

## Challenges and Opportunities in English Language Learning of Junior High School Students

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**Abstract:** This study attempted to identify the challenges and opportunities of the Grade 9 students of Dautil Watkins National high School in English language learning. Specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the challenges encountered by the students in English language learning? (2) What are learning opportunities faced by the students in English language learning? (3) What intervention may be proposed based on the findings of the study?.

The study was premised on the following assumptions: (1)The Grade 9 students of Dautil Watkins National High School encounter identifiable linguistic, emotional, or environmental challenges that significantly affect their proficiency and progress in English language learning. (2) Despite any existing difficulties or the newly founded state of the institution, there are available learning opportunities, instructional strategies, or community supports within the school environment that can be leveraged to enhance language acquisition. (3) Gathered experiences and feedback from the participants will provide a reliable, valid, and practical basis for designing a localized intervention program capable of addressing reading and communication gaps.

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach, specifically employing a case study design, to investigate the intersection of language learning challenges and opportunities among the Grade 9 Junior High School students of Dautil Watkins National High School. By adopting a case study framework, the research moves beyond simple grammatical analysis to examine language struggles as meaningful, bounded social events deeply rooted in the participants' specific cultural and linguistic reality.

The study involves five key participants who are directly immersed in the school's linguistic phenomenon. The participants were selected through criterion purposive sampling, which specifically targets individuals who meet a predetermined standard of experience namely, Grade 9 secondary learners currently experiencing documented "comprehension breakdowns" and reading literacy challenges.

Data were gathered through a semi-structured interview tool, utilizing culturally sensitive, open-ended questions designed to uncover rich, descriptive narratives. This systematic procedure involved securing formal institutional approval and implementing a dual-method recording process of audio-taping and note-taking to accurately identify recurring patterns of communicative resilience and student coping mechanisms.

After analyzing the data gathered, the study yielded the following findings: (1) The Grade 9 students encounter profound dual-natured learning difficulties consisting of physical/cognitive and emotional barriers. Structurally, learners face severe lack of vocabulary and syntactic confusion, struggling with sentence construction and word placement (e.g., placing determiners and prepositions like "the," "of," and "with"). Emotionally, these linguistic deficits trigger high performance anxiety, nervousness, and fear of peer ridicule during public classroom activities such as essay writing, oral reporting, and speaking in front of the class.

Furthermore, these challenges are compounded outside the school environment by digital distractions such as excessive mobile screen time spent on TikTok and YouTube videos and a state of institutional containment where the native mother tongue (Buhinon) is exclusively spoken and English reading materials are absent at home. (2) Despite severe resource limitations in a developing school environment, the students encounter highly effective learning opportunities through collaborative scaffolding and self-regulated learning tools. Inside the classroom, interactive strategies such as group work, educational games, and peer interaction provide a safe, non-threatening space that lowers anxiety and allows students to negotiate meaning together. Oral reporting compels intensive vocabulary preparation, while direct, positive corrections from teachers optimize language retention.

Outside the classroom, the school's provision of targeted reading programs and textbooks serves as a vital foundation. Additionally, students demonstrate deep academic resilience and intrinsic linguistic curiosity, proactively utilizing self-regulated strategies like dictionary searches on the internet, context clue repetition, and media-driven exposure (e.g., songs, television, and subtitles) to cope with text breakdowns (3) The participants explicitly request a balanced intervention model that targets vocabulary simplification, instructional modifications, pedagogical encouragement, and interactive remedial activities. Students express a strong desire for teachers to intentionally simplify advanced or "deep" vocabulary by anchoring lessons in relatable, everyday school contexts rather than abstract concepts.

Affectively, learners articulate a critical need for emotional reassurance and positive reinforcement, requesting that teachers do not react with immediate anger when mistakes are made. To build confidence and oral fluency while avoiding performance boredom,

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students recommend that the school implement structured, non-intimidating interactive programs, specifically prioritizing active educational games, role-playing, small-group discussions, and remedial reading assistance.

In the light of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn: (1) It is concluded that the English language learning challenges of the Grade 9 students are deeply tied to a lack of meaningful, structured language exposure outside of school hours, which triggers a high affective filter. Because the domestic setting is structurally contained by the native Buhinon tongue and digital spaces favor passive entertainment over text literacy, students lack the established cognitive schemas or baseline vocabulary blocks required to smoothly assimilate advanced high school instructions. When forced to produce language publicly without these tools, their emotional filters rise, resulting in performance anxiety, silent retreat, and defensive code-switching to manage psychological stress. (2) It is concluded that while isolated individual tasks induce high anxiety, socially mediated scaffolding and environmental interaction serve as powerful buffers that empower students to actively construct linguistic meaning. The students' strong foundation of intrinsic motivation and growth-mindset resilience indicates that they do not reject English acquisition; rather, they rely on collaborative networks to achieve what they cannot do alone. True language opportunities thrive when the school's community-driven ecosystem provides physical books and targeted reading frameworks, which seamlessly convert passive media habits into active self-regulated learning tools. (3) It is concluded that an effective, sustainable intervention program for a newly founded institution like Dautil Watkins National High School must balance structural language training with emotional optimization. Pedagogical practices cannot rely on rapid instruction or rigid penalties for errors. Instead, to transform documented challenges into real opportunities, any strategic framework must systematically dismantle learning anxiety by fostering an empathetic classroom climate while providing contextualized, clear reading inputs that match the actual developmental readiness of the secondary learners.

