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Research Article

A Study of Academic Buoyancy, L2 Grit, and Peace of Mind based on Class Levels and Gender Differences

Sevcan Bayraktar Çepni [*] **Şakire Erbay Çetinkaya**[**]

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to fill the research gap in the potential interrelationships between three under-researched positive psychology variables: academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and foreign language peace of mind. This explanatory study examined three variables of positive psychology: academic buoyancy, second language grit, and foreign language peace of mind, in relation to grade levels and gender, as well as the factors influencing potential differences. While the quantitative data were gathered from a convenience sample of 160 English majors, the qualitative data were gathered from 9 participants through videoconferencing. L2 grit and foreign language peace of mind, as well as foreign language peace of mind and academic buoyancy, were found to be correlated, yet L2 grit and academic buoyancy were not found to be correlated. Besides, while gender was not found to predict those personality traits, grade levels emerged as a key predictor of those personality traits. The analysis of the qualitative data provided in-depth insights into the underlying reasons for the research outcomes.

Acknowledgments

Please type any acknowledgments here.

Statement of Publication Ethics

The study was conducted in accordance with publication ethics. The ethics committee approval for the current study has been obtained: Trabzon Üniversity Ethical Board, 27.07.2024, and 2024-7/2.11.

Authors' Contribution Rate

First author 55% and Second author 50%.

Conflict of Interest

The study has no conflict and interest.

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[*] Assistant Professor, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/XXXXX, Department of Translation and Interpreting, e-mail address

[**] The Academic Title of the Second Author, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/XXXXX, Affiliation, Department, e-mail address

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Introduction

Language learning is a multifaceted process encompassing more than merely the acquisition of grammatical rules and vocabulary. It includes cognitive, social, and emotional components that interact dynamically, affecting how individuals engage with and persist in their learning experiences. Psychological variables, especially those concerning emotions, attitudes, and motivation, are crucial in influencing learners' experiences and outcomes. In the last decades, researchers have focused heavily on the effects of negative emotional factors such as speaking anxiety, writing anxiety, fear of failure, and low self-esteem on language learning, and most of them emphasized their detrimental effects on language learning. However, with the emergence of positive psychology, researchers shifted their attention toward the constructive role that positive emotions play in language learning contexts. Positive psychology's role in language teaching has garnered significant attention, as research indicates that it enhances both resilience and well-being, which in turn lead to improved student engagement and performance (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Siegel, 2014). This transition has prompted researchers to investigate the interplay between positive psychological factors and the cognitive and social aspects of language acquisition. Therefore, the existing literature has highlighted the necessity of examining how the dynamic interplay of learners' emotions, attitudes, and motivational conceptions contributes to success in foreign language acquisition. Recognizing the interplay between language learning and constructs such as academic buoyancy (the capacity to deal with day-to-day academic challenges), second language (L2) grit (perseverance and passion for long-term language goals), and foreign language peace of mind (a sense of calm and emotional stability in L2 learning) can deepen researchers' understanding of how language learners confront obstacles, sustain their efforts, and maintain emotional well-being throughout the process of acquiring a second language. The current research with the same orientation investigated the possible link between three under-researched positive psychology variables to yield practical implications and theoretical contributions through its insights.

This research is an important one as it addresses a critical gap in the interrelationship among under-researched positive psychology constructs—academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and foreign language peace of mind in the Turkish context. In the literature, there are some research studies on each of these factors on their own; however, not much is known about how they collectively operate to affect language acquisition processes and outcomes. The study gives a more complete and dynamic view of learner psychology by looking at how these factors interact with one another. By focusing on such a study, it fits with the current SLA research trend, which seeks strong emotional approaches that support language learning processes.

Literature Review

Positive Psychology

One important pillar the current research study is informed by is the concept of Positive Psychology (PP, hereafter), which should be understood as "the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between" (Peterson, 2006, p. 4). This new approach within broader psychology came as a reaction to scientific psychology with "a disease model of human nature" (Peterson, 2006, p. 5), which tends to regard individuals as delicate figures who struggle with a wide variety of negativity throughout their lives. However, setting its aim as the discovery of human happiness (Siegel, 2014), PP emphasizes positive feelings and their serious study (Peterson, 2006). In other words, on the premise "that human goodness and excellence are as authentic as disease, disorder, and distress," PP tends to see "those things that make life most worth living" (Peterson, 2006, p. 4) as primary study topics. The history of PP could be traced back to various philosophers from the West and East, including Athenian thinkers Confucius and Lao-Tsu, who all attempted to clarify the true nature as well as the importance of a meaningful life (McIntyre et al., 2019; Peterson, 2006; Siegel, 2014). Dating back to the 1990s, PP came out as an independent and explicit field with the works of modern thinkers, including Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000).

Within the context of foreign language instruction, positive emotions are assumed to increase receptivity to language, while negative ones such as anxiety, boredom, apprehension, burnout, and lack of motivation could yield to, with the words of MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), "a narrowing of focus and a restriction of the range of potential language input" (p. 193). Thus, PP, within the scope of foreign language instruction, aims at helping language learners "learn languages to the best of their abilities, have the most positive experience in doing so, and develop skills to support them in many aspects of their lives" (McIntyre et al., 2019, p. 266).

Positive Psychology Variables

Among several positive psychology variables, such as academic engagement, emotion regulation, enjoyment, grit, loving pedagogy, resilience, and well-being (Wang et al., 2021), particularly academic buoyancy, second language grit, and FLPOM.

