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Bridging Ethnic Psychology and Second Language Acquisition: A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence and Grit in Chinese and Indonesian Learners

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ABSTRACT

With the deepening of cross-national exchange, the significance of ethnic psychology and its interdisciplinary applications has become increasingly evident. Ethnic psychology, which examines the psychological traits and behavioral patterns shaped by distinct cultural contexts, provides valuable insights into how learners from different backgrounds engage in second language acquisition. This study integrates the theoretical framework of ethnic psychology into second language acquisition research by investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and second language grit among university students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Drawing on data from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 831 English learners in China and Indonesia, the study examines cross-cultural variations and correlations. Results show that Chinese students report significantly higher emotional intelligence, while Indonesian students exhibit greater second language grit. These differences are shaped by factors such as rigidity and linguistic distance. Emotional intelligence is positively correlated with second language grit in both groups, though the strength of this relationship and its predictive mechanisms vary. Cultural rigidity and time orientation (long-term vs. short-term) emerge as key influencing variables. This research underscores the value of ethnic psychology in advancing global educational equity and cooperation, offering important implications for culturally responsive educational policy, pedagogical design, and inclusive development in global English language education.

Keywords: Ethnic Psychology ; Second Language Acquisition ; Well-Being Model ; Emotional Intelligence ; Grit

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1. Introduction

In the context of accelerating globalization, multilingual competence has become a vital skill for intercultural communication and individual development. Ethnic psychology, which explores the psychological traits and behavioral patterns shaped by distinct cultural contexts, offers valuable perspectives on how learners from different backgrounds engage with the second language acquisition (SLA) process[1]. Language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a psychological and cultural artifact that reflects shared beliefs, emotional norms, and identity[2].

While previous SLA research has highlighted the influence of affective variables—such as motivation, anxiety, and emotional regulation—on learning outcomes[3], relatively few studies have explored how broader emotional traits like emotional intelligence interact with second language grit, particularly across culturally distinct learner populations. Although emotional intelligence and grit have each been shown to play a role in language learning, the specific mechanisms through which emotional intelligence predicts sustained grit remain underexplored. Furthermore, most existing studies are conducted in single-country contexts and overlook how cultural orientations may shape the emotional and motivational dynamics of SLA. This leaves an important gap in the literature concerning cross-cultural variation in the emotional intelligence–grit relationship, which is critical for developing more inclusive and context-sensitive language education strategies.

To address this gap, this study adopts an ethnic psychology perspective to examine how emotional intelligence predicts second language grit among university learners in China and Indonesia, two culturally distinct and underrepresented contexts in SLA research. Through a mixed-methods design, it aims to uncover both shared and divergent predictive mechanisms across the two cultural groups. In doing so, the study provides novel empirical evidence on the role of emotional and cultural factors in language learning, and offers practical insights for culturally responsive pedagogy and emotion-informed language policy. By filling an important theoretical and empirical gap, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of learner psychology in SLA and supports the goal of global educational equity.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Emotional Intelligence and L2 Grit: The Connection Through the Well-Being Model

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's core capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions. According to Petrides, EI comprises four key dimensions: emotionality, self-control, sociability, and well-being[4]. Second language grit (L2 grit), on the other hand, describes learners' ability to sustain effort and long-term commitment toward language learning goals through self-regulation. It consists of two primary components: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest[5]. Existing research has demonstrated that both emotional intelligence and L2 grit significantly influence second language learning outcomes[6]. Oxford's EMPATHICS model of well-being provides a theoretical foundation for exploring the relationship between these two constructs[7]. This model posits that emotional intelligence promotes learners' emotional adaptability, which in turn enhances their motivation, while L2 grit drives sustained learning through goal-setting and persistence. Theoretically, emotional intelligence and L2 grit are also seen as mutually influential.

However, most existing studies focus on individual emotional states—such as anxiety or hope—and their relationship with L2 grit, while few have systematically examined how emotional intelligence specifically contributes to L2 grit[8, 9]. More importantly, limited research has investigated whether the expressions and mechanisms of this relationship vary across cultural contexts.

