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Reducing Anxiety among EFL Learners through Gamification: An Empirical Study of Instructional Impact

Virawan Amnouychokanant* 

Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University
 Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Abstract. Language learning anxiety is a significant issue faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of gamified instruction using ClassPoint on English language learning anxiety among 46 Thai EFL university students enrolled in the English for Information Professionals course. The intervention was conducted over one academic semester. Quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests via SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis using a coding process verified by inter-rater reliability. Quantitative data from pre- and post-intervention anxiety scales indicated a statistically significant reduction in the learners' anxiety across all dimensions, including classroom environment anxiety, self-confidence anxiety, language skills anxiety, and academic achievement anxiety. Qualitative feedback further revealed that the anonymous participation and game-like features enhanced learners' motivation, confidence, and enjoyment. Despite some concerns about competition and time constraints, the majority of the learners positively perceived the integration of ClassPoint. Overall, gamification proved to be an effective pedagogical tool for reducing EFL anxiety and enhancing engagement in this higher education context.

Keywords: language learning anxiety; EFL learners; gamification; ClassPoint; higher education

1. Introduction

English is the dominant language of academia and is widely used in research, publications, and higher education worldwide. Proficiency in English enables students to access academic resources, gain admission to top universities, and secure international scholarships (Fadhil et al., 2025). It is also essential in the global job market, where employers value strong English communication skills

*Corresponding author: Virawan Amnouychokanant; amnouychokanant_v@su.ac.th

for collaboration and efficiency in multinational settings (Ting et al., 2017). However, learners in non-English-speaking countries face challenges such as limited exposure, pronunciation difficulties, reliance on literal translation, and lack of confidence, which hinder effective language acquisition (Ahsan et al., 2020; Alharbi, 2021; Mridha & Muniruzzaman, 2020). Thai students in Information and Library Science require English proficiency to access global academic resources and develop essential professional skills. English is key for understanding international standards, research, and best practices, and it supports further study and global career opportunities (Franco & Roach, 2018).

However, many students struggle due to weak English foundations, difficulty with specialized terminology, and overreliance on translation tools, leading to misunderstandings. A limited English-speaking environment further restricts skill development (Noom-Ura, 2013). Even proficient students often face anxiety and low confidence in public speaking, hindering their communication and long-term language growth (Bhattachaiyakorn & Phettakua, 2023).

At Silpakorn University, the elective course “English for Information Professionals” is offered to Information and Library Science majors and Information Management minors. It aims to build English communication skills and introduce professional terminology. However, many students reported anxiety and low confidence in using English. Course evaluations from the first semester of 2023 indicated that while students appreciated the content, they felt overwhelmed by excessive exercises and stressed when called on individually due to uncertainty about their answers.

Given these challenges, there is a need for alternative instructional approaches that facilitate language development while alleviating students’ anxiety and fostering their confidence in language use. In response, the researcher examined the integration of educational technology—specifically, gamification—as a pedagogical strategy. Gamification has been shown to enhance motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes across diverse educational contexts (Ariati & Iswahyuni, 2023; Krath et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2023; Riar et al., 2022; Zeybek & Saygı, 2024).

Although gamified platforms such as ClassDojo, Duolingo, Kahoot, and Quizizz have been widely used to promote active participation (Zainuddin et al., 2020), empirical research on ClassPoint remains scarce, particularly in formal education and language learning, thereby revealing a gap in the literature. This study addresses this gap by investigating the potential of ClassPoint to reduce language learning anxiety among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students enrolled in the English for Information Professionals course.

The research questions guiding this investigation were as follows:

RQ1: What are the preferred instructional approaches in the English for Information Professionals course, as perceived by the EFL learners?

RQ2: What are the differences in English learning anxiety levels among EFL learners before and after gamified instruction using Class Point?

RQ3: What are the EFL learners' perceptions of gamified instruction using Class Point?

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Language Learning Anxiety among EFL Learners

English language learning anxiety is a major challenge for EFL learners, often stemming from fear of mistakes, low confidence, and fear of criticism (Al Hanake, 2024; Hajiyevea, 2024; Hanifa, 2018; Salihoglu, 2024). This anxiety negatively affects learners by reducing their confidence and hindering the development of effective language skills (Al Hanake, 2024; Dikmen, 2021; Hajiyevea, 2024; Wang et al., 2022). One major cause of anxiety is the fear of making mistakes. Learners often feel pressured to speak with grammatical accuracy and native-like pronunciation, leading to hesitation or avoidance of speaking (Dewi, 2023; Nurilahi & Suhartono, 2022). This fear disrupts communication and limits practice in speaking and listening—two essential skills for language development (Salihoglu, 2024).

Lack of confidence in one's English abilities is another key factor. Learners who see themselves as less proficient—especially when comparing themselves to more fluent peers—often experience self-doubt and avoid participation (Cao et al., 2024; Tridinanti, 2018). This can lead to stress, reduced motivation, and limited engagement in language learning activities (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021; Hashemi, 2011; Wu et al., 2022). Fear of criticism is also a major source of anxiety. Learners often worry about being misunderstood or judged for using incorrect vocabulary or pronunciation, leading to reluctance to speak in public (Kasbi & Elahi Shirvan, 2017; Tsang, 2022). Mixed-proficiency classrooms can heighten this anxiety, as students may feel inferior to their peers and avoid active participation (Li et al., 2021; Welesilassie & Nikolov, 2024).

Anxiety has a multifaceted impact on EFL learning, significantly reducing motivation and confidence (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021). Learners who fear using English often avoid real-life practice, limiting language development and interaction (Dewi, 2023). Anxiety-related stress can also affect concentration and academic performance, hindering long-term success (Li et al., 2021). To address these challenges, several strategies can help reduce anxiety in EFL learning. Creating a supportive and low-pressure environment encourages learners to express themselves without fear (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Chen, 2024). Setting small, achievable goals can build confidence, while promoting the idea that mistakes are a natural part of learning helps reduce fear and increase active participation.

