

**Elección de la carrera docente de inglés: un
estudio sociocultural en una universidad
ecuatoriana**

**Choosing an English Language Teaching Career:
A Sociocultural Study at an Ecuadorian University**

Claudio Federico Malo-Toledo¹
Universidad de Guayaquil
claudio.malot@ug.edu.ec

doi.org/10.33386/593dp.2025.4.3486

V10-N4 (jul) 2025, pp 1517-1533 | Recibido: 12 de agosto del 2025 - Aceptado: 28 de agosto del 2025 (2 ronda rev.)

¹ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5862-9395>. Docente con dos maestrías, una en Educación Básica por la Universidad de Milagro y otra en Enseñanza de Inglés como Idioma Extranjero por la Universidad Politécnica del Litoral. Actualmente, se encuentra como candidato a doctorando en Lingüística y Lenguas en universidad de Rosario Argentina.

Descargar para Mendeley y Zotero

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza los factores socioculturales que inciden en la elección de la carrera docente de inglés por parte de estudiantes de primer y noveno semestre en una universidad pública ecuatoriana. La comparación entre ambos grupos permitió identificar coincidencias y diferencias en los factores que influyeron en la elección de la carrera, analizando tanto las motivaciones actuales de quienes recién inician la formación como aquellas identificadas retrospectivamente por quienes están en etapas finales de su formación. Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo con alcance descriptivo y no experimental, mediante la aplicación de un cuestionario estructurado. Los datos fueron procesados a través de estadística descriptiva simple, frecuencias y porcentajes, sin la utilización de pruebas inferenciales, dado que el propósito fue describir tendencias generales más que establecer relaciones causales. Los resultados muestran que, si bien la vocación y el interés por el idioma inglés son factores centrales, también influyen elementos como el entorno familiar, las trayectorias escolares, las condiciones económicas y las representaciones simbólicas asociadas al idioma y a la profesión docente. Asimismo, los estudiantes valoran fuertemente principios éticos y deontológicos como la empatía, la responsabilidad y el respeto, lo que evidencia una concepción ética de la labor educativa. El estudio concluye que la elección profesional no puede comprenderse únicamente desde motivaciones individuales, sino que debe situarse en el entramado de factores culturales, sociales y económicos que estructuran las decisiones académicas en contextos específicos.

Palabras clave: docencia en inglés; factores socioculturales; identidad profesional; motivación vocacional.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the sociocultural factors influencing the choice of an English language teaching career among first- and ninth-semester students at a public university in Ecuador. The comparison between both groups made it possible to identify similarities and differences in the factors that influenced their career choice, examining both the current motivations of those just beginning their training and those identified retrospectively by students in the final stages of their program. A quantitative, descriptive, and non-experimental approach was employed through the application of a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, without the application of inferential tests, since the aim was to describe general trends rather than establish causal relationships. Findings show that while vocation and interest in the English language are central factors, family environment, school trajectories, economic conditions, and symbolic representations of the language and the teaching profession also play a significant role. In addition, students strongly value ethical and deontological principles such as empathy, responsibility, and respect, which reveals an ethical conception of the teaching profession. The study concludes that career choice cannot be understood solely on the basis of individual motivations, but must be situated within the cultural, social, and economic frameworks that shape academic decisions in specific contexts.

Keywords: English teaching; sociocultural factors; professional identity; vocational motivation.

Introduction

The choice of a teaching career represents a crucial decision in the life of every university student, influenced not only by individual interests but also by a complex network of sociocultural and contextual factors. In the case of English teaching, this choice gains special relevance due to the strategic role of the language in globalized education, labor market demands, and the intercultural commitments of the 21st century (Richards, 2017; Burns, 2022).

Previous research has explored the motivations to become teachers in various international contexts, such as Australia (Watt & Richardson, 2007), Canada (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), and the United States (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008), identifying both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. However, the literature still shows gaps in understanding how these motivations are configured in Latin American contexts, particularly in Ecuador, where the shortage of qualified English teachers remains a structural concern (Ministerio de Educación, 2022).

Beyond motivational aspects, it is essential to consider the identity dimension linked to learning and teaching English. As Norton (2013) argues, language is not only a communicative tool but also a symbolic resource that contributes to shaping teachers' professional and cultural identities. In contexts such as Ecuador, decisions to pursue an English teaching career may also be influenced by perceptions of prestige and aspirations for mobility, dimensions that Bourdieu (1991) associates with the symbolic power of language. Initial teacher education, therefore, involves complex processes of identity negotiation that shape students' educational and professional trajectories (Block, 2007; Norton, 2013), broadening the study of vocational choice beyond motivational categories and linking it to issues of belonging, legitimization, and agency within educational spaces.

Within this framework, an apparent paradox emerges: the teaching career, particularly in the field of English, faces structural and

symbolic challenges that hinder both its choice and professional practice. These include unfavorable working conditions, administrative overload, insufficient investment in continuing education, lack of teaching resources, and limited access to educational technologies (UNESCO, 2016; Tenti Fanfani, 2005). Added to this are low social recognition, the perception of limited public appreciation for the teaching role, and constant fluctuations in educational policies, which generate uncertainty, as recognized in national evaluations and reports on teacher development (MinEduc, 2016). Moreover, various political sectors exert pressure on teachers through the imposition of standardized tests, the use of their results as punitive criteria, and the codification of content under reductionist views of knowledge, learning, and teaching (Ralston Saul, 1992; Day, 2020).

