

Chapter 4


Developing Grit in EFL Instructors: A Qualitative Exploration of Resilience and Perseverance

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the development of grit, which embodies resilience and perseverance, among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors who work in tertiary-level foreign language preparatory programs in Türkiye. Rooted in a qualitative, phenomenological design combined with a multiple-case study approach, this study examines how EFL instructors develop, navigate, and sustain their professional resilience and commitment over time within varying institutional and professional dynamics. Drawing on in-depth interviews with six participants, categorized into three distinct cases based on their career trajectories, this study adopts an integrated analytical approach that combines cross-case analysis with thematic analysis to examine the data. The findings are considered to provide practical implications for language educators, teacher education programs, and institutional administrators who aim to foster grit in their teachers while enhancing their pedagogical efficiency and professional fulfillment.

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INTRODUCTION

Grit, commonly defined as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087), has remained a focal point due to its potential to influence success across various domains (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014; Robins, 2019). In the realm of education, grit is considered an essential characteristic for teachers, enabling them to resist challenges, maintain their professional commitment, and cultivate an engaging learning environment despite the inevitable obstacles they face (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Luthans et al., 2019; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). The concept embodies resilience and perseverance, referring to overcoming conflict and stress, recovering from failures, and adapting to changing conditions, even amid failure and adversity (Bobek, 2002). In this context, grit is inherently multifaceted as it involves not only the ability to stay committed to long-term goals but also the flexibility to self-tailor to the ever-changing demands of the context in which one is engaged (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014).

Within learning environments, grit can manifest in various forms that necessitate teachers to acquire new roles in their profession or reinforce existing ones; for example, EFL instructors may take on the role of cultural mediators and persistently adapt their instructional approaches to meet the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of their students while maintaining high expectations for academic growth. Furthermore, grit may need to be reflected on when teachers address unwanted student behaviors or when they are required to revisit and revise their pedagogical content knowledge to align with learner aspirations and enhance learning. Accordingly, grit may be the key for teachers to thrive in the complex and often stressful nature of the teaching profession, as well as to sustain an enduring interest in personal and professional growth. Given this, gaining insights into how grit evolves in teachers is imperative in pursuit of teacher pedagogical efficiency and professional fulfillment (Duckworth et al., 2009).

Increasing attention has been paid to the predictive power of grit in academic and professional domains, yet it becomes apparent that little empirical evidence exists on how grit evolves longitudinally, notably in the nuanced context of teacher practice. The absence of insight becomes particularly evident in EFL teaching settings. Most of the time, instructors are confronted with intensive workloads and administrative expectations such as administrative burdens, tight schedules, and curricular intensity. These create conditions that demand unwavering professional engagement. Though the teaching environment is highly demanding, research on this matter remains scarce on how teachers cope within these professionally demanding settings and regulate their internal motivation in the long term. A noticeable absence of studies suggests that there is an urgent need for longitudinal and situated research to understand the nuanced nature of how grit operates among EFL instructors in preparatory year

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