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Factors Affecting English Performance Between Students Residing in Tourist and Non-Tourist Areas

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Abstract

Living in a tourist area is frequently viewed as an advantage for students learning English as it provides more opportunities to practice the language. The present study looked at the English performance of students residing in tourist and non-tourist areas and explored how they learned English and the factors affecting their language performance. A comparative study was conducted using a concurrent mixed-method approach. The data were collected through documents, tests, and interviews and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to examine differences and determine the main themes between the respective groups. The result of the study indicates that the two groups differed statistically in terms of English school grades and speaking test scores with large effect sizes ($d = 3.26$ and $d = 1.28$), respectively. Even though the proficiency test did not show a significant difference ($p = .72$), the non-tourist group outperformed the tourist group in all assessment types. The interviews revealed that regardless of the different attributes and sites where students lived, the two groups were similar in how they learned English. The main factors affecting the English language performance of both groups were (1) strong motivation, (2) the independent effort to learn English outside

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of school, (3) exposure to English through songs, games, movies, and social media, and (4) family support.

Keywords: English language performance, language acquisition, learning English, tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an English as a foreign language (EFL) learning and teaching environment such as Indonesia, students have fewer possibilities to be exposed to authentic English usage (Agung, 2019; Lauder, 2008). As such, the most meaningful exposure to English for most students is during classroom instruction (Lamb, 2013; Marcellino, 2015). Outside the classroom, their exposure to English is confined to songs, movies, video games, television programs, and social media (Hidayati & Husna, 2020; Lamb, 2004). Consequently, seeing as English serves as the primary media of communication with foreign visitors in a tourist destination (Irimiea, 2018), meeting or interacting with a native English speaker in Indonesia is unlikely unless students reside in tourist areas (Gao, 2012).

For most Indonesians living in tourist destinations, acquiring English is driven by economic demand rather than academic need (Gunton, 2004). For example, in Bali, Indonesia, some individuals desire to develop English language skills to assist them in selling their products to tourists. Gunton (2004) noted that many Balinese who speak English acquired language ability from talking to tourists rather than in the classroom. Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) showed that intercultural contact through tourism created positive language attitudes and positively correlated with self-confidence in using the language. Furthermore, Gao (2012) discovered that Yangshuo, a Chinese province with the most international tourists and markets, has a place where people can practice speaking English by interacting with native English speakers. As a result, this location has become the most prominent English-speaking region in the nation.

According to the previous studies mentioned above, living in a tourist area can be advantageous for English language learners. What about the language learners who do not live in tourist areas? Would they be considered disadvantaged under the circumstance of learning English in an authentic setting? Perhaps, but with mobile technology and internet access, students now have access to several language learning platforms (Richards, 2015). With technology, students can learn English using visual and auditory aids and become more proficient in the four macro skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Blake, 2016). Through various mobile applications, individuals can communicate with other language learners, including native speakers of the target language (Sama & Wu, 2019). Thanks to modern technology, learners still have opportunities to be exposed to and engaged with authentic English despite living outside a tourist area. Previous studies in Aceh, Indonesia, found that most university students possessed smartphones and often used various English language learning mobile applications and dual-language dictionaries (Hidayati & Diana, 2019; Hidayati & Endayani, 2019). Moreover, Hidayati and Diana (2019), who introduced various free mobile applications for English language learning, found that students demonstrated greater enthusiasm if they could study English outside classes at any suitable time and location.

However, few studies have investigated the relationship between tourism and English language learning. Most studies concerning technological media in language learning aim to implement specific mobile devices or applications to develop language skills. Less attention has been given to the factors affecting the English performance of students from different learning contexts. Hence, the current study examines this gap and adds to the literature on English language learning in an EFL context by investigating the English performance of students from tourist and non-tourist areas and exploring factors affecting their English performance. In consideration, two questions are proposed:

1. Are there significant differences in English language performance between students living in tourist and those residing in non-tourist areas?
2. What are the factors affecting the English performance of students living in tourist and non-tourist areas?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourism and Authentic Language Learning

United Nations (2010) defines tourism as “a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes” (p. 1). Global tourism growth has established a special status of English as the language of tourism, closely linked to various areas related to tourism, from tourism management to sociological issues of individual perception, experience, and identity (Irimiea, 2018). Ruane (2021) contended that the increase in international mobility trends in today’s global society leads to a change in attitude toward English usage. In the context where tourism serves as the means of income, the English language is needed to do business (Parwati, 2018). For this community, English is a prestigious language required to secure workforce positions. Often, parents send their children to schools offering English programs so they may acquire the English proficiency necessary for business in tourist sites (Artini, 2017).

