

Determinants of Persistence: A Study of Motivation and Perseverance in EFL Learning Contexts

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Abstract

This study examines the levels and patterns of motivation and perseverance in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among students aged 14 to 16 at a non-English-speaking school in Southern Thailand. A total of 60 high school students participated in a questionnaire assessing instrumental, intrinsic and integrative motivation, as well as perseverance. The findings indicate that students demonstrate high levels of motivation, particularly in relation to career goals and self-development. Perseverance levels were also generally high, although slightly lower than the motivation scores, suggesting that students may experience difficulty sustaining long-term effort despite strong initial motivation. These findings highlight the need for instructional strategies that not only enhance motivation but also support sustained engagement over time. The study also observed that gender and grade level differences with female and older students exhibited higher levels of both motivation and perseverance. These results suggest the need for more targeted approaches in EFL instruction. Integrating career-oriented content, promoting self-learning, and using real-life materials can help facilitate students' motivation. Furthermore, providing structured support for long-term goal-setting and fostering growth mindset strategies may enhance perseverance. This research highlights the importance of EFL teaching adaptations to better address the motivational and perseverance related challenges inherent to adolescent learners.

Keywords: EFL learning, motivation, perseverance, adolescent learners, language pedagogy

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Introduction

Acquiring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a non-English-speaking environment poses specific challenges to adolescent learners, particularly those between 14 and 16 years of age. A non-English-speaking school refers to a public school under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in Thailand, where English is taught as a foreign language subject and is not used as a medium of daily communication within or outside the classroom. In such provincial school contexts, the students have limited exposure to English beyond the walls of the school, which creates challenges for sustaining both motivation and perseverance in language learning. According to Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), learners at this level of development are likely to fluctuate or be inconsistent in motivation and levels of perseverance, which can have significant impacts on their ability to learn a language, particularly English. Furthermore, motivation is also an integral part of EFL learning since it motivates the students to learn the language despite the limited exposure outside the classroom (Ushioda, 2020). Nevertheless, grit, defined as persistent effort and resilience in overcoming adversity, is also a key component of long-term success and achievement (Duckworth et al., 2019). This study examines the levels and patterns between motivation and perseverance of EFL learners in a non-English-speaking school and the impact of these on their language learning experience.

Several studies indicate that motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is often influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation, which is derived from personal curiosity and interest, has been linked to greater engagement and better retention (Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, Al-Hoorie (2018) argues that extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards such as academic grades or parental pressure, will not necessarily promote long-term commitment. For adolescents, social interaction and self-perception substantially influence motivation as both social acceptance and self-efficacy beliefs shape their willingness to engage in language use (Papi & Hiver, 2020). In a non-English speaking context, it is particularly challenging to maintain motivation because there are limited opportunities for use in daily life (Kormos & Csizér, 2014).

Perseverance, which is also associated with grit, is another factor to determine success in EFL learning. Duckworth (2016) defines grit as "passion and sustained persistence applied toward long-term achievement," making the argument that effort can triumph over innate ability. In language learning, students with high perseverance are more likely to break through difficulties such as in pronunciation, grammar, or word recall (Teimouri et al., 2022). However, teenagers often experience inconsistency in their behaviors and decisions due to influence of

peer pressure and academic demands (Sarfika et al., 2024). Observing how students can continue despite the odds can provide perspective on effective EFL teaching pedagogies.

The present study involves 14–16-year-old students in a non-English-speaking school, where English is an academic subject rather than a communication tool. By examining students' motivation and perseverance, this research aims to provide a clearer understanding of their learning profile and the challenges they face in sustaining engagement in EFL Learning.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the level of motivation among secondary school EFL Learners,
2. Examine the levels of perseverance in English language learning; and
3. Compare motivation and perseverance across selected variables (e.g., gender and grade level)

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions

1. What are the levels of motivations among secondary school EFL learners?
2. What are the levels of perseverance among these learners?
3. How do motivation and perseverance differ across gender and grade levels?

