

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRADE 10 STUDENTS' LEVEL OF GRAMMAR ANXIETY AND SELF-ESTEEM IN A SELECTED GOVERNMENT SCHOOL IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative correlational study investigated the relationship between English grammar anxiety and self-esteem among 58 Grade 10 Mini English Program (MEP) students at Singsamut School, Thailand. Data collected via the Grammar Anxiety Inventory and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were analysed using weighted mean, t-tests, and Pearson r . Results indicated a moderate level of grammar anxiety driven primarily by time-pressured evaluations, and a high level of self-esteem. No significant differences were found based on gender suggesting uniform psychological impacts within the intensive MEP environment. However, a significant negative correlation was established confirming that as linguistic anxiety increases, student self-worth significantly decreases. To address these findings, the "Level UP" Digital Gamification Framework is proposed. By utilizing anonymous, low-stakes platforms like Blooket and Wayground, the intervention aims to dismantle the local "correctness culture" and lower the affective filter, thereby protecting student self-esteem while enhancing grammatical acquisition.

Keywords: Grammar Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Mini English Program (MEP), Digital Gamification, Thailand EFL.

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of the modern world has made English proficiency a necessity for academic and professional success. However, Thailand's English proficiency has consistently declined, ranking 106th out of 116 countries in the 2024 EF English Proficiency Index. This decline is often attributed to psychological barriers, most notably Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which interferes with the cognitive ability to acquire a second language. While general FLA is well-documented, its specific impact on grammar acquisition remains a critical area for investigation, particularly in Thailand where a pervasive "correctness culture" exists.

In the Thai secondary education system, specialized programs like the Mini-English Program (MEP) at Singsamut High School in Chonburi aim to meet international standards (CEFR A2-B1) through intensive exposure. However, grammar-focused tasks within these programs are often high-stakes and exam-oriented, provoking significant anxiety due to the demands for accuracy and rapid decision-making (Kampookaew, 2020). Previous research indicates that students often struggle with subject-verb disagreement and tense-aspect usage, with errors in these areas accounting for over 80% of linguistic mistakes in writing and speaking.

Crucially, this anxiety does not exist in a vacuum; it is deeply intertwined with a student's self-esteem. Self-esteem shapes academic confidence and risk-taking. In the intensive MEP environment, students with lower linguistic ability often "hide" or withdraw from participation to avoid negative evaluation. While the link between general language anxiety and self-esteem is established, the specific connection between **grammar anxiety** and self-esteem among Grade 10 learners—who are at a pivotal stage of identity formation and university preparation—remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining how these affective factors correlate, with the goal of informing technology-enhanced, gamified interventions that can lower the "affective filter" and foster positive learner self-perception.

Thai EFL Context and Secondary Education The Thai educational landscape is currently defined by a shift toward global standards, specifically the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Thailand 4.0 economic model. Within this framework, the Mini-English Program (MEP) acts as a rigorous testing ground, requiring students to engage in intensive English-medium instruction. Research indicates that while these programs aim for high proficiency, the increased pressure on performance and precision often creates a high-stakes emotional environment for learners.

Policies and the Mini-English Program (MEP) Framework Since the 2007 ASEAN charter established English as the regional working language, Thai educational policy has intensified. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) now mandates CEFR targets for both students and educators. The MEP specifically addresses this by providing 8–14 hours of weekly English contact. However, the intensive nature of these bilingual programs, while promoting communicative competence, emphasizes grammatical accuracy as a structural basis, which may inadvertently contribute to student apprehension.

Exam Orientation and the "Correctness Culture" A pervasive "correctness culture" exists in Thai classrooms, where the fear of negative evaluation often outweighs the motivation to speak. This is exacerbated by high-stakes assessments like the O-NET, which prioritize rote memorization and grammatical decoding over actual communication. Studies show that this disconnect between communicative goals and traditional testing methods forces a return to teacher-centered methodologies, stunting natural fluency and increasing psychological distress among students who fear "losing face" through grammatical errors.

The Construct of Language and Grammar Anxiety Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is a complex of self-perceptions and behaviors that disrupt cognitive processing and working memory. While FLCA is a broad construct, grammar-specific anxiety acts as a unique cognitive burden. In Thailand, this is heavily influenced

by cultural factors; the social desire to maintain harmony makes routine participation a high-stakes event. While the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) remains the standard for measurement, recent debates highlight the need for targeted instruments like the Grammar Anxiety Inventory to capture specific linguistic stressors.

Dimensions of Self-Esteem in Education Understanding the learner's internal state requires a distinction between academic self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-concept. Academic self-esteem motivates initiative, while self-efficacy reflects a student's judgment of their ability to complete tasks. Research indicates that academic self-concept is fluid, particularly during the transition to secondary school, and is influenced by external factors such as socioeconomic status and parental support. Culturally, Thai adolescents may find unique sources of self-worth through mindfulness and religious activities, illustrating that while self-esteem is a universal construct, its sources are culturally bound.

