

A Bibliometric Analysis of Pragmatics and Speech Act Research (2015–2025): A Scopus-Based Study

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ABSTRACT

This study mapped the global landscape of pragmatics and speech act research through a bibliometric approach. A corpus of 1,346 Scopus-indexed articles and reviews published between 2015 and 2025 was analyzed using the bibliometrix package in R and Biblioshiny, examining publication trends, citation patterns, and network structures including co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence. The findings revealed a sustained growth in research output (annual growth rate: 10.1%), sustained by a small set of core journals, most prominently the Journal of Pragmatics, and a group of highly prolific authors distributed across institutions in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. Theoretically, the field remained anchored in foundational constructs derived from speech act theory, politeness, and interlanguage pragmatics, while emerging areas such as digital discourse, corpus-based approaches, and computational applications had gained increasing visibility. Co-citation analysis identified Austin (1962), Searle (1979), and Brown and Levinson (1987) as the most consistently cited intellectual anchors. The co-word network revealed a conceptual structure centered on speech acts and pragmatics, with interconnected clusters related to politeness and interactional norms, specific speech-act types such as requests and apologies, and emerging computational or data-driven approaches. Taken together, the results sketched a field that had grown substantially over the decade, consolidated around a recognizable set of theoretical anchors, and opened up toward new methods, media, and cross-linguistic contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is commonly understood as the study of how language is used in context and how meaning is shaped through interaction (Mey, 2001; Schauer, 2022; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 1996). Over the past decades, it has become a central area of inquiry in both theoretical and applied linguistics (Huang, 2021; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). A key foundation of this field lies in speech act theory, originally developed by Austin (1962) and later systematized by Searle (1969). This framework shifts attention from language as a vehicle of propositional meaning to language as a form of

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social action. Through speech acts, speakers perform functions such as requesting, apologizing, refusing, or thanking, thereby accomplishing interpersonal goals rather than merely conveying information (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995). Subsequent developments have extended this perspective into related areas, including politeness theory and facework (Brown & Levinson, 1987a), conversation analysis (Schegloff, 2007), and intercultural communication (Kecskes, 2014; Schauer, 2022). Together, these strands position speech acts as a central analytical unit for understanding how meaning is negotiated across different social and cultural contexts (Haugh, 2017; Kődör & Haugh, 2013; Locher & Watts, 2005). In applied linguistics, this theoretical foundation has had significant implications. It has informed research on language use in real-world settings, particularly in relation to how speakers manage interactional norms, interpret intentions, and adapt their communicative behavior across contexts.

Within this broader framework, empirical research on speech acts has expanded across a wide range of contexts and populations. Studies now examine both first and additional language use, spanning formal and informal settings as well as face-to-face and digitally mediated interaction (Crystal, 2006; Herring, 2013; Tagg, 2015). This diversity reflects a growing interest in how pragmatic meaning is constructed under varying communicative conditions. Much of this work focuses on core speech act types such as requests, refusals, apologies, and compliments (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995). At the same time, researchers have explored underlying mechanisms such as illocutionary force and felicity conditions (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), implicature (Grice, 1975), and prosodic features that shape how speech acts are interpreted. Importantly, this line of inquiry has become closely connected with second language acquisition and language pedagogy (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Taguchi, 2015). Concepts such as pragmatic competence (Hymes, 1972; Leech, 1983) and interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) have been widely used to examine how learners acquire the ability to use language appropriately in context, highlighting the pedagogical relevance of speech act research in language education (Ifantidou, 2014; Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

Despite this substantial growth, a comprehensive understanding of how research on pragmatics and speech acts is structured at a global level remains limited. Existing reviews tend to adopt a narrative approach or focus on specific dimensions, such as individual speech acts, particular learner groups, or distinct theoretical frameworks. While these studies provide valuable insights, they offer only a partial view of the field. As a result, it remains difficult to trace broader patterns, including how research topics are distributed across regions and publication venues, how different strands of inquiry are interconnected, and how the field has evolved over time. With the continued increase in publication volume, traditional review methods alone are no longer sufficient to capture this complexity in a systematic and up-to-date manner (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Bibliometric analysis offers a complementary, macro-level approach to addressing this challenge (Donthu et al., 2021; Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015; Hood & Wilson, 2001; Nowakowska, 2025; Uztürk et al., 2024; Sedira et al., 2024). By combining performance indicators (such as the productivity and impact of authors, sources, institutions, and countries) with science-mapping techniques (such as co-authorship, co-citation, and co-word networks) (Burner et al., 2003; Cobo et al., 2011; Waltman et al., 2010), bibliometrics can reveal both the social and the conceptual organization of a research domain (Cortés-Sánchez et al., 2021; Klarin, 2024; Uztürk et al., 2024). In the context of pragmatics and speech act theory, this means not only identifying where and by whom research is produced, but also uncovering which documents and authors constitute the intellectual backbone of the field and how key concepts and topics cluster together across publications. Such a perspective is particularly valuable for a mature yet diversifying area of inquiry, where new subfields (e.g. digital discourse pragmatics, corpus-based speech act research, clinical pragmatics) are emerging alongside more established lines of work (Culpeper, 2011; Dynel, 2015; Locher, 2010).

Several recent bibliometric studies have begun to map adjacent areas of pragmatics and related subfields. Liu, Liu, and Li provide a diachronic bibliometric review of pragmatics research from 1977 to 2022, focusing on six SSCI-indexed pragmatics journals and using co-citation and keyword-co-occurrence analyses to identify landmark documents, major co-citation clusters, and key research topics (Liu et al., 2025). Their study shows how pragmatics has evolved across historical stages and highlights the growing prominence of digital and social-media-related themes, but it is restricted to a small set of core journals and does not specifically foreground speech act theory as an organizing construct within pragmatics. Alrefaee and Aljabr conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) from 1973 to 2024, delineating the establishment, consolidation, and expansion of ILP as a subfield, identifying seminal works and collaboration trends, and documenting the emergence of digital technologies in pragmatic instruction and assessment (Alrefaee & Aljabr, 2025). Their focus, however, is limited to ILP and does not encompass the broader pragmatics and speech-act-theoretical literature in which ILP is embedded.

Complementary lines of work have mapped L2 pragmatics more broadly or concentrated specifically on speech act studies. For example, integrated bibliometric and systematic review approaches have been used to chart L2 pragmatics research in terms of production, assessment, cross-cultural pragmatics, and cognitive development, typically with a strong emphasis on SSCI-indexed journals and on English-speaking or Western research centers (Cui & Mahfoodh, 2025). At the same time, several bibliometric studies have examined speech acts as a distinct area, documenting publication trends, frequently addressed topics, influential articles, main publication venues, and country distributions, and showing that speech act research has become increasingly interdisciplinary and

cross-cultural, with links to fields such as philosophy, computer science, psychology, and communication. Afzaal, Shanshan, and El-Dakhs conducted a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of speech acts in international journals between 2013 and 2023, using CiteSpace to uncover emerging patterns, regional variations, and pivotal themes across multiple disciplines, and to highlight new intersections between speech act research, artificial intelligence, and deep learning (Afzaal et al., 2024).

Taken together, these studies demonstrate the growing use of bibliometric methods to examine pragmatics and related subfields. They have successfully identified publication trends, influential works, and emerging thematic areas, providing valuable macro-level insights into the development of the field. At the same time, several limitations can be observed. Many studies rely on a restricted set of journals or databases, most notably Web of Science, which may limit the representation of research published in broader or more regionally diverse outlets. In addition, a number of analyses focus on specific subdomains, such as interlanguage pragmatics or individual speech acts, without fully situating these within the wider landscape of pragmatics research. Methodologically, differences in data sources, time spans, and analytical focus also make it difficult to compare findings across studies or to derive an integrated understanding of how the field is structured (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). As a result, while existing research offers important insights, it does not yet provide a comprehensive account that simultaneously captures the conceptual, intellectual, and social dimensions of pragmatics and speech act research.

Building on these observations, the present study addresses three key gaps in the existing literature. First, previous bibliometric analyses of pragmatics are often limited to specific databases or a narrow selection of journals, which may underrepresent the broader and increasingly multidisciplinary nature of the field. Second, studies focusing on interlanguage pragmatics or L2 pragmatics tend to examine specific domains without explicitly integrating speech act theory as a central analytical framework, despite its foundational role in pragmatic research. Third, existing bibliometric studies on speech acts have either covered earlier periods or adopted narrower disciplinary perspectives, leaving the relationship between speech act research and the wider pragmatics landscape insufficiently explored. Taken together, these gaps point to the need for a more comprehensive and integrative analysis that situates speech act theory within the broader development of pragmatics, while also capturing recent trends across a wide range of publication venues and research contexts.

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions: RQ1. How has global research on pragmatics and speech act theory evolved between 2015 and 2025 in terms of publication output and citation impact? RQ2. Which journals, authors, institutions, and countries have contributed most prominently to this field during the period under study? RQ3. Which documents and authors constitute the intellectual structure of the field, as reflected in citation and co-citation patterns? RQ4.

What are the main thematic clusters in contemporary research on pragmatics and speech acts, and how are these clusters interconnected based on co-word analysis?

