

# **FROM CLIMATE CHANGE TO DEFORESTATION: A GENRE OF POPULARISED SCIENCE**

BY

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**To my husband and my daughters**



**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work, and that it has not previously been submitted to this university or to any other institution for a degree, diploma, or other qualifications.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chonlada L.', is written over a horizontal line.

Chonlada Laohawiriyanon



## Abstract

The topics of climate change, population growth, and deforestation, as discussed in publications such as *New Scientist*, *Discover*, *Time*, and *Our Planet*, exemplify contemporary writing on science for the general community. As such, it is assumed that they are presented in an objective, scientific, informative way. Furthermore, these topics illustrate what it means to write complex issues in a popular manner. Consequently, they provide an opportunity for examining at least one area of popular science as a generic phenomenon.

Through an investigation of thirty texts (ten on each of the three topics mentioned), the consistencies and distinctive features of writing on these environmental issues are investigated, in particular using discourse tools drawn from Systemic Functional linguistics. The foremost tools are the proposals concerning GSP (Generic Structure Potential) put forward by Hasan, which provide an outline of the syntagmatic unfolding of a text (“logogenetic perspective”) and the four stratal perspective that is illustrated in the work by Halliday and Hasan, in particular as such work relates wording to culture. By assessing the degree to which the thirty texts constitute a genre, and the degree to which they exhibit their own internal variations, it is also possible to clarify Halliday’s notion of the ‘cline of instantiation’ between, at one end, the ‘potential/system’ and, at the other end, the instance of ‘text as process’.

The investigation reveals that the assumption of an informative, objective style in popular science journal articles actually obscures a deeper underlying activism about the future, but an activism strongly based on only Western perceptions of environmental crisis.





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# Contents

## Volume 1

### Chapter One

#### Introduction

1.1 Rationale for studying popular scientific discourse	1
1.2 Relevant works on scientific discourse analysis	7
1.3 the emergence of popular scientific discourse	9
1.4 Scientific discourse: Popular or non popular	12
1.5 Purposes of specialist journal articles	16
1.6 Purposes of popular scientific discourse	18
1.7 Differentiating specialist and popular scientific discourse	19
1.8 Purpose of the study	29

### Chapter Two

#### Theoretical Background

2.1 Introduction	30
2.2 Generic Structure Potential (GSP)	30
2.3 Register variation	38
2.3.1 Alternative approaches	43
2.4 The advantages of using multiple elements in the textual characterisation	48
2.4.1 Limitations in ‘Obligatoriness and Optionality’	51

### Chapter Three

#### The structure of popular scientific writing on ‘Climate Change’

3.1 Introduction	56
3.2 Text selection criteria	57
3.3 Synopsis of the sample texts	58
3.4 GSP elements of texts on climate change	62

3.5 Semantic elements within TUNING: definition and realisation	68
3.5.1 TITLE (TTL)	68
3.5.2 GLIMPSE (GLM)	70
3.5.3 SETTING (SET) and PROBLEM (PRB)	77
3.5.4 TECHNICAL LEAD-IN (TLI)	85
3.6 Semantic elements within FOCUSSING: definition and realisation	87
3.6.1 SPECIFIC CLAIM (SPC)	87
3.6.2 GENERAL CLAIM (GCL)	91
3.6.3 BRIDGING (BRG)	94
3.6.4 EVALUATION (EVN)	105
3.6.5 ONGOING PROJECT (ONP)	123
3.6.6 SOLUTION (SLN)	125
3.6.7 CONCERNS (CNS) and PREDICTION (PRE)	125
3.7 Semantic elements within CLOSING: definition and realisation	129
3.7.1 CONCERNS (CNS)	130
3.7.2 PREDICTION (PRE)	132
3.7.3 SUMMARY (SUM)	134
3.7.4 CONCLUSION (CON)	138
3.7.5 CALL FOR COLLABORATION (COL) and RECOMMENDATION (REC)	140
3.8 Distinctions between semantic elements based on degree of ‘delicacy’	146

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings of analysis of texts on population growth and deforestation**

4.1 Introduction	152
4.2 Population growth	154
4.2.1 Texts on population growth and their source	154
4.2.2 Synopsis of the sample texts	154
4.3 Generic structure	158
4.4 Semantic elements within TUNING	160

4.5 Semantic elements within FOCUSsing 163

4.5.1 SUGGESTION (SGN) 163

4.6 Semantic elements within CLOSING 165

4.7 Deforestation 166

4.7.1 Texts and their source 166

4.7.2 Synopsis of the texts 167

4.8 Generic structure 171

4.9 Semantic elements within TUNING 173

4.10 Semantic elements within FOCUSsing 174

4.11 Semantic elements within CLOSING 174

4.12 The consequences of semantic variations for GSP characterisation 176

4.13 Negative view of the future as crucial meaning 194

4.14 The construction of futurism in an environmental context 201

4.14.1 Contestable ‘point of view’ 203

4.14.2 Non-contestable ‘point of view’ 206

4.15 The construction of futurism in the climate change texts 214

4.16 The construction of futurism in the population growth texts 217

4.17 The construction of futurism in the deforestation texts 218

**Chapter Five**

**Interaction between verbal and visuals representations**

5.1 Introduction 221

5.2 Verbals and visuals 222

5.3 Interaction between verbal and visual modes 224

5.3.1 Types of visuals employed in the texts on climate change, population growth, and deforestation 225

5.3.2 Comparison of visual representation in the texts on climate change, population growth, and deforestation 230

5.3.1 Quadrant A visuals: climate change 233

5.3.2 Quadrant A visuals: population growth 237

5.3.3 Quadrant A visuals: deforestation	242
5.3.4 Quadrant B visuals: climate change	245
5.3.5 Quadrant B visuals: population growth	257
5.3.6 Quadrant B visuals: deforestation	259
5.3.7 Quadrant C visuals: climate change	261
5.3.8 Quadrant C visuals: population growth	266
5.3.9 Quadrant C visuals: deforestation	274
5.4 Discussion	278
5.5 Visuals and their negative portrayal of the future	279

## **Chapter Six**

<b>Conclusion</b>	289
<b>Bibliography</b>	299

## **Volume 2**

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Copies of analysed texts showing their semantic elements.	1
Appendix 2: Articles on the current debate on climate change.	145
Appendix 3: Ergative analysis of GLIMPSE in 'Parasol', 'Icy', and 'Heat'.	148
Appendix 4: Ergative analysis of BRIDGING in 'Parasol', 'Icy', and 'Heat'.	149
Appendix 5: Transitive participants conflated with Medium in BRIDGING.	171
Appendix 6: Different categories of the role of Medium.	185
Appendix 7: Affectual meaning and 'irrealis' components in the three sets of texts.	198
Appendix 8: Affectual motif in visuals and captions in the three sets of texts.	207
Appendix 9: 'Realis' and 'irrealis' meaning in the three sets of texts.	212