

L2 GRIT AMONG PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS: DOES SELF-PERCEIVED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY MATTER?

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Abstract: L2 Grit, which refers to the passion and perseverance shown for long-term goals related to L2 learning, is considered an important non-cognitive dimension since language learning is a long process with countless challenges. Although a plethora of research has investigated the issue in various contexts, pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit is an area that has yet to be thoroughly examined. For this reason, this study attempted to explore pre-service English teachers' L2 grit levels and how their self-perceived English proficiency might be related to their grit. This quantitative study collected data from 200 pre-service EFL teachers studying at a Turkish state university through a language-domain grit (L2 Grit) scale and a self-reporting question regarding how they rate their proficiency in English. The results of the data analysis revealed that the participants showed high overall L2 grit, particularly in perseverance of effort, whereas their consistency of interest was moderate, indicating a potential decline in passion over time. Self-perceived proficiency in English was found to have an impact on the participants' L2 grit, with those reporting higher proficiency also demonstrating higher levels of L2 grit. The discussion of the research findings in light of prior research led to some recommendations for future directions.

Keywords: consistency of interest, L2 grit, perseverance of effort, positive psychology, pre-service EFL teachers, self-perceived English proficiency

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Positive psychology is a growing field within psychology in general, and it is centered around human strengths and well-being (MacIntyre et al., 2019). In the context of second language (L2) learning, positive psychology is mostly concerned with non-cognitive learner variables, such as motivation, resilience, and emotional well-being (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014). According to MacIntyre et al. (2019), these variables can effectively enhance the outcomes of the language acquisition process. They play a key role in mastering the English language since they have an impact on constructs such as learner engagement, persistence, and achievement. When these positive psychology variables are successfully integrated into the language learning process, language classrooms can be transformed into a more supportive environment where learners are emotionally and psychologically supported (Dewaele et al., 2019).

As a psychological construct, grit can be described as the enduring passion and perseverance shown toward long-term goals by individuals, and it is characterized by the feeling

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of resilience in overcoming challenges (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087). Duckworth et al. (2007) note that grit includes consistency of interest and perseverance of effort as key elements. The concept of grit has influenced the direction of psychological studies, aiming to understand what drives some individuals more toward a goal. Duckworth et al. (2007) have investigated positive personality traits of individuals working in various professions and identified grit as a crucial positive characteristic. In almost every field, grit is key to success because gritty individuals tend not to give up under difficult circumstances.

Regarding L2 learning, grit is considered a vital non-cognitive trait that significantly impacts L2 learning since the language learning process demands a blend of passion and perseverance for long-term objectives. This mixture of passion and perseverance is regarded as useful for managing the complexities in the process of language acquisition and learning (Teimouri et al., 2022), and learners with high grit levels can achieve higher language proficiency because they can be more engaged with the process (Liu & Wang, 2021). Additionally, since language learning is a long and intricate process that might present disappointing outcomes and loss of morale, it requires learners to possess high levels of grit (Liu, 2021; Teimouri et al., 2022). To overcome such difficulties and negative outcomes, gritty learners work hard and maintain interest and effort (Alazemi et al., 2023; Derakshan et al., 2025). Besides, the role of educators in nurturing L2 grit is crucial since supportive teaching environments can strengthen students' resilience and motivation (Hejazi & Sadoughi, 2023; Liu et al., 2025; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023).

In light of these findings, it is possible to highlight the necessity of investigating perceived levels of L2 grit not only among EFL learners but also among prospective EFL teachers. Exploring pre-service EFL teachers' levels of passion and perseverance for learning English is important for understanding their determination in the language learning process, their ability to cope with the challenges they face, and their commitment to their professional development. Teacher training programs lay the foundation for learning for many pre-service teachers and provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Despite the research on the effectiveness of these programs, there is a lack of information on pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit levels and the impact of grit on the development of their behaviors.

