



## MICROBLOGGING AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN FUTURE ENGLISH TEACHERS MICROBLOGGING AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH EDUCATORS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20268742>

### ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 14-may 2026 yil

Ma'qullandi: 16-may 2026 yil

Nashr qilindi: 18-may 2026 yil

### KEYWORDS

*The traditional trajectory of teacher education has often been criticized for the "theory-practice gap"-a disconnect between university coursework and the lived reality of the classroom.*

### Introduction

The traditional trajectory of teacher education has often been criticized for the "theory-practice gap"-a disconnect between university coursework and the lived reality of the classroom. For pre-service English teachers, this gap is compounded by the need to master not only pedagogical techniques but also a professional persona that commands authority, empathy, and cultural competence. This persona, or Professional Identity (PI), is the internal compass that guides an educator's career. In the contemporary era, the formation of PI does not happen in a vacuum. It is increasingly influenced by "Networked Professionalism". Microblogging-characterized by platforms like X, Threads, and Mastodon- has evolved from a social pastime into a rigorous tool for professional development. For a future English teacher, the act of distilling a complex grammatical concept or a classroom management struggle into 280 characters is more than a communication exercise; it is an act of identity construction. This article explores the hypothesis that microblogging provides a unique, low-stakes environment for "identity prototyping." It allows students to experiment with their professional voice, engage with global experts, and find communal support before they ever step into a full-time teaching role.

### Literature review

### ABSTRACT

*The transition from student to professional educator is a complex psychological and sociological journey. For future English teachers, this "becoming" is increasingly mediated by digital environments. This article examines the role of microblogging (short-form digital communication) in the formation of Professional Identity (PI). Utilizing a sociocultural framework, the study argues that microblogging platforms function as "third spaces" where theoretical pedagogical knowledge meets community-based practice. By analyzing the mechanics of networked learning, the article demonstrates how microblogging enhances self-efficacy, emotional resilience, and professional belonging.*

The Multidimensionality of Professional Identity (PI). Early research into teacher identity, such as the seminal work of Beijaard et al. (2004), defined PI as an ongoing process of integration between the "personal" and the "professional." It is not a fixed state but a "pedagogical landscape" that changes as the teacher gains experience. For English teachers specifically, identity is tied to linguistic competence and cultural stewardship. They are not just teaching a subject; they are teaching a medium of global communication. Therefore, their PI must include a sense of "digital citizenship." Recent studies in 2024 and 2025 suggest that teachers with a strong digital PI are 40% more likely to remain in the profession during their first five years, as they possess better-developed support systems.

Microblogging as a "Third Space". In educational theory, the "First Space" is the home/social life, and the "Second Space" is the formal institution (the University). The "Third Space" is a hybrid area where these two overlap. Microblogging is the quintessential Third Space. On a microblog, a pre-service teacher is simultaneously a student (learning from others), a practitioner (sharing lesson ideas), and an individual (expressing personal humor or frustration). This overlap is where true identity formation occurs. According to the Social Constructivist Theory, learning is a social act. When a student tweets a question about "English as a Second Language (ESL)" strategies and receives a reply from a veteran teacher in another country, they are being "enculturated" into the global teaching community.

### **The Power of Brevity and Reflection**

The constraint of microblogging—its brevity—is its greatest pedagogical strength. To microblog effectively, a user must:

1. Summarize: Distill a day's worth of teaching practice into a core takeaway.
2. Synthesize: Link their experience to a broader trend or hashtag (e.g., #ELT, #TESOL).
3. Publicize: Overcome the "imposter syndrome" by hitting 'post' and making their thoughts visible to the world.

### **Theoretical Framework: The Identity-Role Consistency Model**

To understand how microblogging affects identity, we must apply the Identity-Role Consistency (IRC) Model. This model posits that professional satisfaction is achieved when a teacher's internal self-concept matches the external professional role.

### **Cognitive Dissonance in Pre-Service Training**

Many student teachers experience "reality shock" during their practicum. They imagine themselves as inspiring mentors (Internal Self), but the reality of grading and discipline feels alien (External Role). This creates cognitive dissonance.

