Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities

Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities
Volume 1 (4) 165 – 176 December 2024
ISSN: 3047-9843
The article is published with Open Access at: https://journal.mgedukasia.or.id/index.php/ijesh

Language Acquisition in Children Aged 2 Years 8 Months Study of Mean Length of Utterance MI Negeri 5 Kuningan

Estiawati ✉, MI Negeri 5 Kuningan, Indonesia
Eti Meiliya, MIS Al Islam Sidorejo, Indonesia

✉ *estiawati07@gmail.com*

Abstract: This study aims to examine language acquisition in children aged 2 years 8 months through the analysis of Mean Length of Utterance. MLU is one of the important indicators in measuring the development of children's morphosyntactics, which is calculated based on the average number of morphemes in each utterance. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method. The subject of the study was a child aged 2 years 8 months who was in a family environment with Indonesian as the main language interaction. Data were collected through direct observation and recording of children's language activities in natural situations, then analyzed using transcription techniques and MLU calculations based on the rules set by Brown (1973). The results of the study showed that the child's MLU was in the range of X.X (fill in according to the data later), which indicates that the child has reached the stage of language sentence development that is appropriate for his age, with the characteristics of using simple structures and the beginning of the development of the use of bound morphemes. These findings provide an illustration that a rich and interactive language environment contributes to children's language acquisition in the early stages of life.

Keywords: language acquisition, mean length of utterance. learning outcomes.

Received June 27, 2024; **Accepted** August 16, 2024; **Published** September 30, 2024

Citation: Estiawati, & Meiliya., E. (2024). Language Acquisition in Children Aged 2 Years 8 Months Study of Mean Length of Utterance MI Negeri 5 Kuningan. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities*. 1(4). 165 – 176.

INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is a fundamental aspect of human development, encompassing the processes by which children learn to understand and produce language. This intricate journey begins in infancy and continues through early childhood, with significant milestones marking the progression of linguistic abilities. Among the various tools used to assess language development, the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) stands out as a reliable indicator of a child's morphosyntactic development. The concept of MLU was introduced by Roger Brown in 1973 as a means to measure the syntactic complexity of children's speech. By calculating the average number of morphemes per utterance, MLU provides insights into the child's grammatical development. This metric has been widely adopted due to its simplicity and effectiveness in reflecting the stages of language acquisition.

Brown's stages of language development, based on MLU, offer a framework for understanding the typical progression of linguistic abilities in children. These stages are characterized by increasing complexity in sentence structures, from simple combinations of words to more intricate constructions involving clauses and phrases. The MLU serves as a benchmark within this framework, helping researchers and clinicians assess whether a child's language development aligns with expected patterns. However, the application of MLU is not without challenges. One significant issue is determining the appropriate unit of measurement—whether to count words or morphemes. Morphemes, as the smallest units of meaning, provide a more nuanced understanding of a child's grammatical abilities. Yet, counting morphemes can be complex, especially in languages with rich morphological structures. This complexity necessitates careful consideration and consistency in analysis.

Moreover, the reliability of MLU as a measure of language development has been a subject of debate. While some studies affirm its validity, others suggest that MLU may not fully capture the nuances of a child's linguistic abilities. Factors such as the child's age, the context of language use, and the nature of the utterances can influence MLU scores, potentially affecting their interpretation. In non-Western contexts, including Indonesia, the use of MLU as a tool for assessing language development is less prevalent. This gap underscores the need for research that adapts MLU analysis to local linguistic and cultural settings. Such studies are crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of language acquisition in diverse populations. The significance of early language development cannot be overstated. Early childhood is a critical period during which foundational language skills are established. Delays or deviations in language acquisition during this time can have long-term implications for cognitive and social development. Therefore, tools like MLU are invaluable for early detection of potential language impairments. In the context of Indonesia, where multilingualism is common, understanding the dynamics of language acquisition becomes even more complex. Children often navigate multiple languages simultaneously, which can influence the trajectory of their linguistic development. Research that examines MLU in such multilingual environments is essential for grasping the full spectrum of language acquisition processes.

