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A Descriptive Content Analysis of Bibliometric Analyses of SSCI-Indexed Language and Linguistics Journals

SSCI Dizinli Dil ve Dilbilim Dergilerinin Bibliyometrik Analizleri Üzerine Betimsel İçerik Analizi

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ABSTRACT
Despite a growing number of bibliometric studies in various disciplines, there is a lack of consolidated analysis focusing on SSCI-indexed language and linguistics journals. Through a descriptive content analysis approach, this study offers a panorama of bibliometric research on SSCI-indexed language and linguistics journals. Specifically, it addresses the frequently analyzed journals, the metrics used in these studies, publication trends over the years, bibliometric differences between high- and low-impact journals, and institutional/geographical distribution of authors. Consequently, it intends to reveal under-researched journals and relevant bibliometric trends that warrant further bibliometric attention. To this end, 629 relevant journals were identified using a SCImago search. Two hundred twenty-four were validated for SSCI-indexation through the Web of Science (WoS) Master Journal List. After establishing the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a keyword query was performed using the WoS Core Collection. Results indicated 18 bibliometric studies analyzing 20 journals between 1984 and 2023. Commonly used metrics showed similarities, albeit five studies with individual foci (e.g., methodological characteristics and impact factor). Most studies were multiple-authored publications, with 33.33% international collaboration. The annual scientific production peaked in 2022 and 2023 despite long-lasting stagnation and fluctuations. The bibliometrically analyzed journals had varied impact factors. Geographical distribution showed U.S. and Chinese dominance, followed by Spain. Analyses suggest a vast literature gap in bibliometric mapping of language and linguistics journals. Altogether, this analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of bibliometric practices and their implications for research evaluation in language and linguistics.

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Introduction

Bibliometric analysis has manifested as a significant method for examining research output, author collaboration, and scholarly influence across disciplines in academic evaluation environments. Grounded in informetrics and scientometrics (Bawden & Robinson, 2012; Leydesdorff & Milojević, 2015), this method occupies a central place in understanding the dynamics of scientific communication through such metrics as citation counts, co-authorship networks, and keyword trends (Donthu et al., 2021; Passas, 2024). Although bibliometric methods have gained traction in fields such as business (Donthu et al., 2020) and education (Dao et al., 2023), their application in language and linguistics—particularly concerning SSCI-indexed

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journals—remains fragmented and underexplored. The Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), managed by Clarivate Analytics, curates over 3,500 journals across various disciplines, including 629 in language and linguistics as of 2023 (Clarivate Analytics, 2024; SCImago Journal & Country Rank, 2024). These journals represent the most visible and impactful research in the field, yet there is no consolidated understanding of how they have been bibliometrically analyzed over time.

To date, most bibliometric studies in language and linguistics have focused on either specific topics, such as English as a medium of instruction (Wu & Tsai, 2024) and translanguaging (Xin et al., 2024) or individual journals, such as the *Computer Assisted Language Learning* (CALL) journal (Goksu et al., 2022) and the *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching* (*IRAL*) (Zhong & Liu, 2023). While informative, these efforts fall short of offering a comprehensive synthesis of which SSCI-indexed journals have been examined, what bibliometric indicators have been used, and which research areas remain underrepresented.

This study seeks to address this gap by conducting a descriptive content analysis of existing bibliometric studies focused on SSCI-indexed language and linguistics journals. It aims to identify publication trends, commonly used metrics, and the institutional and geographical distribution of research while also pinpointing neglected journals and subfields. This contributes to a more coherent understanding of bibliometric practices in the discipline and provides practical insights for researchers, journal editors, and policymakers.

In this regard, the research addresses the following research questions:

1. Which SSCI-indexed language and linguistics journals have been most frequently analyzed in bibliometric studies?
2. What are the bibliometric indicators used in these studies?
3. How have the publication trends of bibliometric studies in language and linguistics journals evolved over time?
4. What is the distribution of the citational impact of the bibliometrically analyzed journals?
5. What is the institutional and geographic distribution of the analyzed bibliometric studies?
6. Which journals or subfields are underrepresented and should be prioritized for future bibliometric research?

Literature Review

The bibliometric approach has long been used to evaluate scientific communication patterns, academic productivity, and influence (Ellegaard, 2018; Donthu et al., 2021). The development of major citation databases, including the Science Citation Index (SCI), SSCI, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), has contributed to the growth of bibliometric studies in academic evaluation (Garfield, 2007; Liao & Ma, 2018). Today, the SSCI comprises a vast and rigorously curated body of journals, accessible via the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection, with more than 11 million records (Clarivate Analytics, 2024).

The widespread adoption of tools such as Biblioshiny, CiteSpace, and VOSviewer has further facilitated the accessibility and appeal of bibliometric analysis (Donthu et al., 2021). These technologies allow researchers to visualize co-authorship patterns, keyword clusters, and citation networks with relative ease (Donthu et al., 2021; Dao et al., 2023). As a result, bibliometric methods have been employed across a range of disciplines—including business, education, and health sciences—to track research evolution, identify high-impact publications, and assess journal performance (Mukherjee et al., 2022).

In language and linguistics, however, bibliometric studies remain relatively sparse and are often limited in scope. Researchers have examined broad areas, such as applied linguistics (Lei & Liu,

2019) and second language acquisition (Zhang, 2020), niche areas such as artificial intelligence in second language teaching (Kartal & Yeşilyurt, 2024) and prosody in linguistic journals (Yan & Wu, 2024), and specific journals such as *TESOL Quarterly* (Riazi et al., 2023) and *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) Journal (Yang et al., 2023). These studies typically use indicators such as citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence, authorship, and institutional affiliation.

Despite the contributions of these individual studies, no systematic synthesis currently exists to show how bibliometric research has covered SSCI-indexed journals in language and linguistics as a whole. Additionally, inconsistencies in study design and bibliometric indicators make it difficult to generalize trends or identify gaps in coverage. For instance, specific journals may receive disproportionate attention while others are neglected, and some analyses may emphasize methodological features while others focus purely on citation metrics.

The absence of a unified framework or dataset representing the bibliometric landscape of SSCI-indexed journals in this field thus presents a clear research opportunity. A synthesis of existing studies can help identify which dimensions have been emphasized, which journals have been overlooked, and how scholarly attention is distributed geographically and institutionally. This need provides the rationale for the current study.

Method

Research Design

This study is designed as a systematic review employing the descriptive content analysis (DCA) method, one of the three primary approaches used in systematic reviews, alongside meta-synthesis and meta-analysis (Çalık & Sözbilir, 2014). Descriptive content analysis is particularly suited for synthesizing and mapping trends in existing research by systematically examining documented data (e.g., journal articles) to identify recurring patterns, themes, and methodological characteristics (Cohen et al., 2007; Selçuk et al., 2014).

Within the scope of this study, DCA is used to analyze previously published bibliometric studies focusing on SSCI-indexed journals in language and linguistics. By systematically reviewing these studies, the research aims to determine which journals have been most frequently examined, the bibliometric indicators employed, and the institutional and geographical publication trends. This method allows for a systematic yet flexible synthesis of research findings.