To extend the contextual boundaries drawn by pre-service EFL teachers, the study has the potential to inform readers about how teacher training programs might shape teacher candidates' grit, discovering the duality of the situation in which individuals with varying degrees of grit levels as learners are trained to become teachers who will later manage younger individuals' grit. In this way, treating teacher candidates not only as representing a distinct context but also as a means of understanding how they may position grit in their future careers can provide unique insights into the evolving L2 grit literature. For this reason, in addition to the already acknowledged importance of L2 grit among language learners, exploring pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit will provide a fresh perspective on the discussion due to their intertwined identities as language learners and teachers of English.

Specifically, L2 grit becomes a critical factor for pre-service EFL teachers, both in developing their own language proficiency and in becoming effective teachers of English in the future. Moreover, given the potential of pre-service EFL teachers' perceived levels of L2 grit to inspire their students and increase their motivation to learn, research on this topic can contribute

to making language teaching programs more effective. Therefore, it can be suggested that creating an understanding of L2 grit within EFL pre-service teacher training programs may be essential in equipping future EFL educators with necessary knowledge and skills to provide meaningful assistance to their students in the demanding process of language learning. Zawodniak et al. (2021) contribute to the grit literature in the context of English majors; however, studies on future English teachers remain limited in exploring grit among pre-service teachers.

In short, considering the lack of sufficient research on the pre-service EFL teacher context, the current study will be significant in highlighting the dual identity of pre-service EFL teachers, identifying their perceived levels of L2 grit in particular, and connecting these to their self-perceived proficiency in English, thereby addressing an important research gap. Finally, the study offers pedagogical insights into teacher training programs by indicating how perceived proficiency might shape the grit of future teachers of English. In this regard, the study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are pre-service EFL teachers' perceived levels of L2 grit?

RQ2. What effect, if any, does self-perceived proficiency in English have on pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit?

LITERATURE REVIEW

L2 Grit

Grit as a concept dealing with the psychology of individuals as described by Duckworth et al. (2007) undoubtedly gained importance in educational contexts, later being introduced to the field of English language learning (Teimouri et al., 2022). Teimouri et al. (2022) noted that grit might not have the desired impact to define individuals' psychologies and characteristics in specific areas (e.g., EFL learning), for which they attempted to develop a language-domain-specific measure. In the context of EFL/ESL, grit represented the unwavering attempt of learners to succeed no matter what hardship they face on the way to learning/acquiring the language (Sudina & Plonsky, 2021; Teimouri et al., 2022).

To accommodate grit in the context of language teaching, Teimouri et al. (2022) developed the language-domain-specific grit scale (L2-Grit), which consisted of two components: consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. In the consistency of interest dimension, the scale aims to determine the interest levels of students in the process of language learning, whereas the perseverance of effort dimension attempts to rationalize how students act out persistent behaviors when they want to fulfill their language-related aims (Pawlak et al., 2024; Sudina & Plonsky, 2021; Teimouri et al., 2022). This integration into the field of EFL learning paved the way for further studies on L2 grit, leading the research to explore various dimensions such as motivation, engagement, success, anxiety, boredom, and more.

Research on L2 Grit

Grit has been studied in various contexts to explore connections to psychological issues in EFL teaching and learning contexts. These areas are mainly motivation (Changlek, 2015; Changlek & Palanukulwong, 2015; Chen et al., 2021; Pawlak et al., 2025), engagement (Liu, 2021; Zhao & Wang, 2023), anxiety (Alazemi et al., 2023; Heydarnejad et al., 2022; Li & Dewaele, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Liu & Wang, 2021; Wang & Ren, 2024; Zhao & Wang, 2024), boredom (Solhi et al., 2025), curiosity (Paradowski & Jelińska, 2024), and willingness to communicate (Teimouri et al., 2022). In addition, some studies attempt to explore the relationship between grit and achievement (Akyıldız, 2020; Bazalais et al., 2016; Teimouri et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2019; West et al., 2016). The related research can serve as a useful guide to lead the current study, allowing for a better understanding of the grit construct in the EFL context so that a sound theoretical basis can be established.