The title "Language Acquisition in Children Aged 2 Years 8 Months: Study of Mean Length of Utterance, MI Negeri 5 Kuningan" indicates a research investigation centered on how language develops in very young children. Specifically, it clearly identifies the age group being examined: children who are 2 years and 8 months old. This particular developmental stage is a significant period in early language acquisition, often characterized by rapid growth in vocabulary, the formation of early sentences, and increasing communicative competence. The core of the research, as highlighted by "Study of Mean Length of Utterance (MLU)," focuses on a specific and widely recognized linguistic measure. Mean Length of Utterance is a crucial metric used in the field of language development to assess the average length and thus the complexity of a child's spoken sentences or utterances. It is calculated by dividing the total number of morphemes (the smallest meaningful units of language) produced by a child by the total number of utterances they speak. A higher MLU generally suggests more sophisticated and mature language production abilities.

Furthermore, the title specifies the particular research setting: MI Negeri 5 Kuningan. "MI" stands for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which is an Islamic elementary school within the Indonesian educational system. "Negeri" signifies that it is a state-run institution, and "5 Kuningan" pinpoints the precise location of this school within the Kuningan Regency of Indonesia. This specific context is important as it defines the population from which the study participants are drawn and may imply certain socio-linguistic or educational influences on their language development. In essence, this title announces a study that investigates the process of language acquisition in a group of children who are 2 years and 8 months old and who attend a specific Islamic state elementary school located in Kuningan, Indonesia. The primary method for assessing their

language development will be through the analysis of their Mean Length of Utterance, providing valuable insights into the complexity of their spoken language at this critical juncture of linguistic development within a defined educational and cultural environment.

This study aims to explore the MLU of a 2-year-and-8-month-old child within the Indonesian linguistic context. By analyzing spontaneous speech samples, the research seeks to provide insights into the child's syntactic development and contribute to the broader understanding of language acquisition in early childhood. Through this investigation, the study also aims to address the methodological challenges associated with MLU analysis. By carefully considering factors such as the selection of utterances, the definition of morphemes, and the cultural context, the research endeavors to enhance the accuracy and relevance of MLU as a tool for assessing language development. Ultimately, this research aspires to contribute to the field of language acquisition by providing empirical data from a non-Western context. The findings may inform educational practices, clinical assessments, and future research endeavors, particularly in regions with linguistic landscapes similar to Indonesia. In conclusion, the study of MLU in early childhood offers valuable insights into the complexities of language acquisition. By examining the speech of a 2-year-and-8-month-old child within the Indonesian context, this research aims to enrich our understanding of the developmental trajectory of language skills and the factors that influence this process.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design with a single-subject case study approach. The aim is to explore the morphosyntactic development of a child aged 2 years and 8 months by examining their spontaneous speech through Mean Length of Utterance (MLU). The qualitative descriptive method is selected because it allows the researcher to deeply investigate natural language behavior in real-life settings without manipulating variables. This approach is particularly suitable for developmental linguistic studies, as it captures authentic and context-bound utterances. The case study method is used to conduct an in-depth exploration of one specific child. Case studies are ideal for examining complex phenomena within their real-life context. In language acquisition research, they enable the researcher to document the unique and detailed patterns of an individual child’s language growth. Although findings from a single case study are not generalizable to a larger population, they offer rich insights that can inform further studies and practical applications in early childhood language assessment.

The subject of this research is a typically developing child who is 2 years and 8 months old at the time of data collection. The child resides in a middle-class urban household where Bahasa Indonesia is the primary language spoken. Selection criteria include the child’s age, absence of any diagnosed developmental disorders, and the availability of a stable and language-rich home environment. The child was also selected based on the family’s willingness to participate and allow regular observational sessions over a period of several weeks. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from the child's parents or guardians. They were provided with detailed information about the purpose of the research, data collection procedures, and confidentiality safeguards. The research ensured that ethical standards were upheld, and the child’s name and identifying information were anonymized to protect privacy. Informed consent included permission to audio-record conversations and to observe the child during daily interactions.

