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Educational activities in online mode: An investigation of English teachers' perspectives on difficulties faced with basic level pupils

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Abstract

Electronic educational platforms are considered as one of the most important educational trends due to the confluence of many factors, prime among them being the all-pervading online mode of education. The aim of the current study is to identify the level of difficulties that English language teachers face in electronically conducting learning activities with basic school pupils from their perspectives. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher uses a questionnaire (descriptive method) with a purposive sample of 57 teachers. The results indicate that there are some difficulties that English teachers face when implementing educational activities electronically in teaching English language skills to primary school learners, however, there are no statistically significant differences between arithmetic means of teachers' responses to the questionnaire due to differences in the academic qualification degree variable. Moreover, there are statistical significance differences between the arithmetic means of teachers' responses in difficulties that face in implementing educational activities of teaching English skills electronically due to differences in the years of experience variable for teachers who have long experience. Results of the study would present managerial and pedagogical implications on the use of learning activities in online learning mode.

Keywords: basic level pupils; difficulties; educational activities; electronic learning; english language skills; perspectives

1. Introduction

Electronic educational platforms are considered as one of the most important educational trends due to the confluence of many factors, prime among them being the all-pervading online mode of education. As the result of the outbreak of COVID- 19 and the safety procedures issued by the administration, continuance of the educational process was ensured through the large number of available technologies. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education planned to implement electronic learning. It setup educational platforms and trained teachers in the new teaching strategies to meet the electronic learning requirements and provide interactive educational environment including suitable activities to improve their skills. Kopcha et al., (2020) see that the use of technology in teaching is one of the prominent features of future learning specially since they can be used formally and informally.

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Therefore, the advantages of spread of technology should be taken into account and every effort made to benefit from it as a suitable solution in case of emergencies and crisis such as COVID-19 and consider it as a new system of education outside the classroom.

In the light of this, electronic learning has become an international educational system and many countries try to implement it at all educational levels as a tool for autonomous learning in which students learn by themselves without going to schools (Bhatti et al., 2020; Haider & Al-Salman, 2020; Hoq, 2020). According to this, electronic learning employs educational systems including all educational factors in a way that suits its content, activities, assessment, and immediate ongoing supervision in which the presence of teacher as the fountainhead of all teaching is not needed, and education occurs through intensive learning activities. Its flexible system consists of different learning techniques which give a chance to every student to learn regardless of their circumstances.

Jha & Arora (2020) mentioned that educational activities are essential features for learning the language. They help and encourage students' interaction during the learning process. Whatever the nature of educational content, it will be more effective if the learner initiates the learning.

The teacher plays a great role in designing suitable educational experiences for language learning to achieve the learning objectives and identify learning outputs through using electronic educational activities. Consequently, educational activities are considered as an effective and important factor in drawing attention and motivation for learning. They also reinforce co-operation, interaction, and participation among learners. This leads to strengthening the relationships between learners and the teacher, and developing self-confidence of the learners. However, this depends on the activities which are employed by the teacher when s/he plans to teach foreign language or second language taking into account various experiences that suit the learners' needs, educational environment, objectives and the situation where learning takes place.

Moreover, it is equally important to consider the fundamentals of selecting suitable educational activities according to learners' level and developmental characteristics. Nikolić, et al (2019) also held that the most important fundamentals which are based on selecting educational activities are: the teacher should be able to implement them, previous planning of selection by the teacher and identifying suitable time during the lesson to be implemented, giving the role of planning them to the teacher, and the selection should be made according to available facilities, environment, syllabus content, suitability of learners' needs, attitudes, and interests.

Many previous studies confirmed that using electronic learning in teaching has a positive effective in improving the educational process and experience which previous studies have presented (Alenezi, 2020; Situmorang et al., 2019; Suresh et al., 2018; Nguyen, 2020) while some studies which discussed electronic learning and its relation to different variables such as student satisfaction (Tawafak et al., 2019; Valencia-Vallejo et al., 2018; Diab & Elgahsh, 2020; Saka, 2020)

