

Factors Affecting on Language Learners English Speaking Skills in Rural Area of Sarawak

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges faced by students in rural Sarawak, Malaysia, in developing English-speaking skills. The main problem identified is the significant gap in English-speaking proficiency among rural students due to socio-economic disparities, cultural attitudes, and limited access to resources. The study's objective is to analyse these factors and their impact on students' speaking skills, aiming to inform targeted interventions. A quantitative research method was employed, using structured questionnaires to collect data from 61 secondary school students in rural areas. Key findings revealed that cultural attitudes and socio-economic conditions moderately influence English-speaking abilities, while access to resources poses the greatest challenge. The study highlights the critical need for resource enhancement, teacher training, and community-driven initiatives to foster language learning. The findings underscore the implications for improving pedagogical practices and designing inclusive language education strategies tailored to rural contexts.

Keywords: English Speaking, Abilities, Rural Areas

Introduction

English proficiency is a fundamental skill that can significantly impact an individual's personal and professional growth, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. Mastering English is particularly crucial for students in rural Sarawak, as it opens doors to better educational opportunities, career prospects, and global communication. However, rural students face numerous obstacles in acquiring English-speaking skills due to socio-economic factors, cultural perceptions, and limited access to educational resources. A thorough exploration of this topic reveals the complex interplay of various elements affecting English-speaking skills in rural areas. The significance of studying this issue lies in its far-reaching implications for students' academic and professional futures. English serves as a bridge across diverse communities, enabling individuals to engage in cross-cultural communication and access broader educational and career opportunities. However, students in rural Sarawak struggle with multiple barriers, including inadequate learning environments, resource shortages, and negative attitudes toward English learning. This study is essential because it addresses the pressing need to bridge the educational gap between urban and rural students, ensuring equitable language learning opportunities. English is not just a subject in the curriculum but a critical tool for knowledge acquisition and career advancement. Research by Law Woon Shan and Azlina Abdul Aziz (2022)

highlights the unique difficulties of teaching English in rural areas, such as inadequate facilities, students' negative attitudes toward the subject, and a lack of parental awareness about its importance. Additionally, Getie (2020) emphasizes that students' attitudes toward learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) significantly influence their success, further complicating the issue.

Teachers in rural Sarawak often struggle to deliver effective English lessons due to a shortage of instructional materials, as noted by Yusuf, Astutik, and Megawati (2023). Social factors, as suggested by Spolsky (1989), play a crucial role in language acquisition, making it even more challenging for students in isolated communities to develop fluency in English. The situation in Sarawak is further exacerbated by disparities in infrastructure and educational resources between urban and rural schools, as highlighted by Richard Mark Wood (2023). Urban schools benefit from well-equipped facilities, while rural schools often lack basic educational tools, resulting in monotonous teaching methods and less effective learning outcomes (Shikalepo, 2020; Khulel, 2021). The importance of studying this topic extends beyond academic research—it has practical implications for policymakers, educators, and local communities. By identifying the factors affecting English language acquisition in rural Sarawak, this study contributes valuable insights that can inform targeted interventions. These findings can be utilized to design effective language programs, improve teacher training initiatives, and advocate for increased educational funding in rural areas. Addressing these barriers is imperative to achieving Malaysia's national educational goals, such as Vision 2020, which aims to transform the country into a developed nation. English proficiency is a key component of this vision, as it enhances students' competitiveness in the global economy. Given Sarawak's unique socio-geographic landscape, this research provides an important case study for understanding the broader challenges faced by rural schools in Malaysia. The study seeks to identify the factors affecting English language acquisition in rural Sarawak, including infrastructure, teaching quality, resource availability, and socio-cultural influences. By comprehensively examining these challenges, this research aims to contribute to the development of targeted strategies that support students and teachers in improving English proficiency, thereby promoting equal educational opportunities for rural learners. The utility of this study lies in its potential to drive policy changes, enhance educational practices, and foster an inclusive learning environment for students in rural areas.

