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Teacher education and professional identity in English practicum: A systematic review

Formación docente e identidad profesional en la práctica docente de inglés: una revisión sistemática

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Abstract

Professional identity formation during the English teaching practicum involves relationships, emotions, mentoring, and institutional expectations whose effects vary across school-placement contexts. This systematic review synthesized empirical evidence published between 2015 and 2025 on the negotiation of professional identity among preservice English teachers in authentic teaching practicums. Searches of Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ERIC, and SciELO identified 428 records. Following the removal of 107 duplicates, 321 records were screened; 51 full texts were assessed, and 21 empirical publications met the eligibility criteria. Twenty studies used predominantly qualitative designs, and one used mixed methods. Study quality was examined using the 2018 Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool, with criterion-level judgments rather than aggregate scores. Thematic synthesis identified four interconnected domains: recognition and professional belonging; dialogic reflection and mentoring; emotional negotiation; and situated agency under institutional constraints. Mentoring and school participation could simultaneously support learning and intensify evaluative pressures. Reflective activities were not invariably critical, and institutional conformity did not necessarily indicate belonging. The evidence portrays professional identity as a contextual and relational negotiation rather than a linear developmental outcome. Given the predominance of qualitative and context-dependent studies, causal or universally transferable conclusions are not warranted.

Keywords: professional identity, preservice English teachers, mentoring.

Resumen

La formación de la identidad profesional durante las prácticas docentes en la enseñanza del inglés implica relaciones, emociones, mentoría y expectativas institucionales, cuyos efectos varían según el contexto escolar en el que se desarrollan dichas prácticas. Esta revisión sistemática sintetiza la evidencia empírica publicada entre 2015 y 2025 sobre la negociación de la identidad profesional en docentes de inglés en formación durante sus prácticas en entornos escolares reales. Las búsquedas realizadas en Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ERIC y SciELO permitieron identificar 428 registros. Tras eliminar 107 duplicados, se examinaron 321 registros; se evaluaron 51 textos completos y 21 publicaciones empíricas cumplieron con los criterios de elegibilidad. Veinte estudios emplearon diseños predominantemente cualitativos, mientras que uno utilizó métodos mixtos. La calidad de los estudios se analizó mediante la herramienta *Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool* (versión de 2018), basándose en valoraciones por criterio en lugar de en puntuaciones globales. La síntesis temática reveló cuatro ámbitos interconectados: reconocimiento y pertenencia profesional; reflexión dialógica y mentoría; negociación emocional; y agencia situada bajo restricciones institucionales. La mentoría y la participación en el entorno escolar pueden, simultáneamente, favorecer el aprendizaje e intensificar las presiones evaluativas. Las actividades reflexivas no siempre resultaron ser críticas, y la conformidad con las normas institucionales no implicaba necesariamente un sentido de pertenencia. La evidencia sugiere que la identidad profesional es una negociación contextual y relacional, más que un resultado evolutivo lineal. Dada la predominancia de estudios cualitativos y dependientes del contexto, no es posible extraer conclusiones de carácter causal o universalmente generalizables.

Palabras clave: identidad profesional, docentes de inglés en formación, tutoría.

Introduction

Learning to teach English involves more than acquiring linguistic expertise, classroom techniques, and curricular knowledge. Preservice teachers also negotiate who they are becoming, which professional responsibilities they may assume, and how their teaching is recognized by pupils, mentors, and school communities. Professional identity is therefore better understood as an evolving and relational process than as an attribute acquired upon graduation (Beijaard et al., 2004). Dialogical approaches highlight the coexistence of potentially conflicting professional positions (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011), while language-teacher scholarship draws attention to institutional discourses, power relationships, and the interaction of personal, contextual, and professional influences (Varghese et al., 2005; Pennington & Richards, 2016).

School-based practicum makes these tensions observable. Preservice teachers plan and teach lessons for real learners, respond to unexpected classroom events, and interpret feedback from university supervisors and school mentors who may hold both formative and evaluative roles. Identity formation under these circumstances concerns ways of acting, being seen, and participating in practice, rather than simply the application of theoretical knowledge (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). However, the same experience may support one trainee while constraining another, making it necessary to examine the institutional conditions and interpersonal relationships through which professional roles acquire meaning.

Prior scholarship associates teacher identity with reflection, biography, and situated participation (Izadinia, 2013; Trent, 2013). Studies of the English teaching practicum also describe tensions involving linguistic legitimacy, mentoring, and school socialization (Ardi et al., 2023; Choi & Park, 2022). Yet practices commonly assumed to be beneficial may carry divergent meanings: reflective writing can remain procedural rather than critical (Pita-Castro & Castiblanco-Rincón, 2021; Mulyani et al., 2022), and observation by a mentor may provide guidance while also heightening anxiety (Pravitasari et al., 2025). These contrasts justify a synthesis that preserves disagreement rather than presenting identity formation as a uniformly positive trajectory.

