Explicit Knowledge of L2 Chunks and Chunking in English Learning and Use

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This present research was designed to explore how and to what extent explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking, which have both grammatical and idiomatic information, would benefit English learning and use. The operation of an EFL learner’s explicit L2 chunks and chunking knowledge has been qualitatively investigated over a 6-month period. Through ethnographic data collecting methods such as observations and interviews of the participant’s process of acquiring L2 knowledge system, it was found that the awareness of explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking significantly played an effective role in developing the English language system in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Based on the results of this study, the researchers suggest that the explicit and declarative knowledge become implicit and procedural knowledge through prolonged and systematic practices: the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking works positively for L2 learning and use.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many Korean English learners have suffered from the incompetence in using English as a second language (L2) for practical purposes, even with a great deal of English grammar and vocabulary knowledge (Kim, 2003). In fact, it is hard for non-native English speakers to acquire the English language when they do not use much English in their daily lives. In order to overcome this problem Korean English learners have often employed the

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strategy of explicit learning (Kim, 2002) which is "learning with awareness at the point of learning" (Schmidt, 1994), along with looking for ways to practice the language in meaningful contexts. In doing so, English chunks are regarded as one of the linguistic features which could be learned through conscious learning (Lewis, 2008). Moreover, it is clear that the native speakers (NS)' and non-native speakers (NNS)'s chunks and chunking are different from each other (Wray, 2000) and L2 chunks seem not acquired only through natural and implicit ways. Explicit learning of L2 is likely to produce explicit L2 knowledge (Hulstijn & Graaff, 1994), and thus Korean English learners mainly gain the explicit knowledge of the chunks through learning English chunks explicitly. However, the psycholinguistic process of the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and the benefits of having the mental property are still in questions. This research aims, therefore, to explore how and to what extent explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking works in the mind and eventually facilitates the language learning and use of the L2.

L2 explicit knowledge has been considered fundamental to understand the nature of L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2009). However, the hypothesized roles of L2 explicit knowledge suggested by previous research (Hulstijn, 2002; Vanpatten, 1994) are mostly about the explicit L2 grammar knowledge and the research designs and methods of previous studies on explicit L2 knowledge are exclusively experimental (Norris & Ortega, 2000). While taking advantage of the previous work on explicit knowledge, this research investigated an L2 explicit knowledge in the area of chunks and chunking in a qualitative method.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. L2 Explicit Knowledge

Explicit knowledge has been always discussed with implicit knowledge and the distinction between the two has been synonymously used with other contrasting pairs such as explicit–implicit memory (Dienes & Perner, 1999: N. Ellis, 2005), declarative–procedural knowledge (Anderson, 1982), and conscious–unconscious knowledge. Based on the previous research, the two
types of L2 knowledge can be summarized as follows:

- **L2 explicit knowledge**: the conscious memory that people purposefully recall in order to understand and control their own and others’ L2 behaviors.
- **L2 implicit knowledge**: the unconscious memory that people automatically use without purposeful effort to recall when understanding and controlling their own and others’ L2 behaviors.

The continua intersect of the implicit and explicit knowledge of L2 is shown in Table 1 (Hulstijn & Graaff, 1994). There are mainly three positions from which the interface between the two kinds of knowledge are described: non-interface, weak-interface, and strong-interface positions. The first two positions suggest that knowledge A develops into knowledge C and then becomes knowledge D (Hulstijn & Graaff, 1994). The strong-interface position proposes knowledge D can develop from knowledge A. While the first two positions view the distinction is as dichotomy, the other one regards it as continuum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1. L2 Knowledge as intersecting continua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declarative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious knowledge of L2 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive knowledge of L2 items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The facilitating role of explicit knowledge has been suggested by the weak interface position (Ellis, 2004: Hulstijn, 2002: N. Ellis, 2005: Van Patten, 1994). It is suggested that the explicit and declarative knowledge does not directly become implicit and procedural knowledge. That is, the proponents of weak interface position view that although explicit knowledge triggers the first step of implicit learning processes, implicit knowledge proceeds in
language learning system with its own mechanism. On the other hand, the strong interface position proposes that the explicit and declarative knowledge becomes implicit and procedural knowledge through "systematic and prolonged" practice (Anderson, 1982; DeKeyser, 1994). The distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge is functional and relative rather than absolute (Dienes & Perner, 1999). In summary, the knowledge can be explicitly or implicitly recalled and employed depending on the purpose of recalling and the two types of knowledge are exchangeable.

