

Exploring EFL Learners' Cognitive Engagement when Enhancing Socio-Pragmatic Competence

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Abstract:

Appropriate language use in social contexts necessitates linguistic knowledge as well as cognitive engagement that allows English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to interpret meaning, infer intentions, and select suitable expressions. However, the correlation between cognitive processes of attention, memory, inference, evaluation, and decision-making, and the improvement of socio-pragmatic competence remains underexplored in EFL classroom. The present research addresses this gap by exploring how students perceive the involvement of cognitive mechanisms in producing context-appropriate language usage. The study employs a quantitative descriptive design using a questionnaire composed of five-item Likert-scale and two open-ended questions, administered to a sample of twenty-two (n=22) EFL Third-year students, at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945-Guelma, Algeria. The adopted procedure involves targeting each item with one key cognitive process, and the compiled data were analyzed through mean scores and interpreted qualitatively. The findings reveal that the students perceive a high level of cognitive engagement in socio-pragmatic performances specifically in attention, inference, and decision-making; nonetheless, evaluation emerged as receiving less impact. Learners described these cognitive processes as interlinked, that is, a mental network connecting perception, memory, reasoning, and reflective selection during interaction in language use setting.

Keywords: Attention; cognitive processes; decision-making; evaluation; inference; memory; socio-pragmatic competence

1- Introduction

Language learning does not reside at a mere memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules; it is principally about learning how to utilize language meaningfully and appropriately in social interaction. Communicative competence comprises recognizing language forms as well as understanding when, why, and how to use them in a given context (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kasper & Röver, 2005). EFL learners' attempts to master sociopragmatic competence, that stands for the ability to adjust linguistic choices to align with the context social norms and roles, is found to be critical to maintain genuine communicative success. Additionally, Thomas (1983) and Leech (1983) pointed out that sociopragmatic competence covers the norms of politeness, situational appropriateness, and indirectness.

Nonetheless, social appropriateness in language use does not occur haphazardly but rather requires internal cognitive mechanism intervention. In a speech act situation, learners consider contextual cues such as tone, setting, and relationship, extract relevant

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past experiences, infer speaker intentions when expressing indirect information, evaluate language constructions, and finally decide among the possible alternatives. Some scholars align cognitive operations with information-processing or socio-cognitive theories of pragmatic development by treating pragmatic competence as interwoven with the mental process (Kasper & Rose, 2002). In similar vein, Taguchi (2011) argued that learners' pragmatic enhancement is a cognitive-mediated process which is dynamic rather than a static accumulation of grammar rules. In a longitudinal research study on Japanese learners, Taguchi (2011) noticed that the improvement in learners' pragmatic competence is not simple formal instruction but, it is non-linear and linked to their contextual interaction, exposure, and attention.

However, in terms of interlanguage pragmatics, the body of literature stresses on output performance such as how learners perform speech acts or instructional effects, while less attention is paid to learners' own views on how their thinking processes contribute to pragmatic development (Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020). In other words, as the role played by cognitive processes in pragmatics has shown to have theoretical connection and some empirical backing, learner's subjective perspective of that role remains underexplored.

Consequently, this lack of understanding limits the improvement of instructional strategies that engage cognitive and pragmatic learning. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining EFL learners' opinions on the involvement of cognitive processes in developing socio-pragmatic competence and aiming to reveal how thinking and reasoning contribute to appropriateness in language use.

In response to the identified research gap, the current study is designed to examine learners' perspectives on the interaction that occurs between cognitive mechanisms and pragmatic understanding in a particular contextual situation. It aims to shed light on the mental properties that support the capacity to use language appropriately in social settings. More precisely, the study seeks to achieve the following purposes:

1. To determine EFL students' perceptions of how cognitive processes contribute to socio-pragmatic competence.
2. To demonstrate which cognitive processes of attention, memory, inference, evaluation, and decision-making students perceive as most relevant in understanding and producing contextually appropriate language.
3. To give insights on pedagogical practices that integrate cognitive awareness into pragmatic instruction.

