

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN APPLYING GAMIFICATION IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study aimed to demystify the obstacles faced by English language female teachers in applying gamification strategy to develop English skills of the middle school students in Al-Taif city. The descriptive analytical approach was used to describe and analyze the phenomenon. A sample of 278 English language female teachers was randomly selected from Al-Taif schools using the stratification sampling method. Furthermore, a questionnaire, prepared by the researcher, was employed to get the necessary data from the sample members, after testing its reliability and validity. The results unveiled the multiplicity of obstacles faced by English language female teachers and limit the application of gamification. These challenges include the large number of teaching and administrative burdens, students' overcrowding in the classrooms, weak readiness of the educational environment and its components when introducing gamification, and the high costs of designing and producing gamification into the curricula. Thus, this study urges the Education Ministry to adopt the principles of gamification in education, provide proper programs with suitable tools for that, develop teachers' abilities to employ gamification, and pay attention to the quality of programs and methods developing female teachers' skills. Moreover, it underscores the importance of providing schools with appropriate devices and tools that support the infra-structures for gamification. Significantly, the findings would provide all stakeholders with insights to understand the obstacles faced by English language teachers and the effects of gamification to overcome those obstacles.

Keywords Gamification, Strategy, English Language Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The current era has seen a tremendous and rapid development in almost all life areas. Much significantly, the emergence of various technologies has sped up the advancement of other aspects of human life. Thus, the progress of a

country is no longer measured by the information it possesses, but its ability to use technology to organize and employ that information to serve humanity. The most advanced county in the field of information technology has become the most

powerful economically and financially (Al-fuhailah, 2023; Abdelnabi, 2022).

Investing in human capital through education is the basis for any human and social development. In this respect, Saudi Arabia has embarked on building its future with an ambitious vision. It has directed all of its sectors towards developing human capital to create strong generations able to participate in the diverse transformation processes (Salem & Abdelrazeq, 2023). Therefore, it has focused on quality education as the real force to achieve the vision. This is because educational curricula and the standards for their construction and application represent an aspiring developmental response that is compatible and in line with the rapid progress. They provide the learners with knowledge, skills, and creative and innovative capabilities to be ready to receive the high digital technological revolution (Ismail, 2023; Yaseen & Radia, 2022; Al Yousef, 2016).

Heeding technology and its applications is one of the most important principles we must consider when creating and/or developing curricula. Besides, the curricula and the teachers must provide learners with meaningful situations, experiences, and activities and encourage their thinking and research abilities. This can be done by integrating and applying technology and making it available in the teaching and learning processes. Here, technology is a basic component in education. It plays a crucial requirement for all stages of general education (Mdhlalose & Mlambo, 2023; Shadiev et al., 2023; Fauzi et al., 2021; Yuyun, 2019).

In many countries where English is not people's first or mother tongue, it has significantly become the leading and most important foreign language. It serves as a common and widely used means of communication. In this respect, English language is the greatest common language spoken universally. It is the language of science and technology

worldwide (Chan & Lo, 2024; Nuriska, 2021; Rao, 2019). With the help of the emerging technology, education is being revolutionized and the field of English language learning is no exception. English has a vital role in all aspects of life and has been playing the main part in several sectors. Thus, educators have to intensify their efforts to develop curricula and urge teachers to use innovative modern and fun appropriate teaching strategies in teaching English. Furthermore, teachers in schools should be keen to encourage students and increase their motivation to learn English language (Zarei & Fabregas, 2024; Shadiev et al., 2023; Adawiyah & Gumartif, 2022; Nishanthi, 2018).

Technological development has evidently been a decisive element to promote change and innovation in education to fit the requirements of the digital generations. Therefore, technology-enhanced educational environments (TEEE) offer diverse opportunities for students and educators to support teaching and learning processes. In this respect, educational research and studies have proven that the most popular and widespread modern technology is the integration of AR and VR; the former denotes augmented reality, while the later denotes virtual reality. Therefore, it contributes to create positive, active and interactive educational environments that enable users to experience and explore virtual worlds promoting the purposeful learning (Samarqandi & Yamani, 2021; Sailer et al., 2021; Ahmed, 2021; Al-Tawil, 2020).

New innovative approaches and techniques are continually applied in education at all levels. The aim is to keep students engaged, motivated, and interested. Thus, gamification - game-based learning-, which implies adding elements of games to course, with its various techniques that integrate technology into education and using elements of designing games for a unique and interesting gameful experience in non-game

contexts and tasks, is an effective strategy in teaching English. The motive behind adopting this technique is rooted in the idea that teaching and learning any language is a complicated process. Besides, motivating and encouraging learners is crucial if it were to accelerate their learning (Songcun & Zuwati, 2023; Thurairasu; 2022; Alzahrani & Alhalafawy, 2022; Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021). The essence of gamification involves using the motivational effect of games for purposes beyond the entertaining nature of the game. This notion is undoubtedly centered on the marketing spread to various contexts like education and business (Al-Shammari, 2019; Kapp, 2012).

