

Blending Traditional and Digital Approaches in English Learning at MIN 1 Palembang: a Practical Overview

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Abstract

This article explores the implementation of traditional and digital teaching methods in English language instruction at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Palembang. The school applies two classroom models—digital and non-digital—to accommodate different student needs and infrastructure availability. In traditional classes, teachers rely on textbooks, oral practice, and paper-based activities. In contrast, digital classes incorporate multimedia tools such as PowerPoint, YouTube, and interactive online platforms like Quizizz and Wordwall. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this article highlights how both teaching methods are applied, how they are blended, and how students and teachers experience these approaches in real classroom situations. The article concludes that combining traditional and digital methods can improve student engagement, support various learning styles, and enhance the overall quality of English language learning in primary education. Recommendations are also provided to help teachers and schools make the most of available resources.

Keywords: *English language teaching, Traditional methods, Digital learning, Blended learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the role of technology in education has grown rapidly, especially in English language teaching (ELT). Digital tools have transformed how teachers deliver content, interact with students, and assess learning outcomes. According to Ahmadi (2018), the integration of technology in ELT promotes a more interactive, student-centered learning environment, allowing learners to engage with authentic language input through videos, online games, and virtual collaboration. This trend has influenced many schools, including those in Indonesia, to explore a balance between traditional and digital teaching methods to improve language learning outcomes.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Palembang is an Islamic elementary school that has responded to these changes by implementing two types of classroom settings: digital and traditional. In digital classes, English lessons are supported by tools such as LCD projectors, laptops, internet access, and multimedia content. Teachers use platforms like PowerPoint, YouTube, Google Classroom, and interactive learning apps such as Quizizz and Wordwall to deliver materials. These tools are believed to support various learning styles and increase student engagement, especially for younger learners (Gilakjani, 2017). In contrast, traditional classes at MIN 1 Palembang follow more conventional approaches, using textbooks, blackboards, and paper-based exercises. Although these methods lack digital enhancements, they are still effective for structured learning and classroom discipline (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The combination of both classroom types reflects a broader educational movement toward blended learning, where technology enhances—but does not replace—traditional teaching. Graham (2006) defines blended learning as the strategic integration of face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated activities. In practice, this may mean using digital games to reinforce vocabulary taught through textbook drills, or showing a video to introduce a topic before a traditional grammar lesson. At MIN 1 Palembang, such blended practices are beginning to emerge, particularly among teachers who adapt digital resources for use even in low-tech environments—for example, by printing online materials or replicating digital games in offline formats.

Despite the growing interest in digital tools, there are still challenges to fully integrating technology in language teaching. Some classes at MIN 1 Palembang lack the infrastructure or digital literacy needed for effective digital instruction. According to Reinders and White (2010), successful technology integration depends not only on access to tools but also on teacher readiness, training, and curriculum support. In many cases, teachers must invest extra time and creativity to blend traditional and digital elements effectively. Moreover, students' familiarity with technology varies, which can affect their ability to participate fully in digital activities (Stockwell, 2012).

This article aims to describe and reflect on how English language teaching is carried out in both digital and traditional classrooms at MIN 1 Palembang. By focusing on real classroom practices, it explores the different strategies used by teachers, the tools and materials involved, and the outcomes observed in student learning. It also provides insight into how some teachers creatively blend both methods to overcome limitations and enrich the learning experience. The article further discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each method, with the goal of offering practical ideas for improving English teaching in similar educational contexts.

2. METHOD

This article employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the integration of traditional and digital methods in English language teaching at MIN 1 Palembang. The purpose is to provide a practical overview of classroom practices rather than to test hypotheses or generate generalizable data.

The information presented is based on the teacher's personal classroom observations, informal interviews with colleagues, and reflective teaching experiences. As the author is an active English teacher at the school, insights were gathered from daily teaching practices, both in digital and non-digital classrooms. Examples of classroom activities, teaching tools, and student engagement strategies are described to illustrate how traditional and digital methods are applied and sometimes blended.

This descriptive approach is aligned with the nature of practitioner research (Richards & Farrell, 2005), where teachers reflect on their own practices to contribute to professional knowledge and share experiences with other educators.

3. RESULTS

The findings of this study reveal how English language teaching at MIN 1 Palembang effectively combines traditional and digital methods, adapting to available resources and students' needs. The results are organized into three main themes: teaching practices in traditional classrooms, teaching practices in digital classrooms, and blended teaching approaches.