2.2 Gamified Instruction

As digital technologies and student expectations evolve, educators increasingly incorporate game elements—such as points, badges, levels, and leaderboards—into instructional design to create more interactive learning environments (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Zhang & Hasim, 2023). Gamified instruction blends traditional teaching methods with game mechanics to enhance student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Unlike game-based learning,

which relies on actual games, gamified instruction integrates game elements like points and badges into lessons to boost motivation and engagement. When used effectively, these elements support learner autonomy, aligning with self-determination theory (Kapp, 2016; Su & Cheng, 2015).

Research shows that gamified instruction enhances intrinsic motivation and engagement by transforming routine classroom activities into game-like experiences (Coffland & Huff, 2022; Murillo-Zamorano et al., 2023). It can also improve performance and motivation (Domínguez et al., 2013) and is especially effective for EFL learners by reducing anxiety, promoting risk-taking, and improving communication in low-stress settings (Zhang & Hasim, 2023).

Despite its benefits, gamified instruction is not without challenges. One common concern is that gamification may lead to extrinsic motivation, where learners focus on rewards rather than the learning itself (Hanus & Fox, 2015). In addition, poor design or superficial use of game elements may fail to produce meaningful learning outcomes. Hence, educators must align game mechanics with clear pedagogical goals to ensure that gamification enhances—rather than distracts from—the educational content (Kapp, 2016; Landers, 2014). Furthermore, the effectiveness of gamified instruction can vary based on learners' differences, including age, prior experience, cultural background, and personal learning preferences (Oliveira et al., 2023).

Gamified instruction offers a promising way to boost engagement, motivation, and deeper learning. With its growing role in education, this approach can make learning more effective and enjoyable. This study applies gamification to reduce learner anxiety in the English for Information Professionals course. This study adopted ClassPoint to facilitate gamified instruction due to its seamless integration with PowerPoint, which allows smooth lesson delivery and minimizes technical issues that may cause anxiety (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Ananayo, 2024; Maqsudi et al., 2024). ClassPoint was chosen for its effectiveness in reducing learner anxiety and boosting motivation.

2.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model guiding this study is grounded in three key theoretical frameworks: Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Flow Theory, and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Theory (FLCAT), which together provide a comprehensive understanding of how psychological mechanisms interact with gamification elements to influence learners' emotional and cognitive experiences in language learning environments. According to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002), individuals experience higher intrinsic motivation when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled.

In gamified learning contexts, elements such as points, badges, and levels are associated with increased perceived competence, while anonymous participation and real-time feedback promote autonomy and self-regulation (Sailer et al., 2017). Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) explains the optimal experience of complete immersion and enjoyment when individuals perceive a balance

between challenge and skill. Gamified environments that offer clear goals, adaptive levels, and immediate feedback can foster such flow states, thereby enhancing motivation and sustained engagement (Hamari et al., 2016). Meanwhile, FLCAT (Horwitz et al., 1986) highlights the impact of classroom environment, self-confidence, language skills, and academic achievement on learners' anxiety levels. It identifies primary sources of anxiety in language learners—including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Research suggests that gamified strategies involving anonymous participation, collaborative activities, and low-stakes feedback can effectively reduce anxiety and encourage risk-taking without fear of criticism (Zainuddin et al., 2020). Based on the above theoretical frameworks, the conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 1.

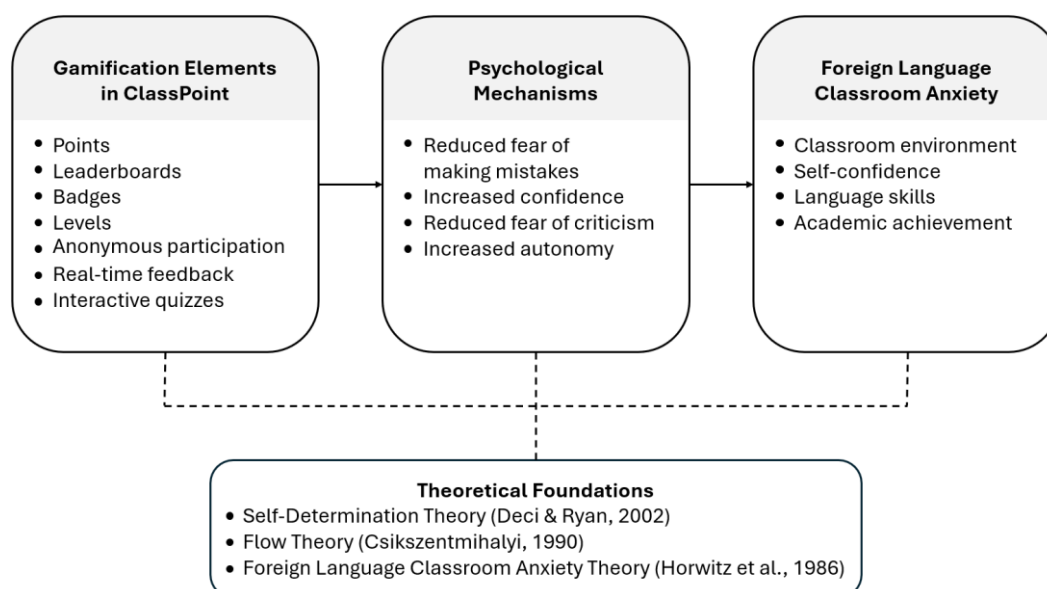


Figure 1: Conceptual model showing key constructs and theoretical foundations

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Participants

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to examine various dimensions of the research questions. The sample comprised 46 undergraduate students (5 males and 41 females) enrolled in the English for Information Professionals course. All participants were third- and fourth-year students from the Faculty of Arts at Silpakorn University in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, with 34 majoring in Information and Library Science and 12 minoring in Information Management.

3.2 Research Instruments

This research used the following measurement tools: 1) The Needs Analysis Questionnaire for Learners in the English for Information Professionals Course; 2) The English Classroom Anxiety Scale; and 3) The Questionnaire on Gamified Instruction Using ClassPoint. The details regarding these tools are as follows.