The suitability of DCA for this purpose is well supported in the literature. Previous research has adopted this approach to explore scholarly trends across disciplines (e.g., Birgili et al., 2021; Çevik, 2024; Kandal & Baş, 2022; Kılavuz, 2023), confirming its methodological value for capturing evolving research landscapes. Situating this study within the systematic review tradition and employing descriptive content analysis as its analytical framework, the research ensures methodological rigor and replicability while offering a comprehensive overview of bibliometric practices in the language and linguistics domain.

Database and Instrument

The study exploited Clarivate's WoS Core Collection database. Clarivate is a prominent worldwide supplier of transformative intelligence, providing enhanced data, insights, analytics, workflow solutions, and expert services in academia and government, intellectual property, life sciences, and healthcare (Clarivate Analytics, n.d.). The WoS database houses over 81 million publication records as of June 2021 (Olaleye et al., 2023). Along with Scopus, the WoS is the world's leading citation database (Zhu & Liu, 2020). It also contains 13,605 academic journals (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). In addition, the WoS database provides users with quantifiable data (e.g., article types, research areas, author profiles, and citations) on scholarly publications (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). All things considered, this study utilized the WoS database for its extensive refereed journal

coverage in social sciences and humanities (Darvish & Tonta, 2016; Steinhardt et al., 2017), user-friendly presentation of bibliometric data (Pranckutė, 2021) and common usage in bibliometric studies (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Singh et al., 2021; Stahlschmidt & Stephen, 2022).

The study employed a data classification form (a spreadsheet) developed by the researcher to extract and organize the data from the identified publications systematically. This form functioned as the data collection tool and was used to record key attributes of each bibliometric study included in the analysis. The form included the following categories: study title and authors, publication years, publication venues, bibliometric indicators used (e.g., citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence, authorship patterns), methodological characteristics (e.g., data sources, tools, analysis type), number of authors and collaboration type (national vs. international), institutional and geographical affiliations, and research focus.

The development of this classification form was informed by prior descriptive content analysis studies (Birgili et al., 2021; Kandal & Baş, 2022) and established practices in bibliometric reviews (Donthu et al., 2021; Pranckutė, 2021). The tool provided an organized framework for identifying publication trends, methodological patterns, and literature gaps. All data extracted using this tool were manually coded and entered into a spreadsheet for further analysis and synthesis.

Data Retrieval

The WoS Core Collection was selected as the primary database for data retrieval due to its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed publications in the social sciences and humanities and its widespread use in bibliometric research (Pranckutė, 2021; Steinhardt et al., 2017; Stahlschmidt & Stephen, 2022). As this study focuses on bibliometric research concerning SSCI-indexed journals in language and linguistics, the first step involved compiling a definitive list of relevant journals in the field.

To generate an initial list of journals in the "Language and Linguistics" domain, the researcher used the SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) website, a publicly accessible tool that allows users to filter journals by subject area and discipline. Although WoS is the authoritative source for SSCI-indexed journals, it does not offer a user-friendly way to filter journals strictly by subject category (e.g., "Linguistics" or "Language") in bulk. Therefore, SJR was used solely as a practical starting point to compile a preliminary list of potentially relevant journals. Previous research has also used this approach to identify subject-specific journal sets (Comel et al., 2023; Gómez et al., 2024; Vaccaro et al., 2022).

In November 2024, a search was conducted on the SJR platform using the "Linguistics and Language" subject area filter, which yielded 629 journals across four quartiles: Q1 = 248, Q2 = 162, Q3 = 123, and Q4 = 96. Recognizing the limitations of SJR in terms of SSCI validation, the complete list of 629 journals was then cross-verified using Clarivate's Web of Science Master Journal List (Clarivate Analytics, n.d.), which serves as the definitive source for indexation status.

This cross-check confirmed that 224 journals were indeed indexed in SSCI at the time of the study: Q1 = 176, Q2 = 38, Q3 = 8, and Q4 = 2. These 224 journals were used as the final sampling frame for the bibliometric study search. Following this, the researcher applied a set of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1) to identify relevant bibliometric studies within the WoS Core Collection that focused on these journals.

Table 1 *The Inclusion Criteria*

Category	Corresponding characteristic
Subject area	Language & Linguistics

Publication source	Academic journals
Indexing	SSCI
Research type	Bibliometric analysis

Accordingly, a keyword search was conducted to initiate a search in titles (i.e., the title of a journal article, proceedings paper, book, or book chapter). Due to the excessive number of journals (n=224) available for analysis, the researcher conducted the query for each journal separately using the following keyword search displayed in Table 2.

Table2 *Sample Keyword Search on the WoS Core Collection*

Search: "bibliometric*" **OR** "scientometric*" **OR** "bibliometric analysis" **OR** "scientometric analysis" **OR** "bibliometric study" **OR** "bibliometric research" **OR** "scientometric study" **OR** "scientometric research" (Title) **AND** "Communication Research" (Title) and Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) (Web of Science Index) **Date Run:** Mon Nov 11 2024 15:10:52 GMT+0300 (GMT+03:00) **Results:** 5

The researcher performed the sample search for each journal and manually sifted (Hernández-Vásquez & Rosselli, 2017) the yielded results until a publication title matched the search criteria (i.e., one of the SSCI-indexed language and linguistics journals and bibliometric analysis). In addition to the full journal titles, the abbreviated forms (e.g., *CALL* for *Computer Assisted Language* Learning and *IRAL* for *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*) were also used to warrant the inclusion of all relevant studies. Following this process, the matched studies were recorded for analysis. The search was also conducted with journal names in quotes, excluding such terms as "bibliometrics" or "bibliometric mapping." In sum, 18 bibliometric studies were acquired from the keyword search. The bibliometric indicators used in these studies, publication dates, authors' affiliations and geographic distributions, and key findings were extracted from the acquired studies that matched the criteria.

Data Analysis

The researcher exploited a combination of qualitative content analysis (Selvi, 2020), quantitative content analysis (Riffe et al., 2023) The first two analyses were performed to organize and generate descriptive statistics, while the latter was conducted in line with the predetermined themes to identify common focal points and areas that need further exploration. The researcher also employed visualization tools like RStudio's Biblioshiny app to illustrate the relationships between authorial, institutional, and geographical data.

Validity and Reliability

The study employed several strategies to ensure validity and reliability. Content validity was addressed through developing and pilot-testing a structured classification form informed by prior studies and refined based on a subset of articles (Birgili et al., 2021; Kandal & Baş, 2022). Construct validity was ensured by confirming the SSCI status of journals through the WoS Master Journal List and applying clearly defined inclusion/exclusion criteria (see Table 1). Triangulation was used by integrating qualitative, quantitative, and bibliometric visualization techniques to cross-check themes and patterns.

A systematic coding protocol was followed to ensure reliability with explicit definitions for each category in the classification form. Intra-rater reliability was checked by re-coding a sample of the articles after a two-week interval to confirm consistency. All data, coding sheets, and extracted variables were stored in structured digital archives to support transparency and replicability.

Findings

The findings are presented in accordance with the research questions: frequency and scope, trends over time, comparative insights, institutional/geographical distribution, and research gaps and future directions.