Fortunately, gamification and e-learning (electronic/online learning; mainly by computers and the internet forms) can be successfully combined. Therefore, gamification in the context of e-learning denotes a set of tools and techniques that raise students' interests and incentives to use and finish a course. To meet educational needs of students, this strategy has widely been applied in many teaching systems. Thus, its adoption is significantly increasing in online learning (Cavu et al., 2023; Alzahrani & Alhalafawy, 2022).

Significantly, gamification strategy improves students' motivation, engagement (with educational materials and situations through AR and VR games and digital devices), and learning out-comes. Besides, it transforms learning from its routine traditional form into learning with fun and interactive nature, thus stimulating students' desire to learn, encourages them to do more and more learning activities, helps them understand and focus on the subject being taught, provides nice opportunities for them to explore, compete, and excel in class, improves competitive traits, thus making learners addicted to learn and providing real-time feedback,.. etc. (Fitria, 2022b).

Furthermore, the said strategy can bring about

self-regulation for students. This is done by creating opportunities for self-monitoring, which sets clear expectations for the student. It promotes problem solving, which can help increase students' motivation to learn (Al-Shammari, 2019; Gressick & Langston, 2017). Notably, ESL learning denotes that learners can participate and cooperate with other peers in educational situations dominated by purposeful activities, and develop good communication skills and interactions with the surrounding environment. Thus, they feel free to express themselves within a socially acceptable and enjoyable framework, with increasing creative and innovative abilities (Redondo-Rodríguez et al., 2022; Fitria, 2022; Deterding, et al, 2011; Al-Mwali, 2011).

Research Problem:

The whole world has become as a global village. This indicates that people need a common language, beside their mother tongue, to communicate with each other all over the world. Along with knowledge, communication and information explosion, English has become this common language. Therefore, learning English has become essential (Rao, 2019).

Moreover, the significant development in using the techniques and technological competencies and their applications and knowledge manufacturing mechanisms is well noticeable in recent years. In this respect, digital transformation (DT) is one of the key pillars of the Saudi Vision 2030 (Zhou & Wei, 2018). Besides, KSA has the highest digitalization in the educational sector (Alzubaid et al., 2023).

The Saudi Ministry of Education (SME), appreciating DT within the framework of the Saudi Vision 2030, does its best to apply and benefit from modern technologies in schools, thus transforming schools into integrated digital environment which is a requirement of the 21st century skills. As the student is the source of real economy, the

educational environment focuses on him. The aim is to deliver knowledge and increase students' academic achievements, along with developing the teachers' scientific and educational capabilities (Alzubaid et al., 2023; Alotaibi, 2021; Aldossary 2020).

Applying motivating strategies in ELT is an important requirement, especially within e-learning environments, together with the rapidly and largely changed landscape of language learning with the normalization of technologies in people's daily communication, and in accordance to the recent global changes in educational patterns, mainly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lăpădat & Lăpădat, 2024; Alyousif & Alsuhaibani, 2021).

Teachers with specific skills and various teaching strategies play a significant role in motivating learners to learn EFL. Therefore, English teachers should adopt teaching methods and activities to minimize the challenges faced during the educational process and help learners improve their performances (Ho et al., 2020). In this respect, motivation is the most significant factor in helping learners of EFL. Good motivation affects the learners' willingness to practice using English regularly. Moreover, inventiveness of EFL teachers to plan and develop more creative and innovative activities enhances learners' English skills (Masadeh, 2022).

From this standpoint, there is a need to change learning from passive to active knowledge building. This is done via employing educational electronic strategies, like games, that leads to achieving remarkable success in e-learning environments and hence the goals of Vision 2030 can be reached (Sailer et al., 2024). Gamification is a useful strategy that enhances EFL learners' motivation and fully engages them in the lesson. Therefore, their full participation is guaranteed. Games themselves can be effective techniques in

teaching any language not only the foreign one. They are attractive and meanwhile attract the attention of learners to use language in an enjoyment and funny way (Masadeh, 2022). This strategy aims to increase students' participation by using some game techniques. These techniques include leaderboards and feedback, along with other techniques, which make students feel more possessive and build a good relationship with the new language. They also give teachers better tools to guide and reward students and help them develop self-confidence, thus achieving the desired learning goals and outcomes (Sailer et al., 2024, Al-Shammari, 2019; Hamari & Koivisto, 2014).

This is consistent with the results and recommendations of previous studies concerned with applying gamification strategy in teaching EFL. Therefore, this study confirmed the necessity of activating gamification in the educational processes and using it within educational environments to develop students' knowledge at all educational levels. The previous studies like Al-Sabbagh (2023), Al-Ahmadi and Kansara (2023), Alzubaidi et al. (2023), Masadeh (2022), Mayyas (2022), Liu, et al. (2021), and Al-Shammari (2019) emphasized this point. Thus, the researcher felt the importance of investigating and identifying the Obstacles faced by English language teachers applying gamification strategy to teach English as a foreign (EFL) language at the middle school female students in Al-Taif, KSA, and how to manage and/or overcome those obstacles.

