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

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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 comfort 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 need to strengthen 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 takes precedence over education, learning English can be 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, which are influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status, the 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 access to resources (Movchan, 2018), insufficient exposure to English speakers (Bartolome et al., 2017), and cultural differences that may impact 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 the specific barriers faced by Maguindanaon students is vital for developing effective support systems that cater to their needs.

Udat and Kunso (2021) found that the struggles of Maguindanaon learners in multilingual learning are due to the students' poor background in word stratification in morphology, inadequate sentence construction resulting from the complexity of syntax rules, and difficulties with word recognition and correct usage in semantics. Maguindanaon refers to the people of the floodplain, 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 facing acute poverty and enduring daily walks to school, students are also expected to assist their parents in the fields during harvest time. They struggle to cope with schoolwork, 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 (HDAKPNHS), 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, a notable gap exists in studies that focus 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 a lack of research exploring the actual stories of Maguindanaon students and their unique and diverse 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, a notable gap exists 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.

At HDAKPNHS, students struggle to speak and respond 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 in the Maguindanaon dialect or Filipino. This leads the researcher to conduct a study exploring the experiences of Maguindanaon learners at HDAKPNHS to understand their challenges and support systems for English language learning.

Research Questions

The study 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 well-suited for this research, as it enables an in-depth exploration of the complex and contextual factors that influence 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 support systems available to them. 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 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 consisted of Maguindanaon students currently enrolled at HDAKPNHS for the academic year 2024-2025. This group comprises students from various grade levels who are 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.

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, a method often employed in qualitative research, enables 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 semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), which at least three language experts validated to ensure that the main and sub-questions 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 designed to elicit detailed responses about the challenges and support systems associated with 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 the identification, analysis, and reporting of 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, followed by an examination of recurring and contrasting themes across their narratives. After thematic analysis identified patterns within each student's case, the researcher conducted cross-case analysis to compare how varying factors influenced the students' experiences. Finally, the researcher produced the report, selecting themes that contribute to the overall understanding of the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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 confidents 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)

Krashen (1986) identifies motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety as three categories of variables that influence second language acquisition according to the Affective Filter Hypothesis. In essence, when feelings or emotions such as anxiety, fear, or embarrassment are elevated, it becomes difficult for language acquisition to occur. 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. "*Nahihirapan akong intindihin ang accent at mga unfamiliar words.*" [I struggle to understand the accent and unfamiliar words.] (P1)

According to 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)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasizes the critical role of multiple environmental systems, such as family, peers, and school, in shaping a learner's development. This theory supports how interconnected support systems influence Case 1's English language learning. 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 is not that I am fully confident, ma'am, because I am 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)

Cummins' (2000) theory on second language acquisition, particularly his distinction between Basic

Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cummins argues that learners often develop conversational fluency (BICS) more easily than the academic language needed for success in school (CALP), and that the latter takes longer and is more cognitively demanding. This directly relates to the participant's admission of struggles with English despite recognizing its academic value. 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.

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 is my limited vocabulary and lack of access to technology that prevent me from practicing English properly, so my improvement is slow]. (P2)

Nation's (2001) work on vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency. The nation emphasizes the critical role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension and language learning, especially for second-language (L2) learners. He also highlights that limited vocabulary and insufficient input (such as reading materials and technology) hinder fluency and language development, exactly the challenges faced by your Maguindanaon participant.

This highlights the role of external factors such as resource availability in shaping English language learning outcomes. The findings from this case study highlight the importance of targeted support strategies, including vocabulary development, grammar instruction, speaking practice opportunities, and increased access to learning materials, in enhancing 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 offer students an opportunity 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, participants benefit 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)

Vygotsky's (1978) supports the idea that structured school-based activities, peer collaboration, and teacher-guided practices (such as English-only tasks and festivals) contribute to second language development, particularly when home and community support is limited. 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)

Norton's (2000) concept of "language learner identity" and "investment" in language learning. Norton argues that language learning is not only about acquiring linguistic competence, but also deeply tied to the learner's identity, confidence, and social interaction. The participant's

comfort in writing over speaking, and their self-directed effort to engage in English through online chats, perfectly reflect these ideas. 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 pedtalun ma'am"* ["It is 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 understand what I read in English; I just cannot express it when I try to say it".] (P3)

Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of language production (speaking and writing) in second language learning. Swain argues that learners need not only to comprehend input (reading and listening) but also to produce language in meaningful contexts to develop fluency and accuracy. 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 am good in writing but weak in oral recitation]. (P3)

Mayer's (2001) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning explains how combining words and visuals (e.g., videos, TV, and projectors) enhances learning by supporting both verbal and visual processing channels. Even with limited resources, the use of television and projectors for participants' school aligns with Mayer's theory that multimedia exposure aids comprehension, especially in content-based language learning.

