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### A HALF-CENTURY OF MOTIVATION RESEARCH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: INSIGHTS FROM A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This study aims to systematically examine the research landscape in the field of ELT motivation over the past five decades, thereby addressing the identified gap in providing a comprehensive mapping of this expanding domain.

**Methodology** – We employed a comprehensive approach utilizing bibliometric analysis, Origin, VOSviewer, and CiteSpace to analyse and visualise the publication trends, publication venues, highly cited articles and references, the most frequent topics and the emerging themes in ELT motivation domain, based on a metadata collection of 1007 articles retrieved and filtered from Scopus-indexed journals.

**Findings** – Results revealed a steady increase in annual publications on ELT motivation, with a marked surge beginning in 2011 and with the yearly total surpassing 200 in 2022. The top 20 publications in the fields of education and psychology were published in renowned journals such as, Computer Assisted Language Learning, System, Language Learning, and Language Teaching Research. The highly cited articles highlighted the diverse issues within the ELT motivation field, encompassing learner motivation, instructional strategies, educational settings, and the psychological aspects of language acquisition. Dörnyei, Z. (2005) and his colleagues have significantly advanced ELT motivation research, with numerous studies

attaining the highest citation metrics. ‘Self-determination theory’ and ‘L2 motivational self-system’ have maintained a robust orientation in the co-occurrence of search keywords. Emerging trends like ‘directed motivational currents’ hinted at a novel framework from the complex dynamic perspective.

**Significance** – This study contributes to benefit researchers by extending their understanding of the evolution and future directions of ELT motivation research, while also providing valuable insights for ELT practitioners.

**Keywords:** English language teaching (ELT), motivation, research trends, research status, emerging themes, bibliometric analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

Motivation is universally acknowledged as a crucial element in language acquisition by both practitioners and researchers. Its importance lies in its ability to provide the necessary initial stimulus to initiate learning, while simultaneously serving as a catalyst that propels the learning process (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Ushioda, 2020). Motivation in English Language Teaching (ELT) is a complex and fluctuating concept that rises from different sources: internal/external motivation, etc. (McDonough, 2007). Intrinsic motivation, which is the desire to learn a new language out of one’s personal interest and for one’s own satisfaction has been demonstrated to yield substantial benefits in language learning (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). The ELT instructor serves as an important extrinsic influence in supporting and promoting student interest (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Henneby-Leung et al., 2023; Woodrow, 2017). Affective factors within the ELT framework including exemplary instruction, supportive feedback and close contact constitute effective sources of built-in motivation. In addition, it is essential to identify and cater for the distinct motivations that students bring with them, as well as their learning needs to further enhance their sustained motivation (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019; Ryan, 2016).

Various studies, for example, Davison & Cummins (2007, Henry, et al. (2015), Papi and Hiver (2020), Ushioda (2013), and Waninge et al. (2014) have examined the complexity of motivation within the context of language learning and instruction. From among these studies, Henry et al. (2015) have provided a nuanced understanding of the critical role of motivation in language learning tasks and the close link between cognition, affect, and motivation in language teaching. Papi and Hiver (2020) revealed that learners’ motivations related to value, truth, and control, showed a dynamic relationship through learning activities, embedded into a set of contextual circumstances and generated the unique motivational profile that remained stable throughout the various learning phases.

These studies collectively underscored the critical role of motivation in shaping both teaching strategies and student outcomes in ELT. Furthermore, there is an increasing amount of published research on ELT motivation. In particular, Dörnyei and his colleagues have produced a great deal of literature, including articles (Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Waninge et al, 2014), book chapters (Dörnyei et al., 2014; Dörnyei, 2019; Dörnyei & Muir, 2019), and books (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, 2021). Existing studies have considerably progressed the comprehension to the understanding of motivational dynamics in language acquisition, covering themes, such as individual

differences, group dynamics, the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) and Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs). Dörnyei and his co-authors have further expanded the concept of motivation in language learning by synthesizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches in research on motivation, enabling educators to design practical strategies that can be used to facilitate the development of language learners.

