

TACIT KNOWLEDGE IN PRAGMATIC PROCESSING AMONG EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatic competence is a crucial aspect of English as a Foreign Language learning; yet, many learners still struggle to understand implied meanings, indirect requests, and conversational implicatures, even when their grammatical knowledge is adequate. This article discusses the role of tacit knowledge in pragmatic processing from a psycholinguistic perspective. The discussion is based on theoretical analysis and review of relevant literature on tacit knowledge, implicit language processing, and interlanguage pragmatics. The analysis suggests that pragmatic comprehension often relies on experience-based and intuitive knowledge rather than explicit rule application. Repeated exposure to authentic communication and social interaction helps learners internalize pragmatic patterns, which later support more automatic language processing. This perspective indicates that pragmatic competence develops not only through explicit instruction but also through implicit cognitive processes shaped by communication experience. Therefore, English language teaching should provide more contextual interaction, authentic discourse exposure, and reflective learning activities to support the development of tacit pragmatic knowledge.

Keywords: tacit knowledge, pragmatic processing, psycholinguistics, EFL learners, communicative competence

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic competence is central to effective second-language communication. It includes the ability to understand indirect speech acts, implicatures, irony, politeness expressions, and other meanings that depend on context. Many language learners can produce grammatically correct sentences but still experience pragmatic problems in real interaction. For example, they may speak too directly to a lecturer or misunderstand humor from peers. This shows that language knowledge is not always explicit or easy to teach. Some knowledge is tacit, meaning that people know how to use it but cannot fully explain it in words (Polanyi, 1966). Therefore, this article focuses on the role of tacit knowledge in real-time pragmatic processing among Indonesian EFL learners.

The concept of tacit knowledge was introduced clearly by Michael Polanyi (1966), who stated that “we can know more than we can tell.” According to him, many human skills depend on implicit knowledge that is difficult to verbalize. This idea has influenced many fields, including language learning, psychology, and education. Research in psycholinguistics and experimental pragmatics shows that pragmatic interpretation can be fast and automatic when people face familiar contexts, but slower when the context is unclear or unexpected (Noveck & Sperber, 2004). This suggests that experience plays an important role in pragmatic understanding.

In second language acquisition research, Taguchi (2008) explains that pragmatic comprehension can improve through greater exposure to real communication contexts. Learners who frequently engage in authentic interaction tend to develop a better understanding of implied meaning and contextual language use. This perspective suggests that repeated exposure to discourse patterns can gradually strengthen tacit pragmatic knowledge and support more natural language processing. In this way, pragmatic competence develops not only from explicit instruction but also from communication experience and social interaction.

From a theoretical perspective, the relationship between implicit and explicit knowledge is also relevant. Ellis (2005) argues that these two types of knowledge interact continuously. Explicit instruction may help learners notice language features, while repeated exposure can gradually develop implicit or tacit knowledge. This explains why teaching

pragmatic rules explicitly is often not sufficient unless learners also experience contextualized communication practice.

Research in interlanguage pragmatics also emphasizes the importance of attention and awareness. Kasper and Rose (2002) explain that pragmatic development depends on exposure, interaction, and opportunities to practice language use in context. Similarly, Schmidt (1993) proposes the noticing hypothesis, which states that conscious attention to language forms helps learners internalize them over time. These perspectives highlight that pragmatic competence develops through both experience and awareness. Recent research also highlights the role of instructed pragmatics and experiential learning in pragmatic competence development (Taguchi, 2015; Huang, 2022).

Although pragmatic competence has been widely discussed in second language learning, the role of tacit knowledge in pragmatic processing has not received much specific attention, especially in EFL contexts such as Indonesia. Many studies on pragmatics tend to focus more on explicit instruction, pragmatic rules, and teaching strategies, while the contribution of experience-based and intuitive knowledge is less emphasized. This article aims to address this gap by highlighting how tacit knowledge may influence pragmatic comprehension from a psycholinguistic perspective. By integrating tacit knowledge theory, psycholinguistics, and interlanguage pragmatics, this article offers a conceptual perspective that may enrich current discussions on pragmatic competence in EFL learning.

