

## Factors Affecting Students' Attendance in English Language Programs A Case Study at Two English Language Institutions in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** *This study explores the factors influencing attendance among employees enrolled in English language courses, with a focus on understanding attendance patterns and proposing interventions to improve participation. English proficiency is a critical asset in the global era, and many companies in Indonesia offer English courses as part of their professional development programs. Despite their importance, these programs face attendance challenges due to factors such as professional commitments and schedule conflicts. The research employs a quantitative method, utilizing surveys to gather data from 15 employees participating in English courses at two institutions in Indonesia, one in Jakarta (called Bravo – pseudonym) and another one in Bandung (called Delta – pseudonym). Results highlight two primary factors affecting attendance: (1) professional development as a key motivator and (2) schedule conflicts as a major barrier. To address these challenges, the study proposes actionable interventions, by implementing a blended learning model and integrating mutual agreements between companies and course providers including creating supportive environment such as implementing blended learning model, designating learning hours and providing reward or incentive.*

**Key words:** Attendance; Professional Development; Barrier; Schedule Conflict; Intervention

### 1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

English competence is a mandatory asset for participating in this global era. It becomes a crucial aspect in fulfilling the requirements for working in a company. A survey conducted by Cambridge English Language Assessment (2016) assessed 5,373 employers in 38 countries found that English language skills are important for over 95% of employers in many non-native English-speaking countries. “There is a wide range of English requirements in countries where English is not a native or official language, with 7% of job tasks requiring native-level English, 49% requiring advanced English, 33% requiring intermediate English and 8% requiring basic English” (Cambridge English).

It is safe to say that one of the quality indicators of good companies is the English competence of their employees. To facilitate their employees in achieving this competence, companies in nonnative English-speaking countries, including Indonesia offer English courses as a compulsory program. Many of them signed English language program with course institutions. Despite its crucial function, this course program, so far, has received various responses. This can be seen from the varying attendance rate in many classes.

Attendance is critical in English language courses, as consistent participation is directly linked to students' achievement and language development. Regular attendance enables students to engage in activities like reading, writing, listening, and speaking exercises, which

are fundamental to language acquisition. Research shows that students who attend classes regularly demonstrate better language proficiency and perform better academically (Credé et al., 2010). Some potential factors might be the cause of this problem such as course-related factors, instructor influence, students-related factors, institutional/environmental factors, etc.

However, understanding the reasons behind high or low attendance in an English course is essential for developing effective strategies to re-engage students and improve participation. This research explores the key factors affecting students' attendance in English language programs, with the aim of identifying barriers and proposing strategies to improve attendance rates. Drawing from such objectives, the research attempts to answer; 1.) *What are the primary factors contributing to students' attendance in the English course?* 2.) *What interventions can be implemented to improve attendance rates in the English course?*

The study has potential for enhancing the understanding of attendance behaviour in English language programs, particularly among employees who are balancing professional commitments with educational aspirations. This research holds significance to uncover nuanced relationships between work obligations and educational engagement. Such insights are essential for designing targeted strategies to increase attendance and ensure learners can fully benefit from the course.

In addition, the practical implications of this study extend beyond identifying attendance barriers. By exploring interventions to improve attendance rates, the research can contribute to more effective program design and recommendations for policy changes that encourage attendance. Employers and language institutions stand to benefit from these findings, as improved attendance rates could lead to higher proficiency among participants, directly impacting workplace communication and productivity. The study's outcomes can serve as a model for other educational initiatives targeting working professionals, ensuring broader applicability and impact in similar educational settings.

## **2. THEORETICAL STUDIES**

### **Previous studies**

Numerous studies have investigated the factors influencing students' attendance in educational settings. Most of them showed the mixture of internal and external factors. David Menendez (2020) on his research, *'Why don't they attend? Factors that influence the attendance of HE students of education'* explores the factors that influence attendance to taught sessions in higher education. Their findings show that attendance is a situated decision that can be articulated in relation to two sets of factors. The first set refers to university imperatives,

and which relate to discourses of performativity and accountability. The second set relates to the complexities of students' lives.

