



A Bibliometric Analysis on Trends and Patterns in Self-Regulated Language Learning in Mobile-Assisted Learning Environments

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ABSTRACT

This study analysed 498 articles published between 2005 and 2023 on Self-regulated Language Learning (SRL) indexed in the core collection of the Web of Science database, using a bibliometric methodology based on scientific mapping, co-occurrence and burstness analysis. Results show China is the most influential contributor to SRL research, with the largest number of total publications and citations. According to the keyword co-occurrence and burstness analysis, mobile-learning, higher education, learning context, learner strategies stand out in this field. It is also shown that listening as a significant linguistic skill is less explored in the SRL field. It is proven that learners' language skills could be improved through mobile-assisted collaborative learning in informal settings. By identifying the developmental patterns in SRL research, this paper can guide future researchers to explore in-depth the significant issues in this field and bring insight for further SRL studies in terms of themes, pedagogy and methodologies.

KEYWORDS

Bibliometric Analysis, Language Acquisition, Mobile-Assisted Learning, Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning (SRL) can be defined as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes that are intentionally engaged by learners towards the achievement of their personal goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Over the past few decades, a significant amount of research has been conducted on SRL, demonstrating its crucial contribution to enhancing students' academic performance and nurturing proactive learners across various educational and psychological settings (Zimmerman, 2013). SRL has grown in popularity as a theory that helps to explain students' achievement, because it takes into account a variety of learner-related factors, including goal orientation, task-related strategies and meta-cognitive strategies for achieving learning objectives (Panadero et al., 2017), and it is viewed as a key feature of successful learners (Zhang & Zhang, 2019).

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The concept of “self-regulation” was first introduced to the field of second language acquisition (SLA) by Dörnyei (2005) to replace “learning strategies,” because the former refers to more “dynamic and process-oriented” learning skills proactively adopted by second language (L2) learners to attain academic goals (p. 195). According to Dörnyei (2005), self-regulation denotes the extent to which individuals are engaged in their personal learning process. It is a multifaceted notion, surpassing the realm of learning strategy by underlining the learners’ proactive endeavors to administer their own accomplishments through distinct beliefs and procedures. This assertion brings to light the transition of a focus from “what is learned” to “how a language is acquired” (Dörnyei, 2005; Teng & Zhang, 2022).

In recent years, SRL has been found to play a positive role in the context of learning English as a Second Language (ESL) or as a Foreign Language (EFL), such as in L2 writing (Yang et al., 2022), speaking (Kang, 2022), and reading (Alreshoud & Abdelhalim, 2022; Qiao et al., 2022). Recent studies have focused on the implication of game-based self-regulated language learning (SRLL) (Zhang et al., 2020), the effectiveness of self-regulation and the role of technology in SRLL (Yang et al., 2023). However, this field still lacks a scientific overview of the most frequently investigated SRLL-related topics and their developmental patterns since its emergence.

Bibliometrics is a commonly used approach in many academic domains that involves the use of statistical and mathematical methods to examine scientific publications, such as books, journals, articles, and other materials, that are sourced from various databases (Pritchard, 1969; Talan & Demirbilek, 2023). A significant focus in bibliometric analysis is placed on data that is large-scale (typically in the hundreds or even thousands) and objective; this data may include important indicators like citation and publication counts, as well as subject and keyword frequencies. Through the meticulous interpretation of large amounts of unstructured data, this methodology proves useful in uncovering and documenting the cumulative scientific knowledge and evolutionary intricacies of established domains (Donthu et al., 2021). In essence, bibliometric analysis is a research methodology employing bibliographic data to investigate the prevailing research patterns pertaining to a designated field or nation (Lin & Lei, 2020; Lei & Liao, 2017). Despite its extensive application in different domains of research (Punnakitikashem & Hallinger, 2019; Zhang, 2020), bibliometric analysis, commonly referred to as science mapping, has only recently gained attention in the field of educational research (Moreno-Guerrero et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2017).

In this regard, this paper explores the research trends and patterns in SRLL studies and intends to identify thematic clusters that emerge from these studies. More specifically, the following questions are addressed:

- (1) What is the status of research in the SRLL field?
- (2) What are the research trends in SRLL?

The status of SRLL research is addressed by analyzing the overall publication trends in the examined period from 2005 to 2023, including the major publication sources, the contributions of countries/regions and the most highly cited articles and references. The research trends are explored by examining the frequency and burstiness of SRLL-related topics across the examined years.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the literature dataset of SRLL on Web of Science (WoS) was established through automatic and manual screening processes. Computer programs were used to analyze the data to address the research questions.

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