2. Statement of the Problem

Most countries had their first brush with the application of technological developments in the teaching process due to the outbreak of COVID (19) with the emergent need to keep the students safe, follow prescribed precautions and procedures, and to keep social-distancing. This resulted in some reflections on the part of the stakeholders in educational institutes including students, teachers, syllabus and learning environment. The field of EFL was no different. However, in physical classes, especially with young learners, the application of educational activities in language learning was bound to be vastly a different form when they were conducted electronically. Hence there was a need to explore the problems that English teachers encounter when implementing educational activities for English skills in electronic learning due to some factors such as absence of direct contact between

teacher and learners, difficulty of interaction with students when teaching some languages skills, deterioration of learners' motivation for electronic learning,, shortage of learning and teaching aids like audio, visual aids, making students busy with virtual educational activities, needs of learners to interact , participate, doing activities which contribute to the development of their linguistics abilities and skills and improving their academic performance.

Questions of the study

Accordingly, the research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the teachers' perception of the level of the difficulties that they face in conducting electronic educational activities for teaching English skills in basic level?

2. What are the differences among the study population concerning the difficulties to implement educational activities and use them in electronic learning for basic students according to the academic degree qualification and years of experience variables?

3. Significance of Study

The importance of this research comes out from the nature of its subject which is related to the teaching of English language skills and activities electronically to basic level learners. It is expected that the study will:

1. Help those who are responsible for preparing electronic educational activities for teaching linguistic skills of English to put basics for selecting suitable activities whose achievement is required to be interactive electronically.

2. To identify indicators for selecting electronic educational activities for English language skills through perusal on the difficulties of implementing these activities.

3. To focus on methods, aids and techniques followed in teaching English language electronically and the extent of their suitability of required interaction for their learning.

4. Identify the basic electronic competencies necessary to be provided for English language teachers.

4. Hypotheses of the Study

1. English language teachers face difficulties in implementing electronic educational activities for English skills in electronic learning in basic level with medium degree (from their perspectives).

2. There are no statistical significance differences in the difficulties of implementing educational activities and employing them in electronic learning for basic pupils due to differences in the academic qualification degree variable.

3. There are statistically significant differences in implementing educational activities and employing them in electronic learning among English teachers in basic level due to the differences in the years of experience variable.

5. Review of Previous Literature

The researcher found a number of studies which touched the issue of educational activities and electronic learning and presented them from different aspects and different variables from (2009 - 2020). The fact that these studies are strewn across the Arab world and beyond, indicate geographic and time variation. The studies will be presented according to the main variables chronologically, from the earliest to the most recent and indicating to the main characteristics with comments indicating differences and similarities and clarifying the scientific gap the research handle and the aspects of their

benefit in the current research. Naveed, et al, (2017) carried out a study aimed to identify the reality of educational activities from teachers' perspectives. The area of focus was the difficulties that hinder the implementing of educational activities and the difficulties faced by students and their impact on the achievement of pupils of grade four. The researcher employed a descriptive and semi experimental method. The sample of the study consisted of (25) teachers and achievement test for (20) students to know their achievement. The comparison was between (10) students who practiced educational activities and (10) who did not practice. A questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. The findings indicated that there were no special lessons for school activities (92%), no place to practice (80%) and (72%) and confirmed that curriculum never considers educational activities. Sabha (2010) also aimed to identify school activities in governmental schools in Alkhalel province from the headmasters' and teachers' perspectives. The population of the study consisted of all governmental schools (6981) while the sample (353) was taken using cluster technique. The researcher used the descriptive method and a questionnaire for collecting the data. The study found out that school activities hindrances were on the top in terms of arithmetic means. The study also indicated statistically significant effect of the sample for school activities hindrances due to experience variable for those with more than (10) years of experience.