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations were drawn: (1) English teachers should slow down the pace of their teaching and start each lesson with a quick vocabulary review. They should also provide simple sentence guides to help students practice word order before they write or speak. Schools and parents should work together to set up a daily reading routine at home to replace screen time with simple books or learning apps. (2) Schools should utilize more group work. Teachers should mix group tasks, peer tutoring, and educational games into daily lessons to reduce student anxiety. They should also enhance current reading programs and textbooks by adding videos and visual worksheets that match students' learning preferences. (3) The school administration should implement "The Eco-Linguistic Scaffolding Program," a three-part school-wide intervention to boost student confidence and literacy. First, it features a reading and speaking clinic focused on step-by-step letter blending and school-based vocabulary. Second, it replaces traditional instruction with interactive methods like role-plays and language games. Finally, it mandates faculty workshops on positive reinforcement and supportive correction to reduce student anxiety and build oral confidence.

**Keywords:** *Challenges, Opportunities, English Language Learning, Intervention.*

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## Introduction

English mastery is a cornerstone for academic excellence and global competitiveness in the Philippines. Yet, achieving proficiency remains a massive hurdle. It is considered a critical challenge in the education sector in Philippines. Republic Act No. 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 provides an opportunity to solve the ongoing educational crisis. It legally mandates building strong linguistic foundations. It demands literacy skills for lifelong learning. However laws alone don't build fluent speakers.

Globally, the struggle with English language acquisition is frequently documented. The various pedagogical, environmental, and sociocultural barriers are identified as hindrances to a learner's progress. This global challenge directly intersects with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Achieving English language proficiency is central to this global agenda, as language literacy functions as a primary vehicle for academic inclusivity and future socioeconomic mobility. Yet, while extensive literature exists on language learning difficulties in long-established urban centers, there is a distinct deficiency in studies focusing on newly founded, rural institutions that are simultaneously grappling with foundational infrastructural development and acute literacy gaps, a reality that directly threatens the localized realization of SDG 4 targets.

Understanding these challenges within a nascent academic environment is highly significant for school administrators, language curriculum designers, and local policymakers who must allocate resources and design localized interventions. The unique institutional context and historical background of the Dautil Watkins National High School, situated in Barangay Monte Calvario, Buhi, Camarines Sur, is where this study is deeply rooted from. The research locale of this study emerged in August 2023 as a beacon of educational opportunity, born out of the collective vision of local leaders and community stakeholders. Established as a direct testament to the national government's commitment to the Education for All (EFA) Program, the school was founded to guarantee inclusive and quality education for every school-age child in the area.

Propelled by Barangay Resolution No. 09 series 2023 and Sangguniang Bayan Resolution No. 23-138, s. 2023, its physical existence was made possible through a generous 1-hectare lot donation by Mr. Joshua B. Watkins and Mrs. Trinidad Dautil Watkins. Despite severe initial infrastructure challenges, the institution opened its doors using temporary learning spaces at the Barangay Evacuation Center.

While the community and local government units have progressively rallied to construct makeshift classrooms supported by materials from the National Power Corporation Buhi Barit Watershed Team and financial backings from provincial and congressional leadership the school's formative state inherently

affects its academic delivery system. Navigating language education within an institution that is still building its physical and instructional foundations introduces a complex layer of variables that directly impacts student performance.

As a direct reflection of these complex ecological and academic factors, the baseline literacy data of the student body underscores a critical, immediate need for scholarly intervention. This intervention aligns precisely with the core mandate of SDG 4, which demands targeted support for vulnerable or lagging student cohorts to ensure no learner is left behind due to systemic or geographical disadvantages.

According to the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Class Summary Report on the Learner's Reading Level in English (Midyear) for the School Year 2025-2026, the Grade 9 students of Section Lauan, assessed by English Reading Coordinator Maria Janette C. Maguljado, display an alarming disparity in reading proficiencies. Out of a total enrolment of 17 learners (8 male and 9 female), the empirical results indicate that while 11 students have reached the Independent reading level (4 males and 7 females), a notable portion of the class remains stagnant at the Instructional level (2 males and 1 female).

