

Tracing The Shifting Goals and Curriculum Trends in English Language Teaching (2015-2025): A Systematic Literature Review and Bibliometric Analysis

Indah Puspitaningsih¹, Shyifa Maula Jasmine², Fia Fuadiyah³, Anugrah Suhartono⁴,
Abigael Chelsea Kimberly⁵, Utami Rosalina⁶

¹²³⁴⁵⁶Institut Prima Bangsa, Indonesia

Correspondent: puspitaningsihindah@gmail.com¹

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ABSTRACT: This study conducts a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis to investigate the shifting goals and curriculum trends in English Language Teaching (ELT) from 2015 to 2025. Drawing upon a dataset of 92 articles retrieved from the Scopus database, the study identifies influential themes, key authors, dominant approaches, and emerging conceptual developments in the field. The findings reveal a major shift from traditional grammar-based instruction to communicative, reflective, and context-responsive teaching methodologies. Five primary thematic clusters are identified: instructional innovation, intercultural communication, sustainable integration, affective and psychological dimensions, and institutional reform. Furthermore, the study underscores the increasing significance of teacher professionalism, learner autonomy, and interdisciplinary approaches in shaping modern ELT curricula. Data visualization was carried out using VOSviewer, and the review process adhered to PRISMA standards to ensure methodological transparency and rigor. This comprehensive analysis offers valuable insights into how ELT has evolved in response to global educational demands and 21st-century challenges. It provides a strategic foundation for future research, curriculum development, and pedagogical innovation within the dynamic landscape of language education.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Curriculum Trends, English Language Teaching (ELT), Systematic Review, Sustainability Education.



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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, English Language Teaching (ELT) has experienced significant transformations driven by shifts in educational paradigms, globalization, sociocultural demands, and technological advancement. The focus of ELT has gradually expanded beyond linguistic accuracy and native speaker norms toward communicative competence, intercultural awareness, and global citizenship. This evolution has influenced curriculum development, instructional approaches, and learning objectives in diverse contexts (Cakıcı, 2016). A move from traditional

model of instruction in grammar and structure to communicative, reflective, and humanized teaching has been a positive landmark in the evolution of (Balla, 2017).

Recent global trends such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English Medium Instruction (EMI), and sustainability education have introduced new directions in ELT curricula (Cenoz & Gorter, 2023; Galloway & Rees, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Furthermore, the proliferation of digital technologies, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, has accelerated the integration of blended learning, digital literacy, and multimodal communication into language classrooms (Godwin-jones, 2021). These shifts have demanded that ELT move toward a more holistic, reflective, and globally responsive orientation.

While individual studies have examined specific aspects of ELT innovation, research remains fragmented and context-specific. There is a lack of comprehensive analysis that systematically maps global trends in ELT curricula and pedagogical priorities over time. Existing literature also rarely synthesizes the interrelation between emerging subfields such as environmental literacy, affective factors, and intercultural competencies within ELT discourse (Martirosian & Hartoonian, 2015). Furthermore, there isn't a longitudinal synthesis in the literature at this time that ties these fields together to form a coherent story of ELT development. A data-driven visualisation of topic clusters and citation networks is made possible by the integration of bibliometric tools, especially VOSviewer, which provides both macro and micro insights into the changes in research priorities (Mohammadpur & Ghafournia, 2015). The word 'bibliometric' comes from a combination of the words 'biblio', which comes from Greek and Latin with the meaning 'book', and 'metric' which means 'measurement' (Sengupta, 1992). In general, the main purpose of bibliometrics is to analyze the scientific literature in a particular field (Yan & Chen, 2021). According to (2023), bibliometrics also aims to document and evaluate the characteristics of the knowledge that has been generated. However, to date, no study has systematically employed bibliometric mapping to provide an integrated, longitudinal overview of ELT curriculum trends and their evolving pedagogical priorities this is the gap the present study seeks to address.

This study empirically identifies main groups that have emerged in the discourse surrounding ELT curricula. The cluster highlights the value of teacher education and high-quality instruction by emphasising pedagogical transformation through communicative approaches and experiential learning (Can, 2018). The cluster, which focuses on the global and intercultural aspects of ELT, shows a move away from traditional language proficiency and towards cultural awareness and global competences (Sadiq, 2017). This is a reflection of a curriculum that is becoming more and more internationalised in order to equip students to engage with a variety of global communities. Cluster presents cutting-edge topics like sustainability and eco-literacy, indicating that ELT is increasingly being utilised as a tool to inculcate social values and global responsibility (Hisatomi et al., 2021). This kind of integration suggests a curriculum for the twenty-first century that is not simply linguistic but also moral and environmental. Affective and institutional aspects of ELT, including teacher attitudes, professional development, and psychological elements like motivation and self-efficacy, are covered in the clusters (Chan, 2020).

