Teacher identity and its impact on english language teaching

Identidad del docente y su impacto en la enseñanza del inglés

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this literature review article is to analyse the identity of teachers and its impact on English language teaching. Through a systematic review of 25 research studies published between 2009 and 2024, four fundamental dimensions are examined: the processes of identity construction, the contextual factors that shape it, the intercultural perspectives inherent to language teaching, and its impact on educational practice. Teaching identity emerges from the interaction between personal experiences, academic training and institutional contexts, manifesting itself in concrete pedagogical decisions that determine the quality of the training processes. It is evident that teachers with consolidated professional identities implement more coherent, adaptive and innovative practices. The identity of the teacher has a decisive impact on the teaching of English by configuring essential curricular components: methodological approaches, curricular adaptations, scaffolding strategies, selection of teaching resources, assessment practices, intercultural mediations and learning environments.

Descriptors: language instruction; identity; educational quality. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Este artículo de revisión documental tiene por objetivo analizar la identidad del docente y su impacto en la enseñanza del inglés. Mediante una revisión sistemática de 25 investigaciones publicadas entre 2009-2024, se examinan cuatro dimensiones fundamentales: los procesos de construcción identitaria, los factores contextuales que la configuran, las perspectivas interculturales inherentes a la enseñanza de lenguas, y su impacto en la práctica educativa. La identidad docente emerge de la interacción entre experiencias personales, formación académica y contextos institucionales, manifestándose en decisiones pedagógicas concretas que determinan la calidad de los procesos formativos. Se evidencia que docentes con identidades profesionales consolidadas implementan prácticas más coherentes, adaptativas e innovadoras. La identidad del docente impacta decisivamente en la enseñanza del inglés al configurar componentes curriculares esenciales: enfoques metodológicos, adaptaciones curriculares, estrategias de andamiaje, selección de recursos didácticos, prácticas evaluativas, mediaciones interculturales y ambientes de aprendizaje.

Descriptores: enseñanza de idiomas; identidad; calidad de la educación. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

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INTRODUCTION

The professional identity of the English teacher is a complex and multidimensional construct that has attracted increasing attention in contemporary educational research. This phenomenon, far from being a peripheral aspect, is positioned as a central element that significantly shapes pedagogical practices and training outcomes in foreign language teaching.

The relevance of this analysis lies in the fact that professional identity transcends the mere accumulation of technical competences, constituting an interpretative framework through which teachers give meaning to their work, make pedagogical decisions and establish relationships with their students and educational communities. As Pennington & Richards (2016) point out, teacher identity integrates personal, contextual and professional factors that operate simultaneously, configuring a dynamic construct that evolves throughout the professional career.

To address this complexity, the present study examines a corpus of 25 research papers published between 2009 and 2024, selected for their relevance and contribution to the field. The review is therefore structured around four fundamental analytical axes: (1) the construction and development of the professional identity of teachers, where the formative processes and trajectories of identity development are examined; (2) the contextual factors and influences on the identity of the English teacher, which analyses how various sociocultural, institutional and relational elements shape professional identity; (3) intercultural and linguistic perspectives, which delves into the cultural and linguistic dimensions inherent to the identity of the foreign language teacher; and (4) the impact of teacher identity on the teaching of English, which examines how professional self-conceptions materialise in specific pedagogical practices.

In this sense, this literature review article aims to analyse teacher identity and its impact on the teaching of English.

Construction and development of the professional identity of teachers

The formation of the professional identity of the English teacher is a complex and multidimensional process that has been approached from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. In this sense, Yazan (2023) proposes a comprehensive conceptual framework that recognises the dynamic and contextually situated nature of teacher identity, arguing that it is constructed at the intersection of personal experiences, academic training and institutional realities. This perspective is complemented by Pennington & Richards (2016), who develop a model that meticulously integrates personal (beliefs, values, linguistic history), contextual (sociocultural environment, educational policies) and professional (training, experience, communities of practice) factors, demonstrating that teacher identity emerges from the continuous interaction between these dimensions.