Intercultural contact from the mobilization of people in today’s era is reported to play an essential role in learning a foreign language. Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) explained that meaningful communication across cultures requires proficiency in the target language. Inter-ethnic contact creates opportunities for developing language skills and acts as a powerful influence in shaping learners’ attitudes and motivation toward the target language. Studies investigating cross-cultural communication among language learners indicate that such encounters improve learners’ communicative competence, increase motivation, and lessen anxiety in language use (Aubrey & Nowlan, 2013; Kormos & Csizér, 2007). Likewise, the linguistic landscape of tourist destinations with multiple languages displayed in public in the form of various signages such as public road signs, street names, advertising billboards, place names, and commercial shop signs (Hancock, 2022) is believed to be a valuable form of linguistic function essential in raising language awareness among language learners (Gorter et al., 2021). A study of learners’ engagement with linguistic landscapes revealed that such opportunities serve as practical pedagogical tools enabling learners to gain new knowledge and understanding of diverse language literacies. Accordingly,

the linguistic landscape functions both as valuable language input and a critical educational resource for foreign language learning (Hancock, 2022). Drawing from these studies, learners residing in tourist locations can benefit from their environment as they will likely be exposed to different forms of language displayed in public for tourist guidance.

2.2 English Language Performance

According to Chomsky (2006), language performance is having a good command of a language in which the user is “able, in principle, to understand what is said and to produce a signal with an intended semantic interpretation” (p. 102). In other words, language performance, as the accumulation of both knowing and using the language, is the ability to use the language to communicate effectively for different purposes and in varied contexts. Studies have found that internal factors such as origins in a student’s inner self, including motivation, attitudes, and perceptions about learning English, and external factors such as classroom setting, educational activities, English proficiency, and exposure to English impact a student’s English language performance (Adolphs et al., 2018; Liu, 2014; Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011).

In addition, when exploring psychological factors that influence English performance, Haidara (2016) found out that despite rating themselves as having the sufficient vocabulary and good grammar knowledge, students were insecure when asked to speak in English due to fear of mistakes, being shy, hesitation, and lacking confidence. Additionally, for dual language learners, social status and poverty were also indicated to significantly influence the speed of English attainment (Kim et al., 2014). Kim et al. (2014) reported that learners whose mothers were born in form-providing countries and attended schools with fewer dual language learners appeared to become proficient in English faster. Moreover, they further stressed that dual language learners have diverse backgrounds with economic issues interfering with their English learning.

Studying young English language learners in several municipalities in East Java, Indonesia, Meisani et al. (2020) noted that learners’ English achievement was also related to gender, grade level, and school accreditation rank. Meisani et al. (2020) asserted that while grade level and gender were repeatedly reported to substantially influence learners’ English performance, they also recorded a significant effect due to the school’s reputation. Students studying in schools with the highest reputation rank were found to have better attainment in English. Similarly, Getie (2020) found that educational context factors, including classroom arrangement and physical environment, can negatively affect students’ attitudes toward learning English. Therefore, it is vital to improve the physical learning environment to assist the language learning process.

With numerous factors influencing and contributing to language performance, instructional methodologies that may enhance learners’ English language performance have been widely and extensively researched. Khoshshima and Shokri (2017) suggested that sound methods can provide better learning opportunities to develop learners’ language performance through engagement, study, and activity elements. Furthermore, Llinares (2015) established that it is essential to have learners think about the language they are encountering. They found that thinking and making decisions about the target language will help learners develop conceptual understanding and

cognitive skills, which is more critical than acquiring information. However, an over-focus on language construction and arrangement may hamper fluency (Khoshsima & Shokri, 2017), as in the case of young learners. Young learners acquire language subconsciously through an inductive process of exposure to language input and the opportunity to experiment with output (Hu, 2016). In other words, they acquire language without thinking about it. The practical implication of this view is that language learning must be balanced between encouraging students to discover complex language constructions and allowing them to use the language in automatic mode without thinking about the sentence arrangements and verb tenses (Housen et al., 2012). Wong et al. (2017) suggested that with more approaches to language learning, the content of language courses should reflect the purposes for which the students are learning the language in the first place. For this reason, teachers should be aware of the learners' needs before beginning a language course.