Literature Review

Motivation in EFL Learning

Motivation is an important factor in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning process. It is the primary force behind learners' involvement, perseverance, and attainment or success. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) argue that recent research in second language acquisition has shifted the conceptualization of motivation from static trait to a more fluid and dynamic construct, one that evolves over time and varies across different learning contexts. This new approach emphasizes the complicated interaction between learners' self-motivations and the external factors, such as social, cultural, and instructional influences upon them. One of the more established theoretical frameworks that has informed recent study into motivation in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting is the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). The model contends that learners are motivated by how they envision themselves as successful English language users (Ideal L2 Self), what others see them or perceived them to be like (Ought-to L2 Self), and their own learning experience. Some actual and factual studies have consistently demonstrated that learners with a strong Ideal L2 Self are more motivated in achieving higher levels of language proficiency (Al-Hoorie, 2018). The significance of self-

concept becomes particularly salient when learners perceive tangible future application of their English proficiency in academic, professional or interpersonal relationships.

The classroom atmosphere and the pedagogical style used have a great impact in encouraging the motivation among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Teachers who promote a supportive and tolerant atmosphere and have pedagogical methods that promote autonomy can boost learners' motivation considerably (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Empirical research indicates that learners will be intrinsically motivated to learn if they perceive language learning to be relevant to themselves and real to themselves and will thus be intellectually immersed and perform better in school (Noels et al., 2019). The intrinsic motivation that stems from real interest and enjoyment in learning has been seen to be highly useful in long-term language acquisition compared to extrinsic motivation based on extrinsically provided reward or pressures (Al-Hoorie, 2018). However, extrinsic motivators in the form of responsibilities to complete the course or find a job will still be effective if learners internalize the motivation and see them as personal in value (Papi, 2018). The use of authentic materials such as films, news media reports, and social media posts has been seen to be highly effective in rendering language learning relevant and engaging to EFL learners (Sockett, 2014).

Social factors have an undeniable impact on motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). According to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016), peer interaction and opportunities for collaborative learning can strongly enhance motivation through the feeling of belonging and shared goals. Moreover, the growing role of English as a global lingua franca has become an important motivational factor, as learners have recognized its practical value in the field of academic, professional, social context (Marlina & Xu, 2018). Moreover, technology has proved to be a crucial factor with virtual tools and online classrooms providing new opportunities for personalized and interactive and engaging language learning (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013). Parallel to the existence of such facilitative factors, EFL learners struggle with motivational challenges in the form of frustration from slow progress, difficulties related to language learning per se, or proscribed chances to use English in real situations, as revealed through Henry et al. (2015). To deal with such challenges, academics suggest inculcating measures in the form of setting clear and achievable near-term goals, providing regular reports on the progress made and opportunities to use the target language intentionally.

To build motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, we must adopt a complete approach that integrates psychological aspects of the student with social and

educational environmental factors. According to Ushioda (2020), the most successful motivational strategies are those supporting learners to build future confidence in English communication and creating learning experiences that are both engaging and relevant right now. Educators and researchers need to stay up to date with the evolving motivational theories and pedagogical approaches as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) continues to evolve through technological integration and shifting global paradigms of English Language use. Future research should explore the efficacy of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality in enhancing EFL motivation, while also examining motivational variations across diverse cultural and instructional contexts (Lamb, 2017). As educators build a stronger comprehension of motivation and application of evidence-based motivational strategies, they establish better learning outcomes and positive learning experiences for global EFL students.

Perseverance in Learning EFL

Perseverance, defined as a sustained effort and persistence in the face of challenges, constitutes a critical key factor in successful EFL acquisition. Recent research on second language acquisition (Sudina et al., 2021) identifies perseverance as pivotal for language learning success, particularly in situations in which learners encounter significant difficulties, such as limited language exposure or lack of instructional support. In addition, Teimouri et al. (2022) pointed out that perseverance is the behavioral manifestation of a long-term commitment to language learning goals, even when immediate progress seems slow or problematic, compared to motivation that can fluctuate. Perseverance in EFL learning encompasses several factors that are important and interconnected with one another such as grit, which refers to the passion and persistence in pursuing long-term goals, resilience, which is the ability to bounce back from setbacks or adversity, and self-regulation, which is the ability to effectively manage one's own learning process (Oxford, 2020). Moreover, Elahi Shirvan et al. (2020) elaborated that learners who show more perseverance in their development achieve better language proficiency over time irrespective of where they started or in what setting they learned.

