

Examining The Grit, Teaching Enjoyment, Self-Efficacy, and Spiritual Intelligence of Iraqi Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers as Predictors of their Reflective Practices

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Abstract

The present study scrutinized the role of novice and experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' affective factors in their teacher reflection. Moreover, it strived to determine the difference between the teacher reflection of these teacher groups. Accordingly, first, the researcher used convenience sampling to select 141 novice and 132 experienced EFL teachers at 31 high schools in Baghdad (Iraq) as the participants. Second, she administered the teacher reflection, grit, teaching enjoyment, self-efficacy, and spiritual intelligence questionnaires of the study to the participants using the Google Forms. Lastly, regression test was used to perform the data analysis. Based on the results, there were differences between the predictors of the reflection of novice and experienced teachers. Moreover, experienced teachers engaged in reflection more frequently than novice teachers. The results may have practical implications for Iraqi English teachers' education courses.

Keywords: (Iraqi EFL teachers, reflective practices, teacher factors).

فحص العزيمة، متعة التدريس، الكفاءة الذاتية، والذكاء الروحي لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين المبتدئين وذوي الخبرة كعوامل مؤثرة على ممارساتهم التأملية

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المخلص

بحثت الدراسة الحالية دور العوامل العاطفية لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين (EFL) المبتدئين وذوي الخبرة في تأملاتهم التعليمية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، سعت إلى تحديد الفرق بين تأملات هذين المجموعتين من المعلمين. ولذلك، أولاً، استخدمت الباحثة طريقة العينة الميسرة لاختيار ١٤١ معلم مبتدئ و ١٣٢ معلم ذو

خبرة من ٣١ مدرسة ثانوية في بغداد (العراق) كمشاركين. ثانيًا، قامت الباحثة بتوزيع استبيانات الدراسة المتعلقة بالتأمل التعليمي والعزيمة ومتعة التدريس والكفاءة الذاتية والذكاء الروحي على المشاركين باستخدام نماذج Google. أخيرًا، تم استخدام اختبار الانحدار لتحليل البيانات. بناءً على النتائج، هناك اختلافات بين العوامل المتنبئة بتأملات المعلمين المبتدئين وذوي الخبرة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، شارك المعلمون ذوي الخبرة في التأمل بشكل أكثر تكرارًا مقارنة بالمبتدئين. قد تكون لهذه النتائج تطبيقات عملية على دورات تدريب المعلمين العراقيين للغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين، الممارسات التأملية، عوامل المعلمين).

1. Introduction

In the field of language teaching various studies (e.g. Gkonou & Miller, 2021; Marzban & Ashraafi, 2016; Rashidi & Javidanmehr, 2012; Soodmand Afshar & Farahani, 2018) have focused on language teachers' characteristics. These teacher attributes are called factors and are considered to be the predictors of the effectiveness of teachers' performance efficacy (Zheng et al., 2022).

Among the teachers' main variable, Teacher Reflection (TR) constitutes a main factor in teachers' pedagogical ability (Fathi et al., 2021). TR refers to teachers' actions that are likely to improve their language teaching techniques (Akbari, 2007). Akbari et al. (2010) noted that TR constitutes the language teachers' effort to improve their teaching efficacy based on the requirements of their academic settings. Moreover, TR is regarded as a measure that informs teachers about their learners' affective issues and enables them to deal with their language learning fears (Gkonou & Miller, 2021).

