

T.R.
BOLU ABANT İZZET BAYSAL UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION



**INVESTIGATING GRIT LEVELS OF PREPARATORY
SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE**

MASTER OF ARTS

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BOLU, OCTOBER - 2024

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Ali Emir Kaan AYYILDIZ

ABSTRACT

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Grit has recently gained attention among researchers studying second language acquisition as one of the individual difference variables. This study investigated the grit levels of preparatory school university students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The main objective is to determine whether factors, such as gender, age, academic department, English proficiency level and preparatory exam results led to different grit levels and to find out some of the prominent factors that affect their grit. The study population consisted of students from two state universities during the 2023-2024 spring semester, with a sample of 330 students (172 males, 158 females). In addition to quantitative data collected via questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 students, transcribed, and analyzed. These interviews explored factors influencing grit, specific events impacting students' grit, and coping strategies. The Persistence Scale (Mutlu, 2017) was employed to gather data on the students' grit levels. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 23 software. No significant differences were observed for gender, age, proficiency scores, or department. However, significant differences were found for the duration of English education and English proficiency levels. Those with longer English education and higher proficiency (B2) exhibited higher grit. The qualitative findings from the study indicated that teacher support, interest in English media, and a supportive learning environment significantly enhanced students' grit in learning English. Conversely, factors such as personal challenges, peer influence, limited access and resources, and fear of failure were identified as major negative influences.

KEYWORDS: Grit, Perseverance, Motivation, English as a Foreign Language, Second Language Acquisition

ÖZET

YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN HAZIRLIK OKULU ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN AZİM DÜZEYLERİNİN İNCELEMESİ

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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BOLU ABANT İZZET BAYSAL ÜNİVERSİTESİ

LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ

YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI

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Azim, özellikle ikinci dil edinimi alanında çalışan araştırmacılar arasında son zamanlarda dikkat çekmeye başlamıştır. Bu çalışma, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen hazırlık okulu üniversite öğrencilerinin azim düzeylerini incelemiştir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, cinsiyet, yaş, akademik bölüm, İngilizce yeterlilik düzeyi ve hazırlık sınavı sonuçları gibi faktörlerin öğrencilerin azim düzeyleri üzerinde farklılıklara yol açıp açmadığını belirlemek ve öğrencilerin azmini etkileyen önemli faktörleri ortaya çıkarmaktır. Çalışma, 2023-2024 bahar döneminde iki devlet üniversitesinden toplam 330 öğrencinin (172 erkek, 158 kadın) katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Anketler yoluyla toplanan nicel verilere ek olarak, 20 öğrenciyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmış, bu görüşmeler yazıya dökülerek analiz edilmiştir. Bu görüşmelerde öğrencilerin azmini etkileyen faktörler, azimlerini etkileyen önemli olaylar ve başa çıkma stratejileri incelenmiştir. Öğrencilerin azim düzeylerini ölçmek için Sebat Ölçeği (Mutlu, 2017) kullanılmıştır. Veriler SPSS 23 programıyla analiz edilmiştir. Cinsiyet, yaş, yeterlilik puanları veya bölüm açısından anlamlı farklılıklar gözlenmemiştir. Ancak, İngilizce eğitim süresi ve İngilizce yeterlilik düzeyleri bakımından önemli farklılıklar tespit edilmiştir. Daha uzun süreli İngilizce eğitimi alan ve daha yüksek yeterlilik seviyesine (B2) sahip olan öğrencilerin daha yüksek azim gösterdiği belirlenmiştir. Çalışmanın nitel bulguları, öğretmen desteği, İngilizce medyaya ilgi ve destekleyici bir öğrenme ortamının öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenme azmini önemli ölçüde artırdığını ortaya koymuştur. Buna karşılık, kişisel zorluklar, akran etkisi, kaynaklara sınırlı erişim ve başarısızlık korkusu gibi faktörler, öğrencilerin azmini olumsuz yönde etkileyen önemli etmenler olarak belirlenmiştir.

ANAHTAR KELİMELELER: Azim, Sebat, Motivasyon, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce, İkinci Dil Edinimi

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ANOVA	: Analysis of Variance
EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
FLE	: Foreign Language Enjoyment
L2	: Second Language
LSD	: Least Significant Difference
SLA	: Second Language Acquisition
SPSS	: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
WTC	: Willingness To Communicate



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1. INTRODUCTION

The following section presents the background, aim, and significance of the study and establishes the foundation for investigating how grit influences the English learning process. Additionally, key terms used in the present study are defined at the end of the chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is an important field in language learning with many important practical implications. With globalization becoming ever more prevalent and the growing regularity of cultural interactions, there is an increasing need among non-native people for skilled English speakers (Gui, 1984). Therefore, EFL education becomes an essential field because it allows for international cooperation and cross-cultural communication (Davitishvili, 2017). The study of EFL is international and crosses linguistic boundaries to include certain social nuances, instructional approaches as well as cognitive processes (Hyland, 2009). Exploration of various factors, such as language competency levels (Köksal & Ulu, 2019), learner motivation (Gulbinskiene & Dubovičienė, 2015) and the socio-environmental contexts that influence language acquisition (Keumala et al., 2019) is necessary for an in-depth understanding of EFL education.

There are many factors affecting the language learner. In the context of English language learning, one of the more prominent and well-researched topics is motivation, and it is often argued that motivation has several effects on a language learner's success and improvement (Ames, 1990). Motivation has long been recognized as a cornerstone in second language acquisition (SLA), shaping the trajectory of language learning for decades (Gardner, 1985; Ushioda, 2012).

Crump (1995) defines motivation as the stimulation of students' minds to actively engage with instruction. He adds that the key aims of motivation include fostering excitement, interest, and enthusiasm towards the learning process. Similarly, motivation is generally described as a form of energy that inspires and channels behavior towards a defined objective (Schunk et al., 2012; Simpson & Balsam, 2016). According to Schunk et al. (2012), motivation can be understood as the process by which purposeful actions are initiated and maintained. Their interpretation assumes the following: (a) motivation is a process, not just a result;

(b) it involves goals driving action; (c) it demands effort, persistence and choice and (d) it is triggered by psychological processes, such as expectations and emotions. Traditionally, motivation is approached as a concept arising from internal drives and can be influenced by reinforcement and certain stimuli (Cook & Artino, 2016).

Some of the most important works in the field of second language (L2) learning motivation are the works of Gardner and Lambert in the 1960s and the 1970s, which laid the foundation in order to understand the relationship between motivation and language acquisition (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1965, 1972). In the following years, Gardner (1985) underscored the essential link between motivation and tenacity in developing language proficiency. Afterwards, Dörnyei et al. (1998) provided learners with certain strategies to sustain their commitment and enthusiasm throughout their language learning process by researching the relationship between motivation and SLA. More recently, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) put forward theories that examined the motivations behind task engagement, such as self-determination theory and intrinsic motivation theory.

The literature illustrates various factors that provide the drive for individuals to participate in language learning tasks. Grit has been regarded among these factors as a concept that is relatively new to the overarching discourse in the field, and Duckworth et al. (2007) coined the term "grit" to describe the commitment for long-term goals through challenges and frustrations. In her book, Duckworth (2016) argues that the path to success is not natural talent but a combination of persistent effort and determination. She identifies the following six key elements that contributed to the development of grit: hope, effort, precision, passion, ritual, and prioritization. Furthermore, she suggests that grit can exist regardless of an individual's IQ or circumstances.

Researchers are paying more attention to how grit impacts language learning, especially in education (Bashant, 2014; Duckworth, 2013). It is argued that grit and motivation are interconnected, as motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation and identified regulation, functions as a mediator between growth mindset and grit, enabling learners to take more active part in the act of learning (Zhao et al., 2018). According to Muenks et al. (2018), the perseverance of effort component of grit is more related to motivation and achievement than the consistency of interests. Motivation is the driving force that enables a student to

begin and continue the language learning process; on the other hand, grit is the student's determination to achieve their goals despite the difficulties they may encounter with in the language learning process (MacIntyre & Khajavy, 2021). High motivation provides an important impetus for grit; in other words, students with high motivation are more determined in the face of difficulties and devote more energy and time to the learning process in general (Chen et al., 2021; Liu, 2022).

It is often discussed that high motivation increases students' grit and motivated student make more effort to achieve their goals and are more resilient to the challenges they come across (Feng & Papi, 2020). Grit is necessary to maintain motivation because difficulties and disappointments encountered in the language learning process can reduce motivation (Teimouri et al., 2022). Motivation keeps students focused on their long-term goals while grit enables students to make continuous efforts (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). In summary, motivation is the starting point for the language learning process, and grit provides the determination to overcome the difficulties and continue the language learning process.

Another related construct that comes up as an influential factor in the foreign language process is perseverance (Mantiri, 2015; Muslimin, 2018; Wang, 2021). Perseverance is regarded as the ability to keep progressing towards a goal in spite of the difficulties (King, 2021). This trait is an element of grit and is considered to be one of the key parts of grit and achieving success (Duckworth et al., 2007). Perseverance enables individuals to pursue and achieve their long-term goals and helps them to overcome the challenges they may encounter in the learning process (Duckworth et al., 2007). Perseverance is roughly defined as the ability to be able to continuously strive to achieve the goal (Salisu et al., 2020). Perseverance is often considered the embodiment of grit and an aspect that allows individuals to overcome certain challenges and achieve their goals (Gerhards & Gravert, 2021).

Persistence is another term closely related to grit used by the researchers. Dörnyei (2020) stresses persistence as a crucial part of language learning. Moreover, research has consistently demonstrated that frequent practice and repetition, which embody persistence, are important in order to master complex grammar rules and vocabulary (Antoniou, 2016; Nation, 2017). Researchers frequently stress the importance of practice in developing language skills, such as speaking, listening, writing, and overall proficiency (Richards & Schmidt, 2013;

Spada & Lightbown, 2013; Vandergrift, 2007). Duckworth et al. (2011) also argue that grit paves the way for practices, such as deliberate practice described as a focused and planned training activity aiming to improve the specific aspects of performance.

Language learning anxiety is another important factor that has a significant effect on the EFL learning process, and grit plays a vital role in helping learners manage their anxiety and handle related challenges (Musumari et al., 2018). The following definition of foreign language anxiety by Horwitz et al. (1986) can be illuminating at this point: “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). Many different unique factors can be the cause of such anxiety. For example, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are frequent causes of anxiety often mentioned as prominent issues by language learners (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Research stresses that anxiety can have a massive detrimental effect on the performance of the students in language acquisition (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Woodrow, 2006). Moreover, high levels of anxiety can also affect the cognitive processing of individuals, impair their working memory and reduce their ability to comprehend and speak the target language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Furthermore, anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors causing language learners to keep a low profile and participate less frequently in the classroom activities, which hinders their progress and their exposure to the target language (Horwitz, 2001). The relationship between anxiety, motivation, and grit in language learning is thought to be rather complex because high levels of anxiety can potentially decrease motivation and even undermine grit to certain degrees (Teimouri et al., 2022).

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The aim of the current study is to explore the influencing factors and grit levels among university students enrolled in EFL preparatory programs at two universities in the Black Sea region of Türkiye. The primary goal is to investigate variations in the students' backgrounds, such as gender, age, field of study, proficiency in English and their exam performance. Additionally, the study aims to identify the factors that positively and negatively affect EFL learners' grit levels and to reveal the strategies they employ to cope with factors that negatively impact their grit.

To achieve this purpose, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What is the general grit level of EFL learners?
2. Do EFL learners' grit levels differ in terms of:
 - a) age?
 - b) gender?
 - c) years of English study?
 - d) English proficiency level?
 - e) academic major?
 - f) English grades?
3. What are the factors that positively affect EFL learners' grit levels?
4. What are the factors that negatively affect EFL learners' grit levels?
5. What do EFL learners do to cope with factors that negatively affect their grit levels?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The 21st century has brought significant advancements in educational contexts, with an increasing focus on non-cognitive constructs such as grit, especially in the field of language learning (Baierschmidt, 2022). Despite the increasing interest in grit within educational research, its exploration among university students learning EFL in Türkiye remains limited. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating grit specifically among EFL students in preparatory schools in the Black Sea region of Türkiye that has not been studied in relation to grit and language learning.

The study also aims to identify the factors influencing their grit and how these factors may impact their language learning. The research takes place in English preparatory classes where students often face unique challenges in their initial exposure to intensive language learning (Yıldız, 2019), which can significantly influence their development of grit. Therefore, the main purpose of the present study is to contribute to the field of EFL by exploring grit in this relatively understudied area.

1.4 The Definition of Key Terms

The keywords in the present study are grit, perseverance, motivation, EFL and SLA. By exploring these concepts and fields, the study attempts to illuminate some of the many aspects of grit.

Grit is defined as the passion and perseverance for long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Perseverance in the educational context can be defined as the commitment to reaching a specific objective even when met with obstacles (Dumdumaya, 2018). It is a characteristic that holds significance for success and other outcomes that are valued by society (Kern, 2017). This trait is associated with leadership skills and personal well-being (Merriman, 2016), and it is a key component of grit (Duckworth, 2007).

Motivation is defined as the stimulation of students' minds to actively engage with instruction (Crump, 1995).

EFL pertains to native speakers learning and using English in countries where English is not the primary language for communication (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

SLA is the process of acquiring a language, and this term includes gaining both understanding and the ability to use the language appropriately in social contexts (Juffs, 2006; Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY AND RELATED RESEARCH

This section presents a review of the relevant literature focusing on the concept of grit, its effects on language learning, its relationship with other constructs, and some of the factors and variables that influence its development.