In an attempt to gain deeper understanding of how EFL students conceptualize the mental processes involved in pragmatic development, the study aims to uncover their perceptions of the correlation between cognitive processing and sociopragmatic performance. In this regard, questions are raised to figure out learners' awareness of cognitive engagement in communicative situations as well as the significance they assign to the targeted cognitive mechanisms. Accordingly, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do EFL learners perceive the involvement of cognitive processes in the development of sociopragmatic competence?
2. Which specific cognitive processes (e.g. attention, memory, inference, evaluation, or decision-making) do learners view as most impactful in their pragmatic judgment and production?
3. What implications might learners perceive to be useful in designing pragmatics instruction which is based on cognitively construction?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Perspectives on Socio-pragmatic Competence

Language learning transcends the mastery of linguistic forms as it comprises the capacity to utilize language appropriately in diverse social settings. In light of this, Canale and Swain (1980) were the pioneers to conceive this property of communicative competence as pragmatic competence, which is part of the communicative competence model that encompasses sociolinguistic, strategic, grammatical, and discourse components. Within this framework, Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) considered socio-pragmatic competence as the knowledge of how social factors influence language use, which involve cultural norms, degree of relations and formality.

It is significant to highlight the distinction between pragma-linguistic competence which stands for the linguistic attainment of pragmatic intent and socio-pragmatic competence that refers to the social perception and utterances contextual appropriateness (Thomas, 1983). For example, choosing between ‘*Could you please open the window?*’ and ‘*Open the window, please*’ relies on grammatical correctness as much as on the speaker’s recognition of politeness norms and social distance. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), socio-pragmatic competence often improves slowly compared to linguistic competence, as it contains integrated cultural knowledge that is not always taught explicitly in EFL classroom.

EFL learners notice, interpret, and internalize pragmatic norms via interaction, that is, pragmatic improvement necessitates combination of both cognitive engagement and input exposure (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Roever, 2009). Therefore, the background of socio-pragmatic competence resides at the crossing level of cognitive processing and social understanding, a viewpoint that motivates the current study.

2.2. Cognitive Processes in Language Learning and Pragmatic Development

Studies in applied linguistics and cognitive psychology stress the fact that language learning is an inherited cognitive process. Anderson (1983) pointed out that the acquired skill comprises shifting from *knowing what*, which is referred to as declarative knowledge, to *knowing how* that stands for procedural knowledge. EFL learners engaging in the cognitive process attempt to process contextual cues, recall prior experiences, make inferences, and evaluate the appropriateness of produced utterances (Taguchi, 2011). Various cognitive mechanisms are connected to socio-pragmatic competence, that are the focus of the study. These are:

- *Attention*: Schmidt (1990) elaborated the Noticing Hypothesis explaining that awareness of language use in context is significant for learning. Hence, pragmatic improvement necessitates learners to notice mismatches between their mother tongue and target language norms.
- *Memory*: Working memory permits students to store contextual and linguistic knowledge simultaneously while processing speech acts. Studies (Taguchi, 2008; Lin, 2014) demonstrate that higher working memory ability can facilitate the development of accurate pragmatic comprehension.
- *Inference*: Connecting what is said to what is meant denotes meaning that includes inferential reasoning (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).
- *Evaluation*: Learners should evaluate the set of expressions to meet social appropriateness; a process that controls linguistic choices (Bialystok, 1993).
- *Decision-making*: decisions on communicative activities are affected by real-time cognitive load and the learner’s judgment of contextual norms (Taguchi, 2011).

Empirical research supports the connectedness of these processes. As Taguchi (2008) reported, learners possessing higher speed in cognitive processing showed capacity in effective interpretation of implicatures. In the same vein, Takahashi (2013) indicated that

metapragmatic instruction presented explicitly ameliorates learners' inferencing abilities and attention resulting in a better socio-pragmatic performance. Nonetheless, various studies emphasize performance outcomes rather than examining learners' perception of the role cognition plays in pragmatic use.

2.3. Learners' Perceptions on Cognitive Engagement in Socio-pragmatic Competence

Understanding the significance of learners' perspectives is crucial as metacognitive awareness affects students' learning strategies and motivation (Flavell, 1979). Additionally, in the field of pragmatics, learners' realization of cognitive involvement can shape the way they notice, interpret, and apply social norms in their performances. According to Malmir and Derakhshan (2020), learners who perceived the cognitive demands of pragmatic tasks, such as interpreting indirect speech acts, demonstrated high-level improvement after explicit instruction. Moreover, their awareness enabled them to effectively assign attention and reflect on social appropriateness.

