



Maguindanaon Students' English Learning Experiences in a Distant-Rural Public School: A Qualitative Exploration of Challenges and Support System

Hanifa B. Nanding, Dr. Adrian Protacio

Sultan Kudarat State University, Philippines

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Abstract— Learning English among Maguindanaon students is both a challenge and a fulfillment. Their journey toward language acquisition reflects their resilience, shaped by their experiences and the support systems available to them. This study explores the experiences of five Junior High School Maguindanaon students in General Salipada K. Pendatun, aiming to uncover their challenges, learning strategies, and the role of their support networks. Findings reveal that students commonly struggle with spoken English due to limited exposure outside the classroom and a lack of confidence in spontaneous conversations. Many express comforts in structured environments such as classroom discussions but hesitate in informal interactions. Vocabulary limitations, pronunciation difficulties, and grammatical errors especially in subject-verb agreement, emerge as key obstacles to fluency, often compounded by the influence of the Maguindanaon language. The study highlights the significant influence of support systems on students' language development. Limited school resources, particularly instructional materials and digital tools, restrict opportunities for practice beyond regular lessons. While some students benefit from teacher and peer guidance, many lack access to structured support programs such as English clubs or tutoring. Family involvement varies, with some providing encouragement but minimal academic assistance. The absence of consistent and accessible support systems creates barriers that hinder students' ability to develop English proficiency. These findings underscore the necessity of strengthening institutional, peer, and familial support networks. Enhancing access to resources, mentorship programs, and immersive language experiences can play a pivotal role in fostering confidence and competence in English. A collaborative approach involving educators, families, and communities is crucial in creating an environment where Maguindanaon students can thrive in their pursuit of language mastery.



Keywords— Challenge, English, Experience, Farmland school, Instructional Material, Students, Support system

I. INTRODUCTION

In rural Maguindanao, where daily survival often overshadows education, learning English is quite challenging for many students due to limited resources and a weak support system.

English is widely regarded as a global language and the ultimate tool for communication and knowledge acquisition in various fields. Proficiency in English is essential for academic success and access to a broader range of

educational resources and opportunities. It enhances students' ability to participate in classroom discussions, access scientific and technical literature, and communicate with peers from diverse backgrounds. Learning and using English effectively can influence students' academic performance and future career prospects (Al-Harbi, 2020).

The dominance of the English language in the academic world presents opportunities and challenges for students worldwide. English facilitates international collaboration and access to a wealth of knowledge. On the

other hand, students from non-English-speaking backgrounds often face difficulties adapting to English-dominated academic environments, which can affect their confidence and performance (Mariñas, 2021). From students' perspective, particularly those whose first language is not English, this global reliance on English can create a barrier to fully engaging with academic content and participating in discourse (Hyland, 2015).

English is both an official language and a medium of instruction in many educational institutions in the Philippine context (Cabigon, 2015). Despite this, many students encounter challenges in mastering English, influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, quality of education, and exposure to English outside the classroom. The gap in English proficiency levels across different regions and socio-economic groups highlights the need to explore students' diverse learning experiences and the factors contributing to their success or struggle in acquiring English language skills (Hol, 2017).

Furthermore, Maguindanaon students, like many others in non-urban areas of the Philippines, often face unique challenges in learning English. These challenges include limited resource access (Movchan, 2018), insufficient exposure to English speakers (Bartolome et al., 2017), and cultural differences that may affect language acquisition. Additionally, the educational infrastructure in some regions may not adequately support the development of English proficiency, leaving students at a disadvantage in academic contexts. Understanding Maguindanaon students' specific barriers is vital for developing effective support systems catering to their needs.

Udat and Kunso (2021) found that the struggles of the Maguindanaon learners in multilingual learning are due to the poor background of students in word stratification in morphology, inadequate sentence construction due to the complexity of rules in syntax, and word recognition and correct usage in semantics. Maguindanaon means people of the flood plain, primarily inhabiting the broad Pulangi River valley. According to data, about 48.5 percent of Indigenous children in BARMM attend elementary school, but only 11.2 percent complete basic education (BARMM, 2022). In addition to acute poverty and exhausting daily walks to schools, students are also expected to help parents in the fields during harvesting. They cannot cope with school work, perform poorly, and most drop out (UNICEF, 2019). This scenario makes it more difficult for the learners to catch up in school.

As this study explores the English language learning experiences of five Junior High School Maguindanaon students at Hadji Datu Abubakar K. Pendatun National High School (HDAKPNS), a rural

institution with limited access to modern educational resources. Each participant presents distinct challenges shaped by their environment, language background, and available support systems. While some students demonstrate proficiency in reading, they struggle with comprehension and articulation, revealing a gap between passive understanding and active communication. Others face difficulties due to minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, technological limitations, and a reliance on traditional teaching methods.

Moreover, while there has been substantial research on English language learning in the Philippines, there is a notable gap in studies focusing specifically on the experiences of Maguindanaon students. Existing research often overlooks the unique cultural and socio-economic contexts (Suarez, 2020), teaching strategies (Pangket et al., 2019), and support at home (Leander & Fabella, 2020) that influence their learning experiences. Hence, there is less research exploring the actual stories of Maguindanaon students and their unique and diversified challenges in learning the English language. Thus, there is a need to examine the barriers these students face and the support systems that can enhance their English language acquisition.