A distinction is therefore required between an educational practice and its perceived meaning. Receiving feedback is not synonymous with feeling supported; fulfilling school routines is not proof of belonging; and reported confidence at the end of a placement does not demonstrate enduring professional transformation. The analytical question is not merely whether the practicum supports identity development, but how recognition, reflection, emotion, and institutional opportunity interact to make particular professional positions possible.

The relevance of this issue to Peru should be stated cautiously. Herrera-Espinoza et al. (2024) examined professional identity among practicing basic-education teachers in metropolitan Lima, not among preservice English teachers. Although Peru's curriculum for initial English teacher preparation identifies practicum and inquiry as formative components (Ministerio de Educación del Perú, 2020), curricular expectations do not establish how trainees experience school placement. Evidence from other settings can inform questions for local investigation,

but it cannot be assumed to describe the prevalence or effects of particular conditions in Peru. The topic is also pertinent to Sustainable Development Goal 4.c, which emphasizes the supply of qualified teachers (United Nations, 2015).

The aim of this article is to critically synthesize the experiences of professional identity negotiation described in 21 empirical publications on preservice English teachers during authentic teaching practicums. The guiding question is: How do preservice English teachers negotiate professional identity during the practicum, and how are recognition, mentoring, reflection, emotion, and institutional conditions implicated in those negotiations? The analysis compares study contexts and methods, identifies convergent and contrasting findings, and evaluates what can reasonably be inferred from the available evidence.

Methodology

A systematic review of empirical research published between 2015 and 2025 was conducted and reported in accordance with PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021) and the PRISMA-S extension for literature-search reporting (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). The review addressed the following question: How do preservice English teachers negotiate professional identity during authentic teaching practicums, and how are recognition, mentoring, reflection, emotional experience, and institutional conditions implicated in those negotiations? The primary unit of analysis was the empirical study report. The review protocol was not prospectively registered. Eligibility, study characteristics, methodological appraisal, and thematic synthesis were documented at the report level.

Eligibility criteria

Eligible publications were peer-reviewed original empirical studies dated between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2025, written in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, and concerned with preservice English teachers undertaking supervised teaching with real learners. A report was required to provide extractable evidence on professional identity, identity positioning, or identity change during the practicum. Studies were excluded if they concerned only in-service teachers, nonauthentic classroom rehearsals, outcomes unrelated to professional identity, non-empirical document types, or mixed samples without separately extractable preservice-English results.

Table 1

Eligibility criteria for the systematic review

Domain	Include	Exclude
Population	Preservice or student teachers preparing to teach English; separable preservice-English results from mixed samples.	Qualified in-service teachers only, or mixed samples without extractable preservice-English findings.
Placement setting	Supervised teaching with real learners in actual educational settings; face-to-face, online, or hybrid.	Peer-only microteaching, coursework, or classroom rehearsals without teaching in authentic settings.
Phenomenon	Findings on professional identity formation, negotiation, positioning, or change during the practicum.	Outcomes limited to satisfaction, linguistic proficiency, or teaching performance without identity-related evidence.
Study and document	Peer-reviewed original qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods research.	Reviews, conceptual essays, protocols, editorials, theses, books, and conference abstracts.
Publication limits	2015–2025; English, Spanish, or Portuguese; any country.	Outside the specified period or languages.

Information sources and search strategy

Bibliographic searches were conducted in Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ERIC, and SciELO on 21–22 September 2026. The search combined the concepts of professional identity, initial teacher education, English-language teaching, and supervised practicum. The publication period was restricted to 2015–2025, while document type, language, population, and placement criteria were also checked during screening. Database-specific search expressions and the corresponding numbers of identified records are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Search strategies and records identified by database