Building on theoretical and empirical work in pragmatics and psycholinguistics, this article offers a conceptual review of how tacit knowledge may shape pragmatic processing among EFL learners. Rather than reporting new experimental data, the article synthesizes key theories and empirical findings to answer the following questions:

1. How can tacit knowledge explain faster and more automatic pragmatic comprehension in familiar contexts?
2. What cognitive mechanisms (intuitive vs analytic) in the literature support a tacit view of pragmatic competence?
3. What pedagogical implications follow from a tacit-knowledge perspective for EFL instruction?

Recent empirical and review studies enrich the original theoretical foundations and show more nuances about how pragmatic competence develops. Notable contributions include Taguchi's synthesis of instructed pragmatics (Taguchi, 2015), which shows the mixed but promising effects of instruction; González-Lloret's review on technology and L2 pragmatics (2019), which highlights new avenues for authentic interaction; and several recent reviews and empirical studies (e.g., Huang, 2022; Tajeddin, 2021) that consider the roles of implicit learning, noticing, and technology-mediated exposure in pragmatic development. These studies confirm that pragmatic learning is multi-faceted: both explicit instruction and repeated, meaningful exposure (often supported by technology or task design) contribute to pragmatic gains.

METHOD

Review Approach and Selection Criteria

This article is a conceptual (narrative) review that synthesizes foundational theory and representative empirical studies to develop an integrated conceptual model. Rather than a fixed quantitative meta-analysis, the approach is interpretative: the aim is to integrate perspectives, not to exhaustively count effect sizes. To ensure transparency, literature selection followed these practical criteria: (1) include foundational theoretical works that shaped the field (e.g., Polanyi, Ellis, Kasper & Rose, Schmidt); (2) include representative empirical studies and recent reviews that address pragmatic competence, implicit learning, and instructed pragmatics (priority given to peer-reviewed journal articles); (3) search major databases (Google Scholar,

Scopus, Web of Science) using keywords such as “tacit knowledge”, “pragmatic competence”, “interlanguage pragmatics”, “implicit learning”, and “instructed pragmatics”; and (4) include materials published in English from 1966 up to 2023, with emphasis on studies that clarify mechanisms linking exposure, noticing, and automaticity. The final corpus for conceptual synthesis consisted of foundational texts and representative empirical and review studies identified by these criteria. This narrative method allows integrative theory building while maintaining traceability of sources.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this article is built on three main theoretical perspectives: tacit knowledge theory, psycholinguistic models of implicit and explicit processing, and interlanguage pragmatics. First, the concept of tacit knowledge is derived from Polanyi (1966), who explains that individuals possess knowledge that guides their actions but cannot always be fully expressed verbally. In language communication, this means learners may understand pragmatic meaning without consciously applying explicit linguistic rules. Tacit knowledge is therefore seen as procedural, experience-based knowledge that develops through repeated social interaction.

Second, from a psycholinguistic perspective, this article adopts the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge as explained by Ellis (2005). Implicit knowledge generally operates automatically and often unconsciously during language processing, while explicit knowledge involves conscious awareness and rule-based reasoning. Previous psycholinguistic literature suggests that automatic language processing is usually associated with familiarity, repeated exposure, and experience. This theoretical perspective supports the assumption that pragmatic comprehension in familiar contexts may rely strongly on tacit, experience-based knowledge that has become gradually internalized.

Third, interlanguage pragmatics provides the social and communicative dimension of the discussion. Kasper and Rose (2002) explain that pragmatic competence develops through exposure, interaction, and communicative experience. Schmidt’s noticing hypothesis (1993) also emphasizes the role of awareness in transforming language input into intake. Together, these perspectives help explain how tacit pragmatic knowledge may gradually develop through repeated exposure and contextualized communication.

