

REVIEW

Bibliometric Analysis of Research on L2 Speaking Skills for the Period of 2020 – 2024

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the scholarly literature on second language (L2) speaking skills published between 2020 and 2024. A total of 233 relevant documents were retrieved from the Scopus database, ensuring a focused, high-quality, and representative dataset. To systematically analyze the data, we employed Microsoft Excel for initial data cleaning and sorting, VOSviewer for visualizing co-authorship and keyword networks, and RStudio (with Bibliometrix) for advanced bibliometric mapping and quantitative analysis. The study explores multiple dimensions of the field, including the annual growth of publications, institutional and author productivity, citation impact, and keyword frequency across the selected years. Special attention is given to the keywords used by leading authors, which help to uncover foundational research themes, conceptual trends, and emerging areas of inquiry. By analyzing citation patterns and keyword co-occurrences, the study identifies influential authors, prominent research clusters, and dominant themes within the literature on L2 speaking skills. The findings reveal a gradual transition from traditional teaching methods to more innovative and technology-supported approaches, including the integration of AI, mobile-assisted learning, virtual tools, and sociocultural perspectives. Furthermore, the analysis highlights underexplored areas, offering strategic guidance for future research agendas and contributing to the ongoing evolution of L2 speaking pedagogy.

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Keywords: L2; Speaking Skills; Bibliometric Review; Keyword Analysis

1. Introduction

Speaking is a fundamental linguistic ability in which students typically excel when learning a foreign language. In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), the development of speaking skills remains a central focus due to its role in real-time communication and academic success. However, the process of acquiring spoken proficiency can vary significantly depending on the learning environment, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts ^[1]. EFL learners study English in countries where English is not commonly used in daily communication, while ESL learners typically acquire English in immersive, English-speaking societies. These different settings shape exposure to authentic language, interaction opportunities, and instructional strategies ^[2]. For instance, while ESL learners often benefit from abundant real-world communication, EFL learners rely more heavily on structured instruction and technological tools to develop speaking competence ^[3]. For many years, speaking has been regarded as the most crucial, significant, and challenging skill, as learners of second or foreign languages often gauge their linguistic progress based on their proficiency in verbal expressions ^[4]. The latter primarily contributes to language anxiety among the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Compared to the other three abilities, oral communication proficiency is the primary source of linguistic apprehension ^[5]. Verbal interaction is a complex process involving the creation, reception, and interpretation of information to construct meaning. Various contextual factors, such as the audience, speakers, and intended goals of the conversation, influence the manner and substance of the speech. Alkhutaba (2022), as a two-way process involving the genuine exchange of ideas, data, or feelings, characterizes speaking. This top-down view suggests that spoken discourse results from the collaboration between two or more participants in a shared timeframe and physical environment. Speaking can fulfill both the transactional and interactional functions. The languages employed in transactional and interactional

discourses have distinct features. In transactional dialogue, language is primarily used to communicate information ^[6]. Throughout the evolution of language pedagogy, the approach to teaching oral communication skills—a vital aspect of language acquisition—has undergone a significant transformation and adaptation ^[7].

Ur (2013) describes speaking proficiency as the skill encompassing all other forms of linguistic knowledge, observing that those fluent in a language are typically referred to as ‘speakers’ of that language. Mastery of speaking skills enables learners to engage in dialogue with others and express their thoughts, views, and feelings Brown & Yule (1983). Moreover, proficiency in oral communication enhances students’ chances of obtaining advanced academic credentials, securing suitable job opportunities, and achieving rapid professional growth ^[9]. As observed by Brown & Yule (1983), difficulties in L2 speaking arise from the need to understand and produce languages concurrently. These obstacles are complex and varied, including personal apprehensions, language proficiency constraints, societal influences, and the limitations of conventional instructional approaches ^[9]. The concept of speaking skills has been interpreted in various ways. Several noteworthy definitions have been proposed owing to their specificity and value. One perspective describes speaking as the process of conveying ideas and information in diverse situations. Another view characterizes it as the construction and exchange of meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols in different contexts. Similarly, speaking is understood as creating and sharing significance using spoken language and nonverbal cues across various settings ^[10]. These developments may help to overcome the constraints of traditional EFL instruction. By utilizing pedagogical foundations, teachers can create learning environments that are more effective, inclusive, and engaging for all students, ultimately helping them all succeed ^[11].

Bibliometric analysis is an effective method for examining publications within a specific research domain. Unlike narrative scientific literature reviews, which often employ a qualitative approach and may be influenced by

researcher bias, bibliometric analysis offers a quantitative technique for investigating the metadata of scholarly works^[12]. While bibliometric analysis can be a valuable tool for identifying research trends, it may only accurately reflect the significance of a particular research topic, as the quantity of publications does not necessarily correlate with importance. However, a narrative literature review is better suited for synthesizing scientific knowledge in a specific research area and highlighting gaps in the existing body of work^[13] learners can learn speaking skills through various resources. Therefore, there is a need to identify the learning strategies used by learners for speaking skills in the new learning environment. In this review, the most frequently used strategies in language learning for speaking skills has been examined. The articles reviewed were from 2017 until 2021 across two databases, ERIC and Google Scholar. The PRISMA 2020 methodology is used in the review. From the review, it was found that meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies were most frequently used for learning speaking skills, followed by compensation and social strategies. The least used strategies by learners were memory and affective strategies. The findings help teachers to look for the most suitable teaching method in the current learning environment. For future research, an extensive review of the use of learning strategies for other learning skills could be carried out. © 2021 The Author(s). The research outcomes enhance the current body of knowledge and provide valuable insights for individuals seeking to improve their English-speaking skills, including university lecturers and organizations involved in educational management. The purpose of bibliometric reviews is not to define terminology or assess research quality, but rather to provide a comprehensive and wide-ranging understanding of the existing literature.^[14]^[15].

