Value
Restricted	title, credibility, response solicitation, signature, incentive
Arbitrary	justifier, programme information, attention-getter

With regard to the **type of super clusters** that can be found in the structures, the top section of the top and bottom structure can possibly have only four types of super clusters. They are the title, signature, attention-getter and programme information super clusters. On the other hand, seven super clusters are found in the bottom section of the top and bottom structure. Only the credibility and value super clusters are not found in the bottom sections of the top and bottom structure. Though title and signature super clusters can occur in the top as well as in the bottom sections, they will only be present in either one of the sections. Table 11.2 provides a summary of the super clusters in the top and bottom structure and identifies their applicability to the information value theory (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006) and to the hierarchy of effects model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961).

The bottom section of the top and bottom structure in the brochures shows that the information value theory can be applied only 50% of the time. Meanwhile the top section has elements that do not signify ideal and thus the theory is not applicable to the top section of this structure. However, the components in the structure of the brochures correspond with

the components of advertisements and function along the lines of effects that advertising has on its readers.

Table 11.2
A Summary of the top and bottom layout and its components, and the applicability of the theory of information value and hierarchy of effects model

Section	Type of super cluster in section	Type of super cluster not in section	Applicability of information value theory (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006)	Correspond to advertising model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961)
top	title, signature, attention-getter, programme information	response solicitation, credibility, incentive, justifier, value	not applicable	Yes
bottom	title, signature, attention-getter, programme information, response solicitation, incentive, justifier	credibility, value	applicable to 50% of the brochures with top-bottom structure	Yes

With regard to the **triptych structure,** the top can have eight possible super clusters namely the title, signature, attention-getter, justifier, incentive, credibility, value and programme information super clusters. Eight out of the nine possible super clusters are found to be placed in the triptych's bottom section. The title is not placed in the bottom of the triptych while the justifier super cluster is not found in the top. In addition, the centre section of the triptych can have all nine possible super clusters. Since there is no centre section in the top and bottom structure, no comparison can be made with the triptych structure. Table 11.3 presents a summary of the super clusters in the three sections of the triptych structure and

identifies their applicability to the information value theory (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006) and to the hierarchy of effects model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961).

Table 11.3
A Summary of the triptych layout and its components, and the applicability of the theory of information value and the hierarchy of effects model

Section	Type of super cluster in section	Type of super cluster not in section	Applicability of the information value theory (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996)	Correspond to advertising model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961)
top	title, signature, attention-getter, programme information, response solicitation, credibility, incentive, value	justifier	applicable to 28.6% of brochures with triptych	Yes
centre	title, signature, attention-getter, programme information, response solicitation, credibility, incentive, justifier, value	none	applicable to 57.1% of brochures with triptych	Yes
bottom	signature, attention-getter, programme information, response solicitation, credibility, incentive, value, justifier	title	applicable to 85.7% of brochures with triptych	Yes

The **information value** of the super clusters as identified by the information value theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) is found to be more applicable in the triptych structure than in the top and bottom structure. The bottom of the triptych shows a high percentage of the theory being applicable to the section and the centre also shows promising percentage of applicability.

Furthermore, the three sections of the triptych structure namely the 'Ideal' top, 'Mediator' centre and the 'Real' bottom are found to correspond to the three stages of the hierarchy of effects model namely the cognitive, affective and the behavioural stages. This is because the components of the three sections of the triptych can be placed comfortably within the confines of the three stages of the model. Since sections of the structures of the brochures are modeled after Kress and van Leeuwen's discussion on compositional value of elements in the front pages of newspapers and that the hierarchy of effects model reflects readers' responses to advertisements, therefore, it can be concluded that *the front pages of newspapers can function as advertisements.*

11.2.4 Question 4: How important are visual elements in Malaysian business-to-business brochures and what are their roles in the brochures?