To explain pragmatic processing in EFL learners, this article proposes an integrated account that links three theoretical strands: Polanyi’s tacit knowledge (1966), psycholinguistic models of implicit/explicit processing (Ellis, 2005), and interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Schmidt, 1993). In this account, exposure and interaction supply repeated input and social scripts; noticing (attention) selectively converts some of this input into internalized patterns; over time these patterns stabilize as tacit (procedural) knowledge. Tacit knowledge then supports implicit, fast pragmatic inferences during comprehension (automatic processing). When context is weak or novel, learners recruit explicit knowledge and controlled processing to reason about meaning. Thus, the three perspectives interact in a processual loop: social exposure → noticing → tacit proceduralization → automatic pragmatic processing, with explicit knowledge available as a compensatory resource. This integrated account helps to explain why learners sometimes perform pragmatically well without being able to state rules, and why explicit instruction alone is often insufficient without rich communicative experience.

Data Sources and Selection Process

The literature corpus for this conceptual review was assembled through targeted searches in Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science between March and June 2023. Search terms combined core concepts (e.g., “tacit knowledge AND pragmatics”, “implicit learning AND pragmatics”, “instructed pragmatics”, “interlanguage pragmatics AND

exposure”). Inclusion criteria were: peer-reviewed articles or major edited volumes; theoretical papers that contribute to tacit/implicit knowledge debates; empirical studies that examine pragmatic competence, instruction, or exposure; and review articles synthesizing relevant findings. Exclusion criteria were: unpublished dissertations (unless highly cited), non-peer materials lacking clear methods, and articles not accessible in English. Priority was given to works that explicitly link exposure, noticing, and automatization in pragmatic learning. The resulting selection included foundational theoretical works and a representative set of empirical and review studies up to 2023. (For transparency, the author can provide an appendix listing all selected works on request.)

Analytical Procedure

The analysis in this article follows three main stages. First, key theoretical concepts were identified from each perspective, including tacit knowledge, implicit processing, pragmatic inference, noticing, and communicative exposure. This step helps clarify how each theory explains language comprehension and pragmatic competence.

Second, the relationships among these concepts were examined. For example, tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) is connected to implicit cognitive processing (Ellis, 2005), and both relate to pragmatic comprehension and communication experience (Taguchi, 2008). This stage aims to build an integrated explanation of pragmatic processing.

Third, the theoretical insights were synthesized into a conceptual explanatory model. The model suggests that pragmatic processing involves interaction between tacit knowledge (experience-based and automatic) and explicit knowledge (rule-based and reflective). In familiar communicative contexts, tacit knowledge tends to dominate, while in unfamiliar contexts, explicit reasoning becomes more active.

Research Orientation

This theoretical approach is interpretative and explanatory in nature. It does not aim for statistical generalization but focuses on developing a deeper conceptual understanding of pragmatic processing in EFL learners. The goal is to provide a solid theoretical foundation that can support future research and discussion in the field of pragmatics and language learning. By synthesizing relevant theories and previous studies, this article aims to clarify how tacit knowledge may contribute to pragmatic competence and language use in real communication contexts.

By applying this theoretical framework, this article aims to bridge tacit knowledge theory with psycholinguistic models of language processing and interlanguage pragmatics. This integration is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of pragmatic competence in EFL contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General Findings on Tacit Knowledge in Pragmatic Processing

The literature suggests that tacit knowledge plays a key role in pragmatic language processing, especially for EFL learners who often rely on experience rather than explicit rules. Pragmatic competence is not only a matter of grammar accuracy but also the ability to interpret meaning based on context, social norms, and communicative intention. Many scholars in interlanguage pragmatics argue that learners frequently understand implied meaning intuitively, even when they cannot explain the rules behind it (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Tacit knowledge, as explained by Polanyi (1966), refers to knowledge that people use in action but find difficult to verbalize. In language communication, this type of knowledge appears when learners interpret indirect speech acts, politeness strategies, humor, or irony

without conscious analytical reasoning. From a psycholinguistic perspective, such interpretation often occurs automatically when learners are familiar with the context.

