

Unveiling the Relationship between the Grit of Thai English Language Learners, Engagement, and Language Achievement in an Online Setting

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Abstract

Past research has found that an individual's academic success, including success in English language learning, can be predicted by a person's 'grit'. Grit is a personality trait defined as the combination of perseverance of effort and consistency of interests. Other than grit, learner engagement is another factor considered to be highly related to levels of academic achievement. However, the paradigm of English language learning has transitioned to online settings. Therefore, it is important to know how students' grit is affected by such a transition. The purpose of this study is to investigate the grit and online engagement of 563 Thai English language learners (ELLs) and to study the relationship between Thai ELLs' grit, learner engagement, and their English language achievement in online settings. Grit scales and online engagement scales were used to collect the data. The present study found that grit positively correlates with language achievement and engagement.

Furthermore, it also found that grit is a predictor of language achievement while online engagement demonstrated no predictive value to language achievement. The results are aligned with, and corroborate, the work of Teimouri et al. (2020) suggesting that grit is associated with success in English language learning.

Introduction

For the past decades, learners' motivation, along with other involving personality traits, has been recognized as a vital factor in successful L2 learning and has been widely examined. (Griffiths & Soruç, 2020) The research on motivation has received much attention in the field of SLA. The question "How does motivation play a role in language learning success?" has been raised since the 1960s (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Motivation has been seen as "a key to learning" (Brown, 2015) and "the key learner variable" (Schmitt & Rodgers, 2019). Motivation-based research from the mid-1970s has been very popular, prompting scholars to undertake more exploration and investigation on this topic. However, past research in the field of pedagogy suggests that the theory of motivation remains at a standstill.

However, there is more beyond motivation that could affect learners' proficiency. Grit, a newly proposed construct, has provoked educators' attention. Duckworth et al. (2007) proposed the concept of grit, a non-cognitive personality trait that can make learning outcomes more sustainable and attainable. Grit is a combination of perseverance and passion for long-term goals which are congruent with sustainability. Duckworth et al.'s research was conducted in the field of social psychology (2007). Many cross-sectional studies were done on various groups of participants different in age, gender, and career. Grit appears to be a predictor of success.

Grit has been studied further in the field of education. Many studies suggest that there are correlations between learners' grit and their performance. (Broghammer, 2017; Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Lin & Chang, 2017; Strayhorn, 2014) Learners with higher levels of grit tend to achieve higher scores for their academic performance. According to previous research, grit is found to be able to predict learners' achievement.

Furthermore, one facet of grit, perseverance, was suggested by many educators as a significant skill in the intrapersonal domain in 21st-century skills. Perseverance is considered to be one of the competencies that plays an important role in learning situations, work ethics, and life situations and result in the learner's life-long outcomes (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). Therefore, the importance of perseverance, a factor of grit, is worth considering in the field of education. The grit concept is also extended specifically to the EFL learning setting.

In SLA, the concept of grit has been explored and appears to influence L2 learners' achievement. Teimouri et al. (2020) proposed that L2 grit, a specific form of the personality trait, was related to the learners' language achievement. Thus, they developed and validated the L2-grit scale to find out the level of learners' grit. The study confirmed that learners with higher levels of L2 grit become more successful in language learning than their classmates with less L2 grit. Furthermore, Wei et al. (2020) conducted similar research to explore the significance of L2 grit in Chinese English-knowing multilinguals. The L2 grit scale they used to collect data was adapted from Teimouri et al.'s. The result of the study agreed with the work of Teimouri et al. suggesting that multilingual learners who have higher levels of L2 grit have higher levels of proficiency in English.

Due to the sudden change in the world with the coronavirus outbreak, the paradigm of learning and teaching has shifted. The previous version of learning in schools faded and was replaced with new modes of teaching and communicating. Most of the learning processes conducted during the pandemic took place in the online learning setting through digital platforms. Many researchers in the field of education have turned their attention to studying online learning settings (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Xie & Huang, 2014; Zheng et al., 2018). In online learning settings, new technology enables teachers to provide their learners with lessons despite being socially distanced. Many teaching methods have been developed to serve different purposes.