Traditional Classroom Practices

In non-digital classrooms, teachers rely primarily on printed textbooks, whiteboards, and face-to-face interactions. Common activities include repetition drills, reading aloud, vocabulary memorization, and simple grammar exercises. Teachers creatively use storytelling, songs, and visual aids such as flashcards and charts to maintain student engagement. Students in these classes generally show strong foundational skills in vocabulary and basic grammar, with a focus on accuracy and oral practice. However, some teachers note that student motivation can decrease if lessons become repetitive or lack variety.

Digital Classroom Practices

Digital classrooms at MIN 1 Palembang utilize technology such as LCD projectors, laptops, and internet access to enhance lessons. Teachers incorporate multimedia resources including PowerPoint presentations, educational videos from YouTube, and interactive platforms like Quizizz and Wordwall. These digital tools improve student

engagement and provide diverse sensory input, especially benefiting listening and speaking skills. Students tend to be more motivated and active during digital lessons, enjoying the interactive and game-based activities. Challenges include occasional technical issues and varied levels of digital literacy among students.

Blended Teaching Approaches

Some teachers at MIN 1 Palembang successfully combine both traditional and digital methods in their instruction. For instance, teachers in traditional classrooms sometimes use printed versions of online materials such as colorful flashcards or worksheets created with digital platforms. In digital classrooms, teachers blend direct instruction on the whiteboard with videos and online quizzes. Homework and assignments may be shared via WhatsApp or Google Forms, extending learning beyond the classroom. This blended approach accommodates different learning styles and keeps students engaged by offering multiple ways to interact with the material. Teachers perceive this method as beneficial in making lessons more flexible, creative, and effective.

Overall, the integration of digital tools alongside traditional methods enhances the learning experience by providing variety, improving motivation, and supporting different learning preferences. The success of this blend depends on teacher creativity, access to technology, and student readiness to engage with digital media.

4. DISCUSSION

Overview of Class Types at MIN 1 Palembang

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Palembang serves a large and diverse population of elementary school students. These students come from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds, which affects their access to learning resources both inside and outside the classroom. In order to meet these varied needs and make the most of its available infrastructure, the school has adopted two types of classroom models: digital and non-digital (traditional). These models are implemented across all subjects, including English language instruction, with the aim of providing flexible and inclusive learning opportunities for all students.

Digital classes at MIN 1 Palembang are equipped with basic educational technology such as LCD projectors, desktop or laptop computers, internet connectivity, and speakers. Within this environment, English teachers are encouraged to utilize multimedia and interactive resources, including PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos, animated songs, Google Classroom, and online learning platforms like **Quizizz**, **Kahoot**, and **Wordwall**. These tools not only make learning more engaging but also provide exposure to authentic English pronunciation, intonation, and real-life context, which are key to improving listening and speaking skills (Munday, 2016). Research by Gilakjani (2017) emphasizes that audio-visual aids can significantly enhance learners' understanding and retention of new vocabulary and sentence structures, especially for young learners who benefit from visual and auditory stimulation.

In contrast, **traditional classrooms** rely on more conventional materials and teaching approaches. English instruction in these settings is largely based on printed textbooks, blackboard or whiteboard use, oral repetition, and paper-based worksheets. While these classes do not incorporate digital tools, they offer the advantage of strong teacher-student interaction, predictable structure, and focused activities. In fact, Harmer (2007) points out that traditional methods, such as repetition drills and teacher modeling, remain effective in language acquisition, particularly for beginner learners who need guided input and consistent practice. Moreover, many teachers at MIN 1 Palembang apply creative strategies in these classrooms, such as storytelling, role-playing, and using handmade flashcards or printed visual aids, to maintain student engagement and motivation.

Both learning environments at MIN 1 Palembang are designed to achieve the same educational goals—namely, to develop students' basic English skills in vocabulary,

pronunciation, simple grammar, and speaking confidence. However, the way these objectives are achieved differs depending on the classroom model. In digital classrooms, students tend to be more actively involved in the learning process through games, quizzes, and audio-visual media that allow for immediate feedback and higher engagement (Dudeny & Hockly, 2007). In traditional classrooms, learning may be more teacher-directed and less interactive, but the emphasis on repetition and controlled practice can lead to better mastery of language form and structure, particularly in early-stage learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Additionally, the availability of resources and teachers' technological proficiency play an important role in how each model functions. Some teachers may feel more comfortable with traditional methods due to a lack of training or confidence in using digital tools. According to Reinders and White (2010), effective integration of technology in language education requires not only access to equipment but also adequate support and professional development for teachers. At MIN 1 Palembang, the digital classrooms are often assigned to teachers who are more familiar with ICT tools, while others continue to teach effectively using conventional techniques. Despite the differences, there is a growing trend toward blending both approaches, with teachers creatively adapting digital content for use in low-tech classrooms—for example, printing online exercises or mimicking interactive games in paper format.