Menendez (2020) showed that attendance can be determined by external and internal factors. The external factor (in this context, the university or institution) plays a crucial role in shaping students' attendance patterns. Ramnoher & Keshav (2020) on their study stated that teaching methods, such as interactive lectures, group discussions, and hands-on activities, can positively influence students' attendance.

Another study conducted by Steven J. Carter (2022), '*Programme and classroom factors affecting attendance patterns for Hispanic participants in adult ESL education*', aimed to identify key institutional factors that negatively affect adult Hispanic students' attendance patterns in ESL classes. Specifically, it focussed on determining which aspects of the overall programme structure and which classroom factors had the greatest negative impact on students' attendance patterns and engagement. Affective factors (e.g. social sensitivity, incongruence), ineffective or incomplete teaching methods, students' perceptions of slow or no progress, and assessment issues were the most prominent factors that emerged from the analyses.

On the other side, internal factor is not less important. Bakar's (2023) study shows that one of the primary factors identified is student motivation and engagement. Students who are intrinsically motivated and find the course content relevant and interesting are more likely to attend classes regularly. Similarly, students with a strong sense of self-efficacy and prior academic success tend to have better attendance records.

Those studies have provided a lot of input into this research. However, this research shows different interest by examining the professionals with permanent employee status who joined English language course program. Their position as employee enables them to elaborate the link between companies' policies and course institution's facilities which hopefully can help policies maker both in companies and course institution to seek better recommendation to achieve learning objectives.

### **Self-Determination Theory**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a psychological framework developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in the 1980s, explaining human motivation, well-being, and personality development. It emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and the fulfillment of basic psychological needs in driving human behavior. Unlike traditional motivation theories that focus on external rewards and punishments, SDT suggests that people

are naturally inclined toward growth, self-improvement, and engagement when their fundamental psychological needs are met.

It is one of the most influential theories of motivation, distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its inherent satisfaction, such as learning a new language because of personal interest or enjoyment. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or pressures, such as studying to earn a promotion or avoid penalties.

Furthermore, Deci & Ryan (1985) introduced a continuum of extrinsic motivation, where external rewards and pressures gradually become internalized: 1. External Regulation; motivation is driven by rewards, punishments, or external pressures. 2. Introjected Regulation; motivation is partially internalized but based on guilt, shame, or the desire for approval. 3. Identified Regulation; motivation comes from recognizing the personal importance of an activity. 4. Integrated Regulation; motivation is fully internalized and aligned with personal values and goals.

### **Role Conflict Theory**

Role conflict theory explains the tension and struggles individuals experience when facing incompatible demands associated with multiple social roles. Rooted in role theory, this concept is widely studied in sociology, psychology, and organizational behavior. Early scholars such as Robert Kahn emphasized that individuals occupy various roles in society, such as being a parent, employee, or student, and these roles sometimes come with contradictory demands, leading to stress and difficulty in role fulfilment.

Role conflict can stem from several factors, including overlapping roles, where an individual must juggle multiple responsibilities, and ambiguous role expectations, where unclear job descriptions or social norms lead to uncertainty. Excessive role demands also contribute, as individuals may struggle to meet all expectations placed upon them. Additionally, competing authority figures and organizational or social pressures can create situations where individuals receive conflicting instructions, further intensifying role conflict.

Prolonged role conflict can have significant consequences, including psychological stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction. Employees who frequently face role conflict may experience anxiety, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion. In professional settings, this can lead to lower performance, work-life imbalance, and disengagement from responsibilities. Role conflict also makes decision-making more difficult, as individuals struggle to prioritize

competing demands. Over time, unresolved role conflict may cause individuals to withdraw from certain roles or even leave their jobs to escape the stress.

### 3. METHOD

This study will employ quantitative method to analyze the factors affecting students' attendance in English courses. Quantitative research functioned to describe current situations, establish relationships between variables, and sometimes attempt to explain causal relationships between variables. This type of research is truly focused on describing and explaining—sometimes in a somewhat definitive manner—the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2005).

