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Teachers' Experiences and Students' Responses to Digital Platforms in Online English Learning

Ruwandi, Alfatihah Dwi Pangestu, Nafian Rahma Fitriyani, Devi Silvia
[1234]Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga
1. ruwandi@iainsalatiga.ac.id
2. alfatihahdp@gmail.com,
3. nafianrahma@gmail.com
4. devisil360@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Digital platforms have become an important component in supporting English language learning beyond emergency situations. However, most previous studies focus on pandemic-based online learning, leaving limited insights into non-emergency contexts. This study aims to explore teachers' experiences and students' responses to digital platforms used in online English learning during a school renovation period at SMA Negeri 1 Getasan. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving English teachers and five eleventh-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model with source triangulation. The findings reveal that Google Classroom and WhatsApp were effective for material delivery and task management, while interactive platforms supported engagement. Nevertheless, challenges emerged related to student motivation, limited interaction, and assessment authenticity. The study concludes that digital platforms are best implemented as complementary tools within a blended learning model rather than as a full replacement for face-to-face instruction.

Keywords: digital platforms, online English learning, teachers' experiences, students' responses, blended learning

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INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements in the 21st century have significantly reshaped the landscape of education (Haleem et al., 2022), influencing the ways teaching and learning are conducted across various subjects, including English. The integration of digital tools and online platforms has become increasingly common, allowing teachers to distribute materials efficiently, monitor students' work, and communicate more flexibly (Josuй et al., 2023). And according to Vardhini (2023) and Tania (2025), English language teaching (ELT), the use of digital platforms supports not only the delivery of content but also the development of essential language skills through interactive resources, multimedia input, and self-paced practice opportunities. As a result, digital learning tools now play a significant role in supporting both instructional needs and students' independent learning processes. (Zafeer et al., 2025)

The growing reliance on digital platforms became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when educational institutions around the world were forced to transition to online learning (Lemay et al., 2021). This sudden shift prompted extensive research on emergency remote teaching, technological readiness, student engagement, teacher challenges, and the effectiveness of online English learning practices. Findings from Naseer & Perveen (2023) and Zaki (2022) indicate that digital platforms offer several advantages, including greater flexibility, reduced costs, opportunities for collaboration and idea exchange, access to a wide range of courses, and support for diverse learning styles. They also enable students to study from anywhere and at any time, save commuting time, develop better time-management skills, and receive immediate feedback. Despite these benefits, researchers also highlight notable challenges, such as higher withdrawal and attrition

rates, increased likelihood of procrastination, the need for strong self-motivation, limited interaction, technological difficulties, and health concerns caused by prolonged screen exposure.

Although online learning gained major attention during the pandemic, its implementation is not limited to emergency conditions. In many educational settings, schools may temporarily shift to online instruction when they encounter practical challenges such as limited classroom availability, infrastructure issues, or environmental disruptions. In these situations, online learning is implemented not because of a national or global crisis, but as a practical solution to ensure instructional continuity despite temporary constraints in physical space or school facilities. This creates a context that differs from pandemic-based online learning, as the level of urgency, emotional pressure, and instructional constraints experienced by teachers and students is not the same.

Such a situation occurred in SMA Negeri 1 Getasan. The school underwent a renovation project that affected the availability of classrooms, making it necessary to adjust the teaching and learning system for several grade levels. To accommodate the limited classroom space, the school implemented a rotational model in which students alternated between face-to-face instruction and online learning. Initially, the rotation followed a weekly pattern, with certain grade levels attending classes on-site while others studied online from home. Over time, this system evolved into a two-day cycle, allowing students to engage in face-to-face learning for two days and then shift to online learning for the next two. This arrangement ensured continuity in the teaching process while accommodating logistical constraints caused by the renovation.

