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EXPLORING IRREGULAR VERB ACQUISITION IN INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING THROUGH NARRATIVE AND RECOUNT LESSON: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

Erly Mulfias Yuli*

English Literature, Universitas Ary Ginanjar, Indonesia

erly.mulfias@uag.ac.id

Aizzatul Hijaiyah

English Literature, Universitas Ary Ginanjar, Indonesia

aizzatul.hijaiyah@students.uag.ac.id

Nabila Ramadani

English Literature, Universitas Ary Ginanjar, Indonesia

nabila.ramadani@students.uag.ac.id

Ghitif Cavan El Hadya

English Literature, Universitas Ary Ginanjar, Indonesia

ghitifelhadya@gmail.com

*Corresponding author

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Abstract:

The using of irregular verbs still remains challenges for Indonesian high school students, especially in spontaneous oral communication. Although learners often recognize irregular verb forms in written contexts, they frequently fail to apply them accurately in speaking. This qualitative case study investigates how Indonesian secondary school EFL learners acquire and use irregular verbs in speaking activities, identifies common error patterns, and examines the role of comprehensible input in supporting this acquisition. Data were collected from ten classroom observation videos of narrative and recount text lessons across different Indonesian high schools. The videos were purposively chosen based on the participants who are 10 grade senior high school students that learn narrative and recount text. Furthermore, the videos were transcribed and analyzed using IRF (Initiation–Response–Feedback) classroom discourse analysis and error analysis within an interlanguage framework to find how the students' repertoire in speaking irregular verbs through narrative and recount text topics. Acquisition was inferred from recurring pattern of students oral production. The findings reveal that students were generally able to convey past events fluently but demonstrated unstable control of irregular verb forms, frequently relying on base forms, overgeneralization, and

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inconsistent tense marking. Pedagogically, irregular verbs acquisition in speaking requires sustained instructional support alongside meaningful speaking practice. The implication of this study suggests that meaningful speaking activities may not be sufficient to facilitate irregular verbs acquisition. It is important to integrate communicative practice that are complemented by systematic grammatical support and language input.

Keywords: *irregular verb, interlanguage, second language acquisition (LS), speaking skill, EFL learners*

Abstrak:

Penggunaan kata kerja tidak beraturan masih menjadi tantangan bagi siswa SMA Indonesia, terutama dalam komunikasi lisan spontan. Meskipun peserta didik sering mengenali bentuk kata kerja yang tidak beraturan dalam konteks tertulis, mereka sering gagal menerapkannya secara akurat dalam berbicara. Studi kasus kualitatif ini menyelidiki bagaimana pelajar EFL sekolah menengah Indonesia memperoleh dan menggunakan kata kerja tidak beraturan dalam aktivitas berbicara, mengidentifikasi pola kesalahan umum, dan meneliti peran masukan yang dapat dipahami dalam mendukung akuisisi ini. Data dikumpulkan dari sepuluh video observasi kelas tentang pelajaran teks narasi dan recount di berbagai sekolah menengah atas Indonesia. Video tersebut dipilih secara sengaja berdasarkan peserta yang merupakan siswa SMA kelas 10 yang belajar narasi dan menceritakan teks ulang. Selanjutnya, video tersebut ditranskripsi dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis wacana kelas IRF (Inisiasi–Respons–Umpan Balik) dan analisis kesalahan dalam kerangka kerja antarbahasa untuk menemukan bagaimana repertoar siswa dalam mengucapkan kata kerja tidak beraturan melalui topik teks narasi dan menceritakan ulang. Akuisisi disimpulkan dari pola berulang produksi lisan siswa. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa siswa umumnya mampu menyampaikan peristiwa masa lalu dengan lancar tetapi menunjukkan kontrol yang tidak stabil terhadap bentuk kata kerja tidak beraturan, sering mengandalkan bentuk dasar, generalisasi yang berlebihan, dan penandaan tense yang tidak konsisten. Secara pedagogis, perolehan kata kerja tidak teratur dalam berbicara membutuhkan dukungan instruksional yang berkelanjutan di samping latihan berbicara yang bermakna. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa aktivitas berbicara yang bermakna mungkin tidak cukup untuk memfasilitasi pemerolehan kata kerja yang tidak beraturan. Penting untuk mengintegrasikan praktik komunikatif yang dilengkapi dengan dukungan tata bahasa sistematis dan input bahasa.

Kata kunci: *pemerolehan bahasa kedua, kata kerja tidak beraturan, antarbahasa, keterampilan berbicara, pelajar EFL*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are one of the important aspects in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Every sentence spoken is composed of several words through morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in a sentence (Lieber, 2009). Lieber (2009) also emphasizes the important role of morphemes as building blocks that compose meaningful communication.

