

The Metacognitive Listening Strategy Preferences of Iranian Learners of the English as a Foreign Language in Relation with their Perceived Self-Efficacy Components

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The present study sought to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and the frequency of metacognitive listening strategies (MLS) use of Iranian learners of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and to explore any significant relationships between the subscales of self-efficacy and the types of MLS use. A sample of 117 Iranian EFL learners studying at the departments of foreign languages of Kerman universities, namely, Shahid Bahonar and Azad, took part in this study. The participants, including both males and females, were randomly selected from the junior and senior students majoring in English Translation and English Literature. In order to obtain the required data, two questionnaires were utilized: Vandergrift et al.'s (2006) Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) to measure the type and frequency of metacognitive listening strategies, and Bosscher and Smit's (1998) General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES-12) to determine the self-efficacy and its subscales. The findings of this study revealed that first, there was a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and MLS use ($r = .86$); second, initiative self-efficacy subscale did not explain any variance of MLS type; third, the subscale effort explained some of the variances of planning and evaluation, person knowledge and mental translation MLS types; fourth, the subscale persistence explained some of the variances of person knowledge, mental translation, and problem solving strategies, and finally, none of the subscales of self-efficacy explained directed any variance of attention MLS use.

Keywords: metacognitive listening strategies, self-efficacy, English as a foreign language

In recent years, emphasis on listening, as a frequently used mode of human communication, has been gaining momentum in the area of language learning. Consequently, a need for teaching language listening skills is deeply felt. In the last 20 years, along with the advancements in cognitive psychology and linguistics, teaching listening has focused its attention on evidence-based approaches with special attention on authenticity and contextualization (Goh, 2008). One of these approaches is the metacognitive approach presented by scholars such as Chamot (1995) and Vandergrift (2004). The problem with metacognitive strategies in such approaches is that they do not remain accountable outside the walls of the classroom (Goh, 2008). Therefore, new metacognitive activities are needed to account for the language uses in contexts other than the classroom use. To reach such a sophisticated goal, metacognitive learning activities should aim at “deepening learners’ *understanding of themselves* [emphasis added] as L2 listeners and the demands and process of L2 listening, as well as teaching learners how to manage their comprehension and learning” (Goh, 2008, p. 192). The success through metacognitive listening strategy use, however, does not occur in a vacuum. There are various related factors involved, for instance: anxiety, motivation, self-efficacy, etc. (Goh, 2008). Self-efficacy, among these factors, makes the learners have control over different tasks (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and plays a vital role in strategy use (Yang, 1999). To be more specific, self-efficacy in L2 listening is directly linked to the metacognitive category of person knowledge (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari, 2006). Furthermore, self-efficacy plays important roles in academic expectations, achievements, and strategy use (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Sparks & Ganschow, 2001; Wenden, 1991; Yang, 1999; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). General self-efficacy is regarded as a personal resource that refers to the optimistic self-belief in one’s competence to exercise control over a range of difficult tasks and to generally cope well with adverse events (Schwarzer &

Jerusalem, 1995).

This study, therefore, aimed at investigating Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' self-efficacy in relation with their use of metacognitive listening strategies. Furthermore, the relation between the components of self-efficacy and the types of metacognitive listening strategy use was another issue to be explored in this study.

Metacognitive Listening Strategies. Metacognitive listening strategies belong to learning strategies. Learning strategies are approaches and strategies used by the learners to enhance their learning (Chamot, 2004). Oxford (1990) categorized language learning strategies (LLS) into six basic types. Metacognitive strategies, among the six types, include non-sequential processes of planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating (Chamot, 2004). Metacognitive listening strategies involve thinking about and directing the listening process. In other words, metacognitive listening strategies include planning before starting a listening task and carrying out problem-solving, monitoring, and self-evaluation actions through a listening task.

Based on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification and Oxford's (1990) categorization, many researchers in specific areas related to the strategies have devised ways to explore the practical nature of strategies in different language skills. Listening has not been an exempt. Vandergrift (2004), for example, proposed a metacognitive listening cycle. Vandergrift, et al. (2006) revised the proposed cycle and developed a questionnaire to identify and establish the listening metacognitive strategies of the learners use. The problem with metacognitive strategies in such cycles is that they do not remain accountable outside the walls of the classroom (Goh, 2008). Therefore, new metacognitive activities are needed to account for the language uses in contexts other than the classroom use. To reach such a sophisticated goal, Metacognitive learning activities should aim at "deepening learners' understanding of themselves as L2 listeners and the demands and

process of L2 listening, as well as teaching learners how to manage their comprehension and learning” (Goh, 2008, p. 192). To run such an errand, metacognitive knowledge categories should be studied in relation with many different factors such as self-efficacy, anxiety, and motivation to name but a few (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003; Paris & Winograd, 1990; Schunk, 2001; Vandergrift, 2005; Winne, 2001; Zimmerman, 1990).

