A Bibliometric Analysis of the Role of Culture in English Language Teaching from 2014 to 2024

Ayşe Nesil DEMİR[1], Senem ZAİMOĞLU[2]

Abstract: The aim of this study is to analyze the role of culture in English language teaching (ELT) through a bibliometric analysis of scholarly publications indexed in Web of Science (WOS) from 2014–2024. While extensive research has explored cultural dimensions in ELT, significant gaps remain, particularly concerning the underrepresentation of marginalized communities and regions. To adress this gap, this study provides a comprehensive overview of cultural integration trends in ELT research. To achieve this, the study utilizes VOSviewer program to visualize research trends through keywords, authors, sources, and countries, while descriptive analysis explores publication patterns by year, country, and institution. The findings indicate that 2024 was the most productive year with 149 publications, underscoring the growing prominence of cultural integration in ELT research. Key contributors include the United States, China, and European countries, reflecting interdisciplinary collaborations. Building on these insights, the study identifies influential authors such as Michael Byram and Claire Kramsch, whose contributions have been pivotal in advancing intercultural competence and cultural dimensions within ELT. Furthermore, co-citation and co-occurrence analyses highlight dominant concepts such as "culture," "intercultural competence," and "critical thinking," emphasizing ELT's multifaceted nature across educational, psychological, and technological domains. In light of these findings, the study underscores the need for a more inclusive research agenda to foster equitable and culturally responsive practices in ELT. By addressing these gaps, this study provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers, stressing the importance of integrating cultural awareness into pedagogy to promote inclusive and globally relevant education.

Keywords: culture, English language teaching, bibliometric

2014'ten 2024'e İngilizce Öğretiminde Kültürün Rolüne İlişkin Bibliyometrik Bir Analiz

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı, 2014-2024 yılları arasında Web of Science (WOS) veri tabanında dizinlenmiş akademik yayınların bibliyometrik analizini yaparak İngilizce Dil Öğretimi (İDÖ)'nde kültürün rolünü incelemektir. İDÖ alanında kültürel boyutlar üzerine kapsamlı araştırmalar yapılmış olsa da, özellikle dezavantajlı topluluklar ve bölgelerin yeterince temsil edilmediği önemli boşluklar bulunmaktadır. Bu boşluğu gidermek amacıyla, çalışma İDÖ araştırmalarındaki kültürel entegrasyon eğilimlerine kapsamlı bir bakış sunmaktadır. Bu amaca ulaşmak için çalışma, araştırma eğilimlerini anahtar kelimeler, yazarlar, kaynaklar ve ülkeler üzerinden görselleştirmek amacıyla VOSviewer programını kullanmaktadır. Ayrıca

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betimsel analiz yöntemiyle yayınların yıl, ülke ve kurum bazındaki dağılımları incelenmektedir. Bulgular, 2024 yılının 149 yayınla en verimli yıl olduğunu ortaya koymuş ve bu durum İDÖ araştırmalarında kültürel entegrasyonun artan önemini gözler önüne sermiştir. Çalışmaya en fazla katkı sağlayan ülkeler arasında Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Çin ve çeşitli Avrupa ülkeleri yer almakta olup bu durum disiplinlerarası iş birliğinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu bulgulara dayanarak, çalışma, İDÖ'de kültürlerarası yeterlilik ve kültürel boyutların gelişiminde Michael Byram ve Claire Kramsch gibi etkili yazarların öncü rollerini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, eş-atıf ve eş-oluşum analizleri, "kültür", "kültürlerarası yeterlilik" ve "eleştirel düşünme" gibi baskın kavramları vurgulayarak İDÖ'nün eğitim, psikoloji ve teknoloji gibi çok yönlü alanlardaki yerini gözler önüne sermektedir. Bu bulgular ışığında, çalışma İDÖ'de daha kapsayıcı bir araştırma gündeminin gerekliliğini vurgulayarak eşitlikçi ve kültürel açıdan duyarlı uygulamaların teşvik edilmesine dikkat çekmektedir. Bu boşlukların ele alınmasıyla birlikte bu çalışma, eğitimciler, politika yapıcılar ve araştırmacılar için değerli içgörüler sunmakta ve kapsayıcı, küresel açıdan geçerli bir eğitim anlayışının yaygınlaştırılması için kültürel farkındalığın pedagojik uygulamalara entegre edilmesinin önemini ortaya koymaktadır**.**

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültür, İngiliz dili öğretimi, bibliyometrik analiz

Introduction

The place of culture in English Language Teaching (ELT) has received considerable attention in the domain of language education (Önal, 2019). Akkuş et al. (2017) explain the underlying reasons by stating that since culture includes the collective beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that define a group or community, it cannot be separated from the language learning process. To elaborate, culture often serves as the medium through which social norms, traditions, and identities are passed across generations. It also shapes how individuals express themselves while communicating, interacting with others, or interpreting events. Moreover, culture is not something isolated or stable; rather, it is dynamic and complex, influenced by elements such as location, history, and socioeconomic situation (Hong & Chiu, 2001). In language acquisition, culture is inextricably linked with communication. Bagea (2023) and Razmeh (2024) argue that language not only articulates thoughts but also conveys cultural meaning. As Sun (2024) highlights, understanding a language without engaging with its cultural foundations often results in poor comprehension, as cultural norms define the use, meaning, and understanding of language in various contexts.

This culturally based knowledge is therefore vital in helping learners improve their communicative competence and develop intercultural awareness in language teaching. Beyond grammatical structures and vocabulary, learners must also develop sociocultural competence to understand the implied meanings underlying target language expressions, such as idiomatic phrases, politeness strategies, and pragmatic appropriateness (Fekete, 2023; Salhab, 2024).

Given the significance of culture in ELT, the current paper intends to undertake a bibliographical review related to the role of culture in English language teaching. By mapping previous research, it also frequently demonstrates the theoretical underpinnings, pragmatic reality, and difficulties of including culture into English language instruction (ELT). This work also intends to highlight gaps in the literature and suggest future research sites, so improving the whole knowledge of how culture influences language teaching and learning in general (Etri, 2021; Softa & Gjergji, 2022;). By means of synthesis of several points of view, this review offers a better knowledge of the intricate link between culture and ELT.

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Theoretical Background of Culture in ELT

Today, ELT professionals must comprehend the significance of culture in the classroom to more effectively prepare their students for successful cross-cultural communication. This bibliometric analysis key theoretical frameworks; including sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, and complexity theory, are examined in this review in order to provide a whole picture of how culture impacts on language instruction and development. It analyzes the advantages and challenges of cultural integration in language education, with a particular emphasis on its implementation in classroom practices, pedagogical materials, and curricula.

To begin, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) views language acquisition as a social process, shaped by cultural encounters (Newman, 2018; Swain et al., 2015; Pathan et al., 2018). According to this perspective language learning is inherently social, and language learners' cultural surroundings and personal experiences must be considered. This theory underscores the significance of social interaction in language learning spaces, which foster meaningful collaborative learning and engagement with the target language and culture (Ilina, 2019; Dao & Sato, 2021). The theory also emphasizes that language acquisition is culturally and socially placed, therefore teaching approaches must include learners' different cultural backgrounds. Building on this, Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development suggests that cooperation with knowledgeable others, such as instructors and peers, facilitates language learning (Pathan et al., 2018; Swain et al., 2015). However, critical pedagogy challenges language teaching paradigms by integrating learners' cultural backgrounds. This approach helps students to participate in the social aspects of language actively and to develop personally as agents of change. Kumaravadivelu's postmethod pedagogy advocates aligning English Language Teaching practices to align with local cultural realities instead of imposing external norms (Chen, 2014; Shaw, 2009). This perspective emphasizes the role of power dynamics and sociopolitical factors in language learning. Incorporating critical pedagogy into ELT enables educators to draw on students' cultural origins and diverse experiences, fostering greater engagement and cultural awareness (Marwa et al., 2021; Perl-Nussbaum et al., 2023). It also equips learners with a critical understanding of how cultural assumptions and biases are embedded in languages and teaching materials. Research by Yin and Dewaele (2018) and Bagea (2023) demonstrates that this approach not only deepens students' comprehension of the intersections between language, culture, and power but also reduces language learning anxiety and enhances intercultural competence (Drozdzewski, 2017). Despite its potential, implementing critical pedagogy in ELT poses challenges, such as resistance to change and institutional constraints (Gül, 2021). However, its emphasis on learners' cultural contexts and transformative learning has the potential to create more inclusive and equitable language education practices (Kaličanin, 2018; Gürsoy, 2022).