According to these objectives, we formulated the following research questions:

1. What are the major publication trends and most influential sources in the field of L2 speaking skills research from 2020 to 2024?
2. Who are the most productive and highly cited authors and institutions in this area, and what are their key areas of focus?
3. What are the dominant keywords, emerging themes,

and conceptual structures that characterize current research on L2 speaking skills?

2. Materials and Methods

This study examined selected publications on global knowledge from the existing research. The investigation gathered English-language academic literature from the Scopus database between 2020 and 2024. Data collection was conducted in September 2024, resulting in 233 publications that used the search term “speaking skills.” Subsequently, articles were classified according to their publication year. A comprehensive database was established, encompassing peer-reviewed papers, including publication year, author names, journal titles, citation counts per paper, and citation counts per journal. The analysis utilized software tools, including CSV files, Microsoft Excel, RIS, VOSviewer, and RStudio. To ensure a well-structured bibliometric analysis, we first organized the collected data into a CSV (Comma-Separated Values) file, making it easier to store and manage the data. Microsoft Excel played a crucial role in the initial stages, enabling us to sort and filter information while conducting fundamental statistical analyses. This allowed us to examine critical bibliometric details such as publication year, author names, journal titles, and citation counts at both the paper and journal levels. For more advanced analysis, we exported the bibliographic data in RIS (Research Information Systems) format, ensuring compatibility with specialized bibliometric software. To map connections between authors, track citation relationships, and explore keyword patterns, we used VOSviewer, a powerful tool for visualizing bibliometric networks. Additionally, we turned to RStudio, an advanced statistical computing environment, to conduct deeper analyses, model trends, and uncover meaningful insights from the data. Ultimately, we reviewed 233 documents, as depicted in **Figure 1**. The rationale for employing these methods stems from Scopus being a reputable database that aggregates authoritative literature globally, particularly in the field of L2 speaking skills. Given its status as a universal language, English-language literature is considered to be more standardized and significant than publications in other languages.

2.1. Eligibility Criteria for Article Selection and Review

In the search process, relevant information, such as the keyword “speaking skill” and all English articles, was added to a spreadsheet. Article = (“speaking skill”), document type = “article,” timespan = “2020–2024”, Subject area = Linguistics, Social Science, Education, countries = all countries, and **Figure 1** shows the flow of the selected methodology for the research. During the screening process, the following exclusion criteria were used.

1. Only the title and abstract of the article are reported in English, but the rest is in another language.
2. Articles related to other research areas.
3. Lack of definition of search terms (stability, sensitivity, resistance).
4. Many articles lack a DOI, and the ability to locate articles is limited. In general, it was not possible to exclude these articles using the filter options in Scopus.

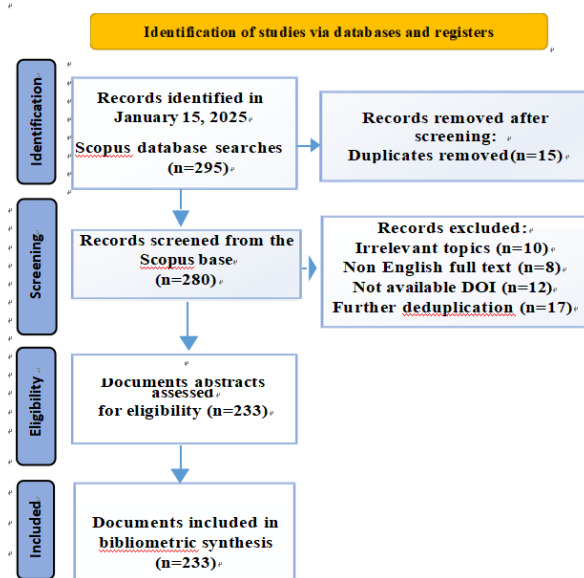


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Methodology.

2.2. Bibliometric Analysis

Data obtained in CSV format was uploaded to Excel for bibliometric analysis. Before starting the analysis, the data were thoroughly checked for errors. Furthermore, the co-occurrence of keywords was analyzed using RStudio software to explore the knowledge components and

structure of the research domain by identifying clusters of the most common keywords in the literature. In conclusion, this study aims to analyze the keywords utilized in academic papers and examine how authors prioritize various factors in the development of students’ speaking skills within English language classrooms. The analysis focused on the compelling findings in L2 speaking skills. The information derived from the studies was categorized into three groups: keywords comprising one, two, or three words (see **Figures 7, 8, and 9**). The articles from the search were assessed and classified according to various aspects, including the number of papers per year, top-listed papers, top journals, distribution by subject categories and journals, and affiliation by country and institution. Finally, the co-authors and co-occurrence of keywords were analyzed to explore the knowledge components and structure of the research domain by identifying clusters of the most common keywords in the literature.

3. Results

3.1. Trend of Publications on Enhancing L2 Speaking Skills

The number of studies published each year from 2020 to 2024 is shown in **Figure 2**. A total of 233 papers were published between 2020 and 2024 on enhancing L2 speaking skills. The number of records grew over five years, from 21 to 53. **Figure 2** shows the 21 papers published at the beginning of 2020. Since 2021, there has been a rapid increase in the number of publications. There are 46 and 53 publications by 2021 and 2022, respectively. In 2023, the highest number of publications was reached during the analysis, 63. Almost 3.9 % of the total number of publications will be published by 2024.

3.2. Authors and Their Affiliated Country

The results in **Figure 3** show that Yunus M. was the top author in research on L2 speaking skills, with nine documents. The results are interesting in that while most of the authors on this list (e.g., Yunus M.) are renowned experts in L2 speaking, some are still researchers with a primary focus on speaking, and it appears that they have

only two or three papers in their works. Our analysis of the top ten institutes' publications on L2 speaking skills enabled us to identify the field's most influential and productive institutions. As indicated in **Figure 4**, of the ten institutions, two were from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, and one was from each of the following countries: Ecua-

dor, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Russia. These prolific institutions contributed approximately 13 % of the total output. Among these, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia occupies the first position in record rank (31 records), followed by Islamic Azad University (26 records), and Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (16 records).

