A Strategy-Based Listening Self-Efficacy Instruction for EFL Learners in Iran

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of metacognitive listening strategy instruction on the listening self-efficacy perceptions of a group of pre-intermediate English learners. This study had an intact group regarding the sampling and a quasi-experimental design. The subjects were already assigned to groups by their institutes. Thus, six classes were selected for the study and were randomly assigned into one control group (N=39; 21 females & 18 males) and one experimental group (N=44; 23 females & 21 males), which were further divided into two groups based on their gender. To be assured about the homogeneity of their listening proficiency and self-efficacy perceptions of the groups a pre-test of listening and a pre-test of listening self-efficacy were administered and the results were analyzed using Independent Samples T-test and One-way ANOVA which revealed no significant difference between the two groups and between male and female students of each group. Then, the participants were screened and those whose scores were two standard deviations below and above the mean score were sampled for the study (the control group N=28; 15 females & 13 males) (the experimental group N=29; 14 females &15 males). Next, the experimental group received seven weeks (i.e. 20 sessions) of metacognitive listening strategy instruction embedded into a speaking & listening course, while the control group received no metacognitive listening strategy

instruction. At the end of the treatment, the same listening self-efficacy questionnaire was administered to the groups. The results were analyzed using Independent Samples T-test and One-way ANOVA which showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group significantly and that there was no significant difference between male and female learners of each group. This suggested that metacognitive listening strategy instruction can result in raising leaners' self-efficacy perceptions.

Keywords: Metacognitive Strategies; Person Knowledge; Self-efficacy; Task knowledge

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Whether you think that you can or you can't, you're usually right." (Henry Ford). This is not just a cliché. There is a reality behind it. In fact, "what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave" (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). According to Bandura, when people *believe* they are capable of achieving a certain task, they are more likely to be confidently involved in related activities. In introducing and developing his Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997) has focused a lot on the notion of self-efficacy and its effect on academic success. Bandura, defines self-efficacy as "people's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" in the future (1986, p 391). Since Bandura's seminal self-efficacy work in 1986, innumerable studies have shown a positive correlation between high self-efficacy beliefs and performance; in fact, self-efficacy beliefs (i.e. perceptions of one's potentials in doing a task) are often cited as the *greatest predictor* of subsequent performances (see, for example, Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991; Nicholls 1979; Pajares, 1996, 1997; Schunk, 1995). While extensively applied to explain performances in other fields, self-efficacy beliefs have only recently been used in the field of English language learning. One important aspect of the relationship between self-

efficacy and performance is that changes in self-efficacy can be brought about through instruction (Gore, 2006).

Another influential factor in academic achievement, in general, and listening performance, in particular, is the use of language learning strategies to tackle the task at hand. Research has shown that more successful listeners use some listening strategies which facilitate the process of listening comprehension for them and make them be superior listeners to others (see, for example, Goh, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002; Goh & Taib, 2006; O'Malley, Chamot & Küpper 1989; Oxford & Crookall, 1989; Vandergrift, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2004; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010).

A. Factors Influencing Listening Performance

Listening performance is influenced by many factors. Researchers have realized the fact that some learners are fast-achievers in language learning, whereas the others have a hard time achieving the same amount of language progress. Thus, they have focused on learner characteristics and preferences as the source of such differences. Some learners have certain characteristics which make them be more successful than other learners. Besides the age and previous language learning experiences, Naiman, Fröhlick, Stern, and Todesco (1978, 1996) listed the cognitive factors of intelligence and language aptitude, personality factors and cognitive style, attitudes and motivation as learner characteristics that are considered relevant and influential to language learning. The list can be expanded with other influential factors including language learning strategies and learners' perceptions of their self-efficacy.

Language learning strategies have been one of the main focuses in the field of language learning. They make learners become "thinking participants who can influence both the processes and the desired outcome of their own learning" (Oxford, 2008, p.52).

Innumerous studies have been conducted to define and classify the language learning strategies (see, for example, Naiman et al., 1978; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; O'Malley, Chamot, & Kupper, 1985; Oxford, 1990; Werden & Rubin, 1987), yet there is no consensus on their classification. While Naiman et al. (1978) define language learning strategies as the methods that a learner utilizes to get information, Werden and Rubin (1987) define them as tactics that help a learner develop a language system created on their own. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) approach the concept of language learning strategies as the certain behaviors that learners employ to understand, learn, and keep new information in mind whereas Oxford (2008) claims that they are "the good-oriented actions or steps that learners take, with some degree of consciousness, to enhance their L2 learning" (p.41).