While traditional studies often regard L2 achievement as the primary outcome variable, this study instead adopts L2 grit as the dependent variable. This shift moves beyond a performance-oriented framework and allows for a deeper exploration of learners' sustained engagement and motivational development. On one hand, grit functions as a psychological foundation for language learning, closely related to learners' learning processes and behavioral patterns[6]. On the other hand, grit is indicative of learners' psychological well-being and aligns with the "positive turn" in applied linguistics, which emphasizes learner well-being and mental health.

This study therefore adopts an ethnic psychology per-

spective to compare the relationship between emotional intelligence and L2 grit among Chinese and Indonesian learners, with the aim of uncovering how cultural contexts shape their interaction. The findings are expected to provide culturally responsive empirical insights for global English language education and support a more inclusive and personalized approach to language learning.

2.2. Cultural Similarities and Differences Between China and Indonesia: The Introduction of Ethnic Psychology

When examining the psychological aspects of language learning, it is essential to recognize the underlying influence of cultural factors. China and Indonesia—while sharing similarities in their approach to English education—each exhibit unique cultural and psychological profiles, making them suitable and representative samples for this study. Both nations position English as the primary foreign language within their formal education systems and are classified as Expanding Circle countries in Kachru's "Three Concentric Circles" model[10]. However, their cultural value systems diverge significantly, leading to distinct psychological patterns in second language learning.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a robust framework for understanding these differences. It comprises six key dimensions: power distance, individualism, motivation towards achievement and success, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. Based on the principle of maximizing cultural contrast, this study focuses on two dimensions most relevant to language learning psychology: *motivation towards achievement and success* and *long-term orientation*. Scores on these cultural dimensions can be retrieved from the Hofstede Insights website (https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool). According to this framework, China scores high on both cultural rigidity and long-term orientation, reflecting a strong emphasis on academic achievement and delayed gratification. In contrast, Indonesia demonstrates a more flexible and short-term orientation, highlighting the importance of learning enjoyment and short-term outcomes. **Figure 1** illustrates the cultural scores of China and Indonesia on these dimensions.

Cross-group comparisons are a well-established method for analyzing the relationship between cultural universality and specificity[11]. In the field of SLA, three main lines of research have emerged. The first involves *cross-national comparative studies*, which treat nationality as a grouping variable and examine differences in the same psychological construct. For instance, Gökçen et al. compared the emotional intelligence of adults in Hong Kong and the UK[12], while Chen et al. investigated how grit influenced achievement goals among university students in China and the United States[13], both revealing cross-national differences in psychological mechanisms. The second category is *cross-cultural studies*, which use culture as an independent variable to examine its effects on psychological outcomes[14]. For example, Gunkel et al. analyzed how nine different cultural value orientations influenced emotional intelligence, demonstrating the moderating role of cultural dimensions[15]. The third category includes *intra-national ethnic studies*, which focus on ethnic group differences within a single country. Dewi's study in Indonesia, for instance, revealed emotional intelligence differences across local ethnic groups[16].

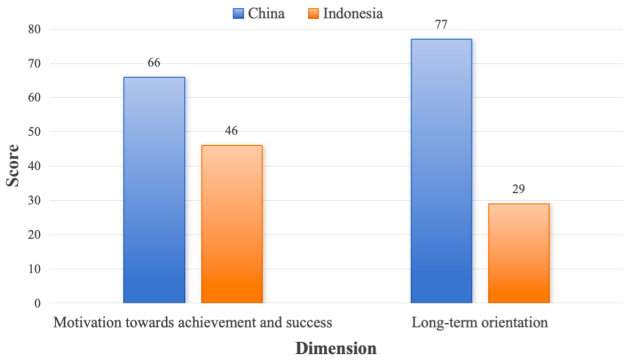

Figure 1. Scores for China and Indonesia on the Dimensions of Cultural Rigidity and Long-Term Orientation Based on Hofstede's Model from the "Hofstede Insights" Website.

