MAGUINDANAON STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING RESILIENCE IN A REMOTE RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

English proficiency is central to academic participation, yet rural Maguindanaon learners often encounter limited exposure, restricted instructional resources, language anxiety, and uneven support beyond the classroom. This article presents an expanded descriptive-correlational model of English learning experiences among 132 Junior High School students, with equal allocation of 33 respondents from Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10. The study examines the intensity of linguistic and affective barriers, the availability of teacher, peer, family, school, and digital support, and the relationship between support and learner confidence. Illustrative results indicate that limited opportunities for spontaneous speaking, fear of making mistakes, restricted vocabulary, pronunciation difficulty, and grammar uncertainty are the most persistent barriers. Teacher feedback and peer collaboration emerge as the strongest supports, while digital access and structured extracurricular language programs remain comparatively weak. Students reporting stronger support also show higher English confidence, suggesting that communicative practice and coordinated support can reduce the gap between classroom knowledge and practical language use. The article proposes a culturally responsive support framework that combines low-anxiety speaking routines, vocabulary and pronunciation development, peer mentoring, family-oriented encouragement, and low-bandwidth learning resources.

Keywords: Maguindanaon learners; English language learning; rural education; learner confidence; support systems; communicative competence

1. Introduction

English remains a major language of instruction, assessment, academic reading, and wider communication in Philippine education. For learners in distant rural schools, however, access to English is not evenly distributed. Students may encounter the language primarily in textbooks and teacher-led lessons, while home and community interactions continue in Maguindanaon or Filipino. This creates a learning environment in which students can recognize classroom forms but still hesitate when asked to speak spontaneously, explain ideas, or sustain an English conversation. The difficulty is not merely linguistic. English learning in rural contexts is shaped by confidence, prior exposure, teacher practices, peer relationships, household resources, school infrastructure, and the social meaning attached to making mistakes. Learners who fear ridicule or correction may remain silent even when they understand a lesson. Conversely, students who receive supportive feedback and regular opportunities to practice with classmates may gradually develop willingness to communicate. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis explains that anxiety and low self-confidence can interfere with language acquisition, while Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective emphasizes that language develops through guided participation and social interaction (Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978). For Maguindanaon students, the relationship between language and identity deserves particular attention. Their first language is not an obstacle to be removed; it is a cultural and cognitive resource that can be used to bridge meaning, activate prior knowledge, and support the transition toward English expression. A culturally responsive approach therefore avoids treating multilingualism as deficiency. Instead, it recognizes that strategic translation, code-switching, oral rehearsal, and collaborative explanation can make English learning more accessible without weakening cultural identity. Prior qualitative evidence highlights recurring concerns involving limited speaking exposure, vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties, uneven family assistance, scarce digital tools, and the central role of teachers and peers. Building on those concerns, the present article expands the inquiry into a larger quantitative framework. A sample of 132 students provides a structured basis for examining patterns across grade levels and for estimating how support systems relate to English confidence. The study of Dr. Naveen Prasadula significant because interventions in rural schools often fail when they focus only on grammar correction or additional worksheets. A stronger response must address the whole learning ecology: classroom interaction, emotional safety, peer support, family encouragement, access to materials, and opportunities to use English for meaningful purposes. By identifying the strongest barriers and the most accessible forms of support, the study aims to guide practical school-based action that is realistic for low-resource settings.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in three complementary perspectives. First, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis explains how anxiety, embarrassment, and low self-confidence may prevent learners from fully processing and producing language even when instructional input is available. This perspective is especially relevant to students who can understand written English but avoid oral participation because they fear making mistakes. Second, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory views learning as a socially mediated process. Students develop language through interaction with more knowledgeable teachers and peers, scaffolded tasks, feedback, modeling, and collaborative practice. Peer-buddy arrangements, paired reading, role-play, and guided conversation are therefore not supplementary activities; they are mechanisms through which learners can move from assisted performance to greater independence. Third, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory situates language development within interconnected environments. The classroom and family operate as immediate microsystems, while school resources, community conditions, connectivity, and education policies form wider systems that shape opportunities to learn. The combined framework suggests that English proficiency cannot be explained by individual effort alone. It develops through the interaction of learner beliefs, social support, and environmental access (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Learner Factors	Support Ecology	Expected Outcomes
Vocabulary	Teachers	Confidence
Pronunciation	Peers	Participation
Grammar	Family	Functional English use
Anxiety	School resources	Academic engagement
Motivation	Digital access	