3. METHODS

This current study utilized a concurrent mixed-method design to collect qualitative and quantitative data (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Quantitative data were collected to obtain information about students' English performance, defined as the ability to produce and comprehend sentences in English (Inayah et al., 2019) both orally and in written form. Quantitative data were determined through school grades, speaking tests, and the EnglishScore application. Meanwhile, qualitative data regarding factors affecting students' language performance were collected through in-depth interviews.

3.1 Participants

The participants were senior high school students studying in eight of the most reputable schools in both tourist and non-tourist areas of Aceh. Four schools were chosen in Sabang, Aceh's most popular tourist destination, and subsequently identified as tourism areas (TA). For comparison, four schools were selected in Meulaboh city, a representative of the non-tourism area; henceforth, it is categorized as NTA. A total of 24 participants were purposefully selected from those who were the most helpful and highly informative for the study. The students chosen were those having the best English ability or those in the top three of the highest English grades in their schools.

3.2 Instruments

There were four instruments used for data collection. The first three instruments were used to obtain data about students' English language performance. The fourth instrument explored certain factors affecting students' English language performance.

3.2.1 English school grade report

Student grade reports generally reflect students' general English ability. The final grade given to students at the end of the semester ranges from 0 to 100: 91–100

is very good, 81–90 is good, 70–80 is satisfactory, and < 70 is insufficient. Each school may set different minimum achievement standards, ranging from 60 to 70.

3.2.2 Speaking test

A speaking test was used to collect data about students' speaking abilities. The test, designed by the researchers, consisted of a series of questions about a casual topic the students generally knew about and was carried out as a one-to-one interview with the researcher lasting around 7 to 10 minutes. Students' speaking ability was graded using a rubric of 10 points adopted from Languages Other Than English: Checkpoint C Resource Guide (University of the State of New York, 2003). Five elements were assessed: comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and grammar. Each element was graded in three ranges; 2 points when students showed strong, excellent, or very good ability; 1 point when students showed moderate, considerable, or good ability; and 0 points when students showed very low or poor ability.

3.2.3 EnglishScore

EnglishScore is a free mobile application developed by the British Council to assess English proficiency (<https://www.englishscore.com>). The application evaluated students' English language performance in an international standardized test. The application was chosen as the instrument instead of other official standardized tests because it is quick and accurate. The test only takes under 40 minutes to complete. It requires a working camera and microphone to ensure the test taker's identity. Someone can take the test through the application installed on their mobile phone by simply using their email to log in. The test assesses proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening. The overall score is shown immediately after completing the test. It is rated based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to indicate the level of proficiency. The score is categorized into six categories: 0–99 (pre-A1), 100–199 (A1), 200–299 (A2), 300–399 (B1), 400–499 (B2), and 500–599 (C1).

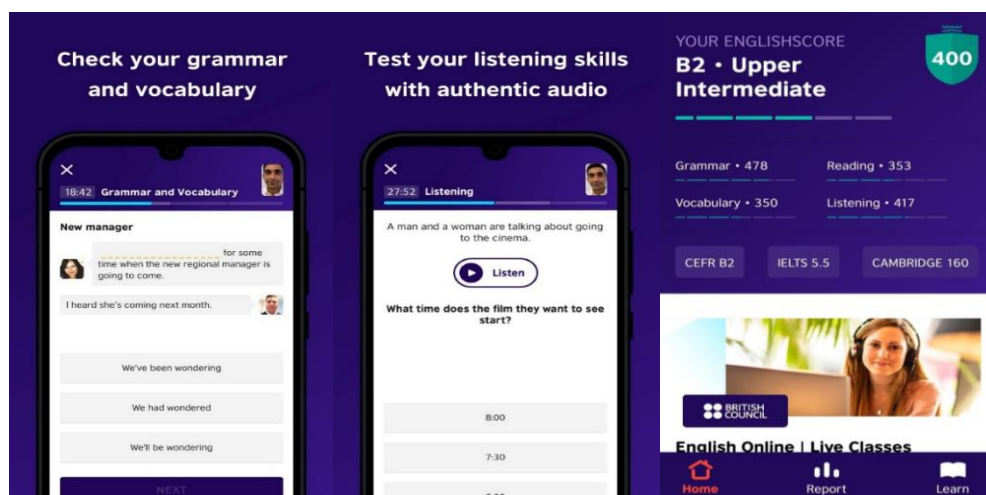


Figure 1. EnglishScore application interface.