Research Questions:

The main question of this research is:

What are the obstacles faced by English language female teachers in Al-Taif to apply the gamification strategy in teaching English at the middle schools?

Some sub-questions emerge:

a) What are the obstacles faced by the female teachers in middle schools at Al-Taif city when

applying the gamification strategy in teaching EFL?

b) What are the obstacles faced by the female students in middle schools at Al-Taif city when gamification strategy is applied to teach them EFL?

c) What are the obstacles faced by the middle school managers at Al-Taif city to apply gamification strategy in teaching EFL?

d) What are the curriculum-related obstacles to apply the gamification strategy in teaching EFL?

Research Objectives:

The current research aims to investigate the obstacles faced by female teachers in applying the gamification strategy in teaching EFL to middle school female students at Al- Taif region in KSA, through:

a) Detecting and identifying the obstacles faced by female teachers.

b) Clarifying the obstacles faced by students.

c) Revealing the obstacles associated with schools managers.

d) Identifying the obstacles associated with the curriculum.

Significance of the research:

The importance of this research can be attributed in part to the value of the sample members and their influence on the educational processes, and to the prominence of identifying the obstacles they faced when applying the gamification strategy at the middle schools in Al-Taif region.

This research reveals the most common obstacles that affect the course of the educational process. Besides, it suggests how to overcome those obstacles. Thus, it contributes significantly to achieving the educational goals and good learning outcomes. In this way, it makes the implemented plans successful.

The importance of the current research is also

evident in the following:

1- The results that the research will reach may be useful for reconsidering the techniques/ methods and tools used in learning EFL. In this respect, making teaching environment more fun and attractive can be achieved using the gamification strategy.

2- This research motivates English language teachers to use the gamification strategy, allows them to understand the mechanism/s to apply it, and supports them in bridging the gap between theory and reality.

3- Assisting English language educators to fulfill their responsibilities. This is done by offering instructional lessons on employing the gamification strategy.

4- Gamification strategy creates more positive learning environments for both the teachers and the learners.

5- Aiding researchers and individuals interested in the field of LEFL (mainly teachers) to develop educational materials that utilize gamification as a means to foster motivation for English language learning.

6- Guiding curriculum designers for English language teaching towards the necessity of incorporating engaging strategies, such as gamification activities, to enhance students' motivation for language learning.

7- Providing a contemporary study on the obstacles faced by teachers when applying the gamification strategy in LEFL to middle school female students.

Research Determinants:

- Objective Determinants: Limited to the degree of application of the gamification strategy and the obstacles to its application.

- Subjective/Human Scope: English language female teachers for the middle stage in public

education schools.

- **Timeframe:** This research was applied in the second semester of the academic year 1445 AH.

- **Spatial Determinants:** The study is conducted within middle schools for females in Al-Taif, KSA.

Concepts and Procedural Terms of Research

Gamification:

Gamification is an innovative educational approach that uses game elements and techniques to achieve goals and solve problems in non-game contexts like media, marketing, and education, thus improving the user behavior (Al-Nadi, 2020).

The researcher defines gamification as "The programs and activities applied by the teachers of English language, through which the principles and elements of games are used. Such elements include rewards, achievements, points, appointments, behavioral momenta, feedback, comfortable productivity, etc... The games are used in various educational situations through teaching processes to encourage the non-native students and increase their motivation to learn English as a foreign language".

Obstacles:

Obstacles are the difficulties and complications that prevent applying the gamification strategy to teach English language at the middle school female students in Al-Taif, KSA, and are identified through the questionnaire conducted by the researcher and applied to the English language female teachers of the study sample.

Theoretical Framework and Review of the Related Literature:

Theoretical Framework:

Meaning of Gamification:

The term "gamification" has emerged and spread widely. It is an educational strategy that employs

game elements to help achieving a satisfied level of engagement and effectiveness in the educational environments. Educational studies have addressed and developed this concept since 2015, as it has been introduced as an educational strategy and have focused on games elements which are viewed as the most motivating tools of the gamification strategy (Al-Ghamdi, 2020).

The concept of "gamification" has gained much popularity in the educational field. However, the literature indicates that gamification still lacks a formal definition and strategic analyses through scientific research to codify its design and employ it effectively in teaching and learning processes. In this respect, the term "gamification"; referring to the use of game techniques and elements in a framework other than the game framework, has attracted the attention and interest of many people who applied in many fields and different activities to solve many problems related to the processes of distance education and e-learning (Toda et al., 2019; Kapp, 2012).