In language teaching, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific role of instruction in developing English language proficiency, particularly within the context of the Maguindanao del Sur Division. Existing research has explored how teachers incorporate various modes in teaching English, such as visuals (Choi & Yi, 2016), texts and animations (Jones, 2017), gestures and communication (Kress, 2015), and instructional technology (Van Leeuwen, 2015) in their classroom practices, along with students' perceptions of this integration. However, comprehensive studies that delve into learners' authentic narratives and struggles in acquiring the English language remain limited.

In the context of Hadji Datu Abubakar K. Pendatun National High School, students have difficulty speaking and responding to simple questions posed by the teacher. In support of this claim, the school head published the student's MPS of 78, signifying a fairly satisfactory performance in English in the previous school year, 2023-2024. They cannot pronounce the words in English well. When asked to recite in class, they tend to answer them in the Maguindanaon dialect or Filipino. This leads the researcher to conduct a study exploring the experiences of the Maguindanaon learners in Hadji Datu Abubakar SK Pendatun National High School to know their challenges and support system for English language learning.

Research Questions

The study ought to investigate the Maguindanao students' English learning experiences, challenges, and support systems. It answered the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Maguindanaon students about English language learning?
2. What are the challenges faced by Maguindanaon students in English language learning?
3. What support systems are available to Maguindanaon students in their English language learning journey?

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a Multiple-case Study design to explore the English learning experiences of Maguindanaon students in a farmland school setting. A case study design is particularly suited for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex and contextual factors affecting students' learning experiences (Yin, 2018). The focus on a single school within a specific geographic and socio-economic context provides an opportunity to examine the unique challenges these learners face and the available support systems. This design facilitates the collection of rich, detailed data through interviews, observations, and document analysis, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences and perspectives.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Hadji Datu Abubakar K. Pendatun National High School (HDAKPNHS), situated in Brgy. Panoseolen, Gen. SK Pendatun, Maguindanao del Sur. This school is in a rural barangay with a predominantly Muslim student population. The community largely relies on farming as the primary means of livelihood, reflecting the area's agricultural economy and traditional way of life.

Research Participants

The participants for this study consisted of Maguindanaon students currently enrolled at HDAKPNHS for the academic year 2024-2025. This group includes students from various grade levels actively engaged in English language courses. Including participants from different grade levels within the school allows for diverse perspectives and experiences related to English language learning. Scientific criteria will guide the selection of participants to ensure the validity and reliability of the study findings.

Description of the Cases

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a Grade 10 student living in a rural farmland community with severely limited access to modern educational resources. The student has consistently struggled with learning English, which has become a major barrier to academic success and effective communication. This student has no exposure to English speakers outside the classroom, relying entirely on school-based interactions to engage with the language. Classified as an instructional-level reader, they face difficulties comprehending English texts beyond basic recognition. With no access to modern technology and no gadgets at home, opportunities for independent learning are scarce. The student has never participated in any after-school programs for English development, further limiting avenues for improvement. Living with both parents who are uneducated and unable to provide academic assistance the student lacks family support in English learning. Additionally, all siblings are still in elementary school and struggle with English themselves, making peer assistance within the household impossible. As a result, this student navigates the challenges of learning English with minimal reinforcement outside the classroom, relying solely on teachers for instruction while grappling with issues of comprehension, vocabulary, and spoken fluency.

Participant 2:

Participant 2 is a female Grade 10 student, residing in a rural farming community where educational resources were limited. While she was an independent reader, she struggles with understanding English texts, often finding grammar structure confusing. Despite being comfortable with writing in English, she lacks confidence in speaking, especially in spontaneous conversations, highlighting the gap between written proficiency and verbal communication skills.

Her access to learning support was severely limited, both in school and at home. She has never participated in any after-school or outside-school programs for English development and has never had a tutor aside from her classroom teacher. She and her brother, who is also in Grade 10, both face significant difficulties with English, making academic progress more challenging. Their lack of family assistance further exacerbates their struggles, as they live only with their grandmother after their parents' separation. With no other family members proficient in English, there is no one at home to help reinforce learning.

Additionally, Participant 1, frequently misses classes due to the need to work on the farm, which further impacts their learning progress. Their situation exemplifies the compounded challenges faced by students with minimal exposure to English speakers outside school, restricted access to modern technology, and no structured learning

support beyond the classroom. Without the necessary resources and guidance, these students struggle to build proficiency and confidence in English, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced educational interventions to support language development in rural communities.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is a male Grade 9 student, demonstrating independent reading skills in English. However, despite his ability to decode and understand written content, he struggles with verbal communication, finding it difficult to articulate his thoughts clearly and confidently in spoken English. This challenge reflects a gap between reading comprehension and oral proficiency, which is common in environments with limited English interaction.

Although his family has minimal educational attainment—his father completed only Grade 3 and his mother finished Grade 6—both parents encourage him to excel academically. However, they struggle with reading English themselves, limiting their ability to provide direct assistance in his language learning. His siblings do not offer additional support, further reinforcing his reliance on school resources.