3.2.4 Interview

The interview was specified to have an in-depth understanding of how the students develop their English skills. It was intended to explore factors that assist students in enhancing their English proficiency. The researchers designed 13 semi-structured questions as a guide in the interview. The questions focused on students' motivation to learn English, how they learn English, their exposure to English, and their family background. The interview was conducted face-to-face individually. It was conducted in mixed English and Bahasa Indonesia to ensure the students understood the questions and could appropriately provide the information needed. The interview lasted around 10 minutes for each participant. It was recorded with the participant's permission to avoid losing information.

3.3 Research Procedure

Data collection started within the tourist area (TA) in March 2021, followed by the non-tourist area (NTA) in April 2021. Data collection in both areas began with meeting with English teachers to choose three to four of their best English students and collect their English school grade reports. The selected students were first asked to take an EnglishScore test using mobile phones provided by the researchers. After that, each researcher started data collection by asking the students questions to assess their speaking ability. Later, the student was individually interviewed.

3.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data analyses were performed separately. Quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and comparative analysis to figure out trends and differences between the groups. Meanwhile, data from the interviews were analyzed following procedures from [Creswell and Creswell \(2018\)](#). First, the interview data were transcribed. Then the researchers read the data carefully and classified them into information segments. The segments were then coded. Next, the codes were collapsed into themes.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Students' English Language Performance

The data comparison indicated that the average score of students in the NTA group, in all three instruments of measurement used, was higher than that of the TA group. At a glance, students in the NTA group had better English language performance than their fellow TA group (see Table 1).

Table 1. Students' English scores from three different instruments.

Tourist area group					Non-tourist area group				
No	Students	English score			No	Students	English score		
		English school grade	Speaking test	English Score test			English school grade	Speaking test	English score test
1	Student 1	83.40	7	400	1	Student 1	90.00	7	454
2	Student 2	85.00	9	400	2	Student 2	90.80	9	408
3	Student 3	85.40	5	325	3	Student 3	94.67	8	408
4	Student 4	82.80	5	300	4	Student 4	90.40	9	372
5	Student 5	86.00	6	299	5	Student 5	89.40	8	363
6	Student 6	82.67	4	290	6	Student 6	89.60	8	345
7	Student 7	84.00	2	272	7	Student 7	87.80	7	345
8	Student 8	85.75	3	272	8	Student 8	86.80	7	308
9	Student 9	83.60	2	272	9	Student 9	93.80	7	281
10	Student 10	82.20	3	272	10	Student 10	84.33	7	281
11	Student 11	86.00	10	254	11	Student 11	87.00	8	272
12	Student 12	81.00	3	254	12	Student 12	93.33	5	263
Average score		83.98	4.92	300.83	Average score		89.83	7.50	341.67

However, this descriptive data did not assume a significant difference between the two groups. Thus, the data were further analyzed through comparative analysis. The result indicated that for English school grades, the TA and NTA groups differed statistically ($t(22) = -5.79$, 95% CI [-7.94, -3.75], $p = .00$) (Table 2). The calculation for effect size $d = \frac{2t}{\sqrt{df}}$ also came with a significant effect ($d = 2.36$) (Larson-Hall, 2010). Thus, the difference in school grades between TA and NTA was proved not due to the normal variation between scores. Apparently, students' different attributes seem to impact their school grades. Similarly, data analysis for English speaking scores from the TA and NTA groups also showed that the two groups differ statistically ($t(22) = -3.13$, 95% CI [-4.35, -.82], $p = .007$) (Table 2). The calculation for effect size also presented a large effect size ($d = 1.28$), meaning that the difference is statistical and can be accounted for. Although the study has a small sample size, t-test analysis was believed to be appropriate for comparing the groups as, de Winter (2013) argued that despite the small sample size, there are no objections to using a t-test as long as the effect size is large.

Table 2. T-test output of English school grade and speaking test scores.

		Independent Sample Tests									
		Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test for equality of means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference		
									Low.	Up.	
English school grade	Equal variances assumed	2.664	.117	-5.788	22	.000	-5.842	1.009	-7.936	-3.749	
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.788	16.832	.000	-5.842	1.009	-7.974	-3.711	
Speaking test	Equal variances assumed	6.992	.015	-3.130	22	.005	-2.583	.825	-4.295	-.872	
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.130	14.615	.007	-2.583	.825	-4.347	-.820	

In terms of proficiency level measured through the EnglishScore application, as the data failed to fit the assumptions for parametric analysis (data in TA group was not normally distributed $p = .006$), a comparative analysis of the data was run using the Mann-Whitney U test. The test displayed a p value of .72, thus failing to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no statistical difference in the proficiency level of the two groups. Nevertheless, it was clear that the average score of the two groups differs largely (TA mean = 300.83, $N = 12$; NTA mean = 341.67, $N = 12$). The effect size ($r = .37$) fell in the medium category. Even though the test failed to reject the null hypothesis, this result does not directly point out that a difference between the groups does not exist but that the test possibly could not detect the difference due to a lack of power (Larson-Hall, 2010). The calculation for power ($r = .37$, $N_1 = 12$, $N_2 = 12$) shows = .14, indicating that even if there are differences between the groups, the possibility for the test to find it is only 14% due to the small sample size. With this finding, the NTA group did justifiably better in the test than the TA group. This result may be affected by their different attributes for living in different locations, although the effect might not be paramount (Table 3).