In this study, the term perseverance is used as a primary construct, defined as sustained effort and consistency in the learning task over time. While closely related to grit, which encompasses both perseverance of effort and consistency of interest (Duckworth, 2016), this study focuses specifically on the effort-related dimension. The terms persistence and

perseverance are therefore used interchangeably in reference to behavioral effort, while grit is acknowledged as the broader theoretical construct.

The development of perseverance among EFL learners is influenced by both internal and external factors. At the individual level, research by Lou and Noels (2020) identifies the growth mindset, which is the belief that language competence can be cultivated through sustained effort is a significant predictor of perseverance. When faced with difficulties in their language learning process, students who view them as chances for personal development rather than ego threats are more likely to continue. Dewaele et al., (2018) also noted that emotional intelligence comes into play; people who can manage their emotions better when they fail or become frustrated are more likely to persevere. Perseverance is also enabled by external factors such as peer support, teacher support, and learning environments that are supportive (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). Yashima et al. (2018) aver that perseverance can flourish in learning environments that are created by teachers who offer meaningful challenges, constructive feedback, and ways of overcoming challenges. Social context for learning is also critical because students who grow up in supportive environments where persistence is modeled and valued are themselves more likely to be more persistent.

Perseverance is very important to persist when learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Those who are learning EFL face very distinct challenges. They receive much less exposure to the language compared to those countries where everyone speaks English. There are fewer opportunities for EFL learners to practice real English outside of their classes (Rose et al., 2018). Feng and Papi (2020) highlighted the importance of perseverance in learning a second language. Their study showed that learners who demonstrate greater perseverance of effort and possess a clear future L2 self are more likely to sustain their motivation and persist in learning overtime. Consequently, English as a Foreign Language learners can adopt various motivational strategies to maintain their engagement and achieve long-term learning goals. These include goal-setting, the monitoring of learning progress, and actively looking for educational opportunities wherever possible. They stay dedicated to the learning process while also improving their ability by performing all of these things. When it comes to keeping individuals motivated to learn, technology is essential. In addition to networks that enhance learning, it offers digital platforms with authentic resources and language practice possibilities (Lai et al., 2018). However, perseverance in EFL learning has its obstacles and challenges, as reflected in the study of MacIntyre et al. (2019). The majority of students go through stages of dissatisfaction, frustration and stagnation, particularly when their proficiency is at mid-level

and their progress or improvement is very slow. It is very important for both the students and teachers to understand these difficulties and to devise plans to overcome them.

Educational programs can help EFL learners become more determined. Research shows that learning strategies such as metacognition, or reflection on one's own learning processes, help learners to better manage how they learn. Such management encourages them to continue practicing and not to quit (Zhang & Zhang, 2020). Additionally, using positive psychology methods, such as exercises where learners practice gratitude and concentrate on their strengths, can boost their resilience and perseverance (MacIntyre et al., 2019). The level of students' dedication to their studies is significantly influenced by the way learning assignments are designed. Tasks that offer the ideal balance of challenge, personal interest, and degree of independence are more likely to encourage students to exert more effort, according to Oga-Baldwin and Fryer (2020). Furthermore, a study by Yan et al., (2021) concurs that assessment practices, which emphasize feedback and progress rather than final grades, are associated with students' growth mindset and academic performance. It is critical to understand that perseverance does not mean to rigidly keep to a single learning strategy but to be prepared to adjust it according to feedback and self-evaluation (Dörnyei, 2020). According to Elahi Shirvan et al. (2020), future research could explore how perseverance varies in different cultures, the influence of digital technology in maintaining effort, and the long-term journey of learners of English as a Foreign Language who are persistent.

