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Citespace-Based Bibliometric Analysis of Englishes: Insights and Trends

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Introduction. The paper examines English in its diverse roles as a national language, a medium for international and intercultural exchange, a practical communication tool for non-native speakers, and a subject of various research programs associated with its functional varieties. The research aims to provide a structured overview of studies on English varieties and their roles within the fields of World Englishes (WE), Global English (GE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and English as an International Language (EIL). The objective of this paper is to summarize achievements in the study of English variation and offer insights for future research.

Methodology and sources. Empirically, the study draws on data from 2008 to 2024 extracted from the Web of Science Core Collection, analyzed using Citespace to visualize trends and patterns within the field.

Results and discussion. The findings reveal that research on WE, GE, ELF, and EIL has been characterized by interdisciplinary and multi-institutional collaboration. The recognition of the polycentric nature of modern English has elevated the status of its varieties, whose phonetic characteristics and pragmatic applications are increasingly integrated into education.

Conclusion. The research has revealed a steady rise in the scholarly interest in the problem of language variation, particularly as exemplified by the English language. This resulted in positive shifts in the World Englishes positioning and reception both in the theoretical and applied fields. However, unresolved issues and research gaps remain, as identified in the study.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis, world Englishes (WE), global English (GE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as an international language (EIL), CiteSpace

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Оригинальная статья

Библиометрический анализ вариантов английского языка с использованием CiteSpace: положение дел и перспективы исследований

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Введение. В фокусе внимания в настоящей статье находится английский язык в его различных функциях: как национальный язык, как средство международного и межкультурного обмена, как инструмент практической коммуникации носителей других

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языков, а также как источник разнообразных исследовательских программ, связанных с этими функциональными разновидностями языка. Цель исследования заключается в создании структурированного обзора исследований отмеченных функциональных разновидностей английского языка в рамках таких исследовательских направлений, как контактная вариантология (World Englishes, WE), глобальный английский (Global English, GE), английский как лингва франка (English as a Lingua Franca, ELF) и английский как международный язык (English as an International Language, EIL).

Методология и источники. Эмпирическая база исследования основана на данных за период 2008–2024 гг., полученных из основной коллекции Web of Science, которые были проанализированы с использованием программы Citespace для визуализации тенденций и паттернов в изучаемой области.

Результаты и обсуждение. Результаты показывают, что исследования в области WE, GE, ELF и EIL характеризуются междисциплинарным и межинституциональным сотрудничеством. Признание полицентрического характера современного английского языка привело к повышению статуса его вариантов, чьи фонетические характеристики и прагматические функции постепенно интегрируются в образовательные программы.

Заключение. Проведенное исследование показало стабильный рост исследовательского интереса к проблеме вариативности английского языка, результатом которого стали положительные сдвиги в рецепции и позиционировании национальных вариантов как в теоретическом, так и прикладном поле. Тем не менее остаются нерешенные проблемы и «слепые зоны», также выявленные в ходе исследования.

Ключевые слова: библиометрический анализ, мировые варианты английского языка (WE), глобальный английский (GE), английский как лингва-франка (ELF), английский как международный язык (EIL), CiteSpace

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Introduction. David Crystal famously noted, “[t]here is no such thing as English, only Englishes” [1, p. 45]. But what do these Englishes reveal about identity, power and globalization? There is a growing body of literature exploring English varieties from diverse perspectives to answer the aforementioned question, forming three essential branches, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as an International Language (EIL) and World Englishes (WE). While ELF focuses on English as a practical communication tool for non-native speakers, EIL emphasizes its global and intercultural function. WE, on the other hand, celebrates the linguistic and cultural diversity of localized English varieties. Together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex role of English in the world today. However, a thorough and updated literature review is lacking now. Therefore, this paper aims to supplement an inclusive and structured view on the Englishes studies.

