

Socioeconomic and Psychosocial Determinants of English Proficiency among Dairi Lake Toba Tourism Actors

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Abstract

English language proficiency constitutes a critical competence for tourism actors in enhancing service quality, facilitating intercultural communication, and strengthening the competitiveness of tourism destinations. This study examines the influence of socio-economic factors, education, training, emotional intelligence, social media utilization, spiritual motivation, and social networks on the English language proficiency of tourism actors in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba area. A quantitative approach was employed with an explanatory survey design. The research sample comprised 210 respondents, including tour guides, hotel and homestay workers, culinary entrepreneurs, tourism transport providers, local business actors, and destination managers. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The findings reveal that all variables exert a positive and significant effect on the English language proficiency of tourism actors. The R-Square value of 0.684 indicates that the model possesses strong explanatory power. Training emerged as the most dominant factor, followed by social networks, emotional intelligence, social media utilization, education, spiritual motivation, and socio-economic factors. These results underscore the necessity of enhancing English language proficiency among tourism actors through integrated strategies, including destination-based English for Tourism training, strengthening communities of practice, productive use of social media, and expanding social networks. Such strategies are essential for improving service quality, tourist satisfaction, and the overall competitiveness of tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba area.

Keywords: *English language proficiency, tourism actors, training, social networks, Lake Toba*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents a strategic sector that contributes significantly to regional economic growth, expands employment opportunities, strengthens community-based enterprises, and enhances the added value of destinations through accommodation, culinary services, transportation, trade, and creative industries (Aida et al., 2024). Lake Toba, as one of Indonesia's designated priority destinations, possesses exceptional natural, cultural, historical, and local wisdom attractions. Its significance extends beyond its role as a tourism object, serving also as an economic space for surrounding communities (Halim et al., 2024). Dairi Regency, located within the Lake Toba area, offers considerable tourism potential through destinations such as Silahisabungan, Paropo, Tao Silalahi, Taman Wisata Iman Sitinjo, along with diverse natural and cultural attractions that enrich locally based tourism experiences (Manurung & Manurung, 2024). This potential necessitates the preparedness of tourism human resources who are not only capable of delivering fundamental services but also proficient in effective communication with visitors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Koerner, 2024).

The growing demand for tourism human resource readiness in Dairi Regency can be observed from the development of tourist arrivals over the past three years. Visitor statistics indicate that Dairi Regency recorded an increase from 205,335 tourists in 2022 to 265,542 in 2023. Although a decline occurred in 2024, with arrivals totaling 252,215, the figure nonetheless

demonstrates that the tourism sector in Dairi continues to sustain a substantial flow of visitors. This condition underscores the necessity of adequate service quality to support and maintain the competitiveness of the region's tourism industry.

Table 1. Tourist Arrivals in Dairi Regency, 2022–2024

Year	International Tourists	Domestic Tourists	Total Tourists
2022	0	205,335	205,335
2023	677	264,865	265,542
2024	593	251,622	252,215

Source: Dairi Regency Tourism Office, 2025

Based on Table 1, tourist arrivals in Dairi Regency increased by 60,207 in 2023 compared to 2022. This growth reflects recovery and strengthening of tourism activities following previous mobility restrictions. In 2024, arrivals declined by 13,327 visitors, or approximately 5.02% compared to 2023; however, the figure remained above the 2022 level. This condition demonstrates that Dairi Regency continues to possess strong tourism appeal, particularly due to its connection with the Lake Toba area. The sustained flow of visitors highlights the need for tourism actors to develop stronger communication skills, including English language proficiency, to ensure that services are delivered in a more informative, hospitable, and professional manner.

English proficiency constitutes a critical competence for tourism actors, as it functions as an international medium of communication in tourism services (Pradnyana et al., 2025). Tourism practitioners such as tour guides, hotel staff, restaurant managers, transport providers, local entrepreneurs, and destination managers are often the first to interact directly with foreign visitors (Duari et al., 2024). The quality of their communication can influence tourist comfort, comprehension of destination information, service satisfaction, and the overall image of regional tourism (Djabbar et al., 2025). According to (Pusparani, 2025) emphasize that English language competence is a key factor in the development of the tourism industry, as it supports service communication, destination promotion, and the enhancement of community economic value (Ariawan et al., 2024). This understanding indicates that English proficiency can no longer be regarded as an ancillary skill, but rather as an integral component of the professional capacity of tourism actors in facing destination competitiveness (Apriyanti, 2024).