Academic Buoyancy

Academic buoyancy, a relatively new emerging concept to represent academic resilience, refers to the capacity of learners to overcome academic challenges and complexities within the educational environment (Martin & Marsh, 2008). In other words, it is "the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday world" (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 26). Given that academic buoyancy is a relatively new concept in positive psychology, an in-depth review of the prior research on its underlying elements may offer a nuanced understanding of the issue. Previous research has concentrated on proximal variables, such as psychological and school-related issues, which are considered more manipulable and responsive to intervention (Cappella & Weinstein, 2001). These variables may be categorized into three major categories. The first one covers psychological elements, such as self-efficacy, motivation, the feeling of purpose and control (Martin &

Marsh, 2008), failure avoidance, anxiety, unclear control, emotional instability, neuroticism, and exam concerns (Collie et al., 2017). On the other hand, the second element covers school and engagement factors encompassing various aspects such as active participation in class, educational goals, enjoyment of school, relationships with teachers and peers, the importance placed on education and curriculum (Liem et al., 2012; Yu & Martin, 2014). The last major category, i.e., family and peer factors, includes support from family members, positive relationships with a responsible adult, a network of friends, peers committed to education, authoritative and nurturing parenting, and connections to organizations that promote positive behavior (Martin et al., 2013b; Martin, 2014). The critical role of an individual's immediate social environment in fostering academic buoyancy shows that academic resilience needs to be seen as a co-product of relational and social support rather than an individual trait.

The association between academic buoyancy and favorable academic and psychological results is well-established (Martin & Marsh, 2008), leading to the development of adaptive academic skills (Collie et al., 2017), increased academic success, motivation, self-control, efficient learning techniques, and active participation in learning (Martin et al., 2013a). It is documented that positive psychology theoretically supports academic buoyancy, in which self-aid constructs are emphasized to assist learning and teaching. Existing research has shown that academic buoyancy significantly predicts L2 achievement (Yun et al., 2018). This correlation results from the fact that language learning inherently involves key qualities of buoyancy, for it enhances motivation, helps learners cope with challenges, and encourages sustained effort toward achieving long-term goals in language education (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). However, academic buoyancy is a trait that develops by itself. It necessitates a level of resilience developed through experience (Martin & Marsh, 2008; Yun et al., 2018). Such resilience actively entails learning from challenges and mistakes, which increases students' overall academic adaptability and achievement (Martin et al., 2013)

L2 Grit

Grit, another important psychological and personality trait (Duckworth et al., 2007; Teimouri et al., 2022), on the other hand, refers to "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087). The link between grit and persistence across diverse life contexts such as military, workplace sales, education, and marriage is well-established (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). L2 grit is considered one of the key predictors of language learning achievement, alongside other factors such as intelligence (Duckworth et al., 2007). The perseverance and passion for long-term goals, i.e., L2 grit, have been documented to play a more direct role in predicting academic success in foreign language learning (Duckworth et al., 2007). This long-term attribute increases with age and differs from the concept of conscientiousness, which requires intensive and short-term focus on what one has at hand. Its components are two lower-order constructs, namely perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. While the former refers to persistent engagement over

a long period, the latter is consistent enthusiasm for important goals in the face of various challenges and failures (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Distinguishing between these two aspects is essential, for it ensures a more nuanced understanding of how grit functions as a predictor of achievement. Both aspects seem crucial for building resilience, for they highlight how language learners manage to maintain their dedication to long-term goals despite a wide variety of challenges.

The concept of grit is closely linked to motivation, for earlier studies have documented that gritty learners are more likely to invest effort into their learning journey compared to their less gritty peers. They were also found to be more cognitively engaged, thereby having more productive learning experiences (see, for instance, Changlek & Palanukulwong, 2015; Teimouri et al., 2022). A negative correlation between L2 grit and anxiety was also identified (Changlek & Palanukulwong, 2015; Li & Dewaele, 2021). Another study found a positive correlation between L2 grit and vocabulary learning and reading habits (Kramer et al., 2018). Similarly, a positive but weak correlation between grit and overall language achievement was found by Robins (2019). It was also found that L2 grit positively impacts foreign language performance as well as enjoyment (Wei et al., 2019). However, there is no agreement on the nature of such correlations. Yamashita (2018) found that the grit of Japanese learners and their course grades were not associated. Furthermore, a negative correlation between grades was identified in one subcomponent of grit: the perseverance of effort subcomponent. Additionally, gender, race, and academic status were found to be unrelated (Credé et al., 2017).

Previous studies have explored the correlations between grit and various outcomes. To ensure a nuanced understanding of such correlations and to quantify this construct, various measures of domain-general grit were developed. One well-known measure to explore domain-general grit belongs to Duckworth et al. (2007), which covers 12 self-report items. Later, its short version with stronger psychometric properties, i.e., the Grit–S, was devised by Duckworth and Quinn (2009). Besides, Teimouri et al. (2022) devised and validated "a language-domain-specific measure" (p. 899), which comprises "two related but distinct subcomponents: consistency of interest and perseverance of effort in learning a language" (p. 900). While the former evaluates student engagement and interest fluctuations, the latter assesses learner determination in achieving their language objectives.