Despite the advances in technology, learning outcomes are still affected by the online learning environment. Online learning is limited by learners' information processing capacity. Cognitive overload can be caused by combinations of learning modalities. Furthermore, learners are limited by their knowledge and confidence in using technology. Additionally, learners may not feel a sense of cognitive engagement or

social connection which could negatively result in decreased learning outcomes (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). Apart from that, teachers are physically distant from learners. Learners are forced to have less interaction with their classmates and their instructors. Engagement and collaboration between learners and teachers have to be operated through technology. As a result, the learners receive less positive external motivation, forcing them to rely more on themselves.

With the change in the learning environment, learners have to be much more independent since external forces, such as teachers, or school systems, are not as prominent in online learning. Successful learning is determined by the perseverance and consistency of interest of the learners.

The current work is deemed to be significant as the research results presented here can be taken into account when planning and developing language teaching and learning. The findings obtained from this study offer a better understanding of the personality trait, grit which is believed to affect the language learning process. Greater understating of grit would help language teachers to navigate their learners to be more successful in language learning. Instructors can apply the findings of the research to their teaching methods reinforcing learners to maintain their consistent interest and pursue their long-term goals.

The researchers first posit a foundational assumption which claims that grit is a predictor of learners' success. Based on this assumption, the researchers then address the following questions:

1. To what extent do Thai ELLs demonstrate their grit and their online engagement in online English learning?
2. How is Thai ELLs' grit related to their online engagement, and their language achievement in an online setting?"

Therefore, the authors have aimed to study the relationship between Thai ELLs' grit, their online engagement in online English learning and their language achievement. This research was conducted by survey with an explanatory correlational design to study associations among three variables. This study was conducted in the context of Thai ELLs. The English proficiency level of Thai learners is considered to be at a low level (EF, 2021). Thai students study English as a foreign language and as a lingua franca. English learning in Thailand differs from other countries, for instance the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, where English is considered as a second language. Furthermore, English courses are

compulsory for Thai students in primary and secondary schools. As a result, Thai high school students appear to be a good representative of Thai ELLs. This study was conducted in the context of high school students in the country's most prestigious high school, which is ranked the highest for its excellent academic standards. The aim was to see at which level students demonstrate their grit and their engagement in online English learning and whether their grit is associated to level of their online engagement and their language achievement in online English courses.

Literature Review

Grit

Grit is known as a non-cognitive personality trait. It is important to note that the key concept of grit involves two concepts which are perseverance and passion. Duckworth et al. (2007) defined grit as a combination of perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. Grit was described as a non-cognitive trait. The concept of perseverance of effort was defined as the tendency to dedicate energy to a particular goal. Consistency of interest is characterized as long-term consistency of interest for an aim without losing attention to that goal regardless of difficulty and failure (Duckworth et al., 2007). A long-term goal must be meaningful and engaging. The term 'consistency of interest' can be used interchangeably with the term 'passion' by Duckworth and Quinn (2009). Both facets of grit result in success. Perseverance of effort is responsible for achievement despite hardship and consistency of interest is involved with the process of successful achievement (Christopoulou et al., 2018).

The interest in grit has increased in the field of education. Grit has a wide range of positive outcomes in education. Several studies found a connection between grit and academic performance such as GPAs, SAT scores, and other positive educational outcomes. Grit has also been found an acceptable predictor of retention in education (Christopoulou et al., 2018).

Duckworth et al. (2007) found that learners with higher grit have higher grades and scores on tests. Grit, therefore, was believed to be able to predict learners' success. Duckworth et al. (2007) had conducted research on students at the University of Pennsylvania to observe their newly proposed construct, grit. The finding suggested that students with

higher levels of grit have higher academic performance. Both GPAs and SAT scores were found to be correlated to grit scores. Duckworth et al. (2007) conducted another study at West Point, U.S. military academy. The construct, grit predicted the success of students at the school. Students who obtained higher scores on the grit scale were able to survive the whole course.

