

## The Influence of Interest and Grit on Indonesian Primary Students' English Language Performance

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the relationship between learning interest, grit, and English language performance among Indonesian primary school students. A total of 240 students from three public elementary schools SDN Negeri 1 Tuk, SDN Negeri 1 Kedung Jaya, and SDN Negeri 1 Kedung Dawa participated in the study. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics, validity and reliability testing, and multiple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that both interest and grit had significant positive correlations with English performance ( $r = 0.622$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for interest;  $r = 0.693$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for grit). Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that grit was the stronger predictor of English achievement ( $\beta = 0.503$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), compared to learning interest ( $\beta = 0.278$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with the model accounting for 52.1% of the variance in performance ( $R^2 = 0.521$ ). These results emphasize that while student interest enhances motivation, grit defined as perseverance and sustained effort—is a more influential factor in predicting academic success in English. The study highlights the importance of cultivating both interest and resilience in young learners. Teachers are encouraged to implement strategies that promote long-term motivation and persistence to support better outcomes in English language learning.

**Keywords:** Elementary Students, English Performance, Grit, Interest, Psychological Traits.

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### INTRODUCTION

The development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction at the primary education level in Indonesia has seen considerable progress over the past few decades. The Indonesian government's effort to enhance English proficiency is reflected in the inclusion of English as an elective subject in the national primary curriculum (Low & Pakir, 2021). This highlights the urgency of mastering an international language to meet the demands of globalization. However, despite various curriculum reforms and pedagogical innovations, students' English performance has not yet achieved optimal results.

Recently, attention in educational research has expanded beyond cognitive aspects to include students' affective dimensions. In this context, two psychological factors learning interest and grit are regarded as critical contributors to the effectiveness of English language learning at the primary level (Wang & Pan, 2023). These non-cognitive variables are believed to play a vital role in supporting students' academic success, especially in learning a foreign language. Primary school students in Indonesia face various psychological challenges in learning English as a foreign language. At this age, limited cognitive development and minimal exposure to English in daily life are major barriers. The complexity of acquiring vocabulary and grammar, along with the pressure to meet academic expectations, often leads to learning anxiety (August et al., 2025). These issues can undermine students' motivation and engagement in the learning process.

To address these challenges, learning interest becomes a crucial factor. Interest drives intrinsic motivation and increases student engagement in learning activities (Hidi & Renninger, 2019). Hafizah and Fithriani (2023) found that students in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah displayed high interest in English, particularly in reading and listening skills. Factors such as curiosity, engaging teaching methods, and varied learning media all contribute to fostering students' interest (W. Li, 2023). On the other hand, grit, which refers to sustained effort and strong commitment toward long-term aspirations, represents students' capacity to overcome difficulties in reaching their academic goals. In the context of English learning, grit enables students to persist despite difficulties in understanding grammar structures or dealing with failure in tasks (Credé et al., 2017). It emphasized the importance of grit in sustaining consistent learning efforts. Moreover, responsive teacher support and a positive learning environment play a vital role in reinforcing students' perseverance (W. Li, 2023).

Although both interest and grit have been widely examined in educational research, most of these studies treat the variables separately and tend to focus on higher education levels, such as secondary schools and universities (Wu et al., 2022). There is a notable lack of studies that simultaneously investigate the influence of both interest and grit on English performance among primary school students in Indonesia. Furthermore, previous research has rarely explored the interaction between these two variables in Southeast Asian EFL contexts (Tricco et al., 2021). This condition reveals a significant gap in the existing literature and indicates the need for further investigation at the elementary school level. Unlike previous studies that have only examined the separate effects of interest and grit at secondary and higher educational levels, this research comprehensively analyzes the combined influence of these two factors on primary school students' English performance in Indonesia. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of interest and grit theories within the EFL context at the primary level in Southeast Asia, an area that has been largely underexplored.

This study aims to comprehensively examine the influence of interest and grit on the English language performance of Indonesian primary school students. Specifically, it seeks to identify the levels of interest and perseverance students demonstrate in learning English, and to evaluate the relationship between these two psychological variables and their academic achievement in the subject. Furthermore, the research intends to assess the predictive strength of both interest and grit to determine which factor exerts a greater influence on students' English performance. The findings of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations for educators in designing instructional approaches that simultaneously foster students' interest and perseverance, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of English language learning at the primary school level.