Foreign Language Peace of Mind

The concept of peace of mind developed by Lee et al. (2013) should be understood "as an internal state of peacefulness and harmony" (p. 571), and in the process, balancing pleasure and pain is required to achieve the state of peace of mind. Lee et al. (2013) proposed that further research should explore the role of mood-regulation processes to let individuals "revert to their equilibrium state of peace of mind" (p. 588). These processes, to them, could help individuals regain emotional equilibrium after struggling with setbacks. To facilitate such research through measuring FLPOM, Lee et al. (2013) developed a 7-item tool specifically designed to measure the construct. Similarly, as comfort, confidence, and emotional well-being experienced during foreign language learning are related to PLPOM, Zhou et al. (2023) devised an 8-item construct to measure it. FLPOM and foreign language

enjoyment were closely related, and additionally, FLPOM was a predictor of self-perceived language proficiency (Zhou et al., 2023).

In broader terms, the relationship between emotional constructs such as peace of mind and language learning outcomes has been consistently supported in positive psychology literature. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) highlighted that positive emotional experiences, such as enjoyment and well-being, substantially enhance engagement and resilience in language acquisition. Li (2020) emphasized that learners possessing superior emotional regulation abilities and favorable psychological characteristics are more likely to maintain motivation and achieve higher academic performance. These findings correspond with the function of FLPOM as both an emotional state and a cognitive-affective element that affects learners' views of their skills and actual performance. The relationships among FLPOM, enjoyment, and self-perceived proficiency transcend simple linkages, indicating a more profound interaction between emotion, cognition, and academic performance in foreign language learning environments.

Interplay between Grade, Gender, and L2 Grit, Academic Buoyancy, and Peace of Mind in Language Learning

Researching grit across genders and grade levels is important since different groups may have different amounts of dedication and determination, which influences the foreign language learning journey. While a study has documented significant gender differences in grit (Tahriri & Ghafouri, 2023), other studies have reported no noticeable difference in L2 grit levels across male and female students in educational environments (Wei et al., 2022; Teimouri et al., 2022). However, these studies also assert that gender may indirectly impact L2 Grit and should be investigated across various settings, warranting further exploration across diverse learning environments. We can better understand these patterns by examining how gender affects L2 grit in foreign language learning. For example, if female students have higher L2 grit on average, this might help explain why they often do better on language coursework than male students. Conversely, if male students demonstrate higher grit, this finding could prompt further research into how classroom dynamics and societal expectations influence perseverance across genders. Duckworth (2016) reported that grit develops with age as individuals dedicate themselves to objectives and acquire insights from challenges. Seniors may exhibit superior study habits compared to younger students. L2 grit can be assessed at various educational stages to see whether college seniors surpass freshmen in performance due to having navigated greater L2 learning obstacles. A notable grade effect has practical implications. If younger learners have low grit, early educational interventions such as instruction in learning strategies and goal setting might enhance their determination before critical language acquisition periods. However, if levels of grit diminish in later grades owing to exhaustion or external pressures, older teenagers require assistance in developing motivational resilience. In conclusion, an examination of grit based on gender and grade facilitates the identification of pupils requiring more motivation to persevere in language acquisition, hence allowing for customized training.

Similarly, several research studies indicate that gender does not indicate variation in academic buoyancy levels (Abdellatif, 2022; Weißenfels et al., 2022). Previous studies have suggested differences between genders in academic buoyancy, with male students achieving significantly better scores than their female counterparts (Aloka, 2023; Datu & Yang, 2016). Given these contradictory findings, the role of gender in influencing these psychological traits remains inconclusive and necessitates further empirical examination. Therefore, examining gender in an L2 environment helps us to ascertain whether one set of language learners is less "buoyant," hence maybe at more danger of disengagement, suggesting a demand for gender-responsive treatments.

Furthermore, grade level is a theoretically significant variable, since both L2 Grit and academic buoyancy are anticipated to develop with enhanced academic experience and exposure to language and academic obstacles (Duckworth et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2021). Advanced grade levels frequently entail more rigorous coursework and intricate learning environments, potentially resulting in enhanced coping methods and more academic perseverance (Credé et al., 2017). Consequently, analyzing the variation of these features over various grade levels helps elucidate essential growth phases in learners' academic paths, aiding in the formulation of more focused pedagogical and psychological interventions.

Dewaele et al. (2016) discovered that female students frequently experience greater foreign language anxiety while simultaneously deriving more satisfaction than their male counterparts in foreign language classrooms. However, as Dewaele et al. (2016) show male students reported marginally less satisfaction in foreign language settings. To be able to foster a peaceful, self-assured mindset, comprehending peace of mind as a variable is significant as it may reveal whether one gender requires further assistance in their language learning journey. Grade level can also be another variable that affects peace of mind, as it may vary with transitions between educational stages. It was noted that as pupils progress, specific pleasant feelings either wane due to increasing academic pressures or undergo a transformation (Zhou & Wang 2024). The realization that peace of mind diminishes in higher grades (if found) would indicate that existing educational processes may be unintentionally elevating stress levels, necessitating modifications in curricula or assessment methods to safeguard students' well-being.

In conclusion, the literature shows contradicting evidence on the interplay between gender, L2 Grit, and Academic Buoyancy. More research needs to be conducted to shed more light on the issue.