Grit is defined as the combination of passion and perseverance toward long-term goals and has recently attracted significant attention in the field of education as an important factor that contributes to academic success (Duckworth et al., 2007). Relatively recent studies in the field have been increasingly stressing the importance of grit as a factor that predicts success (Shechtman et al., 2013; Yamashita, 2018). Disabato et al. (2019) found that the two dimensions of grit, which are perseverance of effort and consistency of interest, tend to function differently in how they impact individuals. According to these researchers, perseverance of effort reflects sustained hard work towards an individual's long-term goals and is linked to certain positive outcomes, such as well-being and personality strengths; in contrast, consistency of interest dimension of grit reflects the ability to maintain long-term focus, still on the same goals but shows weaker and sometimes even negative correlations with well-being.

Grit can be separated into two forms as domain-general grit, which refers to grit that applies broadly across various different contexts, and L2 grit, which is domain-specific to the process of learning a second or a foreign language (Oxford & Khajavy, 2021). In the context of EFL, L2 grit has significant implications as a factor that helps students sustain their efforts when they come across unique language learning challenges (Paradowski & Jelińska, 2023). Teimouri et al. (2021) assert that L2 grit is an important factor that predicts motivational behavior and language achievement. Their research also supports the use of domain-specific measures of grit that show stronger correlations with language outcomes and better reflects some of the long-term commitments necessary in L2 learning contexts and endeavors.

2.1 Distinguishing Grit from Related Constructs

It is important to distinguish grit from similar concepts, such as self-control, conscientiousness and resilience. By examining certain existing research, it is

possible to clarify the distinctions among these constructs and understand how they are defined and related to one another:

2.1.1 Self-Control

Self-control is the ability to control emotions, thoughts and behaviors (Baumeister et al., 2007). According to Diamond (2013), people with high levels of self-control also have a high level of life satisfaction derived from governing themselves and adjusting to the environment, whereas individuals who engage in antisocial behaviors have problems with prosocial adjustment (Tangney et al, 2004).

Self-control is related to grit because both are connected to academic achievement. MacCann and Roberts (2010) found high correlations between time management, grit, self-control, and academic success and claim that these traits are subdomains of conscientiousness. They noted that self-control predicted student life satisfaction beyond conscientiousness. On the other hand, Stewart (2015) revealed that self-control was significantly related to GPA, whereas grit was not.

Moreover, Vazsonyi et al. (2019) found a high correlation between grit and self-control. They concluded that comparing the two constructs was nearly impossible due to collinearity issues. Duckworth and Gross (2014) acknowledged the high correlation but asserted that grit and self-control are distinct constructs. Grit involves passion and perseverance toward long-term goals, unlike self-control, which focuses on short-term objectives and sometimes sacrifices long-term ones (Duckworth et al., 2007; Perkins-Gough, 2013).

2.1.2 Conscientiousness

The concept of grit has often been compared to conscientiousness: the Big Five trait characterized by a tendency to be responsible, hardworking, and organized (Botes et al., 2024). In one validation article of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S), Duckworth and Quinn (2009) tested for potential overlap between the trait of interest and another criterion-related measure: conscientiousness. They identified a strong correlation between the two constructs, but they also revealed that grit remained a significant predictor of educational achievement beyond conscientiousness. This suggests that while they are related, grit is often regarded as an independent construct. However, Credé et al. (2017) argued that the relationship between grit and conscientiousness can even be higher than credited

by Duckworth and Quinn (2009) due to the high inter-correlation between these traits.

On the other hand, Sudina and Plonsky (2020) examined the influence of language-specific grit and its related concepts in foreign language learning. Their study demonstrated a positive association between language-specific grit and foreign language achievement. Their research also revealed that grit and intended effort had an overlap but grit still maintained its conceptual uniqueness from the buoyancy and the industriousness aspects of conscientiousness. Moreover, the consistency of interest dimension of grit was shown to be a better predictor than the perseverance-of-effort facet in their study.

Similarly, Botes et al. (2024) found that the criticisms regarding grit being indistinguishable from conscientiousness did not apply to domain-specific L2 grit. L2 grit was shown to be a better predictor of language learning achievement and outcomes, compared to domain-general grit and even conscientiousness. Their study also indicated that L2 grit was more closely linked to L2 self, L2 engagement, and L2 academic achievement than domain-general grit. In contrast, some researchers such as Ivcevic and Brackett (2014) claim that the concept of grit remains as a subordinate personality trait that falls under the broader category of conscientiousness.

While conscientious individuals tend to demonstrate characteristics of being diligent and hardworking, gritty individuals are more known by their firm commitment and passion toward their goals, often enduring throughout tough times (Credé et al., 2017). That is because grit is known to be influenced by a variety of different factors, which include including intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and supportive learning environments (Duckworth et al., 2007). Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to learn for the sake of learning (Wu, 2003) while self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed (Zimmerman, 2000), and supportive learning environments provide students with the resources, accessibility and encouragement they need to persevere on their language learning journey (Wu et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Resilience

Resilience refers to the capacity of an individual to recover from certain setbacks and adapt to adversity and is often described as being able to recover from challenging experiences and obstacles (Meyer et al., 2020). Resilience and grit are both related to each other and important in getting through these obstacles and

achieving the individual's long-term goals and objectives; however, they are distinct constructs with unique implications for both personal and professional success (Musso et al., 2019). Resilience tends to be associated with recovering from setbacks and maintaining functionality during tough times (Shakir et al., 2020). Grit, on the other hand, emphasizes persistent and continuous effort toward a goal despite challenges (Montas et al., 2020).

Moreover, resilience is more about the immediate coping and recovery strategies (Meyer et al., 2020), whereas grit involves long-term commitment and consistency in pursuing goals (Tang et al., 2020). Also, the concepts are measured with different tools. To illustrate, resilience is measured using scales such as the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, which evaluates the individual's ability to recover from stress (Montas et al., 2020), and grit is measured with grit or persistence scales. Grit is linked to academic perseverance and the achievement of long-term goals (Stoffel & Cain, 2017) while resilience helps students manage stress and recover from setbacks, enhancing overall well-being and academic performance (Meyer et al., 2020).

2.2 The Role of Grit in Language Acquisition and Performance

Grit's importance in the language acquisition process is researched by many studies confirming links between gritty students performing better in this process. This section of the literature review firstly presents international studies dealing with grit's role in this context. Then, the review presents national studies carried out in Türkiye. Finally, the focus of the section moves to grit's connection to teachers, anxiety and its broader social impacts.

Wei et al.'s (2019) research is quite illuminating in this regard as they investigated grit's effect on foreign language performance (FLP) and found that grit positively affected FLP. Furthermore, foreign language enjoyment (FLE) mediated the relationship between grit and FLP, and the classroom environment facilitated the interaction between grit and FLE, as well as between grit and FLP. The study concluded that grit directly promoted the FLP of middle school students and even indirectly improved FLP by promoting FLE.

Yang (2021) reinforced these findings by examining the relationships between grit, FLE and well-being among 335 male and female students from 28 universities. The study required participants to complete three questionnaires: the Grit-S scale, the foreign language enjoyment scale, and the PERMA well-being

scale. Their findings revealed a positive correlation between students' levels of grit and their FLE. Grittier students were found to be more likely to enjoy classroom activities and grit was found to be a significant predictor of overall well-being. Additionally, the study reinforced the idea that grit enhances positive educational experiences, emphasizing the importance of cultivating grit in educational settings to promote both student well-being and enjoyment in the classroom environment.

Supporting these findings, Kiatkeeree and Ruangjaroon (2022) investigated the link between the grit of English language learners in their engagement, and their L2 achievement in an online context, finding a significant correlation between learners' grit and their academic success in English language learning. This suggests that higher levels of grit are associated with better engagement and higher language achievement. Similarly, Derakhshan (2023) found that FLE and online learning self-efficacy are both positively correlated and online self-efficacy mediated the relationship between online learning engagement and L2.

Moreover, Lee (2020) found that grit is a significant predictor of EFL learners' willingness to communicate in L2 (L2 WTC). The study took place in three contexts with participants consisting of middle school, high school, and university students. As a result, the researcher found that classroom enjoyment and perseverance of effort component of grit were positively correlated with L2 WTC and that L2 teachers could enhance learners' L2 WTC by fostering certain consistent efforts that initiate English communication and by creating supportive classroom environments.

Similarly, Bensalem et al. (2023) explored the predictors of WTC in English among college-level EFL students both in Saudi Arabia and Morocco. The research showed that both grit and FLE significantly predicted L2 WTC of students from both countries. However, the strength of these predictors varied across different countries. Grit was a stronger predictor of L2 WTC among Moroccan students while FLE was as a stronger predictor among Saudi students.

Furthermore, Ebn-Abbasi and Nushi (2022a) focused on the L2 motivational self-system and grit in learners' L2 WTC in two contexts, which were public schools and private institutes. They found that learners from private institutes exhibited a stronger L2 self, had higher perseverance of effort and even greater WTC. On the other hand, students in public schools was found to have a stronger ought-to L2 self and lower levels of WTC.

In addition, Zhao (2023) reviewed the relationships between three positive psychological constructs among L2 learners: grit, hope and foreign language enjoyment. The study confirmed a significant and positive relationship between learners' enjoyment and their grit and called attention to the need for further investigation into the relationships between grittiness, hope and foreign language enjoyment.

Also, according to Teimouri et al. (2022), students exhibited a higher level of grit in the L2 context than their overall level of grit, and the language-specific measure of grit yielded more significant and coherent outcomes. The study further revealed that the language learners who demonstrated more perseverance and passion for long-term goals were more successful than their less gritty counterparts.

Adding to this, Mikami (2024) worked with the L2-Grit scale and revalidated it. The researcher addressed some of the concerns regarding the generalizability of Teimouri et al.'s (2022) findings and replicated a sample of 106 English majors, confirming the factor structure of L2 grit and demonstrating the scale's robustness. Moreover, L2 grit was found to be consistent in predicting L2 specific grade point average and test scores.

Additionally, Chen et al. (2021) studied grit in regard to enhancing motivation. Working with 441 female participants from a Japanese university learning L2, the researchers examined the relationships between grit and other constructs such as students' L2 learning motivation. They also focused on how L2 reading and listening anxiety might hinder this motivation. They introduced and validated several self-report scales designed to measure these constructs and confirmed that these constructs could be reliably measured. They found predicted patterns among these variables which suggested that certain positive self-constructs and motivational factors benefit L2 learning while anxiety hinders the process.

Jalilzadeh et al. (2022) conducted a study with participants from three countries: Iran, Türkiye and Iraq. They found a link between English proficiency levels and grit among these EFL learners and found that advanced EFL learners were shown to be the grittiest, followed by intermediate and elementary learners. However, no significant interplay was found between the learners' native language and their proficiency level. The study suggests that grit plays an important role in predicting the achievement of EFL learners. The findings also revealed that Persian

learners displayed greater grit levels compared to their Turkish and Iraqi counterparts.

Khoirunnisa et al. (2023) revealed that individual variances played a role in determining students' grit. Their research stressed the need to acknowledge individual traits during the learning process since perseverance and sustained interest - key aspects of grit - are influenced by these differences. Grit was also shown to be influential in both professional spheres for students being linked to increased engagement, productivity in academics and the capacity to tackle challenges with diligence.

The study by Ebn-Abbasi et al. (2022b) examined the role of grit and classroom enjoyment in EFL learners' WTC in English at public schools and private language institutes in Iran. They found that perseverance of effort (the perseverance aspect of grit) rather than consistency of interest (the resistance to change aspect of grit) predicted WTC. Their study shows that the perseverance of effort as part of grit is linked to encouraging WTC in English within both schools and private language institutes in Iran.

Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) reviewed studies on the relationship between EFL learners' grit, foreign language anxiety and their WTC. The findings indicated a significant relationship between learners' grit and their WTC, and it was found that gritty learners who make persistent efforts are more likely to engage in communication in a foreign language. Furthermore, the review showed that learners with lower levels of anxiety tend to have a higher WTC.

Wei et al. (2020) explored L2 grit in the Chinese EFL context. Confirming the two-factor L2 grit scale structure, their study with 462 Chinese students found self-rated English proficiency and a global multilingualism measure positively predicted L2 grit, explaining 3.1% and 7% of the variance, respectively. Age, English proficiency, and L2 joy emerged as significant positive predictors, with L2 joy showing the strongest relationship at 22.9-33.1% of the variance. The predictors collectively explained 36.4% of L2 grit variance.

Grit also has a significant relationship with pronunciation and self-efficacy. Shehzad et al.'s (2022) study revealed that students with higher levels of grit tend to have stronger beliefs in their ability to pronounce English words correctly. The self-efficacy beliefs relating to pronunciation were found to be linked to the students' actual pronunciation performance among the EFL learners in their study.

Moreover, self-efficacy beliefs about the students' pronunciation were linked to their actual performance on pronouncing English words. The self-efficacy beliefs also acted as a mediator between grit and the performance of pronunciation.

Grit also has connotations regarding growth mindset; for instance, Hu et al. (2022) illustrated that the relationship between a growth mindset and English language proficiency among university students studying EFL is somewhat influenced by their grit and FLE. They suggest that individuals with a strong growth mindset tend to have greater grit and even derive more enjoyment from the English learning process, which leads to improved language performance. This suggests that growth mindset, grit and FLE are quite influential in optimizing the language learning performance of students.

Expanding more on the mindsets of learners and the links between grit and other mediums such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Zarrinabadi et al. (2022) found that the mindsets of the learners and L2 grit had significant influence on their attitudes toward CALL. Students with fixed mindsets had a negative attitude towards the effectiveness of CALL; on the other hand, those with growth mindsets had a positive attitude towards it. Furthermore, the persistence of effort component of L2 grit positively predicted the value of CALL and even the teacher's influence on CALL. More on the consistency of interest component of grit, Zawodniak et al. (2021) assert that this component of grit has links to maintaining student interest. They found that the consistency of interest component of grit appeared to be more variable and also was more influenced by certain external factors.