Occasionally, he has access to modern technology at home, which provides some opportunities for self-directed learning. He also makes an effort to practice speaking English by engaging with English speakers online whenever he can borrow a phone, demonstrating his initiative to improve his communication skills. Despite his struggles in spoken English, he was confident in writing, where he can construct ideas more effectively.

Unlike many students in his community, he has had the opportunity to participate in an outside-school program focused on English language development and Teaching English as a Second Language. This experience has provided exposure to structured learning beyond the classroom, though he still faced difficulties in fluency due to limited real-life practice. His case underscores the importance of accessible learning opportunities and the role of technology in bridging gaps in language exposure.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a male Grade 8 student who has developed strong reading skills but continues to struggle with fluency in spoken English. Having undergone pandemic-era education during his Grade 3, 4, and 5 years, he entered secondary school as a non-reader. Recognizing his difficulties, his parents hired a tutor, which significantly improved his reading ability and provided him with a solid foundation in English literacy.

Unlike many students in his community, he has access to electricity at home, allowing him occasional exposure to technology for learning—an advantage not shared by most of his peers, who lack the luxury of using gadgets. While tutoring helped him overcome his early struggles with reading, expressing himself confidently in spoken English remains difficult due to limited conversational practice and real-world language exposure.

A unique aspect of his learning experience was the presence of his college-aged sister, who provides occasional academic follow-ups at home. Her ability to reinforce lessons and assist with studies offers him a rare source of learning support outside of school. Despite this, the challenge remains in applying his reading skills to practical communication, as structured literacy development does not always translate into fluency in spoken English.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a male Grade 8 student, whose learning journey has been deeply affected by resource limitations and socio-economic challenges. A product of pandemic-era education during his Grade 3, 4, and 5, he remained a frustrated reader upon entering secondary school, unlike Participant 4, who had access to technology and tutoring. While he reads Filipino texts proficiently, he struggles significantly with English reading and is classified as a Level 2 reader, meaning he reads word for word without fully grasping the meaning or context of a text.

His learning struggles were compounded by the lack of parental academic support, as both his parents are uneducated and unable to guide him in his studies. Additionally, he lives in a community with no electricity, further restricting his ability to access modern educational tools or reinforce learning outside of school. Unlike some students who can use digital resources for independent study, he has never had the luxury of using gadgets or online materials to aid his education.

Beyond academic challenges, his role as the eldest among many siblings adds another layer of difficulty. He must balance his education with the responsibility of making a living to support his family after school hours, leaving him little time to focus on improving his English skills. His younger siblings, still in elementary school, struggle with English themselves, meaning there is no one at home who can assist him academically. The absence of both family support and external learning reinforcement places him at a severe disadvantage in developing English proficiency.

Sampling Technique

The researcher utilized purposive sampling to select participants for the study, specifically targeting students in

grades 7 to 10 at HDAKPNHS. The selection of 2 students per grade level in Junior High School as participants for the study was scientifically justified through purposeful sampling, aiming to capture a representative yet manageable subset of the student population that reflects diverse English learning experiences. Purposeful sampling, often used in qualitative research, allows researchers to focus on participants most likely to provide rich, relevant data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Instrument

The primary research instruments for this study were the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), which at least three language experts had validated to ensure that the main and sub-questions were aligned with the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to gain a deep, individual understanding of their personal experiences and challenges in learning English. This method allows for open-ended questions and flexibility in responses, enabling the researcher to probe further into specific areas of interest and gather detailed qualitative data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interviews were designed to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and the support systems they encounter, providing rich insights into their unique learning journeys.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure for this study involved several systematic steps to collect reliable and valid information from the participants. Initially, the researcher developed a set of interview questions designed to address the problems identified in the study. These questions were crafted to elicit detailed responses about the challenges and support systems related to English language learning. To ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of these questions, they underwent a validation process involving feedback from experts in educational research and language education. This validation step is crucial for confirming the instrument's validity and reliability before it is used in the field (Yegidis, 2022).

Data Analysis Method

The data analysis process in this study involved several systematic steps. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading and re-reading it to fully understand its content, paying close attention to recurring patterns. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within the data. It organizes and describes all data in detail. This step is essential for becoming thoroughly acquainted with the data before analyzing. Next, the researcher generated initial codes and themes by documenting where and how patterns emerge.

This involves data reduction, where the data is categorized into labels for easier analysis, and data complication, where inferences are made about the meaning of these codes.

In addition to thematic analysis, this study employed cross-case analysis to enhance the depth and comparability of findings across multiple student cases. Cross-case analysis is a method that allows for identifying patterns and variations across different cases by systematically comparing their experiences, challenges, and support systems (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, five Maguindanaon students from different grade levels were analyzed separately before examining recurring and contrasting themes across their individual narratives. After thematic analysis identified patterns within each student's case, the researcher conducted cross-case analysis to compare how the students' experiences were influenced by varying factors. Finally, the researcher produced the report, selecting themes that contribute to the overall understanding of the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter unveils the results of the five (5) cases, particularly on their experiences, challenges, and support systems in the English language learning.