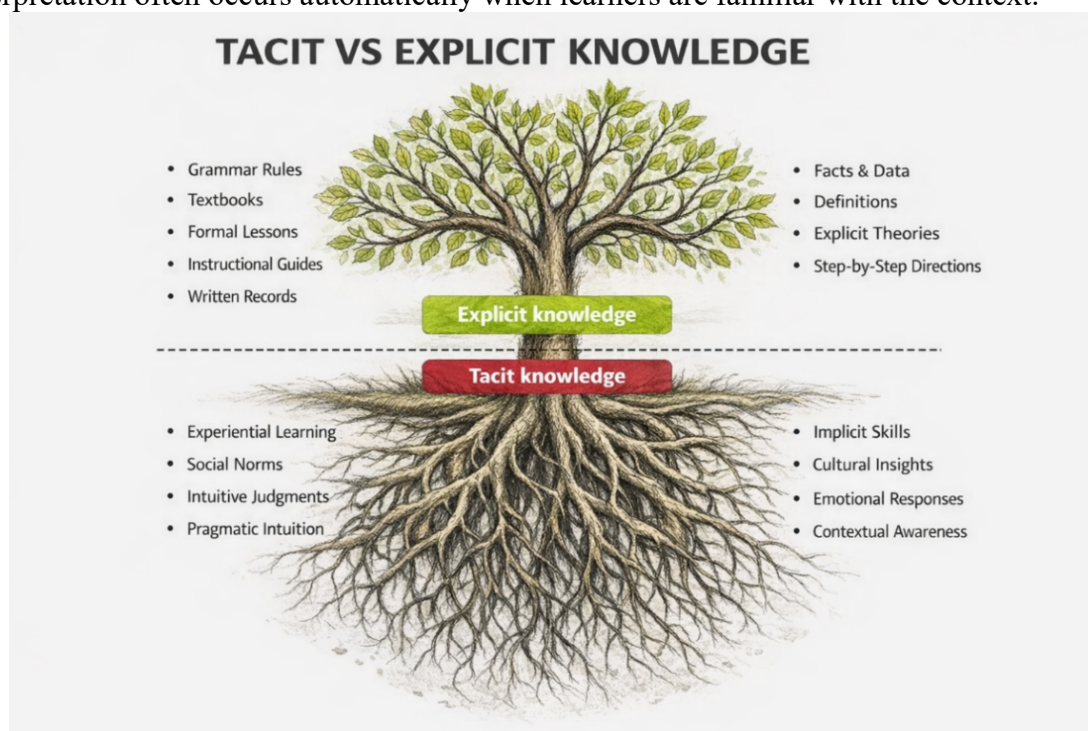


Figure 1. Tree metaphor of tacit vs explicit knowledge in pragmatic processing (conceptual model adapted and elaborated by the author from Polanyi's tacit knowledge idea).

The tree metaphor is an original conceptual depiction created by the author to make explicit the asymmetrical and foundational role of tacit knowledge in pragmatic competence. The visual maps tacit knowledge to the root system, wide, hidden, and generative, while explicit knowledge is represented as the visible canopy. This representation is analytically grounded in Polanyi's (1966) claim that much of human know-how is tacit, and it helps readers see how interaction and exposure feed tacit structures that underpin visible classroom performance. The figure is adapted (and extended) from the tacit/explicit distinction in the literature rather than taken from a single prior diagram; therefore, it should be treated as the author's conceptual synthesis.

The tree illustration helps explain the relationship between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge in language learning. The upper part of the tree, which represents explicit knowledge, is visible and easier to describe. It includes grammar rules, textbooks, formal lessons, and written records. These types of knowledge are usually taught directly in classrooms and can be explained clearly. However, the root system of the tree represents tacit knowledge. The roots are wider, deeper, and more complex than the visible part of the tree. This reflects the idea that tacit knowledge is often larger and more influential than explicit knowledge, although it is not always visible or easy to explain. Polanyi (1966) explains that people often know more than they can express verbally, especially in practical activities such as language use.

In pragmatic language processing, tacit knowledge appears when learners interpret meaning based on context, social norms, and communicative intention without consciously applying grammatical rules. For example, learners may understand indirect requests, humor, politeness strategies, or implied meanings simply because they have experienced similar communication situations before. This understanding often happens automatically, without deliberate analytical thinking. From a psycholinguistic perspective, tacit knowledge is closely

related to implicit processing. When learners frequently encounter similar discourse patterns, their brain gradually stores these patterns as automatic knowledge. Ellis (2005) explains that implicit knowledge develops through repeated exposure and interaction, not only through explicit instruction. This is why pragmatic competence cannot be developed effectively through theory alone; learners need real communication experience.

