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The Role of L2 Learners' Character Strengths in Predicting Academic Buoyancy, L2 Grit, and Interest in Learning English: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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ABSTRACT

Objective: While positive psychology research has had important implications for the field of second language acquisition, there remains a paramount concern to understand the personal resources that enable learners not only to survive but also to thrive through challenges. Grounded in positive psychology, the present study aimed to investigate the predictive role of Iranian L2 learners' character strengths as positive personal resources they bring to educational settings in fostering academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest in learning English.

Method: To achieve this aim through a structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis, 530 Iranian university students were conveniently selected. Data were analysed using the statistical package SMART-PLS 3 to test direct and indirect effects among the variables.

Results: It was found that character strengths positively and significantly predicted academic buoyancy, yet predicted L2 Grit slightly, and did not predict interest at all. However, character strengths influenced interest positively through a significant mediating pathway: L2 grit.

Conclusions: It was found that character strengths positively and significantly predicted academic buoyancy, yet predicted L2 grit slightly, and did not predict interest at all. However, character strengths influenced interest positively through a significant mediating pathway: L2 grit.

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1- Introduction

Positive psychology, as the empirical and scientific study of how people flourish by studying the ordinary human strength and virtues to help them live well, has important implications for the field of second language acquisition by enhancing language learners' linguistic skills as well as their psychological states (MacIntyre, 2016; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Up to date, various types of positivity in individuals such as grit, buoyancy, resilience, and interest have been introduced to reveal why and how some L2 learners overcome obstacles, treat their failures, continue their efforts, and stay eager in learning second language (L2) compared to others. Existing studies mainly focus on the predictive role these positive persistant-related behaviors play in language achievement (e.g., Li, Duan, & Liu, 2013; Teimouri, Plonsky, & Tabandeh, 2022; Yun, Hiver, & Al-Hoorie, 2018; Zhai, 2025).

Moreover, research on individual differences shows that some learners show more determination, flexibility, and enthusiasm when learning a language (e.g., Pawlak, 2021; 2025; Zarrinabadi, 2025). However, there remains a paramount concern to understand what personal traits L2 learners may own to commit those positive behaviors. In addition, further studies are needed to deeply explore what positive behaviors personal traits would predict. In this regard, this study addresses the key gaps by positting that L2 learners' identification of themselves possessing some strengths in their characters may provide the bedrock for developing long-term effort (grit) for mastering a langauge and allow them to bounce back from weaknesses, setbacks, and failures (academic buoyancy) which ultimately leads to consistent interest in the language over time.

To study L2 learners' foundational personal traits, we focus on Character Strengths which is a self-report survey revealing what characters individuals identify themselves more with. The significance of the present study lies in its potential to offer theoretical and pedagogical insights to the field of second language acquisition (SLA) by investigating if learners' character strengths would predict their L2 grit, academic buoyancy, and interest in studying English at unievrsities. Understanding these dynamics would be beneficial to the stakeholders, practitioners, and university instructors in raising leaners' awareness of their potentials and design curriculum through which their strengths will be encouraged.

Literature Review

2-1 Character Strengths

The study of positive traits was clearly recognized as an objective core of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Character strengths, defined as those aspects of personality being morally valued, are the foundation of optimal life-long development and thriving. Good character is not a singular thing but rather a group of positive traits which are

highlighted in one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). One of the most significant contributions to identify one's character strengths was the development of the VIA inventory of strengths (VIA-IS), designed to measure adults' positive characters which are reflected in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Park & Peterson, 2009). In this regard, Peterson and Seligman (2004) devised character strengths inventory on the basis of classifying six universal virtues i.e., wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence, as well as 24 character strengths including creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective, bravery, perseverance, honesty, zest, love, kindness, social intelligence, teamwork, fairness, leadership, forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation, appreciate of beaty, gratitude, hope, humor, and religiousness contributing to individual fulfillment and development (Mcgrath, 2019).