This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is a key factor in achieving optimal English language performance. Within this theory, interest is regarded as an essential element that stimulates students' internal

drive and encourages their active engagement in learning activities (Hidi & Renninger, 2019). Students who are interested in a subject tend to demonstrate higher levels of commitment and involvement in the learning process.

Conversely, grit refers to students' ability to remain persistent and consistent in pursuing long-term academic goals, even when facing challenges or setbacks (Tynan et al., 2020). Grit is viewed as a form of psychological resilience that helps students maintain sustained motivation. Recent empirical evidence indicates that grit may be an even stronger predictor of long-term academic success than interest (L. Li et al., 2022). Furthermore, grit plays a crucial role in fostering learning perseverance and enabling students to overcome various learning obstacles, particularly in the context of primary education (Chen & Gong, 2021).

This research is based on the interest development model proposed by Hidi and Renninger, which consists of four stages: the initiation of situational interest, the continuation of situational interest, the emergence of individual interest, and the establishment of a well-developed personal interest. It also incorporates grit construct, which includes perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how both interest and grit contribute to students' engagement and performance in learning English. Additionally, pedagogical strategies such as project-based learning, interactive digital media, and personalized feedback are viewed as potential means to foster both interest and grit simultaneously (Hidi & Renninger, 2019). Through this theoretical lens, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how interest and grit affect Indonesian primary students' English language performance and to offer a foundation for more effective and long-term oriented instructional practices.

## **METHODS**

Interest was measured using a researcher-developed questionnaire based on the learning interest theory by Hidi and Renninger (2019), consisting of 11 statement items. Grit was measured using an adapted version of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S), which includes 8 statement items assessing two dimensions: perseverance of effort and consistency of interests. The English Performance of primary school students was measured using a researcher-developed questionnaire based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), consisting of 9 statement items describing competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. All items were rated on a 4 point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree). The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through expert review involving three education specialists, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha = 0.857$ ), indicating high internal consistency.

The sampling technique used was non-probabilistic with a purposive sampling approach, where students meeting the inclusion criteria (actively enrolled and having obtained English grades in the previous semester) were selected to participate. This technique was chosen to ensure participation of students relevant to the research context. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, and multiple linear regression analysis to evaluate the relationships and predictive strength of interest and grit on English performance. Classical assumption tests such as normality, multicollinearity (VIF = 1.873), and homogeneity of variance were also conducted, with results meeting the requirements for regression analysis.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables of Interest, Grit, and Performance**

<b>Variabel</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Interest	240	24	60	46.87	6.259
Grit	240	23	60	44.25	6.689
Performance	240	27	60	44.72	6.503

In table 1, descriptive statistics show that the Interest variable has a mean value of 46.87 with a standard deviation of 6.259. The Grit variable has a mean of 44.25 and a standard deviation of 6.889. Meanwhile, the Performance variable shows a mean of 44.72 with a standard deviation of 6.503. These results indicate that, in general, the respondents in this study exhibit relatively high levels of interest, grit, and performance, with a relatively low degree of data dispersion.

**Table 2. Results of the Reliability Test for the Research Instrument**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>N of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
240	3	.857

Based on the results of the reliability analysis conducted on 240 respondents (with no missing data), the Cronbach's Alpha value obtained was 0.857 for the three statement items. This value indicates that the instrument used in this study has high internal consistency and is therefore reliable for measuring the variables under investigation.

**Table 3. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test for the Research Variables Interest, Grit, Performance**

	<b>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</b>			<b>Shapiro-Wilk</b>		
	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Interest	.082	240	<.001	.986	240	.016
Grit	.063	240	.023	.992	240	.224
Performance	.075	240	.003	.991	240	.120

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test showed that both the Grit ( $p = 0.219$ ) and Performance ( $p = 0.112$ ) variables followed a normal distribution, as their p-values exceeded the 0.05 threshold. However, the variable Interest was not normally distributed ( $p = 0.016$ ), indicating a deviation from the normal distribution. These results should be considered when selecting appropriate statistical analyses.