3. Study Objectives

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To examine the English learning barriers, support systems, and confidence levels of Maguindanaon Junior High School students in a remote rural public school and to determine how available support is associated with learners' willingness and ability to use English.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. describe the respondents according to grade level and sex while maintaining balanced representation across Grades 7 to 10;
2. measure the intensity of barriers related to oral communication, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, reading comprehension, anxiety, and access to learning resources;
3. assess students' confidence in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing English in both structured and spontaneous situations;
4. determine the extent of teacher, peer, family, school-based, and digital support available to Maguindanaon learners;
5. identify which forms of support are most accessible and which remain underdeveloped in a distant-rural school context;
6. compare confidence patterns across low, moderate, and high levels of perceived support;
7. test the relationship between perceived support-system strength and English learning confidence; and
8. develop a culturally responsive and resource-sensitive set of interventions for strengthening communicative English development.

4. Research Questions and Hypothesis

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of grade level and sex?
2. What English learning barriers are most strongly experienced by the respondents?
3. What support systems are available to respondents, and how strong are these supports?
4. How does English confidence vary across levels of perceived support?
5. Is there a significant relationship between support-system strength and English learning confidence?

NULL HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship between the perceived strength of support systems and English learning confidence among the respondents.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study uses a descriptive-correlational design. The descriptive component summarizes the respondents' background, learning barriers, available support, and confidence. The correlational

component examines whether students who perceive stronger support also report higher confidence in using English. This design is appropriate because it identifies patterns and relationships without manipulating the school environment.

5.2 Locale and Participants

The proposed study setting is a remote rural public secondary school serving a predominantly Maguindanaon community. The environment is characterized by multilingual interaction, agriculture-based livelihoods, limited connectivity, and restricted access to instructional technology. The target participants are Junior High School students enrolled in Grades 7 to 10.

5.3 Sample Size and Sampling

A total sample of 132 students is used, with equal allocation of 33 respondents from each grade level. Equal-allocation stratified sampling strengthens grade-level representation and prevents a larger grade cohort from dominating the results. Within each grade stratum, respondents may be selected randomly from the official enrolment list after securing permissions and assent. The sample is sufficiently large for descriptive summaries and a preliminary test of association, while remaining manageable in a single-school rural setting.

5.4 Research Instrument

The proposed questionnaire contains four sections: respondent profile; English learning barriers; perceived support systems; and English learning confidence. Barrier and support items use a five-point Likert scale. The confidence section asks students to rate their comfort in classroom recitation, paired conversation, reading, writing, and spontaneous English use. The instrument should be reviewed by specialists in English education, educational research, and culturally responsive pedagogy. A pilot test should be conducted with students who are not part of the final sample, followed by reliability analysis and revision of ambiguous items.

5.5 Data Collection and Ethical Safeguards

Data collection should begin only after approval from the school administration and appropriate research authorities. Because the respondents are minors, informed parental consent and student assent are required. Participation must be voluntary, and respondents should be informed that their answers will not affect grades, class standing, or access to school services. Questionnaires may be explained bilingually when necessary, but the researcher must avoid leading students toward particular answers. Names should not appear in the dataset, and reports should present only aggregated results.

5.6 Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages describe the sample. Weighted means and rank order summarize barriers and support systems. The following interpretation guide is used for five-point scales: 4.21-5.00, Very High/Very Strong; 3.41-4.20, High/Strong; 2.61-3.40, Moderate; 1.81-2.60, Low/Weak; and 1.00-1.80, Very Low/Very Weak. Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to estimate the association between perceived support and English confidence, with significance evaluated at the .05 level.

6. Results and Discussion

The results below demonstrate how the proposed analysis may be presented using the illustrative sample of 132 respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Grade Level and Sex (N = 132)

Grade Level	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Grade 7	16	17	33	25.0%
Grade 8	17	16	33	25.0%
Grade 9	15	18	33	25.0%
Grade 10	16	17	33	25.0%
Total	**64**	**68**	**132**	**100.0%**

Interpretation. The sample is deliberately balanced across the four Junior High School grade levels, with each grade contributing one-fourth of the respondents. The sex distribution is also nearly even: 64 males (48.5%) and 68 females (51.5%). This structure supports grade-level comparison while minimizing overrepresentation by any single group.

The equal grade allocation is especially useful in a rural school where grade cohorts may differ in exposure to English tasks. Older students may have accumulated more classroom contact with English, while younger students may be more dependent on teacher modeling and peer scaffolding. Balanced representation ensures that the overall findings reflect the full Junior High School range rather than only the largest class.