Specifically, this research will use descriptive research to study the phenomenon of students' attendance in two institutional courses; Bravo Jakarta and Delta Bandung. A survey was conducted through 8 students enrolled in English language programs at Bravo and 7 students at Delta to collect data on their attendance patterns and potential influencing factors. The survey instrument will include questions on demographic characteristics, perceptions of the English course, self-reported attendance records, class environment and suggestion/feedback. On the last section, the participants are required to write what they expect from the course institution where they study in the hope of improving their learning experience. The result of the survey will be used to answer the research questions of this study regarding the primary factors contributing to students' attendance in English Course and interventions can be implemented to improve attendance rates in the English course.

The selection of the respondents is based on their status as permanent employee in their companies with minimum two-year experience. The participants aged between 22 until 53 years old consist of 9 women and 6 men. Eight of Bravo students are from the same company, BT - initial, while seven students of Delta Bandung are from different companies in Bandung. All the participants joined three different programs in both institutional courses; Business English, basic conversation, and basic grammar. Seven of them joined business English, 3 participants each joined basic conversation and basic grammar and 2 joined speaking for professionals.

**Table 1.** Course Institution, Student Participants and Company Names

Course Institution	Students			Company
	Initials	Age	Gender	
Bravo Jakarta	TA	38	Female	BT
	ZF	33	Male	
	MI	53	Male	

	FPP	32	Male	
	PPS	32	Female	
	ES	37	Female	
	AA	28	Female	
	WRA	30	Female	
Delta Bandung	DP	33	Female	SC
	HM	22	Male	
	KR	23	Male	
	HK	37	Male	SK
	RR	23	Female	
	ASF	22	Female	
	GA	33	Female	BTS

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collection process took approximately 3 months from October 2024 to December 2024. The survey was conducted through a questionnaire distributed on email to respondents in two cities; Jakarta and Bandung. The findings indicate that participants generally have a high level of interest and satisfaction with the courses, with all respondents agreeing on the relevance of learning materials for their professional development. It also shows that participants are comfortable to participate in the class due to interactive and engaging class environment with small class sizes enhancing their learning experience. However, most of participants agree that schedule conflicts were the main barrier to attendance, and speaking and listening skills were identified as the most challenging aspects.

##### **Professional Development as the Key Motivator**

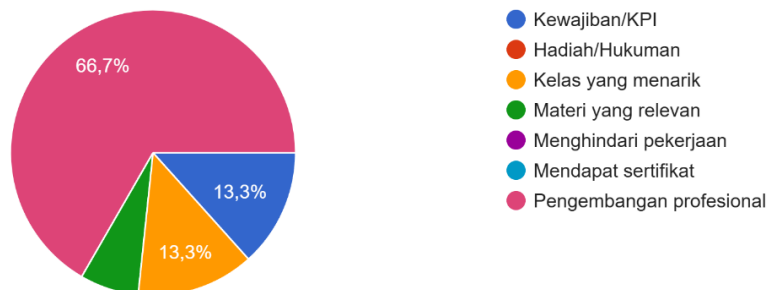
By the result of the survey, professional development becomes the key motivator for students to attend English language programs. This can be seen from 11 participants who choose this option. The finding underscores the importance of motivation in driving attendance. This result is in line with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci & Ryan (1985), which posits that individuals are motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors.

In this context, employees are driven by extrinsic motivation; professional development which aligned with the value of learning English and starts internalizing it as personal goal. Despite of different backgrounds and expertise, these respondents showed that professional development is a significant motivator for individuals in non-native English-speaking countries, such as Indonesia, to engage in English language programs. Employees recognize the importance of English for their career development and job performance. They are aware that taking an English course will help them secure a promotion or expand their professional

network. Providentially, such key motivation is fulfilled by the language program in the institutional courses they joined.

11. Apa alasan anda hadir di kelas?

15 jawaban



**Diagram 1.** Reasons Why Students Attend the Class

In Indonesia, the rapid integration into global markets has amplified the demand for English proficiency, particularly in sectors like tourism, technology, and trade, where communication with international clients and partners is essential (Lauder, 2008). Employers in multinational companies prioritize candidates with strong English skills, as it facilitates collaboration, cross-cultural competence, and access to advanced knowledge and resources available predominantly in English (Graddol, 2006).