AlShammari, et al (2018) conducted a study to find out the role which activities achieved among intermediate pupils, and to identify hindrances of practicing activities from pupils' perspectives. The researcher used the descriptive method. The sample was taken randomly comprising (200) pupils and a questionnaire were used. The study indicated that hindrances to activities were concentrated on study and overload of timetable and lack of interest in the activities by the teachers. Alsadhan (2015) carried out a study aimed to identify difficulties that face the implementation of electronic activities in Shagraa University. It was related to the administrative and financial sides and included the staff members and students. The sample consisted of (129) respondents. The researcher used the descriptive method and a questionnaire for collecting data. The study found that the most noticeable difficulties of implementing electronic learning was the lack of enough skills of using electronic learning among learners. Hosh and Khilafi (201) conducted a study to know the patterns of using electronic notes by university students. The study used descriptive method and the sample consisted of (70) students chosen purposively to respond to the questionnaire. Results indicated that most of the students used electronic educational notes and considered them as a good source of information that helped them in enhancing their knowledge. It is also found out that students faced problems when dealing with educational notes and this has to do with the language. Kazem (2019) aimed to identify the process of developing class and non-class activities from teachers' perspectives and supervisors in basic school on the lines of requirements of comprehensive quality in Babel district. The researcher used descriptive analytical method using a questionnaire. The sample consisted of (20) teachers and supervisors. Results showed that school administrations played an important role in developing activities through providing time and activities needed.

Verlenden et al., (2021) aimed to highlight the situation of using the unified educational system (virtual school platform) and difficulties in using them faced by teachers in Mecca. The study used analytical descriptive method and a questionnaire administered to a random sample of (339) teachers. The study found that the use of the unified educational system by teachers in Mecca city was of high degree and they face difficulties in using it with medium degree. Results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences among the sample of the study in using unified educational system due to sex, years of experiences, age, and qualification variables. Recently, Sebaey (2020) conducted a study aimed to study difficulties of using electronic learning in an enrichment program among talented students from teachers' and supervisors' perspectives. The researcher used the survey-based analytical descriptive method with a sample of (143) respondents who were subject to a questionnaire for data collection. The results showed that the arithmetic means varied highly between

the high and medium achievers. Further, there were statistically significance differences for academic qualification variable for postgraduate diploma qualification while there were no statistically significant differences concerning years of experience. Mohamed (2020) conducted a study aimed to analyze the attitudes of economics students in Borg Boawerij University concerning the situation of electronic learning and the obstacles faced. The study used descriptive analytical method with a sample of (42) students chosen purposively who answered a questionnaire for collecting data. The study indicated that there were some difficulties in media education and using educational activities. Students tended to use electronic learning and confirmed the importance of electronic learning and they did not agree on difficulties of electronic learning from their perspectives.

5.1. Comparison between previous study and the current study

In terms of differences previous studies differ from the current one in the objectives; some studies have highlighted the situation of educational activities as against of some variables. These include (Dooley, Simpson & Beers, 2020; Black et al., 2021). Some other studies aimed to identify difficulties that hinder the implementation of electronic learning system which aimed to analyze students' attitudes towards electronic learning and its difficulties (Elfaki et al., 2019; Thapa et al., 2021). Moreover, the previous studies had a different variable. The limitation of place was in Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Mohamed's study differed from other studies in that it tackled the problem of the study theoretically using structural equation modelling method.

5.2. Academic gap which the current study handle

Through presenting similarities and differences between previous studies and the current one, it is clear that the current study differs from the previous in the main focus and the main objectives. It agrees with the previous studies in many aspects such as the academic gaps which are:

1- Addressing the difficulties that face English teachers in implementing electronic educational activities for teaching English skills for basic pupils in basic schools from their perspectives during the COVID (19).

2- The current research includes linking problem of research with variables that support carrying out the research to identify the reality of the problems.

3- The current study used two ways qualitative and quantitative ways to form accurate idea about the problem of the research.

From the above mentioned, it is clear that the current study handles multi-fact academic gap addressing topic of educational activities electronically in the light of COVID (19).

6. Field Research Procedure

6.1. Methodology of the research

The researcher employed descriptive analytical method because of the nature of its objectives. It seeks to discuss the problem quantitatively and qualitatively in a way that reflects its current reality to discover the reach of the findings and overgeneralizing the interpretation of the phenomenon (Rakic et al., 2020).

6.2. Population of the study

The population of the study consisted of all English teachers in Alqaseem of Academic year (1442) the researcher chose a graded sample to guarantee obtaining comprehensive representation of the

sample according to the nature of the research topic. The study of entire population in scientific research is very rare due to the difficulties the research may face such as difficulty in reaching all of the community, the cost as well as sharing some characteristics among people of the community. Therefore, a sample can serve the purpose.

Distribution of the sample based on sex.