With over 1.5 billion speakers globally, English is not a single language but a kaleidoscope of local varieties. As a result of circumstances including the reverberations of colonial expansion and socioeconomic requirements to some English-speaking countries while trading with their partners, the function of English is multifaceted, serving as a lingua franca, facilitating communication among speakers of different native languages, which ensures mutual intelligibility in multicultural settings. It is also a tool for academic and technological progress, and a medium for cultural exchange. The notion of British English and American English being the only standard Englishes is losing ground, which is symptomatic of the increasing importance for the speakers of

keeping their identity, whichever language, native or non-native, they might be utilizing. The use of English by non-native speakers has garnered heightened attention, and a growing body of research has been conducted in this domain as the population of non-native speakers consistently exceeds that of native English speakers.

The resultant variability of linguistic norms leads to a potential quandary, as English in its national varieties used by individuals of different linguistic backgrounds ceases to be understandable to the speakers of other varieties [2–4], meaning that English here ceases to be the world’s longed for global lingua franca and international language.

Thus, a comprehensive literature review on WE, ELF, and EIL can enhance our overall understanding of the functionality of English and, consequently, facilitate social, economic, and political interactions and exchanges.

This study aims to provide a structured view to English varieties research and answer the following questions: 1) what have we achieved in this field up to now? 2) how can we conduct relevant research in the future?

Methodology and sources. Our understanding of Englishes is largely based on studies that investigate the similarities and differences between endo- and exonormative varieties, aiming at identifying the lexical and pragmatic characteristics of regional Englishes. The majority of the existing literature reviews narrow their focus onto a specific research element, such as the study methodology or the present state of research on a particular English variety, lacking a thorough discussion of various research directions, the current status of the field, and significant discoveries. To address this gap, the present study adopts a more thorough quantitative approach, utilizing software that allows for the exploration and analysis of scientific research fields through network visualization.

CiteSpace is an invaluable tool for conducting literature analysis, identifying research trends, and uncovering interdisciplinary connections [5]. It offers an alternative method for staying updated on scientific literature, continuously tracking the evolving knowledge domain, and significantly reducing biases by encompassing publications from a wide range of perspectives, schools of thought, and disciplines. Its design is inspired by Thomas Kuhn’s concept of scientific revolutions [6, p. 16]. Through visualization and network analysis, CiteSpace enables researchers to extract valuable insights from large sets of literature data. Whether employed for frontier research, bibliometrics, or interdisciplinary studies, CiteSpace provides robust support [5, 7, 8]. In a recent article, Tan et al. [9] conducted an up-to-date and comprehensive bibliometric analysis of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) from 2011 to 2023, demonstrating the tool’s ability to provide a scientific overview.

For this study, 3094 bibliometric records for papers published from 2008 to 2024, withdrawn from the Web of Science core collection, were analyzed using CiteSpace. The initial step involved identifying key themes from the WOS collection, including “World Englishes”, “Global Englishes”, “English varieties”, “English as a Lingua Franca”, and “English as an International Language”. The selection was restricted by the parameters of language (English), and the document type (article). After filtering out irrelevant literature, all relevant records were processed using CiteSpace analysis, including author co-citation, country network analysis, timezone view, keyword cluster and burst detection, cited references, and document co-citation analysis. Through these visual and network analysis, the paper aims to identify prominent journals, key researchers, research trends, and significant achievements in the field.

Results and discussion. In this section, the results of annual comparisons of the selection of articles, key research themes, contributing countries, and authors are presented and discussed. This analysis examines literature from 2008 to the present, obtaining a total of 3094 articles. As illustrated in Fig. 1, there is a steady upward trend in attention to the Englishes research. This study will review the available research across the three domains specified above.