The relationship between the success of L2 learners and grit has been studied in recent years especially in the field of applied linguistics. Lee and Lee (2019) conducted research on the relationship between affective factors and L2 willingness to communicate in in-class, out-of-class, and digital settings. According to the finding, grit among other affective factors, such as self-esteem and subjective happiness, was found to be a significant predictor of students' L2 willingness to communicate. The result of a study revealed that learners who are grittier are inclined to have put effort and time into learning English (Lake, 2013). Grit was also found positively correlated, and a predictor of, English language performance of non-English speaking students in China (Wu et al., 2022).

Learner Engagement

The concept of learner engagement has drawn the attention of scholars in the field of education including language teaching and learning as engagement is claimed to be positively related to levels of academic achievement (Fredricks et al., 2004). The significance of engagement has been previously pointed out especially in the current online environment, where learners are physically distant from their teachers and their peers (Dixson, 2015).

Engagement is a construct comprised of three components: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Even though each component differs in the aspects of intensity and duration, the three dimensions of engagement partly overlap (Zhao, 2018). Behavioral engagement refers to the concept of participation and involvement in both academic and social activities. Emotional engagement refers to learners' reaction to their teachers, peers, and content which can be either positive or negative. Finally, cognitive engagement refers to the thoughtfulness and willingness to make the effort to become proficient at learning (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Behavioral engagement concerns learners' behaviors, principally in terms of participation and involvement in both academic and social activities. Behavioral engagement consists of three characteristics including positive conduct e.g., following the rules and not showing signs of disruptive behaviors, involvement in learning and behaviors such as effort, persistence and concentration, and participation in extracurricular activities (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Emotional engagement relates to learners' affective reactions such as interest, boredom, and anxiety. Emotional engagement can be assessed by examining learners' attitudes, emotions, and preferences towards the school, teachers, and tasks. Emotions such as interest and value are included as a part of this construct and interestingly overlap with constructs in motivational research. However, these emotions are less intricate than constructs in motivational research (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Cognitive engagement can be perceived from two different dimensions. The first view focuses on psychological investment in learning and can be described as a need to accomplish more than the set standard and the affection for challenges. Fredricks et al. (2004) summarized the conceptualization of cognitive engagement as "flexibility in problem-solving, preference for hard work, and positive coping in the face of failure." Fredricks et al. (2004) further discussed the second view of cognitive engagement in terms of learning strategies. It was suggested that cognitively engaged learners are inclined to use deep strategies. With deep strategies, the learners can make more mental effort and connect ideas, and accomplish greater comprehension. Fredrick et al. noted that the term effort appears in the context of both cognitive and behavioral engagement, however, definitions differ. From the point of view of behavioral engagement, effort refers simply to the attempt to do the work, whereas effort, as defined in cognitive engagement, is concentrating on learning and mastering the material (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Learner engagement has received much attention from the scholars and has been explored in the field of EFL. Dincer et al. (2019) studied the learner engagement of Turkish EFL students and found that engagement was a predictor of achievement in English courses. The importance of learner engagement was also highlighted in the work Han (2021) that learners' language achievement depends on learner engagement.

Language Achievement

Formal assessment is one of the processes to determine learners' language achievement. Formal assessment combines procedures designed to assess learner achievement and performance (Brown, 2015). In this research, Thai ELLs' language achievement is reflected in the form of their grades in 8 English courses in 4 semesters. The final grades in each course were evaluated based on both formative and summative assessments.

Methodology

Participants

The authors calculated the size of the sample in this study by using the Taro Yamane formula with a 96% confidence level. According to the school report, there are 4500 grade 10 to grade 12 students. The researchers selected the sample of the study by using the purposive sampling technique. The participants in this research are 563, grade 11 Thai ELL students in the second semester of the 2021 academic year. The researchers established the selection criteria used in recruiting the participants as follows: firstly, the participants must be grade 11 students in academic year 2021. Secondly, the participants must register in 8 English courses in 4 semesters, and lastly the participants must be willing to partake in the survey. The sample came from 17 different classrooms regardless of their study programs at one of the most prominent high-schools which has a high ranking in Thailand.