Research Aim and Research Questions

It is well known that learner and teacher psychology are key to successful language teaching, learning, and interaction (MacIntyre et al., 2019). As the emphasis on positive feelings could promote language enrichment and enhancement (Wang et al., 2021), individuals' positivity has gained immediate relevance in foreign language instruction. This

becomes vital in the modern world with negativity, where learners have various concerns about their bodily appearance, future career, and social relations, making it difficult to ensure a successful academic profile and healthy social-emotional development (Jenkins, 2015; Siegel, 2007). However, the documented second language acquisition research on positive emotions is in its infancy (Zhou et al., 2023). Furthermore, the question of how learner personality affects language learning is under-researched (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Teimouri et al., 2022), pointing to the need to conduct further studies on the interplay between personality traits and foreign language learning. Particularly, studies on the link between grit and other potential achievement-related variables are needed (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Additionally, a comprehensive understanding of such constructs is essential to promote language resilience and success, thereby improving learning outcomes. That understanding is assumed to contribute to the creation of conducive learning environments for language learning, which is a complex yet crucial process to address the diverse environmental and emotional challenges inherent in foreign language learning. In addition to the relevancy of such constructs for successful language-learning outcomes, their interconnected nature requires studying them collectively for a nuanced understanding. Lastly, the practical implications of such studies to help related parties, such as language teachers, teacher educators, and policymakers, to support their students, make the issue worth exploring. Thus, aiming at furthering the existing understanding from a complementary angle, the current research investigated the possible correlation between academic buoyancy, second language grit (L2 grit, hereafter), and Foreign Language Peace of Mind (FLPOM, hereafter) based on grade levels and gender. The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do English majors differ in their levels of L2 grit, academic buoyancy, and foreign language peace of mind based on gender and grade level?
2. What are the interrelationships among L2 grit, academic buoyancy, and foreign language peace of mind in English majors?
3. How do students at varying stages of their academic journey describe the challenges and support affecting their L2 grit and academic buoyancy in foreign language learning?

The intersection of Positive Psychology and Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition theoretically grounds these research concerns. The first two questions explore how learner characteristics vary and co-occur across demographic groups; the third question provides a detailed, contextual knowledge of how students' lived experiences impact these features. Taken together, they offer a thorough investigation of the formation and evolution of L2 grit, academic buoyancy, and peace of mind.

Methodology

Research Design/Model

The current study adopted a quantitative research design combining comparative and correlational approaches to explore differences and relationships among key psychological variables in English Language Teaching (ELT) students. The main objective was to compare the level of L2 Grit, Academic Buoyancy, and Foreign Language Peace of Mind (FLPOM) across various grade levels (prep, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year) and genders, while also investigating the correlational relations among the three variables. A comparative design was utilized to examine statistically significant variations in L2 Grit, Academic Buoyancy, and FLPOM according to students' grade level and gender. The comparative strategy facilitated the detection of variances in the psychological qualities examined across different subgroups. A correlational analysis was performed to determine the degree and direction of the associations among L2 Grit, Academic Buoyancy, and FLPOM. This section of the design explored whether students with higher levels of one variable (e.g., L2 Grit) correspondingly displayed heightened levels of another (e.g., FLPOM), hence illuminating potential underlying correlations between the constructs. This correlational approach refers to "the measurement of two or more factors to determine or estimate the extent to which the values for the factors are related or change in an identifiable pattern" (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019, p. 354).

The current mixed-method study utilizing quantitative and qualitative data-gathering methods was devised as a two-phase study to answer the research questions. In the quantitative phase, the researchers conducted a cross-sectional survey to explore the correlation between the three constructs across different grade levels and genders. Additionally, the researchers explored the possible factors contributing to the difference with semi-structured in-depth interviews. Following a phenomenological approach, which "do not aim at finding common patterns but want to find the underlying structure or essence via an intensive descriptive study of individual cases" (Mills, 2008, p. 102), the researchers conducted the interviews with purposefully selected participants from the prep class and the third and fourth-grade students, i.e., the ones with the highest and lowest academic buoyancy and L2 grit scores. After reaching a broad understanding of the results in the quantitative phase, the researchers developed a nuanced understanding of the possible factors by exploring the participants' personal experiences.

Publication Ethics

The study was conducted after receiving approval from the Trabzon University Ethics Committee (Approval No. 2024-7/2.11) on July 27, 2024.

Participants

As is tabulated below, the quantitative data were gathered from a total convenience sample of 173 English majors (F=113; M=60) enrolled at the English Language Teaching Department of a Turkish state university. English proficiency level of students ranged from B1 to C1 CEFR level.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Participants across Grade Levels

Grade			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Prep	Valid	male	17	38.6	38.6	38.6
		female	27	61.4	61.4	100.0
		Total	44	100.0	100.0	
First Year	Valid	male	9	25.0	25.0	25.0
		female	27	75.0	75.0	100.0
		Total	36	100.0	100.0	
Second Year	Valid	male	12	38.7	38.7	38.7
		female	19	61.3	61.3	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Third Year	Valid	male	13	39.4	39.4	39.4
		female	20	60.6	60.6	100.0
		Total	33	100.0	100.0	
Fourth Year	Valid	male	9	31.0	31.0	31.0
		female	20	69.0	69.0	100.0
		Total	29	100.0	100.0	

The qualitative data was gathered from a total sample of 173 participants. The preparatory class included 17 males (38.6%) and 27 females (61.4%), for a total of 44 students. There were 36 first-year students, 9 male (25.0%) and 27 female (75.0%). In the second year, there were 12 male students (38.7%) and 19 female students (61.3%), for a total of 31. Among the third-year students, 13 were male (39.4%) and 20 were female (60.6%), a total 33 students. Finally, the fourth-year students consisted of 9 men (31.0%) and 20 women (69.0%), for a total of 29 students. On the other hand, the qualitative data was gathered from 9 interviewees (F=7; M=2).