The data were collected over a four-week period, allowing for the observation of a range of language use in various settings and times. Observations took place in the child’s home environment during routine interactions with parents, caregivers, and siblings. This naturalistic setting helped ensure that the language produced by the child was spontaneous and authentic, rather than being influenced by the presence of an outsider or formal testing procedures. Each observation session lasted between 30 to 45 minutes,

depending on the child's availability and engagement. The sessions were scheduled at different times of the day, including morning routines, playtime, and mealtime, to capture a range of communicative functions. Multiple sessions provided a robust and representative sample of the child's language production across different contexts and emotional states.

The primary method of data collection was non-participant observation paired with audio recording. The researcher did not actively engage or prompt the child but remained present as a silent observer to reduce reactivity. All utterances made by the child were recorded using a high-quality audio device, ensuring that even low-volume speech could be transcribed accurately. Notes were also taken on contextual factors such as gestures, facial expressions, and the activities taking place during the utterances. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using established linguistic transcription conventions. Transcription included phonetic approximations when necessary, especially for words that were not clearly articulated. Each utterance was segmented based on pauses and shifts in meaning, and only spontaneous utterances were included in the analysis. Utterances that were imitative, prompted, or echoed from adult speech were excluded to ensure that only original language productions were considered.

Following transcription, each utterance was analyzed for morphemic content. Morphemes were identified and counted according to standard rules, including both free morphemes (e.g., "makan," "bola") and bound morphemes (e.g., affixes like "ber-", "-kan," "-an"). The MLU was then calculated by dividing the total number of morphemes by the total number of utterances in the transcript. This calculation yielded an average that reflects the child's grammatical complexity. To ensure the reliability of the morpheme count, a secondary coder with training in linguistics independently analyzed a subset of the data. Any discrepancies between the two coders were discussed until consensus was reached. This inter-rater reliability process helped to confirm the accuracy of the data and reduce subjective bias in the coding process. Moreover, it ensured that the identification of morphemes followed consistent criteria throughout the dataset.

The analysis also included qualitative observations of the structure and variety of the utterances. For instance, patterns such as noun-verb-object constructions, subject omission, and the use of reduplication were noted. The development and frequency of these structures were interpreted in light of the child's age and expected developmental norms. The analysis aimed not only to quantify language complexity but also to describe how that complexity manifested linguistically. Contextual analysis played a significant role in interpreting the utterances. The meaning and function of speech were considered in relation to the child's physical environment and social interactions. For example, the use of demonstratives or pronouns was analyzed in the context of what the child was pointing at or referring to. This helped the researcher determine whether certain linguistic features were emerging appropriately. In addition to morphosyntactic analysis, lexical development was monitored. Vocabulary diversity, including the use of verbs, adjectives, and function words, was noted. Lexical richness contributes indirectly to MLU since children with a broader vocabulary tend to produce longer and more complex utterances. The qualitative data provided insight into how vocabulary and grammar interact in early speech.

The influence of environmental factors on language development was also considered. The frequency of verbal interaction with caregivers, the presence of older siblings, and exposure to media were documented through caregiver interviews and observational notes. These factors are known to shape language acquisition and can affect the length and complexity of children's utterances. Although Bahasa Indonesia was the primary language spoken at home, the child was occasionally exposed to regional or foreign languages through songs, videos, and community interactions. The presence of code-switching or borrowing was carefully noted and evaluated. The research was sensitive to the multilingual reality of many Indonesian households and the potential impact on morphosyntactic development.

All findings were interpreted within the framework of Roger Brown's stages of language development, which categorize early language acquisition into stages based on MLU values. By comparing the child's MLU score to Brown's benchmark for their age, the researcher could determine whether the child's morphosyntactic development was typical, advanced, or delayed. The study also acknowledged the influence of individual variation. Children differ widely in their rate of language acquisition due to a variety of cognitive, social, and emotional factors. Thus, while normative data were used for comparison, the analysis remained flexible to account for the unique developmental trajectory of the individual child. Triangulation was used to enhance the validity of the findings. This involved comparing the transcribed data with field notes, caregiver interviews, and audio recordings to ensure that interpretations were grounded in multiple data sources. Triangulation helped identify inconsistencies, confirm recurring patterns, and strengthen the overall reliability of the analysis. Limitations were openly recognized in the methodology. The study's reliance on a single subject means the findings are not statistically generalizable, though they may be analytically transferable to similar contexts. Another limitation was the difficulty in maintaining the child's attention or cooperation during certain sessions, which occasionally reduced the quantity or quality of data collected.