Frequency and Scope

The first research question concerns the journals whose bibliometric analyses were conducted and their scope (i.e., the bibliometric indicators included in these studies). Accordingly, the content of the relevant publications was analyzed descriptively. Findings indicated the scant presence (n=18) of bibliometric analyses of language and linguistics journals, remaining at 8.04% (among 224 journals). The journals that were bibliometrically analyzed are presented in Table 3. Beatty et al. (2012) examined *Communication Monographs* and *Human Communication Research* in the same study. Similarly, Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn's paper (2013) included two journals – *Communication Research* and the *Journal of Communication*. Accordingly, 20 language and linguistics journals were analyzed bibliometrically in 18 publications. Additional information about the journals can be found in Table 3.

Table 3 *Descriptives for the Analyzed Journals*

Journal Title	Country	Publisher	First year published	H index	Impact Factor (2023)	Issues per year	ISSN/ E-ISSN
Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences (HJBS)	USA	Sage	1979	70	1.2	4	0739-9863 / 1552-6364
Cognitive Psychology (CP)	USA	Academic Press	1970	132	3.0	8	0010-0285 / 1095-5623
Lexikos	South Africa	Buro van die Wat	1991	19	0.9	1	1684-4904 / 2224-0039
Communication Monographs (CM)	UK	Routledge	1976	84	3.1	4	0363-7751 / 1479-5787
Human Communication Research (HCR)	USA	Oxford University Press	1974	106	4.4	4	0360-3989 / 1468-2958
Communication Research (CR)	USA	Sage	1974	124	4.9	8	0093-6502 / 1552-3810
Journal of Communication (JOC)	USA	Oxford University Press	1950	162	0.7	6	0021-9916 / 1460-2466

Journal of Quantitative Linguistics (JQL)	UK	Routledge	1993	31	0.9	4	0929-6174 / 1744-5035
Porta Linguarum (PL)	Spain	Universidad de Granada	2004	21	5.0	2	1697-7467 / 2695-8244
Journal of Second Language Writing (JSLW)	USA	Pergamon	1991	105	3.3	4	1060-3743 / 1873-1422
Language Teaching Research (LTR)	New Zealand	Sage	1997	81	4.9	6	1362-1688 / 1477-0954
System	UK	Elsevier	1973	104	1.5	4	0346-251X / 1879-3282
Journal of Language, Identity, and Education (JLIE)	USA	Routledge	2002	33	3.1	6	1534-8458 / 1532-7701
Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP)	Netherlands	Elsevier	2002	75	1.8	4	1475-1585 / 1878-1497
Intercultural Pragmatics (IP)	Germany	De Gruyter Mouton	2004	47	2.2	4	612-295X / 1613-365X
Language Testing (LT)	UK	Sage	1984	83	6.0	4	0265-5322 / 1477-0946
Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)	UK	Routledge	1988	75	1.4	8	0958-8221 / 1744-3210
International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching (IRAL)	Germany	Walter de Gruyter	1963	53	3.2	4	0019-042X / 1613-4141
English for Specific Purposes (ESP)	USA	Pergamon	1981	91	1.2	4	0889-4906 / 1873-1937
TESOL Quarterly (TQ)	USA	Wiley-Blackwell	1967	122	3.0	4	0039-8322 / 1545-7249

*The H-indices are based on SCImago (https://www.scimagojr.com/), the impact factors are from the journal websites, while the other data are retrieved from the WoS Master Journal List (Clarivate, n.d.). The

first years of publication indicates the journal's first publication indexed in SSCI.

Table 3 lists the journals in order of publication year of their bibliometric analyses. The journals are published by prominent publishers (e.g., Oxford University Press, Wiley-Blackwell, Sage, and Routledge) based predominantly in the USA (n=9), followed respectively by the UK (n=5), Germany (n=2), South Africa, Spain, Netherlands, and New Zealand (n=1 each). With the first publications of journals ranging between 1963 and 2004, the oldest (1963) journal is the *IRAL*, and the youngest (2004) ones are *PL* and *IP*. The journals' publishing frequency varies from annual (e.g., *Lexikos*) to eight annual issues (e.g., *CALL* and *CR*). The h-index of a publication represents the highest number of h for which at least h articles have each been cited h times or more (Norris & Oppenheim, 2010). For instance, if a journal has an h-index of 100, it indicates the publication of 100 articles that have each received 100 or more citations. In this regard, the analyzed journals' h-indices vary between 21 and 132.

Equally, a journal impact factor indicates the average count of citations that articles from that particular journal receive over a specific timeframe (Mammola et al., 2021). As displayed in Table 3, the impact factors ranged from 0.36 to 3.53 in 2023. Further details about the relevant bibliometric studies are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 *Bibliometric Research on Language and Linguistics Journals*

Article title	**Authors**	**Publishing journal**	**Year**	**Volume**	**Issue**	**Pages**
Personal and institutional sources of manuscripts and book reviews in the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*	Caraveo-Ramos, L. E.	Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences	1984	6	1	3-11
Three decades of psychological research in the journal *Cognitive Psychology*	Mestre, V., Tortosa, F., Samper, P., & Nácher, M. J.	Psychological Reports	2003	93	3	972-982
Lexikos at Eighteen: An analysis	de Schryver, G.	Lexikos	2009	19	-	372-403
Journal impact factor or intellectual influence? A content analysis of citation use in *Communication Monographs* and *Human Communication Research* (2007–2009)	Beatty, M. J., Feeley, T. H., & Dodd, M. D.	Public Relations Review	2012	38	1	174-176
The Matilda effect—role congruity effects on scholarly communication: A citation analysis of *Communication Research* and	Knobloch-Westerwick, S., & Glynn, C. J.	Communication Research	2013	40	1	3-26

Journal of Communication articles						
Quantitative Aspects of *Journal of Quantitative Linguistics*	Chen, R., & Liu, H.	Journal of Quantitative Linguistics	2014	21	4	299-340
Bibliometric study and methodological quality ındicators of the journal *Porta Linguarum* During six-year period 2008-2013	Sabiote, C. R., & Rodríguez, J. A.	Porta Linguarum	2015	24	-	135-150
Analysis of the empirical research in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* at its 25th year (1992–2016)	Riazi, M., Shi, L., & Haggerty, J.	Journal of Second Language Writing	2018	41	-	41-54
Research in language teaching over two decades: A retrospective of the first 20 volumes of *Language Teaching Research*	Stapleton, P., & Shao, Q.	Language Teaching Research	2018	22	3	350-369
The research trends and contributions of *System*'s publications over the past four decades (1973-2017): A bibliometric analysis	Lei, L., & Liu, D.	System	2019	80	-	1-13
A systematic analysis of five years of research articles published in the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* (2015-2019)	Gao, F., & Wright, W. E.	Journal of Language, Identity & Education	2020	19	1	3--9
The contexts, theoretical and methodological orientation of EAP research: Evidence from empirical articles published in the *Journal of English for*	Riazi, A. M., Ghanbar, H., & Fazel, I.	Journal of English for Academic Purpose	2020	48	-	-