English Language Experiences of Case 1

During the interview, the participant immediately admitted feeling uncomfortable and lacking confidence in using English. When asked in what situations they feel most confident using the language, they responded:

"Hindi po ako confident sa pag gamit ng English dahil nahihirapan po ako gamitin ang English sa pakikipag usap. Hindi po ako halos maka salita kung English po ang ginagamit." [I am not confident in using English because I find it difficult to use it in conversations. I can hardly speak when English is being used.] (P1)

This reveals the broader implications of their struggle—not only does English pose a communication challenge, but it also creates barriers to understanding other subjects taught in English. The participant also mentioned that their school environment is predominantly Maguindanaon-speaking, limiting their opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. This case illustrates the significant impact of linguistic environment and resource availability on English language acquisition among Maguindanaon students.

Challenges Faced by Case 1 in Learning English

Case 1 faces significant challenges in learning English as a second language. Coming from a Maguindanaon-speaking household, his exposure to

English is limited primarily to school settings. One of the first difficulties he mentioned is understanding spoken English due to the accent and the presence of unfamiliar words.

"Nahirapan akong intindihin ang accent at mga unfamiliar words." [I struggle to understand the accent and unfamiliar words.] (P1)

This suggests that his difficulties stem from phonological differences between Maguindanaon and English and a lack of frequent exposure to diverse English speech patterns.

Support Systems Available to Case 1 in English Language Learning

Case 1, a Maguindanaon student, navigates his English language learning journey with the support of multiple systems that play a vital role in his academic progress. His family, teachers, and peers are key pillars in his learning process. Throughout her interview, he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of encouragement and exposure in building her English proficiency. Despite his challenges, he acknowledges that these support systems help him gain confidence in using the language.

One of the strongest influences on his learning experience is his family. Though not fluent in English, his parents motivate him to study diligently. He shared:

'Kahit mahirap, anak, mag-aral ka nang mabuti para sa kinabukasan mo.' [My mother always says, 'Even if it is difficult, my child, study well for your future.']. (P1)

This parental encouragement strengthens her determination to improve her English skills despite struggling with grammar and pronunciation.

English Language Experiences of Case 2

The English language experiences of the Maguindanaon student in this case study reveal enthusiasm and struggles in learning and using the language. The participant acknowledges that they are not entirely confident in speaking English, stating:

"Hindi naman po sa, as in confident na po maa'am, dahil struggling parin po ako sa English" [It's not that I'm fully confident, ma'am, because I'm still struggling with English]. (P2)

The participant acknowledges the importance of English in their academic life. The participant stated:

"Malaki yung na-he-help ng English sa akin lalo na po ngayon karamihan sa mga subject na tinuturo gumagamit ng English" [English helps me a lot, especially now that many subjects are taught in English]. (P2)

However, they also admit that their use of English outside the classroom is minimal, as they communicate in Tagalog when interacting with non-Maguindanaon speakers. This suggests that while English is essential for academic success, its practical application in daily life remains limited. Overall, the participants' experiences highlight a mix of enthusiasm, struggle, and contextual limitations that shape their English language learning journey.

Challenges Faced by Case 2 in Learning English

One of the primary struggles identified by the participant is reading English texts. The student finds it difficult to understand unfamiliar words, which disrupts their reading fluency. As the participant states:

"Mengka mga unfamiliar words den na kapasangan ako den ma'am" [When there are unfamiliar words, I struggle to understand, ma'am]. (P2)

The participant acknowledges that limited vocabulary and insufficient access to learning materials slow down progress:

"Siguro po ma'am yung limited vocabulary ko at wala ako masyadong ibang access sa technology kaya hindi ko din napa practice ng maayos ang English kaya mabagal ang improvements ko po" [Maybe, ma'am, it's my limited vocabulary and lack of access to technology that prevent me from practicing English properly, so my improvement is slow]. (P2)

This highlights the role of external factors such as resource availability in shaping English language learning outcomes. The findings from this case study emphasize the need for targeted support strategies, including vocabulary development, grammar instruction, speaking practice opportunities, and enhanced access to learning materials to improve English proficiency among Maguindanaon students.

Support Systems Available to Case 2 in English Language Learning

The participant shared that their school organizes events such as SPED Funday and the Reading Festival, along with establishing a Reading Pantry, to cultivate an environment conducive to English learning. Despite facing material shortages, these activities provide an avenue for students to practice their English skills. The participant noted:

"Mostly sa classroom teachers namin, ini-integrate ang reading at vocabulary enrichment, then nagkakaroon din po kami ng activities sa school like SPED Funday at Reading Festival, kasama ang paggawa ng Reading Pantry" [Mostly in the classroom, our teachers integrate reading and vocabulary enrichment, and we also have

school activities like SPED Funday and Reading Festival, including the establishment of a Reading Pantry]. (P2)

Despite these challenges, the participant benefits from peer support in the classroom. Teachers implement activities that require students to converse in English, providing practice opportunities.

"Ginawa ni teacher, binibigyan kami ng task na sa buong classroom, magsasalita lang kami o mag-uusap kung nag-e-English kami, kaya malaking tulong mga classmates ko po na ma-practice ko po ang English language from time to time" [Our teacher gave us a task where we could only speak English in the classroom, so my classmates have been a great help in allowing me to practice English from time to time.] (P2)

This structured approach in the school setting is crucial in compensating for the limited support available at home and in the community.