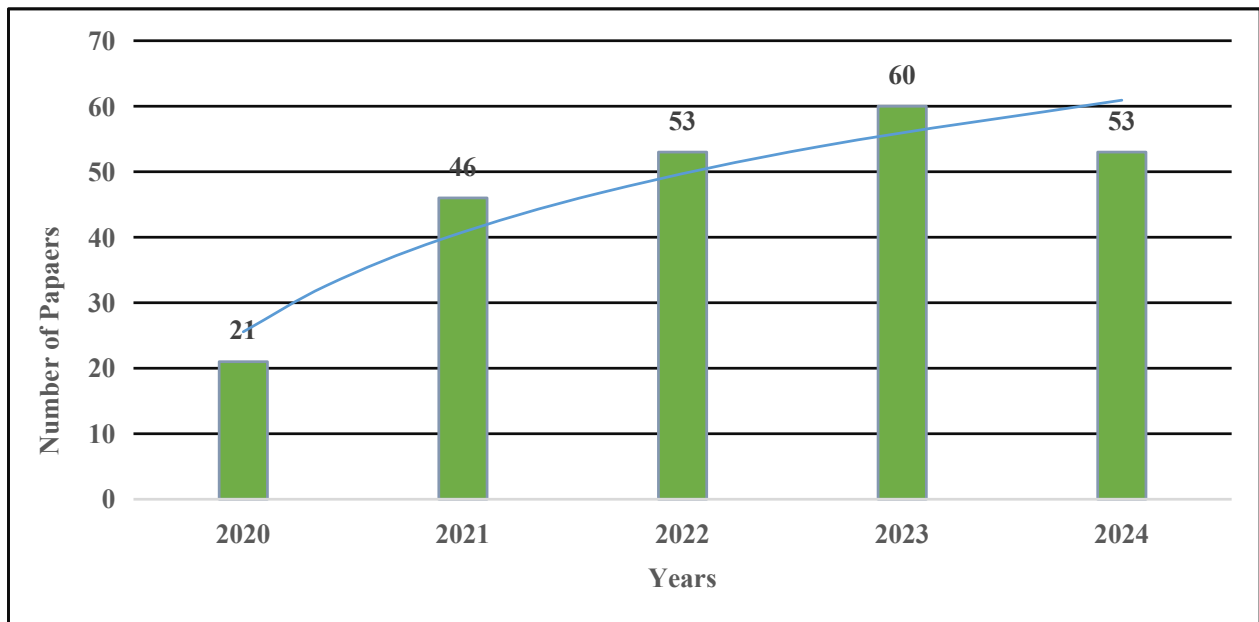


Figure 2. Distribution of Articles from 2020 to 2024.

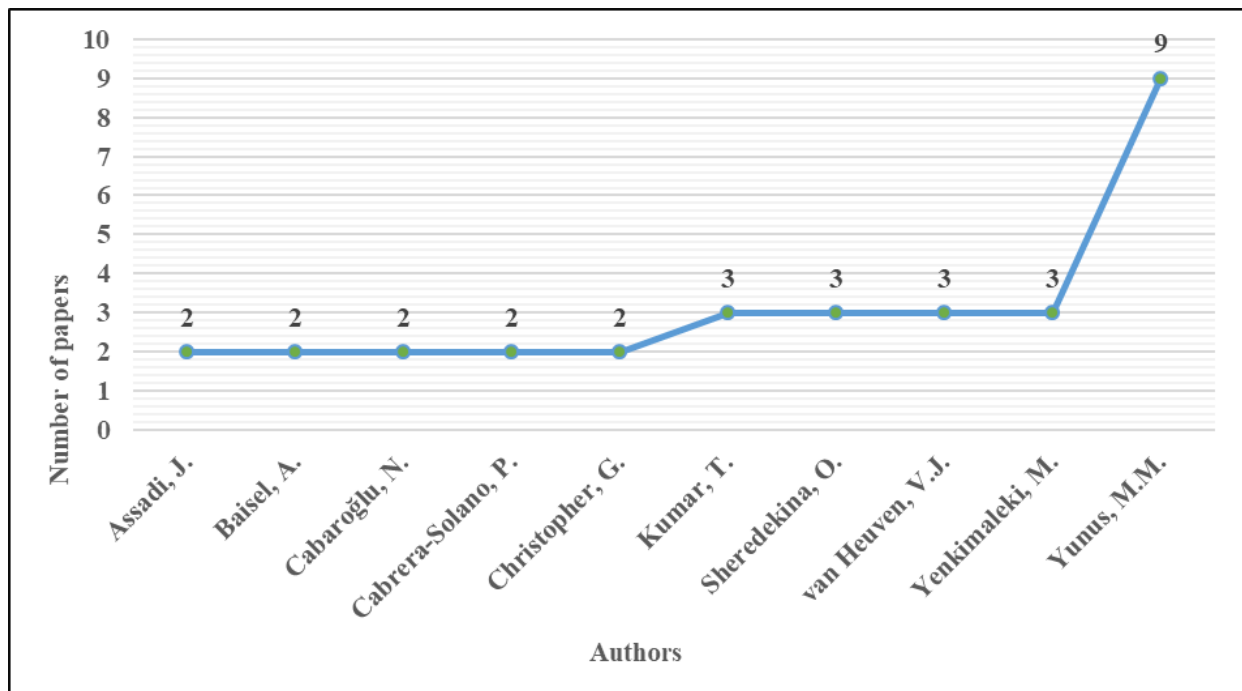


Figure 3. List of Top Authors Published on Enhancing L2 Speaking Skills.