Academic Purposes						
Data collection methods applied in studies in the journal *Intercultural Pragmatics* (2004–2020): A scientometric survey and mixed corpus study	Kirner-Ludwig, M.	Intercultural Pragmatics	2022	19	4	459-487
Research trends and development patterns in *Language Testing* over the past three decades: A bibliometric study	Dong, M., Gan, C., Zheng, Y., & Yang, R.	Frontiers in Psychology	2022	13	-	-
The content analysis and bibliometric mapping of *CALL* journal	Goksu, I., Ozkaya, E., & Gunduz, A.	Computer Assisted Language Learning	2022	35	8	2018 - 2048
A bibliometric analysis of the *IRAL* over the past six decades	Zhong, X., & Liu, H.	International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching	2023	61	1	155-200
Tracing the development of *English for Specific Purposes* over four decades (1980–2019): A bibliometric analysis	Yang, R., Xu, L., & Swales, J. M.	English for Specific Purposes	2023	71	-	149-160
Review and analysis of empirical articles published in *TESOL Quarterly* over its lifespan	Riazi, A. M., Ghanbar, H., Marefat, F., & Fazel, I.	Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching	2023	13	4	811-841

All articles were multiple-authored except three (Caraveo-Ramos, 1984; de Schryver, 2009; Kirner-Ludwig, 2022). The earliest study was conducted in 1984, followed by two in 2018 and 2020, and three in 2022 and 2023. Additionally, all publications were included in different journals. However, the *CP*, *CM*, *HCR*, *LT* and *TQ*'s bibliometric analyses were not published in journals with the same titles but in others. The bibliometric indicators of the analyzed studies are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 *The Bibliometric Indicators Used in The Analyzed Studies*

Authors & years	**Analyz**	**Analyz**	**Analyzed**	**Bibliometric indicators**

	ed journal	**ed articles**	**temporal ranges**	
Caraveo-Ramos (1984)	HJBS	120	1979-1983	personal and institutional authorship
Mestre et al. (2003)	CP	565	1979-1999	research topics and authorial productivity
de Schryver (2009)	Lexikos	543	1991-2008	article frequency, language, page number, publication type, authors, affiliations, countries, and keywords
Beatty et al. (2013)	CM & HCR	579	2007-2009	citations and impact factor
Knobloch-Westerwick & Glynn (2013)	CR	1,020	1991-2005	research topic, author productivity, citations, and gender
Chen & Liu (2014)	JQL	374	1994-2013	keyword frequency, publication type, countries, authors, and affiliations
Sabiote & Rodríguez (2015)	PL	161	2008-2013	sample types, literature novelty, data collection instruments
Riazi et al. (2015)	JSLW	416	2002-2019	contexts and participants, research foci and theoretical orientations, research methodology and data sources, and pedagogical implications
Stapleton & Shao (2018)	LTR	359	1970-2015	research topics and trends (e.g., instructional effects, teacher cognition, and learner behavior)
Lei & Liu (2019)	System	1,589	1973-2017	research topics, highly cited articles, references, and authors
Gao & Wright (2020)	JLIE	114	2015-2019	word frequency, integration of language, identity, and education, research methodologies, authorship, and countries
Riazi et al. (2020)	JEAP	416	2002-2019	contexts and participants, research foci and theoretical orientations, research methodology and data sources, and pedagogical implications
Kirner-Ludwig (2022)	IP	358	2004-2020	data collection methods
Dong et al. (2022)	LT	759	1984-2020	publication frequency, frequent test types and topics, highly cited papers and authors, regional/institutional distribution, and international collaboration
Goksu et al. (2022)	CALL	310	2014-2019	keyword trends, countries, affiliations, authors, and methodological trends
Zhong & Liu (2023)	IRAL	1,214	1963-2022	frequent topics, citations, sources, references, authorship,

				h-indices, and countries/regions
Yang et al. (2023)	ESP	758	1980-2019	topic frequency, highly cited articles, references, authorship, and geographical distribution
Riazi et al. (2023)	TQ	696	1967-2019	contexts and participants, research foci and theoretical orientations, research methodology and data sources, and pedagogical implications

Although the bibliometric mapping of language and linguistics journals showed similarities in general, some differed in scope. For instance, Caraveo-Ramos (1984) examined only personal and institutional authorship. Similarly, Mestre et al. (2003) tackled research topics and authors' production. Equally, Beatty et al. (2013) analyzed the relationship between citations and the journal's impact factor. Likewise, Sabiote & Rodríguez (2015) focused only on the methodological characteristics of *PL* publications. Additionally, Kirner-Ludwig (2022) surveyed the methods for data collection in the *IP* journal. The remaining studies included similar bibliometric analyses (e.g., keyword trends, authorship, citation analyses, and geographical/institutional distribution) in their research.

Cumulative Publication Trends

The second research question dealt with the publication trends in bibliometric studies that centered on language and linguistics journals. Accordingly, the researcher used RStudio's Biblioshiny app to visualize the temporal trends of bibliometric studies of language and linguistics journals. As Figure 1 shows, 18 studies spanned between 1984 and 2023, with a 2.86% annual growth rate. A total of 41 authors used 75 keywords and 772 references in their documents. International co-authorship remained at 33.33%. Figure 1 displays the annual scientific production.