2. Chunks and Chunking of NSs and NNSs

The chunking of NS shows their full mastery and control of their mother tongue. It is said that ordinary English NSs have stored hundreds of thousands of chunks in their memory and retrieve them whenever necessary. Their knowledge of chunks allows them to judge which chunks can be syntactically modified and which ones cannot (Wray & Perkins, 2000). L1 speakers modify and combine the chunks by the grammatical rules, which presents that NS chunking includes syntactic processing (Skehan, 1998). However, their ways to employ the syntactic operation "are not generative but regulative and subservient" (Widdowson, 1989, p. 135). Moreover, they are able to utter chunks naturally through phonological changes such as assimilating, dissimilating, weakening, or deleting (Kim, 2003).

NSs' capability to control L1 chunks and chunking is gradually built up through three stages: lexicalization, syntacticalization and relexicalization (Skehan, 1998; Wray, 2000). Children acquire unanalyzed chunks for communication (lexicalization), and then make strong processes of syntacticization (syntacticalization) (Skehan, 1998), which means they decompose and analyze the chunks. It is important to point out that this syntacticalization happens within the boundary of idiomaticity given by the 'sources' (the chunks of the speech community). Later, the chunks that have been grammatically analyzed are then 're-chunked,' in the need of processing efficiency (relexicalization).

As for NNS' ability to use L2 chunks, NNSs also formulate and use their own nonnative-like chunks based on their interlanguage knowledge (Wray, 2000). NNS chunks are often grammatically ill-formed (e.g., I don't know
what’s this, Let’s discuss about it, Could you explain me this?), but sometimes they are grammatically perfect but not very nativelike (Wray, 2000; Kim, 2004). Even in case L2 learners use NS chunks, they often overuse limited amounts of L2 chunks (Ellis, 2005, Wray, 2000), misuse (Schmidt & Frota, 1986), and pronounce them unnaturally (Kim, 2003).

NNS chunks and chunking are different from NS chunks and chunking. It seems that natural exposure to L2 chunks for NNSs is not enough to develop idiomacity for fluent and natural speaking and listening. A pre-conditional assumption in the study of second language acquisition presents that explicit learning of certain L2 grammar rules is necessary (Ellis, 2004, 2005; Hulstijn & Graaff, 1994; Skehan, 1998), while L2 chunks are acquired implicitly.

3. Explicit Knowledge of L2 Chunks and Chunking

Most of the theoretical and empirical research about explicit knowledge has been exclusively related to L2 grammar (Hasting & Murphy, 2004; Macaro & Masterman, 2006; Norris & Ortega, 2000), which gives an impression that L2 explicit knowledge solely refers to explicit L2 grammar knowledge. In addition, it has been assumed that the knowledge of formulaic L2 chunks is implicit (Ellis, 2004, 2005; Hulstijn & Graaff, 1994; Skehan, 1998). However, Ellis (2004) suggests that other linguistic aspects can be contents of explicit knowledge and it is necessary to investigate the knowledge of other L2 linguistic features.

