

FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE IN FOREST RESOURCE REPORT GENRE  
FROM A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS PERSPECTIVE

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Language Academy  
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

SEPTEMBER 2017

To my beloved parents,  
Azaini binti Arifin and Wan Fakhruddin bin Ali,  
my dearest husband,  
Md Nurrahiem bin Mohd Ali  
and my two beautiful daughters,  
Noor Amni Rahwani and Noor Aliesya Rahwani,  
whose love, support and their faith in my abilities have made me a  
better person, and it is only fitting that this thesis, which is little  
enough repayment, be dedicated to them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah SWT, the Most Glorified, the Most High. All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists). I would like to express my utmost gratitude to Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and Language Academy for giving me the opportunity to pursue my doctoral study. Their support, both financially and emotionally, allowed me to dream big and to travel the world in pursuit of seeking knowledge. I am indebted to UTM for their scholarship which allowed me to present my work at University of Geneva, Switzerland and to spend my three-month attachment at Cardiff University, United Kingdom.

I could not find the words to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Hanita Hassan, for the patient guidance, encouragement and advice she has provided me throughout my time as her student. I have been extremely lucky to have a supervisor who not only cared so much about my work but was also concerned about my personal life when it matters most and who responded to my queries and questions so promptly.

This thesis would not have been materialised were it not for the strong support provided by my parents, my husband and my children. Their constant prayers, encouragement and willingness to give a helping hand in times of need, gave me the strength I need to persevere to complete this thesis. To my dearest friends; Kak Amina, Kak Yasmin, Balqis, Eidhah, Arfin, Mardiana, Ali, Kak Nora, Syura, and those who I fail to mention, thank you for being my companion through this time.

When we attain more knowledge, we actually realise how little knowledge we have. Allah SWT says: “We raise to degrees (of wisdom) whom We please, but over all those endowed with knowledge is the All-Knowing (Allah)” (Surah Yusuf: Verse 76). Thank you Allah for this opportunity. I am forever Your grateful servant.

## ABSTRACT

Despite previous genre studies investigating various professional report genres in different contexts, disciplines and languages, professional report genre in forestry discipline remains the least explored, particularly from a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective. To date, limited findings were reported on how Malay language is used in forestry professional context. This study explored the elements that constitute the generic structure potential (GSP) for forest resource reports (FRR) in forestry discipline, how language is used to represent experiential and textual functions and the role of FRR genre. Six FRR written in Malay and three interviews with forestry officers were used as research data in this study. This qualitative genre analysis study utilised SFL analytical frameworks and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that FRR is a hybrid genre which constitutes 10 obligatory main elements and 17 sub-elements explicating typical letter and forestry-related genre elements whereby the GSP for FRR takes a linear representation. Besides, the experiential function of FRR genre was used mainly to represent activities performed by forestry officers through the dominant use of *Action processes* whereby forest areas are seen as the entity most affected by activities taking place. On the other hand, descriptions of forest areas were supplemented mainly through *circumstance of Location*. Findings on the textual function revealed that FRR genre maintains topic on forest areas as the theme selection, and the overall organisation was established through a *derived Theme progression pattern* to position specific details of forest areas and its resources. Meanwhile, findings on the role of FRR genre indicated that FRR provides a preliminary observation and information to assist forestry department in deciding future directions and planning of forestry-related matters. The implication of this study centres on how exploration of genre elements, representation of experiential and textual functions and roles can be explored from SFL genre and metafunctional perspective in studying the use of Malay language.

## ABSTRAK

Walaupun kajian genre terdahulu mengkaji pelbagai genre laporan profesional dalam konteks, disiplin dan bahasa yang berbeza, genre laporan profesional dalam disiplin perhutanan masih kurang diterokai terutamanya dari perspektif nahu sistemik fungsional (SFL). Sehingga kini, penemuan yang terhad telah dilaporkan mengenai bagaimana bahasa Melayu digunakan dalam konteks profesional perhutanan. Kajian ini mengkaji elemen-elemen yang membentuk struktur generic (GSP) untuk laporan sumber hutan (FRR) dalam disiplin perhutanan, bagaimana bahasa digunakan untuk mewakili makna pengalaman dan tekstual dan peranan genre FRR. Enam FRR yang ditulis dalam bahasa Melayu dan tiga temuramah dengan pegawai perhutanan telah digunakan sebagai data penyelidikan dalam kajian ini. Kajian kaedah kualitatif ini menggunakan analisis SFL dan temubual separa berstruktur. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa genre FRR adalah genre hybrid yang dibentuk oleh 10 elemen utama dan 17 sub-elemen yang menggambarkan elemen-elemen khas dalam surat dan genre berkaitan perhutanan. Selain itu, makna pengalaman genre FRR secara utamanya mewakili aktiviti yang dilakukan oleh pegawai perhutanan melalui proses lakuan yang dominan di mana kawasan hutan dilihat sebagai entiti yang paling terjejas oleh aktiviti-aktiviti yang berlaku. Sebaliknya, penerangan mengenai kawasan hutan ditambah terutamanya melalui kaedah suasana Lokasi. Dapatan kajian makna tekstual menunjukkan bahawa genre FRR mengekalkan topik mengenai kawasan hutan sebagai pilihan tema, dan organisasi keseluruhan dicapai melalui Tema aliran kekal untuk meletakkan maklumat khusus berkaitan kawasan hutan serta sumbernya. Sementara itu, dapatan kajian berkaitan peranan genre FRR menunjukkan bahawa FRR memberikan pemerhatian dan maklumat awal dalam membantu jabatan perhutanan membuat keputusan dan perancangan untuk hala tuju masa depan dalam perkara berkaitan perhutanan. Implikasi kajian ini menunjukkan tentang penerokaan elemen-elemen genre, representasi fungsi pengalaman dan tekstual dan peranan boleh diteroka dari perspektif genre dan metafungsi SFL dalam mengkaji penggunaan bahasa Melayu.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESP	-	English for Specific Purposes
FDPM	-	Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia
FRR	-	Forest Resource Reports
GSP	-	Generic Structure Potential
RGS	-	Rhetorical Genre Studies
R <sub>x</sub> .A.C <sub>b</sub>	-	R <sub>x</sub> = Report number, A= Element, C <sub>b</sub> = Clause number
SFL	-	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SFM	-	Sustainable Forest Management