By focusing on the intersection of pragmatics and speech act theory and by drawing on a broad corpus of Scopus-indexed publications, this study provides a structured overview of how the field has developed over the past decade. Rather than offering a definitive representation, it presents an empirically grounded perspective on patterns of production, influence, and thematic organization. In doing so, it aims to contribute to a more connected understanding of how speech act research is embedded within the wider domain of pragmatics, while also identifying directions for future investigation.

METHOD

2.1 Data source and search strategy

The bibliometric dataset for this study was retrieved from the Scopus database, selected for its broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals in linguistics, the social sciences, and related interdisciplinary fields (Falagas et al., 2008; Harzing & Alakangas, 2016; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). The use of a single database ensured consistency in indexing standards, citation metrics, and metadata structure.

To capture publications at the intersection of pragmatics and speech act theory, a structured search query was developed and applied to the title, abstract, and author keywords fields. The search string combined core and related terms using Boolean operators as follows:

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("pragmatics" OR "speech act" OR "speech act theory" OR "illocutionary force" OR "interlanguage pragmatics"))

The search was limited to documents published between 2015 and 2025. Additional filters were applied to include only journal articles and review articles written in English. The final search was conducted on 14 December 2025.

This procedure resulted in an initial dataset, which was subsequently refined through a screening process to ensure relevance.

Following the initial retrieval, the records were reviewed at the title and abstract level to verify their substantive relevance to pragmatics and speech act theory. This screening step was used to assess whether the Scopus query had captured the intended research domain and to identify any obviously irrelevant uses of terms such as “speech act” in non-pragmatic or highly technical contexts. The final corpus consisted of 1,346 records that met the specified Scopus query, subject-area, document-type, and language criteria. No additional manual exclusions were applied beyond these predefined retrieval parameters.

While Scopus provides extensive coverage of high-impact international journals, it tends to favor English-language publications and established indexing standards. As a result, research published in regional journals or non-English contexts may be underrepresented. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the global distribution of research activity reported in this study.

2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Documents were included in the corpus if they met all of the following criteria:

1. Indexed in Scopus during the period 2015–2025.
2. Classified by Scopus as a journal article or review article.
3. Written in English.
4. Substantively concerned with pragmatics, speech act theory, or the empirical analysis of speech acts (in first or additional languages), as indicated by the title, abstract, and/or author keywords.

Excluded from the analysis were editorials, book reviews, notes, conference abstracts, corrigenda, and other non-research formats, as well as records lacking sufficient bibliographic information (e.g., missing author or source data). This procedure ensured that the corpus consisted of fully citable research contributions suitable for quantitative analysis.

It should be noted that the reliance on title, abstract, and keyword fields as indicators of relevance may introduce a degree of subjectivity. Some relevant studies may not explicitly use the selected terms, while others may include them without a strong conceptual focus on pragmatics. This limitation is inherent in keyword-based bibliometric approaches and should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

2.3 Data extraction and preprocessing

All selected records were exported from Scopus in CSV format. The exported files contained standard bibliographic fields, including authors, title, abstract, source, year of publication, document type, author keywords, references cited, and citation counts. These CSV files were then imported into RStudio and converted into a bibliographic data frame using the bibliometrix package ([Aria et al., 2024](#); [Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017](#))

Prior to analysis, the dataset was cleaned and standardized to improve internal consistency. Author names were harmonized to address variations in spelling and formatting (e.g., “El-Dakhs, D.” and “El Dakhs, Dina A.S.” were treated as a single author). Journal titles were similarly standardized to merge minor variants (e.g., abbreviations versus full titles).

Duplicate records, which may arise from multiple export sessions, were identified by cross-checking titles, author lists, and publication years, and were subsequently removed.

The cleaning process involved a combination of automated procedures within the bibliometrix package and manual verification to ensure accuracy. These steps were necessary to reduce artificial fragmentation in productivity, citation, and collaboration analyses.

For country-level analyses, affiliation information supplied in Scopus was parsed to extract country names associated with authors’ institutional affiliations. These data were used to identify publication activity by country and to construct country-level collaboration networks. In addition, corresponding-author country information was used where available to summarize publication distribution by corresponding author country and to derive Single Country Publications (SCP), Multiple Country Publications (MCP), and MCP ratio. Because the Corresponding Author (RP) field was

incomplete, the corresponding-author country analysis was interpreted as a descriptive indicator based on available metadata rather than as a complete representation of all country-level contributions.

2.4 Analytical tools and environment

All quantitative analyses were conducted in RStudio, using the bibliometrix package as the core engine for bibliometric computation and Biblioshiny, the web-based graphical interface to bibliometrix, for interactive exploration and visualization. Bibliometrix was used to perform data conversion, descriptive analysis, and the construction of co-occurrence and citation matrices, while Biblioshiny facilitated the generation of summary tables and graphs (e.g., annual scientific production, most relevant sources, most productive authors, and country collaboration maps).

The analytical workflow followed standard bibliometric practice: (i) importing and converting Scopus data into a bibliographic data frame; (ii) running a performance analysis to obtain global indicators; and (iii) conducting science-mapping analyses (co-authorship, co-citation, and co-word networks) based on matrices derived from the converted data (Nowakowska, 2025; Uztürk et al., 2024). The use of R and bibliometrix ensured that all steps were reproducible, documented, and, if necessary, replicable by other researchers.

2.5 Bibliometric indicators

The study combined performance analysis with science mapping (Aria et al., 2024). At the performance level, the following indicators were calculated:

- a. **Annual scientific production:** number of documents published per year in the period 2015–2025, together with the annual growth rate.
- b. **Document types:** counts of research articles and review articles.
- c. **Source productivity:** number of documents per journal or source, enabling the identification of the most relevant outlets.
- d. **Author productivity:** number of documents per author, including both full and fractionalized counts, in order to identify the most productive researchers in the field.
- e. **Affiliation and country productivity:** number of documents per institution, publication distribution by country, and corresponding-author country indicators where available. SCP, MCP, and MCP ratio were used to describe single-country and multiple-country publication patterns and to capture the extent of institutional and international collaboration.
- f. **Citation impact:** total citations and citations per year for each document, used to identify the most cited papers and to characterize the overall impact of the corpus (mean citations per document and per year).

These indicators provide a quantitative overview of where, by whom, and with what impact research on pragmatics and speech acts has been produced over the last decade.

2.6 Science-mapping procedures

To investigate the intellectual and conceptual structure of the field, several network analyses were conducted using bibliometrix and Biblioshiny (Aria et al., 2024; Ghorbani, 2024; Klarin, 2024; Uztürk et al., 2024):

1. Co-word analysis (conceptual structure)

Co-word analysis was carried out on author keywords (DE) to identify major thematic areas. Keywords were first standardized by merging obvious variants (e.g., singular/plural forms) and then used to construct a co-occurrence matrix. Only keywords with a minimum frequency threshold were retained to focus on salient themes and reduce noise. The resulting co-word network was clustered using community-detection algorithms and visualized to reveal groups of closely associated concepts.

2. Co-citation analysis (intellectual structure)

Co-citation networks were generated at the level of cited documents and, where appropriate, cited authors. Based on the reference lists of the 1,346 source documents, co-citation matrices were constructed that record how often pairs of references are cited together. These networks were then analyzed and visualized to identify clusters of papers or authors that form coherent intellectual traditions within pragmatics and speech act research.

3. Co-authorship and country collaboration networks (social structure)

Co-authorship networks were built at both the author and country levels to map collaboration patterns. Nodes in these networks represent authors or countries, and links indicate joint publications. Network measures and visualizations were used to identify central actors and collaborative clusters, as well as to highlight the extent of cross-national cooperation in the field.

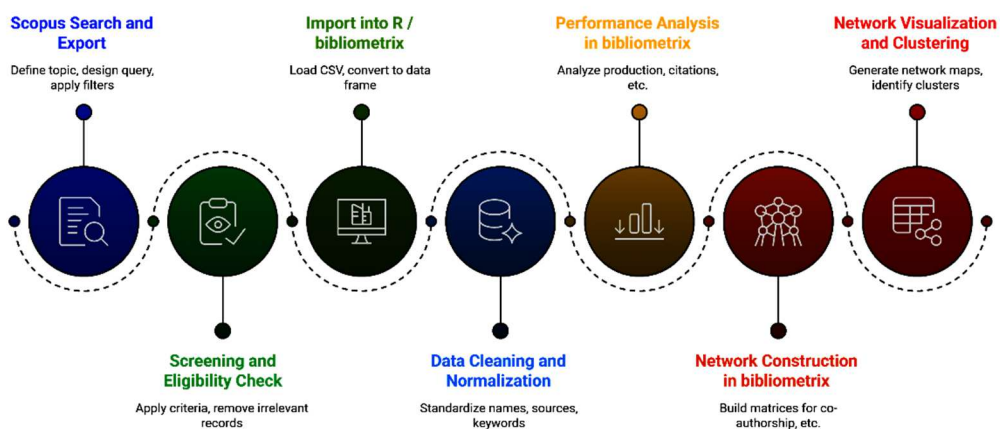


Figure 1. Flowchart Bibliometrics Procedure

RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive overview of the corpus

The final corpus consists of 1,346 documents published between 2015 and 2025 and draws on a total of 8,177 references. Of these documents, 1,270 are research articles and 76 are review articles. Annual scientific production shows a clear upward trajectory across the period, with the lowest annual output recorded in 2016 and a marked increase after 2019. A notable step change appears around 2020, followed by sustained high levels of publication output in the final years of the period. This pattern yields a cumulative annual growth rate of 10.1%, indicating substantial expansion in pragmatics and speech act research over the decade.