**Table 4. Results of the Homogeneity of Variance Test Interest**

		<b>Tests of Homogeneity of Variances</b>			
		<b>Levene Statistic</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Interest	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.797	27	142.496	.750
Grit	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.187	27	65.002	.282

The homogeneity test using Levene's Test showed that the variable Minat had a significance value of 0.750 ( $p > 0.05$ ), and the variable Ketekunan had a significance value of 0.282 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that both variables have homogeneous variances, fulfilling the basic assumptions required for further analysis such as ANOVA or linear regression.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To explore the associations among the variables in this research, several statistical analyses were performed. The outcomes of these analyses are shown in the tables below, along with detailed interpretations and discussions.

**Table 5. Pearson Correlation Between Variables**

		Interest	Grit	Performance
Interest	Pearson Correlation	1	.683**	.622**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001
	N	240	240	240
Grit	Pearson Correlation	.683**	1	.693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001
	N	240	240	240
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.622**	.693**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
	N	240	240	240

This analysis aims to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables of interest, grit, and performance. The Pearson correlation test was used to assess whether there is a significant linear relationship among the variables. The correlation results (Table 5) indicate a positive and significant relationship between interest and performance ( $r = 0.622$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), grit and performance ( $r = 0.693$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and between interest and grit ( $r = 0.683$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This means that the higher the levels of interest and grit, the better the students' English performance. The findings of this study support the Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the significance of intrinsic motivation driven by interest, as well as the grit theory, which highlights the role of perseverance in achieving long-term goals (Tynan et al., 2020). These results also reinforce previous research by Hafizah and Fithriani (2023) and Wu, Wang, and Luo (2022), demonstrating a positive relationship between both interest and grit with English language performance. Multiple Linear Regression Test in Tables 6, 7, and 8. This test was conducted to determine the extent to which interest and grit simultaneously influence performance.

**Table 6. Summary of the Multiple Linear Regression Model between Interest and Grit on Performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.722 <sup>a</sup>	.521	.517	4.519	1.975
a. Predictors: (Constant), Grit, Interest					
b. Dependent Variable: Performance					

Considering the multiple linear regression analysis's findings, the  $R^2$  value obtained is 0.722, indicating a strong relationship between the independent variables (Interest and Grit) and the dependent variable (Performance). The  $R^2$  Square value of 0.521 shows that 52.1% of the variance in Performance can be explained by the variables of Interest and Grit, while the remaining 47.9% is explained by other variables outside the model. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.975 falls within the range of 1.5 to 2.5, indicating that there is no autocorrelation in this regression model.

**Table 7. Coefficients of Multiple Linear Regression**

Model	Unstandardized	Standardized	t	Sig.	Collinearity	
	Coefficients	Coefficients			Tolerance	VIF
	B	Beta				
1 (Constant)	9.536		4.167	<.001		
Interest	.289	.278	4.527	<.001	.534	1.873
Grit	.489	.503	8.173	<.001	.534	1.873

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression in Table 5, it is found that the Interest variable has a significant positive effect on Performance with a coefficient value of 0.289 and significance < 0.001. Similarly, the Grit variable shows a stronger positive effect on Performance with a coefficient of 0.489 and significance < 0.001. The standardized Beta values indicate that Grit ( $\beta = 0.503$ ) has a larger effect compared to Interest ( $\beta = 0.278$ ). Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each variable is 1.873, which is less than 10, and the tolerance value is 0.534, which is greater than 0.1. This indicates that there is no multicollinearity in the regression model.

The following regression equation was derived from the Multiple Linear Regression analysis's findings: Performance = 9.536 + 0.289 (Interest) + 0.489 (Perseverance). The constant value of 9.536 indicates that if both Interest and Perseverance are zero, the predicted value of Performance is 9.536. The coefficient for Interest is 0.289, which means that for every one-unit increase in Interest, Performance increases by 0.289 units, assuming other variables remain constant. Meanwhile, the coefficient for Perseverance is 0.489, indicating that a one-unit increase in Perseverance results in a 0.489-unit increase in Performance.

Regression analysis showed that interest ( $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and grit ( $\beta = 0.489$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) positively predict English performance, with grit having a stronger standardized coefficient ( $\beta = 0.503$ ). The model explains 52.1% of the variance in English performance ( $R = 0.521$ ). These results indicate that students with higher interest and grit tend to perform better in English. Findings are consistent with prior research that underscores the importance of affective and non-cognitive factors in language learning. The stronger impact of grit highlights the necessity for educators to cultivate perseverance in young learners.