During this period, English learning was conducted through a combination of face-to-face and online instruction. Teachers utilized various digital platforms to deliver materials, assign tasks, and communicate with students when they were studying remotely. Students, in turn, accessed the platforms to receive information, complete assignments, and seek clarification. While the specific platforms used varied depending on the teacher's preference and the nature of the lesson, the general reliance on multiple digital tools played a significant role in shaping both teachers' and students' online learning experiences. The rotational learning system required teachers to adjust their instructional strategies to ensure that students received consistent learning support regardless of whether they were physically present in the classroom or participating from home.

Research on digital platforms during the pandemic offers valuable insights into how teachers and students navigate online learning environments, yet these findings may not fully represent experiences in non-emergency contexts. During the pandemic, online learning was often characterized by abrupt transitions, limited preparation time, and heightened uncertainty. Teachers faced increased stress due to the sudden expectation to master digital tools, redesign instructional materials, and manage students' varying levels of access to technology. Students, meanwhile, often experienced isolation, decreased engagement, and reduced motivation. The emotional and psychological burden associated with the global crisis shaped the outcomes of online learning in ways that might differ from situations where online learning is implemented with more stability and predictability.

In contrast, online learning carried out due to school renovation is a localized and structural necessity rather than an emergency response. Teachers may have more time to prepare, more flexibility in choosing and adapting digital tools, and potentially fewer emotional stressors compared to pandemic conditions. Students may also perceive the temporary online learning period differently, viewing it not as a crisis-driven shift but as part of a planned adjustment to allow school operations to run smoothly during construction. Their engagement, motivation, and attitudes toward online English learning may therefore be shaped by different factors compared to students who experienced online learning during a global health crisis.

Despite the increasing recognition of digital platform use in education, research focusing specifically on teachers' experiences and students' responses in non-emergency online learning contexts remains limited. Most existing studies emphasize the use of digital tools during the pandemic, leaving a gap in understanding how these tools function in situations where online learning is implemented for practical or infrastructural reasons. Investigating such contexts is important, as it provides a more comprehensive picture of how digital platforms support learning beyond crisis-related

circumstances. It also helps identify which online learning practices are effective, what challenges persist, and what adjustments are needed when integrating digital tools into teaching outside emergency conditions.

In the present study, the rotational learning arrangement during the school renovation offers a unique opportunity to examine English teachers' and students' experiences with digital platforms. Teachers were required to design lessons that remained coherent across both face-to-face and online sessions, manage student participation through digital tools, and ensure that learning objectives were met despite the shift between instructional modes. Their experiences can reveal how effectively digital platforms support instructional continuity, what challenges teachers encounter when teaching in hybrid contexts, and what strategies they employ to maintain student engagement during online learning days.

From the students' perspective, participating in online English learning as part of a rotational schedule presents its own set of experiences. Students must take responsibility for their learning when studying from home, manage digital tasks independently, and navigate the varying demands of online activities. Their responses—whether positive, negative, or mixed—provide essential insights into the usability of digital platforms, the clarity of instructions, the challenges faced during online days, and the factors that influence their motivation and participation. Understanding these responses is crucial for improving future online learning practices, especially in contexts where online instruction is not the standard but may be implemented temporarily due to situational needs.

Furthermore, examining teachers' and students' experiences in this context contributes to broader discussions on technology integration in ELT. As schools increasingly incorporate digital tools into everyday instruction, understanding how these tools function in different learning environments becomes essential. Research conducted in non-emergency contexts helps determine whether digital platforms are effective only during large-scale disruptions or whether they can also support learning under planned, localized circumstances. It also enables educators and policymakers to make informed decisions about digital literacy development, teacher training, and resource allocation for hybrid or blended learning models.