Literature Review Attitude and Motivation

Attitude and motivation are two critical factors that significantly influence language learning, as highlighted by Thuan Pham (2021). Attitude, defined as a durable tendency to act in a certain way, shapes learners' willingness to engage in language-related activities, such as reading or speaking, while motivation drives the effort to achieve language proficiency. Maslow's hierarchy of needs offers a framework for understanding motivation, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling psychological and emotional needs for effective learning. Scholars like Collins (2009), Cook & Artino (2016), and Getie (2020) stress the vital role of these attributes in both first and second language acquisition, as positive attitudes and intrinsic motivation often lead to higher achievement. Conversely, negative attitudes hinder progress, underscoring the need for a supportive learning environment. Understanding students' perspectives and addressing the affective domain—the emotional and attitudinal aspects of learning—can

provide valuable insights for enhancing pedagogy, enabling educators to create strategies that foster success and improve overall language learning outcomes.

Family Background Influence the Education Outcomes

The socioeconomic background of a family profoundly influences educational outcomes, as demonstrated by Wang and Shen (2022), with lower parental participation in the education of low-performing pupils highlighted by Cashman et al. (2021). Factors such as parents' limited education, financial constraints, irregular working hours, and unstable home environments exacerbate this issue. Govindarajoo et al. (2022) emphasize that low-performing pupils often lack the support and guidance afforded to their high-performing peers, compounding educational disparities. Family income, particularly in rural areas, plays a pivotal role, as poverty restricts access to quality education due to costs like fees, transportation, and materials, coupled with opportunity costs where immediate needs, such as work, outweigh long-term investments in schooling. Rajendram and Kendal (2020) further reveal that children in low-income families internalize struggles with shame and inferiority, stifling aspirations and academic potential. Additionally, impoverished households often lack access to enriching educational resources and literacy practices, particularly in rural areas. Bandura's social learning theory underscores the environmental influence on learning, highlighting the critical role of positive role models and supportive structures. Addressing these challenges requires reducing financial burdens, enriching learning environments, and improving access to quality education to break cycles of poverty and inequality.

The Aspects of English Speaking Skill

According to Fadhilah Utari (2023), verbal expression is a challenging but essential aspect of communication, as speaking enables individuals to organize their thoughts into coherent sentences to convey meaning effectively. However, several factors can inhibit speaking proficiency, as highlighted by Haun and Em (2022). The first factor is grammar, which involves understanding and applying the rules that govern sentence construction. Mastery of grammar ensures clarity and correct interpretation, enabling effective communication. The second factor is vocabulary, which refers to the range of words a person knows and uses. Vocabulary is not merely a collection of words but a critical tool for conveying ideas, accessing knowledge, and interpreting texts. Without sufficient vocabulary, even strong grammatical skills become ineffective, making communication difficult and comprehension limited (Setiawan et al., 2020; Noviyanti et al., 2019). The third factor is pronunciation, which plays a vital role in oral communication by ensuring words are articulated clearly and meaningfully. Proper pronunciation helps prevent misunderstandings, especially for non-native speakers, and prioritizes clarity over native-like accents (Iswandi et al., 2023). While many students excel in theoretical aspects of language learning, they often struggle with practical application, emphasizing the importance of integrating grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation for effective spoken communication (Linda, 2022).

Research Questions

- 1) How do cultural attitudes influence the English-speaking skills of students in rural areas?
- 2) What is the relationship between socio-economic conditions and the English-speaking skills of students in rural areas?
- 3) To what extent does limited access to resources impact the development of English-speaking skills among students in rural areas?

Research Methodology Research Design

This study will employ a quantitative research methodology, incorporating a case study as the research design, to explore the relationship between three proposed variables and the factors influencing English speaking skills among students in rural areas. The case study approach allows for an in-depth examination of a specific group or setting, offering detailed insights into the unique challenges and dynamics within a rural context. Combined with the quantitative approach, this methodology provides objective, measurable, and generalizable data while also capturing the nuanced experiences of rural students. By analyzing the variables using empirical evidence within a focused case study, this design facilitates a systematic examination of the challenges faced by these students in learning English. The insights gained from this research can inform targeted, evidence-based interventions designed to enhance language education outcomes for students in rural settings, ultimately bridging the gap in educational equity and improving their English proficiency.

Research Population and Samples

In this study, a total of 61 students from rural areas of Sarawak were selected as to investigate, and those pupils are going to be asked to fill out the questionnaire in its entirety. This study focuses on a population of students from rural areas in Sarawak, with a total sample size of 61 students. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that ensures the inclusion of individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria for selection include students must reside in rural areas of Sarawak, as the study aims to examine the challenges specific to these settings and must be actively enrolled in a school to provide relevant and current insights into their learning experiences. This purposive sampling ensures that the selected sample is both representative of the rural student population in Sarawak and aligned with the research's focus on understanding factors influencing English speaking skills in these areas.