Like the disagreement on the definition of the language learning strategies, categorization is a problematic issue. Werden and Rubin (1987) put them into two broad categories: strategies that affect learning directly and those that affect learning indirectly. Naiman et al. (1978) created five broad categories: active task approach, realization of language as a system, realization of a language as a means of communication and interaction, management of affective demands, and monitoring of L2 performance. According to Oxford (1990), strategies can be divided into two as direct strategies (including memory, cognitive, and compensation) and indirect strategies (including metacognitive, affective, and social). Despite these differences in definition and categorization, the researchers all agree on the idea that language learning strategies are effective on the achievement of the students (see, for example, Chen, 1990; Goh & Foong, 1997; Green & Oxford, 1995; Khaldieh, 2000; Wharton, 2000).

Learners' perception of their self-efficacy is another influential factor in the process of language learning. Self-efficacy beliefs are a response to the question: 'Can I do this task?' (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, pp. 33–34). They reflect individuals' judgments of how capable they are of performing specific activities, rather than their

judgments about 'who they are as people or how they feel about themselves in general' (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 203). Self-efficacy beliefs guide people's choices, efforts and degree of persistence with tasks. High levels of self-efficacy appear to be particularly important in maintaining motivation in the face of difficulties and failure (Bandura, 1995). Studies that have investigated self-efficacy in language learning have also found that learners with high levels of self-efficacy seem to have better control over and better knowledge of effective learner strategies (Vogely, 1995; Victori, 1999; Yang, 1999).

Self-efficacy beliefs are context-dependent / domain-specific: one may have high self-efficacy for solving math problems, for example, but low self-efficacy for language learning (Bandura, 2006; Zimmerman, 2000). Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs appear to be more than just a reflection of the amount of skill one possesses and are believed to 'contribute to academic performance over and above actual ability' (Bandura, 1993). In other words, self-efficacy is needed for individuals to make the most of their abilities. In addition, having the skill and knowledge to achieve success in something is no guarantee that one will have a high sense of self-efficacy for it.

Therefore, better academic achievements can be achieved through raising learners' perceptions of self-efficacy (see, for example, Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1989; Pajares & Schunk, 2001). These studies, despite the differences in the variables studied and in the results seen at the end, suggest that self-efficacy is a great predictor for the success of learners.

Since self-efficacy is domain-specific, better academic achievements in listening can be achieved through raising learners' perceptions of listening self-efficacy. This seems to be achieved through metacognitive listening strategy instruction. Thus, the study is aimed at investigating the possible effect, if any, of the metacognitive listening strategy instruction on the listening self-efficacy of language learners.

Thus, the two influential factors that are the focus of the present study and that are believed to have an impact on academic achievement in listening proficiency are self-efficacy and listening strategies. Yet, the focus is not on the impact of these two factors on listening performance; rather, the aim of the present study is to investigate the possible effect, if any, of the metacognitive listening strategy instruction on the listening self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners at an pre-intermediate level. Also, the present study aims to investigate whether metacognitive listening strategy instruction has any significantly difference effect on male vs. female learners' listening self-efficacy**.**

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A large number of studies have been done on self-efficacy. But a few has been done to investigate the impact of strategy instruction on self-efficacy (Chularut & DeBacker, 2004; Goker, 2006; Graham, 2007; Khajavi&Ketabi, 2012; Magogwe& Oliver, 2007; Shang, 2010; Wang & Li, 2010). But none of the studies listed above investigated the possible impact of metacognitive listening strategy instruction on learners' listening self-efficacy. Also, no study has been found to be in disagreement with the findings of the present study.

For example, Goker's (2006) study investigated whether student teachers trained using a peer coaching training program after teaching practicum sessions in teaching of English as a foreign language would demonstrate greater improvement in their self-efficacy than those just receiving traditional supervisor visits. Results showed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group's self-efficacy improvement.

As another example, Graham (2007) investigated whether strategy instruction in listening might have a positive effect on the self-efficacy of learners, by helping them see the relationship between the strategies they employed and what they achieved. One group of

learners, as well as receiving strategy instruction, also received detailed feedback on their listening strategy use and on the reflective diaries they were asked to keep, in order to draw their attention to the relationship between strategies and learning outcomes. Another group received strategy instruction without feedback or reflective diaries, while a comparison group received neither strategy instruction nor feedback. As a result of the training, there was some evidence that students who had received feedback had made the biggest gains in certain aspects of self-efficacy for listening; although their gains as compared to the non-feedback group were not as great as had been anticipated.

