



# Challenges and Opportunities of Online English Language Teaching in Islamic Boarding Schools: Teachers' Perspectives

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## Abstract

The practice of online English instruction in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools represents a relatively new instructional shift, prompting diverse teacher perspectives on its implementation. This study utilised qualitative research with a case study which examined two English teachers' experiences of online English language teaching within one Islamic boarding school in West Sumatera, Indonesia. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and in-depth interviews with two participants, the study identifies both challenges and opportunities emerging from the transition to online instruction. Key challenges include poor internet connectivity, limited technological competence, and reduced interaction which particularly hinder the teaching of productive skills such as speaking. Teachers also reported emotional strain and fluctuating wellbeing, shaped by workload demands, students' inconsistent participation, and difficulties ensuring learning outcomes. Despite these constraints, online English Language teaching offered opportunities for enhanced ICT skills, flexible access to learning resources, and broader exposure to digital materials. Teachers also noted that online platforms enabled students to access diverse references and supported independent learning. The findings highlight the need for institutional support, technological training, and wellbeing-oriented policies to strengthen online English language teaching practices in Islamic boarding schools. This study contributes to understanding how teachers make sense of online English language teaching in a unique educational context and offers insights for improving curriculum alignment and future implementation.

## INTRODUCTION

The integration of online teaching and learning is rapidly expanding within educational institutions globally, driven by its flexibility in content delivery, time management, and accessibility (Castro & Tumibay, 2021). Despite the availability of various online learning platforms, schools have faced challenges such as remote environments, limited content, assessment difficulties, and other constraints (Al Abiky, 2021). Specifically, many schools have encountered issues with poor internet

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connections and teachers' unfamiliarity with online English Language Teaching. Given these challenges and the varying perspectives of teachers regarding online English Language Teaching, this study aims to explore the holistic understanding and perspectives of English teachers concerning the online-based English language education in Indonesian Islamic boarding institutions, considering its relationship to the English Language Teaching curriculum.

The main issue addressed in this study concerns the experiences of English teachers at an Islamic boarding school as they navigated the shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to online English language teaching for the first time. Although online English Language Teaching has the potential to enhance students' proficiency across the four language skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading), teachers encountered numerous obstacles during its implementation. These challenges included sustaining student motivation and engagement, limited technological access, and teachers' lack of prior experience with online English Language Teaching (Al Shlowiy, 2022; Hung, 2021; Khaled et al., 2022). Within the context of Islamic boarding schools, additional complexities emerged related to aligning online English Language Teaching with the expectations of the 2013 curriculum and the broader educational vision of the pesantren system. These institutional and pedagogical demands often resulted in less effective online instruction and influenced teachers' emotions, satisfaction, and motivation. In response to these issues, this qualitative study explores English teachers' perspectives on the implementation of online English Language Teaching in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools.

The concept of online teaching refers to instructional practices delivered through the internet, allowing learners to engage in educational activities without being physically present in a conventional classroom. The roots of online teaching and learning can be traced back to distance education, which has existed since the late nineteenth century (Holmberg et al., 2005). According to Holmberg et al. (2005), distance learning involves a structured teaching learning process that does not rely on direct, face-to-face interaction between teachers and students in a traditional classroom setting, but is instead supported by an educational institution. Distance learning typically consists of two main components: the mediated delivery of instructional materials and the interaction between teachers and learners which historically occurred through written correspondence, email, or telephone, and has now evolved into online group communication and teleconferencing (Holmberg et al., 2005). With advancements in ICT, distance learning has increasingly shifted toward online formats and has become one of the fastest growing modes of education worldwide (Castro & Tumibay, 2021).

In practice, online or distance learning enables students to manage their study pace and schedule more flexibly, which is particularly beneficial for individuals balancing academic, work, or family responsibilities (Turan et al., 2022). Furthermore, teacher feedback, teacher-student interaction, and online discussion have been shown to positively influence learners' knowledge development and academic performance (Guler, 2020; Xiao et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Thus, online teaching and learning offer a range of advantages for both educators and students. At the same time, the wellbeing of teachers and learners remains a multifaceted issue, as numerous factors shape their emotional and psychological experiences. Student wellbeing is a critical consideration in education, and empirical evidence demonstrates a strong relationship between teacher wellbeing and student

wellbeing (McCallum et al., 2017).

