

# Ti-ZEL in Action: A Mix-Method Study Redefining English-Speaking Abilities for Academic Staff

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**Abstract.** This study highlights the effectiveness of the Time Zone in English Language (Ti-ZEL) program in improving speaking abilities among academic staff at one of the public universities in Pontianak, Indonesia. This was a mixed-method study that included some participants with provoked tests and treatments. Other forms of observation and interviews were conducted to evaluate the overall obstacles and success factors of the Ti-ZEL program. The program significantly improved speaking abilities with measurable progress ( $p < 0.001$ ). The findings underscore the importance of providing opportunities and supportive environments for English practice within habituation programs. Success factors included respondents' basic English skills, an engaging and practical approach, and consistent commitment. Challenges included technical and non-technical barriers, limited proficiency, internal factors (job exhaustion, mental strain), and external distractions (workload, other activities). This cultivated approach greatly governs the level of skill improvement in speaking English. This strongly concludes the necessity of enhancing the English language skill among the academic staff of the university using the Ti-ZEL habituation model. Implementing this approach to the academic staff was new and at first unfamiliar but it proved to be successful.

**Keywords:** *Ti-ZEL, English habituation program, speaking abilities, academic staff*

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, language soft skills have become essential for global citizens. These skills, which include communication, presentation abilities, critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, conflict management, networking, and teamwork, are vital for both personal and professional success ([Medvedeva et al., 2022](#); [Ulfah, 2018](#)). Language soft skills are fundamental not only in terms of basic interpersonal communication but also in more complex professional interactions. Mastery of these skills is linked to career advancement and is essential for lifelong learning and collaborative work—key elements in outcome-based education, especially at the tertiary level ([Anthonysamy et al., 2020](#); [Cendon, 2018](#)).

Language-related soft skills, especially for supporting international collaboration and networking, are highly valued in higher education. English is given priority along with other languages for both administrative and communicative purposes in academia ([Mat Husin & Mohd Radzuan, 2021](#); [Reynolds et al., 2023](#); [Widiningrum et al., 2025](#)). The present study's results further stress the issue of English language proficiency in the workplace by showing that self-assessed English proficiency together with Human Resource (HR) policies that encourage foreign language instruction contribute greatly to employees' devotion to organizational globalization ([Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2015](#)). This brings to the forefront the issue of the usefulness of language skills in fostering engagement and participation in a globalized world including academic institutions.

This research emphasizes the importance of promoting English language proficiency among academic staff in Islamic universities. As [Tripudiyana et al. \(2022\)](#) state, speaking English enables individuals to share and produce information effectively. English is widely recognized as a primary tool for lifelong and collaborative learning due to several factors. First, it functions as a global lingua franca, a role that extends beyond native-speaking communities to encompass speakers worldwide ([Cheng, 2012](#); [Fang, 2017b, 2017a](#)). Second, English is crucial for career advancement, education, and employment opportunities ([Damayanti, 2019](#); [Dwihartanti & Faizah, 2018](#); [EF EPI, 2021](#); [Fitriana, 2012](#)). Third, Indonesia's education policies increasingly support international programs, with English proficiency integrated into accreditation standards for both public and private universities ([Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2022](#); [Hendayana, 2021](#); [ISO, 2015](#); [Kemendikbud RI, 2020](#); [LLDIKTI Wilayah VI, 2021](#); [Rouf, 2022](#)). Fourth, various universities—such as Universitas Brawijaya, Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta, Universitas Trisakti, and Universitas Sumatera Utara—actively involve their educational staff in English language training and development ([Fakultas Teknologi Pertanian Universitas Brawijaya, 2018](#); [Gilang, 2021](#); [Unisa Yogyakarta, 2022](#); [USU Medan, 2019](#)). Finally, many Islamic universities across Indonesia, including UIN Malang, UIN Jakarta, IAIN Pontianak, IAIN Palangka Raya, UIN Palembang, and UIN Aceh, offer English Department programs to prepare students for careers in English-related fields, such as teaching and facilitation. As globalization progresses, it is essential for the academic community, including university faculty and staff in Indonesia, to attain proficiency in English. This proficiency not only facilitates international collaboration but also contributes to the broader goals of social and cultural development within