

**ADVENTURES  
IN LANGUAGE**



# Science Behind Language Learning

Can you learn a language without trying?

## Implicit Learning

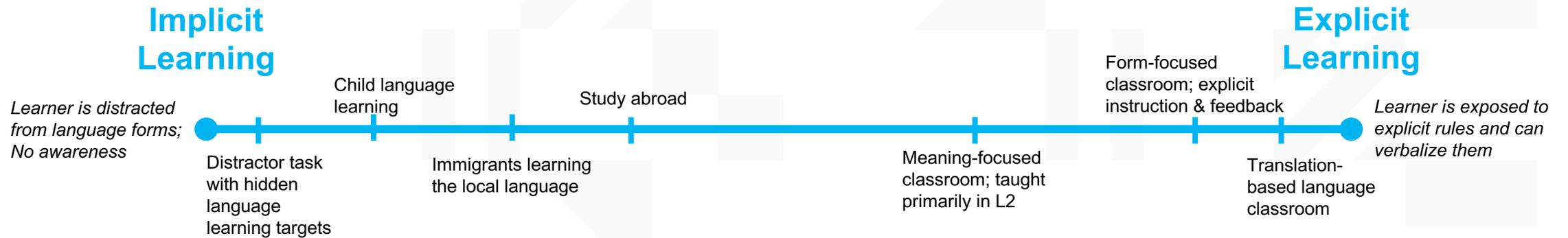
Learning *without* awareness

## Explicit Learning

Learning *with* awareness



# Contexts promoting implicit and explicit learning exist on a continuum\*



*\*Scale is approximate and relative for illustrative purposes; it is not exhaustive*

A baby wearing a white crocheted hat with large owl eyes and colorful braids hanging down. The baby is looking directly at the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Child language learning  
is relatively implicit**