Furthermore, the concept of Global Englishes questions the traditional view of English as a monolithic, Anglo-centric language. This perspective emphasizes English's flexibility and hybridity, highlighting how linguistic diversity reflects globalization and cross-cultural interactions (Fang & Ren, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Tardy et al., 2020;). Global English inclusion within the ELT syllabus would let students communicate between cultures and talk more successfully interculturally (Al-Sha'r, 2021; Shafie & Baharudin, 2021;).). However, this will be a challenging task, considering the tension between linguistic diversity and academic writing norms, shifting entrenched beliefs regarding language standards (Chang, 2021; Nardo, 2021).

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Moreover, Situated Pedagogy emphasizes adapting language teaching to the wider sociocultural, political, and institutional contexts in which the learners are positioned. This notion resonates with sociocultural theory, which acknowledges the role of cultural and social factors in language acquisition (Guilherme & Souza, 2019; Zhou, 2024). It invites local cultural content to be integrated within pedagogies and for teachers to create context-specific approaches that would serve to increase learners' participation and inclusion (Crookes, 2021). Situated Pedagogy also shares shared aims with critical Pedagogy in challenging the traditional power structure and validating students' lived experiences (Erbil, 2020; Mahmoodarabi & Khodabakhsh, 2015). Although there are some challenges in balancing codified language standards and linguistic diversity, it has great potential to make learning environments more responsive and empowering (Hai, 2020; Thomas, 2019).

Considering the nonlinearity, unpredictability, and emergent nature of language development, lastly, complexity theory offers a dynamic perspective on the complex interrelationship between language and culture. Language is perceived as a complex adaptive system that interacts with social, cultural, and environmental factors (Chong et al., 2022; Larsen-Freeman, 2011). This theory has given rise to holistic approaches within language teaching, which stress the interaction among a variety of factors that influence one another within their development, such as individual learner differences, contextual influences, and social interactions, in shaping the process of language learning (Ai-min &Rizen, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2011). This perspective focuses on the dynamic, holistic nature of language development; language acquisition is nonlinear, an adaptive system affected by continuous change and interaction. Inspired by Complex Dynamic Sytem Theory (CDST), holistic methods stress learner autonomy, flexibility in methodology, and adaption to emerging classroom dynamics to provide significant, contextually relevant learning opportunities. Teachers might see language acquisition as an always shifting interplay of elements using complexity theory among cultural, cognitive, and contextual components. Emphasizing the interaction between the experiences of students and environments that shape language learning, the viewpoint also makes excellent company with both Situated Pedagogy and Sociocultural Theory (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2016; Serafini, 2017).

Cultural Integration in ELT

Given the need to prepare students for successful intercultural communication in a globalized society, integrating culture into English Language Teaching (ELT) has become increasingly significant. The literature highlights a notable shift from a static view of culture to one that is dynamic and evolving. Earlier approaches often emphasized native-speaker norms, whereas current perspectives advocate for incorporating a broader range of cultural practices and ideas. Cruz et al. (2019), Aldosari and Alrefai (2020), and Li (2022) present significant findings demonstrating how diverse cultural environments contribute to language variation in emerging contexts. Similarly, scholars such as Chimmarak et al. (2023), Sung (2015), and Fang and Ren (2018) argue that acknowledging English's evolving role in global settings enables educators to promote a more inclusive and relevant approach to language instruction. This comprehensive understanding equips students with the necessary skills to navigate the linguistic and cultural challenges they encounter in today's interconnected world.

Another prominent theme in the literature underscores the inseparable link between culture and language. Researchers emphasize that no language can be effectively learned without actively engaging with its cultural foundations. As Barton and Riddle (2021), Yuliantari and Huda (2023),

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and Sulaimani and Elyas (2015) point out, culture is deeply embedded in language, making meaning inseparable from words, grammar, and pragmatic norms. This viewpoint aligns with sociocultural theory, which frames language learning as a social process shaped by communication within cultural contexts. In this regard, Newman (2018), Pathan et al. (2018), and Swain et al. (2015) emphasize that exposing students to real-life cultural situations enriches language learning by enhancing both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. This approach ensures that students develop a deeper understanding of how language is used in social interactions and cultural practices.

Building on these theoretical insights, researchers have proposed various strategies for incorporating culture into ELT classrooms. One effective approach is culturally responsive education, which adapts teaching practices to align with students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Studies by Dai (2011) demonstrate that this approach strengthens the connection between students and the language, fostering deeper engagement and improved learning outcomes. Integrating both local and global cultures into the curriculum has also proven effective in enhancing learners' exposure to diverse cultural perspectives. For example, in 2023, studies such as Sustainable Development in English Learning for Chinese College Students and Research on the Effects of Integrating Baoding Regional Culture into College English-Major Teaching showed that combining local cultural content with a global narrative significantly improved student engagement and language competence.

Moreover, fostering intercultural dialogue in the classroom has emerged as a valuable strategy for developing students' multicultural communication skills. Research by Maqsood et al. (2024) emphasizes that encouraging students to engage with diverse cultural perspectives prepares them to communicate effectively in international contexts. While cultural integration offers significant benefits, ELT also faces notable challenges in this area. One major issue is cultural bias in teaching materials, which often prioritize dominant cultures while overlooking minority perspectives. Researchers such as Starkey (2008) and Güzel-Yüce & Emir (2020) highlight the urgent need for inclusive materials that reflect the cultural diversity of learners.

Another challenge arises from the complexities of diverse classrooms, where teachers must navigate conflicting cultural narratives while ensuring all students feel represented and valued. Yuliantari (2023) and Sulaimani and Elyas (2015) emphasize the importance of teacher training programs that equip educators with strategies to manage such challenges effectively. Additionally, rigid curricula and limited resources can hinder efforts to integrate cultural elements into language instruction (Barton & Riddle, 2021). Despite these challenges, cultural integration holds transformative potential for ELT. By embracing linguistic and cultural diversity, educators can create inclusive learning environments that foster intercultural understanding and global competence.

Barton and Riddle (2021) and Wang et al. (2024) assert that culturally integrated classrooms not only enhance language proficiency but also promote critical thinking and empathy among learners. Furthermore, incorporating local cultural elements alongside global content makes language learning more relevant, engaging, and meaningful. Studies such as those conducted by Dai (2011) and Maqsood et al. (2024) demonstrate that this approach encourages active participation while helping learners connect language learning with their own cultural identities.

By supporting these broader educational objectives, cultural integration prepares students for active and responsible participation in an increasingly interconnected world. As studies by Dai

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(2011) and Maqsood et al. (2024) have shown, integrating cultural components into ELT not only enhances language learning outcomes but also cultivates a deeper sense of global citizenship and intercultural awareness.

Collectively, these theoretical frameworks emphasize the central role of culture in language learning. Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance of social interactions and cultural contexts in fostering communication skills. Critical Pedagogy promotes inclusive practices that validate learners' cultural identities and reduce anxiety. Global Englishes reinforces the need to expose learners to diverse language varieties in global contexts, while Situated Pedagogy and Complexity Theory advocate for context-driven, flexible teaching methods. By integrating these frameworks, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how cultural integration can enhance language learning outcomes, foster intercultural competence, and promote inclusive ELT practices.

The Purpose of this Study

The integration of culture into ELT is complex and multifaceted; therefore, it must be treated with care in terms of its theoretical and practical dimensions. Moving beyond the static view of culture involves adopting contextually responsive approaches, whereby educators may respond to challenges and unlock the transformative potential of cultural integration. The reviewed literature underlines the need to embrace cultural diversity in language teaching, both as a means toward better linguistic competence and to foster intercultural understanding and global citizenship. As the field continues to evolve, future research and practice must remain adapted to the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and learner needs.

Taking all these factors into consideration, this study focuses on the following research questions:

(1) What are the descriptive analysis results of articles by year, author, institution, and country published on the role of culture in English-language teaching in the WoS database?

(2) What are the bibliometric analysis results of articles by co-authorship network, co-occurrence keywords and co-citations published on the role of culture in English-language teaching in the WoS database?

Method

Research Design

In this study, "the role of culture" within the "ELT" framework was examined via descriptive and bibliometric analysis techniques, each serving distinct yet complementary purposes. Descriptive analysis was used for a general overview of the publishing patterns including the yearly distribution, authorship attributes, journal outlets, and geographical distribution. This quantitative overview contextualizes the magnitude and development of research on culture in ELT in the last decade. On the other hand, bibliometric analysis, also referred to as scientific mapping, has been widely used to illustrate the comprehensive knowledge base of a research topic in terms of quantity, impact, and thematic structures (Small,1973; van Eck & Waltman, 2017; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Like other systematic review approaches, scientific mapping specifies the steps for data analysis and study identification (James et al., 2016). It is important for researchers and academicians to update and determine trends and gaps in the field.