Also, Magogwe& Oliver (2007) studied 480 Bostwanana students. The students completed Morgan's (1999) Efficacy Scale. The findings revealed a dynamic relationship between use of language learning strategies, proficiency and self-efficacy beliefs.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

For the purpose of the study, 83 English learners studying in two English language institutes in Malayer were selected for the control and experimental groups of the study. There were six classes involved in the study. The researcher just assigned the classes into one control group (N=39; 21 females & 18 males) and one experimental group (N=44; 23 females &21 males). Each group was further divided into two groups based on their gender. Thus, the groups are intact and not randomly selected, but randomly assigned.

The participants are adults, their ages ranging from 19 to 30, both males and females. The participants have been studying English for at least three academic years in the institutes and are assumed to be at pre-intermediate level according to the institute's placement test scores and due to their successful completion of the prior course, which last for seven weeks (i.e. 20 sessions).Yet, the researcher did not depend on this and he

administered a sample listening test from *The Official Guide to the TOEFL iBT* (Educational Testing Service, 2009) so as to determine their level of listening proficiency and find out whether the experimental and control group are homogenous or not. Based on the results, data screening was conducted to choose those participants whose scores were two standard deviations below and above the mean score. The participants who were screened for the study were 28 in the control group (N=28; 15 females & 13 males) and 29 in the experimental group (N=29; 14 females &15 males).

B. Measuring Instruments

To ensure that both the control groups and the experimental groups are homogenous before the study, a sample listening test from *The Official Guide to the TOEFL iBT*(Educational Testing Service, 2009) and a listening self-efficacy questionnaire (LSEQ) were administered to the learners. After the treatment, the same listening self-efficacy questionnaire (LSEQ) was administered to the learners again.

Regarding the reliability and validity of the sample listening test from the book *The Official Guide to the TOEFL iBT* (Educational Testing Service, 2009), since the book is prepared by the same staff who design the real TOEFL Tests, its reliability and validity are already proved (Sawaki & Nissan, 2009; ETS, 2011). The reliability estimates for the Listening Section is relatively high (0.85) and the validity (ETS, 2011) and Sawaki& Nissan's study showed Pearson correlation coefficients ranging from 0.56 to 0.74 for the criterion-related validity of the test.

The listening self-efficacy questionnaire (LSEQ) comprises a 20-item Likert scale. Students are required to respond to each item on an 11-point scale (0-100%) ranging from "Not at all sure" (0%) to "Completely sure" (100%) (see Appendix A).

The LSEQ was designed based on the criteria set by Zimmerman (2000) and Bandura (2006). Therefore, in the design of the LSEQ the following factors were taken into account:

1. In order for the questionnaire items to provide differentiating information, the items response format should be either 0-10 (with an interval of 1) or 0-100 (with an interval of 10) (Bandura, 2006).

2. Self-efficacy questionnaires should focus on *mastery criterion* of performance rather than on normative or other criteria. Thus, the items response format should be either 0-10 (with an interval of 1) or 0-100 (with an interval of 10) (Zimmerman, 2000).

3. Since self-efficacy is domain-specific and needs to measure learners' capabilities in a particular domain of functioning, the items should also be domain-specific. Otherwise, it may tap some other mental ability (Bandura, 2006; Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman (2000) states that self-efficacy questionnaire items should be task- or domain-specific. He adds "Although self-efficacy questionnaire items should be adapted to specific tasks, the scope of these tasks can vary on the basis of the user's intended purpose, ranging from proficiency in an academic domain (e.g., writing or mathematics) to proficiency in a subskill (e.g., grammar of functions)."

4. With regard to their content, self-efficacy measures should focus on *performance capabilities* rather than on personal qualities, such as one's physical or psychological characteristics (Zimmerman, 2000).

5. For self-efficacy questionnaire items to have *construct validity* (i.e. to measure the self-efficacy belief not any other system of beliefs or mental abilities), the

items should be phrased in terms of *can do* rather than *will do* because *can* is a judgment of capability but *will* is a statement of intention (Bandura, 2006).

6. The time span of the items should be now or around now not some hypothetical future time. Otherwise, it will be unrealistic and invalid (Bandura, 2006).

