

Electronic Assessment of English Language Learning for Secondary School Students in KSA during Covid-19 pandemic: A multidimensional status check

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Abstract

The study aims to find out the status of the electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in Saudi Arabia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study also aims to present the challenges and obstacles that faced the assessment of learning English online, and then to develop a vision for the electronic assessment of learning English for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study sample consists of (67) secondary school English language teachers in the second semester of the academic year 1442/1443 AH. They are distributed according to the following variables: gender, academic qualification, teaching experience period, level of experience in using technology. To achieve the objectives of the study, the study uses the descriptive analytical method. The study tool is a 59 item questionnaire to determine the status of electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in KSA during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of the study show the most commonly used tools in electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in KSA during the pandemic are electronic assignments, followed by presentations, while research projects came with a low degree of use. The results also show that there are no statistically significant differences in the methods and practices of the assessment of English language learning for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the variables (gender, academic qualification, number of years of teaching experience, level of experience in using technology). The study also found that the degree of difficulties/challenges faced by English language teachers in the assessment of English language learning for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic are perceived as being high. On the other hand, there are no statistically significant differences in the degree of difficulties due to (gender, academic qualification, number of years of teaching experience, level of experience using technology). The study proposes a

plan for evaluating students' English language learning by integrating assessment in a virtual environment as well as in a real environment.

Keywords: assessment of English language learning, electronic assessment, Covid-19 pandemic

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a complete disruption in education systems worldwide. As a result, about (1.6) billion students were affected in more than 190 countries, as officials rushed to close schools and universities to maintain social distancing and to limit the spread of the virus (United Nations, 2020). Despite the great importance of closing schools and various educational institutions, the repercussions may be highly damaging. In a report prepared with data from from 157 countries, the World Bank predicted that precautionary school closures due to the outbreak of the epidemic would cause a drop in education rates and a decline in students' skills, which will reduce the achievement of the required learning outcomes (Conto et al., 2020). With the increase in the closure period, this will reduce the chances of home schooling, and it will require a great effort from parents, since home schooling requires follow-up on the part of parents.

On the other hand, a report by UNESCO on the negative effects of closing schools indicates that this closure will lead to creating greater divide amongst the learners with regard to the use of educational platforms due to the lack of good internet networks in all regions equally. This will hinder the process of continuous learning and lead to a serious lack of guarantee for learners to return to schools in the event that schools are closed for a long period. The process of closing schools also causes the absence of social activities that students perform during the school day, and thus causes social isolation (UNESCO, 2021).

Hence, the governments of countries around the world have tended to think of the most appropriate solutions and methods to continue the learning process by providing distance education opportunities and educational content through internet networks, educational platforms, and satellite channels dedicated to education. As many changes have been made in the methods of assessing students in order to provide educational packages adapted to the new conditions after the complete closure of

institutions, some governments have tended to postpone exams in most of the study levels, while some others have been canceled or replaced by other exams. Such procedures were administered by applying continuous assessments or alternative assessment methods, such as taking final exams through internet. There are also some assessment methods that have been used during distance education, which include mobile opinion polls and student tracking reports for the educational platform (Alam & Tiwari, 2020). UNESCO (2021) had a prominent role in addressing this crisis, as it issued several free educational programs and platforms to help distance learning and to contribute to the exchange of scientific content, the exchange of meaningful discussions among students themselves, and the exchange of experiences among teachers. Examples of these educational programs and platforms are the Arabic website "Edraak", the "Edmodo" platform, the "Google Classroom" application and other applications that allow the educational process to continue while maintaining social distancing.

Regarding KSA, since the outbreak of the epidemic, it has taken a decision to close schools and universities, and to move to home-based distance education. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Kingdom provided educational content through direct broadcasts from a school in Riyadh city to all regions of the Kingdom. Then the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom turned to providing many sources of distance education by providing several educational platforms, and satellite channels to broadcast lessons for all educational levels, including My School Platform, the Ain Online Portal, "Ain Satellite Channel, and the Future Educational Portal (Abu Ababa, 2021, p. 233). A study by the National Center for E-Learning in the Kingdom (2020) in partnership with several bodies such as UNESCO, ISTE, OECD, OLC, entitled: "The Comprehensive Documentary Study of E-Learning for General Education in the Kingdom" highlighted the Kingdom's efforts in the digital transformation of education. This successful and distinguished experience in

the field of distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the Kingdom's progress in 13 indicators out of 16 out of 36 countries (Al-Enezi, 2021).

Distance education and e-learning, as viewed by some educators, have many advantages. They increase the learner's involvement in the education process and develop many skills such as self-learning and critical thinking. Several studies have also indicated the feasibility of using distance education as a means by which to maintain the continuity of education and at the same time ensure social distancing between learners to avoid the spread of the Corona virus. Among those studies, Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020), applied to a private school in Georgia, revealed that the transition from physical education within educational institutions to distance education has achieved acceptable success that can be generalized to the different educational stages. Abu Shkhaidam (2020) reported on e-learning in light of the spread of the Corona virus from the point of view of teachers at Kadoorie University in Palestine, that the lack of training in modern technologies is an important factor to be considered. Al-Enezi and Metwally (2020) indicated that 66.2% of academics and educators in the State of Kuwait preferred to use e-learning during the pandemic. Abdulrahim and Mabrouk (2020) showed that the use of digital learning as an alternative to traditional education during school closures in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia achieved good results in terms of learning outcomes and contributed to the development of the work environment.

Despite the convenience of distance education and e-learning as a replacement for traditional/regular education during periods of suspension of studies, they have created many difficulties and challenges. Abu Ababa (2021) conducted a study on assessing the experience of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in distance education during the spread of Corona from the parents' point of view. This study recommended the necessity of developing a plan to train teachers on the distance education system. Al-Khatib (2020) indicated that the teachers in Kasbah Irbid schools, Jordan pointed out that the weak infrastructure of communication systems and the lack of training programs on modern technologies used in distance education impeded the activation of distance education,

which was used as an education system during the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Al-Sbu` et al. (2021) insisted on the need to provide equipment for distance education, provide internet for all students and teachers, and hold courses and workshops for teachers and students to train them on how to deal with these technologies. Al-Otaibi (2021) conducted an investigation on Saudi families to determine the obstacles of educating their children during the Covid-19 pandemic. It revealed that the obstacles are the lack of technology for most students; the difficulty of connecting to the internet in some areas and neighborhoods; the teachers' shortcomings to employ modern technology skills in education.

It is worth noting that English language is one of the basic courses for students at all levels of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This plays an important role in preparing the future generation and in fulfilling the aspirations of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which aims generally to achieve high levels of education and particularly in teaching/learning English language (Al-Zahrani, 2017). The education policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also stipulates that providing students with at least another living language beside their mother tongue is a demanding need for them to be acquainted with the different branches of science, knowledge, and useful innovations, and, furthermore, to work to transfer our sciences and knowledge to other societies (Al-Badawi, 2017).

Teaching English to the secondary stages in the Kingdom aims to enable students acquire the four English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). During the Covid-19 pandemic, education type has been transformed from regular to distance education in the Kingdom, all teaching practices, whether teaching, following-up or performance assessment, had to shift from the traditional direct method to remote practices.

Based on the aforementioned, the National Center for E-Learning in the Kingdom (2020) stipulated a set of standards called a document of standards for e-learning for the stages of general education, which institutions and individuals are committed to applying to reach a high level of quality performance. That document includes several areas like the field of assessment and performance measurement. This

field focuses on several criteria, including choosing tools to measure learning objectives to suit the activities and resources of digital content, in addition to the sequence and diversity of assessment tools and their relevance to the work of learners, which is evaluated nationally (National Center for E-Learning, 2020). Therefore, the methods and styles of assessing English language courses must be commensurate with the method of teaching remotely, allowing objective judgment of the level of the learners. Assessment is one of the important elements in the education system because it affects and is affected by the rest of the components and the other elements in the teaching/learning process. It is the main input in the development process.