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Using these two approaches allowed the analysis to be both general and specific describing the space of research, as well as mapping the internal dynamics. Visualizing the data mapping through VOSviewer provides an accessible and interpretable representation of the data such as co-authorship connections, co-occurrence of keywords, and citation connections of sources to represent some interrelationships of all three data types (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

Procedure

The major databases that are often used for bibliometric analyses are Clarivate Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, PubMed, and Dimensions. For the purposes of this study, WoS was chosen as the primary data source because of its rigorous selection process, wide-ranging coverage of disciplines, and a history of reviewing the highest quality, peer-reviewed scholarship (Adriaanse, 2018; Birkle et al., 2020). Compared with Scopus, WoS uses a stricter selection process, which makes it particularly useful for bibliometric analyses that seek to map long-term trends, academic impact, and thematic changes over time (Zhan et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2024). In addition, the advanced filtering tools enabled data set that aligned with the study's purpose. An initial search on WoS generated 1,908 results. Subsequently, the sampling process involved applying inclusive and exclusive criteria. The inclusion criteria were: (1) the article explicitly depicts the theme of "the role of culture" in the ELT context; (2) it presented in an article format, (i.e., no reviews, no conference proceedings, and no editorials); and (3) it was indexed in one or more of the following: Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-Expanded), Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A & HCI), or Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). Moreover, articles lacking complete metadata or full texts were removed in the interest of data accuracy. The final data set, following screening, included articles that satisfied all criteria for inclusion (see Table 1).

In the interest of transparency and methodological rigor, the data collection was conducted following the PRISMA criteria (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (BMJ, 2021). More specifically, the following steps were adopted: (1) identification of records through the WoS database; (2) screening records based on titles and abstracts; (3) eligibility screening through full-text review; and (4) studies that met all criteria.

The process is visually outlined in the PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1). To analyze and visualize the bibliometric data, the study used VOSViewer, a popular tool for building and displaying bibliometric networks. VOSViewer allowed the development of co-authorship maps, keyword co-occurrence networks, and citation clustering that illuminated the intellectual and thematic structure of research on culture as related to ELT. These visualizations added to the interpretability of the findings through visual depictions of relationships between authors, concepts, and research timelines (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

Table 1.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria For Inclusion	Criteria for Exclusion
Articles published in English	Works published in other languages
Research articles	Abstracts, letters,notes and book reviews
Years between 2014 and 2024	Works with different years

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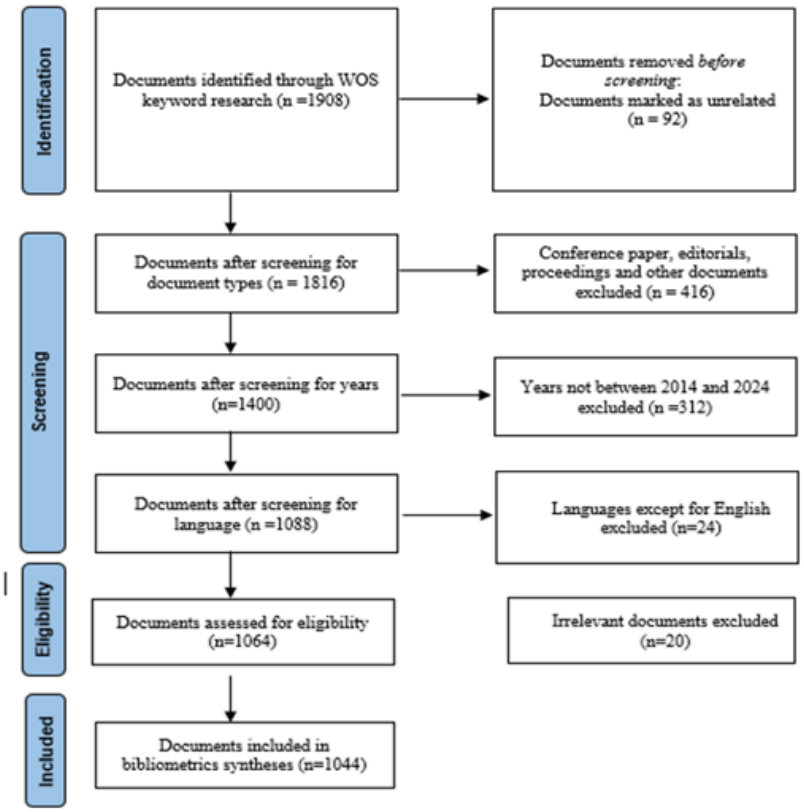
Figure 1

PRISMA flow diagram detailing the procedure



Source: Adapted from BMJ (2021)

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and bibliometric analysis methods were used to analyze the data in this study. The descriptive analysis revealed the frequency values of published papers categorized by year, author, institution/organization, journal, and country/region. In this context, the WoS database was utilized to produce descriptive findings. For bibliometric analysis, the VOSviewer program was employed (Perianes-Rodriguez et al., 2016) to visualize the relationships within the data obtained from the Web of Science database. The VOSviewer program considers the type of analysis, the unit of analysis, and the counting method, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

The analysis types of bibliometric analysis

Types of Analysis	Unit of Analysis	Counting Method
Co-authorship	Countries	Full Counting
Co-citations	Cited authors	Full Counting

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	Cited Sources	Full Counting
Co-occurence	Author Keywords	Full Counting

In this study, co-authorship analysis was conducted for organizations and countries, whereas cocitation analysis was employed for authors, references and sources. According to Peters and Van-Raan (1991), co-authorship analysis identifies authorship patterns and relationships between authors who collaborated on scientific articles. This analysis seeks to portray the principal authors, institutions, and research trends within the specified field while also highlighting existing research gaps and potential opportunities for further inquiry. In cocitation analysis, the frequency with which two documents are cited together is observed (Small,1973). The fundamental assumption of a cocitation analysis is that the more two items are cited together, the more likely it is that their content is related.

Moreover, co-occurrence analysis, a method extensively employed in bibliometric research, shows the links between keywords or ideas that commonly appear in conjunction within the literature. Li et al. (2016) state that the author co-occurrence approach for keywords assesses the most frequently utilized keywords in publications. The links in the study illustrate the frequency of articles in which a certain term cooccurs with another keyword (Zaimoğlu, 2024). Thicker lines depict a greater frequency of co-occurrence, signifying the strength of collaboration between the two terms.

Findings

Descriptive Results

Distribution of articles by year, country, and institution

The descriptive results were thoroughly examined in the Web of Science. The reports focused on the distribution of the research across different years, authors, institutions, and countries. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of articles across the years, offering a visual representation of the research output over time.

Figure 2 clearly shows that the number of articles related to the role of culture in English-language teaching has increased over the years, starting with approximately 40 in 2014 and reaching approximately 140 in 2024. This highlights the growing interest in the role of culture in ELT during this period. Furthermore, the number of citations significantly increased from 2014-2022, reaching a peak of over 2200 citations in 2022. However, beginning in 2023, there is a marginal decrease in citation numbers. The results remain higher than normal, indicating a significant influence of prior publications. In other words, articles have been on the rise, whereas citations exhibit a more variable trend, experiencing substantial growth until 2022, followed by a minor decline thereafter. This indicates that earlier publications received significant attention, resulting in a peak in citations, whereas more recent publications are in the process of gaining recognition.

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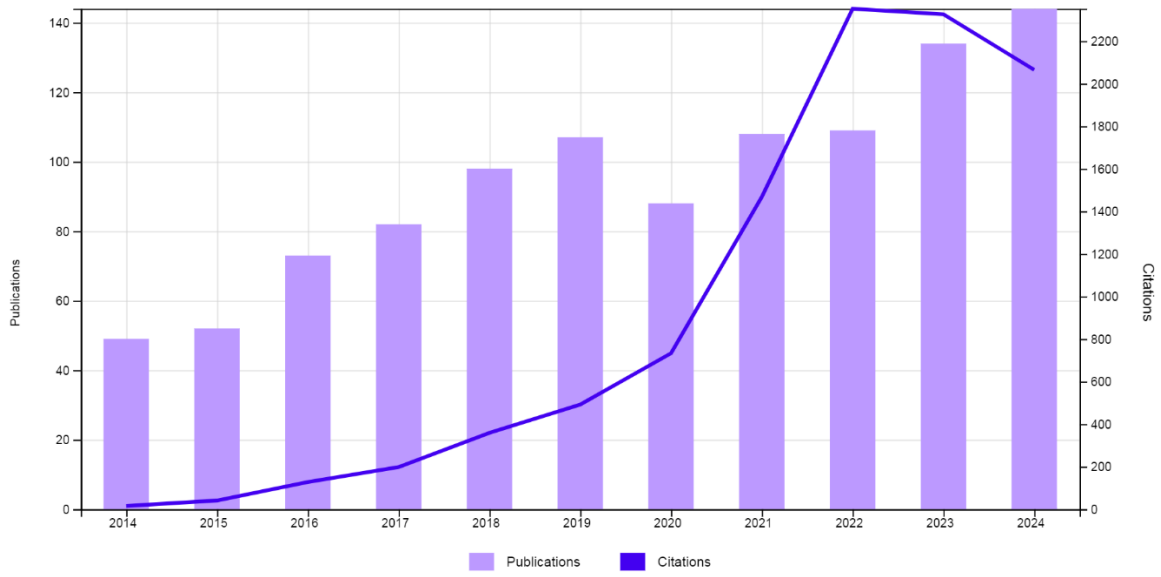
Figure 2