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 have learned in class discussions.] (P4). They sometimes attempt to converse in English via Messenger. However, 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 is so different from the lessons we memorize.] (P4)

Ellis (2003) focuses on second language acquisition (SLA), particularly emphasizing the distinction between explicit knowledge (e.g., memorized classroom material) and implicit knowledge (practical, spontaneous use of language). Ellis highlights that while learners may perform well in structured academic contexts, they often struggle to use the language fluently in real-life communication unless they are given meaningful, authentic practice.

Challenges Faced by Case 4 in Learning English

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 student stated: *"Nahihirapan akong e-apply practically yung natutunan ko sa English."* [I find it hard to apply what I have learned in English practically]. (P4). 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). Krashen's (1982) emphasizes that language acquisition flourishes in environments where learners are exposed to the target language naturally and frequently.

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 nagkarroon 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 is barely any signal, we just watch TV sometimes...] (P4). The participant's response highlighted how limited technological support availability 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)

Warschauer (2004) emphasizes that even minimal access, when paired with strong peer collaboration and teacher guidance, can support meaningful learning despite infrastructure challenges. 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. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy explains how an individual's belief in their capability to perform a task significantly affects their motivation, performance, and persistence, especially in language learning.

Challenges Faced by Case 5 in Learning English

In the case of the fifth participant, a clear pattern of difficulty with English, particularly in reading comprehension, emerges. When asked about reading in English, the participant stated: "*Kapasangan ako maam magbasa ng mahaba na English Nahihirapan 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 do not 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. Grabe and Stoller's (2011) work on reading in a second language provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges learners face with reading comprehension in English.

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

They also benefited from peer tutoring under a "Buddy-Buddy 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)

Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and peer scaffolding. Vygotsky emphasized that learners develop cognitively and linguistically through social interaction and support from more knowledgeable peers or adults. 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.

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.

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 activities, such as debates and games.

Theme 3: Resource Limitations

The third emerging theme, Resource Limitations, highlights how socio-economic conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited 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.

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 reported that, although they could follow English discussions or comprehend texts, they found it challenging to use the language, particularly in speaking tasks. Littlewood's (2004) work on communicative language teaching addresses the gap

between classroom language proficiency and real-world language use.

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 a poor grasp of grammar rules, such as subject-verb agreement. Richards and Renandya (2002) emphasize that vocabulary size, grammatical accuracy, and syntactic

control are critical foundations for effective language expression and that gaps in these areas severely limit learners' ability to communicate.

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, which contributed to low confidence and a fear of participation. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) argues that emotional variables, such as low self-confidence, anxiety, and a lack of motivation, act as filters that can block language input from being processed effectively. He also highlights how a lack of exposure to a language-rich environment can further hinder acquisition.

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.

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.

UNESCO (2016) emphasizes the role of schools as central hubs for language learning, especially in under-resourced and rural settings. The report highlights how basic instructional materials such as textbooks, printed modules, and limited multimedia tools remain essential in delivering quality education where access to advanced technology is limited.

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 to support student learning. Hattie (2009), whose work identifies teacher effectiveness and feedback as among the most powerful influences on student achievement.

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. Gillen (2000) connects Vygotsky's ideas specifically to language learning in classroom contexts, emphasizing the effectiveness of peer-assisted learning.

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. Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement (1995) emphasizes that even in low-resource environments, home-based encouragement, communication, and informal learning support have a significant impact on academic outcomes, including language acquisition.

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.

Theme 1: Barriers to Oral Proficiency

The findings strongly resonate with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that human development is shaped by multiple layers of environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, students' difficulties in oral English proficiency stem from both the microsystem (family and school) and the 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.

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.

Theme 3: Resource 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 Maguindanon 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 reveal three interrelated themes: barriers to the functional use of English, limitations in vocabulary and grammar, 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 that overly emphasize passive learning and correctness further impede fluency and confidence.

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 reported that they primarily speak Maguindanaon or Tagalog at home and rely on their teachers as their primary English-speaking contacts.

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.

Theme 3: Impact of Environment and Confidence

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains how the students' larger environment, including their home, peers, and community, affects 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 the broader community. 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 to the language 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.

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.

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-constructor 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.

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.

Theme 4: Family and Community Engagement

This theme focuses on the microsystem and mesosystem levels of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, specifically the influence of the family and community 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.   CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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 that integrate 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 consider integrating more interactive activities, such as debates, role-plays, message relay games, and storytelling sessions.
2. Addressing the challenge of oral proficiency requires implementing specialized workshops that focus on building speaking confidence, vocabulary enrichment, and practicing pronunciation.
4. Given the students' limited vocabulary and grammar awareness, structured intervention programs such as "Vocabulary of the Week" and grammar clinics, along with daily exposure to English phrases, may be offered.
5. To counter resource 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.
6. Peer collaboration may be institutionalized through English Buddy Programs, where stronger English users mentor struggling learners.
7. 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.

8. Using speaking and writing exemplars effectively enhances the English proficiency of Maguindanaon students. Reading models enhance comprehension, vocabulary, and sentence structure, while writing exemplars aid in organization and grammar.

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