Despite these challenges, the English teaching career has continued to attract new cohorts of students in Ecuador, a trend linked to the growing social demand for English proficiency and the institutional emphasis on expanding foreign language programs (MinEduc, 2016). This persistence raises fundamental questions about the deeper motivations driving this vocational choice, especially when it intersects with issues of professional identity, sociocultural conditions, and personal aspirations.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the sociocultural determinants influencing the choice of English teaching as a career among undergraduate students at a public university in Ecuador. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

In what ways do sociocultural factors shape the decision of undergraduate students to pursue a career in English teaching at a public university in Ecuador?

How do future English teachers construct and negotiate their personal, professional, and cultural identities in relation to the role of English within the Ecuadorian context?

Literature Review

The Teaching Role in Contemporary Education

Teachers play a fundamental role in building societies, as the quality of teachers and teaching is essential for the development and maintenance of an informed and intelligent citizenry (Erten, 2014). In the current context of English language teaching, the role transcends the mere transmission of linguistic content and emerges as a complex, multidimensional profession deeply linked to processes of social and cultural transformation. English teachers bear the pedagogical responsibility of facilitating language learning while promoting inclusive and equitable education that fosters critical thinking in a globalized context. Moreover, English teaching becomes a key avenue for intercultural interaction and the development of communicative competencies that open doors to global citizenship (UNESCO, 2017).

This multifaceted role entails responsibilities that go beyond linguistic instruction, demanding a deep ethical and professional commitment. As committed professionals, English teachers are expected to promote not only linguistic competence but also ethical values, autonomy, and reflective thinking, an endeavor that constitutes a moral and deeply intellectual act requiring judgment, commitment, and responsibility (Shulman, 2005). In this capacity, they act as mediators between language knowledge and learners, serving as agents of change who shape individuals capable of engaging in diverse and international contexts while promoting principles of social justice and equity (Biesta, 2020). Furthermore, teaching English requires a strong vocational calling, as educators must navigate particular challenges inherent to foreign language education, including linguistic barriers, cultural prejudices, and divergences in international pedagogical approaches (Pianda, 2018).

Such responsibilities demand a broad range of technical, social, and emotional competencies grounded in a strong sense of

vocation. For many, the interest in teaching emerges from formative educational experiences and is reinforced by the aspiration to make a positive impact on others' lives. Professional identity often develops through classroom practice, where teachers find purpose in guiding children, adolescents, or young adults along their educational paths. As Octavia (2020) observes, when teaching is approached with both professionalism and passion, it promotes meaningful and socially valuable educational outcomes.

To sustain this vocation and respond to the rapid advancement of technologies and teaching methodologies, English teachers must engage in continuous professional development (Fullan, 2007). This ongoing process, both linguistic and cultural, is essential for building a professional identity suited to the evolving demands of the language classroom. Such identity is shaped through the interaction of formative experiences, relationships with students and the educational environment, and the dominant societal discourses on language teaching (Zeichner, 2010).

Ultimately, these formative and professional processes converge in a professional identity that is also shaped by broader social and institutional contexts. In many parts of Latin America, this work is carried out under challenging conditions marked by precarious employment, limited social recognition, and heavy workloads (Tenti Fanfani, 2009; UNESCO, 2020). Despite these constraints, teaching continues to attract individuals who view it as a vocation and an opportunity to transform lives, promote social justice, and contribute to the creation of more equitable societies.

Motivation to Become a Teacher

Research specifically focused on teaching as an initial career choice remains limited; however, existing evidence indicates that opting for foreign language teaching is chiefly grounded in intrinsic motivation, a love of the language, the pleasure of teaching, and a strong altruistic drive to support students'

academic progress (Kyriacou & Benmansour, 1999; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012). The personal value attributed to the language also significantly shapes the decision, reflecting a deep connection with the language and the satisfaction of facilitating others' learning (Kyriacou & Benmansour, 1999; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012). In the same vein, most students view teaching as a socially valuable and important profession and display strong commitment and instinctive passion for it (Coulthard & Kyriacou, 2002). Further research shows that teaching satisfies psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, belonging, and, above all, the opportunity to influence younger generations (Lawver & Torres, 2011; See et al., 2022; Pérez & López, 2022). Taken together, this offers a broader, more human account of professional motivation in education, where prospective teachers exhibit high commitment, enjoy the profession, consider it proper and respectable, and demonstrate emotional and psychological readiness to teach effectively (Tataroglu et al., 1998; Amengual Pizarro & García Laborda, 2017).

On the other hand, some studies have also found that future teachers choose teaching for extrinsic reasons (Balyer & Özcan, 2014), meaning they are motivated to join the profession mainly due to economic factors, working conditions, and social status. Students are considered interested in teaching as a career and, in general, view it as a preferred and respected occupation. Students interested in teaching consider it attractive because of its significant contribution to society, good salaries, favorable working conditions, job security, attractive working hours, and longer vacations (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Knobloch, 2005). However, Gore et al. (2015) note that extrinsic motivations, though present, are considered less influential, and those based purely on material benefits or external pressure are associated with a lower likelihood of choosing teaching as a first choice. In summary, according to Ozbek (2007), future teachers choose their career for personal reasons more than for economic or social ones.

Teacher Professional Identity

The concept of teacher professional identity is crucial in the present study, as it reflects how future teachers perceive themselves in relation to the profession and how they construct their vocation and commitment in response to social and cultural influences (Beijaard et al., 2004). Choosing a career is not an isolated act but a process deeply tied to self-definition, personal aspirations, and social representations of the teaching role. In societies where proficiency in English is associated with prestige, social mobility, and labor market demands, professional identity becomes an interpretive lens through which to analyze how students internalize these discourses (Clarke et al., 2012; Beijaard et al., 2004).