Therefore, morphological processes such as word changes and word derivation play an important role in forming a sentence.

To produce correct speech, students need to master complex linguistic components. One of them is verbs. Verbs, as key components in sentences, reflect this complexity (Ingo, 2018). Unlike regular verbs, which follow standard patterns in verb conjugation, irregular verbs pose a particular challenge for students. In Indonesia, high school students often have difficulty using irregular verbs when speaking (Ritonga et al., 2026; Miolo, 2022). Although many students know the forms of irregular verbs in writing, they often fail to apply them spontaneously in oral communication (Mufida et al., 2025). For example, they often say “He go yesterday” instead of “He went yesterday.” Such mistakes not only affect language accuracy but can also hinder smooth communication.

Altakhaineh et al., (2022) mentioned that Arabic – EFL learners found irregular verbs more difficult to produce than regular verbs. The paper counted participants correct answers’ score on regular and irregular questions, and it showed that the mean score of regular verbs was higher than irregular. It indicated that Arabic speaking EFL students learned regular prior to irregular which means it contradicts to the natural order hypotheses in first language acquisition in learning irregular form before regular. This research suggests to investigate the acquisition for other types of morphemes beyond past tense verbs. It also aligned with Madanun et al. (2025) study that identified on how Indonesian third semester university students acquisition in adding suffix in various type of verbs. Students often applied regular form to irregular forms. Therefore, this study found many errors in the using of regular verbs inflection, specifically in suffix -en and -ing. Madanun et al., (2025) also suggests that teaching method and quality of instruction is an area that were identified as major factors contributing to students difficulty. In adding the suffix, -en and -ing, this study implies new intervention strategies for further research to help students improve their verbs inflection acquisition.

Etengeneng (2022) tried to investigate irregular verbs acquisition in Cameroon among ESL and EFL learners. The result shows that both groups favoured the regular verbs form over the irregular. EFL learners produced slightly higher frequencies of errors than ESL learners, specifically in using irregular verbs. It indicates that both group are struggle with the complexity of English morphology. The research suggests that the

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teaching method and strategies should be improved in order to overcome this morphological difficulties. Therefore, some further researches are needed to be conducted.

It is quite different from Etengeneng (2022), Zaretsky & Russak (2023) examines four English inflectional morphemes in oral narratives among Hebrew and Arabic learners. This study argued that EL learners receive limited authentic spoken English because it often switch to learners' L1. The input quantity on morphology affects learners ability to acquire English inflectional morphemes. The author explicitly called for the importance of longitudinal research to track how morphology develops over the time and how classroom practice influence the development. Therefore, input or exposure in classroom interaction plays an essential role in facilitating second language acquisition and learners' language development (Suryati, 2013; Loewen & Sato, 2018). Krashen (1989) emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input, which is language exposure that can be understood by learners even though it contains new linguistic elements. This is also expressed by Madanun et al. (2025) that providing an understanding of usage patterns or modifications can enable learners to use irregular verbs and remember them accurately, thereby improving their language skills. Meanwhile, learning environment in Indonesia still relies on memorization and isolated vocabulary drills, which fail to engage students meaningfully long-term retention (Ritonga et al., 2026).

Idaryani (2025) shows that Indonesian learners found the verbs form acquisition in term of morphological and syntactical structures remains difficult. This research suggests to encourage the educators to use contrastive analysis to anticipate errors as pedagogical strategies in EFL classroom for further research. Meanwhile, Miolo (2022) conducted the mastery of irregular verbs among 5th grade students in Indonesia using short videos and assess the pre- post- students' score. The finding showed that irregular verbs are seen as obstacle because of its unpredictable pattern. This study suggests to explore further the usage of video as primary medium for teaching irregular verbs. Besides, it highlights to develop teaching approach to help students overcome the English morphology problems.

Conversely, Fitria (2021) points on the strategies of how students can consistently memorize irregular verbs pattern in writing skill. Even though this study successfully identified students can use both form of verbs (regular and irregular), students are prevalent to use irregular verbs in writing. The research suggests that students need

memorization skill and clear instruction in writing past tense verbs exercise. While, Fitri et al. (2025) shows the result differently. It shows that 10th grade students performing difficulties in writing recount text. The morphological errors are higher in irregular verbs form. However, this study limitation is suggesting further research to explore more to compare verb usage across various text genres, such as descriptive or narrative.