On the other hand, Miller (2009) delves into the fundamental aspects of teacher identity from a sociocultural perspective, emphasising how personal and professional narratives intertwine to give meaning to the teaching experience. This vision is expanded by Martel & Wang (2014), who situate the identity of the language teacher in a broader framework of language and education policies, pointing out the tensions that arise when teachers must negotiate between institutional mandates and their own pedagogical convictions.

Likewise, the systematic review by Sadeghi & Bahari (2022) offers a critical synthesis of existing research, identifying recurring patterns and significant gaps in the understanding of second language teacher identity. Their analysis reveals that, while there is growing recognition of the fluid and negotiated nature of teacher identity, methodological challenges remain in capturing its complexity. On the other hand, Chen et al. (2023) explore the interrelationship between the development of academic literacy and the construction of professional identity in novice teachers who are not native English speakers, revealing how academic reading and writing practices not only develop linguistic competences, but also fundamentally transform how these teachers perceive themselves as professionals. In addition, Cai et al. (2022) provide empirical evidence on how teaching practices influence professional identity, identifying self-efficacy as a

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crucial mediator in this process, which suggests that successful classroom experiences positively reinforce emerging professional identity.

In terms of the position of Trejo-Guzmán & Mora-Vázquez (2018), they offer a contextualised analysis of professional identity in novice English teachers in Mexico, highlighting the tensions between the training received and the realities of the classroom, as well as the adaptation strategies that these teachers develop. For their part, Herrera-Espinoza et al. (2023) delve deeper into the vocational dimension of teacher identity, arguing that vocation is not simply a prerequisite but a component that is constructed and reconstructed throughout one's professional career, influenced by significant experiences and critical reflection. In contrast, Albuquerque (2023) provides an overview of the state of knowledge on teacher identity in primary education, pointing to the evolution of conceptualisations and research methodologies, as well as the growing attention to specific contextual factors that shape professional identity at this educational level.

These aforementioned studies indicate that the construction of the professional identity of the English teacher does not follow a linear trajectory, but constitutes an iterative process of negotiation, adaptation and reconfiguration that responds both to formative experiences and to practical challenges. This dynamic perspective contrasts with more static visions of teacher professionalisation and highlights the importance of creating spaces for reflection and communities of practice that support the identity development of English teachers throughout their careers.

Contextual factors and influences on the identity of the English teacher

The identity of the English teacher is profoundly shaped by a constellation of contextual factors that operate at multiple levels, from the interpersonal to the sociopolitical. In this context, Basalama & Machmud (2018) carry out a detailed analysis of how role models exert a formative influence on the development of teacher identity, demonstrating that trainee teachers not only internalise pedagogical practices but also the ethical and professional stances of their mentors, this identity modelling process is particularly significant in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, where professional role models may be scarce or culturally distant.

On the other hand, Wang et al. (2021) adopt an innovative ecological approach to examine identity in English language teaching, conceptualising it as a dynamic system that emerges from the interaction between the teacher and multiple contextual layers. Their model of dynamic role identity systems allows us to visualise how teachers' identities are constantly reconfigured in response to changes in the educational environment, language policies and social expectations, offering a more holistic perspective than traditional approaches.

Likewise, Chacón (2010) addresses an often invisible but crucial dimension: how accent influences the construction of the professional identity of non-native English teachers. Its analysis from a critical perspective reveals the linguistic and ideological tensions experienced by these teachers, who often internalise hierarchies that privilege 'native' accents and must negotiate their professional legitimacy against normative expectations about 'correct' pronunciation. This work shows how apparently technical factors such as accent are permeated by power relations that profoundly affect professional self-conceptualisation.