Thus, reinforcing English as professional development benefit in course marketing or communication can enhance enrolment and attendance. This can be coupled with the satisfaction rating in learning method (80%), interactive class (79%) and class environment (87%). The marketing team can integrate testimonials or case studies from past participants who have experienced tangible benefits from the program to strengthen the message, making the course more appealing to potential enrolees. By framing English language learning as an investment in professional development and highlighting learning method and interactive class as their excellence, institutions can increase perceived value, leading to higher engagement and attendance from employees committed to their growth.

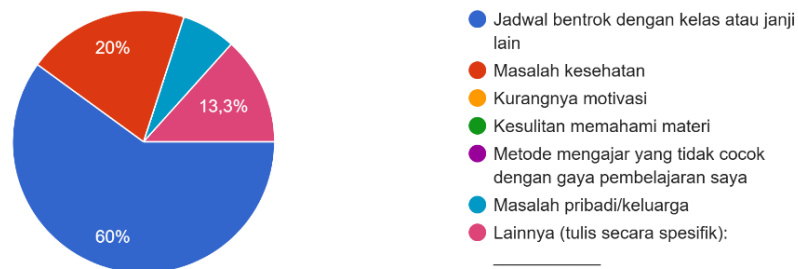
### **Schedule conflict as the Main Barrier**

Schedule conflicts become a significant barrier for employees attending English courses. As many 9 respondents chose schedule conflict as the reason for their absence. Even though in another section, these respondents answered speaking was the biggest challenge, it turned out that this was not the reason they did not attend class. This is proven by the fact that no one

chose the material and learning method difficulty options. Here, we can see that it is not inside course factors that becomes the biggest obstacle to attending classes, but outside one; the difficulty of arranging schedules between the company and the course.

10. Apa alasan utama anda tidak hadir di kelas? (pilih yang sesuai)

15 jawaban



**Diagram 2.** Reasons Why Students Attend the Class

Employees often face competing demands on their time, such as work responsibilities, family commitments, and personal obligations. These competing roles create time scarcity, making it difficult for employees to prioritize English courses. This conflict is what Kahn (1964) called as role conflict which defined as the incompatibility between expected role behaviours. According to Kahn (1964), conflict often arises when individuals are subjected to multiple demands that are difficult to reconcile, especially within constrained time periods. Here, individuals are presumed to occupy multiple roles within their professional and personal lives, which can lead to role conflict when the demands of one role interfere with another. An employee might experience role conflict when the expectations from different supervisors or departments are at odds, making it challenging to fulfil all obligations effectively. Such scenarios are exacerbated by limited time resources, where the pressure to meet conflicting demands within tight schedules leads to significant stress.

Balancing work responsibilities with professional development opportunities can be challenging, especially for employees in demanding roles or industries where work hours are irregular or extended. These conflicts often arise when class schedules overlap with critical work tasks, meetings, or unexpected commitments, leaving employees unable to consistently participate in language learning programs (Lauder, 2008). Additionally, commuting time to physical class locations further exacerbates the issue, particularly in urban areas with heavy traffic, such as in Indonesia.



One of the most immediate effects of schedule conflicts is irregular attendance, which can disrupt the continuity of learning. When students miss classes frequently, they may struggle to keep up with new material, leading to gaps in knowledge and reduced comprehension. This can be particularly detrimental in language learning programs, where continuous practice and interaction are crucial for developing proficiency. Irregular attendance may also impact assessment performance, as students who miss lectures might not receive adequate preparation for assignments, exams, or practical applications of their learning.

Moreover, schedule conflicts can negatively affect motivation and engagement. When students face repeated difficulties in attending classes due to work commitments or overlapping schedules, they may feel discouraged and disconnected from the learning process. This lack of engagement can lead to higher dropout rates, as students may eventually decide that continuing the program is no longer feasible. Furthermore, inconsistent attendance can reduce a student's sense of belonging within the classroom, limiting opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and peer support, which are essential components of effective language acquisition.