Peterson and Seligman's proposed concept of "character strengths" have been found to be studied extensively to predict many variables such as educational outcome and students' achievement (Wagner et al., 2020), well-being (Molavi, Kouhi, & Ahangari, 1402; Höfer et al., 2020) enjoyment (Weber & Harzer, 2022), life satisfaction (Peterson et al., 2007), health (Jabbari et al., 2021), job satisfaction (Heintz & Ruch, 2020), positive emotions (Güsewell & Ruch, 2012), and stress coping (Kalyar & Kalyar, 2018). Also, character strengths have been studied in second language learning with a focus on their predictive role in enhancing positive emotions and resilience, and reducing negative emotions (Alrabai & Alamer, 2022; Gregersen, MacIntyre, & Buck, 2021; MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2019). However, although studies on character strengths and emotions mainly with the association of resilience have been conducted in several fields, empirical research on the predictive role of character strengths in the field of SLA remains sparse, especially among university students.

2.2. Academic Buoyancy

Academic buoyancy is presented as a construct highlighting daily academic resilience within a positive psychology framework and is defined as students' ability to successfully handle academic setbacks and challenges that are typical of school life (e.g., poor grades, competing deadlines, exam pressure, difficult schoolwork) (Martin & Marsh, 2006). This framework recognizes elements like self-regulation, adaptability, and positive emotions as essential aspects of academic buoyancy that are directly related to language learning. Later, research conducted by Martin and Marsh (2008) built upon this foundation, and emphasized the importance of motivation, teacher assistance, and peer relationships in promoting resilience in students. Academic buoyancy connects resilience to educational results by emphasizing students' capacity to endure everyday stressors, like exam anxiety or classroom evaluations, which are common in EFL settings (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Kim & Kim, 2021). Numerous studies have

shown resilience associates strongly and positively with second language achievement, motivations, and reduced anxiety (Kim & Kim, 2021; Oxford, 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Yet, there is paucity of research which has investigated the role of L2 learners' character strengths in predicting academic buoyancy.

2.3. L2 Grit

Grit, defined as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087), has received growing attention in recent years. The US Department of Education has recently highlighted courage, tenacity and perseverance as essential factors for student success in the 21st century (Shechtman et al., 2013). Various educational institutions and organizations have started to design and implement teaching materials and programs to instill grit in schools (Christopoulou, 2018; Shechtman et al., 2013). In language learning, grit is working hard toward challenges, keeping effort and interest over years despite failure, challenges, and plateaus. In this regard, the role of grit has abundantly been studied in association with language achievement (Baierschmidt, 2022; Changlek & Palanukulwong, 2015; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014; Li, 2025; Strayhorn, 2014).

Several studies have investigated the role of grit and linked the concept of grit to learners' confidence, self-esteem, willingness to participate, and determination when facing obstacles (Chen, Lake, & Padilla, 2021; Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Hariri, 2021; Kramer, McLean, & ShepherdMartin, 2018; Lake, 2013; Robins, 2019; Yamashita, 2018; Wei, Gao, & Wang, 2019). Later, Teimouri et al. (2020) introduced the notion of L2-grit as a language-specific grit scale to be positively related to L2 learners' motivation and achievement in language learning. It was proposed that L2 grit needs to be considered alongside other previously established individual differences in the context of L2 development.

To date, various studies have probed the predicting role of L2 grit in relation to different constructs and in a variety of contexts (e.g., L2 achievement (Alamer, 2022); L2 motivational behavior (Pawlak, Zarrinabadi, & Kruk 2024); Reducing anxiety (Sudina & Plonsky, 2021); L2 writing achievement (Zhang, 2023); Self-efficacy (Zheng, 2022)). However, despite a wide range of studies, L2 grit has remained unexplored in relation to L2 learners' character strengths. Therefore, the current study attempts to explore the role of Iranian L2 learners' character strengths in predicting L2 grit as well as the mediating role of L2 grit in sustaining L2 learners' academic buoyancy and interest in learning English.