In addition, Vanegas-Ortega & Fuentealba-Jara (2019) delve into the dialectical relationship between reflection, pedagogical practice and professional identity, arguing that critical reflection is not simply a tool for improving practice but a fundamental mechanism for identity construction. Their analysis demonstrates how spaces for collective reflection allow teachers to reinterpret their experiences, question implicit assumptions and reconstruct professional narratives that are more coherent with their values and aspirations. Meanwhile, Derakhshan et al. (2020) provide empirical evidence on the interrelationship between professional identity, autonomy and teaching success, revealing that the perception of professional autonomy acts as a catalyst that enhances the impact of identity on performance. This work has significant implications for educational policies, suggesting that institutional environments that excessively restrict teacher autonomy can undermine the development of strong professional identities and, consequently, pedagogical effectiveness.

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Incidentally, the studies by Huang et al. (2023) and Choi & Park (2022) offer contextualised analyses of how global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic caused accelerated reconfigurations of teacher identities. Likewise, Huang et al. meticulously document the emotional attitudes, identity transformations and coping strategies developed by English teachers during emergency remote teaching, while Choi & Park examine how teaching practices during the pandemic catalysed deep reflections on professional vocation and the purpose of teaching. Both studies reveal the adaptive nature of teacher identity in the face of significant contextual disruptions.

For their part, Lin et al. (2024) analyse another type of contextual change: the implementation of a new competency-based curriculum. Their research demonstrates how curricular reforms not only demand technical adaptations, but also provoke fundamental reconsiderations of professional identity, especially when they involve paradigmatic transitions in the conception of teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers do not passively implement these changes, but filter them through their existing professional identities, generating creative adaptations and selective resistance.

In another context, Chen et al. (2022) shed light on the frequently underestimated emotional dimension of teacher identity, documenting how emotional experiences during initial training decisively influence identity construction. Their analysis of the narratives of trainee teachers reveals complex emotional patterns ranging from anxiety and insecurity to satisfaction and professional pride, demonstrating that the affective dimension is not peripheral but constitutive of teacher identity. Consequently, Tinoco-Villanueva (2024) delves into the meaning that teachers attribute to their teaching practices, revealing how these subjective interpretations are interwoven with their professional identities. Her phenomenological analysis demonstrates that pedagogical practices are not simply technical applications of methodologies but embodied expressions of how teachers understand themselves professionally and conceive of their social role.

This category, as a whole, shows that the identity of the English teacher does not develop in a vacuum, but is deeply interwoven with specific sociocultural, institutional and political contexts. The contextual factors are not merely external influences but constitutive elements of professional identity, which indicates the importance of adopting situated and ecological approaches to understand and support the identity development of English teachers.

Impact of teacher identity on pedagogical practice

The professional identity of the English teacher is not simply an abstract construct but an operational force that decisively shapes pedagogical practices and, by extension, educational outcomes. In this context, Winchester (2013) carries out a pioneering analysis of how the identity of the teacher influences the construction of identity of students in English teaching contexts. his research reveals subtle but powerful mechanisms through which teachers, consciously or unconsciously, project their own conceptions of language learning, linguistic legitimacy and cultural aspirations, thus shaping the emerging identities of their students as English language learners, this work demonstrates that language teaching is never neutral but is imbued with identity positions that have formative consequences for students.

In line with this, Shahidzade & Mazdayasna (2022) explore this further by examining how specific pedagogical practices, in this case, the use of short stories translated into L1 and L2, mediate the construction of identity in Iranian English learners. Their analysis reveals that these practices not only facilitate language acquisition, but also open up spaces for complex identity negotiations, where students oscillate between language investment (oriented towards professional and personal development) and language consumption (oriented towards entertainment and enjoyment). This study demonstrates how teachers' pedagogical decisions, informed by their own professional identities, create specific conditions for students' identity development.

In addition, Kayi-Aydar (2019) establishes systematic connections between teacher identity and classroom practices, arguing that teachers' professional self-conceptions materialise in concrete pedagogical decisions about the selection of content, methodologies, assessment and

management of interaction. Their analysis shows that teachers with more coherent and reflective professional identities tend to develop more consistent and theoretically grounded pedagogical practices, while those with fragmented or conflicting identities may manifest inconsistencies between their stated beliefs and their actual practices.