In summary, the two types of classrooms at MIN 1 Palembang reflect both the opportunities and challenges of implementing varied teaching strategies in English language education. While digital tools offer rich, engaging experiences, traditional methods continue to provide a strong instructional foundation. Recognizing the strengths of both models enables educators to make informed decisions that suit their students' needs, school context, and available resources. As blended learning becomes more prominent in primary education, the experience at MIN 1 Palembang can serve as a practical case for schools in similar settings.

Traditional Teaching Practices in English Classes

In the non-digital (traditional) classes at MIN 1 Palembang, English is taught using time-tested, conventional approaches. These classes generally rely on government-issued textbooks as the primary teaching material. Teachers supplement the main text with printed worksheets, flashcards, posters, and realia—real-life objects used to bring meaning to vocabulary. According to Harmer (2007), the use of tangible, physical materials can aid memory and make learning more relatable for young learners. These methods emphasize face-to-face interaction, which remains a core strength of traditional instruction.

Typical classroom activities include repetition drills, reading aloud, copying from the board, and guided writing exercises. Vocabulary instruction usually begins with the teacher writing new words on the whiteboard, translating them into Bahasa Indonesia, and having the students repeat them in unison. This technique, known as choral repetition, has been widely used in language classrooms to build pronunciation and listening skills, especially among beginners (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Teachers also use role-play dialogues from the textbook to encourage speaking practice, which aligns with the audio-lingual method often favored in traditional language classrooms.

Grammar instruction in these settings is typically kept simple and contextual. Teachers write example sentences on the board and explain the grammatical rules in Bahasa Indonesia, often drawing from students' everyday experiences to make the language more meaningful. Exercises include fill-in-the-blank tasks, matching, and translation of simple sentences. These types of exercises emphasize accuracy and structural knowledge, which are essential foundations for learners at the elementary level (Nunan, 2003). The structured and repetitive nature of these activities supports memorization, although it may offer limited opportunities for spontaneous communication.

Despite the absence of digital resources, many teachers employ creative strategies to make lessons more dynamic. Some print out song lyrics, use hand-drawn illustrations, or create physical games to enhance vocabulary learning and student engagement. For example, storytelling sessions using puppets or flashcards can bring life to abstract vocabulary. Additionally, classic games like “Simon Says,” “Spelling Bees,” or “Word Races” are common techniques to review language in an enjoyable and memorable way. As Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006) emphasize, games are a powerful tool in language learning because they lower the affective filter and make students more willing to participate.

One of the advantages of traditional methods is that they provide strong classroom management, a predictable structure, and close teacher-student interaction. These conditions can be especially beneficial in crowded or resource-limited classrooms (Ur, 2012). Moreover, traditional methods are often less time-consuming to prepare, especially when teachers are already familiar with the content. However, they also present several challenges. The lack of visual and auditory media may reduce learners’ exposure to authentic English input, and the one-size-fits-all approach can limit individualized learning. Furthermore, students may become passive recipients of information rather than active participants in their learning (Brown, 2001).

In conclusion, traditional English teaching at MIN 1 Palembang remains a practical and accessible approach, especially where technological resources are limited. While it has certain limitations in terms of student engagement and modern content delivery, the effectiveness of traditional teaching often depends on the creativity, dedication, and experience of the teacher. By recognizing the value of these methods and finding ways to occasionally integrate low-tech enhancements, teachers can continue to make meaningful progress in foundational English language instruction.

Digital Teaching Practices in English Classes

In the digital classes at MIN 1 Palembang, English teaching is enriched through the use of technology and multimedia tools. These classrooms are equipped with LCD projectors, laptops, speakers, and internet access, allowing teachers to integrate a variety of digital resources into their lessons. This technological support provides students with a more dynamic and interactive learning experience, which has been shown to increase student motivation and engagement (Gilakjani, 2017).