Chunks and chunking are holistic and unifying (Lewis, 2008), and thus explicit knowledge of chunks and chunking would facilitate learners to develop awareness and intuition of both grammaticality and idiomaticity (Pawley & Syder, 1983), developing the interlanguage system. The definitions of explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking can be summarized as follows:

- Explicit knowledge of L2 chunks: explicit knowledge of the usages and meanings of chunks and the ability to analyze them grammatically
- Explicit knowledge of L2 chunking: declarative knowledge of how
to group and store words in chunks for receptive and productive skills and use them as if they were one item with grammatical modifications and adjustments

III. METHOD

1. Research Questions

L2 explicit knowledge is an 'end product' of explicit teaching and learning. (Schmidt, 1994). The research question starts from the end product after the teacher's job has been done. Therefore, this research has focused not on what the learner learns from instructions but on how the learner's explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking interacts with their implicit knowledge. The research question of this study is 'how and to what extent does the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking benefit L2 use and learning?'

2. Participant and Sampling Procedure

The sampling has been made in regard to "convenience for the researchers and willingness of the participant" (Ellis, 2005). It was purposive and non-probabilistic with four important conditions for a participant: 1) being an English NS teacher's assistant (TA) in an English institute; 2) having explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking; 3) being willing to make conscious efforts to study English; 4) using English more than the work requirement. Since a certain English institute in Seoul was providing a free English class to the TAs and English chunks and chunking were explicitly being taught in the class, the five TAs taking the class were the prospective participants in this research at first. As time went by, it had become clear that a 23-year-old woman, Rose, was the only one fulfilling all the above four conditions. She graduated a 2-year college two years ago, majoring early childhood education and now she is working as a TA in an English institute. Even though her English ability was quite limited, she is seemed to be very motivated and exerted herself on interacting with her NS coworkers. When this research has started, it has been found that she is been using lots of NNS chunks and overusing native-like chunks (e.g., as the name of God,
on my way to home, I got stress, fell a love with her, try one’s best shot) or ill-formulated chunks (e.g., I can’t satisfy by, she married with, he/she dead).

3. Data Collection and Analysis

The entire period of data collection was about 6 months from January to July, 2009. The data sources for this study were various as follows:

- observation of the English class;
- irregular field notes by the researchers;
- voice recording of Rose’s interaction with native English speakers;
- pre and post oral test;
- pre and post grammar test;
- formal interviews with Rose;
- Rose’s English journal entries;
- Rose’s notebooks and reading materials;
- irregular informal interviews with Rose;
- irregular informal interviews with native English speakers who work with Rose

Collecting and analyzing the data had been done simultaneously and all the data sources were mainly for investigating her knowledge operation. The Rose’s English notebook revealed the contents of her explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking. The process of the data analysis went with data coding and categorizing; there were three categories, having the sub categories for the each of the three. Later the qualitative data management software 'NVIVO' was employed. A project file was created and the data which were manually managed were put in the project file. The software has been helpful in two ways. First, it has become a lot easier to retrieve the data whenever necessary. Second, it compressed and reduced qualitative data into quantitative figures through which more concrete and objective secondary data were produced that supported the analysis and interpretation of this study (Park, 2004).
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to examine how and to what extent her explicit knowledge of chunks and chunking worked, both of the two possibilities—the weak and strong interface positions—were examined. First, its role as a focusing device or an advance organizer in noticing was examined, which was suggested by the weak interface position (Hulstijn, 2002; N. Ellis, 2005; Van Patten, 1994). Second, referring to the strong interface position (Anderson, 1982; DeKeyser, 1994), whether her explicit knowledge of English chunks became implicit and proceduralized was examined.

1. Interlanguage Development

Rose’s interlanguage change over a 6-month period was measured in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. The results showed that her interlanguage had become more accurate, more fluent, and more complex than before (see Tables 2 through 4).

To analyze the accuracy change, two phenomena were measured: error-free clauses and target-like use of vocabulary. For the percentage of error free clauses, the number of error-free clauses was divided by the total number of independent clauses (AS-units) and then multiplied by 100. The percentage of target-like use of vocabulary was calculated by dividing lexical error-free clauses by the total number of AS-units and multiplying 100. The higher the score is, the more accurate a learner’s interlanguage. The results indicate that the accuracy of Rose’s English has been improved.

