

# UNDERSTANDING OVERREGULARIZATION PHENOMENON AMONG INDONESIAN CHILD L2 LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** Young learners are known to extend verb regularity further than it actually is. When it happens, this children's overregularization phenomenon can be a result of several reasons: a failed linguistic development due to confusion between rules and memory, a lack of feedback from adults, and problems with cognitive development. The present study attempts to present some quantitative data that may relate to the overregularization issue and bring new findings to the existing debate in the area. The 12-month spontaneous spoken data were collected longitudinally from two Indonesian young learners of L2 English living in England. Utterances containing the use of regular verbs and plural -s were carefully compiled into a database and further classified according to the different types of regularities. From this data, a few overregularization instances were recorded from the research subjects who were between two and 10 years of age. Additionally, it was also apparent that the process of learning English consecutively or successively affected the way learners apply regular rules in obligatory spoken contexts. This study is expected to become a systematic analysis of the typologies of overregularization in Indonesian–English acquisition contexts, a particular nature of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) issue that has rarely been investigated.

**Keywords:** child learners, grammar, overregularization

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In learning a language, children are initially accustomed to imitating speech they hear from the surrounding environment (Spada & Lightbown, 2019). However, learning a language is not just a matter of imitating the rules to which children are exposed daily. From this, it is not fair to say that learning has taken place just by looking at the children's language production evidence. One way to tell that a child has learned a specific rule is by witnessing the application of such a rule to a wide range of examples (Gough, Juel & Griffith, 2017). For instance, children who learn and acquire English are expected to be able to apply an *-ed* form to different examples at the age of three (Paradis, et al., 2011). Therefore, young learners of English should be able to verbalize verbs like *looked* and *studied* at this stage even though persistent errors are regularly found among L2 learners of English who come from L1 with distinct morphological features. This is

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particularly true as studies prove that L2 learners are known to produce variable use of verb inflections in their language production (Mahmud & Slabakova, 2020).

It is well-known that language learners tend to produce frequent errors in the process of acquiring a new language (Hopp, 2013). These errors occur for different reasons and are subject to multiple interpretations among different scholars. Specific to morphological productivity, young learners are known to extend verb regularity further than it actually is. According to Fleischhauer (2013), it is a very common tendency when young learners generalize standard grammatical rules to apply to words that are supposed to be part of those with non-regular inflections (i.e. pluralizing *goose* to *gooses*). This phenomenon is commonly known as *overregularization*, a condition when language learners generalize or extend the use of regular grammatical forms in irregular tenses or forms (Ambridge, et al., 2013).

In learning a language, one of the most common problems faced by learners is when it comes to generalizing the rules learners are exposed to (Chomsky, 1959). In doing so, children must be able to acquire the rules or abstract regularities of the language they learn and either apply them in communication or understand these rules within incoming thoughts or ideas (Figueroa, 2018). Debates in the language acquisition literature provide different evidence that children imitate language rules from their surroundings for different reasons. Such linguistic creativity employed by children is known to have to do with their innate capability to solve linguistic problems they face in their attempts to communicate (Goodman & Goodman, 2013).

Despite extensive work on presenting quantitative and qualitative findings related to the commonly overregularized English morphemes (i.e., past tense, plural form), a very small number of works have attempted to explain such a phenomenon by presenting longitudinal data from young learners with unique language acquisition path as in the present study. The two subjects of this study are unique in a way that one is acquiring English simultaneously (L1 and L2 develop at the same time), while the other is doing it successively (L1 system is already settled at the time L2 acquisition begins). As data from such a study have rarely been documented, especially with specific coverage of young Indonesian learners of L2 English, doing a study in this area ventures an insightful contribution to the area of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia. As previous studies have indicated that several factors (mainly phonological and lexical) might contribute to reasons why children overregularize, it is necessary to know if the data from young learners of different age who acquires English successively and simultaneously would necessarily suggest similar findings (Figueroa, 2018). The findings of such a work would provide important data to English teachers and researchers, both in Indonesia and globally, especially in suggesting a better way to introduce morphological properties that are commonly known to be subjects of overregularization by language learners.