2.4. Interest

The concept of interest, conceptualized as "heightened attention and emotional engagement that emerges when a person has a positive interaction with a content area or a task" (Hidi & Renninger, 2006, p. 112), plays an important role in education (Schiefele, 1991). Moreover, in

the field of language teaching, recent developments have led to recommenced attention to the role of interest in language teaching (Ainley, 2002). As an example, Wiśniewska (2013) focused on the concept of interest in relation to EFL learning and the potential interest-enhancing strategies learners can employ when they find learning English not interesting enough. The questionnaire survey study was conducted to examine how learners rate the interestingness of important classroom activities and how they deal with the activities that score low in this regard. The results indicated that these learners are moderately interested in EFL learning activities, However, they can encourage themselves to continue doing tasks they find less interesting by employing interest-enhancing strategies that are primarily instrumental and goal-oriented.

The current study's conceptual contribution is twofold. First, although the interplay between a combination of above-mentioned constructs has been scrutinized in previous studies, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there is no study investigating the joint effect of character strengths, academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest in learning English in academic settings. Second, it investigates the nuanced relationship between the latent variables (i.e., academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest) which have been unexplored in SLA. Thus, the present study utilized a structural model with the purpose of expanding the line of research on character strengths studies in positive psychology. Given the above, the hypothesized models are depicted in Figures 1 and 2., and the following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: To what extent do Iranian EFL learners' character strengths predict their L2 grit, academic buoyancy, and interest in learning English?

RQ2: Do Iranian L2 learners' character strengths predict their interest in learning English via the mediation of L2 grit and academic buoyancy?

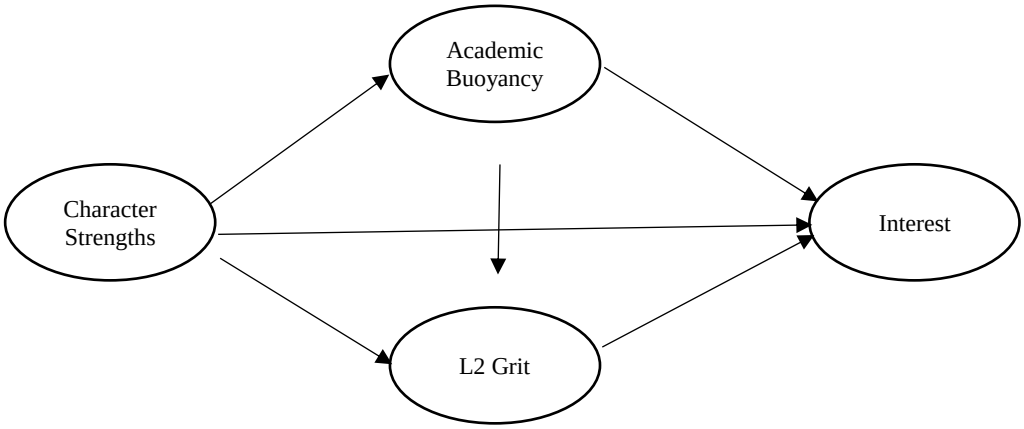


Figure 1. The Hypothetical Model of Character Strengths, L2 Grit, Academic Buoyancy, and Interest in Learning English.