Data Collection and Analysis

In the first phase, the quantitative data were gathered via three scales with high internal consistency, reliability, and validity. The academic buoyancy levels of the participants were measured with the Academic Buoyancy Scale (ABS) composed of four items developed by Martin and Marsh (2008), which assesses "numerous dimensions of students' academic buoyancy, self-efficacy, control, anxiety, academic engagement, and teacher-student relationships" (p. 63). To gather data on L2 grit, the 9-item language-domain-specific measure of Teimouri et al. (2022) with higher internal consistency than that of the domain-general grit scale was opted for. Lastly, the FLPOM levels of the participants were measured with the 8-item- FLPOM scale devised by Zhou et al. (2023). To assure normal distribution of the data and to run parametric tests, the normality tests were done. The normality and reliability analysis of all three scales in the current study's data can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Normality and Reliability Analysis of Scales

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
L2 Grit Total	-0.046	1.05	9	.712
Peace of Mind Total	-0.380	0.570	8	.892
Academic Buoyancy Total	-0.567	0.084	4	.844

The Z-scores for skewness and kurtosis of Peace of Mind and Academic Buoyancy items were within the range of -1 to +1, as George and Mallery (2010) reported. The items for L2 Grit have slightly heavy tails. These normality statistics suggest that although all three variables exhibit slight deviations from a normal distribution, they are not significantly abnormal. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the L2 Grit Scale, Peace of Mind Scale, and Academic Buoyancy Scale. The L2 Grit Scale, which has nine items, exhibited a Cronbach's alpha of .612, with a slightly higher alpha based on standardized items (.654), suggesting moderate internal consistency. The Peace of Mind Scale, consisting of 8 items, had robust internal consistency, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .892 and .891 for the standardized items. The Academic Buoyancy Scale, consisting of four items, similarly demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .844 and .846 based on standardized items. These findings indicate that the Peace of Mind and Academic Buoyancy Scales have high levels of reliability; however, the L2 Grit Scale may necessitate more improvements.

Utilizing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), descriptive statistics, Multivariate Analysis of variance (MANOVA), and Pearson-product moment correlations were computed. Descriptive statistics were computed to describe the participants' demographic information. On the other hand, to investigate the possible variations in all three scales at various grade levels, MANOVA was computed as it analyzes the cumulative effect of several dependent variables, making the analyses free from Type 1 error (Tabachnicket al.,2013). As a post-hoc test, the Bonferroni test helped the researchers "to locate exactly where the similarities and differences between groups lie", if they exist (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 550). Lastly, Pearson product-moment correlations, a well-known measure of association, were computed to investigate the correlations between all three scales and report the possible link quantitatively.

The qualitative data from the second phase was gathered through the in-depth individual semi-structured interviews held on Zoom, a popular videoconferencing platform. The data were analyzed through content analysis. Having transcribed and cleaned the data, the researchers manually coded the data. Then, they created general themes from those codes and interpreted their findings (Miles et al., 2014).

Having asked for the approval of the Institutional Review Board of their institution, the researchers obtained written consent from all participants who were invited to the study upon a brief clarification of the process and their roles and rights. Additionally, at the reporting stage, the researchers paid much attention to accurately reporting the data and avoided plagiarism.

Results

The quantitative and qualitative data analyses were tabulated and explained in accordance with the order of the research questions.

Results from the Quantitative Phase

In the quantitative phase, the researchers investigated the possible variations in all three positive psychology variables among the participants at various grade levels. The ANOVA results for all could be found in Table 3.

Table 3. MANOVA Results for L2 Grit, Peace of Mind, and Academic Buoyancy Scale Across Grade Levels

	Grade Level	N	Mean	Wilks Lambda	Sig.	Partial η²	Bonferroni Post Hoc test
L2 Grit	Prep	44	2.98	0.014	.00	.986	Prep < first year p = 1.00
	First Year	36	3.07				Prep < second year p= .41
	Second Year	31	3.18				Prep < third year p= .36
	Third Year	33	3.18				Prep < fourth year p= .033
	Fourth Year	29	3.28				
	Total	173	3.12				
Peace of Mind	Prep	44	3.54				Prep < first year p = 1
	First Year	36	3.55				Prep < second year p= 1
	Second Year	31	3.64				Prep < third year p= .307
	Third Year	33	3.88				Prep < fourth year p= .1
	Fourth Year	29	3.79				
	Total	173	3.67				
Academic Buoyancy	Prep	44	4,26				Prep < first year p = 1
	First Year	36	4.49				Prep < second year p= .58
	Second Year	31	4.79				Prep < third year p= .034
	Third Year	32	5.07				Prep < fourth year p= .044
	Fourth Year	29	5.07				
	Total	172	4.69				

The descriptive data indicate that the scores for L2 grit showed consistent growth from the Prep class (mean = 2.98, standard deviation = 0.35) to the Fourth Year (mean =

3.28, standard deviation = 0.44). MANOVA results showed that there is a significant difference across grade levels, Wilks' Lambda = 0.014, F (3,160) = 3894.43, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.986$. To understand the direction of the difference, the Bonferroni post-hoc test was conducted. The test analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in L2 Grit between Prep students and Fourth Year students (mean difference = -0.30, SE = 0.10, p = .033). The findings revealed that fourth-year students exhibited higher levels of grit compared to students in the preparatory (prep) year. No statistically significant differences were found between the prep year and other grade levels and among first-year, second-year and third year, and fourth-year students (all p-values > .05). These results suggest that L2 grit may gradually develop throughout the English language teaching program, with a more noticeable increase in the fourth year.

The study tested variations in foreign language peace of mind among different grade levels in the program. The descriptive statistics revealed that the average foreign language peace of mind scores varied from 3.54 (with a standard deviation of 0.70) in the prep class to 3.78 (with a standard deviation of 0.63) in the fourth year. Post Hoc tests provided no significant difference in the Peace of Mind Scale across grade levels.