Regarding the reliability of the listening self-efficacy questionnaire (LSEQ), a pilot study was done by the researcher and its reliability was assessed by computing Cronbach alpha which showed a relatively estimate of (0.73).

C. Training Instruments

To raise the experimental groups' awareness of metacognitive listening strategies, the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) which was constructed and validated by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareshal and Tafaghodtari (2006) was used but it was slightly modified to be compatible for Farsi-speaking learners of English – just the word French was replaced with English. Whenever the learners faced any difficulties understanding the questionnaire items, they were explained more. Also the learners were asked to answer either in English or in Farsi so that their language knowledge does not influence their answers.

Strategy-share discussions: In strategy-share discussions all the learners in the experimental groups shared their strategies and were asked to write down their peers' strategies and try to use and evaluate them in their next listening task.

D. Treatment

The study was structured to raise the person knowledge, task knowledge and strategy knowledge components of the learners' knowledge so that it may have a significant impact on raising the experimental group's listening self-efficacy perceptions.

1. Metacognitive Knowledge/Awareness Raising

Person Knowledge Raising: To raise the experimental groups' awareness of their own metacognitive strategies and help them develop and test new strategies, the modified and translated version of the MALQ was given to them *before and after each listening phase*.

Task Knowledge Raising: To raise the experimental groups' task knowledge clear instructions were given in their native language (i.e. in Farsi) and in each listening phase similar but various listening tasks were given to them. If the listening tasks differed from the previous ones, clear instructions for the new tasks were given so that the learners know what they were supposed to do with the tasks. Also there were some class discussions on how the learners tackled each task and the problems they faced after each listening phase which helped all the learners develop a better task knowledge.

Strategy Knowledge Raising: To raise the experimental groups' strategy knowledge the modified and translated version of the MALQ was used and there were '*strategy-share discussions*' after every other listening phase. In strategy-share discussions all the learners shared their strategies and were asked to write down their peers' strategies and try to use and evaluate them in their next listening task.

2. A Fully Structured Metacognitive Strategy instruction: The First Session

On the very first session, the teacher, the researcher, stated that 'learners of the same age are all cognitively developed almost the same.' He further explained 'one of the most important factors that makes more effective/successful listeners different from less successful listeners is their ability to use appropriate metacognitive strategies for listening tasks.' The teacher introduced the *process-oriented listening* and mentioned four stages for it: prediction/planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving (Vandergrift's Model, 1997). Then he further explained what more successful listeners might do at every stage and he modeled the process through a think-aloud listening task.

3. The Process-Oriented Training

The Prediction Phase: At this phase, the learners were asked to read the listening instructions, look at the pictures (if there were any), read the question stem and the choices (if there were any choices). Next, they were asked to work in *pairs* and make predictions on what they might hear and write down their predictions.

The Monitoring Phase: At this phase, the teacher had the learners listen to the recordings and asked them to verify or reject their predictions and listen for understanding.

The Evaluation Phase: At this stage, the learners were asked to evaluate their predictions and their answers in pairs and check their answers against the right answers provided by the teacher. Also they were asked to write down the problems and/or their misunderstandings.

The Problem-solving Phase: At his phase, the learners listened once more to the recordings and tried to solve their problems and clear up their misunderstandings.

E. Data Analysis

The researcher applied both Independent-Samples T-Tests and one-way ANOVAs using SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2009) to analyze the probable differences between the experimental and control groups' listening self-efficacy. Also, the same data analysis procedures were used to see if there is any significant within-group differences between male and female learners' listening self-efficacy after the treatment.

IV. RESULTS

A. Listening Proficiency Pre-test Results

To see whether the experimental and control groups are homogenous regarding their listening proficiency, a sample listening test from *The Official Guide to the TOEFL iBT* (Educational Testing Service, 2009) was administered to both groups. The observed pre-test results (t= .607 at p< .05) suggest that there is no significant difference between the two groups regarding their listening performance. So both groups seem to be homogeneous on their listening proficiency.

Also, to make sure that the males and females in each group are homogeneous, an ANOVA analysis was run (see Table 1). Thus it can be inferred from the observed results that no significant difference existed within the groups and that female and male sin each group are also homogenous.

Table 1.Listening Proficiency Pre-Test Results: Within Group Differences using ANOVA

(I) Group and Gender	(J) Group and Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Experimental Group: Male	Experimental Group: Female	.044	1.099	.993
Control Group: Male	Control Group: Female	.063	1.124	.989

The mean difference is **not** significant at the 0.05 level.