Self-Efficacy. Bandura (1986) added self-efficacy as a component to his famous social cognitive theory. He defined self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p.3). According to him self-efficacy makes the people have a self-system that makes them able to control their feelings, thought and actions. Such a self-system includes both cognitive and affective sides influencing one’s learning from others, strategy investment, and self-regulation in a learning task (Bandura, 1986).

Self-efficacy, therefore, influences one’s expectations towards goals and consequently, the level of effort and time one devotes to a particular task. Accordingly, the self-efficient learners make good use of opportunities and deal with the problems more easily (Sadighi, Alavi & Samani, 2004). Learners with high level of perceived self-efficacy look at tasks as challenges to be resolved. Thus, they set reasonable goals and try to make efforts to achieve them even in a stressful environment. Such an effort makes them manage their stress and avoid depression. They are able to manage the fear of failure in a particular task. Success in one task brings about a better feeling towards the following tasks (Yong, 2010).

Review of Literature

Graham (2011) conducted a research to investigate the role of self-efficacy in academic listening. Maintaining that self-efficacy is crucial to the development of effective listening skills, and that listening strategy instruction

has the potential to boost self-efficacy, she concluded that in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context, high self-efficacy can help learners cope more effectively with listening comprehension.

Rahimi and Abedini (2009) conducted a research to investigate the role of EFL learner's self-efficacy regarding listening comprehension. Sixty-one freshmen undergraduate learners of English participated in this study. The results indicated that listening comprehension self-efficacy was significantly related to listening proficiency.

Hoffman and Spatariu (2008) investigated how self-efficacy and metacognitive prompting influenced math problem-solving efficiency. Findings suggested that self-efficacy and metacognitive prompting increased problem-solving performance and efficiency separately through activation of reflection and strategy knowledge.

Kharazi, Ezhehei, Ghazi Tabatabaei, and Kareshki (2008) carried out a research on the relationship between achievement goals, self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies based on a causal model. They selected a sample of 685 third grade high school students. The result of their study showed a significant correlation. Besides, all paths of their proposed model were significant.

Chen (2007) conducted a research on the relationship between EFL learners' self-efficacy beliefs and English listening achievement. The study was conducted within college-level English listening comprehension classes at two universities in Taiwan. A sample of 277 students' listening course grades were used as their listening proficiency level. A survey questionnaire which consisted of an English listening self-efficacy scale constructed by the researcher was taken in this study. Results of this study indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and listening achievement.

Magogwe and Oliver (2007) carried out a study on 480 students from primary schools, secondary schools, and a tertiary institution. A modified version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and the Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES) were used in this study. Findings of the research indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and the overall use of language learning strategies for the students with the three proficiency levels mentioned.

Yang (1999) investigated 505 tertiary-level Chinese/Taiwanese EFL learners concerning their beliefs about learning English and their perceived use of learning strategies and also the relationship between the two. She found a strong correlation between beliefs and strategy use. Self-efficacy beliefs were strongly related to the use of all types of learning strategies.

Research Questions

This study aimed at seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. Are there any relationships between self-efficacy and the frequency of metacognitive listening strategies of the Iranian EFL learners' use?
2. Are there any relationships between Iranian EFL learners' scores on the subscales of self-efficacy and the metacognitive listening strategy types they use?

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 117 male and female junior and senior students majoring in English Literature and English Translation at Shahid Bahonar and Azad universities of Kerman. Since the present investigation took gender and two levels of junior and senior students into account, the participants were selected by random stratified sampling.

The rationale behind selecting junior and senior students was that students at higher levels of proficiency are perceived to have more experiences of involving in listening tasks. Furthermore, according to Vandergrift (1997) intermediate listeners use a higher percentage of metacognitive strategies than do novice listeners. Similarly, O'Malley, Chamot, and Küpper (1989) and also Goh (2002, as cited in Shirani Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011) concluded that more proficient listeners employed metacognitive strategies more frequently than the less proficient listeners.