Research Instrument

In this study, a questionnaire serves as the primary data collection instrument, designed to systematically gather responses from participants through a series of structured questions. This tool is specifically tailored to address the study's objectives, focusing on rural students' restricted access to resources, cultural attitudes, and socio-economic backgrounds. The questionnaire consists of 25 items, divided into five sections. Section A collects demographic information about the respondents. Section B focuses on the dependent variable, addressing the challenges rural students in Sarawak face in developing English speaking skills. Section C examines the influence of cultural attitudes on language acquisition, exploring how societal and cultural perceptions affect students' ability to learn English. Section D investigates the role of socio-economic conditions in shaping students' capacity to learn and practice English speaking skills. Lastly, Section E explores the impact of limited access to educational resources

on students' language development. To ensure reliability and validity, the questionnaire is adapted from previously validated instruments used in related studies. A pilot study was conducted with a small group of participants to refine the instrument, ensuring clarity and relevance. This preliminary testing helped identify ambiguities and confirmed that the questions were appropriate for the study's context, enhancing the effectiveness of the tool for data collection.

Data Collection Procedures

This study will focus on students attending rural schools in Sarawak, utilizing primary data collection methods to ensure originality and reliability. Primary data, gathered directly from sources, is considered more dependable than secondary data for understanding specific research contexts. The primary data for this investigation will be collected through an online questionnaire survey. Web-based tools such as Google Forms will be used to design and administer the survey, ensuring efficiency and accessibility. The survey will be distributed to targeted respondents via social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and similar networks, enabling a broad and diverse reach within the rural student population. This approach ensures that data collected is both unique and tailored to the specific research objectives.

Data Analysis Procedure

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) will be utilized to analyze the data for this study. SPSS provides a robust quantitative analysis framework and simplifies statistical computations, making it an ideal tool for handling the study's data. Once the questionnaires are collected from respondents, all responses will be systematically entered into SPSS to create a comprehensive dataset covering every aspect of the research. This raw data will then be processed to generate two primary types of statistics: descriptive statistics, which summarize and describe the main features of the data, and inferential statistics, which allow for conclusions and predictions based on the data. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings, the reliability and validity of the measurement tools employed in the study will be thoroughly assessed. Reliability testing will examine the properties of the measurement scales and their individual components, providing widely used indicators of scale reliability. By analyzing the relationships among the scale's elements and employing correlation coefficients, the study will estimate the consistency and dependability of the measures used. This rigorous approach ensures that the analysis is both credible and meaningful for drawing conclusions.

Result and Discussion

This section presents a detailed analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire responses of 61 participants. It includes an explanation of the reliability test, descriptive analysis for both independent and dependent variables, and correlation analysis examining the relationship between these variables. Each analysis provides insights into the data, ensuring the validity and robustness of the findings while exploring the connections between key factors and their impact on the study's outcomes.

Reliability Analysis*Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.628	20

In the pilot study, the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.628, which measures the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Values between 0.6 and 0.7 are generally considered moderate or marginally acceptable, especially in exploratory research or pilot studies where instrument refinement is still ongoing. Since this is a pilot study, a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.628 indicates that the questionnaire demonstrates an adequate level of reliability for its early stage. This moderate reliability may be acceptable in this context because the study is exploratory, and the instrument is still being refined.

Socio Demographic

The data analysis reveals key socio-demographic trends among the participants, shedding light on factors that may influence English-speaking skills. The mean gender score of 1.74 suggests that the majority of respondents are female, with a standard deviation of 0.444, indicating minimal variability in gender distribution. Regarding the primary language spoken at home, the mean score of 2.00 suggests that Malay or a similar language is most common, with a moderate variability (SD = 0.913). Participants occasionally speak English outside of school, as reflected by a mean of 2.11, with moderate variability (SD = 0.950). The educational background of parents or guardians shows a mean of 2.25, suggesting lower to moderate education levels, with some variability (SD = 0.809). Exposure to English media, such as TV, books, and social media, has a mean of 2.77, reflecting moderate exposure, and variability is moderate as well (SD = 0.990). The sample size of 61 participants is adequate for a pilot study, offering valuable insights into the socio-demographic profiles of the target population. The mean values highlight general trends, while the standard deviations indicate diversity in responses, particularly for language and media exposure. However, the low variability in gender suggests a lack of gender balance in the sample. Overall, the data provides a solid foundation for understanding the participants' socio-demographic characteristics and their potential influence on English-speaking skills. Key variables, such as primary language, frequency of English use, and media exposure, align closely with the study's objectives, while parental education adds socio-economic context. This comprehensive profile is critical for analyzing factors that shape English proficiency among rural students.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	61	1	2	1.74	.444
PrimaryLanguageSpokenathH ome	61	1	3	2.00	.913
FrequencyofSpeakingEnglis hOutsideSchool	61	1	4	2.11	.950
EducationalBackgroundofPar entsGuardians	61	1	5	2.25	.809
ExposuretoEnglishMediaTV BooksSocialMediaetc	61	1	4	2.77	.990
Valid N (listwise)	61				