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Most genre studies advocated the advantages in exploring specific uses of language, the textual organisation and sociocultural factors affecting the construction, purpose and language use within a genre (Bawarshi and Reiff, 2010; Halliday, 1978; Martin, 1985; Eggins, 2007). The concept of genre, aptly defined by Martin (1985:248) as ‘how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them’, becomes the starting point of the exploration of language and its use in specific situations or contexts. In order to relate how language is being used to accomplish various communicative purposes, analysis of genre sets out to identify text structures in terms of its functional stages or moves. In addition, it also aims at identifying features that help characterise the text and realise communicative purposes. Therefore, studies investigating genre could help uncover how a text is accomplished with regard to its social and cultural context and communicative purpose by exploring the language use, structure and functions that the genre serves within a particular community (Bawarshi and Reiff, 2010; Eggins, 2007).

Genre analysis observed from the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective thus far has been successful at interpreting the functions of genre in terms of how language helps to realise its communicative purpose through analysis of the generic structure (Patpong, 2013, Osat, 2012; Fauziah, 2010) and language metafunctions (Forey, 2002; Patpong, 2013; Chakorn, 2010; Idris and Benazir Tanjung, 2014). Language is viewed in SFL as a social semiotic in which language is regarded as a system of meaning-making (Halliday, 1978) which focuses on the relationship between language, text and context (Coffin and Donohue, 2012). Birch (1989:1) proposes that:

‘In a functional theory of language, analysts are not just interested in what language is, but why language is; not just what language means, but how language means’.

(Birch, 1989:1)

SFL both as a language theory and methodological approach has been successful at describing a wide range of domains and disciplines in various languages. Studies investigating professional genres in English (Helan, 2012; Fauziah, 2010; Forey, 2002), French (Caffarel-Cayron and Rechniewski, 2014), Japanese (Mizusawa, 2008) and Thai (Chakorn, 2010) have been successful in obtaining insights on the structure and linguistic features of the respective languages. Differences in terms of the textual and linguistic patterns and realisations are found which add to the body of knowledge on how particular language operates in accomplishing a genre’s purpose. However, studies focusing on professional genres in Malay from SFL perspective is still very much in its infancy. Although studies focusing on Malay literary texts have been explored (Idris, 2012; 2013; Mohammad Fadzeli, 2012), only few studies attempted to investigate professional genres written in Malay (Idris and Benazir Tanjung, 2014). The apparent lack of insights on analysis of professional report genre in Malay acts as an impetus for this study to be conducted. Thus, this study attempted to fill in the gap in this area by analysing one type of Malay professional forestry report genre which is FRR from the SFL perspective.

Previous studies investigating professional report genres have been approached mainly from the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) perspective. Although both ESP and SFL approaches take on a linguistic approach to the study of genre and that both share a fundamental view that linguistic features are connected to social context and function (Yunick, 1997; Hyon, 1996), SFL regards genre as the cultural purpose of text that is expressed through their structural and realisational patterns (Eggins, 1997). Regardless of the differing approaches to the study of professional genres, studies investigating professional report genres are more inclined towards observing the report genre in business disciplines (Mizusawa, 2008; Forey, 2002, Flowerdew and Wan, 2006; 2010; Chakorn, 2010) compared to reports from other disciplines. Despite their similarities, differences and/or overlapping features across disciplinary domains, the report genre is the most common genre found across various professional contexts (Bhatia, 2004). Thus, more studies investigating the report genre in other disciplines are required in order to observe distinctive features of the report genre across all disciplines. Based on the review of literature, investigation on professional report genre in forestry discipline remains undiscovered. This study investigated the FRR genre used in the Malaysian professional forestry context which look into the generic structure, functions, roles and textual organisation that make up the genre from SFL perspective.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

In recent years, sustainable forest management (SFM) has become the primary goal of forestry institutions worldwide (Jalilova, Khadka, and Vacik, 2012). More recently, forestry discipline has received an increased interest from anthropologists and those outside of the forestry community particularly among scholars and graduate students in European universities which mainly explore forest policies and forest governance and its impact on the communities (Arts and Buizer, 2009; Dang, Turnhout and Arts, 2012; Winkel, 2012; Vainio and Paloniemi, 2012;

Buizer and Herzele, 2012; Jalilova, Khadka and Vacik, 2012; Leipold, 2014). However, these studies, which claim to have been approached from a discourse analysis perspective, have received criticisms in terms of the concept of discourse and the methods used in exploring forest discourses (Winkel, 2012; Leipold, 2014; Arts and Buizer, 2009, Arts *et al.*, 2010). Most of the forestry discourse studies investigating forest policies and governance were based on diverse theoretical orientations and disciplines which resulted in inconsistent and unsystematic definitions of discourse concepts and interpretations (Leipold, 2014; Winkel, 2012; Arts *et al.*, 2010). Consequently, the study of forestry genres from a linguistic perspective remains unexplored and unknown. Further discussions on forestry studies are presented in Chapter 2.