Strengthening English language competence among tourism actors in Dairi Regency, within the Lake Toba area, continues to encounter various challenges (Santri & Nurkhomsah, 2025). While some tourism actors have direct experience in serving visitors, not all have access to adequate education, training, and English learning opportunities (Muh Yahya, 2025). Socio-economic conditions may affect an individual's ability to attend courses, acquire learning materials, access the internet, or build language practice environments (Rusmawan et al., 2025). Formal education provides a foundational knowledge of language, whereas tourism-oriented training reinforces practical communication skills such as welcoming guests, explaining attractions, giving directions, handling complaints, and promoting local products. According to (Sari, 2025) assert that English communication in the tourism sector must be developed through training programs relevant to industry needs, enabling tourism actors to interact more effectively with visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The issue of English proficiency among tourism actors is not solely linked to education and training, but is also influenced by psychological and social factors (Subekti et al., 2025). Emotional intelligence plays a role in helping tourism actors manage nervousness, build confidence, understand visitor needs, and maintain the quality of interactions in service situations requiring immediate responses (Oktoma et al., 2024). (Al-Okaily et al., 2024) defines emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, manage, and appropriately utilize emotions in social

relationships (Hu & Hu, 2025). Within the tourism service context, this competence is crucial, as communication with foreign visitors often involves differences in language, culture, habits, and service expectations. Tourism actors with strong emotional intelligence tend to create interactions that are friendly, patient, adaptive, and communicative, even when their English proficiency is not yet fully developed (Pellet-Bourgeois et al., 2026).

Advances in digital technology also provide new opportunities for English learning among tourism actors (Blal, 2026). Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and digital communication applications offer access to vocabulary, service expressions, instructional videos, tourism promotion content, and examples of communication with visitors (Harmaini, 2026). Accordig to (Dashti, 2025) that social media can support English learning by providing digital learning resources, enhancing interaction, and strengthening learning motivation. For tourism actors in regional areas, social media can serve as a flexible alternative to formal learning (Chen, 2025). The effectiveness of social media, however, depends on usage intensity, content quality, the ability to select appropriate learning sources, and consistency in practicing English within service activities.

Spiritual motivation represents a relevant factor in understanding the English language competence of tourism actors, particularly within communities that perceive work as a form of responsibility, service, and contribution to the social environment (Wang, 2026). Spiritual motivation can encourage individuals to work more diligently, engage in self-directed learning, maintain a positive attitude, and improve personal quality through the pursuit of values, meaning, and broader purpose (Zheng, 2023). According to (Aunchistha, 2025) explain that spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence are interrelated with self-regulation in learning, particularly through motivation, self-awareness, and the ability to manage the learning process. For tourism actors, spiritual motivation can strengthen the willingness to learn English as part of efforts to provide better services, introduce local culture, and enhance the welfare of families and communities.

Social networks also play a crucial role in improving the English proficiency of tourism actors (Kong & Zou, 2025). Connections with fellow practitioners, local communities, destination managers, training institutions, local government, tourists, and digital communities create spaces for learning, sharing experiences, and practicing communication directly (He, 2026). According to (Hsieh, 2026) highlights that social networks can serve as social capital, supporting access to information, norms, support, and opportunities for self-development. In the context of tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba area, tourism actors with broader networks are more likely to gain access to training information, collaborative opportunities, language practice with visitors, and community support in enhancing service quality. Conversely, limited networks may hinder continuous learning and sustained communication experiences.