The illustration also shows that tacit knowledge includes experiential learning, social norms, intuitive judgment, cultural insight, emotional response, and contextual awareness. These elements are very important in pragmatic communication. Language is not only a system of grammar but also a social practice influenced by culture, emotion, and interaction. Therefore, tacit knowledge helps learners adapt their language to different communicative situations.

In the context of EFL learning, especially in Indonesia, learners often receive strong explicit instruction in grammar but limited exposure to authentic communication. As a result, their explicit knowledge may develop faster than their tacit pragmatic knowledge. This imbalance can cause difficulties in real-life communication, even when grammatical competence is relatively good. The tree metaphor also suggests that explicit knowledge actually grows from tacit knowledge. Just like a tree depends on its roots, explicit linguistic knowledge is often built on repeated experience and intuitive understanding. Over time, learners may become able to explain rules that they originally learned implicitly.

For language teaching, this perspective suggests that educators should not focus only on explicit instruction. Classroom activities should also support the development of tacit knowledge through interaction, role-play, exposure to authentic discourse, and reflective discussion. Such activities allow learners to internalize pragmatic patterns gradually and naturally.

Automatic and Controlled Processing in Pragmatics

Psycholinguistic theory distinguishes between automatic processing and controlled processing. Automatic processing is usually fast, intuitive, and based on repeated exposure, while controlled processing is slower and requires conscious attention. Ellis (2005) explains that implicit knowledge develops through repeated interaction and can eventually support automatic language use.

Based on this perspective, pragmatic comprehension can become faster when learners frequently encounter similar communicative situations. Reaction-time research in language processing also supports this idea, showing that familiar linguistic patterns tend to be processed more quickly than unfamiliar ones (Sternberg, 1969). Therefore, tacit knowledge can be understood as a cognitive resource that supports efficient pragmatic interpretation.

In unfamiliar contexts, learners often shift to analytical reasoning. They may consciously recall grammatical or pragmatic rules, consider possible meanings, or even guess the speaker's intention. This shift indicates interaction between implicit and explicit knowledge systems, as suggested in second language acquisition theory (Ellis, 2005).

Role of Exposure and Social Interaction

Another important point discussed in this article is the strong influence of exposure and social interaction on the development of pragmatic competence. Pragmatic ability does not grow only from reading textbooks or listening to explanations about politeness rules. It develops mainly through real communication experience. When learners are involved in authentic interaction, they are exposed to natural language use, including tone, hesitation, indirectness, humor, and cultural nuance. These elements are difficult to learn only through explicit instruction.

Taguchi (2008) explains that learners who receive greater exposure to real-life communication contexts, such as study-abroad environments or intensive interaction settings, tend to develop better pragmatic understanding. Repeated exposure to authentic communication allows learners to gradually internalize pragmatic patterns, so language use becomes more natural and less dependent on conscious rule application. This suggests that pragmatic knowledge can develop implicitly through experience, not only through explicit instruction. Learners do not simply memorize expressions; over time, they begin to develop a sense of what sounds appropriate in different communicative situations. Social interaction also plays an important role in this process. Through interaction, learners observe how more proficient speakers use language in various contexts. They notice how requests are softened, how disagreement can be expressed politely, and how humor often depends on shared understanding. Gradually, these communication patterns become part of learners' intuitive competence. Although these patterns are not always remembered as explicit rules, they can guide language use more automatically in real communication.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, repeated exposure leads to the proceduralization of language. Ellis (2005) explains that when learners repeatedly encounter similar patterns, the brain gradually shifts from effortful, rule-based processing to faster, automatic processing. This means that pragmatic competence becomes part of the learner's internalized system. The learner no longer needs to consciously think about which expression is polite or indirect; the response comes naturally. However, exposure alone may not be sufficient. Schmidt (1993) emphasizes the importance of noticing. Learners must pay attention to certain language features in order for input to become intake. For example, when a learner hears a polite request such as "Would you mind closing the window?", the learner needs to notice the modal form and the indirect structure. Without noticing, the expression may pass without deeper processing.