Independent Variables Analysis

The descriptive statistics highlight the influence of cultural attitudes on learning English-speaking skills. Overall, the findings reveal a generally positive environment for language acquisition, though some challenges remain. Community Encouragement: With a mean of 3.66, respondents generally feel that their communities value and encourage speaking English, though the moderate variability ($SD = 0.947$) suggests mixed levels of support across individuals. Cultural Identity: A mean of 2.28 indicates that most respondents do not feel speaking English distances them from their cultural identity, reflecting favorable cultural attitudes. However, higher variability ($SD = 1.082$) reveals differing opinions among participants. Family Support: The high mean score of 3.85 reflects strong encouragement from families to practice English, with low variability ($SD = 0.792$), suggesting this is a shared experience across most respondents. Perceived Importance: A mean of 4.18 underscores the belief that English proficiency is essential for achieving success, demonstrating strong aspirational value. Moderate variability ($SD = 0.885$) indicates that while most agree, not all participants share this view. Practice Opportunities: Respondents somewhat agree (mean = 3.69) that there are opportunities in their communities to practice English. However, moderate consistency ($SD = 0.847$) suggests these opportunities are not equally accessible. The data highlights the positive role of cultural and familial support in encouraging English learning, as well as the motivational importance of viewing English as a tool for success. However, variability in perceptions of practice opportunities and cultural alignment suggests areas for improvement. Initiatives such as community-based English programs or increased access to English-speaking environments could help bridge these gaps and enhance language acquisition outcomes.

Table 2
Cultural Attitudes

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking English is valued and encouraged by my community	61	1	5	3.66	.947
I feel that using English makes me feel distanced from my cultural identity	61	1	5	2.28	1.082
My family encourages me to practice speaking English	61	2	5	3.85	.792
I believe that speaking English is essential for achieving success outside	61	1	5	4.18	.885
There are enough opportunities within my community to practice speaking English	61	1	5	3.69	.847
Valid N (listwise)	61				

The data reveals the varied influence of socio-economic factors on students' access to resources and opportunities for learning English. Financial Support: A high mean of 4.10 shows that most respondents agree their families' financial situations enable access to learning resources, with low variability (SD = 0.700) indicating general consensus. Similarly, a mean of 3.67 suggests that socio-economic status positively impacts English learning, supported by moderate agreement among participants (SD = 0.926). Community and Media Access: The mean of 2.93 reflects mixed opinions on whether students in the community lack opportunities to practice English, while high variability (SD = 1.014) highlights diverse experiences. Regarding access to English-speaking media, a mean of 3.03 suggests neutral perceptions, with significant differences (SD = 1.183) across respondents. Financial Constraints: A mean of 3.00 reveals divided opinions on whether financial constraints limit families' ability to provide additional educational support. The large standard deviation (SD = 1.155) indicates substantial variability in these experiences. The findings suggest that favorable financial situations enable access to resources, enhancing learning opportunities. However, disparities in community resources and access to English-speaking media point to socio-economic barriers affecting some students more than others. The variability in financial constraints further highlights the unequal impact of economic challenges. To address these gaps, targeted interventions such as community resource programs, expanded access to English media, and financial aid initiatives could help create more equitable learning environments, ensuring all students can effectively learn and practice English.