In another study, Shafiee Rad and Jafarpour (2022) found that certain interventions that aim to enhance L2 learner's well-being, grit, resilience and emotion regulation had a positive effect on the learner's writing skills. These specific interventions had the tendency to improve the learner's positive emotions and even enhanced their writing skills. Their research consisted of two groups of learners: the experimental group received writing instructions and interventions while the control group only received writing instruction. The experimental group showed significant improvements in well-being, grit, emotion regulation and resilience, which in turn contributed to better writing performance. The study suggests that incorporating positive psychology interventions can lead to both affective and educational benefits for L2 learners.

In addition to the previously discussed studies, Wu et al. (2022) further supports the significant role of grit in language acquisition. This study investigated the relationship between motivation, grit and English language performance among non-English speaking major students at a public university in China. The findings revealed that both motivation and grit positively correlated with English language performance. However, grit was found to have a bigger impact on English language performance than motivation. They also revealed that male students slightly outperform female students in their perception of motivation and grit.

In summary, a significant body of literature underlines the importance of grit in enhancing language learning outcomes, including FLE, WTC, well-being, classroom engagement and proficiency in EFL context. Grit is shown in the literature to be a critical factor in predicting student success in conjunction with other environmental factors and psychological traits, especially motivation. Furthermore, the literature suggests that grit is a malleable trait, influenced by factors, such as motivation, self-efficacy and supportive learning environments, which can develop over time.

2.3 Grit Studies in Türkiye

When examining grit studies in Türkiye, it can be noted that the literature is somewhat limited. The relevant research on Turkish EFL students is as follows:

The study by Taşpınar and Külekçi (2018) explored the relationship between grit and academic success among various EFL learner populations in a college context in Türkiye. They administered the Grit-S to 37 adult EFL learners, collected data on students' achievement test scores, goal cards and conducted semi-structured interviews. The analysis found no significant correlation between students' grit levels and academic achievement scores. However, it was observed that students with higher grit levels set more elaborate and specific goals compared to students with lower grit levels. Grittier students were characterized in their study as hardworking, goal-oriented and organized while less gritty students had difficulty identifying their goals and persisting in the case of challenges.

In a more recent study, Solhi et al. (2023) explored the relationships among L2 grit, coping strategies with boredom and emotion regulation strategies among 259 Turkish EFL university students. Through equation modeling, they uncovered strong links between L2 grit and coping mechanisms for combating boredom and between emotional regulation strategies and ways to handle boredom. While there

was an association between L2 grit and emotion regulation in their study, it was evident that L2 grit significantly influenced how students deal with boredom, particularly through cognitive approaches where they changed their perspective on dull situations.

The study by Kaya and Yüksel (2022) examined the relationship between teacher mindsets and grit among Turkish pre-service teachers by considering variables such as year of study, gender and subject taught. The research revealed a significant positive correlation between growth mindset and effort while a higher fixed mindset correlated with lower interest. First-year students had higher fixed mindset scores than fourth-year students, who showed greater effort. Although gender differences did not show a significant fixed mindset difference, females scored higher in growth mindset, interest and effort. It was also found in the study that mathematics education students had higher fixed mindset levels, whereas ELT students exhibited lower grit levels.

On a related note, Erarslan (2023) investigated Turkish EFL teachers' cognitive flexibility and grit during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that cognitive flexibility and grit did not differ by gender or age but did vary based on teaching experience and school type. The study also identified a significant positive correlation between cognitive flexibility and grit.

Furthermore, Yüce (2023) investigated the relationships between critical thinking, autonomous learning, and academic grit among 475 preservice EFL teachers in Türkiye. The findings revealed that critical thinking positively predicted both autonomous learning and academic grit among preservice teachers. Autonomous learning was also identified as a positive predictor of academic grit. Additionally, critical thinking indirectly influenced academic grit. Certain, significant differences were observed in participants' scores for critical thinking, autonomous learning and academic grit based on their self-perceived foreign language proficiency and academic success.

Mutlu (2017) found significant connections between EFL learners' persistence, which she equates with "grit" and their perceptions of the learning environment. The "materials environment" emerged as the most influential factor, and it was concluded in the study that well-organized and engaging resources are vital. Supportive teacher behaviors also positively impacted persistence, and student background factors, including family income and out-of-class exposure to

English contributed to these outcomes. Their findings indicate that enhancing the learning environment and fostering positive teacher-student interactions can significantly improve students' grit and persistence in learning English.

In summary, as can be understood from the above literature, research on grit in Türkiye shows promise as studies confirm links between grit and other constructs. However, there is a need to call for further research into the field of EFL in Türkiye as it remains somewhat limited.

2.4 Grit and Teachers

Studies on grit and the role of teachers in language learning show an important connection between these factors in determining student success. Teacher support is considered significant in sustaining grit, and teachers can contribute to the grit development of their students by providing both emotional and academic support (Tang & Zhu, 2024). Furthermore, teachers who create positive learning environments and strive to keep their students' interest high in language learning ultimately help them to continue their language learning efforts permanently (Tang & Zhu, 2024).

It is known that a student's grit can change throughout learning a language. To illustrate, Shirvan et al. (2022) conducted a longitudinal study and tracked the changes in learners' grit in the language learning process. They revealed that while students' grit can fluctuate, the underlying factor structure tends to remain stable over time. In addition, students who first showed lower levels of grit in their study improved more over time as they advanced thanks to their teachers. This means that the grit levels of students can be changed by their teachers.

Yamashita (2018) also claims that grit's role in language learning varies depending on the environment, and grit could be more influential in student-centered activities, which involve self-regulation and autonomous learning. While students who enjoy language learning at a high level are more successful in the process, students who experience difficulties because of the teacher or other environmental factors may experience a loss of motivation (Vestad & Bru, 2023; Zhao & Yang, 2022).

Building on these findings, Tang and Zhu (2024) underlined how teacher encouragement enhances academic self-efficacy and grit. In another study, Yuan (2022) pointed out that a number of factors, such as caring teacher attitudes, positive teacher-student relationships, teacher respect and supportive actions are indicators

for building grit among EFL learners. Providing a learning environment that is sensitive to student's academic and emotional needs by teachers can increase students' perseverance to the learning process (Huang et al., 2024). Students tend to put in more effort when they feel safe and valued, and learning activities that interest students can increase their commitment to language learning and enable them to participate more in the learning process (Huang et al., 2024; Zhao & Yang, 2022).

Therefore, teachers should encourage a growth-oriented mindset in students, emphasizing that success comes through effort as well as the learning process, and this approach can help students view failures as learning opportunities by strengthening their determination to achieve their long-term goals (Vestad & Bru, 2023). Giving students positive feedback that recognizes their efforts and progress increases their motivation; furthermore, constructive feedback helps students recognize their shortcomings and take the necessary steps to improve them (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Thus, it is suggested that teachers should take into account students' certain emotional states and help them manage their negative emotions such as stress (Dewaele et al., 2018).

Looking at the literature, a link between grit and teacher performance becomes apparent as well. For instance, Ashka et al. (2021) examined how EFL teachers' beliefs regarding teaching corresponded to their actual practices in their classes and how their grit might influence this correspondence. They conducted questionnaires and observations on 70 teachers and found that although teachers tended to share the same beliefs about teaching, only those with high levels of grit showed a strong connection between this belief and their actions as well as practices. This suggests that grit is important for teachers transferring their beliefs into action, which in turn underlines the necessity to foster grit among teachers to improve their quality of teaching and the practices they employ.

Similarly, Derakhshan et al. (2022) investigated resilience, well-being, grit, and their link to Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment (FLTE) and uncovered that all three of these factors significantly influenced FLTE among the 450 Iranian EFL teachers, with grit emerging as the most influential predictor. They suggest that teachers who are resilient, content and especially gritty are more likely to enjoy teaching.

Similarly, Fathi et al. (2023) examined certain factors that influence the work engagement of EFL teachers. Testing a structural model that incorporated teacher's professional identity, grit and FLTE, they found that these factors directly correlated to the work engagement of the teachers. Furthermore, the professional identity of the teachers indirectly affected their work engagement through FLTE and grit, and FLTE influenced their work engagement with the mediation of grit.

In summary, the literature review above about the relationship between grit and teachers showed that grit plays an important role for learners and teachers alike. Teachers can foster grit among their students, and those who provide students with emotional and academic support, create positive learning environments and promote growth mindsets can enhance their students' psychological well-being and commitment to learning. Constructive feedback was also shown to be important in increasing motivation and grit among the students. Meanwhile, for teachers, being grittier can mean better cognitive flexibility, a strong connection between belief and action and even more enjoyment derived from the act of teaching.

2.5 Grit and Foreign Language Anxiety

Anxiety has a significant effect on language learning and often interacts with many other psychological factors such as grit (Liu & Wang, 2021). Research shows that there is an inverse relationship between grit and anxiety in education. For example, Liu and Wang (2021) found that grit is negatively correlated with foreign language anxiety, namely grittier students among a Chinese high school tended to have less anxiety in relation to language learning. This relationship can extend beyond the language learning context as grit has been found in a recent study to predict lower research anxiety in students, which suggests that those who have higher grit are more likely to manage their anxiety while engaging with academic research (Eteng-Uket & Njaka, 2023).

There is a connection between grit and reduced anxiety in non-academic context as well. Musumari et al. (2018) revealed that students with high levels of grit scored lower on the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) scale in a university in Thailand and concluded that grit can be generally useful in reducing anxiety and improving mental well-being.

Additionally, Heydarnejad et al. (2022) found a strong correlation between L2 grit core self-assessment, and foreign language anxiety. In their study, L2 grit positively predicted core self-assessment, which includes self-esteem, self-efficacy,

emotional stability and negatively predicted certain components that make up foreign language anxiety, such as communication anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Core self-assessment negatively predicted foreign language anxiety as well. This suggests that higher self-assessment leads to lower levels foreign language anxiety. Therefore, their study concludes that both L2 grit and core self-assessment regulate foreign language anxiety to some degree.

In conclusion, the literature review related to grit and anxiety shows that grit can be quite useful in reducing anxiety. Therefore, increasing grit could be an effective way of dealing with anxiety in various contexts, especially for language leaning contexts.

2.6 The Broader Social Impacts of Grit

Grit has also been shown to be effective in various social domains (Duckworth 2013, 2017). The researchers have been paying more attention to how grit affects social life and how it interacts with certain concepts in these contexts. For example, Aparicio et al. (2017) uncovered that among university students, those who had higher levels of grit had better e-learning success which also led to increased satisfaction and improved performance in this context.

In addition, Ain et al. (2021) found that there is a link between emotional intelligence, grit and life satisfaction. They collected data from undergraduate students and found that these concepts are associated with each other, specifically finding that emotional intelligence and grit are moderately associated with each other and that they positively influenced life satisfaction.

In another study, Fernández-Martín et al. (2020) revealed that grit was not just an outcome variable because it exhibited greater potency as a predictive factor for achievements across educational, professional and even personal domains. Grit is known be associated with higher retention rates as well; for example, Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) found that grit predicted retention in military, workplace, school and even marriage.

In another study, Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014) discovered that novice teachers who exhibit higher levels of grit tend to demonstrate better performance and are less inclined to leave their classrooms midyear. In addition, Shakir et al. (2020) observed a negative correlation between grit, resilience and burnout among neurosurgery residents. Their study indicates that higher levels of grit and resilience are associated with reduced burnout, mainly when mitigating

social and personal stressors. Similarly, Moen and Olsen (2020) have reported a positive correlation between grit and well-being and a negative correlation between grit and burn-out.

To sum up, beginning with grit's role in language acquisition and performance, the literature review above focused on the relationship of grit with FLE, WTC and academic achievement. Then, the relationship between grit and teachers was presented. Subsequently, the links between foreign language anxiety and grit was examined and finally, some of the broader social impacts of grit were discussed. These included e-learning success, life satisfaction and retention in various fields. In short, grit was shown to be related to a diverse range of contexts, and the research above showed that grit was useful in these fields along with language education.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The present study utilized a convergent mixed methods design in order to combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches which allowed to examine the grit levels of the participants more in-depth. Creswell and Clark (2017) state that convergent mixed approach allows for a holistic view of the research problem by providing the complexity of human behaviors and attitudes. The data collection tool in the present study is a questionnaire (Mutlu, 2017) to measure grit levels and a demographic information form that provides the demographic data required to analyze the influence of variables such as age, gender, years of English study, English proficiency level, academic major, and proficiency grade. The qualitative data collection tool used in the study is a semi-structured interview providing personal experiences and contextual factors affecting students' grit. This study investigates the differences in grit levels based on the specified variables and explores factors that positively and negatively affect grit levels, as well as the coping strategies EFL learners employ.

3.2 Research Setting

The population of the research consisted of students continuing their education at the preparatory schools of two state universities in the Black Sea Region of Türkiye in the 2023-2024 spring semester. The two universities were chosen based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher as well as on the presence of a diverse student population suitable for the study. In other words, the study utilized a convenience sampling strategy to select participants, which, as described by Dörnyei and Griffe (2010), is the most widely used sampling method among researchers due to its efficiency in terms of time and financial resources. This method is straightforward to implement as it allows researchers to readily access participants such as students in a classroom or customers in a store without complex sampling frames or randomization processes (Emerson, 2021).

The study included participants from the Department of English Language and Literature in the Faculty of Science and Literature, the Department of Emergency Aid and Disaster Management, and the Department of Economics in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences as well as students from the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Medicine.

3.3 Participants

Students from two universities participated in the research. 330 participants volunteered to take part in the questionnaires and interviews were conducted with 20 participants.