Instruments

In this study, the following instruments were used to collect the required data:

1. The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)
2. The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES-12)

The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) was developed by Vandergrift et al. (2006). MALQ is based on a likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*). This instrument consists of 21 items. There are five distinctive subscales in this questionnaire, namely, problem-solving, planning and evaluation, mental translation, person knowledge, and directed attention. In order to validate the subscales in the instrument, the developers used the questionnaire with nearly 1,000 learners from various countries including Iran. According to them, reliabilities of the subscales were as follows: problem-solving, .74, planning and evaluation, .75, mental translation, .78, person knowledge, .74, and directed attention, .68. In the present study, the two subscales of mental translation and person knowledge were scored negatively. In the original form of MALQ, the proposed language is French. The researcher replaced the word French with English.

Bosscher and Smit's General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES-12) is a 12-item

questionnaire scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *disagree*, 5 = *agree*). The instrument is a modified version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) developed by Sherer, et al. in 1982 (as cited in Bosscher and Smit, 1998). GSES-12 measures three subscales, namely, initiative, effort, and persistence. Bosscher and Smit (1998) reported the reliabilities of the overall general self-efficacy and subscales as follows: overall GSES-12: .69, initiative, .64, effort, .63, and persistence, .64.

Before launching the main study, MALQ and GSES-12 were piloted with 30 junior and senior EFL students who were randomly selected at Shahid Bahonar and Azad universities of Kerman. Cronbach alpha showed that the reliability of MALQ of the pilot study was .81. The reliability of the MALQ in the main study among 117 participants came out to be .87. Moreover, the reliability of GSES-12 of the pilot study was .79. The reliability of the GSES-12 in the main study came out to be .83.

Data Collection Procedures

MALQ and GSES-12 scales were distributed among the participants simultaneously. Participants were given time (15–20 mins.) to answer these questionnaires and there were accompanying instructions. They were assured that the information would be kept completely confidential. They were also told that the gathered information would be used only for research purposes.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the variables of the study, namely metacognitive listening strategy use and self-efficacy as well as the subscales of these variables have been presented in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1
The Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
MLS	117	78.00	47.00	125.00	86.84	24.74	612.49
Self-Efficacy	117	37.00	23.00	60.00	45.42	11.09	123.02

Table 2
The Descriptive Statistics of the Subscales of MLS and Self-Efficacy

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
Directed Attention	117	20.00	4.00	24.00	22.42	2.65	7.07
Person Knowledge	117	15.00	3.00	18.00	10.09	5.09	25.96
Planning and Evaluation	117	25.00	5.00	30.00	24.68	6.96	48.51
Mental Translation	117	15.00	3.00	18.00	11.41	6.07	36.91
Problem Solving	117	28.00	8.00	36.00	22.86	9.41	88.56
Initiative	117	5.00	10.00	15.00	13.14	1.28	1.64
Effort	117	18.00	7.00	25.00	19.49	6.27	39.42
Persistence	117	15.00	5.00	20.00	12.50	5.23	27.40

Frequency of MLSs in Relation with Self-Efficacy

In order to answer the first research question regarding the relationship between MLS use and self-efficacy, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was conducted. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
The Correlation Coefficient between MLS and Self-Efficacy

	Variables	Self-Efficacy
MLS	Pearson Correlation	.866**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	117

It can be seen in Table 3 that the Pearson correlation coefficient between MLS and self-efficacy is .866 with the P-value of .000 which is less than the significant level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between MLS use and self-efficacy ($r = .866$). Therefore, as the scores of self-efficacy increase, the scores of MLS increase too.

MLS Type Preferences in Relation with Subscales of Self-Efficacy. In order to investigate the second research question regarding the learners' MLS type preferences in accordance with their obtained scores from self-efficacy subscales, the following five Multiple Linear Regressions were conducted. The results are shown in Table 4.

Planning and Evaluation

The regression analysis of planning and evaluation MLS type in relation with subscales of self-efficacy in Table 4, shows that $R^2 = .74$. (R^2 is the common variance between planning and evaluation and the subscales of self-efficacy) and $P = .000$. Since $R^2 > 0$ and $P < .05$, the multiple linear regression correlation is significant. In other words, at least one of the subscales of self-efficacy has a linear relationship with planning and evaluation MLS type. On the whole, the three subscales of self-efficacy explain 73.5 percent of the variability of MLS students' planning and evaluation preference ($R^2_{\text{adjusted}} =$

.735). The regression coefficient for each subscale of self-efficacy has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Multiple Regressions with MLSs as Criteria and Self-Efficacy Subscales as Predictors