Despite growing academic attention to ELT innovation, there remains a clear research gap in the form of a longitudinal, data-driven analysis that captures how ELT curricula and pedagogical

objectives have evolved globally over time. Most prior studies lack a visual and systematic representation of emerging themes, citation relationships, and the interconnection of subfields within ELT. To address this gap, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis to explore the following questions:

1. What key themes and trends have shaped ELT curricula from 2015 to 2025?
2. How have pedagogical objectives evolved during this period?
3. Which research clusters have emerged as dominant in the literature?

This study makes a significant contribution to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) by providing a comprehensive and longitudinal mapping of curriculum developments and pedagogical priorities from 2015 to 2025. By employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) combined with bibliometric analysis, it offers visual representations of topic trends, citation networks, and emerging research clusters, allowing for a deeper understanding of the intellectual landscape in ELT. The study bridges empirical data with theoretical insights, offering educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers practical evidence to inform the design of more globally responsive and future-oriented ELT curricula (Song et al., 2024). It also emphasizes the growing importance of interdisciplinary approaches, highlighting how language education is increasingly intertwined with issues of global citizenship, cultural awareness, digital literacy, and sustainability. Ultimately, this research promotes a more holistic and reflective view of ELT, encouraging the development of instructional practices that are not only linguistically effective but also socially and ethically relevant in a rapidly changing world.

METHOD

This study aims to explore research trends related to change goals and curriculum trends in English language teaching through bibliometric analysis from 2015 to 2025. Bibliometric analysis, in contrast to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), is the preferred methodology, as it accommodates extensive research data on a wide-ranging subject, facilitating both quantitative and qualitative assessments (Donthu et al., 2021). This study is classified as quantitative because of the use of statistical methods to analyze and interpret data based on year, author, geographical region, and type of document published (Kadirhanogullari & Kose, 2024; Martínez-López et al., 2018).

This study adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) standards to guarantee transparency and replicability in locating and choosing pertinent material. The investigation utilized the Scopus database, selected for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed and high-impact scholarly papers in education and applied linguistics.

Two primary keywords were used in the search: “change in goals of ELT” and “change in curriculum development of ELT”. These keywords were selected to capture the core themes of the study, focusing on the evolution of curriculum objectives and instructional practices in English Language Teaching. Boolean operators (AND/OR) and filtering by subject area (e.g., Education, Social Sciences, Linguistics) were applied to refine the search. The period was limited to 2015–

2025, targeting studies published in the last decade to align with recent trends and developments in ELT.

The inclusion criteria for this study consisted of: (1) articles published in peer-reviewed journals between 2015 and 2025; (2) articles written in English; (3) studies that explicitly addressed curriculum development, pedagogical trends, or the evolving goals in English Language Teaching (ELT); (4) articles with accessible full texts; and (5) research situated within the fields of education, applied linguistics, or related disciplines.

In contrast, the exclusion criteria comprised: (1) duplicate records or reprinted articles; (2) non-peer-reviewed publications such as editorials, book reviews, or conference abstracts; (3) studies not directly related to ELT or those lacking discussion on curriculum goals or changes; (4) publications falling outside the designated time frame of 2015–2025; and (5) articles written in languages other than English.

The initial search yielded 92 records. In the identification stage, 29 duplicate entries were removed. The remaining 63 articles were then subjected to a screening process, which involved evaluating the titles, abstracts, and publication years. Articles not thematically related or outside the time frame were excluded ($n = 34$). Subsequently, 29 full-text articles were assessed in the eligibility phase, with a focus on determining whether they addressed the changing goals or curriculum practices within the ELT context. Articles that did not meet this criterion were excluded ($n = 8$).

As a result, a total of 21 articles were deemed relevant and included in the final analysis. These articles served as the foundation for both the qualitative thematic synthesis and the quantitative bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer software. The inclusion and exclusion process, as detailed in the article, is visually represented in Figure 1.

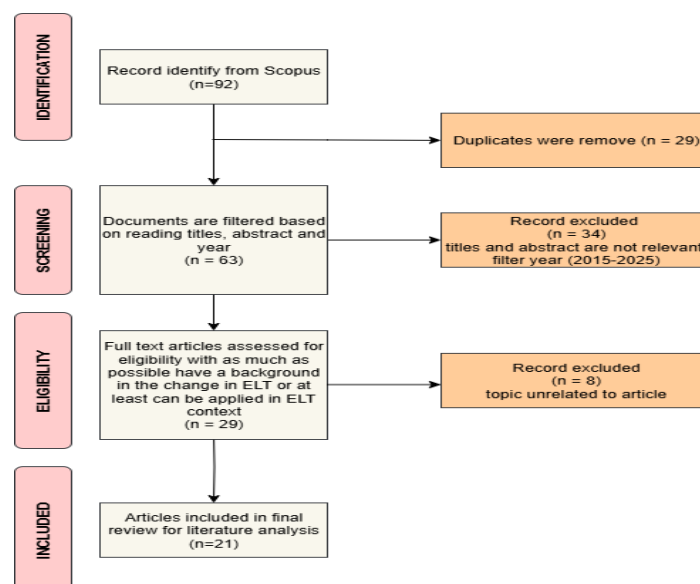


Figure 1. PRISMA of Article Selection

To ensure objectivity and reduce selection bias, the article screening and eligibility assessment were performed independently by two researchers who carried out the screening and eligibility