Beyond academic performance, professional development opportunities may also be compromised. Many students enrol in English language programs to enhance their communication skills for career advancement. However, if they are unable to attend classes regularly due to schedule conflicts, they might miss essential lessons, discussions, and practice opportunities that are crucial for workplace communication. As a result, their ability to improve professionally may be hindered, reducing the overall effectiveness of the training program.

## **Intervention to Improve Attendance Rate**

### **Implementing Blended Learning Model**

One effective strategy can be implemented to improve students' attendance is a blended learning model, which integrates face-to-face instruction with online learning opportunities. Research by Means et al. (2014) demonstrates that blended learning not only increases accessibility for working adults but also enhances learning outcomes by allowing participants to engage with materials at their own pace. For instance, offering recorded lectures, interactive online modules, and asynchronous discussion forums can provide employees with the flexibility to complete coursework outside of traditional class hours.

Furthermore, leveraging technology to provide supplementary resources can help participants stay engaged even when they miss classes. Bernard et al. (2014) argue that access to recorded sessions, digital textbooks, and self-paced exercises can mitigate the negative impact of absenteeism by ensuring continuity in learning. For example, a learning management

system (LMS) could be utilized to distribute materials, track progress, and facilitate communication between instructors and participants.

This approach not only accommodates busy schedules but also empowers employees to boost their competence by ensuring that they feel effective in their learning. Materials are structured in a way that allows students to catch up easily if they miss a class. Providing summary notes, recorded lessons, or peer study groups can help students maintain progress even with inconsistent attendance. Moreover, offering frequent and constructive feedback can reinforce their sense of achievement, making them more likely to stay motivated and continue attending classes despite occasional conflicts. When students feel capable of succeeding, they are more likely to persist in their education.

### **Designating learning hours**

Employer involvement is another critical factor in mitigating schedule conflicts. Studies by Noe (2017) suggest that organizational support, such as granting flexible work hours or allocating specific time for training, significantly improves employee participation in professional development programs. It is interesting that from all suggestions written in the survey, no single statement suggesting to seek companies' involvement in making policies regarding the schedule. Those 14 participants, (only one did not fill the suggestion section) had varied answer; one suggesting to have more additional hours per-session, two giving the positive feedback regarding the material and its delivery, while two suggesting to have more interesting delivery and more varied media, one, mentioning to have more flexible schedule, also one mentioning reward, one person saying everything is enough and the rest, four, suggesting to have more practice on speaking in every meeting through conversation and more interactive class.

**Table 2.** suggestion to improve the attendance rate

18. Apa yang bisa ditingkatkan dalam kursus ini sehingga bisa memotivasi kehadiran anda?

Answer	Translation
<i>N/A</i>	
<i>Waktu nya ditambah</i>	The duration must be added
<i>Selalu memberikan materi yang relevan dan penyampaian yang menarik</i>	The tutors always teach relevant material and interesting delivery
<i>So far so good</i>	-
<i>Adanya interaksi positive dan aktive</i>	There is positive and active interaction
<i>Jadwal yang fleksibel</i>	Flexible schedule
<i>Percakapan dua arah (practice)</i>	Two ways conversation
<i>Praktek speaking lebih sering</i>	More frequent speaking practice

<i>Build confidence to speak english fluently in front of people</i>	-
<i>Reward</i>	-
<i>Untuk mengejar standar kelulusan beasiswa di luar negeri</i>	Pursuing the scholarship requirement abroad
<i>Penyajian materi pembelajaran yang menarik &amp; lebih interaktif</i>	More interesting and interactive in delivering the learning material
<i>Media pembelajaran, seperti video, podcast dll</i>	More learning media such as video, podcast, etc.
<i>Pemberian modul atau tugas yang sesuai dengan pembelajaran</i>	Modul provision or tasks suitable with learning objectives
<i>Udah cukup</i>	It is all enough