Elements/Components of Gamification:

A systematic review of gamification design revealed different frameworks from various fields, with many attempts to develop a structural methodological framework; bridging the gap between game designs and techniques, and criticisms (Mora et al, 2017)

The most frequently used in most educational environments all over the world is the Mechanics-Dynamics Aesthetics (MDA) framework. It divides the game into three elements. These elements are:

Mechanics; that describe the specific components of the game at the level of data, representations, and algorithms. They represent the player actions defined by system rules like points, levels and quests. The mechanics clarify the nature of interaction by determining the individual's reactions to the use of the implemented. This seeks

to satisfy human needs and desires, including the desire for reward, self-expression, enthusiasm, achievement, altruism, and competition, as it includes these desires.

1- Dynamics: This term describes the runtime behavior of mechanisms acting on player input and each other's outputs over time. The different mechanisms driving interactions include interaction, behavior, practice and strategic reactions to help the learner interact with the game. Furthermore, these mechanisms include levels, points, challenges, titles, virtual goods, honor rolls and feedback mechanisms.

2- Aesthetics: This term defines the affective impact on users and describes what the player needs to interact with the game system. Aesthetics expresses the desired feelings in terms of spirit, surprise, credibility, happiness, pride, satisfaction, etc. Beyond the appearance of the game and the visual element, it attracts the user's attention through colors, diversity, originality, joy, and the arts displaying the game stages. The same framework can be used in reverse by designers to target specific aesthetics and emotional responses, as challenge, curiosity, self-expression, or sensation (Abdelhamid et al., 2018; Korany & Abosaif, 2016).

Types of Gamification:

Gamification can be categorized into two primary forms:

1. Structural Gamification involves the integration of game elements into the educational framework without modifying the underlying subject matter. In this approach, gamification is constructed around the existing learning content, applying game mechanics to guide learners while maintaining the integrity of the material. The focus is primarily on motivating learners to advance through the content by offering rewards and incentives, rather than altering educational

objectives. Typical game mechanics employed in this type include badges, points, and leaderboards.

2. Content Gamification, on the other hand, entails the modification of learning content to incorporate game-like features. This method is particularly effective when there is pre-existing, useful content that could benefit from increased interactivity and engagement. Content gamification employs game mechanics such as challenges, storytelling, feedback loops, and opportunities for failure to captivate learners. Rewards are tailored to enhance engagement and encourage continued participation in the learning process, with the gamification elements often embedded within the learning material itself, including characters and narrative components (Fuchs, 2023; Abadi et al., 2022).

Purposes of Gamification:

The objectives of gamification can be summarized as follows:

3. Cognitive objectives:

Gamification in education has a great role in developing and improving mental and cognitive abilities and skills, exploration and innovation. Besides, it promotes social learning and collaboration.

4. Social objectives:

Gamification allows students to communicate with peers (players), exchange roles between them, learn the system, leadership, laws, rules and decision-making, addresses some problems like shyness, and qualifies the player for social integration with others.

5. Emotional or sentimental objectives:

Gamification enhances the learners' motivation and sense of pride that accompanies them when winning, sportsmanship, cooperation among learners, self-expression, and character formation; when they feel emotional intelligence and sensory

awareness.

6. Skill objectives:

Gamification enables the learner to master the skills of speed, accuracy, planning and organization, and problem solving.

7. Physical objectives:

No doubt that gamification affects the human body; in terms of stimulating and training the learner's senses and muscles, and coordination of his sensory, mental, nervous and muscular systems (Abdelhamid et al., 2018).

Advantages of Applying Gamification in Education:

Gamification has grown over time, with numerous advantages for students at all educational levels. The gamification strategy can be used with all subjects and educational levels. In this respect, gamification can be applied by itself with different subjects without the need to find special material's or components, like the educational games that need a special game for each subject or educational level. Besides, gamification provides immediate and direct feedback. This strategy is easy to manage by the teacher, alongside the possibility of its use in or outside the classroom. Several studies have confirmed the effectiveness of the gamification in increasing engagement and intrinsic motivation towards learning, and retaining information. Gamification in education is becoming a popular method to engage learners (Pappas, 2014).

In the in-depth analytical study, especially the internal (meta-) analysis conducted by Lister (2015) on (19) studies related to gamification, the researcher certified gamification to positively affect motivation, performance, and academic achievements, mostly among weak students. Moreover, gamification makes the students felt as if they master the course and energize them with a

desire to achieve, instead of just thinking about getting grades, as they became more proactive and initiative to complete the tasks (Lister, 2015).

In the same context, Al-Hadlaq (2019) defined the merits of gamification as follows:

a. Increasing participation and interaction:

One of the most important advantages of gamification is that it motivates and encourages learners to participate in the activities or tasks with which it was designed, so assist increasing learners' interactions with the tasks to be accomplished; by motivating them to achieve.

b. Giving awards and incentives (points-badges- levels):

Gamification awards and incentives are provided to the learners when their evaluations are positive. Gaining awards and points encourages competition and increases interest.

The content is structured to build on previous concepts; as learners advance through different levels, maintaining their interest and momentum. The level indicates the extent of the learner's activity. A learner continues working hard until reaching the highest level (mastery).

c. Raise the spirit of competitiveness and overcome challenges:

Learning processes include several skills, thus the learner could master specific skills when practicing a set of tasks.

d. Fun and entertaining:

Through motivation via gamification strategy, the learner not only tries to reach a specific goal or solve a problem, but also enjoys what he practices, and the challenges he faces till achieving the desired goals.