To the best of our knowledge, there has been very limited literature covering overregularization by Indonesian learners of L2 English. Even if there are any, these studies have looked at skills other than speaking where spontaneous language use is usually recorded. A recent study by Abidah et al. (2023), for instance, has looked at the development of English grammatical learning by young learners in Indonesia. Corpus data from multiple short essays indicated that grammatical errors have been recorded in the production of grammatical tense markings, person, features, and negation. Although they prove to be beneficial for educators and language acquisition researchers, the findings of this study only covered data from young

learners' writing samples, which may not reflect how errors are produced in a spontaneous speaking environment.

In a study focusing on grammatical errors produced by English learners in a spoken context, Rahayu (2016) presented interesting empirical data and findings in this regard. Her study indicated that 5.1% of spoken language errors produced by the research participants are considered over-generalization errors or ignorance of rule restriction. By this definition, Rahayu refers to specific errors such as the use of the auxiliary *have* in place of *has* as the learner's default option of applying overregularization, or the use of copula *'is'* in place of any other *'be'* verb regardless of the subject. This finding proves that overregularization is still a common issue among Indonesian adult learners of English.

As mentioned earlier, the two studies above are among very few works that have specifically looked at the overregularization phenomenon among Indonesian learners of L2 English. Unfortunately, none of these studies have specifically investigated the overregularization issue among child learners of L2 English and within the spoken language context. Our present work has collected extensive and relevant data within this scope of research. In this article, we attempt to discuss a detailed overview of overregularization in this context and provide relevant empirical data to support the claim that Indonesian learners of L2 English tend to overregularize the use of some English grammatical formulas in irregular contexts. The main objective of this work is to present a further literature review of the overregularization phenomenon among Indonesian child L2 learners of English. Further, empirical evidence on how young learners of English extend the use of some regular English inflections to irregular contexts will be presented.

In the following section of this paper, we will proceed with a brief overview of overregularization in general, which be accompanied by a discussion of where this phenomenon sits within the area of language acquisition research. Subsequently, we briefly provide findings from past works addressing overregularization issues by language learners in relevant contexts to the present research. This would highlight and support the claim that, in the process of acquiring a new language, young learners frequently overuse some regular inflections in contexts where they are not necessary. Following this, we proceed with discussing our study, a brief introduction to the procedures used, the main findings, and the discussion. The final part of this article is dedicated to answering the question of why and how Indonesian young learners of L2 English spontaneously overregularize, if any, in their oral English production.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to generative linguistic theory, certain principles underlying language structure are innately given (White, 2012). This is what governs how we acquire a language although the target language is different from our mother tongue. In the case of children, for instance, the process of learning a language begins as early as after birth through different stages. The general concept around this process includes stages like babbling, the one-word stage, the two-word stage, and the multi-word stage. It is at the multi-word stage, which mostly occurs around the age of 24-30 months, that the learning process becomes more complex and unique. At this stage,

which is also known to be an earlier stage of a critical period in language learning, a language learner begins to say longer sentences although its grammar is not necessarily accurate.

In most cases, language learners acquire a new language by imitating what they hear from their surroundings, while in other cases they learn a language in formal classrooms (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017). Throughout this process, which normally occurs around the age of 3, children start building a set of internal grammar rules and apply them to the language they are acquiring (Figueroa & Gerken, 2019). This could be the result of multiple exposure to the target language, formal learning, or a combination of both. Often, children who are at this stage tend to acquire irregular past verbs before they begin to produce the regular ones (Abidah et al., 2023). This is commonly termed as overregularization.

In the area of language acquisition studies and linguistics, *overregularization*, also termed *overgeneralization*, is known as the application of a grammatical rule in cases where it does not apply, especially by young learners (Meisel, 2003; Yang, 2016). In the present article, only the term *overregularization* will be used so as not to confuse our further discussion of the topic. The idea of overregularization is commonly seen in inflectional morphemes, such as when regularizing the past tense marker, and in the use of irregular nouns (for instance, the occurrence of *breaked* until the learner realizes that the correct version must be *broke*) (Figueroa & Gerken (2019).