1) The Needs Analysis Questionnaire for Learners in the English for Information Professionals Course (see Appendix 1): This questionnaire was designed as an open-ended instrument to allow the learners to freely express their opinions regarding the instructional design of this course. Its purpose was to enable the instructor to align instructional activities more closely with learners' needs and preferences.

2) The English Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix 2): This scale was developed to assess the anxiety levels of EFL learners before and after the instructional intervention. It was adapted from the widely recognized Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986), which has been extensively used in numerous studies (Al-Saraj, 2014; Liu, 2019). To ensure the instrument comprehensively captured the factors contributing to learners' anxiety within the Thai EFL context, several modifications were made. These included revising the language to better fit the cultural and educational setting of Thailand, removing redundant items, and restructuring the scale into four clearly defined dimensions: 1) classroom environment anxiety, 2) self-confidence anxiety, 3) language skills anxiety, and 4) academic achievement anxiety.

To ensure cultural appropriateness and content validity, the adapted scale underwent expert review by specialists in English language teaching and educational psychology familiar with the Thai context. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of Thai EFL learners to assess clarity, relevance, and comprehension of the items. Based on feedback, further refinements were made to improve understanding and relevance.

The finalized instrument consists of 16 items, with four items per dimension, measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The interpretation of mean scores is as follows: 4.50–5.00 indicates very high anxiety; 3.50–4.49 indicates high anxiety; 2.50–3.49 indicates moderate anxiety; 1.50–2.49 indicates low anxiety; and 1.00–1.49 indicates very low anxiety. The overall reliability of the adapted scale was 0.89. The reliability coefficients for the individual dimensions were as follows: 0.71 for classroom environment anxiety, 0.81 for self-confidence anxiety, 0.86 for language skills anxiety, and 0.81 for academic achievement anxiety.

3) The Questionnaire on Gamified Instruction Using ClassPoint (see Appendix 3): This questionnaire was developed to examine the impact of using the ClassPoint tool in the English for Information Professionals course, with a focus on its potential role in reducing learners' anxiety. In designing the questionnaire items, the researcher employed clear and straightforward questions to ensure ease of understanding. In addition, the questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice and open-ended items to obtain both quantitative data and in-depth qualitative insights.

3.3 Procedure

At the beginning of the course, the instructor administered two instruments: the English Classroom Anxiety Scale and the Needs Analysis Questionnaire for

Learners in the English for Information Professionals Course. These tools provided an understanding of the causes of the learners' anxiety and enabled the instructor to design learning activities that were better aligned with their needs and expectations. Based on the results, the G.A.M.E.S. Instructional Framework (Figure 2) was developed to increase learner motivation and reduce anxiety through gamified instructional activities. The framework consists of five stages—Goal Setting, Activation, Motivation, Experience, and Success & Application—designed to guide instructional planning using gamification principles (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Hong et al., 2024; Huang & Hew, 2018; Nyholm, 2024).

Gamified instruction using ClassPoint was implemented in the English for Information Professionals course over one academic semester (Figure 3). Furthermore, learners' activity data on ClassPoint, such as correct answers, correct percentage, and average time taken, were exported as reports to track individual learning progress and development (Figure 4). At the end of the course, learners completed the English Classroom Anxiety Scale and the Questionnaire on Gamified Instruction Using ClassPoint.

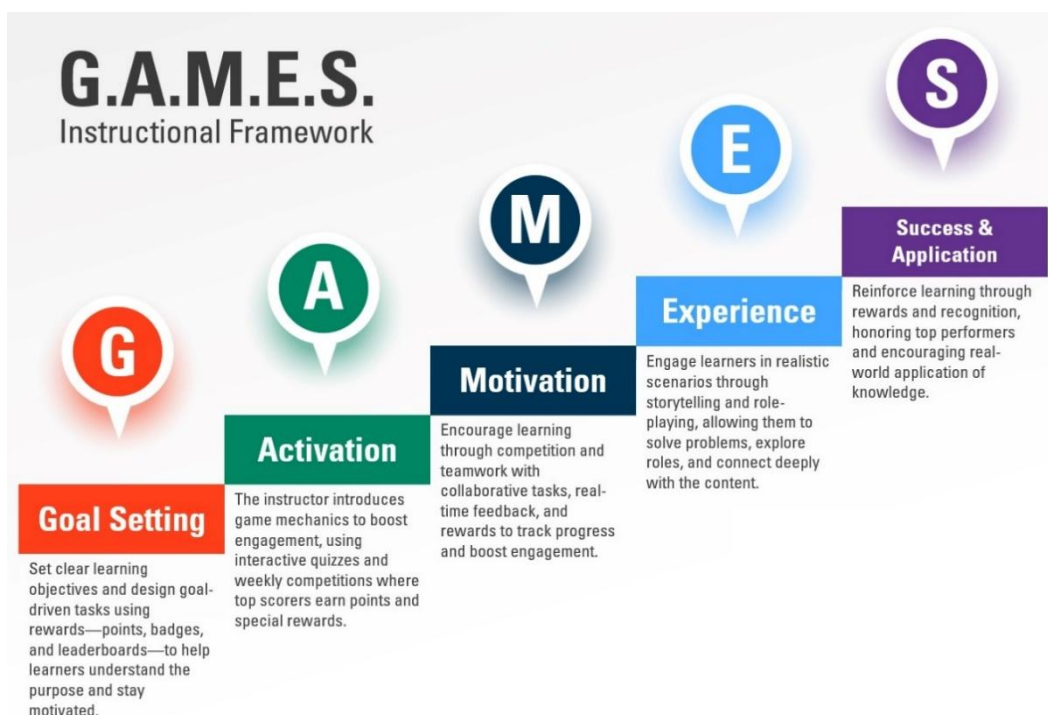


Figure 2: A five-step instructional framework grounded in the principles of gamification

