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AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLICATIONS IN THE AREA OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

BRIDGET NGOZI MADU
Department of English
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University
Igbariam Campus, Nigeria
Email: madubridget@gmail.com
Phone: +2348066252520.

Abstract

This is an investigation into the trends in English Language publications in South Africa, using a bibliometric analysis method. The first 50 articles in the area of English Language publications in South Africa were uploaded using Google Scholar database, and analyzed to find out trends in authorship, type of journals where the articles were published in, branch/area of English directly related to the publications, research methods used by the authors, and source of data for their publications or participants. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of research is used in this study; and the Multicriteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) is used to group the publications into desired variables and Frequency Table. Result shows that the number of articles published by sole authors is much less (42%) than those published by more than one author (58%); articles published in English-specific journals are also much less (16%) than the ones published in multi-disciplinary journals (84%); most of the reviewed articles (96%) are in the area of English Language, and only a few (4%) are the area of Literature; authors used more of Qualitative Research method (68%), than Quantitative research method (20%), or Mix method (12%); finally, the sources of data for the publications were more of human respondents (54%) than literature review (44%). Conclusions are drawn from the findings to guide young/future researchers in the area of English language in South Africa towards prolific writing and quality publication.

Keywords: English Language Publications, Bibliometric Analysis, South Africa.

Introduction

Since the end of the apartheid regime in 1994 in South Africa, the country has become one of the leading countries in African south of Sahara, in the areas of education, research and technology. Although South Africa, as a rainbow nation, has many languages, their official languages for communication in the governments and higher institutions of learning are English and Afrikaans. In most of their universities, the official languages for lectures and research are either English only, or English and Afrikaans. That means, in some universities, the official language is English; while in others, it is English and Afrikaans. Therefore, the English language is taking a leading position in teaching, learning and research in South African higher institutions. However, young researchers in the area of English Language may be wondering how some authors succeed in publishing their articles in reputable journals, while others do not. Therefore, investigating the trend of research and publications in the area of English language in South Africa and analyzing it using the bibliometric method of

analysis, would assist in addressing the question. Young researchers in the area of English language in South Africa, as well as researchers from other countries in Africa who look up to South Africa as a model in the research area, will benefit from the analysis.

The Multicriteria decision analysis (MCDA) is the theoretical framework for this research. MCDA is one of the most frequently used decision-making frameworks (Belton & Stewart, 2002; Figueira, Greco, & Ehrgott, 2005). It is often described as a process utilizing a set of qualitative and quantitative approaches that simultaneously and explicitly take into account multiple and often conflicting factors (Baltussen & Niessen, 2006). The use of MCDA is increasing because of its potential for improving the quality of decisions by making the decision process more explicit, rational and efficient than traditional deliberative processes (Oliveira, Fontes, & Pereira 2013).

Bibliometric analysis is the statistical evaluation of published scientific articles, books, or the chapters of a book; also it is often an effectual way to measure the influence of publication in the scientific community (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015; Mao, Wang & Ho, 2010). Many researchers have published bibliometric analysis of publications in some other areas of studies. For instance, bibliometric analysis of publications have been conducted in the areas of health care (Adunlin, Diaby, & Xiao, 2015), European educational research (Aman & Botte, 2017), membrane biological reactor for wastewater treatment and reuse (Li, Zhang, Liu, & Huang, 2016), 'problematic' dominance of 'Web of Science' journals in academic human geography (Derudder, 2011), rebirth of European publishing (Attenborough, 1990), Taiwan's criminological 'footprint' (Hebenton, & Jou, 2013), elementary language arts (Graham & National Council of Teachers of English, 2000), and psychology (Krampen, Eye, & Schui, 2011). None of such a research has been conducted and published in the area of English language in South Africa. This is therefore the aim of this research.

Method

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research are used in this study; but the Multicriteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) is used to group the publications into desired variables and Frequency Tables are used for statistical analysis.

Source of Data

The author used Google Scholar database to search for research-based publications in the area of English language in South Africa. The first latest 50 publications found were used for the analysis. The search was conducted on 18th September 2020.

Procedure

The author read through all the publications and tabulated them using the following columns: Author(s) and year of publication, the type of journal the article was published in (English specific or multi-disciplinary), area of English the publication falls into (e.g. Language or Literature), the research method used by the author(s), and the type of participants in the study or source of data.

Coding and Statistics

The coding for each publication is as follows: single authorship = 0, multiple authorship (more than one author) = 1; English specific journal = 0, Multi-disciplinary journal = 1; Language as

the area of English = 0, while Literature as the area of English = 1; Quantitative Method = 0, Qualitative Method = 1, and Mixed Method (Quantitative and Qualitative) = 2; Students/workers as participants or source of data = 0, Literature Review as source of data = 1. The SPSS computer package Version 21 was used for data analysis. Frequency statistics was then used.