Challenges of Applying Gamification in Education:

The game design was suggested to be the biggest

reasons for the failure of gamification in education; so it must be designed according to standardized standards, in addition to the gamification elements appropriate to the learning topic. This must be concerned to benefit the advantages of gamification in education, and achieves the desired goals. If the game elements are not aligned with the learning objectives, they may not lead to meaningful learning outcomes (Werbach & Hunter, 2012).

From the previous literature, the researcher concluded the following challenges and difficulties those hinder or impede the application of gamification in education:

- 1- The absence of the concept of gamification among those responsible for the educational process and teachers in particular.
- 2- Using gamification strategy not in an organizational framework, which contributes to its ineffectiveness.
- 3- The inappropriateness of gamification elements to learning objectives.
- 4- Applying gamification in educational content that cannot be employed.
- 5- The high cost of designing and producing gamification leads to poor designs of gamification, due to the lack of appropriate financial compensation.
- 6- Problems that arise due to lack of time and low investment.
- 7- Obligating learners to gamify conflicts with their freedom.
- 8- Lack of a real benefit that helps to continue participating in gamification.
- 9- Improper application of gamification.
- 10- Weak compatibility of learners' characteristics with gamification elements (Fuchs, 2023; Abadi et al., 2022).

Disadvantages of Applying Gamification in Education:

Despite the many advantages that have been counted for the gamification strategy, it's essential to use it with caution. Every coin has two sides, and gamification is not an exception. Some limitations associated with implementing gamification in education were indicated. Gamification depends mainly on technology. Therefore, any school lacking devices and Internet will face an obstacle to implementing gamification. Moreover, not all students have equal access to the educational technology required for gamified learning, potentially widening the gap between those with and without digital resources. The Internet at homes is curial to achieve the required game-based assignments, but this may be unavailable in some homes. Further, lack of internet in general may lead to isolation. This is due to the inability to connect. Some students may excel over others due to their practice of these games, and this leads to a decrease in the determination of others when comparing them to others. It is also difficult to apply games to all goals and skills, like written articles, as games may not be suitable for the content of the teacher's curriculum. Besides, introducing gamification in education in an inappropriate manner can inadvertently diminish intrinsic motivation, by emphasizing external rewards like badges and points too much. In this respect, gamification makes the learners focusing not on learning but on prizes, points, material rewards, and badges. This limits the educational goal to team members for obtaining the same points despite their unequal performance within the game (Ismail, 2022).

Review of the Related Literature:

Esra Ataman (2020) addressed the English teachers' perceptions and views of technology-assisted tools as integral parts of EFL education. The variables investigated in the study included

age, seniority, gender, and educational level. The study specifically focused on whether the participants rely on computer-aided materials or not. The participants included 11 English teachers. The convenience sampling model was used in selecting the respondents. A semi-structured interview was relied upon in collecting data. It included six questions. Furthermore, the descriptive method was used to analyze data. Similar responses were categorized under 6 themes. Results implied that 55% of the participants rely on educational technology, believing that it attracts students' attention and increases efficiency. Contrastingly, 45% relied on both the computer and smart board, believing that these tools improve speaking and listening skills. Furthermore, 91% believed in technology-aided education as the tool to motivate students. Unfortunately, 55% of the participants faced internet access problem, while 64% lacked the basic skills to use technology.

In the same context, Sahar Al-Qahtani (2019) identified the effectiveness of an interactive educational environment, based on gamification, in developing immediate and delayed achievement among first-year secondary school students on the English language subject and their attitudes towards it. To achieve the study objectives, the 909 I'll experimental approach was used, as it was applied to a randomly selected sample consisting of (52) first-year secondary school students. The study sample was divided into two groups; each of (26) students. The first was the training group and the second was the control group. An achievement test was prepared, and a scale of attitudes towards gamification environments was developed. The results showed a statistically significant difference in the students' achievement in the English language course in favor of the experimental group. Also, the result of the attitude scale showed positive results towards the gamification environment.

Additionally, Saovapa and Fasawang (2018) addressed the gamification's role in increasing students' performance and motivation to learn English at Bangkok University in Thailand. The quasi-experimental approach was used. The study sample consisted of two groups: the control one; including (39) students on whom the conventional method was applied, and the experimental group of (38) learners studying by applying the digital game "Kahoot". The study tools were the Pre- and post-tests. Questionnaires that aimed to know the students' attitudes and motivation regarding the use of gamification in language learning were also used. Furthermore, the Independent t-tests and One-way Analysis of Covariance were adopted in data analysis. The results demystified the existence of differences at 0.05 in learning performance and motivation, between the two groups in favor of the experimental one, in terms of learning performance and motivation towards learning.