According to the previous studies, learners in ESL and EFL context find irregular verbs are much harder than regular verbs to acquired. Even while some research looked at more general inflectional systems, such as -ed, -en, -ing, and -s/es (Madanun et al., 2025; Zaretsky & Russak, 2023), irregular verb forms continued to be one of the most difficult grammatical elements. These results imply that learners' morphological development is still hampered by the complexity and unpredictable nature of irregular verb patterns. Additionally, there are two common problems in all previous studies. First, learners often overgeneralize by applying regular verb rules to irregular forms, which leads to mistakes such applying regular suffixes to irregular verbs (Altakhaineh et al., 2022; Madanun et al., 2025; Etengeneng, 2022). Second, variations in morphological acquisition linked to learners' language backgrounds demonstrate how cross-linguistic transfer or L1 interference affects learners' performance (Zaretsky & Russak, 2023; Idaryani, 2025). The interlanguage theory, which sees learners' language development as a dynamic system influenced by both internal developmental processes and external linguistic influences, is supported by these findings taken together.

Furthermore, a number of studies highlight the significance of instructional elements, such as instructional strategies, classroom procedures, input quality, and chances for real-world language use (Etengeneng, 2022; Zaretsky & Russak, 2023; Miolo, 2022). The acquisition of irregular verbs across various text genres and how classroom interaction may contribute to learners' acquisition of irregular verb forms have received little attention, despite the fact that prior research has successfully identified common error patterns and potential contributing factors. This disparity highlights the need for more research on the connection between classroom discourse, genre-specific language use, and the emergence of irregular verb morphology.

However, research on the acquisition of irregular verbs in Indonesia has mostly focused on writing skills or general grammar mastery. Studies that highlight the

acquisition of irregular verbs in speaking skills by emphasizing the role of comprehensible input through classroom interaction activities, specifically in narrative and recount text lesson, need to be explored more. Therefore, this study is relevant to provide an empirical description of how high school students in Indonesia learn irregular verbs in speaking skills, as well as its implications for English teachers' teaching strategies.

The results of this study are expected to contribute in two areas, namely theoretic and practical area. Theoretically, this study expands second language acquisition research related to the acquisition of irregular verbs by linking it to the input hypothesis. Practically, the results of this study can help teachers understand students' error patterns and effective strategies for providing input. Pedagogically, this study provides recommendations for designing comprehensible input-based activities (discussions, role-play, storytelling) to improve the accuracy and fluency of students' speaking in the use of irregular verbs.

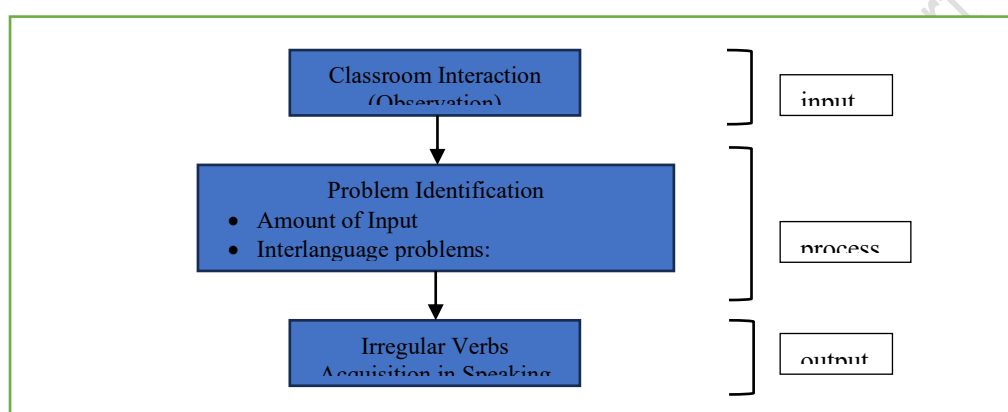
The complexity of using irregular verbs often leads to errors in the use of past verb forms, even by students with advanced English skills (Pliatsikas & Marinis, 2013). It is also stated that learners frequently overgeneralize regular patterns or struggle with non-rule-based forms (Lin & Alhawary, 2018). In the context of Indonesia, Indonesia doesn't have certain form to signify a specific time like verbs in English, such as how to use *makan* (eat) right now, *telah makan* (ate) is the same. It's not like in English that has *eat-ate-eaten* (Idaryani, 2025).

(Selinker, 1972) introduced five processes that can shape Interlanguage behavior, including Language Transfer, Transfer of Training, Strategies of Second Language Learning, Strategies of Second Language Communication, and Overgeneralization of Target Language Linguistic Material. Language transfer is a disturbance caused by differences or similarities between the learner's native language and the target language (Odlin, 1989; Deng et al., 2025).