This study integrates ethnic psychology into SLA by using a broader definition of "ethnic group" as "national-ethnic group"[1], treating national culture as a unit of analysis. By comparing psychological traits across culturally distinct populations, this approach aims to uncover the role of culture and its influence on L2 learning psychology. Compared to traditional perspectives, this study bridges *cross-national* and *cross-cultural* approaches while also expanding the scope of *intra-national ethnic* research in three key ways: (1) it adopts a broad notion of "ethnicity" that emphasizes both linguistic and cultural commonalities; (2) it focuses on psychological

traits as core variables for analyzing cultural effects; and (3) it transcends the limitations of within-country comparisons by offering a more global and inclusive analytical framework.

Using Chinese and Indonesian learners as representative cases, this study investigates emotional intelligence and L2 grit as culturally shaped psychological constructs and explores how cultural dimensions moderate their relationship. The findings aim to contribute to a deeper theoretical understanding of cultural influences on L2 learning psychology and offer insights for culturally responsive educational practices in global language education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

This study, from the perspective of ethnic psychology, seeks to address the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the overall levels of emotional intelligence and L2 grit among Chinese and Indonesian university students? Are there significant differences between the two groups?

RQ2: How does emotional intelligence predict L2 grit among Chinese and Indonesian students, respectively? Are there differences in the predictive mechanisms across the two groups?

3.2. Participants

For the quantitative phase, a total of 850 questionnaires were distributed, of which 831 were returned with valid responses, yielding a response rate of 97.76%. The participants consisted of full-time undergraduate students majoring in non-English disciplines in China and Indonesia, aged between 18 and 22. The gender and year-level distributions of the participants are presented in **Table 1**. Although the gender ratio was imbalanced, this reflects a common pattern in language learning research and is consistent with the typical gender distribution in language classrooms [17].

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information.

Quantitative Study						
	N	**Male**	**Female**	**Freshman**	**Sophomore**	**Junior**	**Senior**
Chinese	416	123 (29.6%)	293 (70.4%)	94 (22.6%)	111 (26.7%)	75 (18.0%)	136 (32.7%)
Indonesian	415	117 (28.2%)	298 (71.8%)	100 (24.1%)	104 (25.1%)	81 (19.5%)	130 (31.3%)

Qualitative Study										
ID	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**
Nationality	**Chinese**					**Indonesian**				
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Grade	Freshman	Junior	Sophomore	Sophomore	Senior	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Sophomore	Senior

The Chinese participants were recruited from key universities in Shandong, Henan, and Guangxi, representing eastern, central, and western regions of China, respectively. Indonesian participants were selected from prominent universities in East Java, Central Java, and North Sumatra. These sites were chosen to capture a range of geographic and institutional contexts. However, it is acknowledged that geographic diversity alone does not ensure cultural or socioeconomic representativeness. As such, the sample should not be regarded as fully representative of all university students in China or Indonesia. Additionally, this study does not explicitly address the intranational ethnic and cultural heterogeneity present within each country, which is recognized as a limitation.

Furthermore, Chinese participants were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, and Indonesian participants were native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia, reflecting distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the participants' English proficiency levels ranged between B1 and B2, indicating intermediate-level learners.

In the qualitative phase, a stratified random sampling method was used to select ten participants (five from each country) for in-depth interviews. This approach ensured that qualitative data could complement the quantitative findings and offer multidimensional insights. Detailed participant information is provided in **Table 1**.

3.3. Instruments

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection. The quantitative data were collected through standardized questionnaires, while qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews to triangulate and enrich the interpretation of the results.

Emotional Intelligence: Emotional intelligence was assessed using the *Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form* (TEIQue-SF) developed by Petrides (2009). This 30-item instrument includes four core dimensions (emotionality, self-control, sociability, and well-being) and two standalone facets (adaptability and self-motivation), which directly affect the global trait emotional intelligence score but are not part of any specific subscale. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was used. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scale were 0.89 for the Chinese sample and 0.84 for the Indonesian sample, indicating good internal consistency.

