UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

DECLARATION OF THESIS / UNDERGRADUATE PROJECT REPORT AND COPYRIGHT

Author's full name: Nurainasuhada Binti Mohamad Apandi
Date of Birth: 11 MAY 1987
Title: UNDERGRADUATE MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS WITH LECTURES IN ENGLISH
Academic Session: 2010 - 2011

I declare that this thesis is classified as:

☐ CONFIDENTIAL (Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972)*

☐ RESTRICTED (Contains restricted information as specified by the organization where research was done)*

☑ OPEN ACCESS I agree that my thesis to be published as online open access (full text)

I acknowledged that Universiti Teknologi Malaysia reserves the right as follows:

1. The thesis is the property of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
2. The Library of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia has the right to make copies for the purpose of research only.
3. The Library has the right to make copies of the thesis for academic exchange.

Certified by:

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
SIGNATURE                              SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR

Nurainasuhada Binti Mohamad Apandi     Dr. Sarimah Binti Shamsudin
(870511-23-5610)                        NAME OF SUPERVISOR

Date: 07 May 2011                      Date: 07 May 2011

NOTES:  * If the thesis is CONFIDENTIAL or RESTRICTED, please attach with the letter from the organization with period and reasons for confidentiality or restriction.
“I hereby declare that I have read this thesis and in my opinion this thesis is sufficient in terms of scope and quality for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science with Education (TESL).”

Signature : ………………………………
Name of Supervisor : Dr. Sarimah binti Shamsudin
Date : 07 May 2011
UNDERGRADUATE MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STUDENTS’ LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS WITH LECTURES IN ENGLISH

NURAINASUHADA BINTI MOHAMAD APANDI

A thesis fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science with Education (TESL).

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

MAY 2011
I declare that this thesis entitled “undergraduate mechanical engineering students’ listening comprehension problems with lectures in English” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature : ....................................................
Name : Nurainasuhada Binti Mohamad Apandi
Date : 07 May 2011
DEDICATION

To My dear Mother
For her endless support

My Father
For his worship and faith in me

My Sisters and Brothers
For their everlasting encouragement in my education

My Love
For motivating and believing in me

My Friends

This thesis is dedicated to them
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my main supervisor, DR. SARIMAH SHAMSUDIN for her continuous support; supervision and encouragement during this semester. I would not have completed this thesis successfully without her assistance. In preparing this thesis, I worked with many people; they have contributed towards my understanding and thoughts. My classmate and friends helped me and gave their support. My sincere appreciation goes to all who have provided assistance at various occasions. Their views and tips are useful indeed. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my family members for their support.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate undergraduate mechanical engineering students’ listening comprehension problems with lectures in English and identify strategies they used to overcome listening problems. The study was guided by two research questions 1) How do undergraduate engineering students rate their ability in listening to lecture in English? 2) What language learning strategies do undergraduate engineering students use to overcome their listening comprehension problems with lectures in English? The study consisted of three parts. In the first part, 150 students responded to a quantitative instrument; a questionnaire which enquired about students’ demographic information and listening strategy used. In the second part, the same 150 students were required to make assessment of their listening to lecture or self rating assessment. Five were selected to respond to one qualitative instrument which is interview session to further investigate the respondents’ listening comprehension problems of lectures and strategies they used to overcome these problems. Results showed that undergraduate mechanical engineering students had a moderate problem related to listening to lecture in English. They also used meta cognitive strategies the most with a mean value of 1.73 compared to other strategies such as socio affective 1.68 and cognitive 1.45.
ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat masalah pelajar kejuruteraan mekanikal di dalam memahami kuliah yang dikendalikan di dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan mengenal pasti strategi yang digunakan untuk mengatasi masalah ini. Kajian ini mempunyai dua persoalan. Kajian 1) apakah masalah yang di alami pelajar dalam memahami kuliah yang dikendalikan didalam bahasa inggeris ?2) apakah strategi yang digunakan oleh pelajar untuk mengatasi masalah memahami kuliah didalam bahasa Inggeris . Kajian ini terbahagi kepada tiga bahagian. Pada bahagian pertama, 150 pelajar kejuruteraan mekanikal mengambil bahagian didalam instrumen kuantitatif yang mempunyai; dua-bahagian soal-selidik, di mana terdiri daripada maklumat demografik dan strategi yang digunakan. Manakala untuk bahagian kedua 150 pelajar yang sama diminta untuk membuat penilaian diri terhadap kuliah yang dijalankan didalam bahasa Inggeris. Daripada 150 responden hanya 5 responden sahaja diambil untuk mengambil bahagian di dalam temubual mengenai pemahaman,masalah dan strategi yang gunakan di dalam kuliah supaya hal ini dapat dikaji dengan lebih lanjut. Hasil kajian menunjukkan secara keseluruhan pelajar kejuruteraan mekanikal mengalami masalah yang sederhana di dalam memahami kuliah di dalam bahasa Inggeris .Manakala strategi yang paling kerap digunakan ialah meta kognitif dengan nilai min 1.73 berbanding strategi yang lain seperti sosio afektif 1.68 dan kognitif 1.45.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** iv  
**ABSTRACT** v  
**ABSTRAK** vi  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS** vi  
**LIST OF TABLES** x  
**LIST OF FIGURES** xi  
**LIST OF SYMBOLS**  
**GLOSSARY OF TERMS** xii  
**LIST OF APPENDICES** xiii  