This is in line with what is stated by Pliatsikas & Marinis (2013) that morphological processing, especially the distinction between regular and irregular inflections, remains robust in L2 even at high proficiency, supporting the idea that irregulars are stored as lexical items, not purely generated by rule (Clahsen & Felser, 2018). Fasikh (2020) stated that students show substantial difficulty with past tense verb forms (regular and irregular). Pedagogical

implications include targeted remediation of overgeneralization and attention to transfer effects from L1.

According to the previous studies above and its important in English learning in Indonesia context, it indicates that learners find difficulties with irregular verbs not only as a matter of memorization or insufficient practice, instead of the recurring pattern of overgeneralization and L1 interference. Therefore, a theoretical framework to account students language development is needed to explain in acquisition process to explain the



emergence of linguistic forms throughout the learning process.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of this study

Thus, based on the explanation of the importance of acquiring irregular verbs in speaking skills, this study aims at classroom interaction to investigate how students' learning of irregular verb forms is influenced by teacher-student negotiation of meaning and instructional information, offering insights into the function of interaction in promoting morphological development. This purpose can be formulated through the following research questions:

1. How do secondary school EFL students in Indonesia use irregular verbs in their speaking classroom interaction?
2. What are the most common mistakes in the use of irregular verbs when speaking?
3. To what extent does comprehensible input contribute to the acquisition of irregular verbs in students' speaking skills?

METHOD

Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with classroom discourse analysis design. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on an in-depth exploration of how high school students in Indonesia improve their acquisition of irregular verbs in speaking skills through narrative and recount text lesson through classroom interactions (Nunan & Bailey, 2009; Harrison et al., 2017). The selection of narrative and recount material because of their language features using past tense which required morphological change (Turmudi, 2026). This study analyses classroom instructional videos used in speaking classes when teaching narrative and recount texts. The research subjects were 10th grade high school students in EFL context, as the topics of recount and narrative are taught at this level. The videos used in this study were obtained from YouTube with permission from the relevant parties. The videos had to cover the entire learning process for narrative and recount texts; short clips were excluded.

Participant

The research was conducted in a regular English class consisting of around 30 students in grade X. This level of grade was chosen because students at this level already have a basic knowledge of English grammar, but still often make mistakes in the use of irregular verb forms when speaking. In addition, at this level the students are taught how to use past tense, specifically regular and irregular verbs through narrative and recount text lesson. Data collection activities took place over three weeks, covering several English learning sessions that focused on speaking skills and transcription process. The participants and school's name in the video are presented anonymously.

Instrument

The data of this study was collected through 5 compiled-video of narrative and 5 videos of recount text lesson teaching from different schools in Indonesia that observe speaking activities and the exposure to irregular verbs.

To validate the data, the videos were viewed repeatedly throughout the transcription and analysis process. The transcript also reviewed multiple times to ensure and minimize the risk of misinterpretation and verify the students' utterances, specifically the use of irregular verbs. Transcription data analysis were codified into Initiated (I) – Response (R) – Feedback (F) pattern. This study used *Turboscribe* application as co-instrument in transcribing the

classroom interaction. It will be also focused on how students responses incorrectly to analyze the interlanguage errors. The example of this coding can be seen in the Table 1 below.

Table 2. Transcription coding

<i>Video</i>	<i>Utterance(s)</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Interlanguage Errors Category</i>
<i>Narrative</i>	<i>"Ok students, have you finish?"</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>I</i>	
<i>(NVI)</i>	<i>"Yes"</i>	<i>Ss</i>	<i>R</i>	
	<i>"This is the presentation time after you discuss."</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	
	<i>"Ok, who want to present firstly? Raise your hand."</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>I</i>	
	<i>[A student raised hand]</i>	<i>S1</i>	<i>R</i>	
	<i>"Mawar, Ok."</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	
	<i>[student retell the story of Malin Kundang and sometimes reading in their paper]</i>	<i>S1</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Become → became</i> <i>Will → would</i> <i>[overgeneralization error]</i>
	<i>"Malin Kundang become rich."</i>			
	<i>"Malin was very sure that he will be successful."</i>			
	<i>"Mam, I have hard time writing in English"</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>R</i>	

Data collecting technique

The videos are obtained from YouTube with several considerations. First, it implements the national curriculum, which requires English as a compulsory subject, so that students have received formal exposure to English grammar, including irregular verbs. Second, the video observations have the general characteristics of EFL students in Indonesia, where English is not a daily language of communication, but is only used in class or in certain academic situations. This condition makes the school representative of the real challenges in acquiring irregular verbs in speaking skills. Lastly, it is about narrative and recount text lessons. The length of each videos around 30 minutes for its main activity and were transcribed and interpreted as IRF in classroom discourse analysis.