Given the points highlighted above, this research seeks to fill an important gap by exploring how English teachers and students navigate digital platforms during a temporary shift to online learning caused by school renovation. The study focuses on three central aspects: (1) teachers' experiences in using digital platforms to conduct English lessons within a rotational learning system, (2) students' responses toward online English learning activities implemented during the renovation period, and (3) teachers' and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of online English learning and their expectations for future learning models. By examining these aspects, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with digital platform use in a non-pandemic, context-specific online learning situation. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature on digital learning in ELT and offer practical insights for schools facing similar infrastructural constraints in the future.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, as it focuses on the experiences of teachers and students in online learning conducted during the school renovation period at SMA Negeri 1 Getasan. This study uses a qualitative approach because it is considered appropriate for understanding the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by teachers and students in online learning in depth (Creswell & David Creswell, 2018).

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Getasan, located in Semarang Regency, Central Java, which conducted online learning during the school renovation period. The research participants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of English teachers and 5 grade XI students (2 male and 3 female students) who had experience with online learning so that they could provide information relevant to the research (Tavakol & Sandars, 2025, p. 1443).

Data collection was carried out during the online learning period using three instruments, namely observation, interview, and document analysis. Observation was conducted to observe the use of digital features during online learning, student participation, and teacher-student interaction. Interviews were conducted with English teachers and students to explore their experiences, perceptions, challenges, and responses to online learning during the non-pandemic period. In addition, various supporting documents, such as lesson plans, teaching materials, documentation of online classroom activities, and online learning records were analyzed as supporting data sources to strengthen the research findings.

Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024, pp. 80-82). Then, to ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation by cross-verifying data from observations, interviews, and document analysis (Nurfajriani et al., 2024, p. 829). This triangulation process ensured that the research findings described the teachers' experiences and students' responses to the use of digital platforms in online learning.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from interviews with English teachers and students and discusses them in relation to existing theories and previous research. Three main themes emerged from the data: (1) teachers' experiences in using digital platforms, (2) students' responses towards the use of these platforms, and (3) perceptions of effectiveness and expectations for future learning.

Teachers' Experiences in Using Digital Platforms

Digital Platform Used

Interviews revealed that the Teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Getasan utilized several digital platforms, mainly Google Classroom and WhatsApp, to manage online learning during the school renovation period. One teacher explained, "Saya pakai Google Classroom dan Whatsapp karena itu yang paling simple dan mudah digunakan. Selain itu ya juga lebih familiar aja, udah sering dipakai." (Teacher 1, Interview, November 6th 2025). Another teacher also integrated additional platforms such as Padlet, Quizzes, and Wordwall to make learning more engaging, "Pakai Padlet, Quizzes, Wordwall, dan lain-lain biar nggak monoton pembelajarannya. Tapi yang utama ya Google Classroom dan Whatsapp." (Teacher 2, Interview, November 24th 2025).

The findings show that teachers relied mainly on Google Classroom and WhatsApp because these platforms were simple, familiar, and easy to operate. This is in line with previous research which states that teachers are more likely to adopt digital tools when they perceive them as easy to use and useful in supporting their teaching activities (Oktaria & Rohmayadevi, 2021).

In addition to these primary platforms, some teachers incorporated Padlet, Quizizz, and Wordwall to make learning more engaging. This aligns with Guaca-Moya et al. (2024) which shows that interactive digital tools can help increase student motivation and prevent monotony in online learning. Teachers' choice to combine basic communication platforms with more interactive platforms is an attempt to balance practicality with student engagement.

Challenges during Online Learning

Teachers faced various challenges when conducting online learning during the school renovation period. Not all students had adequate facilities, and some students could not access Google Classroom because they did not have a learning account, so they could not attend all

Google Classroom classes. This led teachers to use platforms other than Google Classroom. One teacher explained "Karena kalau kita hanya mengandalkan Google Classroom, itu ada beberapa anak yang handphonenya tidak support." (Teacher 2, Interview, November 24th 2025). This finding is in line with research conducted by (Subon et al., 2023) that poor internet access, frequent technical disruptions, and difficulty in following online learning are common among research participants.