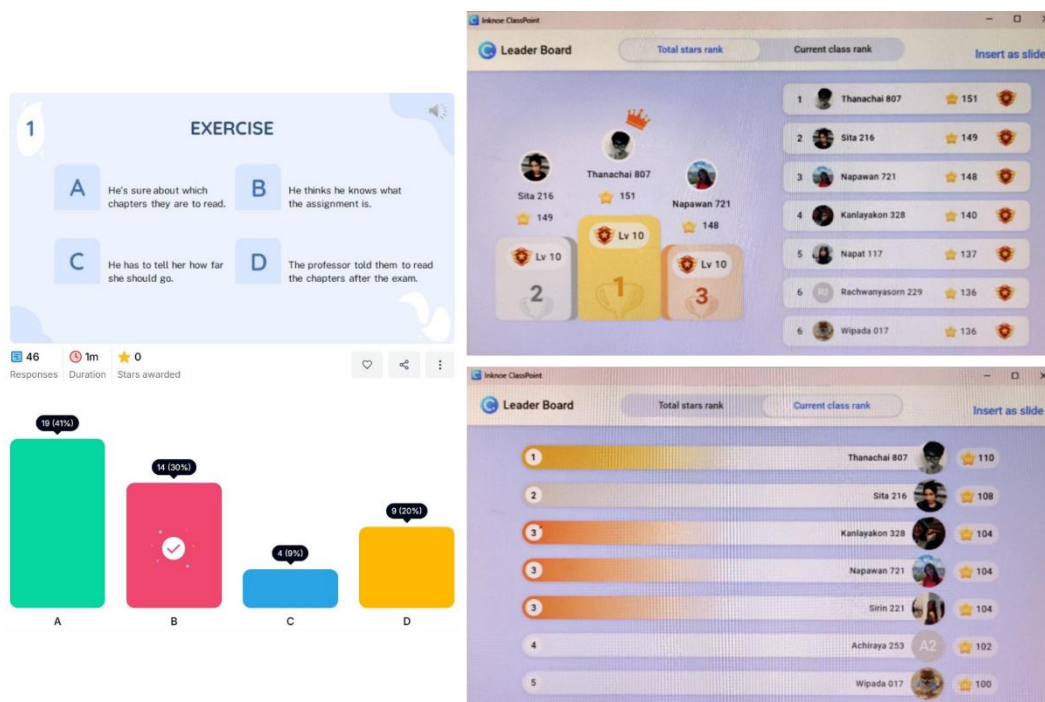


Figure 3: Screenshots of Class Point-integrated activities

Quiz summary - Protected... - Saved to this PC											
File Home Insert Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Automate Help											
A1											
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
	Name	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
1	Difficulty level	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
2	Correct answer(s)	C	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
3	Correct percentage	39.47%	63.16%	79.49%	81.58%	74.36%	76.92%	89.74%	74.36%	87.5%	85%
4	Average time taken	00:12	00:17	00:08	00:12	00:15	00:13	00:06	00:20	00:09	00:10
5											
6	1 Sita 216	B	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
7	2 Thanachai 807	B	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
8	3 Pannita 236	C	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
9	4 Sirin 221	C	C	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
10	5 Tanitcha 180	C	D	A	D	A	D	A	C	D	A
11	6 Thanapon 428	C	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
12	7 Napawan 721	C	A	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
13	8 Chonwarang 374	C	D	A	D	A	C	C	C	D	A
14	9 Achiraya 253	B	D	B	D	A	A	A	C	D	A
15	10 Elimelech 264	B	C	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
16	11 Thanaphon 440	B	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
17	12 Thanyaphon 454	A	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	C
18	13 Jeerada 353	B	A	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
19	14 Wisaruta 624	A	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
20	15 Rachwanyasorn 229	B	D	B	D	A	A	B	A	D	A
21	16 Rawisara 600	C	D	A	D	A	C	A	C	D	A
22	17 Thitinan 394	B	D	A	B	A	C	A	C	D	A
23	18 Tassawan 434	B	D	A	B	A	C	A	C	D	A
24	Quiz summary	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10

Figure 4: Sample Excel report exported from ClassPoint, containing individual learners' activity data

4. Results

4.1 Preferred Instructional Approaches in the English for Information Professionals Course

Based on the findings from the needs analysis, the key points in each area are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Coding results for the needs analysis questionnaire

Themes	Codes	Number of mentions by the learners
Anxiety related to studying the English for Information Professionals course	Lack of confidence in English language skills	18
	Fear of participating in class	12
	Fear of being compared with classmates	9
	Anxiety about instructional approaches and assessments	7
Preferred instructional approaches that helped the learners feel more relaxed and less anxious	Game-based activities	24
	Group activities (e.g., brainstorming)	11
	Voluntary participation	8
	No forced public speaking	7
	Less emphasis on grades	7
	Friendly classroom atmosphere	6
	Small rewards or incentives	4
	Individual tasks	2
	Short breaks during class	2
Preferred instructional approaches in the English for Information Professionals course	A low-pressure learning environment	22
	A focus on all four language skills	18
	Small competitive or reward-based activities	25
	Various classroom activities	15
	Inclusion of practical vocabulary and expressions	10
	A fair and balanced assessment	8

The analysis revealed that learners' anxiety stemmed from various factors. Many students reported that their English foundation was inadequate, particularly in listening skills and vocabulary. A lack of confidence in speaking or responding to questions was also common, driven by fears of making mistakes, giving incorrect answers, being embarrassed by their pronunciation or accent, and comparing their abilities with those of their peers. Regarding preferred instructional approaches, most learners reported that game-based activities helped them feel more relaxed and less anxious. These activities emphasized collaboration over confrontation, reduced the pressure to perform individually, and often placed less emphasis on grades. Learners appreciated instructional approaches that did not require them to speak in front of the class, offered greater learner autonomy, and fostered a less stressful classroom environment.

Additionally, many learners expressed a desire for the English for Information Professionals course to adopt an active learning approach. They preferred a variety of classroom activities that offered a balance of games, group activities, and traditional lectures. They also valued a relaxed classroom atmosphere that encouraged the confident use of English. Furthermore, learners suggested that the course should address all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and include practical vocabulary and expressions, particularly

those related to information science. Small competitive activities or reward-based challenges were viewed as effective in enhancing learner engagement, while a fair and balanced assessment system—with appropriate weighting for homework, projects, and examinations—was also preferred.