Table 3. English scores Mann-Whitney U Test output.

Ranks				
	Group	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
EnglishScore test	Tourist area	12	9.92	119.00
	Non-tourist area	12	15.08	181.00
	Total	24		
Test Statistics^a				
	EnglishScore test			
Mann-Whitney U	41.000			
Wilcoxon W	119.000			
Z	-1.800			
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.072			
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.078 ^b			
Note: a. Grouping variable: Group				
b. Not corrected for ties.				

In sum, the NTA group outperformed the TA group in all three measurement instruments. Particularly regarding English school grades and speaking test scores, the NTA group proved to be statistically different from the TA group. Although in terms of proficiency level, the difference was not statistical, the NTA group also achieved a higher mean score than the TA group. All in all, students' different attributes for living in different locations seem to influence their English language performance.

4.2 Elements Contributing to Student English Language Performance

Regarding elements contributing to students' English language performance, the findings from the interview presented four main themes:

4.2.1 Motivation for learning English

Of the 24 students in the TA and NTA group, 22 students shared that they like learning English. Some students displayed strong intrinsic motivation, while others

appeared to have extrinsic motives. Four students pointed out that they had been interested in English since they were young, while others stated that they started to be fond of English in high school.

- (1) "I like English because I can speak with tourists from outside Indonesia. I've been interested in English since I was in kindergarten". (Student 1-TA)
- (2) "I love it. I don't know. Maybe when I was born. English is everywhere. It's just something really touching for me". (Student 2-NTA)

However, three students also admitted that their circumstances made them like English. They did not like English but studied it as part of a subject at school to benefit them in the future. Also, they were exposed to English through media in their surroundings.

- (3) "Actually, I don't like English that much. It's the condition at the time. In SMP, I joined my friends enrolling in a bilingual class and was accepted. So, I have to learn it". (Student 6-TA)
- (4) "I don't like English that much, but I don't mind studying it. Moreover, it is something needed in the future". (Students 9-NTA)

It was interesting to learn from the interviews that two students in the TA group still like English, but because of their current circumstances, they preferred learning English more in the past.

- (5) "*When I was in SMP, I used to practice English with friends, but now in SMK, I never practice because many of my friends speak the local language*". (Student 6-TA)
- (6) "*I used to read English story books when SMP. Now I still like English, but I also feel bored, so I just like listening to songs*". (Student 10-TA)

4.2.2 English learning experience

All student experiences in learning English, in general, were similar. Half of the students had taken English courses to improve their English skills, yet the duration varied, and many did not continue to take the courses after some time. Still, they learned English independently through various media.

- (7) "*Yes, I took an English course when I was in junior high school for one year. After that, I learned independently*". (Student 1-NTA)
- (8) "*Yes, I had an English course when I was in SMP, then in Grade 2, I quit... I was not very diligent, so I had better save the money and learn by myself*". (Student 12-TA)
- (9) "*Now, I have a smartphone. I watch movies or online teaching videos*". (Student 3-NTA)

Some other students said that they had never taken an English course. Rather than learning formally, they preferred having fun and learning English informally through music, movies, games, and the internet.

- (10) "No, I've never taken an English course. I don't like formal learning. I enjoy learning from music or the internet". (Student 2-TA)
- (11) "Yeah, I've never taken an English course. Hmm... how to say. I watch movies, listen to music in English, and play games. I am used to talking with my foreign friends through the games". (Student 2-NTA)
- (12) "No, I've never had any English course outside school. I study it by myself. I watch YouTube, learn grammar from it. You know, there's a lot of YouTube channels". (Student 4-NTA)

Living in the TA, some students admitted that they had met foreigners on several occasions and got the chance to speak English with them.

- (13) “I often met foreign tourists when I was helping my mom at the restaurant. They came from the US, France, Spain, and Germany. I spoke English and French with them”. (Student 11-TA)

Two students reported participating in a cruise ship program where they were allowed to practice their English skills by being tour guides for tourists for one day.