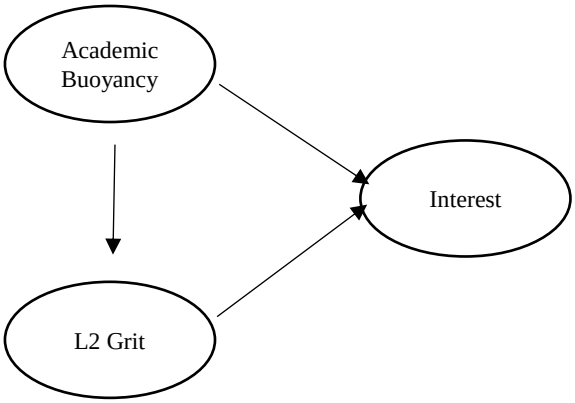


Figure 2. The Hypothetical Model between Outcome Variables

Figure 1 and 2 reveal the suggested hypothetical model to clarify how sets of variables are related.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Participants in this study included 530 Iranian university students at Bachelor of Arts level at Yazd University in Yazd, Iran bothe male and female in the range of 18 to 24 years old; while nearly half of the participants were 19 and 20 years old (n= 289, 54.5%), and most of whom were female (Male = 130, 24.5%; Female = 400, 75.5%). A convenience method was used for sampling. In terms of the major, participants were studying English Translation, English Teaching, English Literature, and miscellaneous majors in General English Classes.

Furthermore, measures were taken to ensure a diverse range of academic backgrounds among the participants, comprising various levels of English proficiency and different academic years. Participants had to meet specific criteria, such as demonstrating at least intermediate English proficiency, which was confirmed through their self-reported academic records, former coursework, or results from the English diagnosis tests given by English Language and Literature Department.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables (n=530)

		Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	130	24.5
	Female	400	75.5
Age	18	55	10.4
	19	176	33.2
	20	113	21.3
	21	56	10.6

	22	58	10.9
	23	30	5.7
	>=24	42	7.9
Major	English Teaching	186	35.1
	English Translation	132	24.9
	English Literature	28	5.3
	General English	184	34.7

Table 1 reveals the demographic characteristics of the participants offering a solid basis for comprehending the study's context. The age distribution indicates that there is a significant number of young students involved in English language learning in the academic settings. As the table reveals, the students majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) (35.1%) had the highest frequency with General English (34.7%) close behind.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. VIA Inventory of Strengths-P (VIA-IS-P)

Character strengths were measured using the VIA-IS-P, part of the VIA Assessment Suite for Adults (McGrath, 2019). VIA-IS-P is a shortened 96-item scale, includes only positively keyed items, and measures 24 character strengths under six virtue categories. A minimum of four character strengths items are present for every virtue scale and use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(very much unlike me) to 5 (Very much like me). Higher scores show greater identification of a specific character strength. The VIA-IS-P has been translated into the plenty of languages; however, due to unavailability of the Persian version at the time, the Persian translation of the scale was done by the authors of this paper. The VIA-IS-P demonstrated good internal consistency in the present sample (ranging from 0.60 - 0.91).

3.2.2. Academic Buoyancy Scale

Academic buoyancy is a four-item measurement within positive psychology framework and assesses students' ability to successfully deal with academic setbacks and challenges that are typical of the ordinary course of academic life (e.g., poor grades, competing deadlines, exam pressure, difficult coursework) (Martin & Marsh, 2008). This survey has been utilized in Iranian EFL research contexts (e.g. Alazemi et al., 2023; Heydarnejad et al., 2022; Fathi, Rezaei, & Mohammad Hosseini, 2025). The scale showed acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.70$).

3.2.3. L2-Grit Scale

Language-domain-specific grit was assessed using a 9-item EFL context-embedded scale devised by Teimouri et al. (2022). This scale includes 5 items measuring persistence of effort and 4 items measuring consistency of interest on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 5 (*very much like me*) to measure L2 learners' grittiness in relation to L2 learning, use, and achievement (Teimouri et al, 2022). The scale has been used in Iranian EFL research

contexts (e.g. Derakhshan, Dewaele, & Noughabi, 2022; Heydarnejad et al., 2022; Shahrokhi & Dehaghani, 2025; Shahvarani, Noughabi, & Razi 2025). In this study, the internal consistency reliability of L2-grit scale measured by Cronbach's alpha was acceptable (ranging from 0.65 - 0.85).

3.2.4. Interest Scale

Learners' interest in English learning was evaluated through a 13-item self-report scale which aims to measure individuals' interest across different educational settings based on two dimensions: interest in the course and enjoyment of the instructor's teaching (Harackiewicz et al., 2000). Items are rated on a 5-Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 5 (*very much like me*). In the present study, the internal consistency of the scale was convenient (ranging from 0.68 to 0.91).