Most crucially, the diagnostic data reveals that 3 out of the 17 learners (17.6%) are classified as Struggling Readers who specifically experience severe difficulties in blending the sounds of letters. The presence of these phonetic and decoding struggles at the Grade 9 secondary level serves as a primary, data-driven basis for choosing these participants, highlighting an urgent instructional challenge.

By examining this specific cohort, this study aims to dismantle the underlying linguistic barriers faced by these junior high school students, transforming these documented challenges into actionable opportunities for sustainable language acquisition, ultimately contributing a localized blueprint toward fulfilling the promise of quality and equitable education.

### Statement of the Problem

This study aims to identify the challenges and opportunities of the Grade 9 students of Dautil Watkins National high School in English language learning.

Specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the challenges encountered by the students in English
- What are learning opportunities faced by the students in English language learning?
- What intervention may be proposed based on the findings of the study?

### Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach, specifically employing a case study design, to investigate the language learning challenges and opportunities of the participants. A qualitative case study is a systematic method of inquiry used to build a holistic, narrative description of a specific, bounded social event within its real-world context. This design is an inductive process that allows the researcher to organize raw narrative data into meaningful categories and identify relationships among them.

By adopting a case study framework, the research moves

beyond a simple analysis of linguistic capability to examine language struggles as meaningful social events deeply rooted in the participants' specific cultural and situational reality. This approach ensures that the identified reading and communication difficulties are not treated as standardized, abstract language deficits. Instead, the case study design guarantees that the findings remain directly grounded in the actual social environment, home literacy conditions, and daily classroom interactions experienced by the participants.

### Key Informants

The participants of this study consisted exclusively of five (5) Grade 9 junior high school students enrolled at Dautil Watkins National High School in Monte Calvario, Buhi, Camarines Sur. These student-participants were selected using criterion purposive sampling, which is a non-random technique used for the deliberate identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the specific phenomenon of interest. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), purposive sampling allows researchers to target individuals who have the most relevant experience with the topic being studied, while Etikam, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) define it as choosing participants based entirely on the specific qualities and experiences they possess.

To select the final five participants from the student population, inclusion criteria were established. First, the participants must be officially enrolled secondary learners in the Grade 9 department of the school. Second, they must be individuals who frequently encounter documented "comprehension breakdowns" and reading literacy challenges in their regular English classes. Finally, because a semi structured face-to-face interview was the sole data-gathering tool, the selected participants had to demonstrate a complete willingness and ability to reflect on and describe their own learning struggles. This ensured that the five participants could accurately articulate not just their vocabulary gaps and syntactic confusion, but also the emotional anxiety they felt during those classroom struggles and the specific self-regulated strategies they mentally or verbally used to overcome them.

### Research Locale

This study was conducted at Dautil Watkins National High School, an institution established in August 2023 in Barangay Monte Calvario, Buhi, Camarines Sur. Founded under the national government's Education for All (EFA) program, the school was designed to provide inclusive, localized secondary education on a one-hectare lot donated by Mr. Joshua B. Watkins and Mrs. Trinidad Dautil Watkins. As a newly established institution, the school initially faced significant infrastructural adjustments, requiring the community to set up Temporary Learning Spaces at the Barangay Evacuation Center so classes could begin without delay. This initial environment sets the stage for understanding the physical and structural challenges that impacted the early academic adjustments of the student population.

Despite these early resource limitations, the school environment is heavily characterized by strong community intervention and active stakeholder support. Over time, the school expanded its facilities through local government funding and community-led efforts, which included the building of makeshift classrooms and the acquisition of educational tools, such as textbooks and a television unit donated by local leadership. This collaborative, community-driven ecosystem is highly relevant to

the study because it serves as the exact physical and social backdrop where the junior high school student's access learning materials, interact with peers, and navigate the structural and emotional variables of their English language acquisition.

### **Data Gathering Tool**

In this study, semi-structured interview served as the qualitative instrument for uncovering the struggles and strategies of the Grade 9 learners of Dautil Watkins National High School. The semi-structured interview functioned as a meaning-making tool that allowed the participants to articulate the internal cognitive and emotional processes involved in language comprehension. By engaging in a direct dialogue, the researcher captured the insider's view of how these learners perceive linguistic hurdles within their specific mountainous locale.

The open-ended nature of the interview ensures that the data is not limited to a "yes" or "no" response but instead results in a rich, narrative transcript that reflects the complex reality of teaching and learning in a rural, multilingual setting. The data gathered through this tool provides the "thick description" necessary to categorize the linguistic patterns of the community, transforming personal anecdotes into formal qualitative data that defines the relationship between language learning struggles and communicative resilience.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The data gathering procedure for this study followed a systematic process designed to ensure ethical compliance, methodological rigor, and accurate data captured.