The issue of overregularization has been well-debated in the past decades, especially covering the lengthy development of language acquisition research (Clahsen et al., 2002). Recent studies in this context have covered the acquisition of English by children of first language other than Indonesian. The study by Repetti-Ludlow and MacKenzie (2022), for instance, suggested that different processing requirements were used in learners' language acquisition attempts. In particular, they found that children seemed to confuse themselves with the use of plural among plural nouns ending in voiceless fricative such as *leaves*, *houses*, and *paths*. Furthermore, Figueroa's (2018) findings interestingly suggest that overregularization seems to be the way chosen by children to simplify their utterances in an effort to produce more sentences with better quality.

Children are known to overregularize this rule to form words like *caughted* instead of *caught*. As foreign language learners, in our attempt to learn a new language, or observe someone else's L2 production, for instance, most of us have probably heard a child say a word that we would perhaps not attempt to say as an adult. For example, young learners acquiring English may be heard to routinely produce nouns like *writed* or nouns like *foots*, which is the results of them relying on the dominant regular pattern in the language (Yang, 2016). Although we know that children frequently imitate adults' speech and their surroundings, according to Nordquist (2020), such inaccurate use of regular English rules is the result of their attempt to figure out how these grammatical rules work. Consequently, they deliberately modify the natural use of regular tenses and plural forms to accommodate some exceptions that exist in English grammar (i.e. irregular verbs and plurals). According to Baker Martinez and Shin (2023), later in life, as exposure to the target language increases, assuring grammatical development and lexical frequency, learners' ability to apply grammatical regularities will also develop. They also suggested that overregularization occurred more frequently among younger children with lower morphosyntactic scores and with lower frequency participles.

In general, overregularization occurs in many different forms. Morphologically, this phenomenon affects the production of several grammatical morphemes that are often inflected in their uses, for example, irregular past tense and plural -s. Since decades ago, different studies have indicated this issue, particularly those that investigate the acquisition of English by learners of different L1. The study by Marcus (1995), for instance, has quantitatively looked at noun overregularization by young learners. In his study, Marcus observed the noun plural *overregularization* phenomenon among English-speaking young children by analyzing corpus data from CHILDES database. Findings indicated that the occurrences of overregularization in nouns are relatively similar to those of irregular verbs. It was also suggested that similar to adults, children apply tense marking mostly from memory. In many cases, their memory is unable to successfully retrieve the rules that need to be applied, therefore resulting in *overregularization*. For this reason, it has been postulated that both types of overregularization are due to similar basic progressions in learners' language acquisition trajectories. According to Permana and Laksman-Huntley (2020), such a 'blocking mechanism' in learning prevents the application of regular rules when the required form is irregular. This is confirmed in a study conducted by Ramscar et al. (2013) where the child research subjects tend to extend the use of regular nouns to the irregular ones (i.e., *mouses* instead of mice).

In response to Marcus' proposal mentioned earlier, Marchman et al. (1997) suggested different findings from a different study reviewing longitudinal data collected from parents of children who were involved in the research. Their findings indicated that children between the ages of 1 year and 5 months to 2 years and 6 months were found with likeliness to produce overregularization in nouns than in verbs. In terms of children's familiarity with irregular nouns and verbs, their findings suggested that the former is more familiar than the latter. The study strengthens another previous study proposing that learners' familiarity with irregular nouns seems to reduce the possibility of overregularization occurrences (Plunkett & Marchman, 1993).

In many cases, the occurrence of *overregularization* is due to limited feedback from the learners' environment, which in general plays an important role in promoting the language acquisition process. In practice, however, many language learners are known to avoid making mistakes (perhaps due to limited understanding of the grammatical rules), resulting in consequently less production in a target language (Permana & Laksman-Huntley, 2020). As a consequence, they will miss an important opportunity to receive feedback from their teacher or other people around them.

Apart from the aforementioned studies, many have also doubted cross-linguistic transfer in tense morphology acquisition. Our further search has led us to a study by Lu (2016) who investigated the role of cross-linguistic influence in the acquisition of verb morphology. The study, which involved bilinguals and monolinguals from a rich inflectional morphology language (Spanish) and a language with less grammatical morphology (Mandarin), aimed to investigate the two bilingual groups' grammatical morphology. Findings approved that children who come from weak grammatical morphology language (i.e. Mandarin – English bilinguals) tend to suffer problems in producing English past tense when compared to the other groups (English monolinguals and Spanish-English bilinguals). In contrast to what Marchman et al. (1997) pointed out earlier, Lu suggested that familiarity with grammatical patterns does not seem to guarantee better language production. In this study, the English monolinguals and the

Spanish-English bilinguals were found to produce more overregularized past tense markers than the Mandarin-English bilinguals, suggesting cross-linguistic transfer. These are not in line with the recent findings in a study investigating the acquisition of simple and compound past tense by English monolinguals and English-Spanish simultaneous bilinguals (Lee Halstead, 2022). It was then argued that overregularization was only found among English monolinguals, and not in the English-Spanish bilinguals. This led to the conclusion that no crosslinguistic influence was found among bilinguals.