While motivation and perseverance are often discussed as separate constructs, they are conceptually related in language learning. Motivation initiates and energizes learners' engagement, serving as the main driving force in the long and demanding process of second language acquisition; perseverance, on the other hand, plays an important role in maintaining the engagement over time. According to Feng and Papi (2020), perseverance of effort is associated with motivational intensity and persistence in language learning, suggesting that learners who sustain effort are more likely to remain engaged. In addition, research on L2 grit highlights that learners who demonstrate effort and commitment are more likely to remain engaged despite challenges (Shahrokhi & Dehaghani, 2025). Therefore, without perseverance, even highly motivated learners may struggle to maintain the consistent effort required of long-term EFL learning.

Methodology

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a descriptive survey strategy to investigate the levels and patterns of motivation and perseverance of students in English language learning. This survey method was employed because it facilitates efficient data collection from a large group of respondents and enables statistical analysis of the relationship between variables (Dörnyei, 2017). The questionnaire-based approach is in agreement with the recent studies on language learning motivation by Alamer (2021). It provides accurate understanding of learners' attitudes and behaviors in language acquisition.

Research Environment

The research was conducted in a secondary school in Koh Lanta, Thailand, where English is taught as a foreign language under the national curriculum. The classroom reflects a typical Thai-Muslim context, with mixed ability students and predominantly teacher-centered instruction supported by some communicative activities. This setting is relevant for studying language learning motivation because learners often depend on external support, such as teacher guidance and structured tasks due to limited exposure to English beyond their classroom. As noted by Kormos and Csizer (2014), such contexts present challenges including low speaking confidence, language anxiety, limited to no practice, and varying proficiency levels, which influence learner motivation.

Respondents

The respondents comprised 60 students in a secondary school in Koh Lanta, Thailand. There were 22 males and 38 females from three Matthayom levels: Matthayom 4 with 24 students, Matthayom 5 with 20 students, and Matthayom 6 with 16 students. The sample also reflected different English proficiency levels of students based on their academic performance. Seventeen (17) students had a 1.5 GPA, one (1) student had a 3.0 GPA, twenty-nine (29) students had a 3.5 GPA, and thirteen (13) students had achieved a 4.0 GPA. In this context, GPA provides a practical and accessible measure to reflect general academic ability, which may be associated with language learning performance.

Sampling Procedure

Convenience sampling was used due to accessibility and administrative constraints within the school setting, allowing for efficient data collection and sufficient participation (Dörnyei, 2017). Although this sampling method has limitations in terms of generalizability, the inclusion of students across different grade levels, genders, and academic performance enhances its relevance to similar Thai secondary school contexts.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used to assess the students' motivation was a structured questionnaire, adapted from Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model and Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System. Relevant items were selected and simplified to suit secondary school students, with minor modification to reflect the English learning context. Perseverance was measured using selected items adapted from the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S), developed by Duckworth and Quinn (2009), focusing specifically on the dimension of sustained effort in learning tasks. Items were reworded for clarity and contextual relevance.

1. English Learning Motivation Questionnaire
 - A. Format: 18 items on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree).
 - B. Domains Measured:
 - Instrumental motivation (e.g., career, high salary). (6 questions)
 - Integrative motivation (e.g., cultural interest, social identity). (7 Questions)
 - Intrinsic motivation (e.g., enjoyment of challenge, self-development). (5 Questions)
 - C. Reliability: The questionnaire was found to be internally consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$).
2. English Learning Perseverance Questionnaire
 - A. Format: 8 items on the same 4-point Likert scale.
 - B. Domains Measured:
 - Task persistence (e.g., persevering over difficulties, completing tasks). (4 questions)
 - Concentration and conscientiousness (e.g., maintaining long-term effort). (4 questions)

- Reliability: The scale showed satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$).

The interpretation of mean scores followed a four-level classification based on the 4-point Likert scale:

- Very low : 1.00 – 1.75
- Low level : 1.76 – 2.50
- High Level : 2.51 – 3.25
- Very High : 3.26 – 4.00

Data Analysis

Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data in this study. These descriptive analysis were employed to examine the levels and patterns of motivation and perseverance; however, no inferential analysis (e.g., correlation or regression) were used.