Relationship Between Anxiety and Self-Beliefs Empirical evidence consistently reveals an inverse relationship between language anxiety and self-esteem. Healthy self-esteem acts as a psychological buffer; students with high self-worth are more likely to view grammatical errors as constructive feedback rather than personal threats. Conversely, those with low self-esteem often experience higher "affective filters," leading to reclusiveness in the classroom. While some studies suggest that low levels of anxiety can occasionally aid achievement, the broader consensus suggests that fostering a positive self-concept is essential to neutralizing grammar-induced apprehension.

Gender and Demographic Factors in the Affective Domain Gender socialization significantly mediates how students experience anxiety. Stereotyping in academic environments can influence a student's belief in their ability to master complex structures. During adolescence, the pressure to perform is often experienced differently by male and female students due to varying social support structures and internal coping mechanisms. This necessitates inclusive, teacher-led interventions—such as gamification—to lower the affective filter across all demographics.

Grammar Learning Challenges and Pedagogical Approaches Thai EFL learners face specific hurdles due to cross-language discrepancies, particularly with English tense-aspects and conditional sentences. These linguistic challenges are often met with either deductive (rule-first) or inductive (discovery-first) teaching methods. While modern research favors inductive, communicative techniques, the transition in Thailand remains inconsistent. Furthermore, the style of corrective feedback plays a critical role; while supportive feedback improves writing quality, negative or unclear correction can trigger significant spikes in grammar anxiety.

This study, therefore, aims to fill this specific gap by quantifying the correlation between the two variables. By confirming this relationship, the research will move beyond general anxiety and provide the data-driven foundation required for the Proposed Program, allowing for the development of targeted, psychologically supportive interventions that address the affective roots of grammar challenges in the MEP setting.

The reviewed literature confirms that the Thai secondary education context, governed by CEFR standards and a pervasive "correctness culture," creates a high-stakes environment that frequently triggers affective barriers. Three key points of convergence emerge from current research:

1. **The Affective Filter:** Anxiety, particularly regarding complex English tenses and the fear of negative evaluation, acts as a primary barrier to acquisition.

2. **Mediating Factors:** Self-beliefs, specifically academic self-esteem and self-efficacy, are critical variables that can mitigate the debilitating effects of classroom apprehension.
3. **Linguistic Stressors:** Grammar remains a primary source of anxiety for Thai EFL learners, often exacerbated by the tension between traditional deductive and modern inductive pedagogical approaches.

Despite these insights, a significant empirical gap remains. While general language anxiety and self-esteem are broadly documented, there is a dearth of research directly examining the correlation between **grammar-specific anxiety** and **self-esteem** among Thai Grade 10 MEP students. This demographic is uniquely vulnerable due to the intensive nature of their program and the psychological transitions of adolescence. This study addresses this gap, providing the empirical foundation necessary to develop psychologically supportive, gamified interventions that target the affective roots of grammar challenges.

Theory

This study is anchored in the integration of three psychological frameworks that explain how emotional states and developmental stages influence linguistic performance.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Prof. Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that successful language acquisition depends not only on linguistic input but also on the learner's emotional state (Yaoqing, 2021). Anxiety acts as a primary component of this "filter"; when students experience high stress during grammar-focused tasks, the filter rises, blocking the cognitive processing and storage of grammatical rules (Yang et al., 2022). This mental blockage leads to avoidance behaviors and reduced engagement (H. Zhao et al., 2025). Conversely, high self-esteem serves as a protective factor, lowering the affective filter and allowing for more effective retention of linguistic patterns (Liang et al., 2024).

Control-Value Theory (CVT)

Pekrun's Control-Value Theory (2024) explains that achievement emotions, such as anxiety, arise from a learner's perceived control over an activity and the value they place on its outcome. Grammar anxiety is triggered when a student perceives a task (like a tense-usage test) as highly important but feels they lack the mastery to control the result. This uncertainty creates intense anxiety, which is often compounded by low self-esteem. A negative self-concept contributes to feelings of inadequacy and a fear of negative evaluation, directly hindering the learner's performance (Yu et al., 2022).

Adolescent Development and Gender Mediation

The Grade 10 level represents a critical developmental juncture where self-esteem is fundamentally tied to academic engagement (Zhao et al., 2021). During this stage, "test anxiety" becomes prominent as students face increased pressure for university preparation. This anxiety is often mediated by gender, as societal expectations and "face-saving" pressures influence how students perceive their own efficacy and internalize language-related stress (Kutuk et al., 2021). For these adolescents,

receiving low scores or facing public correction in grammar classes can significantly diminish self-worth, creating a cycle of high anxiety and inadequate self-esteem development (Atifnigar, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

The figure below shows the conceptual framework of the study.