The overall quality of an educational system is also closely tied to the wellbeing of its teachers (McCallum et al., 2017). In the context of online learning, Jones and colleagues (2021) examined the impact of distance learning on law students and found significant psychological and practical links between online learning environments and students' wellbeing. These findings underscore the importance of prioritising wellbeing when designing and implementing online teaching and learning practices.

There are, however, several limitations associated with implementing an online English language teaching. One of the most prominent issues is unstable internet connectivity, which negatively affects the quality of online English instruction, particularly when lessons rely on digital tools, multimedia resources, and other online learning activities (Al Abiky, 2021; Manegre & Sabiri, 2020). Weak internet signals can significantly disrupt the teaching-learning process and reduce the effectiveness of online classrooms. In addition to connectivity problems, studies have shown that many schools struggle with the integration of technology required for online instruction. A range of obstacles emerges when schools attempt to conduct online English lessons. For instance, Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison (2020) examined the challenges and opportunities encountered by teachers delivering online English instruction in Chile during 2020, revealing numerous difficulties that educators faced throughout the transition.

This study is a case study in which there are 27 teacher candidates who taught English as a foreign language. The result shows that there are many obstacles in teaching English online. For example, lack of interaction between the teachers and students makes it difficult to conduct the virtual teaching. Furthermore, the abrupt changes in the teaching context create difficulties for teachers as they attempt to adjust their methods for virtual instruction. Moreover, a considerable number of teachers struggle with limited Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK), a competency essential for effective online English instruction, including lack of training in integrating technology meaningfully into pedagogical practices (Shiu, 2024; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2024; Shruthi et al., 2025). Given the range of difficulties teachers encounter in online English instruction, many educators and their students ultimately favour traditional face-to-face learning environments over virtual ones (Alhamami, 2019).

The objectives of this research are to investigate teachers' perspectives regarding the practices of delivering English lessons online within the Islamic boarding schools' context. Moreover, this study is also to understand the emotional experiences (feelings) of teachers regarding online English Language Teaching. In addition, this study identifies the perceived benefits of online English Language Teaching implementation at an Islamic Boarding School from the teachers' perspectives. Furthermore, this research also identifies the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing online English Language Teaching at the school and assesses the alignment of online English Language Teaching practices with the goals and expectations of the curriculum within the Islamic boarding school system. Furthermore, there are several significances of this study.

This study adds to the understanding of online English language instruction in a number of ways by using interpretive phenomenological analysis to look at teachers' perspectives on online instruction at an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. This study is beneficial because information gathered from interviews in

depth related to challenges in carrying out online the online English Language Teaching is thorough and shows how teachers actually expressed their senses, happiness, frustration, and other aspects of their experiences, particularly their well-beings in teaching English online. Based on the result of this study, it is advantageous to the teachers, educational institutions, and all stakeholders to take into considerations to improve online English language instruction as well as online instruction in general in Indonesia, follow-up actions regarding the implementation of online English language instruction might be created and the curriculum, in particular in Indonesia.

## METHODS

This study employed a case study design to investigate teachers' experiences within a specific institutional context. Case studies allow for the detailed and holistic examination of bounded phenomena, encompassing individuals, social settings, and circumstances relevant to the research (Holley & Harris, 2019). The design is inherently flexible, adapting to the context under investigation. The methodological approach was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, a qualitative framework that seeks to explore and interpret participants' lived experiences (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). Central to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is the interpretative process, through which researchers aim to understand how participants make sense of their personal and professional lives (Engkizar et al., 2026; Liang, 2019). In this study, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was applied to investigate how teachers perceive and experience the implementation of online English instruction at Islamic boarding school X in Indonesia.

### Research Participant and Sampling Technique

The participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling, a strategy that allows researchers to gather rich and meaningful insights from individuals who can best illuminate the phenomenon under investigation (Smith et al., 2009). In Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, maintaining a homogeneous sample is a key methodological principle, as such homogeneity enables the generation of detailed idiographic data that can be explored in depth (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis studies typically involve a small number of participants (Smith et al., 2009), as a limited sample size supports case-by-case analysis and allows the researcher to examine each participant's perspective with considerable depth and nuance. Participants in this study were two English teachers working at an Islamic boarding school in West Sumatera, Indonesia. Each teacher was responsible for teaching English at a different grade level, specifically grade 10 and grade 12.