Table 1

English Learning Motivation

English Learning Motivation Questionnaire	Mean	SD
Instrumental Motivation		
1. I want to have a good job in the future	3.70	0.67
2. I want to get a job with high salary	3.75	0.43
3. I feel that English is a subject I'm expected to learn	3.41	0.50
4. I would feel ashamed if I couldn't speak English with foreign friends.	3.43	0.50
5. I would feel guilty if I didn't know anything about English.	3.50	0.50
6. I want to show that I'm a good citizen because I can speak English.	3.38	0.50
Integrative Motivation		
7. I want to be a person who speaks more than one language.	3.79	0.41
8. I want to be a person who can speak English.	3.77	0.42
9. I enjoy learning about the lifestyle and culture of English speakers.	3.44	0.50
10. I want to be happy when I find I've learned more about the lifestyle and culture of English speakers.	3.44	0.50
11. I want to feel good when I hear people speaking English.	3.39	0.50
12. I want to feel good when I speak English.	3.48	0.49
13. I want to be happy when I hear native speakers speaking English.	3.48	0.50
Intrinsic Motivation		

English Learning Motivation Questionnaire	Mean	SD
14. I think learning English is good for self-development.	3.66	0.48
15. I want to enjoy the experience when facing challenges in learning English.	3.49	0.50
16. I want to be satisfied when I can do difficult exercises in English class.	3.49	0.50
17. I want to be happy that my English ability is improving.	3.57	0.50
18. I want to experience satisfaction when learning new things.	3.48	0.50
	3.54	0.49

Table 2

English Learning Perseverance

English Learning Perseverance Questionnaire	Mean	SD
Task Persistence		
1. Setbacks don't discourage me. I don't give up easily.	3.28	0.73
2. I am a hard worker.	2.85	0.91
3. I finish whatever I begin.	2.80	0.88
4. I am diligent.	3.15	0.85
Concentration & Conscientiousness		
5. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	3.21	0.64
6. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	2.97	0.75
7. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	2.92	0.86
8. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	2.92	0.74
	3.01	0.80

Table 3

Demographic Insights

	Category	Motivation (M/SD)	Perseverance (M/SD)
Gender	Female	3.15 (±0.72)	3.05 (±0.76)
	Male	2.98 (±0.81)	2.88 (±0.82)

	Category	Motivation (M/SD)	Perseverance (M/SD)
Grade Level	M.4 (n=16)	3.10 (± 0.68)	2.95 (± 0.74)
	M.5 (n=20)	3.20 (± 0.75)	3.10 (± 0.79)
	M.6 (n=24)	3.25 (± 0.70)	3.15 (± 0.72)
English Grade	High (≥ 3.5)	3.30 (± 0.65)	3.20 (± 0.70)
	Low (< 3.5)	2.85 (± 0.80)	2.75 (± 0.85)

Results

Table 1 shows a range of important trends across the 60 participants, who comprise 22 males and 38 females at different high school levels (M.4=24, M.5=20, M.6=16). The results show strong instrumental motivation, with top scores for profession items: "I want to get a job with a high salary" (M = 3.75) and "I want to have a good job in the future" (M = 3.70). Intrinsic motivation factors also received high scores, particularly those related to personal satisfaction and challenge: "I want to enjoy the experience when confronted with challenges in learning English" (M = 3.49) and "I want to be happy that my English ability is improving" (M = 3.57). There were relatively high scores for integrative motivation items, such as "I enjoy studying the culture and lifestyle of English speakers" (M = 3.44). Notably, the highest mean score was recorded for the item "I want to be a person who speaks more than one language" (M = 3.79). However, the data yield an interesting tension between different forms of motivation. Although instrumental motivations scored the highest, the standard deviations (0.41-0.79) suggest large individual variation. There were relatively lower scores on items about social expectations shown in the questionnaire, such as "I think that English is a subject I am supposed to learn" (M = 3.41).