4.2 Impact of Gamified Instruction Using ClassPoint on English Learning Anxiety among EFL Learners

In this study, quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests via SPSS. After participating in gamified instruction using ClassPoint, learners showed a statistically significant decrease in their overall level of English learning anxiety at the 0.01 level, as detailed in Table 2. The intervention significantly reduced learners' anxiety levels, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.68$), indicating a substantial impact of the gamified instruction on lowering anxiety. Further analysis across specific anxiety dimensions revealed reductions in classroom environment anxiety, self-confidence anxiety, language skills anxiety, and academic achievement anxiety, as shown in Table 3. However, the relatively high standard deviation of the post-test scores indicates that, although anxiety decreased across all dimensions, some learners may still have experienced a considerable degree of anxiety after the intervention.

Table 2: Results of the learners' anxiety levels in the English for Information Professionals course

Items	M	SD	t	p
Anxiety levels (pre)	4.04	0.293	12.616	<0.001**
Anxiety levels (post)	2.69	0.649		

** $p \leq 0.01$

Table 3: Results of the learners' anxiety levels in the English for Information Professionals course (categorized by dimension)

Dimensions of anxiety	M	SD	t	p
Classroom environment (pre)	4.10	0.499	12.201	<0.001**
Classroom environment (post)	2.46	0.742		
Self-confidence (pre)	3.99	0.536	12.439	<0.001**
Self-confidence (post)	2.32	0.676		
Language skills (pre)	4.05	0.581	2.784	0.008**
Language skills (post)	3.59	0.966		
Academic achievement (pre)	4.02	0.403	7.057	<0.001**
Academic achievement (post)	2.90	0.995		

** $p \leq 0.01$

4.3 EFL Learners' Perceptions of Gamified Instruction with ClassPoint

The analysis of the Questionnaire on Gamified Instruction Using ClassPoint revealed that almost all of the learners (96%) had no prior experience with this tool before enrolling in the course. Thus, integrating ClassPoint into the teaching and learning activities provided learners with a new learning experience. During the course, all the learners used ClassPoint to respond to questions and participate in classroom activities. Regarding anxiety reduction, the majority (85%) of learners strongly agreed that using ClassPoint reduced their anxiety. Specifically, 54% reported the highest level of anxiety reduction, with 41%

reporting a high level of anxiety reduction. Most learners also reported that ClassPoint reduced their fear of giving incorrect answers and anxiety about English communication, as shown in Figure 5. When asked which features of ClassPoint were the most effective in reducing anxiety, the learners rated the anonymous answering feature as the highest (Figure 6).