assessments in parallel. Both reviewers individually evaluated the titles, abstracts, and full texts against the inclusion and exclusion criteria with expertise in ELT and research methodology. In the case of disagreement, a third reviewer was consulted to reach a consensus, ensuring objectivity and reducing potential selection bias. To enhance reliability, inter-rater agreement was measured using Cohen's Kappa coefficient, which yielded a score of 0.82, indicating substantial agreement between reviewers (Landis & Koch, 1977). This step reinforced the thematic coherence and consistency of the selection process.

The criteria were applied consistently at all stages, and a detailed record of inclusion/exclusion decisions was maintained. The final 21 articles were exported with full metadata into Bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and analyzed using VOSviewer for bibliometric mapping. The PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 visually summarizes the selection process.

The article search was conducted in the Scopus database due to its high-quality, peer-reviewed content, making it ideal for bibliometric analysis (Baas et al., 2020). The following search series was added to the database on June 28, 2025. A detailed search suite has been added to the database, providing in-depth insights into articles relevant to the topic of "change goals in ELT" in a given period. In total, 63 documents have been identified using the search criteria TITLE-ABS-KEY (change in goals of ELT) AND PUBYEAR > 2015 AND PUBYEAR < 2025.

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("change in goals of ELT" OR "change in curriculum development of ELT") AND PUBYEAR > 2015 AND PUBYEAR < 2025.

Table 1. Article Database

Keyword String	Year	Scopus
Change goals in ELT*	-	61
Change in Curriculum Development*	-	31
Total		92 documents
Change in Curriculum Development*	2015-2025	22
Change goals in ELT*	2015-2025	41
Total		62 documents

Note: the sign (*) is used in keyword searches to be more specific

The collected metadata and bibliographic information were then exported and added to Bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) for further visualization, mapping, and analysis utilizing VOSviewer software. The search strategy was limited by keywords, publication year (2015–2025), document type (articles), and language (English) to ensure the specificity and quality of the retrieved literature.

This study employs two primary data analysis techniques: systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. Systematic literature review was conducted to identify and critically examine relevant research articles that discuss the shifting goals and curriculum development in English

Language Teaching (ELT) from 2015-2025. This approach allows for the synthesis of empirical findings and conceptual discussions that have emerged in the field over the past decade.

A bibliometric study was concurrently conducted utilizing VOSviewer software to examine publishing trends, collaboration patterns, and conceptual advancements in ELT research. The bibliographic information was obtained from the Scopus database and included information such as authorship, publication year, keywords, and affiliations were analyzed to produce co-authorship and co-occurrence maps; thematic clusters; conceptual and factorial analyses.

Overall, the combination of systematic review and bibliometric mapping provides a well-rounded insight into the historical trajectory and current focus of ELT research. It also helps identify gaps in the literature and suggests potential future research directions aligned with curriculum development and pedagogical innovations in English language education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Structure

A structural idea analysis was performed to identify the most pertinent themes and concepts that have been studied and the interrelationship between them. A structural concept analysis was conducted to reveal a map of the network (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Sharma et al., 2021). This map shows different nodes that represent different concepts or topics, as well as relationships between topics that show the frequency with which they appear together in the text. Nodes are colored differently, and the size of the nodes can reflect relative frequency or importance of the concept. Nodes indicate keywords or key terms that often appear in related literature. Bibliometric visualization illustrates the relationship between topics in the study of ELT through the mapping of terms that often appear simultaneously in the literature. The term "English language teaching" is at the center of the network, indicating its dominant position and being a link between other themes. From this center, several colored clusters emerged that represented the different focuses of studies in ELT. The green cluster, for example, covers topics such as *intercultural communication*, *culture*, *teachers' attitude*, and *self-assessment*, which indicate a shift in the ELT curriculum towards a more humanistic and contextual approach, especially in building intercultural awareness and teacher self-reflection.