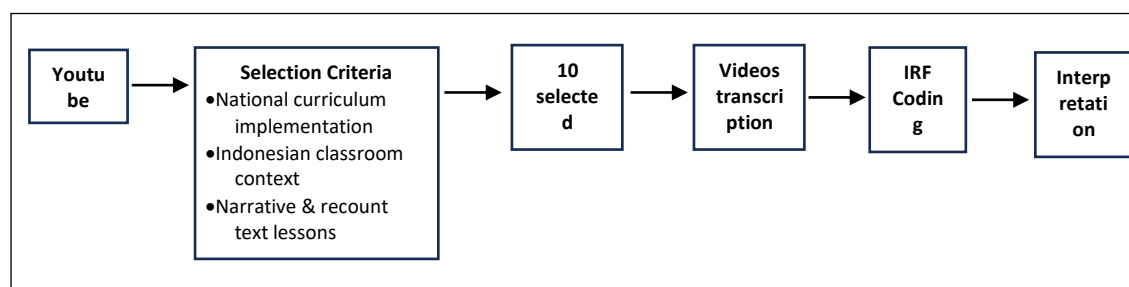


Figure 2. Data collecting process**Data analysis technique**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive data analysis approach to offer an in-depth and contextualized account of secondary school EFL learners' acquisition of irregular verbs in spoken activities. The analysis focused on naturally occurring classroom interactions during narrative and recount text lessons, as captured in 10 classroom observation videos. These videos served as the primary data source because they allowed the researchers to observe authentic language use and instructional practices without intervention.

The analysis focused on students' use of irregular verbs in contexts where past tense forms were required. Errors included the use of base forms instead of past forms, omission of tense marking, overgeneralization of regular verb rules, and failure to self-correct despite contextual cues. Rather than treating these as isolated grammatical mistakes, the study interpreted them as indicators of learners' interlanguage development.

In addition, teacher talk was analysed to identify forms of comprehensible input, including explicit explanations, modelling, repetition, contextual scaffolding, and corrective feedback. Particular attention was given to how teachers responded to students' incorrect irregular verb production through explicit correction, recasts, modelling, or the absence of feedback. The findings from narrative and recount lessons were then compared to determine how different text genres influenced students' acquisition of irregular verbs in speaking.

The analysis of the five narrative text lessons revealed that instruction primarily emphasized story comprehension, moral values, and generic structure rather than grammatical accuracy. Teachers commonly introduced traditional stories such as *Malin Kundang*, *Kebo Iwo*, *The Crying Stone*, *Cinderella*, and *The Legend of Surabaya* through discussion and retelling activities. Although past tense forms were occasionally introduced, grammatical focus was rarely sustained during oral presentations. Consequently, students frequently produced incorrect irregular verbs and past tense forms, such as *become* instead of *became* and *come* instead of *came*, without receiving corrective feedback. Only one lesson consistently integrated modelling, pronunciation support, and corrective feedback throughout speaking activities. Overall, students demonstrated strong understanding of narrative content

but only partial control of irregular verb forms, indicating that meaningful exposure alone was insufficient to promote accurate spoken production.

In contrast, the recount text lessons displayed a more systematic instructional structure. Because recount texts naturally require references to past experiences, teachers more frequently incorporated explicit instruction on past tense forms, guided practice, verb modelling, and scaffolded speaking activities. Students were encouraged to produce longer oral responses while receiving support during both preparation and performance stages. Lessons that consistently emphasized verb conjugation and corrective feedback showed greater improvement in students' accuracy and evidence of interlanguage development, including self-correction and emerging control of irregular verbs. However, lessons that prioritized creativity or product completion over grammatical reinforcement continued to show frequent irregular verb errors.