Implicit  
LearningExplicit  
Learning

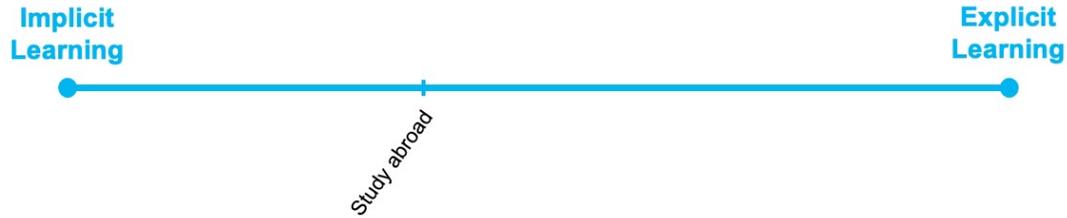
Study abroad

## Alma's learning context

### *Implicit characteristics*

- ✓ Study abroad
- ✓ Incidental learning
- ✓ Focus on meaning





## Alma's learning context

### *Implicit characteristics*

- ✓ Study abroad
- ✓ Incidental learning
- ✓ Focus on meaning

### *Explicit characteristics*

- ✓ Awareness
- ✓ Conscious thought about language



**Learning Context ≠ Learning Process ≠ Knowledge**



## Parker's learning context

### *Explicit characteristics*

- ✓ Classroom context
- ✓ Intentional learning
- ✓ Focus on language forms





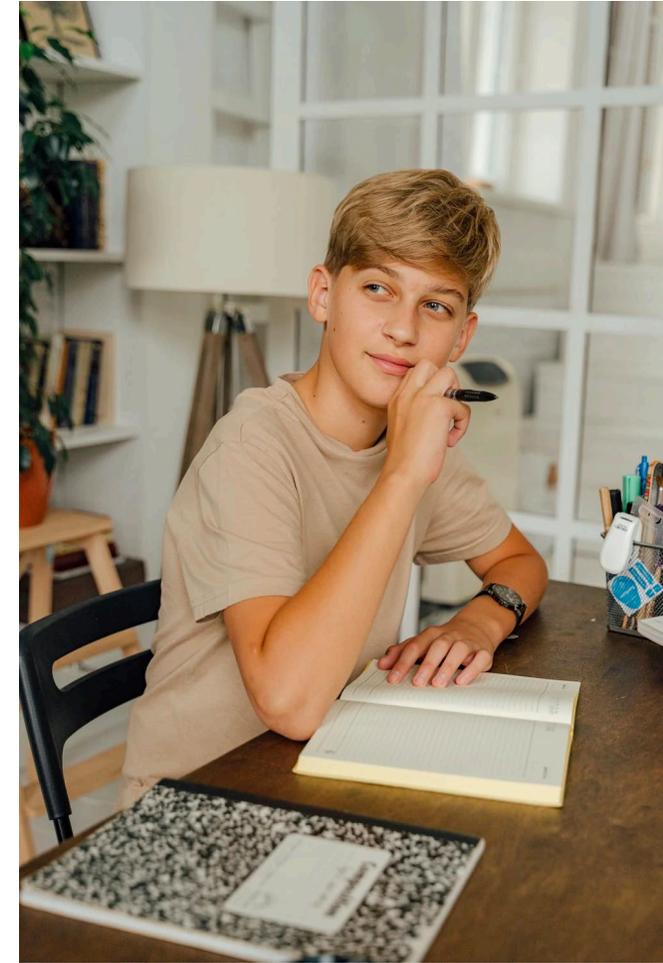
## Parker's learning context

### *Explicit characteristics*

- ✓ Classroom context
- ✓ Intentional learning
- ✓ Focus on language forms

### *Implicit characteristics*

- ✓ Incidental learning of language features that are not the focus of the lesson



*Living*

*Non-living*

**Near**



gi bird



ro sofa

Most participants were not aware of the hidden animacy rule...

but they still learned it!

**Far**



ul bird

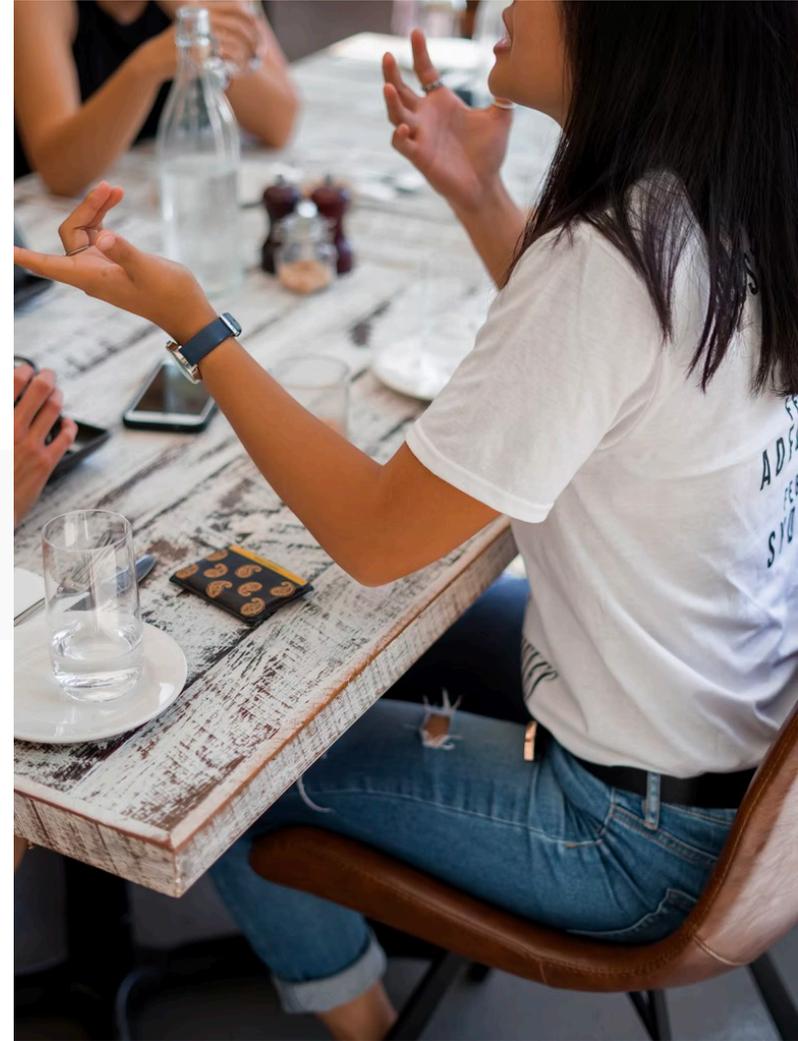


ne sofa

*Williams (2005)  
See Hama & Leow (2012) for another POV*

## Some takeaways

1. Learners can develop both implicit and explicit knowledge about language in most learning conditions
2. People can learn in implicit conditions, even with little to no awareness
3. More explicit conditions generally lead to more explicit knowledge and faster learning



**Implicit learning** → automatic, fluent language use

**Explicit Learning** → more effective, especially in early phases of learning

*(Hulstijn, 2005, 2007; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010)*