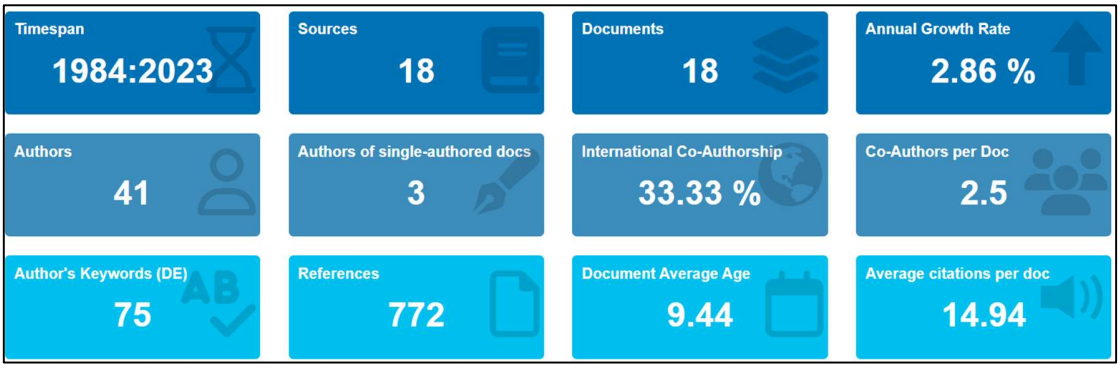

Figure 1. General publication data

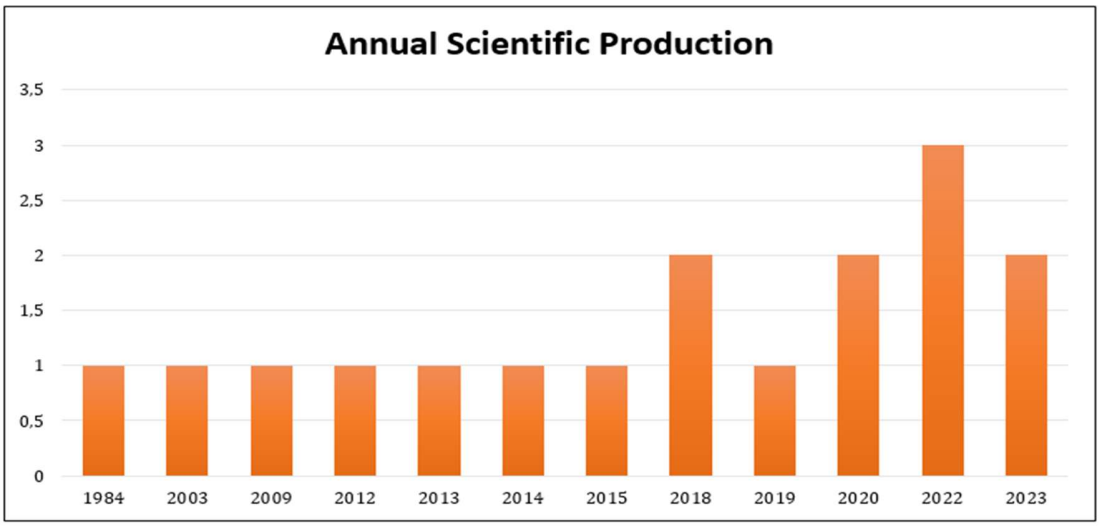

Figure 2. Annual scientific production

As Figure 2 demonstrates, bibliometric studies of language and linguistics journals started in 1984 (n=1), stagnated between 1985 and 2002, fluctuated between 2003 and 2021, peaked in 2022 and 2023 (n=3).

Comparative Insights

The third research question intended to reveal whether there were any differences in journals with higher and lower impact scores. Accordingly, h-indices, journal impact factors (JIF), journal citation indicator (JCI) metrics, and citations were analyzed descriptively and inferentially and shown in Table 6.

Table 6 *Descriptives for Impact of Journals*

Journal Title	Quartile	H index	JIF (2023)	Five-Year IF	JCI
HJBS	Q1	70	1.2	1.6	0.36
CP	Q1	132	3.0	3.3	1.10
Lexikos	Q2	19	0.9	0.7	0.42
CM	Q1	84	3.1	7.6	1.18
HCR	Q1	106	4.4	4.7	2.14
CR	Q1	124	4.9	5.9	2.14
JQL	Q1	31	0.7	1.1	2.80
PL	Q1	21	0.9	1.0	0.65
JSLW	Q1	105	5.0	5.9	2.84
LTR	Q1	81	3.3	4.3	2.07
System	Q1	104	4.9	5.5	3.08
JLIE	Q1	33	1.5	2.1	1.22
JEAP	Q1	75	3.1	3.7	2.45
IP	Q1	47	1.8	1.7	1.70
LT	Q1	83	2.2	3.4	2.05
CALL	Q1	75	6.0	6.8	3.53
IRAL	Q1	53	1.4	1.3	1.35
ESP	Q1	91	3.2	3.9	1.77
TQ	Q1	122	3.0	4.6	1.83

*Quartile & H-index: SCImago Journal Ranking; JIF & 5-year IF: Journal websites & WoS journal info; JCI: Master Journal List Clarivate

The h-index of a journal refers to the highest number of h for which at least h articles in that journal have each been cited at least h times (Costas & Bordons, 2007). For example, a journal with a h-index of 30 has published 30 articles that have been cited at least 30 times. H-indices are advantageous for objectively delineating scientific output since they combine quantity and impact measures calculated by publications and citations (Hirsch, 2005). The impact factor indicates how often articles in a journal are cited within a specific year (Larivière & Sugimoto, 2019). On the other hand, the 5-year impact factor refers to the average number of citations for articles published in the journal over the last five years (Pagani et al., 2015). Ultimately, The JCI represents the average Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI) of citable works, such as articles and reviews, published by a journal over the last three years (Crea et al., 2023). Local citation measures the frequency of citations of a document from all the articles/periodicals of a specific collection. The other instance of citation is global citation, which measures the total times any document in the collection is cited from all publications represented in the source (Batista-Canino et al., 2023).

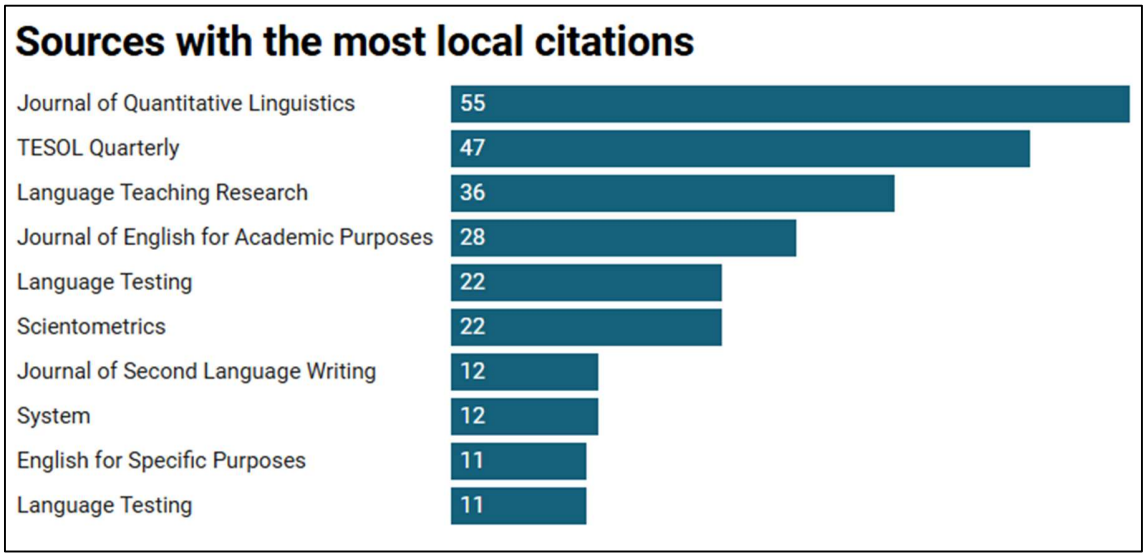

Figure 3. Sources with the most local citations

Figure 3 shows the journals cited in the 18 documents analyzed in this study. The total citations from these local sources were between 11 and 55. It is also evident that citations were received from journals with different scopes, such as Scientometrics, Language Testing, and English for Specific Purposes. These descriptive statistics also suggest the recognition of bibliometric studies from diverse academic venues.

Table 7 *Documents with the Most Global Citations*

Paper	Journal	TC	TCPY	NTC
Knobloch-Westerwick & Glynn (2013)	CR	71	5.46	1.00
Riazi et al. (2018)	JSLW	59	7.38	1.76
Lei & Liu (2019)	System	52	7.43	1.00
Riazi et al. (2020)	JEAP	16	4.00	1.92
Goksu et al. (2022)	CALL	15	2.50	1.67
Beatty et al. (2012)	Public Relations Review	11	0.79	1.00
Chen & Liu (2014)	JQL	9	0.75	1.00
Stapleton & Shao (2018)	LTR	8	1.00	0.24

Dong et al. (2022)	Frontiers in Psychology	5	1.25	0.60
De Schryver (2009)	Lexikos	5	0.29	1.00
Kirner-Ludwig (2022)	IP	4	1.00	0.48
Sabiote & Rodríguez (2015)	PL	4	0.36	1.00
Gao & Wright (2020)	JLIE	3	0.50	0.33
Zhong & Liu (2022)	IRAL	3	1.00	1.80
Mestre et al. (2003)	Psychological Reports	2	0.09	1.00
Riazi et al. (2023)	SSLLT	1	0.33	0.60
Yang et al. (2023)	ESP	1	0.33	0.60
Caraveo-Ramos (1984)	HJBS	0	0.00	-

TC: Total citations, **TCPY:** Total citations per year, **NTC:** Normalized total citations

As Table 7 shows, Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn's study (2013) received the most citations (n=71) on the WoS, followed by Riazi et al. (2018) and Lei and Liu (2019). One interesting finding was that there were no citations for the first bibliometric analysis of HJBS (Caraveo-Ramos, 1984).