**Table 1. Demographic/Informational Table**

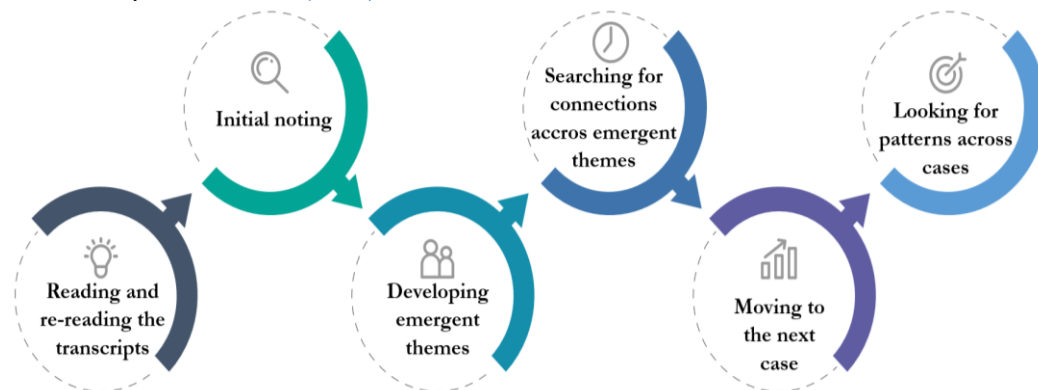
	Participant 1	Participant 2
Gender	Male	Female
Age (Years Old)	27	43
Teaching English Experience	4 years	17 years
Experience in online English Language Teaching	1.5 semester (less than 1 year)	1.5 semester (less than 1 year)
Educational Background	Bachelor of English Education	Bachelor of English literature

Participants' experiences were elicited through semi-structured, in-depth

interviews, consistent with the interpretative phenomenological analysis emphasis on capturing individual narratives. Twelve core questions, supplemented by prompts based on participants' responses, explored teachers' perspectives of online English language teaching at Islamic boarding school X. The interviews addressed teaching duration, platforms employed, views on implementation, time allocation, perspectives of teaching English skills online, perceived advantages, and institutional support. Data interpretation follows Kvale and Brinkmann's (Rosewell & Ashwin, 2019) principle that analysis seeks a justifiable understanding rather than a definitive explanation.

### Data Analysis

After completing the transcription of the interviews, the data were translated from Bahasa Indonesia into English, as the interviews were originally conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. To ensure the accuracy, we repeatedly listened to and viewed the recordings throughout the translation process to capture the intended meanings as precisely as possible. Following translation, the analysis phase began. Although IPA offers several possible analytic approaches, it is characterised by a set of core processes, moving from individual accounts to shared patterns, and from descriptive observations to interpretative insights and by key principles, including a commitment to understanding participants' perspectives and an emphasis on personal meaning-making (Smith et al., 2009). Guided by these principles, we followed the six stages of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis data analysis outlined by Smith et al. (2009).



**Fig 1. Research Analysis Flow**

Data analysis followed the stages of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The first step involved repeated reading of both original and translated transcripts, accompanied by listening to and viewing interview recordings to attend closely to participants' gestures, intonation, and expressions. This immersion ensured that participants remained central to the analysis. The second stage, initial noting, entailed exploratory comments on descriptive detail, semantic meaning, language use, and phenomenological aspects, alongside conceptual reflections to capture participants' accounts. From these notes, emergent themes were identified, representing participants' responses. The fourth stage involved abstraction, subsumption, and contextualisation, through which superordinate themes were developed by clustering related themes (Smith et al., 2009). Step five emphasised Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis's idiographic commitment, with the analytic process repeated for each transcript to refine and expand the thematic structure. Finally, cross-case analysis highlighted recurring patterns, consolidating the superordinate themes across participants (Engkizar et al., 2026; M et al., 2026;

Masani & Fabanjo, 2026).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis delineated several repeating themes. There were two English teachers of Islamic boarding school X who participated in this study. We presented super-ordinate themes from both participants related to their perspectives as English teachers of the online English instruction delivered at Islamic boarding school X. Our attention centres on teachers' perspectives of how online English Language Teaching was conducted in this school.