Correspondingly, through the process of pragmatic learning, learners analyze interactions reflectively, infer meaning, and adapt their answers (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). This aligns with Atkinson (2010) socio-pragmatic theory that views pragmatic development as an interaction between internal (cognitive) processing and external (social) context. Many of these studies evaluate learners' performances via comprehension tests, role-plays, and discourse completion tasks (Roever, 2011; Taguchi, 2008).

Regardless of these insights, empirical research centered on learners' subjective comprehension of the cognitive norms remains limited. Thus, this study responds to that need by exploring how EFL learners perceive the impact of attention, memory, inference, evaluation, and decision-making in their pragmatic development to interpret and produce appropriate language in a given context.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present research applied a quantitative descriptive design to scout about EFL learners' perceptions of the role of cognitive processes in enhancing socio-pragmatic competence. The descriptive approach was selected as it permits to identify patterns of thought which occur naturally among learners and students' attitudes. The study depends on self-reported data that were gathered through a structured questionnaire. It was designed to explore learners' reflective awareness of the five fundamental cognitive processes - attention, memory, inference, evaluation, and decision-making – that are connected to pragmatic language use.

3.2. Participants

The research sample comprised twenty-two (n=22) EFL students enrolled in Third-year possessing an upper-intermediate level in English language, in the Department of English, at University 8 Mai 1945 – Guelma. The participants were chosen using purposive sampling, as they represent students with sufficient language proficiency to report on pragmatic performance. The group involved male and female learners aged between 20 and 25, all of whom had prior experience in language at academic and informal contexts.

3.3. Research Instrument and Data Collection Procedure

The compiled data were achieved by employing a questionnaire of five-item Likert-scale and two open-ended questions developed by the researcher. Each item corresponds to one of the targeted cognitive processes and measures the learners' degree of agreement with statements relating these processes to socio-pragmatic comprehension and production. The scale is ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was administered during a regular class session with prior consent from participants. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and assured students of confidentiality and

voluntary participation. Each participant completed the questionnaire independently within 10 minutes maximum. The responses were then coded and tabulated for analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The gathered quantitative data were examined using descriptive statistics that involve the mean scores (average) and standard deviations (how much variation or spread there is in a set of data values) for each cognitive process. The analysis aimed to figure out which processes learners recognized as having more influence in their pragmatic awareness and decision-making. Moreover, qualitative interpretation of open-ended questions was used to highlight learners' reasoning patterns and contextualize the numerical results. Afterwards, findings were visualized through a conceptual circular model portraying the interlinked role of these cognitive processes in building the socio-pragmatic competence. The scoring guide entails that each response is scored from 1 to 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) with a total score range of 5 to 25, additionally, the mean score is calculated per respondent (sum of 5 items ÷ 5). Table 1 provides details on data interpretation in relation to score range:

Score Range	Level of Cognitive Involvement	Interpretation
21–25	High Cognitive Involvement	The student perceives strongly socio-pragmatic competence as requiring active cognitive processing (attention, memory, reasoning, decision-making). This indicates deep awareness of cognitive–pragmatic interaction.
16–20	Moderate Cognitive Involvement	The learner recognizes some cognitive engagement in pragmatic understanding, but may not always apply consciously these processes. This suggests developing metacognitive awareness.
11–15	Low Cognitive Involvement	The learner may rely mainly on linguistic knowledge (grammar/vocabulary) rather than cognitive strategies for socio-pragmatic decisions. This may show limited reflection on pragmatic thinking.
5–10	Minimal Cognitive Awareness	The learner demonstrates little recognition of the mental processes involved in comprehending and using pragmatically appropriate language. Could signal need for explicit cognitive-pragmatic instruction.

Table (1). Interpretation of Scores

4. Findings

To explore how learners perceive the role of cognitive engagement in developing socio-pragmatic competence, EFL students answered a questionnaire in order to collect, analyze, and provide quantitative-qualitative data interpretation.