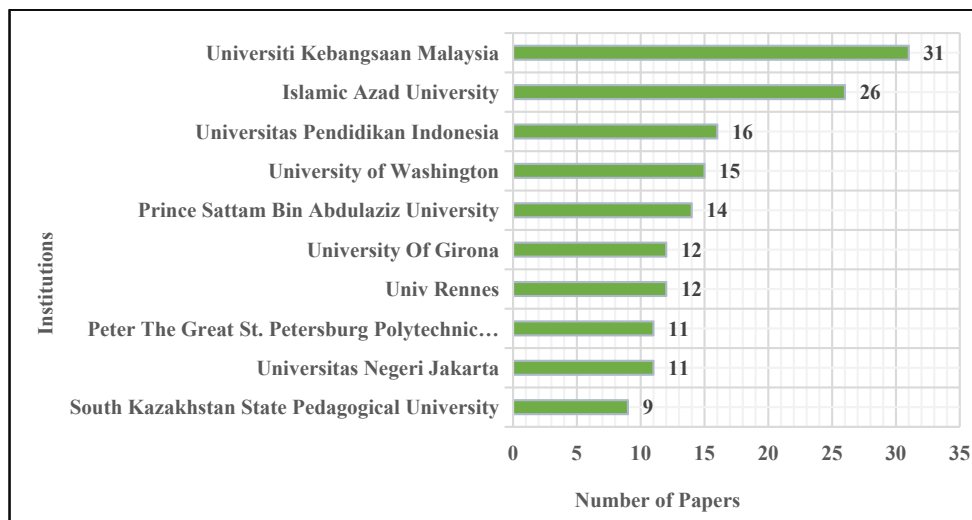


Figure 4. List of Top Institutions for Enhancing L2 Speaking Skills in the World.

3.3. Top Keywords for Enhancing I2 Speaking Skills

The keyword analysis yielded 1150 keywords. After excluding general keywords with a low relevance score and those with a low occurrence (by default, a minimum of 40 occurrences of a keyword were selected to strengthen the co-occurrence results), 40 items were identified. Each resulting keyword was represented as a node based on the total link strength, thereby creating a network map of all keywords. **Figure 5** shows the network map of the keyword co-occurrence among the top 40 authors. The size of each node reflects the degree of importance of the

keywords. There were 40 items distributed over five clusters: Cluster 1 (EFL learners, language skills, listening, listening skills, perceptions, reading, speaking, speaking anxiety, speaking skills, technology, writing, writing skills), Cluster 2 (adult, article, communication, controlled study, female, human, human experiment, humans, male, perception, public speaking, skill), Cluster 3 (anxiety, artificial intelligence, digital storytelling, education, EFL, English speaking skills, language, motivation, students, teaching), Cluster 4 (communication skills, higher education, online learning), and Cluster 5 (English – speaking skills, knowledge). The total link strength was 644, with 255 links.

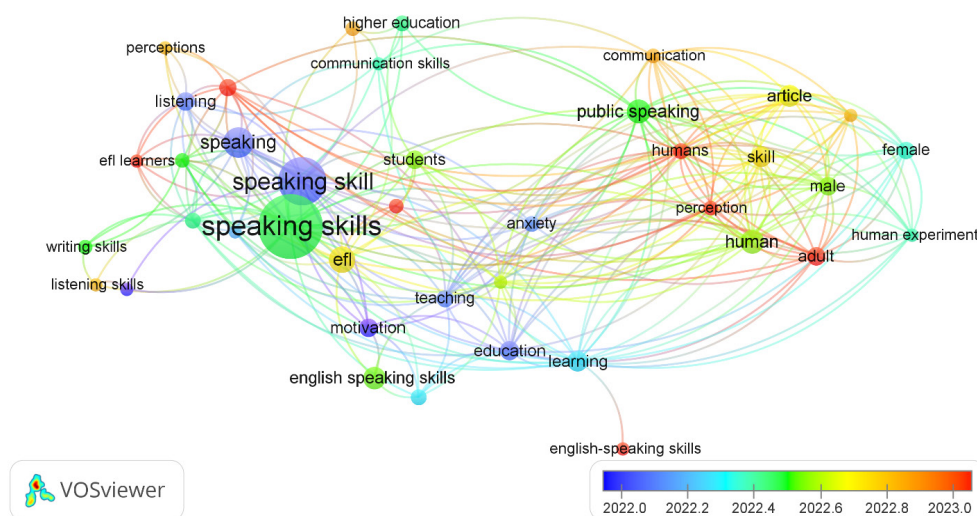


Figure 5. Co-occurrence Network of Keywords. The different colored lines represent the co-occurrence clusters of different keywords; the more significant the keyword, the more influential it is, and the bolder the line between the keywords, the more times they have co-occurred.

3.4. Top Cited Papers on Enhancing L2 Speaking Skills

A high number of citations indicates the quality and novelty of the research. The ten most cited papers on irrigation and drainage are listed in **Table 1**. A total of 250 citations were given to 233 publications on the enhancement of L2 speaking skills over a given period. Almost 44 % of the citations were given to ten papers, as shown in **Table 1**. The first ten top-cited papers consisted of three

reviews and seven research articles. In this list of the most cited papers, Malaysia has three representatives, Saudi Arabia has two, and the United States, the Netherlands, Iran, China, and the Russian Federation each have one representative. As we witnessed through this analysis, most studies were published in peer-reviewed sources. Through these journal papers, we can conduct an in-depth analysis of their rationale. Therefore, despite the large number of documents in the issue series, they were cited fewer times.

Table1. List of Top-cited Publications on Enhancing L2 Speaking Skills in the World.