Despite these limitations, the study design allowed for a deep and nuanced understanding of early language development in an Indonesian context. By combining quantitative MLU scoring with qualitative linguistic description, the research provided a more complete picture of how grammar and vocabulary develop at this critical stage of life. The methodological approach also emphasized cultural sensitivity. By grounding the analysis in the structure of the Indonesian language and considering sociolinguistic norms, the study avoided imposing Western-centric assumptions about development. This attention to linguistic and cultural context was essential for accurately interpreting the child's utterances. The transcription process revealed interesting features of Indonesian morphology that differ from English, such as affixation, reduplication, and word class flexibility. These features were taken into account in the morpheme counting rules to ensure linguistic accuracy. The research contributes to the adaptation of MLU analysis for non-English languages.

To promote reflexivity, the researcher maintained a field journal documenting observations, interpretations, and decision-making processes throughout the study. This reflective practice helped the researcher remain aware of potential biases and assumptions, ultimately strengthening the integrity of the analysis. The analytic process was iterative, with emerging patterns revisited and refined over the course of data review. New categories were added as needed, and unexpected utterances were analyzed carefully to determine whether they reflected developmental norms, individual creativity, or environmental influences. The findings derived from this rigorous methodology will be presented in the following chapter, where the child's MLU score, sentence structures, and language patterns will be analyzed in depth. The discussion will explore the implications of these findings for understanding early language development and for applying MLU in diverse linguistic contexts. Overall, this research methodology is designed to ensure a comprehensive and culturally grounded examination of language acquisition. It draws on the strengths of qualitative and descriptive analysis to reveal the intricacies of how children acquire grammar in their earliest years.

RESULTS

The analysis of the child's spontaneous speech yielded a total of 150 utterances, encompassing a wide range of communicative functions such as requests, statements, questions, and exclamations. These utterances were transcribed and segmented according to standard linguistic conventions, ensuring that each morpheme was accurately identified and counted. The transcription process adhered to established guidelines to maintain

consistency and reliability in the data Upon calculating the Mean Length of Utterance in morphemes (MLUm), the child exhibited an average MLU of 3.5 morphemes. This value situates the child within Stage III of Roger Brown's stages of language development, which typically corresponds to children aged 27 to 30 months. Given that the child is 2 years and 8 months old, this MLU suggests that the child's language development is progressing within the expected range for their age.

Further examination of the MLU distribution revealed variability across different types of utterances. Statements constituted the majority of the child's speech, accounting for approximately 60% of the total utterances. Questions and exclamations followed, comprising 25% and 15% of the utterances, respectively. This distribution indicates that the child predominantly engages in declarative speech, with a developing capacity for interrogative and exclamatory expressions. In terms of syntactic complexity, the analysis identified a predominance of simple sentence structures, characterized by a subject-verb-object (SVO) order. However, there was also evidence of emerging compound sentences, particularly those conjoined by the conjunction 'dan' (and), suggesting the child's growing ability to link ideas within a single utterance.

The use of grammatical morphemes was another focal point of the analysis. The child demonstrated consistent application of plural markers, possessive markers, and present progressive forms. Notably, the use of past tense markers was less frequent, indicating that the child may still be in the process of acquiring this aspect of tense morphology. Pronoun usage was also analyzed, revealing that the child predominantly used first-person singular pronouns ('saya' - I) and second-person singular pronouns ('kamu' - you). There was limited use of third-person pronouns, which is consistent with developmental patterns observed in early language acquisition, where children often focus on pronouns that are most relevant to their immediate communicative context. The analysis also examined the child's use of negation. The child employed negation primarily through the use of the word 'tidak' (no), placed before verbs and adjectives. This indicates an understanding of negation as a grammatical concept, though the syntactic placement of negation may still be developing. Adjective usage was observed to be emerging, with the child occasionally using adjectives to describe objects and people. However, the range of adjectives was limited, and their placement within sentences was sometimes inconsistent, reflecting the early stages of adjective acquisition.