- (14) “Yes, I’ve met foreigners several times. I once participated as a tour guide on a cruise ship”. (Students 1-TA)

Meanwhile, although the students living in the NTA had rare opportunities to meet foreigners, two students reported that they had the chance to speak to foreigners.

- (15) “I once spoke to foreigners in the airport. I didn’t speak fluently, but they seemed to understand me. I felt proud of myself”. (Student 6-NTA)
(16) “I met a foreigner at the airport when I picked up my dad. I helped him find the check-in counter, then he gave me candy”. (Student 4-NTA)

Two other students reported that they were debate team members, and anytime the competition was held, they were trained intensively in English.

- (17) “The school has no additional English course outside school hours, but if there is a debate competition, we will practice intensively”. (Student 6-NTA)
(18) “I think I got this English because I joined a debate team. I’ve been in the team since grade 1. We practice regularly”. (Student 9-NTA)

Another critical English learning experience shared by students in both groups was setting their phones to the English language mode and having mobile English learning applications. Nineteen students pointed out that they had a dictionary and English learning apps installed on their mobile phones to help them learn English. The English learning apps used were Google Translate, Duolingo, Cake, Zenius, Slime, and Tandem.

- (19) “Yes, I have a dictionary and Duolingo on my phone”. (Student 1-TA).
(20) “I have the Tandem app. With this app, I can interact with people from other countries who learn the language, too”. (Student 12-NTA).
(21) “I used to have Cake. It sends notifications every day, but I rarely use it now”. (Student 12-TA).

4.2.3 *Exposure to English*

Another central theme that emerged from the interview was frequent exposure to English. Students in the TA and NTA groups indicated they frequently encountered English in their free time. All students liked listening to English songs, watching movies, playing games, or browsing the internet and social media in their free time. For all of them, these activities provided chances for informal language learning.

- (22) “I think playing online games helps me develop my English. If you can’t speak English, they just leave you”. (Student 2-NTA)

- (23) “I like watching movies. When I watch, I listen to the pronunciation, then try watching without subtitles”. (Student 1-TA)

Three students intentionally took the chance to learn English while also enjoying the activities such as looking up the meaning of captions on social media, paying attention to the pronunciation, and taking notes on the expression obtained in the movies and songs.

- (24) “When I listen to music, I like to search for the lyrics. It gives me new words”. (Students 8-TA)
(25) “I often play social media. I intentionally set my Twitter account in English, so I can learn”. (Student 7-TA)
(26) “I like watching movies. Here I get new expressions, and I write them”. (Student 10-NTA)

Other students did English activities for fun and to relax in their free time. However, some students pointed out that these free time activities influenced their English ability.

- (27) “I learn from music. I got curious with the meaning, so search for it. It eventually adds my vocabulary”. (Student 4-TA)
(28) “I learn English more outside school because I watch every day, but I only have one hour at school”. (Student 3-NTA)

In short, students in both groups substantially encountered English through activities they did in their free time. The exposure was considered helpful in developing their English skill.

4.2.4 Family background

Family background was one of the aspects that were also explored in the interviews. This issue played a minor role in developing the English language performance of students living in the TA. Three of the twelve students interviewed shared that their family members did not know English. Several other students revealed that some family members had some English ability but hardly used English.

- (29) “My sister knows English. She is studying at law faculty now, but we never talked in English at home”. (Student 2-TA)

Two students indicated that their families influenced their English language study. Student 5 stated that their father strongly supported their English study.

- (30) “It was my father who strongly encouraged me. He said that I have to master both Acehese and English. I like English”. (Student 5-TA)

Meanwhile, Student 11 acknowledged that their father was French. They had known English since they were little and had lived in France for almost two years.

- (31) “I studied in a bilingual school for two years. Then I went to France with my father”. (Student 11-TA)

Unlike the TA group, the family in the NTA group seemed to positively influence the student’s involvement in English language learning. There were two

students whose fathers were English teachers. In addition, some students indicated that their interest in English was initiated by their family members, such as those shared by Student 7 and Student 5.

- (32) “I have a brother. He’s quite good at English. He taught and lent me his note. After that, I learned by myself”. (Student 7-NTA)
 (33) “I don’t know... I think I have skill in it, and my father is an English teacher”. (Student 5-NTA)

Although some family members indicated that they know English, students from the TA and NTA groups shared that English was used for short, simple conversations in very few limited contexts. For instance, English was used when talking about something secret or in public so that no one else knew the content of the conversation.