Meanwhile, the red cluster shows terms such as *English as a foreign language*, *communicative language teaching*, and *qualitative method*. This cluster reflects the dominant methodological trends and teaching approaches in ELT studies, where language learning is increasingly geared towards communicative interaction with the support of qualitative research methods to capture the social dimension of learning. On the other hand, the blue cluster, consisting of the terms *ecoliteracy* and *descriptive writing*, shows the emergence of new themes, such as integrating environmental issues and ecological literacy in language teaching, as a form of response to global challenges and the need for 21st-century competency development.

The yellow and purple clusters also display other important aspects. The yellow cluster highlights the importance of *teachers' attitude* and *self-assessment*, which support the direction of a curriculum

that is more reflective, participatory, and based on teacher professional development. The purple cluster that includes *higher education* shows that research on ELT is now mostly carried out in the context of higher education, which marks that curriculum shifts are not only happening at the primary and secondary levels, but also in universities. Overall, this visualization shows that the ELT curriculum continues to evolve from a structural approach to a more communicative, reflective, contextual, and responsive approach to global issues. Figure 2 shows network visualization in analysis change goals, and curriculum development.

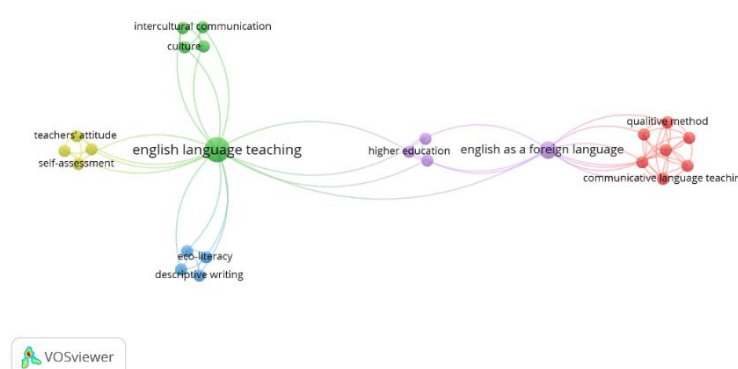


Figure 2. Network Visualization (Keyword co-occurrence and thematic clusters)

Figure 2 illustrates that English language teaching serves as the pivotal node linking several topic groups. This suggests that foreign language anxiety (FLA) is studied within broader contexts of pedagogical strategies, teacher-related factors, cultural elements, and curriculum shifts. Several key themes emerge. First, one significant cluster focuses on *communicative language teaching* and *qualitative methods*, indicating that recent FLA studies emphasize learner interaction and the use of qualitative approaches to understand the emotional and communicative aspects of language learning. This aligns with a growing preference for understanding anxiety in real-life classroom interactions rather than purely through quantitative measures.

Second, another thematic cluster points to *intercultural communication* and *culture*, which underscores how FLA is increasingly analyzed through the lens of cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural awareness. This implies that learners' anxiety may stem from intercultural misunderstandings or lack of familiarity with the target culture. Additionally, the presence of *teachers' attitudes* and *self-assessment* suggests that learners' anxiety is also shaped by the teacher's role and how students perceive their performance and progress.

Third, emerging concepts such as *ecoliteracy* and *descriptive writing* represent newer directions in ELT research, suggesting a broadening of scope where FLA is not only seen as an individual affective factor but also as something that can be addressed through integrative and thematic content. The inclusion of *higher education* indicates that FLA is a relevant concern across educational levels, particularly in university contexts where academic expectations may heighten anxiety. Overall, the visualization reveals a shift in FLA research towards more humanistic, contextual, and

interdisciplinary approaches, integrating communicative competence, intercultural awareness, and reflective pedagogy.

In the context of change goals and curriculum development, co-emergence map analysis, overlay is the process of adding or inserting additional information into an existing network map (Figure 3). Additional information in this overlay is the year of production.

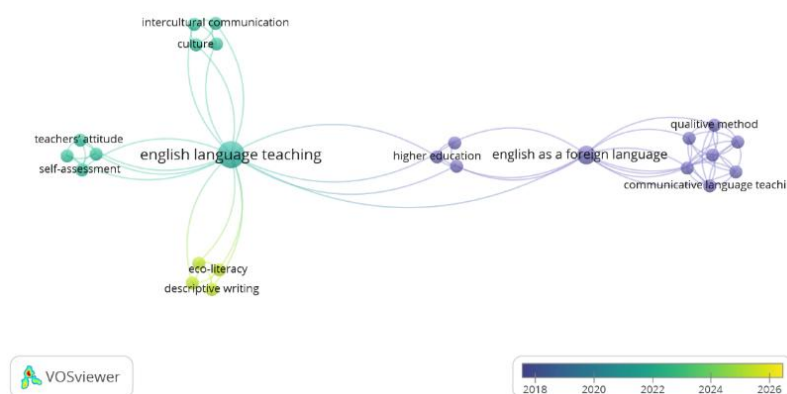


Figure 3. Visualization Overlay (Temporal trend of ELT keywords by average publication year 2018-2025)

The overlay visualization in Figure 3 illustrates the temporal evolution of key concepts in English Language Teaching (ELT) research, highlighting the shifting goals and curriculum trends over time. The gradient, ranging from dark blue (2018) to yellow (2025), indicates the average publication year in which each keyword prominently appeared. The central node, “english language teaching,” serves as the main anchor connecting various emerging themes across different periods. In earlier years (2018–2020), research predominantly focused on foundational pedagogical approaches, such as “english as a foreign language,” “communicative language teaching,” “higher education,” and “qualitative method.” These terms, displayed in purple and blue tones, reflect the earlier emphasis on methodological development and communicative competence within formal academic settings.