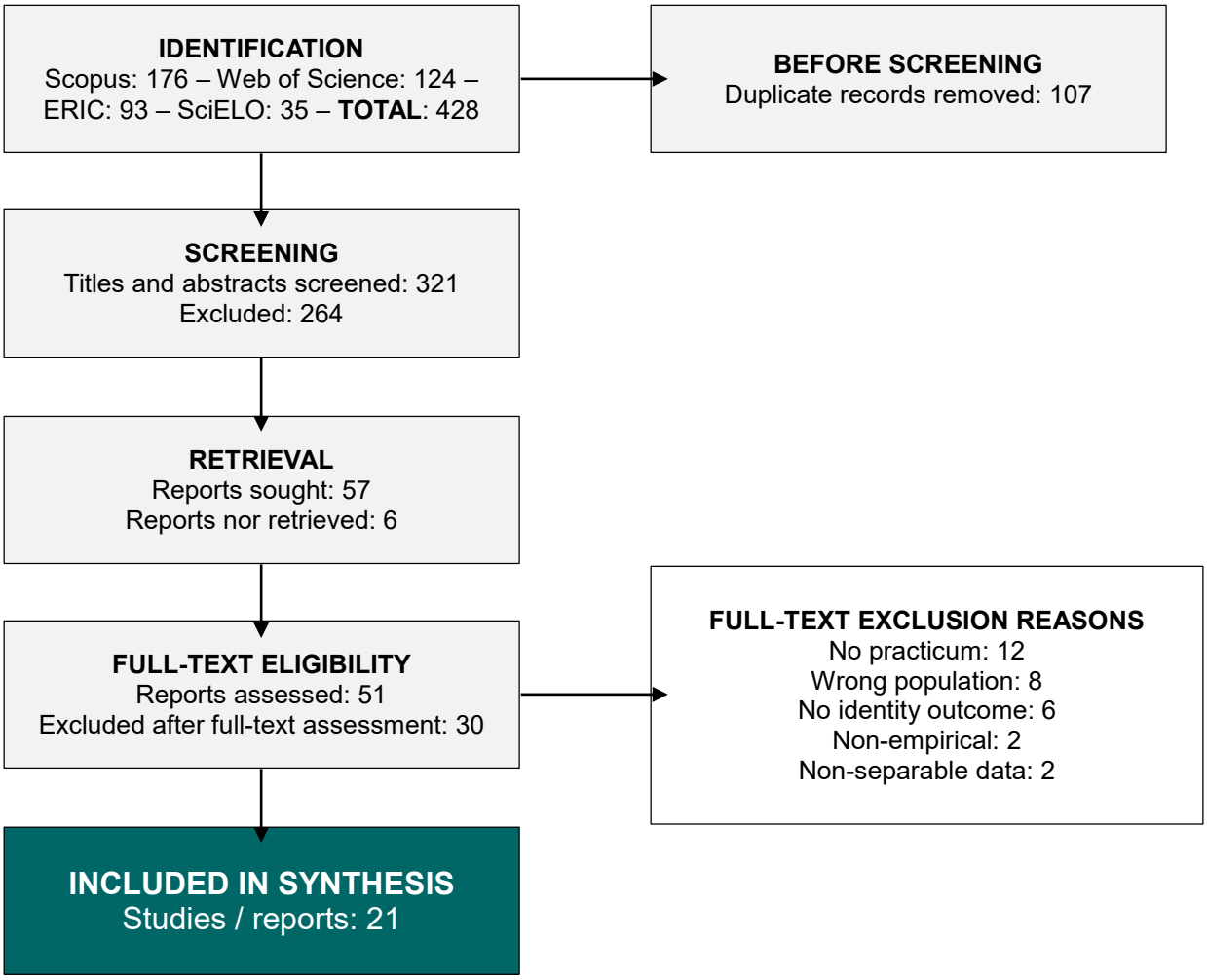
Database / search date	Records identified	Database-specific search strategy
Scopus / 21 Sep 2026	176	TITLE-ABS-KEY(("teacher identit*" OR "professional identit*" OR "language teacher identit*") AND (preservice OR "pre-service" OR "student teacher*" OR "teacher candidate*") AND (English OR EFL OR ESL OR TESOL) AND (practicum OR "teaching practice" OR "school placement*" OR "teaching internship*")) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026
Web of Science / 21 Sep 2026	124	TS=(("teacher identity" OR "professional identity" OR "language teacher identity") AND (preservice OR "pre-service" OR "student teacher*") AND (English OR EFL OR ESL OR TESOL) AND (practicum OR "teaching practice" OR "school placement*")) AND PY=(2015-2025)
ERIC / 22 Sep 2026	93	("teacher identity" OR "professional identity") AND ("preservice teachers" OR "student teachers") AND (English OR EFL OR ESL) AND (practicum OR "student teaching" OR "field experience")
SciELO / 22 Sep 2026	35	("identidad profesional docente" OR "identidade profissional docente" OR "teacher identity") AND (inglés OR inglês OR English) AND ("práctica pedagógica" OR estágio OR practicum)
Total	**428**	**Total records identified before duplicate removal**

Screening, extraction, and data integrity

Records were first deduplicated using normalized DOIs and then by comparing publication titles, authors, and years. Two reviewers independently screened titles and abstracts and subsequently assessed potentially eligible reports at full text. Differences were resolved through discussion, with third-reviewer adjudication when necessary. Of the 428 identified records, 107 duplicates were removed. The remaining 321 records underwent title-and-abstract screening, during which 264 were excluded. Fifty-seven reports were sought, six could not be retrieved, and 51 were assessed at full text. Thirty reports did not meet the eligibility criteria, leaving 21 publications for synthesis. Reasons for full-text exclusion were documented and grouped according to the principal criterion.