In addition to technical issues, teachers also faced challenges in monitoring student attendance and participation in online learning. During online learning, some students did not attend all online classes and did not submit their assignments on time. One teacher said, "Sulit memantau siswa apakah siswa-siswi mengikuti pembelajaran dari awal sampai akhir" (Teacher 1, Interview, November 6th 2025). Some students have not shown readiness to learn in online learning, for example, they are still asleep when class is about to start or do not fully participate in online learning. Based on an interview with one of the teachers "Anak-anak belum bangun saat kelas dimulai, pembelajaran dimulai dari jam 7, ada beberapa anak yang belum bangun. Maka dari itu saya buat polling di Whatsapp sebelum pembelajaran dimulai, jika ada yang belum vote, saya menyuruh teman-temannya untuk mengingatkan," (Teacher 2, Interview, November 24th 2025). According to Mailizar et al., 2020) When online learning was implemented, some teachers had difficulty preparing students to participate in online learning.

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In addition, teachers also faced challenges related to the authenticity of student assignments. During online learning, it was difficult for teachers to check the authenticity of student assignments, especially written assignments. Teachers stated that "misal kita menyuruh anak untuk membuat sebuah teks, memang hasilnya bagus, tapi kita tidak tahu apakah itu hasilnya sendiri atau bukan," (Teacher 1, Interview, November 6th 2025). The high accessibility of online information today has led some students to complete their assignments by copying directly from the internet or plagiarizing. As cited by (Gabatin et al., 2023) currently, internet access is very easy and accessible to anyone, especially in the world of education where students are very dependent on online sources, making it easy for them to copy and paste without citing the source.

Adaptation Strategies

Teachers combine several interesting websites and applications such as Padlet, Quizizz, LiveWorksheet, and other online platforms to make English learning more interesting. Teacher stated that "selain menggunakan Google Classroom, saya juga menggunakan platform atau website lain seperti Wordwall, Padlet, Quiziz, Liveworksheet, tapi yang sering saya gunakan Liveworksheet, karena anak-anak kan bisa langsung ngisi di web itu terus nanti langsung ada nilainya" (Teacher 2, Interview, November 24th 2025).

Using gamification in online learning, such as Quizizz, Kahoot, and other online platforms, can increase student motivation, participation, and focus during online learning. This was stated by Nieto-Escamez & Roldбn-Tapia (2021), who noted that gamification has been used for a decade in education to increase student motivation and encourage social interaction. This is also supported by research conducted by Koivisto & Hamari (2019), which found that the use of gamification in learning has a positive effect on student learning outcomes.

Students' Responses towards The Use of Digital Platforms

Engagement and Participation

Students' engagement and participation during online English learning varied among the five participants, showing a pattern of initial enthusiasm followed by decreasing motivation. Several students mentioned that online learning felt enjoyable at the beginning because it allowed them to study from home. Student 1 explained, "Awalnya seneng karena bisa belajar dari rumah," (Interview, November 24th 2025) but later admitted becoming bored as the learning continued. A similar response came from Student 4, who noted that she initially felt comfortable studying from home but then became "males" due to irregular schedules (Interview, November 26th 2025). These statements indicate that while flexibility increased early engagement as stated by Akpen et al. (2024), the lack of structured routines eventually weakened students' participation (Shareef et al., 2024).

The use of Google Classroom helped maintain engagement to some extent because students found the platform accessible and easy to use. Student 1 described the platform as "gampang sih penggunaannya, nggak ribet," (Interview, November 24th 2025), while Student 2 similarly stated that tasks given through Google Classroom were easy to access and complete. Student 5 also reinforced this by saying that Google Classroom was "cukup mudah digunakan," (Interview, November 26th 2025), especially for checking materials and submitting assignments. These responses suggest that platform-related barriers were minimal, allowing students to participate without significant technical difficulties, particularly due to the user-friendly features of Google Classroom (Santos, 2021).