In contrast, Derakhshan et al. (2020) provide empirical evidence on the effects of professional identity on teaching success, demonstrating significant correlations between a strong professional identity and various indicators of pedagogical effectiveness; this identifies specific mechanisms through which identity influences performance, including greater persistence in the face of challenges, greater willingness to innovate pedagogically and more productive relationships with students and colleagues. Therefore, these authors state that strengthening professional identity is not simply a goal of personal development but a strategy to improve the quality of education.

For his part, Tinoco-Villanueva (2024) delves into the hermeneutic dimension of teaching practice, exploring how English teachers interpret and attribute meaning to their teaching practices in relation to their professional identities, their phenomenological analysis reveals that pedagogical practices are imbued with personal and professional meanings that transcend their technical dimension, constituting expressions of how teachers understand their educational mission and their social contribution, this work demonstrates that coherence between professional identity and pedagogical practice is not automatic, but requires continuous processes of reflection and interpretation.

In addition, Choi & Park (2022) establish empirical connections between professional identity, teacher motivation and pedagogical effectiveness in the challenging context of teaching during the pandemic. These authors confirm that teachers with more resilient and adaptive professional identities were able to maintain higher levels of motivation and commitment despite the difficulties, which translated into more meaningful learning experiences for their students, thus the value of professional identity as a resource for dealing with adverse pedagogical situations. As for Huang et al. (2023), they examine in greater detail the coping strategies and emotional attitudes that mediate between teacher identity and pedagogical practice in crisis contexts. This multidimensional analysis demonstrates that professional identity functions as an interpretive framework that allows teachers to make sense of disruptive situations and develop pedagogical responses consistent with their professional values and commitments. Therefore, identity not only influences routine practices, but is particularly crucial at times that require pedagogical improvisation and creative adaptation.

Consequently, Cai et al. (2022) identify specific psychological mechanisms of self-efficacy and commitment to learning, which mediate between professional identity and educational outcomes. their explanatory model demonstrates that teacher identity influences the perception of self-efficacy, which in turn affects the level of commitment to continuous professional learning, generating a virtuous cycle that enhances pedagogical effectiveness, this contribution has significant implications for the design of professional development programmes, suggesting that these should simultaneously address identity construction and the strengthening of self-efficacy.

What has been discussed so far in this category paints a convincing picture of how the identity of the English teacher translates into specific pedagogical practices that decisively influence the educational experience of students. Far from being a secondary variable, professional identity emerges as a determining factor of educational quality, which justifies its priority consideration in initial and continuing training programmes for English teachers.

Intercultural and linguistic perspectives on the identity of the English teacher

Teaching English as a foreign or second language places teachers at complex cultural and linguistic intersections that distinctly shape their professional identity. Basalama & Machmud (2018) explore this intercultural dimension by analysing how role models influence the identity development of teachers in contexts where English is not the dominant language. Their research reveals that these teachers not only internalise pedagogical practices, but also actively negotiate between different cultural references, selectively adapting elements that they consider

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compatible with their local contexts. This process of selective cultural appropriation is fundamental for developing authentic professional identities that transcend the mere imitation of Anglo-centric models.

For their part, Derakhshan et al. (2020) delve into the interrelationship between professional identity, autonomy and teaching success in intercultural environments, demonstrating that English teachers operate in pedagogical spaces where different cultural expectations about teaching and learning converge and sometimes collide. Their analysis reveals that the ability to navigate these intercultural tensions, between globalised communicative methodologies and local educational traditions, constitutes a crucial component of the professional identity of successful teachers, which indicates that professional autonomy acquires a particular meaning in intercultural contexts, manifesting itself as the ability to make culturally sensitive pedagogical adaptations without compromising fundamental educational principles.