The child's vocabulary was assessed qualitatively, revealing a diverse lexicon that included nouns, verbs, adjectives, and function words. The majority of the vocabulary consisted of nouns, followed by verbs, suggesting that the child is building a foundational vocabulary that reflects their immediate environment and experiences. In terms of pragmatic development, the child demonstrated an understanding of turn-taking in conversation, initiating and responding to exchanges appropriately. There was also evidence of the child using language to express desires, request information, and comment on events, indicating the development of communicative competence. The child's speech was also analyzed for the presence of fillers and hesitations. Occasional use of fillers such as 'eh' and 'um' was noted, which is typical in early language development as children formulate their thoughts and sentences. The analysis also considered the influence of the child's bilingual environment. While Bahasa Indonesia was the primary language spoken at home, there was occasional code-switching to a regional language, which was reflected in some of the child's utterances. This bilingual exposure may contribute to the child's developing linguistic repertoire and communicative strategies.

Comparing the child's MLU to normative data for their age group indicates that the child is within the expected range for MLU development. This comparison provides a benchmark for assessing the child's language development and highlights areas where further growth may occur. The study also examined the relationship between MLU and other measures of language development, such as vocabulary size and sentence complexity. Correlational analyses revealed moderate to strong positive relationships between MLU and these measures, supporting the validity of MLU as an indicator of

overall language development. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that has utilized MLU as a measure of language development. For instance, studies have shown that MLU correlates with age and other indices of language growth, such as grammar and vocabulary, supporting its validity as a measure of syntactic development. The study also considered the role of input in language development. The child's exposure to language through interactions with caregivers and peers was noted to be rich and varied, providing ample opportunities for language use and learning. This input likely plays a significant role in the child's language development and the observed MLU.

The analysis also took into account the child's individual differences. Factors such as temperament, cognitive abilities, and social interactions may influence language development and contribute to variations in MLU and other language measures. Limitations of the study include the single-subject design, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused on a specific linguistic context, which may not reflect the experiences of children in different environments or linguistic communities. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the language development of a 2-year-8-month-old child, highlighting the utility of MLU as a measure of syntactic development. The findings contribute to the body of knowledge on early language acquisition and underscore the importance of considering both quantitative and qualitative aspects of language development. Future research could expand on these findings by including a larger sample size and examining the influence of additional factors, such as socioeconomic status and educational background, on language development. Longitudinal studies could also provide insights into the trajectory of language development over time. In conclusion, the analysis of the child's spontaneous speech using MLU provides a comprehensive picture of their language development at 2 years and 8 months. The findings suggest that the child is developing language skills in line with typical developmental patterns, with emerging complexity in syntax, morphology, and pragmatics. These insights can inform educational practices and support strategies to foster language development in early childhood.

DISCUSSION

The present study set out to explore the morphosyntactic development of a child aged 2 years and 8 months using the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) as a primary metric. The data collected and analyzed provided substantial evidence that the child’s language development aligns well with developmental norms established in prior linguistic studies, particularly those outlined by Roger Brown. The average MLU of 3.5 morphemes falls within Stage III of Brown's classification, typically observed in children aged 27–30 months. This suggests that the subject is developing language at a rate consistent with their chronological age. One of the most salient features observed in the child’s language was the predominance of simple sentence structures. The majority of utterances followed a subject-verb-object (SVO) order, which is common in the early stages of morphosyntactic development. This pattern reflects an increasing ability to structure thoughts using basic grammatical constructions, signaling a foundational grasp of sentence formation. It also indicates that the child is internalizing the syntactic rules of their ambient language, in this case, Bahasa Indonesia.

The emergence of compound sentences, although less frequent, is particularly noteworthy. The use of conjunctions such as "dan" (and) suggests the child is beginning to link ideas and expand their utterances beyond simple clauses. This development demonstrates an early awareness of syntactic subordination and coordination, which are important markers of linguistic maturity. Even when such constructions appeared with some inconsistencies, their presence marks a transition toward more complex linguistic behavior. The child’s use of grammatical morphemes further supports the indication of developmental progress. The consistent appearance of plural forms, possessive markers,

and present progressive morphology reflects an increasing command over the rules that govern word modification. These findings are congruent with what is typically expected in Brown's Stage III, where children begin to regularly employ inflectional morphology, albeit with occasional errors.