- (34) “My mom knows a little English. We only used it to talk about something that others can’t know”. (Student 7-TA)
 (35) “Yes, my sister. She’s in Banda Aceh. Sometimes I mix English and Bahasa when I chat with her but only for simple things like, Sis, I want to borrow your T-shirt”. (Student 8-TA)
 (36) “My sister can speak English. Sometimes I use English with her, but it’s just simple things to keep my English”. (Student 6-NTA)

Some students in the NTA group reported that their family members did not speak English, but they admitted to being supported to master English by their family.

- (37) “No, no one speaks English in my family, but they support me”. (Student 1-NTA).
 (38) “My family can’t speak English. But my mom really supports me because she knows I have liked English since I was small”. (Student 3-NTA)

From these interview excerpts, it is apparent that in the NTA group, the family members had some role in the development of students’ English language skills; meanwhile, in the TA, such a role was less apparent.

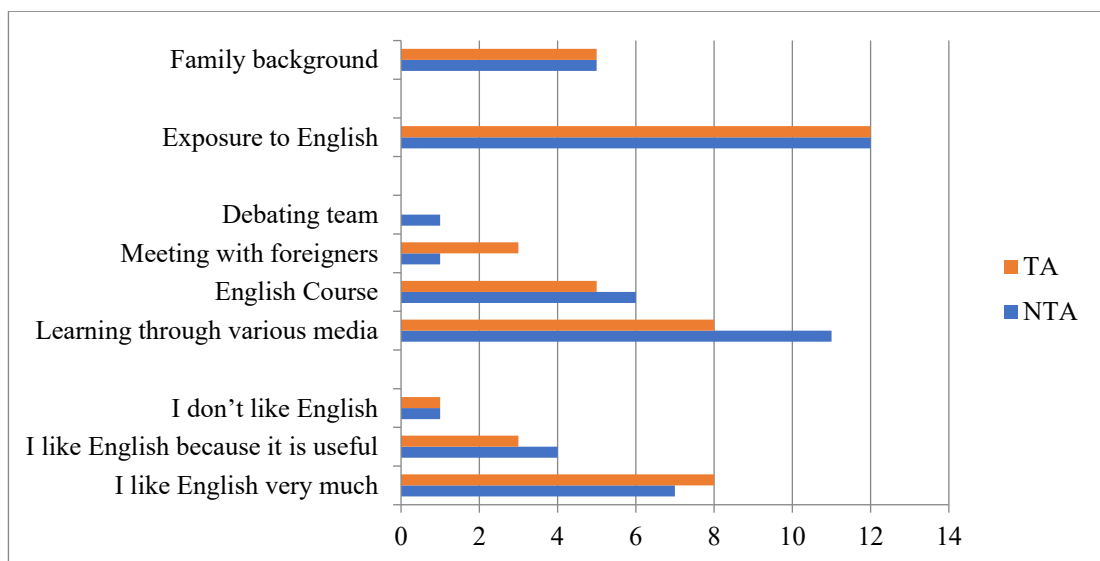


Figure 1. Elements contributing to students’ English performance.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings related to students' English language performance in the present study showed that in all three criteria used to measure English language performance, the students in the NTA group were more advanced than those in the TA group. The differences in English grades and speaking test scores were statistically significant. This observation is interesting because it goes against the positive perception of tourism in the context of English language learning which has also been reported by [Kormos et al. \(2014\)](#).

Although earlier studies on tourism and English language learning did not compare the English ability of different groups of students, they presumed the positive advantages of tourism on English language learners. Students were found to have positive attitudes toward the target language and seemed more confident in using the language ([Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005](#)). Tourist destination areas were also famous places for English language learners to practice speaking English directly with English speakers ([Gao, 2012](#)). In other words, tourist areas were considered ideal places to assist learners in improving English language proficiency.

The present study found that students in the TA group had lower English language performance and can be directed to lower quality in taking chances and opportunities for English exposure and resources available in their surroundings. English classes at schools did not have any learning activities that explored the available learning resources used for tourists at their locations. Similarly, tourist-related programs have yet to be made interesting for students. Hence, the potential learning resources available in the environment did not significantly impact students' English performance.

Meanwhile, the students in the NTA group presumably had been making the best use of the potential to be exposed to and practice English offered by using mobile app-based technology. The integration of currently emerging technologies in English language learning, either inside the classroom or outside the school boundaries, has repeatedly been reported to positively affect the development of students' English language skills. Exposure to English outside schools through movies and television programs without subtitles, reading books and magazines, and using the internet had a more prominent effect on students' vocabulary mastery than the length of instruction ([Peters, 2018](#)). Likewise, rich language exposure correlates significantly with language proficiency ([Al Zoubi, 2018](#)).