The initial phase involved seeking formal approval from the academic and institutional authorities to ensure the study adhered to established ethical and administrative protocols. This began with securing the endorsement of the research adviser, Dr. Rafael Oñate, and the OIC Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research, Dr. Jose B. Ballesteros. Once approval was granted, the researcher coordinated with Dr. Veronica Sabio, the School Head of Dautil-Watkins National High School, to obtain the necessary permission to conduct the study within the school's locale. This step was critical for establishing a professional entry point into the community and ensuring the cooperation of the teacher and student participants.

The researcher also focused on the crafting of semi-structured interview questions. This process involved developing an interview guide that aligned with the study's statement of the problem and research questions: identifying specific linguistic "struggles" and the subsequent "strategies" employed by students and teachers. Unlike a rigid questionnaire, these questions were designed to be open ended, allowing for the flexibility to probe deeper into the participants' unique experiences in Dautil-Watkins National High School.

The final stage was the actual conduct of the interviews, where the researcher engaged with students and teachers in a one-on-one setting. The researcher utilized an audio clip recording to secure a verbatim account of the conversation. This ensured that the nuances of the teachers' and students' language use and their described strategies were captured with high fidelity. These recordings formed the raw data set, which was later transcribed and categorized to identify the recurring relationships between comprehension challenges and communicative resilience in the rural school setting.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The research entitled "Challenges and Opportunities in English Language Learning of Junior High School Students" adhered strictly to ethical guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of all participants. Informed Consent served as the foundation of the ethical practice. Before the study commenced, the school administration and the student-participants received a clear, comprehensive consent form detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Each participant provided voluntary written consent, acknowledging their understanding of the research goals and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

To uphold the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, no identifying information was collected or reported alongside the qualitative data. During the interview process and subsequent transcription, the students were assigned unique pseudonyms or numerical codes for analysis. Any specific details that could link the data to a particular individual were scrubbed from the final narrative to ensure that no identity could be discerned from the research report or any subsequent publications. The master list linking these codes to the participants' true identities was kept in a secure, encrypted file accessible only to the researcher and was destroyed upon the study's completion.

The study remained committed to beneficence and transparency. The primary goal of this research was to enhance the linguistic and communicative strategies within the school, thereby directly benefiting the participants and the Dautil-Watkins National High School community by contributing to improved instructional practices. All data gathered through the interview were used strictly for research purposes. Furthermore, the findings were disseminated to the school administration to provide them with actionable insights into the language learning struggles faced in their specific locale, ensuring the research served as a tool for professional and institutional growth.

### **Results**

#### **LEARNING CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY THE GRADE 9 STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

The Grade 9 students encounter profound emotional and structural challenges that primarily manifest as public performance anxiety and syntactic confusion. When tasked with utilizing the English language in front of their peers such as during oral reports, class presentations, or essay writing, the learners consistently experience an overwhelming combination of anxiety, nervousness, and fear of public embarrassment. This performance anxiety is deeply tied to their fear of making grammatical slips or mispronouncing terms, which they worry, will make them targets for peer ridicule.

This psychological stress is made worse by structural or syntactic confusion; students express that even when they know basic English words, they lack the clear mental framework required to organize them logically into proper sentences. As a result, this lack of structural confidence forces them to heavily rely on code switching (mixing Tagalog and English) or retreat into classroom silence to avoid linguistic errors.

Beyond these performance anxieties, the students are heavily limited by acute vocabulary deficiencies that stem from digital distractions and an isolated language environment outside

the classroom. The participants explicitly note that encountering complex or "deep" English words for the first time severely impairs their ability to process simple classroom directions or finish reading assignments. This vocabulary gap is worsened by daily lifestyle habits; the students admit to spending excessive amounts of screen time on mobile entertainment applications like TikTok and YouTube videos instead of engaging in supplemental reading.

Furthermore, because the students reside in households where the native mother tongue (Buhinon) is the primary mode of communication and formal English reading materials are completely absent, they endure a state of institutional containment. Lacking a steady stream of vocabulary input at home, the learners struggle to build the prior cognitive building blocks needed to keep up with the pacing of high school-level language instruction.

### Theme 1: Public Performance Anxiety and Syntactic Insecurity

The data gathered from the participants reveals that the most prominent challenges the Grade 9 students encounter in English language learning revolve around speaking in front of the class, writing essays, and overcoming deep emotional barriers. When required to use English inside the classroom, students consistently mentioned the combination of intense anxiety, fear, nervous tension, and embarrassment. This emotional distress is heavily tied to a deep-seated fear of making grammatical errors or mispronouncing words, which makes them worry about being laughed at by their classmates. A closer look at the participants' responses shows that their anxiety is directly lead by an inability to organize English words properly in their minds.