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
VIA	0.60 - 0.91	0.76 - 0.93	0.46 - 0.78
Academic Buoyancy	0.70	0.81	0.53
L2 Grit Scale	0.65 - 0.85	0.81 - 0.89	0.61 - 0.62
Interest Scale	0.68 - 0.91	***0.82*** - 0.93	0.58 - 0.61

As Table 2 shows, the reliability and construct validity of the scales were investigated through performing Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). A CR value above 0.7 indicate good reliability, suggesting the acceptability of the internal consistency. The results further indicate that the measurement tools effectively measured the intended constructs.

3.3. Procedures

To ensure clarity and cultural relevance, all scales were made into one composite form and translated into Persian. Two experts scrutinized the translated versions to confirm accuracy in the meaning equivalence. All items on the questionnaires used a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to capture degrees of agreement. Final version of the instrument was submitted to 50 Iranian L2 learners in a pilot study for further checking of the reliability and validity.

Having been informed of the study's overall purpose, participants were ensured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Questionnaires were given in paper-and-pencil format during standard class hours to ensure reliable responses. Participants were given breaks and refreshments to avoid potential boredom effects (Meier, Martarelli, & Wolff, 2024). They finished the surveys in 30 to 45 minutes.

3.4. Data Analysis

The underlying relationship between the research variables was tested via a comprehensive model within a positive psychology perspective using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. SEM is one of the statistical methods that has gained significant popularity among researchers of various disciplines including L2 research. It models various observed and latent variables, considers different forms of measurement error, and tests entire theories for answering research questions beneficially (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Within variance-based SEM techniques, partial least squares (PLS) path modeling is considered the most thoroughly and comprehensively developed framework (McDonald, 1996). Therefore, this study including a wide range of subscales employed a variance-based SEM method, particularly PLS path modeling, in which composites were applied to model strong theoretical concepts.

Initially, the collected data were screened out to ensure a lack of missing data or outliers and described statistically through running SPSS (version 26). Later, the assumptions of running SEM (e.g., sample size, data normality, and multicollinearity) were also checked. To address the research questions, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Path Analysis (PA) were run through SMART-PLS (version 3) firstly to investigate the correlation among the variables and secondly to reveal how L2 character strengths might directly or indirectly have predicted their academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest among Iranian L2 learners.

4. Results

The purpose of the current study was to test the underlying hypothetical model between L2 learners' character strengths in predicting L2 grit, academic buoyancy, and interest.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Main Variables (n = 530)

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Character Strengths	359.47	41.29	236	476
Academic Buoyancy	14.30	3.06	5	20
L2 Grit	32.52	6.96	12	45
Interest	53.13	9.08	14	65

Table 3 displays the participants' performance on character strength, academic buoyancy, L2 grit and interest. As it was shown, the mean values of the variables investigated in the study enjoyed a good amount of variability, reflecting high variance among participants in terms of their character strengths, academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest in learning English.

4.1. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The SEM model investigated the interconnections among character strengths, academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest for learning English. The examination assessed both direct effects and indirect (mediated) effects by employing bootstrapping methods. The findings are

organized into two sections: direct effects of predictor variables and indirect effects of the variables.

4.1.1. Hypothesis Testing Results (Standardized Direct Effects)

Table 4 summarizes the SEM analysis for the model through bootstrapping analysis for standardized direct coefficients.