4.1. Section one

Table 1 represents the main concepts used to analyze the correlation between cognitive processes and the improvement of socio-pragmatic competence among EFL learners. It contains five statements in which each corresponds to a specific cognitive dimension – attention, memory, inference, evaluation, and decision-making – that are identified as fundamental to pragmatic comprehension and language use. In this section, the learners were asked to rate given statements according to how much they agree with it, allowing quantification of learners' self-reported perceptions. This question structure addresses the research problem that highlights the limited evidence on how EFL learners themselves perceive the mental mechanisms underlying their pragmatic performance. By stimulating learners' judgments on how they react to contextual cues, recall prior interactions, infer implied meanings, evaluate choices, and decide consciously on appropriate expressions, the table operationalizes the abstract concepts of pragmatics and cognition into measurable variables. Therefore, essential data needed to answer the research main questions concerning extent and nature of cognitive involvement in developing socio-pragmatic competence are provided.

Scale

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Paying close <i>attention</i> to tone, expressions, and context helps me comprehend the speaker's intended meanings in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	My <i>memory</i> of former interactions enables me to decide how to respond appropriately in diverse social situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I utilize <i>inference</i> and reasoning to interpret indirect or polite expressions in English conversations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	When I communicate in English, I mentally evaluate and choose expressions that sound polite and relevant for the context.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Using English appropriately in different social contexts requires conscious thinking and decision-making not just knowing vocabulary or grammar.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The findings (Table 2) demonstrate that EFL learners perceive the five cognitive dimensions as significant in the amelioration of socio-pragmatic competence although varying degrees of impact were observed. The highest mean score ($M = 4.3$) was found in '*attention to contextual cues*', assuming that EFL learners place strong focus on comprehending contextual and paralinguistic knowledge when interpreting meaning in communication. In this regard, Taguchi (2019) highlighted that attention is a key factor in pragmatic understanding as it permits learners to notice pertinent social signals. In terms of conscious reflection in pragmatic use ($M = 4.2$) and inference and reasoning ($M = 4.1$), high scores were noticed. This implies that students are engaged cognitively in examining language use and implicit meanings, that is, skills that promote adaptability and pragmatic awareness (Kasper & Rose, 2002). On the contrary, memory of prior interactions ($M = 3.9$) and evaluation and decision-making ($M = 3.8$) scored lower, reflecting that learners value

these cognitive processes but, they may find them less accessible instantly during contextual interaction in real-time.

Item	Cognitive Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Attention to contextual cues	4.3	0.6	High awareness – learners consistently reported noticing situational and social cues when choosing expressions.
2	Memory of prior interactions	3.9	0.7	Moderate-high – students moderately relied on recalling similar situations and language forms.
3	Inference and reasoning	4.1	0.5	High involvement – learners actively reasoned about others' intentions and implied meanings.
4	Evaluation and decision-making	3.8	0.8	Moderate-high – while engaged, learners showed some variation in how confidently they evaluated appropriateness.
5	Conscious reflection in pragmatic use	4.2	0.6	High awareness – participants expressed reflective thinking when monitoring or adjusting pragmatic behavior.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Perceptions Regarding Cognitive Processes in Developing Sociopragmatic Competence

All in all, the synthesis suggests that EFL learners consider socio-pragmatic competence as an active, reflective, and inferential process while attention and reasoning trigger appropriate language use. The retrieved findings support the need for pedagogical approaches that engage learners' cognitive processes explicitly in order to enable them integrate attention, inference, and reflection in communicative practices.

4.2. Section Two

The research adopted two thematic questions in which the first one reports on the interaction between the cognitive processing and socio-pragmatic awareness, while the second covers the role of cognitive reflection in socio-pragmatic decision-making.

Question 1. To what extent do your thinking skills (such as attention, reasoning, and memory) assist you in understanding how to use language appropriately in different social situations?

Students answers to this item are summarized as follows:

- "I usually pay attention to tone and expression which helps me to know what the speaker means"
- "I rely a lot on past conversations and I try to remember what people said in similar situations"
- "I think my reasoning allows me to guess what people mean even when they are indirect"
- "Sometimes I don't remember effectively, so I'm not always sure how to respond politely"
- "I always try to be attentive toward what the speaker says as it helps me to focus on important information"

The gathered responses reveal that many EFL students perceive the cognitive processes of attention, memory, and reasoning as affecting directly their capacity in interpreting social and pragmatic cues in communicative settings. In this respect, learners who reported 'often' or 'always' depend on these processes which demonstrates a strong awareness of grasping context, inferring intentions, and remembering past interactions in enhancing their socio-pragmatic competence. Additionally, the students' feedback suggests

that socio-pragmatic performance is not an automatic process but rather supported by active cognitive engagement. Therefore, learners mobilizing cognitive resources have the tendency of expressing social meanings, politeness strategies, and implicit intentions more effectively.

