

FORMS AND COMMUNICATIVE INTENT OF METADISCOURSE IN  
MALAYSIAN AND BRITISH UNDERGRADUATE ENGINEERING  
LECTURES

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Dedicated to my parents  
Haji Ibrahim bin Husain and Hajjah Ainon binti Hamzah  
and

all my four children:  
Along Amirul Azfar bin Abdul Razak,  
Angah Amirul Ashraf bin Abdul Razak,  
Amirul Zarif bin Abdul Razak, and  
Nurhanna Ellisya binti Abdul Razak

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## ABSTRACT

The growing influence of English as an academic language has led to various studies on aspects of academic lectures and the associated communicative needs to understand the nature of spoken academic language. This thesis examines how undergraduate engineering lecturers from two different institutional backgrounds guide their students in lectures. Using the linguistic framework of metadiscourse, defined as language expressions that explicitly guide listeners to speakers' discourse intentions, this study focuses on metadiscoursal features employed by lecturers to guide students to understand lectures. The study used an approximately 85,000-word corpus of 12 hours from ten undergraduate engineering lectures recorded at a Malaysian and British university. Two layered analyses were done: at the macro-level, types of metadiscourse used were identified and taxonomized; at the micro-level, the lexico-grammatical features were further explored. Fourteen different types of metadiscourse performing six major discourse functions were identified and categorized into either content-organizing metadiscourse or content-transmitting metadiscourse. Lecturers from both institutions were found to use more content-organizing metadiscourse, reflecting their strong awareness of students' needs for guide to information processing. While there were only minor differences in the use of metadiscourse among the two groups of lecturers, detailed micro analysis proved that there are variations in the way metadiscourse is manifested. The use of personal pronouns and micro markers showed many similarities, but the use of *wh*-cleft for strategic packaging of contents was strikingly different. Overall, cultural differences appeared minimal suggesting that the genre of academic lecture overrides all others. This study provides pedagogical perspectives into the language and linguistic expressions commonly found in engineering lectures, which could have impacts on teaching effective academic listening skills to undergraduates. The findings could also be beneficial for training beginning lecturers on delivering effective lectures.

## ABSTRAK

Pengaruh bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa akademik yang terus meningkat telah membawa kepada pelbagai penyelidikan dalam aspek perkuliahan dan keperluan komunikasi yang berkaitan untuk memahami sifat bahasa akademik lisan. Tesis ini mengkaji bagaimana pensyarah kejuruteraan peringkat prasiswazah dari dua universiti yang berlainan latarbelakang membimbing pelajar semasa perkuliahan. Kerangka 'metadiscourse' iaitu ekspresi bahasa yang memberi petunjuk secara jelas terhadap maksud penutur telah digunakan dalam kajian ini yang memfokus kepada petunjuk-petunjuk yang digunakan oleh pensyarah untuk membantu pelajar memahami isi kandungan kuliah. Kajian ini menggunakan korpus yang berjumlah lebih kurang 85,000 perkataan merangkumi 12 jam kuliah dari sepuluh kuliah kejuruteraan peringkat prasiswazah yang dirakam di sebuah universiti di Malaysia dan di Britain. Dua peringkat analisis telah dijalankan: pada tahap makro, jenis-jenis 'metadiscourse' telah dikenalpasti dan ditaksonomi; di peringkat mikro, ciri-ciri 'lexico-grammatical' telah diperincikan. Empat belas jenis 'metadiscourse' yang memenuhi enam fungsi utama wacana telah dikenalpasti dan dikategori sama ada sebagai 'metadiscourse' yang merujuk kepada susunatur isi kandungan atau 'metadiscourse' yang merujuk kepada transmisi isi kandungan. Pensyarah dari kedua-dua universiti didapati menggunakan lebih banyak 'metadiscourse' susunatur isi kandungan, menunjukkan kepekaan mereka terhadap keperluan pemprosesan maklumat pelajar. Walaupun tidak terdapat banyak perbezaan dalam 'metadiscourse' yang digunakan di kalangan pensyarah kedua-dua universiti, analisis secara mendalam di peringkat mikro membuktikan terdapat pelbagai variasi bagaimana 'metadiscourse' dizahirkan. Penggunaan katanama diri dan penanda wacana mikro menunjukkan banyak persamaan, namun penggunaan 'wh-cleft' untuk penyatuan isi kandungan yang strategik telah menunjukkan perbezaan yang ketara. Secara keseluruhannya, perbezaan budaya yang minimum menunjukkan bahawa genre kuliah mengatasi yang lain. Kajian ini memberi perspektif pedagogi terhadap bahasa dan ekspresi bahasa yang sering digunakan dalam kuliah kejuruteraan yang boleh memberi impak kepada pengajaran kemahiran pendengaran akademik. Dapatan juga boleh digunakan untuk melatih pensyarah muda dalam memberi syarahan akademik yang lebih berkesan.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWL	-	Academic Word List
BASE	-	British Academic Spoken English
BSLC	-	Business Study Lecture Corpus
CTL	-	Center for Teaching and Learning
CU	-	Coventry University
EAP	-	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	-	English as a Foreign Language
ELC	-	Engineering Lecture Corpus
ELF	-	English as a Lingua Franca
ELFA	-	English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings
ESL	-	English as a Second Language
ESP	-	English for Specific Purposes
L1	-	First Language
L2	-	Second Language
LGSWE	-	The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English
MICASE	-	Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English
MICUSP	-	Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Students Papers
MyLinE	-	Online Resources for Learning in English
NNS	-	Non-native speaker
NS	-	Native speaker
PMI-2	-	Prime Minister Initiative Two
T2K-SWAL	-	TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
RAs	-	Research Articles