No.	Title	Journal	Corresponding author	Country	PY	TC 2020-2024	Document Type
1	A systematic review of digital storytelling in improving speaking skills	Sustainability	Nair V	Malaysia	2021	36	Review
2	A systematic review of the flipped learning approach in improving speaking skills	European Journal of Educational Research	Santhana-samy C	Malaysia	2022	26	Review
3	Interprofessional model on speaking up behavior in healthcare professionals: a qualitative study	BMJ Leader	Umoren R	United States	2022	22	Article
4	A systematic review of social media integration to teach speaking	Sustainability	John E	Malaysia	2021	21	Review
5	The added benefit of an extra practice session in virtual reality on the development of presentation skills: A randomized control trial	Journal of Computer-Assisted Learning	Boetje J	Netherlands	2021	20	Article
6	Effects of attention to segmental vs. suprasegmental features on the speech intelligibility and comprehensibility of the EFL learners targeting the perception or production-focused practice	System	Yenkimali M	Iran	2021	17	Article
7	An Investigation Into Artificial Intelligence Speech Evaluation Programs With Automatic Feedback for Developing EFL Learners' Speaking Skills	Sage Open	Zou B	China	2023	15	Article
8	'Desire to learn, learn to shine': Idolizing motivation in enhancing speaking skills among L2 learners	Cypriot J Edu Sci	Kumar T	Saudi Arabia	2021	15	Article
9	The efficiency of using pictures in teaching speaking skills to non-native Arabic beginner students	Univers J Edu Res	Al-Khresheh Mh	Saudi Arabia	2020	14	Article
10	The use of monologue-speaking tasks to improve first-year students' English-speaking skills	Education Sciences	Karpovich I	Russian Federation	2021	13	Article

* PY – Published year, * TC – Total citation

3.5. Top Cited Journals on Enhancing L2 Speaking Skills in the World

In Section 4.5, we analyze the top journals that published the most papers. Therefore, we decided to investigate the top-cited journals in the field of L2 speaking skills. First, we sorted the source names alphabetically using an Excel extension file containing 233 documents. Then, the step-by-step total papers' citations are summarized for each journal. Interestingly, we have updated the list with potential journal names. The initial ten journals

were selected, as shown in **Table 2**. Due to the high number of citations, the first-ranked journal, with 75 documents, emerged as the best journal based on publication rate. Five journals —Sustainability, the European Journal of Educational Research, Sage Open, Frontiers in Psychology, and the World Journal of English Language — were ranked as top-cited journals (**Table 2**). Four journals, Education Sciences, BMJ Leader, Language Testing in Asia, and the Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences, have more citations. However, they have fewer articles on fostering speaking skills issues worldwide.

Table 2. The Rank Order of the Ten Most Highly Co-cited Journals.

No.	Source	Society	Co-cites
1	Sustainability	Switzerland	75
2	European Journal of Educational Research	<u>Netherlands</u>	37
3	Sage Open	<u>United States</u>	35
4	Frontiers In Psychology	Switzerland	34
5	World Journal of English Language	<u>United States</u>	30
6	Education Sciences	Switzerland	24
7	Bmj Leader	<u>United Kingdom</u>	22
8	Language Testing in Asia	<u>United States</u>	20
9	Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences	<u>Cyprus</u>	20
10	Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies	<u>Turkey</u>	20

4. Discussion

4.1. Building Keyword Co-Occurrence Networks and Analysis of Thematic Keywords

We constructed keyword co-occurrence networks using the collected data. Then, we analyzed the single, two-word, and three-word keywords using the abstracts and authors' keywords from 50 articles after screening. The keyword analysis in **Figure 6** provides a comprehensive overview of the thematic landscape of literature on L2 speaking skills. The predominance of “speaking skills” (88 occurrences) ^[16,17], along with “speaking skill” ^[18,19], and “speaking” ^[20], has established the field's primary focus. Beyond mere speaking, it encompasses the skills involved, emphasizing pedagogical assessment methods and other aspects of communicative competence. This research prioritizes a detailed examination of what constitutes ideal spoken language ability and how to teach and assess this ability effectively. This focus is further elucidat-

ed by the use of the terms “English Speaking skills” ^[21,22] and “EFL” ^[23,24]. The data suggest a focus on teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language—a context in which practical speaking skills are crucial for learners' success. The inclusion of other keywords, such as “listening” ^[25,26], “motivation” ^[27,28], and “digital storytelling,” adds depth and complexity. “Listening,” though significantly less frequent, highlights the recognition that speaking is not an isolated skill. Effective communication requires active listening and articulation. The presence of “motivation” ^[29] acknowledges the importance of the learner's affective state in successful language acquisition. Indeed, much of effective teaching involves understanding and fostering learner motivation. The emergence of “digital storytelling” ^[30,31] indicates emerging trends in language instruction, with technology potentially playing a significant role in developing speaking skills. The less frequent terms “education” ^[32,33], and “higher education” ^[34,35] contextualize the research within its broader educational setting, emphasizing the importance of these skills in academic contexts. The research community demonstrates a

significant interest in speaking skills, considering them not in isolation but as a complex aspect of language learning situated within a broader educational context that encompasses elements of learner motivation and the progressive application of digital tools. This dynamic research landscape is continually evolving. As keywords emerge from the collective research endeavors of numerous scholars

globally, they reflect shared concerns, the ongoing pursuit of enhanced teaching practices, and the exploration of practical methodologies for cultivating essential speaking abilities. Further investigation could examine the progression of these keywords over time, potentially elucidating shifts in research priorities and emerging trends within the field.