From this perspective, teacher identity is a dynamic and complex construct that develops throughout the educator's trajectory and is shaped through teaching experiences, critical reflection on practice, and relationships with students and colleagues (Beijaard et al., 2004; Clarke et al., 2012). This ongoing construction involves constant interpretation and reinterpretation of lived experiences. Therefore, initial and continuing education play a fundamental role in providing teachers with the tools to integrate their values, beliefs, and knowledge into their pedagogical practice (Izadinia, 2013). In this way, identity not only answers the question "Who am I as a teacher?" but also "Who do I want to become?", framing its development within each individual's personal history and projection (Beltman, 2015; Beijaard et al., 2004; Henkel, 2000). In this sense, teacher identity is not merely functional; it represents the core from which professional ethics, pedagogical vision, and the deeper meaning of being an educator are configured. Recognizing and strengthening this identity enables teachers to develop authentically, assume their role with social awareness, and transform their educational environment with vocation and purpose. This component becomes even more relevant in a globalized and diverse context, where educational settings are constantly changing and demand inclusive and

contextualized pedagogical practices (Alonso Sáez et al., 2015).

Identity, therefore, is constructed from the initial motivations for entering the profession to prior experiences and teaching models that influence each future teacher's pedagogical approach. This process involves positioning oneself within an official arena, adopting stances that express one's self-understanding as a teacher, personal history, future projections, and attitude toward professional change (Bergmark et al., 2018). This journey intertwines personal, social, and professional dimensions, connected to ways of speaking, being, and relating to others in diverse educational contexts.

For novice teachers, identity represents an essential component of learning to teach languages, as it is not only about acquiring technical competencies but also about deeply understanding what it means to be a language teacher. This identity includes elements such as self-image, self-awareness, and how the teacher is perceived by others (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). Upon entering the classroom, the teacher assumes an identity that projects both an institutional vision of the teaching role and their individuality, shaped by their biography, the students, and the educational context. In practice, many teachers begin with a situated or default identity, based on traditional pedagogical models validated by the institution. However, some evolve toward a transposable identity, more informal, personal, and centered on the student relationship. This transition is part of a dynamic process that evolves through negotiating meanings, roles, and positions, connecting personal and professional identities with the demands of the educational environment (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Thus, teacher identity is a socially situated construction, shaped and validated by the sociocultural environment, making it a key component in the training of future teachers, especially in diverse educational practice contexts (Cattley, 2007). This process must be understood as a conscious purpose that accompanies teachers throughout their formative trajectory (Hoveid & Hoveid, 2004), as professional identity

provides a guiding framework for educators to build their ideas about who they are, how they act, how they understand their work, how their personality relates to the environment, and, of course, what their place in society is (Timoššuk & Ugaste, 2010). As Sachs (2005) argues, the teaching profession must author its own identity. Consequently, it is not an accessory element but the core that integrates the ethical, pedagogical, social, and human dimensions of being a teacher and is essential to understanding the sociocultural determinants that guide the choice of this career.

Deontological Foundations and Teaching Praxis

Deontology, understood as the study of the moral duties that govern human conduct in professional practice, constitutes a fundamental axis of teaching praxis (Mogollón, 2022; Salgado, 2020). Derived from the Greek terms *deon* (duty) and *logos* (knowledge), this discipline establishes ethical principles that guide teachers' actions, who operate not only under legal mandates but also within an ethical framework that defines their commitment to the integral education of students (Villanueva, 2006).

From this perspective, educational work cannot be reduced to the mere transmission of content but must be articulated with an ethical and humanistic dimension. As public figures and role models, teachers embody a standard of conduct that significantly impacts students, the educational community, and society at large (Salgado, 2020; Cambra, 2011). This ethical responsibility demands coherence between the values promoted and daily practice, making teaching a political and moral act. Quintana (2016) argues that the complexity of pedagogical relationships and the high degree of responsibility inherent in teaching make it essential to have a deontological code to regulate educators' actions. Such a code not only provides behavioral guidelines but also informs decision-making and strengthens the prestige and identity of the profession.

Deontological principles help establish a shared professional ethos, creating an

educational climate based on respect, justice, and social responsibility (Mogollón, 2022). They integrate values such as autonomy, truthfulness, objectivity, and equity into the educator's daily work (Delgado, 2023), enabling critical reflection on the ideal nature of their role and providing guidance for addressing ethical and pedagogical challenges in changing contexts. Within this framework, the Teacher's Deontological Code serves as both a philosophical discipline and a practical guide, ensuring coherence between teachers' actions and educational goals, regulating ethical commitments, and consolidating a professional identity rooted in social responsibility. It establishes specific duties toward students, the institution, and society, promoting an education grounded in responsibility, respect, justice, truthfulness, objectivity, tolerance, solidarity, confidentiality, institutional commitment, and exemplary conduct (Universidad Católica Benedicto XVI, n.d.).

These values must not only be present in pedagogical discourse but embodied in the educator's daily actions (Quintana, 2016; Mogollón, 2022; Salgado, 2020; Delgado, 2023). Teaching vocation demands a permanent ethical disposition, capable of combining pedagogical knowledge with moral commitment, where the "ought to be" translates into the creation of inclusive, dialogical, and humanizing learning environments (Villanueva, 2006). Far from abstract ideals, these principles sustain a praxis committed to the integral development of human beings and to social transformation through education. Their integration into teacher education and professional performance not only ensures higher educational quality but also contributes to building a more ethical, equitable, and solidary society.