Due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were trends in some countries, such as France, Canada, Spain, England, and the Netherlands, that student assessments should be canceled at the end of the semester and only assessment during the semester be employed. In this case, the teacher assesses the learners based on the activities and home assignments they perform and sends students' works electronically, especially for students of the transfer years (Al-Dahshan, 2020). It is worth noting that other countries have adopted the principle of remote electronic student testing as a method of assessment.

Key terms of the Study:

• Electronic assessment:

Omar and Al-Yousef (2020, 157) defined electronic assessment as "The use of information and communication technology to display data, provide information, record responses, monitor grades, and report on student performance". Electronic assessment depends on digital technology, which makes it more efficient. While the term is defined by Al-Enezy (2019, 63) as "It is one of the tools that are used in educational assessment, and it invests in electronic networks and their innovations in order to serve the assessment and achieve its objectives in the educational process in accordance with specific and safe scientific standards", as far as the operational definition concerns, electronic assessment, in the current research, is defined as "The use of digital

technology in designing, preparing and using assessment tools and applying them electronically from a distance with the aim of assessing the learner's level in the English language."

• Corona pandemic:

It is known as the emerging corona virus, scientifically known as Covid 19 (COVID-19), a viral disease that affects the respiratory system, which originated in the country of China at the end of 2019. It is a contagious disease that spread to all countries of the world and the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic or epidemic due to its widespread (World Health Organization, 2020).

E-assessment of learning English during Covid-19

Assessment plays a vital role in education in general. It is a necessary tool to improve the quality of the educational process. It also motivates students to learn, provides feedback on their progress, measures their achievement, and identifies actual progress in the curriculum. Moreover, the results of the assessment process can be inferred by the extent to which the actual learning outcomes have been achieved and their conformity with the desired learning outcomes of the educational programs (Abduh, 2021). With the emergence of the Corona pandemic, governments were forced to completely close schools and educational institutions to implement social distancing and limit the spread of the Corona virus. This prompted educators to move to the method of distance learning, from traditional assessment or in-class assessment to distance assessment or electronic assessment and employing its tools to measure the level of learners. In addition to the characteristics of electronic assessment as a means of formative and final assessment that has educational and practical benefits, it allows testing many students with the speed and ease of electronic correction of answers. On the other hand, the electronic assessment achieves the feature of providing immediate feedback to students, the ability to store and re-examine, the stability and fairness of the assessment, and the flexibility of time and place of assessment (Kearney et al., 2002).

Hebrew (2017, p. 22) defined electronic assessment as "the process of using computerized programs in which classroom and extra-curricular activities and tests are carried out so that the student answers them using a computer and provides immediate feedback to judge students' performance, and the extent of their acquisition of information in academic subjects". Omar and Al-Yousef (2020) declared that electronic assessment is the use of information and communication technology to display data, provide information, record responses, monitor grades, and report on student performance. Electronic assessment relies on digital technology, which makes it more efficient. Al-Enezi (2019, p. 63) indicated that "electronic assessment is one of the tools that are used in educational assessment, and it invests in electronic networks and their innovations to serve assessment and achieve its goals in the educational process in accordance with specific and safe scientific standards."

Electronic assessment tools enable the teacher to detect the level of learners. Abdulaziz (2008) explained that students can be evaluated electronically through short exams, essay exams, and e-portfolios, e-interviews, paper writing. Azmy (2008) added some other methods that a teacher can use in the electronic assessment and, thus, can infer the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved. The learning outcomes include discussions, projects, practical training, and self-assessment that contribute to the student's assessment of himself/herself and recognition of his/her level.

Several studies have indicated that the use of technological tools or e-learning tools through the internet in learning/teaching English and using interactive platforms achieves the targeted learning outcomes. Al-Thubaiti (2020) showed the effectiveness of the (Rwaq) platform in developing English language skills. Al-Hanaki (2020) revealed the effectiveness of inverted classes in developing motivation among English language students. Al-Ahmadi (2020) found out the effectiveness of electronic blogs in the acquisition of English grammar for second-year secondary students in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

With regard to the process of electronic assessment of the English language, there are studies that indicated the existence of many challenges and difficulties that caused the lack

of credibility of the assessment results through electronic assessment tools. Yulianto & Mujtahin's (2021) study was conducted on a group of teachers in Indonesia to find out their perceptions about electronic assessment tools in teaching English. The study indicated that online assessment is less effective due to internet connection problems, students, and teachers' lack of skills to deal with electronic assessment tools, students' lack of enthusiasm, and lack of confidence in their activities. Thus, electronic assessment is less effective in assessing students' understanding of the English language (Waluyo, 2020; Hirata & Hirata, 2020).

The results of the study (Al-Subaiy, 2020) also showed that one of the obstacles to applying electronic assessment tools is the weak electronic assessment skills among the faculty, and it is considered an additional burden on the faculty member. Omar and Al-Youssef (2020) displayed that the challenges related to the use of electronic assessment tools are the difficulty of controlling electronic assessment, the spread of cases of plagiarism and cheating, the difficulty of maintaining the electronic test as it may be hacked or copied and distributed among students. Thus, it appeared to be difficult to assess students' skills through electronic assessment tools.

One of the main positive aspects of using electronic assessment tools in assessing English language learning is that it is the only viable solution during the spread of the Corona pandemic and school closures. Noteworthy, the individual activities provided by the electronic assessment tools enable students to express their ideas without shame. Khafaga's (2021) study, applied to five universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, revealed that the virtual classes via (Blackboard) helped students overcome their shyness and express in English in electronic discussions better than traditional classes. This result is consistent with the high rate of students' satisfaction with electronic assessment as confirmed by Omar and Al-Yousef's (2021) study where the results revealed that there is a high degree of satisfaction with electronic assessment tools among students of humanities colleges than practical colleges and in favor of male students over female students.

International experiences in the field of education and electronic assessment:

The process of measuring and assessing students constituted a challenge when applying the distance education system as an alternative to face-to-face education. Several countries have had to change their educational plans or postpone assessments. In this regard, UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020) conducted a survey of the opinions of government institutions and schools in which fifteen Arab countries participated (KSA, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt, Oman, UAE, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Palestine, Somalia, Iraq, Syria). The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the extent to which Arab countries respond to educational needs during the Corona pandemic, to know the extent to which it is mandatory to assess students to move from one class to another during the pandemic, and to identify tools and forms of student assessment during the Corona pandemic. Among the results related to the assessment process: The report indicated that teachers in the countries participating in the survey used several different forms of student assessment. These forms included direct assessment during the educational process and electronic tests using websites such as Google Form, Kahoot, Quizlet. The results of the questionnaire also showed that 40% of educational institutions (the study sample) had to change exam dates, 13% reduced courses, and 16% postponed exams for the following year. The results revealed that all parties to the educational process were interested in the assessment process in order to raise students' motivation, as it can focus on some experiences in the field of student assessment during the Corona pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). Perhaps the experience of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was one of the most prominent experiences.

Undoubtedly, KSA made undaunting efforts in activating distance education and assessment to confront the spread of the Corona pandemic. It was mentioned in the scientific forum held by UNESCO under the title Distance Education Week: the Kingdom's efforts in this context. One of the forum's goals was to show the efforts of countries in the educational field during the period of school closure, and the spread of the Corona pandemic. Press reports indicated that KSA took a decision to close all educational institutions since the beginning of the spread of

the Corona pandemic, and directed educational institutions to move to distance education to provide the curriculum for students while they are in their homes to ensure the continuity of the educational process during the pandemic (Watfa, 2021). Hence, the Ministry of Education was able to maintain the educational process successfully during the Corona pandemic through the e-learning and distance education systems (the Saudi Ministry of Education). To achieve this, the Kingdom provided six educational platforms: the future portal, satellite channels for all educational levels, the eye channel on YouTube, the Ain Enrichment portal, the Unified Education System, the Virtual Kindergarten (Abu Ababa, 2021).