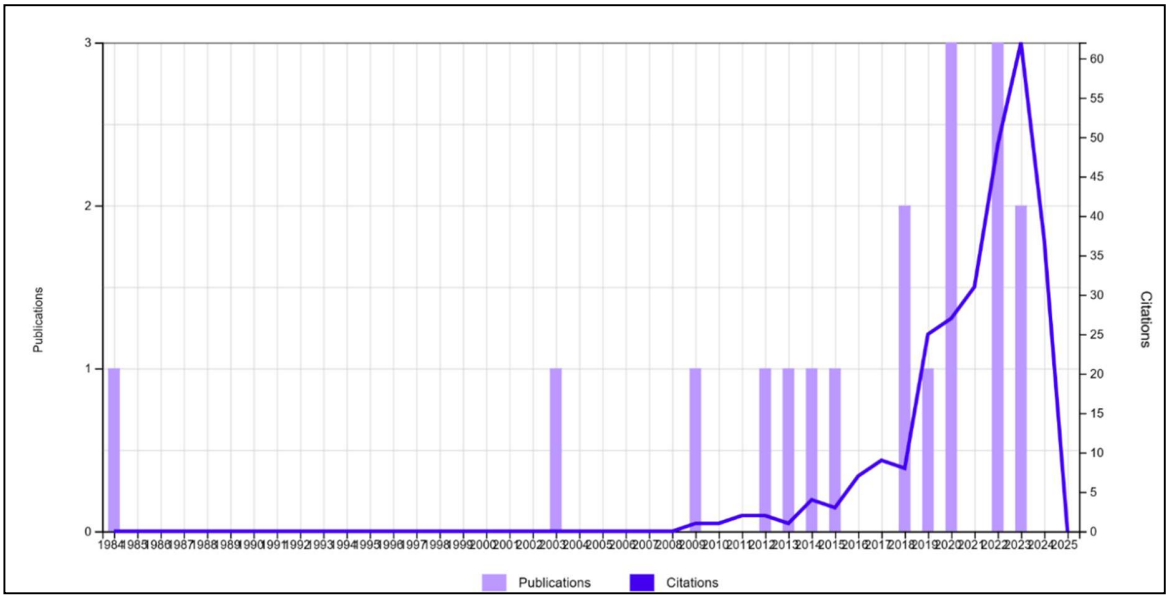

Figure 4. The overall citation counts of all 18 publications (1975-2024)

As Figure 4 displays, all publications received a total of 269 citations (257 without self-citations) from 244 articles (238 without self-citations) between 1975 and 2024. All 18 articles were cited 14.94 averagely.

Institutional and Geographical Distribution

The fourth research question sought to discover the distribution of authors' affiliations and countries. A full-count method was adopted for geographical and institutional distribution. If, for example, a paper was published by three authors, two of whom are from the same country, it was counted as one. This approach was embraced for fair distribution. As Figure 4 displays, the USA (n=6) ranked first, followed by China (n=5) and Canada (n=3). Three countries (Australia, Iran, and Spain) were represented in two publications. The remaining countries had one publication. For example, the paper with the highest citation (n=71) was published by U.S.-based authors Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn (2013). Similarly, the document with the second most citations

(n=59) was an Australian-Canadian collaboration (Riazi et al., 2018). Equally, the third most cited article (n=52) was a U.S.-Chinese collaborative study by Lei and Liu (2019).