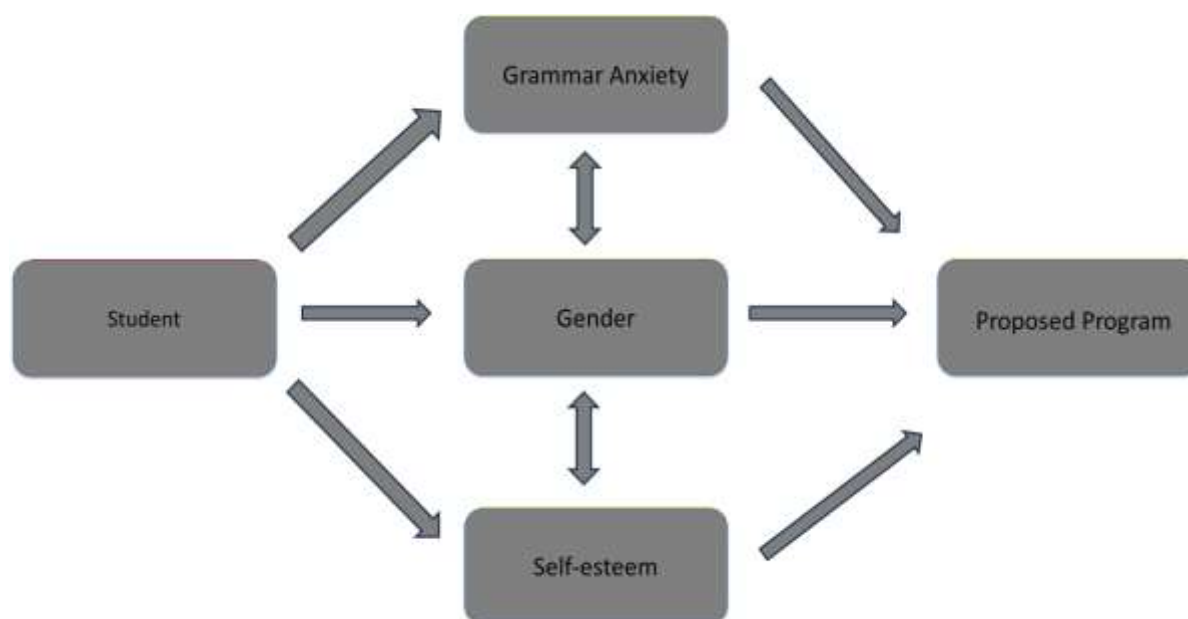


Figure 1 The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study, visually represented in Figure 1, displays the key variables and their hypothesized relationships within the Thai Mini-English Program (MEP) context.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study, illustrating the hypothesized relationships among the key variables. The student serves as the central subject of the study, whose learning experiences may influence psychological and academic factors related to language learning. The framework identifies grammar anxiety as a significant variable affecting students' learning outcomes. Students may experience varying levels of grammar anxiety, which can influence their confidence and performance in language-related tasks. Grammar anxiety is shown to have an interactive relationship with academic self-esteem, indicating that students with higher academic self-esteem may experience lower levels of grammar anxiety, while those with lower self-esteem may feel more anxious when dealing with grammar-related activities.

Furthermore, the framework suggests that grammar anxiety plays an important role in shaping or informing the program. This implies that the findings regarding students' grammar anxiety and their academic self-esteem may serve as a basis for the development or enhancement of an instructional program designed to address these

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challenges. It proposes that students' experiences contribute to the development of grammar anxiety and academic self-esteem, and that understanding the interaction of these variables can guide the design of programs aimed at improving students' grammar learning and reducing anxiety in the language classroom.

Research Questions

This study's primary goal was to investigate the connection between Grade 10 students' self-esteem and their degree of grammar anxiety in a particular government school in Chonburi, Thailand. It answered the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the grade 10 MEP students in terms of gender?
2. What is the overall level of grammar anxiety among grade 10 MEP students?
3. What is the overall level of self-esteem among grade 10 MEP students?
4. Is there a significant difference between grammar anxiety or self-esteem among the grade 10 students when they are grouped according to gender?
5. Is there a significant relationship between grammar anxiety and self-esteem among the grade 10 students?
6. What program can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the grammar anxiety and the self-esteem of the Grade 10 MEP students.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean scores for grammar anxiety and self-esteem when the Grade 10 MEP students are grouped according to gender.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational survey design to estimate the association between grammar anxiety and self-esteem. This design was chosen for its suitability in assessing the relationship between two variables within an authentic educational setting without manipulating them. The research did not aim to establish cause-and-effect but rather to identify the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables.

Scope and Delimitation

This quantitative correlational study investigates the relationship between grammar anxiety and self-esteem among a sample of 59 Grade 10 students in the Mini English Program (MEP) at Singsamut High School in Chonburi, Thailand. The data will be collected through a survey-based methodology during the second academic semester of the 2025-2026 school year. The research is specifically focused on these two variables and their relationship within this particular school and student population.

The study is delimited in several ways. It is confined to a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design and will not include a longitudinal component to track changes over time or incorporate qualitative methods such as interviews or observations to explore the lived experiences of the students. Furthermore, the research is limited to an examination of grammar-specific anxiety and self-esteem and will not explore other types of anxiety (e.g., speaking, writing) or other self-belief constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, self-concept).