Teachers in digital classes often use PowerPoint presentations to display vocabulary, grammar points, and sentence patterns in a visually appealing format. Visual input is especially effective for young learners because it supports comprehension and memory (Mayer, 2009). To develop students’ listening and speaking skills, teachers play YouTube videos featuring English songs, animated stories, or pronunciation tutorials. This allows students to hear authentic English in a contextualized and entertaining way, promoting better pronunciation and listening comprehension (Lynch & Anderson, 2013).

Interactive learning platforms such as Quizizz, Kahoot!, and Wordwall are frequently used for practice activities and review games. These tools turn traditional drills into engaging competitions, which foster active participation and instant feedback (Wang, 2015). In some classes, especially at the upper levels, Google Classroom is used to assign homework, provide digital materials, and collect student work. This not only helps streamline communication between teachers and students but also introduces learners to basic digital literacy and online learning habits (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018).

A typical digital English lesson might begin with a PowerPoint slideshow to introduce new vocabulary with pictures, followed by a short animated video that puts the words into context. The lesson may conclude with a digital quiz or game to reinforce the material. This multi-modal approach—combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning—caters to different learning styles and increases knowledge retention (Fleming & Mills, 1992).

Despite these advantages, digital classes also face several challenges. Not all students possess the same level of digital familiarity, and some may be easily distracted by the

technology itself. Moreover, technical issues such as slow internet, faulty projectors, or a lack of IT support can hinder lesson flow and effectiveness (Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2011). Teachers also need adequate training and time to design and implement technology-integrated lessons effectively (Hew & Brush, 2007).

Nevertheless, the use of digital methods in English teaching at MIN 1 Palembang has proven to be a valuable enhancement to traditional instruction. Digital tools offer variety, accessibility, and engagement, enabling teachers to present content in innovative ways that are better aligned with 21st-century learning needs.

Blending Traditional and Digital Methods

At MIN 1 Palembang, some teachers—especially those with access to digital tools—are creatively blending traditional and digital approaches in their English lessons. This blended method allows teachers to combine the structure and familiarity of traditional instruction with the engagement and multimedia support of digital tools, making learning more flexible, inclusive, and effective, particularly for young learners (Horn & Staker, 2014).

In some cases, the blending happens even in non-digital classrooms. For instance, a teacher might print colorful flashcards from Canva or download worksheets from platforms like Wordwall, bringing in visually rich and up-to-date materials into classrooms that lack screens or internet access. This practice aligns with the concept of low-tech blended learning, where elements of online resources are adapted for offline use (Graham, 2006). In this way, students in traditional settings still benefit from modern design and diversified content, even without real-time interaction with digital tools.

In digital classrooms, the blending becomes even more dynamic. A teacher may begin the lesson by explaining grammar rules using the whiteboard, then transition to a short YouTube video or animation that shows the grammar in real-life usage. To reinforce learning, students might complete an interactive quiz using Quizizz or join a collaborative vocabulary game on Wordwall. This sequencing of instruction allows for multiple representations of the same content, which improves understanding and retention (Mayer, 2009).

Some teachers have also started to assign homework via WhatsApp or Google Forms, even for students in non-digital classes. When parents are involved, especially in lower grades, this helps extend learning beyond school hours and introduces families to digital tools in a simple and manageable way. Research shows that parental involvement in digital assignments can enhance student performance and engagement (Epstein, 2001).

Blending traditional and digital methods is particularly helpful in meeting the needs of diverse learning styles. Visual learners benefit from images and videos, auditory learners gain from spoken explanations and songs, while kinesthetic learners engage better with interactive tasks and movement-based games. This approach is consistent with multimodal learning theory, which suggests that instruction should appeal to different senses to optimize learning outcomes (Fleming & Mills, 1992; Moreno & Mayer, 2007).

Importantly, blended learning at MIN 1 Palembang does not always require high-end devices or sophisticated software. What matters most is the teacher's creativity, flexibility, and intention in designing lessons that connect both worlds. Even with limited resources, many teachers have found innovative ways to bridge the gap between traditional and digital learning, creating an inclusive classroom environment where all students have the opportunity to grow.

This evolving approach reflects a global shift in pedagogy where digital integration is no longer seen as a replacement for traditional methods, but rather as a complementary enhancement. In contexts like MIN 1 Palembang—where infrastructure varies and teacher training is ongoing—this kind of adaptive blended learning offers a practical, scalable, and learner-centered path forward (Picciano et al., 2014).