*"I'm nervous because I think of English words when I speak in front of my classmates, but I'm not sure where to place 'the,' 'of,' 'with,' 'they,' and others in my mind."- P3*

This demonstrates that students face structural or syntactic confusion. Structural confusion happens when a sentence is confusing not because the individual words are hard, but because the way the words are put together allows for more than one meaning.

The students' challenges are not just about memorizing random vocabulary words; they struggle heavily with sentence construction. The student knows the basic words but gets confused about how to arrange them grammatically.

Because the students are confused by English structure, they experience high anxiety and fear of making mistakes in front of their peers. To cope with this structural confusion, they often resort to mixing Tagalog and English just to get their point across.

*"Sometimes, I mix Tagalog and English, but I'm trying my best."- P3, added*

Furthermore, Participant 1 highlighted that this fear severely limits their performance during graded activities, stating,

*"The hardest thing for me is speaking in front of my classmates, for example, when reporting and also when writing essays".*

The students' language challenges are dual-natured: they are both structural (cognitive) and emotional (affective). Students lack long-term, intensive exposure to continuous English speaking spaces. Because they lack confidence in syntax and vocabulary, their "emotional walls" go up, creating a mental block. The fear of

peer judgment forces them into a state of silent anxiety, which slows down their natural language production and makes standard classroom tasks like oral reports and essay writing highly intimidating.

This strongly aligns with Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis within the Second Language Acquisition Theory. Krashen (1982) asserts that emotional variables such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation act as a psychological barrier that prevents input from reaching the language acquisition part of the brain. When the affective filter is high, language learning drops significantly.

Additionally, this is supported by Woodrow (2006), who noted that speaking in the target language in front of peers is consistently identified as the most anxiety inducing activity in foreign and second language classrooms, directly causing performance avoidance.

### Theme 2: Vocabulary Deficiencies and Digital Distractions

Another major challenge for the students is a severe lack of vocabulary and a general struggle to comprehend basic instructional terms. Participants explicitly stated that they find it difficult to process unfamiliar words and often do not understand what their assignments are asking them to do. They attribute this lack of vocabulary to poor reading habits and an excessive amount of time spent on entertainment applications on their mobile phones.

It proves that a limited vocabulary directly impairs basic classroom comprehension.

*"...the reason is that I lack vocabulary and sometimes I don't immediately understand the instructions. Sometimes, I also have a hard time thinking of the right English words."- P2*

When students run into unfamiliar terms, they feel completely lost, as shared by Participant 3:

*"...the difficult words, and then I just hear these words for the first time".*

Participant 3 openly connected this vocabulary gap to modern lifestyle habits, stating that they

*"...find it harder because we haven't read enough English... and we spend too much time on our phones watching videos and TikTok".*

The students' vocabulary struggles are deeply tied to a lack of meaningful exposure to the language outside of school hours. Instead of using their free time to read books or engage with text that could build their vocabulary, they consume rapid, short-form digital media that does not encourage deep language processing.

This lack of vocabulary creates a gap in their prior knowledge. Without an established base of words, they cannot actively construct new linguistic meaning during regular lessons.

This finding supports Jean Piaget's Cognitive Constructivism (1952), which emphasizes that learning relies on a student's existing cognitive "schemas" or prior knowledge. If a learner lacks the basic vocabulary building blocks, they cannot assimilate or accommodate new, advanced language lessons.

Furthermore, this is backed by Schmitt (2010), who states that vocabulary knowledge is the foundational core of second language acquisition; without sufficient vocabulary, learners cannot comprehend instructions, express their own ideas, or

successfully develop reading and writing skills.

### **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES ENCOUNTERED BY THE GRADE 9 STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

The learning opportunities encountered by the Grade 9 students of Dautil Watkins National High School primarily center around classroom-based interactive strategies and institutional literacy interventions. The students explicitly highlight that collaborative frameworks, such as group work, class presentations, and reporting, serve as the most effective tools for learning the English language. Group work offers a safe and non-threatening space where peers can consult each other and clarify difficult concepts without fear.

Meanwhile, oral reporting practices compel students to deeply study the definitions of vocabulary words before presenting them to the class. When language performance errors occur during these sessions, the direct feedback and constructive corrections provided by the teacher further optimize the learning experience.

These instructional practices are heavily reinforced by the school's concrete efforts, which include distributing English textbooks and implementing a targeted school-wide reading program to give students structured access to necessary language materials.

Beyond formal classroom hours, the students' learning opportunities are heavily shaped by self-directed tools, modern media consumption, and targeted digital resources. Although their home environments are predominantly localized and immersed in the native Buhinon mother tongue, the learners independently seek out language exposure through multimedia channels. Students actively practice and process English by listening to western songs, watching English television shows, and reading subtitle translations on foreign programs like Korean novelas.

When working on hard assignments outside of school, the students proactively create their own interventions by utilizing digital mobile devices to look up unknown words on the internet, navigating online translator tools, or applying selective keyword searches to break down text.