Distribution of Articles by Year



The distribution of articles according to country is visualized in Figure 3, offering insights into the geographic spread of research contributions on the role of culture in English-language teaching. According to the figure, the United States is the foremost contributor, exhibiting the highest volume of publications and citations, Following the USA, the People's Republic of China produces a significant volume of documents; however, its citation impact is comparatively lower than that of the USA, suggesting an emerging yet developing academic influence. Apart from these countries, countries, including Australia, England, and Canada, exhibit a correlation between document output and citation count, indicating a significant per-document impact. In contrast, countries such as Iran, Turkey, and Germany present moderate document outputs accompanied by varying degrees of citation influence, indicating their consistent yet regionally oriented research contributions. Moreover, countries such as Finland, Norway, and Chile demonstrate lower document outputs and citations, suggesting specialized or constrained research activities.

Figure 3

Distribution of articles by country

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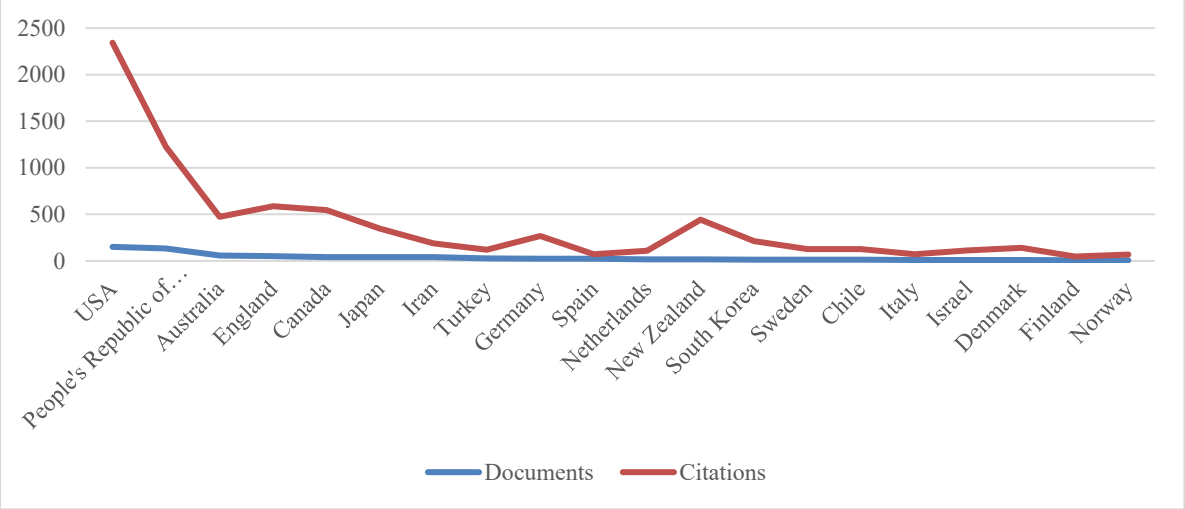

Bibliometric analysis results of articles by co-authorship network, co-occurrence keywords, and co-citations

In this section, the bibliometric analysis results regarding co-authorship, cocitation and co-occurrence keyword categories are given. Figure 4 shows a co-authorship network visualization map for countries on the role of culture in English-language teaching.

The importance of culture in ELT is shown in Figure 4, which illustrates the power of cooperation on the network visualization map. The color clusters represent collaborations, the size of the circle represents the number of articles, and the line thicknesses represent the strength of the cooperation. Due to their extensive international connections and leading roles in research on English language teaching, the United States and the People's Republic of China have made significant contributions to our understanding of cultural factors in language instruction. Their close cooperation with nations like Australia, Japan, and Russia reveals a shared commitment in analyzing the link between English language instruction (ELT) and culture. Beyond these countries, there is a regional emphasis on addressing the unique cultural and linguistic obstacles to ELT in the Asia-Pacific area, including countries like South Korea, Malaysia, Australia, and Japan. On the other hand, European countries, including Germany, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands, constitute a distinct cluster, highlighting an emphasis on cross-cultural communication and multilingualism within European English Language Teaching contexts. Collaborations are emerging in countries such as Russia, Iran, and Turkey, which are increasingly contributing to English-language teaching research and addressing cultural considerations within their multilingual and multicultural contexts. The figure also illustrates global connectivity, highlighting the involvement of countries such as South Africa, Brazil, and Saudi Arabia in international dialogs concerning cultural integration in English language teaching (ELT). These connections underscore the widespread acknowledgment of cultural diversity as a crucial element affecting language instruction and acquisition.

Figure 4.

Co-authorship network visualization map for countries

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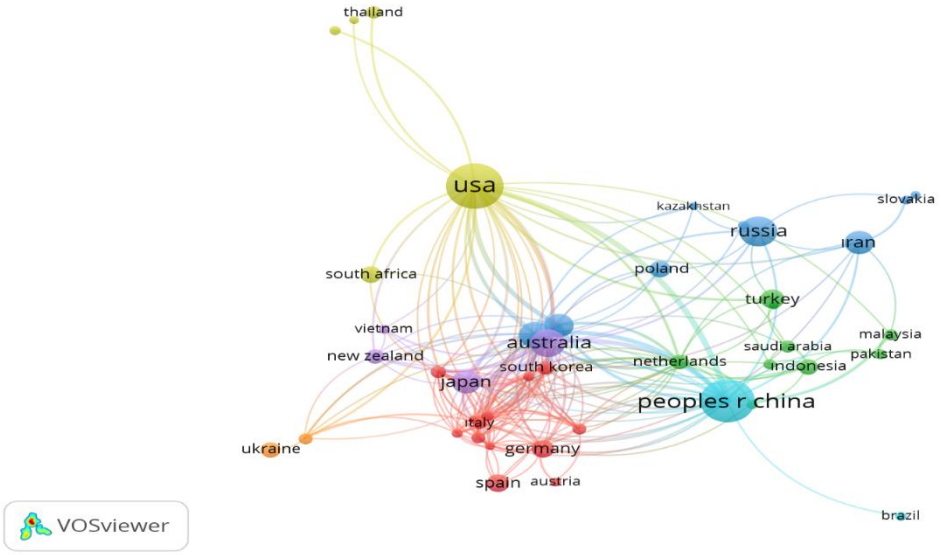

As seen in Figure 5, the co-occurrence network of author keywords offers a detailed perspective on the interrelated themes in research concerning English language teaching (ELT) and culture. “Culture” serves as the central and most interconnected node within the network, highlighting its essential significance in the overarching discourse. This concept is closely associated with terms such as “intercultural competence,” “language teaching,” and “critical thinking,” emphasizing the necessity of incorporating cultural awareness and critical pedagogy into English-language teaching practices. In addition, terms such as “education,” “higher education,” and "teaching," in relation to “culture,” highlight the institutional and pedagogical aspects of English language teaching (ELT), underscoring its significance in developing culturally responsive educational practices. Moreover, terms such as “linguistics,” “pedagogy,” and “assessment” emphasize the technical and evaluative dimensions of language education, indicating a need for a balanced emphasis on both theoretical and practical elements.

In the context of multilingualism and diversity, terms such as “multilingualism,” “identity,” and “foreign language education” are interrelated and form a cohesive cluster. This classification highlights the growing acknowledgment of varied linguistic and cultural identities in influencing learners' experiences. The presence of terms such as "motivation," "self-efficacy," and "online learning" reflects an increasing interest in learner-centered approaches and the impact of technology on enhancing cultural adaptability in English language teaching (ELT).