At the same time, once these patterns are repeatedly noticed and used, they become automatized. This explains why learners sometimes produce appropriate pragmatic expressions without being able to explain why they are correct. They may not remember the theoretical explanation, but their tacit knowledge guides them.

In EFL contexts such as Indonesia, exposure to authentic English interaction may be limited compared to ESL environments. Many learners receive strong grammatical training but fewer opportunities for natural communication. As a result, their explicit knowledge may develop faster than their tacit pragmatic knowledge. This imbalance can cause difficulty in real communication, especially in situations involving indirect meaning, sarcasm, or culturally sensitive expressions. Therefore, exposure and interaction should be considered central elements in developing pragmatic competence. Classroom activities should simulate authentic interaction as much as possible. Role-play, discussion tasks, video-based analysis, and peer interaction can provide meaningful exposure. When learners repeatedly engage in such activities, their tacit pragmatic knowledge can grow gradually and support more automatic and confident communication.

Implications for EFL Teaching

The discussion in this article suggests several important implications for English language teaching, especially in EFL contexts where exposure to authentic communication is often limited. If pragmatic competence depends partly on tacit knowledge, teaching strategies should not rely only on explicit explanation of grammar rules or pragmatic formulas. While explicit instruction is still necessary, it should be balanced with activities that allow learners to experience language use in meaningful social contexts.

Pragmatic competence develops more effectively when learners actively participate in communication rather than only receiving theoretical explanations. Activities such as role-play, group discussions, simulations, and problem-solving tasks can create opportunities for learners

to practice language in realistic situations. Through these activities, learners gradually build intuitive understanding about how language is used appropriately in different contexts. This kind of experiential learning supports the development of tacit knowledge because learners repeatedly encounter similar discourse patterns.

Contextualized communication is also very important. Language does not exist in isolation; it is always connected to social relationships, cultural norms, and communicative goals. When learners practice language within realistic contexts, they learn not only what to say but also when and how to say it. For example, learners may understand how indirect requests sound more polite in formal situations or how humor depends on shared cultural understanding. These insights are often difficult to teach explicitly but can develop naturally through contextual exposure. Exposure to authentic discourse should also include audiovisual materials such as films, interviews, podcasts, and recorded conversations. Pragmatic meaning is often expressed not only through words but also through intonation, pauses, facial expression, gesture, and body language. Audiovisual input helps learners notice these subtle cues. Over time, repeated exposure allows learners to internalize pragmatic patterns and respond more naturally in real communication.

Another important implication is the role of reflective practice. After communicative activities, teachers can guide learners to reflect on what happened during interaction. Reflection does not mean memorizing rules but encouraging awareness of communicative choices. For example, learners can discuss why a certain expression sounds polite, why a misunderstanding occurred, or how tone of voice affects interpretation. This reflective process helps connect tacit understanding with explicit awareness, which supports deeper language learning. Confidence in communication is also influenced by tacit knowledge development. When learners have sufficient experiential knowledge, they tend to respond more spontaneously and comfortably in communication situations. They do not need to analyze every sentence consciously, which reduces anxiety and cognitive load. This confidence is important because pragmatic competence involves not only correctness but also fluency and appropriateness.

Below are practical activity designs teachers can use to support tacit pragmatic learning:

1. **Pragmatic Awareness Tasks (15–30 mins):** Present short authentic dialogues (video or transcript). Ask students to identify pragmatic functions (request, refusal, implicature) and discuss which cues (intonation, politeness markers) signal the function. Follow with brief reflection: “Why does this sound polite here?”
2. **Discourse-based Instruction (1–3 lessons):** Use a corpus of real interactions (classroom data, blogs, interviews). Have students compare how native speakers perform a speech act in different contexts, then practice producing similar responses in role plays.
3. **Structured Interaction Activities (30–45 mins):** Task-based role plays with changing social relations (e.g., student→friend, student→lecturer). After each role play, conduct a stimulated-recall or short peer feedback session focused on pragmatic choices.
4. **Noticing and Form-Meaning Mapping (15–20 mins):** Use input enhancement (highlight hedging devices, modal verbs, tag questions), then ask students to notice patterns and practice them in controlled tasks.
5. **Repeated Spaced Practice (over weeks):** Recycle the same pragmatic function across multiple sessions and modalities (spoken, written, video), to support proceduralization.
6. **Technology-mediated authentic exchanges:** Use language exchanges, forums, or video chat with learners from other countries to increase exposure and authentic feedback. González-Lloret (2019) reviews how such technologies scaffold pragmatic learning.
7. **Reflective Journal & Peer Discussion:** Ask learners to keep short pragmatic journals after tasks and discuss them in pairs—this helps bridge tacit intuition and explicit awareness.

Recent research in instructed pragmatics highlights that pragmatic competence develops through both explicit instruction and experiential exposure, suggesting that implicit learning processes play an important role in pragmatic development (Taguchi, 2015). In many EFL settings, including Indonesia, classroom instruction traditionally emphasizes grammatical accuracy more than pragmatic appropriateness. As a result, learners may perform well in written tests but feel uncertain in real conversation. Integrating pragmatic-focused activities into teaching practice can help balance this situation. Teachers can create communicative environments where learners feel safe to experiment with language, make mistakes, and gradually develop pragmatic intuition.

Theoretical Contribution

The discussion in this article contributes theoretically by connecting tacit knowledge theory with psycholinguistic models of language processing and interlanguage pragmatics. The synthesis suggests that pragmatic competence is best understood as a dynamic interaction between implicit experience-based knowledge and explicit rule-based knowledge.

This perspective may help explain why some learners perform well in real communication despite limited grammatical explanation, while others with strong explicit knowledge still experience pragmatic difficulty. Tacit knowledge bridges this gap by emphasizing the importance of experiential learning.

Table 1. Theoretical Perspectives on Tacit Knowledge in Pragmatic Processing

Theory Area	Key Scholar(s)	Main Idea	Relevance to Pragmatic Processing
Tacit Knowledge Theory	Polanyi (1966)	Knowledge can be implicit and difficult to verbalize	Explains intuitive understanding of indirect meaning
Psycholinguistics (Implicit–Explicit Knowledge)	Ellis (2005)	Implicit and explicit knowledge interact dynamically	Supports automatic pragmatic interpretation
Interlanguage Pragmatics	Kasper & Rose (2002)	Pragmatic competence develops through exposure and interaction	Shows the importance of communicative experience
Noticing Hypothesis	Schmidt (1993)	Attention helps convert input into intake	Explains the development of tacit pragmatic knowledge
Experimental Pragmatics	Noveck & Sperber (2004)	Context affects the speed of pragmatic inference	Supports automatic vs controlled processing

(Source: synthesized from cited literature)

Conceptual Model of Tacit Pragmatic Processing

This article proposes a compact conceptual model linking four core elements: (1) Exposure & Interaction (input), (2) Noticing & Attention (cognitive filter), (3) Tacit Proceduralization (internalized pragmatic schemas), and (4) Processing Mode (implicit/automatic vs explicit/controlled) that leads to Pragmatic Comprehension. The directional relations are: repeated exposure → selective noticing → proceduralization into tacit schemas → rapid implicit processing in familiar contexts. When exposure or noticing is insufficient, learners rely on explicit knowledge and controlled reasoning. The model also

recognizes feedback loops: successful pragmatic use feeds further exposure and refinement of tacit schemas.