Question 2. How often do you consciously reflect on context, tone, and social cues prior selecting the more convenient words or expressions when communicating with others?

Several answers were collected, and the most frequent ones are provided as follows:

- "I often think whether or not my expressions are polite before I say it".
- "Sometimes I don't recognize the tone I am using until after I speak".
- "I always check the setting where I am speaking as there's a difference with teachers vs strangers".
- "I rarely think deeply before I speak and I quickly respond, and I hope it fits the situation".
- "I adjust my language consciously when I realize I may be offending others, I want to avoid sounding rude".

Feedback on this item shows that EFL students encounter cognitive challenges related to limited attention, weak memory retrieval, and difficulties in inference which usually hinder socio-pragmatic performance and results in communication breakdown. In light of this, learners who expressed that these difficulties 'sometimes' or 'often' influence their comprehension of social cues indicate that disruption in cognition can lead to misinterpretation of context, intention, tone, and politeness. Consequently, this demonstrates the strong connection between cognitive restrictions and pragmatic challenges as the students struggle to recall previous interactions and process contextual signals leading to inaccurate socio-pragmatic judgments. Therefore, ameliorating cognitive processes as contextual reasoning and working memory can decrease pragmatic miscomprehension; this calls for strategies supporting cognitive improvement and pragmatic awareness.

5. Discussion

The present section brings together the findings obtained from the Likert-scale items and the open-ended questions in order to interpret how cognitive processes engage EFL students' to construct socio-pragmatic competence. On the one hand, the Likert-scale questions offered quantitative insights on learners' levels of attention, memory, inference, evaluation, and conscious reflection during socio-communicative situations. On the other hand, the open-ended questions gathered qualitative information on how students perceive the role of these cognitive processes in formulating and building their capacity to answer conveniently in diverse social settings. Banding together these two data sets aims to explicate the extent to which cognitive skills prop socio-pragmatic awareness and language use, in addition to relating these patterns to the study main objectives, particularly recognizing the internal mechanisms that impact pragmatic decision-making in EFL learners.

Attention is considered the starting point of pragmatic comprehension, a fact that is believed by EFL students, that effective communication begins with observing subtle social cues including politeness markers, intonation, and gestures. This conforms with Schmidt's *Noticing Hypothesis* (1990), which claims that attention to pragmatic input is the primary step toward acquisition. Interpretively, learners realize attention as the *inlet* to pragmatic understanding, in which without concentrated attention they risk missing social variations and implicit meanings. Thus, students are aware of attentional control as an ability that necessitates to be consciously improved in authentic communication settings.

According to the extracted data, learners view memory as a connector between experience and application, that is, correlating between past interactions and current communication. Students tend to recall previous conversations knowledge in order to

adjust pragmatic selections; this information retrieval enables them to internalize social norms and adopt them dynamically in new situations. Therefore, memory can be described as a *bridge* that transmits socio-pragmatic knowledge from long-term storage to real-time use. EFL students find memory a predominant ability to maintain consistency in politeness, register, and context-appropriate behavior in which stronger pragmatic memory retrieval states greater confidence and fluency.

Findings on inference demonstrate learners' emphasis on this process as it assists them to interpret ambiguous and indirect expressions, for instance, '*it's hot in here*' sounds as a request to open the window. In light of this, students realize that pragmatic meaning goes beyond literal meaning and serves as an analytical connector that reshapes language input into social understanding. The ability of reasoning reflects higher order cognitive engagement in which the linguistic form is connected with the targeted meaning, indicating that meaning is built through mental interpretation, not just received from words.

Regarding evaluation, the reflective filter, it is considered the phase where learners assess mentally their language choices appropriateness. However, some students find it a demanding process as it requires making a balance between linguistic accuracy and social sensitivity. Moreover, evaluation comprises metacognitive monitoring where students can judge their output before or prior speaking, and this is what makes it a reflective connector. Learners who rated evaluation lower may need instructive awareness activities to boost their reflective ability.