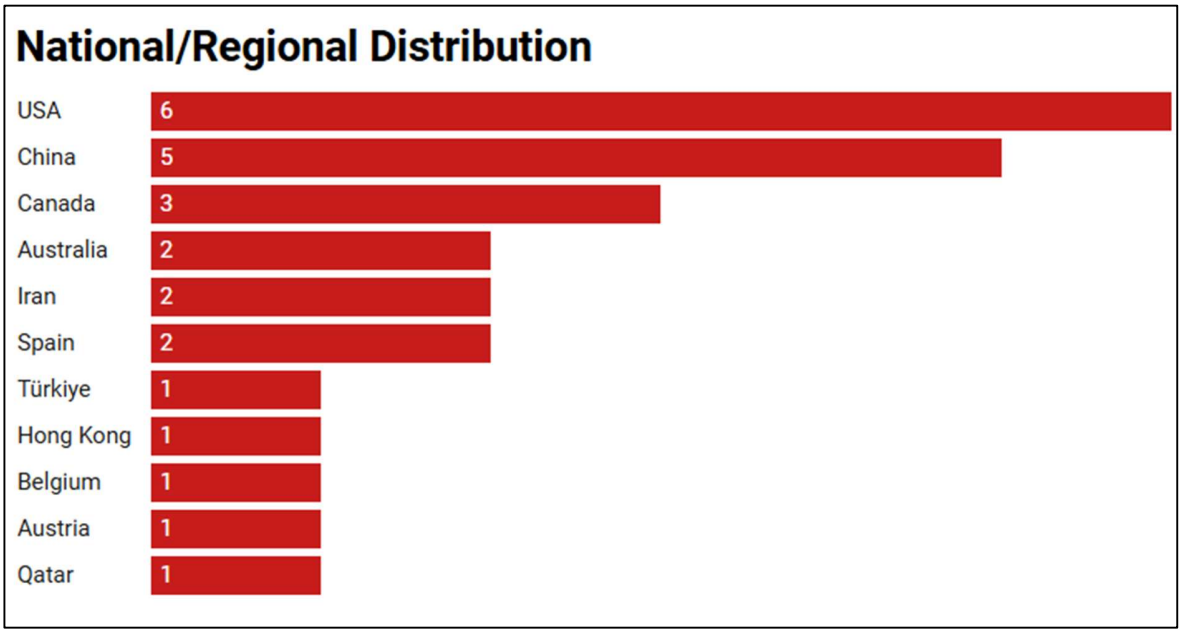

Figure 5. Geographical distribution of authors in bibliometric studies

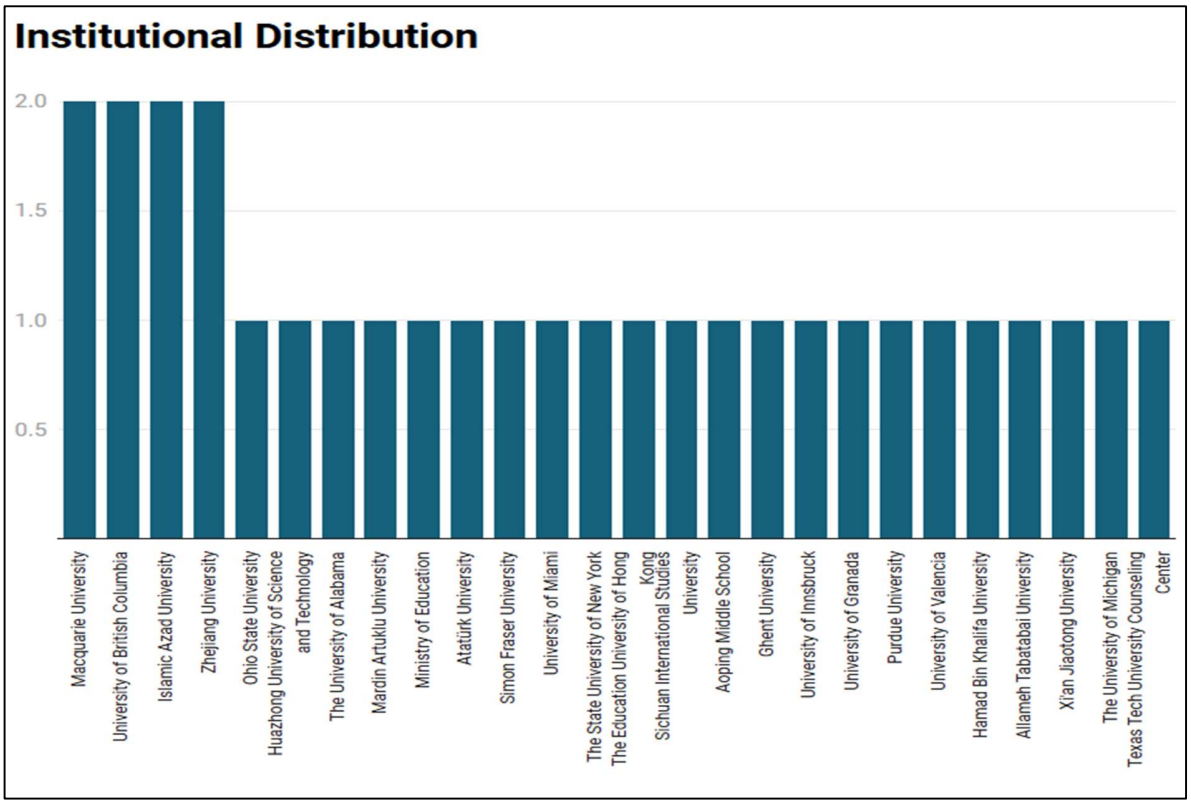

Figure 6. Institutional distribution of authors in bibliometric studies

Four institutions shared the first place in terms of academic productivity: Macquarie University (Australia), The University of British Columbia (Canada), Islamic Azad University (Iran), and Zhejiang University (China). The remaining publications were affiliated with 22 institutions. The document with the second most citations (Riazi et al., 2018), for example, involved A. Mehdi Riazi, a professor from Macquarie University at the time, currently affiliated with Hamad Bin Khalifa University. The other two authors in the same publication were Ling Shi and John Haggerty from the University of British Columbia. Co-authoring two papers (Riazi et al., 2020, 2023), Hessameddin Ghanbar is an assistant professor of applied linguistics from Islamic Azad University.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

The final research question sought to identify the gaps in the existing literature, guiding future researchers interested in conducting bibliometric analyses of journals in language and linguistics. In this context, descriptive statistics revealed a considerable research gap in the literature of bibliometric mapping of language and linguistics journals. Two-hundred and four SSCI-indexed journals in language and linguistics still await bibliometric analysis. Table 9 shows the top 30 well-known journals in different areas of language and linguistics that were not analyzed bibliometrically. The list of journals was identified based on SCImago ranking, journal scope diversity, h-indices, and impact factors.

Table 8 *Top Thirty SSCI-Indexed Journals Requiring Bibliometric Mapping*

Journal Title	Country	Publisher	H index	JIF (2023)
Language Learning	UK	Wiley-Blackwell	132	3.50
Applied Linguistics	UK	Oxford University Press	125	3.06
*Journal of Pragmatics**	Netherlands	Elsevier	120	1.80
Studies in Second Language Acquisition	UK	Cambridge University Press	115	4.20
The Modern Language Journal	USA	Wiley-Blackwell	112	4.70
Applied Psycholinguistics	UK	Cambridge University Press	101	2.40
Journal of Phonetics	UK	Academic Press	97	1.90
Reading and Writing	Netherlands	Springer Netherlands	92	2.00
Bilingualism – Language and Cognition	UK	Cambridge University Press	82	2.50
Language Teaching	UK	Cambridge University Press	79	4.00
*ELT Journal**	UK	Oxford University Press	72	3.10
Second Language Research	UK	Sage	72	1.90
ReCALL	UK	Cambridge University Press	67	4.60
Journal of Neurolinguistics	UK	Elsevier	67	1.20
Foreign Language Annals	USA	Wiley-Blackwell	65	1.50
Journal of Sociolinguistics	UK	Wiley-Blackwell	64	1.50
World Englishes	USA	Wiley-Blackwell	64	0.80
Annual Review of Applied Linguistics	UK	Cambridge University Press	62	2.08
International Journal of Applied Linguistics	UK	Wiley-Blackwell	53	1.50
International Journal of Corpus Linguistics	Netherlands	John Benjamins	53	1.60
*Assessing Writing**	UK	Elsevier	50	4.20

International Journal of Multilingualism	UK	Routledge	50	2.00
Language Awareness	UK	Taylor & Francis	49	1.50
Journal of Semantics	UK	Oxford University Press	48	2.00
RELC Journal	UK	Sage	47	3.60
Social Semiotics	UK	Routledge	41	1.60
Discourse and Communication	UK	Sage	38	2.10
Language Assessment Quarterly	USA	Routledge	36	1.40
Translation Studies	UK	Taylor & Francis	27	2.20

*H- index: SCImago; JIF: Journal websites

Table 9 shows a considerable research gap in the bibliometric mapping of the prominent journals in language and linguistics. These journals are mostly U.K., U.S., or Dutch-based and released by distinguished publishers. Also, their h-indices vary between 27 and 132, with different degrees of JIF. Some studies were conducted on the journals indicated with an asterisk in Table 9. However, they were not bibliometric studies. For instance, Anderson (2017) investigated the history of the PPP model through *ELT Journal*'s publications. Similarly, Zheng and Yu (2019) explored the content of publications (n=219) in *Assessing Writing* to reveal the evolution of writing assessments between 200 and 2018. Similar treatment was exhibited for numerous other journals, among which are *Linguistic Inquiry* (Sprouse et al., 2013), *Journal of Pragmatics* (Egbert et al., 2016), *Natural Language Engineering* (Tait & Wilks, 2019), *English in Education* (Hodgson & Wilkin, 2014), *Cognition* (Hardwicke et al., 2018), *Language Problems and Language Planning* (Li & Liu, 2013), *Language Teaching Research* (Lindstromberg, 2016), *NAMES: A Journal of Onomastics* (Nuessel, 2013), *Topics in Language Disorders* (Stark, 2010), *Ibérica* (Escudero & Swales, 2011), and *TESOL Quarterly* (Jiang & Jiang, 2023).