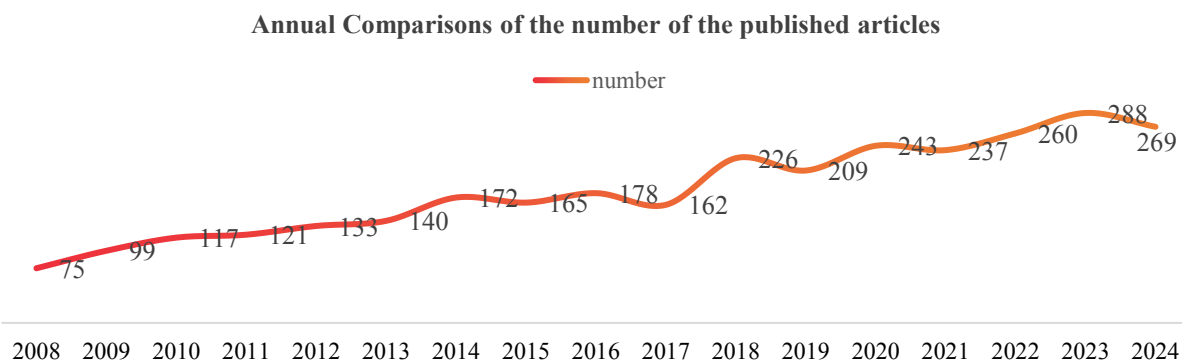


Fig. 1. Comparisons of the number of publications per year from 2008 to present

Key journals and key researchers. The first set of analysis investigates the authors, institutions and countries that contributed the most to the World Englishes, global English, ELF, and EIL paradigm in the past decades.

The result, as shown in Fig. 2, indicates that the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and Germany are the top four contributing countries with 799, 382, 338, and 269 articles respectively, out of the 310 entities that have submitted pertinent papers.

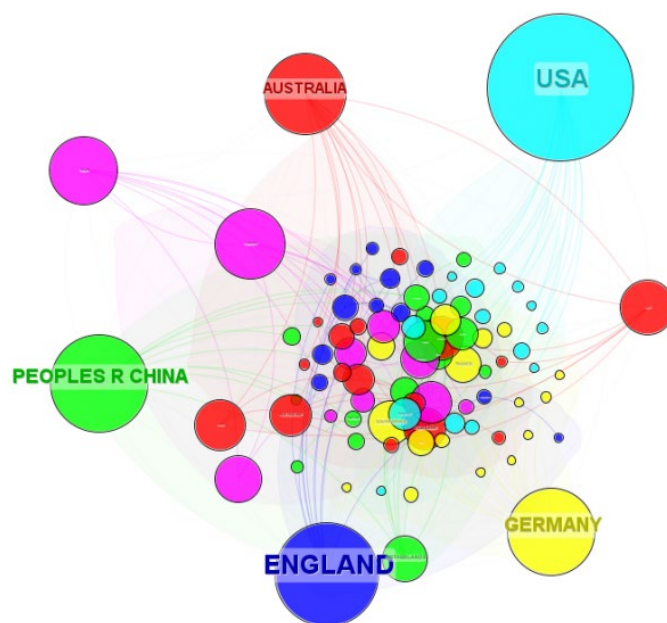


Fig. 2. Co-country network of WE, GE, ELF and EIL research

On the institutions level, the University of London, University of California System, Nanyang Technological University, and Hong Kong Polytechnic University are the most active contributors, as is set out in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3. Key institutions to articles on WE, GE, ELF and EIL topic

Passing onto the individual level, we have identified the authors who have expedited the WE, GE, ELF and EIL research (see Table 1, Fig. 4).

What stands out in the presented data is the trend of multi-national and multi-institutional collaboration, which is consistent with the Englishes exploration: out of 6 entities, highlighted in Table 1, half are presented by international research teams. This also illustrates the feature of English varieties study, which is the necessity of examining the origins and evolution of a certain English variety from a multitude of perspectives in order to get more thorough and impartial findings.