The comparison between the two genres demonstrates that instructional emphasis strongly influenced learners' acquisition of irregular verbs. While both narrative and recount texts required past-time reference, narrative lessons generally relied on implicit exposure through storytelling, whereas recount lessons more deliberately integrated grammar into communicative speaking activities. As a result, recount instruction provided more effective opportunities for students to notice, internalize, and produce irregular verb forms accurately. Overall, the findings suggest that successful acquisition of irregular verbs requires not only meaningful communicative input but also consistent grammatical focus, explicit modelling, corrective feedback, and repeated opportunities for spoken practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Classroom observations of narratives and recount text lessons showed that students were generally able to express past events through oral speaking activities. In both genres, learners showed an understanding of past-time reference, frequently employing temporal markers like yesterday, last holiday, and then to locate events in the past. The results suggest that students grasped the communicative purpose behind recounting and narrating past events. However, students' spoken production showed unstable control of past tense verb forms, particularly irregular verbs. A recurring pattern across lessons was the use of base verb

forms in past-time contexts, such as “*Malin Kundang become rich*” and “*I go to Monas last holiday*”. Students also frequently produced inconsistent verb forms within single utterances and omitted tense markers in their spontaneous speech. The summary of error analysis can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 3. Irregular Verb Error Analysis in Speaking Activities (n=10 videos)

Video	Speaking Activity	Example of Utterances	Identified Issue	Interlanguage / Error Analysis	Teacher Response
Narrative 1 (NV1)	Group storytelling	“ <i>Malin Kundang become rich</i> ”	Using verb 1	interference	No correction
Narrative 2 (NV2)	Group representative presentation & text analysis	“ <i>He live in the village near the beach with his mother</i> ”	Using verb 1 & incorrect verb form	developmental error	Implicit correction by restating student's answer to the class
Narrative 3 (NV3)	Group discussion & presentation of text analysis	<i>Students read the text “... can help consequenced and ...” [unclear]</i>	Tense not marked	intralingual & developmental error	No correction
Narrative 4 (NV4)	Group presentation (story telling & text analysis)	“ <i>Cinderella was a lovely girl</i> ”	Students read their prepared story & even the answers	-	No correction
Narrative 5 (NV5)	Group presentation text analysis	“ <i>They were two strong animals, Sura and Baya</i> ”	Students read their prepared story	-	No correction
Recount 1 (RV1)	Personal presentation & Group presentation (text analysis of recount text)	“ <i>I went to my home my parents still didn't found something</i> ”	inconsistent verbs use.	Overgeneralisation (intralingual)	Teacher consistently models past tense.
Recount	Group	“ <i>I go to Monas</i> ” [last	Using verb	interference	No

2 (RV2)	tournament (answering questions about recount text)	holiday]	1		correction
Recount 3 (RV3)	Group presentation (retell famous people biography)	<i>“Thomas Alpha Edison is innovation lamp”.</i>	Using verb 1 Incorrect form of sentence	developmen tal error/ interference	No correction
Recount 4 (RV4)	Group presentation (retell past experience)	<i>“In the end of 2020, I got a motorcycle from my father because my birthday in the end of December.”</i>	-	-	Teacher consistently models past tense.
Recount 5 (RV5)	Group presentation (retell past experience)	<i>“I with my friends and they angry”</i>	Incorrect form of sentence	Intralingual/ developmen tal error	No correction

Error analysis identified several recurring types of irregular verb errors. The most frequent error involved the use of base forms instead of irregular past forms. Other errors included overgeneralization of regular verb rules (e.g., *“didn’t found”*), omission of past tense marking, and inaccurate sentence construction combining tense and verb form errors. The errors were particularly noticeable in spontaneous speaking activities, such as oral recounting and personal account reminiscences, rather than in reading-based or pre-prepared talks.

Differences were observed between narrative and recount text types. In narrative lessons, speaking activities frequently involved recounting set stories or reading pre-prepared texts. While students could communicate story content smoothly, errors with irregular verb conjugation were often not addressed during spoken presentations. Narrative lesson teacher feedback generally concentrated more on understanding stories and moral principles than on grammatical correctness. In contrast, recount text lessons—especially those based on personal experiences—elicited longer and more spontaneous spoken output. In lessons where teachers consistently modelled past tense forms and guided students through structured practice, students demonstrated relatively more accurate use of irregular verbs and occasional self-correction during speech. However, in recount lessons where grammatical feedback was

limited or instruction focused primarily on creativity and presentation, students' irregular verb usage remained inconsistent.

Overall, the results suggest that students were able to express past events in spoken English, but struggled consistently with irregular past tense forms, particularly when instructional support and teacher feedback were not present during speaking exercises.

Discussion

The findings suggest that students' spoken production reflects a transitional interlanguage stage in second language acquisition, in which learners have acquired the concept of past time but have not fully internalized the morphological system of irregular verbs. During speaking tasks, students appeared to prioritize fluency and message delivery rather than grammatical form. Similar findings have been reported in previous EFL studies, which suggest that learners often focus on meaning construction when speaking, resulting in persistent grammatical inaccuracies (Fasikh, 2020; Madanun et al., 2025).). This finding is also supported by Idayani (2025) that Indonesian learners are still struggle in morphological and syntactical structures as well as Etengeneng (2022) that stated both ESL or EFL learners find irregular verbs are more difficult because of the complexity of English morphology. However, unlike those studies, which primarily examined learners' performance through tests or elicited language tasks, the present study investigated irregular verb usage during naturally occurring classroom interaction. This suggests that the challenges associated with irregular verbs may become even more apparent when learners are required to produce language spontaneously in real-time communication.