Table 2. English Learning Barriers Reported by the Respondents

Learning Barrier	Weighted Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Limited opportunities for spontaneous English speaking	4.31	1	Very High
Fear of making mistakes or being laughed at	4.18	2	High
Limited English vocabulary	4.07	3	High
Difficulty with pronunciation and accent differences	3.94	4	High
Difficulty applying grammar during speaking and writing	3.88	5	High
Limited access to digital English-learning resources	3.72	6	High
Overall Mean	**4.02**	**-**	**High**

Interpretation. The overall barrier mean of 4.02 indicates that respondents experience a high level of difficulty in learning and using English. The strongest barrier is the lack of spontaneous speaking opportunities (M = 4.31). Fear of mistakes ranks second, showing that restricted practice and language anxiety reinforce one another. Vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar concerns remain important, but they become more serious when students have few low-risk opportunities to use English meaningfully.

The ranking shows that the main problem is not simply knowledge of rules. Students need chances to retrieve words, organize ideas, monitor pronunciation, and respond in real time. When classroom English is limited to memorized recitation, learners may perform adequately in rehearsed tasks but struggle in authentic communication. This supports Ellis's distinction between explicit knowledge and spontaneous language use and Swain's argument that learners need meaningful output, not input alone (Ellis, 2003; Swain, 1985). The high rating for fear of mistakes also supports the Affective Filter Hypothesis. A student who expects embarrassment may avoid participation, reducing the practice needed to improve. The practical implication is that accuracy-focused correction should not dominate early speaking activities. Teachers can first prioritize meaning, participation, and encouragement, then provide selective feedback after the student has completed the message.

Table 3. Strength of Support Systems Available to the Respondents

Support System	Weighted Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Teacher feedback, modeling, and encouragement	4.24	1	Very Strong
Peer collaboration and buddy-based practice	4.10	2	Strong
Printed books, modules, and classroom materials	3.91	3	Strong
Family encouragement to continue studying	3.67	4	Strong
Access to multimedia or digital English resources	3.12	5	Moderate
English clubs, tutorials, or structured after-class practice	2.84	6	Moderate
Overall Mean	**3.65**	**-**	**Strong**

Interpretation. Support systems are strong overall (M = 3.65), but their distribution is uneven. Teacher support is the strongest resource, followed by peer collaboration and printed materials. Digital resources and organized after-class language programs are only moderate. The school therefore relies heavily on human support to compensate for limited infrastructure. This is encouraging, but it also means that support may weaken when teachers are overextended or when structured peer routines are absent.

The results emphasize the importance of teachers as language models, feedback providers, and confidence builders. In a setting where English is rarely used outside school, the teacher may be the learner's most consistent English-speaking contact. Peer collaboration ranks almost as highly, confirming that classmates can provide a less threatening space for rehearsal. Vygotsky's framework explains why paired tasks and peer tutoring can move learners beyond what they can accomplish independently. Family support is interpreted as strong, but the form of support may be motivational rather than technical. Parents or guardians do not need advanced English proficiency to contribute. They can encourage attendance, provide quiet study time, ask children to share newly learned words, or listen to short readings. By contrast, the moderate rating for digital access shows that interventions should not depend exclusively on stable internet service. Downloadable audio, printed conversation cards, shared school devices, and offline videos are more realistic options.

Table 4. English Confidence across Levels of Perceived Support

Perceived Support Level	n	Mean Support Index	Mean English Confidence	Confidence Interpretation
High Support	42	4.34	4.10	High
Moderate Support	58	3.63	3.52	High
Low Support	32	2.74	2.86	Moderate
Association Test	**132**	**Pearson r = .61**	**p < .001**	**Significant positive relationship**

Interpretation. Students in the high-support group report the highest English confidence (M = 4.10), while those in the low-support group report only moderate confidence (M = 2.86). The illustrative correlation of r = .61 with p < .001 indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between support and confidence. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected in this model: stronger perceived support is associated with greater willingness and confidence to use English.

The pattern does not prove that support alone causes confidence, because the design is correlational. Confident students may also seek more interaction and receive more feedback. Nevertheless, the size and direction of the association are educationally meaningful. Support appears to create conditions in which learners can take risks, practice repeatedly, and recover from errors without withdrawing from participation. The relationship also illustrates why isolated interventions are unlikely to be sufficient. A vocabulary worksheet may increase word knowledge, but students may still remain silent if they fear ridicule. Similarly, a speaking activity may be ineffective when students lack words or receive no preparation. A coordinated approach should combine linguistic scaffolding, emotional safety, peer interaction, and accessible materials.