Table 4. Results of the Standardized Direct Effects

Direct Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Interpretation
Character Strengths -> Interest	0.00	0.15	0.87	Not Significant
Character Strengths -> L2 Grit	0.06	1.96	0.05	Marginally Significant
Character Strengths -> Academic Buoyancy	0.19	4.79	0.00	Significant
L2 Grit -> Interest	0.42	9.34	0.00	Significant
Academic Buoyancy -> L2 Grit	0.04	1.20	0.22	Not Significant
Academic Buoyancy -> Interest	-0.07	2.32	0.02	Negatively Significant

As illustrated in Table 4, the impact of character strengths on academic buoyancy was positive and significant (($\beta = 0.19$, $t = 4.79$, $p < 0.00$). In addition, the effect of character strengths on L2 grit was marginally significant (($\beta = 0.06$, $t = 1.96$, $p = 0.05$). However, since the t-value is 0.15, which is less than 1.96, it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between character strengths and interest ($\beta = 0.00$, $t = 0.15$, $p = 0.87$). There was also a positive and significant relationship between L2 grit and interest. The effect of academic buoyancy on interest was also negatively significant. The mentioned results indicate that Iranian L2 learners' character strengths cannot predict their interest in learning a second language, particularly English in an academic setting. Yet, their character strengths can be an appropriate predictor of their academic buoyancy and L2 grit.

4.1.2. Indirect Effect Analysis (Mediated Effects Analysis)

How variables mediate relationships is indicated through specific indirect effects. Results of the bootstrapping analysis for standardized specific indirect (mediated) coefficients are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Standardized Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Character Strengths -> L2 Grit -> Interest	0.02	0.02	0.01	1.88	0.06

Academic Buoyancy -> L2 Grit -> Interest	0.01	0.01	0.01	1.17	0.24
Character Strengths -> Academic Buoyancy -> L2 Grit -> Interest	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.09	0.27
Character Strengths -> Academic Buoyancy -> Interest	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	2.05	0.04
Character Strengths -> Academic Buoyancy -> L2 Grit	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.12	0.26

The mediated effects were further analyzed. The results (see Table 5) showed that the indirect path from character strengths to interest via academic buoyancy and L2 grit was not significant ($\beta = 0.00$, $t = 1.09$, $p = 0.27$). Likewise, the indirect effects from the sub-scales of character strengths through L2 grit and interest showed p-values higher than 0.05, indicating non-significant mediated effects through academic buoyancy and L2 grit (See Figure 3).

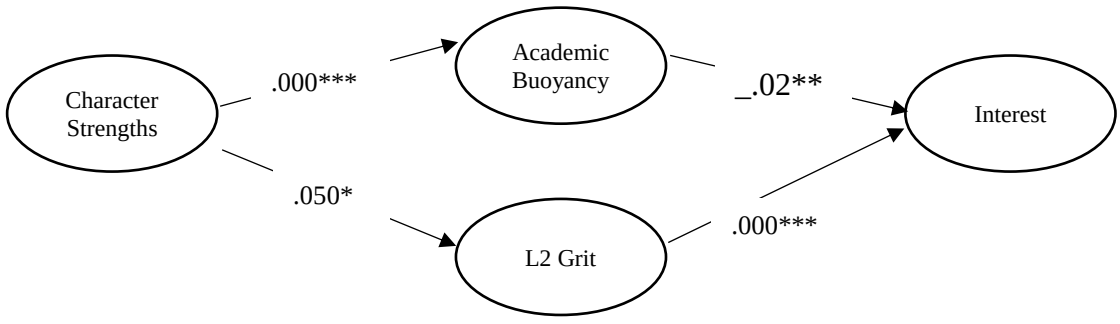


Figure 3. The Final Model of Character Strengths, Academic Buoyancy, L2 Grit, and Interest. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

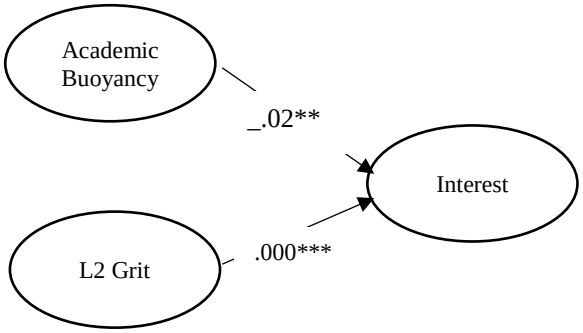


Figure 4. The Final Model of the Outcome Variables. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

As Figure 3 and 4 indicated, character strengths had a positive effect on academic buoyancy and L2 grit; yet, these strengths by themselves were not enough to reliably predict Iranian L2 learners' interest in English learning at academic settings without the mediation of other factors.