In the local context, it is believed that no attempt has been made on the exploration of professional forestry report genre from a linguistic perspective. Although studies on forest management, its resources and forest management practices have been conducted by forestry professionals and graduate students (Islam, *et al.*, 2010; Mohd. Gani, Wahab and Rasat, 2013; Kamaruzaman and Wan Ahmad, 2003; Mohd Zukki, Abd Manaf and Abu Samah, 2010; Che Muda and Yusoff, 2009), these studies were more theoretically and statistically-oriented. Most of forestry-related studies conducted focused on valuation of forest resources thus providing very little accounts on how forestry management practices are performed with empirical evidences to show the significance of such practices and its direct impact on the forestry community and to others. Leipold (2014:19) acknowledges that forest discourses lack insights from a sociological perspective in which she contends that deeper insights into ‘how control over forests and people is and can be organised through the application of language’. To date, studies within the forestry discipline lack empirical findings on evidences of how forestry-related genres are written in such a way that they are able to achieve the communicative purposes of planning, managing and executing the practice of SFM that is of outmost importance to forestry professionals working at the government department responsible for managing forest resources in Malaysia, such as in the case of the FRR genre. Thus, based on the concerns identified pertaining to the lack of empirical evidences

accounting for how language is used in the context of forestry discipline, there seems to be a gap which hindered further understanding to be acquired on how the report genre in forestry discipline is constructed and how Malay is used to achieve its purpose.

The motivation for the researcher to embark on this study is to contribute to the developing literature in professional forestry report genre and Malay language use in professional context. Specifically, four key concerns were identified which are: (1) there is a scarcity in empirical research on the nature of forestry professional texts and how genres in the forestry discipline function in the discourse community, (2) there seems to be limited evidence on the structure and functions of forestry-related report genre which could potentially yield insights into how forestry-related concerns are discussed and portrayed in forestry report genre, (3) limited findings on the ways in which Malay is used in the professional context and (4) how does FRR investigated in the study assumes its roles in the forestry discourse communities specifically and to others in general. The gaps identified thus guided the current study to enrich literature in these areas.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In forestry discipline, sustainable forest management (SFM) has become a global concern of forest institutions worldwide (Jalilova, Khadka and Vacik, 2012) whereby implementation of SFM practices in tropical forests such as Malaysian forests are considered as highly prioritised (Boscolo, Snook and Quevedo, 2009). Being one of the genres that embodies SFM practices implemented by the forestry department responsible for protecting, managing and administering forest resources in Peninsular Malaysia, analysing the roles and functions of FRR genre is deemed to be indispensable in understanding how SFM practices are implemented by Malaysian



forestry professionals. Although analysing FRR genre may not provide the overall outlook on SFM practices implemented by the forestry department investigated in the current study, the findings obtained may provide a glimpse of how these practices are exemplified through the roles and functions of FRR genre in addressing SFM concerns which are of utmost importance to forestry communities both in the local and global contexts. This indeed shows that there is a significant gap that need to be addressed on the exploration of the functions and roles of forestry-related genres.

The functions and roles of a genre can be observed by means of linguistic analysis from SFL perspective by analysing how language is used to serve the genre's communicative purpose looking into various kinds of meanings represented in the genre. Previous studies (Idris and Benazir Tanjung, 2014; Patpong, 2013; Forey, 2002; Mizusawa, 2008) investigating various kinds of meanings in different genres were successful at deriving findings on the functions of the respective genres. Since concerns have been raised by forestry professionals on the need to explore how genres in forestry discipline serve their functions, roles and the ways in which information are presented and used in the discipline, there is a need to figure out how information presented in FRR genre is structured which contributes to the functions and roles of the genre in its context of use. It is believed that only a limited number of studies investigated forestry genres from a linguistic perspective (Jason, Joseph and Nor Arifah, 2014; Friginal, 2013) and none so far has attempted analysing forestry texts from the SFL perspective. Since this seems to be the existing gap from previous studies, the current study was aimed at investigating the generic structure, functions, meanings and roles of FRR from the SFL perspective.