**Implicit Condition**  
(no instructions)



**Explicit Condition**  
(grammar instructions)



**End of Training  
(High Proficiency)**



*Native-like brain activity*



*Non-native like brain activity*

**3-6 Months Later  
(High Proficiency)**



*More native-like brain activity*

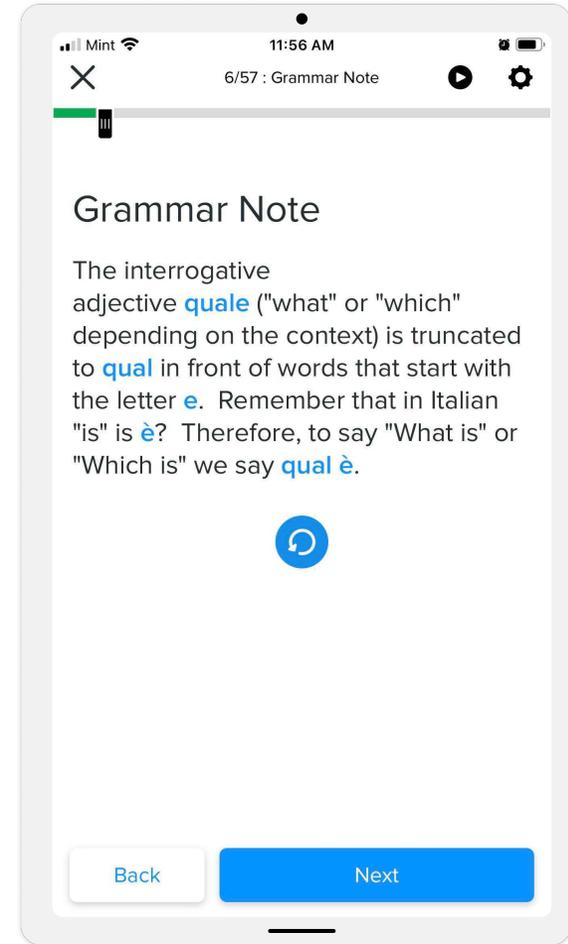
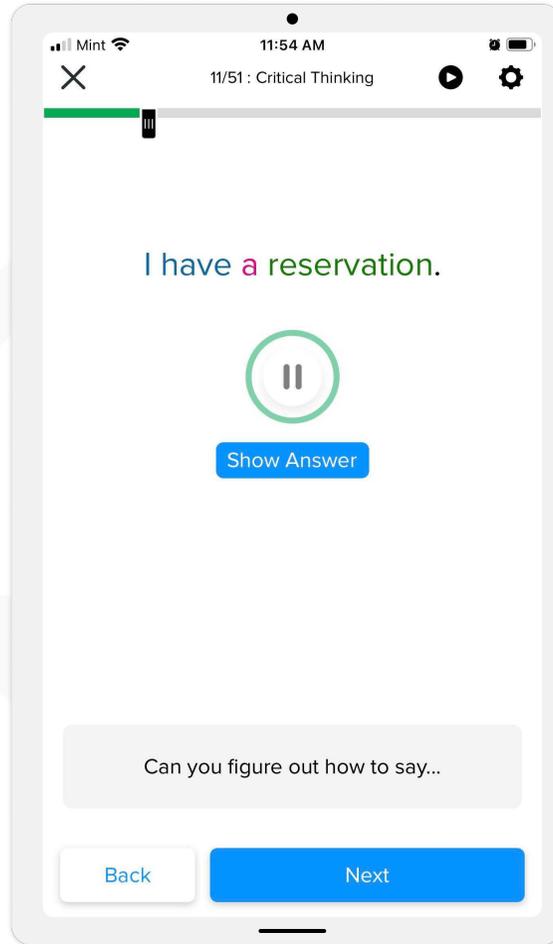
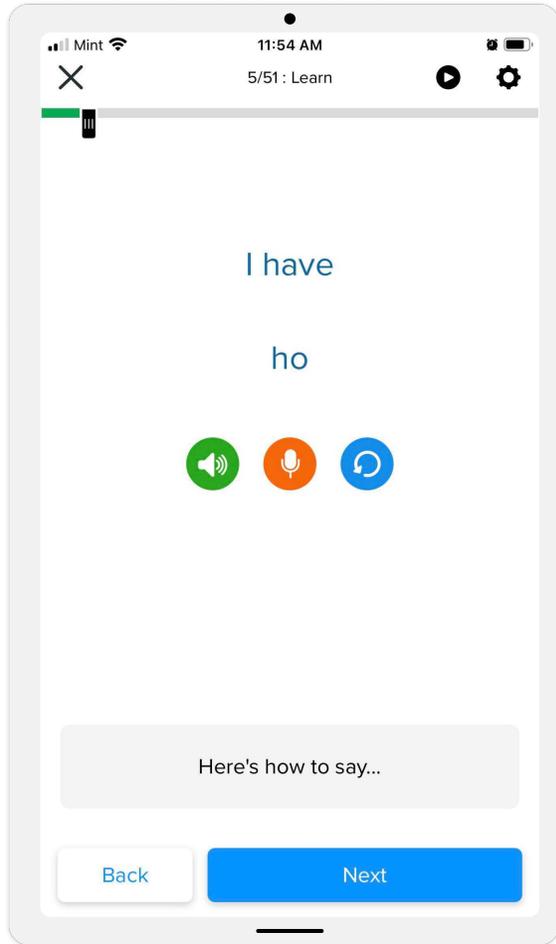