Research Instruments

The research instrument used in this research was a four-part questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire collected basic demographic data. The principal instruments in this research were a grit scale and an engagement scale designed to measure learners' grit and their engagement in online English learning. A 6-point rating scale was designed to collect the data in this research. The researchers selected an even number of items in the rating scale in an attempt to enhance the ability to distinguish the level of learners' grit and engagement.

Additionally, in the final part, three open-ended questions were added in order to reaffirm the data with the previous section. The validity of the content of the instrument was examined by three experts. The experts validated the scale by using the Item Objective Congruence Index (IOC). An overall mean IOC value of the scale was 0.90 which is in the acceptable range of 0.50 - 1.00. The reliability of the scale was at .834. As the Cronbach's alpha value was reported higher than 0.7, the research instrument was considered strong enough to be implemented in the research to collect the participants' data.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers asked for cooperation from grade 11 English teachers to deliver the questionnaire to their learners in the form of a Google Form link. Within the questionnaire, the purposes and methodology of the research were clearly explained to the participants. All participants acknowledged that the survey was not compulsory but voluntary. The researchers scheduled a one-week time frame for the process of data collecting. The data were collected at the end of the second semester of the 2021 academic year.

All collected data from all the participants were encoded and the participants were referred to as numbers to protect the participants' information. The data from the first part of the questionnaire represents learners' language achievement with descriptive statistics in terms of the mean and standard deviation. In order to answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were applied to determine the mean and standard deviation of the scores from the 6-point rating scales, Grit scale and Engagement scale, using the SPSS program. The scoring system used in distinguishing learners with high grit from learners with low grit was based on the original version used by Duckworth et al. (2007). To calculate the score, the researchers added up all the points from every item and divided them by the number of items, 12. The maximum score is 6 and the lowest is 1. The scores of the items with negation were calculated with the opposite scoring system. The researchers established the criteria for interpretation of the mean values by using the interval calculation (Table 1). To calculate the score of online engagement, the researchers conducted an identical procedure.

Table 1*Interpretation of the mean values of Grit score and Engagement Score*

Interpretation	Scale	Mean Range
Very low	Not like me at all	1.00-1.82
Low	Not much like me	1.84-2.65
Moderate	Slightly not like me	2.66-3.48
Above moderate	Slightly like me	3.49-4.31
High	Mostly like me	4.32-5.14
Very high	Very much like me	5.15-6.00

To answer the second research question, multiple regression analysis was applied to study the relationship between Thai ELLs' grit, their level of engagement, and their language achievement in online settings.

Results of the Study

Quantitative data

Language Achievement

Descriptive statistics for learners' language achievement in the form of learners' English grades were reported along with the sample sizes, means, and standard deviation in Table 2. Thai ELLs had high language achievement ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .23$).

Table 2*Mean and Standard Deviations of Language Achievement*

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Language achievement (English GPA)	563	2.69	4.00	3.89	.23

Thai ELLs' grit scores

As shown in Table 3, Thai ELLs had a high level of grit ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .76$). The level of perseverance of effort was rated at a high level ($M =$

4.64, SD = .78) while the level of consistency of interests was rated as above moderate (M = 3.99, SD = .98).

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation of Grit Score

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Grit	2.33	6.00	4.32	.76
Perseverance of Effort	1.83	6.00	4.64	.78
Consistency of Interests	1.33	6.00	3.99	.98

Regarding the perseverance of effort, the means and standard deviations of the responses to questionnaire items relating to the perseverance of effort were shown in Table 4. Items numbered 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 demonstrated a high level of perseverance of effort while item 3 showed an above moderate level of perseverance of effort.