Table 1. Major authors of WE, GE, ELF and EIL research

Count	Authors
12	Hamid, M Obaidul
11	Szmrecsanyi, Benedikt
9	Kang, Okim; Bernaisch, Tobias; Collins, Peter; Saito, Kazuya;
8	Sung, Chit Cheung Matthew
7	Bolton, Kingsley; Lee, Ju Seong; Stell, Cerald; Boonsuk, Yusop
6	Baker, Will; Lee, Seongyong; Tagliamonte, Sali A; Rose, Heath; Hundt, Marianne; Deuber, Dagmar; Ahn, So-Yeon; Kobayashi, Yoko.

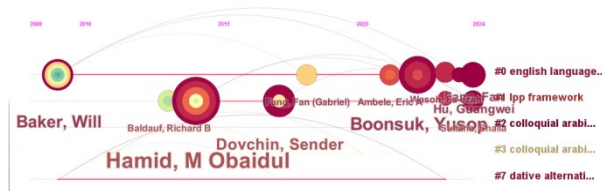


Fig. 4. Transitions of key authors in WE, GE, ELF and EIL research

Further analysis of data shows that M.O. Hamid studies the Englishes of Bangladesh, Vietnam, Arabic, Saudi Arabic, and Asia and his research is focused on the policy and pedagogy of those English varieties [10, 11]. His research frequently investigates the utilization of English across various cultural contexts, emphasizing the global proliferation of English and its effects on indigenous languages and communities. Another major contributor, B. Szmrecsanyi, emphasizes in his research the comparative exploration of multiple English varieties through dialect typology and corpus research methodologies, particularly at the morphosyntactic or grammatical level [12, 13]. W. Baker is among the pioneering authors to have initiated the study in the domain of cultural communication, who substantially actively participated in the study of World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, and English teaching. More importantly, his work explores how socioeconomic issues, such as class, ethnicity, and education determine how English is used, spoken, and taught around the world.

Key Developments. This section of the study analyzes the compiled database for keywords, using Citespace to examine the essential developmental insights in the WE, GE, ELF and EIL research. Fig. 5 and 6, as well as Table 2 illustrate that contemporary study in this domain has concentrated on three areas: education, interdisciplinary studies, and language identity, with sociology, psychology, anthropology, and corpora integrated within interdisciplinary studies.

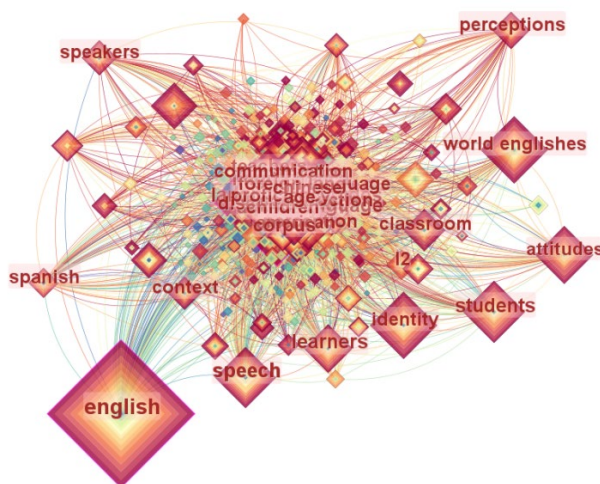


Fig. 5. Keywords clusters of WE, GE, ELF and EIL research

Table 2. Major themes of WE, GE, ELF and EIL research

Key Categories	Major Themes
Education	Acquisition; Students; Proficiency; L2 Motivation
Interdisciplinary Studies	Sociology; Psychology; Anthropology; Corpus Linguistics
Language Identity	Attitudes; Variety; Policy; 2nd Language