Table 3

Socio-economic Conditions

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Myfamily'sfinancialsituationallowsmetoaccessresourcesuch	61	2	5	4.10	.700
StudentsinmycommunityhavefeweropportunitiestopracticeEnglishcomp	61	1	5	2.93	1.014
Myfamilyssocioeconomicstatushasapositiveimpactonmyabilitytolearn	61	2	5	3.67	.926
LimitedaccesstoEnglishspeakingmediasuchastelevisioninternetandbo	61	1	5	3.03	1.183
Financialconstraintsmakeitdifficultformyfamilytoprovideadditional	61	1	5	3.00	1.155
Valid N (listwise)	61				

The data highlights several challenges faced by rural students in improving their English-speaking skills due to resource limitations and inadequate infrastructure. Teacher Availability: With a mean of 3.05, students moderately agree that the lack of English-speaking teachers limits their progress. However, variability in responses ($SD = 1.161$) suggests some schools may have better access to qualified teachers. Access to Materials: A near-neutral mean of 2.85 indicates mixed responses regarding access to English language materials like books and magazines. The slightly higher variability ($SD = 1.167$) reflects uneven resource availability across different communities. Community Opportunities: A mean of 3.20 suggests moderate agreement that opportunities for attending English language workshops are scarce, with lower variability ($SD = 0.910$) showing consistency in this concern among respondents. Internet Access: The mean of 3.02 highlights the impact of limited internet access on students' ability to use online English-learning tools. Variability ($SD = 1.147$) suggests differing experiences, likely influenced by regional internet penetration. Practice Spaces: A mean of 2.80 reflects slightly below-neutral perceptions of the availability of platforms or spaces for English practice. While this is an issue for some, others may rely on alternatives such as informal groups or online platforms. The findings underscore the multifaceted barriers rural students face in developing English-speaking skills. Limited access to qualified teachers, English language materials, workshops, internet connectivity, and practice spaces hinders learning opportunities for many. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions such as hiring English-speaking teachers, increasing the availability of language resources, organizing community workshops, expanding internet access in rural areas, and establishing dedicated spaces for practicing English. These efforts could significantly improve the learning environment and foster better language acquisition outcomes for rural students.

Table 4

Access to Resources

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The lack of English speaking teachers in my school limits my ability to improve	61	1	5	3.05	1.161
I have limited access to English language materials like books and magazines	61	1	5	2.85	1.167
There are few opportunities in my community to attend English language work	61	2	5	3.20	.910
Lack of internet access in my area limits my ability to access English learning	61	1	5	3.02	1.147
There are not enough platforms or spaces in my school or community to practice	61	1	5	2.80	1.046
Valid N (listwise)	61				

The table highlights three key variables—Cultural Attitudes, Socio-Economic Conditions, and Access to Resources—that influence learners’ English-speaking skills. Cultural Attitudes demonstrate a consistently positive impact, with a high mean of 17.66 and low variability (SD = 2.670). This indicates strong cultural engagement and shared views among participants, emphasizing the role of cultural support in language learning. Socio-Economic Conditions show a moderately high mean of 16.74, reflecting their significant influence on English acquisition. However, a slightly higher standard deviation (SD = 3.167) reveals some variability, indicating differences in socio-economic experiences among respondents. Access to Resources emerges as the most critical barrier, with the lowest mean (14.92) and the highest variability (SD = 3.765). This suggests significant disparities in resource availability, with some learners facing considerable challenges in accessing materials, digital tools, and learning opportunities. The findings highlight priority areas for intervention. Cultural attitudes, already a strong influence, can be further leveraged by aligning language learning strategies with cultural norms. Addressing socio-economic disparities through scholarships, financial aid, and community initiatives can help reduce barriers for disadvantaged students. Most importantly, improving access to resources—such as digital tools, English-language materials, and reliable internet—should be prioritized to create equitable learning opportunities. By focusing on resource accessibility while building on cultural strengths and addressing socio-economic gaps, learners can receive the support needed to enhance their English-speaking skills.

Table 5

*Overall Mean for Independent Variables***Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
CulturalAttitudes	61	17.66	2.670
SocioEconomicConditions	61	16.74	3.167
AccesstoResources	61	14.92	3.765
Valid N (listwise)	61		