The fact that students in the NTA group performed better has yielded important information about elements influencing English language learning. The interview results indicated that the two groups of students were identical in some ways. However, each has different motivations, experiences in learning English, exposure to English, and family backgrounds.

[Long et al. \(2013\)](#) suggested that students require motivation to help them learn as it will lead to the proper learning goal. It is generally known that there are two categories of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. The data indicated that some students in TA or NTA groups seem to have intrinsic motivation, whereas others show extrinsic motivation. However, several students in the TA group revealed a decrease in motivation due to less support in their current school environment. The classroom environment is one determiner likely to influence students' motivation ([Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011](#)). Experience in learning English means the activities the students go

through to learn English. From the findings, we can infer that learning English at school is not enough for students in both areas to promote their language acquisition and learning. Although the duration of language learning at school is relatively short, about two hours per week, language achievement is obtained through the learning process from school and additional language hours outside of school.

The study reveals that several students on both sides had taken additional classes to better their English proficiency, such as English courses, when they were in junior high school and elementary school. However, some other students did not take any additional English classes but took part in English programs at school or learned independently through various media. The trends are quite similar for the TA and NTA groups. This broad learning experience did not make a striking difference between the two groups.

Exposure to English means that the learners are exposed to the authentic language they are trying to learn, either generally or with specific language points. Referring to authentic language, in general, often relates to contact outside the classroom. From this notion, language exposure may happen in an informal setting which provides a “language resource base” (Lawson & Sachdev, 2004). Exposure is essential in English language learning because it benefits the learners’ linguistic development, creates opportunities for personal expression, and reinforces students’ knowledge (Al Zoubi, 2018).

Although both groups show regular exposure to English, it is somewhat surprising that the outcomes differ for both sides. The difference in language exposure they encounter slightly affects the results. It is believed that a higher level of exposure will lead to higher attainment of English scores. Interestingly, the students in the TA group who were expected to be more exposed to English for living in tourist areas did not show high exposure. There were only a few students participated in the tourist guide program. Most students have never spoken to foreign tourists visiting their region and were unaware of notice boards and signs written in English. The kind of exposure the TA and NTA groups experienced was alike. The students in the NTA group seem to be exposed more extensively to utilizing more technology of learning applications such as Zenius, Cake, and Tandem in addition to Duolingo and Google Translate and engaging in various English-related activities ranging from listening to songs, watching movies, and videos, playing online games, to doing social media. Such exposure works well with the NTA students and is evidenced by obtaining average scores that exceed the other group.

Lastly, when considering the family background, we found that family member encouragement plays the most significant role in developing motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitude toward learning English. The family role is crucial to growing a sense of learning in learners as they are greatly influenced by it. Parents’ positive attitudes, education, and awareness provide constant encouragement and support for the learners (Gubbins & Otero, 2020). A previous study regarding the relationship between family background and students’ attainment at school has also justified that parents and family members are instrumental in helping students acquire the language (Calderón et al., 2011). Data in this study showed that the NTA students receive more support from parents and family members than the TA group. This finding can somewhat justify why the NTA students outperformed the TA students in general attainment of English.

6. CONCLUSION

The results from this study shed light on an interesting finding about students' English language performance in two locations, namely the tourist area (TA) and the non-tourist area (NTA). It also highlights some factors affecting students' language attainment. Based on the findings, students can perform well in the English language regardless of their background or locations wherein the participants live if they have strong motivation, the independent effort to learn English outside of school, exposure to English through songs, games, movies, and social media, and family support. It is also interesting to note that students with continuous exposure to the English language have a more powerful effect on their language development than students who live in tourist areas yet do not have sufficient exposure and meaningful experience. These findings demonstrate that students' developmental trajectories are noteworthy to better understand their everyday learning style in the prevalent naturalistic setting so that a bridge can be created between home and school through the background knowledge and students' experience.

The insights from this current study are expected to make parents and teachers aware of the importance of their involvement in promoting students' English learning. However, there are some unresolved limitations in the present study. Although the data were obtained quantitatively and qualitatively, they were collected from a limited number of respondents. We learned that the larger the sample size, the more reliable the research. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted cautiously and not generalized to different contexts. To obtain more comprehensive information, similar studies with larger sample sizes and other approaches are highly recommended to be performed in future research.

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