English as a Language of Prestige

In the context of globalization, English has acquired a privileged status as the language of international communication, access to scientific knowledge, job opportunities, and academic mobility. This symbolic prestige has reinforced its presence in educational systems

and shaped the perception of English teachers as key figures in personal and professional development. The choice of this specialization responds not only to individual motivations but also to broader sociocultural dynamics, where English is associated with progress, status, and openness to the world.

Over the past century, English has consolidated itself as a hegemonic tool of global communication, acquiring symbolic, academic, and economic prestige due to historical, sociopolitical, and colonial processes that legitimized it as a primary vehicle of knowledge, power, and modernity (Lovón, 2023; Pérez, 2024). It functions as a *lingua franca* in science, technology, commerce, diplomacy, and education, shaping imaginaries of what is considered valuable or successful in professional and cultural terms (Urrego, 2024; Santoyo, Huerta & Bernal, 2021). In academia, its dominance as the language of scientific publication, reinforced since the mid-twentieth century with the rise of Anglo-Saxon research, positions it as the language of science and academic prestige (Pérez, 2024; Santoyo et al., 2021; Nymark, 2024). Publishing in English grants greater visibility, recognition, and credibility to researchers, further strengthening its elitist status (Lizasoain, 2021).

Beyond academia, in many Latin American contexts, English is seen as a tool for social mobility and progress. Learning, and especially teaching, it is perceived as a gateway to better job opportunities, international study or work, and a supposed modernity linked to Western culture (Lovón, 2023; Urrego, 2024). In countries such as Peru, Mexico, and Chile, where English is not official, it is framed as a means of aligning with dominant economic and political models, reinforcing its symbolic value in academic training (Lizasoain, 2021; Nymark, 2024). The figure of the English teacher is embedded within this framework, where teaching the language can confer additional social status. For many future teachers, this career represents not only a viable path but also access to symbolic recognition, belonging to a global academic community, and advancement

in meritocratic structures that value English as a key competence (Urrego, 2024; Lovón, 2023).

From decolonial and intercultural perspectives, however, the prestige of English is seen as the product of historical power relations, colonialism, and market forces that have imposed a linguistic hierarchy legitimizing some languages while marginalizing others (Lovón, 2023). This hierarchy privileges speakers closer to the native standard and devalues indigenous languages and local communicative practices, perpetuating symbolic exclusion in education.

In summary, the prestige of English is a key sociocultural determinant in choosing to teach it. Its centrality in science, market value, and symbolic role in shaping professional trajectories influence vocational decisions, making English teaching both an educational profession and a vehicle for accessing social, academic, and economic capital. This reality demands rethinking teacher training not only from a technical-linguistic perspective but also from an ethical and intercultural standpoint that questions the logics of prestige and the implications of teaching a language historically linked to power.

Sociocultural Factors in Career Choice

The choice of a professional career cannot be understood exclusively as the result of an individual or rational decision but is deeply conditioned by sociocultural factors that shape the field of possibilities, expectations, and legitimacies surrounding the individual. Studying to become an English teacher is thus a situated construction influenced by symbolic structures, social representations, family trajectories, and material conditions. This perspective broadens vocational motivation by incorporating the role of context, culture, and accumulated capital in academic decisions.

One of the most useful frameworks for analyzing these influences is Bourdieu's concept of habitus, a system of internalized dispositions, and the different types of capital, economic, social, cultural, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986).

In future English teachers, cultural capital may manifest as familiarity with language learning, access to quality institutions, or the value attributed to English proficiency as a status symbol. Symbolic capital, in turn, is activated when English and teaching are perceived as prestigious, desirable, or aspirational. Both forms of capital are strongly shaped by social class, gender, ethnic background, and the individual's educational trajectory.

Social class remains a decisive factor in academic choices. Families with higher education levels tend to value teaching more, particularly when it is linked to prestigious areas such as English (Díaz, 2018). In contrast, in rural or vulnerable contexts, the choice often responds to the economic or geographic accessibility of the career rather than explicit vocation (Martínez & Lucero, 2020). Geographic context reinforces these patterns: universities in urban areas or with international partnerships offer greater incentives for language training, while in rural or impoverished regions, English may be perceived as distant or elitist unless linked to migration, tourism, or intercultural education (Barahona, 2014). These structural conditions outline the opportunities and limitations within which career decisions are made.

Beyond socioeconomic and geographic factors, the family environment plays a central role as a primary socialization agent, transmitting values, aspirations, and professional representations (Tenti Fanfani, 2009). Teaching is more easily legitimized when it has been present in the family nucleus, and families with experience in migration, tourism, bilingual education, or international work often associate English teaching with opportunities for social and professional advancement (González Monteagudo & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2011).

Gender expectations also influence these trajectories. Teaching has historically been feminized and linked to caregiving roles (Bonder, 2003), yet in the case of English, its association with global prestige, modernity, and cultural capital has begun to erode traditional gender distinctions. This shift has attracted both

women and men, particularly due to the perceived potential for social mobility (Cárdenas, 2016).

These individual and structural factors are reinforced by social representations, which, as Moscovici (2000) explains, generate shared interpretive frameworks that influence the perception and valuation of professions. When the English teacher is viewed as a professional with high employability, better salaries, or opportunities in private or international institutions, interest in this career increases, especially when linked to the prestige of English in science, economics, and globalization (Pérez, 2024; Santoyo et al., 2021). Media narratives, language policies, and institutional discourses further strengthen this imaginary by framing English proficiency as essential for national development, access to technology, and international competitiveness. In countries such as Chile or Colombia, bilingualism programs have promoted both English learning and teacher training, consolidating the idea that English teachers belong to an educational elite with access to certifications and professional networks (British Council, 2015).