In this context, Shahidzade & Mazdayasna (2022) offer an innovative perspective by examining how specifically culturally situated pedagogical materials, short stories translated between L1 (Persian) and L2 (English), mediate identity construction processes in both students and teachers. Their detailed analysis reveals how these texts function as spaces for intercultural negotiation where representations of one's own and other cultures are confronted and reconfigured. for teachers, the selection and implementation of these materials implies complex identity positions regarding which aspects of English-speaking cultures are relevant for their students and how they can engage productively with local cultural references. Therefore, it is demonstrated that apparently technical decisions about teaching materials are deeply impregnated with identity and intercultural considerations.

On the other hand, Winchester (2013) meticulously examines the potential impact of the teacher on the identities of students in contexts of teaching English as a foreign language, revealing subtle but powerful mechanisms through which teachers transmit not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural and value orientations, thus demonstrating that English teachers inevitably project their own intercultural identity negotiations, influencing how students position themselves in relation to English and the cultures associated with this language, thus, the ethical responsibility of teachers to critically reflect on their own intercultural identities and how these shape their pedagogical practices.

In this category, it is argued that the identity of the English teacher is intrinsically interwoven with intercultural and linguistic dimensions that transcend merely technical aspects of teaching, English teachers not only teach a linguistic system but also operate as intercultural mediators whose professional identities are constructed in the continuous negotiation between different cultural and linguistic horizons. This perspective contrasts with more instrumental approaches to English teaching and highlights the importance of creating training spaces where teachers can reflectively explore the intercultural dimensions of their professional identity.

In addition, this category shows that the intercultural and linguistic dimension is not peripheral but constitutive of the identity of the English teacher. Especially in contexts where this language is taught as a foreign language, understanding these intercultural dynamics is fundamental for the development of teacher training programmes that transcend technical reductionism and prepare teachers to consciously navigate the complex cultural and linguistic territories that characterise contemporary English teaching.

Impact of the teacher's identity on English teaching

The teacher's identity is a determining factor that significantly shapes the processes of English teaching and learning in multiple curricular and pedagogical dimensions. This impact is manifested in essential components of educational practice:

In the didactic-methodological sphere, professional identity decisively guides the selection and implementation of pedagogical approaches. The research of Kayi-Aydar (2019) and Derakhshan et al. (2020) shows that teachers filter methodological proposals through their identity constructs, favouring those that align with their conceptions of second language acquisition. These authors emphasise that teachers with consolidated professional identities

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demonstrate a greater capacity to implement active methodologies and communicative approaches that promote meaningful learning, while those with less developed identities tend to adopt more transmissive practices centred on formal aspects of the language.

In the curricular dimension, teacher identity operates as a mediator in the didactic transposition of the prescribed curriculum to the real curriculum, in this order, Lin et al. (2024) document how teachers, from their identity positions, reinterpret the official curricular guidelines, making adaptations that respond to their pedagogical conceptions about the teaching of English. This mediation determines the sequencing of content, the prioritisation of specific language skills and the contextualisation of expected learning according to the perceived needs of their students.

In the field of learning management, scaffolding strategies and the teaching sequences implemented clearly reflect the influence of the teacher's identity. Winchester (2013), meanwhile, demonstrates that the patterns of pedagogical interaction established in the classroom not only facilitate the construction of communicative competences, but also implicitly transmit conceptions about linguistic legitimacy. Therefore, teachers with interculturally sensitive identities tend to implement scaffolding strategies that validate linguistic diversity and promote intercultural communicative competence as a training objective.

In the selection and adaptation of teaching resources, the impact of professional identity is clearly evident. Shahidzade & Mazdayasna (2022) argue that these curricular decisions involve complex identity positions that determine which cultural and linguistic representations are legitimised in the educational process. Consequently, teachers with critical-reflective identities tend to select or adapt materials that promote critical literacy and intercultural awareness, while those with more instrumental identities prioritise resources aimed at the development of specific functional skills.