As the timeline progresses, a shift in focus becomes apparent. The emergence of green-colored nodes like “intercultural communication,” “culture,” “teachers’ attitude,” and “self-assessment” (2021–2023) indicates a growing research interest in affective, cultural, and reflective dimensions of ELT. This period signifies the curriculum’s movement beyond structural and linguistic aspects, emphasizing the socio-cultural context of learning and the importance of teacher and learner agency. It also suggests the increasing integration of intercultural awareness and professional development into ELT practices.

Most notably, the yellow nodes such as “eco-literacy” and “descriptive writing” mark the most recent developments in the field (2024–2025), signifying a turn toward innovative, interdisciplinary, and context-sensitive themes. The appearance of eco-literacy reflects a broader educational movement toward sustainability, suggesting that ELT is being leveraged as a platform

to promote environmental consciousness and global responsibility. Meanwhile, the emphasis on descriptive writing indicates a refined focus on genre-based literacy skills, supporting learners' ability to express ideas with clarity and creativity. Overall, the visualization reveals a dynamic trajectory in ELT research from traditional methodologies toward reflective, intercultural, and value-driven pedagogical innovations supporting the central thesis of this study on the evolving goals and curricular priorities in English language teaching.

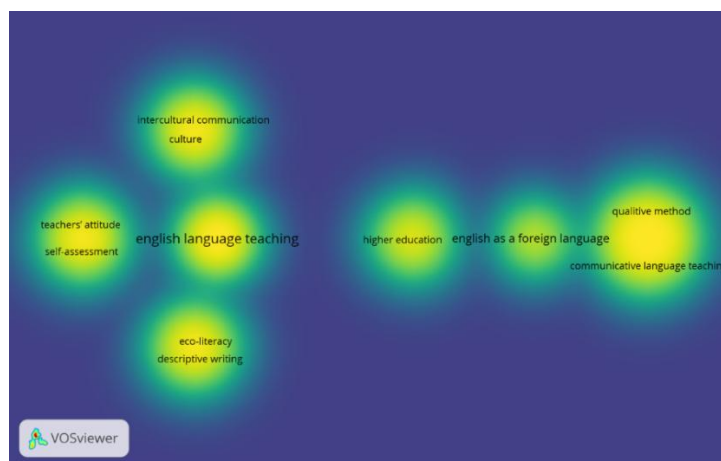


Figure 4. Density Visualization (Keyword frequency and thematic intensity map.)

Figure 4 illustrates a representation of the density of key terms that often appear in the English Language Teaching (ELT) literature. Yellow indicates areas with a high frequency of term occurrences, while green to blue indicates areas with a lower frequency. This color density indicates the topics that are most frequently discussed and are the center of attention in ELT research.

It can be seen that the term "English language teaching" is the center with the brightest yellow intensity, indicating that this topic is at the heart of various studies and has a strong relationship with other concepts. Around it, several areas with high concentrations are divided into several main themes. On the right, the bright yellow area shows the terms "qualitative method" and "communicative language teaching", indicating that communicative and qualitative methodological approaches are the dominant themes in ELT research. This reflects the shift of the curriculum from a structural approach to a communication- and experiential-based approach.

On the left side of the image, you can see a yellow concentration on the terms "intercultural communication," "culture," "teachers' attitude," and "self-assessment". This shows that the affective, cultural, and reflective dimensions of English teaching are also rapidly becoming a growing focus. The presence of the terms "eco-literacy" and "descriptive writing" in the lower left, although more recent also suggests that these themes are beginning to attract attention in the ELT curriculum discourse, particularly in educational contexts that integrate sustainability values and genre-based writing skills.

In addition, the terms "higher education" and "english as a foreign language" also seem to be quite prominent, indicating that much of ELT's research is focused on the context of learning in higher education and in the teaching of EFL. This shows that the shift in the purpose of the ELT curriculum also occurs a lot in the realm of formal institutions such as universities.