Several review studies through a meta-analysis of the literature on L2 motivation, have focused on the effectiveness of instructional intervention that has been guided by areas of concern such as, motivational theories on students' learning achievement, engagement or motivation-related variables (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Aryadoust et al., 2023; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019; Papi, 2010). Various scholars have provided comprehensive overviews of language motivation research, highlighting the evolution of study themes and the emergence of new research directions (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Boo et al., 2015; Dörnyei, 2019). Moreover, Lamb (2017) examined the increasing body of research regarding strategies for motivating language learners and had identified the following four primary research domains in ELT: techniques to engage L2 learners, implementation of psychological theories in educational settings, impacts of pedagogical innovations, and inadvertent learner demotivation. Mahmoodi and Yousefi (2022) analyzed the theoretical frameworks, methodologies, tools, and educational contexts of studies on L2 motivation over the past decade. Marzia Shurovi et al. (2024) highlighted accomplishment motivation in ELT and examined empirical research on this topic spanning five decades. These research syntheses have significantly improved our understanding of language motivation research. Notwithstanding the significance of these efforts, the field had experienced a limited examination of bibliometric studies. For example, previous researches conducted by Wu (2022) and Zhang (2020) were found to have had a limited scope, covering merely two decades of studies. Therefore, a comprehensive bibliometric investigation covering an extended period is urgently required. Such an analysis will be able to provide researchers with a thorough and better grasp of the progression of ELT motivation research over more past decades, thereby revealing fresh new opportunities for the advancement of ELT motivation research in the future.

In this respect, the studies by Ahmi (2022) and Donthu et al. (2021), which explored bibliometric analysis using computer-assisted methods had led to this approach being embraced across a growing number of disciplines for the systematic assessment of bibliographic data (Jafar et al., 2025). This was an important development for several reasons. First of all, it called for the use of fixed and agreed parameters in order to evaluate comprehensively the success and relevance of the scientific endeavors. Secondly, it also shed light on the extent of the dissemination of the works, the scope of authorship, and the patterns of citation. Third, it could be used to find new areas of inquiry, as well as important works in specific areas (Lei & Liu, 2019; Zhang, 2020). Fourthly, it offered a useful tool for the application of network mapping methods that would enable the representation of the intellectual architecture of any knowledge domain (Derviş, 2020). Smyrnova-Trybulska et al. (2018) pointed out that the use of special programs followed the improvement of the visualization process, which used programs such as Bibexcel, Pajek and VOSviewer, etc. Based on its use of the Scopus indexed bibliographic data on ELT motivation, covering the period from 1972 to 2022, the present bibliometric study seeks to respond to the following questions:

RQ1: In terms of publication trends, prolific journals, and the most highly cited articles/references, what is the present status of motivation research in ELT?

RQ2: What are the most widely explored research topics and most searched emerging themes of motivation research in ELT?

This bibliometric analysis will examine the status of motivation research in ELT by analyzing publication trends, key publication venues, highly cited publications and references within the field. The primary research topics and emerging themes in ELT motivation over the period covered in the present study were characterized by the frequency of keyword co-occurrence and those keywords exhibiting the most significant citation bursts. The synthesis is anticipated to hold significant value and relevance for TESOL scholars, educational practitioners, syllabus designers, and language policymakers. This section will present an overview of the data source and the methodology of the data collection. Next, the findings will be presented, followed by an exploration of topics pertinent to the research. The discussion will encompass both theoretical and practical implications for the study of motivation in English Language Teaching (ELT).

## METHODOLOGY

The objective is to conduct a comprehensive search for articles published in Scopus-indexed journals over the last fifty years on motivation in the field of ELT and then to perform a bibliometric analysis of these publications. This section first outlines the data collection procedure, which includes the formulation of search queries and the establishment of criteria for literature filtering. Secondly, it details the data analysis techniques relevant to the two research questions addressed in this study.