Table 2, the perseverance data, reveals a less favorable profile, with mean scores of 2.85 to 3.28, usually lower than the motivation scores. The highest rated item was "Setbacks don't discourage me" (M = 3.28), indicating higher mean responses on this item, and the lowest scores were on items about maintaining long-term concentration: "I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take over a few months" (M = 2.92), and "I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest" (M = 2.92). For the task persistence items, which focus on effort, perseverance and completing task obtained high level ratings ("I am diligent" M = 3.15, "I am a hard worker" M = 2.8, and "I finish whatever I begin" M = 2.80) It is important to note that several perseverance items were negatively

worded (e.g., Difficulty maintaining focus, losing interest over time.) Higher mean scores on these items indicate lower perseverance.

For Table 3, the study's results reveal considerable differences in motivation to learn English and perseverance across gender and grade levels. The mean scores on motivation were greater for female students ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.72$) compared to male students ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.81$). Standard deviation, however, indicates variation within both groups with regard to perseverance. Female students also performed better ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.76$) compared to male students ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.82$). In comparing grade-level differences, the M.6 students were the most motivated ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.70$) and the most persistent ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.72$), followed by M.5 and M.4 students. In addition, those students who attained higher scores on their English grades (≥ 3.5) demonstrated significantly higher levels of motivation ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.65$) and perseverance ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.70$) compared to their peers.

Discussion

For Table 1, the results show a strong instrumental motivation ("I want to get a job with high salary" $M = 3.75$), which is in accordance with more recent research by Dörnyei and Ushioda, (2021), which stated that instrumental motivations, such as obtaining better employment, improving career paths, and achieving socioeconomic advancement, are significant drivers of second language learning. Instrumental purpose orientation is a demonstration of the subjective value of English as linguistic capital in the workplace, according to Pillar and Cho (2013). For the results on intrinsic motivation factors, these outcomes are consistent with Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory revised, where they emphasize competence and autonomy as essential in sustaining motivation. The relatively high scores for integrative motivation ("I want to be a person who speaks more than one language" $M = 3.79$) indicates a strong aspirational and identity related dimension of motivation, which reflects learners' ideal L2 self and corroborates the opinion of Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) about the ongoing importance of cultural interest in language study, despite globalization. Nonetheless, the information reveals an interesting conflict between different forms of motivation. This suggests that Lamb's (2017) argument that motivation in language learning is becoming more complex and context-dependent in the 21st century is valid. The relatively lower scores ("I want to feel good when I hear people speaking English" $M = 3.39$) indicates that social expectations may be less motivating than their personal and career goals, aligning on the benefits of independent motivation (Noels et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The results of the English learning motivation have significant implications for language teachers. First, the high career motivation means that basing English teaching on vocational outcomes would raise motivation, as proposed by Kormos (2020) in her study of ESP motivation. However, it is important to note that ESP contexts require more than general career aspirations. ESP emphasizes domain-specific language skills; therefore, simply linking English learning to future employment may be insufficient unless instructional content reflects authentic professional communication tasks (Belcher, 2006). Second, the high intrinsic motivation scores mean that developing autonomy through self-assessment and project-based learning would be an effective strategy, aligning with Mercer and Dörnyei's (2020) emphasis on autonomy-supportive teaching. When learners experience enjoyment and personal relevance, they are more likely to engage. However, the relatively low perseverance ($M = 3.48$) indicates that such motivational strategies should be complemented with structured support to sustain long-term engagement. Finally, the cultural interest shown in integrative questions reveals that the use of authentic materials and intercultural interactions can enrich the learning process, as advocated by Byram (2021) in his recent work on the intercultural teaching of languages.

The perseverance data for Table 2 reveals a less favorable profile. These findings are in line with more current research into "grit" in language learning by Teimouri et al. (2022), which concluded that while most learners show early resilience, effort is hard to sustain over time. The results of perseverance are in line with broader trends identified in educational psychology. The tasks persistence item ratings agree with the research of Järvelä et al. (2016) on self-regulated learning among online environments, which concluded that current students are likely to struggle in sustaining attention due to distracting stimuli. Furthermore, the ratings indicate the issues noted by Rose et al., (2018) about persistent falling off among generation Z learners within learning spaces. For English-learning perseverance, these findings carry broad pedagogical implications. The perseverance difficulties suggest a need for systematic long-term goal scaffolding, such as that which Hiver et al. (2021) propose in their study on language learner perseverance. Breaking up more significant tasks into achievable steps with regular feedback could be advantageous, following evidence-based interventions presented by Cleary et al. (2021) for academic perseverance enhancement. The perseverance demonstrated in overcoming obstacles suggests that growth mindset interventions (Lou & Noels, 2020) could be especially effective for this group, as they encourage learners to see effort and challenges as part of the learning process. The gender and level differences also imply that tailored