Criteria		Predictors				
		Initiative	Effort	Persistence		
Planning and Evaluation	β	-.01	.88	-.01		
	t	-.33	12.66	-.246		
	p	.73	.000	.80		
R = .86	R ² = .74	R ² _{adjusted} = .735	F = 108.30	df = 3	P = .000	
Directed Attention	β	-.12	.11	.05		
	t	-1.09	.85	.40		
	p	.27	.39	.69		
R = .13	R ² = .01	R ² _{adjusted} = -.008	F = .70	df = 3	P = .55	
Person Knowledge	β	-.03	-.14	-.75		
	t	-.60	-2.10	-12.04		
	p	.54	.03	.000		
R = .87	R ² = .765	R ² _{adjusted} = .759	F = 122.59	df = 3	P = .000	
Mental Translation	β	-.02	.15	-.95		
	t	-.38	2.22	-14.64		
	p	.70	.02	.000		
R = .86	R ² = .748	R ² _{adjusted} = .742	F = 111.91	df = 3	P = .000	
Problem Solving	β	.001	.09	.84		
	t	.03	1.69	15.83		
	p	.97	.09	.000		
R = .91	R ² = .831	R ² _{adjusted} = .827	F = 185.55	df = 3	P = .000	

With regard to the calculated P for each subscale of self-efficacy at the level of $\alpha = .05$, effort has the highest relationship with planning and

evaluation ($\beta = .88$). Initiative and persistence do not explain any variance of planning and evaluation strategy preference.

Directed Attention

The regression analysis of directed attention MLS type in relation with subscales of self-efficacy in Table 4, shows that $R^2 = .01$ and $P = .553$. While $R^2 > 0$, P is larger than $.05$. Therefore, the multiple linear regression correlation is not significant. In other words, none of the subscales of self-efficacy has a linear relationship with the directed attention MLS type.

Person Knowledge

The regression analysis of person knowledge MLS type in relation with subscales of self-efficacy in Table 4, shows that $R^2 = .765$ and $P = .000$. Since $R^2 > 0$ and $P < .05$, the multiple linear regression correlation is significant. On the whole, the three subscales of self-efficacy explain 75.9 percent of the variability of students' person knowledge MLS preference ($R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .759$). The regression coefficient for each subscale of self-efficacy has been presented in Table 4.

With regard to the calculated P for each subscale of self-efficacy at the level of $\alpha = .05$, persistence ($\beta = -.75$) and effort ($\beta = -.14$) have the highest relationship with the person knowledge. Initiative does not explain any variance of person knowledge strategy preference.

Mental Translation. The regression analysis of mental translation MLS type in relation with subscales of self-efficacy in Table 4, shows that $R^2 = .748$ and $P = .000$. Since $R^2 > 0$ and $P < .05$, the multiple linear regression correlation is significant. On the whole, the three subscales of self-efficacy explain 74.2 percent of the variability of students' mental translation MLS preference ($R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .742$). The regression coefficient for each subscale of self-efficacy has been presented in Table 4.

With regard to the calculated P for each subscale of self-efficacy at the level of $\alpha = .05$, persistence ($\beta = -.95$) and effort ($\beta = .15$) have the highest relationships with mental translation. Initiative does not explain the mental translation strategy preference.

Problem Solving

The regression analysis of problem solving MLS type in relation with subscales of self-efficacy in Table 4, shows that $R^2 = .83,1$ and $P = .000$. Since $R^2 > 0$ and $P < .05$, the multiple linear regression correlation is significant. On the whole, the three subscales of self-efficacy explain 82.7 percent of variability of students' Problem Solving MLS use preference ($R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .827$). The regression coefficient for each subscale of self-efficacy has been presented in Table 4.

With regard to the calculated P for each subscale of self-efficacy at the level of $\alpha = .05$, only persistence with $P = .000$ has a significant relationship with problem solving ($\beta = .84$). Initiative and effort do not explain any variance of problem solving strategy preference.

Discussion

Regarding the first research question of the present study concerning the relationship between MLS use and self-efficacy, it was found that there was a significant positive relationship between metacognitive listening strategy use and self-efficacy. Therefore, the results of the present investigation show that learners' self-efficacy correlates with the language strategy use. This finding is in line with those of Kharazi et al. (2008), Magogwe and Oliver (2007), Shmais (2003), and Yang (1999). Students with high self-efficacy seem to actively increase their exposure to language outside the classroom, for example, by listening to English radio programs. Besides, the relationship between self-efficacy and strategy use is not a one-way one; using learning

strategies results in successful learning outcomes which in turn raises the learners' self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 1990).

Concerning the second research question of this study regarding the learners' metacognitive listening strategy type preferences in relation with their obtained scores from self-efficacy subscales, some significant findings were achieved that are discussed one by one.