The research on TR (Motalebzadeh et al. 2018; Sabah & Rashtchi, 2017) has been mainly concerned with its impact on teachers' instructional effectiveness. However, there is a lack of research on the main predictors of TR. Therefore, as Zheng et al. (2022) noted, there is a need to determine the role of teachers' grit, Teaching Enjoyment (TE), Self-Efficacy (SE), and Spiritual Intelligence (SI) in their TR.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1. TR

Akbari (2007) argued that TR has proved to be one of the main teacher factors in the field of language instruction owing to its significant impacts on various aspects of teachers' instructional efficacy. Due to the consequential role of TR in the process of language teaching, Akbari et al. (2010) developed a model of this construct and itemized its five underlying sub-components including the *cognitive*, *metacognitive*, *practical*, *affective*, and *critical* sub-components. As they explained, the cognitive sub-component of TR refers to EFL teachers' endeavors to expedite their thought processes in language instruction. Moreover, the metacognitive sub-component encompasses teachers' ability to evaluate their teaching beliefs and to modify them based on their understanding of the process of language learning. In addition, the practical sub-component of TR refers to teachers' efforts to adjust their teaching practices to their learners' needs. Additionally, the affective sub-component of this construct refers to teachers' understanding of their learners' affective factors and their endeavors to reduce their language leaning anxiety. Finally, the critical sub-component of TR refers to teachers' efforts to ameliorate their learners' critical thinking skills.

2.2. Teacher Factors

The definition of TR and the particularization of its sub-components has motivated researchers to examine the factors that are likely to predict it. Kharlay, et al. (2022) argued that grit, TE, SE, and SI are four interrelated factors that may influence EFL teachers' TR.

Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) defined grit as EFL teachers' persistence in dealing with language teaching difficulties that enables them to ameliorate their performance over the course of time. In light of this definition, Duckworth and Quinn (2009) itemized two sub-

component of grit including *consistency of interest* and *perseverance of effort*. As they explained, consistency of interest refers to EFL teachers' positive attitudes towards their job despite its difficulties. Moreover, perseverance of effort encompasses teachers' endeavors to perform their pedagogical tasks in an efficient way.

In addition, Liu et al. (2023) stated that TE refers to teachers' satisfaction with diverse aspects of language instruction in their relevant academic settings. In line with this definition, Proietti Ergün and Dewaele (2021) developed a model of TE that involves three main aspects including *personal enjoyment*, *social enjoyment*, and *learner appreciation*. According to them, teachers' personal enjoyment encompasses their positive attitudes towards their job. Moreover, social enjoyment determines teachers' satisfaction with their relationships with their learners and peers. Finally, learner appreciation specifies the extent to which teachers are aware of the fact that their efforts are appreciated by their learners in the context of the classroom.

Moreover, Xiyun et al. (2022) defined SE as the degree to which EFL teachers are confident about their language teaching capabilities in their academic settings. In accordance with this definition of SE, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) developed a model of EFL teachers' SE that encompassed three components including *classroom management*, *instructional strategies*, and *student engagement*. As they explained, classroom management refers to teachers' confidence in their ability to manage all of the aspects of their classes. Moreover, instructional strategies determine the extent to which EFL teachers are confident about the efficacy of their teaching practices. Finally, student engagement encompasses teachers' perspectives on their capability to engage the learners in the process of language learning.

Lastly, King and Decicco's (2009) defined SI as the individuals' understanding of the relationship between human life and the outside

world. Accordingly, they itemized five main sub-components of SI including *sanctification*, *transcendence*, *virtuosity*, *resources*, and *consciousness*. According to them, sanctification refers to the individuals' ability to sanctify their real-life experiences in diverse settings. Furthermore, transcendence refers to the individuals' capability to overcome the various limitations that are imposed on them by their settings. In addition, virtuosity determines the individuals' ability to deal with diverse sources of stress and anxiety by capitalizing on their inner skills and abilities. Additional, resources refers to the individuals' ability to take advantage of spiritual resources to ameliorate their course of life. Finally, consciousness determines the extent to which individual are aware of their capabilities in various settings and contexts.

2.3. The Present Study

The pertinent studies of EFL teachers' TR have focused on certain research lines without dealing with all of its aspects. First, some of the relevant studies (e.g. Rashidi & Javidanmehr, 2012) have made an effort to determine the role of EFL teachers' personal characteristics including their education degree in the development of their TR. Second, a number of studies (e.g. Motallebzadeh et al., 2018) have made an effort to determine the effect of TR development on EFL teachers' pedagogical self-efficacy. Lastly, a few of the pertinent studies (e.g. Sabah & Rashtchi, 2017) have examined the degree to which TR development influences EFL teachers' professional development.