Definition of Terms

For a better understanding of the study, the following terms are hereby operationally defined:

Grammar Anxiety: A specific form of language-related apprehension characterized by tension and self-doubt during the acquisition and application of grammatical structures, operationally measured by the Grammar Anxiety Inventory (GAI).

Self-Esteem: A student's overall evaluation of their self-worth and academic value during the developmental shifts of adolescence, operationally measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

Mini English Program (MEP): A bilingual educational framework in Thailand where English is the medium of instruction for 8–14 periods per week, aimed at achieving CEFR A2 to B1 proficiency levels.

Cultural Context: The specific social environment of Singsamut High School, influenced by Thai collectivist principles and the local Navy/Marine Corps communal values, which prioritize harmony and "face-saving" in academic performance.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Data for this quantitative correlational study were collected using two main instruments: the Grammar Anxiety Inventory (GAI) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Both instruments were prepared in the Thai language to ensure maximum comprehension and accurate response from the Grade 10 Mini English Program (MEP) participants.

Grammar Anxiety Inventory (GAI)

The Grammar Anxiety Inventory (GAI) was an adapted version of the Grammar Anxiety Scale (GAS) originally developed by ÇeliKpazu and Taşdemir (2022). This adaptation was necessary to ensure the instrument's language was appropriate for the CEFR A2-B1 proficiency level of the Grade 10 EFL students.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was utilized to measure the students' overall self-esteem. The RSES is a widely recognized and globally validated 10-item measure of self-acceptance and self-worth. For the purpose of this research, the researcher utilized the pre-existing and validated Thai translation of the scale.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tools were employed to treat the data, with all computations processed at a significance level of ($p < 0.05$):

1. **Frequency and Percentage Distribution:** This was used to determine the demographic profile of the Grade 10 MEP students (SOP 1) and to classify the levels of anxiety and self-esteem.
2. **Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation (SD):** These were utilized to determine the overall level of grammar anxiety (SOP 2) and self-esteem (SOP 3).
3. **Independent Samples t-test:** This was used to determine if a significant difference exists between genders regarding grammar anxiety and self-esteem (SOP 4).
4. **Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r):** This was employed to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between grammar anxiety and self-esteem (SOP 5).

Table 2 & 3
Statistical Interpretation of Mean Scores

Points Value	Statistical Limits	Descriptive Equivalent	Descriptive Equivalent
5	4.50 – 5.00	Very High Anxiety	Very High Self-Esteem
4	3.50 – 4.49	High Anxiety	High Self-Esteem
3	2.50 – 3.49	Moderate Anxiety	Moderate Self-Esteem
2	1.50 – 2.49	Low Anxiety	Low Self-Esteem
1	1.00 – 1.49	Very Low Anxiety	Very Self-Esteem

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents information about the results of the study and the analysis and interpretation of data gathered with the use of the adapted statistical measures. The presentation includes a narrative discussion of the results and implications of the data gathered which are illustrated in tables.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the students in Terms of Gender

Male/Female	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	39.70%
Female	35	60.30%
Total	58	100.00%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the Grade 10 Mini English Program (MEP) students at Singsamut High School in terms of gender. Out of the initial 59 target participants, 58 (98%) successfully completed the survey. One student was absent and no refusals were recorded. The data shows, the majority of the participants were Female ($n=35$), representing 60.3% of the total sample. Male participants comprised the

remaining 39.7% ($n = 23$). This gender distribution indicates a higher female representation within the MEP group studied.

Table 2 Overall Level of Grammar Anxiety Among Grade 10 MEP Students

Grammar Anxiety Indicators	WM	DR
1. I feel tense when the teacher asks me a grammar question.	3.05	MA
2. My heart beats fast before a grammar test or activity	3.41	HA
3. I feel stressed when I need to use correct English grammar quickly.	3.55	HA
4. I worry that my teacher will think badly of me if I make a grammar mistake.	3.19	MA
5. I am afraid my friends will laugh at my grammar errors.	2.81	MA
6. During grammar tests or activities, my mind goes blank and I forget what I studied.	3.00	MA
7. I get nervous and anxious because I can't think clearly when I need to use the correct grammar.	3.28	MA
8. I keep my sentences short in English, so I don't make grammar mistakes.	3.16	MA
9. I feel nervous when I have to choose the correct verb tense in English.	3.16	MA
10. I feel uneasy when I have to display my grammatical errors on the interactive board for others to see.	3.19	MA
Composite Mean	3.18	MA

Table 2 illustrates the weighted mean and the descriptive rating for each item in the Grammar Anxiety Inventory (GAI), providing a detailed view of the specific triggers affecting the Grade 10 MEP students.

As illustrated in Table 2, the overall level of grammar anxiety among Grade 10 MEP students is Moderate ($M=3.18$). Analysis of individual indicators reveals that students experience the highest levels of anxiety during time-sensitive tasks, specifically when needing to use correct English grammar quickly (Item 3, $M = 3.55$) and immediately before a grammar test or activity (Item 2, $M = 3.41$). These items both fall within the High Anxiety category.