Table 3.1. The distribution of the participants based on their gender

Gender	Frequency
Male	172
Female	158
Total	330

As can be seen in Table 3.1, the sample group for the questionnaire consisted of 330 students in total, with 172 male and 158 female participants.

Table 3.2. The distribution of the participants based on their age

Age	Frequency
Ages 18-20	268
Ages 21-23	31
Ages 24-26	25
Ages over 27	6
Total	330

As shown in Table 3.2, most of the participants are between the ages of 18-20. This is because they are enrolled in preparatory classes, which typically consist of students in this age group.

Table 3.3. The distribution of the participants based on their length of English education

Length of English Education	Frequency
0-2 years	208
3-5 years	40
6-8 years	39
9-10 years	25
Over 10 years	18
Total	330

As can be seen in Table 3.3, the majority of participants (208) had 0-2 years of English education indicating limited exposure. A smaller portion (40) had 3-5 years, and even fewer (39) had 6-8 years. Only 25 participants had 9-10 years of English education, and just 18 had over 10 years showing that extended exposure to English is relatively uncommon among the participants.

Table 3.4. The distribution of the participants based on their English proficiency level

English Proficiency Level	Frequency
A1	19
A2	144
B1	124
B2	34
C1	9
Total	330

As illustrated in Table 3.4, the majority of participants (144) are at the A2 level, followed by those at the B1 level (124). 34 of the participants are at the B2 level while the least represented levels are A1 (19) and C1 (9).

Table 3.5. The distribution of the participants based on their proficiency score

Proficiency Score	Frequency
Between 0-50	285
Between 51-75	25
Between 76-100	20
Total	330

As can be seen in Table 3.5, the vast majority of participants (285) scored between 0 and 50, while 25 scored between 51 and 75, and only 20 scored between 76 and 100.

Table 3.6. The distribution of the participants based on their department of study

Department of Study	Frequency
English Language and Literature	84
Emergency Aid and Disaster Management	72
Economics and Administrative Sciences	42
Faculty of Engineering	80
Faculty of Science and Literature	8
Faculty of Medicine	44
Total	330

As shown in Table 3.6, the most represented department is English Language and Literature, with 84 participants, followed by the Faculty of Engineering with 80 participants and Emergency Aid and Disaster Management with 72 participants. The Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences have 44 and 42 participants, respectively. The Faculty of Science and Literature has the lowest representation, with only 8 participants.

After the quantitative data were collected, 20 students volunteered from the preparatory schools from the same universities for the semi-structured interviews. The interview participants comprised of five students from the Emergency Disaster Management Department and 15 students from the English Language and Literature Department.

3.4 Context of the Study

The study participants are students in university preparatory schools, which aims to help students transition into higher education by building essential academic skills. These programs, including language preparation and study skills workshops are effective in improving academic performance and retention rates (Greefrath et al., 2016; Sigal & Jacobs, 2019). Such programs provide a supportive environment that helps students acclimate to academic expectations and cultures leading to better educational outcomes (Pezzella et al., 2014; Tekin, 2015).

The preparatory schools in the context of the current study provide the student with language programs that aim to improve their proficiency levels. Beginning from the A1 level and aiming for B2 level, the curricula used in these programs are typically divided into three or four models, each of which targets certain CEFR levels and focuses on developing the four basic language skills in

addition to teaching students critical academic skills. Students generally progress from basic language skills in the initial modules (A1 to A2), through pre-intermediate to intermediate levels (A2 to B1, B1 to B2), with one program offering a final module emphasizing advanced language proficiency at the B2 level.

At the start of the academic year, students take a proficiency exam that determines their placement within these programs. The “proficiency grade” variable in this study is the results the students got from this exam. Throughout the program, they are evaluated through quizzes, exams and performance assessments, and their success in the program depends on the satisfactory scores on final exams and continuous assessments. Those who do not meet the criteria may need to retake modules or specific components to achieve the required proficiency before advancing. These preparatory programs are structured to provide rigorous and supportive learning environments integrating authentic materials and constructive activities to prepare students for academic success in their subsequent university studies.

3.4 Data Collection Tool

In this study, students' demographic information (e.g., age, gender, English language level, duration of English education, department, proficiency grade) was obtained through demographic questions prepared by the researcher. The students self-reported this demographic information. Karabenick et al. (2007) suggest that the interpretations of self-report survey items by respondents may not align with researchers' assumptions and might lead to potential inaccuracies in the data collected. To address this limitation, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into the factors affecting students' grit. The qualitative data from these interviews analyzed through content analysis (Stemler, 2000) aimed to complement the quantitative data obtained from the Persistence Scale and the variable information gained from the demographic questions.

The Persistence Scale developed by Mutlu (2017) was used in the research to gauge the grit levels of the students. The scale (Appendix 1) consists of a single dimension and employs a five-point Likert scale applied to the participants: 1-Does not describe me at all, 2-Describes me slightly, 3-Describes me moderately, 4-Describes me very well, and 5-Describes me perfectly. Some of the item examples of the scale are as follows: “The failures I encounter in the process of learning

English do not discourage me.”, “If one of my English language skills is weak, I will make an effort until I strengthen it.” Mutlu (2017) referred to grit as “persistence” which is why the scale was used in this research.

Mutlu (2017) developed the Persistence Scale with a rigorous validation process that included expert reviews, pilot studies and both exploratory as well as confirmatory factor analyses. The scale demonstrated strong reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha value of .93. Both an English and a Turkish version of the scale were developed. For this research, the Turkish version of the scale was used so that the participants, who were native Turkish speakers, could more accurately understand and respond to the questionnaire. The permission was obtained from the researcher for its use in this study.

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Five interview questions (Appendix 2) were developed by the researcher in line with Mutlu's (2017) scale and checked by two senior EFL instructors with PhDs. The instructors evaluated the content, coverage, meaning as well as the clarity of the items and identified any structural issues. The interview questions were also piloted with two students to refine the questions used and to figure out the follow-up questions best suited to get additional information as part of a semi-structured interview. The pilot interviews were not included in the gathered data but proved useful in improving the questions asked in the interview. The interviews were conducted in Turkish to achieve more accurate results from the participants. During the interviews, participants responded to five questions, and each interview took approximately ten minutes.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

This section demonstrates the data collection procedures that took place in the present study. The data collection process began with obtaining the necessary permissions from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University as well as from the author of the Persistence Scale (Mutlu, 2017). Quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire which included demographic questions to inquire about the demographic information of the participants and the Persistence Scale. The questionnaires were distributed by hand to students who volunteered to participate. With permission from both the respective universities and their teachers, it was given to the students at the end of their classes and then collected by the researcher. The process took approximately one week.

After the completion of the quantitative data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with volunteering students. The interviews aimed to explore personal experiences and contextual factors related to grit. Participants provided consent, and the interviews were recorded via video conferencing software (Zoom), with the recordings accessible only to the researcher. The recordings were then transcribed and analyzed.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

SPSS 23 was used in the analysis of the quantitative data obtained in the research. The data of the sample group in the study were subjected to the Skewness-Kurtosis normality test, and the values between -1.5 and +1.5 were considered to have a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The normality analysis of the variables was analyzed using the Skewness-Kurtosis test. The results of the test showed that the variables had a normal distribution.

Since there were only two options in the gender variable, the difference between gender and scale parameters was analyzed with the independent samples t-test. The t-test is a parametric test, and certain prerequisites must be met in order to report the results of this test (Cevahir, 2020).

The ANOVA test was utilized in order to analyze certain parameters that have more than two options, such as age, English language level, English education duration, department, and proficiency grade (Akyıldız, 2009).

For the parametric tests, ANOVA and t-test were used in the examination of normally distributed parameters, and a significance level of $p < 0.05$ at a 95 percent confidence interval was deemed acceptable (Can, 2019). If variations between parameters were detected by ANOVA test outcomes, then LSD Post Hoc analysis was used to pinpoint which parameter had an impact (Howell, 2013).

For the interview results, the analysis involved a content analysis of the interview responses to identify certain recurring themes, subjects and patterns (Stemler, 2000). Every response was assessed in detail to group the major elements that impact students' grit in learning English. The categories were then quantified and grouped to identify prominent influences.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which investigated the grit levels of university students learning EFL in Türkiye. The results are organized according to the research questions by focusing on the differences in grit levels based on age, gender, English language level, duration of English education, department and proficiency grade.

The descriptive statistics for the participants' demographic information are presented first, followed by the results of the independent samples t-test for gender differences in grit levels. Subsequently, the findings of the one-way ANOVA tests for differences in grit levels based on age, English language level, duration of English education, department and proficiency grade are presented. Where significant differences were found, LSD Post Hoc analyses were carried out to identify the specific groups that differed significantly from each other.

4.1 General Grit Levels

In line with the first research question "What is the general grit level of EFL learners?", the descriptive statistics of the participants' responses to the questions that make up the scale are shown in Table 4.1. The scale items are scored as 1 'does not describe me at all', 2 'describes me slightly', 3 'describes me moderately', 4 'describes me very well', and 5 'describes me perfectly.' The means and standard deviation values in Table 4.1. were determined according to this classification and transferred to the table.

Table 4.1. The General Grit Levels of Participants

Items	n	Min	Max	$\bar{x}$	Std.D.
1. The failures I encounter in the process of learning English do not discourage me.	330	1	5	3.47	0.57
2. If it's about learning English, I finish everything I start, even if I'm tired.	330	1	5	3.27	0.11
3. When learning English, I force myself to work harder than other people.	330	1	5	3.44	0.17
4. If I feel weak at any point regarding English, I practice more in that subject.	330	1	5	3.74	0.54
5. Even though it creates many problems for me, I am persistent in achieving my goal of learning English.	330	1	5	4.08	0.10
6. While learning English, I do more than my teachers expect from me.	330	1	5	3.22	0.05

7. If one of my English language skills is weak, I will make an effort until I strengthen it.	330	1	5	3.71	0.05
8. When I get a low grade in English class, I study harder for the next exam.	330	1	5	4.24	0.05
9. Even though it requires hard work and patience, I continue to put in the time and effort necessary to learn English.	330	1	5	3.80	0.05
10. If I am engaged in an activity related to learning English, I try to finish that activity even if there are distractions in the environment.	330	1	5	3.47	0.06
11. My goal of learning English well provides me with significant motivation while overcoming the difficulties I encounter.	330	1	5	3.74	0.10
12. I try to do my best to learn English.	330	1	5	3.85	0.51
13. The more difficult it is to master an English skill, the more determined I am to achieve it.	330	1	5	3.49	0.55
14. I will make an effort until I reach the goals I set in learning English.	330	1	5	3.85	0.51
15. I strive to deal with the problems encountered when learning English that others are already frustrated by.	330	1	5	3.54	0.56
16. Even if I cannot overcome a difficulty I encounter in a language assignment, I try again and again, thinking that I will eventually overcome it.	330	1	5	3.66	0.58
17. I make an effort to follow the study plans I made when learning an English language skill.	330	1	5	3.56	0.58
18. I work hard to learn English.	330	1	5	3.66	0.54

As shown in Table 4.1, participants were asked to evaluate their grit on a scale of 1 to 5. It is seen that the average answers are between 3.22 and 4.24. Therefore, the items most selected are: 3- Describes me moderately, 4- Describes me very well. Based on this, it can be concluded that the students who participated in the questionnaire generally think that they are gritty in their English learning process.

However, they also think they do not meet their teacher's expectations, as indicated by the average score of 3.22 for the item 'While learning English, I do more than my teachers expect from me.' Furthermore, the second lowest average score of 3.27 suggests that students might struggle to consistently finish everything they start, as reflected in their responses to the item 'If it's about learning English, I finish everything I start, even if I'm tired.' On the other hand, the item with the highest average score was 'When I get a low grade in English class, I study harder for the next exam.' As such, it can be pointed out that the students felt grittier after encountering setbacks.

4.2. Gender Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

In line with the research question "Do EFL learners' grit levels differ in terms of gender?", t-test analysis findings on grit and gender variable are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. T-Test Analysis Table of Persistence Scale and Gender Variable

Scale Size	Gender	n	$\bar{x}$	S.s.	t	sd	p
Grit	Male	172	4.42	0.74	-0.890	328	.374
	Female	158	4.49	0.65			
	Total	330					

*p<0.05

As can be understood from Table 4.2, no significant difference was found between the persistence scale and the gender variable. T-test was used to examine the difference between the gender variable and the grit to learn English because there are two different variables (male and female).

4.3. Age Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

In line with the research question "Do EFL learners' grit levels differ in terms of age?", ANOVA Test analysis findings on whether grit varies according to the age variable can be seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. ANOVA Test Table of Persistence Scale and Age Variable

Scale Size	Age	n	$\bar{x}$	S.s.	Source of Variance	sd	F	p
Grit	a. Ages 18-20	268	4.46	0.42	Between groups	3	0.54	0.65
	b. Ages 21-23	31	4.48	0.15	Within groups	326		
	c. Ages 24-26	25	4.42	0.14				
	d. Ages over 27	6	4.10	0.20				
	Total	330	4.45	0.38				

*p<0.05

As can be understood from Table 4.3, since the number of age variables of the participants was more than two, ANOVA test was utilized to reveal whether there was a significant difference between the age variable and the persistence scale. When the ANOVA analysis, in which the participants' ages and the persistence scale were tested, no significant difference was found in the level of grit between age groups.