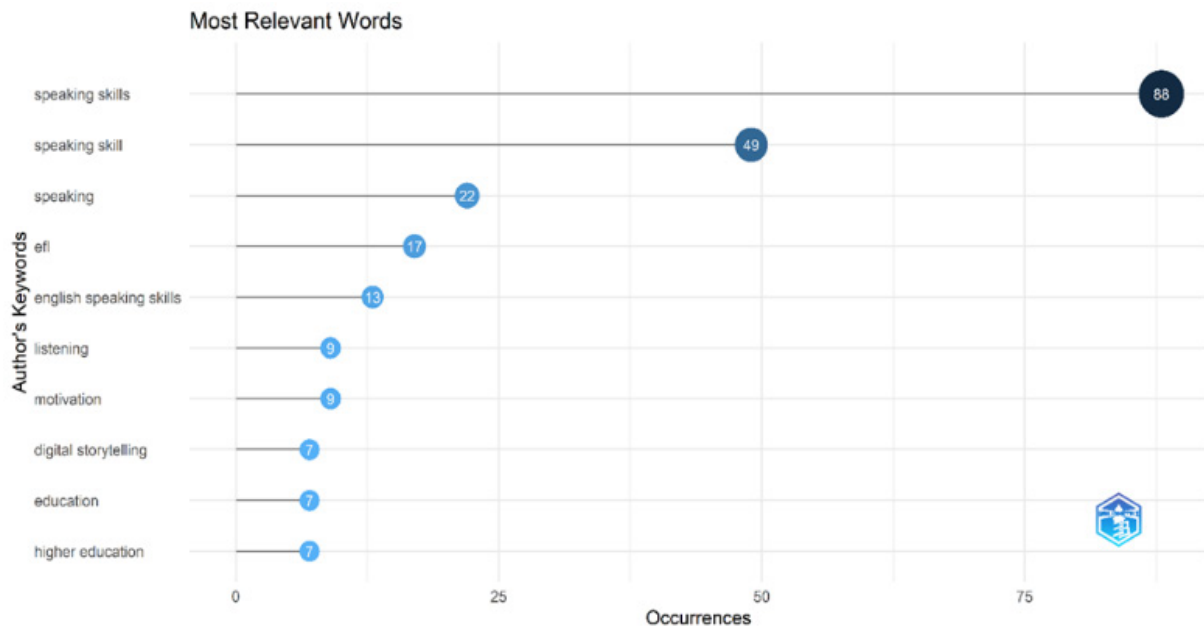


Figure 6. Author's Keywords.

Figure 7 presents a one-word keyword analysis based on abstracts, a standard method used in bibliometric research. It visually represents the frequency of the most prevalent keywords within research abstracts. The predominance of "speaking" (718 occurrences) immediately establishes the central theme. This is not merely about communication; the emphasis is on speaking, suggesting a research focus on speaking skills, fluency, pronunciation, or specific communicative strategies. The word "speaking" is significantly more frequent than any other term, indicating that the body of literature on this analysis is predominantly concerned with this specific aspect of language use^[36]. The high frequency of "students" (671 occurrences) immediately contextualizes the "speaking" research. This represents a substantial body of work centered on students' learning and developing their speaking abilities. This research is not merely theoretical; it is directly connected to practical challenges and opportunities in educational settings. It can be inferred that numerous studies

have focused on teaching methodologies, assessment techniques, and student performance in language courses^[37]. "Skills" (536 occurrences)^[38] further refines this focus. The research is not simply interested in whether students speak but rather in the specific skills they possess or lack and how to best develop them. This suggests a detailed interest in the components of speaking proficiency, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and communicative effectiveness^[39]. "Language" (489 occurrences), "study" (448 occurrences), and "English" (385 occurrences) strongly support this interpretation^[40,41]. Language learning, specifically the study of English language acquisition, has driven research interest in this field. Including "learning" (383 occurrences) confirmed the educational focus, emphasizing the learning processes associated with developing speaking skills. The less frequent keywords—"research" (232 occurrences), "learners" (217 occurrences), and "teaching" (204 occurrences)—add further layers of context. "Research" highlights the

scholarly nature of this body of work, while "learners" and "teaching" suggest that the studies likely encompass investigations of different pedagogical approaches and their effectiveness^[42,7].

In conclusion, this keyword analysis paints a picture of a research field intensely focused on developing speak-

ing skills in students, particularly in those learning English as a Second Language. The high frequency of specific terms illuminates the core interests of the research community, emphasizing pedagogical practices, assessment strategies, and the overall learning processes involved in this key aspect of language acquisition.

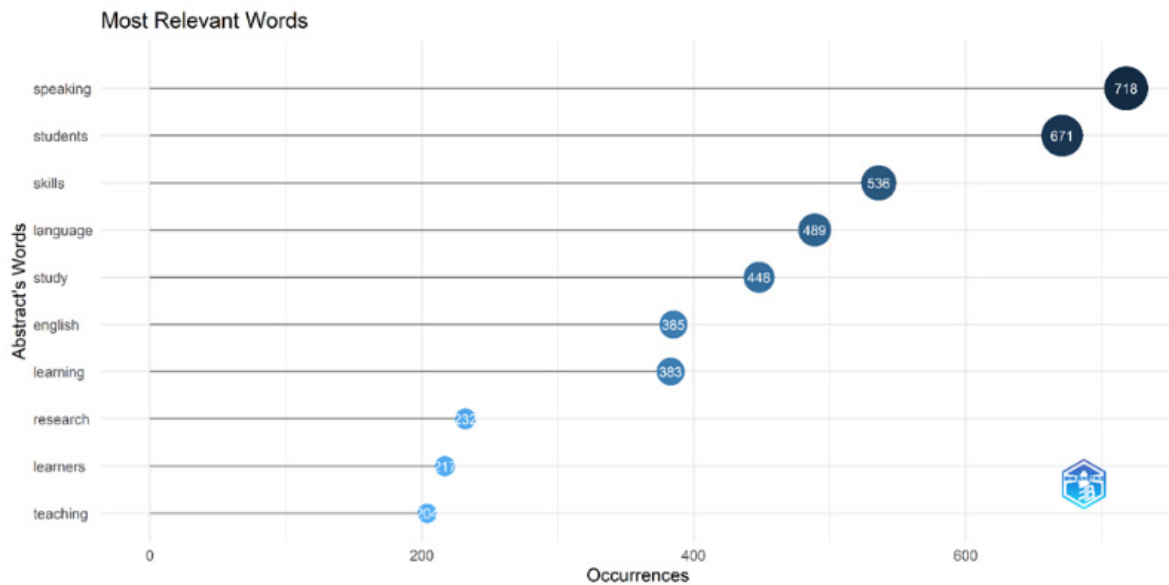


Figure 7. One-Word Abstract Keywords.