B. *Listening Self-efficacy Pre-test Results*

The results achieved from the listening self-efficacy pre-test (t= 1.054 at p< .05) implied that there is no significant difference between the two groups' listening self-efficacy. So both groups seem to be homogeneous on their listening self-efficacy.

Also, to make sure that the males and females in each group are homogeneous regarding their listening self-efficacy, an ANOVA analysis was performed on the observed results from the pre-test of the Listening Self-efficacy Questionnaire (LSEQ) (see Table 2). Thus it can be inferred from the observed results that no significant difference existed within the groups and that female and male sin each group are also homogenous.

Table 2.Listening Self-efficacy Pre-Test Results: Within Group Differences using ANOVA

(I) Group and Gender	(J) Group and Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Experimental Group: Male	Experimental Group: Female	6.010	3.696	.657
Control Group: Male	Control Group: Female	1.250	3.780	.991

The mean difference is **not** significant at the 0.05 level.

C. Listening Self-efficacy Post-test Results

The LSEQ Post-Test results using the Independent Samples T-test analysis suggested that there is a significant difference (t= 2.630 at p< .05) between the experimental and control groups' listening self-efficacy. But to investigate where this difference exactly lies, an ANOVA analysis was performed. The ANOVA analysis on LSEQ Post-Test results, as shown in Table 3, suggest that there are no significant within-group differences between male and female leaners' listening self-efficacy. Thus it can be inferred that the difference is only due to the experiment, not gender differences.

Table 3.Listening Self-efficacy Post-Test Results: Within Group Differences using ANOVA

(I) Group and Gender	(J) Group and Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Experimental Group: Male	Experimental Group: Female	-.337	4.247	.998
Control Group: Male	Control Group: Female	1.875	4.344	.978

The mean difference is **not** significant at the 0.05 level.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study seem to support studies revealing that strategy instruction has an impact on self-efficacy (Chularut & DeBacker, 2004; Goker, 2006; Graham, 2007; Khajavi&Ketabi, 2012; Magogwe& Oliver, 2007; Shang, 2010; Wang & Li, 2010). Thus, based on the results achieved in the present study and based on the supporting evidence from studies indicated previously, it can be inferred that metacognitive listening strategy instruction does have a positive impact on pre-intermediate EFL learners' listening self-efficacy in Iran and that the gender difference has no impact on learners' listening self-efficacy in Iran.

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Appendix A. The Listening Self-efficacy Questionnaire (LSEQ) (Original)

Instructions: Please read and answer the following statements carefully. There is *no right* or *wrong* answer. Circle the number on the scale that best describes *how sure you are that you can perform each of the English listening tasks below*.

1. How certain are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a short conversation about school life.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

2. How sure are you that you can understand the *details* of a short conversation about school life.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

3. How certain are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a short daily conversation.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

4. How sure are you that you can understand the *details* of a short daily conversation.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

5. How certain are you that you can understand the *implied messages* of a short daily conversation.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

6. How sure are you that you can understand the *main idea* of English stories.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

7. How certain are you that you can understand the *details* of English stories.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

8. How sure are you that you can understand English movies without subtitles.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

9. How certain are you that you can understand English songs.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

10. How sure are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a short academic lecture.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

11. How certain are you that you can understand the *details* of a short academic lecture.

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 % |

Not at all sure   Completely sure

12. How sure are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a conversation in which a tourist requests
   information and receives simple instructions.

   0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100 %

   Not at all sure   Completely sure

13. How certain are you that you can understand the *details* of a conversation in which a tourist requests
   information and receives simple instructions.

   0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100 %

   Not at all sure   Completely sure

14. How sure are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a domestic quarrel between a husband and
   wife.

   0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100 %

   Not at all sure   Completely sure

15. How certain are you that you can understand the *details* of a domestic quarrel between a husband and
   wife.

   0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100 %

   Not at all sure   Completely sure

16. How sure are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a news report on TV.

   0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100 %

   Not at all sure   Completely sure

17. How certain are you that you can understand the *details* of a news report on TV.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100 %

Not at all sure   Completely sure

18. How sure are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a sports news report on TV.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100 %

Not at all sure   Completely sure

19. How certain are you that you can understand the *details* of a sports news report on TV.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100 %

Not at all sure   Completely sure

20. How sure are you that you can understand the *main idea* of a television commercial.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100 %

Not at all sure   Completely sure