The Ministry of Education has also taken a set of decisions in this direction as follows (Al Montashari & Al Montashari, 2020):

- Establishing the virtual school building in one week, as the school headquarters and satellite broadcasts furnished, 12 smart boards were supplied and installed, and the educational staff was trained on filming educational clips.
- Preparing daily lessons to explain the curricula with the participation of (267) male and female teachers, and (3,368) lessons were explained, the number of teaching hours was (1684) hours.
- The Ministry followed the application of distance education according to two methods:

Simultaneous Interaction Method:

The simultaneous interaction is implemented through three platforms. First, the virtual school is performed through the unified education system, and the system includes digital lessons and educational activities. Second, Ain Gate provides digital content that contains more than 45000 virtual educational materials and more than 2000 digital books. Third, the Future Gate is an integrated e-learning platform for all educational levels, and more than 700000 students have benefited from its services.

Asynchronous Interaction Method:

Asynchronous interaction is implemented through Ain satellite channels, which include 12 satellite channels for all school levels, as well as through Ain channels via YouTube for live broadcast (www.moe.gov.sa).

○ The Ministry of Education (2020) was also keen to address the problems that appeared at the beginning of the transition to distance education, resulting from technical malfunctions due to heavy user load on the internet. The Ministry decided to divide the use of distance education into two shifts so that middle and high school students are in online classes during the morning hours, while primary school students are in online classes in the afternoon. These efforts ensured that internet congestion caused by a large number of simultaneous users was reduced. The afternoon distance learning hours for primary school students allowed parents to help their children and follow up with their online lessons (Oraif & Elyas, 2021).

○ In the field of assessing the teaching of courses and English language courses in particular, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia (2020) has provided, through the Madrasati platform, a set of electronic assessment tools. They include solving assignments and assignments and sending them by e-mail and conducting effective discussions and participations with the teacher by taking advantage of the electronic learning resources available on the platform. E-learning resources include video explanations, three-dimensional resources, and Microsoft Office 365 technologies for the student to use in learning courses, especially English language courses and mathematics courses. Moreover, teachers can design electronic tests or benefit from the question banks on the Madrasati platform.

Another experience in the Arab region is the experience of Egypt in education during the Corona crisis. The Egyptian government was forced to take a decision to close educational institutions in order to avoid the spread of the pandemic, and then, it turned to an alternative education strategy i.e. distance education. The Ministry of Education launched several electronic resources that include digital textbooks for all stages of public education from primary to secondary and guiding forms for tests and grade distribution. These sources include:

- Education Communication Platform (Edmodo): <https://edmodo.org>

Edmodo is a free educational platform to facilitate communication between the student and the teacher through the virtual classes built into the platform. The platform provides a free

copy of Office programs (such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) to help the student write assignments, prepare research, and encourage them to deal with various applications. There is also a link on the platform for the students, according to their educational stage, to upload the research assigned to prepare as an alternative to the final exam.

- Madrasatuna Platform 2 (Egyptian Education Platform, Eduhub, 2020)

The content of the channel of Madrasatuna 2 is prepared by specialists from the National Center for Curricula and Examinations, where an explanation is provided for the types of electronic questions such as how to learn using different sources, and the method of solving exams in light of learning outcomes.

- Egyptian Knowledge Bank <https://study.ekb.eg>

It is a library that includes all academic curricula in an electronic form. It includes all school levels up to the third secondary, in both Arabic and English.

- Learning management platform

Learning Management Platform (LMS) is an interactive digital content associated with all courses. Digital content contributes to clarifying information for students through lessons designed in an interactive multimedia way. The lessons include videos, images, written texts, etc. Digital content in this style helps in the correct understanding of the content. The platform also provides interactive exercises accompanied by immediate feedback, which in turn, contributes to determining the level of students after studying the content (Khairy et al., 2020).

In the field of student assessment, the Ministry has taken the following steps:

- Replacing year-end exams with research projects, and it includes all students from the third grade to the second grade of middle school (the second intermediate); so that the period is two months for preparing and delivering projects.

- The first and second secondary grade exams are conducted electronically from home using the tablet device that the government distributed to all students.

- Certificate exams (preparatory, secondary and technical) are conducted in attendance.
- Using the electronic platform and the digital library as an alternative to our children's exams abroad (students who study the Egyptian curricula abroad).
- The first and second grade exams are conducted electronically from home through a tablet device.
- Replacing the final exams for students with special needs in the first and second grades with research projects (SIS, 2020).

Critical review of previous literature

There are certain studies worth mentioning in this context. Abdu (2021) aimed to find out the teachers' perceptions of assessment tools and methods used in e-learning during the Corona pandemic in English as a foreign language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study used the descriptive approach by applying a questionnaire to 26 English language teachers through the internet using Google Forms. The study also used the interview tool to collect information related to the challenges and obstacles of distance assessment. The results of the descriptive statistics showed that teachers of English as a Foreign Language have a positive attitude towards electronic assessment tools. On the other hand, the results showed the existence of challenges and obstacles for distance assessment. The biggest challenge facing teachers was how to ensure the integrity of the online assessment. In addition, many teachers complained about recurring technical problems and internet outages, which affected the reliability and validity of the assessment. Electronic tests and valid assessment cannot be achieved unless all students are in the same circumstances while taking the tests. As for the electronic assessment tools used in the English language assessment in English, the study showed that teachers use the following tools:

1. Self-assessment (students' participation in assessing their own learning process) is an effective assessment method.
2. Well-designed group projects help students master the course content.
3. Continuous assessment helps to evaluate students effectively.

4. Electronic portfolios support students' reflective thinking, develop creativity, and increase collaborative work.
5. The teacher's feedback on individual reports helps to assess students effectively.

Saleh (2021) aimed to investigate the impact of the distance learning method on all the cognitive, skill and assessment aspects during the Corona pandemic from the point of view of school principals. The study used the descriptive approach, where the researcher prepared a questionnaire that was applied to a sample of thirty Arab school principals. The results showed a high response among the sample members to the feasibility of using the distance learning method and its success in the three areas (cognitive, skill, assessment). The distance learning method contributed to the possibility of teaching students by providing them with electronic files of the course content, giving them interactive activities to integrate into education, sending them videos and audio clips, and enabling them to participate in meetings, dialogue and discussion with teachers. This contributed to the skill development of the students. As for the impact of distance learning on students' assessment, teachers were able to answer students' inquiries and questions and give them the necessary time to answer assignments and duties. The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the impact of distance learning due to the variable of academic qualification, scientific qualification, years of experience, or the type of school in which the principal worked.

Yulianto & Mujtahin (2021) aimed to find out about English language teachers' perspectives and practices on the use of online assessment during the Corona pandemic in Indonesia. The study which was conducted at a university in Surakarta, Indonesia, used the case study method. It. An open questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were administered through internet and WhatsApp on a sample of 12 English language teachers. The results showed that teachers used online tools to assess students' English language achievement during the pandemic, despite the fact that there are some difficulties in using online assessment tools. The difficulties are that online assessment is considered less effective due to problems with internet, students and teachers' lack of skills to deal with electronic assessment tools, and,

therefore, considered less effective. As far as the assessment tools used are concerned, it was found that teachers used the electronic test of the multiple-choice type and filled the survey forms through social media and Google Forms.