*More native like brain activity*

*(Morgan-Short et al., 2012ab)*

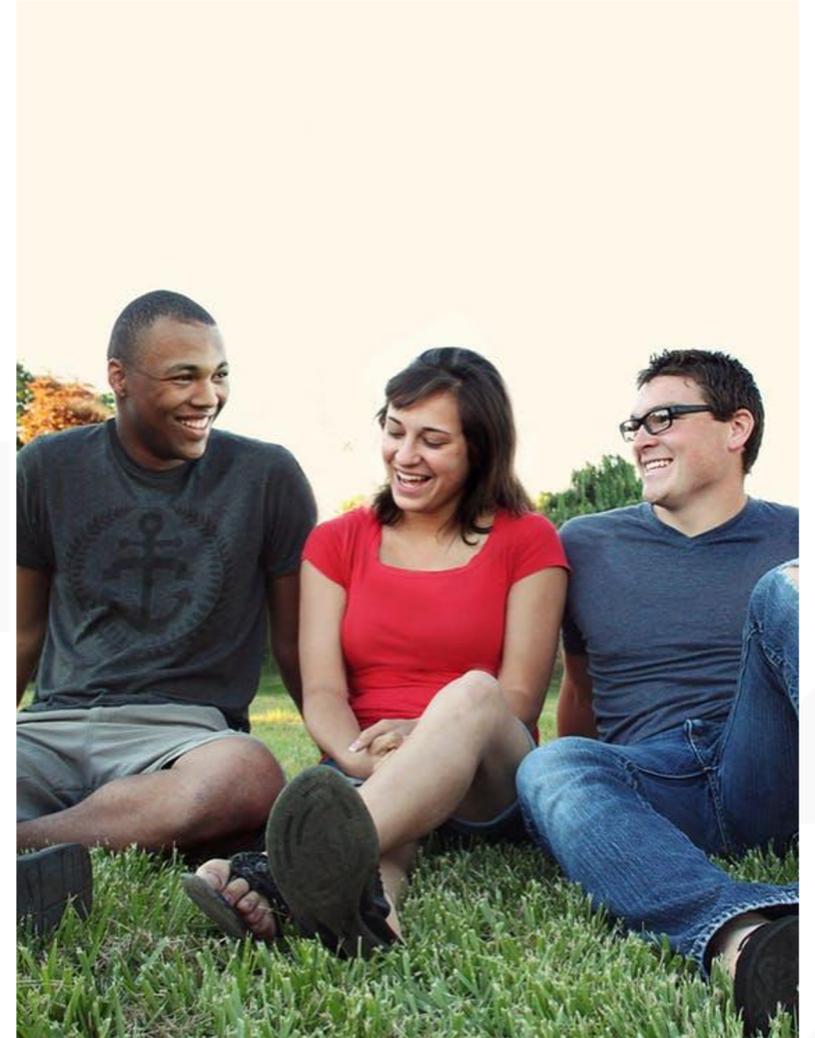
A photograph of two men sitting in a cafe. The man on the left is wearing a checkered shirt and holding a smartphone. The man on the right is wearing a dark t-shirt and jeans, smiling. A laptop is open on a table between them. In the background, there are other people and a chalkboard menu. The text 'Should you prioritize implicit or explicit learning opportunities?' is overlaid in white on the image.

**Should you prioritize  
implicit or explicit learning  
opportunities?**



# Let's Recap!

1. Implicit learning = learning without awareness
2. Explicit learning = learning with awareness
3. Context  $\neq$  Process  $\neq$  Knowledge
4. Implicit and explicit learning strategies can build a balance of effective and intuitive language learning





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