7. Major Findings

1. The balanced sample of 132 students provides equal representation from Grades 7 to 10 and a nearly even distribution by sex.
2. English learning barriers are high overall, with spontaneous speaking opportunities identified as the most serious concern.
3. Fear of mistakes is a major affective barrier that can suppress participation even when students understand lessons.

4. Vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar difficulties remain persistent and directly affect functional language use.
5. Teacher feedback and encouragement constitute the strongest available support in the rural school setting.
6. Peer collaboration is a highly valuable support mechanism because it provides repeated practice with less pressure than formal recitation.
7. Printed materials remain important, while digital access and structured after-class English programs are comparatively limited.
8. Students reporting stronger support also report higher English confidence; the illustrative analysis shows a significant positive association between the two variables.
9. The evidence supports a whole-ecology approach in which classroom practice, peer support, family encouragement, and resource access are strengthened together.

8. Suggestions and Educational Implications

- **Establish daily low-anxiety speaking routines :** Begin English classes with two- to five-minute paired conversations, picture descriptions, sentence-completion tasks, or short personal responses. Students should rehearse with a partner before whole-class speaking.
- **Use a culturally responsive multilingual bridge :** Allow strategic use of Maguindanaon and Filipino for planning, clarification, and comparison before students produce the final English response. This preserves identity while supporting comprehension and transfer.
- **Institutionalize an English Buddy System :** Pair students for reading, vocabulary review, pronunciation rehearsal, and conversation practice. Partners should rotate periodically so support does not become dependent on one classmate.
- **Create a practical vocabulary-and-pronunciation cycle :** Select a small number of high-frequency words each week. Teach meaning, pronunciation, word families, example sentences, and communicative use rather than asking students only to memorize definitions.
- **Adopt feedback that protects confidence :** During fluency activities, teachers should avoid interrupting every error. Feedback can be delayed, selective, and framed around one or two improvement goals so students remain willing to participate.

- **Develop offline and low-bandwidth resources :** Schools can maintain shared audio files, offline videos, recorded dialogues, printed conversation cards, and QR-linked materials that can be downloaded when connectivity is available.
- **Organize structured English practice beyond the lesson :** A weekly English circle, reading pantry, storytelling session, debate club, or radio-style school program can provide authentic roles for speaking and listening without requiring expensive technology.
- **Engage families through simple, non-technical activities :** Parents can encourage regular attendance, listen to children read, ask them to share one English word or sentence each day, and recognize effort even when the parent does not speak English.
- **Monitor progress through multiple indicators :** Assessment should include willingness to communicate, vocabulary growth, comprehension, intelligibility, and improvement over time—not only grammatical accuracy in written tests.
- **Build partnerships for resource support :** School leaders may collaborate with local government, community organizations, universities, and literacy groups to obtain books, shared devices, teacher development, and learner mentoring.

9. Conclusion

The study also shows that rural schools possess important strengths. Teacher encouragement, peer collaboration, and printed materials provide a foundation on which more systematic language support can be built. Maguindanaon students in remote rural schools demonstrate resilience and a clear desire to improve their English, yet their progress is constrained by limited opportunities for spontaneous use, fear of mistakes, vocabulary gaps, pronunciation difficulty, grammar uncertainty, and restricted access to digital learning resources. These challenges reveal a gap between knowing English as a school subject and using it as a functional means of communication. The positive relationship between perceived support and English confidence suggests that learners participate more willingly when they feel guided, accepted, and adequately prepared. Confidence should therefore be treated not as a personality trait but as an educational outcome that can be strengthened through design. Effective improvement requires a coordinated response. Students need frequent low-risk speaking opportunities, explicit vocabulary and pronunciation support, culturally respectful multilingual scaffolding, accessible offline materials, peer mentoring, and family encouragement. When these elements work together, English learning becomes more than preparation for tests; it becomes a practical tool for academic participation, self-expression, and future opportunity.

10. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Because the proposed study is confined to one rural public school, the results should not be generalized automatically to all Maguindanaon learners or all schools in BARMM. Self-report measures may also be influenced by social desirability and differences in how students interpret rating scales. Future research should combine questionnaires with classroom observation, interviews, speaking-performance tasks, and teacher perspectives. Longitudinal studies could examine whether peer mentoring, daily speaking routines, or offline multimedia resources produce sustained gains in confidence and communicative proficiency.

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