Thirdly, studies investigating the ways in which Malay is used in a professional context are scarce. Studies focusing on Malay professional texts from a functional perspective are also limited (Idris, 2012). Furthermore, despite the fact that Malay is ranked as one of the top ten most spoken languages in the world (Zuraidah, Knowles and Yong, 2008), being recognised as the official languages of Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei (Lee, *et al.*, 1998) and being spoken by

250 million people around the world (Yap, *et al.*, 2010), Malay has not been researched extensively as compared to English, Chinese and Tagalog (Zuraidah, Knowles and Yong, 2008). At this juncture, empirical findings on how Malay is used to realise the communicative functions in a text are crucial and that the results obtained would contribute to new discoveries on the use of Malay as a means for making meanings and accomplishing various communicative purposes from SFL perspective. As Malay scholars strive to uphold Malay to be the language of knowledge – *bahasa ilmu* (Idris, 2012; Asmah, 2014), the need to explore Malay language is of paramount importance. This can be achieved by exploring the ways in which Malay is used to accomplish a genre's purpose. This involves looking into how Malay is used to establish a genre's generic structure and how the roles and functions of a genre are realised in Malay. Thus, the current study is not only motivated to investigate the professional report genre in forestry discipline, but is also inspired to explore the use of Malay in the context of forestry professional texts using SFL theory of language. Overall, based on the existing gap, the current study attempted to explore and investigate the genre of FRR in these three aspects.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of the current study was to explore the FRR genre in forestry discipline using SFL as a theory of language and as an analytical tool to analyse its generic structure potential, linguistic functions and realisations as well as the roles the genre plays in the context of its use. In order to obtain a complete understanding on the nature of FRR, this study also explored forestry professionals' experience and engagement with FRR genre. The elements that constitute the generic structure potential (GSP) of FRR that help to accomplish the genre were identified in the study. Additionally, the functions of FRR were also analysed which are derived from the analysis of experiential elements to realise experiential meaning in FRR. Next, the roles of FRR were also investigated in order to derive an

understanding of how the genre serves its functions and roles which are accomplished through language. Finally, this study also aimed at exploring the ways in which FRR is structured in establishing relevance and coherence of the genre to accomplish its functions and roles in the forestry discipline to realise textual meaning in FRR. Although this study focused only one type of forestry professional report genre written in Malay, it is hoped that findings of the current study may contribute to the advancement of knowledge (Larivière, 2011) in Malay professional texts from SFL perspective.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The following objectives were outlined to guide the current study:

1. To identify the elements that constitute the generic structure potential (GSP) of forest resource reports (FRR).
2. To examine the functions of forest resource reports (FRR) genre elements realised through the experiential meaning.
3. To explain the roles of forest resource reports (FRR) genre within the forestry discipline in achieving its communicative purpose.
4. To describe the text structure of forest resource reports (FRR) in realising the textual meaning.

## 1.5 Research Questions

Consistent with the research objectives outlined, four research questions were formulated based on the existing gaps identified and posed as follows:

1. What are the elements that constitute the generic structure potential (GSP) of forest resource reports (FRR)?
2. What are the functions of forest resource reports (FRR) genre elements realised through the experiential meaning?
3. What are the roles of forest resource reports (FRR) genre within the forestry discipline in achieving its communicative purpose?
4. How is the text structured in realising the textual meaning of forest resource reports (FRR)?

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in order to obtain deeper insights into the generic structure potential, linguistic functions and realisations as well as the roles of FRR. To fulfill the objectives of this study, a qualitative research paradigm that utilised a genre analysis approach was employed whereby four criteria were used to limit the scope of this study. First is the type of genre investigated in the study. This study investigated FRR genre written and issued by forestry professionals working at one of the forestry district offices in the southern region of Peninsular Malaysia representing the state forestry department. This report is written in the form of an extended letter but elements within the genre show writing conventions that were similar to a conventional report writing style although it is written in a letter form. Most importantly, it is regarded as a report as forestry professionals refer to FRR genre as report (*laporan isi hutan*) rather than acknowledging it as a letter. Thus, in

this study, the report genre which is written in the form of a letter was acknowledged as a report rather than a letter.

Due to confidentiality issues and limited access to all the documents produced by forestry professionals in the field, the genre investigated includes only those reporting on forest resources. These reports are perceived to be crucial for the forestry department in their decision-making process in order to decide on necessary actions that need to be taken thereby indicating the relevance of the reports to be investigated. FRR is also one of the most important and frequent report genres that forestry officers need to write in their profession and thus would yield significant findings on the common practices of forestry professionals in professional report genre.

The second limiting scope concerned the theoretical orientation of the study. This study was conducted by applying SFL both as a theory of language as well as an analytical tool to investigate how language is used within the field of forestry discipline. As argued by Eggins (2007), the distinct feature of SFL is that it aims at developing both a theory of language as a social process and an analytical methodology that could allow a comprehensive and systematic description of language patterns within its context of use. In SFL, it is claimed that language has three metafunctions that relate to meanings that people need to make in their everyday interaction; experiential (construing human experience), interpersonal (enacting human relationships) and textual (creating discourse) (Halliday, 1994). The current study investigated how experiential and textual meanings are realised in FRR genre through analysis of linguistic features.

The final criterion is the research participants that were involved in the study. Forestry officers that were involved in the semi-structured interviews were those who are familiar with the writing and issuing of FRR as well as executive forestry officers in charge of responding to the reports issued in one of the district and state levels at

the southern region of Peninsular Malaysia. A purposive sampling for the interview sessions were employed so as to obtain rich data with regard to the nature and context of the genre investigated and to ensure that thick descriptions on the structure, linguistic functions and roles of FRR genre could be obtained from those directly in charge of producing FRR.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

In the Malaysian context, specifically in the study of Malay language from the SFL perspective, investigation on Malay professional texts has not been researched extensively and through extensive search on MyTo (Malaysian Theses Online), Google Scholar, as well as online journal databases, only few studies (Fauziah, 2010; Yee, 2012) on Malay professional texts were found to be approached from an SFL perspective. Therefore, apart from contributing to existing empirical research on professional texts, enriching limited literature on the forestry professional report genre and contributing to the body of knowledge on SFL explorations of Malay professional texts, findings of the study are significant to (i) forestry professionals and other related parties, (ii) forestry community, (iii) concerns on resource sustainability, (iv) SFL community, and (v) professional report genre literature.