Table 4

Results of Items on Perseverance of Effort

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I am a diligent English language learner.	4.40	1.09	High
2. Failing an English test doesn't make me want to give up.	4.84	1.26	High
3. When it comes to English, I am a hard-working learner.	4.10	1.23	Above moderate
4. I finish whatever English activity I begin.	5.07	1.12	High
5. I will not allow anything to stop me from my progress in learning English.	5.07	1.22	High
6. I have achieved a goal in learning English that took years of practice.	4.37	1.34	High

As regards the consistency of interests, Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of the responses to questionnaire items relating to consistency of interests. As shown in the table, items 2, 3, and 4 showed a high level of perseverance of effort while item number 5 showed an

above moderate level of consistency of interests, and items 1 and 6 demonstrated a moderate level of consistency of interests.

Table 5

Results of Items on Consistency of Interest

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. *My interests in learning English change from year to year.	2.71	1.42	Moderate
2. *I am not as interested in learning English as I used to be.	4.42	1.45	High
3. *I have been obsessed with learning English in the past but later lost interest.	4.73	1.42	High
4. *I think I have lost my interest in learning English.	4.51	1.43	High
5. *I often set a goal in learning English but later choose to go after a different goal.	4.30	1.43	Above moderate
6. *I think it is hard to stay focused on learning English because it takes long time to succeed.	3.28	1.61	Moderate

Thai ELLs' engagement scores

Table 6 presents the overall engagement score, the behavioral engagement score, the emotional engagement score, and the cognitive engagement score. As shown in the table, the overall engagement of Thai ELLs was found to be at a moderate level ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .72$). The level of behavioral engagement was rated at an above moderate level ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.04$) and the level of emotional engagement was found to be the highest at an above moderate level ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .91$). Whereas, cognitive engagement was ranked the lowest with a moderate level ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .71$).

Table 6

Mean and Standard Deviation of Engagement Scores

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Engagement	1.56	5.33	3.46	.72

Behavioral Engagement	1.00	6.00	3.56	1.04
Emotional Engagement	1.20	6.00	3.78	.91
Cognitive Engagement	1.50	5.00	3.19	.71

Regarding behavioral engagement, Table 7 presents the means and standard deviations of the responses to questionnaire items relating to the behavioral engagement. Item number 3 demonstrated a high level of behavioral engagement and item number 2 was reported as an above moderate level while items 1, 3, 4 showed a moderate level of behavioral engagement.

Table 7

Results of Items on Behavioral Engagement

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I interact with my teacher the whole time during the online English class.	3.00	1.49	Moderate
2. *I lose my attention when learning English online.	3.54	1.50	Above moderate
3. I listen attentively to the teacher during online class.	3.46	1.41	Moderate
4. I participate in class discussions by sharing my thoughts/opinions.	3.17	1.43	Moderate
5. I join online English classes on a regular basis.	4.63	1.48	High

The means and standard deviations of the responses to questionnaire items relating to emotional engagement are shown in Table 8. Item number 4 showed a high level of emotional engagement and item 1 and 5 were rated as above moderate. Items 1, 3, and 4 showed a moderate level of emotional engagement.

Table 8

Results of Items on Emotional Engagement

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I feel like I am a part of the learning process even when studying online.	3.64	1.45	Above moderate
2. I enjoy interactive activities during my online classes.	3.37	1.54	Moderate
3. *I am uncomfortable interacting with people in my class during online learning.	3.04	1.74	Moderate
4. *I feel that interactive activities are boring and pointless.	4.96	1.20	High
5. I feel that interactive apps/websites make English lessons more interesting.	3.88	1.37	Above moderate

Cognitive engagement is shown in Table 9. The means and standard deviations of the responses to questionnaire items relating to the cognitive engagement were presented here. Item number 4 showed a high level of cognitive engagement and items 1 and 5 were rated at an above moderate level. Meanwhile, items 1, 3, and 4 showed a moderate level of cognitive engagement.