4.4 English Education Duration Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

In line with the research question "Do EFL learners' grit levels differ in terms of years of English study?", ANOVA test analysis findings showing the grit differences in relation to the English education duration variable are illustrated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. ANOVA Test Analysis of Persistence Scale and English Education Duration

Scale Size	Length of English Education	n	$\bar{x}$	S.s.	Source of Variance	sd	F	p	Post Hoc
Grit	a. 0-2 years	197	4.35	0.67	Between groups	5	2.29	0.045*	d>a
	b. 3-5 years	40	4.58	0.80	Within groups	324			
	c. 6-8 years	39	4.49	0.67					
	d. 9-10 years	36	4.65	0.71					
	e. Over 10 years	18	4.68	0.69					
	Total	330	4.45	0.70					

*p<0.05

As can be realized in Table 4.4, where the English education duration of the participants and the persistence scale were compared, a significant difference was found in the dimension of grit ($p<0.05$). According to the Post Hoc analysis, it was determined that those who received English education for 9-10 years had a higher level of grit in learning English than those who received education between 0-2 years.

4.5 English Proficiency Level Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

In line with the research question "Do EFL learners' grit levels differ in terms of English proficiency level?", ANOVA test analysis findings of the Persistence Scale and English level are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. ANOVA Test Analysis of Persistence Scale and English Level

Scale Size	English Proficiency Level	n	$\bar{x}$	S.s.	Source of Variance	sd	F	p	Post Hoc
Grit	a. A1	18	4.35	0.67	Between groups	5	2.41	0.034*	d>c
	b. A2	144	4.58	0.80	Within groups	324			
	c. B1	124	4.49	0.67					
	d. B2	34	4.65	0.71					
	e. C1	10	4.68	0.69					
	Total	330	4.45	0.70					

*p<0.05

As shown in Table 4.5, a significant difference was found between students' language levels and their level of grit. According to the Post Hoc analysis, it was determined that those who know English at the B2 level have more grit than those who know the language at the B1 level.

4.6 Proficiency Score Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

In line with the research question, "Do EFL learners' grit levels differ in terms of English proficiency level?", Table 4.6 presents the ANOVA test analysis findings, showing whether there is a relation between the grit levels and the proficiency score.

Table 4.6. ANOVA Test Table of Persistence Scale and Proficiency Grade
Variable

Scale Size	Proficiency Score	n	$\bar{x}$	S.s.	Source of Variance	sd	F	p
Grit	a. 0 -50	285	4.43	0.71	Between groups	2	1.21	0.29
	b. 51-75	25	4.66	0.62	Within groups	327		
	c. 76-100	20	4.43	0.55				
	Total	330	4.45	0.70				

As seen in Table 4.6, the comparison of participants' proficiency grades and their grit in learning English shows no significant difference between the variables.

4.7 Department of Study Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

In line with the research question, "Do EFL learners' grit levels differ in terms of academic major?", Table 4.7 presents the ANOVA test analysis findings between grit and department.

Table 4.7. ANOVA Test Table of Persistence Scale and Department of Study
Variable

Scale Size	Department of Study	n	$\bar{x}$	S.s.	Source of Variance	sd	F	p
Grit	a. English Language and Literature	84	4.57	0.63	Between groups	5	0.93	0.46
	b. Emergency Aid and Disaster Management	71	4.49	0.71	Within groups	323		
	c. Economics and Administrative Sciences	42	4.34	0.70				
	d. Faculty of Engineering	80	4.39	0.80				
	e. Faculty of Science and Literature	9	4.35	0.62				
	f. Faculty of Medicine	44	4.37	0.61				
	Total	330	4.45	0.70				

*p<0.05

Illustrated in Table 4.7, the comparison between the departments of the sample group and their grit levels in learning English reveals no significant difference between the variables.

4.8 Interview Results

This section presents the results from interviews conducted with university preparatory school students learning EFL in Türkiye. Specific quotes from the students were selected to exemplify the main findings, providing perspectives into how various factors positively or negatively affected their grit in learning English.

The participants were asked the following five questions:

1. What factors positively influence your grit in the process of learning English?
2. What factors negatively influence your grit in the process of learning English?
3. Can you explain if there was a specific event or topic that increased your grit in learning English?
4. Can you explain if there was a specific event or topic that decreased your grit in learning English?
5. What do you do to cope with factors that decrease or negatively affect your grit in the process of learning English?

Table 4.8. Data from interview question 1.

		N:20
1. What factors positively influence your grit in the process of learning English?	Teacher Encouragement	13
	Interest in English Media	7
	Learning Environment	6
	Friend Support	5
	Family Support	3
	Interest in Multiple Cultures	3
	Interest in Foreign Languages	3
	Exposure to Abroad Influence	2
	Peer Competition	2
	Self-Realization	2
	Having a Goal	2
	Access to Quality Materials	1
	Recognizing Aptitude	1
	Motivation from Setbacks	1

The answers to the question “What factors positively influence your grit in the process of learning English?” are represented in Table 4.8. Out of 20 participants, 13 identified Teacher Encouragement as a positive influence, making it the most frequently mentioned factor. Other significant factors include Interest in English Media (7 participants), Learning Environment (6 participants), Friend Support (5 participants), and Family Support (3 participants), Interest in Foreign Languages (3 participants), Interest in Multiple Cultures (3 participants), Exposure to Abroad Influence (2 participants), Peer Competition (2 participants), Self-Realization (2 participants), Having a Goal (2 participants), Access to Quality Materials (1 participant), Recognizing Aptitude (1 participant), and Motivation from Setbacks (1 participant).

The most common response was the support provided by teachers. 13 students emphasized teacher factors as a positive influence on their grit level in English learning. These students generally focused on the teacher's role in motivating and encouraging them to learn English. Some of the comments made by these students are as follows:

Student 4: *“A good teacher also has an impact. It influences our participation in the class more positively. When we don't understand something, we can ask questions openly without hesitation.”*

Student 6: *“My primary school teacher helped me a lot; she was a cheerful woman. Because of this, I had a greater desire to participate in her class.”*

Student 7: *“My teachers, especially during high school and middle school, would say things like, 'You've got this, you can handle it.'”*

Student 8: *“It was mostly my teachers. Influenced by films and music, I chose a field I loved, and they (teachers) helped me as well.”*

Student 10: *“Because my teachers were very kind and welcoming, I thought, 'Oh, I can do this.'”*

Student 12: *“Of course teacher influence is very effective. For example, if my teacher had gotten angry at me for the slightest mistake or made fun of me, it would have affected me negatively. On the contrary, my teachers were not like that.”*

Student 19: *“My teachers were really supportive.”*

The second most mentioned positive influence cited by seven students was interest in English language media. Here are representative comments shared by the students:

Student 1: *“I always wanted to learn. That's why I turned to foreign TV shows. When I started trying to speak a little, for example, by imitating them, and realized that I could do it, it got better for me. At that point, I never wanted to stop. I always wanted to learn.”*

Student 4: *“I have always had an interest in English movies. The same goes for music. For example, I have always wanted to understand them without subtitles.”*

Student 6: *“My interest in (video) games since primary school has encouraged me to learn English.”*

Student 12: *“For instance, when I watch a series or a movie or listen to a song now, the fact that English words and sentences are automatically translated in my mind honestly improves my grit.”*

The third most influential factor was the learning environment, mentioned by six students with such comments:

Student 8: *“They (the institution) taught in ways that made learning a bit easier. You know, I loved it, and they provided that. They implemented such practices at school.”*

Student 9: *“When I was preparing for the YKS, I was in a very low-level class. I think it could have been better if I had been in a better class.”*

Student 11: *“Yes, because they were my peers and people close to me, and likewise, our teachers were like that too, it created a classroom environment where I had more desire and, how should I say, could take an active role.”*

Additionally, support from friends was also mentioned as a positive influence by five students:

Student 10: *“Then my friends said, ‘Don't be silly. You're good. Since you made it to this program, you know something. It's your first day, you're excited. You might not speak. You might be shy. But it will improve. You'll see, you'll start speaking. it will get better over time.’ They influenced me in a very positive and beautiful way.”*

Student 11: *“Until the 8th grade, I knew almost nothing about English. A friend guided me and made me love English.”*

Student 18: *“Initially, my circle of friends. Additionally, I have friends studying abroad. They also have an influence on me.”*

Family support was another influential factor, mentioned by three students. Some of the comments made by the students are as follows:

Student 11: *“Well, my aunt’s teachers were there, and she had also graduated from the same high school. With her guidance, knowing the teachers, and believing that I could do it, I chose the language department.”*

Student 7: *“My family’s support was there, much more than my own.”*

Interest in different cultures and lifestyles was another notable response, with three students citing this as a positive factor. Some of the comments made by the students on this subject are as follows:

Student 4: *“In general, I’m mostly interested in American and British culture, but beyond that, I also have an interest in Spanish and German. I want to learn them as a second and third language in the future.”*

Student 13: *“I love American culture and such. Watching foreign TV shows broadens your horizons a bit.”*

Three students mentioned having an interest in learning a foreign language as a positive factor:

Student 1: *“First of all, I have always found myself interested in foreign languages and have always wanted to learn them.”*

Student 4: *“I have always loved learning, listening to, and speaking English since I was a child.”*

Another factor was exposure to abroad influences, as mentioned by two students. Here is an example from one of them:

Student 16: *“There were people around me who went abroad. Seeing them made me very eager to learn a language as well.”*

Competition amongst peers was another reason given by two students. Student 4 mentioned being determined to outperform their classmates in the classroom environment:

Student 4: *“At school, being in a competitive environment with my friends also has a positive effect. Yes, sometimes we compete to see who will get the higher grade.”*

Self-realization, such as succeeding in learning or getting good scores on exams was mentioned as a positive factor by two students:

Student 14: *“For example, I remember memorizing simple pronouns like 'I', 'you', and 'we' when I was younger. And when I used them in a sentence, I felt very happy and wanted to continue. This greatly increased my grit.”*

Two students mentioned having a goal to be a leading positive influence for them:

Student 5: *“First of all, having a goal is essential, just like in everything else. I believe a person needs to have a purpose. I did things not for others, but always for myself, out of respect and value for myself.”*

On the other hand, having access to quality materials was also mentioned by one student.

Student 15: *“Our resources were excellent. The materials provided to us were very good.”*

Furthermore, one student mentioned having an aptitude for learning English:

Student 3: *“It's not something very specific, but because I recognized my aptitude, I can say I worked with more grit.”*

Lastly, one student mentioned being grittier after setbacks:

Student 5: *“Strangely enough, getting low scores on exams has a positive effect. When I receive low scores, I work harder and become grittier.”*

In conclusion, the interviews revealed a variety of factors that positively influence students' grit in learning English. The most significant influences were teacher support, interest in English media, and favorable learning environments. Other important factors included peer and family support, interest in different cultures, and personal motivation. Some students also mentioned the positive impact of competition, self-realization, clear goals, quality learning materials, and personal aptitude. The answers show the diverse range of factors that might influence a student's grit in their language learning process.

Table 4.9. Data from interview question 2.

		N:20
2. What factors negatively influence your grit in the process of learning English?	Personal Challenges	6
	Peer Influence/Class Environment	6
	Limited Access and Resources	5
	Teacher Influence	4
	Lack of Practice Opportunities	2
	Exam Scores	2

The answers to the question “What factors negatively influence your grit in the process of learning English?” are represented in Table 4.9. Out of 20 participants, Personal Challenges and Peer Influence/Class Environment were

identified by 6 participants each as the most significant negative influences. Other notable factors include Limited Access and Resources (5 participants) and Teacher Influence (4 participants). Additionally, Lack of Practice Opportunities and Exam Scores were each mentioned by 2 participants.

Personal challenges were reported by six students as significantly impacting their grit in English learning negatively. These challenges included procrastination, lack of motivation, struggles with traditional study methods, and external circumstances:

Student 2: *“By nature, I am a bit lazy, I guess we can't deny that. So, I have difficulty focusing on things and studying. This affects me very negatively. Sometimes I plan to do something at a certain time, study English, memorize vocabulary, or watch a series. But I can't get myself out of bed.”*

Student 4: *“There are times when I feel very tired and, in a mood, where I can't do anything. No matter how much I want, some days I can't get anything done. Sometimes I find some topics very hard to understand. I get very tired.”*

Peer influence and class environment were reported by six students as having a significant negative impact on their grit in English learning. Issues such as lack of class participation, peer jealousy, and ridicule from peers were mentioned:

Student 2: *“My friends were somewhat jealous. They made negative comments about the university I attended, saying it was inadequate. They criticized my pronunciation and knowledge, which was discouraging.”*

Student 6: *“Generally, when my classmates show little interest in participating in class, it diminishes my enthusiasm for learning.”*

Student 10: *“I'm a bit nervous about the process because my friends and people around me have given me some doubts and made me anxious about the whole thing.”*

Student 12: *“In general, for example, if I make a mistake and someone who is not even at C1 level makes fun of me by saying ‘That's not how it's done’, my self-confidence is really damaged.”*

These comments made by the students about peer influence and environment show how these factors can impact a student's motivation and grit.

In addition, limited access to resources, particularly due to the region/location was reported by five students as an important factor that impacted

their grit in English language learning. Financial constraints, limited access to technology, inadequate educational institutions and certain challenges of living in underdeveloped locations were mentioned:

Student 1: *“I live in a small city. There were very few opportunities for language learning here. There was no language department in my school so I had to graduate from a different one that I didn’t want. Just as there was no language department, it was also really difficult to find private tutors, or even institutions. Even when I found an institution, the teacher there was a middle school teacher and just read everything off a grammar book.”*

Student 9: *“Of course it’s important (the city). I live in a small city, there are very few schools here and very few quality schools. I don’t live in the center of the city but even in the center of the city there are only three quality schools and only one them can provide a good education. I couldn’t get into that school. The number of private schools is also very low and because there are so few of them, they are very expensive.”*

Student 16: *“I want to practice English a bit more but learning English is a bit expensive. That was a bit challenging. Also, I need to have a computer. I live in a dormitory and it’s really difficult to learn English here.”*

Student 19: *“One negative factor was my environment. Since I live in a dormitory, a study environment was not possible because of my friends. Also, since my classes were constantly intensive, I couldn’t study every day. I was too tired.”*

These comments made by the participants show how certain limitations and the environments they live in can affect their grit.