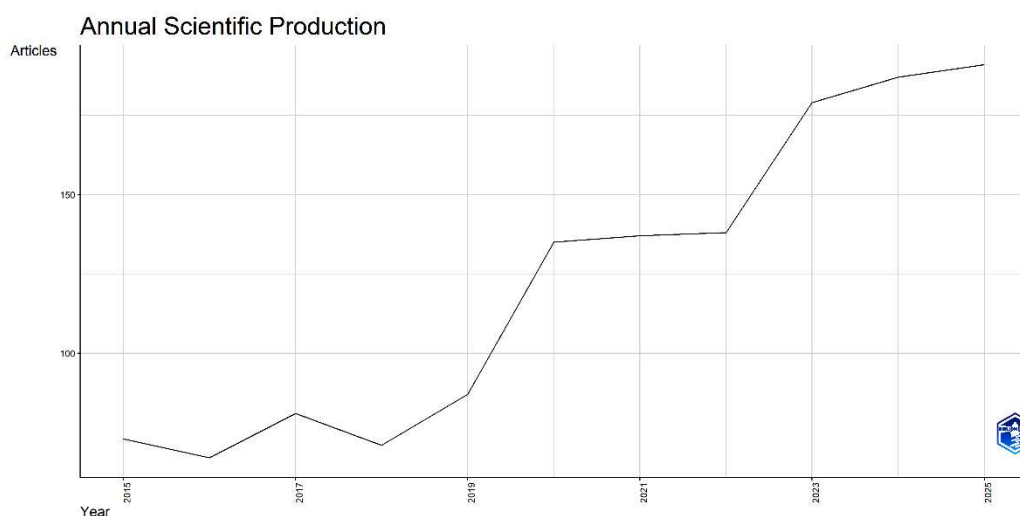


Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production

The average age of documents in the corpus is 3.85 years, and the mean citation impact is 6.56 citations per document, corresponding to 1.18 citations per document per year.

Authorship and collaboration indicators reveal 1,961 distinct authors and 2,533 author appearances. There are 622 single-authored documents, and 531 authors have at least one single-authored publication. On average, there are 0.684 documents per author and 1.89 co-authors per document, with international co-authorship accounting for 15.59% of publications. These values indicate that while co-authorship is common, single-authored work remains prominent in the corpus.

The overall pattern suggests a field that has expanded substantially while retaining a mixed authorship structure. The coexistence of single-authored and collaborative publications indicates that pragmatics and speech act research continues to support both individually driven theoretical inquiry and team-based, often interdisciplinary, research. This trajectory mirrors growth patterns reported in adjacent areas of applied linguistics (Cui & Mahfoodh, 2025; Liu et al., 2025) and reflects the

expanding application of pragmatics in language education, digital communication, and intercultural research contexts.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Corpus

Description	Results
Timespan	2015:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	493
Documents	1346
Annual Growth Rate %	10.1
Document Average Age	3.85
Average Citations Per Doc	6.564
Average Citations Per Year Per Doc	1.178
References	8177
Document Types	
Article	1270
Review	76
Document Contents	
Keywords Plus (ID)	235
Author's Keywords (DE)	3842
Authors	
Authors	1961
Author Appearances	2533
Authors of Single-Authored Docs	531
Authors Collaboration	
Single-Authored Docs	622
Documents per Author	0.684
Co-Authors per Doc	1.89
International Co-Authorships %	15.59

3.2 Sources and document impact

The Journal of Pragmatics is, by some margin, the most productive outlet in the corpus, accounting for 78 articles across the decade. Theory and Practice in Language Studies follows with 31 articles, then the Journal of Language Teaching and Research with 27, Intercultural Pragmatics with 25, and Pragmatics with 22. A second tier of relevant outlets includes Cogent Arts and Humanities (20), Corpus Pragmatics (16), International Review of Pragmatics and Languages (14 each), and Contrastive Pragmatics (13). Pragmatics and Society (13), Synthese (12), and Applied Pragmatics (12) round out the top tier of contributing outlets.

The prominence of these journals reflects a layered structure within the field. Core outlets such as Journal of Pragmatics and Pragmatics function as central venues for theoretically oriented research, while journals like Theory and Practice in Language Studies and Journal of Language Teaching and Research indicate a strong applied and pedagogical dimension. This distribution suggests that research on pragmatics and speech acts is not confined to a single disciplinary space but spans both theoretical linguistics and language education contexts.

Table 2. Most Relevant Sources (by Document Count)

Source	Articles
Journal of Pragmatics	78
Theory and Practice in Language Studies	31
Journal of Language Teaching and Research	27
Intercultural Pragmatics	25
Pragmatics	22
Cogent Arts and Humanities	20
Corpus Pragmatics	16
International Review of Pragmatics	14
Languages	14
Contrastive Pragmatics	13
Pragmatics and Society	13
Synthese	12
Applied Pragmatics	12

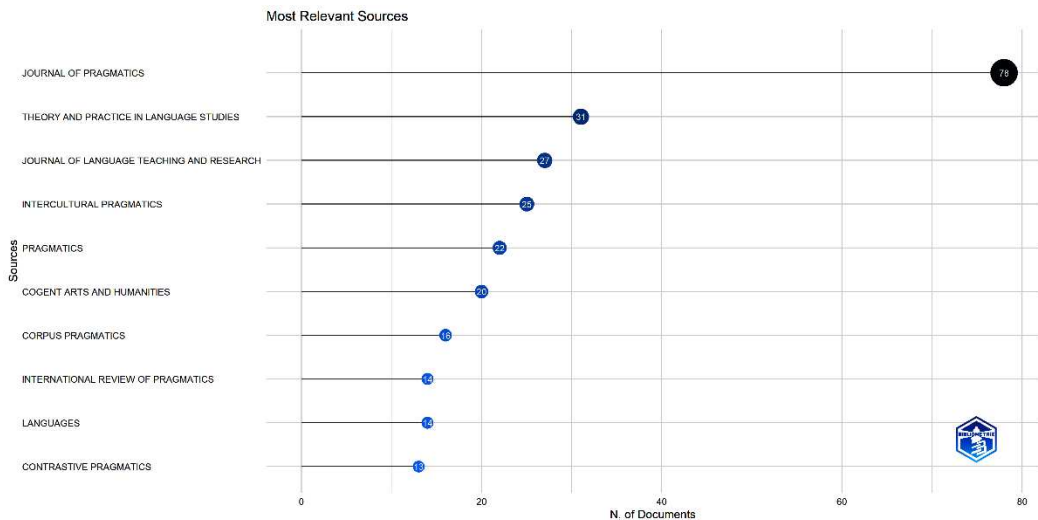


Figure 3. Most Relevant Sources

The list of most globally cited documents (based on total citations within the corpus) is headed by Sampietro (2019) in *Journal of Pragmatics* with 127 citations, followed by Hellbernd (2016) in *Journal of Memory and Language* (114 citations), Franke (2016) in *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* (108), and Segalowitz (2016) in *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching* (107). Matley (2018) in *Discourse, Context & Media* has 104 citations, Taguchi (2016) in *The Modern Language Journal* 94 citations, and Enfield (2019) in *Journal of Linguistics* 91 citations. Ren (2016)

in *ELT Journal* is cited 90 times, while Ge-Statnyk (2018) in *First Monday* has 75 citations and Bardovi-Harlig (2015) in *Language Teaching Research* 73 citations. When citation rates per year are considered, these same documents also show high annual impact.

Table 3. Most Globally Cited Documents (Total Citations)

Document	Total Citations
Sampietro (2019), <i>Journal of Pragmatics</i>	127
Hellbernd (2016), <i>Journal of Memory and Language</i>	114
Franke (2016), <i>Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft</i>	108
Segalowitz (2016), <i>Int. Review of Applied Linguistics</i>	107
Matley (2018), <i>Discourse, Context & Media</i>	104
Taguchi (2016), <i>The Modern Language Journal</i>	94
Enfield (2019), <i>Journal of Linguistics</i>	91
Ren (2016), <i>ELT Journal</i>	90
Ge-Statnyk (2018), <i>First Monday</i>	75
Bardovi-Harlig (2015), <i>Language Teaching Research</i>	73