These independent habits, combined with the social support of turning to more knowledgeable siblings, peers, and teachers when stuck, provide a strong scaffold for the students to independently transform their linguistic challenges into functional learning opportunities.

#### **Theme 3: Collaborative Scaffolding and Institutional Literacy Support**

In terms of learning opportunities, interactive and collaborative activities serve as the most effective tools for helping students learn English. Participants highlighted group work, class presentations, educational games, and direct teacher explanations as highly valuable resources.

Additionally, the school's structural efforts such as providing textbooks and specialized reading initiatives emerged as excellent environmental opportunities that support language growth. Peer interaction helps lower classroom anxiety and provides a safe space for learning.

*"The most helpful for me are the group works because with your group, if you don't know something, you can ask them."*

P1

Working in groups allows students to share knowledge and clarify confusions together. Class presentations also offer a structured way to practice speaking, with Participant 1 mentioning,

*"Reporting also helps because it allows me to practice speaking English... If I make a mistake, our teacher corrects it".*

Participant 3 added that preparing for reports forces them to look up definitions carefully:

*"...the words we put on the manila paper or powerpoint presentation should be understood by us... we, who are reporting study the meanings carefully, and because of this study, we also learn something".*

Students also appreciated the school's program, with Participant 1 noting, *"They have an English reading program, and we also have English books"*.

These findings reveal that while individual tasks cause high anxiety, collaborative learning spaces act as a powerful buffer that encourages students to take risks. Group work and oral reports give the students a clear purpose to study language structures actively. The implementation of a dedicated reading program and the distribution of books provide a critical foundation. These resources give students the direct, comprehensible input they need to bridge their learning gaps.

This dynamic is a perfect example of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the concept of scaffolding, where learners accomplish more difficult tasks with the help of peers and teachers than they could alone. It also perfectly matches the researcher's own Eco-Linguistic Scaffolding Framework, which states that language learning thrives when the school environment stabilizes the emotional learner through collaborative, supportive networks.

Long (1996) also supports this through his Interaction Hypothesis, which argues that negotiation for meaning during group work makes linguistic input much more comprehensible and significantly promotes language acquisition.

#### **Theme 4: Digital Interventions and Socially-Mediated Scaffolding as Self-Regulation Tools**

The data regarding the actions students take to fight their language challenges reveals that they actively use a mix of independent digital tools, recursive reading techniques, and social support systems. When left to handle difficult assignments or reading passages on their own, the participants do not stay passive. Instead, they use self-regulated strategies to break down sentences, research definitions online, or seek direct assistance from more knowledgeable individuals.

It shows that the learners use specific cognitive steps to make sense of hard text.

*"I first read the paragraph. After that, I just choose what I understood and keep repeating it. I will just connect the words so that I can understand something",* as explained by the participant 1 his personal reading process.

This shows that they use repetition and context clues to build meaning. When independent reading is not enough, students heavily rely on modern technology and social connections.

Participant 2 shared,

*"Sometimes I search the internet for the meanings of words I don't understand, and sometimes I ask the teacher".*

Participant 3 supported this active approach, stating,

*"I searched the internet. I also ask others, but I don't immediately trust if their answers are correct".*

The students are capable of managing their own learning through basic problem-solving strategies when faced with linguistic confusion. For the Grade 9 students, the internet serves as an immediate, private dictionary that helps them look up deep words without feeling embarrassed in front of the class. Furthermore, their habit of turning to the teacher or peers for help shows that they naturally value collaborative support.

This result aligns with Zimmerman's (2002) theory of Self-Regulated Learning, which shows that successful students actively manage their own learning by using cognitive strategies like repetition, keyword searches, and environmental assistance.

Furthermore, this behavior matches the core idea of Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory. Vygotsky states that when learners seek help from a teacher or a more knowledgeable peer, they are using "socially-mediated scaffolding" to bridge the gap between what they can do alone and what they can achieve with guidance.

#### **Theme 5: Intrinsic Linguistic Curiosity and Resilience against Failure**

The data concerning how students react emotionally to learning challenges demonstrates that despite the serious reading and vocabulary barriers they experience, the students do not lose their drive to learn the English language. Instead of becoming discouraged or giving up on the subject, the learners display a strong sense of acceptance regarding their current proficiency gaps combined with an internal desire to improve. The data shows that encountering complex English tasks actually pushes them to study harder rather than causing them to lose interest.