Table 1. Number of sample according to sex variable and percentage

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	18	31.58%
Female	39	68.42%
Total	57	100%

It is clear from the above table (1) that the percentage (68.42%) of the sample were females and (31.58%) were males.

Table 2. Distribution of sample according to academic qualification variable and percentage

Academic qualification	No	Percentage
Bachelor	26	45.61%
Postgraduate Diploma	15	26.32%
Master	12	21.1%
PhD	4	7.2%
Total	57	100%

The above table (2) shows that the greater number of the study sample were holders of Bachelor degree (45.61%) while (26.32%) held postgraduate diploma, flowed by Master (21.5%) and finally, doctorate (7.2%).

Table 3. Distribution of sample according to years of experience variable

Years of experience	No	Percentage
Short(1-5 years)	14	24.56%
Medium(more than 5 to 10)	20	35.9%
Long (more than 10 years)	23	40.35%
Total	57	100%

The above table (3) indicates that most of the study sample had more than (10) years of experience (40.35%) whereas (5-10) were (35.9%) and (1-5) years were (14.1%).

6.3. Tool of data collection

To obtain the objective of the study and collecting the required data to confirm the validity of the hypotheses; the researcher designed a questionnaire with items based difficulties in implementing electronic educational activities of English language skills. The statements of the questionnaire were designed purposively to inform the sample of the study about the objective of the study, how to write personal information and how to respond to the statements. The questionnaire consisted of (20) statements using percentage and scales (very big- big- medium- weak- very weak). The researcher calculated the validity of the questionnaire by seeking the assistance of a jury committee. The

members had expertise in education technology, curriculum and method of teaching, educational psychology and pedagogy to know the suitability, relevancy and accuracy of statements to the sample of the study. The statements were about educational activities and electronic learning. The validity of the questionnaire was (100), this indicates high validity. As for calculating co-efficient correlation of the questionnaire, the researcher implemented the questionnaire in the sample of (10) teachers (pre) not the real sample of the study to know if the statements were clear or not and to ensure the simplicity of the statements and instructions. The researcher used co-efficient correlation for each statement and the questionnaire. The co-efficient correlation of each statement and the whole questionnaire was (0.05) as explained in the following table.

Table 4. Coefficient correlation of questionnaire statements

Statements	Correlation co-efficient	Probable value	Statements	Correlation co-efficient	Probable value
1	0.492	0.000	12	0.744	0.000
2	0.757	0.000	13	0.807	0.000
3	0.704	0.000	14	0.450	0.000
4	0.8810	0.000	15	0.781	0.000
5	0.730	0.000	16	0.814	0.000
6	0.740	0.000	17	0.836	0.000
7	0.697	0.000	18	0.0.872	0.000
8	0.766	0.000	19	0.8861	0.000
9	0.765	0.000	20	0.798	0.000
10	0.755	0.000			0.000
11	0.7887	0.000			0.000
Whole questionnaire		0.000		0.910	

The above table shows that all correlation co-efficient for the statements in the questionnaire are statistically significant in particular mean (0.05) which indicates internal consistency of the statements. Therefore, the questionnaire is valid.

Table 5. Alpha Cranach's' value for the reliability of questionnaire

Questionnaire	Alpha Coronbach	Reliability
Difficulties of educational activities	0.925	0.962

Table (5) shows the value of Alpha and reliability of the questionnaire at 0.962. Accordingly, the questionnaire is valid and reliable and consequently measure what is to be measured.

6.4. Implementation of tool of the study

The researcher designed the questionnaire in Google Drive clarifying the objectives of the study, instructions of responses and how to implement to English teachers in basic level during the second term of the year 1442. This was done through using WhatsApp via a special link *http: //forms.gle/fskLkPuDSRRB71uw8*. The application took (15) days and there were no problems or obstacles during the application.

6.5. Statistical processing of data

The researcher used SPSS program for analyzing the data using the following computations:

1- Percentage, frequencies, arithmetic mean and standard deviation.

2- Alpha Cronbach test for validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

3- Pearson correlation co-efficient for measuring internal consistency of the questionnaire.

4- Monolithic analysis of variance test to know whether there is statistically significant differences between three groups or more from the variables.