Figure 8 illustrates the frequency of the two-word keywords found in the research abstracts, providing an overview of the predominant themes within a corpus of literature. The most striking result was the high frequency of "speaking skills" (278 occurrences). This immediate dominance establishes the central focus of the research: the development, assessment, and understanding of speaking skills. This is not simply about communication in general; the emphasis is on the specific skills involved in proficient spoken language, suggesting a detailed focus on aspects such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and communicative effectiveness. The substantial difference between this frequency and other terms underscores this core interest^[43,44]. The following most frequent keywords, "foreign language" (94 occurrences) and "English language" (60 occurrences), place speaking skills research firmly within the context of second language acquisition. This suggests that many of the included studies have investigated how learners develop speaking proficiency in a foreign language, with a particular focus on English. The difference in frequency between "foreign language" and "English language" might indicate a subtle focus on

English as the predominant target language. However, this should be examined further^[36,45-47]. Further reinforcing this thematic focus are "language learning" (59 occurrences) and "speaking skill" (51 occurrences). These terms confirm that the body of research actively investigates the processes and mechanisms involved in language learning, specifically focusing on speaking abilities and their underlying mechanisms. The high frequency of these related terms again points to a body of research focusing on students' development of their speaking skills^[48-56]. Frequently occurring terms such as "language skills" (46 occurrences), "students speaking" (45 occurrences), "communication skills" (43 occurrences), "public speaking" (42 occurrences), and "English speaking" (39 occurrences) provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research scope. These terms indicate that the studies encompass more than mere speaking proficiency. They also incorporate the ability to communicate effectively in various contexts, including public discourse. Furthermore, the research considers students' perceptions and attitudes toward speaking^[57-62].

In conclusion, this lexical analysis presents substantial

research on second language acquisition, particularly in the context of English language learning. The frequently occurring terms predominantly relate to pedagogical approaches,

assessment methodologies, and learners' oral proficiency. A more comprehensive literature examination would facilitate a deeper understanding of the research landscape.

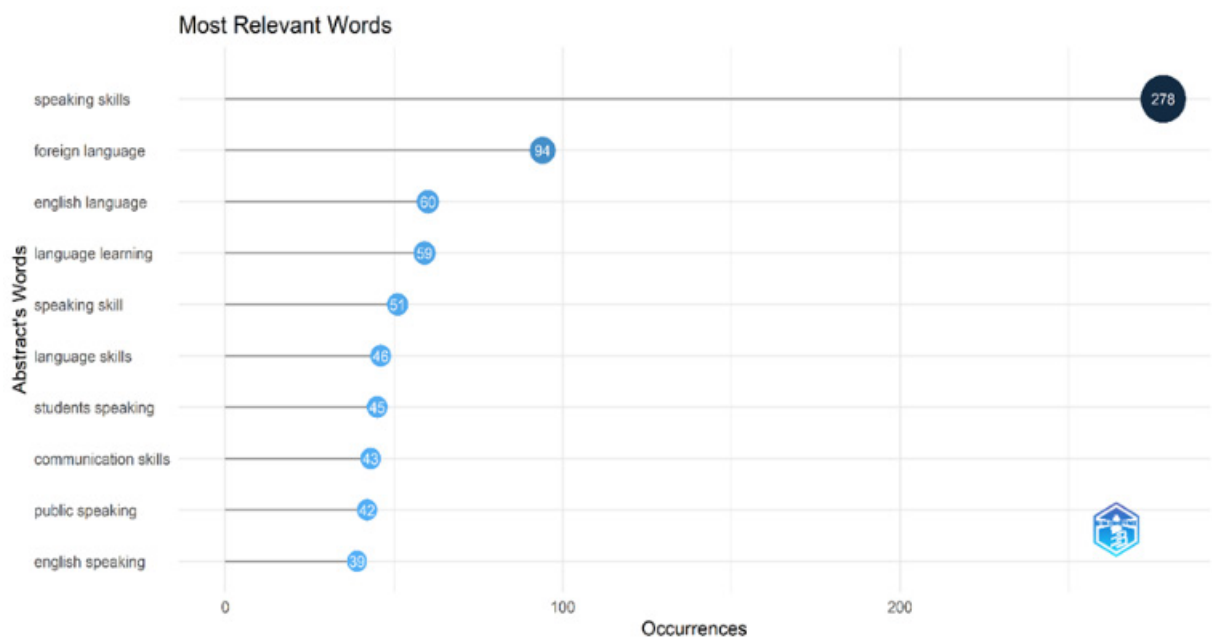


Figure 8. Two-word Abstract Keywords.

An examination of three-word keywords extracted from research abstracts is illustrated in **Figure 9**, highlighting the frequency of occurrence for each term. The most recurrent keyword, “students’ speaking skills” (25 instances), immediately established the research’s primary focus: developing and evaluating students’ oral communication abilities. This suggests a strong emphasis on teaching methods, assessment techniques, practical obstacles, and achievements in nurturing speaking proficiency within educational environments. The substantial gap between this keyword’s frequency and others underlines its significance. “Foreign language EFL” emerged as the second most frequent keyword (20 instances), providing essential context. The research explicitly centers on foreign language acquisition, with “EFL” likely representing the primary language under investigation. This indicates a concentrated body of studies exploring the instruction and acquisition of speaking skills in non-native language settings ^[63]. The keywords “English speaking skills” (18 occurrences) ^[64–67], “public speaking skills” (12 occurrences) ^[68,30], and “pupils speaking skills” (12 occurrences) further narrow the focus of the research. The recurrence of “speaking skills” in various forms underscores a primary

interest in language acquisition. The subtle differences in terminology may indicate nuances in the research, potentially addressing distinct age groups (students versus pupils) or communication contexts (general speaking versus public speaking skills). Additional keywords with lower frequency (between 11 and 8 occurrences) comprise “learners speaking skills,” “oral communication skills,” “English language teaching”, “online language exchanges,” and “oral corrective feedback.” These terms provide further depth to the analysis, indicating that the research examines various pedagogical strategies, instructional methods, technological tools (such as online exchanges), and feedback mechanisms (specifically oral corrective feedback) aimed at enhancing speaking abilities ^[69–73].

To summarize, this examination of keywords revealed a field of research deeply committed to understanding and enhancing students’ oral communication skills, particularly within the realm of foreign language acquisition. The prevalent occurrence of “students’ speaking skills,” coupled with terminology associated with English language learning and particular instructional techniques, offers a lucid depiction of the research emphasis and the pragmatic implications of these investigations.