### Data retrieval

Bibliometric information of journal articles downloaded from Scopus on Sep 15, 2023 constituted the data used in the current study. The search statement we utilized was as follows:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (elt OR esl OR elf OR tesol OR eap OR esp OR efl OR tefl) AND TITLE (motivation\*) OR ABS (motivation\*) AND PUBYEAR < 2023 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ARTS") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "PSYC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))

Several points should be noted regarding the research statement and retrieval techniques. First, the researcher retrieved data from the Scopus database to obtain our bibliometric information due to its provision of openly accessible metadata (Pranckutė, 2021) and its esteemed Scopus Content Selection and Advisory Board (CSAB), which makes decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of articles. Scopus is considered a more reliable source than repositories like Google Scholar (Baas et al., 2020).

Second, the researcher employed the method of TITLE-ABS-KEY for advanced research and covered the variants of *English language teaching (ELT)* with a wide range for a more thorough retrieval, which included *English as second language (ESL)*, *English as a lingua franca (ELF)*, *teaching English to speakers*

*of other languages (TESOL), English for academic purposes (EAP), English for special purposes (ESP), English as foreign language (EFL) and teaching English as foreign language (TEFL). Besides, we added motivation\* to the TITLE-ABS for a more accurate and topic-related retrieval.*

Third, the researcher restricted the document types to research articles, adhering to the established standards of bibliometric research. This study included research articles for two specific reasons. Research articles hold greater value in bibliometric analysis than other document types, as they provide findings from original studies (Geng et al., 2020). The second reason is that most research articles include abstracts, enabling an examination of patterns in research themes concerning motivation in ELT over the span of years under consideration. In contrast, document categories such as book reviews typically lack abstracts.

Initially, metadata for 1,815 research articles published in 160 journals by 160 distinct authors from 160 affiliations across 95 countries/territories was gathered for the present study. Subsequently, the researcher performed further screening and identified 6 duplicates among the 1815 papers. Consequently, the researcher obtained a total of 1809 data points in the second stage. Furthermore, to ascertain the pertinence of the papers for the purposes of the current study, the researcher rigorously scrutinized the titles, abstracts, and keywords of each article, and conducted an exhaustive review of numerous articles. Researcher ultimately selected 1007 articles through a manual process for subsequent analysis based on the following criteria: a) the article must concentrate on the context of English teaching or learning; b) the article must be relevant to the broad spectrum of the topic of motivation in ELT; or c) the article must incorporate motivation as either an independent or dependent variable.

Further explanation regarding the data filtering is that researchers were inclusive in our inclusion of studies about ELT motivation theories, classic concepts of language motivation (e.g., autonomy, self-efficacy, self-regulation, goal-orientation), task motivation, reading motivation, writing motivation, and experiments on the effectiveness of technology-assisted teaching for English learning motivation (e.g., in our sample). Both McDonough (2007) and Ushioda (2013) specified the scope of studies on motivation in ELT, and this specification was used to develop the inclusive criterion.

## **Data Processing**

This research utilised a multi-phase bibliometric methodology. The data processing procedure is outlined as follows:

### ***RQ1: Research Status***

First, researcher quantified the annual number of publications to analyze the publication trends within the field over time. Second, researcher tallied the publications for each journal to identify the major publication venues contributing to the body of literature. Third, the researcher identified highly cited articles with both the total and normalized citation metrics. Total citation refers to the numerical representation of how frequently a specific work has been referenced by other works since its release. Normalized citation entails modifying the total citation count to consider variables such as the publication's age, type, and citation patterns within the particular field or subject (Colliander, 2015).

Equation (1) is a representation of this procedure:

$$\text{Normalized citation count} = \frac{\text{Total citation count of the article}}{\text{The average citation count of articles published in the same year}} \quad (1)$$

Normalized citation counts mitigate biases towards earlier publications by adjusting total citation counts relative to the total citation of articles published within the same year. The dual citation metrics in bibliometric analysis is essential for equitable comparisons across publications from varying disciplines and publication years (Bornmann & Marx, 2015; Waltman 2016). Finally, the researcher extracted all referenced works from the 1007 articles and computed their frequency, specifically determining the number of citations each received within the collection of articles.