To ensure comparability across cultural groups, the study employed the internationally validated version of the TEIQue-SF, as it allows for consistent measurement across different populations. Given the cross-national nature of this research involving participants from China and Indonesia, it was essential to maintain identical item content across both samples. To enhance comprehensibility while preserving the integrity of the original instrument, both the English items and their respective translations (in Mandarin Chinese and Bahasa Indonesia) were presented to participants. The Chinese translation was conducted by a doctoral student who is a native speaker of Chinese with a degree in English, while the Indonesian translation was performed by a linguist with a doctoral degree in Indonesian language and literature. This dual-language presentation and expert-informed translation process aimed to maximize linguistic clarity and cultural appropriateness, although full-scale psychometric validation of the translated versions in the specific participant populations remains a recognized limitation.

L2 Grit: L2 grit was measured using the scale developed by Teimouri et al., which consists of two dimensions: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. The instrument contains 9 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The scale's construct validity has been supported in previous studies (χ^2/df = 1.30, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.03, SRMR = 0.02)[18]. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.80 for the Chinese sample and 0.73 for the Indonesian sample, indicating acceptable reliability.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted with the assistance of university instructors in both China and Indonesia. Prior to the survey, the purpose and ethical considerations of the study were explained to both teachers and students. All participants gave informed consent and voluntarily participated in the study. Personal information was kept strictly confidential.

After removing invalid responses and reverse-scoring negatively worded items, the reliability of the scales was examined using SPSS 27.0. For RQ1, descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare overall levels of emotional intelligence and L2 grit between the Chinese and Indonesian samples. For RQ2, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and L2 grit in both groups. Subsequently, linear regression analyses were used to examine the predictive mechanisms of emotional intelligence on L2 grit within each national context.

For the qualitative component, online interviews were conducted, and the responses were thematically analyzed. The interview findings were used to triangulate and support the quantitative results.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Group Differences in Emotional Intelligence and L2 Grit

To examine the overall levels and group differences in emotional intelligence and L2 grit among Chinese and Indonesian university students, descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were conducted. As shown in **Table 2**, the means for both emotional intelligence and L2 grit were slightly above the midpoint value of 3 across the two groups, indicating a moderately high level of both constructs.

Specifically, Chinese learners demonstrated significantly higher emotional intelligence (M = 3.32) than Indonesian learners (M = 3.21) with a small effect size (Cohen's d

= 0.24 > 0.2; $p < 0.001$)[19]. Conversely, Indonesian learners showed significantly higher levels of L2 grit (M = 3.36) compared to their Chinese counterparts (M = 3.19), also with a small effect size (Cohen's $d = |-0.27| > 0.2$; $p < 0.001$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Group Differences in Emotional Intelligence and L2 Grit.

Nationality	N	Emotional Intelligence				L2 Grit			
		M	SD	t	Cohen's d	M	SD	t	Cohen's d
Chinese	416	3.32	0.51			3.19	0.71		
Indonesian	415	3.21	0.39	−3.56***	1.23	3.36	0.51	3.99***	−0.27
N	831	3.26	0.46			3.27	0.62		

Note *** $p < 0.001$.

4.2. Predictive Relationships Between Emotional Intelligence and L2 Grit

The correlations between emotional intelligence and L2 grit for both Chinese and Indonesian samples are presented in **Table 3**. In the Chinese sample, emotional intelligence and L2 grit showed a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.57), whereas in the Indonesian sample, the correlation was weaker (r = 0.26), Based on Plonsky and Oswald's correlation benchmarks[20].

Further analysis revealed significant correlations between each dimension of emotional intelligence and L2 grit, although the strength of these correlations varied across groups. In the Chinese sample, L2 grit was moderately correlated with emotionality, self-control, sociability, and well-being ($r > 0.4$), while the correlation with the standalone facets (adaptability and self-motivation) did not reach a meaningful level ($r = 0.13 \leq 0.25$). In contrast, in the Indonesian sample, only emotionality reached a low-level correlation with L2 grit (r = 0.25), while the other dimensions showed negligible correlations ($r \leq 0.25$).