This density visualization makes it clear that there are several *theme hotspots* in the ELT curriculum that have undergone significant development. The main emphasis on communicative methods, qualitative approaches, cultural awareness, as well as the integration of contemporary values such as ecological literacy shows that the ELT curriculum continues to evolve, in line with global demands and the times. These findings support the argument that the ELT curriculum has shifted from mere language mastery to a more humanistic, reflective, and value-oriented approach to 21st century sustainability.

Factorial Analysis

Clustering refers to the process of grouping objects or entities into clusters based on certain shared characteristics or attributes. The goal of clustering is to identify natural patterns in data that may not be immediately apparent. Clustering is performed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Keywords within each cluster (Group Items by Cluster)

Cluster 1 (7 items)	Cluster 2 (5 items)	Cluster 3 (4 Items)	Cluster 4 (4 Items)	Cluster 5 (4 Items)
Communicative language Curriculum implementation English language teaching Phenomenology approach Qualitative method Teacher quality Teachers education	Culture Efl pre-service teachers English language teaching Intercultural communication Intercultural competencies	Descriptive writing Eco-literacy Enviromental education Sustainable language learning	English as a foreign language Self-assessment Self-efficacy beliefs Teachers' attitude	English as foreign language Higher Education Student evaluation of teaching (set) Teacher development programme

Table 2 presents the clustering results of keywords that frequently appeared in studies related to English Language Teaching (ELT) over the past decade, reflecting the shifting goals and curriculum trends in the field. The cluster analysis categorizing 21 selected ELT articles into five thematic clusters based on keyword co-occurrence patterns. Each cluster contains a specific set of keywords, reflecting dominant thematic orientations in ELT research from 2015 to 2025. The frequency and thematic scope of each cluster are discussed below. Cluster 1 highlights the shift toward pedagogical innovation and methodological transformation, contains 7 key terms such as *communicative language*, *curriculum implementation*, *qualitative method*, and *phenomenology approach* appearing in this cluster 7 of 24, or 29,2%. This cluster indicates a growing preference for communicative and experiential learning, supported by qualitative inquiry, alongside an increasing focus on *teacher education* and *teacher quality* emphasizing the importance of educator competence in curriculum delivery.

Cluster 2 emphasizes intercultural dimensions of ELT. Comprising 5 keywords and present 5 of 24, or 21% such as *culture*, *intercultural communication*, *intercultural competencies*, and *EFL pre-service teachers* suggest that the curriculum is increasingly aligned with fostering global citizenship. This

cluster underscores how ELT has expanded beyond linguistic competence to include cultural awareness, aiming to equip future teachers and learners with the abilities required for effective communication in diverse contexts.

Cluster 3 represents an emerging and innovative trend in the integration of sustainability education into ELT. Featuring 4 keywords such as *eco-literacy*, *environmental education*, *sustainable language learning*, and *descriptive writing*, this cluster reflects the curriculum's responsiveness to global environmental challenges and appeared in the articles 4 of 24 it means 16,6%. It suggests that language teaching is now also being used as a medium to promote environmental consciousness and values-based learning, making ELT more relevant to real-world issues.

Cluster 4 centers on psychological and affective factors in teaching and learning. With 4 dominant terms and coverage in articles 4 of 24, or 16,6% focuses on *self-assessment*, *self-efficacy beliefs*, and *teachers' attitude* point to a curriculum shift that prioritizes learner autonomy, confidence, and reflective practice. This reveals an increasing concern with the internal, personal dimensions of learning and teaching, reinforcing the role of affective support and teacher disposition in enhancing student outcomes.

Lastly, Cluster 5 brings attention to the institutional context and professional development, especially within higher education. It includes 4 keywords, *english as a foreign language*, *higher education*, *student evaluation of teaching (SET)*, and *teacher development programme*, suggesting that ELT is not only undergoing curricular shifts but also institutional transformations. This cluster appears in articles 4 of 24, or 16,6%. These changes focus on improving the quality of instruction, student feedback mechanisms, and continuous teacher development at the university level.

Table 3. Factorial Analysis and Cluster Interpretation

Cluster	Main Themes	of Articles (%)	Interpretation
Cluster 1	pedagogical innovation and methodological transformation	29,2%	Reflects the shift toward student-centered, experiential learning
Cluster 2	Intercultural Competence	21%	Highlights globalization and cultural sensitivity in ELT
Cluster 3	Sustainability in ELT	16,6%	Indicates emerging trend integrating sustainability
Cluster 4	Reflective & Affective Practices	16,6%	Emphasizes learner autonomy and teacher reflection
Cluster 5	Institutional Focus	16,6%	Shows reforms and focus on tertiary education & quality teaching