### **English teachers' views on how online English language teaching is carried out in Islamic boarding schools.**

Although online instruction has become one of the most rapidly expanding modes of teaching worldwide, its adoption within Islamic boarding schools remains relatively limited. In the Indonesian pesantren system, organising online learning poses particular challenges because these institutions traditionally emphasise direct, face-to-face interaction as the foundation of their educational approach. This was evident at Islamic boarding school X, where teachers were largely unfamiliar with online teaching practices. This situation aligns with findings by Hanafi et al. (2021), who noted that distance learning is generally not well integrated into pesantren environments. For this school, the introduction of online teaching represented an entirely new instructional model, prompted by the sudden shift required during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many other educational institutions, Islamic boarding school X was compelled to transition from conventional classroom-based instruction to remote learning and adapt to the realities of teaching in a distance-based environment.

#### **The role of teachers**

Being a teacher involves not only delivering knowledge and skills but also attending to the many dimensions that shape the educational process. In the context of online instruction, teachers take on multiple roles, including that of educator. The participants in this study recognised that their responsibilities as teachers were central to the success of online English language teaching at Islamic boarding school X. They emphasised the need to be thorough and attentive when teaching online, as their instructional choices influenced students' cognitive, psychomotor, and affective development. In this sense, the teachers viewed themselves as guides who supported students' learning throughout the online classroom experience. They also highlighted the importance of acknowledging students' efforts, noting that appreciation plays a significant role in sustaining learners' motivation in virtual settings.

In addition, the participants described how online English Language Teaching required them to act not only as instructors but also as facilitators and designers of learning. Beyond presenting content, teachers needed to develop engaging instructional materials and digital resources that could support students' understanding in an online environment. They further reiterated that recognising students' work remained a crucial aspect of their role, as such encouragement helped students remain committed to their studies. Reflecting this idea, one participant explained: *"Yes, I created a [YouTube] channel, yes, I ... at first it was specifically for children here. it's just a ... yes, seeing that many use YouTube as a teaching medium for many students, yes, so I choose, yes, for all its intentions in general, so anyone who needs learning,"* (Participant 1).

Developing online learning materials is a crucial responsibility for teachers, as it enables them to guide students in accessing a wide range of digital resources available on the internet. This aligns with the teachers' roles as both content facilitators and process facilitators in online learning environments (Goodyear et al., 2001). By preparing such resources, teachers help create conditions that support students' ability to learn independently.

### **Teacher's Self perspective and Wellbeing**

Due to the wide range of difficulties, they faced, the participants indicated a stronger inclination toward traditional face-to-face teaching rather than conducting English lessons online. These challenges significantly shaped their teaching preferences. Among the issues raised, teacher wellbeing emerged as the most prominent concern during the period of online instruction, reflecting its crucial role in the overall teaching process (McCallum et al., 2017). The participants described a variety of emotional responses linked to their wellbeing, including disappointment, fatigue, sadness, guilt, uncertainty, and moments of relief.

The participants explained that they often English language teaching disappointed with students' performance after conducting online lessons. They viewed students' ability to understand the material as a direct reflection of their own effectiveness as teachers. When students failed to achieve satisfactory outcomes in the online setting, the teachers reported experiencing considerable stress. According to their accounts, the pressure to ensure acceptable student results in an online environment contributed significantly to this stress, particularly because they were not permitted to assign a "zero" on students' reports. As a result, they English language teaching compelled to find alternative ways to support students and prevent them from receiving extremely low scores, especially given the perceived ineffectiveness of online instruction.

Beyond stress, the teachers also described feeling physically and emotionally drained by the demands of online teaching. Participant 2 used expressions such as feeling "nauseous" or wanting to "vomit" to convey the depth of her exhaustion, noting that the workload required substantial energy and constant attention. She explained that managing four classes simultaneously in an online format intensified her fatigue. In addition, she expressed a sense of guilt when she English language teaching unable to fulfill her responsibilities as an English teacher to the standard, she expected of herself.

In addition to stress and exhaustion, the participants described experiencing mixed emotions, particularly sadness, when observing students' low levels of engagement during online lessons. They noted that students often showed little enthusiasm for learning in the virtual environment, which created a sense of disappointment and responsibility for the teacher. One participant reflected that being a teacher meant managing a wide range of emotions, especially when students did not respond as expected. These experiences suggest that the challenges encountered during online instruction had a direct impact on teachers' wellbeing. The participants also reported feeling overwhelmed by the daily workload associated with online teaching. One contributing factor was the large number of students attending online classes at the same time, which intensified the pressure and added to their feelings of stress and overload.