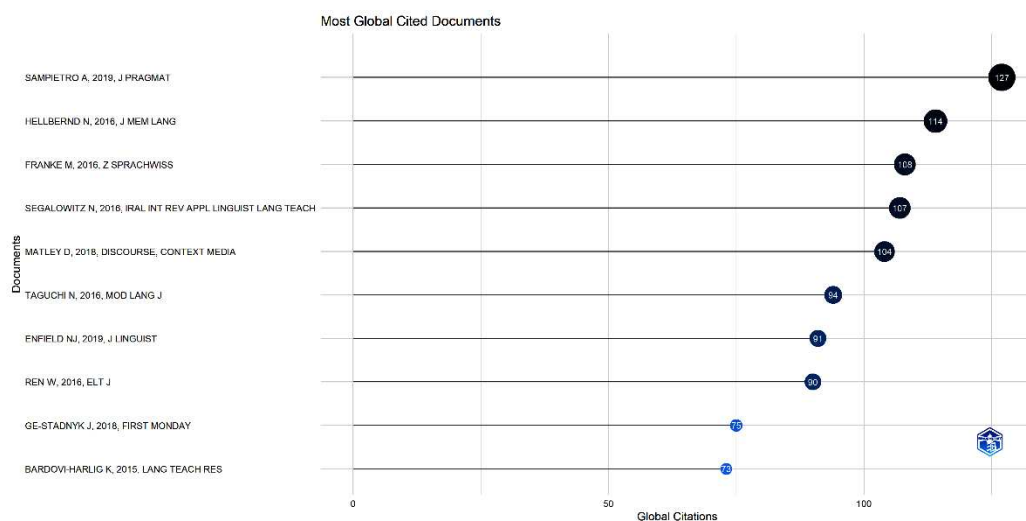


Figure 4. Most Globally Cited Documents

3.3 Authors and author impact

In terms of output, House J. leads the corpus with 24 articles, followed closely by Kődör D.Z. with 23 articles. They are followed by El-Dakhs D.A.S. with 18 articles, Taguchi N. with 17, Liu F. with 11, and Ren W. with 10. Further frequent contributors include Derakhshan A. with 8 articles, Alghazo S.M. with 7, Su Y. with 7, and Tantucci V. with 7, alongside a broader group of authors with between 5 and 6 publications.

Table 4. Top Authors by Productivity

Author	Articles	Articles Fractionalized
House, Juliane H.	24	8.39
K6d6r, D6niel Z.	23	8.39
El-Dakhs, Dina Abdel Salam	18	10.17
Taguchi, Naoko	17	10.08
Liu, Fengguang	11	2.75
Ren, Wei	10	5.58
Derakhshan, Ali	8	3.00
Alghazo, Sharif M.	7	2.17
Su, Yunwen	7	3.67
Tantucci, Vittorio	7	4.50

When authorship is fractionalized by co-authorship, El-Dakhs D.A.S. registers 10.17 fractionalized articles and Taguchi N. 10.08. House J. and K6d6r D.Z. each record 8.39 fractionalized articles, followed by Ren W. with 5.58, Tantucci V. with 4.50, and Su Y. with 3.67. These fractionalized counts provide a more nuanced view of author productivity by adjusting for co-authorship and showing how individual contribution is distributed across collaborative publications.

A comparison between productivity and local citation counts suggests that high publication output does not always correspond directly to higher influence within the field. Some authors with fewer publications exhibit relatively strong citation impact, indicating that influence may be concentrated in specific high-impact contributions rather than sustained output alone. This pattern reflects a differentiated structure of scholarly recognition, where both prolific authors and selectively influential contributors play distinct roles in shaping the development of the field.

Based on local citation counts within the dataset, the most locally cited authors are Alemi M. (16 local citations), Al-Khawaldeh N.N.A. and Hisa I. (15 each), followed by Abdelhady S., Bardovi-Harlig K., and Mossman S. with 14 citations. Su Y. registers 11 local citations, while El-Dakhs D.A.S. and Vellenga H.E. have 10, and Alrefae Y.M.H.A. has 9 citations within the corpus.

The “Authors’ production over time” visualization shows that House J., K6d6r D.Z., El-Dakhs D.A.S., Taguchi N., Liu F., Ren W., Derakhshan A., Alghazo S.M., Su Y., and Tantucci V. are the ten focal authors plotted, with publication activity distributed across 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2025. In this plot, circle size reflects the number of articles (2, 4, 6, or 8) and color intensity indicates total citations per year (0, 10, 20, or 30).

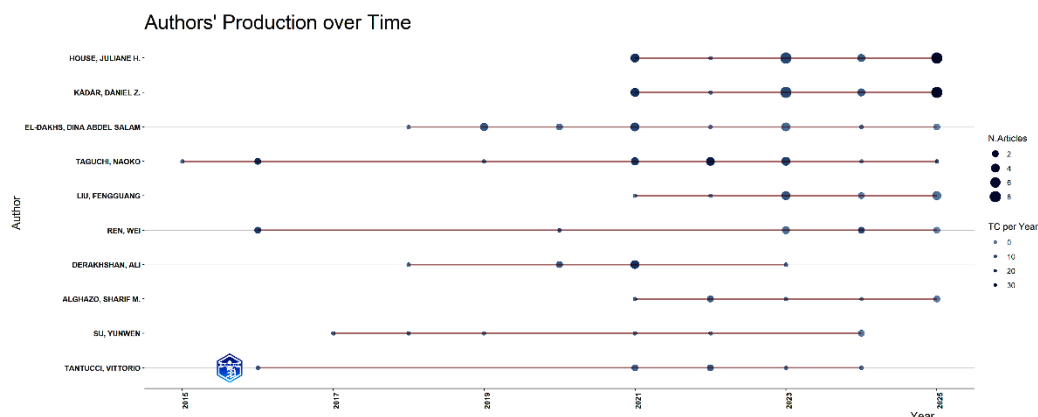


Figure 5. Author's Production Over Time

3.4 Affiliations and country collaboration

At the institutional level, Dalian University and ELTE Research Centre for Linguistics lead the corpus with 27 articles each, followed by Universität Hamburg with 26. Islamic Azad University contributes 22 articles, placing it fourth. The University of Jordan accounts for 18 articles, Prince Sultan University for 17, and Hellenic American University and Univerza v Mariboru for 16 each. Northern Arizona University rounds out the top ten with 13 articles. Taken together, these institutions span China, Hungary, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Slovenia, and the United States, reflecting a genuinely international spread of research activity.

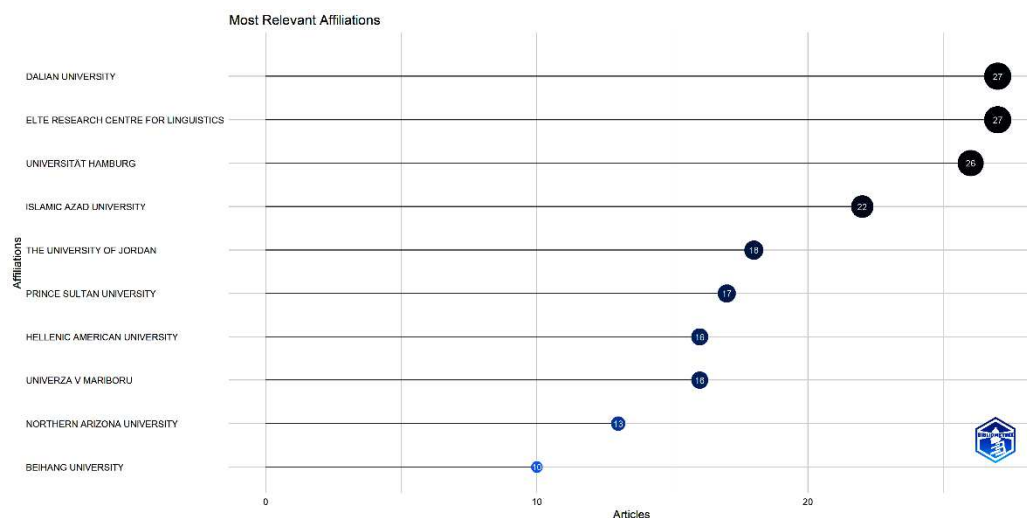


Figure 6. Most Productive Affiliations

Based on available corresponding-author country metadata, the United States leads with 115 articles (8.5% of the corpus), followed by China (96, 7.1%), Iran (68, 5.1%), Germany (58, 4.3%), Spain (51, 3.8%), the United Kingdom (44, 3.3%), Saudi Arabia (41, 3.0%), Indonesia (35, 2.6%), Jordan (32, 2.4%), and Italy (27, 2.0%).

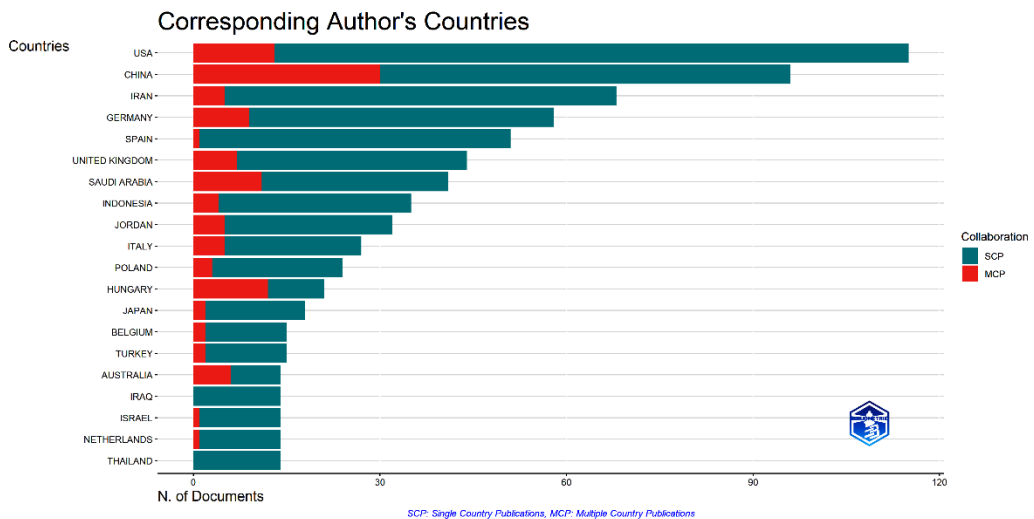


Figure 7. Corresponding Author's Countries

Because the Corresponding Author (RP) field is incomplete, the distribution shown in Figure 7 should be interpreted cautiously as a descriptive profile based on available corresponding-author metadata. The SCP and MCP segments provide useful information about single-country and multiple-country publication patterns, but they should not be interpreted as direct evidence of the effect of international collaboration on citation impact.