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Background of the Study: English as a Medium of Instruction in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions**

English has gained an important role in different spheres of life globally (McCarthy and Carter, 2001; Nikula, 2005) and in education, English has long been established as a language of scholarship, especially for the dissemination of research findings through scientific communication (Swales, 1990). The use of English as a medium of instruction at a tertiary level has now spread beyond the native speaking English countries (United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada) and it has been adopted as the medium of instruction in institutions of higher learning in countries where English may only have a role or status as a second language or even a foreign language. This change, apart from being influenced by the established role of English as an international language, is to a large extent due to the need for many institutions to internationalize their education system as a response to globalization and also to respond to the need that students should acquire credentials which are suitable for global occupational marketplace.

The spread of English as an academic language has not left Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) unaffected. Skills in English have been highly valued and more so in the present situation whereby most of the content lectures in UTM are conducted through the medium of English. Although the pathways into higher education are not likely to be dictated by English language proficiency, such as in Australian higher education (Singh and Doherty, 2004) for example, the need to be

able to function in English, is almost as crucial to students in UTM and in other universities in Malaysia as their western counterparts. Failures in addressing this need and its repercussion spill over well after the students leave the campus, as lamented frequently in the local newspapers that local graduates have poor command of English.

The use of English in Malaysian tertiary education system could not be considered as a recent practice. During the pre-independence era, when there were four mediums of instruction in different types of primary schools, English was used for university studies (Tan, 2005). After ten years of independence, when the Malay language was declared as the national language, tertiary institutions adopted the national language, while the use of English persisted at least for the teaching of science and technology courses. The use of English as instructional language was later legitimized in 1996 (Tan, 2005) primarily to reduce the gap in the ability to use the English language between the public and private institutions graduates (Zaaba et al., 2010). In 2003, when English was used as the medium of the instruction to teach Mathematic and Sciences in schools and in matriculation colleges, the requirement to use English in the public higher education institutions was pushed to a higher level, and it culminated in 2006 when all first year courses in public universities in Malaysia started using English as the medium of instruction (Mohamed, 2008). The need to conduct courses in English becomes even more crucial when public universities start enrolling international students in an effort to make the country one of the higher education hubs in the world (Mohamed, 2008).

However, in 2012 it was decided that the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English at the basic educational level be phased out and reverted to the Malay language. The new policy, however, did not affect the use of English as the medium of instruction at matriculation colleges and beyond (Zaaba et al., 2010). Therefore, English as the medium of instruction in tertiary education remains strongly relevant, at least for those from matriculation colleges who have been trained in English for their pre-university courses and for the international students whose enrollment is expected to increase.

## 1.1 Challenges in Using English as a Medium of Instruction

The unprecedented spread in the use of English as a medium of instruction in English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) settings, has placed a considerable attention on challenges in using English to teach, as well as to learn and acquire new knowledge in English. The focus of most studies has been on second language (L2) learners and their difficulties due to the demand of cognitive processing of contents delivered by instructors in the English language. Bjorkman (2010), in describing the use of English as a medium of instruction in a technical university in Sweden, an ELF setting, argues that when both lecturers and students are non-native speakers of English and yet use English as a vehicular language, they become novices in the situation and therefore both have their own set of challenges. In other words, research should focus on both lecturers and students.

Marsh and Laitinen (2005, cited in Coleman, 2006) argue that one of the complications involving lecturers using English as a medium of instruction is perhaps the high likelihood that they lack specialist knowledge on demands of university-level education through an L2, despite their adequate command of English. A more interesting issue could be the one raised by Bjorkman (2010), namely the appropriate *definition* for an effective speaker. Bjorkman argues that a proficient lecturer may not be an effective speaker if he or she fails to convey the information to students. He argues that in interactions wherein speakers form a wide range of proficiency levels, the more proficient speakers need to find ways to effectively communicate with the less proficient counterparts. In other words, in the context of a lecture, lecturers have to be aware of the complexities of the situation – for examples, mixed ability of students in terms of their English language proficiency and complex lecture contents that have to be delivered – and therefore should have the skills to make certain adjustments so that their use of language results in successful communication.

In one study involving several Turkish universities, Sert (2008) found that lecturers simplified their English language or used Turkish in order to prevent

misunderstanding in lectures, where the audience was students with limited English proficiency. However, the lecturers admitted that their lectures were not interesting and lively, and perhaps the simplified language could negatively affect students' information processing. In a different study, Hincks (2010) discusses the possibility of lecturers adjusting their speaking rate in order to increase students' comprehension. However, a slower speaking rate may reduce the amount of content to be delivered, particularly if the total duration of lectures remains the same. So, Hincks (2010) recommends the inclusion of training in speaking rate modification in lecturer-training program so that lecturers could learn how to slow down their speech when necessary.