A standardized extraction matrix documented the study setting, research design, participant and placement characteristics, evidence of identity-related experiences, mentoring and evaluative roles, and methodological cautions. Participant accounts, primary authors' interpretations, and review-level inferences were considered separately to limit overinterpretation. Potential dependence between the two reports on international placement (Triyoga et al., 2024; Anindya & Triyoga, 2025) was addressed through a sensitivity analysis, as shared participants or program contexts could not be ruled out.

Figure 1
PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study-selection process



Note. The flow is reconciled at each stage: 428 − 107 = 321; 321 − 264 = 57; 57 − 6 = 51; and 51 − 30 = 21

Methodological appraisal (MMAT 2018)

Methodological appraisal followed the design-specific criteria of the 2018 Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Hong et al., 2018). The 20 predominantly qualitative reports were evaluated against five qualitative criteria, while the mixed-methods report (S07) was assessed against the five mixed-methods criteria. Each item was coded as Yes (Y), No (N), or Cannot tell (CT), with comments on reporting limitations. For qualitative reports, the criteria addressed the approach, data collection, derivation of findings, substantiation of interpretation, and coherence across sources and analytical procedures. For the mixed-methods study, the criteria concerned the rationale for integration, the effective combination of components, the interpretation of integrated outputs, the accounting for divergences, and the quality of individual components. No overall numerical quality score or low/moderate/high category was calculated. Criterion-level assessments are presented in Table 4.

Thematic synthesis and sensitivity analysis

Thematic synthesis followed the three stages described by Thomas and Harden (2008): coding relevant findings, organizing them into descriptive themes, and deriving analytical themes. Four domains structured the cross-study interpretation: recognition and belonging, dialogic reflection and mentoring, emotional negotiation, and situated agency under institutional constraints. Contradictory accounts were retained rather than treated as uniform effects. Quantitative effect-size pooling was not undertaken because the evidence was predominantly qualitative

and heterogeneous in design, measures, and setting. A sensitivity analysis revisited the thematic structure after excluding the two potentially related international-practicum reports (S11 and S20).

Results

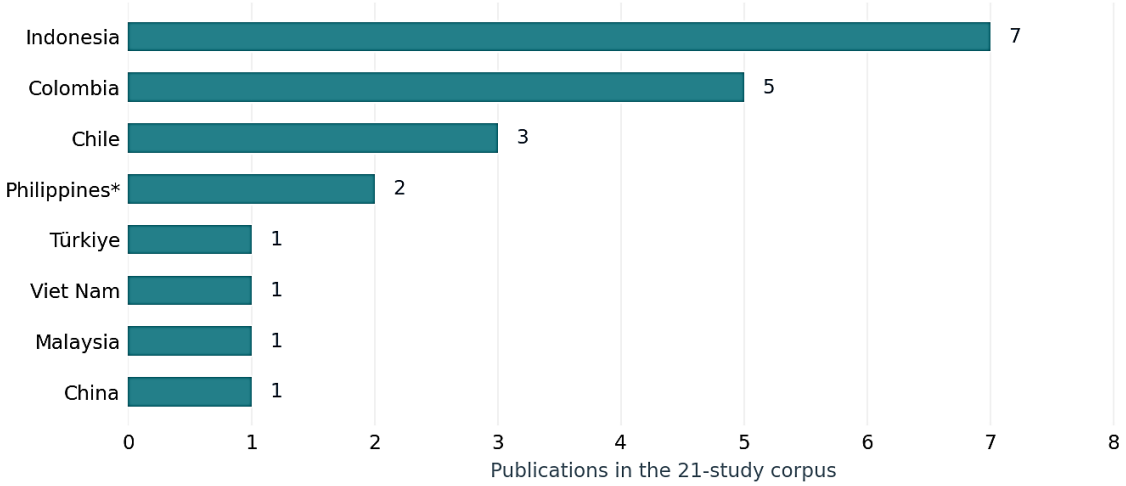
Study selection and corpus characteristics

The database searches identified 428 records: 176 in Scopus, 124 in Web of Science Core Collection, 93 in ERIC, and 35 in SciELO. After the removal of 107 duplicates, 321 records were screened by title and abstract; 264 were excluded, and 57 reports were sought. Six reports were unavailable, leaving 51 full-text articles for eligibility assessment. Thirty were excluded: no authentic practicum (n = 12), incorrect population (n = 8), no professional-identity findings (n = 6), non-empirical publication (n = 2), and non-separable results from mixed samples (n = 2). Twenty-one publications were included in the qualitative synthesis (Figure 1).