The responses of the participants during the interview confirm that academic difficulties do not automatically destroy student motivation. For instance, Participant 1 looked at their learning gaps as a normal part of the process, stating,

*"...it's normal for me not to understand what I'm hearing or reading, so it doesn't affect my interest in the subject".*

This shows a healthy mindset where a lack of understanding is not viewed as a personal failure. Similarly, Participant 2 and Participant 3 highlighted a strong inner drive to gain knowledge. Participant 2 explained,

*"I'm not losing interest in the subject. I'm more focused on how I can better understand English so I can answer the teacher. I need to study hard so I can answer".*

This active focus is supported by Participant 3, who confidently stated,

*"I never lose motivation because I want to learn English".*

From these findings, the Grade 9 students at Dautil Watkins National High School possess a strong foundation of internal motivation and academic resilience. Even though they struggle with sentence structures and basic vocabulary in a

developing school environment, their desire to learn stays high because they view English as a valuable skill.

This is a major opportunity for the school. It proves that if teachers introduce localized reading interventions, the students will likely participate eagerly because they genuinely want to overcome their reading weaknesses and participate successfully in class.

It supports the Self-Determination Theory developed by Deci and Ryan (2000), which states that intrinsic motivation learning an action out of genuine interest or a personal desire to master a skill leads to long-term persistence and better learning outcomes compared to external rewards.

Additionally, this matches research by Dweck (2006) on the "growth mindset," which asserts that when students view learning difficulties as normal challenges rather than permanent failures, they show higher academic resilience and are much more willing to invest extra effort to fix their learning gaps.

### **STUDENT SUGGESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS**

#### **Theme 6: Student-Driven Desires for Simplification, Encouragement, and Interactive Interventions**

When asked for recommendations to improve English language learning, the participants focused on three main needs: simplifying vocabulary, receiving emotional encouragement from teachers, and introducing more interactive classroom activities. The students expressed a strong desire for remedial reading assistance and structured opportunities to practice speaking without the fear of being embarrassed or scolded.

The participants' suggestions show that they want a classroom environment that is more understanding and less intimidating. Participant 2 requested,

*"You could give us more encouragement, do not get angry immediately when we make mistakes, and give us many chances to speak so we can practice and boost our confidence".*

To make lessons easier to understand, Participant 3 suggested focusing on familiar settings:

*"I think the words that teachers teach students should just be simplified with things the students already know, like what's happening in school... so they can quickly understand the meaning".*

To make classes more engaging, Participant 2 stated,

*"I would prefer if there were more activities like games, role play, and group discussions so that the students are more active and the class isn't boring".*

Ultimately, their main goal is oral fluency, as Participant 3 concluded,

*"What I want is for us to speak English well so that we won't be embarrassed to speak English and so that we won't be nervous".*

It indicates that the ideal intervention for these students must balance emotional support with practical, simplified language tools. The students are not resisting the English language; rather, they are asking for a safer, more interactive environment where mistakes are treated as normal parts of learning. Contextually, any

intervention program must focus on simplifying vocabulary using local, relatable contexts. It should also focus on training teachers to offer positive reinforcement, which lowers the students' anxiety and gives them the confidence to actively build their reading and speaking skills.

It is strongly supported by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), who write that positive emotional experiences in the classroom expand a learner's attention and encourage them to absorb new language features. On the other hand, negative emotions narrow their focus and limit learning.

Furthermore, Tomlinson's (2011) principles of materials development for language learning state that instructional materials are most effective when they provide simple, relevant contexts that give learners a sense of ease and help them feel comfortable and confident during the learning process.

#### Chapter 4

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter is a presentation of the summary of the previously presented chapters with the findings gathered by the researcher. From the findings, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations were formulated.

#### **Summary**

This study attempted to identify the challenges and opportunities of the Grade 9 students of Dautil Watkins National High School in English language learning. Specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following questions: (1) what are the challenges encountered by the students in English language learning? (2) What are learning opportunities faced by the students in English language learning? (3) What intervention may be proposed based on the findings of the study?

The study was premised on the following assumptions: (1) The Grade 9 students of Dautil Watkins National High School encounter identifiable linguistic, emotional, or environmental challenges that significantly affect their proficiency and progress in English language learning. (2) Despite any existing difficulties or the newly founded state of the institution, there are available learning opportunities, instructional strategies, or community supports within the school environment that can be leveraged to enhance language acquisition. (3) Gathered experiences and feedback from the participants will provide a reliable, valid, and practical basis for designing a localized intervention program capable of addressing reading and communication gaps.

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach, specifically employing a case study design, to investigate the intersection of language learning challenges and opportunities among the Grade 9 Junior High School students of Dautil Watkins National High School. By adopting a case study framework, the research moves beyond simple grammatical analysis to examine language struggles as meaningful, bounded social events deeply rooted in the participants' specific cultural and linguistic reality.

The study involves five key participants who are directly immersed in the school's linguistic phenomenon. The participants were selected through criterion purposive sampling, which specifically targets individuals who meet a predetermined standard of experience namely, Grade 9 secondary learners currently experiencing documented "comprehension breakdowns" and

reading literacy challenges.