The use of appropriate pragmatic strategies has also been investigated. Bjorkman (2010) investigated a 46,662-word corpus of four lectures given by four different lecturers from a Swedish technical university and found instances of pragmatic strategies that could enhance communication in lectures. These pragmatic strategies included commenting on terms, concepts and discourse structure, signaling and highlighting critical points, repeating important point for emphasis and questioning to increase interactivity in lecture. Findings from his corpus revealed that lecturers in his ELF context used relatively small number of pragmatic strategies. Bjorkman (2010) related this to his query on the definition of an effective speaker and concluded that being proficient does not presuppose a speaker to be pragmatically effective.

Based on the above accounts, it seems clear that there are numerous challenges faced by L2 lecturers in using English as the medium of instruction. The use of English as a medium of instruction in the Malaysian tertiary education could also be assumed to face some challenges particularly when students have limited exposure of listening to instructional English (Choy and Troudi, 2006). At the same time, lecturers also perhaps have insufficient training in lecturing in English. Thus, the use of English as a medium of instruction in the Malaysian tertiary education obviously merits further investigation, not only to contribute to our understanding on the complexities of lecturing in a language that is not our own, but more importantly to strengthen our ability to help students comprehend lectures. It is therefore the general aim of this current study to investigate the manner in which lecturers in UTM

use metadiscourse in their lectures in their attempt to guide students to comprehend lectures.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In UTM, as in any other higher learning institutions in the country, lectures have a pivotal role as they form the main platform of information transfer from lecturers to students. However, studies that investigate what actually happens in the Malaysian lecture halls, especially based on a corpus, have been limited perhaps due to the scarcity and difficulty of collecting and building authentic lecture corpus. The reinstating of English as the medium of instruction to all first year courses in 2006 (see Mohamed, 2008) further incites the urgency to find out how lectures are conducted. This is because the use of English as the medium of instruction poses challenges, particularly to students, generally due to their limited proficiency and communicative skills in English (see Ali et al., 2011). As for the lecturers, the use of English as the medium of instruction may impose a greater pressure and demand on them to pedagogically perform and function effectively in English (Gill, 2007), especially when they are aware of the students' level of academic English proficiency, which has direct consequence on the ability to access the lecture contents (Ali et al., 2011). In brief, the move of reinstating English as the medium of instruction has brought about some adjustments for both students and lecturers, which open up an important area for investigation.

The use of English as the medium of instruction also offers the opportunity to investigate the manner in which English is used for spoken academic purposes in the Malaysian context. Research on academic spoken English has been conducted mostly in native speakers' setting spurred particularly by the availability of corpora such as the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) (Simpson and Swales, 2001) and the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus (Nesi, 2012). Studies on these two corpora have revealed that there are variations in the way spoken academic English is used. Lin (2012), for example, discovered some observed differences in the use of modifiers among speakers in MICASE and BASE

and she hinted that the different preferential use could be ascribed to the different academic cultures. While research using MICASE and BASE has shown interesting insights into lectures and how spoken academic English is used in native speakers' setting, it would be particularly intriguing to discover how English is used as a medium of instruction in lectures in a non-native academic setting, particularly in Malaysia where the majority of the participants – lecturers and students – share an understanding of a common language, i.e. the Malay language, making it “a wholly artificial setting for using English” (Carey, 2014:120). Yet, as the use of English as a medium of instruction in tertiary level education has spread in an unprecedented manner, this study not only offers a valuable addition to the knowledge on how lectures are enacted through the medium of English, but also on the variety of spoken academic English used, in this case the Malaysian variety.

Generally, in a non-native academic setting such as UTM, to be able to communicate effectively may not necessarily entail striving for fluency and accuracy (see for example Bjorkman, 2010). Faced with a varying degree of English language proficiency among students, a UTM lecturer must not merely concentrate on delivering the content, but more importantly has to focus on strategizing for a successful communication by paying attention to the overall structures and features of the discourse. One useful aspect that has been in focus is signposting language, or metadiscourse, an area which has been repeatedly shown to have a facilitative effect on students' listening comprehension (Khuwaileh, 1999; Aguilar and Macia, 2002). Aguilar and Macia (2002) in particular found that students with low-proficiency in English benefited the most from listening to lecture with metadiscourse, while Khuwaileh (1999) showed that a lecturer who incorporated more metadiscourse expressions in his or her lecture could lead to better students' performance in assessment. In brief, by having knowledge and the linguistic ability on how to best deliver contents, lecturers could help students to effectively interpret and comprehend lecture contents, which ultimately help them in other academic tasks as well as their future profession.

As an English lecturer in UTM, it has become a concern for me to find out how the students are being guided by their content lecturers. The opportunity to formally investigate this came when Coventry University (CU) proposed a joint-

research with UTM in order to secure a grant from the British Council via the Prime Minister Initiative Two (PMI-2) project in 2008. The collaborative work opened up further research opportunity in terms of comparing lecturing practices employed by lecturers from two different institutional, cultural and language backgrounds, in particular comparing the manner in which the two groups of lecturers use metadiscourse to guide students through the lectures.

### **1.3 Rationale of the Study**

This study may provide a better understanding of the ways second language speakers control the resources of English, a language that is not their own, yet being used in order to achieve communicative objectives. Specifically, this study could help to provide some relevant and important information in relation to how language is used in the undergraduate engineering lectures that are taking place in UTM. Knowledge of the linguistic and discourse structure of lectures could offer the engineering lecturers, particularly beginning lecturers some valuable information that may enable them to structure their lectures in an optimally effective way (Flowerdew, 1994). The findings also could provide an increased understanding on the ways lectures are conducted in English in a non-native setting, and offers insights into crucial discourse features that engineering lecturers could employ in their classes.