Additionally, teacher influence was reported by four students as having a significant negative impact on their grit in English language learning. Issues, such as inadequate teaching methods, negative attitudes and mockery from teachers were mentioned:

Student 8: *“When I was going to a private institution, I felt behind on my speaking skills to be honest. We had foreign teachers and they spoke too quickly, and when they did, I thought I couldn’t do this.”*

Student 11: *“I had a problem with my teacher’s attitude in high school. Because some of my family members had also graduated from the same school and they expected much from me, we had some problems.”*

Student 12: *“For example, even the smallest mistakes I made caused my teacher to make fun of me, laughing etc. This really destroyed my confidence and still does. I start thinking ‘I wonder If I can’t do this’.”*

Another negative factor reported by two students was not having opportunities to study and improve English. Limited exposure to English speakers to speak with and insufficient speaking practice opportunities in general were mentioned:

Student 5: *“One small detail maybe was that there were no people around me who spoke English. You can’t practice it and language learning process requires a lot of practice. When you can’t practice, you start forgetting, and you can’t practice much on your own.”*

Finally, two students mentioned the impact of bad exam scores and said that they had a negative effect on their grit. Getting low grades led to feelings of failure and decreased the student’s motivation:

Student 12: *“When I get a low score, I get in the mindset of ‘Ok, you can’t do this, you’re a failure’.”*

In conclusion, personal challenges, which included procrastination, lack of motivation and external circumstances were mentioned as prominent issues. Peer interactions, such as bullying and mockery, along with negative teacher influence, such as unsupportive or mocking behavior also affected students' confidence and grit regarding English language learning negatively. Unlike the previous question in which students pointed to the teachers as their primary positive influence on their grit, it was revealed that teachers might also have quite a negative influence depending on their conduct towards their students. Once again, the extent of teachers' influence on their students' grit becomes clear. Additionally, limited access and resources, influenced by location, financial constraints and inadequate educational facilities posed significant barriers. In addition, low exam scores led to feelings of failure and decreased grit. Another issue was the lack of practice opportunities, particularly the inability to practice speaking due to limited use in their environment, which hindered progress. Other factors included unequal language proficiency levels, high tuition fees, lack of learning materials, class level, and societal pressure regarding job prospects in language teaching. It can be

concluded that several factors negatively affected participants' grit in learning English.

Table 4.10. Data from interview question 3.

		N:20
3. Can you explain if there was a specific event or topic that increased your grit in learning English?	No	6
	Teacher Support and Feedback	6
	Personal Achievements and Challenges	4
	Personal Changes and Habits	2
	Family/Friends	2
	Peer Competition	1

The answers to the question “Can you explain if there was a specific event or topic that increased your grit in learning English?” are represented in Table 4.10. Out of 20 participants, 6 indicated that there was no specific event or topic that increased their grit in learning English. Among the remaining participants, 6 identified Teacher Support and Feedback as a factor that increased their grit, making it the most frequently mentioned positive influence. Other significant factors include Personal Achievements and Challenges (4 participants), Family/Friends (2 participants), Personal Changes and Habits (2 participants), and Peer Competition (1 participant).

It is realized that six participants mentioned experiences related to their teachers. They reported that their teachers' motivation and encouragement to speak English, or their admiration for their teachers' lives, had an active effect on their language learning. This aligns with the answers to the first question in which the most prominent positive factor pointed at was teacher influence. Some of the answers given by the participants are given below as examples:

Student 1: “After being accepted to my current university, I didn't go there with much enthusiasm, but by the end of the term, when I realized I had gained something, I thought, 'Yes, I'm glad I came.' My grit increased a bit, especially after receiving positive feedback from my teachers. For instance, my writing teacher said, 'I never give a perfect score of 20 out of 20, it's like giving away my chair.' I told myself, 'I will get a 20 out of 20 before the term ends,' and I did. I'm happy about that. Such things increase my grit.”

Student 9: *“More hours and more successful teachers come to mind, at least teachers who cared about their English classes. Before high school, I had very good English teachers, and I always admired them. I said, ‘I want to be like this teacher.’ One day, I also want to speak like this teacher, pronounce like this, and communicate like this. I constantly admired and looked up to them because my teachers, especially my elementary and middle school teachers left a strong impression on me. I still remember their names.”*

Student 13: *“I think this is entirely related to our teachers getting us to speak. For example, I could normally form sentences in my head, but I struggled and felt shy when speaking. However, our teachers did everything they could to get us to talk. Once I started speaking, it got easier. I think this had a very positive impact on me.”*

Student 16: *“One of my teachers always used to share his biography, telling us about the difficult conditions he came from and how he learned English. He would also mention the high position he holds now. This honestly served as a great example for me.”*

Additionally, personal achievements and challenges were reported by four students as events that significantly impacted their grit in learning English. These experiences included overcoming difficult tasks, receiving positive feedback and achieving goals, which significantly improved their grit. Some of the answers given by the participants are provided below as examples:

Student 2: *“Increasing my grit came from my attempts and the results of university exams. I put myself to the test to see where I stood, and seeing those results helped me determine my level and progress. This motivated me to keep improving.”*

Student 7: *“During high school, I wanted to choose the English department but was demoralized by low exam scores. My English teacher provided significant help and special attention, which improved my confidence and interest in pursuing English. That's when I started moving towards this field.”*

Student 20: *“Once, a difficult exam was approaching, difficult for me anyway, and I was very stressed. I didn't understand the grammar rules and was certain I would fail, so I stopped studying. My teacher noticed that I basically had given up, she helped me after class, and told me what I should be studying. I started studying. I didn't have much time but still got a good grade. This experience showed me that I could handle tough situations and made me feel more confident.”*

Moreover, personal changes and habits were reported by two students as events that significantly impacted their grit in learning English. These experiences included adjusting daily routines to incorporate more English exposure and finding new ways to stay motivated:

Student 17: *“The first year I attended preparatory school, another teacher suggested that we translate our phones, or anything related to language around us into English, and immerse ourselves in English as much as possible. I followed this advice that year. When I saw something in English on TV, on my phone, or in a text in front of me, I could understand the gist of it even if I didn't know the meaning of all the words. This motivated me and increased my desire to learn more.”*

Another significant factor was the support received from family and friends, being mentioned by two students. The following comments were made by the students to explain how families or friends provided them with opportunities and offered support and encouragement:

Student 18: *“My family provided me with the opportunity to study abroad. I needed to put in extra effort for this.”*

Student 19: *“I came to the program with a friend, whose support was very important in adapting to the preparatory process and social environment. The presence and support of the friend made the transition easier and improved my grit.”*

Finally, competition amongst their peers was mentioned by one student as an event that increased their grit as such:

Student 3: *“Noticing competition in the classroom and competing with my friend increased my grit.”*

In summary, teacher support and feedback were mentioned as the most frequently cited positive influence, aligning with the previous findings where teachers were noted as a significant factor in improving grit. This connection once again underlines the powerful role teachers play in fostering grit. As seen from the responses, students valued their teachers' ability to motivate them to speak English, their impactful personal stories shared and the positive reinforcement provided. In addition, personal achievements and challenges were recognized as important contributors to increased grit, with students citing overcoming difficulties and achieving personal goals as key motivators. The influence of family/friends,

personal changes and habits as well as peer competition also played roles, although to a lesser extent.

Table 4.11. Data from interview question 4.

		N:20
4. Can you explain if there was a specific event or topic that decreased your grit in learning English?	No	5
	Poor Exam Scores	4
	Falling Behind Peers	4
	Fear of Failure	4
	Social Environment Pressure	2
	Taking a Gap Year After High School	1
	Teacher Influence	1
	Lack of Motivation	1

The answers to the question “Can you explain if there was a specific event or topic that decreased your grit in learning English?” are shown in Table 4.11. Five participants indicated that there was no specific event or topic that decreased their grit in learning English. Out of the remaining participants, four identified Poor Exam Scores as a factor that decreased their grit, making it one of the most frequently mentioned negative influences. Other significant factors include Falling Behind Peers (4 participants), Fear of Failure (4 participants), Social Environment Pressure (2 participants), Taking a Gap Year After High School (1 participant), Teacher Influence (1 participant) and Lack of Motivation (1 participant).

Getting poor exam scores were mentioned by four participants as their experience that decreased their grit. These students reported feeling demoralized and less motivated to continue their English studies after receiving low grades on language tests. Some of the answers given by the participants are provided below as examples:

Student 2: *“Of course, I can say that a slightly discouraging event was when I was in high school preparing for university. I always received low scores on the practice tests given by the teachers. This had a somewhat negative impact on me.”*

Student 9: *“Many practice exams really discouraged me. I already had issues with education.”*

Equally significant, four students cited situations in which they fell behind their peers as a reason for decreased grit. This suggests that comparing their progress to that of their friends and feeling like they were lagging had a notable negative impact on their motivation to learn English. Some of the answers given by the participants are provided below as examples:

Student 3: *“A demotivating situation for me was in the preparatory class when I saw my friends speaking very fluently. I felt like, 'What am I doing here?'"*

Student 13: *“When I was in the language class in high school, my friends were much better than me. Most of their parents knew English, many had families who had worked or studied abroad, and they were very good. I looked at them and then at myself and thought, 'There must be something wrong with me.' Despite working like crazy, I couldn't even get close to their grades.”*

Another factor that was mentioned by four participants as a factor that negatively affected their grit was fear of failure. Fear of failure caused feelings of anxiety. This anxiety created a significant barrier to their success and caused their grit to plummet. Some of the answers given by the participants are provided below:

Student 10: *“One time, I went down to the study rooms and saw a girl. It was exam period, maybe finals, I don't remember. She was studying so intensely and kept saying things like, 'Oh, it's so hard. Oh, I can't do this. Why did I choose this field?'"*

Student 11: *“Yes, I was afraid because, for example, when we read an essay, I couldn't understand what I was reading. I thought, 'If it's like this now, what will it be like in the future?'"*

On the other hand, social environment pressure was cited by two students as a reason for decreased grit. This included expectations from family, peers or the broader community that negatively impacted their motivation to continue learning English. One of the comments made by a student is as follows:

Student 8: *“That has already happened with the external environment. We can say that the external environment had some impact because everyone thinks that everyone else knows English. Many people, whether it's fathers, others in the external environment, or different people, think they know English. People can see this field as somewhat negative.”*

Less frequently mentioned factors, each cited by one student, included taking a gap year after high school, negative teacher influence, and a general lack of motivation. Some of the answers given by the participants are provided below as examples:

Student 1: *“Something that diminished my motivation was waiting. For example, taking a gap year after high school—I waited for three years. I know my own capacity and say to myself, ‘I can do this and that,’ but when I take the exam, it doesn’t turn out that way.”*

Student 6: *“In middle school, one of the English teachers would often not come to class. When she did, she was very difficult, acting aggressively. Instead of teaching us by speaking English, she focused on rote memorization.”*

In conclusion, these responses showcase the diverse range of factors that can negatively impact students' grit in English language learning, from academic performance and peer comparisons to personal fears and external pressures.

Table 4.12. Data from interview question 5.

		N:20
5. What do you do to cope with factors that decrease or negatively affect your grit in the process of learning English?	Self-Motivation	8
	Working Harder	3
	Support from Family	3
	Support from Friends	3
	Increasing Exposure to the Language	2
	Focusing on Themselves	1
	Therapy Support	1

The answers to the question “What do you do to cope with factors that decrease or negatively affect your grit in the process of learning English?” are represented in Table 4.12. Out of 20 participants, eight identified Self-motivation as their primary coping strategy, making it the most frequently mentioned method. Other significant coping strategies include Working Harder (3 participants), Support from Family (3 participants), and Support from Friends (3 participants). Additionally, participants mentioned Increasing Exposure to the Language (2 participants), Focusing on Themselves (1 participant), and Therapy Support (1 participant) as ways to cope with factors that negatively impact their grit.

First of all, self-motivation was mentioned by eight students as an effective strategy:

Student 2: *“Yes, I motivate myself by thinking, 'I need to focus on this topic', I see my mistakes.”*

Student 3: *“I motivated myself by thinking that everyone starts learning at some point; no one is born knowing everything.”*

Student 4: *“I usually encourage myself by reminding myself of my potential.”*

Similarly, three students responded to challenges by working harder and increasing their effort as well as discipline:

Student 15: *“I worked very hard, I took notes on almost everything my teachers said.”*

Student 17: *“Because I was embarrassed by my friends, I worked hard at the beginning of the year.”*

On the other hand, three students relied on support from their families to maintain their grit:

Student 10: *“My family is my biggest supporter.”*

Additionally, three students found that support from friends played an important role in maintaining their grit:

Student 19: *“I always prefer to talk with someone who supports me and improves my grit. This person was my friend.”*

Moreover, two students found motivation by immersing themselves in English language content:

Student 9: *“To motivate myself, I listened to English music, watched movies, and short clips of my favorite films on YouTube. This would lift my spirits, and then I would get back to studying.”*

Student 20: *“Well, sometimes I just take a break and watch a movie or series in English. It helps me relax and also, I still kind of feel like I'm learning.”*

One student mentioned focusing on themselves and their well-being as a method of coping with negative factors:

Student 13: *“At the end of the day I’m trying to improve myself. So, this is not a competition. What’s important is me and my mental health”*

Lastly, one student talked about seeking professional help in the form of therapy as a way to deal with the challenges they face:

Student 11: *“To be honest I get help, I mean from like psychologists, therapists or people who I know who have walked through the same roads. I am able to avoid an anxiety disorder and I know that as long as I struggle with this, it will be like this. I mean it will be fixed in some way. I know I have many opportunities in order to change things and because I know this, I choose to get help.”*

In conclusion, the responses from the participants show some of the strategies and solutions students choose to use in order to deal with challenges and maintain their grit. From internal motivation and goal setting to seeking external support and engaging with the language through certain media, the students deal with negative factors in a number of interesting ways.