To further explore the predictive mechanisms of emotional intelligence on L2 grit, separate multiple linear regression analyses were conducted for the Chinese and Indonesian samples. The stepwise regression method was used, with the dimensions of emotional intelligence as independent variables and L2 grit as the dependent variable.

In the Chinese sample, three core dimensions (self-control, sociability, and well-being), along with the standalone facets (adaptability and self-motivation), were retained in the final model (**Table 4**). The model passed the overall significance test (F = 78.83, $p < 0.001$), and the Durbin–Watson statistic was close to 2 (DW = 1.79), indicating no autocorrelation. The residual plot confirmed normal distribution of errors, satisfying the assumptions for linear regression.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients between Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and L2 Grit.

Nationality	Variable	Emotionality	Self-Control	Sociability	Well-Being	Standalone Facets	Emotional Intelligence
Chinese	L2 grit	0.41^{**}	0.55^{**}	0.58^{**}	0.56^{**}	0.13^{**}	0.57^{**}
Indonesian		0.25^{**}	0.20^{**}	0.15^{**}	0.19^{**}	0.24^{**}	0.26^{**}

Note ** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 4. Stepwise Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions Predicting L2 Grit (China).

Model	Non Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Standard Error	β			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	1.05	0.17		5.89	0.004		
Self-control	0.29	0.065	0.24	4.45	0.000	0.47	2.13
Sociability	0.28	0.06	0.28	4.87	0.000	0.41	2.39
Well-being	0.23	0.06	0.24	3.89	0.000	0.36	2.72
Standalone Facets	−0.17	0.04	−0.14	−3.43	0.001	0.82	1.21

Collinearity diagnostics showed tolerance values of 0.47, 0.41, 0.36, and 0.82 and variance inflation factors (VIFs) of 2.13, 2.39, 2.72, and 1.21, respectively, suggesting no multicollinearity. All retained variables significantly predicted L2 grit ($p < 0.05$). Standardized beta coefficients indicated the relative importance of predictors: sociability > self-control = well-being > standalone facets.

In the Indonesian sample, only emotionality and the standalone facets were included in the final model (**Table 5**). The model was statistically significant ($F = 19.85$, $p < 0.001$), with no autocorrelation (DW = 1.99), and residuals were normally distributed. Tolerance values for both predictors were 0.73, and VIFs were 1.36, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Emotionality and the standalone facets were significant predictors of L2 grit, with predictive strength ranked as: emotionality > standalone facets.

4.3. Interview Results

To gain deeper insights into participants' perceptions of their emotional intelligence (Interview Theme 1) and L2 grit (Interview Theme 2), and to explore their understanding of the relationship between these two constructs (Interview Theme 3), semi-structured interviews were conducted. Representative responses are summarized in **Table 6** and will be further discussed in the following "Discussion" section.

Table 5. Stepwise Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions Predicting L2 Grit (Indonesia).

Model	Non Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Standard Error	β			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	2.37	0.17		13.72	0.000		
Emotionality	0.17	0.06	0.16	3.02	0.00	0.73	1.36
Standalone facets	0.12	0.04	0.15	2.76	0.01	0.73	1.36

Table 6. Representative Interview Excerpts from Chinese and Indonesian Participants.