Result

Table 1 below shows the result of the Bibliometric Analysis of the publications.

Table 1: Bibliometric Analysis of the publications

S/N	AUTHOR(S) NAME/YEAR	TYPE OF JOURNAL	AREA IN ENGLISH	METHOD USED	TYPE OF PARTICIPANTS/SOURCE OF DATA USED
1	Mncwango, E. M. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Mixed Method	Secondary School Students
2	Murendeni, L. & Makananise, F. O. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Tertiary Institution Students
3	Pascoe, M., Mahura, O. & Dean, J. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Health Service Professionals
4	Makhanya, T. (2020).	English-Specific	Language	Qualitative	University Graduates
5	Simons, B. C., Dixon, K., Pretorius, E. & Reed, Y. (2020).	English-Specific	Language	Mixed Method	Literature Review
6	Posel, D., Hunter, M. & Rudwick, S. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	House Hold Surveys
7	Baker, B. A. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Literature	Mixed method	Primary school pupils
8	King**, S. (**2020**).**	English-Specific	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
9	Rwodzi, C., Jager, L. & Mpofu, N. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Secondary School Students
10	Ali, M., Hamid, O. M. & Hardy, I. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Secondary School Students
11	Seabi, P., Mogoboya, M. & Montle, M. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Literature	Qualitative	Secondary School Students
12	Ndebele, H. (2020)	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
13	**Mekoa, I. (2020).**	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Mixed Method	Literature Review

14	Sibomana, E. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Secondary School Students
15	Dowling, T., & Krause, L. (2019).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
16	Prince, R. & Frith, V. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Secondary School Students
17	Kruger, H. & Rooy, B. V. (2020).	English-Specific	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
18	Nurdiansyah, D. M. R., Asyid, S. A., & Parmawati, A. (2019).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Secondary School Students
19	Madima, S. E. & Makananise, F. O. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Primary School Pupils
20	Pravina, P. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Tertiary Institution Students
21	**Suh, H. (2020).**	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
22	Pascoe, M., Mahura, O. & Rossouw, K. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Tertiary Institution Students
23	Baines, L. & Nahar, G. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
24	Kotze, J., Fleisch, B. & Taylor, S. (2019).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Teachers
25	Spaull, N., & Pretorius, E. (2019).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Primary School Pupils
26	Remzi, K., Ceyhun, O. & Duygu, I. (2019).	English-Specific	Language	Mixed Method	Secondary School Students And Teachers
27	Hampton, L. H., Harty, M., Fuller, E. A. & Kaiser, A. P. (2019).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Mixed Method	Autism Spectrum Disorder Children
28	Matthew, G. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Tertiary Institution Students
29	Poppelaars, A. G. M. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review

30	Michelle, P., Daleen, K., Thandeka, M. & Mikateko, N. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
31	Eslick, C. J., Le Roux, M., Geertsema, S. & Pottas, L. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Secondary School Students
32	Arendse, D. E. (2020).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Students and Organizational employers
33	Govender, N. N. (2019).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
34	Tosin, F. O. & Tolupe, F. A. (2019).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
35	Omidire, F., Ebersöhn, L., Leask, M., Konza, D. & Du Plessis, A. B. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Primary School Pupils
36	Álvarez-Mosquera, P. & Marín-Gutiérrez, A. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Quantitative	Young L1 children
37	Klimova, B. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
38	Kaiper, A. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
39	Coetzee-Van Rooy, S. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
40	Mirhosseini, S. A. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
41	Essien, A. A. (2018).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
42	Bharuthram, S. (2017).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
43	Fleisch, B., Pather, K. & Motilal, G. (2017).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Primary School Pupils
44	Hunter-Adams, J. & Rother, H. A. (2017).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Immigrants
45	Boekstein, M. S. (2017).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Tourists
46	Mckenzie, T. & Muller, C. (2017).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review

47	Posel, D. & Zeller, J. (2016).	Multi-disciplinary	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
48	Kamwangamalu, N. & Tovares, A. (2016).	English-Specific	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
49	Ntombela, B. X. (2016).	English-Specific	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review
50	Akukule, I. & Brookes, H. (2020).	English-Specific	Language	Qualitative	Literature Review

Table 2 shows the Frequency Distribution of the trends of publications in the area of English language in South Africa, as shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of the Trends of Publications.