English Language Experiences of Case 3

Despite this rich linguistic background, the participant expressed that using English in speaking situations remains a challenge, revealing:

"Mas komportable po ako mag-share ng thoughts ko pag sinusulat pero kapag sinasabi ko na po, hindi ko na po ma-voice out." ["I am more comfortable sharing my thoughts when writing, but when I have to say them, I cannot voice them anymore."] (P3)

The student revealed an interesting strategy for practicing English through informal online conversations. He shared:

"Minsan po sinusubukan ko po makipag-chat sa mga English speakers sa Messenger lang po para ma-practice ko yung English skills ko po." ["Sometimes I try chatting with English speakers on Messenger just to practice my English skills."] (P3)

This experience highlights the student's agency and willingness to engage with English despite linguistic insecurities, illustrating a key aspect of language learning: the courage to use the language despite imperfections.

Challenges Faced by Case 3 in Learning English

One of the most significant struggles the participant highlighted is oral expression, particularly when speaking in English. The student shared,

"Challenging sa akin yung pag-express ng ideas mengka pag-English pedalun ma'am" ["It's challenging for me to express my ideas when speaking in English, ma'am"]. (P3)

The participant emphasized a lack of self-directed opportunities to improve English skills. The student reflected:

"Yung wala po kaming masyado exposure sa English kaya limited lang din alam naming words... naiintindihan ko naman po talaga ang English na binabasa ko, hindi ko lang din po talaga ma-express pag sinasabi ko na po" ["We don't have much exposure to English, so we only know a limited number of words... I really understand what I read in English; I just can't express it when I try to say it"]. (P3)

This indicates an internalization of receptive skills but a struggle with productive ones. The situation highlights the need for more community-based, low-stakes English speaking opportunities and encouragement in code-switching to bridge expressive gaps during the learning process.

Support Systems Available to Case 3 in English Language Learning

A primary institutional resource mentioned was the availability of a single television for film viewing. The participant shared:

"May TV po sa school pero isa lang kaya hindi po nagkakasiya sa'min" [There is a TV at school, but there is only one, so it is not enough for all of us]. (P3)

Despite the constraint, TV is utilized to watch lectures on literature, science, and history. Occasionally, they also use a projector, but according to the student, *"mostly po ay books po"* (we mostly use books), which remain their primary learning materials. This highlights the school's effort to maximize existing resources to support content-based English learning through multimedia exposure.

Furthermore, the participant regularly receives feedback from teachers, particularly noting their strength in writing and weakness in oral communication:

"Madalas na feedback na nakukuha ko po ay okay ako sa written pero mahina po ako sa participation pag oral recitation" [I often get feedback that I'm good in writing but weak in oral recitation]. (P3)

This points to a nuanced understanding of the student's needs and the tailored support teachers provide.

English Language Experiences of Case 4

The participant noted that they feel most confident using English within the classroom context, particularly during lessons:

"Confident naman po ako gamitin ang English po na natutunan ko sa class discussions po." [I feel confident using the English I've learned in class discussions.] (P4)

They sometimes attempt to converse in English via Messenger, but even then, they feel uncertain:

"Medyo alanganin na po ako pag sinasabi na po, ibang iba po kasi sa lesson na gina-memorize po." [I feel unsure when I have to say it out loud—it's so different from the lessons we memorize.] (P4)

This final insight reveals the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, suggesting the importance of more authentic and practice-oriented approaches in English instruction for Maguindanaon learners.

Challenges Faced by Case 4 in Learning English

The student stated:

"Nahirapan akong e-apply practically yung natutunan ko sa English." [I find it hard to apply what I've learned in English practically]. (P4)

This shows a disconnection between what is taught in the classroom, often focusing on grammar and structure, and the actual use of the language in real-life communication.

The participant highlighted the role of the environment in language development:

"Limited ang vocabulary, at si teacher lang access na nakakausap actual ng English. Walang ibang makausap actual na English" [Vocabulary is limited, and the teacher is the only one I can speak English with. There is no one else to talk to in English]. (P4)

This response pinpoints a critical issue in rural or linguistically homogeneous communities: an English-speaking environment.

Support Systems Available to Case 4 in English Language Learning

Despite infrastructure challenges, such as the school only recently having electricity and a limited television signal, the school has provided basic instructional tools. As the participant noted:

"Dahil bago lang din po nagkaroon ng kuryente sa school, wala din po halos signal sa TV lang po kami na nonood minsan..." [Because the school only recently had electricity, there's barely any signal, we just watch TV sometimes...] (P4)

The participant's response showed how the limited availability of technological support affects exposure to English.

Peer interaction in the classroom plays a vital role in the participants' English learning:

"Malaki po ang part ng mga classmates ko sa progress ko sa English... pinapa-communicate kami isa't isa gamit po ang English..." [My classmates play a big part in my

English progress... we are asked to communicate in English...] (P4)

Despite the absence of external training or workshops, this participant's English learning is sustained by teacher guidance, family involvement, limited school resources, and peer collaboration

English Language Experiences of Case 5

When asked in what situations the student felt most confident using English, the participant replied candidly:

"Diko pon a benal kasaligan ginawa ko ma'am sa kabatya sa English" [I am not confident, Ma'am, in using English.] (P5)

This statement highlights a central theme in their experience—a lack of self-assurance. *"Diko pon a banal"* (not really) implies an internal struggle, a reluctance to assert English proficiency despite possibly having basic exposure.