### ***RQ2: Research Topics***

Publication keywords typically encapsulate the central research focus and facilitate the swift identification of the publication's research topic (Hu et al., 2020). From the 1007 documents analyzed in the current study, 892 remained after removing those without keywords, yielding a total of 4328 keywords. The researcher then calculated the occurrence of these keywords across the examined period. To enhance precision, the researcher observed and merged similar keywords of the different alternatives. For example, 'attitude' and 'attitudes', 'English as a foreign language' and 'EFL', 'L2 motivational self-system', 'L2 motivational self-system', and 'L2MSS', 'ELT', 'English language teaching', and 'teaching', and 'learner autonomy', and 'autonomy'. Thereafter, VOSviewer version 1.6.20 was used to construct a visual co-occurrence map of keywords to present the most frequent topics within research on motivation in ELT. In addition, Citespace version 6.2R6 was employed to create keyword burst maps, facilitating the detection of emerging hotspot trends from 1972 to 2022.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the researcher present and analyse the results pertaining to the research questions, namely the publication trend, important publication venues, the most productive authors, the most highly cited articles and highly cited references, the most frequently explored topics and the emerging themes across time.

### **Research Status**

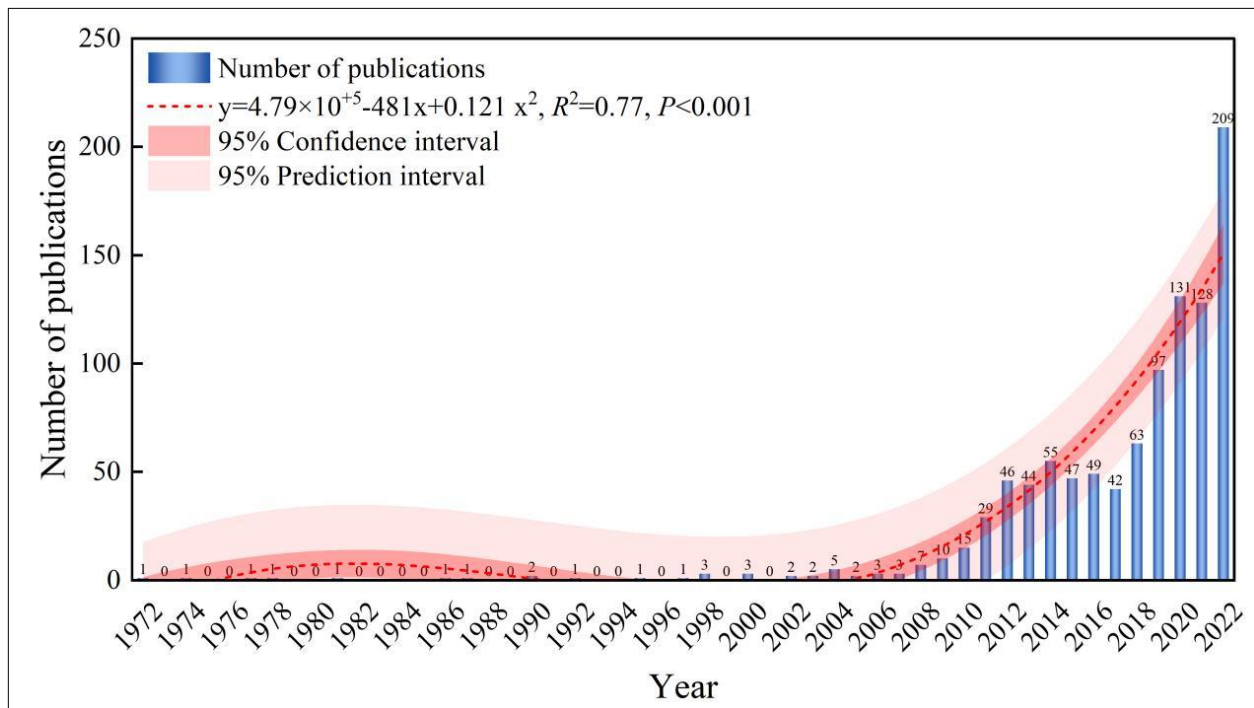
#### ***Publication Trend***

The quantity of publications each year and the trend of publications is as depicted in Figure 1. There has been a consistent rise in the quantity of publications concerning motivation in ELT in the last 50 years. In the early years of the 1970s, there was a limited number of publications, averaging only 1 to 2 titles per year. Nevertheless, there was a progressive increase in the number of publications during the 1980s and 1990s, with an annual average of approximately five publications in the late 1990s. In the early 2000s, there was a notable surge in the number of publications, averaging around 10 each year. From 2011 onward, there

has been a rapid and significant increase in the number of publications, with the yearly total surpassing 200 in 2022. This trend shows the growing interest and amount of scholarly work in the domain of motivation in ELT. This observation is supported by the outcome of the second-degree polynomial regression, which demonstrated a significant increase ( $F(2,48) = 35.33, p < .001$ ) in the number of motivation in ELT publications throughout the years under investigation, with a medium size Multiple  $R^2 = .5955$ , and Adjusted  $R^2 = .5786$ .

**Figure 1**

*Number of Publications by Year*



**Publication Venues**

Table 1 displays the top 20 journals ranked by the quantity of papers on motivation in ELT. The main venues for publications in this field have provided valuable insights on the publication trends of prominent journals in TESOL and applied linguistics. Notable among them were *System*, *Language Teaching Research*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *ELT Journal*, and *Language Learning*. These journals have published many articles on motivation in ELT motivation, emphasising their significance and impact in defining the research agenda.