Table 2. Fluency Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Narrative 1 (Feb. 9th)</th>
<th>Narrative 2 (July 1st)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total speaking time</td>
<td>3.28 minutes</td>
<td>5.30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of AS-units</td>
<td>27 units</td>
<td>48 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total length of main pauses</td>
<td>55 seconds</td>
<td>35.5 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total dysfluent words</td>
<td>63 words</td>
<td>59 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of subordinate clauses</td>
<td>4 clauses</td>
<td>18 clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words (minus dysfluencies)</td>
<td>213 words</td>
<td>407 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Accuracy Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Narrative 1 (Feb. 9th)</th>
<th>Narrative 2 (July 1st)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Error-free clauses</td>
<td>11.1% (3/27)</td>
<td>41.7% (20/48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target-like use of vocabulary</td>
<td>85.1% (23/27)</td>
<td>97.9% (47/48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For complexity change of Rose's English, the amount of subordination and the type of token ratio were measured. The amount of subordination was estimated by dividing the total number of separate clauses by the total number of AS-units. For the type of token ratio, each text was divided into 100-word segments and the total number of different words was divided by the total number of words in each segment. The mean score of all the segments was calculated subsequently. The amount of subordination indicated structural complexity and the type-token ratio showed lexical richness. For both measures, higher numbers mean that a learner challenged herself to linguistically complexity. As it is seen in Table 4, Rose had become able to use more complex structures and richer vocabulary repertoire than before.

Table 4. Complexity Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Narrative 1 (Feb. 9th)</th>
<th>Narrative 2 (July 1st)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount of subordination</td>
<td>1.14 (31/27)</td>
<td>1.4 (66/48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type-token ratio</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The progress she had achieved was interpreted in the light of more natural selection and better fluency. Rose was able to use more natural sentences and phrases and speaking with fewer hesitations and pauses. The outcome of the interlanguage measurement implied the possible contribution of her explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking. Her two narratives also revealed that she chunked more nativelikely than before (see Table 5).

Table 5. Examples of Nativelike and Non-nativelike Chunks from Rose's Two Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Narrative 1 (Feb. 9th)</th>
<th>Narrative 2 (July 1st)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>once upon a time, there was a, lived with, got a letter from, was really excited about that, began to help has lived with, was very her, at first sight, time goes by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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2. Noticing

It was found that Rose noticed idiomacity and grammaticality with her explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking. In relation to idiomacity, her explicit English chunk knowledge seemed to encourage her to notice chunks which were not just what she already explicitly knew but what she did not know before as well.

In an interview conducted on July 11th, 2009, Rose was asked if she could recall any chunks she knew explicitly and noticed during interaction. After thinking for about a minute, she was able to recall two expressions: *they are my feet are killing me and no way*. She continued:

> There are moments I recognize that what I heard is what I had learned before. Whenever I encounter those moments I feel quite excited and satisfied, especially when I didn't think I would understand what I heard if I had not learned the chunks. But it is not easy to later recall the chunks that I noticed. When I talk with foreigners, everything comes and goes very quickly and it's very hard to remember what happened later (laughs).

Then she added:

> But now I think that foreigners have their own ways of talking, as I was taught (laughs). So I try to follow their ways to say what I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nativelike chunking</th>
<th>picked up, was looking for, three days later, came back, did many things she wanted to, time was almost over (N=41)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>danced together, have to go home (N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-nativelike chunking</td>
<td>*married with, got a some, thank for, at the night, was very hurry, *fell a love with, they gone, didn't depressed (N=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*remarried with, *fell a love with, she wanted found (N=9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N indicates the number of chunking used in narratives; *, the same non-nativelike chunks in both narratives.
want to say in English. Sometimes I ask them if the sentences I made are the ones they use as well or not. If not, I ask them to change them into what they may say, and then write what they let me know in my notebook.

In fact, it seemed that what had facilitated her to notice idiomacy of English were not just specific items. Moreover, her awareness and realization seemed to help her to discover idiomacy from what she had heard. Meanwhile, it was relatively easier to detect some evidence of noticing idiomacy from Rose's reading materials than from the audio scripts because she left noticeable traces which showed her knowledge operation.