Figure 5

Co-occurrence by author keywords

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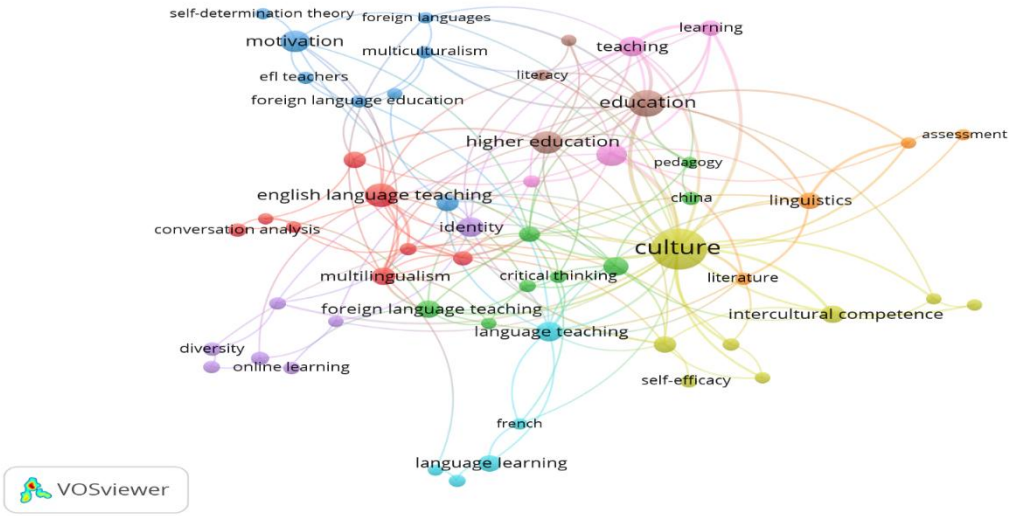
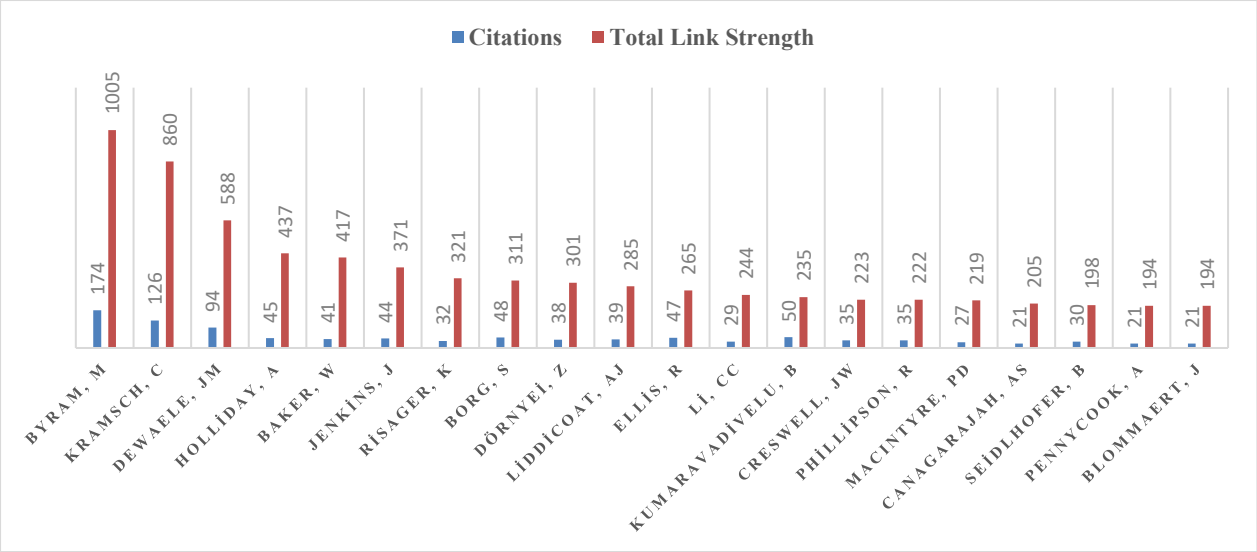


In terms of co-cited authors, the lowest number of author citations was set as 21 out of 20 authors who met the threshold. Co-citation denotes the frequency with which two articles are concurrently cited by other papers in the context of bibliographic coupling (Cunill et al., 2019; Deveci, 2022). The proximity of the two writers correlates positively with their relatedness. In terms of total link strength, Byram is the most cited author in the WoS database, followed by Kramsch and Dewaele. Figure 6 depicts the network visualization map of co-citations by cited authors. (ELT).

Figure 6.

Co-citations by cited authors

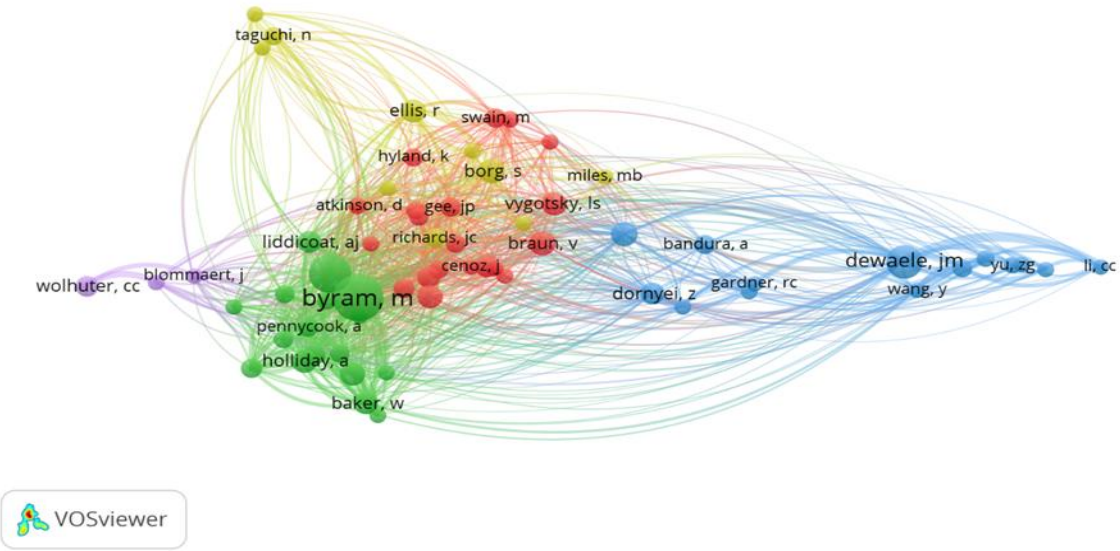


It is also depicted in Figure 7 that the co-citation network of cited authors illustrates a complex web of interrelated academic impacts on the role of culture in the field of English language teaching (ELT). Byram, M. is a pivotal player within the network, demonstrating considerable

impact on studies concerning intercultural competency and cultural factors in language teaching. His work is intricately linked to scholars such as "Kramsch, C.", "Holliday, A.", "Pennycook, A.", and "Baker, W.", who underscore the need to incorporate cultural awareness and global views in English language teaching (ELT). In a distinct cluster, "Dewaele, J.M.", in collaboration with "Gardner, R.C.", and "Dörnyei, Z.", constitute another notable group. This cluster emphasizes the psychological dimensions of language acquisition, including motivation, individual variances, and emotional dynamics, which are essential for comprehending learner experiences. The relationships among these scholars emphasize the importance of including sociocultural and psychological viewpoints in language instruction. The picture depicts a cohesive academic ecosystem where cultural, psychological, and pedagogical components converge. The network emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary methods in progressing ELT research, promoting innovation, and meeting the intricate demands of various learners.

Figure 7

Network visualization map of co-citations by cited authors



When co-citations by cited sources were analyzed, 176 out of the total number of sources met the threshold. However, only 20 sources were considered. When Figure 8 was analyzed, the top 5 journals with the highest number of citations were Modern Language Journal (n:343, total link strength: 8226), System (n:278, total link strength: 7731), TESOL Quarterly (n:340, total link strength: 6447), Teacher and Teaching Education (n:282, total link strength: 6062) and Front Psychology (n: 192, total link strength: 5472).

Figure 8.