Another dependent variable investigated was academic buoyancy levels across grade levels within the program. The descriptive data indicated an increase in academic buoyancy from the prep class (mean = 4.27, standard deviation = 1.14) to the fourth year (mean = 5.08, standard deviation = 1.33), suggesting that academic buoyancy tends to increase throughout the English language teaching program. MANOVA results showed that there is a significant difference between groups in terms of academic buoyancy. To understand the direction of the difference, the Bonferroni test was conducted. The test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in academic buoyancy between the prep class and third-year students (Mean difference =-0.81, SE = 0.27, p = .034), as well as between the prep class and fourth-year students (Mean Difference =-0.81, SE = 0.28, p = .044). The third and fourth-year students exhibited statistically significantly higher levels of academic buoyancy than the prep class students. No statistically significant differences were found in the comparisons between the following grade levels: preparatory class - first year, first year - second year, second year - third and fourth year, and third year - first and fourth year (all *p* > .05). These findings indicate that academic buoyancy tends to increase as students advance in their academic careers, especially in the final stages.

To further explore the differences between genders in L2 grit, peace of mind, and academic buoyancy, a MANOVA was conducted, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. MANOVA Results for L2 Grit, Peace of Mind, and Academic Buoyancy Scale Between Genders

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	Wilks Lambda	Sig.	Partial η^2
L2 Grit	Male	60	3.05			

	Female	113	3.16	0.977	0.289	0.023
	Male	60	3.70			
Peace of Mind	Female	113	3.65			
	Male	60	4.88			
Academic Buoyancy	Female	113	4.59			

Gender did not exert a statistically significant multivariate effect on the combined dependent variables of L2 Grit, Peace of Mind, and Academic Buoyancy among English Language Teaching (ELT) students, as indicated by the results of the MANOVA analysis (Wilks' Lambda = 0.977, F (3, 160) = 1.263, p = 0.289, partial η^2 = 0.023). These findings suggest that gender does not play a meaningful role in influencing students' levels of grit in second language learning, their sense of peace of mind, or their academic buoyancy.

To better understand the relationships between L2 grit, peace of mind, and academic buoyancy, Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were conducted to provide insights into how these variables are interconnected and whether there exist any significant associations. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for L2 Grit, Peace of Mind, and Academic Buoyancy

		L2 Grit	Peace of Mind	Academic Buoyancy
L2 Grit	Pearson Correlation	1	.288*	.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.421
	N		173	173
Peace of Mind	Pearson Correlation	.288**	1	.374**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	173	173	173
Academic Buoyancy	Pearson Correlation	.062	.374**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.421	.000	
	N	173	173	173

The study investigated the correlations between L2 grit, foreign language peace of mind, and academic buoyancy among students enrolled in the program. The Pearson

correlation analysis demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation between L2 Grit and Peace of Mind ($r = .29$, $p < .001$, $N = 173$), showing that higher levels of grit are linked to increased peace of mind. Furthermore, a noticeable positive connection was seen between the foreign language peace of mind and academic buoyancy, with a correlation coefficient of $r (172) = .37$ and a p-value of less than .001. This indicates that students who possess a stronger feeling of peace of mind are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of academic buoyancy. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis revealed no significant connection between L2 grit and academic buoyancy in the sample. The correlation coefficient (r) was .06, with a p-value of .421, showing a lack of substantial link between these variables.

Results and Discussion from the Qualitative Phase: Insights from Students Across Grade Levels

To provide a comprehensive picture of the reasons behind the statistical findings, interviews were conducted with the purposively chosen participants from the prep class, third- and fourth-year students. The emergent themes on perceived self-characteristics can be found below.

Table 6. Emergent Themes on Perceived Self-Characteristics

Grade Level	Category	Indicator	Reference
4th year	Perfectionism and Self-pressure	-Striving for the best, initially placing high pressure on oneself to achieve perfection.	Participant 4(P1)
	Evolving Confidence and Openness	-Initial shyness or anxiety, with gradual growth in confidence and openness to learning and new experiences.	Participant 4(P2)
	Passion and Continuous Interest	-Strong and enduring interest in language learning has grown over time and contributed positively to my personal and professional life.	Participant 4(P3)
	Lack of Recent Active Learning	-Acknowledgment of a gap in active learning or formal language study in recent years, with a focus on practical language use rather than structured study.	Participant 4(P4)
3rd year	Comfort and Confidence in Chosen Field	-Feeling comfortable and confident in the chosen field of study, with minimal challenges due to a strong affinity for the subject.	Participant 3(P2)
	Engagement and Enthusiasm	-High level of engagement in academic and extracurricular activities related to language learning, with a proactive approach to education.	Participant 3(P1)
Preparatory	Struggles and Overcoming Challenges	-Recognition of personal challenges in language learning, such as difficulty in understanding or communicating, and the need for extra effort to overcome these hurdles.	Participant 0(P1)
	Reliance on Classroom Learning	-Tendency to rely on in-class learning rather than independent study, with less emphasis on self-driven learning outside the classroom.	Participant 0(P2) 0(P3)

The data showed that the fourth-year participants have high standards in individual development and a strong desire to keep learning the language. The theme of "Perfectionism and Self-Pressure" reveals that these participants possess self-imposed pressure on themselves to attain perfection and success in their field. The theme "Evolving Confidence and Openness" must be highlighted, as the data demonstrated that students go through an evolving process from the prep class to the fourth year. This finding may be supported by the interplay between self-efficacy, self-confidence, academic achievement, and buoyancy, as the literature suggests that these traits affect one another and help learners set more ambitious academic goals (Gore, 2006; Meisha & Al-Dabbagh, 2021). As learners advance to higher grades, they are more inclined to perform better in their classes than before. Additionally, this finding may explain why prep class students exhibit lower levels of L2 grit and academic buoyancy. As the data shows, prep class students self-reported their struggles and possible ways to overcome these challenges.