The 21 publications were published between 2018 and 2025. Twenty used predominantly qualitative designs, and one reported a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Study settings included Indonesia (n = 7), Colombia (n = 5), Chile (n = 3), international placements in the Philippines involving Indonesian preservice teachers (n = 2), and one study each in Türkiye, Viet Nam, Malaysia, and China. Twenty publications were in English, and one was in Spanish. These descriptive characteristics identify the included studies and do not estimate the global distribution of research on the topic.

Figure 2

Geographic distribution of the 21 included publications



Note. The two Philippines entries describe international placements of Indonesian preservice teachers

Study-level evidence map

Table 3 summarizes the characteristics, principal identity-related observations, and interpretive reservations associated with each included publication. The study-level map supports comparison across educational settings while maintaining the distinction between original findings and review-level interpretation.

Table 3

Included publications and study-level identity-related evidence

Study	Study / setting	Design and main finding	Interpretive caution
S01	Salinas & Ayala (2018); Chile	Qualitative case study — Self-image, life history, and recognition during the practicum.	Identity change cannot be attributed to a particular school structure or generalized.

S02	Alvarado Gutiérrez et al. (2019); Chile	Qualitative; ten workshops and a focus group — Collaborative reflection alongside confidence and readiness to change.	No comparison group; mentor presence may influence responses.
S03	Buendía-Arias et al. (2020); Colombia	Qualitative; interviews, journals, and representations — Critical incidents, reflection, and context-sensitive decisions.	Triangulation enriches interpretation but cannot establish causation.
S04	Montoya-López et al. (2020); Colombia	Qualitative narratives — Language policy, identity, and institutional negotiation.	Agency is shaped by school routines and expectations.
S05	Ulum (2020); Türkiye	Qualitative narratives — Positive and negative mentoring experiences.	Contextual accounts; no universal developmental trajectory.
S06	Pita-Castro & Castiblanco-Rincón (2021); Colombia	Qualitative reflectivity analysis — Technical reflection predominated; deeper reflection was uneven.	Journal completion does not, in itself, establish critical reflection.
S07	Krisdianata & Mbato (2022); Indonesia	Sequential mixed methods; survey and interviews — Resilience, perseverance, help-seeking, and practice revision.	Reported relationships do not prove that resilience causes identity consolidation.
S08	Mulyani et al. (2022); Indonesia	Qualitative; selection questionnaire and interviews — Reflection, motivation, and personally interpreted responsibility.	Biographical diversity resists uniform expectations of change.
S09	Aguirre-Garzón et al. (2023); Colombia	Qualitative narratives — Personal histories and school relationships shape multiple positions.	Multiple positions should not be equated with identity stability.
S10	Ardi et al. (2023); Indonesia	Qualitative inquiry — Linguistic, pedagogical, and organizational school socialization.	Researcher–participant proximity calls for reflexive interpretation.
S11	Triyoga et al. (2024); Indonesia / Philippines	Qualitative; international placement — Recognition and expectations in a cross-border practicum.	The source reports three participants but develops two cases.
S12	Riffo-Salgado (2024); Chile	Qualitative; observations and stakeholder accounts — Professional identity dilemmas in a specific sociopolitical setting.	Historical and institutional specificity limits transferability.
S13	Le & Bui (2024); Viet Nam	Qualitative longitudinal; interviews and journals — Narrated shift from a rigid ideal to flexible teacher–student relations.	The persistence of change after the placement was not established.
S14	Aguirre-Garzón & Ubaque-Casallas (2024); Colombia	Qualitative narratives — Queer identity, visibility, recognition, and institutional constraints.	Visible adaptation should not be read as well-being or belonging.
S15	Ardi et al. (2025); Indonesia	Qualitative; six months, four novices, and two mentors — Reflective mentoring and interpretation of professional experiences.	Campus- and school-based elements cannot be isolated.
S16	Pane et al. (2025); Indonesia	Qualitative narrative inquiry — Classroom experiences, family aspirations, and career reassessment.	Placement duration and the data-collection timeline require separation.
S17	Wong & Lim (2025); Malaysia	Qualitative — Motivation, mentor support, and participation in the school.	The selection of highly rated trainees may exclude difficult trajectories.
S18	Pravitasari et al. (2025); Indonesia	Qualitative narratives — Mentor-observation anxiety and confidence with pupils.	Short episodes do not demonstrate lasting emotional effects.
S19	Emyliana & Upa (2025); Indonesia	Qualitative — Classroom difficulties and limited feedback in primary schools.	Some future-tense method descriptions reduce reporting clarity.

S20	Anindya & Triyoga (2025); Indonesia / Philippines	Qualitative narrative study — Identity negotiation and recognition during an international placement.	Possible continuity or overlap with Triyoga et al. (2024).
S21	Wu et al. (2025); China	Qualitative longitudinal; 18 weeks — Workload, non-English tasks, and unequal recognition.	The study does not evaluate intervention effects on burnout or retention.