7. Results, Findings and Discussion

To identify the most frequent difficulties that face English teachers in implementing educational activities in teaching English skills electronically, a gradation of responses between five quantitative estimations that explained difficulties when interviewing teachers about these difficulties was used. The researcher identified difficulties that indicated the scale as explained below:

Table 6. Interpretation of level of responses

Responses	Extent
Very big	(4.21)- (5.00)
Big	(3.4)- (4.20)
Medium	(2.61)- (4.20)
Weak	(1.81)- (2.60)
Very weak	(1.00)- (1.80)

The extent of importance of responses has been identified by calculating the range of arithmetic means by equation (the biggest quantitive estimation of responses – less quantitative estimation of responses ÷ alternatives of responses), then adding the less quantitative estimation of responses.

First hypothesis: English teachers face problems in implementing electronic educational activities for teaching English skills for basic level pupils with medium degree from their perspectives.

To confirm this hypothesis the researcher calculated the arithmetic means and standard deviation of responses of the sample of the study in the statements of the questionnaire each separately to know the degree of difficulties that face English teachers. The following table (7) illustrates the findings:

Statements	Arithmetic means	Standard deviation	Weight percentage	Order after analysis	Level
1-E-learning reduces the practice of direct education	3.16	1.29	63.20	18	medium
2- Lack of students interaction with the electronic activities which teacher includes in the platform	4.19	1.23	43.80	3	Big
3-Lack of opportunities for the teacher to encourage students to take initiative and organized discussion.	4.10	1.32	42.00	8	big

4- Lack of infrastructure for empowering electronic learning	4.7	1.31	63.40	5	Big
5- It is difficult to provide practical implementation for some subjects in electronic learning	3.34	1.18	66.80	16	Medium
6-Difficulty of designing electronic activities and identifying its tasks electronically	4.19	1.23	43.80	4	Big
7- Electronic learning depends on educational activities which are solid and not interesting.	4.15	1.42	59.00	6	Big
8- Electronic educational activities do not help in improving interaction between educational process sides.	3.90	1.32	42.00	12	Big
9- Educational activities lack to make student acquired required skills of achievement and performance.	4.11	1.23	43.80	7	Big
10- Declining the adaptation of educational platform for educational activities appropriately.	4.08	1.32	42.00	9	Big
11- Using technology in teaching language skills weakens learning.	3.99	1.23	43.80	10	Big
12- Lack of being convinced with electronic educational activities for teaching language skills.	4.44	1.04	48.80	1	Very big
13-Learning language skills needs direct educational activities.	3.87	1.32	42.00	14	Big
14- Electronic learning is not source for educational activities suitable for language skills.	3.88	1.25	42.00	13	Big
15- Lack of teachers' desire to participate in implementing lessons electronically.	2.95	1.33	46.20	20	Medium
16 Electronic educational activities do not help students to learn English skills.	3.92	1.31	59.00	11	Big
17- Students a void participation with teacher in electronic activities.	3.11	1.16	62.20	19	Medium
18- Lack of students interaction with electronic educational activities.	4.20	1.32	42.00	2	Big
19- Decrease of students' interest to follow up and dealing with electronic activities.	3.32	1.19	66.40	17	Medium
20- Lack of agreement of educational activities with attitudes and interest of students	3.55	1.18	66.80	15	Medium
The whole questionnaire	4.19	0.94	48.20		Big

It is clear from table (7) that the arithmetic means of all statements varied (big degree and medium) from the teachers' perspective. The statement (12) got the highest arithmetic mean at (4.44) and least standard deviation (1.04) while statement (15) scored the least arithmetic mean (4.19) and (0.94) standard deviation. This indicates difficulties that face English teachers are at the level of big degree. The result agrees with the responses of the sample of the study. This result can be explained in the light of English teachers' awareness of the nature of teaching English language skills and what it requires including direct interaction between learners and teachers, and what components are related to this interaction such as, practicing activities that depend on audio, visual and sensuality effects which seem to be difficult to find in electronic learning activities. In addition, the absence of classroom interaction between learners is considered the main factor that contributes to a lack of interest in implementing electronic educational activities for teaching English language. This finding of the study concur with previous literature that e-learning can increase students creative ability and self-confidence (Yaniawati et al., 2020; Encarnacion et al., 2021; Al-Ahdal, 2020a).