## **METHOD**

The present work attempted to collect empirical findings on the occurrence of the overregularization phenomenon among Indonesian child L2 learners of English. Two young learners, aged 2 years, 4 months, and 9 years, 3 months, were involved as the research subjects. These subjects had been living in England, where the data collection was also taking place, for nearly one year. For this reason, the researchers considered that they had prior input and exposure to standardized English during (pre)school hours and interactions with native-speaking friends around their place of residence. This was confirmed by separate data about language exposure collected through the use of UBILEC (Utrecht Bilingual Language Exposure Calculator). These data will not be presented here but are available for our internal use. The selection of these participants was due to the unique environment available as part of their exposure to the target language (English). The main purpose of the current study was to present data from young learners of English in two distinct ways, namely successive and simultaneous bilinguals (as previously mentioned). The two participants met the requirements in this regard as they both were first exposed to the English-speaking environment at different ages. This is necessary to gather relevant data that contain tokens of overregularization, which are usually observed during the similar range of age of these participants.

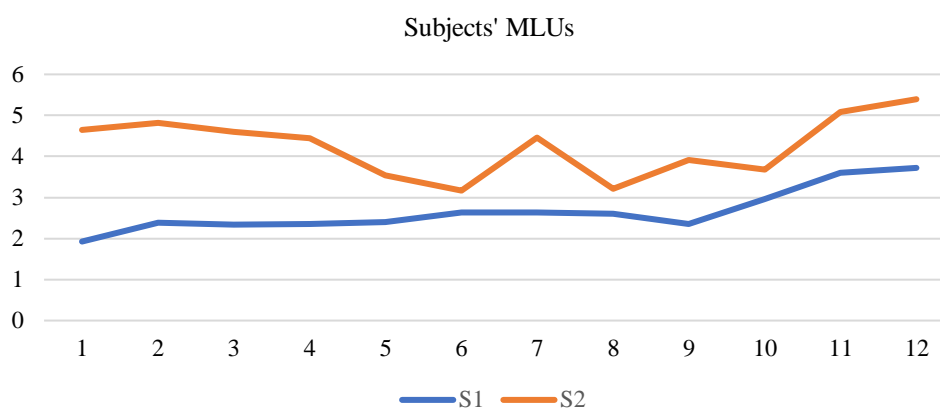
The investigators followed these research participants for nearly one year with the purpose of audio-recording their language production in a naturalistic environment. Hidden audio recording devices were used during these research subjects' interactions with the native speaker interlocutors we purposively recruited for this study. Most of the time, they were recorded separately at different places (homes, parks, playgrounds, etc.), but on a few occasions, they were recorded together at some social or community gatherings.

Following the lengthy data collection process, the collected audio data were then transcribed for further analytical uses. At the same time, all relevant information during the recording phases was recorded and noted to provide contextual information needed during the analysis stages. The obtained transcripts were able to give us important data about the subject's language production, including their MLU (Mean Length of Utterances) and their suppliance of relevant morphemes in obligatory contexts. Further details about these will be provided in the subsequent section.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

As mentioned earlier, this study involved two Indonesian-speaking children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). This term is used to emphasize that the two subjects (subsequently labeled as *S1* and *S2*) have already been exposed to and speak one language besides their mother tongue, thus English is recorded as their third language. To prove that their English acquisition process is ongoing, we found it important to collect relevant data about their language development progress. In this case, data about their utterance productions is necessary to show their progressive learning of English. Our results demonstrated that their L2 oral production was showing consistent progress, as illustrated in the following graph.