Results of methodological appraisal

Table 4

Criterion-level MMAT 2018 appraisal of the 21 included studies

Study	Design	1	2	3	4	5	Methodological considerations
S01	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Life-history accounts; limitations in the reporting of analytic coherence
S02	Q	Y	Y	CT	Y	CT	Focus group or mentor presence could shape self-report
S03	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Multiple sources of qualitative evidence were used in the analysis
S04	Q	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Institutional narratives; substantiation is uneven
S05	Q	Y	Y	CT	CT	CT	Mentoring narratives with limited triangulation
S06	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Levels of reflectivity are described, but coherence is uncertain
S07	M	Y	Y	CT	CT	CT	Mixed-methods integration and discordance are unclear
S08	Q	Y	Y	CT	Y	CT	Reflective accounts are affected by biographical variation
S09	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Multiple professional positions are represented
S10	Q	Y	Y	Y	CT	CT	Researcher–participant proximity warrants caution
S11	Q	Y	CT	CT	CT	CT	Participant counts are inconsistently described
S12	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Strong context-specific interpretation
S13	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Longitudinal accounts are limited to the placement period
S14	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Identity disclosure and institutional context are entangled
S15	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Mentoring, observation, and contextual data are integrated
S16	Q	Y	Y	CT	CT	CT	Timing and retrospective reconstruction may differ
S17	Q	Y	Y	CT	CT	CT	Positively selected participants could restrict variation
S18	Q	Y	Y	CT	Y	CT	Short emotional episodes; limited reporting of coherence
S19	Q	Y	CT	CT	CT	CT	Methods are incompletely described
S20	Q	Y	Y	CT	CT	CT	Possible overlap with S11 cannot be ruled out
S21	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Rural workload is recorded; the duration of effects is unknown

Note. Y = Yes; N = No; CT = Cannot tell. Q = qualitative study, MMAT criteria 1.1–1.5; M = mixed-methods study, MMAT criteria 5.1–5.5. Criteria are reported separately, without a summed methodological-quality score

Among the 20 qualitative reports, the appraisal indicated Yes for the appropriateness of the qualitative approach in all cases, while uncertainty increased for the reporting of methodological coherence and interpretive substantiation. Across criteria 1.1–1.5, the respective numbers of Cannot tell judgments were 0, 2, 9, 8, and 15. The mixed-methods report received Yes for the first two criteria and Cannot tell for the remaining three, highlighting uncertainties regarding the integration and interpretation of its components. These judgments were treated as criterion-specific caveats when interpreting the themes, rather than as a basis for excluding otherwise eligible studies.

Thematic synthesis of professional identity negotiation

Recognition, legitimacy, and professional belonging

Across the included publications, professional identity was narrated as an accomplishment mediated by recognition and participation in school communities, rather than solely as a private self-description. Salinas and Ayala (2018), Ardi et al. (2023), Pane et al. (2025), and Wong and Lim (2025) illustrate the salience of opportunities to participate, take responsibility, and receive acknowledgment of pedagogical judgment. These accounts suggest that professional belonging emerges through interaction; however, differences in research settings and designs preclude estimating the strength or prevalence of this relationship.

Recognition was not invariably equivalent to acceptance. Aguirre-Garzón and Ubaque-Casallas (2024) demonstrate the need to distinguish visible adaptation to institutional norms from felt safety, authentic recognition, and personal well-being. Favorable evaluation and compliance may coexist with constrained self-presentation. Thus, the included evidence calls for the analytical separation of enacted conformity, perceived legitimacy, school membership, and emotional well-being.

Mentoring and reflection: formative support or procedural compliance?

The studies emphasize the form and quality of mentoring more than its mere presence. Alvarado Gutiérrez et al. (2019) associated collaborative reflection with reported confidence and readiness to revise teaching, while Ardi et al. (2025) examined reflective dialogue connecting classroom experience, theoretical perspectives, and role expectations. Buendía-Arias et al. (2020) similarly illuminate the importance of critical incidents in interpreting practice. These findings describe plausible formative conditions but do not establish that mentoring, independently of other features of the placement, causes identity development.

A contrasting pattern emerged where reflection functioned mainly as technical description or as an assessed requirement. Pita-Castro and Castiblanco-Rincón (2021) documented uneven levels of reflectivity, and Mulyani et al. (2022) reported biographical and motivational differences in reflective accounts. Recording a lesson is therefore not equivalent to analyzing assumptions, evaluating alternative pedagogical responses, or revising professional judgment. Taken together, these studies favor attention to the quality and dialogic use of reflection rather than the volume of reflective tasks.