Data were gathered through a semi-structured interview tool, utilizing culturally sensitive, open-ended questions designed to uncover rich, descriptive narratives. This systematic procedure involved securing formal institutional approval and implementing a dual-method recording process of audio-taping and note-taking to accurately identify recurring patterns of communicative resilience and student coping mechanisms.

#### **Findings**

After analyzing the data gathered, the study yielded the following findings:

1. The Grade 9 students encounter profound dual-natured learning difficulties consisting of physical/cognitive and emotional barriers. Structurally, learners face a severe lack of vocabulary and syntactic confusion, struggling with sentence construction and word placement (e.g., placing determiners and prepositions like "the," "of," and "with"). Emotionally, these linguistic deficits trigger high performance anxiety, nervousness, and fear of peer ridicule during public classroom activities such as essay writing, oral reporting, and speaking in front of the class.

Furthermore, these challenges are compounded outside the school environment by digital distractions such as excessive mobile screen time spent on TikTok and YouTube videos and a state of institutional containment where the native mother tongue (Buhinon) is exclusively spoken and English reading materials are absent at home.

2. Despite severe resource limitations in a developing school environment, the students encounter highly effective learning opportunities through collaborative scaffolding and self-regulated learning tools. Inside the classroom, interactive strategies such as group work, educational games, and peer interaction provide a safe, non-threatening space that lowers anxiety and allows students to negotiate meaning together. Oral reporting compels intensive vocabulary preparation, while direct, positive corrections from teachers optimize language retention.

Outside the classroom, the school's provision of targeted reading programs and textbooks serves as a vital foundation. Additionally, students demonstrate deep academic resilience and intrinsic linguistic curiosity, proactively utilizing self-regulated strategies like dictionary searches on the internet, context clue repetition, and media-driven exposure (e.g., songs, television, and subtitles) to cope with text breakdowns.

3. The participants explicitly request a balanced intervention model that targets vocabulary simplification, instructional modifications, pedagogical encouragement, and interactive remedial activities. Students express a strong desire for teachers to intentionally simplify advanced or "deep" vocabulary by anchoring lessons in relatable, everyday school contexts rather than abstract concepts.

Affectively, learners articulate a critical need for emotional reassurance and positive reinforcement, requesting that teachers do not react with immediate anger when mistakes are made. To build confidence and oral fluency while avoiding performance boredom, students recommend that the school implement structured, non-intimidating interactive programs, specifically prioritizing active educational games, role-playing, small-group discussions, and remedial reading assistance.

## Conclusions

In the light of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. It is concluded that the English language learning challenges of the Grade 9 students are deeply tied to a lack of meaningful, structured language exposure outside of school hours, which triggers a high affective filter. Because the domestic setting is structurally contained by the native Buhinon tongue and digital spaces favor passive entertainment over text literacy, students lack the established cognitive schemas or baseline vocabulary blocks required to smoothly assimilate advanced high school instructions. When forced to produce language publicly without these tools, their emotional filters rise, resulting in performance anxiety, silent retreat, and defensive code-switching to manage psychological stress.

2. It is concluded that while isolated individual tasks induce high anxiety, socially-mediated scaffolding and environmental interaction serve as powerful buffers that empower students to actively construct linguistic meaning. The students' strong foundation of intrinsic motivation and growth-mindset resilience indicates that they do not reject English acquisition; rather, they rely on collaborative networks to achieve what they cannot do alone. True language opportunities thrive when the school's community-driven ecosystem provides physical books and targeted reading frameworks, which seamlessly convert passive media habits into active self-regulated learning tools.

3. It is concluded that an effective, sustainable intervention program for a newly founded institution like Dautil Watkins National High School must balance structural language training with emotional optimization. Pedagogical practices cannot rely on rapid instruction or rigid penalties for errors. Instead, to transform documented challenges into real opportunities, any strategic framework must systematically dismantle learning anxiety by fostering an empathetic classroom climate while providing contextualized, clear reading inputs that match the actual developmental readiness of the secondary learners.

## Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. English teachers should slow down the pace of their teaching and start each lesson with a quick vocabulary review. They should also provide simple sentence guides to help students practice word order before they write or speak. Schools and parents should work together to set up a daily reading routine at home to replace screen time with simple books or learning apps.

2. Schools should utilize more group work. Teachers should mix group tasks, peer tutoring, and educational games into daily lessons to reduce student anxiety. They should also enhance current reading programs and textbooks by adding videos and visual worksheets that match students' learning preferences. 3. The school administration should implement "The Eco-Linguistic Scaffolding Program," a three-part school-wide intervention to boost student confidence and literacy. First, it features a reading and speaking clinic focused on step-by-step letter blending and school-based vocabulary. Second, it replaces traditional instruction with interactive methods like role-plays and language games. Finally, it mandates faculty workshops on positive reinforcement and supportive correction to reduce student anxiety and build oral

confidence.

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