This relates to Pekrun's (2024) Control-Value Theory (CVT), which is strongly supported by the finding that students are most anxious before tests and during time-sensitive tasks. CVT states that when students believe they have little influence over future achievement events, like passing a fast-paced grammar test, their anxiety levels naturally increase.

Furthermore, this anxiety is deeply coupled to the "Correctness Culture" in Thailand identified by Imsa-Ard (2020). Interestingly, while Imsa-Ard notes a systemic fear of negative evaluation, the data reveals that for these MEP students, the fear is strictly top-down. The indicator related to social anxiety among peers (Item 5, $M=2.81$) returned the lowest mean score, indicating that their primary stressors are driven by formal teacher evaluation and time constraints, rather than a fear of their friends' judgment.

The presence of this anxiety among the Grade 10 MEP cohort aligns with broader national trends. As noted in Chapter II, Thanachoksawang et al. (2024) established that measurable psychological distress and anxiety are documented realities for high school

students across Thailand. However, because the overall grammar anxiety recorded in this study is Moderate ($M=3.18$) rather than severe, it may not be entirely unfavourable. According to Kienngam et al. (2022), an appropriate level of anxiety can actually yield a positive effect on academic achievement.

Therefore, the moderate stress generated by the rigorous MEP environment might be acting as a functional academic driver—keeping students alert and motivated—provided it is balanced by protective factors and does not escalate into paralyzing distress.

Table 3 Overall Level of Self-Esteem Among Grade 10 MEP Students

Self-Esteem Indicators	WM	DR
1. I am happy with myself most of the time.	3.84	HSE
2. Sometimes, I feel like I am a bad person. (R)	3.24	MSE
3. I feel that I have many good things about me	3.45	HSE
4. I can do things (School work Or Activities) as well as most other people.	3.50	HSE
5. I feel I don't have much in my life to be proud of. (R)	3.47	HSE
6. I definitely feel useless sometimes. (R)	3.50	HSE
7. I feel that I am important and have value, just like everyone else.	3.41	HSE
8. I believe I should respect myself more	4.16	HSE
9. When I look at my life, I feel like a failure. (R)	3.59	HSE
10. I have a good and positive view of myself.	3.74	HSE
Composite Mean	3.59	HSE

Table 3 illustrates the weighted mean and the descriptive rating for the ten indicators of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). To ensure statistical consistency, where a higher mean represents higher self-esteem, items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 were reverse scored prior to analysis. This adjustment aligns the negative statements with the positive direction of the scale, allowing for an accurate calculation of the overall level of self-esteem among the participants.

As illustrated in Table 3, A high level ($M=3.59$) of Self-Esteem is experienced by the students of Grade 10 MEP. The highest mean was recorded in item 8. “I believe I should respect myself more” ($M=4.16$) which indicates a strong innate desire for self-respect and self-worth. This high score is particularly notable as it approaches the 'Very High' threshold, indicating that the students have a healthy internal foundation of self-worth.

However, Item 2, “Sometimes, I feel like I am a bad person.” ($M=3.24$) yielded the lowest weighted mean, falling into the Moderate Self-Esteem range. Because this item was reverse scored, a lower mean relative to the other items suggests that students occasionally struggle with self-critical thoughts or feelings of guilt. The gap between these two items suggests that while students have a high ideal for self-respect (Item 8), they still encounter occasional moments of self-doubt (Item 2) in their daily lives.”

The high composite mean ($M = 3.59$) indicates, despite the moderate levels of grammar anxiety previously noted, the students generally maintain a healthy and positive self-image. This suggests that their academic stressors in grammar do not significantly diminish their overall sense of personal value.

As noted by Plumwongrot and Pholphirul (2021), the Thai cultural context, which often integrates Buddhist mindfulness and religious activities, contributes to a uniquely strong sense of self-worth among adolescents. Additionally, Liang et al. (2024) theorizes that high self-esteem serves as a psychological protective factor. The students' high innate desire for self-respect appears to shield them, preventing their moderate grammar anxiety from completely eroding their overall self-image.

Table 4 Difference in the Overall Level of Grammar Anxiety and Self-Esteem Among Grade 10 Students When Grouped According to Gender

Profile	Mean	Computed T-Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Grammar Anxiety					
Gender					
Male	2.98	-1.58	0.120	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
Female	3.31				
Self-Esteem					
Gender					
Male	3.56	-0.31	0.755	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
Female	3.61				

Table 4 shows the comparison of variables in males and females; To accomplish this an Independent Samples t-test was performed to determine if gender influences grammar anxiety and self-esteem.

The comparison of Grammar anxiety and genders returned a *p*-value of 0.120. Since this value is greater than the alpha value of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) which states that there is no significant difference between male and female students is therefore **not rejected**. Although the mean score for females ($M=3.31$) was slightly higher than their male ($M=2.98$) counter parts, the difference is not statistically significant.