Interestingly, the child's use of past tense markers was infrequent, which may suggest that the concept of past events is still developing cognitively, or that such grammatical forms have not been heavily reinforced in the input the child receives. Bahasa Indonesia's relatively analytic structure—with less reliance on inflection compared to highly inflected languages—may also play a role in the reduced use of tense markers in early utterances. Pronoun development also mirrored expected trends. The frequent use of first-person and second-person singular pronouns indicated an awareness of self and interlocutor roles, which are crucial to communicative interaction. Limited use of third-person pronouns may be attributed to the child's focus on immediate social interactions, which primarily involve themselves and their primary caregivers. As children expand their social worlds, the use of third-person forms tends to increase accordingly.

The emergence of negation, particularly through the word "tidak," suggests a developing grasp of sentence polarity. The child was able to apply negation across verb and adjective contexts, signaling syntactic control over this grammatical function. Although more complex forms of negation were not yet present, the functional use of basic negation demonstrates significant progress in expressing contrary meanings. Another developmental aspect observed was the limited but emerging use of adjectives. While the frequency and variety were not extensive, their appearance in noun phrases reflects the child's growing ability to elaborate on referents and provide descriptive detail. This development supports theories of semantic expansion that typically occur between the second and third years of life. Vocabulary richness was evident, especially within the noun and verb categories. The predominance of nouns is a common trend among children at this age, as their early language often centers around labeling objects and people in their immediate environment. However, the appearance of a diverse set of verbs also indicates a maturing lexicon that supports action-based and relational concepts, crucial for forming complete propositions. The child's pragmatic abilities were also well-developed, as observed in their capacity to engage in back-and-forth conversations. The ability to take turns, respond to questions, and initiate exchanges suggests a growing sensitivity to conversational norms. This aspect of language development is often less emphasized in structural analyses but remains essential to real-world communication and social integration.

The occasional use of discourse fillers such as "eh" or pauses between utterances is a natural part of language development. These markers often signify the child's attempt to maintain interaction while cognitively organizing their thoughts. Such fillers are transitional tools that indicate emerging discourse management skills. Exposure to multiple languages within the child's environment seemed to influence linguistic patterns, particularly in instances of code-switching. While Bahasa Indonesia remained dominant, the occasional use of regional expressions points to the cognitive flexibility inherent in multilingual contexts. This linguistic flexibility may enhance metalinguistic awareness and should be explored in future research.

The MLU findings serve as a strong indicator of syntactic development, but they also interact with other linguistic domains. A child with a higher MLU is likely to demonstrate broader lexical diversity and greater command over grammatical structures. The correlation between MLU and these linguistic aspects reaffirms its status as a robust tool for early language assessment, even in non-English-speaking contexts. The value of MLU is further affirmed by its ability to track developmental changes over time. While this study focused on a single point in time, the methodology can be replicated longitudinally to observe how MLU evolves and correlates with other aspects of linguistic and cognitive development. The linguistic environment plays a central role in language acquisition. In this study, the richness of verbal interaction between the child and caregivers likely

contributed to the developmentally appropriate MLU. Children who are spoken to frequently and exposed to varied sentence structures tend to exhibit faster and more sophisticated linguistic growth.

Input quality, including the complexity and responsiveness of caregiver speech, was also observed as a contributing factor. Caregivers who provide scaffolding, model correct syntax, and respond to their child's speech foster environments conducive to language learning. These contextual influences are as important as cognitive readiness in shaping language development. Another influential factor in the child's development was daily routine. The language data collected came from natural settings—during meals, playtime, and daily routines—contexts that provided varied and meaningful language exposure. Contextual variety helped reveal a wide spectrum of syntactic and pragmatic capabilities. Individual differences such as temperament and cognitive style may also play a role in language acquisition. The subject of this study appeared highly verbal and socially engaged, traits that are often associated with advanced language development. These characteristics likely enhanced the child's opportunities for linguistic experimentation and learning. Cultural context must also be acknowledged when interpreting the data. Bahasa Indonesia, with its own syntactic and morphological rules, influences how MLU manifests in young children. The analytic nature of the language, for instance, means that some grammatical distinctions common in other languages may appear differently or emerge later.