In the Malaysian business-to-business brochures that advertise human resource training programmes, it is found that forty or 63.5% of the brochures have images on their front covers. This shows that images are optional elements in these brochures but based on the percentage of their occurrence, they can be considered as popular elements. However, they are described as being not very salient as they are comparatively small in size and placed in a less salient position, on the 'given' left of the pages. Furthermore, the images included in the

brochures are of low modality and are sometimes superimposed by the title or the incentive cluster. They are included in the brochures to primarily visualise the title of the programmes advertised in the brochures. For example, in Brochure 43 that advertises the programme 'Effective Communication in the Work Place', the image in the brochure shows two people communicating in a workplace setting and in brochure 46 that advertises the 'Modern Systems Analysis and Design' programme, the image of a computer forms the background of the title cluster. Thus, the position of the images in the Malaysian business-to-business brochures is one of lesser importance as compared to the images in other print advertisements (Cheong, 2004) as the images are not given a prominent role in the business brochures.

In terms of the **functions** of the images, they are found to be sources of information as they are identified as 'offer' images projecting a narrative process, the process of 'doing' or 'happening'. These processes usually provide information about the activities of the participants in the programmes. Being 'offer' images the viewers are thus, 'detached' from the images, merely looking at the represented participants as objects of their contemplation. This is in line with the function described by the discourse community which is to provide the readers with information about the programme advertised.

The analysis of the images also showed that there is no difference in power in the relationship between the viewers and the represented participants and this is seen as contributing towards the distant personal relationship that is found to exist between them. In this kind of relationship, 'subjects of personal interests and involvement' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:130) could be discussed. This 'closeness' could provide a conducive

environment for persuasion to take place and to establish relationships, a function cited by the readers of the brochures and as evident in the verbal texts.

Apart from informing the readers about the training programme and establishing relations, the function of the brochures is also to persuade the readers to participate in the programmes advertised. The images placed in these business-to-business brochures seem to have played their persuasive role though not necessarily being the lead element of attracting attention to the brochures. By portraying the target audience in the images, the intended audience could relate to the programmes and be persuaded to participate. According to the discourse community, the images can persuade the readers to continue reading the brochures they have initially picked up based on the very salient title of the brochures, Thus, the functions of the images are in tandem with the functions of the brochures identified based on the visual and verbal analysis of the components, and with the functions identified through interviews with the discourse community.

11.2.5 Question 5: Can cohesion of the various semiotic resources in the business-to-business brochures be established based on visual-compositional resources?

The study proposes the visual compositional resources of cohesion in multimodal texts as an alternative analytical framework to the lexical and logico-semantic based resources in establishing cohesion. The sources from which the visual and compositional resources are derived come from three different sources that are frameworks in themselves in establishing cohesion. The three sources are:

1.   Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) principles of composition

2.   visual resources of colour (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2005) and typography (van Leeuwen, 2005)

3. Gestalt visual perceptual principles of proximity and similarity (Wertheimer, 1938)

Thus, the list of sources brings together frameworks currently available in discussing the visual cohesive devices of texts. By unifying these contributions in visual cohesiveness of elements, a more holistic framework in analyzing visual cohesion of texts can be proposed.

The justification for including the **principles of composition** proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) in the framework is that the principles establish the fact that composition explains how elements are made to relate to each other and how they are integrated into a meaningful whole through the systems of information value, salience and framing. Thus, relations are established between semiotic elements that could provide the means for cohesion.

Van Leeuwen (2005) recognised that the cohesion is not only established through composition or layout but also through **colour and typography**. This is so as they are usually used in combination with other semiotic resources of a text such as colours in visuals, in typography and in the background space of text. Furthermore, "typography has forged new relations between image, graphics and letter forms in meaningful ways" (van Leeuwen, 2005:29). These two visual resources of colour and typography brought about concepts like color rhyme and visual rhyme across modalities that could also establish cohesion in texts. Thus, colour and typography act as a common thread through which the different semiotic modes of the multimodal text can be seen as linked together to provide a sense of unity in the entire text. With regard to **Gestalt visual principles** as a source for establishing VCR, Jacobson and Pomorska (1983) suggested the potential importance of the

principles of proximity and similarity of Gestalt in cohesion analysis. Based on this, Campbell (1995) proposes a theory of coherence and cohesion which would describe the unifying effects of visual and semantic elements based on Gestalt principles of proximity and similarity. The discussion provides the justification for considering these three sources as a basis on which the visual compositional resources for text cohesion is established.