Challenges Faced by Case 5 in Learning English

In the case of the fifth participant, a clear pattern of difficulty with English emerges, particularly with reading comprehension. When asked about reading in English, the participant stated:

"Kapasangan ako maam magbasa ng mahaba na English Nahirapan pa po ako magbasa maam ng English po." [I find it hard, ma'am, to read long texts in English. I still have a hard time reading English, ma'am.] (P5)

The student faces internal and external limitations when it comes to self-directed learning or trying to improve their English independently. The participant expressed:

"Niyaba maam ha dili kon a gayd kataw matiya sa English." [Maybe, ma'am, because I really don't read English well.] (P5)

This honest response reflects a sense of helplessness or discouragement. The student perceives English as a difficult subject and struggles to see personal improvement, which could lead to low motivation and reduced effort in independent practice.

Support Systems Available to Case 5 in English Language Learning

Various support systems emerged that played a crucial role in their English language learning. The participant identified school-provided resources as the primary source of English support. Among the most frequently used tools were books and the occasional use of technological equipment. The participant shared:

"Mga books bu kadakelan ma'am, bago pon aden kuryente sa school, bali aden TV na school na tubay pedsusukiyan nami pagilay." [Books are the most common, ma'am. Since

there's now electricity in our school, we sometimes use the TV to watch shows.] (P5)

They also benefited from peer tutoring under a "Body-Body System," where honor students partnered with those needing support:

"Mga classmate naming na mga honor gina-paretner samin para matulungan kami." [Our honor classmates are partnered with us to help us.] (P5)

This collaborative model fostered a sense of mutual responsibility and belonging among learners, reinforcing the school's internal support mechanisms.

The Cross-Case Analysis

Table 1. Cross-Case Analysis of English Language Experiences

Emerging Themes	Case Unit		Remarks
	Similarities	Differences	
Barriers to Oral Proficiency	1, 2, 3, 4	5	Cases 1 to 4 struggle with expressing ideas orally in English. Case 5, however, compensates by engaging in self-initiated language learning and using multiple languages.
Motivation through Engagement	1, 2, 3, 4, 5		All cases report increased participation and enjoyment when engaged in structured, collaborative English activities such as debates and games.
Resources Limitations	1, 2, 3, 5	4	Most students experience limited access to resources such as electricity, internet, and digital tools. Case 4, however, supplements learning with home-based media like YouTube.

Emerging Theme 1: Barriers to Oral Proficiency

The experiences of Maguindanaon students reveal a prominent struggle with oral English proficiency, marked by anxiety, limited vocabulary, and a lack of spontaneous language use. This theme emerged most strongly in participants who expressed difficulty speaking English, particularly in unstructured or impromptu settings.

Emerging Theme 2: Motivation through Engagement

The second emerging theme, Motivation through Engagement, captures how structured and interactive English learning activities inspire Maguindanaon students

to participate actively, even when they face linguistic challenges.

Students consistently expressed enjoyment and interest when engaged in class-based tasks like debates and games.

Emerging Theme 3: Resources Limitations

The third emerging theme, Resources Limitations, highlights how socio-economic conditions, lack of infrastructure, and minimal access to learning materials hinder Maguindanaon students' ability to develop English proficiency. Many participants disclosed that their only English learning resource at school was textbooks.

Table 2. Cross-Case Analysis on Challenges Encountered by Maguindanaon Learners

Emerging Themes	Case Unit		Remarks
	Similarities	Differences	
Barriers to Functional Use of English	1, 2, 3, 4	5	Cases 1 to 4 struggle with using English in practical contexts despite understanding lessons, especially in speaking. Case 5, while also facing challenges, is more affected by reading comprehension issues rather than application in real-life conversations.
Vocabulary and Grammar Limitations	1, 2, 3, 5	4	Cases 1, 2, 3, and 5 report limited vocabulary and grammar awareness, particularly in writing and speaking. Case 4 shows some understanding of grammar but still finds it hard to use it productively.
Impact of Environment and Confidence	1, 2, 3, 4, 5		All cases reveal that limited access to English-speaking environments and resources, coupled with anxiety and lack of exposure, significantly impact their confidence and ability to participate in English-based classroom activities.

Emerging Theme 1: Barriers to Functional Use of English

The first emerging theme, Barriers to Functional Use of English, captures the common challenge Maguindanaon students face in applying English in real-life, communicative contexts despite understanding lessons in the classroom. Many participants expressed that while they could follow English discussions or comprehend texts, they found it difficult to use the language, especially in speaking tasks.

Emerging Theme 2: Vocabulary and Grammar Limitations

The second emerging theme focuses on the foundational linguistic challenges that hinder Maguindanaon students'

ability to express themselves in English. These include limited vocabulary, difficulty with sentence construction, and poor mastery of grammar rules such as subject-verb agreement.

Emerging Theme 3: Impact of Environment and Confidence

The third emerging theme, Impact of Environment and Confidence, reflects how external factors and internal affective responses shape Maguindanaon students' English learning experiences. A recurring issue across all five cases was the lack of access to English-speaking environments and resources, contributing to low confidence and fear of participation.