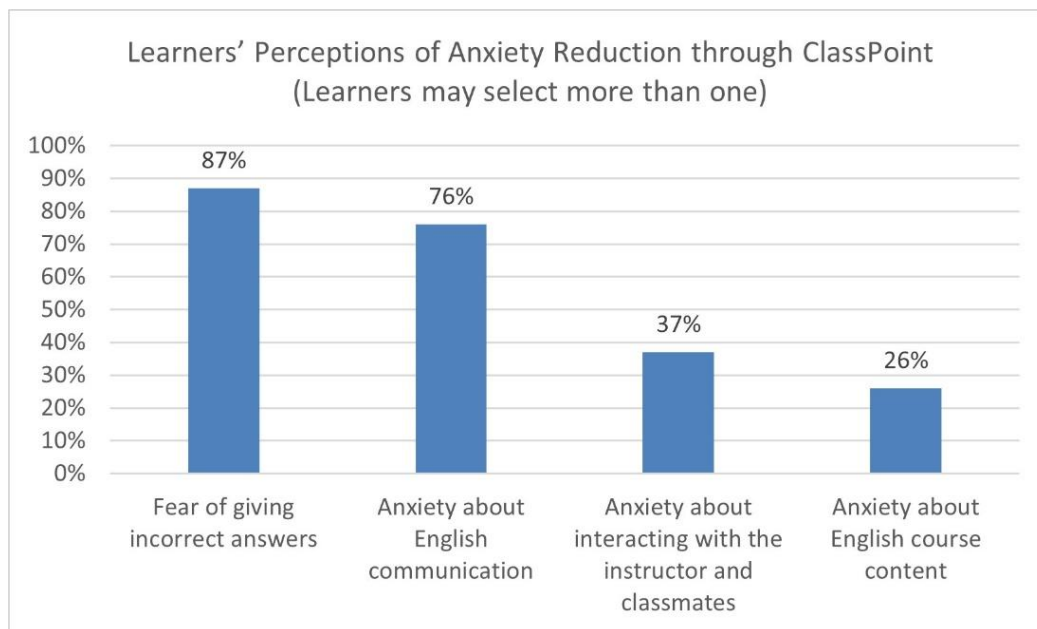


Figure 5: Learners' perceptions of anxiety reduction through ClassPoint

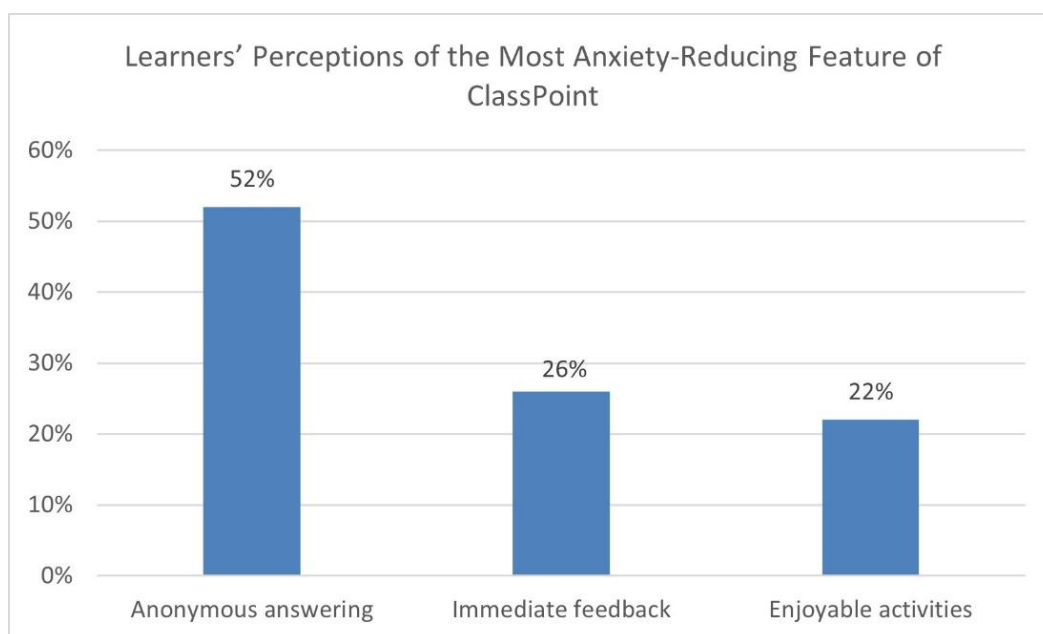


Figure 6: Learners' perceptions of the most anxiety-reducing feature of ClassPoint

In this study, the learners' perceptions of the integration of ClassPoint into the English for Information Professionals course were analyzed through thematic

analysis using a coding process verified by inter-rater reliability and categorized as follows:

Table 4: Positive impacts of using ClassPoint

Themes	Sub-themes	Representative quotes
1. Emotional and Psychological Support	- Promoted greater confidence in responses	<i>"Since the responses were anonymous... it was less stressful than answering aloud."</i> (Learner 1)
	- Reduced anxiety in class participation	<i>"I did not have to say the answers out loud... I would not have been embarrassed."</i> (Learner 5)
2. Motivation and Engagement	- Encouraged participation through competition	<i>"The stars and levels... allowed us to compare rankings."</i> (Learner 1)
	- Fostered motivation with points/rewards	<i>"There were points to collect. I felt motivated to try harder."</i> (Learner 9)
3. Learning Enjoyment and Relaxation	- Made learning feel like a game	<i>"It felt like I was playing a relaxing game."</i> (Learner 2)
	- Reduced stress from learning	<i>"It made the learning experience more relaxing."</i> (Learner 12)
4. Cognitive and Learning Benefits	- Supported learning development	<i>"It helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses."</i> (Learner 1)
	- Facilitated self-assessment and review	<i>"It felt like a review and showed what we had learned."</i> (Learner 10)
5. System Usability and Appeal	- Easy to use and accessible	<i>"It was easy to use."</i> (Learner 9)
	- Attractive and well-organized interface	<i>"I was impressed... made Q&A sessions more enjoyable."</i> (Learner 16)
6. Innovation in Pedagogy	- Encouraged participation more than theory-based learning	<i>"It made lessons more engaging... better than learning only through theory."</i> (Learner 10)
	- Broke from traditional classroom routines	<i>"It helped break away from the traditional framework..."</i> (Learner 18)

The learners' reflections suggest that integrating ClassPoint into classroom instruction enhanced their learning experience on multiple levels (Table 4). Beyond reporting enjoyment or ease of use, students expressed a deeper sense of psychological comfort and empowerment. Anonymity and real-time interaction reduced fear of judgment and encouraged participation. Gamified features such as rankings, stars, and point systems transformed the classroom into a space of friendly competition and intrinsic motivation. The activity no longer felt like an obligation, but a playful, low-pressure experience that boosted engagement and attention.

Many learners demonstrated growing metacognitive awareness, using the tool not only to track their performance but also to identify areas for improvement. This indicates a shift toward active learning and self-assessment, where students become active agents in their educational journey. Furthermore, the platform's novelty and interactive design revitalized the learning environment, breaking

away from rigid, lecture-based formats and appealing to students' digital sensibilities. Altogether, the use of ClassPoint served not only as a participation tool but also as a catalyst for building confidence, sustaining interest, and fostering deeper cognitive and emotional engagement in learning.

Table 5: Negative impacts of using ClassPoint

Themes	Sub-themes	Representative quotes
1. Psychological Pressure	- Stress from scoring and ranking	<i>"Knowing my score was low made me feel discouraged." (Learner 19)</i>
	- Pressure from time-limited questions	<i>"Time limits... created pressure for me." (Learner 21)</i>
2. Environmental and Technical Challenges	- Background noise interference	<i>"There was background noise... difficult to hear." (Learner 22)</i>
	- Technical instability	<i>"The website lagged slightly... caused minor disruptions." (Learner 27)</i>
3. Time Management Issues	- Activities took too long	<i>"Activities... made me feel tired and bored." (Learner 23)</i>
	- Inability to take breaks	<i>"I could not leave the room... had to stay focused." (Learner 25)</i>
4. Repetition and Monotony	- Repetitive use of activities	<i>"The activities... felt monotonous and boring." (Learner 26)</i>
5. Limitations in Learning Style Support	- Limited access to learning materials afterward	<i>"I wanted to review slides later... not sure if it was possible." (Learner 17)</i>
	- Hindered notetaking	<i>"Answering questions prevented me from noting down details." (Learner 18)</i>

The learners' reflections reveal that although ClassPoint introduced an engaging and interactive learning environment, it also brought about unintended negative consequences that affected learners both emotionally and cognitively (Table 5). The gamified scoring system, though designed to motivate, inadvertently created pressure and a sense of inadequacy among some students, particularly those who perceived themselves as underperforming. Rather than fostering healthy competition, the awareness of low scores led to feelings of discouragement and diminished self-confidence.

Additionally, the structured timing and continuous nature of the activities imposed a sense of rigidity, limiting students' flexibility and causing fatigue or boredom, especially during listening tasks. Technical challenges, though minor, disrupted the flow of learning and pointed to the platform's limitations in ensuring a smooth educational experience. Moreover, the lack of access to post-lesson materials and the incompatibility of the tool with learners' preferred study habits, such as note-taking, further reduced its effectiveness for some individuals. These insights emphasize the need to balance interactivity with emotional and practical considerations to create an inclusive digital learning environment that caters to diverse learner needs.