To reiterate, concerns have been raised by forestry professionals on the need to include more sociological perspective on the forestry discipline to investigate the kind of genres that exist in the discipline and the extent to which these genres serve their functions and roles within the forestry community. Firstly, findings of the study may be of value to forestry professionals particularly those who are directly and indirectly involved or responsible for the FRR genre written by and addressed to within the forestry department specifically and to other parties in general. Forestry

professionals and other related parties who may benefit from the findings of the study include i) forestry professionals involved in the writing process of FRR, ii) officers from the district, state and headquarters division involved in the decision-making process of FRR, iii) the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia, iv) the state government, v) the Malaysian government as well as vi) research institutions who are interested in obtaining insights on the practice and planning of sustainable forest management (SFM).

Forestry professionals who are involved in the writing and decision-making process as well as those from the district, state and headquarters divisions may benefit from the findings obtained from the study which make explicit how the functions and roles of FRR genre are represented and accomplished through language. This will allow them to identify whether the standard operating procedures (SOP) of FRR writing and its conventions are conformed to by forestry professionals in charge of the genre which would allow sound evaluation of forest areas to be made judiciously. The state and Malaysian governments as well as research institutions may also benefit from the results of the study as FRR genre is one of the genres that provides a transparent evidence on the implementation of SFM practices conducted by the forestry department as reported and presented in the genre. Thus, this will ultimately help to ensure that necessary actions are taken to ensure that forest areas and its resources are protected, managed and administered accordingly by the forestry department in achieving successful implementation of SFM practices in Malaysia. As SFM is considered a primary concern of forest institutions worldwide (Jalilova, Khadka and Vacik, 2012), results obtained on the analysis of FRR genre which is also a genre which addresses SFM concerns in Malaysian forestry context thus may be of value to the forestry communities at large.

Secondly, findings of the study contributes to one of the niche areas of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's (UTM) research which aimed at supporting not only the national agenda concerning the Malaysian education blueprint and National Key Economic Area (NKEA) but also the global grand agenda (UTM website, 2016) as

well as bridging university research that stimulates innovation, encourages collaboration and commercialisation. Figure 1.1 depicts the niche areas of UTM research which support the Malaysian education blueprint, NKEA and the global agenda.



**Figure 1.1:** UTM research niche areas to support national priorities

Figure 1.1 illustrates five niche areas of UTM research which aim to support national priorities. Specifically, findings of the study contribute to the area of resource sustainability which is regarded as an area which ‘deals with local, national and global sustainability issues concerning human interactions with the environment’ (UTM website, 2016). Resources are regarded as the backbone of every economy whereby forests are classified as one of the slowly renewable natural resources (Zaharia and Şuteu, 2011). In this study, the ways in which forests are managed and administered by the district forestry department were analysed. Consequently, the ways in which forestry professionals deal with issues of SFM were highlighted in the study. It is hoped that the results obtained from the study would contribute to the outlook on forest sustainability practices by forestry professionals in charge of managing Peninsular Malaysia’s forest resources thus contributing to a better understanding on pertinent national and global issues on sustainability. Additionally, findings of the study may also be worthy to other research communities outside the forestry discipline such as those from the social sciences and linguistic communities



interested in exploring the nature of the discipline and understanding the values and cultures of forestry discipline and how texts are constructed within the discipline.

Thirdly, the current study explored the forestry professional reports that to date, have not been explored from the SFL perspective. Thus, analysing professional report genre in the field of forestry would contribute to new knowledge within SFL community while simultaneously provide insights to the forestry community from a linguistics point of view. This study is hoped to make an original contribution to knowledge within SFL perspective into how forestry professional report genre is structured and how the functions and meanings are realised by employing the analysis on language metafunctions proposed by Halliday (1994). New knowledge thus will emerge for analysis of forestry professional report genre from the perspective of SFL in terms of its use in formal settings in achieving the genre's communicative purpose. To date, research within this scope is limited with few studies focusing on professional forestry research articles (Joseph, Jason and Nor Arifah; 2014, Friginal, 2013) rather than professional forestry genres used in the workplace context therefore indicating the significance for this study to be carried out. Therefore, this study aims to enrich and expand the present knowledge on SFL professional forestry report genre literature.