Contrastingly, Ardoiz García (2017) studied gamification as an educational concept, specifically in the EFL Primary Education context. The motif behind this was to come out with an intervention proposal. Therefore, gamification was studied along with innovation, motivation and technology. Pre- and post-tests were conducted. Moreover, the participants included 25 students (both genders). They were chosen intentionally. Based on the existing theoretical contents, an intervention proposal was designed. The proposal made gamification a necessity to teach EFL to the 5th grade pupils at Primary Education. The results emphasized the fundamental role played by gamification in the acquisition of various skills related to social thinking and linguistics.

Methodology and Research Procedures:

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive analytical approach that depends on studying the phenomena objectively was

adopted. Moreover, the correlations were analyzed, along with the causality between the independent variable; the obstacles faced by English language teachers, and the dependent variable; applying the gamification strategy in English Language Teaching to middle school female students at Al-Taif city. The aim is to demystify the relationship between the variables.

Research Procedures

Research Population:

The research population included all English language female teachers in Al-Taif, KSA; (1000 teachers), according to statistics from the Education Department in Al-Taif region.

Research Sample:

The participants included in the sample were randomly selected via stratification so as to express the study community with more accuracy.

It consisted of (278) English language female teachers in Al-Taif region; KSA.

Research Tool/s:

The researcher prepared a questionnaire as a study tool to obtain the needed data and information from the participants, and reach the required results of the research. The researcher used the five-point Likert scale ultimately to measure the answers to the scale items. This scale can reveal the different dimensions of the phenomenon under study, and it also helps to convert the answers into quantitative data that can be measured statistically. For each item, there are five answers that determine the level of the agreement of participants with it. The answers were given numerical weights to represent the degree of answering the item, as shown in the following table (Table"1"):

Table (1): Weighted averages for the five-point Likert scales.

Result	Yes	often	sometimes	rarely	No
Weighted average	5	4	3	2	1

Stability of the Study Tool

The tool's stability was measured by the

Cronbach's- α - coefficient, as shown in the following table (table"2"):

Table (2): Values of Cronbach's- α -Coefficient for the questionnaire of obstacles faced by female English language teachers applying the gamification strategy

No. of Items	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation (SD)	Cronbach's- α -Coefficient
20	1.575	0.028	0.169	0.701**

Table (2) embodies the Cronbach's- α -coefficient's values for the questionnaire of obstacles facing

English language teachers to apply gamification strategy. It shows:

~0.700**, indicating is a high level of reliability.

The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient to ensure each item's internal consistency and the scale items as a whole. See Table (3).

Reliability and Validity of the Study Tool:

Table (3): Values of Cronbach's- α -Coefficient for each item of the questionnaire of obstacles faced by female English language teachers applying the gamification strategy

Item	R1	R2	Item	R1	R2
1	0.860**	0.822**	11	0.881**	0.8932**
2	0.869**	0.866**	12	0.777**	0.787**
3	0.797**	0.761**	13	0.814**	0.819**
4	0.693**	0.688**	14	0.881**	0.892**
5	0.788**	0.728**	15	0.814**	0.818**
6	0.782**	0.690**	16	0.881**	0.892**
7	0.814**	0.818**	17	0.797**	0.761**
8	0.881**	0.892**	18	0.693**	0.688**
9	0.777**	0.786**	19	0.860**	0.822**
10	0.819**	0.840**	20	0.869**	0.866**

Table (3) demystifies that the coefficients linking the items of obstacles faced by English language female teachers to apply the gamification strategy, the sub-dimension to which it belongs and the total score of the questionnaire were significant at (0.01). This evidently ensures the validity of the scale's internal consistency.

Statistical Methods:

The collected data was encoded and computerized using the SPSS. Then the appropriate statistical methods were done using this program. These statistics are listed below:

1- Frequency: This statistical method was used

to highlight the participants' characteristics.

2- Percentage (%): This method was applied to identify the repetitions with regard to the participants' characteristics.

3- Mean: This method involves calculating the average answers for each of the scale items into the mean of each study dimension.

4- Standard Deviation (SD): This statistical method determines the extent to which the values deviate from the center of their aggregation.

5- The Multiple Regression Coefficients: This method tests the validity of the impact of the IV on the DV.

RESULTS

The Demographic Data:

The results of the demographic data for the research sample are shown in tables (4), (5), and (6); as follows:

Table (4): Distribution of the research sample according to the academic qualification variable

Type	Frequency	Percentage %
Bachelor's Degree	176	64%
High Diploma	83	29.2%
Postgraduate Studies	19	6.8%
Total	278	100%

Table (4) showed the frequency and percentage of the research participants according to their academic qualifications. The number of the female English teachers with a bachelor's degree was

(176) which represents (64), those with high diploma were (83) which represents (29.2%), while those with postgraduate studies were (19) with a percentage of 6.8%.