In sum, sociocultural factors are decisive in the choice of an English teaching career, structuring the field of possibilities, aspirations, and valuations that guide university students' decisions. Understanding these dimensions not only clarifies the deeper motivations of those who choose this profession but also calls for a rethinking of teacher education policies from a more contextualized, critical, and equitable perspective.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive and cross-sectional scope, as its main objective was to identify and analyze general trends related to the sociocultural factors influencing the choice of an English teaching career among university students. The research followed a non-experimental design, as no variables were manipulated, and data were collected at a single point in time. The analysis was limited to descriptive statistics, frequencies

and percentages, without the application of inferential statistical tests, since the aim was to describe patterns and tendencies rather than establish causal relationships or generalizations.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data were collected through an online questionnaire designed in Google Forms, administered at the beginning of the 2025–2026 academic cycle. The instrument consisted of 15 structured questions, most of them multiple-choice, with an “Other” option in some items to capture additional responses. A limited number of open-ended items were included to provide complementary insights; however, these were not subjected to qualitative analysis, as the focus of the study remained on quantitative description. The questionnaire was reviewed by specialists in education and language teaching to ensure clarity, coherence, and relevance to the research objectives. No statistical validation or pilot testing was conducted, given the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study. The questionnaire was distributed digitally through institutional channels, and students completed it individually and anonymously in an average of 10 to 15 minutes. Responses were automatically stored in Excel format and later processed through descriptive statistical techniques, frequencies and percentages.

Participants

The study was conducted with a non-probabilistic convenience sample of 280 undergraduate students enrolled in the first-semester and ninth-semester of the English Language Teaching program at a single public university in Ecuador. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The inclusion of both cohorts responded to the purpose of comparing the current motivations of students at the beginning of their training with the retrospective perceptions of those in advanced stages, in order to identify similarities and differences in vocational choice across the training trajectory.

Results

The data obtained were processed using descriptive statistical techniques. The results are presented in tables that show the percentage distribution of responses, highlighting the most frequent option in each item to facilitate the identification of predominant trends. As this was a descriptive study, no inferential statistical tests between groups or qualitative analyses were conducted, since the aim was focused exclusively on describing and systematizing the perceptions of the sample.

Table 1

Gender distribution of the sample

Question	Category	Percentage
What is your gender?	Female	80
	Male	20

The data obtained through the questionnaire administered to the sample from a public university in Ecuador provided insights into the sociocultural profile of future English teachers. Regarding gender, the majority of respondents identified as female (80%), reflecting a widely documented trend of the feminization of the teaching profession in Latin America (Bonder, 2003). This demographic pattern constitutes a relevant feature that, when analyzed together with other variables, contributes to understanding students' formative and vocational trajectories.

Table 2

Influences and external motivations

Question	Most Frequent Response	Percentage
Reason for choosing to become an English teacher	Because I'm passionate about the language and I want to teach it	90
Influence from others in career choice	No external influence, it was a vocational choice	80
Alternative careers considered	Health Sciences (medicine, nursing, etc.)	50
Being a teacher provides stable income	Agree	70

The results highlight central factors influencing students' decision to pursue a career in English language teaching. The most frequent response, reported by 90% of participants, was passion for the language and the desire to teach, underscoring the primacy of intrinsic motivation and affective connection to the subject (Kyriacou & Benmansour, 1999; Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012). Similarly, 80% indicated that their choice was not shaped by external pressures but emerged as a personal vocational calling, reflecting autonomy and professional agency in line with Beijaard et al.'s (2004) and Beltman's (2015) accounts of identity formation.

Regarding alternatives, 50% of students mentioned health sciences (e.g., medicine or nursing). Although in a different professional domain, these careers share a service-oriented ethos, pointing to altruistic motivations and alignment with Biesta's (2020) conception of teaching as a moral, transformative act and Shulman's (2005) emphasis on care and social responsibility.

Finally, 70% agreed that teaching provides stable income, showing that economic considerations, while not primary, play a complementary role. This resonates with Balyer and Özcan's (2014) view of extrinsic factors such as job security, and with Ozbek's (2007) finding that teaching is chosen mainly for personal and vocational reasons within material realities.

Table 3

Personal, professional identity and values

Questions	Most Frequent response	Percentage
How do you see yourself in relation to English?	Bilingual	63
Does speaking English change your cultural identity?	No, my cultural identity does not change because I speak English.	75
How important is Spanish compared to English in your life?	Both are equally important, each in its context.	70
Which values are most important for an English teacher?	Patience, empathy, respect, responsibility, honesty.	80

The data shed light on how students construct their linguistic identity and perceive their role as future English teachers. A total of 63% identified as bilingual, suggesting a self-perception that goes beyond the functional use of English and reflects an emerging dual linguistic and cultural identity, consistent with Beijaard et al.'s (2004) view of professional identity as

the integration of personal experiences and self-definitions.

At the same time, 75% stated that their cultural identity remains unchanged despite speaking English. This reflects the principle of additive bilingualism, where learning a new language enriches rather than replaces the mother tongue (García & Wei, 2014), and supports Byram's (1997) idea of intercultural competence as the ability to engage with other languages and cultures without erasing local belonging.

Moreover, 70% considered Spanish and English equally important, highlighting a multilingual perspective in which languages coexist and serve different communicative purposes depending on context. This finding resonates with Norton's (2013) argument that identity in language learning is dynamic and negotiated within sociocultural environments.

Finally, 80% emphasized patience, empathy, respect, responsibility, and honesty as the most important values for English teachers. This reflects a strong ethical dimension in students' understanding of the profession, aligning with Sockett's (1993) conception of the teacher as a moral agent and Biesta's (2020) view of education as a relational and humanistic practice grounded in care and responsibility.