5. Discussion

5.1. The Predictive Role of Character strengths

The current research employed structural equation modeling to study the complex interplay between Iranian L2 learners' character strengths, academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest in learning English. The findings revealed that character strengths helped explain academic buoyancy, to a lesser extent L2 grit, and interest indirectly. The final model supported the Peterson and Seligman's (2004) character strengths theory in shaping positive experience and explaining positive language learning outcomes.

More specificcaly, character strengths significantly predicted academic buoyancy which might be due to the reason that personal virtues, working as internal and mental resources, would boost learners' capacity in taking adaptive actions to academic setbacks. This shows an agreement with Goodman et al. (2017) who emphasized the consistent predictive direct effect of character strengths on resilience-related behaviors in educational settings. The findings are also in line with McGrath (2015) and Alrabai and Alamer (2022) who highlighted that character strengths is beneficial to L2 learners in developing cognitive flexibility to deal with academic difficulties. L2 learners awareness of their character strengths would help them shape their beliefs toward their potential abilities which would foster their buoyancy. By promoting cognitive flexibility and buoyancy, Iranian L2 learners might be able to navigate the specific challenges of learning English in an EFL context. Nonetheless, the findings do not align with De la Fuente et al. (2022) who found that certain strengths (e.g., temperance) might act as a negative predictor depending on specific contexts. The probable reason can be attributed to Iranian cultural context where personal values and moral virtues are encouraged.

The predictive role of character strengths in education has been called for scrutiny due to their interplay with many educational and academic variables (Hokanson & Karlson, 2013). The current study confirmed the predicting role of character strengths in direct association with two important educational constructs namely academic buoyancy and L2 grit. However, the association of these strengths on L2 grit was small, suggesting that character strengths may play a smaller and context-dependent role in predicting L2 grit. Contrary to our expectations, character strengths' predictive role on interest in learning English was non-significant. This indicates that character strengths foster academic buoyancy and L2 grit, yet they do not have a direct impact on long-lasting interest in learning a language. This suggests a complex relationship where learners with strong beliefs in their personal resources, high perseverance, dealing with difficulties may not necessarily find their language journey enjoyable.

One noteworthy result is that character strengths can predict L2 learners' interest in language learning through indirect impact of L2 grit. Therefore, despite the fact that these strengths by themselves were not sufficient to reliably and directly predict Iranian L2 learners' interest in English learning at academic settings, they could influence Iranian L2 learner's interest in English learning through the mediation of other factors, i.e., L2 grit and academic buoyancy. This is in line with Lake (2013), who debated grittier learners would score higher on positive scales such as happiness, hope, and flourishing.

5.2. The Interplay of Outcome Variables

The present study extended the knowledge on the predicting role of academic buoyancy for interest in learning a language as well as L2 grit. According to the results obtained through SEM analysis of the relationship between latent variables, academic buoyancy does not have an effect on L2 grit showing that bouncing back when facing routine academic setbacks does not necessarily cause long-term perseverance and effort for learning a second language. This seems compatible with what Martin and Marsh (2008) have previously claimed that buoyancy is a short-term routine-based construct which varies from more chronic construct namely resilience relating to severe long-term traumas. However, the findings are in contrast with Yang, Sun, & Park (2022) who stated that academic buoyancy was a strong predictor of learners' grit, in addition to Ghafouri and Tahriri's (2023), where it was reported that L2 grit was highly associated with L2 buoyancy.

Contrary to what was expected, academic buoyancy had a negative effect on learners' interest in learning English indicating that despite high levels of academic buoyancy when managing an academic challenge, L2 learners did not find their experience of English learning interesting. To put it more simply, the more L2 learners became willing in facing setbacks, the less interested they were in their second language learning journey. This is not in line with

Derakhshan et al.'s (2022) claim where it was concluded that high levels of resilience (or buoyancy) relate to individuals' (teachers') happiness in the context of Iran. Neither is it in line with Xu and Wang (2022) who have claimed that academic buoyancy and interest are highly correlated which means that an increase in one causes a rise in another.