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in connection with the existing literature concerning university students studying EFL and their levels of grit in learning the language. The study collected data on the levels of grit exhibited by university students learning EFL to examine any discrepancies based on demographic factors, such as gender, age as well as variations in their length of English educational background and proficiency levels alongside their department of study. Additionally, the factors that influence an individual's level of grit are discussed to provide additional insight into the obtained results.

5.1. The General Grit Levels of Participants

The students who participated in the questionnaire were asked to evaluate their experiences concerning their grit on a scale from one to five. The average response ranged from 3.22 to 4.24, indicating that the students generally considered themselves as gritty English language learners. For example, when asked about their grit level after facing challenges in learning English, the average response was 3.47, which suggests that while most students feel they maintain their grit in the case of difficulties, there is still room for improvement in certain regards.

The lowest average score of 3.22 in the questionnaire was related to the students' acknowledgment that they might not consistently live up to their teachers' expectations. This shows that students felt as though they sometimes could not meet their teachers' expectation, and there is a degree of self-reflection and rapport between students and their teachers. On the other hand, the highest average score of 4.24 reflected students' tendency to increase their efforts after receiving lower grades, possibly motivated by the necessity to pass their courses and meet their teacher's expectancy of them, which suggests a strong drive to succeed and self-actualize. These results show that the levels of general grit among the participants are moderate to high, and research shows that individuals with high grit levels are more successful in the foreign language learning process (Kiatkeeree & Ruangjaroon, 2022; Wei et al., 2019).

High grit levels are often associated with greater well-being, enhanced enjoyment of learning, stronger self-efficacy, better pronunciation, success in both traditional and e-learning environments as well as success at effective goal setting, leading to greater long-term success (Ain et al., 2021; Aparicio et al., 2017;

Fernández-Martín et al., 2020; Jalilzadeh et al., 2022; Kiatkeeree & Ruangjaroon 2022; Shehzad et al., 2022; Taşpınar & Külekçi, 2018; Wei et al., 2019, 2020; Yang, 2021). Despite the obstacles individuals may encounter with, those with high levels of grit can maintain their motivation and continue their efforts towards language learning (Teimouri et al., 2022). A high level of grit also helps students cope with negative emotions such as exam anxiety which can negatively affect performance in language learning (Aydın et al., 2006; Aydın & Takkaç, 2010; Datu & Fong, 2018; Liu & Wang, 2021).

5.2 Gender Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

The results of the present research did not show any differences based on the participant's gender in relation to their grit. This finding aligns with certain previous research that also did not find gender to be a significant parameter (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Li et al., 2018; Wahidah & Herdian, 2021). Other research with larger participant numbers also support this findings; for example, Khajavy et al. (2021) worked with 723 students and did not find significant differences between genders in relation to concepts such as motivation and grit. They revealed that both genders exhibited similar levels of motivation and grit. Similarly, in another more recent study, Calafato (2023) found that factors such as language learning strategies, motivation and self-efficacy beliefs were essential factors that contributed to language learning success; however, there was no significant link between these factors and the gender of the participants. This suggests that a lot of varying elements regarding language learning are determined by similar factors regardless of the student's gender.

Furthermore, Li et al. (2018) found no significant gender differences in grit among Chinese adults. Their correlation and multi-group analysis revealed certain relationships between grit, self-esteem and life satisfaction but these relationships did not vary significantly by the sample's gender. Finally, Teimouri (2022) also observed that gender did not significantly affect the levels of L2 grit; therefore, gender can be said to be negligible in such contexts.

5.3 Age Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

The current study found no distinction in grit across different age groups. Studies suggest that age may not have an influence on grit in acquiring languages. For instance, Sanders et al. (2022) focused on whether age plays a key role in determining grit. They found that the grit of individuals was primarily influenced

by differences between generations rather than individual ages themselves, and this indicates that in the absence of specific intervention that fosters a gritty mindset, grit still tends to endure over time. Guo and Li (2022) further examined the levels of grit among language learners across various age groups and concluded that age did not play a significant role in determining grit. In a similar vein, Habók and Magyar (2018) explored how language learning strategies and success vary across age groups and discovered that the approaches adopted by language learners and their attitudes produce comparable outcomes irrespective of age disparities.

In short, these results indicate that grit in language learning is more interconnected with the strategies employed than certain personal distinctions. Therefore, based on this data, it is suggested that age does not play a significant role in the level of grit in language learning. However, given the range and variety of studies in this area, it is important to recognize that individual's learning experiences can vary based on a multitude of various factors (Tseng & Gao, 2021).

5.4 English Education Duration Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

The current research study found a significant difference between grit and the English education duration the students received. The analysis revealed that the participants who reported receiving English education for 9 to 10 years had higher grit levels in relation to learning English compared to the participants who reported receiving 0 to 2 years. Research also demonstrates that longer, structured and more consistent language education can increase a student's grit in language learning (Hejazi & Sadoughi, 2022; Khajavy et al., 2021).

Prolonged exposure allows students to build confidence, deepen their understanding and acquire stronger language skills, all of which contribute to their willingness to continue learning the language (Duan et al., 2024; Murphy et al., 2020). Lou and Noels (2016) also found a partial mediation effect of L2 grit on the relationship between growth language mindset and academic achievement. Furthermore, Sadoughi and Hejazi (2023) state that learners' academic engagement is largely influenced by their growth language mindsets and learning experiences. In addition, Hu et al. (2022) suggests that students who have a growth mindset are more likely to have greater grit. Similarly, Demir and Al-Kadi (2024) found that students with a higher growth language mindset develop more L2 grit. Research also emphasizes that students with longer-term and more supportive educational

experiences have higher levels of grit, which supports continuous effort in language learning (Liu, 2021).

5.5 English Proficiency Level Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

The study examined whether there was a difference in grit among participants based on their foreign language proficiency levels. The results found a significant link between students' level of grit and their language proficiency. The analysis revealed that students with B2 level English proficiency exhibited greater grit in comparison to the students with B1 level proficiency. Research on the impact of language proficiency on grit in language learning suggests that the proficiency of an individual is linked to their motivation and grit throughout the learning process (Jalilzadeh et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2020).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals with advanced language proficiency possess higher motivation, leading to increased grit in language learning (Liu, 2022; Teimouri et al., 2022). Investigations into sources of motivation indicate that as language proficiency increases, students' belief in their own success also rises (Wang & Sun, 2020). However, in cases of low language proficiency, factors such as anxiety and lack of motivation can hinder grit in the learning process.

It was uncovered that students with lower proficiency levels experience higher anxiety, negatively impacting the learning process (Yoğurtçu & Yoğurtçu, 2013). Research demonstrating the effectiveness of advanced language proficiency in promoting grit in foreign language learning shows that students at this level exhibit greater grit in the learning process by increasing their motivation (Liu, 2022). Advanced language learners are more self-confident and motivated in using and developing their language skills, engage in language use systematically and consciously, and even obtain further longer-term motivation in language learning as they strengthen their language identities (Winke, 2022).

Often, students learning a language at the beginner level experience higher anxiety and lack of motivation, which can make it challenging for them to persist in the learning process (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005). Anxiety and low self-confidence can negatively affect the continuation of the learning process for students at lower proficiency levels; nevertheless, students at intermediate and advanced levels have reached a certain level of competence in the language,

resulting in higher motivation and self-confidence which enables them to be more persistent in the learning process (Salehi & Vaez-Dalili, 2017).

In conclusion, increased language proficiency of students improved their motivation, causing them to be more persistent in the language learning process (Wong, 2020). Obstacles, such as anxiety and lack of motivation can hinder grit in cases of low language proficiency; hence, it is essential to increase students' motivation and reduce their anxiety by creating appropriate teaching strategies and supportive learning environments in the language learning process (Alrabai, 2022).

5.6 Proficiency Score Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

Various studies have explored the relationship between foreign language test scores and grit in language learning and revealed certain varied connections between these factors (Mikami, 2024). In the present study, no significant difference was found in EFL students' grit level depending on the proficiency variable. Nonetheless, it is claimed in the literature that students who obtain higher proficiency scores might be more motivated and show a higher degree of grit in language learning. For example, it was found that higher test scores can positively influence students' motivation and grit in language learning (Liu & Hou, 2017), and students who perceive their language proficiency as high are generally more motivated to continue learning, which increases their persistence (Dunn & Iwaniec, 2021; Wu & Lee, 2017). Another research study suggested that intrinsic motivation is a significant determinant of persistence in language learning (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000).

On the other hand, external motivation, such as the need to pass a test or achieve a certain score often encourages students to continue their language studies (Ramage, 1990). The relevant literature shows that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are important; conversely, extrinsic motivation (e.g., the desire to meet graduation requirements) has a more direct impact on test performance and persistence (Dunn & Iwaniec, 2021; Wu & Lee, 2017). It is commonly acknowledged that test anxiety can negatively affect performance, but it is not obvious how it affects persistence in language learning, and students may persist despite their anxiety if they have strong extrinsic motivations, such as career requirements or academic goals (Calafato, 2023).

In conclusion, while proficiency scores can influence motivation and grit in language learning, the type of motivation (extrinsic and intrinsic) and anxiety levels play a significant role in determining how persistent a student will be to continue their language studies (Noels et al., 2000; Ramage, 1990). It is also argued in the Turkish EFL context that grit is associated not only with high test scores but also with personal characteristics and the ability to handle academic challenges (Taşpınar & Külekçi, 2018).

5.7 Department of Study Differences in University Students' Grit in English Learning

The current study did not reveal a significant difference in grit based on academic major. Research on this subject is relatively unexplored. As a result, it would be fair to recommend that the relationship between academic major and grit levels should be subjected to further investigation. While grit is extensively explored in educational contexts, comprehensive cross-disciplinary comparisons remain scarce, and this gap presents several promising directions for future research (Christopoulou et al., 2018).

5.8 Factors Influencing Grit Among EFL Learners in Türkiye

The qualitative findings from the interviews show the complex interplay of personal, social and environmental factors among preparatory school students learning EFL in Türkiye.

One of the most prominent findings is the significant role of teachers in fostering grit among EFL students. Many participants identified teacher encouragement as a positive influence on their grit. This concurs with previous research emphasizing the important role of teachers in motivating language learners (Hejazi & Sadoughi, 2022). The students' testimonies in the present study emphasize how supportive, enthusiastic and competent teachers can significantly improve learners' grit. For instance, many of the participants commented on the positive effects of certain teachers allowing communication in their classes, encouraging active participation and helping students through their anxiety. Several participants also emphasized how a welcoming teacher can be quite influential. Some participants pointed out that supportive teachers enhanced their experience in the class and made them be more actively engaged in their classes. Others noted how their teacher's attitudes prevented certain negative feelings. Yuan (2022) supports these findings by maintaining that caring teachers who have positive

relationships with their students contribute significantly to the development of grit. Likewise, Tang and Zhu (2024) support the findings of the current study by arguing that teachers can provide emotional or academic support to increase students' grit over a long term.

Another important finding of the present study is the significance of personal interest in certain English language media. It was discovered that authentic materials that students are interested in, such as movies, TV shows and music can pave the way for increased grit. To illustrate, one student in this study commented on imitating certain characters in TV shows while another student mentioned having an interest in learning English in order to understand their favorite media without subtitles. In a similar vein, another participant touched upon the fact that their interest in video games motivated them to use English from an early age. These findings are in line with the relevant literature arguing for the benefits of incorporating authentic materials into language learning (Gilmore, 2007; Mitrulescu & Negoescu, 2024). Gilmore (2007) emphasized that integrating such materials can create a more engaging and interesting educational experience for the learners. Likewise, Mitrulescu and Negoescu (2024) found that using authentic materials, including menus, leaflets, magazine articles, recorded radio programs, TV shows and movies can significantly improve second language classes.

Some students in the present study also commented on their interest in different cultures and how their interest increased their grit to learn English. For instance, one student talked about watching American TV shows. Furthermore, some students mentioned their intrinsic interest in foreign languages as a means of influencing their grit. Therefore, it would be fair to state that interest in learning a foreign language or culture is likely to have a positive influence on student's grit.

Moreover, the data provided a more nuanced understanding on how certain factors, such as the duration of English education and proficiency levels interact with individual experiences to ultimately influence grit. For example, some of the relevant comments of the participants were related to how their grit increased over time, how their lack of enthusiasm for the university they attended shifted in time to a more positive outlook and how receiving positive feedback from their teachers contributed to grit development.

The learning environment also plays a role in shaping students' grit levels. Some students mentioned that their institution made learning more enjoyable by

implementing certain practices. On the other hand, being placed in a lower-level class without sufficient support led to a less positive experience for some students. Moreover, the classroom atmosphere shaped by interactions with peers and teachers was mentioned as important in increasing grit. This shows the importance of creating supportive, engaging and enjoyable classroom environments in EFL classes. This finding concurs with previous research on language learning environments (Lee, 2020).

The current study also revealed some of the factors that negatively impact students' grit. Personal challenges, peer influence, limited access to resources and inadequate teacher support emerged as major issues. Procrastination, difficulty focusing and lack of motivation were mentioned as personal challenges that students struggled with. Limited access to resources, particularly because of location was also mentioned quite often. Some students also drew attention to financial constraints, inadequate educational facilities and difficulties associated with living in small cities. Peer influence, which included a lack of participation and interest as well as ridicule was also reported by some students as factors decreasing their grit. Inadequate teacher support or uncaring attitudes from teachers were also mentioned. These findings demonstrate the multifaceted nature of grit in regard to EFL learning and show how it can be influenced by a varied combination of individual, social and environmental factors (Cui & Yang, 2022).