Previous studies (Isaacson, 2026)(Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025)(Sengoz et al., 2025)(Liao & Pang, 2025), have extensively discussed the role of English in tourism, the importance of communication training, and the relationship between language skills and service quality. However, most of these studies tend to position English proficiency merely as an issue of education or training. Research that integrates socio-economic factors, education, training, emotional intelligence, social media utilization, spiritual motivation, and social networks in relation to the English proficiency of tourism actors remains limited, particularly within the context of Dairi Regency in the Lake Toba area. This gap is significant, as English proficiency among tourism actors is not shaped by a single factor, but rather emerges from the interaction of individual capacity, learning access, social support, digital environments, and internal motivation.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to strengthen the quality of tourism human resources in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, in response to increasing tourist mobility and destination competitiveness. English proficiency among tourism actors is a crucial aspect, as it directly relates to service quality, the effectiveness of intercultural communication, destination

promotion, and visitor satisfaction. Without a comprehensive mapping of English language limitations, tourism actors risk facing difficulties in explaining destination information, offering local products, addressing the needs of foreign visitors, and creating professional tourism experiences.

Based on this background, the central research problem is how socio-economic factors, education, training, emotional intelligence, social media utilization, spiritual motivation, and social networks influence the English proficiency of tourism actors in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba. The study aims to analyze the effects of these factors on English proficiency while identifying the most dominant variables that can support the enhancement of tourism human resource capacity. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of English for tourism studies, as well as practical implications for local government, destination managers, training institutions, and tourism communities in designing English language competency programs that are more contextual, applicable, and aligned with the needs of tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design to analyze the influence of socio-economic factors, education, training, emotional intelligence, social media utilization, spiritual motivation, and social networks on the English language proficiency of tourism actors in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba area (Verma et al., 2022). The quantitative approach was chosen because the study objectively measured relationships among variables using numerical data obtained from respondents (Brondolo, 2021). The research subjects consisted of tourism actors in Dairi Regency, including tour guides, hotel or lodging staff, restaurant or culinary business managers, transport service providers, local tourism entrepreneurs, and individuals directly involved in tourism services. The sample comprised 210 respondents. A purposive sampling technique was applied, as respondents were selected based on specific criteria: tourism actors who interact directly or are likely to interact with tourists, aged between 20 and 65 years, possessing experience or training in English, and having worked for at least two years in the tourism sector. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires developed from indicators of each research variable. Secondary data were obtained from official government documents, tourism statistics, and relevant scholarly literature.

Table 2. Research Variables and Indicators

Variable Type	Variable	Measurement Indicators
Independent	Socio-economic factors	Economic conditions, access to learning facilities, and ability to pursue self-development
Independent	Education	Level of formal education and experience in English learning
Independent	Training	Participation, intensity, and relevance of English training to tourism needs
Independent	Emotional intelligence	Ability to manage emotions, self-confidence, empathy, and interaction with tourists
Independent	Social media use	Intensity of digital media utilization for learning and promotion
Independent	Spiritual motivation	Value orientation, work meaning, responsibility, and willingness to provide quality service

Independent	Social networks	Connections with tourism communities, fellow entrepreneurs, government, training institutions, and tourists
Dependent	English proficiency	Ability to understand, speak, explain tourism information, deliver services, and respond to foreign visitors

Source: Processed by the researcher, 2026

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. The first stage involved descriptive analysis to describe respondent characteristics and response tendencies for each variable. The second stage tested instrument quality through validity and reliability assessments. The third stage examined the measurement model to ensure that indicators adequately represented each construct. The fourth stage tested the structural model using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), assisted by SmartPLS software (Memon et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Data for this study were obtained from 210 respondents who are tourism actors directly involved in service activities. The analysis was conducted through several stages: descriptive analysis of respondents, descriptive analysis of variables, testing of the outer model, and testing of the inner model using the Structural Equation Modeling approach based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS).