Initially, the relationship between grit and motivation is one of the areas explored frequently by researchers. In a general sense, it is revealed that learners with higher levels of grit are more likely to engage deeply with their language studies and persevere through challenges. For instance, Changlek (2015) and Changlek and Palanukulwong (2015) determined that grit can influence motivational states of EFL learners. Liu and Wang (2021), on the other hand, revealed a positive dependency between grit and learner engagement, and suggested that grit can increase the foreign language performance of learners by increasing their enjoyment and decreasing anxiety.

As for another area of interest, studies mostly focused on the relationship between anxiety and grit. In a broad sense, it was acknowledged that if learners have a high level of grit, their language learning anxiety will be alleviated greatly. As stated in many studies, anxiety is a significant obstacle in the way of learning a language successfully because learners might feel that they might fail or are not prepared enough for the task. To overcome these challenges, grit holds great potential, and this potential caught the interest of researchers. Heydarnejad et al. (2022) presented a structural model showing how grit can reduce foreign language anxiety and foster a more balanced and supportive learning environment. In a similar sense, Zhao and Wang (2023) revealed that grit has an important role in enhancing learner resilience against anxiety, enabling them to manage their emotions more effectively during challenging tasks. In addition, Liu and Wang (2021) reported that learners with greater grit are better equipped to handle performance anxiety, and that they are more in focus during language learning challenges.

In addition to motivation and anxiety constructs, related research focused on the relationship between L2 grit and other affective factors such as engagement, boredom, curiosity, and willingness to communicate. Initially, engagement is considered as a factor positively affected by L2 grit within the foreign language classroom. Liu (2021) noted that grit facilitates higher levels of student engagement, which is vital due to the persistent effort required by the language mastery process. More engaged students tend to show greater persistence when faced with linguistic challenges. In this regard, Teimouri et al. (2022) stated that grit is a strong predictor of L2 success in the face of challenge. Additionally, Zhao and Wang (2023) advocated that L2 grit and a learner's ability to communicate effectively are positively correlated.

Regarding boredom, Solhi et al. (2025) found that grit is important for helping learners cope with feelings of boredom that can occur alongside the language learning process. Students who have higher grit are better at using coping strategies to reduce boredom. In addition, Zhao and Wang (2023) indicated that one's grit can affect academic performance as well as increase the enjoyment of learning, suppressing the feeling of boredom through intrinsic motivation. It can be seen that grit is essential for maintaining engagement and enjoyment in the context of language learning.

Concerning curiosity, research by Paradowski and Jelińska (2024) showed that it can promote grit and patience in learners. Their study found that curiosity is nurtured by high levels of L2 grit along with motivation, implying that the natural desire of learners to discover the complex nature of language depends on their perseverance to tackle barriers. When learners' curiosity is heightened, they will immerse themselves in the language material, leading to more successful academic outcomes (Calafato, 2025; Fathi & Hejazi, 2024). When curiosity is elevated, opportunities can be created for learners to investigate the language, enhancing their engagement in the language learning process.

Language mindset is yet another dimension explored in the related literature, which has been identified as a crucial factor affecting L2 grit. Two types of mindsets which can impact L2 learners' grittiness have been identified: growth mindset and fixed mindset (Khajavy et al., 2021; Lou & Noels, 2017; Mercer & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Mercer, 2012). Language learners may simultaneously possess various degrees of these two types of mindsets, and in some instances, separating them is challenging (Mercer & Ryan, 2009). Additionally, grit and individuals' mindsets are two components that might show correlation; that is, it can be suggested that gritty individuals often display behaviors supported by a growth mindset (Derakshan et al., 2025). Khajavy et al. (2021) addressed this by reporting that learners with a growth mindset were more likely to accept the mistakes and issues that arise in L2 learning and continued to try even when there was a chance of failure. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between grit and L2 achievement, which warranted further exploration.

Along with different mindsets affecting grit, some studies focused on how grit might influence individuals' emotional regulation abilities during language learning situations. Emotional regulation can be referred to as a set of strategies to decrease the involvement of emotions in a circumstance in a conscious manner (Solhi et al., 2025). Alazemi et al. (2023) claimed that giving EFL learners ideal learning environments helps them to regulate their academic emotions regarding their psychological states. Furthermore, combining emotion regulation with grit development as individuals learn a language helps elevate engagement and dedication levels in language classrooms.