Table (5): Distribution of the research sample according to the years of experience the variable

Type	Frequency	Percentage %
< (5) years	33	12%
5-10 years	85	30.5%
>10 years	160	57.5%
Total	278	100%

Table (5) implies that the participants from the research sample varied in terms of the number of years of practical experience. In this respect, (33) teachers had less than (5) years of experience,

representing (12%), and (85) teachers had experience from (5-10) years, representing (30.5%), while the largest percentage was for those with more than (10) years of experience; (160) teachers, representing (57.5%).

Table (6): Distribution of the research sample according to the variable of obtaining training courses

Type	Frequency	Percentage
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Obtain Training Courses	174	63%
Donot Obtain Training	104	37%
Total	278	100%

Table (6) showed the frequency and percentage of participants in the research according to the variable of obtaining training courses. The number of those who obtained courses was (174) teachers, at a rate of (63%), while those who did not obtain courses were (104) teachers, at a rate of (37%).

Results Related to the Main Question of the Research:

The main question was: What are the obstacles faced by English language female teachers in Al-Taif region to apply the gamification strategy in teaching English at the middle schools? The means, percentages, and deviations were calculated from the items of the research tool and tabulated in Table (7).

Table (7): The arithmetic means, percentages, and the standard deviations of obstacles faced by English language female teachers to apply the gamification strategy in teaching EFL at the middle schools in Al- Taif region, KSA

No.	Dimension	Phrase	Arithmetic mean	Percentage	Standard	Practice
1	First Dimension: Obstacles Associated with the Teachers	-Lack of ability and efficiency to use English language to	4.12	84.5	0.964	High
2		-Lack of training on how to use the	3.98	77.9	0.911	Medium
3		-The large number of teaching and administrative burdens that limit the	4.22	96.4	0.923	Very High
4		-Lack of professional teachers who are skilled in applying gamification.	4.13	85.8	0.932	High
5		-Inability of teachers to issue students at each stage; to	4.20	76.6	10. 89	Very High
Overall average			4.11	High		

6	Second Dimension : Obstacles Associated with the Students.	-Lack of awareness of students about the importance of learning English language using the	3.84	87.9	0.916	Medium
7		-The overcrowding of students in the classroom, which limits the use	4.33	87.4	0.941	Very High
8		-Low motivation of students to study EFL and lack of participation in educational activities.	4.25	5..8	0.919	Very High
9		-Poor compatibility of characters of female students with the elements of	4.23	86.5	0.935	Very High
10		-Students' focus on prizes, points, material rewards and badges, not on learning	3.87	87.9	0.916	Medium
Overall average			4.18	High		

Table (7): The arithmetic means, percentages, and the standard deviations of obstacles faced by English language female teachers to apply the gamification strategy in teaching EFL at the middle schools in Al- Taif region, KSA

No.	Dimension	Phrase	Arithmetic mean	Percentage %	Standard Deviation	Practice Degree
11	Third Dimension: Obstacles Associated with the school management and available financial	-Poor readiness of the classroom environment and its components when introducing the gamification	4.13	77.2	0.900	High
12		Lack of financial allocations for schools that will implement gamification to support educational	3.99	50.6	0.956	Medium
13		-Lacking the classroom of equipments with modern tools and devices necessary for the	3.64	62.7	0.936	Medium
14		-High cost of designing and producing gamification and lack of suitable financial compensation that	4.28	52.6	0.989	Very High

15	resources.	-Lack of necessary support to provide incentives and special privileges for teachers who use	3.85	90.9	0.946	Medium
Overall average			3.97	Medium		
16	Fourth Dimension: Obstacles Associated with the Curriculum	-English language courses are overcrowded with facts and concepts that need to be taught	4.24	96.4	0.911	Medium
17		- The packaging strategy is not suitable for the scientific material.	3.92	83.98	0.921	Medium
18		- The lack of development of programs or applications to support the packaging strategy in English language courses.	4.16	89.9	0.916	Very High
19		- The lack of inclusion of strategic mechanisms, components and principles in educational	3.92	70.6	0.986	Very High
20		- The curricula do not contain different mechanisms to help students in interaction, behavior.	4.22	84.6	0.966	Very High
Overall average			4.10	High		

-The responses of the research sample participants recorded a high overall average on the items of applying the first dimension (obstacles related to teachers). The overall average related to this dimension was (4.11), denoting a high practice level.

-The responses to the phrases of applying the first dimension (obstacles related to female teachers) ranged from (3.98-4.22), from the participants' viewpoint, assuring a high degree of practice. This explains the disparity in the responses to the phrases of this dimension from their point of view.

-The statement No. (33) (large number of teaching and administrative burdens limit the the gamification's application) from the first dimension (obstacles related to female teachers)

ranked first, with a mean of (4.22) and a deviation of (0.923), while statement No. (32) (lack of training for female English language teachers to use gamification), from the same dimension, ranked last, with a mean of (3.98) and a deviation of (0.911).

-The responses of the research sample members came with an overall average of (4.18) on the paragraphs of the application of the second dimension (obstacles related to female students), revealing a very high degree of practice.