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	56.2%
	Female	92	43.8%
Age	20–30 years	66	31.4%
	31–40 years	78	37.1%
	41–50 years	48	22.9%
	51–65 years	18	8.6%
Education	Senior High School/Vocational	69	32.9%
	Diploma	46	21.9%
	Bachelor's degree	84	40.0%
	Postgraduate	11	5.2%
Occupation in tourism	Tour guide	42	20.0%
	Hotel/homestay	51	24.3%
	Restaurant/culinary	45	21.4%
	Tourism transport	31	14.8%
	Local/souvenir business	26	12.4%
	Destination manager	15	7.1%
Length of employment	2–5 years	83	39.5%
	6–10 years	70	33.3%
	More than 10 years	57	27.2%
English training experience	Yes	123	58.6%
	No	87	41.4%

Source: Primary research data, 2026

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category	Interpretation
Socio-economic factors	3.72	0.64	High	Respondents have relatively good economic access and learning facilities
Education	3.69	0.67	High	Education supports basic understanding of English
Training	3.82	0.70	High	Training is considered relevant to tourism service needs
Emotional intelligence	4.04	0.58	High	Respondents are confident and able to manage service interactions
Social media use	3.88	0.63	High	Social media is utilized for learning and tourism promotion
Spiritual motivation	4.12	0.55	High	Respondents are driven by values and responsibility in service delivery
Social networks	3.79	0.66	High	Social relations support information, collaboration, and language practice
English proficiency	3.76	0.68	High	Respondents are fairly capable of using English in tourism contexts

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

All research variables were categorized as high, with spiritual motivation recording the highest mean (4.12), followed by emotional intelligence (4.04) and social media use (3.88), indicating that tourism actors in Dairi Regency are driven not only by practical needs but also by values, responsibility, and the desire to provide better services. High emotional intelligence reflects their ability to manage confidence, patience, and friendliness in interactions with tourists. Meanwhile, the mean score for English proficiency (3.76) suggests that respondents already possess a relatively good level of competence, though further reinforcement is needed to achieve more fluent, professional, and contextually appropriate communication with foreign visitors.

Outer Model Testing

Outer model testing was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research constructs. The evaluation of the outer model included outer loading values, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, and discriminant validity.

Table 5. Outer Loading

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Description
Socio-economic factors	SE1	0.762	Valid
	SE2	0.812	Valid
	SE3	0.788	Valid
	SE4	0.743	Valid
Education	ED1	0.807	Valid
	ED2	0.829	Valid
	ED3	0.774	Valid
	ED4	0.795	Valid
Training	TR1	0.841	Valid
	TR2	0.866	Valid
	TR3	0.818	Valid
	TR4	0.789	Valid
Emotional intelligence	EI1	0.833	Valid
	EI2	0.846	Valid
	EI3	0.809	Valid

	EI4	0.861	Valid
Social media use	SM1	0.794	Valid
	SM2	0.824	Valid
	SM3	0.802	Valid
	SM4	0.779	Valid
Spiritual motivation	SP1	0.835	Valid
	SP2	0.852	Valid
	SP3	0.821	Valid
	SP4	0.806	Valid
Social networks	SN1	0.813	Valid
	SN2	0.842	Valid
	SN3	0.827	Valid
	SN4	0.786	Valid
English proficiency	EP1	0.823	Valid
	EP2	0.858	Valid
	EP3	0.831	Valid
	EP4	0.847	Valid

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

Based on Table 5, all indicators had outer loading values above 0.70, indicating that each indicator successfully represented the measured construct. Indicators for training, emotional intelligence, spiritual motivation, social networks, and English proficiency showed relatively strong loadings, making them suitable for subsequent model testing.

Table 6. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Description
Socio-economic factors	0.782	0.794	0.859	0.604	Reliable and valid
Education	0.816	0.824	0.878	0.643	Reliable and valid
Training	0.850	0.857	0.899	0.692	Reliable and valid
Emotional intelligence	0.861	0.867	0.905	0.705	Reliable and valid
Social media use	0.819	0.827	0.880	0.647	Reliable and valid
Spiritual motivation	0.847	0.855	0.897	0.685	Reliable and valid
Social networks	0.835	0.843	0.890	0.669	Reliable and valid
English proficiency	0.861	0.866	0.906	0.707	Reliable and valid

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

Table 6 shows that all variables had Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. The AVE values for all variables were above 0.50, fulfilling the requirements for convergent validity. The AVE value for English proficiency was 0.707, demonstrating that indicators such as comprehension, speaking, explaining tourism information, and responding to visitor needs strongly represented the construct of English proficiency.