Table 3. Cross-Case Analysis of the Support System Given to Maguindanaon Learners

Emerging Themes	Case Unit		Remarks
	Similarities	Differences	
School-Based Instructional Support	1, 2, 3, 4, 5		All five cases report access to school-provided instructional materials like books, occasional multimedia tools (TV/projector), and structured classroom activities.
Teacher-Initiated Interventions	1, 3, 4, 5	2	Most cases, except Case 2, describe pull-out sessions, personalized feedback, or vocabulary enrichment activities led by teachers beyond formal lessons.
Peer Collaboration and Social Support	1, 2, 3, 4, 5		All students benefit from peer collaboration, either through informal conversation practice, English-only tasks, or peer tutoring systems such as 'Body-Body.'
Family and Community Engagement	1, 2, 4	3, 5	Only Cases 1, 2, and 4 receive some form of family support. Cases 3 and 5 lack home-based academic guidance due to parents' limited education or absence of literate members.

Emerging Theme 1: School-Based Instructional Support

School-based instructional support emerged as a vital theme across all five cases, highlighting the importance of structured educational settings in the English language learning journey of Maguindanaon students. Despite varied access levels to advanced technology, all students reported that their schools provided basic tools such as printed books, modules, and occasional multimedia support (TV or projector), revealing how foundational print-based resources remain in under-resourced environments.

Emerging Theme 2: Teacher-Initiated Interventions

Teacher-initiated interventions are one of the most impactful support systems for English language learning among Maguindanaon students. Four out of five participants shared experiences where their teachers went beyond basic instruction to support their English development. This includes providing individualized feedback, initiating pull-out sessions for struggling readers, and creatively organizing classroom activities.

Emerging Theme 3: Peer Collaboration and Social Support

Peer collaboration and social support play a pivotal role in the English language development of Maguindanaon students. All five participants emphasized the importance of classmates in reinforcing their learning. Teachers actively encouraged peer interaction in various classroom settings as part of language activities.

Emerging Theme 4: Family and Community Engagement

The availability and impact of family and community engagement in English language learning varied significantly among the participants. While some students benefited from home-based support and informal tutoring, others described environments with minimal to no academic assistance.

Discussion of Findings

English Language Experiences of Maguindanaon Learners

The English language experiences of Maguindanaon learners reveal a complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental factors that shape their language development. Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and the Theory of Support Systems, the findings highlight three critical themes: barriers to oral proficiency, motivation through engagement, and environmental limitations. Students struggle with spoken English due to

limited exposure outside the classroom, illustrating how familial, community, and systemic contexts constrain their opportunities for authentic language use.

Emerging Theme 1: Barriers to Oral Proficiency

The findings resonate strongly with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which asserts that human development is shaped by multiple layers of environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, students' difficulties in oral English proficiency stem from the microsystem (family, school) and macrosystem (socio-linguistic environment). Most participants reported communicating exclusively in Maguindanaon at home and in their communities. This lack of interaction with English outside the classroom diminishes their opportunities for authentic oral practice, reinforcing language anxiety and low confidence.

Emerging Theme 2: Motivation through Engagement

This theme is supported by Vygotsky's Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes the significance of social interaction and cultural context in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). In this framework, learners build knowledge more effectively when engaging in collaborative activities.

Emerging Theme 3: Resources Limitations

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory offers a framework for understanding how environmental limitations impact learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Exosystems such as school resources and home infrastructure exert a powerful indirect influence on learners. When schools lack electricity, digital tools, or up-to-date materials, the learners' development is stunted despite internal motivation.

Challenges Faced by Maguindanaon Learners in Learning English

The challenges faced by Maguindanaon learners in learning English reveal a complex web of linguistic, environmental, and emotional barriers that inhibit their full language development. The findings uncover three interrelated themes: barriers to the functional use of English, vocabulary and grammar limitations, and the impact of environment and learner confidence. Learners struggle not only with the mechanics of language but also with limited opportunities for authentic practice within and beyond the classroom. Instructional methods overly emphasizing passive learning and correctness further impede fluency and confidence.

Emerging Theme 1: Barriers to Functional Use of English

The experiences reported in this theme align closely with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that learners are influenced by nested environments such as home, school, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The absence of English-speaking interactions outside the classroom, particularly within the microsystem (peers, family), limits fluency development. Students shared that they primarily speak Maguindanaon or Tagalog at home and rely on teachers as their only English-speaking contacts.

Emerging Theme 2: Vocabulary and Grammar Limitations

The findings under this theme reinforce Constructivist Theory, which posits that learners build language competence through guided exploration and interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, students demonstrated difficulties in grammar and vocabulary due to limited scaffolding and contextual language use. Since their language input is often rule-based and memorized, they cannot dynamically apply grammar in conversation or writing.

Emerging Theme 3: Impact of Environment and Confidence

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains how the students' larger environment, home, peers, and community affect their ability to learn and use English. In these cases, a monolingual Maguindanaon context with limited English exposure inhibits oral practice and vocabulary development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem and exosystem layers do not support English usage, which limits reinforcement.

Support Systems Available to Maguindanaon Learners in English Language Learning

The support systems available to Maguindanaon learners in their English language journey reveal a multi-layered network anchored within schools, teachers, peers, families, and communities. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and the Theory of Support Systems, the findings highlight four major themes: school-based instructional support, teacher-initiated interventions, peer collaboration, and family and community engagement. Schools and teachers emerge as the primary scaffolds for English learning, compensating for students' limited exposure at home and in the broader community. Peer interactions provide crucial social reinforcement and a less intimidating environment for practicing English, while family and community involvement, when present, enhances learners' motivation, confidence, and persistence.