Decision-making is seen as the culmination of cognitive connection that represents the final cognitive act, that is, the selection of the most appropriate form of language. For example, learners choose among alternatives as '*could you*' or '*can you*', by recognizing this as a mental process of balancing and integrating the previous stages:

Attention → memory → inference → evaluation → decision

Consequently, decision-making brings together the cognitive processes into action which makes it the *executive connector*. This competence shows the result of cognitive engagement constructing responses that are appropriate linguistically and socially; a step that necessitates pragmatic sensitivity and quick thinking.

Overall, learners' answers demonstrate that they recognize socio-pragmatic competence as a joined cognitive process rather than a mere linguistic skill; a mental sequence that relates understanding, remembering, reasoning, evaluating, and deciding in a socio-communicative setting. Moreover, EFL students consider these processes as interactive instead of being applied in isolation underpinning convenient language use. Learners agree that these cognitive processes are fundamental for pragmatic growth to achieve successful communication as it is required not only to know what to say but also how to think about what to say; formulating socio-pragmatic learning as thinking-in-action.

To sum up, learners' perspectives reveal that the elaborated cognitive processes do not operate independently but rather function as a continuous cycle, where each stage feeds the next step. The connective network of cognitive processes assigns each competence to a given socio-pragmatic ability:

- *Attention*: permits learners to observe pragmatic input.
- *Memory*: saves and extracts contextual examples.
- *Inference*: interprets meaning depending on the situation.
- *Evaluation*: adjusts the suitability of answers.
- *Decision-making*: enacts the choice that reflects social appropriateness.

The present cycle illustrates students' implicit understanding of socio-pragmatic capacity as a *cognitive dynamic process* that involves ongoing adaptation and reflection (Figure 1).

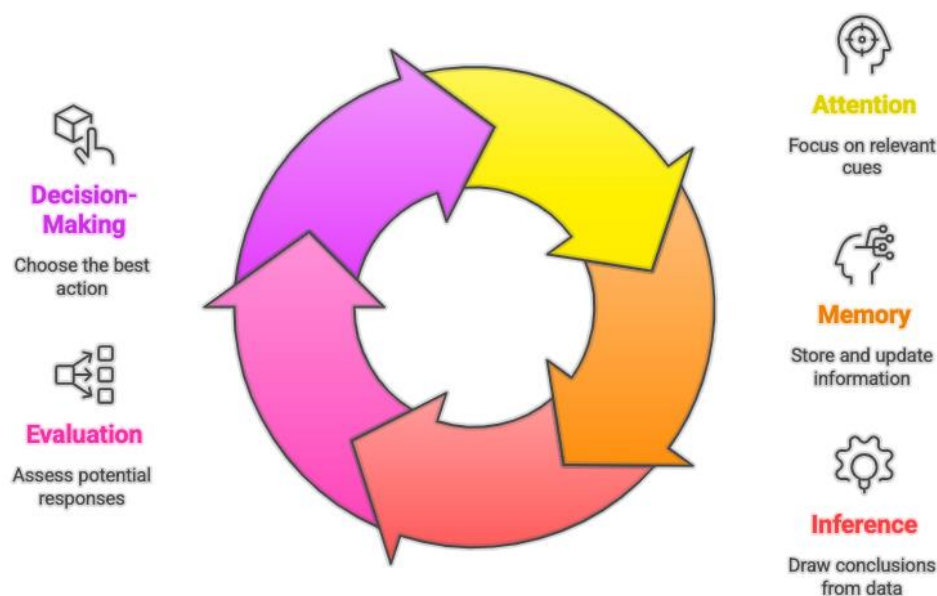


Figure (1). Iterative Socio-pragmatic Process of EFL Students

Note. Created by the author using Napkin.ai (2025) for visualization

6. Implications of the Study

The results suggest a strong link between socio-pragmatic ability and cognitive processes that learners acknowledge as pragmatic appropriateness rather than an instantly learnt linguistic competence. This implies the occurrence of cognitive-mediated activity containing attention, inference, and reflective judgment, respectively. This aligns with the cognitive-pragmatic frameworks (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2011) that correlate pragmatic production and comprehension to processing ability, working memory, and inferencing capacity in a contextual situation.