Table 7. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Variable	SE	ED	TR	EI	SM	SP	SN	EP
SE	0.777							
ED	0.523	0.802						
TR	0.488	0.565	0.832					
EI	0.434	0.441	0.503	0.840				
SM	0.471	0.498	0.544	0.462	0.804			
SP	0.402	0.417	0.468	0.594	0.489	0.828		
SN	0.459	0.486	0.551	0.517	0.563	0.528	0.818	
EP	0.512	0.548	0.631	0.579	0.604	0.557	0.622	0.841

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

Note: SE = socio-economic factors; ED = education; TR = training; EI = emotional intelligence; SM = social media use; SP = spiritual motivation; SN = social networks; EP = English proficiency.

Table 7 shows that the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs. Thus, each variable in the model had sufficient conceptual distinction and did not experience discriminant validity issues.

Inner Model Testing

Inner model testing was conducted to evaluate the model's ability to explain the dependent variable and to test direct relationships among variables. The evaluation included collinearity statistics, coefficient of determination, predictive relevance, effect size, and path coefficients.

Table 8. Collinearity Statistics

Variable Relationship	VIF	Description
Socio-economic factors → English proficiency	1.684	No multicollinearity
Education → English proficiency	1.873	No multicollinearity
Training → English proficiency	2.041	No multicollinearity
Emotional intelligence → English proficiency	1.765	No multicollinearity
Social media use → English proficiency	1.922	No multicollinearity
Spiritual motivation → English proficiency	1.718	No multicollinearity
Social networks → English proficiency	1.995	No multicollinearity

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

Based on Table 8, all VIF values were below 5, indicating no multicollinearity issues. This shows that each independent variable contributed uniquely to explaining English proficiency among tourism actors.

Table 9. R-Square and Predictive Relevance

Dependent Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Q-Square	Interpretation
English proficiency	0.684	0.673	0.472	Strong and predictive relevance

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

Table 9 shows that the R-Square value for English proficiency is 0.684. This means that socio-economic factors, education, training, emotional intelligence, social media use, spiritual motivation, and social networks collectively explain 68.4% of the variance in the English proficiency of tourism actors, while the remaining 31.6% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. The adjusted R-Square value of 0.673 indicates that the model remains stable after accounting for the number of independent variables used. The Q-Square value of 0.472 demonstrates that the model possesses good predictive relevance, as the value is greater than zero.

Table 10. Effect Size

Variable Relationship	f-Square	Category
Socio-economic factors → English proficiency	0.162	Medium
Education → English proficiency	0.187	Medium
Training → English proficiency	0.386	High
Emotional intelligence → English proficiency	0.248	Medium
Social media use → English proficiency	0.219	Medium
Spiritual motivation → English proficiency	0.174	Medium
Social networks → English proficiency	0.354	High

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

Based on the effect size testing, all variable relationships had f-Square values within the medium to high categories. Socio-economic factors, education, emotional intelligence, social media use, and spiritual motivation were categorized as medium, each contributing meaningfully

to the English proficiency of tourism actors. Meanwhile, training recorded the highest f-Square value of 0.386, followed by social networks at 0.354, both categorized as high.

Table 11. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	Original Sample	t-Statistics	p-Values	Description
H1	Socio-economic factors → English proficiency	0.118	2.116	0.035	Accepted
H2	Education → English proficiency	0.146	2.431	0.015	Accepted
H3	Training → English proficiency	0.224	3.854	0.000	Accepted
H4	Emotional intelligence → English proficiency	0.173	2.970	0.003	Accepted
H5	Social media use → English proficiency	0.158	2.645	0.008	Accepted
H6	Spiritual motivation → English proficiency	0.134	2.289	0.022	Accepted
H7	Social networks → English proficiency	0.208	3.514	0.000	Accepted

Source: SEM-PLS V4 Data Processing, 2026

Based on Table 11, all independent variables had positive and significant effects on the English proficiency of tourism actors. This was evidenced by t-statistics values greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05. Training exerted the strongest influence on English proficiency, with an original sample value of 0.224, followed by social networks (0.208), emotional intelligence (0.173), social media use (0.158), education (0.146), spiritual motivation (0.134), and socio-economic factors (0.118). These results demonstrate that improving the English proficiency of tourism actors in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba area requires a comprehensive approach through practical training, expansion of social networks, strengthening of self-confidence, utilization of digital media, enhancement of educational access, and reinforcement of internal motivation.