The theme of "Passion and Continuous Interest" can be attributed to the fourth-year participants' increased awareness of the professional demands of their department, as they will be English teachers in a very short time. Third-year students, who have one more academic year to finish their studies, reflected a more relaxed attitude by demonstrating their engagement and enthusiasm for their studies.

The results show that there is a pattern of growth and development that happens over the school years. The participants in preparatory schools are just starting out on their learning journey, in which they have just started to face basic problems and rely heavily on classroom teaching. By the third year, the participants had grown confident, fully committed to their studies, and felt like they fit in their field. Fourth-year students demonstrate continued motivation and enthusiasm, though their attention is transitioning from classroom-based learning to practical applications. These findings could mean that they are ready to move from college to the working world.

The qualitative phase also explored the possible reasons why 4th- and 3rd-grade students exhibit higher levels of academic buoyancy. Below is a table summarizing these possible reasons.

Table 7. Facilitating and Debilitating Factors Affecting L2 Grit and Academic Buoyancy by Grade Level

Grade Level	**Facilitating Factors: L2 Grit**	**Facilitating Factors: Academic Buoyancy**	**Participants**
4th /3rd Year Students	-Developed methodologies to address academic obstacles effectively	- Gradually adapted to the needs of the classroom without excessive stress.	Participant 4(1) 3(P1) (4 (P2) 3(P3))

Grade Level	**Facilitating Factors: L2 Grit**	**Facilitating Factors: Academic Buoyancy**	**Participants**
4th /3rd Year Students	- Ongoing enhancement of language proficiency, such as the ability to recall crucial phrases without the need to write them down.	- Depend on the assistance and guidance of fellow students to obtain feedback and achieve academic accomplishments.	Participant 4(P1) 3(P2)
4th /3rd Year Students	- Consistent immersion in the English language via the consumption of various forms of media such as films and books.	- A robust support network comprises peers who provide motivation and assistance to one another.	Participant 4(P2) 3(1,2)
4th /3rd Year Students	- Utilization of digital tools and resources to optimize learning and improve work	- Confidence gained over time, reducing stress in academic settings.	Participant 4(P2) 3(P3))
4th /3rd Year Students	- Proficient in academic English, enhancing proficiency in managing academic assignments.	- Overcoming obstacles by experimenting and gaining knowledge from mistakes, cultivating the ability to bounce back from adversity.	Participant 4(2,3)3(P1)
	Debilitating Factors: L2 Grit	**Debilitating Factors: Academic Buoyancy**	
Preparatory Students	- Struggle with grammar and academic writing due to a lack of prior exposure.	- Less experience and exposure, leading to lower academic confidence.	Participant 0(P1), Participant 0(P2)
Preparatory Students	- Reluctance to participate in class due to fear of making mistakes.	- Lack of established support networks and self-directed strategies.	Participant 0(P1)
Preparatory Students	- Limited experience with speaking and writing in English before university.	- Dependence on instructors for guidance rather than peer support.	Participant 0(P2)

The table offers a broader perspective on factors contributing to the participants' L2 grit and academic buoyancy. Both third- and fourth-year students overcame challenges and improved their language proficiency while learning to handle academic difficulties. It is also clear that all 4th and 3rd-graders know that external input from movies, books, or other media offers them a rich source of target language instances that can improve their language skills. Improved skills in academic English can also be considered a factor that contributes to their academic buoyancy, as they feel less stressed when they can manage the requirements of the courses.

Another important factor is a strong support network of friends who encourage and help each other. This network seems to help students do better in school and feel like they are part of a community and have a duty to each other. Research reveals that social support, particularly from classmates and family members, may be critical for academic achievement, as such support decreases academic stress and contributes to academic

buoyancy (Lei et al., 2021). Therefore, this finding supports the idea that a supportive social environment empowers students when they face academic challenges. Additionally, Jia and Cheng (2022) state that social support promotes motivation among EFL learners, which may imply that such support systems are essential for building academic buoyancy and L2 grit. It is also evident from the participants' interviews that the process of gaining academic buoyancy requires a significant amount of experience and the ability to learn from one's failures.

Discussion

The findings showed that L2 grit and foreign language peace of mind are correlated, and there is a link between foreign language peace of mind and academic buoyancy. However, L2 grit and academic buoyancy were not found to be related to each other. Besides, while gender was not a predictor of those personality traits, statistically significant differences were found between the traits and grade levels. While the participants from higher grades were found to be grittier and academically resilient, their foreign language peace of mind did not statistically vary from the lower grades. The finding that older participants are grittier than the younger ones is in line with the study of Duckworth et al. (2007), who conclude that "the quality of grit, although a stable individual difference, may nevertheless increase over the life span" (p. 1098). Furthermore, the study by Credé et al. (2017) also found no correlation between gender and L2 grit.