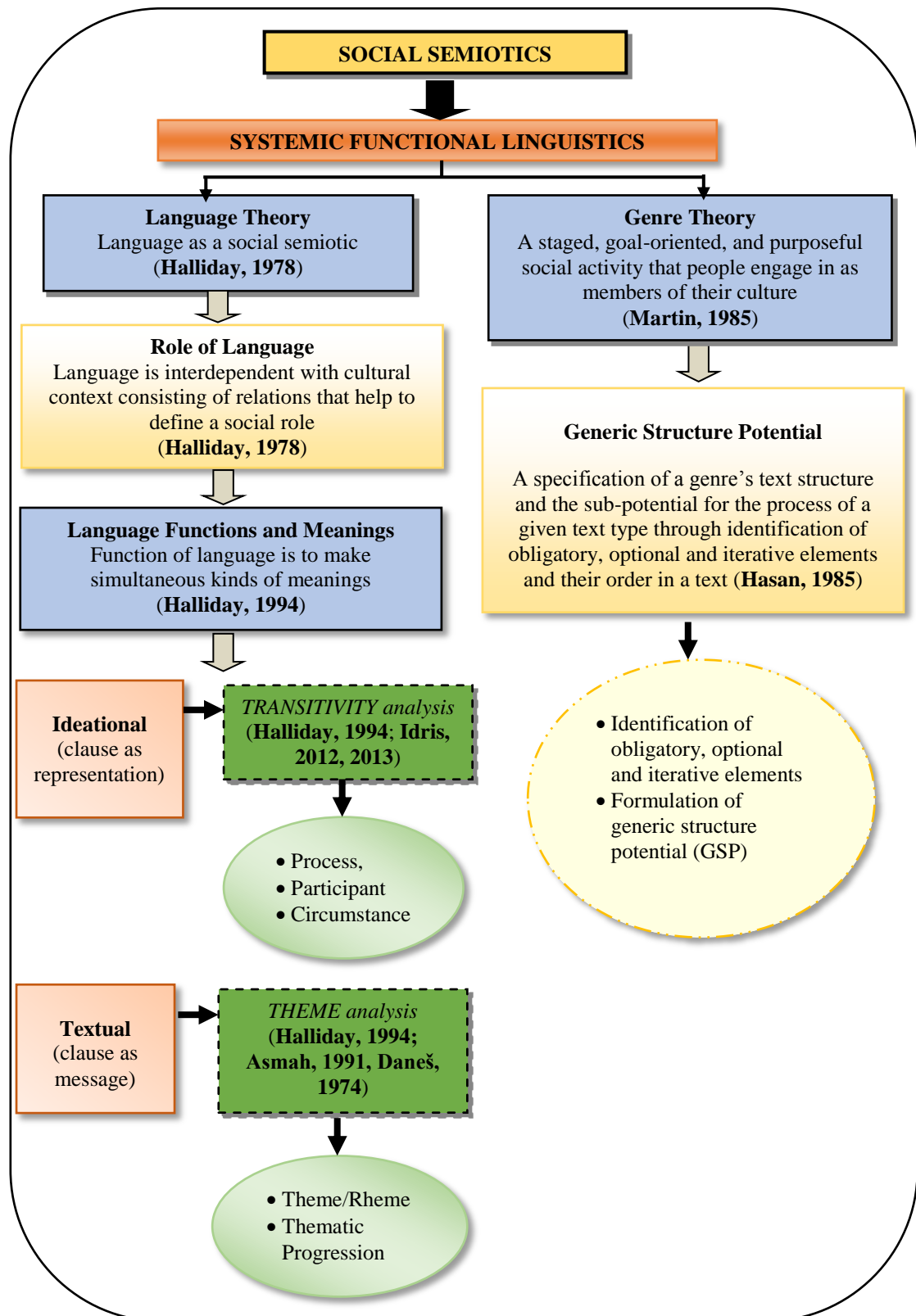
## **1.8 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This section presents the theoretical framework which guided the study. SFL theory proposed by Halliday (1978) which is a branch of social semiotics theory was chosen as the overarching theory that steered the study. SFL was proposed in this study since systemic linguists view language as a system of meaning-making in which language and context are highly interrelated in terms of its influence on one another (Halliday, 1978).

There are three integral theoretical foundations that guide the study which are SFL's theory on social semiotics (Halliday, 1978), language functions (Halliday, 1994) and genre (Martin, 1985). Firstly, analysis of FRR genre capitalised on the belief that language is influenced by social and cultural contexts in which it is used and that the entire process of language use is a semiotic process that involves making meaning by choosing (Halliday, 1978). Halliday (1978) advocates that language is the means by which people interact that must be considered in a social context. Following Halliday's (1978) notion on social semiotics, it is essential to take into account the ways in which language is used to achieve communicative purpose by assuming useful roles in situations where culture and context are key issues presented in particular text types. Therefore, the current study investigated the roles of FRR genre in relation to its context of use and how language is used to accomplish these roles following Halliday's (1978) notion on social semiotics.

The second theoretical foundation of the study is based on Halliday's (1994) notion on language functions. Halliday (1978; 2004) postulates that language evolves across cultures to express simultaneous kinds of meanings to perform three generalised functions referred to in SFL as metafunctions (Halliday, 1978). The metafunctions are (i) ideational or experiential (clause as representation), (ii) interpersonal (clause as exchange) and (iii) textual (clause as message) which express three independent semantic choices. In these study, experiential and textual meanings were analysed in order to investigate how language is used to accomplish FRR genre's roles, functions and meaning realisations. The experiential metafunction expresses representational meaning of speaker's particular situation through Transitivity analysis involving analysis of process (verbal group), participants (nominal group) and circumstantial elements (prepositional phrases or adverbials) (Halliday, 1994) while the textual metafunction expresses the organisation of the message in terms of the speaker's means of organising the message and creating text through Theme analysis involving the analysis of Theme and Rheme (Halliday, 1994; Asmah 1991) and thematic progression (Daneš, 1974). Further discussions on the theory of language from the SFL perspective and analysis of language metafunctions are included in Chapters Two and Three.