Despite this familiarity, participation was strongly affected by limited teacher explanation and reduced interaction. Several students pointed out that it was difficult to stay actively engaged when they had to understand materials independently. Student 1 admitted that some instructions were "kurang jelas," (Interview, November 24th 2025), while Student 2 stated that although he could understand the lessons, it was "enggak semudah saat luring" (Interview, November 24th 2025). Student 3 also explained that some materials were clear, but others were not fully understood without direct guidance (Interview, November 26th 2025). This aligns with Qun (2025) that stated the lack of immediate opportunities to ask questions reduced students' active participation, highlighting a common limitation of asynchronous online learning.

Students' Challenges

Besides teachers, students also face challenges when online learning is implemented. Some students find it difficult to understand the material presented during online learning and are unable to ask teachers directly about material that is unclear. One student stated, "Kadang kesulitan buat nyari tau kalo ada yang kurang dipahami soalnya engga bisa tanya langsung ke gurunya kalo daring," (Student 2, Interview, November 24th 2025). Based on research conducted by Nartiningrum & Nugroho (2020) students feel that the lessons delivered by teachers during online learning are more difficult to understand because there are no direct explanations or clarifications from the teachers.

Students also complained that studying from home reduced their motivation and discipline. Some students felt lazy to do their assignments online, and eventually the assignments piled up. Students said, "Kadang jadi pusing lebih banyak tugas yang numpuk gegara dengan adanya renovasi dan diadain daring yang bergiliran jadi buat jam pelajaran engga maksimal apalagi kalo dirumah bawaannya males," (Student 2, Interview, November 24th 2025). An unfavorable home environment or numerous distractions make students reluctant to study and participate in online learning. According to Suri (2021), students experience disruptions during online learning because they are distracted by the activities of other family members.

In addition, students also find it difficult to cope with inconsistent or constantly changing online and face-to-face learning schedules. This makes students feel uncomfortable with such irregular schedules. One student stated, "Kegiatan belajar waktu sekolah direnovasi ya pastinya kurang efektif, kurang enak juga. Jadwal PJJ engga teratur, katanya masuk 2 hari PJJ 2 hari lah. Tiba-tiba sehari masuk sehari PJJ. Efek dari PJJ juga banyak, pelajaran banyak yang gak paham, tugas banyak yang gak dikumpulkan." (Student 4, Interview, November 26th 2025). Suri (2021) revealed that many students find it difficult to manage their time due to irregular online learning schedules.

Learning Outcomes

Students' learning outcomes during the online English learning period showed mixed results, indicating that while some students were able to maintain their understanding of the material, others experienced a noticeable decline in comprehension and performance. One of the most prominent patterns in the data is that students who were already independent learners tended to cope better with the online format, while those who relied on teacher explanation struggled to achieve optimal results. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Biwer et al. (2021) that emphasizes the role of self-regulated learning in online contexts.

Several students reported that their learning outcomes remained relatively stable for topics that were simple or familiar. Student 2, for example, stated that he could still follow and understand most of the lessons, explaining, "Sebagian besar bisa saya pahami, cuma enggak seefektif kalau tatap muka" (Interview, November 24th 2025). His experience suggests that for certain materials, especially those requiring less detailed explanation, the digital format did not drastically hinder learning, as students were able to rely more on self-directed learning strategies when immediate teacher guidance was limited (Rasheed et al., 2020).

However, this was not the case for all students. Student 1 mentioned that her understanding decreased when the material involved more complex topics, noting, "Kalau materinya susah, jadi kurang paham karena enggak dijelasin langsung" (Interview, November 24th 2025) Likewise, Student 3 admitted that she understood "beberapa" materials, but others were difficult without teacher guidance (Interview, November 26th 2025). These statements highlight that learning outcomes were strongly influenced by how dependent students were on direct instruction, especially for English components such as grammar, text analysis, or vocabulary usage (Altakhaineh et al., 2023).