The role of narrative structures in child language development is another important dimension. Though the child in this study did not produce fully formed narratives, there were instances of sequential discourse that hinted at emerging storytelling abilities. This skill is closely linked to syntactic and lexical development and is expected to grow in the following months. Errors observed in the child's speech were developmentally appropriate and indicative of rule formation. Overgeneralization, omissions of function words, and misordering of sentence elements are typical in this stage of language acquisition. These mistakes are not regressions but rather signs that the child is experimenting with and internalizing linguistic rules. These developmental errors provide insight into the child's internal grammar. For instance, a tendency to omit auxiliary verbs in early constructions suggests that the child is still working toward full mastery of verb phrase structures. As exposure and experience increase, these omissions typically decrease. The study reaffirms that MLU is a useful but not exhaustive measure of language proficiency. While it captures the average length of utterance, it does not account for communicative intent, prosody, or narrative coherence. Thus, it should be used in conjunction with other linguistic observations to gain a complete picture.

Despite the strengths of the findings, certain limitations must be addressed. The single-subject design, though valuable for in-depth exploration, restricts the generalizability of results. Moreover, variations in child behavior, mood, and interaction quality across sessions may influence the data. The methodology was sensitive to such variability, with multiple observation sessions designed to balance out anomalies. Nonetheless, future studies could benefit from including multiple subjects to allow for comparisons and thematic patterning across individual developmental trajectories. Another limitation lies in the reliance on audio recordings, which, while effective, may not capture every nuance of the child's speech. Nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and intonation also contribute significantly to meaning but are not measured by MLU. Including video data in future research could offer a more holistic analysis. Caregiver input, though observed, was not systematically measured in this study. Future research may consider using tools like the Language Environment Analysis (LENA) system or structured caregiver interviews to quantitatively evaluate language input and its relationship to child output. Nevertheless, the results of this study make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of early morphosyntactic development in Indonesian-speaking children. They suggest that MLU, when culturally adapted, remains a reliable metric across linguistic contexts and can support both academic inquiry and clinical

assessment. These findings also hold practical implications for educators and clinicians. Early identification of atypical MLU scores may prompt timely intervention, potentially mitigating future language delays. Similarly, understanding the normal range of development can prevent unnecessary concern and support more accurate diagnosis. This study underscores the necessity of language-specific research. While most MLU-based studies originate in English-speaking contexts, expanding research to include diverse linguistic settings provides a more complete view of universal and language-specific acquisition processes. In sum, the child's language behavior as analyzed through MLU offers valuable insights into the dynamic and multifaceted nature of language acquisition. From the emergence of grammar.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the child's language development, as measured through Mean Length of Utterance (MLU), is progressing in alignment with developmental expectations for their age. With an MLU average of 3.5 morphemes, the child falls within Roger Brown's Stage III of syntactic development, indicating that the basic building blocks of grammar are well in place. This MLU score, combined with the observed use of varied sentence structures, functional grammatical morphemes, and contextually appropriate utterances, points to a maturing linguistic system that reflects the child's growing mastery of both form and function in language. The child's speech exhibited a balance between rule-based grammar and creative language use, confirming that language acquisition at this age is both systematic and highly adaptive. The emergence of compound sentences, correct use of pronouns, growing vocabulary, and pragmatic skills such as turn-taking and topic maintenance all point to a child who is navigating language with increasing sophistication. Although certain grammatical elements, such as past tense markers and third-person pronouns, were less frequently used, their partial presence suggests they are still emerging and may become more prominent as the child continues to acquire language through social interaction and exposure. The qualitative aspects of the child's language, such as the use of code-switching and cultural expressions, further support the idea that language development is shaped not only by internal cognitive mechanisms but also by the richness and diversity of the linguistic environment. In conclusion, the study has shown that language acquisition at the age of 2 years and 8 months is a dynamic process marked by the gradual integration of grammatical rules, expanding vocabulary, and growing communicative competence. The child in this study displays typical patterns of development and offers a valuable example of how MLU can be used as both a research tool and a practical means of language assessment. Future research should continue to explore diverse linguistic environments, larger sample sizes, and longitudinal designs to deepen our understanding of language acquisition across cultures and developmental stages. Ultimately, the study reinforces the idea that language development is a deeply human process—shaped by interaction, nurtured through communication, and grounded in the rich tapestry of daily life.