Research has also focused on other dimensions of language learning apart from affective states and psychological constructs of learners, such as proficiency and achievement (Badieli et al., 2025; Pawlak et al., 2024; Teimouri et al., 2022; Zawodniak et al., 2021). In their study, Teimouri et al. (2022) found that the higher the learners perceived their English levels, the more L2 grit they possessed. Moreover, it can be inferred that using a domain-specific measurement for grit yields stronger correlations in terms of emotions and motivational dimensions of learners. Research by Badieli et al. (2025) discovered how L2 grit mediated the relationship between perceived proficiency of learners and their foreign language peace of mind and

enjoyment, and it was found that these components affected learners' way of perception. According to the structural equation model in the study, L2 grit mediated these dimensions. In other words, learners need to have a gritty attitude to possess positive proficiency perceptions.

In the Polish context, in their mixed-method research, Zawodniak and colleagues (2021) determined that their English major participants showed high levels of L2 grit as anticipated due to their departmental nature, insinuating the deep relationship between proficiency (attainment was their choice of word for this) and gritty characteristics. Finally, a study by Pawlak et al. (2024) investigating English majors in another Polish context found that when learners have high success levels in the target language, they use more positive and stronger statements to describe their situation, indicating the affirmative relationship between proficiency perceptions and L2 grit. They also suggested that teachers model for their students and train them in how to acquire gritty behaviors, especially in classrooms where students are at low proficiency levels. In conclusion, proficiency-related studies commonly emphasize the superiority of domain-specific L2 grit scales to measure grit concerning psychological dimensions, and perceived proficiency of learners mediates the relationship between grit and affective dimensions measured.

In short, L2 grit interacts with important emotional and motivational factors that are necessary for language learning success. Research suggests that fostering L2 grit may enhance engagement, reduce anxiety, assist in boredom management, enhance curiosity, and eventually pave the way for an environment for effective communication (Jin, 2024; Teimouri et al., 2022). Educators and practitioners continue to explore the importance of L2 grit in different language learning contexts; however, it is clear that research concerning pre-service English teachers in particular remains quite limited.

Although some insights into English majors who could possibly become English teachers after graduation can be gained in a similar sense from the studies of Zawodniak et al. (2021), Badiei et al. (2025), and Pawlak et al. (2024), limited research has investigated pre-service EFL teachers' perceived levels of L2 grit. This gap is particularly relevant considering that grit is widely recognized to influence learners' capability to persist in L2 learning despite challenges, which is essential for EFL teachers since they prepare to manage their own teaching challenges and model resilience to their future students.

Investigation of how perceived language proficiency and L2 grit may be related is especially important for EFL teacher candidates, not only to conduct a replication in a different context, but also to understand how conflicting identities of pre-service English teachers might contribute to the L2 grit narrative. After all, pre-service EFL teachers are expected to pursue a teaching career after graduation, and such teacher training programs offer pedagogical content, rather than language training. In this case, apart from their language learner identities that they need to maintain, they are expected to adopt a teacher identity. Therefore, this duality in identities can generate new perspectives on how gritty behaviors can be cultivated in such environments and how teacher candidates can be provided with grit awareness to utilize in their future careers.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This quantitative study employed a convenience sampling method to select the participants, resulting in 200 pre-service EFL teachers studying at a state university in Türkiye taking part. The mean age of the participants was 20.94 (SD = 3.18) ranging from 18 to 50. Among the participants, 126 (63 %) were female and 74 (37 %) were male. With respect to their year of study, 66 (33%) were first-year learners, 58 (29%) were in their second year, 55 (27.5%) were third-year learners, and 21 (10.5%) were in their fourth year.