Additionally, the analysis of self-esteem scores resulted in a *p*-value of 0.755. This high *p*-value indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the self-esteem levels of male ($M = 3.56$) and female ($M = 3.61$) students. Consequently, the null hypothesis is **not rejected**.

The findings suggest that for this specific group of Grade 10 MEP students, gender is not a determining factor in their levels of grammar anxiety or their overall self-esteem. Both groups appear to experience these psychological variables in a similar manner.

This lack of meaningful difference in either gender direction highlights an interesting contrast to some of the existing literature. While Kienngam et al. (2022) found that female students were identified as reporting more general distress compared to males, however in our study, a difference was not detected with regard to specific grammar anxiety. The reason behind this equalization can probably be justified by the Mini-English Program (MEP) environment depicted in Chapter II. The academic pressure is evenly distributed among MEP, with all female and male learners equally exposed to the same amount of English-medium instruction of 14 hours per week (SingsamutSchool,

2024) which in turn leads to uniform psychological responses among both male and female learners.

Table 5 Relationship Between the Grammar Anxiety and Self-Esteem Among Grade 10 Students

Variable	Computed Pearson Value	Description	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Grammar Anxiety vs Self-Esteem	-0.291	Low Correlation	0.027	Reject the Hypothesis	Significant

Note: $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ – significant, $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ – not significant

Scale of correlation coefficient	Value
$0 < r \leq 0.19$	Very Low Correlation
$0.2 \leq r \leq 0.39$	Low Correlation
$0.4 \leq r \leq 0.59$	Moderate Correlation
$0.6 \leq r \leq 0.79$	High Correlation
$0.8 \leq r \leq 1.0$	Very High Correlation

Table 5 presents the correlation analysis between grammar anxiety and self-esteem among the 58 Grade 10 MEP students. To test the correlational hypothesis, the data were subjected to the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

The computed Pearson r value is -0.291, which indicates a low negative correlation between the Grammar anxiety and Self-Esteem. This negative sign signifies an inverse relationship: as students' levels of grammar anxiety increase, their overall self-esteem tends to decrease.

The inverse relationship established between grammar anxiety and self-esteem affords support for Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Yang et al., 2022) at an empirical level. Stress levels can reach a point when it acts as a cognitive block preventing grammatical input and causing strain on the learner's self-concept. Additionally, this indeed supports the adolescent developmental risks as discussed earlier by Atifnigar (2024), who mentions that continuous testing and fear of poor performance in foreign language classes can negatively impact directly on the overall self-esteem of a student. Furthermore, this adds evidence that the linguistic challenges often encountered by Thai EFL students (Kampookaew, 2020) constitute not just an academic burden, but one with measurable psychological implications.

The statistical significance of this relationship is confirmed by a p -value of **0.027**. Since this p -value is less than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) stating that there is no significant relationship between grammar anxiety and self-esteem is **rejected**.

This significant finding suggests that while the relationship is considered "low" or weak, there is a clear psychological link between how students perceive their grammatical proficiency and how they feel about their overall self-worth. Consequently, addressing

grammar-related stress may serve as a contributing factor in supporting the students' general self-esteem within the MEP environment.

Summary of findings

Among the important findings of this research were:

1. Out of a total of 58 participants in the Grade 10 MEP, the majority were female, representing 60.3% ($n=35$) of the sample, while male participants accounted for 39.7% ($n=23$). This indicates a higher female representation within this specific linguistic program.
2. The students exhibited a Moderate overall level of grammar anxiety ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.80$). Detailed analysis revealed that the highest triggers of anxiety were time-sensitive tasks ($M = 3.55$) and pre-test apprehension ($M = 3.41$), which fell into the High Anxiety category. Fear of peer judgment scored the lowest ($M = 2.81$), indicating anxiety is heavily driven by academic evaluation rather than social dynamics.
3. Participants demonstrated a High overall level of self-esteem ($M = 3.59$). The strongest indicator was the students' innate desire for self-respect ($M = 4.16$), highlighting a robust internal foundation of self-worth despite academic pressures.
4. The Independent Samples t -test revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female students regarding their levels of grammar anxiety ($p = 0.120$) or self-esteem ($p = 0.755$). Both genders experience the pressures and psychological states of the MEP environment uniformly.
5. A significant weak negative correlation ($r = -0.291$, $p = 0.027$) was established between grammar anxiety and self-esteem. This inverse relationship proves that as grammar anxiety increases within the classroom, a student's overall self-esteem tends to decrease, confirming a measurable psychological impact of language learning stress.
6. A proposed program, entitled, "Level UP: A digital Gamification Framework for Confidence Building" was proposed.

Conclusions

Based on the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Gender is not a determining factor in how MEP students experience grammar-related stress or perceive their self-worth. The intense academic environment of the MEP affects all demographics equally, necessitating unified, class-wide interventions.
2. Grammar anxiety is a prevalent psychological barrier among Grade 10 MEP students, primarily triggered by a top-down "correctness culture," time constraints, and formal teacher evaluation, rather than the fear of being mocked by peers.
3. High self-esteem serves as a vital psychological protective factor for these students. They possess a strong sense of personal value that remains resilient, though occasionally tested by moments of academic self-doubt.