The examination of the above-mentioned studies shows that the researchers have disregarded the specification of the affective predictors of EFL teachers' TR. Moreover, very few studies (Marzban & Ashraafi, 2016) have examined the role of teachers' experience in their TR development. The present study tried to deal with these

inadequacies of research on teachers' TR in Iraqi EFL context by examining the role of grit, TE, SE, and SI in the prediction of novice and experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' TR.

The results of the present study are likely to make a significant contribution to English instruction in Iraqi context by helping EFL teacher educators to provide the EFL teachers with teacher-factor-based instruction that is likely to ameliorate their instructional efficacy. Moreover, the results may help Iraqi syllabus designers to revise the current teacher manuals in light of the role of teacher factors in the process of language teaching. Considering these issues, the present study made an endeavor to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do novice Iraqi EFL teachers' grit, TE, SE, and SI significantly predict their TR?

RQ2: Do experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' grit, TE, SE, and SI significantly predict their TR?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between novice and experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' TR?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

In the present study, the researcher used convenience sampling to select 141 novice and 132 experienced EFL teachers at different high schools in Baghdad (Iraq) as the participants. These teachers were native speakers of Arabic, Kurdish, or Turkish and ranged in age from 26 to 51. Moreover, their experience was in the range of 3 to 21 years. The researcher obtained written informed consent from these teachers prior to the onset of the study.

3.2. Instruments

The researcher used a demographic information questionnaire along with five Likert-scale questionnaires to gather the required data. As a result, she used Cronbach's Alpha (CA) measure in order to determine the reliability of the Likert-scale questionnaires prior to the onset of data collection. The following section expounds on these instruments:

3.2.1. Demographic Information Questionnaire

A demographic information questionnaire was used to determine the participants' experience, age, native language, and academic degree in the present study.

3.2.2. TR Questionnaire

In the present study, Akbari et al.'s (2010) TR questionnaire was used to examine novice and experienced teachers' TR. This instrument involves 29 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert- scale. They are used to examine five underlying sub-components of TR including affective, cognitive, metacognitive, practical, and critical sub-components. The results of CA showed that the reliability (.89) of this instrument was acceptable.

3.2.3. Grit Questionnaire

Duckworth and Quinn's 8-item (2009) grit questionnaire helped the researcher to examine the teachers' grit. CA analysis showed that the reliability of this instrument (.81) was acceptable.

3.2.4. TE Questionnaire

Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021) TE questionnaire was used to gather data on teachers' TE. The reliability of this instrument was .86.

3.2.5. SE Questionnaire

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2001) SE questionnaire was used by the researcher. Its reliability was .87.

3.2.6. SI Questionnaire

King and Decicco's (2009) SI questionnaire was utilized in this study. This instrument focuses on five sub-components of SI including *sanctification, transcendence, virtuosity, resources, and consciousness*. It encompasses 24 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert-scale. The results of CA analysis indicated that the reliability of this questionnaire (.85) was satisfactory in Iraqi context.

3.3. Procedure

In this study, first, the researcher contacted the managers of 31 high schools in Baghdad (Iraq) and informed them about the aim of the study. The managers consented to the study and helped the researcher to contact their male and female EFL teachers. Second, the researcher contacted 285 male and female teachers at these schools and invited them to take part in the study. Twelve of these teachers did not consent to the study owing to their busy schedule. Nonetheless, the remaining 273 teachers agreed to participate in the study and completed the written consent forms. Third, the researcher used Bing et al.'s (2022) criterion for distinguishing novice EFL teachers from the experienced EFL teachers. Accordingly, she assigned teachers with one to five years of experience to the novice group. On the other hand, the teachers whose experience was more than five years were assigned to the experienced group. As a result, the study involved 141 novice and 132 experienced EFL teachers. Fourth, the researcher used Google Forms to administer demographic information, TR, grit, TE, SE, and SI questionnaires of the study to the participants. Finally, the researcher coded the data on the examined teacher factors and performed the data analysis in order to answer the raised questions.