REFERENCES

Arikunto, S. (2002). *Prosedur Penelitian*. Bandung: Rineka Cipta.

Apriyanti, I., & Rahayu, S. (2024). Efforts to Improve Student Learning Outcomes through the Problem Based Learning Model in Islamic Education Learning at SD Negeri 104325 Kampung Manggis. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(2), 61–68.

Elistiana, V., Novita, N., & Ginting, F. W. (2024). A Development of E-Module Learning Media based on SETS (Science, Environment, Technology, and Society) on Sound Wave Material. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities*, *1*(2), 20–32.

Erawadi, E., Hamka, H., & Juliana, F. (2017). The Analysis of Student's Stressed Syllables

Mastery at Sixth Semester of TBI in IAIN Padangsidimpuan. *English Education: English Journal for Teaching and Learning*, 5(1), 44–57.

Hamka, H. (2023). The Role of Principals on Teacher Performance Improvement in a Suburban School. *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama*, 15(1), 371–380.

Hamka, H., Suen, M.-W., Anganthi, N. R. N., Haq, A. H. B., & Prasetyo, B. (2023). The Effectiveness of Gratitude Intervention in Reducing Negative Emotions in Sexual Abuse Victims. *Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 8(2), 227–240.

Harahap, D. S. (2024). Implementation of ChatGPT to Improve Students' Critical Thinking Abilities. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities*, *1*(2), 33–39.

Harahap, S. M., & Hamka, H. (2023). Investigating the Roles of Philosophy, Culture, Language and Islam in Angkola's Local Wisdom of 'Dalihan Na Tolu.' *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 79(1), 8164.

Indrawati, N., & Desky, A. Y. D. (2024). How to Improve Elementary School Student Learning Outcomes by Implementing the Articulation Type Cooperative Learning Model? *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(2), 32–37.

Jannah, A., Lubis, A. H., & Julia, N. M. (2024). Development of Number Card Media in Mathematics Learning for Elementary School Students. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(3), 12–23.

Latifah, I., & Safrida, I. (2025). Improving Students' Language Skills with Punakawan Wayang Media at RA Mansyaul Huda: A Classroom Action Research. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *2*(1), 13–24.

Lubis, A. H. (2024). Improving Elementary School Students' Reading Skills Using Picture Word Cards: How is This Possible? *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(2), 9–18.

Lubis, A. H., & Lubis, S. S. W. (2024). Development of Newsletter Media in Thematic Learning for Elementary School Students. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities*, *1*(1), 28–36.

Mauliana, I., Ulfa, N., & Fitria, A. (2024). Improving Student Learning Outcomes with the Problem Based Learning Model: Classroom Action Research at the State Islamic Primary School. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities*, *1*(2), 1–8.

Misqa, L., Oviana, W., Hayati, Z., & Jannah, M. (2024). Improving Student Learning Outcomes in Mathematics Learning through a Contextual Teaching and Learning Approach in Elementary Schools. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(2), 19–26.

Muliawati, I., & Aldin, A. (2024). The Effectiveness of the Problem Based Learning Model on Elementary School Students' Mathematics Learning Outcomes. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(2), 27–31.

Nurliza, M., Lubis, A. H., & Lubis, S. S. W. (2024). Word Square Model Used by Poster Media to Improve Primary School Student Learning Outcomes. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(1), 19–28.

Rahayu, L., & Daud, R. M. (2024). SAS Method assisted by Picture Story Books to Improve Elementary School Students' Beginning Reading Ability. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(1), 37–46.

Rahmah, S., & Lubis, A. H. (2024). Problem Posing as a Learning Model to Improve Primary School Students' Mathematics Learning Outcomes in Gayo Lues. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, *1*(4), 93–104.

Simamora, R. (2024). A Survey Research: What is the Role of the Mendeley Application in the Student Environment? *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities*, *1*(2), 40–45.

Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.