Table 9

Results of Items on Cognitive Engagement

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I like to join group work activities in my online English classes.	2.88	1.65	Moderate
2. I engage in online classes no less than traditional classes.	3.10	1.69	Moderate
3. I like to answer the teacher's questions in the chat box.	3.65	1.58	Above moderate
4. I always complete the tasks even during online learning.	5.24	1.19	Very high
5. *I think learning English grammar and vocabulary becomes harder in online classes.	3.33	1.71	Moderate
6. The online class makes me want to learn English more.	2.23	1.20	Low
7. *I practice my English-speaking skill less in online classes.	2.59	1.55	Low
8. My English-writing skill is getting better during online learning.	2.49	1.29	Low

Correlations between Thai ELLs' grit and language achievement

A Pearson Correlation analysis was used to examine the correlation between Thai ELLs' grit and language achievement. It was found that Thai ELLs' grit was positively correlated with their language achievement, $r = .345$. Furthermore, the relationship was found significant, $p < .001$ (Table 10).

Table 10*Correlations between Grit and Language Achievement*

		Grit	Language achievement
Grit	Pearson Correlation	1	.345*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	563	563
Language achievement	Pearson Correlation	.345*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	563	563

Correlations between Thai ELLs' engagement and language achievement

Another Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted in order to investigate the correlation between Thai ELLs' engagement and language achievement. The Pearson's correlation coefficients showed a low positive correlation between engagement and language achievement, $r = .128$, $p < .01$. (Table 11)

Table 11*Correlations between Engagement and Language Achievement*

		Engagement	Language achievement
Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.128*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	563	563

Language achievement	Pearson Correlation	.128*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	563	563

Correlations between Thai ELLs' grit and engagement

The correlation between Thai ELLs' grit and online engagement was examined by the Pearson Correlation analysis. The result showed that Thai ELLs' grit was positively correlated with their engagement score, $r = .412$, $p < 0.1$ (Table 12).

Table 12

Correlations between Grit and Engagement

		Grit	Engagement
Grit	Pearson Correlation	1	.412*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	563	563
Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.412*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	563	563

Diagnostics for Regression of Thai ELLs' grit score, online engagement score and language achievement

Moreover, to examine whether grit and engagement were predictors of Thai ELLs' language achievement, a multiple regression analysis was completed. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 34.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .119$) and that the model was a significant predictor of language achievement, $F(2, 560) = 37.96$, $p < .01$. It was found that only grit significantly predicted language achievement ($B = .106$, $p < .01$). However, engagement did not significantly predict language achievement ($B = -.005$, $p = .69$). (Table 13)

Table 13*Multiple Regression results of Grit and Engagement on Language Achievement*

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	3.448	.057		60.056	< .001
Grit	.106	.013	.352	8.093	< .001
Engagement	-.005	.014	-.017	-.396	.693

Qualitative data

To confirm the results regarding learners' grit, the participants' statements acquired from the open-ended questions were presented to support the positive relationship between grit and language achievement. Some example quotations are provided below:

I believe that online learning does not affect my goals in English learning. My goals in English learning depends on me, not the platform.

I do not lose the interest in learning English at all. Although I can't concentrate very well in online learning, I continue to study English outside the class in my own time.

I am always interested in English, so I do not think online learning affects my interest in English learning.

I do not think my interest in English becomes less. Although I might participate less in English class, I spend a lot of time practicing English on my own such as learning English from Netflix or songs.

I might lose my interest in the English class but I still enjoy learning English from YouTube, songs, and movies.

Even though the results suggested that there is a low positive correlation between engagement and language achievement. The qualitative data collection from the open-ended questions can suggest otherwise. Some example quotations are provided below:

During online classes, I did not see my teachers and my classmates at all! I did not interact with them at all!

I cannot discuss with my friends during online classes. Although it is possible to ask questions in class, sometimes I lack the confidence. If I ask something, the whole class will turn their focus to me. It is not the same as when I was in a traditional classroom. Then, I can walk directly to the teacher and ask questions.