3.4. Design

The researcher used predictive correlational design to carry out the present study. As Creswell and Creswell (2017) pointed out, this design helps the researchers to determine the extent to which a number of independent variables predict a certain dependent variable.

3.5. Data Analysis

The researcher used Multiple Regression Test (MRT) to analyze the obtained data.

4. Results

RQ1: Do novice Iraqi EFL teachers' grit, TE, SE, and SI significantly predict their TR?

The researcher examined novice EFL teachers' data to ensure their compatibility with the assumptions of MRT. The first assumption of this test was multicollinearity. Therefore, the researcher examined the VIF and Tolerance (T) values. Table 1 provides these results:

Table 1

T and VIF Values of Data on Novice Iraqi Teachers

Predictor	T	VIF
Grit	.571	2.44
TE	.246	2.51
SE	.651	1.27
SI	.345	2.37

As shown in Table 1, the multicollinearity assumption was not violated since T values were larger than 0.1 and the VIF values were less than 10. Consequently, Mahalanobis Distance (MD), and Cook's Distance (CD) values were checked to scrutinize the other assumptions of MRT that involved *independence of residuals, outlier, linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity*. Table 2 shows these results:

Table 2

MD and CD Values of Data on Novice Iraqi Teachers

Value	Minimum	Maximum
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MD	9.27	15.28
CD	.032	.177

According to Table 2, the maximum MD value was 15.28. This value is less than 18.47 that constitutes the critical MD value of the models with four independent variables (Pallant, 2020). Moreover, the maximum CD value was less than 1. Therefore, the assumptions were not violated and the researcher could examine the relevant model. Table 3 shows this model:

Table 3

Model of Novice Iraqi Teachers' TR

Model	R	R Square	ARS	SEE
1	.651	.589	.545	22.654

As shown in Table 3, this model explained 58.9 percent (R Square multiplied by 100) of the variance in novice teachers' TR. In addition, the result of the relevant ANOVA test was significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the researcher examined the model coefficients. Table 4 shows these results:

Table 4

Beta Values of Novice Iraqi Teachers' TR

Predictor	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Sig.
Grit	.598	.000
TE	.475	.002
SE	.065	.377
SI	.079	.395

The examination of the Beta values in Table 4 showed that novice teachers' grit (.598) and TE (.475) were respectively the first and the second strongest predictors of the variance in their TR.

RQ2: Do experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' grit, TE, SE, and SI significantly predict their TR?

Considering the aim of this question, the researcher examined the compatibility of data characteristics with the assumptions of MRT test. Table 5 shows the T and VIF values:

Table 5

T and VIF Values of Data on Experienced Iraqi Teachers

Predictor	T	VIF
Grit	.467	1.65
TE	.342	1.93
SE	.387	2.44
SI	.456	1.87

As shown in Table 5, the multicollinearity assumption was not violated due to the fact that the T values were larger than 0.1 and the VIF values were less than 10. Therefore, the researcher examined MD and CD values. Table 6 shows the relevant results:

Table 6

MD and CD Values of Data on Experienced Iraqi Teachers

Value	Minimum	Maximum
MD	9.51	14.732
CD	.025	.164

As shown in Table 6, the maximum MD value was 14.732. This value is less than 18.47 that constitutes the critical MD value of the models with four independent variables (Pallant, 2020). Moreover, the

maximum CD value was less than 1. Consequently, the assumptions were not violated and the researcher examined the relevant model. Table 7 shows the relevant model:

Table 7

Model of Experienced Iraqi Teachers' TR

Model	R	R Square	ARS	SEE
1	.834	.796	.752	27.126

As shown in Table 7, this model explained 79.6 percent (R Square multiplied by 100) of the variance in experienced teachers' TR. In addition, the result of the relevant ANOVA test was significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the researcher examined the model coefficients. Table 8 shows these results:

Table 8

Beta Values of Experienced Iraqi Teachers' TR

Predictor	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Sig.
Grit	.058	.342
TE	.042	.489
SE	.452	.004
SI	.577	.000

The examination of the Beta values in Table 8 showed that experienced teachers' SI (.577) and SE (.452) were respectively the first and the second strongest predictors of the variance in their TR.