Data Collection Instrument

The data were gathered using a questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section included some demographic questions regarding the participants' age, gender, grade, and self-perceived English proficiency. The second part included the Language-Domain Grit Scale (L2 Grit), developed by Teimouri et al. (2022). The scale included nine items related to two distinct sub-components of the construct: (1) perseverance of effort in language learning (items 1, 3, 5, 6, and 9) and (2) consistency of interest (items 2, 4, 7, and 8). A five-point Likert-type scale, with response options from 1 'not at all like me' to 5 'very much like me', was used to measure all the items. Reliability analyses performed in the reference study showed that the original scale developed and empirically validated by Teimouri et al. (2022), was internally consistent, with an alpha coefficient of ($\alpha = .80$). In the current study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .85 (α). The students' self-perceived proficiency in English was also obtained through a self-report question (1 'very poor' to 5 'very good') in the questionnaire.

Procedure for Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from Balıkesir University Ethics Committee. The data collection was carried out in the spring term of the 2024-2025 academic year. Prior to initiating the data collection process, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and they were asked to give their consent through a signed consent form. They were instructed to answer the statements using the 5-point Likert-type scale, selecting one response from the options ranging from 1 'not at all like me' to 5 'very much like me'. The completion of the questionnaire lasted about five minutes.

The data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24. It is important to note that before the analysis, all negatively worded items on the scale were reverse-coded. Preliminary analyses were carried out to guarantee that the assumptions of linearity and normality were met. No violation of the normality assumption was detected. Descriptive statistics were calculated to address the first research question and reveal the participants' perceived levels of L2 grit. Regarding the second research question, one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) was performed to explore whether self-perceived English proficiency is associated with pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Perceived Levels of L2 Grit

To determine the participants' levels of L2 grit, descriptive statistics were utilized. Drawing from the method of Lian and Budin (2014), the mean scores were classified into three categories simply by using the formula 'maximum value of mean score (5.00) – minimum value of mean score (1.00) / number of categories (3). Consequently, the mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 2.33 were considered indicative of low L2 grit, scores from 2.34 to 3.67 were categorized as moderate L2 grit, and scores from 3.68 to 5.00 were considered to be high L2 grit. Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each item on the L2 grit scale.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: L2 Grit Including Scale Items

Items	Dimension	Mean*	SD
5. Now that I have decided to learn English, nothing can prevent me from reaching this goal	PoE	4.00	.87
1. I am a diligent English language learner		3.99	.81
6. I will not allow anything to stop me from my progress in learning English.		3.95	.84
3. When it comes to English, I am a hard-working learner		3.78	.92
9. I put much time and effort into improving my English language weaknesses		3.54	.99
Total PoE Score		3.85	.70
4. I think I have lost my interest in learning English	CoI	3.97	1.13
7. I am not as interested in learning English as I used to be		3.67	1.34
8. I was obsessed with learning English in the past but have lost interest recently		3.64	1.28
2. My interests in learning English change from year to year		2.51	1.21
Total CoI Score		3.45	.94
Total L2 Grit Score		3.69	.70

Note. *1.00- 2.33: Low; 2.34-3.67: Moderate; 3.68-5.00: High. PoE: Perseverance of Effort; CoI: Consistency of Interest

The mean score for perseverance of effort was 3.85 (SD = .70). This means that the participants showed a high level of persistence in their L2 learning. As the mean score for consistency of interest was 3.45 with a standard deviation of .94, it can be stated that the participants had a moderate level of consistency of interest in learning English. The mean value for L2 grit was 3.69 (SD = .70), which means that pre-service EFL teachers had a high level of grit in learning English as a foreign language.