In terms of error patterns, several recurring types of irregular verb errors were identified. The most frequent error was the use of the base verb form in past-time contexts. Additionally, some students overgeneralized regular verb rules to irregular forms, such as "didn't found" instead of "didn't find". Other errors included the omission of past tense markers and inconsistent verb tense use within a single utterance. These errors were more prominent during spontaneous speaking activities, particularly when students were required to speak without relying on written texts.

The occurrence of these errors suggests intralingual transfer, where learners apply familiar grammatical rules to forms that do not follow regular patterns. According to previous

research, irregular verbs are often stored as lexical items rather than rule-based forms, making them more difficult to retrieve during real-time speech production (Huang & Pinker, 2010; Altakhaineh et al., 2022). As a result, when learners are unable to access the correct irregular form, they tend to default to base forms or regularized structures. Similarly, Madanun et al. (2025) found that learners frequently overgeneralized inflectional principles, especially when they tried to apply regular morphological patterns to irregular verb forms.

In contrast to Altakhaineh et al. (2022) and Madanun et al. (2025), the current study looked at students' irregular verb usage during spontaneous classroom interactions. Because of this, the mistakes found in this study occurred when students were concurrently handling vocabulary retrieval, content creation, and real-time communication. because of that learners seemed to choose communicative fluency over morphological precision, base-form usage may be especially common. These results suggest that spontaneous speech production of irregular verbs may not always be successful transferred as in written exercises or controlled tasks.

The role of comprehensible input was also evident in students' speaking performance. In lessons where the teacher consistently modelled past tense forms, repeated irregular verbs in meaningful contexts, and provided feedback during speaking activities, students produced longer utterances and occasionally demonstrated self-correction, such as revising "want" to "went". This behavior indicates emerging awareness of grammatical accuracy and supports Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input slightly above the learners' current level.

Conversely, in lessons where instruction focused primarily on storytelling content or creative activities without sustained grammatical reinforcement, students showed limited improvement in the accuracy of irregular verb usage. Narrative text activities often emphasized comprehension and moral values, resulting in minimal attention to verb form accuracy. While recount text activities, particularly those based on personal experiences, encouraged more spontaneous speaking, grammatical accuracy remained inconsistent without explicit feedback and repeated exposure.

A comparison between narrative and recount text learning revealed that recount texts provided more opportunities for students to actively use irregular verbs in speaking. Narrative activities often involved reading or retelling fixed stories, which limited spontaneous verb

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retrieval. In contrast, recount tasks encouraged students to generate original utterances, allowing irregular verb usage to emerge more naturally, albeit with frequent errors. This finding suggests that text genre influences the extent to which learners practice grammatical forms in spoken production. This finding extends Fitri et al. (2025), who reported that students experienced considerable difficulties in using past-tense verbs when writing recount texts. The findings indicate that genre influences not only language content but also the extent to which learners are required to retrieve grammatical forms during communication. Recount activities encouraged learners to draw on personal experiences and generate original utterances, whereas narrative activities often relied on retelling familiar stories. Consequently, recount tasks appeared to create richer opportunities for irregular verb emergence, making learners' interlanguage development more visible during classroom interaction.

Overall, the findings indicate that the acquisition of irregular verbs in speaking is influenced not only by exposure to genre-based texts but also by the quality and consistency of comprehensible input and teacher feedback. While students demonstrated communicative ability in expressing past events, sustained grammatical development requires deliberate instructional support during speaking activities.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

Regarding the first research question, the findings show that students generally used irregular verbs inconsistently during classroom interaction. Their spoken production prioritized successful communication and meaning-making over grammatical accuracy, particularly during spontaneous storytelling and personal recounts. Although students demonstrated an understanding of narrative and recount content, their control of irregular verb forms remained unstable, reflecting an ongoing process of interlanguage development.

The second research question is also answered by identifying the most common irregular verb errors. These included overgeneralizing regular verb patterns, using base forms rather than past forms, failing to self-correct in spite of contextual indications, and omitting tense marking. These frequent mistakes show that students had not yet fully learned irregular verb forms for spontaneous speech.