Table 4
Social prestige of English and the profession

Question	Most Frequent Response	Percentage
To what extent can English teachers influence how society views the language?	A lot, because they are role models in language learning	80
Do you think speaking English gives you social advantage or prestige in Ecuador?	Yes, definitely	80
Do you think society sees English teachers in a positive way?	No, they don't get enough recognition	50

The data in Table 4 reveal students' perceptions of the symbolic power of English and the social role of English teachers in Ecuador. A total of 80% of respondents stated that English teachers strongly influence how society views the language, mainly because they are perceived as role models in language learning. This view supports Bourdieu's (1991) notion of linguistic capital, where educators function as agents who legitimize and transmit socially valued practices.

Likewise, 80% of participants reported that speaking English provides social advantage or prestige in Ecuador, reinforcing the idea of English as a marker of distinction and upward mobility in globalized societies (Phillipson, 1992; Ricento, 2006). These perceptions mirror national and international discourses that associate English with educational, professional, and technological opportunities.

In contrast, only 50% of respondents believed that society views English teachers positively, with the other half suggesting that they receive insufficient recognition. This gap between the prestige attributed to the language and the undervaluation of those who

teach it illustrates a sociocultural paradox: while English is highly esteemed, the teaching profession lacks adequate appreciation. Such concerns echo Santoyo et al. (2021), who note the disconnection between policies promoting English and the limited support and visibility granted to educators.

Table 5
Educational path and aspirations

Question	Most Frequent Response	Percentage
Which language(s) do you use most in daily life?	Spanish	80
Would you like to keep specializing in English teaching after graduation?	Yes, I want to pursue a master's or a doctorate in the field.	50
How satisfied are you with choosing to be an English teacher?	Very Satisfied	80

The results in Table 5 provide insight into students' linguistic practices, professional aspirations, and satisfaction with their career choice. A total of 80% reported using Spanish most frequently in daily life, reflecting the sociolinguistic context of Ecuador, where Spanish remains the dominant language, even as students pursue professional training in English (Grosjean, 2010).

Half of the participants (50%) expressed interest in pursuing postgraduate studies in English teaching, such as a master's or doctoral degree. This indicates an emerging academic ambition among future educators and reflects growing awareness of the importance of continuous professional development, in line

with the principles of lifelong learning (Day, 1999; Flores, 2020).

Finally, 80% stated that they were very satisfied with their decision to become English teachers. This finding reinforces the role of intrinsic motivation and personal fulfillment as key drivers of vocational choice, supporting Kyriacou and Coulthard's (2000) view that satisfaction derives from both the perceived value of teaching and the sense of professional purpose it provides.

Overall, these results portray a student population that remains linguistically rooted in its native language while also aspiring to academic growth and expressing a strong positive connection to its chosen career.

Discussion and conclusions

The results of this study reveal that, despite the structural and social challenges associated with the teaching profession, the choice to become an English teacher among undergraduate students at a public university in Ecuador is largely guided by intrinsic motivations. The most recurrent determinants were passion for the language (90%) and vocational autonomy (80%), underscoring that career choice is primarily self-directed rather than externally imposed. This finding directly addresses the first research question, showing that sociocultural factors—such as the prestige attributed to English and perceptions of teaching as a stable profession—interact with strong personal motivations in shaping students' decisions. In contrast, Espinoza et al. (2022), in a study at Santa Elena University, found that family expectations also influenced vocational choice, suggesting that while intrinsic motivations predominate in this case, external pressures may be more decisive in other Ecuadorian contexts.

With regard to the second research question, the study demonstrates that future English teachers construct their professional identity in dynamic and negotiated ways. Sixty-three percent identified as bilingual, and 70% valued English and Spanish as equally important,

reflecting an additive approach to bilingualism (García & Wei, 2014) and an intercultural positioning consistent with Norton's (2013) view of identity as socially constructed and Byram's (1997) concept of intercultural competence. Students' perception of themselves as both language instructors and cultural mediators illustrates how they negotiate local and global perspectives within their educational trajectories.

The results also highlight the centrality of ethical and deontological principles in students' professional self-conception. Eighty percent emphasized empathy, respect, responsibility, and honesty as core values, reinforcing Sockett's (1993) view of teachers as moral agents and Biesta's (2020) notion of education as a relational and ethical practice. Likewise, the high level of satisfaction with their career choice (80%) and the aspiration to pursue postgraduate studies (50%) reflect resilience, intrinsic commitment, and long-term professional ambition, supporting Day's (1999) and Kyriacou and Coulthard's (2000) findings on the link between motivation, identity, and continuous development.

Overall, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of teacher education in Ecuador by showing how personal motivations, sociocultural determinants, and ethical values converge in the decision to become an English teacher. It also highlights the paradox of English in the Ecuadorian context: while the language is highly valued for its symbolic and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Phillipson, 1992), the teaching profession does not always receive equivalent recognition, as also noted by Santoyo et al. (2021).

Nevertheless, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted at a single public university, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. In addition, although the questionnaire was reviewed by peers for clarity and relevance, no statistical validation or pilot testing was carried out due to the exploratory scope of the research. Future studies should expand to other institutions, apply complementary qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and examine how motivations

evolve over the course of teacher education programs.

In practical terms, the findings suggest the need to design teacher education policies and programs that not only reinforce intrinsic motivation but also address sociocultural challenges, provide greater recognition to the profession, and integrate ethical and intercultural dimensions into teacher preparation. By doing so, English teaching in Ecuador can be affirmed not only as a professional path but also as a vocation rooted in responsibility, social engagement, and a vision of education as a transformative practice for equity and collective well-being.