Al-Subu's et al. (2021) aimed to shed light on the status of distance education for the science and English courses in the background of the Corona pandemic from the point of view of primary teachers in Jordan. The study used the descriptive analytical method with 74 teachers in Karak Governorate schools. The study tool included a questionnaire consisting of 21 items targeted to unravel the extent of awareness about the status of distance education. The results of the study showed that the degree of distance education employment for primary school teachers was high. The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the status of distance education according to the variables of gender, academic qualification, job experience, and specialization (Science, English).

Alshudaifat's (2020) study aimed to discover the status of the employment of distance education due to the Corona pandemic in the schools of the Mafraq Kasbah in Jordan from the point of view of school principals. The researcher used the descriptive approach by applying a questionnaire that included three domains (cognitive, skill, assessment) and the respondents were 145 school principals. The results related to the student assessment process showed that teachers lacked the skills to deal with electronic exams and did not have enough time to receive assignments from students in the distance education system. They are also convinced that electronic exams are not suitable to cover all subjects of the course.

Al-Ahdal and Alqasham's (2020) study aimed to find out the status of learning and assessment of EFL in KSA during the Corona pandemic. The study used the descriptive approach and used a questionnaire to elicit responses from ten faculty members at the Saudi Electronic University and Qassim University. The results showed that most faculty members used quizzes for the assessment of students in the English language. They also used dialogues and discussions through chat rooms and forums and students are assessed through worksheets and group projects. One of the most important difficulties and obstacles faced by faculty members when using

distance assessment is the difficulty of controlling cheating in electronic tests. Moreover, the assessment of all learning outcomes through electronic assessment was not as required, not to mention the problem of the availability or non-availability of internet for many students.

Omer and Alyousuf's (2020) investigation aimed to discover the extent of using the electronic assessment during the Corona pandemic among students of King Faisal University by measuring the variables of the type of college (human or practical), and the type of student (male or female). The study used the descriptive approach by applying a questionnaire that was distributed to a sample of 519 students from university colleges in the academic year 1441 AH, (307 from humanities colleges, 212 from practical colleges). The results showed that the most used electronic tools in the field of student assessment are short tests, final exams, weekly assignments, research, and the least used are oral discussions, achievement files, articles and worksheets. The study also revealed that there are no differences between males and females in the presence of obstacles and challenges for electronic assessment, and that there is a high degree of satisfaction with the electronic assessment tools among students of humanities faculties over practical faculties, and in favor of male students over female students.

Al-Subaiy (2020) directed his study to find out the extent to which faculty members at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University use electronic assessment during and following the Corona pandemic. The descriptive approach was used by preparing a questionnaire to collect data from the study sample which comprised 310 faculty members. The results of the study concluded that the status of the use of electronic assessment tools by the faculty was, in general, to a moderate degree. Their most used tools were electronic assignments, electronic participations, and the electronic achievement file. Their use of discussion forums, electronic oral interviews, and research papers was moderately high. The weak use of tools was for electronic projects, electronic self-assessment, and electronic peer assessment. The results also showed the existence of some obstacles when applying and practicing electronic assessment. They included weak use of electronic

assessment skills among the faculty and additional burden on the faculty member.

Yoestara et al. (2020) aimed to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of English language students to the system of electronic tests through internet in Indonesian universities. The study used the descriptive approach by applying a questionnaire that was distributed to a sample of 82 undergraduate students in the Department of English Language. The results showed a high level of student satisfaction with the application of electronic tests as one of the electronic assessment tools, due to the characteristics of electronic tests in providing immediate feedback. Additionally, the electronic tests required students to have simple computer skills.

Abu Shkhaidam's (2020) aimed to find out the effectiveness of e-learning in light of the spread of the Corona virus from the teachers' point of view at Kadoorie University. The study relied on the descriptive analytical method. The study sample consisted of 50 faculty members at Palestine Technical University who had taught the courses by the distance education method during the period of the spread of the Corona pandemic. The study tool was a questionnaire that was applied to the study sample. The results revealed that the faculty members' assessment of the effectiveness of e-learning in light of the spread of the Corona virus was generally average. The questionnaire covered the following areas: (e-learning continuity, e-learning obstacles, teachers' interaction with e-learning, students' interaction with e-learning). The researchers recommended developing solutions to remove the obstacles that hinder the continuity of distance education by using the blended learning model.

The purpose of Al-Samiri's (2021) study was to explore how English is taught in Saudi Arabia both negatively and positively during the Corona pandemic. By deducing the most important obstacles that English language teachers faced in distance education, the study revealed that the biggest challenges are the lack of motivation among students, as well as the recognition of the existence of technological problems related to distance education environments, such as poor internet connection, which in turn affected the quality of lesson delivery. The results of the study showed that one of the most important advantages of

teaching English from a distance is the flexibility of place and time, and that it benefits students who suffer from shyness or anxiety about learning a foreign language.

Hernández & Flórez's (2020) study aimed to identify the relationship of the e-learning method to motivating students in Santander schools in Colombia to study the English language and the challenges they faced when studying remotely. The study was applied to a sample of 22 English language teachers, where the mixed research method was applied through a questionnaire that was sent to the participants by e-mail. The results of the study showed the importance of simultaneous direct confrontation and its positive impact on motivating students towards teaching English regardless of geographical location. One of the challenges revealed by the study is the students' feeling of isolation during distance education due to the lack of personal interaction with the teacher and peers. Also among the challenges is the problem of poor internet access and distraction because of studying at home.

Rahman's (2020) study aimed to explore the obstacles and challenges of teaching English as a Foreign Language online during the COVID19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia and to assess whether teachers are satisfied with their online English language teaching. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches through a self-administered online questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 50 members of the English language faculty from various Saudi universities, KSA. The results revealed that classroom teaching is more motivating than distance teaching of English language courses. Thus, distance teaching leads to poor motivation of students towards studying English, to the difficulty of maintaining discipline in a large class when teaching remotely, and to the difficulty of teaching some skills such as writing skills. The study showed a level of satisfaction and happiness among the participants, as distance education provides them to study freely with saving time.

The purpose of Alriyami et al. (2020) was to discover the obstacles faced in administering electronic assessments for elementary schools in the Sultanate of Oman during the Corona pandemic. The study used the descriptive

approach by preparing a questionnaire that was distributed electronically to a sample of 319 teachers in various disciplines. The study showed that the most important challenges facing the administration of electronic assessment are the poor availability of devices and technologies that support education and electronic assessment, the feasibility of electronic assessment, and the teacher's doubts about the credibility of students' answers in the electronic assessment.

Alsayafi (2020) conducted a study with an aim to explore the uses and obstacles of distance education against the emerging Corona pandemic from the point of view of secondary school teachers in public education schools in Al-Ahsa region. The researcher relied on the descriptive analytical approach, and the data was collected through a questionnaire that was distributed to a sample of 30 mathematics teachers at the secondary level who taught remotely during the Corona pandemic. The results showed that the distance learning obstacles from the point of view of the study sample came to a degree that did not agree with most of the items of the questionnaire, meaning that there were no obstacles from their point of view. These items include: a) weak technical support to solve technical problems related to the Madrasati platform and the Times program; b) lack of evidence and instructions on using the platform in education and assessment; c) lack of training programs for teachers on using the Madrasati platform; d) electronic assessment as additional burden on teachers; e) teachers' beliefs of remote exams as an inappropriate way to assess student achievement.

Problem of the Study:

Due to the suspension of studies and the complete closure of educational institutions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the world has been forced to search for ways and methods to ensure the continuation of the education process. An alternative method was to switch to distance education. The Saudi government was a pioneer in the process of immediate transition to the distance education system, as it introduced the curricula through many electronic learning sources, such as the Madrasati platform, the Ain online portal, the Ain satellite channel, and the Future educational portal.

Several electronic assessment methods have been applied to all courses, including English language courses. There are many advantages to the distance learning system and the electronic assessment method, the most important of which is that it is a lifeline during the Corona crisis and contributes to social distancing that contributes to limiting the spread of the virus.