Researchers interested in language and linguistics might explore the research trends in the eminent journals in Table 9. Prospective scholars are reminded that the current study included bibliometric studies indexed in SSCI. Hence, language and linguistics journals (see Appendix 1 for a complete list) included or excluded in Table 9 may have been analyzed bibliometrically in journals indexed in other databases.

Discussion

The present study aimed to synthesize existing bibliometric analyses of SSCI-indexed journals in language and linguistics by revealing patterns in journal focus, methodological approaches, collaboration dynamics, and geographical trends. While bibliometric research has become increasingly popular in disciplines such as business (Donthu et al., 2021) and education (Dao et al., 2023), our findings reveal that such work remains underrepresented in language and linguistics, confirming similar concerns expressed by Wu and Tsai (2024) and Goksu et al. (2022), who noted the scarcity of bibliometric evaluations outside high-impact or technologically oriented journals.

The relatively small number of studies (n = 18) analyzing only 20 journals—out of a verified 224 SSCI-indexed journals in language and linguistics—suggests that bibliometric attention remains highly selective. Interestingly, these studies were distributed across a wide topical and regional spectrum, from applied linguistics journals such as TESOL Quarterly and IRAL to regionally rooted journals like HJBS and Lexikos. This spread contrasts with the findings of Vaccaro et al. (2022), who observed that bibliometric analyses in other disciplines tend to focus disproportionately on high-impact journals. The language and linguistics field appears more eclectic in this regard, although the overrepresentation of U.S. and U.K.-based journals may still reflect global publication hierarchies (Liu & Hu, 2024).

Regarding bibliometric indicators, the findings confirmed that most studies employed similar metrics (e.g., citations, h-index, co-authorship patterns, and institutional affiliations). Thus, they aligned with standard bibliometric practices (Donthu et al., 2021). However, methodological variations (particularly in terms of temporal ranges and document counts) suggest a lack of standardized approaches. For instance, the earliest bibliometric window began in 1963 (IRAL), while others started decades later. This inconsistency limits cross-study comparability and reinforces calls made by Pranckutė (2021) and Mongeon and Paul-Hus (2016) for more methodologically unified bibliometric reporting frameworks.

The temporal trends of bibliometric publications also reflect broader patterns in the field. After decades of inactivity, interest began increasing in the 2010s and peaked in 2022 and 2023. This mirrors the growing reliance on bibliometric indicators for research assessment worldwide (Mukherjee et al., 2022). The annual growth rate of 2.86%, though modest, supports the idea that language and linguistics is only beginning to embrace bibliometric evaluation at scale. Compared to more mature domains in bibliometric research (e.g., economics and medicine), this field still appears to be in an early developmental stage (Zhu & Liu, 2020).

Institutional and authorial data revealed a concentration of output in specific countries, particularly the USA, China, and Canada. This echoes global research output patterns across disciplines but also aligns with findings from Wu and Tsai (2024) who reported similar geographic dominance in English-medium instruction research. Notably, leading institutions such as the University of British Columbia and Zhejiang University show consistent engagement with bibliometric research. However, compared to domains like scientometrics or business analytics, language and linguistics still lacks regionally diverse bibliometric scholarship, suggesting the need for greater international collaboration.

Furthermore, while citation metrics such as JIF, five-year IF, and JCI were examined, there was no consistent pattern of selecting high-impact journals for bibliometric analysis. This suggests that researchers in this domain are not driven purely by impact factor considerations but perhaps by topical or regional relevance. Still, some highly cited studies (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick & Glynn, 2013) demonstrated wide citation visibility across WoS, Scopus, and Google Scholar, implying that bibliometric work, when done rigorously, achieves interdisciplinary recognition.

The last dimension emphasizes a pressing need for diversification. Despite their high visibility and influence, mainstay journals (e.g., Language Learning, Applied Linguistics, and System) remain underrepresented in bibliometric studies published in SSCI-indexed journals. Dao et al. (2023) observed that bibliometric neglect of high-performing journals can distort our understanding of field-wide dynamics, leading to skewed perceptions of scholarly influence and trends.

Overall, the study mapped out the bibliometric studies of journals related to language and linguistics. The content of these studies was analyzed descriptively. The results pointed to the scarcity of bibliometric research of related journals, urging for more academic ventures. Such attempts will bridge significant gaps and contribute significantly to the relevant literature by guiding researchers, journal publishers, and other specialists.

Conclusion

This study aimed to map and synthesize the existing bibliometric research conducted in SSCI-indexed journals in language and linguistics. By analyzing 18 bibliometric studies covering 20 journals, the study provided a comprehensive overview of how these journals have been examined, which indicators have been used, and which scholarly communities have contributed to this line of research.

The findings revealed that bibliometric attention to language and linguistics journals has been

limited in quantity and scope, with only 8.04% of SSCI-indexed journals analyzed in previous studies. The journals explored varied in geographic origin, scope, and impact metrics but showed no systematic pattern regarding journal selection or bibliometric focus. Most studies were authored collaboratively, reflecting a growing trend of co-authorship and international engagement. Institutional and geographical data showed dominance by U.S., Chinese, and Canadian scholars, with notable contributions from leading universities in those countries.

The overall scientific output indicates reduced consistency in bibliometric studies in the field. However, the citational activities and WoS-indexation of the reviewed journals indicate their increasing recognition and academic value.

Collectively, the results confirm that bibliometric research in language and linguistics holds substantial potential for informing scholarly assessment, journal positioning, and disciplinary trends despite its infancy. This synthesis contributes a foundational reference point for future bibliometric inquiries in the field.

Suggestions for Researchers and Practitioners and Limitations of the Research

Based on the synthesis and interpretation of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to support future bibliometric research in the field. Future bibliometric studies should include more SSCI-indexed language and linguistics journals. With 224 such journals identified, there is substantial potential for widening the scope beyond the currently analyzed 20 journals. Equally, dividing the journals into more specific sub-categories (e.g., language acquisition, applied linguistics, discourse studies, academic writing, technology-assisted language learning) would enable more precise mapping of research trends and publication behaviors within each sub-discipline. In addition to field-wide analyses, future research may benefit from detailed bibliometric investigations of individual, high-impact journals—such as *Applied Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, or *System*—to reveal shifts in editorial policy, citation impact, and thematic development.

Given the high proportion of co-authored studies in the current analysis, bibliometric scholars are encouraged to pursue national, institutional, and international collaborations. This way, they can achieve more inclusive perspectives and contribute to knowledge exchange across academic communities. Researchers should consider adopting shared frameworks for indicator selection (e.g., h-index, JIF, JCI), timeframes, and analytical tools to enhance cross-study comparability. Consistency in methodological approaches will strengthen the integrity and utility of bibliometric analyses in the field (Donthu et al., 2021; Pranckutė, 2021).

Although this study focused on the Web of Science (WoS), future work may include Scopus and Google Scholar to capture broader citation data and regional publication dynamics, especially from less frequently indexed or open-access journals. These recommendations will guide emerging and experienced researchers in developing more rigorous, representative, and methodologically sound bibliometric studies. They also offer practical insights for journal editors, policymakers, and institutions evaluating publication impact and visibility in language and linguistics.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available at https://shorturl.at/q5bME

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s)

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