1 **INTRODUCTION** 1-2  
1.1 Background of Study 3-4  
1.2 Problem Statement 4  
1.3 Research Objectives 5  
1.4 Research Questions 5  
1.5 Significance of Research 6-7  
1.6 Definition and Terms 7  
1.7 Conclusion 8  

2 **LITERATURE REVIEW** 9  
2.0 Introduction 9  
2.1 Definition of Listening 10  
2.2 Listening Theoretical Background 10-11  
2.3 Comprehension Requirements of Academic Listening 11-12  
2.4 Listening Comprehension Strategies 12-13  
2.5 Previous Studies on Listening Comprehension Problems 14-16  
2.6 Previous Studies on Listening Comprehension Strategies 17-18  
2.7 Theoretical Framework 18-19
2.8 Conclusion 20

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 21

3.0 Introduction 21

3.1 Research Approaches 21

3.2 Research Design 22

3.3 Research Questions 22

3.4 Participants 23

3.5 Research Instruments 23-24
   3.5.1 Listening Strategies 25
   3.5.2 Self-Rating Assessment Scale 25-26
   3.5.3 Interviews 25

3.6 Research Procedures 26-28

3.7 Data Analysis 28

3.8 Conclusion 28

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 29

4.0 Introduction 29

4.1 Data from the Questionnaire 30
   4.1.1 Demographic Information 30
   4.1.2 Listening Strategies 35
      4.1.2.1 Meta cognitive 35
      4.1.2.2 Cognitive 37
      4.1.2.3 socio Affective 40
      4.1.2.4 the most frequent use of listening strategies 42

4.2 Data from the Self-assessment Rating Scale 43

4.3 Findings from the Interview Sessions 46-53
   4.3.1 Perceptions towards attending lectures in English 47
   4.3.2 Purpose of the lecture 47-48
   4.3.3 Perspectives towards understanding the Lectures 48-49
   4.3.4 Students’ activities in class 49
   4.3.5 Students’ experience of lectures 50
4.3.6 Lecturers’ style 51
4.3.7 Listening comprehension problems 51
4.3.8 Further details of listening comprehension problems 51
4.3.9 Listening experience 52
4.3.10 Students’ listening strategies to overcome the problems 52-53

4.4 Discussions on Major Findings 54-56
  4.4.1 Listening Comprehension Problems 54-55
  4.4.2 Listening Strategies 56-57

4.5 Conclusion 57

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 58
5.0 Introduction 58
5.1 Conclusion on Findings 58-59
5.2 Limitations of the Study 60
5.3 Implication of the Findings 60-61
5.4 Recommendations for Future Research 61-62

REFERENCES 63-65
A Listening Strategies Questionnaire 66-69
B Self rating assessment scale 70
C Interview questions 71
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE NO.</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6</td>
<td>correlation between MUET Result, MUET listening Result and Self Rating Assessment Scale</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7</td>
<td>Students’ use of Meta Cognitive Strategies</td>
<td>36-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.8</td>
<td>Students’ use of Cognitive Strategies</td>
<td>37-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.9</td>
<td>Students’ use of Socio affective Strategies</td>
<td>40-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.10</td>
<td>summary of frequent use of listening strategies</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.12</td>
<td>summary of students’ Self Rating Assessment Scale</td>
<td>44-45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES/CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE NO.</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3-1</td>
<td>Flow chart of research questions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3-2</td>
<td>Research procedures</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4-1</td>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4-2</td>
<td>Races</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4-3</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4-4</td>
<td>MUET result</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4-5</td>
<td>MUET listening result</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4-11</td>
<td>Summary of frequent use of listening strategies</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4-13</td>
<td>Summary of students’ self assessment rating scale</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

SL/FL - Second language learner/foreign language learner
MUET - Malaysian University English Test
IELTS - International English Language Testing System
TOEFL - The Test of English as a Foreign Language
# LIST OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Listening Strategies</td>
<td>66-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Self Rating Assessment Scale</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

English language nowadays has been described as a lingua franca all over the world. It is the leading language or in some instances even the required international language for communication in serious area such as science, business, aviation, entertainment, radio, diplomacy and education. It spreads beyond the country and is now accepted globally. Since English is so widely spoken, it has been referred to as a global and dominant language. A working knowledge of English has become a requirement in a number of fields, occupations and professions such as medicine and computing; as a consequence, over a billion people speak English at least at the basic level. Although, English is not the official language in many countries, it is the language most often taught as a second language around the world.