Coming from English lecturer and tutor position, I personally believe that companies' involvement is needed to mitigate schedule conflict barrier. Companies in Jakarta and Bandung could collaborate with program organizers to create a supportive environment for employees, such as designating learning hours. This solution aligns with one of participants suggestion to have more flexible schedule. However, flexible schedule cannot be implemented without the cooperation between companies and institutional courses. One effective approach is for companies to set aside dedicated time blocks within working hours for employees to participate in English language program. This could be in the form of:

a. Weekly Learning Sessions

Companies can allocate one to two hours per week during non-peak business hours for employees to attend English classes, either in-person or online. This ensures that learning becomes part of the corporate routine rather than an additional burden outside work.

b. Rotational Learning Hours

For industries with shift-based work (e.g., hospitality, retail, customer service), companies can implement a rotating schedule, allowing different teams to participate in English courses at staggered times without disrupting daily operations.

c. Short Daily Language Breaks

Some organizations may opt for 30-minute to 1-hour language training sessions before or after work, during lunch breaks, or as part of professional development meetings to encourage continuous learning in a less disruptive manner.

This approach allows employees to attend English classes without compromising their job responsibilities. Research suggests that providing designated time for learning during working hours significantly improves participation and skill retention (Tynjälä, 2013).

Employees are more likely to commit to language learning when they do not have to sacrifice their free time or personal obligations. By integrating language training into the corporate environment, companies can ensure that employees are not deterred by schedule conflicts, which were identified as a primary barrier to attendance in Bandung and Jakarta.

### **Providing Reward or Incentive**

Another intervention can be implemented to create the supportive environment is providing reward or incentives. Here, companies should provide reward or incentive to encourage consistent participation due to the consistent attendance. This approach is mentioned by one of the participants on the table suggesting '*reward*'. "Reward is something given in exchange for a useful idea, good behaviour, excellent work, etc" (Cambridge). It is given after the desired outcome or behaviour achieved. The purpose is to acknowledge and celebrate an accomplishment or contribution. While incentive is a proactive motivator, offered before a behaviour or performance occurs, with the goal of encouraging specific actions. Incentives are used as a driving force to influence behaviour, meaning that employees are aware of the benefit before engaging in the activity.

Despite their differences, both rewards and incentives contribute to motivation and engagement, particularly when they are used together. Incentives initiate participation, while rewards sustain motivation by reinforcing success. Studies indicate that extrinsic motivators, such as financial reward, career advancement opportunities, or tuition reimbursements, enhance employees' commitment to professional development (Noe et al., 2010). Companies can implement attendance-based reward, such as bonuses for completing language courses, promotions tied to English proficiency, salary increments, or tuition reimbursements upon completing specific language proficiency levels. Certification-based rewards, such as covering the costs of international exams like TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC, can further motivate employees to take their language learning seriously.

Beyond financial rewards, non-monetary incentives can also play a significant role in increasing motivation. Companies can introduce career-related incentives, such as promotion opportunities, additional job responsibilities, or internal recognition for employees who improve their English skills. Studies show that public recognition, certificates of achievement, and additional leave days can be just as effective as monetary rewards in fostering a culture of learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Companies can introduce peer recognition programs, where employees who excel in English training are acknowledged in company meetings or internal newsletters. Additionally, team-based incentives, such as department-wide language learning

challenges with group rewards, can create a sense of collective motivation and workplace engagement. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), rewards that acknowledge effort and competence help employees develop intrinsic motivation over time, meaning they will continue learning English even after the initial reward system is no longer in place.

In the context of Jakarta and Bandung, where employees often struggle with long working hours, traffic congestion, and multiple professional responsibilities, a structured and meaningful reward system can help mitigate attendance barriers. By implementing both financial and non-financial incentives, companies can ensure that employees remain committed to enhancing their English proficiency, ultimately leading to a more competitive and globally capable workforce.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There are two factors affecting students' attendance in English course; professional development as the key motive and schedule conflicts as a barrier. 1) Professional development factor along with courses' excellences such as learning method and interactive class can be used as marketing materials to reach other potential enrollers. 2) Schedule conflict is the biggest challenge for the students in attending the class. This can be addressed by a blended learning model and mutual agreement between company and course institution in arranging flexible environment by designated learning hours and providing incentive. By adopting these strategies, the program can reduce barriers to attendance and create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for working professionals in Jakarta and Bandung.

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