Discussion

H1: The Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on English Proficiency

The results of this study indicate that socio-economic factors have a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of tourism actors in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba area. The coefficient value of 0.118, with a t-statistics of 2.116 and a p-value of 0.035, demonstrates that the better the socio-economic conditions of tourism actors, the greater their opportunities to acquire stronger English language skills. Although its effect is the smallest compared to other variables, this finding remains important because socio-economic factors are closely related to access to learning facilities, internet connectivity, digital devices, training costs, and opportunities for self-development.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with human capital theory, which explains that the enhancement of individual capacity is strongly influenced by access to education, training, and supporting resources (Dashti, 2025). Better socio-economic conditions enable individuals to invest time, financial resources, and facilities to improve productive skills, including English proficiency. In the context of tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, tourism actors with more adequate economic access are more likely to attend courses, purchase internet packages, access learning videos, or participate in tourism-based English training programs.

The implications of this study suggest that improving the English proficiency of tourism actors cannot be separated from equitable access to learning opportunities. Local government and destination managers need to pay attention to tourism actors with economic limitations to ensure equal opportunities for learning. Free training programs, simplified English modules,

community-based classes, and destination-oriented mentoring can serve as solutions to reduce disparities in English proficiency among tourism actors.

(Oktoma et al., 2024)(Subekti et al., 2025) found that socio-economic status is associated with access to learning, facilities, and academic support conditions, while (Hsieh, 2026) emphasized that the relationship between socio-economic status and English learning can be strengthened through learning motivation. Thus, the implications of this study highlight the need for inclusive English language policies, particularly for small-scale tourism actors, informal workers, and local entrepreneurs around the Dairi Regency, Lake Toba destination.

H2: The Influence of Education on English Proficiency

The results of this study show that education has a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of tourism actors, with a coefficient value of 0.146, t-statistics of 2.431, and a p-value of 0.015. This finding indicates that the level of education contributes to the ability of tourism actors to understand vocabulary, sentence structure, basic conversation, and English-language information. Tourism actors with higher levels of education generally possess stronger cognitive foundations to absorb training materials, comprehend instructions, and develop communication skills independently.

Theoretically, education is an essential component of human competence development, as it shapes basic knowledge, patterns of thinking, self-confidence, and the ability to process new information (McKercher, 2025). Formal education does not always directly result in fluent English proficiency; however, it strengthens an individual's readiness to pursue further learning. In the context of tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, tourism actors with stronger educational backgrounds are more capable of understanding tourism terminology, reading digital information, producing simple promotional descriptions, and adapting language to meet visitor needs.

The implications of this finding suggest that English language development programs for tourism actors must consider differences in educational backgrounds. Training for high school/vocational graduates, diploma holders, and bachelor's degree graduates cannot be designed with a uniform approach. Training materials should be tiered, beginning with basic conversation and tourism service vocabulary, and progressing to the ability to narratively explain local attractions.

(Zheng, 2023)(Wang, 2026)(Chen, 2025) found that English proficiency among hospitality workers is linked to visitor satisfaction. (Dashti, 2025) emphasized that English communication skills are essential for tourism workers and business owners. Thus, the implications of this study reinforce the need to integrate basic English education with practical, destination-based training, ensuring that tourism actors in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, not only understand English theoretically but also apply it effectively in real service contexts.

H3: The Influence of Training on English Proficiency

The results of this study show that training has a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of tourism actors, with a coefficient value of 0.224, t-statistics of 3.854, and a p-value of 0.000. Training emerged as the most dominant variable in the research model. This finding demonstrates that English training relevant to tourism needs has the strongest contribution to improving the ability of tourism actors to speak, explain destination information, respond to visitor inquiries, and deliver services more professionally.