Despite these advantages, there are many challenges that may hinder the achievement of goals, as shown by studies (Al-Otaibi, 2021; Al-Subu' et al. 2021; Abu Abaya, 2021; Al-Khatib, 2020). They assessed the experience of distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic to show the existence of challenges and obstacles that prevent distance education from achieving its goals fully. There are challenges related to technology infrastructure, challenges related to students and teacher training courses, and challenges related to designing curricula in accordance with the requirements of distance education.

Research questions:

Since assessment is one of the basic components of the education system, in that it gives indications of the extent to which the learner has absorbed what has been studied, so the current study aims to show the reality of electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study questions are as follows:

1. What are the global trends regarding the assessment of English language learning for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What is the status of the electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Covid-19 pandemic?
3. What are the most prominent challenges and obstacles that faced the electronic assessment of learning English for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Covid-19 pandemic?
4. What is the proposed scenario for the electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) for the methods of assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic according to the variables (gender, academic qualification, number of years of teaching experience, level of experience in using technology).
2. There are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) regarding teacher practices in assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic according to the variables (gender, academic qualification, years of teaching experience, and level of experience in using technology).
3. There are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) regarding the electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Covid-19 pandemic according to the variables (gender, academic qualification, years of experience in teaching and experience level in using technology).
4. There are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) related to the difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic according to the variables (gender, academic qualification, years of experience in teaching, and experience level in using technology).

Objectives of the Study:

The current study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Shedding light on the effects of the Corona pandemic on the electronic assessment of the English language, and presenting the trends and strategies adopted by countries to overcome the crisis.
2. Revealing the status of electronic assessment of English language learning for

secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Corona pandemic.

3. Presenting the challenges and obstacles encountered while assessing English language learning electronically for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Corona pandemic.

4. Developing a proposed scenario for the electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic.

Significance of the study:

The significance of this study lies in recognizing the status of electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in the Kingdom during the Corona pandemic and benefiting from international experiences. The points of significance are summarized below:

- ❖ The authorities responsible for the education process can benefit from the most important positive practices in electronic assessment processes during the Corona pandemic.
- ❖ The results of the current study may contribute to presenting the challenges surrounding the electronic assessment process, and thus attempting to address them.
- ❖ It is expected that the proposed concept will contribute to solving the problems of electronic assessment, and thus the decision makers will benefit from it.

Methodology

Study population and sample:

The study population consisted of all English language teachers in secondary education in government schools in the Qassim region for the academic year 1442/1443 AH, a total of 67 male and female teachers, who were chosen randomly. Table (1) shows the division of the study sample according to demographic variables.

Table 1: Description of the study sample

| Variable | | Number | Percentage |
|----------|------|--------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 36 | 54% |

| Variable | | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|------------|
| | Female | 31 | 46% |
| Educational qualification | Bachelor | 27 | 40% |
| | Master | 39 | 58% |
| | Ph. D | 1 | 1% |
| Years of experience | Less than 5 years | 24 | 36% |
| | From 5 to less than 10 years | 34 | 51% |
| | More than 10 years | 9 | 13% |
| Experience in using technology | High | 30 | 45% |
| | Medium | 34 | 51% |
| | Low | 3 | 4% |

Tool of the Study:

The study tool consisted of a questionnaire that included 59 items aimed at determining the status of electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Corona pandemic. The questionnaire contained three main axes. The first axis stated the methods of assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic. The second axis stated teacher practices in assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic. The third axis stated the difficulties/challenges of English language learning assessment for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic. Each item on the questionnaire could be answered with any one of the three given choices (rarely, sometimes, always) for the first axis, and (agree, agree to some extent, disagree) for the second and third axes.

Reliability of the study tool:

To verify the reliability of the internal consistency of the tool, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated, which came to (0.84), indicating high reliability of the tool and its suitability for such a study.

Results and discussion:

Question 1: What are the global trends regarding the assessment of English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic?

This question was answered through displaying the theoretical framework of the study.

Question 2: What is the status of the electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Corona pandemic?

To answer this question, the averages and standard deviations of the response of the sample members on the first and second axes of the questionnaire were calculated. The following table 2 show these results.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations

| Axis 1: Methods of English language learning assessment for secondary school students during Corona pandemic | Mean | Std. Deviation | degree of use |
|--|------|----------------|---------------|
| Electronic homework | 2.99 | 0.12 | High |
| Presentation | 2.96 | 0.27 | High |
| Oral discussions on the forums (to evaluate student contributions) | 2.84 | 0.41 | High |

| Axis 1: Methods of English language learning assessment for secondary school students during Corona pandemic | Mean | Std. Deviation | degree of use |
|--|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| Short Quizzes | 2.33 | 0.61 | medium |
| E-Portfolios | 1.07 | 0.36 | low |
| Paper Work | 1.07 | 0.36 | low |
| e-Tests | 1.01 | 0.12 | low |
| Research projects | 1.01 | 0.12 | low |

The results in Table 2 indicate that the degree of use of English language learning assessment methods for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic by the study sample ranged between high and low degree, and with an arithmetic average that ranged between (1.07 - 2.99), where the highest was for the Electronic Homework Method which reflected an arithmetic mean of (2.99), a standard deviation of (0.12), and a high degree. In the second place came the Presentation Method with an arithmetic mean of (2.96) and a standard deviation of (0.27), with a high degree of use. In the third place, the method of Oral Discussions on the Forums (to evaluate students' participation) came with a mean of (2.84) and a standard deviation of (0.41). In the fourth place, with a medium degree of use, the Short Quizzes

method came with an arithmetic mean of (2.33) and a standard deviation of (0.61), while the Research Projects Method came in the last rank with a low degree of use with an arithmetic mean of (1.01) and a standard deviation of (0.12).

To verify the first hypothesis, a t-test for two independent samples was used to find out the status of English language learning assessment methods according to the gender variable (male, female). Table 3 shows these results. One Way ANOVA was also conducted to find out the status of English language learning assessment methods according to academic qualification variables (Bachelor, Master, PhD) and number of years of teaching experience (less than 5 years, from 5 to less than 10, more than 10 years).

Table 3: Results of the t-test for the sample differences according to the gender variable

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Sig. |
|--------|----|------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Male | 36 | 1.91 | .125 | -0.286 | 0.775 |
| Female | 31 | 1.92 | .135 | | |

It is clear from Table 3 that there are no statistically significant differences for the reality of English language learning assessment methods according to the gender variable, where the sig. value was greater than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted, i.e. there is no difference attributable to this variable. This result is consistent with what was concluded by Saleh's (2021) study. However, the results of Al-Sbu's et al. (2021) showed that there are statistically significant differences considering the variables of gender, qualification, and experience. The researcher attributes this result

to the fact that the transition phase to distance education during the outbreak of the Corona pandemic was mandatory, and then all teachers chose it as an alternative to classroom education, regardless of gender, years of experience, educational qualification, or technical expertise. Hence, one of the requirements of distance education is the use of electronic assessment tools, which ranged between electronic assignments and presentations as tools that are used at a high rate due to their compatibility with all courses, ease of use and achieving educational goals. The research projects came

with a low degree of use because they fit more with applied courses and are less used with theoretical courses. It also needs teamwork and

participatory work, and this was not achieved considering electronic learning and assessment.