Interview Theme 1: Are you aware of or able to regulate your positive and negative emotions during English learning, and do you use these emotions to your advantage? Please provide examples.	
Chinese Learners	**B:** Most of the time, yes. Although I'm not particularly interested in learning English and often find it boring, I can tolerate it and keep going when I think about how useful it will be for my future career. **D:** I occasionally get distracted and feel bored during exams, but I can quickly pull myself back and refocus on answering the questions. **E:** I really enjoy reading English aloud. It motivates me to study harder.
Indonesian Learners	**G:** Sometimes it's hard to say. I've tried reviewing grammar several times after class, but I always forget it quickly. Sometimes I experience anxiety that feels uncontrollable. **I:** Listening is a big hurdle for me. When I can't understand what's being said in class, I completely lose motivation. It just feels dull.
Interview Theme 2: When you encounter difficulties in learning English, are you able to maintain effort and enthusiasm for your long-term learning goals? Please provide examples.	
Chinese Learners	**A:** I try my best, but honestly, it doesn't always work out. English grammar is really difficult! **C:** I think I work hard, but it's hard to find patterns when memorizing vocabulary. It gives me a real headache.
Indonesian Learners	**H:** Indonesian and English share some similarities. When I come across familiar words, learning becomes much smoother, and I stay quite interested in English. **J:** Learning English has been easy for me from the start because many Indonesian words are borrowed from English. It feels like talking to an old friend—very natural and close.
Interview Theme 3: Among the four dimensions of emotional intelligence—emotionality (emotion perception, trait empathy, emotion expression, interpersonal relationships), self-control (emotion regulation, stress management, impulse control), sociability (assertiveness, emotion management, social awareness), and well-being (self-esteem, trait happiness, trait optimism)—which do you think most influences your persistence and enthusiasm in English learning? Why?	
Chinese Learners	**D:** Sociability. Our teacher often arranges group presentations in class, which are really helpful for practicing speaking. Gradually, I've become more confident speaking English, and that motivates me to keep learning.

Table 6. *Cont.*

Interview Theme 3: Among the four dimensions of emotional intelligence—emotionality (emotion perception, trait empathy, emotion expression, interpersonal relationships), self-control (emotion regulation, stress management, impulse control), sociability (assertiveness, emotion management, social awareness), and well-being (self-esteem, trait happiness, trait optimism)—which do you think most influences your persistence and enthusiasm in English learning? Why?	
Chinese Learners	**B:** Self-control. Although English is a bit difficult and sometimes makes me anxious, I now realize that learning it requires consistent effort. If I skip a day of vocabulary study, I feel uncomfortable, like I've left something undone. **E:** Speaking of self-control, English is crucial for passing the test and the postgraduate entrance exam. I have to resist pressure. To stay disciplined, I now study English for 30 minutes every day without exception. **C:** When I do well on English exams, I feel a strong sense of happiness, which makes me even more motivated to study.
Indonesian Learners	**F:** Definitely emotionality! Every time I learn a new word, I like to use it in daily conversations right away—it really helps with memorization. I also find that when I'm chatting face to face, being able to sense others' emotions makes the conversation go much more smoothly and naturally. It helps us reach mutual understanding more easily. **B:** Emotionality. I often go to tourist spots and chat with foreigners. Once, I noticed someone seemed a bit down, so I asked what was wrong and helped him out. That feeling of helping others was really rewarding. It showed me how practical English can be, and it made me more determined to keep learning it.

5. Discussion

5.1. Overall Patterns of Emotional Intelligence and L2 Grit Among Chinese and Indonesian University Students

The findings revealed that both Chinese and Indonesian university students exhibited moderately high levels of emotional intelligence and L2 grit, consistent with previous studies [21, 22]. However, the comparative analysis showed that Chinese learners scored significantly higher in emotional intelligence than their Indonesian counterparts. This suggests that Chinese students tend to demonstrate superior ability in perceiving and utilizing emotional information during English learning, thereby maintaining a higher level of emotional regulation. The interview data supported this result: although Chinese students occasionally mentioned negative emotions such as boredom, they often described redirecting these feelings into heightened concentration. In contrast, Indonesian students frequently reported experiencing anxiety and boredom, reflecting a relatively weaker capacity for emotional regulation, which may adversely affect their learning outcomes.