In the evaluative component of the educational process, the teacher's identity shapes both the instruments and the evaluation criteria implemented. Conceptions of what constitutes meaningful learning of English, rooted in professional identity, determine whether assessments focused on grammatical accuracy or communicative competence are favoured, whether formative or summative evaluative approaches are adopted, and what feedback strategies are implemented to guide the learning process. While teachers with identities oriented towards socio-constructivist approaches tend to implement authentic assessment systems that value the development of communicative competences in meaningful contexts.

The intercultural dimension of the English curriculum is particularly influenced by teacher identity. Basalama & Machmud (2018) show that teachers, as intercultural mediators, determine from their identity constructs which aspects of English-speaking cultures are incorporated into the actual curriculum and how these relate to the students' sociocultural referents. This mediation decisively shapes the development of intercultural communicative competence as a cross-curricular educational objective. Therefore, teachers with interculturally reflective identities tend to implement teaching sequences that promote the comparative analysis of cultural practices and the development of attitudes of openness towards diversity.

The management of specific linguistic aspects within the curriculum, such as the teaching of pronunciation and sociolinguistic variation, clearly reflects the impact of teacher identity, while Chacón (2010) documents how non-native teachers, from their identity positions, make curricular decisions about which varieties of English to legitimise in the classroom and which approaches to implement for the teaching of pronunciation, these decisions determine whether a model of plurilingual competence is promoted or whether idealised monolingual standards are reinforced.

The capacity for curricular adaptation in the face of changing educational contexts is significantly determined by teacher identity. Huang et al. (2023) and Choi & Park (2022) show that, during disruptive situations such as the transition to virtual learning environments, teachers with more resilient professional identities implemented innovative curricular adaptations that maintained pedagogical coherence despite contextual limitations, this shows that professional identity constitutes a fundamental resource for curricular flexibility and pedagogical innovation in challenging contexts.

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The classroom climate and the socio-emotional component of learning are significantly influenced by teacher identity. Cai et al. (2022) identify how teacher self-efficacy, rooted in professional identity, determines the ability to establish learning environments that promote the psychological security necessary for the development of communicative competences. In this sense, teachers with consolidated professional identities tend to implement strategies that reduce the affective filter and promote the willingness of students to actively participate in meaningful communicative interactions.

In consideration, the identity of the teacher has an impact on the development of autonomy and metacognition in students, in this context, Winchester (2013) and Shahidzade & Mazdayasna (2022), show that teachers, from their identity constructs, implement didactic strategies that shape how students develop their self-regulation in learning English, teachers with identities oriented towards lifelong learning tend to implement didactic sequences that promote metacognitive reflection and the development of autonomous learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

The identity of the teacher has a decisive impact on the teaching of English by configuring essential curricular components: methodological approaches, curricular adaptations, scaffolding strategies, selection of teaching resources, assessment practices, intercultural mediations and learning environments.

This impact indicates the importance of incorporating reflective components into initial and continuing teacher training programmes that promote the development of solid, adaptive and interculturally sensitive professional identities, capable of implementing pedagogical practices consistent with the contemporary challenges of English language teaching.

Consequently, the professional identity of the English teacher constitutes a multidimensional and dynamic construct that transcends the mere accumulation of technical competences, configuring itself as a determining factor in the quality of the teaching-learning processes.

This identity is constructed at the intersection of personal experiences, academic training, institutional contexts and sociocultural factors, manifesting itself concretely in pedagogical decisions, selection of didactic resources, evaluative approaches and intercultural mediations. Particularly significant is the evidence that demonstrates how teachers with consolidated, reflective and culturally sensitive professional identities implement more coherent, adaptive and innovative practices that promote meaningful learning of English.

FINANCING

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest with people or institutions linked to the research.

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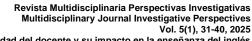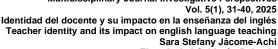
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