Table 4: Results of (One Way ANOVA) analysis of the variables

| Variables | Source of variance | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Educational qualification | Between Groups | .029 | 2 | .015 | .888 | .416 |
| | Within Groups | 1.058 | 64 | .017 | | |
| | Total | 1.088 | 66 | | | |
| Years of experience | Between Groups | 0.007 | 2 | 0.004 | 0.212 | 0.809 |
| | Within Groups | 1.081 | 64 | 0.017 | | |
| | Total | 1.088 | 66 | | | |
| Technical expertise level | Between Groups | 0.072 | 2 | 0.036 | 2.268 | 0.112 |
| | Within Groups | 1.016 | 64 | 0.016 | | |
| | Total | 1.088 | 66 | | | |

The results in Table 4 show that there are no statistically significant differences in the status of English language learning assessment methods according to the variables (academic qualification, number of years of teaching experience, and level of experience in using technology). The significance value was greater than sig. 0.05, thus, accepting the null hypothesis, that there were no differences. This result is consistent with what was revealed by the study of Saleh (2021) and the study of Al-Sbou' et al. 2021, in that there are no differences

due to the variable of academic qualification, number of years of experience, or level of experience in technology. The researcher attributes this result to the feasibility of the follow-ups carried out by the Ministry of Education in confirming the existence of programs to train teachers on the use of technology, to the keenness of teachers to interact with distance learning platforms, and to some of them resorting to self-learning through YouTube sites for training on the use of technology.

Table 5: Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to teacher practices in assessing English language learning

| The second axis: teacher practices in assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic | Mean | Std. Deviation | degree of practice |
|--|------|----------------|--------------------|
| I provide my students with online homework to measure their knowledge of English grammar. | 3.00 | 0.00 | High |
| I encourage my students to speak and debate in English in educational situations. | 2.97 | 0.24 | High |
| I guide students to visual educational channels to help them understand English lessons. | 2.03 | 0.17 | medium |

| The second axis: teacher practices in assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic | Mean | Std. Deviation | degree of practice |
|--|------|----------------|--------------------|
| I determine the purpose of the assessment tools before applying them to students. | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| I give feedback to students after each assessment. | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| I use the assessment tools available on educational platforms to monitor students' grades in real time. | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| I am convinced that the electronic assessment measures the levels of students fairly. | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| The assessment tools available on educational platforms help to measure learning outcomes more accurately. | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| The electronic assessment helps me explore individual differences between students. | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| I use the discussion method through social media to develop students' language skills. | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| I am convinced that the electronic assessment is suitable for all English language learning requirements for secondary school students. | 2.00 | 0.25 | medium |
| I use interactive educational platforms as an environment for communication and discussion with students during the Corona pandemic. | 2.00 | 0.00 | medium |
| I use social media applications to assess students in English lessons. | 2.00 | 0.00 | medium |
| I use group electronic activities to develop cooperative work among students | 2.00 | 0.00 | medium |
| I get the students to present their homework during the e-lecture to ensure that they do it themselves. | 2.00 | 0.00 | medium |
| I involve students in evaluating their assessment methods and tools on an ongoing basis. | 1.97 | 0.17 | medium |
| I am convinced that the electronic assessment has contributed to the successful continuity of the educational process during the pandemic. | 1.22 | 0.42 | low |
| I use quizzes to assess students' understanding of English language topics. | 1.10 | 0.35 | low |
| I encourage my students to rate their peers against specific criteria when applying the peer assessment method. | 1.07 | 0.36 | low |
| I rely on the self-assessment method as one of the methods of judging students' performance | 1.03 | 0.17 | low |

The results in Table 5 indicate that the status of the teacher's practices in assessing English

language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic as perceived by the

study sample ranged between high and low, with an arithmetic mean that ranged between (1.03-3.00). The item "I provide my students with electronic homework to measure their knowledge of English grammar" and, "I encourage my students to dialogue and discuss in English in educational situations" ranked first and second with an average of (3.00) and (2.97), respectively, and with a high degree of practice. The items "I use short electronic tests to assess students' understanding of English language topics", "I encourage my students to evaluate their colleagues through specific criteria when applying the peer assessment method", and, "I rely on the self-assessment method as one of the

methods for judging students' performance" ranked the last in terms of the degree of practice, with a low degree, and an arithmetic mean of (1.10), (1.07) and (1.03), respectively.

The t-test was used to verify the second hypothesis i.e. (there are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the status of teacher practices in assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic, according to the variables (gender, academic qualification, number of years), teaching experience, level of expertise in using technology).

Table 6: Results of t-test for the differences between the sample according to the sex variable

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Sig. |
|--------|----|------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Male | 36 | 1.93 | 0.13 | 0.094 | 0.926 |
| Female | 31 | 1.92 | 0.04 | | |

It is clear from Table 6 that there are no statistically significant differences as far as gender variable is concerned in the status of teacher practices in assessing English language learning, where the value of sig. was greater than 0.05, and therefore the null hypothesis was accepted, meaning that there is no difference. This result is consistent with the study of Al-Sebu' et al. (2021). The researcher attributes this result to the availability of electronic assessment tools in the platforms provided by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the electronic assessment tools most approved by the study sample and which achieved high averages, are electronic homework, and the use

of websites for dialogue and discussion in English. These two tools are among the most appropriate tools for measuring English language learning outcomes, whether achievement or speaking skills. Thus, their use was high.

Table 7 shows the results of One-Way ANOVA used to find out the status of teacher practices in assessing English language learning according to academic qualification variables (Bachelor, Master, PhD), number of years of teaching experience (less than 5 years), from 5 to less than 10, more than 10 years).

Table 7: Results of the variables of One-Way ANOVA

| Variables | Source of variance | Sum Squares | of Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Educational qualification | Between Groups | 0.011 | 2 | 0.005 | 0.591 | 0.557 |
| | Within Groups | 0.586 | 64 | 0.009 | | |
| | Total | 0.597 | 66 | | | |
| Years of experience | Between Groups | 0.025 | 2 | 0.012 | 1.382 | 0.258 |
| | Within Groups | 0.572 | 64 | 0.009 | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Total | 0.597 | 66 | | | |
| Technical expertise level | Between Groups | 0.015 | 2 | 0.007 | 0.820 | 0.445 |
| | Within Groups | 0.582 | 64 | 0.009 | | |
| | Total | 0.597 | 66 | | | |

The results in Table 7 show that there are no statistically significant differences for the status of teacher practices in assessing English language learning according to the variables of educational qualification, number of years of teaching experience, and level of experience in using technology. The significance value, sig., was greater than 0.05, and therefore the null hypothesis was accepted, and there were no differences. The researcher attributes this result to the fact that the electronic assessment tools available through the education platforms in the Kingdom do not require expertise in the field of technology, and it is easy for the teachers to deal with them.

The participants were asked about the types of social media applications or programs that they used in assessing students' level of English during the Corona pandemic. All the participants without exception confirmed that the WhatsApp application is the only application that was used by them. They were also asked for suggestions for developing electronic assessment processes for learning English for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic. Table 8 illustrates these suggestions.

Table 8: Development proposals from the participants' point of view

| Your suggestions for developing electronic assessments for learning English for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic | repetitions | Percentage |
|--|-------------|------------|
| E-learning teacher training | 64 | 96% |
| Strengthening the electronic skill of teachers | 1 | 1% |
| Encouraging teachers to e-learning | 1 | 1% |
| Increasing class time | 1 | 1% |

A t-test was used for two independent samples to verify the third hypothesis. Table 9 shows these results. One Way ANOVA was also conducted to find out the status of the assessment of e-learning for the English

language according to academic qualification variables (Bachelor, Master, PhD), number of years of teaching experience (less than 5 years, from 5 to less than 10, more than 10 years). Table 9 shows these results.