Emotional experiences and discontinuous trajectories

Emotional accounts did not follow a simple progression from initial insecurity toward stable confidence. Krisdianata and Mbato (2022) described resilience through perseverance, help-seeking, and the reinterpretation of difficult experiences. Pravitasari et al. (2025) reported anxiety associated with mentor observation alongside confidence fostered by interaction with pupils; Ulum (2020) documented both supportive and troubling mentoring experiences. Le and Bui (2024) illustrated the revision of professional expectations during the practicum. These findings position emotion within professional identity negotiation rather than treating it as an isolated personal attribute.

The same trainee may feel competent when working with learners but vulnerable during high-stakes evaluation. The available evidence is principally situated and episode-sensitive; therefore, increased confidence reported within a practicum should not be equated with durable identity change after entry into the profession. Longitudinal evidence beyond the placement would be necessary to evaluate that durability.

Situated agency and institutional constraints

The opportunity to exercise professional agency depended on institutional arrangements as well as individual willingness. Montoya-López et al. (2020) described negotiation with language policies and school routines, and Riffo-Salgado (2024) situated professional dilemmas within a particular sociopolitical context. Wu et al. (2025) reported demanding rural placements that included tasks beyond English instruction, while Emyliana and Upa (2025) described classroom challenges and limited mentoring feedback. These cases show why agency cannot be inferred solely from motivation, perseverance, or individual competence.

Preservice teachers may be responsible for planning lessons while having limited influence over resources, assessment requirements, schedules, or classroom management. Conversely, opportunities to justify a pedagogical decision in dialogue with a mentor may constitute meaningful professional participation. The cross-study interpretation is therefore that perceived agency is shaped jointly by novice teachers' intentions and the material, relational, and evaluative conditions of the placement.

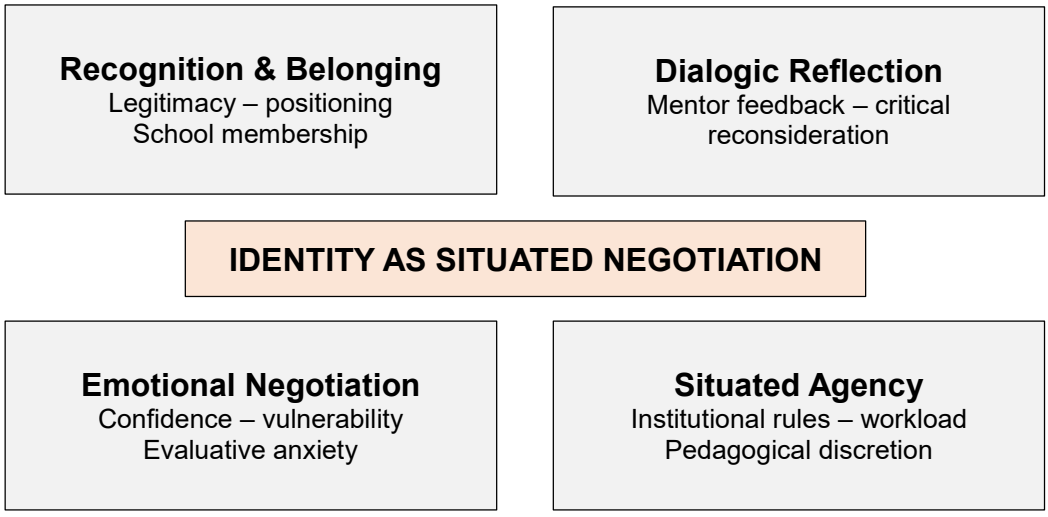
Table 5
Cross-study themes, illustrative publications, and interpretive boundaries

Theme	Supporting publications	Limits of inference
Recognition and belonging	Salinas & Ayala (2018); Ardi et al. (2023); Aguirre-Garzón et al. (2023); Pane et al. (2025); Wong & Lim (2025).	Recognition is consequential for positioning. Compliance, positive grades, and perceived belonging should not be treated as interchangeable.
Dialogic reflection and mentoring	Alvarado Gutiérrez et al. (2019); Buendía-Arias et al. (2020); Pita-Castro & Castiblanco-Rincón (2021); Mulyani et al. (2022); Ardi et al. (2025).	Reflective activities create possible conditions for learning; their existence alone does not demonstrate critical reflection or a causal effect.
Emotional negotiation	Ulum (2020); Krisdianata & Mbato (2022); Le & Bui (2024); Pravitasari et al. (2025).	Emotions depend on specific relationships and episodes. Short-term narratives cannot establish durable identity outcomes.
Situated agency and constraint	Montoya-López et al. (2020); Riffo-Salgado (2024); Emyliana & Upa (2025); Wu et al. (2025).	Choice is conditioned by resources, policies, and role expectations; restricted agency is not reducible to personal deficiency.