Last but not least, another noteworthy result is the significant association between L2 grit and L2 interest which suggests that long-term effort and perseverance will help maintain more interest in language learning by learners. This finding is compatible with Duckworth et al. (2007) who debated that grit, especially by its perseverance-related nature, helps learners achieve their long-lasting goals. This also aligns with Teimouri et al. (2020) who highlighted that L2 grit helps L2 learners maintain their long-term motivation and inside eagerness (interest).

5.3. Implications and Limitations

The present study reveals the influential role of Iranian university students' character strengths on the level of their academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and interest in learning English (directly or indirectly). This in turn, not only confirms previous studies, but also proves that helping L2 learners and teachers become aware of their substantial strengths may cause a more positive, happy, enjoyable, and successful language learning experience which may furtherly lead them to psychological and emotional growth.

Moreover, it extends the knowledge in PP in SLA realm (Mercer, 2018) by underpinning unified concepts from academic buoyancy research (Martin & Marsh, 2008), to perseverance-related investigations (Duckworth et al., 2007), particularly L2 interest studies (Harackiewicz et al., 2016). The findings also support the beneficial role of character strengths in academic settings (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) that directly or indirectly influence L2 learners' overcoming obstacles, maintaining perseverance, and keeping interest in learning a language.

This research, however, is subject to several limitations. First and foremost, data collected in this study are self-reported psychological instruments which may have been affected by participants' momentary mood and liable to untrustworthiness. Moreover, the lack of self-confidence in some individuals may have caused a source of underestimating their strengths. Second, other educational factors such as lecturers' behaviors rather than participants' character strengths may have played roles in creating interest. Other-reports, qualitative research, and longitudinal studies can serve as valuable assets in overcoming this limitation.

6. Conclusion

The strong connection between learners' character strengths and academic buoyancy as well as between L2 grit and their interest in learning English lays emphasis on the significance of character strengths and development of perseverance in language learning. In other words, L2

learners' virtues help them continue their language learning when facing obstacles like failure and are more likely to extend a consistent interest in learning English. This supports the concept of character strengths in improving perseverance in aiding students to stay motivated in facing difficulties. Productive teaching methods and establishing goals could additionally boost students' grit and long-lasting engagement in learning language (Pishghadam & Derakhshan, 2021). All in all, in the world of content-creating on social media, especially for building beauty-related and psychotherapy routines, L2 learners can become aware of strengths in their characters and set long-term goals by building self-routines both linguistically and psychologically. This will help them maintain long-lasting interest and stamina in language learning.

Several avenues for future research are in order. First, character strengths are self-reports which are based on what individuals interpret about their strengths. Although researchers in this study did their best to create a calm atmosphere to help learners report on their strengths, different individual may have underrated or overrated their strengths depending on their situational-psychological moods. Qualitative interviews or other-reports may be regarded as precious assets to help future research on character strengths. Second, interest in learning a language has recently become popular in SLA. Yet, character strengths studies in association with this important construct have been rare. On the other hand, the current study confirmed indirect and mediating impact of character strengths (through L2 grit) on L2 interest. If supported by future studies in other contexts, focus needs to be directed to the ways in which, interest variance is caused by different strengths. Moreover, longitudinal studies can be carried out to follow interest in language learning over time in terms of L2 learners' character strengths. Third, intervention-based research can offer valuable insights on helping L2 learners become aware of their strengths for gaining higher levels of academic buoyancy, L2 grit, and L2 interest. Finally, the present paper focused on a broad framework of character strengths; however, further research on every single strength will shed light on understanding this complex construct in predicting other educational variables.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization of the article and writing of the original and subsequent drafts.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical considerations

The authors avoided data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and any form of misconduct.

Data availability statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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