Lastly, the third research question shows that when understandable material is combined with explicit modeling, corrective feedback, repetition, and scaffolded speaking practice, it significantly aids in the acquisition of irregular verbs. Even though meaningful exposure was not enough to increase grammatical accuracy, learners were able to identify, practice, and eventually gain more control over irregular verb forms with persistent instructional support. Grammar training was more methodically incorporated into communicative tasks in recall text courses, which made this especially clear.

Theoretically, this study reinforces interlanguage theory by demonstrating that in spontaneous spoken production, the cognitive load of conveying meaning takes precedence over grammatical monitoring. Pedagogically, these findings suggest that using recount texts as an instructional intervention is more effective than narrative texts for training consistency in irregular verbs. The novelty of this research lies in the identification of specific patterns in which students prioritize communicative function over formal accuracy at a particular stage of oral development, suggesting that instructional support should focus on the transition from meaning-based to form-focused approaches in the context of spontaneous speech.

Limitation

Some limitations should be taken into account while evaluating the findings of this research. First, despite the fact that the findings show that students could communicate their past experiences yet failed to acquire stable command of irregular verbs, the above conclusions were made on the basis of a small sample of ten videos showing classroom observations. Consequently, observed patterns of base forms, overgeneralization, and unstable tense forms may not reflect the overall situation among all Indonesian EFL learners. Furthermore, reliance on video-recorded interaction limited the analysis to overt language production and did not provide access to learners' internal cognitive processes, strategies, or decision-making during irregular verb use.

Second, the study did not include learner interviews, stimulated recall sessions, or reflective journals. Consequently, learners' perceptions, difficulties, and strategies in acquiring irregular verbs could only be inferred from classroom performance rather than explored directly. Future studies may combine interactional data with learner perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of irregular verb acquisition.

Third, the study was not longitudinal in nature. The classroom observations captured learners' performance at specific points in time and therefore cannot reveal how irregular verb acquisition develops over longer periods. Longitudinal research would be valuable for examining whether repeated exposure, teacher feedback, and classroom interaction lead to sustained morphological development. Finally, although the findings suggest that comprehensible input and teacher feedback may contribute to learners' irregular verb development, the study can only discuss relationships rather than prove direct effects because neither an experimental intervention nor learning outcome measures were used.

Implication

The findings of this study have both pedagogical and theoretical implications. Pedagogically, they highlight the need for explicit instruction of irregular verbs alongside communicative speaking activities. Although students were generally able to express past events, they frequently relied on base forms and overgeneralized regular verb patterns, indicating that communicative practice alone is insufficient for accurate morphological development. Therefore, teachers should integrate explicit grammar instruction with meaningful speaking tasks.

The findings also emphasize the importance of corrective feedback in promoting grammatical awareness. Students occasionally demonstrated self-correction after receiving teacher feedback, suggesting that recasts, clarification requests, and explicit correction help learners notice the gap between their production and target language forms. In addition, guided speaking activities incorporating modelling, repetition, and rehearsal provide valuable opportunities for learners to practice irregular verbs more accurately, particularly through recount tasks based on personal experiences.

Theoretically, the study supports interlanguage theory by showing that learners can successfully communicate meaning despite unstable morphological development, indicating that semantic and grammatical development do not always progress simultaneously. The findings also provide further support for Krashen's Input Hypothesis, as comprehensible input combined with consistent instructional support and feedback facilitated learners' acquisition of irregular verb forms.

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Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples to determine the generalizability of these findings across Indonesian EFL contexts. Longitudinal studies are recommended to investigate how irregular verb acquisition develops over time and how teacher feedback and classroom interaction influence long-term grammatical development. Future studies may also combine classroom observation with learner interviews or stimulated recall to explore learners' perspectives. Finally, intervention-based research examining the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction, corrective feedback, and guided speaking practice would provide stronger evidence for improving the acquisition of irregular verbs in EFL classrooms.

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BIO-PROFILE:

Erly Mulfias Yuli is an English Literature lecturer in Ary Ginanjar University. She is now pursuing her doctoral degree in Linguistics of Universitas Indonesia. Her expertise is in Linguistics, ELT, Second Language Acquisition. She is particularly interested in classroom discourse, language learning processes, and the role of interaction in language education. Her research focuses on language pedagogy and discourse analysis in educational contexts. Corresponding email: erly.mulfias@uag.ac.id

Nabila Ramadani, Aizzatul Hijaiyah, and Ghitif Cavan El Hadya are English Literature students in Ary Ginanjar University. They are now in 4th semester and already accomplish Second Language Acquisition subject.

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