As for grammaticality, during ongoing conversation with English NSs, for which her attentional resources were usually used up to 'decode' what she heard (Skehan, 1998), she was hardly able to notice grammatical modification and adjustment of the chunks used by English NSs. However, she was able to pay attention on how the chunks she knew were grammatically modified and adjusted to meet with the context demands, when she had enough time to use her attentional resources. The analysis on the chunks that Rose noticed in her reading materials is presented in Table 6. She noticed that many of chunks could be broken down into smaller parts and the parts in chunks could be replaced with other words. She also recognized the morphological changes for different verb tenses and noun forms. She indicated that with the explicit knowledge of English chunks it was easy for her to notice combinations and adjustments (grammaticalizing) of lexis that she already knew.

Table 6. Tracing Contribution of Rose's Explicit Knowledge of Chunks and Chunking to Noticing Grammaticality (Throughout May, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types/appearing numbers</th>
<th>Sample items</th>
<th>What Rose did</th>
<th>Grammatical features that Rose noticed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No matter Connecting ideas/18</td>
<td>'how' wrote '상관없어'</td>
<td>'how' can be replaced by 'who, what, if' wanted to make sure its meaning and other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how many sponsors</td>
<td>wrote 'No matter'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois Waller</td>
<td>circled 'how' and wrote 'who, what, if' over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Table 7. Repeated Chunks in Rose's Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chunks that appeared more than four times in R's journals (n = 72)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I'd like to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd like to be healthy and strong (February 2nd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd like to have a graduation day fast (February 15th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd like to be strong like real man (April 1st)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * indicates that every item was underlined by Rose.

3. Proceduralization

According to the strong interface position, explicit and declarative knowledge becomes implicit and procedural knowledge through prolonged and systematic practices (DeKeyser, 1994). Rose's English journal and her mental rehearsal revealed that there was a significant effect of the prolonged and systematic practice on language learning and use. Table 7 shows some examples of chunks that appeared more than four times in Rose's journals over the 6 months.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. | I’d like to go there (April, 27th)  
I’d like to feel foreign countries ’nature (April, 29th)  
I’d like to be a man (June 1st) |
| 2. I (don’t) know what (where how who..) | I don’t know who can I travel with me (Feb 1st)  
I don’t know what I have to do yet (Feb 27th)  
I want to know who he is (March 3rd)  
I know how you feel (May 29th)  
I don’t know what he is thinking now. (June 1st)  
I don’t know where I have to stand (June 25th) |
| 3. be looking forward | I really have been looking for graduation day (Feb 15th)  
I’m looking forward to go to Bali (March 1st)  
I was looking forward to meet God’s face (June 8th)  
I looked forward to having my payday (July 11th) |

While the examples above are the ones she recalled the same chunks over a period, in the journal entry introduced below, she repeated the frame, 'if I were...,' I would V'within one journal entry as below:

**Title:** If I were Z, I would··
I'm really angry because I wanted to pick up the newspaper, but I'm too short to reach my arm to the newspaper. And I got shame. ··· If I were Z, I would pick up any luggage or newspaper! If I were Z, I wouldn't need to jump high to get newspaper and see something interesting. If I were Z, I wouldn't need to go upstairs to appreciate beautiful view on the roof of B's building. If I were Z, I wouldn't need a high hill shoes. But I don't want to be Z. Even though I'm very short, I like my height. My short height makes me more slim. I imagined. If I were very tall or tall enough, people will* recognize me as a little bit fat girl.

(Journal entry, June 25, 2009)

Describing what she felt when she couldn't reach the newspaper on the subway shelf because of her height, Rose used 'If I were ..., I would ...' frame appropriately. At the end, she made a mistake by using 'will' instead of 'would,' which seemed caused by using a different NP 'people'. It indicated that she had not fully mastered the grammar. Nevertheless, it was quite clear that she was practicing the grammar, creating a meaningful context. Unlike
ongoing interaction, which did not allow her to meditate and work on grammatical features, voluntary personal writing enabled her to fully take time to practice what she explicit knew in meaningful ways. In fact, whether the utilization of her explicit L2 chunks knowledge could be seen as the process of proceduralization should be discussed with more evident phenomena.