Consequently, guided instruction pursuing to improve socio-pragmatic skill should integrate cognitive strategy training to EFL learners (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Grice's, 1975; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Schmidt, 1990, 2001; Taguchi, 2007).

Cognitive Process	Activities
<i>Attention:</i> paying attention to contextual cues such as tone, verbal signals, setting, and expressions is predominant in interpreting pragmatic meaning, which is confirmed by Schmidt in Noticing Hypothesis.	- Noticing exercises utilizing short dialogues to highlight politeness markers - Matching utterances to appropriate contexts - Discourse shadowing to raise awareness of tone and prosody - Cue identification worksheets focusing on situational variables.
<i>Memory:</i> Storing and retrieving pragmatic knowledge, such as apology formulas and request pattern, in which the pragmatic improvement depends on recalling prior interactional experiences.	- Pragmatic drills for frequent expressions - Reconstructing dialogues based on memory function - Interaction journals that track past pragmatic successful experiences - Repetitive role-plays to strengthen memory retrieval
<i>Inference:</i> learners' capacity to infer unspoken intentions of a given situation can reinforce pragmatic comprehension	- Implicit meaning interpretation tasks - Ambiguity resolution activities necessitating pragmatic reasoning

	- Think-aloud reasoning tasks to make inferencing explicit
<i>Evaluation:</i> assessing the response in terms of politeness, appropriateness, and social acceptance as pragmatic selection relies on evaluating imposition, distance, and power.	- Ranking responses from most to least polite - Peer-evaluation using pragmatic appropriateness scales - Context-fit justification tasks - Politeness detection tasks identifying over-direct or over-formal responses
<i>Decision-Making:</i> choosing the convenient expression demonstrates the interaction that takes place between attentional control in pragmatic ability and decision-making.	- Real-time scenario-based role-plays requiring immediate responses - Multiple-choice pragmatic decisions with justification - Negotiated meaning tasks where learners must refine their expressions - Timed response activities simulating natural interaction

Table (3). Recommendations on Training Socio-pragmatic Skill via Cognitive Strategy

Conclusion

The present study explored the correlation between the cognitive processes and the improvement of socio-pragmatic competence among EFL students, demonstrating that they heavily recognize cognition as an integral part to use language appropriately in social environments. The extracted data indicated that attention, inference, and conscious reflection were acknowledged as the most impactful processes, compared to memory and evaluation and decision-making, although were considered significant but slightly less prominent. Therefore, the results highlight that socio-pragmatic competence is not an automatic ability but a demanding capacity that relies cognitively on active mental engagement. From a pedagogical point of view, the study sheds lights on the need to employ cognitive strategy training into pragmatics instruction in order to promote students' reasoning, awareness, and reflective abilities. Regardless of the small sample size, the study offers meaningful perspectives on how learners comprehend the cognitive background of socio-pragmatic competence and provides a basis for future research in this area.

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Appendix Students' Questionnaire Cognitive Processes Involvement in Socio-pragmatic Competence

Dear respondents,

You are kindly invited to take part in this study questionnaire which seeks to scrutinize EFL students' views of the role of cognitive processes in the amelioration of socio-pragmatic competence in contextual situations. Your participation is highly voluntary and the responses will be treated with great confidentiality and care, and used only for research purposes. Your honest contribution is extremely valued and will tremendously boost this research. Thank you for your collaboration.

a. Section One

Instructions

Please rate how much you agree with each statement.
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree / 2 = Disagree / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Agree / 5 = Strongly Agree

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Paying close <i>attention</i> to tone, expressions, and context helps me comprehend the speaker's intended meanings in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	My <i>memory</i> of former interactions enables me to decide how to respond appropriately in diverse social situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I utilize <i>inference</i> and reasoning to interpret indirect or polite expressions in English conversations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	When I communicate in English, I mentally evaluate and choose expressions that sound polite and relevant for the context.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Using English appropriately in different social contexts requires conscious thinking and decision-making not just knowing vocabulary or grammar.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Section Two

Question 1. To what extent do your thinking skills (such as attention, reasoning, and memory) assist you in understanding how to use language appropriately in different social situations?

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Question 2. How often do you consciously reflect on context, tone, and social cues prior selecting the more convenient words or expressions when communicating with others?

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