approaches to developing determination could be called for, as Oxford (2020) has argued more recently in her work on individual differences in language learning. The levels and patterns of perseverance and motivation in this data conform to more recent theoretical models that define these constructs as distinct but related (Sudina & Plonsky, 2021). According to the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2020) and the Directed Motivational Currents model (Dörnyei et al., 2016), students who show high levels of instrumental motivation are not always linked to perseverance, necessitating targeted intervention in the development of both constructs. The mismatch between high motivation and intervention with lower perseverance highlights the need for pedagogical intervention that goes beyond engagement and address sustained effort. For example, structured goal-setting, progress tracking, and stage task completion should be integrated into instruction to help learners' consistency overtime. These results show that although some learners demonstrate resilience in short-term challenges, they struggle with sustained long-term commitment.

Table 3 show significant differences in perseverance and English-learning motivation between genders and grade levels. This is in line with more recent findings by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), who found that female students are more likely to have higher integrative motivation, driven by a desire for social interaction and cultural engagement. Oga-Baldwin and Fryer (2020), also confirmed, based on their research, that female students showed high quality of motivation which means that there is a greater likelihood of sustained learning and perseverance. According to Ellis (2018), since motivation is often associated with academic success, teachers must design lessons that connect English learning to both students' career and personal objectives. Task-based learning (TBL) and project-based learning (PBL) can be useful since they allow students to understand the real-world relevance of language skills. When it comes to gender, females performed well in perseverance compared to males. This outcome is consistent with a study by Duckworth et al. (2019), which reveals that females tend to show more effort consistency, particularly in formal academic performance. Female test-takers scored more on perseverance items, in line with recent research by Sudina and Plonsky (2021) on gender differences in language learning perseverance. More perseverance among the female students may be explained by the more powerful self-regulation strategy of females, claims Zimmerman (2015), who indicated that women learners utilize more metacognitive strategies in language acquisition. While female students have a higher motivation and perseverance, the variability suggests that personalized approaches are important. For example, male students are more receptive to more competitive or game-

based learning strategies since they respond well to achievement-driven incentives (Hulleman et al., 2017). Since perseverance is a long-term predictor of success, teachers must integrate goal-setting activities and incremental challenges into the curriculum. Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) suggest that breaking tasks into fragments allows for the preservation of effort. For example, instead of providing a full essay at one time, teachers can structure the process by covering brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revision phases. For the demographic insights, these results are consistent with the findings of Eccles and Wang (2016), who believe that older children develop clearer goals for the future, which is associated with higher motivation and perseverance. M.6 students are slightly more persistent than juniors, perhaps because of the impact of development on self-regulation, as Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) described in their detailed model of self-regulated learning. Lower perseverance scores for M.4 students perhaps reflect transitional challenges, as younger students are still adapting to higher academic demands (Wigfield et al., 2016). Since the M.4 students were less motivated and persistent, certain early interventions - e.g., mentorship programs or skill-upgrading workshops - may help them transition into upper-secondary English study more smoothly. Research by Yeager et al. (2016) suggests that building a growth mindset in young learners can push back early disengagement. The pattern among higher-performing students is in line with the self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017), since it asserts competence (feeling of mastery) in order to create intrinsic motivation. This student population is likely to be more motivated because they perceive their efforts as being beneficial, suggesting a possible positive learning cycle.