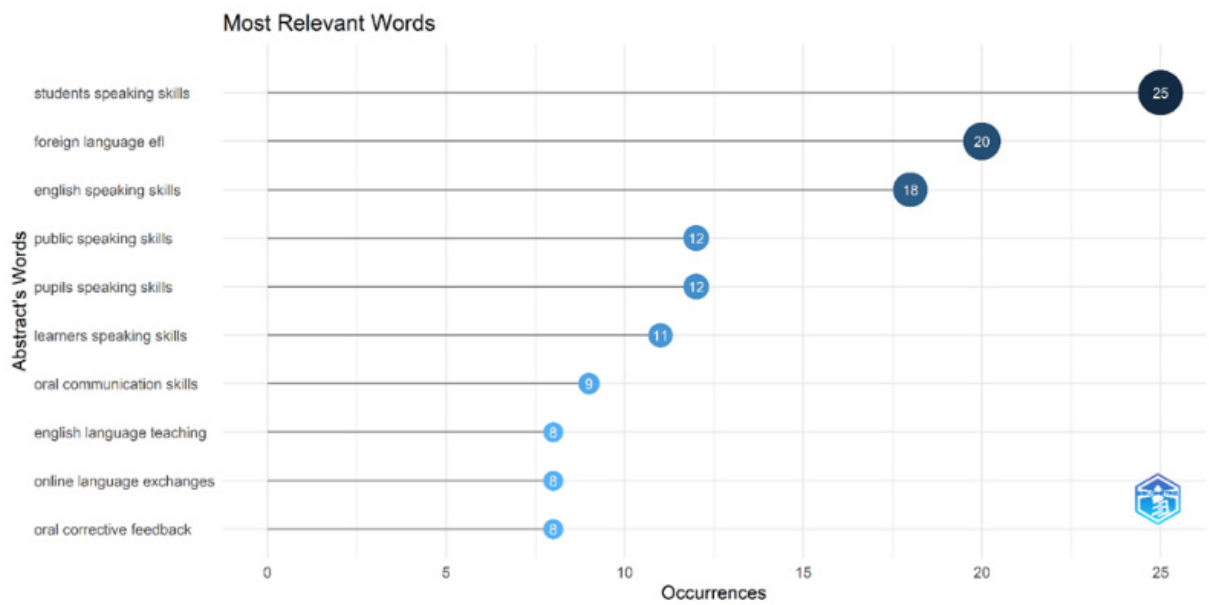


Figure 9. Three-word Abstract Keywords.

4.2. Enhancing L2 Speaking Skills: Insights from a Keyword Examination of Educational Studies

Examining keywords in L2, research on speaking skills in the literature reveals a predominant emphasis on speaking skills, English language acquisition, and educational settings. The most commonly occurring terms, including “speaking skills,” “English speaking skills,” and “EFL,” underscore the significance of practical verbal proficiency in language learning. The analysis also unveils the multifaceted nature of speaking competence, with terms such as “listening,” “motivation,” and “digital storytelling” indicating the interrelation of speaking with other language learning facets. The research field exhibited dynamism, reflecting common concerns and the quest for improved teaching methodologies. A single-word keyword analysis of abstracts further corroborated the central theme of developing students’ speaking abilities, particularly in English language acquisition contexts. The high prevalence of words like “students,” “skills,” “language,” “study,” and “learning” accentuates the educational focus and interest in teaching approaches, evaluation methods, and learning processes involved in cultivating speaking proficiency.

5. Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it utilized only one database, Scopus, to gather literature over five years. This tactic was used to minimize the possibility of formatting errors by combining data from multiple sources. However, limiting the investigation to English-language papers found in Scopus leaves pertinent literature from other databases and languages. Future studies could overcome this limitation by combining data from several databases and considering articles in different languages.

6. Conclusions

The present study conducted a bibliometric analysis of 233 published papers to examine current research trends in enhancing speaking abilities. The key findings and conclusions are as follows:

- i. Examining affiliations revealed that Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia is the foremost contributor to research in this domain. The “Islamic Azad University” and “Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia” also rank among the top three research centers making significant contributions to this field. Yenkimlike, M., van Heuven, O.
- ii. In terms of publication quantity, the three most prolific authors were identified as “Yunus M.M.,” “Yenkimlike M.,” and “van Heuven O.”
- iii. The primary publications in this area are “Sustainabil-

ity,” “European Journal of Educational Research,” and “Sage Open.” According to Rstudio software analysis, 16 sources were responsible for one-third of the 233 publications in this domain.

- iv. Amongst the most frequently cited publications, two reviews and one article occupied the top three positions.
- v. The keyword co-occurrence analysis revealed that “Speaking skills,” “Speaking,” and “Student speaking skills” were popular topics in this field. Future research could employ additional bibliometric tools, such as Vosviewer or alternative analytical methods, to provide a more comprehensive overview of bibliometric reviews within this area.

This research provides vital insight into the multifaceted process of developing oral communication skills, highlighting the interconnectedness of various language acquisition elements and the importance of student-centered approaches. These findings can inform educators and researchers in developing more effective teaching strategies and assessment methods to enhance second-language speaking abilities. The study’s comprehensive analysis of keywords lays the foundation for future research directions in second language acquisition, particularly in improving verbal proficiency. Importantly, the findings of this bibliometric review also carry practical implications. First, educators and curriculum designers can use the identified trends to prioritize approaches that are currently gaining traction, such as task-based learning, AI-supported instruction, and mobile-assisted language practices. Second, the thematic patterns observed across highly cited works can inform the structure of language programs by integrating more communicative, real-world speaking activities aligned with sociocultural models of language use. Third, teacher training institutions may consider investing in professional development that emphasizes digital literacy, formative assessment strategies, and the integration of interactive technologies into speaking instruction. Overall, these insights help bridge the gap between research trends and classroom practice, guiding more responsive and future-oriented language education policies.

Author Contributions

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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