It is very difficult to do groupworks in online learning. Some people do not participate in groupworks because of their poor connection of the internet or their lack of interest.

I felt more enthusiastic when I studied in a traditional classroom. In online classes, I think my interaction with others decreases.

I feel less engaging during my online classes especially when I study with native teachers. I do not have the courage to answer questions in class because when I do, everyone will turn off their microphone and listen attentively. It makes me feel uneasy.

Discussion

We examined the relationship between variables and drew inferences about the possible effects among them, the grit of Thai ELLs in online settings was found at a high level and grit was positively correlated with language achievement, $B = .106$, $p < .01$. These findings were consistent with the work of Duckworth (2007) in the field of social psychology. In the work of Duckworth, it was found that grittier undergraduates in an elite university outperformed their less gritty classmates. Furthermore, in the field of language learning, the findings were consistent with the work of Teimouri et al (2020). Teimouri et al (2020) found that grit in English learning was positively related to their language achievement. Additionally, the present study revealed that grit is a predictor of language achievement ($R^2 = .119$, $F = 37.96$, $p < .01$). This finding was consistent with Duckworth (2007) and Wei et al. (2020) who conducted the study in the Chinese EFL context. Wei et al. also found that grit was significantly predictive of language achievement.

In addition, the present study showed that grit was positively associated with engagement ($r = .412, p < 0.1$). To elaborate, grit scales and engagement scales shared some similarities in the items. Relating to consistency of interest, the item, “I think I have lost my interest in learning English.” was closely similar to a behavioral engagement item, “I lose my attention when learning English online.” Moreover, an item relating to the perseverance of effort which was “I finish whatever English activity I begin.” was related to a cognitive engagement item, “I always complete the tasks even during online learning.”

Furthermore, the study also found a moderate level of engagement among Thai ELLs who participated in the study and a low positive correlation between engagement and language achievement ($r = .128, p < .01$). The results contradicted the previous research of Lei et al. (2018). Lei et al. (2018) found a moderately strong and positive correlation between engagement and academic achievement. The current study also found that engagement was not a predictor of language achievement ($B = -.005, p = .69$). These findings suggested counterfactual results. There are alternative explanations that might have contributed to the relationship. From the qualitative data we gathered, it appears that learners who participated in the study had less affection toward online settings reflected in low engagement in online settings.

Conclusion and Implication

This study revealed the relationship between grit, engagement, and language achievement in online settings. The finding suggests that learners with grit do not become demotivated, even when placed in difficult situations. Gritty learners can maintain their efforts and pursue certain goals in English learning. The results of the study also provided evidence that even though the paradigm of English learning has transitioned to an online setting, learners’ grit continues to stay at a high level in accordance with the definition of grit by Duckworth et al. (2007) that grit involves working toward challenges and maintaining effort despite difficulties. This indicated that grit can be viewed as a bridge crossing to successful language learning. Grit allows learners to sustain their learning in different circumstances in which leads to success. Grit will always drive their learning and help them find ways to become resilient. In this paper, we argue that grit is the main predictor for successful language

learning. Therefore, it is vital to employ proper coaching and instruction to improve the level of Thai ELLs' grit and encourage learners to persist and maintain effort toward their goals. Teachers should build a long-term goal in English learning for students and design perseverance-oriented activities. The present study also suggested that learner engagement was affected by the online settings. The learners seemed to be more in need of engaging and interacting activities during their online classes.

Limitations and Suggestions

The present study has some limitations. First, the data in the current study were collected from high school students, from one of the most prestigious high schools, ranked the highest for its excellent academic level in Thailand. As a result, the majority of the participants' language achievement is considered to be at a high level compared to other schools. It would be interesting to further explore different groups of participants, to gather a better representative of general Thai high school students. Secondly, the research instrument used in this study was a self-report questionnaire. Further research should investigate other data collection methods, for instance, interviews in order to increase the extent of the data. This study could be extended to an experimental one to measure the level of L2 learning achievement in relation to grit and engagement.

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