**Table 1**

*Top 20 Publication Venues*

Journals	Number of articles published
Frontiers in Psychology	57
System	48
Theory and Practice in Language Studies	28
Asian EFL Journal	25
Journal of Asia TEFL	24
Language Teaching Research	22
Computer Assisted Language Learning	17
Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching	17
International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature	17
Journal of Language Teaching and Research	17
TESOL Quarterly	17
Cogent Education	16
English Language Teaching	15
Asia-Pacific Education Researcher	14
Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics	12
International Journal of Instruction	12
Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics	11
Sage Open	11
ELT Journal	10
Language Learning	10

***Most Highly Cited Articles and References***

Table 2 lists the papers with the highest total and normalized citation counts. These empirical studies span a wide range of concerns within the motivation in ELT domain, covering student motivation, instructional tactics, language learning environments, and the psychological components of language acquisition. When it comes to motivation research in the ELT context, several studies have become particularly influential. For instance, the concepts of investment and social identity, which Peirce (1995) introduced in her work, have had a significant influence on motivation research in ELT. She brought attention to the fact that power dynamics and learner identities were crucial aspects of language acquisition. Lamb's studies (2004, 2012) explored how factors including globalization, students' sense of self, and classroom context affected learners' language learning. By combining psychology, sociology, and education, Lamb's work offered a comprehensive construct that has framed language learning motivation as being shaped by individual and socio-cultural factors. Gardner and Bernau (2008) socio-educational model and distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation are foundational and far-reaching in the field. Gardner and his colleagues (Bernau & Gardner, 2008) underscored the importance of cultural context, teacher influence, and affective variables in learner motivation, considerations which have profoundly shaped educators' instructional strategies.

Furthermore, other associated areas of inquiry have been given considerable attention, such as the willingness to communicate (Khajavy et al., 2014; Peng, 2012; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), demotivation (Chen et al., 2005; Falout et al., 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), and English-medium instruction (Jiang et al., 2019). Taken collectively, these papers have contributed to providing an account of the varied and complex components that will motivate language learners. They have also tackled the issue of classroom dynamics, language learning processes, emotional experiences in language learning, teacher-related factors, contextual influences, and self-directed learning. The findings of these studies are crucial, both theoretically and practically, in the understanding of the motivation mechanisms and the scaffolding of ELT methodologies.