It was found that planning and evaluation MLS had only a significant relationship with the subscale effort. Initiative and persistence did not explain any variance of planning and evaluation strategy preference. This finding is theoretically sound, since according to Brown's (1978) strategy categorization, planning strategies determine the comprehension objectives and decide which direction to take so that the objectives are attained. Moreover, evaluating strategies determine the success of the individuals' efforts at processing spoken input for improving their listening abilities. Therefore, it can be concluded that without willingness to expend effort in completing the behavior, the best use of planning and evaluation MLS cannot be achieved.

With regard to the directed attention metacognitive listening strategy type, it was found that none of the subscales of self-efficacy explained any variance of the directed attention metacognitive listening strategy use. According to Vandergrift et al. (2006), directed attention represents strategies such as getting back on track when losing concentration, recovering concentration when one's mind wanders, and having a high level of attention and concentration in the process of listening comprehension. However, based on the findings of this study, directed attention has nothing to do with the three subscales of self-efficacy. The justification of directed attention metacognitive listening strategy may lie somewhere else such as anxiety and/or personality factors.

Concerning the person knowledge MLS, it was found that person

knowledge had significant relations with two subscales of self-efficacy, namely effort and persistence. The subscale initiative did not explain any variance of the person knowledge strategy use. It is implied that learners with willingness to expend effort in completing the behavior and persistence in the face of adversity, are better person knowledge metacognitive strategy users. This finding is in line with Vandergrift et al.'s (2006) view that person knowledge “represents listeners’ perceptions concerning the difficulty presented by L2 listening and their self-efficacy in L2 listening” (p. 451).

Concerning the mental translation MLS in relation with the three subscales of self-efficacy, it was found that mental translation had significant relations with effort and persistence. The subscale initiative did not explain any variance of mental translation strategy use. It is worth mentioning that mental translation represents strategies that learners must avoid. These strategies fight against the fruitless approaches to listening that lower-level listeners often are obliged to adopt (Vandergrift et al. 2006). This finding might be due to the fact that the participants of this study were not beginners. Moreover, most of the participants had mid and high level self-efficacy scores. The replication of this relationship at other levels of proficiency may produce some other results.

With regard to the problem solving metacognitive listening strategy type in relation with subscales of self-efficacy, it was found that problem solving had only a significant relation with persistence. The subscales effort and initiative did not explain any variance of the problem solving strategy use. According to Vandergrift et al. (2006), problem solving strategies include using one’s experience and general knowledge in interpreting the text, adjusting one’s interpretation upon realizing the information in the text, and monitoring processes. Thus, the successful use of such strategies necessitates learners with high level of persistence in the face of adversity.

This study had some limitations, including the nature of sample size and consequently, a lack of opportunity to generalize the findings which were

based on a specific sample of Iranian EFL students. Another limitation was the level of proficiency of the students, for the participants were junior and senior students. Another major limitation was the reliance on self-report data in assessing the level of MLS use and self-efficacy. The inclusion of other ways of data collection such as interviews and diaries in longitudinal studies would help other researchers have a better understanding and, of course, more comprehensive assessment of the level of each variable.

To guarantee a good use of metacognitive listening strategy use, factors such as self-efficacy should enter to enhance the learners' understanding of themselves (Goh, 2008). This study found that there is a positive relationship between MLS use and self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy has been theorized to influence learners' performance by influencing the choices they make, the amount of effort they expend, and the persistence they put forth in accomplishing a specific task (Pajares & Valiante, 1997). By the same token and in the light of the findings of the present study, listening tasks among the existing diverse tasks can face the influence of self-efficacy. Believing that they are capable listeners can benefit EFL learners by having them make enough effort and exercise sufficient persistence when they try to comprehend diverse listening tasks.

Regarding the subscales of self-efficacy in relation with MLS use, this study found some significant relationships. Therefore, success in MLS use necessitates a proper attention to self-efficacy. Such a finding can bear fruit when teachers, curriculum developers, material designers, and teacher trainers take concepts such as metacognition and self-efficacy into account and provide opportunities that best suit the needs of the learners with different levels of MLS use and self-efficacy. Students that do not use strategies should not be left alone. They might have learnt the strategies but they are not able to use them practically. They may not lag behind in strategy learning but in other factors related to the strategy use, such as self-efficacy. The findings of this

study might also encourage the other researchers to do much more about enhancing metacognitive listening strategy use. There are different factors affecting the strategy use, such as anxiety, achievement goal orientations, culture, learning styles, motivation, extraversion, and introversion, to name just a few. The implementation of the researches on these factors can find fruitful ways to enhance listening comprehension.

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