A survey conducted among 61 participants sheds light on the crucial factors influencing the development of English-speaking skills. The data identifies key areas such as the availability of learning resources, motivation, teacher influence, and extracurricular activities, highlighting actionable insights for enhancing students' language proficiency. Availability of Learning Resources with the highest mean score (4.34), the availability of resources like textbooks and audiovisual aids emerges as the most critical factor. Students overwhelmingly agree on their importance for improving speaking skills. However, the findings also highlight significant resource gaps, particularly in underserved areas, emphasizing the need for targeted investments in resource accessibility. Extracurricular Activities such as language clubs, speaking contests, and similar activities also play a pivotal role in language learning, as reflected by a strong mean score of 4.07. These activities provide practical, immersive opportunities for students to hone their speaking skills. Nevertheless, the relatively high standard deviation (0.910) indicates disparities in students' access to such opportunities, suggesting that efforts must be made to bridge this gap. Motivation to practice speaking regularly recorded the lowest mean score (3.93), highlighting it as a significant barrier to skill development. This finding suggests a lack of consistent opportunities or external encouragement for students to engage in regular speaking practice, underlining the importance of fostering a supportive environment. Teacher Influence teachers' language proficiency and teaching methods received a strong mean score of 4.18, underscoring their essential role in shaping students' speaking abilities. The low standard deviation (0.827) reflects widespread agreement among participants on the importance of effective teaching in language acquisition. Investing in teacher training and development could further enhance teaching quality and language proficiency.

Table 6

Dependent Variable Analysis

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The availability of English learning resources such as textbooks, audio, and video	61	1	5	4.34	.854
The support of my family and community influences my confidence and willingness	61	1	5	4.28	.859
Teachers' language proficiency and teaching methods have a significant impact	61	1	5	4.18	.827
I feel motivated to practice speaking English regularly even outside of school	61	1	5	3.93	.892
Extracurricular activities such as language clubs or speaking contests	61	1	5	4.07	.910
Valid N (listwise)	61				

A study examining factors influencing English-speaking skills revealed several key insights. Cultural attitudes showed a weak negative correlation with speaking skills ($r = -0.257$, $p = 0.045$), indicating that resistance to English as a second language could hinder development. This underscores the need to address cultural barriers, particularly in rural areas, by promoting English's benefits and aligning it with local values. Socioeconomic conditions showed no significant direct impact on speaking skills ($r = -0.057$, $p = 0.660$). However, a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.329$, $p = 0.010$) was observed between socioeconomic conditions and access to resources, emphasizing how financial stability enables greater resource availability. Access to resources, while important, had only a very weak and statistically insignificant correlation with speaking skills ($r = 0.103$, $p = 0.432$), suggesting indirect or inconsistent effects.

Table 7
Correlation Analysis

		Correlations			
		CulturalAttitude	SocioEconomic	Access to Resources	Learning Speaking Skills in English among rural students
Cultural Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	1	-.031	-.018	-.257*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.815	.89	.045
	N	61	61	61	61
Socioeconomic Conditions	Pearson	-.031	1	.329*	-.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.815		.01	.660
	N	61	61	61	61
Access to Resources	Pearson	-.018	.329*	1	.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.892	.010		.432
	N	61	61	61	61
Learning Speaking Skills in English among rural students	Pearson	-.257*	-.057	.103	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.660	.43	
	N	61	61	61	61

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion and Implication

This study sheds light on the challenges faced by rural students in Sarawak, Malaysia, in acquiring English-speaking skills, a critical competency for personal and professional growth in an increasingly globalized world. Through an in-depth analysis of cultural attitudes, socioeconomic conditions, and access to resources, the findings reveal key barriers and provide a roadmap for targeted interventions. The research highlights that cultural attitudes have a significant yet weak negative correlation with English-speaking skills, underscoring the role of cultural resistance as a barrier to language acquisition. Rural communities often perceive English as a threat to local identities, which can deter consistent engagement with the language. While this resistance is subtle, its presence necessitates initiatives to harmonize the promotion of English with the preservation of cultural heritage. Socioeconomic conditions, although not directly correlated with speaking skills, exhibit a significant positive relationship with access to resources. Financial stability plays a pivotal role in enabling families to afford educational materials, tuition, and technology, indirectly impacting students' ability to practice and improve their speaking abilities. This finding underscores the importance of addressing economic disparities to create equitable opportunities for learning. Access to resources emerges as the most pronounced challenge. The variability in the availability of learning materials, qualified teachers, and

digital tools across rural areas exacerbates the educational divide. Although resources alone are not strongly correlated with speaking skills, their absence limits the potential for effective language acquisition, as they form the foundation for structured practice and skill development.

The implications of these findings are both multi-dimensional and actionable, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to improving English-speaking skills among rural students. By tackling cultural resistance, resource inequities, and socioeconomic challenges, stakeholders can create an inclusive educational environment that empowers students to thrive. This research serves as a call to action for policymakers, educators, and communities to work together in fostering a generation of confident English speakers equipped for success in the global arena.

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