Teacher and Student Experiences

Teachers at MIN 1 Palembang have shared a variety of experiences in using both traditional and digital approaches in their English lessons. These experiences reflect the strengths and challenges of each method and highlight how different students respond to each learning environment.

In traditional classrooms, many teachers feel more confident and in control, especially when teaching younger students. The simplicity of the method allows for clear instructions, direct interaction, and immediate feedback. Teachers note that students in these classes are often more focused on their tasks and develop a strong foundation in reading, writing, and speaking English. However, some students may become bored or passive, especially if the activities are too repetitive or lack visual stimulation.

On the other hand, teachers in digital classrooms often report higher student engagement, especially during activities that involve videos, games, or multimedia presentations. Students tend to participate more actively and show excitement when using online platforms like Quizizz or watching short English cartoons. These activities help increase vocabulary retention and improve listening skills.

However, some challenges have also been observed. Not all students are equally skilled in using technology, and technical problems such as unstable internet connections or malfunctioning equipment can disrupt lessons. Additionally, a few students may become distracted during digital activities if not closely monitored.

From the students' perspective, many enjoy the variety and interactivity offered by digital lessons. They like learning English through songs, games, and videos because it feels fun and different from other subjects. In traditional settings, students appreciate clear explanations and group activities, especially when teachers use storytelling or real objects to explain vocabulary.

Overall, both teachers and students recognize the benefits of combining both methods. Many believe that using digital tools in moderation—alongside traditional techniques—helps make lessons more effective and enjoyable.

Benefits and Challenges of Each Method

Both traditional and digital approaches to English language teaching at MIN 1 Palembang offer unique benefits and present their own challenges. Understanding these helps teachers choose the most suitable method—or combination of methods—based on classroom conditions, student needs, and available resources.

Traditional Methods

Benefits:

- Easy to implement without needing special equipment or internet.
- Encourage direct interaction between teacher and students.
- Suitable for classrooms with limited technology.
- Promote structured, focused learning—especially helpful for younger learners

Challenges:

- Limited visual and audio support for language input.
- Less interactive—students may get bored with repetition.
- Harder to bring real-world English contexts into the classroom.
- May not appeal to modern learners who are used to digital media.

Digital Methods

Benefits:

- Provide rich multimedia input (videos, sounds, animations).
- Highly engaging—many students find lessons more fun and memorable.
- Encourage active participation through interactive tools (e.g., quizzes, games).
- Allow access to up-to-date and authentic English resources.

Challenges:

- Require proper equipment, internet, and basic digital skills.

- Can cause distractions if not used carefully.
- Technical issues (e.g., slow connections, broken projectors) may interrupt lessons.
- Teachers need training and time to plan digital-based lessons effectively.

By comparing both methods, it becomes clear that neither is perfect on its own. However, when thoughtfully combined, traditional and digital methods can complement each other, helping to cover each other's weaknesses while offering a more varied and meaningful learning experience for students.

5 CONCLUSION

The experience at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Palembang shows that both traditional and digital methods play important roles in teaching English to young learners. Traditional methods continue to provide a strong foundation for classroom management and structured learning, while digital tools offer exciting new ways to engage students and enhance their language skills.

By observing how both types of classes function, and how some teachers creatively blend them, it becomes clear that a balanced approach is the most effective. Blending traditional and digital methods allows teachers to adapt to different learning styles, maintain student motivation, and overcome limitations—whether they are related to resources, time, or classroom dynamics.

To further improve English teaching at MIN 1 Palembang and similar schools, the following recommendations are suggested:

For Teachers

- Explore simple digital tools that can complement your teaching (e.g., PowerPoint, Wordwall, YouTube).
- Blend traditional activities with digital media whenever possible.
- Share experiences with colleagues to learn from each other's strategies.

For Schools

- Provide more access to digital equipment such as projectors, speakers, or laptops.
- Offer basic training for teachers to use digital tools confidently.
- Encourage collaboration between digital and traditional class teachers to share best practices.

For Education Stakeholders

- Support madrasahs with technology infrastructure and internet access.
- Create workshops or online resources to help teachers blend digital methods into their daily lessons.
- Recognize and promote innovation in classroom teaching—both traditional and modern.

In conclusion, teaching English at the primary level can be more effective when teachers have the flexibility to use both traditional and digital methods. What matters most is the teacher's creativity, understanding of the students' needs, and willingness to keep learning and adapting.

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