Second hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences in difficulties of implementing electronic educational activities in electronic learning among English language teachers due to differences of the academic qualification degree variable.

To find the statistical significance between arithmetic mean of teachers' responses for the questionnaire, the researcher calculated arithmetic means and standard deviation according to academic qualification degree variable. The following table summarizes this:

Table 8. The arithmetic means and standard deviation value of the questionnaire

Qualification	No	Arithmetic Means	Standard Deviation
Bachelor	26	74.620	30641
Post diploma	15	772.221	30205
Master	12	65.342	20461
Doctorate	4	58.452	20879

Table (8) depicts the statistical significance differences between calculated values of arithmetic means and standard deviation for the responses of sample of study according to academic qualification degree variable.

Monolithic variance analysis was used to know whether the differences have statistical significance and, if so, for which variables. The results of this analysis are shown in the following table.

Table 9. Monolithic variance analysis and (F) value for responses of the sample of study according to academic qualification variable

Questionnaire	Source of variance	Total of squares	Free degrees	Medium of squares	F value	Level of significance	Conclusion
As whole	between the group	4.349	2	0.544	0.617	0.784	Not significant
	Within the group	70.641	55	0.693			
	Total	72.990	57	.7884			

It is clear from table (9), there are no statistically significant differences between responses of teachers due to the academic qualification degree variable. This result agrees with Alreshy (2020) who indicates that no statistically significant differences occur due to the academic qualification variable. It differs from the study of Sebaey (2020) who shows that statistically significant differences occur due

to the academic qualification variable. Accordingly, the researcher has noted that the result is reasonable compared with teaching in general education where it has nothing to do with teachers' academic qualification but with experience, practice, and opportunities of participation available to the teacher. These play a great role in developing teaching competence and link it with teaching situation, aids, methods, and educational activities which are related to the electronic learning systems to meet the needs and objectives of learning.

Third hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences in implementing and employing electronic educational activities among English teachers in basic level due to differences in the years of experience.

To know the statistically significant differences between the arithmetic means of teachers' responses to the questionnaire, the researcher calculated the arithmetic means and standard deviation according to the years of experience variable. The following table 10 explains the point:

Years of experience	No	Arithmetic Means	Standard Deviation
Short	14	66.62	20895
Medium	20	69.221	20205
Long	23	71.342	104661

The above table (10) indicates differences among the calculated values for arithmetic means of responses of the sample of study according to years of experience differences. Monolithic variance analysis was used to know whether the differences have statistical significances and for which variables. The result of analysis will be presented in the following table.

Table 11. Mono variance analysis and (F) value and the level of significant of responses of sample of study according to years of experience qualification

Questionnaire	Source of variance	Total of squares	Freedom degrees	Average of squares	F value	Level of significance	Conclusion
As whole	between the group	55.359	2	1.679	2.490	0.006	Significant
	Within the group	76.641	55	0.674			
	Total	78.990	57				

It is clear from table (11) that there are statistically significant differences of teachers' responses due to differences of years of experience (short, medium, long). With reference to table (10) concerning Arithmetic means and standard deviation, it is for long years of experience. This result seems to be reasonable because experience leads to the development of occupational and performance level. In addition, it develops competence and skills which teachers need in teaching and consequently become aware of obstacles and difficulties in the educational process. Hence, previous literature support this finding (Luo et al., 2017; Yunusa & Umar, 2021; Rouleau et al., 2019; Al-Ahdal, 2020b).

8. Recommendations of the Study

On the basis of the above results, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Training English teachers in how to design audio and visual educational activities in electronic education for teaching different English language skills.

2. Training English teachers in educational computer programs that suit teaching English for pupils in basic level as well as meet their needs, attitudes, and interests.

3. Providing educational activities which are suitable to be practiced and participated in by the family to help implementing them.

4. Specifying intensive methodological training courses in designing electronic educational activities for lessons to the English teachers.

5. Training English teachers in employing strategies that improve pronunciation, reading, listening, and writing through virtual classes.

9. Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study can be summarized as follow:

1. Limitation of subject: Electronic educational activities of English language skills in electronic learning

2. Limitation of population: English language teachers in the basic level

3. Limitation of place: Alqaseem- Saudi Arabia Kingdom

4. Limitation of time: second term of the year 1442

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