Effects of Self-perceived Proficiency in English on Pre-service EFL Teachers' L2 Grit

A one-way ANOVA was performed to scrutinize whether self-perceived proficiency in English significantly affected pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit. Prior to presenting the results obtained from the one-way ANOVA, it is important to share the descriptive statistics that illustrate the participants' L2 grit levels in terms of their self-perceived English proficiency. Detailed information regarding these statistics can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of L2 Grit Across Self-Perceived English Proficiency Groups

Variable L2 Grit			
Self-perceived proficiency in English	N	M	SD
Very poor	-	-	-
Poor	1	3.77	-
Moderate	25	3.14	.76
Good	123	3.70	.64
Very good	51	3.90	.72

As presented in Table 2, 51 participants rated their English proficiency as very good, and this group had the highest L2 grit mean score ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .72$). Of the participants, 123 rated their proficiency in English as good with a mean L2 grit score of 3.70 ($SD = .64$) while 25 who rated themselves as moderate in English proficiency had a mean L2 grit score of 3.14 ($SD = .76$). Only one participant thought that s/he had a poor English proficiency with a mean L2 grit score of 3.77. The descriptive statistics suggested possible differences in L2 grit across the proficiency groups, which were subsequently examined using a one-way ANOVA.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Comparing L2 Grit Across Self-Perceived English Proficiency Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.*
Between Groups	9.332	3	3.111	6.717	<.001
Within Groups	90.302	196	.2463		
Total	99.634	199			

* $p < .05$

As can be seen in Table 3, the one-way analysis of variance findings suggested that there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in L2 grit scores for the four analyzed self-rated proficiency groups [$F(3, 196) = 6.71$, $p < .001$]. The effect size calculated using eta squared (η^2) was .09 which suggests that the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was medium (Cohen, 1988). This implies that self-perceived proficiency in English accounts for a meaningful proportion of variance in pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the moderate proficiency group ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .76$) was significantly different from the good proficiency group ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .64$) and the very good proficiency group ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .72$). The poor proficiency group (M

= 3.77) did not differ significantly from the moderate proficiency group, the good proficiency group, or the very good proficiency group. The post-hoc results suggest that differences in L2 grit become more evident at higher levels of perceived proficiency, indicating that increases in L2 grit may not occur in a strictly linear manner across all proficiency levels. Rather, a threshold effect may be observed, whereby more substantial gains in L2 grit emerge once learners reach higher levels perceived proficiency in English.

Discussion

This section attempts to interpret the findings related to the research questions of the study. Initially, the findings of the study regarding the pre-service EFL teachers' perceived levels of L2 grit will be compared to outcomes reported by other researchers. Subsequently, the results concerning the potential effect of self-perceived proficiency in English on pre-service EFL teachers' L2 grit will be interpreted in light of similar research and the contextual dynamics of participants to provide a rationale for proficiency level and its correlation with L2 grit level.

Regarding the first research question, it was found in the study that the participants demonstrated high levels of L2 grit in general and in the dimension of perseverance of effort, whereas they indicated a moderate level in the dimension of consistency of interest. In a general sense, a high level of grit on average showed similarities with Zawodniak et al. (2021), who revealed that English majors naturally showed high levels of grit since they are well-accustomed to the language learning process. Showing similar outcomes to those of Zawodniak et al. (2021), this study also included learners who can be referred to as English majors, namely pre-service EFL teachers. Even though these departments differ in essence in the Polish and Turkish contexts, pre-service English teachers are similarly equipped with other capabilities after graduation, such as translation, linguistics work, interpreting, and tour guidance, etc. Therefore, the participants of this study can also be considered in a similar category of language users.

Among the components of the L2 Grit scale, perseverance of effort emerged as high based on the participants' responses. However, items related to the consistency of interest indicated moderate levels overall, with one item (i.e., I think I have lost my interest in learning English) receiving high scores. Naturally, one would expect low scores in this component due to its negative attributions, such as being fed up and losing the illusion. However, the consistently moderate to high scores assigned to these items might suggest a decline in grit under certain circumstances. This can be explained by the study of Zawodniak et al. (2021), which demonstrated that as the grade level increases, gritty behaviors might diminish. This might indicate the need for teacher support, a more peaceful environment, and increased awareness of learners' psychological well-being, as implied by Badiei et al. (2025). Similarly, Li and Dewaele (2021) suggest that grit can be maintained in an understanding and helpful learning environment, especially with the help of teacher support (Hejazi & Sadoughi, 2023).