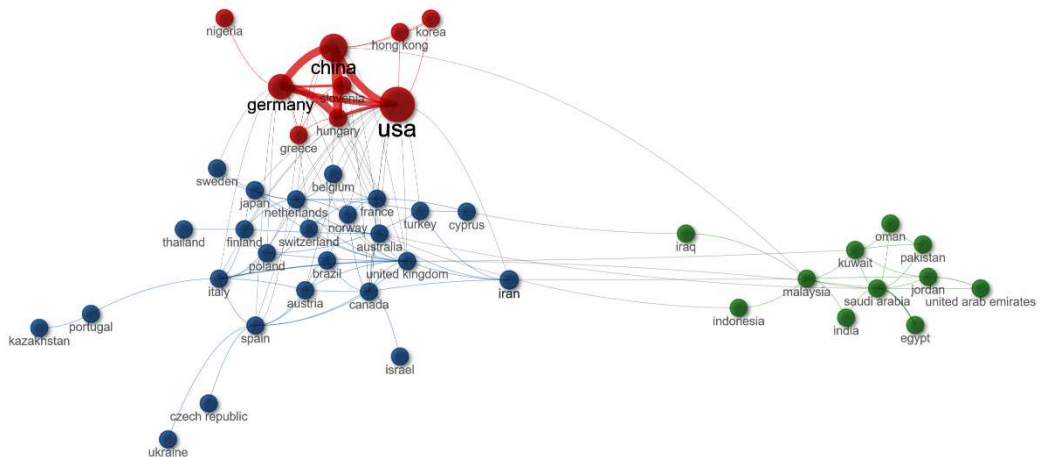


Figure 8. Country Collaboration Network

The country-level collaboration network indicates that international collaboration in pragmatics and speech act research is present but unevenly distributed. Several national and regional clusters are visible, with stronger connections among countries that have higher publication output and thinner links connecting more geographically dispersed partners. The network suggests that the field combines nationally concentrated publication activity with selected cross-national partnerships.

At the country level, collaboration appears to be organized around a mixture of regional proximity, institutional ties, and established research networks. Countries with larger publication outputs tend to occupy more visible positions in the network, while some countries appear as bridging nodes connecting regional clusters. Overall, the collaboration structure points to a field that is internationally connected but still partly organized around national and regional research communities.

3.5 Intellectual structure: co-citation patterns

The local co-citation analysis of sources shows that Bardovi-Harlig is the most locally cited source with 255 citations, followed by Blum-Kulka with 152 and Chen with 84. Next are Alcyn-Soler and Barron with 67 citations each, Culpeper with 66, Cohen with 56, Al-Gahtani with 53, Bella with 39, and Aijmer with 37. At the level of individual references, the “Most Local Cited References” list spans twelve entries. The top ten, by local citation count, are: Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1962) with 402 local citations; Brown and Levinson’s *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Brown & Levinson, 1987) with 261; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper’s *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) with 175; Blum-Kulka’s CCSARP article on speech act realization patterns (1984) with 80; Searle and Vanderveken’s *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (1979) with 76; Scarcella and Oxford’s *Developing Communicative Competence in a Second Language* (1990) with 55; Bardovi-Harlig’s *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics* (2003) with 53; Bachman’s *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing* (1990) with 47; and Kasper and Rose’s *Pragmatics in Language Teaching* (2001) and Grice’s *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3* (Grice, 1975) with 44 citations each.

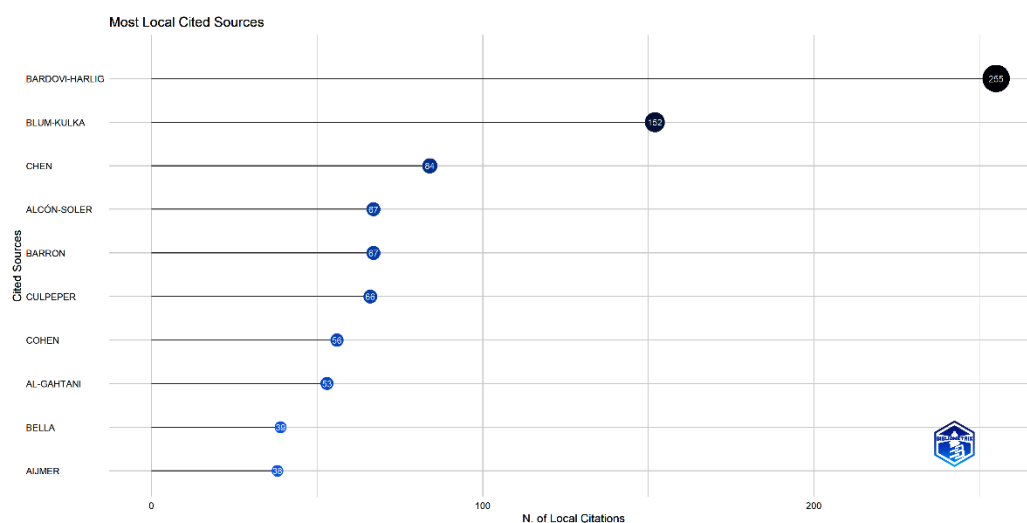


Figure 9. Most Local Cited Sources

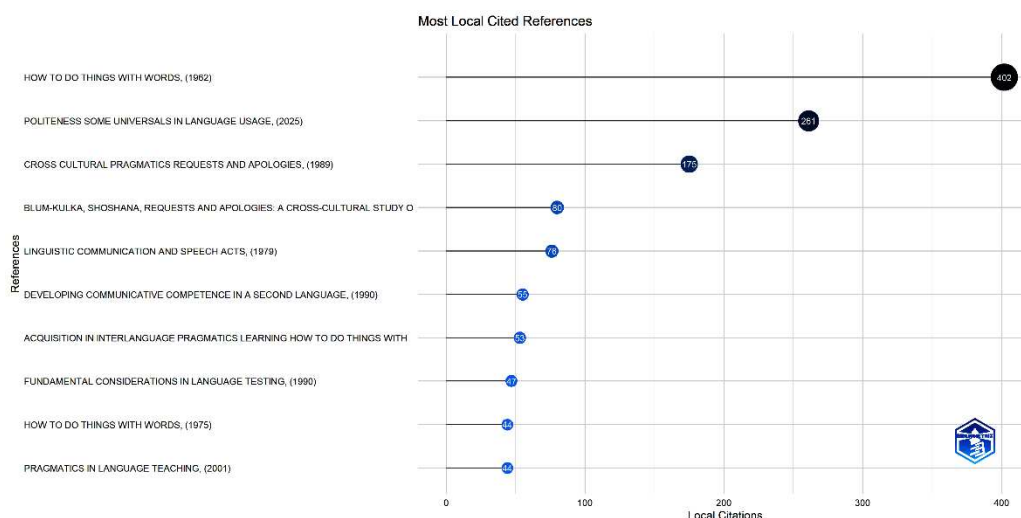


Figure 10. Most Local Cited References

The co-citation network of cited references, based on these counts, reveals a structured intellectual landscape in which related references cluster together. One prominent region of the network is formed by foundational works in speech act theory and politeness (e.g. Austin 1962, Searle 1979, Brown & Levinson, Blum-Kulka), which are frequently co-cited and occupy central positions. A second region brings together key contributions to interlanguage pragmatics, communicative competence, and instructional pragmatics (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, Alcyn-Soler and Barron, volumes on interlanguage pragmatics and language teaching), indicating a tightly knit cluster of references concerned with L2 pragmatic development and pedagogy. A third region consists of works on language testing, assessment, and related methodological issues (e.g. Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing and associated Syntax and Semantics volumes), which are frequently co-cited with but distinct from the classic speech act and interlanguage pragmatics clusters. Together, these regions suggest the presence of several prominent co-citation clusters that appear to structure the intellectual landscape of the corpus. However, it should be noted that such clusters are shaped by methodological parameters, including threshold selection and clustering algorithms, and should therefore be interpreted as indicative patterns rather than fixed or discrete categories.