Although the findings generally support existing theories, they also reveal a gap: high motivation does not automatically translate into high perseverance. This may indicate that contextual constraints, such as limited exposure to English language and lack of long-term learning structures, may weaken the motivation-perseverance pattern. Therefore, this pattern should be viewed as conditional rather than linear.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study provides valuable insights into the role of motivation and perseverance in EFL learning among adolescents in a non-English-speaking school. However, there are limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was limited to students of a secondary School in Koh Lanta, Thailand, restricting the generalizability of the findings to broader EFL contexts. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data may have introduced social

desirability bias, in the sense that students may have overestimated or underestimated their motivation or perseverance experiences. Cross-sectional design constitutes a significant limitation as it captures only the students' experiences at that moment rather than tracking their changes over time. A longitudinal study would reveal more insights into how motivation and perseverance evolve. Additionally, the study's reliance on quantitative methods precluded deeper investigation of learners' subjective experiences, which could have been enriched through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or classroom observations. External variables such as family background and prior exposure to English, were not fully controlled, which compromised the validity of the findings. This study relied on descriptive statistics only and did not include inferential analysis. Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn regarding the statistical patterns of motivation and perseverance.

To address these limitations, subsequent studies should employ:

1. Expanded sampling strategies incorporating larger and more diverse cohorts across multiple institutional and regional contexts to improve generalizability.
2. Mixed-methods designs triangulating quantitative surveys with qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations to capture multifaceted learner experiences.
3. Longitudinal frameworks to examine developmental trajectories, particularly during critical educational transition periods when motivation and perseverance patterns may significantly fluctuate.

Methodologically, researchers should reduce reliance on self-reported data by incorporating objective behavioral indicators such as classroom participation or standardized language proficiency tests. Furthermore, experimental studies examining the efficacy of targeted interventions such as growth mindset training or structured goal-setting workshops could provide valuable insights into supporting language learning perseverance, particularly in addressing students' difficulty in sustaining long-term effort despite high motivation. Given that the study relied on descriptive statistics only and did not include inferential analyses, future research should incorporate inferential statistics to examine the patterns of motivation and perseverance more rigorously. Finally, cross-cultural comparative research would help distinguish between universal principles versus context-specific factors that shape EFL learning experiences, potentially informing more culturally responsive pedagogical approaches.

Educators can apply these principles through: (1) providing curated choice of reading materials or project topics, (2) using task-based language teaching with graduated difficulty

levels, and (3) implementing reflective practices where students analyze their mistakes without grade penalties or score deductions. Such approaches balance structure with autonomy while developing growth mindsets. Integrating real-world applications of English, for example, multimedia projects or language exchange programs such as talking to native English speakers, can enhance students' perceived relevance of learning the language. These approaches are particularly important in addressing the observed pattern where students demonstrate high motivation but lower perseverance, especially in maintaining long-term engagement. By addressing these limitations and implementing these recommendations, future research and teaching practices can better support adolescent EFL learners in non-English-speaking environments achieve more successful language learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that instrumental motivation, specifically career and economic goals, was the strongest driver of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning among the learners. Items such as "I want to have a good job in the future" and "I want to be working in a well-paying job" obtained the highest scores, aligning to global trends whereby being English-proficient is increasingly regarded as linguistic capital to trade for better-paying jobs in competitive labor markets. Intrinsic motivation was also very significant, with students expressing enjoyment in overcoming challenges and satisfaction at the progress being made. Integrative motivation, while existent, was weaker, indicating that although cultural interest is present, pragmatic objectives take priority among adolescent EFL learners.

Perseverance, on the other hand was a weaker point. Students resisted short-term challenges well, but they found it difficult to maintain long-term goal and task commitment. This is in accordance with previous research on grit in language learning, where initial interest usually decreases without sustained scaffolding. Grade-level and gender differences were also evident, with female students and older learners (M.6) being more motivated and persistent, perhaps through increased self-regulation and more defined long-term goals.

The study supports the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) because students' "Ideal L2 Self" (future English-user self) had a strong influence on motivation. On the other hand, the lower perseverance scores show that motivation does not always accord with persistence, affirming the need to tackle these constructs as connected yet distinct. Results also resonate with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) because intrinsic motivation and autonomy-supportive environments have been associated with higher engagement.

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AI Declaration Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Quillbot (grammar checking and paraphrasing functions) to improve language clarity. All outputs were carefully reviewed and revised by the author, who takes full responsibility for the final content.

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