The third and final theoretical foundation that sets the study is the genre theory proposed by Martin (1985). In SFL, genre is interpreted by Martin (1992:503) as ‘a staged, goal-oriented social process’ by which a genre is understood to be structured into several stages and steps whereby each genre aims to realise particular communicative goals within a socially-determined context and practices (Martin, 1992). Apart from the concept of genre coined by Martin (1985), Hasan’s (1985) influential work on generic structure potential along with the works of Halliday and Hasan (1985) also sets the theoretical foundation on the analysis of GSP. The generic structure concerns the development of the text which is surrounded by the given context (Takahashi *et al.*, 2004) which refers to the stages that serve particular functions and is embedded within a text to accomplish its social purpose. Further explanations on the concepts of genre and generic structure from SFL perspective are included in Chapter 2. The theoretical framework illustrated in Figure 1.2 presents the working theory that guided this study.



**Figure 1.2:** Theoretical framework of the study

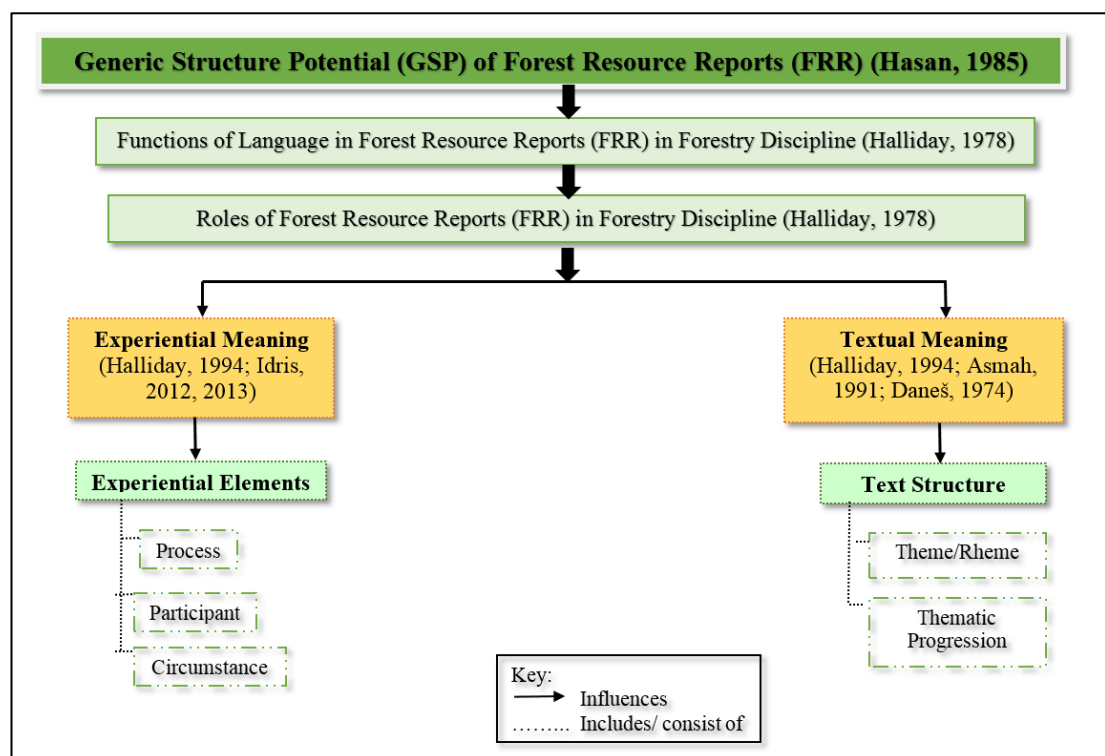
## 1.9 Conceptual Framework of the Study

In order to narrow down the theoretical framework discussed in the previous section, this section presents the conceptual framework of the overall study which helps in defining the research problem, establishing theoretical coherence as well as organising the research design and implementation. To investigate the FRR genre in terms of its generic structure potential, linguistic functions and realisations as well as the roles of FRR genre, several key concepts shown in Figure 1.3 are addressed.

This study investigated FRR genre in forestry discipline. Genre theory drawing on from the SFL perspective formed the basis of the theoretical framework of the study as highlighted in Section 1.8. SFL as a theory of language regards language as a system of meaning-making resource was used as a guide to the study of genre in relation to its meanings and functions. The current study explored FRR genre in terms of its language use within the context which probed into analysing how language construes experience by looking at the social actions that are taking place (experiential meaning) as well as how language is organised and playing its part by analysing the coherence of the text with its context of situation (textual meaning).

Apart from analysing the report genre through its functions and meaning portrayal, FRR genre was also analysed to derive findings on the generic structure potential (GSP) for FRR genre following Martin's definition of genre as 'a staged, goal-oriented social processes' (Martin, 1985:25) and Hasan's (1985) concept of GSP. Thus, identification of the GSP for FRR genre also probed into how meanings are achieved and presented through its goal-oriented social processes and linguistic realisations analysed in FRR genre.

This study explored the GSP, functions and meanings through its linguistic realisations in FRR and the significant roles the genre plays within its context of use. To achieve the aims of the study, document analysis and semi-structured interviews were employed to critically analyse FRR genre. It is hoped that from the findings obtained, the study could obtain valuable insights on FRR genre written by professionals in the forestry discipline thus filling the gap that is currently present both within forestry and SFL communities previously deliberated in the chapter. The mapping between GSP for FRR, its linguistic functions, meanings and realisations as well as the roles of FRR genre in forestry discipline is summarised in the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1.3.