**Figure 1.** Subject's MLU counts from months 1 to 12

The data illustrated in Figure 1 visualizes at least two things. First, the subjects' MLU counts have been observed to be at different levels. This is because the two children were 7 years apart from each other when the data were collected. *S1* was significantly younger than *S2*, thus the MLU was consequently lower. Secondly, we can see that they show progress in their language acquisition. The MLU growth for *S1* was more obvious because the subject was consistently exposed to an English-speaking environment throughout the process of data collection. On the other hand, *S2*'s exposure to an English-speaking environment was interrupted by a family trip to Indonesia for a little over a month around the middle stage of data collection. Following this trip, we found that she lost her spoken ability to a certain extent, resulting in a drop in her MLU scores. Although these data showed a negative statistic, the overall production data related to the overregulation errors being investigated were not affected.

Throughout the entire 12 months of data collection work, utterances in which the two subjects were recorded to produce incidents with the presence of overregularization errors were collected. For the purpose of discussing the occurrences of overregularization, only relevant data that are related to the relevant properties will be provided. For this reason, only utterances consisting of the use of regular and irregular morphemes will be presented here. The presentation

of data considers the total number of possible obligatory contexts, number of accurate suppliance, and inaccurate suppliance. The latter is a combination of no suppliance at all and incorrect or mis-formation of the form. Table 1 below will illustrate this in detail.

**Table 1.** Suppliance and errors in the production of irregular morphemes

	S1		S2	
	Irreg. Verbs	Plural -s	Irreg. Verbs	Plural -s
No. of obligatory contents	21	84	347	149
No. of accurate suppliance	10	62	213	64
No. of inaccurate suppliance	11	22	134	85
No. of inaccuracies with overregularization	0	1	2	2
% overregularized errors	0%	4.5%	1.5%	2.35%

As illustrated in Table 1 above, a relatively small number of tokens with overregularization errors have been recorded throughout the data collection period. Between the two subjects, S2 obviously produced more utterances with tokens consisting of the two morphemes under current investigation, while S1 was reported with much smaller numbers. The rational explanation for this is due to the fact that these morphemes are known to be produced by child learners of L2 English around the age of 31 months (or MLU 2.7) at the earliest (Brown, 1973).

At the beginning of data collection, S1 was only 2 years and 4 months of age and her MLU at that time was 1.92. As seen from the table above, she produced only 21 tokens where the use of irregular verbs was recorded. Despite half of these utterances being inaccurate, none of the utterances was recorded with an overregularized verb. Furthermore, the production of plural -s morphemes by S1 was relatively more frequent than the irregular verbs. As highlighted in the table, the number of contexts where this morpheme appears is four times higher overall. Among around 22 incorrect suppliance of this morpheme, only one appears to be within an overregularization issue or can be explained with the relevant theory. This can be seen in the following extract.

*Extract 1.*

“...two bus.” S1, Age 3;2 [MLU2.3].

This excerpt illustrates S1’s failure to supply the plural morpheme correctly. With the presence of determiner *two* modifying the noun following it, the word *bus* should be pronounced as *busses*. As we expect to see the occurrence of regular plural at 31 months of age, S1 must have been past this age of onset at the time when this morpheme was recorded. However, she could have confused herself on how to attach a plural -s morpheme at the end of a word that already has an *s* consonant. We will go into more detail about this in the discussion section.

With regard to S2, the data indicated that the production of irregular verbs was significantly higher than that of plural -s. This subject was initially involved in the study at the age of 9 years and 3 months (MLU 2.82), so the production of such morphemes is expected to be a lot more



frequent. Among 134 inaccurate suppliance of irregular verbs found in the study, only 2 could be regarded as having an overregularization issue. The following example illustrates this.

*Extract 2.*

“I just eated” S2, Age 9;9 [MLU3.05]

An almost identical case was also found in the production of plural -s, where it was found that only a very small portion of utterances containing this morpheme were recorded with an overregularization issue. An example of this is seen below.

*Extract 3.*

“...some silly stuffs.” S2, Age 10;4 [MLU3.3]

As seen in this example, the use of plural -s has been extended to an irregular verb, which in this particular case does not require an -s suffix. In this example, S2 extends the regular grammatical pattern of plural -s to a lexical item where it should not appear. Fortunately, only this instance has been found as an overregularization token produced by S2, which is considered to be a very low occurrence when compared to the number of obligatory contexts and percentage of plural -s errors found in the data. Further discussion about this will be covered in the subsequent section.