This study on the lecture discourse could also provide information relevant for the students. The findings could indicate the types of linguistic and discourse features students need to be familiar with in order to comprehend lectures. The linguistic and discourse features could be incorporated in English classes, in order to assist students to comprehend their content lectures more successfully. For example, as Allison and Tauroza (1994) have shown in their experiment, students who were aware of the macro organization of lecture discourse would comprehend better than those who were not. In relation to the current research, knowledge about metadiscourse that is used by the engineering lecturers could later be transformed into contents of EAP or ESL classes. Increased students' awareness of

metadiscourse could mean providing them with an important rhetorical knowledge that may be essential in making discourse decisions, which could be related to the inquiry patterns and knowledge structures of their disciplines (Hyland, 2004).

This study would also offer insights into a crucial, yet under-researched dimension of metadiscourse. As Adel (2006) mentions in her book, despite their abundance, research on metadiscourse have not been able to precisely offer information about how metadiscourse works in general, how it varies across genres and more importantly how it differs across languages. This study could therefore add knowledge about the use of metadiscourse in tertiary academic lectures, particularly in a non-native setting. The research on metadiscourse used in Malaysian academic culture is also timely as to the best of my knowledge there has been a lack of investigation on metadiscourse used by Malaysian English speakers. In fact, investigations of lecture discourse in a context where lecturers and learners share at least a common native language and yet use English as a medium of communication have also been limited. Khuwaileh's (1999) study has some features of the latter with his investigation involving a lecturer and learners with Arabic as the mother-tongue. Yet his investigation only involved one lecture, and therefore could not really show any conclusive evidence. Nonetheless, his research has provided insights into tertiary education classroom where the participants know and can communicate in one common language, and yet used English as the language of instruction. The current study may therefore provide another informed insight of linguistic and discourse features of lectures taking place in a purely non-native setting, which uses its own variety of English.

Finally the research also offers comparative accounts on lecturing practices, in particular the manner in which lecturers guide students through the lectures, across cultural, institutional and linguistic backgrounds, which studies have been lacking especially ones involving the Malaysian context. Findings of this study would be a valuable addition to enhance our understanding generally on mapping how undergraduate engineering lectures use metadiscourse to help students achieve comprehension of lectures.



## **1.4 Research Questions**

The main aim of the study is to investigate how Malaysian lecturers use metadiscourse in their attempt to guide students to follow lectures and consequently comprehend the lectures. To further enhance the description of the manner in which the Malaysian lecturers use metadiscourse, a comparison is made to the metadiscourse used by the English native-speaker lectures. Therefore, the study seeks to find answers for these questions:

1. How do Malaysian and British lecturers use metadiscourse to guide their students through the lectures?
2. To what extent does the use of metadiscourse among the lecturers of the two institutional backgrounds differ?
3. What are the recurrent lexico-grammatical features in the manifestation of metadiscourse between the two groups of lecturers?

## **1.5 The Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This study aims at analyzing lectures by means of corpus linguistics as a methodological approach and from the contrastive perspective as I compared how English is used in two different institutions that are operating in different cultural backgrounds. The objective is to examine how engineering lecturers in Malaysian and British universities use metadiscourse as a means to guide their students through the lectures.

The framework of the study was derived from principles in metadiscourse, and genre theory. This dual-faceted approach is not uncommon in the study of discourse, in fact it is crucial in order to pinpoint language resources that are employed to aid comprehension of a discourse as complicated as an academic lecture.

### 1.5.1 Metadiscourse

This investigation strongly connects with a number of important work on metadiscourse that have been done (Vande Kopple, 1985; Hyland 1998b, 2000, 2004, 2005; Adel, 2006; Mauranen, 1993; Burneikaite, 2009), even though their focus was on written discourse. From these studies, it is apparent that metadiscourse serves as indispensable linguistic devices that have positive effect on the comprehension of written texts. Features of metadiscourse could help transform a dry, difficult text into reader-friendly prose (Hyland, 2004). Several studies on the use of metadiscourse in spoken academic discourse also work on the same principle, i.e. metadiscourse may have similar facilitative effects in the comprehension of lecture (Thompson, 2003; Mauranen, 2007; Adel, 2010).

Studies on metadiscourse, whether on written or spoken texts have emphasized that metadiscourse is a fuzzy concept that requires a clear framework in order to achieve consistency in the analysis process. Vande Kopple (1985) argues for the concept of metadiscourse that does not expand the propositional information of a text, but help reader (or listener) to organize, classify, interpret, evaluate and react to the text. Crismore et al. (1993) also agree that metadiscourse is used to refer to non-propositional aspect of discourse which helps to organize prose as a coherent text and convey a writer's personality, credibility, reader sensitivity and relationship to the message. Yet it is acknowledged that it has not always been easy to distinguish the propositional from the non-propositional (metadiscourse) meanings due to the fact that they occur together in texts, and with a high likelihood of occurring in the same sentence (Hyland and Tse, 2004). In other words, metadiscourse is not a separate part of the message but rather an integral process in the communication of the message, and therefore requires a clear means of distinguishing the two.