Furthermore, English has also been widely used at the tertiary level as the language for communication and also as a medium to transfer knowledge to students. It is obviously important for students to engage in the English language in order for them to excel in their studies and their future career. Therefore, the use of English in engineering courses is crucial since students will be exposed to the sources that mostly use English as a medium of knowledge. Not only that, students need to understand the engineering terminology used for disseminating information in
English. In order to master the engineering knowledge and skills better, students should acquire the English language competence. Students need to have good skill in the English language to be successful in their area of study since most of the scientific papers or journals in the world are written in English.

Moreover, most engineering professors and lecturers in many universities are also conducting their lectures in English. Hence, engineering students should at least master the basic English ability to deal with the countless of English lectures, tutorials, assignments, labs, and projects. Finally, students also have to submit their important theses in English. When engineering students graduate from the higher institution and become real engineers, they will find that English is even more crucial than it used to be. Engineers usually work in groups and their projects can seldom be solved on individually. The nature of their work determines that being an engineer, they need to cooperate and communicate with different people from different parts of the world. Most of the engineers speak English at the workplace as the main language of communication. In order to understand and coordinate with their colleagues and accomplish their projects successfully, engineers have to speak good English.

All in all, Malaysia tertiary engineering students should try their best to improve their English ability which could help to make both their university life and career more successful and enjoyable.

However, a developing country like Malaysia is still looking forward in enhancing students’ capability and proficiency in the English language. A lot of tests have been done to improve students’ ability such as MUET, IELTS and TOEFL to make our students at par or better than international students.

Therefore, this research intended to investigate the problems affecting engineering students’ listening comprehension with lectures in English. In addition, this research was also interested in finding out the listening strategies applied by engineering students which help them in understanding lectures in English.
1.1 Background of Study

Malaysia language teaching system is struggling hard to enhance students’ proficiency in the English language since English is mostly the second language (L2) for students. Mohd. Faisal Hanapiah (2002) states “The Ministry of Education also makes suitable changes in its policies with the objective to arrest or reduce the declining standard of English among the students. The Education Ministry had introduced Malaysian University English Test (MUET) a few years ago. It is a special English examination, which is almost equivalent in terms of standard like the international English examinations, for example, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL-USA) and International English Language Testing Service (IELTS-UK)”. The MUET consists of four main sections namely writing, reading, listening and speaking. Examiners could have a general understanding on a students’ understanding of the usage of English. The MUET must be taken and passed before a university or college student is allowed to graduate. It is increasingly becoming an indication used by employers to know a job candidate’s proficiency of English by looking at the level of MUET.

Basically, engineering students have problem with understanding lectures in English because they do not have sufficient exposure of the language skill specifically in academic listening. Hence, the problem that arose is students’ problem of understanding the knowledge that lecturers want to deliver because students are unable to get sufficient information that they need due to the listening problem. Listening is listed first in language skills not only because it appears first in natural first language acquisition but because it is used the most and “on average, we can expect to listen twice as we speak, four times more than we read and five times more than we write” (Morley 1991, p.82). In addition, the research also intend to discover strategies used by undergraduate engineering student’s to improve their listening skills as stated by Peterson(2001) “strategy use varies with proficiency and so the relationship between strategy use and proficiency level is an important one”. Thus, the aim of this research is to discover undergraduate mechanical engineering
students’ listening comprehension problems with lectures in English and strategies that students use related with listening to lectures in English.

1.2 Problem Statement

Engineering students need to learn a lot of things and gather a lot of information from the lectures of subjects that they are taking. Mohd. Faisal Hanapiah (2002:p 5) said that “successful graduates at the university level, specifically those who achieve first class degrees, are people who have a very high level of mastery in English”. This research aims to study if Malaysian engineering students face difficulties in listening comprehension of lectures in English because English is their second language or L2 and not mastering the language could result in poor understanding of lectures in English. They do not only have problem with the language generally but also listening specifically. Since they listen to lectures in English daily therefore the researcher decided to examine this study. Engineering students’ problem initiated from different sources such as the lack of sufficient exposure to the English language and appropriate preparation, and also the lack of strategies on how to make the listening activity meaningful. Listening, as a skill, is assuming more weight in SL or FL classrooms than ever before. Rost (1994: 141-142), points out, "listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking." Therefore undergraduate engineering students have to understand the input to produce good output.
1.3 Research Objectives

Since a large number of Malaysian engineering undergraduate students are completing their degrees in local universities and the medium of instruction is English, therefore, their listening comprehension with lectures in English is being taken into consideration. Although their proficiency had been examined based on the result that they gained before entering university and they are assigned to respective English language courses in university, they still experience listening comprehension problems in the process of listening to lectures.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. look into undergraduate engineering students’ listening comprehension problems with lectures in English by looking at their own self rating assessment.

2. discover the variety of listening strategies which undergraduate engineering students use to deal with listening comprehension problems with lectures in English.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will be investigated in the study:

1. How do undergraduate engineering students rate their ability in listening to lectures in English?

2. What listening strategies do undergraduate engineering students use to overcome their listening comprehension problems with lectures in English?