The three sources of visual – compositional framework of text cohesion give rise to seven resources for analyzing cohesion of elements in texts. The seven resources are:

1. information value
2. salience
3. framing
4. colour
5. typography
6. similarity
7. proximity

The analysis of the seven resources in the Malaysian business brochures undertaken in Chapter 10 proves that cohesion of the semiotic resources can be established based on visual compositional resources. A system network that outlines the resources for the visual compositional framework in text cohesion and its realisations is also established in this study.

11.3 Implications of the Study

The study's focus on a multimodal analysis of business brochures is timely as the advent of technology and the flourishing of desktop publishing today has made these texts even more multimodal. This shows that apart from language, visuals should also be analysed in present day texts. Their presence in texts made them an important source of meaning making

alongside language. Therefore, there is a great need to include visual analysis of texts to give visuals their due recognition in texts.

Much of advertising texts have been subjected to analysis. However, little research has been carried out pertaining to business brochures. As such, it is hoped that the findings of this study have contributed to a better understanding of the brochures in terms of their physical forms, functions, components, layout and how their components cohere to present unity in the texts. The information is useful as reference for text producers designing brochures for not only the local markets but also for foreign markets as it is found that functions of the business brochures are rather universal. This study, therefore, has made important contribution in the field of business communication.

In terms of pedagogical implications, it is hoped that the findings could be adapted for the development of teaching materials not only for the media and semiotic studies but also for the writing courses especially in the context of language for specific purposes. Therefore, language in these courses would have to mean both verbal language as well as visual language.

11.4   Recommendations for Future Research

This study would like to recommend that comparative studies be undertaken in which the Malaysian business-to-business brochures are compared with business brochures from other Asian countries or other parts of the world. It would be interesting to know if globalisation has made these brochures similar in functions and characteristics.

It is recommended that other visual elements like colour and typography be analysed to identify their characteristics in these brochures and also to find out if the functions of the business brochures are reflected in these resources. This could enrich findings further as all the main visual elements would have been analysed.

In analysing the verbal texts of the business brochures, it is encouraged that theme analysis and mood analysis be carried out apart from analyzing its transitivity system such that all the metafunctions of systemic functional linguistics, the framework of its verbal analysis, are included in the verbal analysis. These analyses could describe the textual and the interpersonal meanings of the verbal text of the brochures and would provide more comprehensive findings of the verbal text.

Finally, it is recommended that computer software such as the MCA Concordance (Baldry and Thibault, 2005) be used in transcribing the elements in a large corpus for otherwise it would be near to impossible to undertake the task. This study faced this challenge and in the process of trying to make sense of the many semiotic elements in the data, it proposes a six-step procedure to manage the elements and ease the task of analysing elements in a large corpus of this nature.

11.5 Conclusion

The study, which can be considered as a pioneering study of business brochures not only in Malaysia but also elsewhere, is a comparatively comprehensive analysis of the Malaysian b2b brochures. It starts with an analysis of the form and functions of the brochures before identifying the verbal as well as the visual components present in them and describing how these components are placed in the layout established. The analysis is enhanced by the

description of the images as they are the least researched subject in text analysis in Malaysia and the study ends with a proposal on how cohesion of the various visual and verbal elements of the brochures can be established based on visual compositional resources. This analytical framework on cohesion departs from the lexical and logico-semantic resources usually employed in analysing cohesion within the systemic functional framework. This study has, therefore, contributed pertinent information about the Malaysian business-to-business brochures and has enhanced knowledge in the areas of multimodality and business communication, two areas which are endlessly evolving in this era of globalisation.