Cross-theme mechanisms, contradictions, and sensitivity

The four themes are analytically distinguishable but empirically intertwined. Mentor feedback may confer recognition, prompt pedagogical reconsideration, and heighten anxiety within the same encounter. School rules may stabilize practice while limiting personal expression, and the extent of classroom discretion influences whether reflection becomes actionable. Figure 3 summarizes these intersections as a heuristic rather than a tested causal pathway. The synthesis therefore rejects a universal directional explanation of identity development and instead highlights the configuration of contextual conditions.

Figure 3
Heuristic framework of the interacting dimensions of professional identity negotiation



Note. Conceptual model derived from the study summaries; it is not a tested causal model or an effect-size estimate

The sensitivity analysis excluded S11 (Triyoga et al., 2024) and S20 (Anindya & Triyoga, 2025) from a second thematic mapping, reducing the comparison set to 19 reports. Evidence relevant to recognition, reflection, emotional negotiation, and situated agency remained in the other publications. Thus, the thematic structure was not dependent on the two international-placement reports. This theme-presence comparison does not demonstrate that those reports shared participants, nor does it establish quantitative robustness.

Discussion

Across the retained corpus, professional identity emerges as a socially negotiated process rather than a linear consequence of participation in the school practicum. The findings converge in treating recognition, mentoring, emotional interpretation, and opportunities for pedagogical decision-making as interdependent. They diverge in the meaning and value assigned to similar practices: feedback may validate professional judgments yet also heighten surveillance; structured reflection may encourage analysis yet remain procedural; and institutional compliance may coexist with constrained self-expression. This tension is especially important for language-teacher education, where legitimacy is mediated not only by subject knowledge but also by language ideologies and school-level power relationships (Varghese et al., 2005; Pennington & Richards, 2016).

An important methodological feature is the distinction between records, reports, and included studies, along with explicit reasons for full-text exclusion and criterion-level methodological appraisal. PRISMA 2020 emphasizes transparent accounting of study identification and selection, whereas the MMAT supports design-sensitive interpretation without reducing varied methodological considerations to an unqualified total score (Page et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2018). Together, these practices clarify the evidence base supporting the thematic interpretation.

The review suggests program-design considerations rather than proven interventions. Mentors and university supervisors may make feedback more productive by clarifying their formative and evaluative roles, inviting explanations of pedagogical decisions, and supporting reflective dialogue that examines alternatives rather than merely documenting completed activities. Teacher-preparation programs should also consider whether trainees receive meaningful opportunities to participate in school decision-making and whether procedures are available for raising concerns without immediate punitive consequences. These proposals follow from interpretive patterns across the included studies; their effects have not been evaluated in this synthesis.

In Peru, the findings justify locally grounded research comparing preservice English teachers' accounts before, during, and after school placements with those of university supervisors and school mentors. Interviews, lesson plans, observations, mentoring conversations, and reflective artifacts could help distinguish reported confidence from experienced recognition or actual pedagogical discretion. Sampling across institutional sectors and resourcing conditions would be essential before determining whether internationally described patterns extend to Peruvian teacher education.

Strengths and limitations

The review synthesizes 21 empirical publications and preserves contrasting accounts of mentoring, reflection, recognition, and identity-related emotion. It also reports the study-selection sequence, full-text exclusion categories, and criterion-level methodological appraisal. Several limitations qualify its interpretation. The included publications are concentrated in a limited number of countries, use predominantly qualitative designs, and vary substantially in participant characteristics, data-collection procedures, and placement conditions. Possible dependence between the two international-practicum reports cannot be definitively ruled out. Most studies provide limited evidence on the persistence of identity change beyond the practicum. These limitations preclude causal claims, population-level estimates, or the unqualified transfer of findings to other teacher-education systems.

Conclusions

Within the 21-study corpus retained from the supplied source manuscript, professional identity during the English teaching practicum is characterized by interconnected negotiations of recognition, reflective judgment, emotional vulnerability, and agency under institutional constraints. Mentoring is not uniformly empowering, technical reflection is not equivalent to critical learning, and outward institutional compliance should not be taken as evidence of belonging. These findings support context-sensitive analysis rather than a single developmental trajectory or a causal claim about practicum effectiveness.

This systematic review identified four interdependent domains of professional identity negotiation during the English teaching practicum: recognition and belonging, dialogic reflection and mentoring, emotional experiences, and situated agency within institutional constraints. The 21 included publications show that mentoring, reflective activities, and school socialization do not have uniform implications across contexts. Strengthening preservice teacher education therefore requires attention to the quality of feedback, meaningful school participation, and the institutional conditions under which trainees exercise professional judgment. Further longitudinal and multi-perspective studies are needed to assess whether the changes observed during the placement endure after entry into the profession.

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