Co-citations by cited sources

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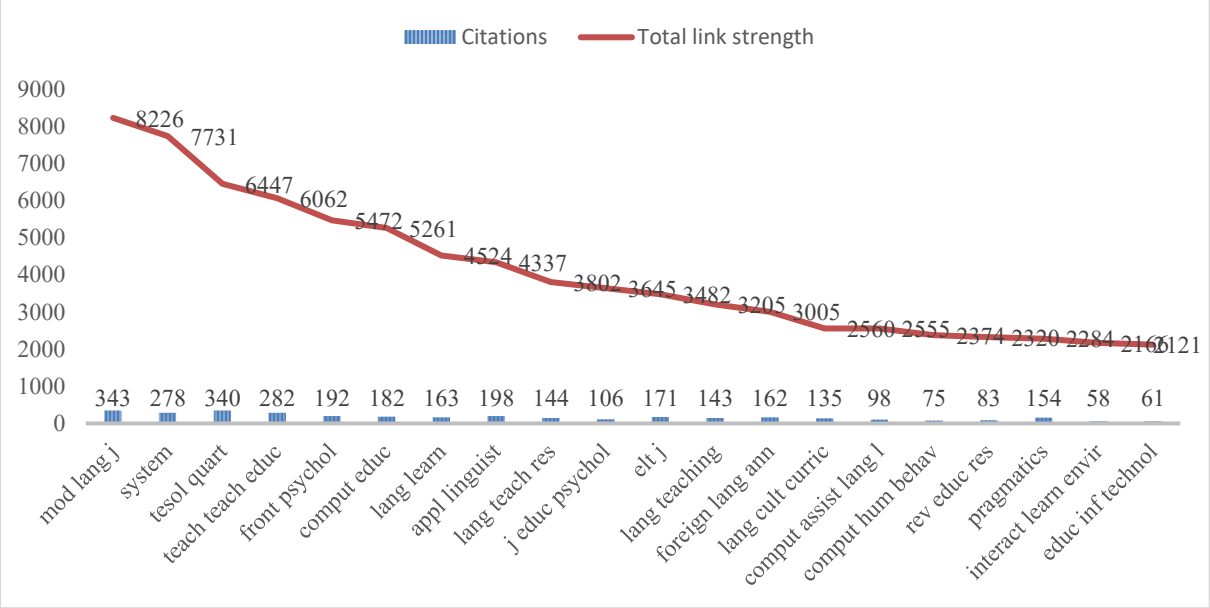


Figure 9 illustrates the interrelation of scholarly sources concerning the influence of culture on language teaching. Journals such as the Modern Language Journal and TESOL Quarterly prevail owing to their significant impact and extensive citations. The clusters and links indicate subject topics, whereas interdisciplinary interconnections demonstrate the integration of several fields, including education, psychology, and technology. This network highlights the variety and cooperation throughout the research community.

Figure 9

Network visualization map of co-citations by cited sources

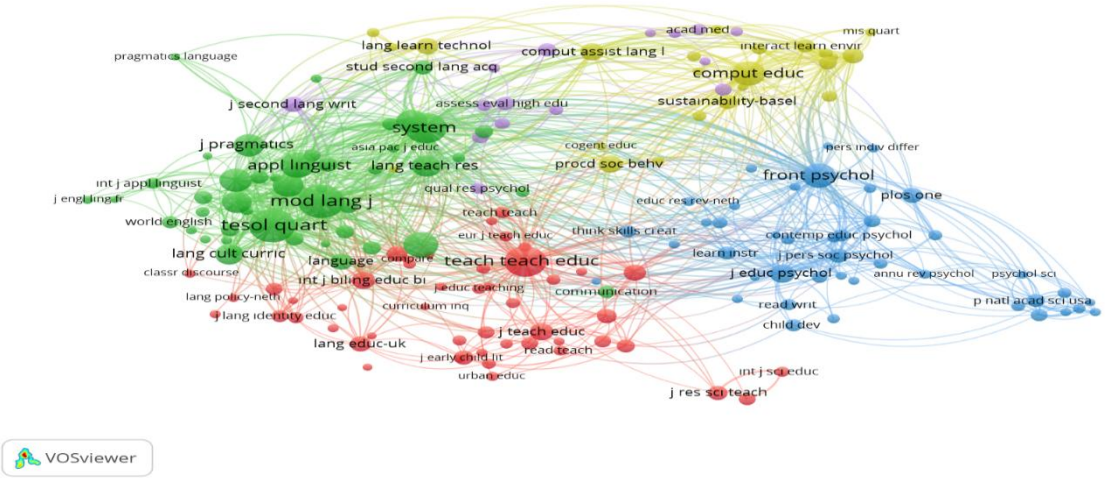
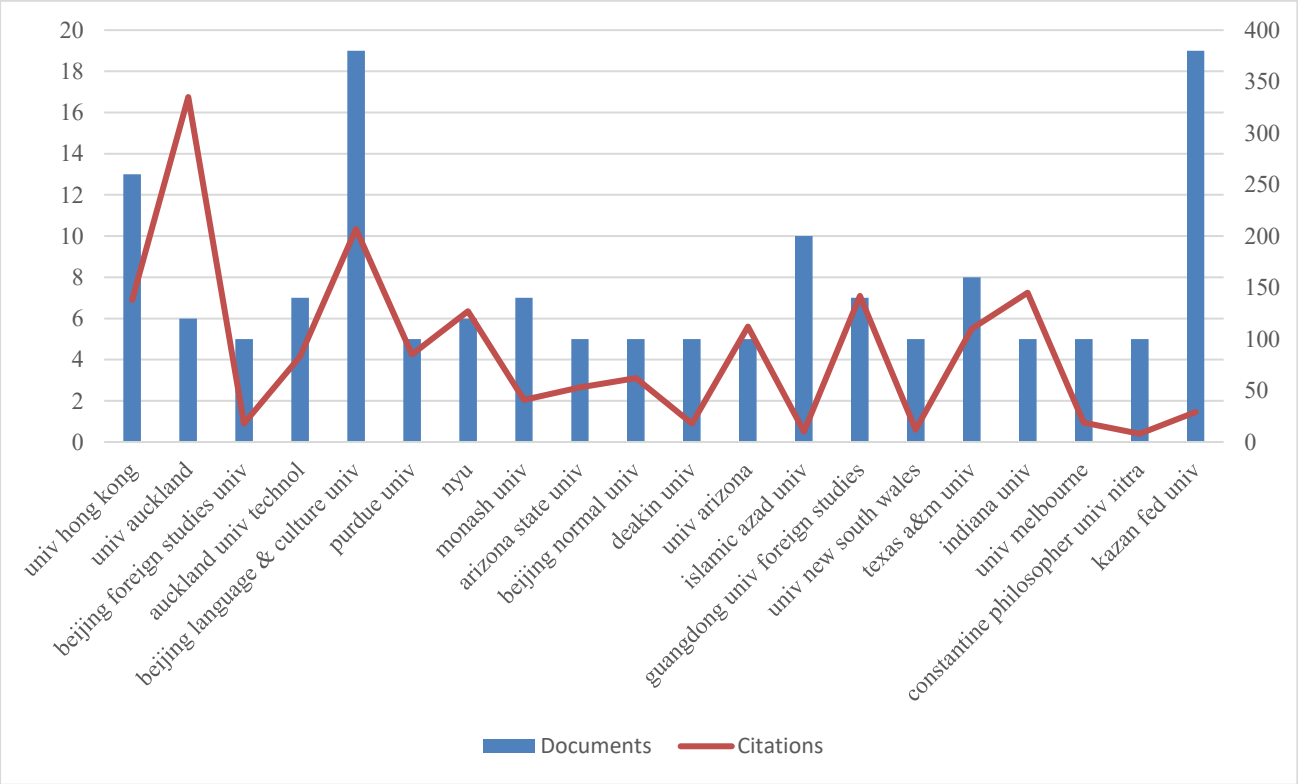


Figure 10 highlights the variation in academic performance across different universities. Some institutions attain considerable influence by producing a limited number of high-quality publications, whereas others prioritize productivity, resulting in varying levels of research impact.

The identified patterns highlight the various strategies and contributions within the academic and research landscape. For example, the University of Auckland demonstrates a notable achievement with the highest citation count, even though it has generated a relatively moderate volume of documents. This indicates a notable influence and underscores the exceptional quality of its research output in relation to its volume. In contrast, Kazan Federal University and Beijing Language and Culture University exhibit a significant peak in document production, which suggests a high level of academic output. However, the citation count does not correspondingly increase, indicating a relatively moderate impact in terms of research influence. In a comparable manner, the University of Purdue, University of New York and University of Arizona exhibit stable figures regarding documents and citations, reflecting a sustained level of academic contributions and influence throughout the years. Conversely, Islamic Azad University demonstrates lower outputs, reflected in citation counts, suggesting a restricted level of impact.

Figure 10

Distribution of articles by institution



Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis highlights the key trends and dynamic visions of the changing role of culture within the framework of ELT. The role of culture should not be ignored in English-language teaching because it plays a vital role in developing learners' intercultural competence,

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increasing their motivation, and leading to a more meaningful and contextually appropriate learning experience (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993).