4. There is a verifiable inverse relationship between grammar anxiety and self-perception. Even though the correlation is mathematically weak, it is statistically significant, demonstrating that linguistic difficulties actively erode a student's confidence and overall sense of worth.
5. The results show that in language learning environments, grammatical anxiety has a quantifiable impact on students' psychological health. Higher levels of grammatical anxiety are linked to poorer levels of self-esteem among Grade 10 pupils, according to the statistically weak negative connection. The statistical significance shows that grammar-related stress can nevertheless have an impact on students' confidence and self-perception in the classroom, despite the relationship's poor strength.
6. Through incremental achievement and understanding of grammar ideas, the proposed curriculum aims to boost pupils' confidence. The application promotes active engagement and lessens the fear of making mistakes by turning grammar tasks into interactive, game-based learning experiences. In the end, the Level UP framework functions as an intervention that enhances grammar acquisition while simultaneously promoting greater self-worth and a more optimistic outlook on language acquisition.

Recommendations

In light of the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Implement the 4-week "Level UP" Digital Gamification Framework to systematically combat the high anxiety surrounding formal evaluation and time limits. By transitioning from high-stakes testing to anonymous, mastery-based platforms like Blooket and Wayground, the department can effectively lower the affective filter and remove the incapacitating pressure associated with the local "correctness culture."
2. Actively utilize "redemption" features and immediate, private feedback instruments on digital learning platforms to reframe their grammatical mistakes. Guiding learners to view structural errors as mastery opportunities rather than academic failures will help protect and further elevate their high self-esteem.
3. Integrate universal, low-stakes formative assessments into the standard curriculum. Because the data indicates that grammar anxiety and self-esteem levels affect both genders equally, a unified pedagogical approach is sufficient to alleviate test-taking pressure for the entire student cohort without the need for gender-segregated interventions.
4. Pivot pedagogical strategies away from traditional, deductive grammar drilling toward more inductive, communicative approaches. Removing the rigid focus on immediate grammatical perfection will prevent the loss of student self-worth, directly addressing the negative correlation established between grammar anxiety and self-esteem.
5. Provide dedicated professional development and sustainable institutional funding for educational technology integration. Ensuring educators are highly competent

in executing digital gamification tools will guarantee that the psychological well-being of students is prioritized alongside traditional academic performance metrics.

6. Adopt a mixed-methods approach in subsequent research by incorporating qualitative student interviews and classroom observations. Expanding the methodology beyond quantitative surveys will help researchers deeply understand the sociocultural root causes of grammar anxiety and capture the multifaceted lived experiences of the bilingual students.
7. Realign internal departmental assessments to reflect communicative competence rather than strict grammatical accuracy. Aligning classroom testing rubrics with the Ministry of Education's CEFR guidelines will reduce the universal high-stakes testing anxiety achieved by national exams like the O-NET.
8. Cultivate a "safe-to-grow" classroom ecosystem that intentionally dismantles the fear of top-down evaluation. Establishing clear classroom social contracts that normalize making and correcting linguistic errors will reduce the specific anxieties students harbour regarding formal teacher judgment.
9. Expand the implementation of digital gamification frameworks across multiple grade levels (e.g., Grades 10–12) and other bilingual tracks. Conducting longitudinal tracking of these groups will allow administrators to measure the long-term effectiveness of gamified interventions on both language acquisition and psychological resilience over a multi-year period.
10. Embed continuous affective monitoring protocols into the daily instructional routine to navigate the sustained intensity of the Mini English Program (MEP) curriculum. Rather than isolated check-ins, educators should utilize brief, digitized "emotional thermometers" or exit tickets at the conclusion of each unit to track variations in student anxiety in real-time. This long-term data will allow teachers to identify increased stress patterns and implement pedagogical mental palate cleansers or low-stakes review sessions whenever the collective emotional state of the class signals a risk of cognitive burnout.

Proposed Program

The data analysis reveals that Grade 10 MEP students experience a moderate level of grammar anxiety ($M=3.18$) and maintain a high level of self-esteem ($M=3.59$). A significant negative correlation ($r=-0.291$, $p=0.027$) was established, confirming that as linguistic anxiety increases, student self-worth significantly decreases. Notably, the Grammar Anxiety Inventory (GAI) identified that time-pressured evaluations and the fear of negative peer judgment were the primary stressors for these learners. Since no significant differences were found between genders, a unified, targeted intervention is proposed for the entire Grade 10 MEP group.

To bridge this gap, the "Level UP" Digital Gamification Framework is proposed. This framework is a clinical pedagogical intervention designed to dismantle the "correctness culture" and lower the Affective Filter through a structured, 4-week implementation

Program Title: “Level UP”: A digital Gamification Framework for Confidence building!