5. Discussion

This study revealed that the integration of ClassPoint gamification into the English for Information Professionals course led to a notable reduction in foreign language anxiety (FLA) and fostered a more supportive learning environment. This aligns with previous research suggesting that gamified approaches can enhance learner motivation, engagement, and emotional well-being (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Hong et al., 2024; Zhang & Yu, 2022). The findings underscore the potential of gamification not only as an engagement tool but also as a pedagogical strategy for addressing affective barriers to language learning.

Several psychological mechanisms likely contributed to these outcomes. Anonymous participation and real-time feedback, enabled by ClassPoint's interactive features, appeared to reduce learners' fear of negative evaluation—a core component of FLA (Horwitz et al., 1986). This is consistent with studies demonstrating that low-stakes, interactive activities can create a safe space for participation (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023). Additionally, gamification elements such as points, levels, leaderboards, and progression tracking may have provided extrinsic motivation that, over time, supports the development of intrinsic motivation (Hong et al., 2024; Zhang & Yu, 2022).

Cultural factors may also have amplified these effects. In the Thai educational context, where collectivist values and face-saving concerns can heighten learners' reluctance to participate (Gunawan, 2016; Hofstede Insights, 2023; Mulder, 2016), features that allow discreet contribution and equitable recognition may be particularly beneficial. By minimizing the social risks associated with speaking in front of peers, gamification can help overcome culturally embedded participation barriers (Komin, 1991; Malikhao & Servaes, 2017).

The findings suggest that gamified instruction effectively reduces learner anxiety and incorporates universally motivating elements—such as points, levels, and anonymous participation—that can enhance engagement across various educational contexts (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Hong et al., 2024). However, cultural factors—such as Thai learners' emphasis on respect for authority, harmony, and collectivism (Gunawan, 2016; Hofstede Insights, 2023; Mulder, 2016)—may influence preferences for collaborative over competitive gamification features, indicating that some aspects of gamification effectiveness are context-specific. Consequently, while gamification holds broad pedagogical potential, its application should be adapted to align with cultural and contextual nuances to maximize anxiety reduction.

Nonetheless, the study also identified nuanced learner responses. While most participants viewed competitive elements positively, some expressed discomfort with public leaderboards, echoing concerns in prior studies about the potential for gamification to induce pressure or disengagement (Almeida et al., 2023; Hanus & Fox, 2015). This suggests that careful design and optional participation in competitive features may be necessary to maximize benefits while minimizing drawbacks.

While the current study demonstrates that gamification effectively reduces learner anxiety, it is important to consider the long-term sustainability of these effects (Deterding et al., 2011). The initial reductions in anxiety may be influenced by the novelty of gamified activities, which can enhance engagement and motivation temporarily (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015). However, as the novelty wears off over time, the anxiety-reducing benefits may diminish if the gamification elements are not continuously adapted or refreshed (Li et al., 2024).

Finally, the effectiveness of gamification on anxiety reduction is unlikely to be uniform across learners. Individual differences—including proficiency, personality, and learning style—may moderate responses to gamified activities. Learners with higher proficiency or more extroverted dispositions may benefit from competitive elements, whereas those with lower proficiency or more introverted traits may favor collaborative, low-pressure tasks. Customizing gamified tasks—by offering both competitive and collaborative options, adjustable difficulty levels, and opportunities for self-paced progress—may help accommodate diverse learner needs and maximize benefits for all learners (Deterding et al., 2011; Hamari & Koivisto, 2015).

6. Conclusion

Gamified instruction in the English for Information Professionals course effectively reduced learners' anxiety across multiple dimensions, including classroom environment, self-confidence, language skills, and academic achievement. A key strength of ClassPoint was its anonymous answering feature, which allowed learners to participate without fear of judgment or embarrassment. Its interactive tools—such as quizzes, polls, and leaderboards—fostered a supportive and engaging atmosphere that encouraged expression and focus on improvement rather than fear of making mistakes.

By minimizing pressure and encouraging active participation, ClassPoint significantly built learners' confidence and reduced their language learning anxiety. Beyond anxiety reduction, gamification also demonstrated broader pedagogical potential by fostering intrinsic motivation, promoting active learning, and supporting skill development through immediate feedback and self-assessment opportunities, thereby enhancing both learners' emotional well-being and sustained academic engagement.

However, some learners reported negative effects from competition, score comparison, and time constraints, which could lead to discouragement or loss of confidence. Therefore, instructors should carefully design gamified activities and select appropriate ClassPoint features while considering individual learner differences to maximize benefits, tailoring the approach to create a safe, enjoyable, and effective learning environment that supports both emotional and cognitive growth in language education. These findings suggest that thoughtfully designed gamified instruction can be adapted across diverse EFL contexts, offering a versatile strategy to support language learning goals beyond anxiety reduction.

7. Limitations and Implications

7.1 Limitations

The relatively small sample size may limit the generalizability of the results. In addition, the sample exhibited a gender imbalance, which could have influenced certain perspectives or responses. The study was also confined to a specific institutional and academic context, which may not reflect the experiences of students from other disciplines or institutions. Furthermore, potential researcher bias, particularly in the interpretation of qualitative data, cannot be entirely ruled out.