Participant 2 noted that managing four classes at the same time during online instruction was extremely draining and contributed to the overall ineffectiveness of online English teaching. As a result, students often struggled to grasp the lesson

content on those days. These reflections illustrate how the participants evaluated their own experiences with online classroom practices. Despite the numerous challenges they encountered, the issue of teacher wellbeing emerged as a critical factor that must be taken into account in educational settings. This highlights the importance of acknowledging and supporting teachers' wellbeing within online teaching environments as well. Although the participants faced significant obstacles throughout the online teaching process, they attempted to address these difficulties by seeking support from their students, who in some cases demonstrated sufficient independence in their learning. Even when problems originated from the students' side, the teachers believed that the learners were mature enough to manage certain tasks on their own. The participants explained that their students' ability to work independently was helpful, as it reduced the extent to which students relied entirely on the teacher during online lessons.

It is very clear that the emotions and feelings of the teachers while they were teaching were overwhelmed and exhausted. Sometimes they were under a lot of pressure when they conducted the class.

### **Advantages of online English Language Teaching**

Online English language teaching offers both advantages and disadvantages for teachers and students. In terms of its benefits, online English Language Teaching provides opportunities for both parties to enhance their skills and broaden their knowledge. Participant 2 noted that "*They (students) can access the learning or material we convey from various references.*". Moreover, participant 1 also added that "*So the advantage is that we have less time to work and have more time to rest so [we still have] little time to add other knowledge*" because the participants can teach the students from home. It was an opportunity for teachers to improve their capability in new technology and digital knowledge. Moreover, participants described that online English Language Teaching offered flexible teaching and learning activities because they can use the time effectively as the use of Google Classroom provided a space for teachers and students to interact and discuss topics, helping to widen their knowledge base without wasting time to go to the classroom.

The participants agreed that online teaching is more comfortable which makes them easier to teach the students everywhere and students can learn the lesson easier than ever before since it is very easy to search the materials needed on the internet, and the materials they receive are varied and very useful. For example, there are several websites that can help participants to collect the sources of the lesson. Moreover, online teaching is flexible and accessible because the online classroom can be implemented anywhere as long as internet connection and the devices are available (Akyuni et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2025).

In terms of applications used in online class, not only the teachers frequently used zoom meeting as the platform to conduct the class, they also utilised google classroom, WhatsApp and Youtube to deliver the lesson during the class. They provided the materials and assignments through the apps, and participant 2 stated that he created his own Youtube channel that was used to help him to provide more explanation because the learning time is very limited, so the use of youtube video for learning can make the teaching process more effective and efficient because it provided more complete explanations in the video and it could be an alternative source that students could use to learn (Kassymova et al., 2025).

### **Constraints and Limitations in Conducting English Language Teaching Online**

The practice of online English Language Teaching at Islamic boarding school X encountered numerous challenges. In terms of readiness, the participants reported several obstacles, including environmental factors that made online teaching difficult. The participant said that *“online learning English is a bit difficult for us because there are actually many obstacles .... So, there is a factor from us, there is a factor from the children too.”* Online learning is not familiar to both teachers and students. It then eventually makes both teachers and students difficult to conduct the teaching and learning process at the beginning because they were not ready.

Although the online teaching is undoubtedly beneficial, there were some problems with the implementation of online English Language Teaching during the class. First, the online teaching materials were not delivered effectively because the participants explained that they could not ensure whether students fully understood the content. whether students understood what they had learnt through the online class. This is probably because they did the teaching process from a distance and no one could ensure that the students did the right thing or not, or even if they cheated during the class. Moreover, lack of interaction made online English language teaching ineffective because teachers could not interact directly with students. To illustrate, the participants highlighted that, *“We use a zoom meeting or what, now there are many who turn off the video, we don't know whether they are listening to us or not, they could be asleep or something!”*. Owing to lack of interaction, teachers were not able to ensure that the students join and focus on the lesson during the online classroom so that this circumstance impacts students' comprehension and progress. Consequently, teachers also have difficulty in maintaining students' motivation and interaction in online classes and it can impact students' language skills as the result of less interaction (Farid, et. al., 2023).