Adel (2006, 2010) proposes a notion of discourse-internal and discourse-external as a central feature in determining what is metadiscourse from what is not. Assuming the same principle and using data in their study, Hyland and Tse (2004) illustrate how a metadiscoursal feature could function as an internal reference,

organizing the text, or as an external reference, connecting activities in the world outside the text:

- 1) Crops accounted for a significant proportion of heavy metals dietary intake. The reasons are two folds. *Firstly*, crops are being the bottom positions of many food chains and food webs. *Secondly*, vegetables are one of the main dietary components of Hong Kong people. (Bio MSc)
- 2) For the boric acid indicator, *firstly*, 5g of boric acid crystals was dissolved in 200ml of warm distilled water, *then*, 40ml of methyl red indicator [0.02 per cent (w/v) in 60 per cent ethanol] and 15ml of bromocresol green indicator [0.1 per cent (w/v) in 60 per cent ethanol] were added to the boric acid solution. (Bio Phd)

(Taken from Hyland and Tse, 2004: 166)

In example (1) the sequencing devices *firstly* and *secondly* refer to the unfolding discourse (discourse-internal) showing the steps in the argument while in example (2) the similar linguistic devices describe the steps involved in a particular research process, which form part of the subject matter of the text representing what happens outside the world of discourse (discourse-external). The delicate manifestation of discourse-internal and discourse-external in texts leads Adel (2010) to insist that a researcher to constantly ask whether he is dealing with discourse-internal (language about language) or discourse external (language about items being discussed), while identifying metadiscourse in texts. And, as a further consequence, a researcher's intuition on the identification of metadiscoursal item has to be recognized (Burneikaite, 2009), and inter-rater judgment in the study of metadiscourse has to be included.

The complexity of identifying propositional from metadiscoursal element or discourse-internal from discourse-external perhaps spurs the high agreement among researchers to search for metadiscourse items from a functional perspective. Most of the models of metadiscourse already devised have been developed functionally, and they seem rather easy to understand. Hyland (2004) who is an advocate of the functional approach discusses the suitability of the approach in analyzing metadiscourse, which can linguistically vary to fit the writer's need. Most scholars

working on metadiscourse (Valero-Garces, 1996; Hyland, 1999; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Mauranen, 2007) have shown strong agreement about the heterogeneous category of metadiscourse, and, perhaps have adopted the functional approach as a means to minimize the complexity of managing the unpredictability of the role of linguistic items in texts. As could be deduced from the two examples above (1 and 2), an item that is usually identified as a metadiscourse may function so as metadiscourse in some parts of the text but not in others; and in reverse, an item that is usually not metadiscursive in function may act metadiscursively, appropriate to the need of a writer or a speaker at a particular moment of language use to achieve his or her rhetorical purpose.

The functional-orientation perspective of metadiscourse, however, in order to take effect, has to function in the context in which metadiscourse occurs. Thus context-dependent has been highly acknowledged by researchers investigating metadiscourse as another important feature. Mauranen (1993) points out that it is not always easy to identify metadiscourse in isolation. Hyland (1999; 2004) talks about social purpose and specific group of audience, that could function as context that determines the manner in which metadiscourse is used. According to Hyland, writers anticipate “the audience’s likely background knowledge, processing problems and reactions to the text” (1999: 5) before making decisions on how to “intrude into their texts to organize their arguments” (1999: 5) using metadiscoursal strategies. He further emphasizes that the ways writers present themselves, negotiate an argument, are closely linked to the norms and expectations of their particular cultural and professional communities (Hyland, 2004). In other words, the context in which metadiscourse is used not only gives its meaning, but in fact conditions its use in the first place (Hyland, 1999).

Furthermore, due to the rich complexity of metadiscourse, as well as for practical purposes, it is important to consider explicitness in wording (Adel, 2006) as an important criterion in analyzing metadiscourse, and possibly it is particularly even more relevant in the case of analyzing lecture discourse. According to Mauranen (2001), because of the imposing capacity of teaching staff in a university environment, by default, the element of didacticism is omnipresent in any communicative event involving lecturers and students. This means every word

uttered by a lecturer, explicit or otherwise, could mean to help students understand what is intended in the communication, and therefore metadiscoursal. However, metadiscourse is the result of decisions made by the speaker to highlight his or her intentions in a given situation (Hyland and Tse, 2004). That a lecturer uses metadiscourse in an explicit manner, rather implicit, implies his or her *overt attempts* to create a specific intended pragmatic and discoursal effect (Hyland 2005) at that moment of speaking. In other words, due to the didactic element that characterized a lecturer's utterance, we may not be able to point exactly where the starting and ending points of implicit metadiscourse (and consequently the discourse function intended), thus impose difficulty on the practicality and objectivity for identification of metadiscourse. In short, the consideration as suggested by Adel (2006) to consider explicitness as a criterion in analyzing metadiscourse could not be easily ignored.

### 1.5.2 Genre Theory

This investigation on metadiscourse in lectures represents an investigation of a genre-specific language component, which therefore requires a look at genre analysis theory. There have been two tendencies of genre analysis studies, one that looks at the genre from the Swalesian move analysis perspective and another that looks at linguistic analysis. This study adopts the second tendency of genre analysis which attempts to give a detailed analysis of specific features of language i.e. metadiscourse, as used in a particular genre, lectures.