Table 9: Results of the t-test for the differences between the sample according to the sex variable

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Sig. |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| male | 36 | 2.3557 | 0.05021 | 0.308 | 0.759 |
| female | 31 | 2.3525 | 0.02765 | | |

It is clear from Table 9 that there are no statistically significant differences for the status of the electronic assessment of English language learning according to the gender variable, where

the value of sig. was greater than 0.05, and therefore the null hypothesis was accepted, meaning that there is no difference. This result is consistent with the Al-Subaiy's (2020) study,

which indicated that there are no gender differences in the status of electronic assessment. In contrast, this result differs from the results of Omar and Al-Yousef's (2020) study, which showed that there are differences in satisfaction with electronic assessment tools in favor of males. The researcher attributes this result to the conviction of both males and

females about the feasibility of using electronic assessment tools on the grounds that the education strategy used is distance learning, which requires distance assessment. Hence, the participants in the current study agreed to use some tools that would achieve the desired outcomes of learning.

Table 10: Results of variables of One-Way ANOVA

| Variables | Source of variance | Sum Squares | of Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Educational qualification | Between Groups | 0.003 | 2 | 0.001 | 0.876 | 0.421 |
| | Within Groups | 0.108 | 64 | 0.002 | | |
| | Total | 0.111 | 66 | | | |
| Years of Teaching experience | Between Groups | 0.005 | 2 | 0.003 | 1.550 | 0.220 |
| | Within Groups | 0.106 | 64 | 0.002 | | |
| | Total | 0.111 | 66 | | | |
| Level of technical expertise | Between Groups | 0.009 | 2 | 0.005 | 2.903 | 0.062 |
| | Within Groups | 0.102 | 64 | 0.002 | | |
| | Total | 0.111 | 66 | | | |

The results in Table 10 show that there are no statistically significant differences in the status of the electronic assessment of English language learning according to the variables of academic qualification, number of years of teaching experience, level of experience in using technology. The significance value was greater than sig. 0.05, thus accepting the null hypothesis, that there were no differences. This result is consistent with the Al-Subaiy (2020) study, which indicated that the employment of electronic assessment came to a medium degree and there are no differences related to experience or training courses. The researcher attributes this result to the fact that the study sample constituted 96% of them with a high level of technical expertise, and, therefore their levels were close to each other in employing electronic assessment tools, and most of them had more than 5 years of teaching experience, in

addition to experience in using electronic assessment tools. Since this method is not new, the Ministry was directing teachers to employ electronic assessment during the attendance study before the pandemic.

Question 3: What are the most prominent challenges and obstacles that faced the electronic assessment of learning English for secondary school students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Corona pandemic?

To answer this question, the averages and standard deviations of the response of the sample members to the questionnaire items that express the difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic from their point of view were calculated. Table 11 shows these values arranged in descending order.

Table 11: Averages and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample members to the degree of difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic, arranged in descending order

| The third axis: Difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic | Mean | Std. Deviation | Difficulty level |
|--|-------------|----------------|------------------|
| Some English language topics require skills that are difficult to measure using electronic assessment. | 2.99 | 0.12 | High |
| Weakness of students' skills in dealing with electronic assessment tools on educational platforms | 2.99 | 0.12 | High |
| Electronic assessment tools do not measure the actual level of student performance. | 2.99 | 0.12 | High |
| Many students copy their classmates' assignments and present them as their own. | 2.99 | 0.12 | High |
| Weak availability of introductory guides for electronic assessment tools for the English language. | 2.97 | 0.24 | High |
| Weakness of the internet in some places while performing electronic tests | 2.97 | 0.24 | High |
| The electronic assessment application consumes the student's time | 2.97 | 0.24 | High |
| The difficulty of preparing electronic tests and the teacher's dependence on questions to measure students' ability to memorize only | 2.97 | 0.24 | High |
| Weak immediate technical support in the event of problems during the performance of electronic tests. | 2.96 | 0.27 | High |
| The difficulty of direct communication between the teacher and the student during the performance of electronic tests | 2.96 | 0.21 | High |
| Lack of clarity on the duties and assignments required of students, which makes them resort to foreign aid | 2.96 | 0.27 | High |
| The electronic assessment tools focus on the cognitive aspects at the expense of language and pronunciation skills | 2.96 | 0.27 | High |
| Most students do not submit homework and assignments on time. | 2.96 | 0.27 | High |
| Too many excuses and postponement of exams by students reduces the achievement of the principle of equal opportunities among students | 2.96 | 0.27 | High |
| The electronic assessment doubles the teacher's burden to reveal whether the student answered the homework by himself or with the help of another person | 2.96 | 0.21 | High |
| The lack of technical capabilities for many students leads to unequal opportunities among them | 2.94 | 0.34 | High |

| The third axis: Difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic | Mean | Std. Deviation | Difficulty level |
|--|-------------|----------------|------------------|
| The difficulty of providing a mechanism that limits the problem of cheating during the performance of electronic tests | 2.94 | 0.34 | High |
| Poor communication between the teacher and parents to follow up on the level of their children | 2.94 | 0.30 | High |
| It is difficult to evaluate electronic activities based on groups of students simultaneously. | 2.94 | 0.30 | High |
| A large percentage of students submit assignments that include a large proportion of citation/plagiarism due to copy-and-paste operations from websites. | 2.94 | 0.30 | High |
| The electronic assessment tools do not cover all the required English language learning outcomes. | 2.93 | 0.36 | High |
| The electronic assessment leads to weak social relations between the student and the teacher | 2.93 | 0.36 | High |
| Students have dissatisfaction with their electronic assessment of the English language | 2.07 | 0.26 | medium |
| The electronic assessment for learning English puts psychological pressure on students | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| Weak commitment of students to ethical aspects when performing electronic tests or assignments | 2.01 | 0.12 | medium |
| The teacher's reluctance to develop himself in technical skills | 2.01 | 0.21 | medium |
| The electronic assessment tools lack elements of attraction and suspense. | 2.01 | 0.27 | medium |
| The electronic assessment does not achieve the academic integrity of the teacher because of neglecting some of the required learning outcomes | 2.01 | 0.21 | medium |
| Total | 2.76 | 0.24 | High |

The results in Table 11 indicate that the arithmetic mean of the total score is (2.76) with a standard deviation of (0.24), which indicates that the degree of difficulties/challenges faced by English language teachers in assessing English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic is high.

To verify the fourth hypothesis, a t-test of two independent samples was used to find out the status of the difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning according to the gender variable (male, female), and Table 12 shows these results.

Table 12: Results of the t-test according to the gender variable

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | t | Sig. |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Male | 36 | 2.7907 | 0.02283 | 1.57 | 0.121 |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|--|
| Female | 31 | 2.7834 | 0.01283 | |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|--|

It is clear from Table 12 that there are no statistically significant differences for the status of the difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning according to the gender variable, where the sig. value was greater than 0.05, and therefore the null hypothesis was accepted, meaning that there is no difference. This finding is consistent with the study of Omar and Al-Yousef (2020). The researcher attributes this result to the fact that the content provided to male and female students is unified, and the facilities available to male and female teachers

are almost identical, given the keenness of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to provide equal opportunities for all.

One Way ANOVA was also used to find out the reality of the difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning according to the variables of academic qualification (Bachelor, Master, PhD), number of years of teaching experience (less than 5 years, From 5 to less than 10, more than 10 years). These results are shown in table 13.