Some students also talked about how receiving poor exam scores and fear of failure affected their grit negatively. This finding indicates the complex relationship between academic performance, self-efficacy and grit in the EFL context. Some students also mentioned feeling demoralized as well as being less gritty before important exams and after receiving low grades on language tests. This finding aligns with previous research on the role of academic self-concept in language learning motivation (Xu, 2022).

Furthermore, some students commented on the negative attitudes of their teachers, particularly inadequate or archaic teaching methods and mockery. For example, some students described feeling discouraged when faced with too fast-paced instruction or critical attitudes. Others noted that mocking behaviors for even the slightest mistake had a negative effect on their grit levels. Therefore, creating a trustworthy environment in the classroom is quite important in order to make the students feel confident while speaking, which in turn positively affects their

language learning (Davis, 1993; Khajavy et al., 2017; Kızıldaş, 2021; Özer & Korkmaz, 2016).

5.9 Coping Strategies Employed by the Students

The strategies that the students shared show how certain EFL learners maintain their grit through difficult times. The students stated that they seek motivation within themselves or from family/friends and increase their exposure to the target language in their daily lives. Self-motivation was mentioned as a prominent strategy cited by several students, which stresses the importance of personal reflection, self-regulation, and goal setting (Baumeister et al., 2007; Travers et al., 2015). De La Cruz et al. (2021) supports this notion, finding that grit personality is linked to self-efficacy, which is also positively connected to autonomous motivation and the readiness to change.

Additionally, some students commented on how they improved their grit by putting more effort into language learning while others mentioned seeking support from family and friends. Du et al. (2023) also discovered that the family support, especially parental support is vital in increasing grit as it paves the way for language learners to fulfill essential psychological needs. Similarly, Lase and Wibowo (2024) has recently revealed a positive link between social support from peers and grit.

In conclusion, the analysis of the interviews provided a clear understanding of some of the factors influencing grit among EFL learners in the current context.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Summary

This study investigated the grit levels of university students learning the English language in Türkiye by focusing on the effect of individual differences in students' backgrounds and the factors influencing their grit in language learning. The primary aim was to examine whether variables, such as gender, age, department of study, English proficiency level, and English proficiency exam scores led to differences in their grit levels in English language learning, and to explore the factors that influence this grit. A convergent mixed-methods approach was employed to combine quantitative data from the Persistence Scale (Mutlu, 2017) with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of a total of 330 university students from two universities in the Black Sea region of Türkiye.

Quantitative data analysis revealed no significant differences in grit levels depending on gender or age groups. However, a significant difference in grit was revealed based on the duration of English education. Students with 9-10 years of English education exhibited higher grit compared to those with only 0-2 years. English proficiency level also had a significant impact on grit; students with B2 proficiency showed greater grit than those at the B1 level, but no significant differences in grit were found based on English proficiency scores or the students' department of study.

On the other hand, the qualitative data provided a deeper understanding of the factors influencing students' grit. Teacher encouragement emerged as the most frequently mentioned positive influence. Interest in English media and a supportive learning environment were also significant factors. Other positive influences included friend support, family support, and interest in multiple cultures and foreign languages. The qualitative data also provided information on some of the negative influences affecting grit. Personal challenges such as procrastination, lack of motivation, peer influence, and limited access to resources emerged as major negative influences. Poor exam scores and fear of failure were also noted as factors that decreased the student's grit.

Some of the coping strategies students resort to in the case of difficulties regarding their grit were uncovered and discussed. Students reported various

methods, with self-motivation being the most common. These qualitative findings demonstrate major personal, social and environmental factors affecting preparatory students' grit in EFL learning.

Overall, the participants self-reported that they had moderate to high levels of grit and their responses on the 5-point Persistence Scale averaged between 3 ("Describes me moderately") and 4 ("Describes me very well"). The quantitative data along with the qualitative findings indicate the importance of both personal, demographic and contextual factors that increase or decrease grit in language learning.

6.2 Implications

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings of the current research as well as the relevant literature in the field pertaining to EFL (Chang et al., 2014; Erarslan, 2023; Lee, 2020; Mutlu, 2017; Shirvan et al., 2022; Solhi et al., 2023; Yuan, 2022), several implications regarding EFL education in Türkiye can be drawn and suggested:

1. Long-term English education: The quantitative data showed that students who reported having longer exposure to English education had higher grit levels. Thus, starting English education from a young age is advisable to foster grit in language learning. Starting to foster grit from earlier stages of schooling and ages as well as focusing on the actual usage of the language may allow the students to develop their grit relating to language learning better and become more successful in their efforts.
2. Proficiency-based support: It was found in the present study that those who identified themselves as being B2-level in English were grittier than those who thought themselves B1. This suggests that lower-proficiency students might exhibit less grit in general due to their less experience in the language. Therefore, it might be useful for institutions to develop strategies to improve grit among students with lower proficiency scores. This might be possible through more achievable regular positive reinforcement and tailored learning experiences.
3. Teacher training and development: The interview results specifically underlined the importance of teacher encouragement and involvement, with many students talking about the influence of teachers on their grit both positively and negatively. Given these insights and the quantitative findings pertaining to proficiency and grit as well as the student's perception of not fully meeting their teachers' expectations, teacher training programs could focus on motivational techniques, strategies to

foster grit and methods to effectively align certain expectations, particularly for students at lower proficiency levels.

4. Multifaceted approach to grit development: As Chang et al. (2014) suggest, in order to increase grit levels among their students, institutions should adopt a multifaceted approach by achieving the following:

- Encouraging students to set long-term goals and fostering a growth mindset.
- Creating supportive and engaging classroom environments and promoting a sense of community and collaboration.
- Implementing certain targeted interventions for students with lower proficiency or less exposure to English.
- Providing more professional development opportunities for teachers and knowledge about grit.

These strategies were developed by Chang et al. (2014) who found that teaching students specific goal setting techniques and providing opportunities to consistently apply these skills can enhance their grit and positively influence perseverance.

5. Integration of English media and culture: The qualitative data from the interviews also showed that the students had a strong interest in English media and culture. Thus, it can be useful for curriculum designers or teachers to incorporate more authentic material and cultural elements into courses to increase grit.

6. Optimizing learning environments: The qualitative data also indicated the need for creating environments that support grit development, and teachers can be mindful of certain negative classroom interactions that negatively affect grit.

7. Peer and family support systems: As the qualitative insights on friend and family support are shown to be positive factors as well as effective coping mechanisms, developing certain peer-to-peer learning programs and family engagement initiatives in schools could enhance the support system for language learners.

8. Goal setting and self-reflection: As seen from the moderate to high self-reported grit levels from the participants and the major influence of self-reflection and motivation as a coping strategy, implementing regular goal setting exercises and reflective practices could help students maintain their interest and increase their grit, especially as they progress in their language learning and gain higher proficiency levels.

9. Early intervention and continuous support: The relationship between years of English education and grit levels in this study suggests the need for early intervention and continuous support throughout a student's language learning process. This could involve regular assessment of grit levels and targeted interventions at different stages of language education.

In conclusion, the abovementioned implications derived from both quantitative and qualitative findings as well as the relevant literature (Chang et al., 2014; Erarslan, 2023; Lee, 2020; Mutlu, 2017; Shirvan et al., 2022; Solhi et al., 2023; Yuan, 2022) try to provide a framework for enhancing EFL education in Türkiye. By focusing on these areas and considering the suggested strategies, educational institutions may enhance the effectiveness of their learning environments, thereby fostering grit and potentially improving language learning outcomes across various proficiency levels and student demographics.

6.3 Limitations of the Research

The sample of the study was limited to the students in the preparatory schools of two universities in the Black Sea Region of Türkiye. The research also collected data at a single point of time rather than over multiple periods, which could have provided useful information regarding changes in grit over time.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

For future research, other relevant factors that could influence grit may be included. These could be learning strategies or socioeconomic background. Examining a broader range of variables could provide more useful information regarding the understanding of grit, and as Jaeger et al. (2010) suggest, additional research on grit and student success could inform educators about strategies to employ and ways of increasing students' grittiness.

In the present study, the questionnaires were administered physically by hand, which led to more accurate responses but limited the sample size. Future studies can expand the scale and the scope of the demographic and administer questionnaires online to reach a larger sample. The scale used in this study can be applied to individuals learning EFL at different ages. Moreover, similar studies can be conducted with students in departments where English education continues after the preparatory period, such as the Faculties of English Language and Literature, Gastronomy and Tourism. Researchers can also measure students' grit levels at the

beginning of the preparatory class and compare them with their levels at the end of the preparatory class.

Additionally, future studies can investigate participants' exposure to language learning, such as the mediums they were exposed to and how they learned the language. Furthermore, subsequent studies might prove more insightful if they conduct similar research with diverse groups of EFL students across different regions.



7. REFERENCES

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8. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Persistence Scale

Değerli katılımcı, bu anket, İngilizce öğrenme sürecinizde azim düzeyiniz hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmek amacıyla yapılan bir çalışmanın bir parçasıdır. Katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır ve size bağlıdır. Lütfen ankette size yönlendirilen 18 soruyu dikkatlice okuyun ve size en uygun seçeneği işaretleyin. Her sorunun yanında aşağıdaki seçenekler yer almaktadır: 1. Beni hiç yansıtmıyor 2. Beni çok az yansıtmıyor 3. Beni kısmen yansıtmıyor 4. Beni çok yansıtmıyor 5. Beni tamamen yansıtmıyor. Sorulara dikkat etmeniz ve hiçbirini boş bırakmamanız önemlidir. Cevaplarınız gizlilik ilkelerine uygun olarak işlenecek ve sadece araştırmacı tarafından erişilecektir. Anketin tamamlanması yaklaşık 5 dakikanızı alacaktır. Katkılarınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.

Cinsiyetiniz	Yaşınız	Okuduğunuz Üniversite	Okuduğunuz Bölüm	Kaç Yıldır İngilizce Öğreniyorsunuz?	İngilizce Seviyeniz	Sene Başındaki Yeterlilik Notunuz
Kadın ☐ Erkek ☐	18-20 ☐ 21-23 ☐ 24-26 ☐ 27+ ☐			1 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 6-9 ☐ 10+ ☐		

		Beni hiç yansıtmıyor	Beni çok az yansıtmıyor	Beni kısmen yansıtmıyor	Beni çok yansıtmıyor	Beni tamamen yansıtmıyor
1.	İngilizce öğrenme sürecinde karşılaştığım başarısızlıklar beni yıldırmaz.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	İngilizce öğrenme ile ilgili ise, yorgun bile olsam, başladığım her işi bitiririm.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	İngilizce öğrenirken, kendimi diğer insanlara oranla daha fazla çalışmaya zorlarım.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	İngilizce ile ilgili herhangi bir noktada kendimi zayıf hissedersen, o konuda daha çok pratik yaparım.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5.	Bana birçok sorun yaratsa da İngilizce öğrenme hedefime ulaşma konusunda ısrarcıyım.	①	②	③	④	⑤

6.	İngilizce öğrenirken öğretmenlerimin benden beklediklerinin daha fazlasını yaparım.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7.	İngilizce dil becerilerimden biri zayıf ise, onu güçlendirinceye kadar çaba sarf ederim.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8.	İngilizce dersinde düşük bir not aldığımda, bir sonraki sınav için daha sıkı çalışırım.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9.	Sıkı çalışma ve sabır gerektirse de İngilizce öğrenmek için gerekli zamanı ve çabayı harcamaya devam ederim.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10.	İngilizce öğrenme ile ilgili bir etkinlikle uğraşıyorsam, çevrede dikkatimi dağıtan unsurlar olsa bile o etkinliği bitirmeye çalışırım.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11.	İngilizceyi iyi öğrenme amacım, karşılaştığım güçlükleri aşarken bana önemli bir motivasyon sağlar.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12.	İngilizce öğrenmek için yapabileceğim en iyisini yapmaya çalışırım.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13.	İngilizce bir beceriyi kazanmak ne kadar zor ise, bu beceriyi başarma konusunda o kadar kararlı olurum.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14.	İngilizce öğrenme konusunda belirlediğim hedeflere ulaşınca kadar çaba gösteririm.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15.	İngilizce öğrenirken karşılaşılan ve başkalarının çoktan yıldıdığı sorunlarla başa çıkmak için çabalarım.	①	②	③	④	⑤
16.	Bir dil ödevinde karşılaştığım bir zorluğu aşamasam bile, sonunda aşacağımı düşünerek tekrar tekrar denerim.	①	②	③	④	⑤
17.	Bir İngilizce dil becerisini öğrenirken yaptığım çalışma planlarına uymak için çaba gösteririm.	①	②	③	④	⑤
18.	İngilizce öğrenmek için sıkı çalışırım.	①	②	③	④	⑤

APPENDIX 2: Semi-Structured Interview

Mülakat Soruları:

- 1. İngilizce öğrenme sürecindeki azminizi olumlu yönde etkileyen faktörler nelerdir?**
- 2. İngilizce öğrenme sürecindeki azminizi olumsuz yönde etkileyen faktörler nelerdir?**
- 3. İngilizce öğrenme azminizi artıran belirli bir olay ya da bir konu olduysa açıkla mısınız?**
- 4. İngilizce öğrenme azminizi azaltan belirli bir olay ya da bir konu olduysa açıkla mısınız?**
- 5. İngilizce öğrenme sürecindeki azminizi azaltan veya olumsuz etkileyen faktörlerle baş etmek için neler yapıyorsunuz?**