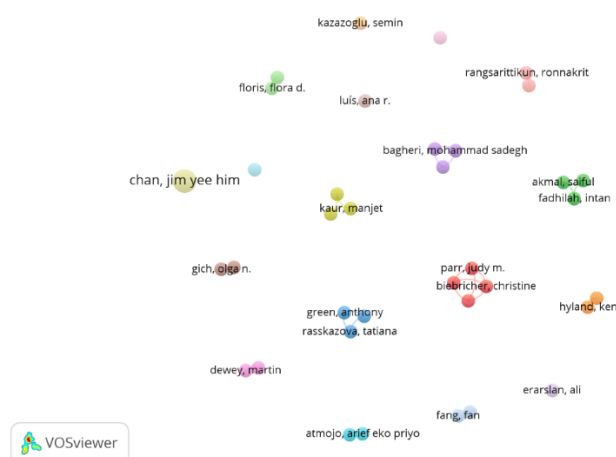


Figure 5. Co-Authorship Network Visualizatio

Tabel 4. Intrepretation of Co-Authorship Visualization in ELT Research (2015-2025)

Aspects	Description
Identified Author	Biebricher Christine, Parr Judy M., Zhang Lawrence Jun, and Zhang Xiaoyu Sophia
Average Publication Year	2022
Country Distribution and Frequency of Publications (2015-2025)	Indonesia (3), China (2), Turkey (2), Russian (2), Hong Kong (3), Spain (1), Bangladesh (1), Portugese (1), Singapore (1), Malaysia (1), Vietnam (1), Thailand (1), Macau (2)
Number of Clusters	1 main collaboration cluster
Collaborative Relationships	There are indications of joint publications between the four authors that strengthen academic and research relationships
Thematic Relevance	The focus of collaboration is expected to be related to curriculum trends and changing goals in English language learning
Academic Significance	Demonstrates that ELT transformation is underpinned by cross-institutional/country cooperation, reflecting a multidisciplinary and global approach

The results of the bibliometric analysis in this study identified the formation of a main cluster in the co-authorship network consisting of four authors, namely Biebricher Christine, Parr Judy M., Zhang Lawrence Jun, and Zhang Xiaoyu Sophia. The existence of this cluster reflects the existence of a strong collaborative network among researchers who have made significant contributions to the study of shifting goals and curriculum trends in English language teaching (ELT). The collaboration between authors in the cluster shows a concentration of topics closely related to curriculum changes, adjustment of learning objectives, and the integration of multicultural and competency-based approaches in English teaching. In addition, the existence of this cluster also indicates a common interest in research on the dynamics of education policy and global needs in the context of language teaching. Taken together, these five clusters reflect a multidimensional transformation in ELT, moving from traditional, grammar-based instruction toward an integrated, reflective, and socially responsive curriculum This bibliometric research confirms that the field of

ELT is adapting dynamically to global demands by embedding values such as intercultural understanding, sustainability, reflective pedagogy, and teacher professionalism into its curricular priorities.

This study provides a comprehensive overview of global ELT research trends from 2015 to 2025, particularly in relation to changing pedagogical goals and curriculum reforms. The bibliometric findings confirm a clear thematic evolution in ELT scholarship shifting from structure-based instruction and native-speaker models toward communicative, reflective, and context-sensitive approaches. However, this evolution does not manifest uniformly across regions or educational levels. For example, while some countries such as Indonesia and Turkey emphasize intercultural competence and sustainability, others like Iran still grapple with implementing student-centered and communicative frameworks due to systemic and material constraints.

In terms of publication characteristics, there has been a steady increase in ELT-related publications from 2015 to 2025, with a notable surge after 2020. The analysis reveals a curricular shift from a native-speaker-oriented perspective to a recognition of English as an international language. This change reflects the dynamic global sociolinguistic landscape. Teaching practices have also transitioned from rigid, structured methods to more authentic, purposeful, and meaningful tasks embedded in real-life contexts (Chan, 2020). According to Chan, curriculum design has a substantial impact on student learning outcomes. Meanwhile, (2011) emphasizes the movement from a strictly product-oriented curriculum toward more flexible and learner-responsive approaches. While curricula are theoretically distinguished between product and process orientations, in practice, teachers are not merely implementers but active designers of instructional content (Bildik & Altun, 2022; Some, 2025).

Geographically, countries such as China, Indonesia, Iran, and Turkey emerge as the most prolific contributors to research on ELT curriculum changes and pedagogical goals. These nations host large populations of EFL learners, prompting to assess effectiveness of language education policies and strategies. China and Iran have produced substantial work on the integration of technology and affective factors in language teaching, while Indonesia and Turkey tend to focus on teacher education, curriculum reflection, sustainability issues, and intercultural competence.