-The responses of the respondents to the phrases of applying the second dimension (obstacles related to the female students) varied. In this respect, the mean values of these responses ranged from (3.84-4.25), from the point of view of the

respondents to the dimension (English language female teachers), indicating a very high degree of practice. This explains the disparity in the responses to the phrases of this dimension from their point of view.

-The statement No. (38) (low motivation of female students to study, and their lack of participation in educational activities), from the second dimension (obstacles related to female students) ranked first, with a mean equals (4.25) and a deviation of (0.919). Contrastingly, the statement No. (36) (weak awareness of female students of the importance of learning English using gamification), from the same dimension, ranked last, with a mean of (3.84) and a deviation of (0.916).

-The responses to the items of the third dimension (obstacles related to school management and available financial capabilities) came with an overall average of (3.97), indicating a medium degree of practice.

-The responses of the participants to the items of the third dimension (obstacles related to school management and available financial capabilities) varied. In this respect, their response averages ranged from (3.64 to 4.28) from the teachers' viewpoint, thus clarifying the disparity in the responses to the items of this dimension.

- The statement No. (44) (the high cost of designing and producing gamification, which makes the designer design gamification poorly, due to the lack of appropriate financial compensation) from the dimension (obstacles related to school management and available financial capabilities) ranked first, with a mean of (4.28) and a deviation of (0.989), while the statement No. (43) (the lack of classroom equipment with modern tools and devices necessary for the packaging strategy), from the same dimension, ranked last, with a mean of (3.64) and a deviation of (0.936).

-The responses of the respondents on the items of the fourth dimension (obstacles related to the curriculum) came with an overall average of (4.10). This value of the overall average indicated a high degree of practice.

- The responses to the phrases of the fourth dimension (obstacles related to the curriculum) varied. Here, the mean values of these responses ranged from (3.92-4.24), from the point of view of the respondents, indicating a high degree of practice. This explains the disparity in the responses to the phrases of this dimension, from their point of view.

- Finally, the statement No. (46) (English language courses are overcrowded with facts and concepts that need to be taught using traditional methods), from the fourth dimension (obstacles related to the curriculum) also ranked first, with a mean of (4.24), and a deviation of (0.911), while the statement No. (49), (Lack of inclusion of strategic mechanisms, components, and principles in educational situations and objectives) from the fourth dimension, ranked last, with a mean (3.92), and a deviation of (0.921).

DISCUSSION

Interpretation and Discussion of Results:

It is concluded that the obstacles associated with teachers in applying the gamification strategy are the plenty of teaching and administrative burdens, and the inability of teachers to provide students with sufficient and appropriate information, at each stage, to facilitate their tasks.

Besides, the obstacles associated with female students, at the middle schools in Al- Taif region, to apply the gamification strategy in teaching EFL included: the large number (overcrowding) of students in the classrooms that limits the use of this strategy, the low motivation of female students to study EFL, their lack of participation in educational activities, and the weak compatibility

of the characteristics of female students with the elements of the gamification strategy. Presenting gamification strategy in an inappropriate manner may be the reason that makes the learners focusing on prizes, points, material rewards and badges, not on learning, thus limiting the educational goals. It is crucial to understand that games are more than just points and badges. In that team the players gain the same points despite the unequal performance in the game.

Furthermore, among the challenges related to school management and available equipment capabilities are the weak readiness of the classroom environment and its components, the lack of appropriate financial compensation, when introducing the gamification strategy, and the high cost needed to design and produce gamification, which leads the designers to gamify poorly.

Another obstacle related to the curriculum is the lack of development of programs and applications to support the gamification strategy in English language courses. This also includes lack of inclusion of strategic mechanisms, components and principles in educational situations and objectives, and the lack of curricula containing different mechanisms to help students in interaction, behavior, practice and reactions to help the learner interact with the game.

Recommendations:

- 1- There is an urgent need to pay attention to gamification in education, as a modern teaching technique that has proven its effectiveness.
- 2- The Ministry of Education should adopt the principles of gamification in education, and provide appropriate programs and tools for that.
- 3- Paying attention to supporting the infrastructure for gamification in schools. This can be done by providing appropriate devices and tools.
- 4- The necessity of spreading the culture of

gamification and its effectiveness in education among educators and officials in educational institutions.

- 5- The curriculum designers should include adequate language games within the curriculum.

Suggested Research:

- 1- The researcher hopes to conduct future studies addressing students from other stages, universities, as well as students institutes and training centers, in both public and private sectors, as this study targeted students of public middle schools. Also, these studies could be conducted in other geographical areas; urban and rural areas, or in other geographical areas other than KSA, for example, other Arab countries.
- 2- The researcher urges future researches to take into account designing gamification for several academic subjects; including Science, Mathematics, Arabic language, ...etc, in several different fields and prepare it for empirical testing.
- 3- It is also possible that future studies can be expanded by adding moderator/s to this study, maintaining the main variables, like gender, age of students, the educational level of students, area of residence...etc.

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of investment in human capital (education sector) on economic growth in Saudi Arabia during the period 2013-