7.2 Pedagogical Recommendations

Based on the findings, instructors should consider the following guidelines when implementing gamified instruction to avoid potential negative effects:

- Avoid emphasizing "winners and losers" in classroom competitions. Instead, encourage self-competition or collaborative group activities to foster intrinsic motivation and a sense of teamwork.
- Use symbolic rewards (e.g., badges representing effort or progress) instead of material prizes. Rewards should be applied cautiously, with an emphasis on promoting learning and effort rather than competition. Praise and recognition should focus more on the learning process than solely on outcomes.
- Adjust the time allotted for answering questions to ensure it is neither too short nor too long, helping to reduce stress caused by time pressure. Additionally, incorporate short breaks during class sessions to maintain a relaxed and productive classroom atmosphere.
- Use ClassPoint as a supplementary tool rather than the sole teaching tool throughout the semester. Incorporate other creative and varied learning activities to prevent learner fatigue or boredom from repetitive formats. Alternatively, if ClassPoint is to be used throughout the semester, instructors should diversify the types of activities within the platform, which offers various interactive response formats such as multiple choice, word cloud, short answer, slide drawing, quick poll, image upload, fill in the blanks, audio record, and video upload.
- Allow learners to use pseudonyms or avatars when displaying scores or rankings to reduce pressure and create a safer, more supportive learning environment.
- Create a psychologically safe learning environment where making mistakes is normalized as part of the learning process and does not impact assessment outcomes. This can help reduce fear and anxiety among learners.
- Encourage learner feedback by allowing learners to share their opinions on the use of gamification. This feedback should inform ongoing improvements to ensure that instructional practices align with learners' needs and preferences.

7.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should consider expanding the sample to include students from a wider range of disciplines and faculties, including related fields such as

humanities and social sciences, as well as distinctly different disciplines such as science, technology, and business administration. Doing so would allow researchers to explore potential differences in the impact of ClassPoint based on learner characteristics across academic domains. Additionally, future research should consider applying gamified learning approaches to courses with different characteristics from English, such as technical and analytical subjects. Comparing the outcomes and effectiveness of gamified instruction in various contexts can help refine the use of ClassPoint to better align with subject-specific needs and learner profiles.

Finally, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the long-term impact of gamification on language learning outcomes and psychological well-being. Such studies would allow researchers to track learners' progress and emotional responses over an extended period, rather than relying solely on short-term intervention results. By observing changes in motivation, anxiety levels, engagement, and language proficiency across multiple semesters or academic years, future research can determine whether the positive effects of gamified instruction are sustained, diminished, or enhanced over time. In addition, longitudinal research can reveal delayed outcomes—such as increased language retention or shifts in learners' attitudes toward English learning—that may not be immediately evident in short-term studies.

8. References

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Appendix 1: Needs Analysis Questionnaire for Learners in the English for Information Professionals Course

Part 1: Learners' General Information

1. Gender
☐ Male
☐ Female
2. Year of Study
☐ 3rd Year
☐ 4th Year
3. Field of Study
☐ Major in Information and Library Science
☐ Minor in Information Management

Part 2: Learners' Opinions about the English for Information Professionals Course

1. Do you feel pressured or anxious about studying the English for Information Professionals course? Please explain.
2. What types of instructional approaches would help you feel relaxed and reduce anxiety when learning English?
3. How do you wish the instructional approaches in the English for Information Professionals course to be organized?

Part 3: Additional Suggestions

Appendix 2: English Classroom Anxiety Scale

Part 1: Learners' General Information

1. Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Year of Study ☐ 3rd Year ☐ 4th Year
3. Field of Study ☐ Major in Information and Library Science
☐ Minor in Information Management

Part 2: Information Related to Anxiety in English Language Classrooms

Items	Level of agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Classroom Environment Anxiety					
1.1 I am afraid of strict teachers who put too much pressure on students.					
1.2 I feel nervous when I am called on to answer questions in English class.					
1.3 I feel anxious and nervous when I am called on to answer questions in English class.					
1.4 I am afraid that my classmates will laugh at me when I speak English.					
2. Self-confidence Anxiety					
2.1 I lack confidence when speaking English in class.					
2.2 I lack confidence in my English accent and pronunciation.					
2.3 I feel shy and hesitant to volunteer to answer questions in English class.					
2.4 I often think that my classmates are better at English than I am.					
3. Language Skills Anxiety					
3.1 I am afraid to speak English because I am worried that people will not understand me.					
3.2 I lack vocabulary and expressions, which is a major barrier to effective communication.					
3.3 I often have difficulty understanding English because of the accents, pronunciation, and speed of native speakers.					
3.4 Communicating in English is difficult because I have to translate my thoughts from Thai to English, which slows down my speech and makes it sound unnatural.					
4. Academic Achievement Anxiety					
4.1 I worry that the exam content will differ from what I have prepared.					
4.2 I still feel anxious even when I have thoroughly prepared for my English exams.					
4.3 I am concerned that I will fail English class.					
4.4 I will feel very upset and stressed if I do not receive a good grade in English.					

Part 3: Additional Suggestions

Appendix 3: Questionnaire on Gamified Instruction Using ClassPoint

Part 1: Learners' General Information

1. Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Year of Study ☐ 3rd Year ☐ 4th Year
3. Field of Study ☐ Major in Information and Library Science
☐ Minor in Information Management
4. Experience using ClassPoint before taking the English for Information Professionals course
☐ Frequently used
☐ Occasionally used
☐ Never used

Part 2: Effects of ClassPoint on Learners' Anxiety

1. In which activities have you used ClassPoint in the English for Information Professionals course? (You may choose more than one)
☐ Answering questions in class
☐ Participating in classroom activities
☐ Communicating between the instructor and students
☐ Others (please specify):
2. Do you agree that ClassPoint reduces your anxiety?
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
3. To what extent do you think ClassPoint reduces your anxiety in the English for Information Professionals course?
☐ Very high
☐ High
☐ Moderate
☐ Low
☐ Very low
4. In which aspects do you think ClassPoint helps reduce your anxiety? (You may choose more than one)
☐ Fear of giving incorrect answers
☐ Anxiety about using English for communication
☐ Anxiety about interacting with the instructor and classmates
☐ Anxiety about English course content
☐ Others (please specify):
5. Which feature of ClassPoint do you think is most helpful in terms of reducing your anxiety in the English for Information Professionals course?
☐ Anonymous answering
☐ Immediate feedback
☐ Interactive and enjoyable activities
☐ Others (please specify):

Part 3: Learners' Perceptions of the Use of ClassPoint in Instructional Activities

Please share your thoughts on how ClassPoint has been used to support teaching and learning in the English for Information Professionals course.