This situation with consistency of interest can be an indication of the unique dual nature of pre-service English teachers. Starting as language learners to be trained in field-specific subjects such as methodology, linguistics, and skill-based teaching techniques, pre-service EFL teachers may increasingly shift away from their language learner identities as they advance in their academic and professional trajectories. Therefore, it can be assumed that they begin to attribute

more teacher characteristics to their identities, gradually abandoning language learning responsibilities and motivation.

Regarding the second research question, after examining the ANOVA descriptive statistics, it was found that self-perceived proficiency in English is linked to the participants' L2 grit, with those reporting higher proficiency also demonstrating higher levels of L2 grit. This shows similarities to the findings of Teimouri et al. (2022), which indicated that learners who possess high levels of grit tend to be successful students. In the study, learners who claim to have high proficiency in English are consistently grittier. This pattern was also in alignment with Pawlak et al. (2024), who found that learners who perceived themselves as high-level and low-level had higher grit and tended to invest the most effort in learning English.

From a different perspective, Heydarnejad et al. (2022) imply that high grit might be associated with heightened self-evaluations, in this case, higher self-perceived proficiency in English. In a similar vein, Liu and Wang's (2021) study explains this outcome by addressing the interplay between the emotional states of students and grit. In their study, it is suggested that learners with positive emotions tend to have high levels of grit, which is directly related to learners' proficiency levels. Therefore, it might be assumed that learners who identify themselves as highly proficient may have developed greater grit, nurtured by positive emotions.

Notably, in Pawlak et al. (2024), learners who had moderate-level perceived proficiency were in a stasis, believing that they did not need further effort. In the case of this study, despite not being a very clear-cut situation validated with a high number of participants, this pattern could also be observed. Considering the self-perceived proficiency in English, learners who considered themselves very good, good, and poor showed high levels of grit mean score. However, 25 participants regarded themselves as moderate in English proficiency, and interestingly, they generated a mean score lower than the poor-proficiency group's grit on the L2 Grit scale. As Pawlak et al. (2024) explain, these learners' moderate level of grit can be attributed to the feeling of being in the '*comfort zone*' (p. 108).

Given that grit is naturally a product of persistence and consistency characteristics, high proficiency levels can be expected from gritty language learners. Similar patterns can be observed for low-proficiency learners, as it is natural that they might want to improve themselves in terms of language proficiency, assuming that they have not given up. Due to the nature of teacher training programs, pre-service teachers are presumed to have greater awareness of language-related responsibilities than those in other fields or in their formal education, such as at the primary and secondary levels. This can explain high grit levels of pre-service teachers with low perceived proficiency. On the other hand, in addition to Pawlak et al.'s (2024) comfort zone association, a moderate level of proficiency in language perceived by pre-service teachers can be explained by different factors, such as identity conflict, feeling content with moderate levels due to career-related requirements, and low awareness of language learning responsibilities.

To sum up, pre-service teachers provide a unique population for the L2 grit investigation because they do not receive language training in the department; rather, they are expected to learn pedagogical content regarding how to teach English. Therefore, their constant focus on language development might be disrupted by departmental content and obligations. These results, which indicate the abovementioned causality between perceived language proficiency

and L2 grit levels, can shape how pre-service English teachers should be treated. Teacher candidates with low perceived proficiency study hard to compensate for their lack of language skills to match their content knowledge, just as highly proficient candidates do due to their high-achiever characteristics, requiring them to constantly maintain their levels. However, a moderate level of proficiency might lead teacher candidates to feel content with their current levels, allowing them to focus more on their departmental obligations. This interpretation and possible discussions yield a more in-depth investigation of this specific issue with pre-service English teachers.