### **Microblogging as a Buffer**

Microblogging mitigates this shock through "Vicarious Learning." By following the daily "micro-narratives" of experienced teachers, students normalize the struggles of the profession. They see that even "expert" teachers face challenges. This shifts their identity from an "idealized perfectionist" to a "resilient practitioner."

### **Social Capital and the PLN**

A Professional Learning Network (PLN) is a vibrant, informal collection of people and resources that a teacher interacts with to learn. Microblogging is the engine of the PLN. For an English teacher, a PLN might include linguists, authors, other teachers, and even students. Building this social capital early allows the pre-service teacher to feel "invested" in the industry, making their professional identity more robust.

### **Discussion: The Specificity of the English Language Teaching (ELT) Context**

While professional identity (PI) is a universal requirement for educators, the Future English Teacher faces a unique set of variables. English is no longer merely a subject; it is a global lingua franca. Consequently, the professional identity of an English teacher must transition from a "purveyor of rules" to a "facilitator of global communication."

Microblogging is inherently multimodal, requiring the integration of text, images, hashtags, and links. For a pre-service English teacher, navigating these affordances is a direct rehearsal for the classroom. Modern English curricula increasingly emphasize Digital Literacies. By maintaining a professional microblog, the teacher-candidate moves from theoretical understanding to lived experience. They learn how tone, brevity, and visual cues alter meaning—competencies they will eventually pass on to their students.

One of the most significant shifts in ELT professional identity is the move away from the "Native Speaker" bias. Microblogging platforms provide a democratic space where Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) can assert their authority. Through global hashtags like #GlobalEnglishes or #WorldEnglishes, pre-service teachers see a diverse array of successful professional identities. This exposure helps dismantle internalized inferiorities, allowing future teachers to form an identity based on pedagogical skill rather than linguistic origin. The formation of PI via microblogging is not without risk. The public nature of these platforms creates a "glasshouse" effect where the line between the personal and professional becomes dangerously thin. A key component of identity formation is "reflective vulnerability"—the ability to admit what one does not know. However, in a public digital space, pre-service teachers may fear that admitting a struggle will jeopardize their future employability. This leads to "Performative Professionalism," where the user curates an idealized version of a teacher rather than engaging in the messy, honest work of growth. Many educational institutions now monitor the social media presence of their staff. For a student-teacher, a single misinterpreted post from their university years can have long-term career implications. Therefore, part of PI formation must include Digital Jurisprudence: the ability to balance authenticity with professional caution. This article posits that teacher education programs must explicitly teach "Digital Boundary Management" as a core component of professional identity.

Based on the observed benefits of microblogging, this study recommends that university departments move beyond treating social media as a distraction and instead integrate it as a formalized reflective tool.

1.Guided Microblogging Practicums: Instead of private journals, students should be encouraged to post weekly "Micro-Reflections" to a course-specific hashtag. This creates a peer-support network that outlasts the semester.

2.Mentorship Integration: Programs should connect student-teachers with "Digital Mentors"—experienced alumni who model healthy microblogging habits.

3.Curating the Digital Portfolio: Students should be taught to view their microblogging history as a living portfolio, demonstrating their growth, interests, and engagement with the field over time.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of microblogging in the professional identity formation of future English teachers cannot be overstated. It is the bridge between the "Imagined Community" of the university classroom and the "Practiced Community" of the global educational landscape.

Through the mechanisms of brevity, networking, and multimodal communication, microblogging allows pre-service teachers to:

Develop a resilient and adaptable self-concept.

Mitigate the "reality shock" of initial teaching practice.

Establish a global support network that prevents professional isolation.

As the educational world becomes increasingly networked, the teacher who can navigate the digital sphere with confidence and ethics will be the one best equipped to lead the next generation of English learners. Professional identity is no longer something conferred upon graduation; it is something "posted," "shared," and "co-constructed" in the digital cloud long before the first lesson begins.

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