From the perspective of Hofstede's cultural value dimensions, the emotional intelligence advantage observed among Chinese students may be closely linked to the influence of a rigid cultural environment. In Chinese culture, academic achievement and examination results are accorded high value. This achievement-oriented context may foster strong motivation and drive students to persist in English learning through effective emotional regulation. This interpretation was further corroborated by interview responses in which Chinese participants frequently emphasized the practical value of English learning for career advancement and exam success. Conversely, Indonesian culture, which leans toward a more flexible orientation, tends to place greater emphasis on the quality of the learning experience itself. Interview data revealed that Indonesian students were more concerned with personal satisfaction during the learning process, which may partly explain their comparatively weaker emotional regulation strategies.

In contrast, Indonesian learners outperformed their Chinese peers in L2 grit. This result likely reflects a combination of cultural and linguistic factors. While Chinese students are typically influenced by a long-term orientation culture that promotes delayed gratification, interviews revealed that despite their sustained efforts, many Chinese students experienced frustration due to difficulties mastering complex language features such as grammar and spelling. This often became a barrier to continued engagement. For Indonesian students, however, the relative linguistic proximity between Bahasa Indonesia and English—such as similarities in vocabulary and alphabetic structure—reduced cognitive demands and facilitated more fluent acquisition. This finding sup-

ports the claim that language distance significantly impacts learners' experience and performance [23]. Compared to the greater linguistic distance between Chinese and English, the lower distance between Bahasa Indonesia and English may have fostered a more positive learning attitude and enhanced Indonesian learners' perseverance in SLA.

5.2. The Predictive Mechanisms of Emotional Intelligence on L2 Grit Among Chinese and Indonesian Learners

As shown in **Table 3**, emotional intelligence was significantly and positively correlated with L2 grit in both Chinese and Indonesian samples, indicating that learners with stronger emotional perception and regulation abilities tend to exhibit higher persistence and enthusiasm in English learning. This result supports previous research indicating a close relationship between grit and emotional factors [8]. Additionally, the finding aligns with the theoretical assumptions of the well-being model. However, the correlation in the Indonesian sample was relatively weaker, possibly due to traditional cultural tendencies toward emotional restraint in Indonesia, which may inhibit the positive role of emotions in sustaining language learning behavior [24].

Further regression analysis revealed that among Chinese learners, multiple emotional intelligence dimensions—namely sociability, self-control, well-being, and the independent facet—significantly predicted L2 grit, with sociability emerging as the strongest predictor. Interview data confirmed that this result is closely related to China's long-term orientation. In Chinese English classrooms, activities such as group collaboration and presentations emphasize teamwork and confident expression. These settings provide opportunities for learners to develop social competence, which plays a pivotal role in maintaining long-term motivation. Additionally, the grammar-oriented focus of China's English pedagogy—rooted in long-term educational planning—requires learners to exercise strong self-control to overcome the tedium and pressure associated with mastering complex linguistic forms. This aligns with China's "rigid" cultural orientation, which places high value on academic achievement. Moreover, as a society with strong long-term orientation, Chinese culture widely regards academic excellence as the cornerstone of future career success. Within this cultural framework, students often associate academic achievement with personal well-being and life prospects. As such, academic progress may foster positive emotional experiences, which in turn enhance motivation, creating a virtuous cycle of persistence and satisfaction.

In the Indonesian sample, however, only emotionality and the independent facet significantly predicted L2 grit, with emotionality being the most influential. This outcome may be rooted in the short-term orientation of Indonesian English instruction, which places greater emphasis on practical application [25]. Spoken English, as the most immediate output form, can meet short-term socioeconomic demands such as those arising in trade and tourism. Consequently, Indonesian learners are more inclined to enhance their English proficiency through oral practice. In real-life communication, the ability to perceive and express emotions is vital for maintaining effective interaction. These emotional traits play a significant role in sustaining Indonesian learners' engagement with English. Interview data further supported this explanation. Participants frequently mentioned engaging in conversations with native English speakers to improve their oral proficiency, during which they actively monitored emotional cues to ensure the quality of the interaction, build rapport, and resolve misunderstandings. Such experiences strengthened their appreciation of the practical value of English, thereby reinforcing their motivation to continue learning.