CONCLUSION

This quantitative study contributes to the field because few studies have explored the relationship between pre-service teachers' self-perceived proficiency levels and L2 grit. Considering that no studies can be found in the Turkish context, the current study plays a crucial role in describing the grit-related situations of individuals who will be working as English teachers. The study explored how pre-service English teachers' self-perceptions of their English proficiency shape their L2 grit. In a broad description of the pre-service teachers' grit-related situations, it can be stated that a high level of self-perceived English proficiency is a significant predictor of a high level of L2 grit. Furthermore, the results indicate consistency with similar studies in a way that consistency of interest is a fluctuating construct, as it poses the risk of decreasing over time. On the other hand, it was found in the study that the pre-service EFL teachers displayed high perseverance of effort regardless of their self-reported English proficiency levels. An interesting point was that learners who rated their English proficiency as moderate demonstrated lower L2 grit than both their lower and higher proficiency peers. These findings highlight the importance of creating supportive environments where teachers foster positive psychological outcomes in learners and provide peaceful learning conditions.

Based on the outcomes of the study, some practical recommendations can be made. Firstly, learners who regarded themselves as individuals with low- or high-level English proficiency tended to be grittier. On the other hand, participants with moderate self-perceived proficiency in English reported moderate levels of L2 grit, indicating that this group needs special attention. Therefore, learners who fall into this category can be supported through teacher attention or counseling. Secondly, as suggested by the related literature (e.g., Teimouri et al., 2022), a domain-specific L2 grit scale can better reflect language learners' grit than general grit scales can. Next, since the study can potentially validate the risk of grit decreasing over time, as Zawodniak et al. (2021) pointed out, learners should be supported with certain precautions to maintain gritty behaviors. Besides, it can be stated that pre-service teachers might need to learn ways of increasing grit levels so that they can have higher grit as learners themselves. Meanwhile, they can have a better chance to help their future students possess gritty behaviors. As Hejazi and Sadoughi (2023) and Badieli et al. (2025) suggest, teacher support introduced as early as possible can help learners maintain high grit levels throughout the learning process without the risk of decreasing grit. Moreover, seniority levels in the teacher training program can be a factor in the decline in L2 grit among pre-service teachers, as they may develop a tendency to abandon their language learning responsibilities and identities over time. This can

happen either because they feel so competent that they are now beyond the language-learning phase in their lives, or because their newly gained teacher identities replace gritty behaviors associated with language learning. For these reasons, research or practices should consider this possibility with pre-service English teachers. Lastly, it is noteworthy that creating nurturing environments where gritty behaviors are promoted and learners are supported along the way can be helpful for pre-service teachers, as suggested by related studies (Li & Dewaele, 2021; Liu et al., 2025). Therefore, teacher training institutions should offer prospective teachers motivating and supporting environments in which they can preserve their grit for language learning, along with other technical courses.

The present study is restricted to 200 pre-service English teachers within a quantitative research design, which might constrain the generalizability of the results. Another limitation of the study is its reliance on self-report instruments to measure both key variables. As a result, participants' responses may have been influenced by similar response tendencies, such as social desirability or self-perception biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Accordingly, the observed relationship should be interpreted with caution. It should also be noted that the distribution of participants across proficiency groups was unequal, with some groups comprising relatively small sample sizes. Although one-way ANOVA is considered relatively robust to unequal group sizes, interpreting the findings requires caution, particularly for groups with smaller sample sizes. Besides, while the use of descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA was appropriate for addressing the research questions of the current study, future research could employ more advanced analytical techniques (e.g., regression or structural equation modeling) to provide deeper insights into the relationships between self-perceived proficiency in English and L2 grit among pre-service EFL teachers.

The use of a mixed-methods research design may also offer more robust and comprehensive findings in similar research contexts by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. Moreover, further research could examine both motivational aspects and other affective factors, such as grit, for comparative purposes. Additionally, pre-service teachers can be investigated further, using qualitative methods, to understand to what extent they are aware of their language learning grit, how they interpret their gritty behaviors, and how they intend to improve their future students' L2 grit. In this way, statistical data on the relationship between pre-service teachers' proficiency and grit can be used to improve the effectiveness of teacher training programs. Further studies should explore the issue by including in-service teachers as well. Lastly, studies with empirical evidence and ethnographic characteristics would provide invaluable data, enabling researchers and practitioners to draw on unanticipated phenomena or events to better comprehend L2 grit as a construct.

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