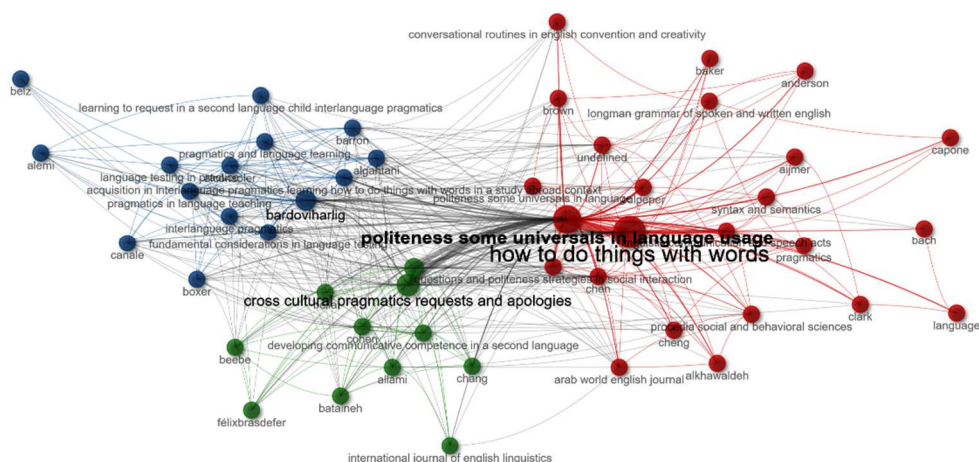


Figure 11. Co-citation Network of References

3.6 Conceptual structure: keywords and co-word network

The most frequent author keywords (DE) in the corpus are “SPEECH ACTS” (300 occurrences), “PRAGMATICS” (246), and “SPEECH ACT” (159). Other recurrent terms include “POLITENESS” (80), “PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE” (74), “INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS” (42), “SPEECH ACT THEORY” (42), “ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE” (31), “REQUEST” (28), and “APOLOGY” (27). Further keywords with notable frequencies are “L2 PRAGMATICS” (26), “GENDER” (22), “CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATICS” (22), “ENGLISH” (22), “IMPLICATURE” (22), “CHINESE” (20), “CORPUS PRAGMATICS” (19), “CONTEXT” (17), and “PROSODY” (17).

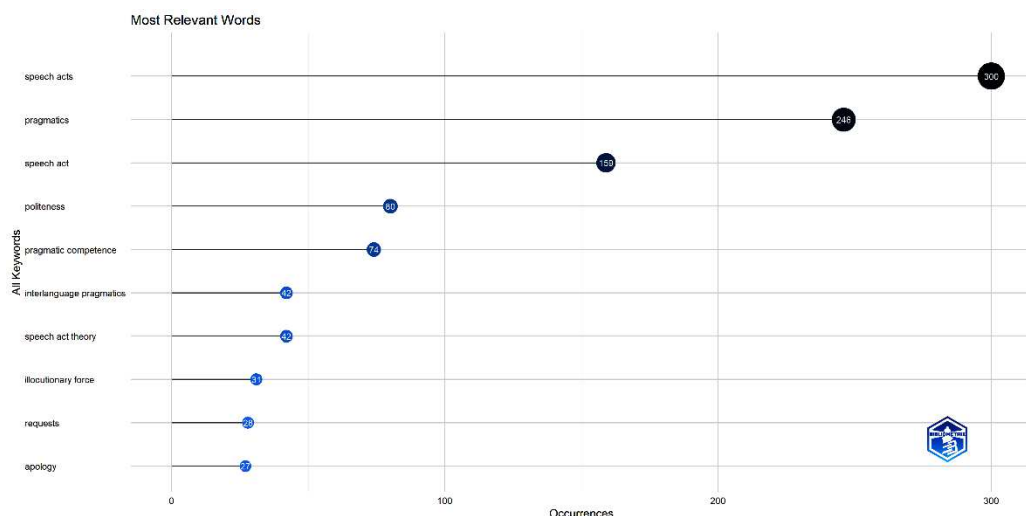


Figure 12. Top Author Keywords

Keywords-Plus (ID), derived from cited references, highlight more general descriptors such as “SPEECH” (29 occurrences), “HUMAN” (26), “ADULT” (22), “FEMALE” (22), “MALE” (22), “LANGUAGE” (19), “HUMANS”

(16), “ARTICLE” (14), “LINGUISTICS” (12), “HUMAN EXPERIMENT” (11), “COMPREHENSION” (10), and “INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION” (8). The co-word network visualization based on these terms groups them into three main color-coded clusters.

However, the interpretation of Keywords Plus should be treated cautiously because the ID field is missing in most records. For this reason, the conceptual structure of the field is interpreted primarily through author keywords (DE) and the author-keyword co-occurrence network, while the Keywords Plus network is used only as a supplementary indicator of broader indexing terms.

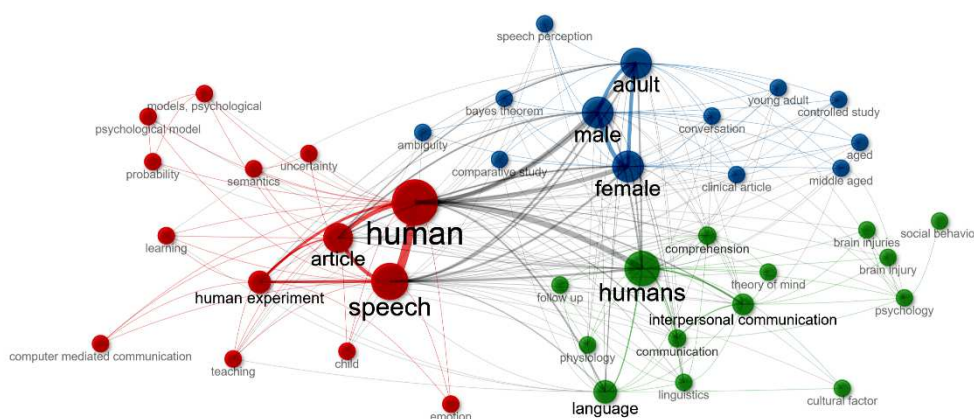


Figure 13. Keyword-Plus Co-occurrence Network

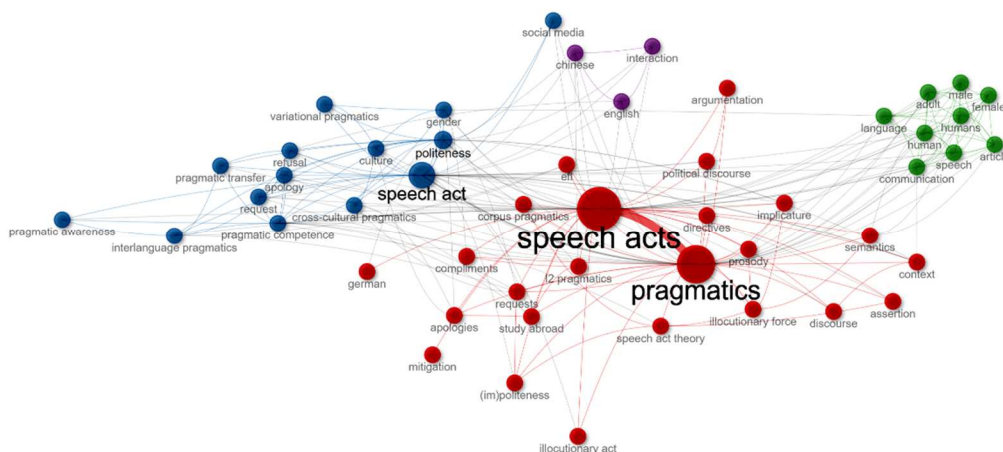


Figure 14. Keyword Co-occurrence Network (Co-word)

The author-keyword co-occurrence network presents a structured overview of how key concepts in pragmatics and speech act research cluster and interact. The largest conceptual region is organized around “speech acts” and “pragmatics”, indicating the centrality of these constructs in the corpus. A related cluster reflects work on politeness, pragmatic competence,

interlanguage pragmatics, and cross-cultural pragmatics, suggesting a strong applied and interactional orientation. Another group of terms highlights specific speech-act types such as requests, apologies, refusals, and related pragmatic phenomena. Smaller clusters point to emerging or specialized lines of work, including corpus pragmatics, digital discourse, prosody, argumentation, and data-driven approaches. The extensive cross-cluster links indicate that the field is conceptually integrated, with theoretical constructs, social-interactional concerns, and specific speech-act analyses shaping one another within a multidimensional research landscape.

3.7 Data quality and metadata completeness

The metadata completeness analysis shows that several core fields are fully populated. Abstract (AB), Document Type (DT), Source/Journal (SO), Language (LA), Publication Year (PY), Title (TI), and Total Citation (TC) have 0 missing values (0.00%) and are therefore rated “Excellent”. Author (AU) has 1 missing entry (0.07%), Cited References (CR) has 2 missing entries (0.15%), Affiliation (C1) has 9 missing entries (0.67%), Author Keywords (DE) has 94 missing entries (6.98%), and DOI (DI) has 99 missing entries (7.36%); all of these fields are rated “Good”.

Metadata	Description	Missing Counts	Missing %	Status
AB	Abstract	0	0.00	Excellent
DT	Document Type	0	0.00	Excellent
SO	Journal	0	0.00	Excellent
LA	Language	0	0.00	Excellent
PY	Publication Year	0	0.00	Excellent
TI	Title	0	0.00	Excellent
TC	Total Citation	0	0.00	Excellent
AU	Author	1	0.07	Good
CR	Cited References	2	0.15	Good
C1	Affiliation	9	0.67	Good
DE	Keywords	94	6.98	Good
DI	DOI	99	7.36	Good
RP	Corresponding Author	346	25.71	Poor
ID	Keywords Plus	1309	97.25	Critical
WC	Science Categories	1346	100.00	Completely missing

Figure 15. Metadata Completeness Summary

By contrast, several metadata fields show more substantial incompleteness. Corresponding Author (RP) is missing in 346 records (25.71%) and is therefore rated “Poor”, indicating that analyses relying on corresponding-author information should be interpreted with caution. Keywords Plus (ID) is missing in 1,309 records (97.25%) and is rated “Critical”, while Science Categories (WC) are missing in all 1,346 records (100.00%) and are classified as “Completely missing”.