#### **Accessibility of Internet Connection**

Another major challenge identified by the participants when implementing online English Language Teaching at this school was the limited internet access in several regions where students lived. As an archipelagic country, Indonesia continues to struggle with uneven internet infrastructure, and this issue was also evident in the context of this study because students came from diverse areas, including remote islands with weak connectivity. Although the boarding school normally housed students in dormitories, the pandemic forced them to return home and continue their studies from their respective regions. This situation created numerous difficulties for online learning. As one participant explained, some students were from the Mentawai Islands, areas where internet access is extremely limited, making it difficult for them to participate in online classes. Obtaining a stable signal required significant effort, for instance, some students had to walk long distances or even travel by boat for several kilometres just to find a location with adequate connectivity to join the lesson.

Furthermore, unstable internet connections frequently disrupted the learning process, causing delays and reducing the effectiveness of the digital tools used in online teaching. Poor connectivity became one of the most serious obstacles affecting the implementation of online English Language Teaching at Islamic boarding school X. At times, students were unable to join the virtual classroom at all due to these internet-related constraints.

### Challenges Related to Technology

Technology offers powerful tools that support online education, including the delivery of online English Language Teaching. A range of digital platforms can be used by teachers to facilitate online English instruction. At Islamic boarding school X, several applications such as Zoom, YouTube and WhatsApp, were commonly utilised during online class. Participant 1 highlighted that one of the major challenges she faced was her limited familiarity with using technology for teaching English. She explained that conducting online lessons was difficult for her, noting that only a small number of “young teachers” were comfortable managing online classroom activities. In contrast, many senior teachers struggled to adapt to new technological demands, particularly those related to online and digital learning. Only a few had sufficient technological competence to run online classes effectively. Many teachers who were not considered “young” found it challenging to teach using multiple digital platforms. In this regard, technological professionalism is an essential component of effective online English teaching (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). As a result, the implementation of online teaching, including online English Language Teaching, did not always function as intended.

### Online Pedagogical Approaches to English Language Skills

Online English language teaching was perceived as a significant challenge for the teachers at Islamic boarding school X, as this was their first experience implementing online instruction. Participant 2 explained that, during online lessons, they tended to focus primarily on cognitive or knowledge-based aspects of learning, while psychomotor skills received far less attention. He noted that teaching speaking and reading skills online was particularly difficult since speaking activities required considerable time, and reading lessons made it hard for teachers to determine whether students truly understood the text. In contrast, Participant 1 offered a different viewpoint regarding online English instruction. She believed that teaching reading skills was actually the easiest component of online English Language Teaching. Her perspective aligns with the findings of Alshumaimeri & Almasri (2012), who reported that WebQuests can significantly enhance students’ reading comprehension.

Reading was considered easier to teach in the online setting because students were able to work independently, and teachers could assess their comprehension through the quizzes provided. In contrast, teaching English pronunciation proved far more challenging due to limited interaction during virtual lessons. As a result, teachers were unable to monitor each student’s pronunciation individually throughout the online sessions.

### Challenges in Online English Assessment and Academic Integrity

Assessment was recognised as an essential component of online English language teaching. However, due to the various challenges encountered, Participant 2 noted that student assessment in the online environment was not carried out as effectively as intended. As discussed in the previous section, certain English language skills, particularly speaking, were difficult to evaluate online. This aligns with Retnawati et al. (2016), who emphasise that assessing students involves multiple complex considerations. In this study, evaluating speaking skills required substantial time because teachers needed to assess pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. For this reason, the participants did not prioritise speaking assessments, as they English language teaching it was unrealistic to evaluate all components within the limited time available during online

lessons. Consequently, pronunciation assessment was also deprioritised due to the constraints of online teaching.

In addition, plagiarism emerged as a potential issue during online classes. Because students were learning remotely, it was difficult for teachers to verify whether the submitted work was genuinely their own. Despite this challenge, the participants consistently emphasised the importance of honesty, stressing that integrity is a fundamental value in education.

The findings of this study illuminate how English teachers at Islamic boarding school X navigated the rapid transition to online English Language Teaching, revealing a complex interplay between technological, pedagogical, and emotional factors. Although online teaching has expanded globally (Castro & Tumibay, 2021), its implementation in Islamic boarding schools remains relatively unfamiliar, as reflected in teachers' accounts that "online learning English is a bit difficult for us because there are actually many obstacles." This unfamiliarity shaped teachers' initial resistance and contributed to the perspectives that online English Language Teaching was less effective than face-to-face instruction.