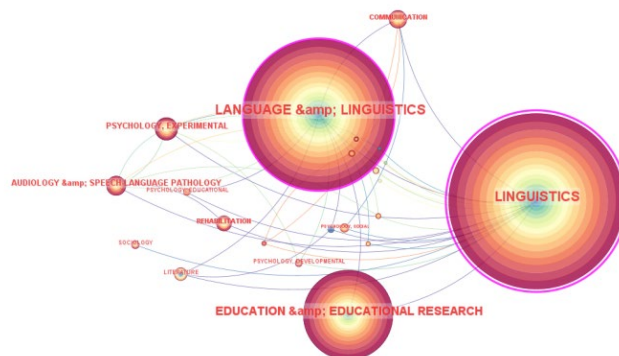


Fig. 6. Category of WE, GE, ELF and EIL research

More research has been conducted on the opinions of non-native English speakers regarding standard English and other varieties of the language [14]. Piller and Cho [15], as the most cited article, explored how the economic ideology – neoliberalism – serves as a covert language policy mechanism pushing the global spread of English. Some surveys indicate that English teachers gradually depart from considering American and British English as the teaching standards. They advocate explicit instruction on the distinguishing features of English varieties, such as Malaysian English and Chinese English [16]. Yet, this trend is not universal. Thus the Evan and Imai [17]’s survey of Japanese English revealed that US English continues to be perceived as the ‘standard’ variety in Japanese English teaching.

Regarding “identity” or “variety”, it has been estimated that up to 66.28 percent of English speakers worldwide are non-native speakers [18], which makes the notion of a single or even dual worldwide standard problematic. This is what Young and Walsh [19] observe in respect to “standard English”, suggesting that it is better to aim at real than at standard. In Ambele and Boonsuk’s [20] research, the findings revealed that most of the participants congruently agreed that the prime target of ELT is to prepare language learners for communication that involves interlocutors, and not to force them to adopt native-like English competence.

Following the identity research, many studies have concentrated on the characterization of different varieties of the English language. Bello et. al [3] investigated intelligibility of English vowels produced by Nigerian and Malaysian speakers and the findings showed that Malaysian English lacks vowel contrast between /e-æ/, /i-ɪ:/, and /ʌ-ɜ:/ and the authors indicate that a brief training session can augment individuals’ understanding of diverse language varieties and promote comprehensibility. The Evan and Imai [17]’s research, focused on Japanese English, demonstrates that international relations profoundly impact this language variety.

Among other trends, Salazar [21] outlines the ongoing initiatives of the Oxford English Dictionary in respect to English varieties and highlights how scholars have utilized the OED in subsequent studies to substantiate their own research findings.

The status of many English varieties has been elevated, and numerous studies no longer categorize them as non-standard English. However, this has also spawned new issues. Young and Walsh [19] investigated teachers’ beliefs on which model(s) were likely to predominate in their teaching contexts in the future and results showed that teachers may work without any clear idea of “which English” was the target. From another perspective, educators might incorporate the attributes of each English variety into their instructional material to facilitate students’ comprehension of the actual significance of WE. Recognizing the distinctiveness of different varieties is crucial for our future endeavors in language acquisition and instruction and our English instruction could prioritize communicative proficiency.

Among other teaching implications, Lee [16] highlights the role of examining methods, which are to augment students’ WE cognition as well as boost their receptiveness to diverse English varieties, while also addressing the role of educators in this endeavor. Nonetheless, the findings are not sufficiently instructive about the current state of English language education.

Research Trends. This section aims at investigating the research trends and milestone findings, which may have important implications for the future development of the Englishes paradigm. As evinces from Fig. 7, the discussion surrounding the following four themes, “English as a medium of instruction”, “English language teaching”, “global Englishes” and “languages”, has become more prominent subsequent to 2020. The present condition of the English language instruction and acquisition as a second or third language, along with the associated challenges, has been a central focus of research in English Medium Instruction (EMI). Richards and Pun [22]’s “A Typology of English-Medium Instruction”, as the most cited source, identified 51 features across 10 curriculum categories and highlighted different dimensions of EMI that are involved in describing, planning, or evaluating EMI. Surveys also investigate the present condition of EMI instruction and learning through example-based inquiry to enhance language teaching and learning, such as Aizawa and Rose [23]’s High School to University Transitional Challenges in

English Medium Instruction in Japan, Yuksel et.al [24]’s A Longitudinal Study at An English Medium Instruction University in Turkey: the Interplay between English Language Improvement and Academic Success.