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between novice and experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' TR?

The researcher examined the characteristics of the data on experienced and novice EFL teachers' TR to determine the appropriate statistical test that had to be used to perform the data analysis. The results showed that the data were compatible with parametric test

assumptions owing to the fact that they were independently collected interval data that were normally distributed based on the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Shapiro-Wilk normality tests ($p > .05$). Therefore, the researcher used *Welch's independent-samples t-test* (due to unequal sample sizes) to analyze the data. Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics on EFL teachers' TR:

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics on Novice and Experienced Iraqi Teachers' TR

Groups	N	M	SD	SEM
Novice	141	81.22	10.228	.877
Experienced	132	110.43	9.58	.592

Moreover, Table 10 provides the results of the t-test:

Table 10

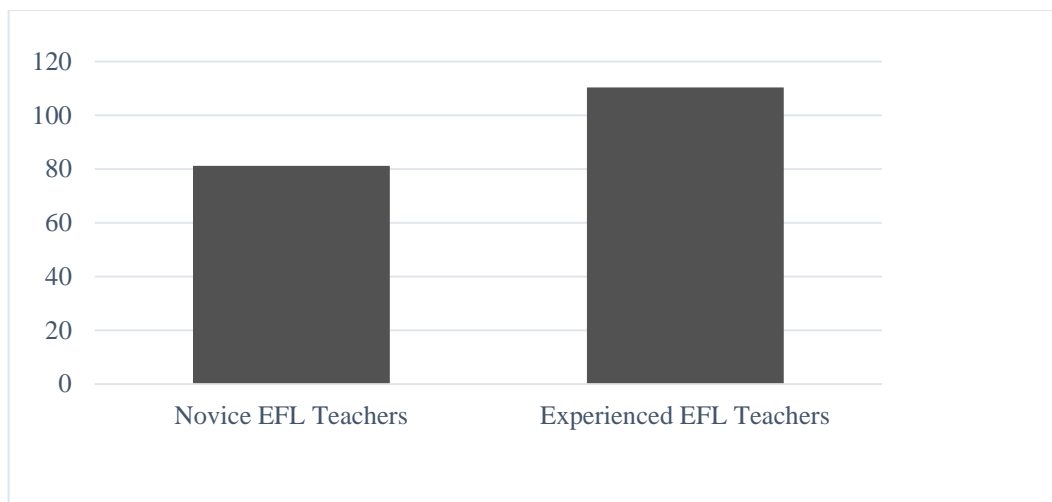
Welch's t-test of Novice and Experienced Iraqi Teachers' TR

Levene's	
Test for	
Equality of	
Variances	t-test for Equality of Means

								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	MD	SED	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	15.432	.765	- 23.667	271	.000	- 25.318	1.144	- 28.785	- 23.765
Equal variances not assumed			- 25.054	242.618	.000	- 23.318	1.137	- 28.692	- 23.845

Welch's t-test assumes unequal variances. The examination of the unequal variances in Table 10 showed that experienced teachers' TR was significantly higher than that of novice teachers ($p < .05$). Figure 1 shows the relevant results:

Figure 1
Novice and Experienced Iraqi EFL Teachers' TR



5. Discussion

Research question one examined the role of novice EFL teachers' grit, TE, SE, and SI in the prediction of their TR. The results indicated that these teachers' grit and TE significantly predicted their TR in school settings. These results are in line with the results of the studies that were conducted by Soodmand Afshar and Farahani (2018), Fathi et al. (2021), and Xie and Derakhshan. (2021). Soodmand Afshar and Farahani (2018) argued that the positive role of EFL teachers' grit in their TR stems from the fact that perseverance of effort sub-component of grit is closely related to the practical aspect of TR. That is, the EFL teachers who constantly make an effort to ameliorate their language teaching techniques take advantage of reflection to determine the weaknesses of their practices and to improve them based on the learners' needs. Moreover, Xie and Derakhshan. (2021) pointed out that the significant role of teachers' TE in their TR emanates from the fact that the learner appreciation sub-component of TE is associated with the affective aspect of TR. More specifically, the teachers who are concerned with their learners' anxiety in language learning make an effort to develop a friendly learning environment that results in their satisfaction with their language learning experience. As a result, it can

be argued that in this study novice EFL teachers' grit and TE significantly predicted their TR since they prompted them to ameliorate their teaching practices and encouraged them to reduce their learners' anxiety.

Research question two examined the extent to which experienced EFL teachers' grit, TE, SE, and SI significantly predicted their TR. Based on the results, these teachers' SI and SE were the significant factors in their TR. These results are in accordance with the results of the studies that were carried out by Shavit and Moshe (2019), Sotoudehnama et al. (2018), Estaji and Pourmostafa (2020), and Zheng et al. (2022). Estaji and Pourmostafa (2020) attributed their results to the fact that the self-awareness or consciousness aspect of experienced EFL teachers' spiritual intelligence is linked with the metacognitive sub-component of their TR. According to them, these teachers' attempts to develop a better understanding of their capabilities helps them to adapt their teaching contentions to the learners' needs. Moreover, Zheng et al. (2022) stated that experienced teachers' SE can be a significant predictor of their TR since the student engagement sub-component of SE is associated with the critical aspect of TR. That is, the teachers who make an effort to engage the learners in the process of language learning are likely to help them to develop effective critical thinking skills. Therefore, it can be averred that in this study experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' SI and SE were significant predictors of their TR since they helped them to develop a better understanding of their instructional capabilities and prompted them to ameliorate their learners' critical thinking ability in their classes.

Finally, research question three focused on the difference between novice and experienced Iraqi EFL teachers' TR. The obtained results showed that experienced teachers' TR was significantly higher

than that of novice teachers. These results support the results of the studies that were conducted by Rahnama et al. (2016), and Liu et al. (2023). Rahnama et al. (2016) argued that experienced teachers' higher TR stems from their capability to objectively examine the effectiveness of their teaching practices and to ameliorate them by adapting them to the requirements of their academic settings. Therefore, in this study, Iraqi experienced EFL teachers' higher TR levels may be attributed to their ability to modify their teaching techniques based on the requirements of the school settings.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study indicated that there were differences between the predictors of novice and experienced EFL teachers' TR. Moreover, based on the results, experienced teachers engaged in TR more frequently compared to novice teachers.

Based on the results, it can be argued that it is necessary to revise Iraqi EFL teachers' education courses. To this end, teacher educators need to focus on teacher factors. Moreover, it is necessary to add a module to the content of these courses based on TR. In addition, these teachers' manuals should provide them with adequate information on their factors and TR.

Finally, the results indicated that Iraqi EFL teachers' have to develop information on grit, TE, SI, and SE as the significant predictors of their TR by taking advantage of national and international events such as webinars and conferences. Moreover, they can seek advice from their more experienced peers in order to ameliorate there TR in school settings.

This study was limited in terms of sample selection since it was not able to select the participants from different cities in Iraq. Moreover, it could not determine the effects of participants' characteristics including their gender and language background on the

results. In addition, the researcher delimited the study by focusing on a certain number of predictor variables including grit, TE, SI, and SE without dealing with the other teacher factors such as psychological well-being among the others. The future studies need to deal with these issues. Moreover, they have to use mixed-methods designs to provide a better understanding of the factors in Iraqi EFL teachers' TR. Finally, these studies should be conducted in both second and foreign language contexts to determine the generalizability of the results of the present study.

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