Objectives

1. To dismantle the "Correctness Culture" by reframing traditional, high-stakes grammar assessments into anonymous "game quests" that decouple academic error from personal identity and peer judgment.
2. To mitigate time-pressured anxiety by utilizing teacher-paced and asynchronous digital moderation, allowing students to process complex grammatical structures without the stress of immediate, rapid-fire response times.
3. To foster academic self-efficacy and engagement through team-based collaborative modes that protect and leverage the students' existing high self-esteem, ensuring that social support structures mitigate individual performance anxiety (Zhao et al., 2021).
4. To eliminate cognitive "blocking" (the blank-mind phenomenon) by providing immediate, private feedback and redemption features that allow for mastery-based learning rather than punitive evaluation.
5. To provide a gender-inclusive learning environment that recognizes and addresses the varying ways gender socialization influences language learning stress and efficacy (Kutuk et al., 2021).

Time Frame

- **Duration:** 8 Weeks
- **Frequency:** Twice a week during the English Fundamentals classes.
- **Session Length:** 15–20 minute gamified micro-sessions integrated at the beginning (as warm-ups) or end (as formative assessments) of the 50-minute class period.

Budget & Resources:

- **Cost:** Minimal to Zero Budget.
- **Software:** Utilization of free-tier or school-sponsored educational technology platforms (e.g., Wayground, Blooket, Kahoot!). If a premium upgrade is desired for advanced analytics, an estimated budget of 1,500 THB per semester is recommended.
- **Hardware:** Existing school infrastructure (projector, interactive whiteboard, internet access) and students' personal smartphones or school-provided tablets.
- **Incentives:** 500 THB allocated for non-academic rewards (e.g., digital badges, stickers, or small stationary items for "Quest Winners").

4. Facilitators:

- **Lead Facilitator:** The MEP English Fundamentals Teacher (responsible for creating the digital quizzes and facilitating the sessions).
- **Co-Facilitators:** MEP Program Coordinators (responsible for observing the sessions, monitoring student engagement, and ensuring the program aligns with the broader curriculum).

Table 6: Proposed Action Plan: Digital Toolkit

Week	Focus	Activity & Digital Tool	Target Outcome
1	Anonymity	Blooket (Randomized Nicknames): Competitive grammar sprints where identities are hidden.	Reduces Fear of Negative Evaluation by detaching the "mistake" from the student's social identity.
2	Mastery	Quizizz (Homework Mode): Asynchronous "quests" allowing for multiple retries on grammar modules.	Targets Time-Pressured Anxiety, which was identified as the #1 stressor in the GAI results.
3	Social Support	Team-Mode Gamification: Group-based scoring where success is shared collectively.	Boosts Social Self-Esteem by replacing individual competition with collaborative engagement (Zhao et al., 2021).
4	Efficacy	AI-Powered Storytelling: Using AI to generate narratives based on specific grammatical tenses.	Enhances Academic Self-Efficacy by shifting focus from rigid rules to functional, creative use (Kutuk et al., 2021).
5	Agency & Choice	Digital "Quest Logs" (Choice Boards): Students choose between three different ways to demonstrate grammar mastery (e.g., a video, a digital poster, or a quiz).	Reduces "Blank Mind" Phenomenon. Providing choice reduces the "fight or flight" response, allowing students to select the medium where they feel most competent.

6	Affective Monitoring	Digital "Stamina" Checks: Using brief anonymous exit tickets on online platforms to track class anxiety levels.	Prevents Cognitive Burnout. Allows for real-time adjustments to ensure the MEP intensity does not overwhelm student self-esteem.
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The decision to use digital gamification tools directly addresses the pedagogical gaps identified in Chapter II. This framework supports a necessary shift from anxiety-inducing deductive methods toward a student-driven inductive approach. As highlighted by Atifnigar (2024), understanding the specific social pressures students face is a prerequisite for reducing foreign language anxiety; therefore, allowing students to discover rules through active engagement fosters a more resilient academic self-concept.

Furthermore, the transition to low-stakes, anonymous environments actively dismantles the "Correctness Culture" prevalent in Thai EFL contexts. By offering instant, private feedback via digital platforms, the program aligns with Kutuk et al. (2021), ensuring that corrective feedback is delivered in a non-threatening manner that protects student self-esteem. In effect, the "Level UP" program—supported by the developmental insights of Zhao et al. (2021)—artificially lowers the Affective Filter, allowing students to engage with complex grammar safely and without fear.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study was conducted with strict adherence to ethical research protocols. Formal permission was obtained from the Director of Singsamut School, and written informed consent was secured from parents and guardians. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw without consequence, and the potential risks and benefits. To ensure complete anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected. Confidentiality was maintained through password-protected electronic files and physical data storage in a secure, locked cabinet accessible only by the researcher. All data will be destroyed following the completion of the study. Furthermore, the researcher affirms the integrity of the findings, ensuring accurate reporting and proper citation of all sources. While Generative AI was consulted for editorial and structural guidance, the core intellectual property and data analysis remain the independent work of the researcher.

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