Rose was also asked to sort out the chunks written in her English notebook into 1) the ones that she could produce easily without conscious effort (SWOE); 2) the ones she could use with conscious effort (SWE); 3) the ones she could not produce by herself but could understand by listening (UBL); 4) the ones that did not seem to exist within her knowledge (NH). The percentage of each category is presented in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Rose's Utilization of English Chunks in her Notebook](image)

SWOE = to be able to speak without conscious effort
SWE = to be able to speak with conscious effort
UBL = to be able to understand by listening
NH = not helpful

The chunks in her notebook were mostly the ones she explicitly learned from the formal instruction or self-study, and thus it was likely that most of them would exist in her explicit memory. As for the chunks in her notebook, she thought she could use almost 50% of them without conscious effort. In addition, she seemed to become able to utilize quite freely some of the learned chunks in her speech or an essay after practicing. Therefore, it
implies that a part of her explicit and declarative knowledge of English chunks and chunking becomes implicit and procedural knowledge.

When Rose noticed what was already in her explicit knowledge and when she meaningfully practiced the chunks in her explicit knowledge over the period, the effects of noticing and those of meaningful practice seemed quite similar to each other. Both are the ways to iteratively recall the chunks from her explicit memory. By being recycled and revisited over and over, some of the chunks in her explicit memory seemed to become more easily recalled, which is regarded as proceduralization. It was not clearly verified in this research if those recalled explicit memories have become implicit or not. However, it was revealed that she quite freely and effortlessly utilized some of the chunks which she had practiced in her speech, implying that her explicit knowledge of English chunks had become implicit. In Figure 2, the researchers in this study suggest a model of how explicit knowledge would become implicit and proceduralized, through iterative recalling caused by noticing or meaningful and prolonged practices.

![Figure 2. Influences of Noticing and Practice on Rose's Explicit and Implicit Knowledge](image)

V. Conclusion

In this study, the participant, Rose was encouraged to be aware of the process of her own English knowledge system. The awareness seemed to encourage her to accumulate the explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking and provided significant data to answer to the research question. Based on the findings, it is suggested the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking is an alternative concept for the explicit knowledge of L2

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It implies that, when an L2 learner speaks or writes in L2, he or she does not assemble individual words according to grammar rules, rather, he or she employs partially or wholly prefabricated L2 chunks with grammatical modification and adjustments. This in turn calls for a paradigm shift on which linguistic features should be learned explicitly and what should be the content of explicit knowledge produced from the explicit learning. In responding to this, this research suggests that the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking can benefit L2 learners more than that of L2 grammar rules. The notion of explicit L2 chunk knowledge is neither excluding nor contrasting to that of explicit L2 grammar rules. It is rather that the former encompasses the latter, yet differently conceiving how grammar rules work for L2 learning and use. Moreover, the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking enables L2 learners to discover the idiomacity. When acknowledging that one needs to acquire both L2 grammar rules and idiom principles, and when realizing that the idiom principles are hard to be learned solely implicitly, the attempt to conceptualizing the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks could be considered significant.

This research also suggests that it is advantageous to have "awareness of the learning itself" and "what is to be learned" (Skehan, 1998). The awareness appears to encourage the participant to accumulate the explicit knowledge of English chunks and chunking, and to actively and independently look for ways to utilize the knowledge for the learning and use of English. That is, the awareness of explicit L2 chunks and chunking knowledge, besides the knowledge itself, plays a role to push forward the interlanguage system. In summary, the explicit knowledge of L2 chunks and chunking seems to operate positively for L2 learning and use. L2 chunks and chunking embrace both grammaticality as well as idiomacity from the input, and become implicit and proceduralized.

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