A comparison of the correlation results and regression models across the two cultural groups suggests that while the dimensions of emotional intelligence were significantly associated with L2 grit in both samples—thus supporting the predictions of the well-being model—the specific predictors varied by cultural context. In the Chinese sample, sociability, self-control, well-being, and the independent facet significantly predicted L2 grit. In contrast, in the Indonesian sample, only emotionality and the independent facet emerged as significant predictors. These findings resonate with the view of Pekrun et al., who argued that while the structural principles and causal mechanisms of emotions are generally universal, the expression intensity and impact of emotional processes differ across cultural settings [26].

These findings yield several important implications for language educators and policymakers. First, English instruction should be culturally responsive, with pedagogical design tailored to the dominant emotional traits of learners shaped

by local values. For example, Chinese learners may benefit from structured group tasks and long-term goal setting that enhance self-control and sociability, whereas Indonesian learners may respond more positively to emotionally expressive and interactive activities that support emotional engagement. Such differentiated approaches align with calls for emotion-informed language pedagogy in diverse contexts [27]. Second, at the policy level, there is a pressing need to integrate emotional intelligence and motivation-related constructs, such as grit, into national language education frameworks through culturally sensitive curriculum reform and teacher training programs. Evidence suggests that embedding socio-emotional learning components into language instruction can enhance learner persistence and engagement across cultural settings [28]. These insights underscore the value of ethnopsychological perspectives in fostering equity and effectiveness in global English language education.

6. Conclusions

This study investigated cross-cultural psychological differences in L2 English learning from an ethnopsychological perspective. Based on data collected from 831 university students from China and Indonesia, the findings revealed that both groups exhibited above-average levels of emotional intelligence and L2 grit. Chinese learners demonstrated significantly higher levels of emotional intelligence, whereas Indonesian learners showed significantly higher levels of L2 grit. Further analysis indicated that emotional intelligence and its dimensions were positively correlated with L2 grit in both samples, with moderate correlations observed in the Chinese group and weak correlations in the Indonesian group. Importantly, the predictive mechanisms of different EI dimensions on L2 grit varied across cultural contexts. These findings underscore the influence of cultural background on psychological functioning, suggesting that variations in cultural values can shape key psychological factors, such as motivation and emotional regulation, which in turn manifest in observable differences in language learning behavior. The study thus highlights the critical role of cross-cultural psychological comparison in advancing the shared goal of building a global community.

This study offers dual contributions. Theoretically, it adopts an ethnopsychological lens to explore the interplay between psychological variables in L2 learning, providing empirical evidence and an interdisciplinary perspective to enrich SLA research. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for culturally responsive language pedagogy and cross-cultural education, fostering mutual understanding and respect among different cultural groups. Nevertheless, the study has certain limitations. The cultural scope was restricted to two national groups, and the research design lacked longitudinal follow-up. Future studies should consider expanding the cultural sample and employing longitudinal methods to more comprehensively examine the developmental trajectories and influencing factors of L2 learning psychology across diverse cultural backgrounds. Such efforts would provide stronger theoretical support for language education and contribute to the pursuit of greater equity and inclusivity in global English language education.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.L. and X.Z.; methodology, S.L.; software, S.L.; validation, S.L. and X.Z.; formal analysis, S.L. and X.Z.; investigation, S.L. and X.Z.; resources, S.L. and X.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, S.L.; writing—review and editing, S.L. and X.Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the following reasons: (1) the research involved minimal risk to participants, focusing on non-sensitive topics related to language learning experiences and psychological traits (emotional intelligence and L2 grit); (2) all data were collected anonymously, with informed consent obtained from all participants; and (3) the study adhered to ethical standards commonly accepted for educational and psychological research that does not involve vulnerable populations or clinical interventions.

Informed Consent Statement

Written informed consent has been obtained from the participants to publish this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The data are available from the corresponding author upon request at lishuhong98@163.com.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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