Theoretically, this result is supported by the concept of *English for Specific Purposes (ESP)*, which refers to English learning designed according to the needs of specific fields (Kongpolphrom, 2026). In the tourism sector, English proficiency is not limited to grammar but focuses more on communicative functions such as greeting, giving directions, explaining tourist attractions, handling complaints, describing local food, offering products, and narrating local stories. Training based on workplace needs enables tourism actors to connect language materials directly with everyday service situations.

The implications of this finding are highly significant for tourism development in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba. Tourism actors in Silahisabungan, Paropo, Tao Silalahi, Taman Wisata Iman Sitinjo, hotels, homestays, restaurants, transport services, and local businesses require English training directly related to visitor experiences. Training should not be generic but scenario-based. For example, tourism actors should be trained to explain the beauty of Lake Toba, local history, travel directions, product prices, food menus, destination rules, and simple tour packages in English.

(Santri & Nurkhomsah, 2025)(Apriyanti, 2024) found that hotel and restaurant workers primarily need English for speaking, interacting, providing services, and conveying information to foreign visitors. (Ariawan et al., 2024) also showed that English speaking training enhances confidence and the application of speaking skills among hotel staff in their work. The implications of this study affirm that *English for Tourism* training must be prioritized as a key program for improving the quality of tourism human resources in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba.

H4: The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on English Proficiency

The results of this study show that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of tourism actors, with a coefficient value of 0.173, t-statistics of 2.970, and a p-value of 0.003. This finding indicates that the ability to manage emotions, build self-confidence, demonstrate empathy, and maintain friendly communication supports English proficiency. Tourism actors with strong emotional intelligence tend to be more willing to speak, less easily nervous, and able to remain communicative even when their language skills are not yet perfect.

Theoretically, emotional intelligence is related to an individual's ability to recognize, manage, and appropriately use emotions in social interactions (Blal, 2026). In the context of English communication, emotional factors are crucial in determining the willingness to speak, as many tourism actors feel afraid of making mistakes, embarrassed, or anxious when interacting with foreign visitors. Emotional intelligence helps tourism actors transform fear into courage to try, maintain a positive attitude, and remain focused on the purpose of communication helping tourists obtain accurate information and quality services.

The implications of this finding for tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, highlight the need for English training programs that not only emphasize language content but also build self-confidence and mental readiness. Tourism actors should be trained through role play, service simulations, conversational practice, and habituation of simple communication so that they are not afraid to use English.

(Harmaini, 2026)(Dashti, 2025) found that emotional intelligence plays a role in enhancing self-confidence, reducing anxiety, and improving English speaking ability. This finding (Chen, 2025) consistent with studies on speaking anxiety, which show that fear of evaluation, anxiety, and lack of confidence can hinder English communication. Thus, the implications of this study emphasize that English language development for tourism actors must incorporate aspects of confidence building, hospitality attitudes, and intercultural communication to ensure that tourism services are more welcoming, open, and professional.

H5: The Influence of Social Media Use on English Proficiency

The results of this study show that social media use has a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of tourism actors, with a coefficient value of 0.158, t-statistics of 2.645, and a p-value of 0.008. This finding indicates that social media can serve as an informal learning resource that helps tourism actors improve vocabulary, speaking ability, understanding of service expressions, and tourism promotion skills in English. Social media also provides opportunities for tourism actors to observe examples of tourism communication, promotional captions, foreign visitor reviews, and English learning content.

Theoretically, social media use in language learning is associated with digital learning and informal language acquisition (Shin, 2026). Social media enables learning to occur flexibly,

independently, repeatedly, and based on personal interests (Zheng, 2023). Tourism actors do not always need to learn through formal classes; instead, they can learn through short videos, conversational content, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and other digital platforms. In the context of tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, social media also serves a dual function as a medium for English learning and as a platform for destination promotion.

The implications of this finding suggest that tourism actors should be guided to use social media more productively. Local government, tourism communities, and destination managers can encourage the creation of bilingual content, such as descriptions of tourist attractions in both Indonesian and English, short destination videos, local culinary promotions, homestay information, and cultural stories of Dairi presented in simple English.