These metadata conditions have direct implications for the analyses conducted in this study. The completeness of core bibliographic fields supports reliable descriptive, citation-based, and author-keyword analyses. However, the incomplete RP field limits the precision of corresponding-author country analysis, the near absence of Keywords Plus constrains the use of ID-based keyword mapping, and the complete absence of Science Categories prevents finer-grained disciplinary classification. These limitations do not invalidate the findings, but they should be considered when interpreting patterns related to collaboration, conceptual structure, and disciplinary distribution.

DISCUSSION

4.1 Growth and maturity of the field

The bibliometric profile of the corpus points to a decade of real and sustained growth. Starting from a base of around 70 documents per year in the mid-2010s, annual output climbed to 191 by 2025, with the steepest acceleration occurring between 2019 and 2020. The overall annual growth rate of 10.1% across the 1,346 documents confirms that interest in pragmatics and speech act research has not plateaued over the period studied. These figures suggest that pragmatics and speech act research have maintained strong scholarly visibility over the past decade. However, this growth should be interpreted as an indicative bibliometric pattern rather than as direct evidence of the causes behind the field's expansion.

The relatively young average document age of 3.85 years, together with a mean citation rate of 6.56 citations per document and 1.18 citations per year, suggests that the corpus represents an active and still-developing research area. The field appears to be anchored in established theoretical constructs, including speech acts, illocutionary force, politeness, and pragmatic competence, while also responding to newer methodological and empirical directions such as corpus analysis, experimental pragmatics, digital discourse, and applied language education (Austin, 1962; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Noveck & Sperber, 2004; Searle, 1969; Taguchi, 2015).

The distribution of document types also points to a field with a strong empirical orientation. Research articles account for the overwhelming majority of the corpus, while review articles represent a smaller but still visible component (Donthu et al., 2021). This balance suggests that the field continues to generate primary empirical studies, while also beginning to consolidate selected areas through synthesis and review. Rather than indicating disciplinary maturity in an absolute sense, the pattern reflects a research domain that is both theoretically established and methodologically open to further development.

4.2 Core publication venues and the visibility of pragmatics

A small number of journals clearly carry a disproportionate share of published output. The Journal of Pragmatics alone contributes more than twice as many articles as the next most productive source, and the top five outlets together account for a substantial fraction of the corpus. This distribution is a textbook instance of Bradford's Law of Scattering (Bradford,

1934), which predicts that a small core of journals will account for a disproportionately large share of the literature in any given domain. Journal of Pragmatics is the most productive venue in the corpus, with 78 articles, followed by Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Journal of Language Teaching and Research, Intercultural Pragmatics, and Pragmatics. This distribution indicates that the field is sustained by both specialist pragmatics journals and applied linguistics or language-teaching-oriented outlets.

The prominence of Journal of Pragmatics, Pragmatics, and Intercultural Pragmatics reflects the continuing importance of journals that explicitly foreground pragmatic theory, interaction, and intercultural communication. At the same time, the strong presence of teaching-oriented journals suggests that speech act and pragmatics research is closely connected with language pedagogy, interlanguage pragmatics, and pragmatic competence in second or additional language learning contexts. This pedagogical orientation is further corroborated by studies examining how specific speech acts are taught and practiced across a range of instructional and cross-cultural settings (Alsuhaime & Alhojailan, 2025; Jakupčević & Portolan, 2021; Phaisarnsitthikarn, 2025).

The wider distribution of sources, including Cogent Arts and Humanities, Corpus Pragmatics, International Review of Pragmatics, Languages, Contrastive Pragmatics, Pragmatics and Society, and Synthese, further indicates that pragmatics research circulates across disciplinary boundaries. The field is not limited to theoretical linguistics alone (Levinson, 1983), but intersects with applied linguistics, philosophy of language, discourse studies, corpus linguistics, and social interaction research (Mey, 2001; Yule, 1996).

Document-level impact also shows that highly cited studies are not confined to specialist pragmatics journals. Several influential publications appear in outlets associated with psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, digital communication, and language learning. This pattern suggests that speech-act-related research has relevance beyond pragmatics as a narrowly defined subfield, particularly when it engages with cognition, learning, interaction, or technologically mediated communication.

4.3 Author productivity and intellectual influence

A small cluster of authors generates a disproportionate share of the output, a pattern consistent with Lotka's Law of scientific productivity (Lotka, 1926), which predicts that a small number of authors will account for a disproportionate share of output in a given field. House and Kõdõr each produced 24 publications in the corpus, placing them jointly at the top. El-Dakhs follows with 18, and Taguchi with 17. Other contributors, including Liu, Ren, Derakhshan, Su, Alghazo, and Tantucci, also appear among the most productive authors. What emerges from the author data is a picture of a field sustained by a relatively compact core of highly active scholars working across intercultural pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics, and applied linguistics more broadly, alongside a wider network of contributors with smaller but still meaningful publication counts.

Fractional authorship counts provide a more nuanced picture by adjusting for co-authorship (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). El-Dakhs and Taguchi remain among the most prominent contributors, with 10.17 and 10.08 fractionalized articles respectively, followed by House and Kõdõr with 8.14 each. This indicates that their visibility in the corpus is not merely a result of frequent co-authorship, but also reflects a sustained individual contribution to the publication record.

Local citation data further show that productivity and influence do not fully overlap. Authors such as Alemi, Al-Khawaldeh, Hisa, Abdelhady, Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, Su, El-Dakhs, and Vellenga appear among the most locally cited authors, suggesting that certain works have become reference points within the dataset even when their authors are not always the most prolific. This distinction is important because bibliometric influence may emerge either through repeated publication activity or through a smaller number of highly cited contributions.

The local H-index values of key authors also point to differing forms of scholarly visibility. For instance, Taguchi and El-Dakhs show citation patterns that suggest sustained recognition across multiple publications. However, these indicators should not be interpreted as complete measures of intellectual authority. They reflect citation behavior within the selected Scopus corpus and are therefore shaped by database coverage, time span, indexing practices, and the thematic scope of the search strategy.

4.4 Institutional and geographical patterns

The institutional distribution of the corpus reinforces the picture of a globally spread field. Dalian University and ELTE Research Centre for Linguistics tie for the top position with 27 articles each, reflecting the significant contributions of Chinese and Central European research communities. Universität Hamburg follows with 26. Islamic Azad University (22), The University of Jordan (18), Prince Sultan University (17), and pairs tied at 16, Hellenic American University and Univerza v Mariboru, complete a picture in which no single institution overwhelmingly dominates. The spread across China, Hungary, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Greece, and Slovenia suggests that the field's growth is not the product of a concentrated cluster of institutions but rather a genuinely distributed scholarly effort.

This distribution indicates that the field is not concentrated exclusively in traditionally dominant Anglophone research centers. Instead, a number of institutions located in EFL and multilingual contexts appear to contribute substantially to the publication output. This pattern may reflect the growing relevance of pragmatics and speech act research in language education, intercultural communication, and applied linguistics in regions where English is taught, learned, and used across diverse sociolinguistic settings (Kecskes, 2014; Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

Country-level indicators provide a useful but bounded view of geographical distribution and collaboration. The corresponding-author country profile shows that the United States, China, Iran, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Jordan, and Italy are among

the most visible contributors in the available RP metadata. However, because the RP field is incomplete, these results should be interpreted as a descriptive profile rather than as a complete account of country-level productivity.

The country collaboration network provides a broader view of international co-authorship patterns. It suggests that collaboration is present across several regions but remains unevenly distributed. Some countries form relatively dense regional or institutional clusters, while cross-national ties between distant clusters are comparatively thinner. This pattern indicates that pragmatics and speech act research is globally distributed, but still shaped by national, regional, and institutional research networks.

More cautiously, the institutional and geographical patterns suggest a field with both regional concentration and international connectivity. Productive institutions in Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, North America, and Southeast Asia point to a distributed research landscape, while the collaboration network indicates that cross-national research is present but not uniformly developed across the corpus. Future studies with fuller country-level metadata would be needed to examine regional specialization, international collaboration, and citation visibility in greater detail.

4.5 Conceptual structure: continuity and diversification of themes

The keyword analysis indicates that the conceptual core of the field remains closely aligned with established categories in pragmatics. “Speech acts”, “pragmatics”, and “speech act” are the most frequent author keywords, followed by terms such as “politeness”, “pragmatic competence”, “interlanguage pragmatics”, “speech act theory”, “illocutionary force”, “requests”, “apology”, and “cross-cultural pragmatics”. These patterns suggest a continued reliance on foundational constructs derived from speech act theory and related traditions (Austin, 1962; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Levinson, 1983; Searle, 1969).

At the same time, the co-occurrence of these core terms with keywords such as “corpus pragmatics”, “context”, “prosody”, “gender”, and language-specific labels (e.g., “Chinese”) points to a gradual diversification of research topics and methods (Huang, 2021; Ronan, 2022). This suggests that while the theoretical core remains relatively stable, empirical approaches and research contexts have expanded over time.