According to Fasco et al. (2024), another factor that shaped students' learning outcomes was their individual level of engagement. Students who frequently delayed assignments or lacked motivation experienced more difficulty (Xie, 2021). Student 4, for instance, acknowledged that her own lack of consistency affected her learning, saying, "Kadang sudah ngerjain tapi malas ngumpulin," (Interview, November 26th 2025) which implied that although she completed tasks, the inconsistency resulted in delayed feedback and reduced learning effectiveness. Such behavior influenced not only her participation but also her overall academic performance as stated by Issabell et al. (2021), there was a correlation between students' motivation and outcomes in learning English.

Environmental and technological challenges also indirectly impacted students' outcomes (Mokhtar et al., 2023; Wang, 2024). Student 5 mentioned that unstable internet access made it difficult for him to stay focused, explaining, "Gangguan jaringan bikin susah nangkep materi." (Interview, November 26th 2025) Poor connectivity and distractions at home limited his ability to absorb information, which likely affected his comprehension and retention of the lessons. This is consistent with the previous study from Issabell et al. (2021) that bad internet connection affects students' comprehension in online learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that students' learning outcomes during online English learning were uneven. As previously stated by Biwer et al. (2021), those with strong self-regulation and access to stable technology performed relatively well, while others experienced declines due to limited teacher interaction, environmental distractions, and reduced motivation. These results reinforce the idea that digital platforms can support learning but require structured guidance, interactive instruction, and consistent routines to ensure equitable learning outcomes for all students (Brugliera, 2024; Shareef et al., 2024; Wei, 2024).

Perceptions of Effectiveness and Expectations for Future Learning

Perceived Effectiveness of Online English Learning and Future Learning Preferences

Teachers' and students' perceptions of online learning effectiveness in English language instruction indicate that digital platforms are effective for material delivery and task management. Platforms such as Google Classroom and WhatsApp facilitate the distribution of materials, instructional clarity, and communication, making the learning process more organized and accessible (Nelliraharti & Murnia Suri, 2021).

However, online learning is perceived as less effective for language skills requiring direct interaction, particularly speaking and writing. Teachers reported difficulties in assessing students' authentic abilities due to students' reliance on written scripts and digital assistance. This finding aligns with Samala et al. (2020), who reported that limited interaction in distance learning reduces the effectiveness of practice-based language activities.

From the students' perspective, face-to-face learning is considered easier to understand because it allows immediate interaction and clarification. Students also experienced difficulties maintaining focus and perceived an increased workload during online learning (Nelliraharti & Murnia Suri, 2021).

Despite these challenges, both teachers and students acknowledge the benefits of digital platforms as supportive learning tools, particularly for communication and material storage. WhatsApp is viewed as more effective than Google Classroom due to students' digital habits and responsiveness. Challenges in task submission and assessment, such as unclear task documentation and late submissions, highlight the limitations of online assessment for authentic performance evaluation (Samala et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings suggest that while online learning cannot fully replace face-to-face instruction, it holds significant potential as a complementary approach. Therefore, blended learning is perceived as the most suitable future learning model, integrating the flexibility of digital platforms with the strengths of direct classroom interaction.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the use of digital platforms during the school renovation period at SMA Negeri 1 Getasan contributed significantly to maintaining the continuity of online English learning in a non-emergency context. Teachers perceived platforms such as Google Classroom and WhatsApp as practical and effective for organizing materials, distributing assignments, and maintaining communication, although challenges related to student participation, motivation, and assessment authenticity persisted. Students' responses indicated that online learning offered flexibility but also led to decreased engagement, limited interaction, and varied learning outcomes depending on self-regulation and learning environments. Overall, digital platforms were effective for instructional support but less optimal for developing interactive language skills. Therefore, online

learning cannot fully replace face-to-face instruction. A blended learning approach is recommended to combine the strengths of digital platforms with direct classroom interaction for more effective English language learning.

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