A central challenge was poor internet connectivity, which significantly disrupted teaching and learning. Teachers' descriptions of students travelling long distances "just to look for the signal" illustrate how infrastructural inequalities directly affected participation and comprehension. This aligns with previous research identifying internet access as a critical determination of online English Language Teaching success (Al Abiky, 2021; Manegre & Sabiri, 2020).

Technological competence also merged as a barrier, particularly for senior teachers who were less accustomed to digital tools. This finding reinforces the argument that effective online English Language Teaching requires not only pedagogical and content knowledge but also technological proficiency (Downing & Dymont, 2013). Limited training and institutional support further intensified teachers' workload, contributing to emotional exhaustion.

Teacher wellbeing was a prominent theme, with participants expressing disappointment, stress, and guilt when students struggled, echoing the strong link between teacher wellbeing and educational quality (McCallum et al., 2017). The emotional burden was heightened by reduced interaction, which made it difficult to assess understanding and maintain engagement. The impact of online learning on students is clearly demonstrated in the study by Jones et al. (2021), which examined law students and found that online learning significantly influenced both their psychosocial wellbeing and their learning environment. Physical presence, therefore, remains a crucial element in the educational process (Ganayem & Zidan, 2018).

Additionally, teaching English skills and conducting assessments in online classrooms pose significant challenges for teachers who aim to optimise the learning process and evaluate students' performance accurately. Plagiarism also becomes a major concern in online English language assessment. This issue can be mitigated when teachers actively guide students in understanding academic honesty and integrity throughout their learning. Despite these efforts, several English language skills remain particularly difficult to teach in virtual environments. For example, speaking skills are especially challenging to be applied effectively due to limited interaction between teachers and students (Ganayem & Zidan, 2018). Nevertheless, a number of online platforms can support the development of English language skills. For example, the program Tell Me More has been shown to enhance students'

vocabulary, listening, and reading abilities (Gyamfi & Sukseemuang, 2018), while WebQuests have been found to improve learners' reading comprehension (Alshumaimeri & Almasri, 2012). Despite the availability of such tools, teachers at Islamic boarding school X were hindered by unforeseen contextual factors that limited their ability to develop students' English skills (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). These contextual constraints refer to the surrounding conditions in which teachers and students operated, conditions that restricted interaction and made it difficult to conduct online English lessons effectively.

Despite these challenges, teachers recognised opportunities for professional growth, including improved ICT skills and increased access to digital resources. Online platforms also supported student autonomy, suggesting potential for blended learning models in the future (Engkizar et al., 2018). Overall, the findings indicate that online English Language Teaching in Islamic boarding schools remains far from ideal, primarily due to infrastructural limitations, insufficient technological preparation, and wellbeing pressures. Strengthening institutional support, providing targeted training, and integrating wellbeing-focused policies are essential for enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of online English Language Teaching in this context.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study contributes to a novel perspective to the field of digital pedagogy by situation online English language teaching within the specific context of Islamic boarding schools. Teachers reported gains in professional development, increased familiarity with digital tools, and greater possibilities for collaboration and resource sharing with students. Different from the previous study, this research not only focuses on teachers' technological and pedagogical obstacles in teaching English online, but also highlights the wellbeing of teachers that become a crucial factor influencing the overall quality of online English Language Teaching. This is due to emotional strains and workload pressures directly shape teaching effectiveness, as well as the students' wellbeing is pivotal to be considered during the online learning. Within this context, teachers assumed multiple roles such as educator, facilitator, learning designer, and advisor, each of which become more complex in the online environment. Additionally, the implementation of online English Language Teaching at the Islamic boarding school remains far from optimal and requires substantial improvement, particularly in relation to the expectations of the independent curriculum. These findings provide significant implications for policymakers, curriculum designers, school administrators and all stakeholders in Indonesia to consider various aspects in implementing online English language into the current curriculum, such as, flourishing teachers' wellbeing, improving and providing teachers' technological and pedagogical knowledge and trainings, and building well-equipped infrastructures to ensure the sustainability and equitability of online English language teaching in Indonesia.

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## DECLARATIONS

### Author contribution

**Ahmad Syukri:** Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, Conceptualization, Investigation, and analysis, **Julia Miller:** Methodology, Improve Language, Improve Content, **Fadilah Habibul Hasna:** Data accuracy, Visualization.

### AI Statement

The data and the grammatical structure in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that this research was conducted without any conflict of interest in the research.

### Ethical clearance

This study involves human subjects and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Adelaide under approval number: H-2020-261.

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