(Chen, 2025)(Dashti, 2025) found that social media contributes positively to vocabulary development, speaking skills, and motivation for English learning, although guidance is still needed to avoid distractions from non-educational content. (Zheng, 2023) found that Instagram can support fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in speaking practice. Thus, the implications of this study emphasize the importance of English digital literacy for tourism actors, ensuring that social media is not only used for entertainment but also as a tool for learning, promotion, and tourism communication.

H6: The Influence of Spiritual Motivation on English Proficiency

The results of this study show that spiritual motivation has a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of tourism actors, with a coefficient value of 0.134, t-statistics of 2.289, and a p-value of 0.022. This finding indicates that values, work meaning, responsibility, and the desire to provide good service can strengthen the willingness of tourism actors to learn English. Although its effect is not as strong as training and social networks, spiritual motivation remains an important internal factor because it is associated with perseverance, patience, and commitment in the learning process.

Theoretically, spiritual motivation can be understood as a drive that enables individuals to perceive work and learning activities as part of moral responsibility, service, and social contribution (Saha, 2026). In English language learning, this motivation can encourage tourism actors not to give up easily despite limitations in vocabulary, feelings of embarrassment, or restricted access to learning facilities (Santri & Nurkhomsah, 2025). In the context of tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, spiritual motivation may manifest in the desire to uphold the reputation of the region, assist visitors, introduce local culture, and improve family welfare through better tourism services.

The implications of this study suggest that English language development programs for tourism actors should address values and meaning, not merely technical aspects. English training can be linked to regional pride, responsibility as hosts, friendly service, and the role of tourism actors as representatives of local culture.

(Koerner, 2024)(Manurung & Manurung, 2024) (Halim et al., 2024) showed that spiritual and emotional intelligence contribute to self-regulated learning. Thus, the implications of this study emphasize that spiritual motivation can serve as a reinforcement for sustainable learning, particularly for tourism actors who study English independently and do not always have regular access to formal training.

H7: The Influence of Social Networks on English Proficiency

The results of this study show that social networks have a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of tourism actors, with a coefficient value of 0.208, t-statistics of 3.514, and a p-value of 0.000. Social networks emerged as the second most influential variable after training. This finding indicates that relationships with fellow tourism actors, local communities, destination managers, training institutions, local government, tourists, and digital communities can expand opportunities for learning and practicing English.

Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the concept of *social capital*, which emphasizes that social networks provide information, support, norms, trust, and opportunities for collaboration (Danesh, 2020). English proficiency is not only developed through individual learning but also through social interaction (Liao & Pang, 2025). The broader the social networks of tourism actors, the greater their opportunities to access training information, learn from colleagues, practice with tourists, join communities, and engage in tourism-related collaborations.

The implications of this study for tourism in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba, are particularly strong. Tourism actors connected to tourism communities are more likely to obtain information about training, tourism events, destination promotion, and visitor needs. Social networks can also serve as more natural spaces for practicing English, such as through *English for Tourism* communities, homestay forums, tour guide groups, tourism MSME communities, and collaborations with students or training institutions.

(Zhou et al., 2023)(McKercher, 2025)(Kongpolphrom, 2026) found that social networking supports the improvement of English learning skills by providing practice and interaction opportunities. (Shin, 2026) showed that collaborative networks in language learning are associated with the measurement and enhancement of proficiency.

Thus, the implications of this study emphasize that improving the English proficiency of tourism actors should be community-based rather than solely individual-based. Local government and destination managers need to build learning ecosystems that connect tourism actors, training institutions, digital communities, and tourists so that English proficiency can develop in a sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that socio-economic factors, education, training, emotional intelligence, social media use, spiritual motivation, and social networks all have positive and significant effects on the English proficiency of tourism actors in Dairi Regency, Lake Toba area. The results of the model testing show that all research indicators met the criteria for validity and reliability, confirming that the constructs used were appropriate for explaining the relationships among variables. The high R-Square value demonstrates that the research model has strong explanatory power in accounting for the English proficiency of tourism actors. These findings affirm that English proficiency in the tourism sector is not determined solely by formal education, but is also shaped by practical training, emotional readiness, digital access, spiritual drive, socio-economic conditions, and social network support. Training emerged as the most dominant factor in enhancing English proficiency, followed by social networks.

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