Variable	Trends	Frequency	Percentage
Author(s)	Sole author	21	42
	More than one author	29	58
Type of Journal	English-specific	8	16
	Multi-Disciplinary	42	84
Area of Specialisation in English	Language	48	96
	Literature	2	4
Research Method used	Quantitative	10	20
	Qualitative	34	68
	Mix (Quantitative & Qualitative)	6	12
Source of Data used	Students/workers	27	54
	Literature Review	23	46

Table 2 shows that the number of articles published by sole authors is much less than those published by more than one author (42% and 58% respectively). The articles published in English-specific journals are much less than the ones published in multi-disciplinary journals (16% and 84% respectively). Most of the reviewed articles are in the area of English Language, and just a few of them are in the area of Literature (96% and 4% respectively). The authors of the articles used more of Qualitative Research method (68%), than Quantitative research method (20%), or Mix (combination of Quantitative and Qualitative) method (12%). Finally, the sources of data for the publications were more of human respondents (students, workers, tourists, or patients) than only literature review (54% and 46% respectively).

Discussion

The bibliometric analysis of the articles shows that the number of articles published by sole authors is much less than those published by more than one author. This may suggest that articles with multiple authors appear to be of higher quality than those written by sole authors. This supports the adage which says that 'two heads are better than one'; and thus articles written by multiple authors gain access easier into reputable journals than those of sole authors. However, the issue of whether a multiple-authored article will be given the same

weighting/scores as a sole-authored article during assessment for promotion/awards is another matter altogether. The question is left for the different institutions or Assessment Boards to answer.

Articles published in English-specific journals are much less than the ones published in multi-disciplinary journals. Thus, young researchers who are under pressure to 'publish or perish' should not limit their search for journals only to English-specific journals. They also need to look for journals that are broad-based or multi-disciplinary.

Most of the articles (48 out of 50) found using Google Scholar database are all in the area of Language, (and only 2 are in the area of Literature). This raises some questions: Are articles written in the area of Literature published in journals that are not visible in Google Scholar database? If one is to increase the number of articles analyzed for this study (e.g. to 100), would one find more that are in the area of Literature? If one is to use other database (like Ebscohost), would one get more articles in the area of Literature? These and many more are questions which future researchers in the area of bibliometric analysis of publications in the area of English language in South Africa may want to address.

The majority of the publications used Qualitative Method of research, followed by those that used Quantitative Method, and then by those that used Mixed or Triangulation method. This finding suggests that studies that follow the Qualitative Method of research find acceptability in journals more than those that use Quantitative Method, or Mixed Method. Although there are arguments in favor of use of Quantitative Method (Dean & Voss, 1999), and some others in favor of use of Qualitative Method (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow & Ponterotto, 2017), and some are even in favor of using Mixed Method (Todd, Nerlich, McKeown & Clarke, 2004), the finding in this study suggests the use of Qualitative Method over the use of other methods. The issue of objectivity in research which is associated more with Quantitative Method than the Qualitative Method by many authors/reviewers/editors may not be explained with this result (Dean & Voss, 1999). It rather suggests that researchers in the area of English language feavour the use of qualitative method more than quantitative method or mixed method.

The result of this study suggests that publications that use human subjects as participants or source of data (e.g., students or workers) get acceptable in journals more than those that used only literature review. The question of objectivity in research which is raised above may explain this finding (Dean & Voss, 1999).

There are, however, some limitations in this study. While searching for publications in the subject area of English Language in South Africa, it limited itself only to Google Scholar database. Many other databases, like Ebscohost, could also be used. Only the first 50 articles that were found were used for the study. Other authors may want to increase the number (e.g., to 100 or more); although that would make the Table on Bibliometric Analysis of the publications (Table 1) more lengthy and cumbersome. The literature search was done just once (cross-sectional). Searching over a period of time may be encouraged. Future authors are advised to take the limitations in this study into consideration.

Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis of the articles shows that the number of articles published by multiple authors is much more than those published by sole authors. Articles in English language are more published in multi-disciplinary journals than in English-specific journals. Most of the articles found during the literature search (using Google Scholar database) are in the area of Language (and only very few are in the area of Literature). The majority of the publications used Qualitative Method of research, followed by those that used Quantitative Method, and then by those that used Mixed or Triangulation method. Finally, the majority of the authors used human subjects (e.g., students/workers) as source of data (and not literature review).

Recommendations

From the above findings, the author recommends the following to researchers in the area of English language in South Africa:

1. Future/young researchers should be encouraged to collaborate with others in their research endeavors, since 'two heads may be better than one'. Sole-authorship is no more in vogue.
2. Future authors should consider multi-disciplinary journals for publication of their articles, and not just English-Specific journals.
3. Although the literature search brought out mostly articles in the area of Language, those in the area of Literature should look into ways of increasing the quality of their research and make their publications visible in such database as Google Scholar. They should try to publish in journals that are electronically visible, in case that is the reason for finding so few of them during the Google search.
4. The same applies to those who use Quantitative or Mixed Method of research; they should try to improve on the quality of their publications and publish in journals that are electronically visible, in case that is also the reason for finding so few of them during the Google search.

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