**Figure 1.3: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

## 1.10 Definition of Terms

The operational definitions of key terms employed in the context of this study are sequenced in alphabetical order for ease of reference and are presented in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1:** Definition of terminology used in the study

No	Terminology	Definition	Source
1	Element	<p>Elements and classes are categories set up to describe units. The elements are structural and will be stated as symbols.</p> <p>The elements set up to describe the structure of the sentence represent the upper limit of systemization; these in turn determine the limits of the classes, since the class of forms operating at each place in the structure of the sentence is a class of the clause.</p>	Halliday, 1956: 56
2	Experiential function	The ‘content’ function of language: it is language as the expression of the processes and other phenomena of the external world, including the world of the speaker’s consciousness, the world of thoughts, feelings and so on.	Halliday, 1974b: 95
3	Forestry	A multi-disciplinary field that incorporates many scientific disciplines; soils, wildlife, civil engineering, economics, ecology, agriculture, environmental science, recreation, silviculture and utilisation of timber products.	Green, 2006: 2

No	Terminology	Definition	Source
4	Functional approach	The essential feature of a functional theory is not that it enables us to enumerate and classify the functions of speech acts, but that it provides a basis for explaining the nature of the language system, since the system itself reflects the functions that it has evolved to serve.	Halliday, 1971a:65-66
5	Genre	A staged, goal-oriented, and purposeful social activity that people engage in as members of their culture. Genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them.	Martin, 1985
6	Generic Structure Potential	A specification of a genre's text structure and the sub-potential for the process of a given text type through identification of optional, obligatory and iterative elements and their order in a text.	Hasan, 1985: 56
7	Ideational Function	The ideational function is that part of the grammar concerned with the expression of experience; including both the processes and those of consciousness – and the logical relations deducible from them. The ideational component thus has two sub-components, the experiential and the logical.	Halliday, 1973:99
8	Language	Language is best regarded as a form of activity. Specifically, it is a form of activity of human beings in societies; and it has the property of being patterned.	Halliday, 1974:4



No	Terminology	Definition	Source
9	Meaning	Meaning is at the same time both a component of social action and a symbolic representation of the structure of social action. The semiotic structure of the environment – the ongoing social activity, the roles and the statuses, and the interactional channels – both determines the meanings exchanged and is created by and formed out of them.	Halliday, 1976:143
10	Realisation	The concept of realisation is called by different names in English, exponence, implementation, manifestation as well as realisation.	Halliday, 1976a:4
11	Report	A text that classifies and describes a phenomenon. In this study, the report refers to the forest resource report (FRR) that is written in a form of an extended letter but contains elements of a report.	Martin and Rose, 2008: 125
12	Roles	Refers to the context of situation in which culture and context are presented in texts.	Halliday, 1978: 85
13	Social Semiotic	The general science of signs which has its basic discipline linguistics, the science of verbal signs.	Jakobson, 1960:289
14	Systemic Functional Linguistics	A useful descriptive and interpretive framework for viewing language as a strategic, meaning making resource.	Eggs, 2007:20
15	Texts	Highest unit on the rank scale of semantics operating in a context of situation; it is language functioning in context.	Halliday, 1976: 74

No	Terminology	Definition	Source
16	Textual function	The textual component is concerned with the creation of text; it expresses the structure of information, and the relation of each part of the discourse to the whole and to the setting.	Halliday, 1973:99
17	Theme/Rheme	The Theme is what is being talked about, the point of departure for the clause as a message: and the speaker has within certain limits the option of selecting any element in the clause as thematic. What the speaker puts first is the Theme of the clause, the remainder being Rheme.	Halliday, 1976: 212
18	Transitivity	Transitivity is the representation in language of Processes, the Participants therein, and the Circumstantial features associated with them.	Halliday, 1976: 159
19	Thematic Progression	A sequence of Themes in a text which are chosen by the writer to create a coherent text.	Daneš, 1974: 114

### 1.11 Thesis Overview

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. The content of the first chapter had been summarised at the beginning of this chapter. In the second chapter, comprehensive reviews of literature on SFL, genre theories, professional report genres as well as the nature of forestry discipline and Malay language are presented. In the third chapter, methodological approach concerning research design, research data and participants, research procedure, results of preliminary study and data analysis procedure are described and justified. In Chapter 4, results of the study exploring the elements and GSP for FRR are reported. Chapter 5 is also addressing

the results of the study related to the representation of experience (Experiential meaning) and the roles of FRR. Chapter 6 is also reporting on the results of the study related to theme selection and meaning organisation (Textual analysis) in FRR. The final chapter (Chapter 7) concludes the study and marks the end of this thesis.

## **1.12 Summary**

This chapter provides an overall view on significant insights into the relevance of the current study. It discusses established acknowledgements with regard to literature in general and presented the probable ways in which genre can be understood and explored. Additionally, there is also a discussion on the general view of genre and SFL theory of language. Additionally, the chapter serves as a guideline of this study where the introduction, background of the study, statement of problem, statement of purpose, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, theoretical and conceptual frameworks as well as the definition of terms are presented. The next chapter presents an in-depth account of relevant theories on SFL and genre analysis along with a discussion on relevant studies addressing these areas which have contributed to the construction of the objectives and research questions in this introductory chapter.

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