The researchers understand that while there may be a connection between these non-cognitive traits, it should be viewed carefully because just because they are related does not mean one causes the other. Yet, the existence of a weak link is worth commenting on due to the well-established association between traits and desired outcomes: See Zhou et al. (2023) for a positive correlation between peace of mind and self-perceived language proficiency and language enjoyment; see Wei et al. (2019) for the impact of L2 grit on foreign language performance as well as enjoyment; see Kramer et al. (2018) for the positive link between L2 grit and vocabulary learning and reading habits; see Martin and Marsh (2008) for the association between academic buoyancy and favorable academic and psychological results; and see Li and Dewaele (2021) and Teimouri et al. (2022) for a negative correlation between grit and anxiety.

Additionally, the study's second phase highlighted a pattern of growth and development throughout the school years. While the participants in preparatory schools just starting out on their learning journey were concerned about classroom teaching-oriented problems, the third graders were found to have grown in confidence, together with full commitment and a fit with their studies. On the other hand, the fourth graders were found keen enough; however, an attention transition from classroom learning to real-world applications was identified, showing their readiness to move from college to the working

world. In addition to supporting previous research, 3rd and 4th graders were seen to recognize outside help and have a strong group of friends to deal with their language and emotional issues, allowing them to bounce back quickly from difficulties, which helps them succeed in school. The current study found that gaining academic buoyancy takes a lot of experience and learning from mistakes, which matches earlier findings that students build resilience by facing tough situations. 4th- and 3rd-grade students must have developed the ability to recover quickly from setbacks, which is an essential component of academic buoyancy. It is emphasized that academic buoyancy is closely related to students' capacity to overcome common academic challenges, suggesting that such experiences are vital for learning the required abilities to recover from setbacks (Martin & Marsh, 2008).

Conclusion

The study aimed to look at the connections between three less-studied psychological traits in learning a second language—L2 grit, academic buoyancy, and foreign language peace of mind (FLPOM)—using both numbers and personal stories. The results revealed that L2 is positively connected to FLPOM and academic buoyancy, while indicating no significant positive correlation between L2 grit and academic buoyancy. When grade-level effect was considered, it was found that it is a key determinant of these categories, although gender did not account for significant differences in any of them. The current study showed that students in advanced grade levels possessed higher levels of grit and academic buoyancy, which indicates that there is a developmental progression influenced by academic experience. However, this situation cannot be claimed for peace of mind, which exhibited stability across grade levels. We can conclude that individual emotions and context-independent factors have a greater influence on peace of mind.

The qualitative data complemented findings by presenting a developmental picture. The data showed that prep class students mentioned confidence problems and lacked external coping strategies; third-year students reported the feeling of increasing competence and emotional resilience; fourth-year students demonstrated self-awareness, academic maturity, and readiness for real-world application. These findings highlight how academic confidence, self-control, and support from others develop during the educational process, helping to build effective and motivating traits.

This study contributes to the literature in multiple ways. First, it incorporated positive psychology principles into the field of foreign language acquisition as experienced by students of the English Language Teaching department and gave insights into the interplay between emotional and motivational elements and ELT learners' academic experiences. Second, it showed that grade level is an essential developmental factor, indicating that psychological characteristics that are relevant to language acquisition are not fixed but rather evolve as individuals progress in their academic and personal lives.

Suggestions

The current research findings suggest several implications. As positive emotions are assumed to broaden individuals' perspectives and prepare them for language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012), learners must be shown how to cultivate a calm mind away

from negativity and concerns. As one form of contemplative practice, meditation could serve well, for mindfulness awareness has been reported to "improve the capacity to regulate emotion, to combat emotional dysfunction, to improve patterns of thinking, and to reduce negative mindsets" (Siegel, 2007, p. 6). To exemplify, reaching such a calm state was found to develop creative and reflective thinking, promote cooperation and interaction skills (Nãdrag & Buzarna-Tihenea, 2022), and lower foreign language speaking anxiety and thus enhance oracy performance through alleviating fear of making a mistake and being negatively evaluated by peers (Rahman & Syafei, 2019).

Additionally, language instructors could be listed as one of the most important related parties. They need to adopt an encouraging, understanding, and constructive attitude towards learners, for "to promote the grit, the instructors should value the students' struggle and effort to succeed and support the belief that people are able to develop and change to become better by learning from setbacks and failures" (Changlek & Palanukulwong, 2015, p. 36). Therefore, incorporating a variety of challenging activities (such as debates, writing projects, or presentations) with systematic direction and feedback may help students deal with academic challenges in a reasonable manner, which in turn may result in learners' confidence gain and positive attitude towards problems, increasing their capacity to continue in long-term language learning journeys.

Depending on the challenges that prep-class students face in their first year of university, it is suggested that teachers encourage a growth mindset by guiding them to realize that their language skills can be improved with work and time and that they should be given opportunities to participate in projects that are slightly above their current competency level. As a result, they may see how commitment might help them improve their language abilities.

Finally, teachers could utilize a peer-support system, such as a buddy/mentoring mechanism, to foster a sense of institutional identity and a positive environment. Older students could mentor prep students to share their experiences, understandings, insights, and strategies to help them recover from academic setbacks and build L2 grit. Besides, systematic and specific orientation programs empowered with the worldviews and experiences of the older students could contribute to the construction of such a positive atmosphere.

Limitations of the study

The current study is not without its limitations. First, using only self-reports to measure those non-cognitive traits, even though they are generally reliable and valid, might lead to inaccurate results because self-reports can be affected by people wanting to look good and getting tired of answering questions. Therefore, future studies could utilize a multimethod to ensure more accurate measurement. Second, two independent variables, namely grade level and gender, were taken into account to demonstrate the possible link between the traits. Yet, other factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural background,

motivation, academic performance, and individual experiences could impact those traits, so further studies could pay attention to those.

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