Indonesia, in particular, has undergone several curriculum transitions from the 2006 Curriculum to the 2013 Curriculum, and currently to the “Kurikulum Merdeka”, According to (2025), the current curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, flexibility, and the development of 21st-century competencies. In English instruction specifically, it promotes differentiated teaching, genre-based approaches (Dong & Lu, 2020; Herman et al., 2020; Khasanah et al., 2023), and character education through the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) (Ningsih & Sartika, 2023; Nugroho & Narawaty, 2022). However, challenges persist, including limited supervision, students’ overreliance on AI, difficulties in implementing differentiated instruction, low teacher participation in the official platform PMM, and complex character assessment procedures. Consequently, improving teacher competencies and securing policy support are crucial for the effective implementation of this curriculum (Novita, 2019; Zein et al., 2020). Further insights from (2025) based on a study conducted in three secondary schools in Macau, China. The study highlights the significant role of teacher education and curriculum innovation in enhancing ELT practices. The

study encourages teachers to embrace more inclusive, communicative, and contextual pedagogical methods, shifting away from the limited focus on native-speaker norms. Integrating authentic materials, multimedia, and cultural diversity into the curriculum better prepares students to use English as a global lingua franca (Gunantar, 2016; Jon et al., 2021).

(2018) examines the ELT curriculum reforms in Turkey's primary education system, which has experienced three major changes (1997, 2006, and 2013). Despite the communicative orientation of the 2013 curriculum, several challenges persist, such as unmet learning objectives, inadequate materials, and outdated assessment methods. The dominance of grammar instruction and imbalance in language skills integration hinder the program's overall effectiveness, indicating a continued need for alignment with global demands. In Iran, (2020) explore the use of Dynamic Assessment (DA), which emphasizes the simultaneous integration of teaching and assessment to foster student development. This method follows a pretest, teach, retest model, where teachers provide graduated mediation from implicit to explicit guidance based on students' needs. Rooted in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), this methodology allows teachers not only to assess final outcomes but also to support students' cognitive and affective growth throughout the learning process (Xi & Lantolf, 2020).

The conceptual and factorial analyses reveal several dominant clusters, including communicative teaching, intercultural competence, sustainability, affective factors, and teacher development. While this confirms the field's growing interdisciplinarity, the heavy focus on certain keywords and citation networks may skew the representation of niche or region-specific innovations. For instance, African contexts and underrepresented EFL communities appear minimally in the data, suggesting a potential Western-Asian publication bias inherent in Scopus-indexed sources. Moreover, bibliometric tools rely on co-occurrence and citation frequencies, which may not fully capture the depth, quality, or theoretical nuance of individual studies.

Another methodological limitation involves the risk of overlooking unpublished or non-indexed research, such as local policy reports or government documents that often inform actual curriculum reform. Additionally, while this study involved two researchers during the screening and analysis process, inter-rater reliability was not statistically measured an area that future research could strengthen for enhanced rigor.

Despite these limitations, the study offers several practical implications. First, curriculum designers should integrate themes like intercultural awareness, eco-literacy, and affective factors more explicitly into national frameworks, accompanied by relevant training for educators. For policymakers, the findings emphasize the need for sustained support systems including digital infrastructure, assessment reform, and teacher mentoring to bridge the policy-practice divide. Furthermore, ELT programs in higher education should prioritize critical pedagogy, reflective practice, and innovation in teacher education to meet global competencies.

In conclusion, the evolution of ELT curricula over the past decade reflects broader sociocultural, technological, and environmental shifts. However, this transformation is ongoing and uneven. By identifying both converging trends and persistent gaps, this study not only maps the intellectual landscape of ELT but also provides targeted insights for shaping more responsive, equitable, and transformative language education in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a concise mapping of curriculum trends and pedagogical goals in English Language Teaching (ELT) from 2015 to 2025 using systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. The findings reveal five dominant thematic clusters ranging from communicative pedagogy and intercultural competence to sustainability education, affective factors, and institutional development demonstrating a broadening of ELT discourse beyond traditional language instruction. The study's unique contribution lies in its longitudinal, data-driven perspective, which synthesizes both conceptual and practical developments in ELT curricula over a decade. Through the use of bibliometric tools like VOSviewer, this research offers visual and thematic clarity that can support curriculum designers, teacher educators, and policymakers in identifying key trends and aligning instructional priorities accordingly.

However, this study is not without limitations. It relies solely on Scopus-indexed publications, which may exclude relevant but non-indexed or locally published studies. Additionally, the lack of inter-rater statistical reliability limits the robustness of the screening process. Future research should expand bibliometric mapping to include diverse databases, languages, and regional publications to capture underrepresented perspectives particularly from African and Latin American contexts. Further qualitative investigation is also needed to explore how curriculum reforms are implemented in real classrooms, particularly in relation to teacher agency, institutional support, and student engagement.

In conclusion, ELT is undergoing a meaningful transformation toward more reflective, interdisciplinary, and socially responsive approaches. This study contributes to a growing body of knowledge that can inform the development of curricula that are not only linguistically effective but also globally and ethically relevant.

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