Perhaps the best known work of genre analysis has still been of Swales' (1990), which focuses on EAP and defines genre based on the relationship between text and discourse community by means of communicative purpose:

A genre comprises of a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expect member of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This

rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and styles. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in term of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. (Swales, 1990: 58)

As we can see in this definition, the importance of communicative purpose and discourse community is emphasized, and it is expressed in terms of a group of expert members who recognize the shared purpose(s) of genre that need to be achieved, and who thereby establish and maintain some very recognizable conventions of the genre. These conventions could be seen typical across *the* genre, suggesting the notion of universal patterns or prototypical features of one genre (Swales, 1990). And, these prototypical features, which are subject to constant change and thus could be challenged, could allow us to recognize the category of membership, even when many defining features may be absent (Swales, 1990). In the case of lectures, as proposed in this research for example, some similarities such as the speaking roles of lecture participants (lecturers and students), the use of visuals during presentation of content, and the employment of particular linguistic features to realize certain discourse functions put the lectures in the same genre category, even though they occur in two distinct cultural settings and that many of other features may differ.

Bhatia (2002) also emphasizes on the importance of communicative purpose of a genre and defines genre analysis as “the study of situated linguistic behavior” (p 4). Therefore, he argues,

analyzing genre means investigating instances of conventionalized or institutionalized textual artifacts in the context of specific institutional and disciplinary practices, procedures and cultures in order to understand how members of specific discourse communities construct, interpret and use these genres to achieve their community goals... (Bhatia 2002: 6).

Cautions, however, need to be exercised during analysis, due to the volatility of genre, as a result of the complexity and dynamism, and interactivity of four different perspectives namely the real world perspective, the writer's (speaker's) socio-cognitive perspective, the discourse analyst perspective and the pedagogical perspective (Bhatia, 2002). In the lecture genre, from the real world perspective, even if most lecturers recognize that the common purpose of conducting lectures is the dissemination of information for acquisition of knowledge, most lecturers acknowledge for instance, that there are variations in lectures delivered in different fields of study. For example, lectures delivered in engineering and humanities may not be similar perhaps due to the differences in the structure of knowledge systems of the disciplines. Similarly, a deviation from *the* common convention may also arise as a consequence of the presence of speaker's multiple purposes and/or his "private intention" (Bhatia, 2002: 12), within the recognized communicative purpose. For example, a lecturer who aims at receiving high positive rating for performance evaluation at the end of semester, may adopt different practices from his other community members' in order to achieve this implicit goal. In sum, even though a genre is understood as having typical and recognizable conventions, they are open and sensitive to deviations and therefore not static but dynamic.

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1993) emphasize the need to study genre in the actual social context of use, to see how "genre users manipulate genres for particular rhetorical purposes" (p 476). In other words, according to Berkenkotter and Huckin, genre users acquire genre knowledge and strategically deploy the knowledge, when they engage in their disciplinary knowledge-producing activities. Berkenkotter and Huckin then come up with five principles that govern their view of genre: (1) A genre is a dynamic rhetorical form that is developed from responses to recurrent situations and has a tendency to change over time in response to the user's needs; (2) genre users acquire the knowledge of the genre as a result of participating in the communicative activities and that the knowledge would continue to develop as they participate further in the activities of the culture; (3) the knowledge of genre embraces both form and content, including a sense of appropriateness of what content to say at a particular situation and point of time to fulfill a particular purpose; (4) while participating in the organizational and disciplinary genres, genre users

simultaneously make use of their social structures, and (5) genre conventions signal the norms and ideologies of a discourse community.

In brief, we have seen that genres are agreed to be dynamic and flexible, but at the same time strong enough to capture aspects of situations that constantly recur. Expert genre users are typically aware of the practices that are common in their discourse community, and reproduce these practices, but these users are also aware of the requirements to vary the practices whenever appropriate and needed. The importance of genre analysis theory is prominent in this study. Results discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 revealed that the consistent variables that were held for lectures from both institutions governed the metadiscourse used and other factors associated with the different institutional setting generated distinctive differences.

## **1.6 The Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The study attempts to look at the metadiscourse that undergraduate engineering lecturers use to guide their students in following their lectures. As discussed in the previous section, the most crucial framework for the study is the linguistic framework of metadiscourse, with lectures as a genre shape and influence the manner in which metadiscourse is employed. A closely related aspect that merits attention for the construction of the conceptual framework of this study is related to listening comprehension of monologic lectures and the role of lecturers. Listening to lecture has been acknowledged to be complicated primarily due to the different tasks that the audience, i.e. students, have to do simultaneously while the listening takes place (Thompson, 2003). Richards (1983) claims that academic listening requires the skill to identify the purpose and scope of a lecture, to identify relationship among units within the discourse, and to deduce meanings of words from contexts. Academic listening is also characterized by one-way transactional listening, which aims at delivering dense information and knowledge closely related



to listeners' professional field, and of which the listeners may already possess some background knowledge (Flowerdew, 1994).