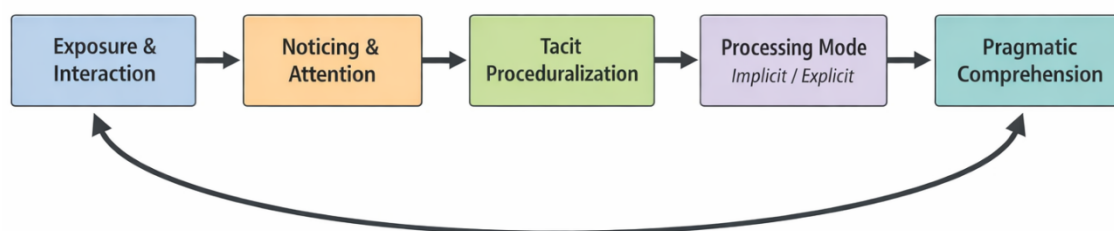


Figure 2. Tacit Pragmatic Processing Flowchart

Figure 2 presents a conceptual model illustrating how tacit knowledge may contribute to pragmatic processing in EFL learners. The model shows a sequence of interconnected stages that explain how pragmatic comprehension can develop through communicative experience. The process begins with Exposure and Interaction, which represent learners' engagement with authentic language use in social communication. Through repeated interaction with speakers and communicative contexts, learners receive input that contains pragmatic cues such as politeness markers, indirect expressions, and contextual meanings.

The next stage is Noticing and Attention, where learners consciously or subconsciously attend to certain language features in the input. According to the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1993), attention plays an important role in transforming language input into internalized knowledge. After this stage, repeated exposure and noticing gradually lead to Tacit Proceduralization. In this stage, pragmatic patterns become internalized as tacit knowledge through experience and practice. This knowledge is not always consciously accessible but can guide language use automatically.

The model then shows Processing Mode, which may involve either implicit or explicit processing. In familiar communicative contexts, tacit knowledge supports implicit and automatic interpretation of pragmatic meaning. In unfamiliar situations, learners may rely more on explicit reasoning and rule-based processing. These processes ultimately lead to Pragmatic Comprehension, where learners interpret the intended meaning of utterances based on context, social norms, and communicative intention.

Finally, the model includes a feedback loop from pragmatic comprehension back to exposure and interaction. Successful communication creates new experiences that further reinforce tacit knowledge, allowing pragmatic competence to develop continuously over time. Overall, the model suggests that pragmatic competence is not developed solely through explicit instruction, but also through repeated exposure, attention to contextual cues, and the gradual formation of tacit knowledge.

Limitations and Future Direction

As a theoretical article, the discussion here is based mainly on literature synthesis rather than new experimental data. Future research may include empirical testing using reaction-time experiments, classroom observation, or longitudinal studies to examine how tacit pragmatic knowledge develops over time.

Further research may also explore cultural factors influencing tacit knowledge in communication, especially in multilingual contexts such as Indonesia. Cultural norms strongly shape pragmatic interpretation, and understanding these influences may improve language teaching practice.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature reviewed, which includes theories of tacit knowledge, psycholinguistic studies on implicit and explicit processing, and research in interlanguage pragmatics, it can be concluded that pragmatic competence in EFL learning is not only influenced by explicit knowledge of language rules. The ability to understand implied meaning, indirect speech, and contextual nuances often depends on tacit knowledge that develops through exposure, interaction, and communicative experience.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, pragmatic comprehension involves both automatic and controlled cognitive processes. Automatic processing, supported by tacit knowledge, helps learners interpret meaning quickly and naturally, especially in familiar contexts. Meanwhile, explicit knowledge tends to support understanding when learners face unclear or unfamiliar situations. Therefore, pragmatic competence cannot rely only on formal instruction but also requires meaningful communicative experience.

This finding suggests that English language teaching should not focus only on grammar explanation and explicit rules. Teachers need to provide contextual communication practice, authentic interaction, and reflective activities so that tacit pragmatic knowledge can gradually develop. Learning environments that encourage interaction and repeated exposure to real language use are very important for improving pragmatic competence.

However, this article is based on a literature review, so the conclusions remain theoretical rather than empirical. Future research should conduct experimental or classroom-based studies to examine how tacit knowledge works in real-time pragmatic processing among EFL learners. Such research will help strengthen both theoretical understanding and practical teaching strategies.

In summary, developing pragmatic competence requires not only explicit instruction but also continuous communicative exposure that supports the growth of tacit knowledge. This balance is essential for helping EFL learners use English appropriately and effectively in real communication.

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