The keyword map also reflects a gradual shift in the empirical terrain. Digitally mediated interaction, social media discourse, and computer-mediated communication have all accumulated enough representation in the corpus to form recognizable clusters, which points to a field engaging with newer communicative environments rather than restricting itself to face-to-face or classroom speech act research (Fried et al., 2022). However, these developments should be interpreted as emerging trends rather than as a complete shift away from earlier theoretical frameworks. The growing prominence of corpus and computationally informed approaches also reflects broader changes in how linguistic data are collected and analyzed (Hussain & Khan, 2024; Ronan, 2022).

The co-word network provides a more differentiated view of how these concepts are organized. Clusters of keywords group around general linguistic and methodological descriptors, interactional and social dimensions of communication, and more specialized domains such as clinical or cognitively oriented studies. These clusters suggest that pragmatics and speech act research now operate across multiple domains, although the boundaries between them remain fluid and shaped by the parameters of the network analysis.

Overall, the conceptual structure appears to reflect both continuity and diversification: established theoretical constructs continue to guide research, while new topics, methods, and contexts extend the scope of inquiry in pragmatics and speech act studies.

4.6 Intellectual foundations: classic works and their contemporary role

The local co-citation analysis suggests the continued prominence of a core set of frequently cited works within the corpus. Classic texts such as Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1962), Brown and Levinson's *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Brown & Levinson, 1987), Blum-Kulka et al.'s *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), and Searle's works on speech act theory (Searle, 1969) appear among the most highly cited references, alongside key works on communicative competence, interlanguage pragmatics, and language teaching.

This pattern reflects the historical development of the field, in which speech act theory, politeness theory, and cross-cultural pragmatics have provided foundational frameworks for subsequent research (Austin, 1962; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Searle, 1969). Later contributions in interlanguage pragmatics and language education have extended these frameworks into applied and pedagogical contexts (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

At the level of cited authors and sources, figures such as Bardovi-Harlig, Blum-Kulka, Chen, Alcyn-Soler, Barron, Culpeper, Cohen, Al-Gahtani, Bella, and Aijmer represent key strands within this broader tradition. Their prominence in the local citation network suggests that contemporary research continues to engage with, refine, and reinterpret these foundational contributions rather than replacing them entirely.

At the same time, the presence of more recent studies in highly cited document lists indicates that newer empirical approaches, particularly those associated with experimental methods, corpus analysis, and interdisciplinary research, are increasingly visible within the field (Fried et al., 2023; Hussain & Khan, 2024). Taken together, these patterns suggest a research landscape that remains theoretically anchored while incorporating a growing range of empirical and methodological perspectives.

4.7 Methodological and data-quality considerations

From a methodological perspective, the reliance on Scopus as the sole data source enabled the construction of a coherent and standardized

corpus, but it also introduces limitations related to coverage. Scopus tends to prioritize English-language publications and high-impact journals, which may lead to the underrepresentation of regional, non-indexed, or non-English-language research (Falagas et al., 2008; Gusenbauer, 2024; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). This is particularly relevant in pragmatics, where monographs and edited volumes have historically played an important role (Hicks, 2004).

The metadata profile reflects both strengths and constraints. Core fields such as abstract, document type, source, language, year, title, and total citations are complete and therefore support reliable descriptive and citation-based analyses. Author, affiliation, reference, DOI, and author-keyword data are also sufficiently complete for the purposes of performance analysis and author-keyword-based co-word mapping.

By contrast, several fields are incomplete or largely unavailable. The Corresponding Author (RP) field is incomplete, which limits the precision of corresponding-author country analysis. Keywords Plus (ID) is almost entirely absent, making ID-based keyword mapping unsuitable as a primary basis for conceptual interpretation. Science Categories (WC) are completely missing, which prevents finer-grained disciplinary classification. As a result, the conceptual and social mapping presented in this study relies primarily on author-supplied keywords, affiliation information, citation data, and available corresponding-author metadata.

More broadly, bibliometric indicators should be interpreted with caution. Citation counts may be influenced by factors such as journal visibility, indexing practices, and self-citation, while co-authorship measures do not capture the qualitative dimensions of collaboration (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). Similarly, keyword-based clustering reflects patterns of co-occurrence rather than fixed conceptual boundaries. Within these constraints, however, the dataset provides a sufficiently robust basis for identifying general trends and structural patterns in pragmatics and speech act research.

4.8 Implications and avenues for future research

Taken together, the findings suggest a field that is both relatively consolidated and increasingly diverse. The concentration of publications and citations in a core group of journals and around a limited number of highly productive authors points to a shared set of reference frameworks within the research community. At the same time, the thematic and network analyses indicate an expansion of topics, methods, and research contexts, including corpus-based approaches, experimental studies, clinical applications, and digitally mediated communication.

Several directions for future bibliometric research emerge from these results. First, integrating data from multiple databases, including Web of Science, DOAJ, and regional indexing systems such as ERIC, would provide a more comprehensive picture of the field, particularly for research published in non-indexed or regionally focused outlets (Gerasimov et al., 2024; Gusenbauer, 2024). Second, improved metadata, especially for corresponding authors, Keywords Plus, and subject or science categories,

would allow for more detailed analyses of geographical distribution, collaboration networks, disciplinary intersections, and conceptual development. Third, longitudinal approaches to co-citation and co-word analysis could offer deeper insight into how specific theoretical constructs and research themes evolve over time.

From a substantive perspective, the continued prominence of speech-act-related research suggests that speech acts remain a productive analytical unit within pragmatics. At the same time, their application across diverse contexts—ranging from language education to digital communication and clinical settings—indicates that the field is moving toward more integrative and multi-method approaches.

Rather than presenting a definitive account, the present study provides an empirically grounded overview of recent developments in pragmatics and speech act research. It highlights patterns of continuity and change and offers a basis for further investigation into how the field is likely to develop in response to new data, methods, and research contexts.

CONCLUSION

Working from 1,346 Scopus-indexed documents spanning 2015 to 2025, this study traced the development of pragmatics and speech act research through a set of bibliometric lenses: publication growth, source and author productivity, institutional and geographical distribution, and the intellectual and conceptual structures visible through co-citation and co-word analysis. Based on this corpus, the analysis provides a systematic overview of publication growth, core journals and authors, institutional and geographical contributions, and the intellectual and conceptual structures that currently organize the field.

The results show a sustained increase in scientific production, with a clear upward trend in publication output and citation activity across the period. This pattern, together with the presence of both empirical articles and review papers, indicates a mature but still dynamically evolving field. A relatively small set of specialized journals, most notably the *Journal of Pragmatics*, alongside outlets such as *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *Pragmatics*, and pedagogy-oriented applied-linguistics journals, functions as the primary locus of dissemination. At the same time, highly cited studies published in broader cognitive, applied, and discourse-oriented journals demonstrate that speech-act-related work has visibility beyond narrowly defined pragmatics venues.

In terms of social and intellectual structure, the findings highlight the role of a limited number of prolific and influential authors whose work on interlanguage pragmatics, politeness, speech act theory, and instructional pragmatics has become a key point of reference within the corpus. The most productive institutions are geographically dispersed, with notable contributions from Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and North America. Within the limits of the available metadata, the country-level patterns indicate both nationally concentrated publication activity and selected cross-national collaborations. These patterns suggest an international but unevenly connected research community.

The conceptual analysis confirms that the field remains anchored in classic pragmatic constructs. High-frequency author keywords such as “speech acts”, “pragmatics”, “politeness”, “pragmatic competence”, “interlanguage pragmatics”, “speech act theory”, and “illocutionary force” demonstrate the continuing importance of Austinian and Searlean speech act theory, politeness theory, and interlanguage pragmatics. At the same time, the co-word structure reveals diversification into newer or more specialized areas, including corpus pragmatics, prosody, digital communication, argumentation, and computational or data-driven approaches. The most locally cited sources and references further show that contemporary research continues to build on a stable canon of foundational works while incorporating newer empirical and methodological perspectives.

Methodologically, the study underscores both the strengths and constraints of Scopus-based bibliometrics. Core metadata fields relevant for performance and citation analyses are highly complete, allowing robust description of publication and citation patterns. However, the exclusive reliance on Scopus, the restriction to English-language documents, the incomplete corresponding-author metadata, the near absence of Keywords Plus, and the complete absence of Science Categories limit the breadth of possible analyses, particularly with respect to finer-grained geographical, disciplinary, and conceptual structures.

Within these boundaries, the study contributes a coherent data-driven picture of how research on pragmatics and speech acts is currently configured: concentrated in a recognizable set of journals, shaped by a core group of authors and institutions, intellectually grounded in a well-established canon, and increasingly diversified in methods, contexts, and applications. Future bibliometric work could extend this picture by incorporating additional databases, non-English sources, and book-based scholarship, and by conducting more fine-grained longitudinal and network analyses. Even so, the present findings delineate the main contours of the field and provide a baseline against which subsequent developments in pragmatics and speech act theory can be assessed.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation. The author takes full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author used ChatGPT and Claude during manuscript preparation to refine language. All outputs generated by the AI tool were critically reviewed, revised, and verified by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT

The author declares no competing interests.

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