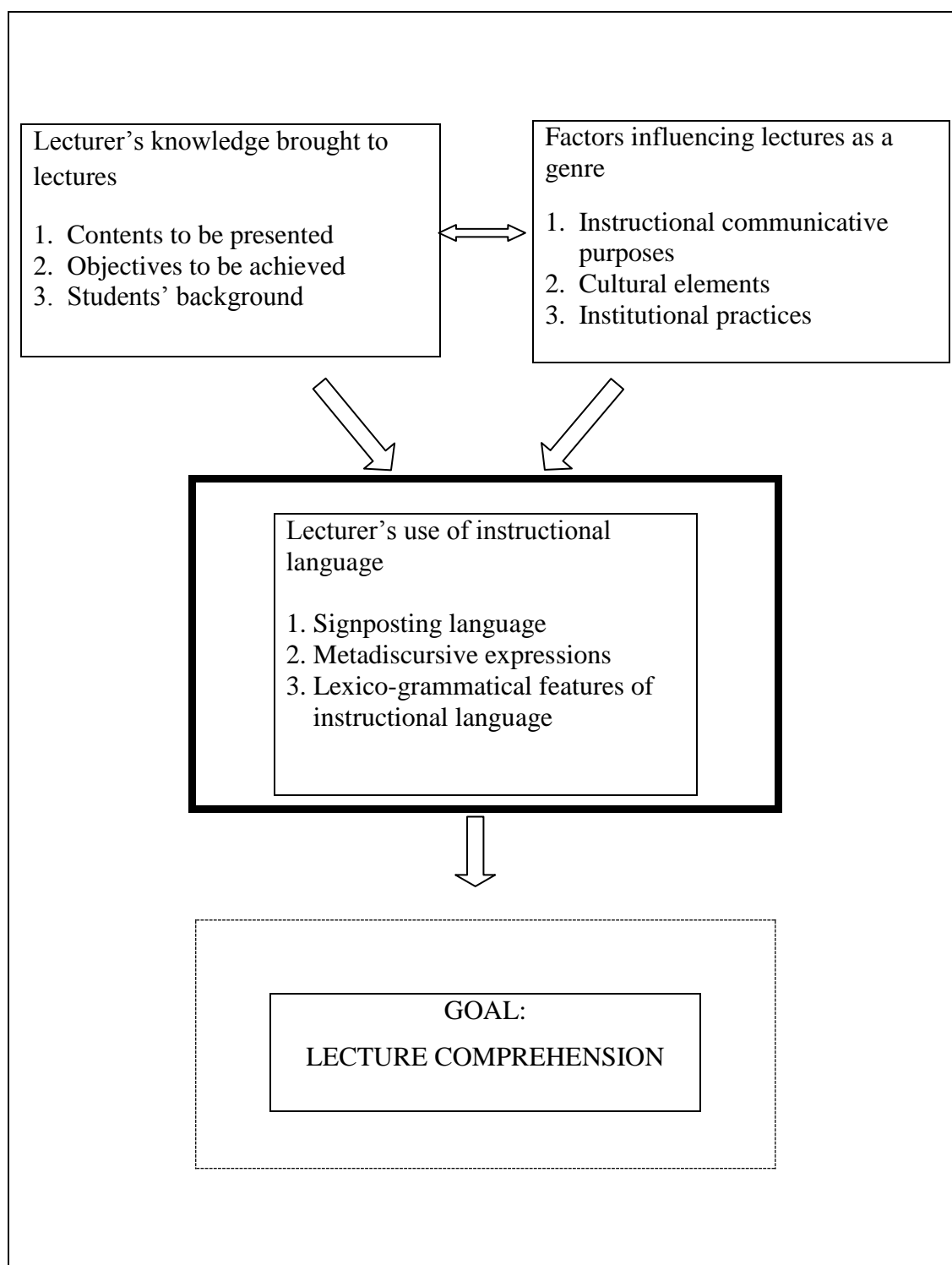
Thompson (1994) points out that in listening to a monologue, listeners have to grasp the network of concepts and semantic relations of the text in order to successfully process it. However, she argues that the responsibility of making the listening task a success, i.e. for audience to comprehend, does not lie in the hand of listeners per se. Thompson (1994) asserts that the speaker of a monologue is primarily responsible for making meaning transparent to the listeners, perhaps by using linguistic resources that are available at the speaker's disposal based on his or her predictions about the likely interpretations that the listeners would make on what they have heard, and with the on-line processing. In her study of twenty monologues given by native speakers, Thompson (1994) was able to show that speakers paid particular attention on clause relations in order to develop a coherent interpretation of the text. In signaling the relationship between the clauses, the speakers made use of explicit markers or lexico-grammatical items, or in some cases intonation (not a concern in this study). Although her study has focused on clause relations and discourse pattern, it could always provide an important implication for students' listening to monologue, where a clear organization of clause relations could lead to coherence of a particular text. Her study has shown that clear organization of clause relations could be achieved through manipulations of linguistic items produced by speakers. In other words, lecturers play an utmost important role in making lectures comprehensible to students.

Many other research investigating lecture discourse (Dudley Evans, 1994; Young, 1994; Chaudron and Richards, 1986) have established the fact that lecturers provide cues in their speeches to help students understand the lectures. It is also established that students' understanding of these cues could be one of the key strategies in understanding the lecture. Khuwaileh (1999) in his comparative investigation of students' comprehension of lectures found out that students who listened to a lecture rich with "helpful speaking terms", "paraphrasing chunks" and "illustration chunks" (p.255) understood the lecture better than their counterparts who listened to a lecture without the said chunks and phrases. His investigation has

also shown that, based on the score of a quiz given after the lecture, the students who listened to the lecture rich with helping chunks understood the lecture significantly better than their counterparts in the control group. Even though the study used only one lecture, the findings have shown interesting insights into the facilitating role of some linguistic devices used during lectures.