To further expand, the trends of publications from 2014 to August 2024 clearly demonstrate the distinct role of culture in language education research. The findings show a steadily increasing scholarly interest in this subject, with significantly high growth between 2014 and 2024. This increase reflects the enhanced recognition of culture as a fundamental constituent of language teaching (Byram, 2021) and leads to increased awareness of the interplay between linguistic and cultural competencies in today's globalized knowledge and learning systems (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014). With the increasing focus on cultural issues within educational institutions and research, a growing body of research has investigated the role of language teaching in developing intercultural competence, promoting global citizenship, and addressing issues of social justice and inclusivity. This is realized through the bridging of cultural divides and equipping learners with the necessary skills for effective cross-cultural communication (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993).

As this field continues to develop and change, it is likely that the number of publications will increase because institutional contributions will give great importance to integrating cultural issues in ELT. For example, Kazan Federal University and Beijing Language and Culture University have been at the top of the rankings when considering the number of publications; both contributed a very high number of studies. This underlines the fact that leading academic institutions are very much at the forefront of driving research in the cultural dimensions of ELT, developing frameworks and practices in keeping with global trends in intercultural competence and culturally responsive teaching. Their active contributions also underlined a call for institutional support, funding, and collaboration to be extended for this critical area of research to be developed (Duff & Kobayashi, 2010). On the other hand, the University of Auckland turns out to be at the top when the number of citations is considered, which proves that a modest number of publications with high-quality research has an impact on shaping the field.

The apparent dominance of countries such as the United States and China in cultural research in the field of ELT is reflected in the number of publications produced in those countries and the number of citations generated by these countries, indicative of core positions taken in framing discourses on the role of culture in ELT. Until very recently, most of the leading work in ELT has come from the United States because of the large academic background, strong research funding, and established world influence there. What also stands out is how the global power of the U.S. has allowed U.S. researchers to collaborate with many scholars from practically all over the world, enabling their ideas and practices to circulate internationally. On the other hand, China's rise in the same area represents important development. As the most popular country of the world and one of the most influential players in the international economy and politics, China increasingly recognized the importance of integrating culture and language in ELT to prepare its citizens for international participation. This increase in Chinese scholars' publishing output is both an indication of investment in education in that country and a recognition of the increasingly important dynamics of culture and language in a rapidly globalizing world. While the US and China have set dominant discourses, voices from other countries have brought new dimensions to the debate. These burgeoning contributions underline the necessity of locating ELT practices within specific cultural and regional contexts and encourage a move away from uniformity. It is also a democratization of academic research in ELT, as revealed by the increased participation of countries such as Iran, Türkiye, and South Korea. These countries provide a regional perspective to complement a global view of how culture influences language teaching and learning. This shift

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challenges the dominance of Western-centered models and underlines the adoption of culturally responsive methods that reflect the diverse realities of learners across the world.

The descriptive results in terms of countries also support the co-authorship network for countries, which underlines how international collaboration has been crucial for developing research into the cultural dimensions of ELT. Large circles and thick connecting lines represent large circles for the United States and the People's Republic of China to show their leading positions in producing significant output and developing global partnerships. This means that these countries not only are prolific in ELT research but also serve as distribution centers for knowledge and cross-national dialog on cultural integration. Their collaborations with different countries underpin a shared commitment to the exploration of culture and English-language education. Nault (2006) states that international collaboration is important, as it pools together a wide range of cultural insights to develop practices that are effective, inclusive, and more globally relevant to ELT. Network visualization is thus a manifestation of how culture shapes and embells these partnerships toward a much more holistic understanding of ELT worldwide.

The networks provide a deeper understanding of the complicated academic ecosystem, highlighting the critical intersections between the cultural, psychological, and pedagogical components in ELT research via co-citation network analysis, Indeed, the fact that the most cited author is Byram denotes his foundational contributions to understanding intercultural competence and its role in English Language Teaching; hence, his work may be considered a cornerstone for scholars investigating the integration of cultural awareness into language education. The interrelationships among Byram and other key figures, such as Kramsch, Holliday, Pennycook, and Baker, emphasize the same emphasis on cultural awareness and internationalism in ELT. This network gives a strong consensus that this is a cultural turn, part and parcel of developing inclusive, internationally relevant pedagogies. It insists on the integration of cultural awareness within the teaching of the English language to better prepare learners for effective communication in a global setting marked by diversity. Additionally, the inclusion of psychological perspectives, as shown in the cluster that includes Dewaele, Gardner, and Dörnyei, signals that culturally responsive pedagogy needs to be informed by emotional and motivational learner dynamics, which means that any form of language education has to be holistic and integrate cultural and psychological dimensions. Finally, the network reveals that the adoption of the cultural turn is now imperative for renewal in ELT research and practice so that the methodology remains current, fresh, and effective within an increasingly interconnected world.

Moreover, the network of co-occurring author keywords enables a far more fine-grained understanding of the thematic landscape arising in research on English Language Teaching and Culture, with much emphasis being placed on the dynamic relationships among factors of culture, psychology, and technology. Most notably, the status of “culture” as the most connected term emphasizes its fundamental position within modern discourse on ELT. This centrality reflects a growing awareness in the field of embedding cultural dimensions within pedagogic practice. Thus, cultural awareness moved from an ancillary element to a core pedagogical element. On the other hand, key words such as “intercultural competence,” “language teaching,” and “critical thinking” signal greater concern for developing learners' ability to navigate and engage critically with cultural diversity. This shift is in line with the more holistic pedagogical approaches called for globally to raise students better suited for intercultural communication within a global world (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). Furthermore, the connection of “culture” with “education,” “higher education,” and “teaching” implies the institutional effort within the community toward cultural responsiveness

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with respect to the ELT curriculum and teacher development programs. Such efforts respond to calls to integrate cultural awareness into broader educational frameworks to enhance learner engagement and inclusivity (Deardorff, 2009). In addition, the clustering of terms such as "multilingualism," "identity," and "foreign language education" signals an acknowledgment of the complexities inherent in multilingual and multicultural settings. This means that there is an increasing tendency for researchers to relate language learning to the processes of identity formation and the negotiation of diverse linguistic realities, especially in contexts where the students' native languages and cultural backgrounds are important (García & Wei, 2014). The inclusion of terms such as "motivation," "self-efficacy," and "online learning" reflects an evolving emphasis on learner-centered approaches and the role of technology in ELT. Digital tools have increasingly enabled the establishment of dynamic and culturally responsive learning environments. For example, some online platforms allow the simulation of intercultural exchange to nurture learners' cultural adaptability and communicative competence in international contexts (Dornyei, 2005; Warschauer, 2000). This trend again indicates a need for flexible pedagogies that focus on learners' individual experiences but take advantage of technology for easy access and better engagement.

With respect to the co-citation analysis of the cited sources, it is observed that there is a strong interdisciplinary grounding of research in culture in language teaching. High-ranking journals, such as the Modern Language Journal and TESOL Quarterly, demonstrate the core role of the formation of discourse, which means that these sources are used as important reference points for furthering knowledge in the field. Strong links among other journals, such as System and Front Psychology, which are diverse in these areas, show that education, psychology, and technology are also at the core of informing ELT practices. This network represents a collective effort by this research community to foster innovative, inclusive, and culturally responsive language practices.

Overall, the data highlight the challenges related to the integration of culture into ELT. Dominant cultural narratives in teaching materials often marginalize less represented cultures, thus limiting students' exposure to global diversity. This issue calls for a shift toward creating balanced curricula that incorporate both local and global cultures. Moreover, the findings emphasize that teacher training programs are also very much needed to help educators be prepared for cultural diversity, as today's classrooms are multicultural and impose a complex interplay in linguistic and cultural variety. Without adequate preparation, educators may be unable to create an inclusive learning environment that respects and celebrates diversity while ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students. In this case, effective training programs for teachers are needed to enhance their cultural competence, help them understand and appreciate the cultural backgrounds of their students, and finally link these to teaching practices. For example, teachers trained in culturally responsive pedagogy are in a better position to construct lesson plans reflecting the cultural contexts of students, hence making learning relevant and engaging. Moreover, training programs help educators identify and handle the potential biases and stereotypes that may unconsciously influence their approach to teaching. Such training can help teachers be sensitive and professional in handling cultural diversity, hence earning respect and ensuring inclusivity in the classroom. As the findings indicate, cultural diversity is not only about understanding differences but also how to turn those differences into strengths. Well-trained teachers have the ability to capitalize on the diverse cultural experiences of their students to enhance discussions, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding. These are important skills needed to equip

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students with the ability to succeed in a globalizing world, where communication across cultures is imperative.