Emerging Theme 1: School-Based Instructional Support

This theme reflects the tenets of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, where the school, as part of the microsystem, plays a pivotal role in shaping learners' language acquisition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Without strong external support from family or community, the school becomes the primary source of English exposure and practice for many Maguindanaon learners.

Emerging Theme 2: Teacher-Initiated Interventions

This theme strongly aligns with Constructivist Theory, which views the teacher not as a mere transmitter of knowledge but as a co-creator of meaning and facilitator of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Through individualized attention and personalized interventions, the teachers in these cases help learners scaffold complex language concepts in a supportive environment, enabling more meaningful internalization of the English language.

Emerging Theme 3: Peer Collaboration and Social Support

This theme aligns directly with Constructivist Theory, which advocates that learning is a social process shaped through interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Through peer-based learning, Maguindanaon students co-construct knowledge and reinforce understanding by participating in meaningful conversations and shared learning experiences. These activities help them practice English in real-time and with less pressure than formal assessments.

Emerging Theme 4: Family and Community Engagement

This theme focuses on the microsystem and mesosystem levels of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, particularly the family and community's influence on learning outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In cases where the home environment is literate and emotionally supportive, students display greater confidence and persistence. Conversely, when these systems are absent, students face additional isolation and struggle to self-direct their learning.

IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examines the English language learning experiences of Maguindanaon students in a rural farmland school, where socio-economic constraints and limited educational resources create substantial barriers to language acquisition. However, students in resource-limited settings

often struggle with fluency, comprehension, and structured learning due to the absence of technological access, exposure to English speakers, and adequate instructional support.

The role of support systems varied across cases. Schools provided basic instructional materials and teacher interventions, while peer collaboration encouraged informal language practice. However, family assistance was inconsistent—some students received encouragement, while others lacked academic reinforcement due to illiterate parents or demanding household responsibilities. The absence of structured after-school programs further limited opportunities for extended learning and language reinforcement.

Ultimately, the study highlights that Maguindanaon students possess a strong willingness to learn English, yet their success is heavily influenced by institutional, peer, and family support systems. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions that incorporate interactive teaching strategies, peer-driven learning, and expanded community engagement, ensuring students can confidently apply English skills in academic and real-world settings.

Conclusions

Maguindanaon students' English learning journey reflects both resilience and struggle. Despite linguistic and environmental barriers, they show a strong willingness to learn, especially when engaged in interactive and socially supportive activities. However, oral proficiency remains a challenge due to limited vocabulary, poor grammar control, and lack of fluency, compounded by restricted access to digital resources and English-speaking environments.

Support systems play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. School-based instruction, teacher interventions, and peer collaboration provide essential reinforcement, though family support varies. While some students receive encouragement, others lack literate role models or academic assistance at home. The absence of structured learning programs further limits language development outside the classroom.

Ultimately, the study highlights the need for comprehensive support strategies, integrating classroom innovations, peer-driven learning, and expanded community involvement to enhance students' English proficiency and confidence. Without strengthened educational frameworks, achieving fluency and meaningful language use remains an uphill battle.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, several important recommendations for English language instruction among Maguindanaon students are formulated:

1. To enhance the positive learning experiences of Maguindanaon students, schools may integrate more interactive activities like debates, role-plays, message relay games, and storytelling sessions. These activities may be contextualized to their cultural background and daily life realities, making English use more meaningful, relatable, and less intimidating.
2. Addressing the challenge of oral proficiency requires implementing specialized workshops focusing on building speaking confidence, vocabulary enrichment, and pronunciation practice. These workshops may be safe spaces where students can practice English speaking without fear of judgment, gradually transitioning from guided conversations to spontaneous speaking tasks.
3. Given the students' limited vocabulary and grammar awareness, structured intervention programs such as "Vocabulary of the Week," grammar clinics, and daily exposure to English phrases may be offered. These programs may provide low-pressure repetition, modeling, and practice of functional language use in writing and speaking.
4. To counter resources limitations, schools and local governments may invest in expanding access to multimedia English resources such as educational videos, interactive learning apps, and English audio materials. Simple technology can set up mobile learning kits, community digital libraries, or even school-based English Corners, significantly widening English exposure beyond textbooks.
5. Peer collaboration may be institutionalized through English Buddy Programs, where stronger English users mentor struggling learners. This approach promotes language learning in an informal and supportive way and strengthens the students' confidence, social bonds, and willingness to use English more spontaneously.
6. Schools may partner with local government units (LGUs), NGOs, and religious organizations to create community-based English literacy campaigns. Workshops for parents supporting children's English learning at home, even for non-literate parents, could include storytelling activities, encouraging children to share English words daily, or hosting community reading days.
7. Using Speaking and Writing exemplars effectively enhances Maguindanaon students' English proficiency. Reading models improve comprehension, vocabulary, and sentence structure, while writing exemplars help with organization and grammar. Given limited tech access, print-

based materials provide practical support beyond the classroom, building confidence, accuracy, and fluency.

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