Table 13: Results of One-Way ANOVA of the variables

| Variables | Source of variance | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Educational qualification | Between Groups | 0.001 | 2 | 0.000 | 1.151 | 0.323 |
| | Within Groups | 0.023 | 64 | 0.000 | | |
| | Total | 0.024 | 66 | | | |
| Years of teaching experience | Between Groups | 0.000 | 2 | 0.000 | 0.449 | 0.640 |
| | Within Groups | 0.024 | 64 | 0.000 | | |
| | Total | 0.024 | 66 | | | |
| Level of technical expertise | Between Groups | 0.001 | 2 | 0.001 | 1.448 | 0.243 |
| | Within Groups | 0.023 | 64 | 0.000 | | |
| | Total | 0.024 | 66 | | | |

The results in Table 13 show that there are no statistically significant differences for the status of the difficulties/challenges of assessing English language learning according to the variables academic qualification, number of years of teaching experience, and level of experience in using technology. The significance value was greater than sig. 0.05, thus accepting the null hypothesis, and there were no differences. This result is consistent with the study of Amr Al-Youssef (2020) which indicated that there are no differences due to gender with regard to the presence of obstacles. Many studies also agreed that there are obstacles when applying electronic assessment tools (Al-Riyami et al., 2020; Hernández, & Florez, 2020;

Al-Samiri, 2021; Al-Subaiy, 2020; Al-Ahdal & Alqasham, 2020; Al-Shdeifat, 2020). All aforementioned studies showed the existence of challenges ranging from the weak skills of teachers in dealing with electronic assessment tools, or problems related to technology and the internet. On the other hand, the results of the current study differ with the study of Al-Seyafi (2021) which indicated that there are no obstacles of any kind whatsoever. The researcher attributes this result to the fact that the obstacles that were scored high are obstacles related to the electronic assessment itself, and they do not differ among the sample members, whether in terms of gender or teaching experience. There are certain significant

obstacles that hinder the application of electronic assessment. There are difficult topics to measure using electronic assessment in the English language. Moreover, students are found weak in using electronic skills and to deal with electronic assessment tools on educational platforms. Students are found copying the duties of their classmates and presenting them as their own production. Thus, the electronic assessment does not give the actual level of students.

Question 4: What is the proposed scenario for the electronic assessment of English language learning for secondary school students during the Corona pandemic?

To answer this question, the studies that dealt with the effectiveness of electronic assessment tools were referred to, which can be commensurate with the assessment of the English language course in the event of the continuation of the distance learning strategy and the gradual return of students to schools. The proposed scenario can be identified as follows:

Blended Assessment

The objective of the proposed scenario: Assessing secondary school students' learning in the English language using multiple methods that combine in-class assessment tools, and electronic assessment tools in line with the vision and strategy of the Saudi Ministry of Education in limiting the spread of the epidemic, ensuring social distancing, and the continuity of the educational process at the same time i.e., activating distance learning in addition to attendance education in schools.

The proposed conceptualization philosophy: The combined assessment philosophy includes the foundations on which it is based, and it includes the following:

1) This perception is based on a mixture of teaching and learning theories. The built-in assessment relies in its construction on several teaching and learning theories, including behavioral, cognitive, constructivist, and communicative theories. This perception follows the behavioral theory when the teacher segments or divides the content and selects the appropriate assessment tool that achieves the desired goals. It also seeks to provide

reinforcement and appropriate feedback at the right time. It is also possible to follow the cognitive theory in choosing the topics that are related to the students' environment and away from memorization and indoctrination. The constructivist theory is followed to determine the appropriate assessment method in the light of content analysis, where the teacher uses assessment tools to measure understanding and remembering that differ from other tools for developing pronunciation, speaking or reading skills. The communicative theory is one of the most important pillars of the integrated assessment, which is compatible with the requirements of the current century, which takes into account the use of Internet technology and innovations in the educational process, and then employs them in evaluating student learning.

2) This perception depends on the diversity of assessment strategies, such as the performance-based assessment strategy, so that assessment topics are linked to life situations practiced by the student and this appears when the learner is assigned to prepare a presentation and discuss its content (whether electronically or in the classroom). It also depends on the observation strategy, which enables the teacher to monitor the student when pronouncing the words. For example, when the teacher asks two students to conduct a conversation in English, the teacher follows and observes the way letters are produced and the words are pronounced or, follows and observes the student when he reads several paragraphs in the textbook. In addition, there is a paper-and-pencil strategy existing which relies mainly on traditional paper-based tests.

3) This perception is based on a mixture of assessment tools (electronic / traditional). This integrated assessment visualization is based on the use of traditional assessment tools in the classroom, which include paper tests, student conversations, class participation, etc. It also seeks to employ electronic assessment tools, which include student presentations, electronic activities, and electronic achievement files.

❖ Stages of applying the proposed vision:

The built-in assessment is applied through the design shown. The explanation of each stage is as follows:

❖ Stages of applying the built-in calendar template:

1) Content analysis:

The applications of behavioral theory are used in dividing and analyzing content into the knowledge and skills required to be acquired by students.

2) Setting goals:

In light of the previous analysis, goals can be formulated, their level and the outputs to be reached.

3) Determining assessment strategies:

More than one strategy can be used depending on the nature of the goal or the learning outcomes to be achieved. In the case of skill development, the performance-based evaluation strategy and the observation strategy can be used, and this can be achieved from a distance. If the learning outcomes require the development of knowledge, the pen and paper strategy can be used by applying tests in the classroom. It is also possible to take advantage of artificial intelligence techniques, and Internet of Things applications (in the case of applying online tests) in order to reduce the phenomenon of cheating during the performance of tests, such as facial recognition and identification technology during the performance of the tests or the use of the 360-degree camera system to monitor the student during the performance test at home.

4) Determining the appropriate assessment tools:

According to the assessment strategy followed and considering the learning outcomes to be achieved, the teacher has the choice of assessment tools, whether they will be applied in the classroom or through the electronic assessment tools. Thus, it is possible to benefit from the communicative theory in employing technological innovations in the assessment process, such as the use of electronic achievement files, which contribute to building the learner's personality and show his/ her writing skills. It is also possible to use blogging sites on the internet or available on the educational platform to develop the learner's social skills, in addition to developing the skill of expression, and using chat sites to develop the learner's conversational skills.

5) Activities design:

After selecting the appropriate assessment tools, the teacher designs the appropriate activities that the learner will carry out to achieve the learning outcomes. The teacher can take advantage of the question banks available on the Madrasati platform or use web applications 2 and Google

Drive tools in preparing the activities, whether they are individual or group activities.

6) Assessment Tools Application:

Upon reaching the stage of applying the tools, the teacher has a vision of the type of tool that will be applied and whether it will be applied in the classroom (in attendance) or will be applied electronically from a distance. When applying, the teacher considers the process of diversifying the assessment tools and employing the capabilities of the built-in assessment according to the learning outcomes desired to be achieved, taking into account the identification of the goal of each tool that he uses to be clear to students.

7) Providing feedback:

After applying the assessment tools, the teacher analyzes the results of the students and gives them feedback immediately upon the end of the application of the tool to determine the level of the students on one hand, and on the other hand, to determine the feasibility of the assessment tool that was used and whether it achieved its goal or not.

Recommendations of the Study:

Given the results of the study, the following can be recommended:

- Holding training courses for male and female teachers to train on employing the built-in assessment in measuring students' level.
- Holding awareness lectures for parents and students to inform them of the importance and feasibility of electronic assessment and its effectiveness in measuring all learning outcomes, especially if we use a combination of the in-person assessment and the distance assessment.
- Providing technological means that allow the teacher to monitor students' performance of the tests if they are applied remotely.
- Expanding the use of applications available on the internet, especially applications that can be used to measure skills, such as forums, Google Drive applications, and electronic test preparation sites.
- Developing the digital learning repositories provided by the Ministry to include learning units that the teacher and student can benefit from when preparing English language activities.

▪ Following up on the performance of male and female teachers in the application of evaluation tools through a committee dedicated to this, to stand on the obstacles and challenges of the application and address them.

Limitations of the Study:

❖ **Objective limitations:** The current research was limited to identifying the methods of electronic assessment of the English language at the secondary level, and the obstacles and challenges that faced its application.

❖ **Spatial boundaries:** The study was applied to public secondary schools (public and private) in the Qassim region.

❖ **Human limitations:** The study was applied to a random sample of (67) secondary school English language teachers.

❖ **Time limitations:** The study was implemented in the second semester of the academic year 1442/1443 AH.

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