Bibliographic References

- Alonso Sáez, M., Lobato Fraile, M., & Arandia Loroño, M. A. (2015). La identidad profesional docente como clave para el cambio en la educación superior. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 26(1), 55–73. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_RCED.2015.v26.n1.42366
- Amengual Pizarro, M., & García Laborda, J. (2017). Choosing Teaching English as a Profession in Primary Education Contexts. *Online Submission*, 32(2), 121–133.
- Balyer, A., & K. Özcan. (2014). “Choosing Teaching Profession as a Career: Students’ Reasons.” *International Education Studies* 7 (5): 104–115. doi:10.5539/ies.v7n5p104.
- Barahona, M. (2014). Pre-service teachers’ beliefs in the context of a professional development program. *Profile: Issues in Teachers’ Professional Development*, 16(1), 33–42.
- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 175–189.
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers’ professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 107–128.
- Beltman, S., Glass, C., Dinham, J., Chalk, B., & Nguyen, B. (2015). Drawing identity: Beginning pre-service teachers’ professional identities. *Issues in Educational Research*, 25(3), 225–245.
- Bergmark, U., Lundström, S., Manderstedt, L., & Palo, A. (2018). Why become a teacher? Student teachers’ perceptions of the teaching profession and motives for career choice. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(3), 266–281.
- Biesta, G. (2020). *World-centred education: A view for the present*. Routledge.
- Block, D. (2007). Second language identity. In T. McNamara & C. Roever (Eds.), *Language testing: The social dimension* (pp. 162–178). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bonder, G. (2003). *Las brechas de género en el acceso, uso y apropiación de las TIC*. CEPAL.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.
- British Council. (2015). *English in Colombia: An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors*. <https://www.britishcouncil.org>
- Bruinsma, M. F., & Canrinus, E. T. (2012). The factors influencing teaching (FIT)-choice scale in a Dutch teacher education program. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 40 (3), 249–269.
- Burns, A. (2022). Key themes and future directions in language teacher education. In Garton, S. & Graves, K. (Eds.), *International perspectives on teacher education in ELT* (pp. 203–219). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Butcher, J., & Lewis, E. (2002). Why not teaching? Senior students have their say. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Brisbane. Dec. 1–5.
- Cambra, J. (2011). *Código Deontológico para el ejercicio de la Profesión Docente*. Aprobado por la Junta General del Colegio Oficial de Doctores y Licenciados en Filosofía y Letras en

- Ciencia de Cataluña el 28 de septiembre de 2011: España.
- Cárdenas, M. L. (2016). Teacher professional development in Colombia: The case of English language teachers. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 21(2), 171–187.
- Cattley, G. (2007). Emergence of professional identity for the pre-service teacher. *International Education Journal*, 8(2), 337–347.
- Clarke, M., Hyde, A., & Drennan, J. (2012). Professional identity in higher education. In *The academic profession in Europe: New tasks and new challenges* (pp. 7–21). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Coulthard, M., & Kyriacou, C. (2002). Does teaching as a career offer what students are looking for? In I. Menter, M. Hutchings, & A. Ross (Eds.), *The Crisis in Teacher Supply. Research and strategies for retention*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.
- Day, C. (1999). *Developing teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning*. Falmer Press.
- Day, C. (2020). *The passion of teaching and the power of teachers: The challenges of educational reform*. Routledge.
- Díaz, M. (2018). El capital cultural y las trayectorias educativas: Aportes para una sociología crítica de la educación. *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos*, 48(3), 79–99.
- Erten, I. H. (2014). Understanding the Reasons behind Choosing to Teach English as a Foreign Language. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 8(1), 30–44. *European Educational Research Journal*. 3 (1), 49–76.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- González Monteagudo, J., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2011). Lenguas, poder y migraciones: Una perspectiva crítica. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, 55(2), 1–16.
- Gore, J., Holmes, K., Smith, M., & Fray, L. (2015). Investigating the factors that influence the choice of teaching as a first career. A Report commissioned by the Queensland College of Teachers. Australia: University of Newcastle.
- Henkel, M. (2000). *Academic identities and policy change in higher education*. London: Kings-ley.
- Hoveid, M. & Hoveid, H. (2004) On the possibilities of educating active reflective teachers.
<http://712educators.about.com/od/teacherresources/tp/teachergood.htm>
- Izadinia, M. (2013). A review of research on student teachers' professional identity. *British educational research journal*, 39(4), 694–713.
- Kayi-Aydar, H. (2019). Language teacher identity. *Language Teaching*, 52(3), 281–295.
- Klassen, R. M., & Chiu, M. M. (2010). Teachers' job commitment and intention to quit: Impacts of career stage, self-efficacy, job stress, and teaching context. In *revision with Contemporary Educational Psychology*.
- Knoblauch, D., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2008). "Maybe I can teach those kids." The influence of contextual factors on student teachers' efficacy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 166–179.
- Knobloch, L. K. (2005). Evaluating a contextual model of responses to relational uncertainty increasing events: The role of intimacy, appraisals, and emotions. *Human Communication Research*, 3(1), 60–101.
- Kyriacou, C., & Benmansour, N. (1999). Motivation to become a teacher of a foreign language. *Language Learning Journal*, 19(1), 69–72.
- Lawver, R. G., & Torres, R. M. (2011). Determinants of Pre-Service Students' Choice to Teach Secondary Agricultural Education. *Journal Agricultural Education*, 52(1), 61–71.
- Lizasoain, A. (2021). Perfil del profesor de inglés en Chile: quién es y qué enseña. *Educación*, 57(1), 0189–205.