From a methodological perspective, the bibliometric tools used here add value to this study in ways that reveal the nature of the academic landscape. The visualizations created by VOSviewer go beyond identifying the patterns of collaboration and highlight the gaps in the literature. For example, even though there is substantial research concerning the problem of cultural integration within the sphere of teaching the English Language, most such studies focus on well-represented regions; this leaves out, therefore, the critical question regarding its consequences in the situation of marginalized groups of communities or in unrepresented areas. Owing to some distinctive difficulties, their experiences of using or accessing this type of language education often remain gloomy. These include, among others, resource constraints, systemic inequity, and, where English is introduced insensitively, the very real danger of cultural erasure for the loss of linguistic and cultural identity. Further research should focus on how culturally integrative ELT programs can be designed to respect the linguistic and cultural diversity of such groups. For example, some bilingual or multilingual models of education could be adopted in which English is taught in addition to the native languages instead of ignoring the vernacular languages.

Implications

The results of this study have several implications for ELT researchers, educators, and policymakers. First, the analysis underscores the need to embed local and global cultural elements into ELT curricula to facilitate intercultural competence and increase learner participation. Teaching materials should go beyond the dominant cultural discourses and represent diverse perspectives. Second, the findings indicate a need to prepare educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to cultural diversity. This would be possible through professional development programs on culturally responsive teaching and the integration of digital tools to support innovative pedagogical practices. Future research should also be conducted to fill the gaps in knowledge concerning the impact of cultural integration in underrepresented regions and among marginalized communities. It would be worth investigating what specific cultural teaching strategies are effective and how technology can enhance cultural adaptability. Finally, policymakers should prioritize funding for interdisciplinary research that bridges the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that ELT policies reflect the diverse needs of learners and educators worldwide.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis focuses on the role of culture in ELT research and reflects the international recognition of this concept in the development of linguistic and intercultural ability. The present article identifies major contributors, themes, and challenges that exist within this field while also charting a roadmap for future research and practice. The focus on specific countries and institutions brings attention to certain geographical regions; however, the inclusion of diverse voices is necessary for the sake of a balanced and inclusive understanding of cultural integration in language education. The limitations of this study, especially its reliance on the Web of Science database and focused analysis of highly cited publications, provide opportunities for future research by using additional data sources and expanded evaluation criteria.

Despite such constraints, this study provides valuable insight into research trends and foundational themes to contribute to the ongoing dialog on culture in ELT. By building on these

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insights, future research can better theorize and practice cultural integration by filling the existing gaps and embracing interdisciplinary approaches, thus ensuring that its transformative potential is realized in diverse educational contexts.

Ethics statement: This study, using bibliometric analysis as its research method, does not require ethical approval.

Conflict of Interest: This study has no conflict of interest and no financial support was received.

Author Contributions: The first author conducted the study conceptualisation, research methodology design, study selection process, data extraction, risk of bias assessment, synthesis of results, and manuscript writing. The second author assisted on the development of the eligibility criteria, contributed resolving study selection disagreements, conducted risk of bias assessment, synthesis of results and provided critical feedback of the drafts. All authors approved the final manuscript.

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Geniş Özet

Giriş

İngilizce dil öğretiminde (ELT), kültürün rolü giderek daha önemli bir araştırma ve uygulama alanı haline gelmiştir. Kültür, yalnızca dilsel yeterliliği şekillendirmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda kültürlerarası iletişim becerilerinin geliştirilmesinde de merkezi bir rol oynar. Bu bağlamda, bu makale 2014-2024 yılları arasında yayımlanan çalışmalara dayalı bir bibliyometrik analizi inceleyerek kültürel entegrasyonun önemini, karşılaşılan zorlukları ve eğitimciler ile politika yapıcılar için çıkarımlarını tartışmaktadır.

Kültür ve dil birbiriyle derin bir şekilde iç içedir. Dil, kültürel normlar, değerler ve kimliklerin ifade aracı olarak işlev görür ve bu nedenle dil öğretimi kültürel bağlamından ayrı düşünülemez (Bagea, 2023). Kültürel temellerin göz ardı edilmesi, öğrenme sonuçlarının yüzeysel kalmasına yol açabilir çünkü kültürel normlar, dilin pratik kullanımı ve anlamlandırılmasını belirler (Sun, 2024). Dolayısıyla, ELT'ye kültürel farkındalık eklemek, öğrencilere yalnızca dilbilgisel ve sözcük bilgisi açısından değil, aynı zamanda kültürlerarası yeterlilik geliştirme açısından da katkı sağlar (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993).

Yöntem

Bu çalışma, ELT'de kültürün rolünü incelemek için bibliyometrik analiz yöntemini kullanmıştır. Veriler, Web of Science (WoS) veritabanından elde edilmiş ve 1.908 makale analiz edilmiştir. Ortak yazarlık ağları, anahtar kelime eş-oluşumları ve atıf trendleri gibi analizlerin görselleştirilmesi için VOSviewer programı kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular

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Sonuçlar, incelenen on yıl boyunca bu alandaki yayın sayısında önemli bir artış olduğunu göstermektedir. Özellikle 2024, en üretken yıl olarak öne çıkmıştır. ABD ve Çin gibi ülkeler bu alanda liderlik yaparken, Türkiye ve İran gibi ülkeler bölgesel dinamiklere dikkat çekmiştir.

Küresel Trendler: ABD ve Çin, ELT'de kültürel entegrasyon üzerine yapılan çalışmalara liderlik etmiş ve hem teorik çerçeveler hem de pratik uygulamalar geliştirmiştir. Örneğin, ABD, eleştirel pedagoji ve kültürlerarası yetkinlik çerçevelerine önemli katkılar sağlamıştır (Byram, 2021). Çin ise geleneksel kültürel unsurları ELT'ye entegre ederek küresel İngilizce normları ile yerel kimlik arasındaki dengeyi araştırmıştır (Li, 2022).

Tekrar Eden Temalar: Anahtar kelime analizleri, "kültür," "kültürlerarası yetkinlik" ve "eleştirel düşünme" gibi kavramların baskın olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu, kültürel farkındalığın ELT müfredatına entegre edilmesinin, etkili kültürlerarası iletişim için önemini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, "kimlik" ve "çokkültürlülük" gibi kavramlar, çeşitliliğin dil eğitimindeki önemini yansıtmaktadır (Sulaimani & Elyas, 2015).

Kültürel Entegrasyonun Zorlukları: Kültürel entegrasyon, çeşitli zorluklarla karşı karşıyadır. Öğretim materyalleri genellikle baskın kültürlere öncelik vererek öğrencilerin küresel çeşitliliğe olan maruziyetini sınırlamaktadır (Güzel-Yüce & Emir 2020). Ayrıca, katı müfredatlar ve yetersiz öğretmen eğitimi, kültürel açıdan duyarlı uygulamaların geliştirilmesini engellemektedir. Pek çok eğitimci, çokkültürlü sınıflarda etkili bir şekilde çalışacak becerilere sahip değildir, bu da kapsayıcı olmayan öğrenme ortamlarına yol açmaktadır (Barton & Riddle, 2021).

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Bu analiz, ELT'de bir paradigma değişimine duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. Kültürel açıdan duyarlı öğretim, yalnızca yüzeysel bir dahil etmenin ötesine geçerek müfredata çeşitli kültürel anlatıları derinlemesine entegre etmelidir. Eğitimcileri kültürel çeşitliliği yönetmek ve kapsayıcı uygulamaları hayata geçirmek için gerekli becerilerle donatacak mesleki gelişim programları hayati önem taşımaktadır (Cruz vd., 2019). Ayrıca, politika yapıcıların yerel ve küresel kültürleri entegre eden dengeli müfredatlar geliştirmek için kaynak ayırmaları gerekmektedir (Nhem, 2020).

Marjinal topluluklar ve bölgelerde kültürel entegrasyonun etkilerini ele alan daha fazla araştırmaya ihtiyaç vardır. Yerel kültürel içerik ile küresel İngilizce normlarının entegrasyonunu keşfetmek, kapsayıcı eğitim uygulamaları oluşturmak için değerli bilgiler sağlayabilir (Softa & Gjergji, 2022). Ayrıca, sanal değişim programları ve çevrimiçi simülasyonlar gibi teknolojik araçlar, kültürel adaptasyonu geliştirme potansiyeline sahiptir (Dörnyei, 2005).

Bu makale, ELT'de kültürün kritik rolünü vurgulayarak dil eğitiminin kültürlerarası anlayış ve küresel vatandaşlık geliştirme için bir araç haline gelme potansiyelini göstermektedir. Mevcut zorluklar ele alınarak ve yeni fırsatlar değerlendirerek, eğitimciler ve araştırmacılar daha kapsayıcı ve etkili öğrenme ortamları yaratabilir. Bu bulgular, kültürel entegrasyonu öncelik haline getirme konusunda tüm paydaşlar için bir çağrı niteliğindedir ve dil eğitiminin, küresel dünyanın farklı ihtiyaçlarını karşılamasını sağlamaktadır

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