Current research on global Englishes primarily examines the identification and attributes of multiple English varieties, integrating this with English Language Teaching to enhance learners' understanding of global Englishes and to shift priority from Native English. Rose et. al. [25] set a future research agenda in which explicit research into teacher education, including the exploration of changes in teacher beliefs and practices of Global Englishes, and curriculum change were suggested. And Boonsuk [26] found that students appreciated the value of “Thai English”, as they no longer viewed it as a communicative barrier. Curry and Lillis [27] proposed to turn the predominant focus on English and the English Only ideology and emphasized the multilingual realities of academic knowledge production globally.

Other obstacles persist, including the training of educators and formulation of empirically effective curriculum based on these findings, although studies have delineated the identities of English varieties and examined their implications for pedagogy. More research on this topic needs to be undertaken concerning these challenges.

This study additionally found that, as Fig. 7 illustrates, there has been a steady decline in grammar research in recent years, with an increase in studies that concentrate on the utterance or usage features. Meaning in corpus linguistics is frequently obtained by examining language usage patterns in big text collections, or corpora. The influence of the grammatical dimension is no longer decisive. The study of intelligence has also revealed the similar pattern.

Top 25 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

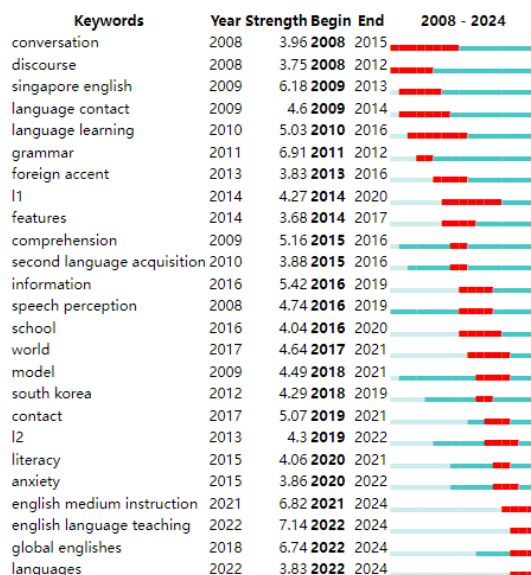


Fig. 7. Keywords bursts of WE, GE, ELF and EIL research from 2008 to 2024

The evaluation of key developments and research trends reveals that, despite significant advancements in current research and the gradual application of findings from other sectors of English language field to the study of English varieties, many questions remain unanswered. First, for instance, there is still no practical and efficient way to direct instruction even though American

and British English is no longer considered the standard English and the status of English varieties has been acknowledged. Second, more work has been done to examine the phonetic elements, which is highly beneficial for increasing intelligibility. However, it is still unclear how to use and represent these findings in the classroom. The findings reported here suggest that more research on the aforementioned should be conducted to encourage dialogue.

Conclusion. This study set out to figure out what have been researched in WE, GE, ELF and EIL up to now and what needs to be investigated further. The results have shown that research connected to Englishes across the world has grown in recent years, characterized by enhanced collaboration among scholars and institutions, as well as a shift towards multidisciplinary studies. Contemporary research has established the position of each English variety, contended that standard English should not be sought, and acknowledged the significance of comprehensive examination of each English variety for effective communication. The research on the characteristics of different varieties of English extends beyond their historical origins to explore phonetic features and pragmatic dimensions. These findings have been utilized in education, prompting English educators and learners across various countries to cultivate an understanding of global Englishes. Nonetheless, additional challenges remain in place, including the determination of a standard of English for instructional purposes, the enhancement of the teaching curriculum, and the immature and unsystematic study on various English varieties. These were also the focal points and trends in research from 2020.

Being aware of the limitation, consisting in addressing only data from the WOS, we still hope the present study can offer a framework for the exploration of WE, GE, ELF and EIL, while future research may broaden the study database to encompass CNKI and similar resources.

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