## **Discussion**

Debates in the literature have pointed in different directions regarding whether there is cross-linguistic interference in the acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms. This would be something to emphasize when explaining such occurrences among child Indonesian learners of English as a second or foreign language. In this study, we attempted to gather data on the production of these forms by two young learners in naturalistic settings, with the initial assumption that there would be some type of variability and inconsistencies in the oral production of these particular forms in English (Witton-Davies, 2006). As presented earlier, we found no evidence of cross-linguistic transfer in the data as the findings of the present study do not seem to indicate that there has been a cross-linguistic influence on the two subjects' language production.

However, we argue that such characteristics of language production by the two subjects are typical of normal developmental trajectories by young learners of English, especially those who come from an L1 background with a grammatical system relatively distinct from that of English. This is consistent with Nordquist's (2020) argument which states that children's errors are considered evidence of verbal language development, which also shows that children are progressing in applying grammatical rules they absorb from their exposure to the target language. When S2 produced the utterance *I just eated*, for instance, it is just a sign of language sophistication showing that she is trying to apply grammatical rules she knows at that particular stage of her language acquisition, just as Brown (1973) predicted. Certainly, with more input

and exposure, this will slowly be corrected later, especially with the presence of adults or exposure to some types of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1992).

Errors like those found in the present study provide us with valuable explanations about the current state of children's grammatical knowledge. From the data, it is obvious that children learn by imitating and repeating what they hear from their surrounding environment (Gordon, 2003). When we hear a child saying *I goed home with mom*, for example, we know that there is a certain extent of knowledge about regular past verbs within that child's grammar dictionary, but its use has not fully developed. This is particularly true, at least in the utterance *I just eated* produced by S2. Such a phenomenon occurs among both child native and non-native speakers of English, showing that both monolinguals and bilinguals move through similar, if not identical, acquisition trajectories. What is currently missing is the understanding that some verbs in English are inflected irregularly and do not require an -e(d) suffix when used in past tense form. This is exactly similar to the use of irregular plural in *'my foots bled'* and *'we digged a well'*, which often occurs among children whose English is their first language (Paradis, et al., 2016).

In general, findings from the present study have yielded relatively limited data containing evidence to prove that overregularized verbs and plural forms are produced by the two subjects being investigated. The data suggest that the two subjects are well aware of English regularity. Their prior exposure to a native English-speaking environment for one year had truly shaped their familiarity with these grammatical aspects. For this reason, most of the errors we found were missing suppliance of the required morpheme in obligatory contexts, or mis-formation such as *I's wake up*. In most cases, the two subjects appear to understand this complex structure of English grammar but decided to use the default by omitting some surface morphological morphemes (Prevost & White, 2000). In many cases, the findings are to be consistent with Marchman et al.'s (1997) proposal suggesting that learner's familiarity with irregular nouns and verbs may reduce the effect of overregularization.

Furthermore, Figueroa's (2018) explanation that overregularization is likely to be the way chosen by children to simplify their utterances seems to be much more logical to explain current findings. Their efforts to simplify the form also have nothing to do with their memory capacity as memory limitations alone do not necessarily lead to overregularization (Prefors, 2011). The first subject and the second subject involved in the present study were only exposed to a full English-speaking environment when their family relocated to the United Kingdom following their parent's academic journey. Had they been in the country for a longer period, the data that we collected would have been significantly different (perhaps with more tokens explaining the overregularization phenomenon).

Both of the research subjects came from middle-level families with relatively decent academic backgrounds. When the recording was made, the authors were both involved in the process and were able to observe their conversation with the interlocutors, who were also native speakers of English. The two young subjects seemed to be aware of English grammatical rules but inadvertently forgot some superficial grammatical markers, consistent with the findings suggested by Abidah et al. (2023) and Panjaitan et al. (2023). Evidence to support this was found in the fact that these errors were random, which means that the same property of grammar is expected to be produced accurately on other occasions.