**Table 8. ANOVA Test of Multiple Regression**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
1 Regression	5269.192	2	129.032	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	4839.103	237		
Total	10108.296	239		

a. Dependent Variable: Performance  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Grit, interest

The results of the ANOVA test in the multiple linear regression analysis show that the regression model, consisting of the predictor variables Grit and Interest, significantly affects the dependent variable Performance simultaneously ( $F = 129.032$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the regression model can be considered suitable for explaining the variation in performance. These findings support the interest development model proposed by Hidi and Renninger (2019), which highlights the important role of interest in enhancing learning motivation. Additionally, the grit theory explained by Credé, Tynan, and Harms (2020) is reinforced by these results as a significant predictor of academic success. Recent studies by Wu, Wang, and Luo (2022) and Gyamfi and Lai (2021) indicate that grit has a stronger influence than interest

on students' English language performance. The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the effects of interest (X2), grit (X1), and their interaction (X1, X2) on performance.

**Table 9. MANOVA Multivariate Analysis of Variance**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.997	9513.086 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.003	9513.086 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	339.75	9513.086 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	339.75	9513.086 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	.000
X2	Pillai's Trace	1.047	2.089	60.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.193	2.378 <sup>b</sup>	60.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	2.927	2.683	60.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	2.410	4.579 <sup>c</sup>	30.000	.000
X1	Pillai's Trace	.893	1.644	56.000	.013
	Wilks' Lambda	.305	1.624 <sup>b</sup>	56.000	.015
	Hotelling's Trace	1.632	1.603	56.000	.018
	Roy's Largest Root	.943	1.919 <sup>c</sup>	28.000	.019
X2 * X1	Pillai's Trace	1.377	1.049	240.000	.390
	Wilks' Lambda	.096	1.041 <sup>b</sup>	240.000	.409
	Hotelling's Trace	4.507	1.033	240.000	.429
	Roy's Largest Root	2.633	1.251 <sup>c</sup>	120.000	.174

Based on the results of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), it was found that the overall research model is statistically significant, as indicated by the very high F value (F = 9513.086) and significance levels below 0.001 across all multivariate test methods, including Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root. These findings suggest that the combination of interest and perseverance contributes to variations in elementary school students' English performance. Specifically, the variable of students' interest (X2) shows a significant effect on English performance, with significance values ranging from 0.001 to 0.007. Likewise, the variable of perseverance (X1) also has a significant influence, although with slightly higher significance levels ranging from 0.019 to 0.049. However, the interaction between interest and perseverance (X1.X2) does not show a statistically significant effect on students' English performance, as indicated by significance values exceeding the 0.05 threshold (ranging from 0.174 to 0.409).

Therefore, it can be concluded that both interest and perseverance individually have a significant impact on the English performance of elementary school students, but there is no significant interaction effect between the two variables. This finding supports previous studies (Jaya et al., 2022), which state that grit contributes significantly to academic performance, although it may not necessarily interact strongly with interest. This implies that fostering interest and grit separately remains effective for enhancing students' English performance.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that interest in learning and perseverance (grit) have a positive and significant relationship with English language performance in elementary school students, with perseverance having a greater influence

than learning interest. Regression analysis showed that these two psychological factors together were able to explain the variation in students' English achievement. These findings confirm the importance of the role of affective and non-cognitive aspects in language learning, so teachers are advised to pay attention to and develop students' perseverance and interest in order to improve English learning outcomes in a sustainable manner.

This study has limitations in participant representation, questionnaire scope, and the use of a purely quantitative approach, which may not fully capture students' learning experiences. It is hoped that this journal can serve as a reference for future research employing a more holistic approach, involving more diverse participants, and providing a stronger contribution to improving the quality of English language education at the elementary school level. This study was limited to 240 students from three schools in a single district, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. The quantitative approach also limited deeper insights into students' learning experiences. Additionally, the data were collected at a single point in time, which does not capture the dynamic nature of psychological development. Future research is recommended to use mixed methods, longitudinal designs, and more diverse samples.

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