- Lovón, M. (2023). La necesidad de decolonialismo lingüístico sobre el subtítulo en inglés. *Texto livre*, 16, e41785.
- Manuel, J., & Hughes, J. (2006). It has always been my dream: Exploring pre-service teachers' motivations for choosing to teach. *Teacher Development*, 10 (1), 5-24.
- Martínez, M., & Lucero, B. (2020). Educación rural y formación docente: Una mirada desde la equidad. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, (78), 83-106.
- Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. (2022). Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo 2022-2025. Quito: Ministerio de Educación.
- Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. (2016). *Programa Nacional de Inglés 2016-2025*. Quito: Ministerio de Educación.
- Mogollón, M. Y. O. (2022). PRINCIPIOS DEONTOLÓGICOS PARA UNA EFECTIVA LABOR GERENCIAL DEL DIRECTIVO DOCENTE. TRABAJO DE GRADO DE MAESTRÍA.
- Moscovici, S. (2000). Social representations: Explorations in social psychology. Polity Press.
- Norton, B. (2013). Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Nymark, J. (2024). LA LENGUA, MÁS QUE COMUNICACIÓN. *Revista Ñeñe*, 2(1), 14-24.
- Octavia, S. A. (2020). Sikap dan kinerja guru profesional.
- Ozbek, R. (2007). Ogretmen Adaylarının Ogretmenlik Meslegini Tercih etmelerinde Kisisel, Ekonomik ve Sosyal Faktorlerin Etkililik Dercesine Iliskin Algilari. *Firat Universitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 17(1), 145-159 [In Turkish].
- Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (2016). Teacher identity in language teaching: Integrating personal, contextual, and professional factors. *RELC journal*, 47(1), 5-23.
- Pérez, A., & López, J. (2022). Aplicación de la teoría de la autodeterminación en la formación docente. *Ciencia Latina*, 6(1), 112-130. <https://ciencialatina.org/index.php/cienciala/article/download/14924/21242>
- Pérez, M. Q. (2024). El inglés como lingua franca de la ciencia en relación con la lengua española: perspectivas desde el campo de la astrofísica. *Epos: Revista de filología*, (40), 179-205.
- Quintana, O. (2016). Deontología del docente, formador de formadores, en el subsistema de Educación universitaria, en su rol investigador. *Revista ARJÉ*, 10, 19.
- Ralston Saul, J. (1992) *Voltaire's bastards: the dictatorship of reason in the West* (New York, The Free Press).
- Richards, J. C. (2017). Teaching English through English: Proficiency, pedagogy and professionalism. *RELC Journal*, 48(1), 7-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690059>
- Richardson, P. W., & Watt, H. M. G. (2010). Current and future directions in teacher motivation research. In T. C. Urdan & S. A. Karabenick (Eds.), *The decade ahead: Applications and contexts of motivation and achievement* (pp. 139-173). Bingley: Emerald. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ama>
- Sachs, J. (2005). Teacher education and the development of professional identity: learning to be a teacher 1. In *Connecting policy and practice* (pp. 5-21). Routledge.
- Santoyo, G. B., Huerta, E. A. R., & Bernal, J. M. G. (2021). La importancia e influencia del idioma inglés dentro del campo científico. *Revista Lengua y Cultura*, 3(5), 46-51.
- See, B. H., Munthe, E., Ross, S. A., Hitt, L., & El Soufi, N. (2022). Who becomes a teacher and why?. *Review of Education*, 10(3), e3377.
- Shulman, L. S. (2005). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52-59.

- Tataroglu, B., Ozgen, K., & Alkan, H. (1998). Matematik ogretmen adaylarinin ogretmenligi tercih nedenleri vebeklentileri. 2nd International Conference on New Trends in Education and Their Implications, Siyasal Kitabevi, Antalya-Turkey, April 27-29, 998-1006.
- Tenti Fanfini, E. (2005). La condición docente: análisis comparado de la Argentina, Brasil, Perú y Uruguay.
- Tenti Fanfani, E. (2009). El oficio de docente: Vocación, trabajo y profesión en el siglo XXI. Siglo XXI Editores.
- Timošćuk, I., & Ugaste, A. (2010). Student teachers' professional identity. Teaching and teacher education, 26(8), 1563-1570.
- UNESCO. (2016). *Docentes en América Latina y el Caribe: realidad y desafíos*. UNESCO, Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe.
- UNESCO. (2020). Informe de seguimiento de la educación en el mundo 2020: Inclusión y educación: Todos y todas sin excepción. Recuperado de <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374817>
- Universidad Católica Benedicto XVI. (s.f.). Código deontológico del docente [Presentación]. Scribd. <https://es.scribd.com/presentation/602391323/CODIGO-DEONTOLOGICO-DEL-DOCENTE>
- Urrego, L. C. M. (2024). La Competencia Intercultural en la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera. Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar, 8(2), 4843-4860.
- Vergara, K., Romero, I. R. C., & Solórzano, R. J. P. (2023). Factors that Influence Major Choice of Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Students at Santa Elena University, Ecuador: *Latam: revista latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 4(2), 127.
- Villanueva, J. (2006). La filosofía y la formación docente hacia la construcción y consolidación de una praxis educativa más consciente, crítica y participativa. Laurus, 12(Ext), 206-235.
- Watt, H. M. G., & Richardson, P.W. (2008). Motivations, perceptions, and aspirations concerning teaching as a career for different types of beginning teachers. Learning and Instruction, 18, 408e428.
- Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the Connections Between Campus Courses and Field Experiences in College- and University-Based Teacher Education. Journal of Teacher Education, 61(1-2), 89-99.