However, data from the younger subject (S1) seem to suggest that her language growth was significantly influenced by a richer language experience, which later strengthened language growth. When compared to S2, who was significantly older at the commencement of the study, S1 was observed to have been exposed more to child-directed speech, causing her to be more efficient in processing familiar words. For this reason, the errors of inflections that she produced were significantly lower than those of S2. At the same time, as S2's L1 grammatical system had already been settled, it was more possible for her to use distinct L1 grammatical forms in the production of her L2. In contrast, S1's production of English sentence structures was much more independent from her L1 linguistic system as she was observed to be fully speaking English both at home and during her days at kindergarten. For this reason, we argue that interference from her home language (i.e. Indonesian, Acehnese) was considerably minimal in this regard. Consequently, her English was much more 'native-like', and the errors produced were much more identical to those of monolingual English children. This understanding is particularly important in teaching young learners of English as a foreign language, especially in determining important factors in acquiring and learning a language such as the presence of comprehensible input and exposure to target-like environment. It is also important to highlight that teacher's guides, considering various non-linguistic aspects that surround a language, are essential in EFL learning even if the learners have been previously exposed to the target language environment (Perdana & Lakshman-Huntley, 2020).

If we compare the results of the current study with those of Baker Martinez and Shin (2023), for instance, we found that the occurrences of overregularization reduce significantly as learners' grammatical proficiency develops. The participants of the present study were recruited when their L2 development was at the best rate (considering the quality and quantity of exposure to the naturalistic English language environment and setting). According to Baker Martinez and Shin, or at least based on what their research findings suggested, it was clear that tokens of overregularization reduced significantly as overall grammatical development increased. However, it is also worth mentioning that the two sets of data may not be directly comparable as the settings of the two studies are also distinct from each other.

Concerning cross-linguistic transfer, the findings of the present study do not seem to indicate that there has been a cross-linguistic influence on the two subjects' language production. Indonesian is not considered a rich inflectional morphology language, and it has been predicted that Indonesian learners of L2 English would produce more bare stems of the verbs. In other words, the fact that the two research subjects would produce more bare forms of verbs was not unpredicted. It is not the Indonesian language morphological forms that caused their failure to inflect the verbs, but they seemed to use the default form more frequently until they realized that some sort of inflections was necessary, as Prevost and White (2000) had suggested. The data confirmed this, and this is consistent with Lu's (2016) findings regarding the evidence of cross-linguistic transfer.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of the present study have indicated that the occurrence of overregularization is the case among any learners of English (Maratsos, 2000). Learners overregularize verbs and

plural markings mainly because they rely on a specific template in using certain inflections. In such a case, the use of regular markers is extended even to some verbs or nouns that are supposed to be inflected irregularly. In other cases, the presence of overregularized verbs and nouns is related to learners' attempts to make use of an abstract rule, which confuses them in practice. Some scholars believe that overregularization in nouns is more common than in verbs, while others seem to believe the contrary (O'Grady, 2005).

In light of the present study, our data have been able to show that variability in the use of particular English morphemes is available. Tokens containing irregular use of verb and plural morphemes have also been found despite being in small numbers. In terms of research subjects, the study only covered longitudinal data collected from two child learners who were exposed to an English-speaking environment at different ages of onset, thus they had different linguistic backgrounds. We suggest that future researchers in this area collect more extensive data from a bigger number of samples to make it more representative of a larger population. Instead of collecting it longitudinally, cross-sectional data from different groups of learners with different levels of proficiency may perhaps provide better insight into investigating overregularization issues among Indonesian child L2/FL learners of English. In addition, the data from the present study were collected in an English-speaking environment where research participants had fully been exposed to standard English use, while data from participants with non-native English exposure are also worth investigating. For this reason, any future study investigating this area may consider collecting data from English L2 or foreign language learners who are living in a non-native English environment, as such data may reveal interesting findings different from what the present study has revealed.

The results of the present study are expected to contribute to strengthening the literature, particularly in the area of EFL teaching in the Indonesian context. With the presence of two Indonesian learners of English, we hope that the data presented here will provide interesting findings to English teachers and researchers in Indonesia, generally in researching the Second Language Acquisition area which involves young learners. In the English Language Teaching (ELT) context, in particular, this study will be of interest to university students of English majors, teachers, and lecturers who may be willing to use the report or data from this study in their teaching, particularly in discussing the language acquisition process involving two languages with distinct grammatical features (i.e., Indonesian and English).

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