Another study that showed the relationship between the presence of certain linguistic markers in lecture and a more satisfactorily students' comprehension of lecture content is Chaudron and Richard's (1986). They distinguished micro-markers from macro-markers and concluded that macro-markers are superior in helping students in the understanding and recall of lectures. Similarly, DeCarrico and Nattinger (1988) who investigated lexical phrases in academic lectures involving English-speaking lecturers and students insisted that teaching the functional categories of macro-markers can enhance the ability of second language learners to comprehend academic lectures. This is because macro-markers could allow learners to foresee the incoming information and thus organize and interpret the flow of the information more effectively.

An awareness and knowledge about signaling devices used by lecturers in lectures seems to facilitate students' comprehension of lectures more effectively. Yet, despite the demonstrated facilitative effects of signaling cues or chunks or macro-markers in lectures, to the best of my knowledge, Malaysian lectures at tertiary level, which are conducted in the English language, have not been examined from this viewpoint, not to mention a comparative analysis of the metadiscourse with those of lecturers from the native speaking context. This fact and the complexities of metadiscourse used in spoken academic English described in the previous section led to the present research to look into metadiscourse used by Malaysian and British lecturers in guiding students listening to lectures, in an attempt to facilitate the latter's understanding of the lectures. Figure 1.1 below illustrates the interrelation of elements discussed above that make up the conceptual framework of this study. The goal, i.e. students' lecture comprehension is put in dotted-line border to indicate that it is not the concern of the study, while lecturer's instructional language is put in bold border to indicate that it is the area of investigation in the study.



**Figure 1.1:** The conceptual framework of studying metadiscourse in Malaysian and British lectures

## **1.7 Operational Definition of Terms**

The following key terms are defined in order to establish a consistent meaning in the current study.

### **1.7.1 Metadiscourse**

Metadiscourse has been acknowledged as a fuzzy concept made up of an array of linguistic features that are agreed to perform two different but, arguably, complementing overarching functions – textual and interpersonal (Hyland, 2005; Crismore et al., 1993; Touemi, 2009). Based on these different functions, there are two major types of metadiscourse. The first type functions to guide readers or listeners through a text; in other words, a writer or a speaker uses this type of metadiscourse to ensure the audience comprehends of what is being read or heard. The second type of metadiscourse, functions to involve the readers or the listeners in the text. The writer or the speaker utilizes the second type of metadiscourse interpersonally as a means to show his attitudes and persona in relation to the text, and the audience.

In this study, the term metadiscourse refers to both major types of functions of metadiscourse. However, due to practical considerations, I focused only on the first type of metadiscourse, the one that guides an audience through the text; yet I use the umbrella term metadiscourse. It should be noted that some researchers who focused on the same type have used different labels, such as metatext, as used by Mauranen (1993).

### **1.7.2 Lecture**

A lecture may be recognized due to some prototypical features that it bears. In an academic setting a lecture is always understood as a speech given to a group of students by a lecturer about a particular subject, for some duration of time, for the

purpose of teaching the students about the disseminated information. Yet a lecture could vary considerably as a result of techniques used by the lecturers during the delivery of the information. In this investigation, the term lecture refers to a teaching session which is primarily monologic, i.e. the lecturer holds the floor for most of the duration of the talk. There could be a minimal amount of contribution from the students, most often as a result of prompts made by the lecturer, or made voluntarily by students for clarification of information.

### **1.8 Assumptions of the Study**

An important assumption made for this research was that all Malaysian lecturers whose lectures were recorded for the development of the corpus are competent users of English in the sense that they are able to achieve the communicative objective of the lecture. Their involvement in the study has not been judged by their accuracy in using English as a medium of instruction or based on their competency level in lecturing. It is also assumed that their use of English in their recorded lectures represents their normal-lecture-day English, which has not been modified purposely for the recording.

### **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

Like any other studies, this study also has its limitations. The first limitation is that students' comprehension was not investigated. Even though it was mentioned that metadiscourse could facilitate comprehension, whether or not comprehension was achieved among students in this study was not taken into consideration. Another limitation relates to the types of metadiscourse investigated. Only metadiscourse that was used to guide students through the lecture discourse or what was termed as textual metadiscourse or interactive resources of metadiscourse was included in this study. However, I recognized the importance of interactional metadiscourse in facilitating comprehension in lectures. In addition, since it is known that engineering

lecturers incorporate a high number of visual aids during lecture, there were instances in which the visual on its own performed metadiscursive function. These instances were also not be counted and analyzed. In relation to this, gesturing or other extra-linguistic elements that helped to supply additional meaning to the lecture were also excluded in the research. Despite being excluded in the analysis of the findings, whenever these elements were deemed appropriate and relevant they were mentioned in the discussion.

Because the aim of the study was to cover only lecturers' discourse, the study included only lectures that were primarily monologic, where the lecturers control the floor and the turns for speaking. By focusing on monologic lecture discourse, it was assumed that a higher proportion of lecture talk could be captured and examined, compared to if lectures that contained heavy students' contributions were studied. Even though students' utterances (if they occur) were transcribed and included in the data corpus, in the analysis process any of these students' contributions were ignored.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has set the scene for the investigation by describing all pertinent background information relevant for the study. The complexity of the genre lecture delivered through the medium of English language offered an interesting area to study. This thesis chose to concentrate on identifying the manner in which Malaysian lecturers guide their students through lectures using the linguistic framework of metadiscourse. In the next chapter, related literature will be reviewed in great length to describe previous work related to the topic.

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