**Table 2**

*Most Highly Cited Articles*

Ranking	Source	Total Citation	Normalized Citation
1	Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 29(1), 9-31. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/3587803">https://doi.org/10.2307/3587803</a>	1379	1
2	Peng, J.-E., & Woodrow, L. (2010). Willingness to communicate in English: A model in the Chinese EFL classroom context. <i>Language Learning</i> , 60(4), 834-876. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2010.00576.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2010.00576.x</a>	311	7.84
3	Lamb, M. (2004). Integrative motivation in a globalizing world. <i>System</i> , 32(1), 3-19. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2003.04.002">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2003.04.002</a>	240	4.04
4	Lamb, M. (2012). A self-system perspective on young adolescents' motivation to learn English in urban and rural settings. <i>Language Learning</i> , 62(4), 997-1023. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00719.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00719.x</a>	218	7.78
5	Hyland, F. (1998). The impact of teacher written feedback on individual writers. <i>Journal of Second Language Writing</i> , 7(3), 255-286. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/s1060-3743(98)90017-0">https://doi.org/10.1016/s1060-3743(98)90017-0</a>	200	2.43
6	Bernaus, M., & Gardner, R. C. (2008). Teacher motivation strategies, student perceptions, student motivation, and English achievement. <i>The Modern Language Journal</i> , 92(3), 387-401. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00753.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00753.x</a>	185	3.6
7	Saito, K., Dewaele, J.-M., Abe, M., & In'nami, Y. (2018). Motivation, emotion, learning experience, and second language comprehensibility development in classroom settings: A cross-sectional and longitudinal Study. <i>Language Learning</i> , 68(3), 709-743. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12297">https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12297</a>	177	11.33

(continued)

Ranking	Source	Total Citation	Normalized Citation
8	Lasagabaster, D. (2011). English achievement and student motivation in CLIL and EFL settings. <i>Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching</i> , 5(1), 3-18. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2010.519030">https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2010.519030</a>	175	4.95
9	Peng, J.-E. (2012). Towards an ecological understanding of willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms in China. <i>System</i> , 40(2), 203-213. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2012.02.002">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2012.02.002</a>	165	5.89
10	Chen, J. F., Warden, C. A., & Chang, H.-T. (2005). Motivators that do not motivate: The case of Chinese EFL learners and the influence of culture on motivation. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 39(4), 609-633. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/3588524">https://doi.org/10.2307/3588524</a>	163	1.26
11	Jiang, L., Zhang, L. J., & May, S. (2019). Implementing English-medium instruction (EMI) in China: teachers' practices and perceptions, and students' learning motivation and needs. <i>International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism</i> , 22(2), 107-119. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1231166">https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1231166</a>	150	12.09
12	Kormos, J., & Csizér, K. (2013). The interaction of motivation, self-regulatory strategies, and autonomous learning behavior in different learner groups. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 48(2), 275-299. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.129">https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.129</a>	140	7.49
13	Falout, J., Elwood, J., & Hood, M. (2009). Demotivation: Affective states and learning outcomes. <i>System</i> , 37(3), 403-417. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2009.03.004">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2009.03.004</a>	138	2.48
14	Sakai, H., & Kikuchi, K. (2009). An analysis of demotivators in the EFL classroom. <i>System</i> , 37(1), 57-69. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.09.005">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.09.005</a>	137	2.46
15	Khajavy, G. H., Ghonsooly, B., Hosseini Fatemi, A., & Choi, C. W. (2014). Willingness to communicate in English: A microsystem model in the Iranian EFL classroom context. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 50(1), 154-180. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.204">https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.204</a>	136	5.03
16	Papi, M., & Abdollahzadeh, E. (2011). Teacher motivational practice, student motivation, and possible L2 selves: An examination in the Iranian EFL context. <i>Language Learning</i> , 62(2), 571-594. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00632.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00632.x</a>	136	4.85
17	Teng, L. S., & Zhang, L. J. (2016). A questionnaire-based validation of multidimensional models of self-regulated learning strategies. <i>The Modern Language Journal</i> , 100(3), 674-701. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12339">https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12339</a>	134	4.96

(continued)

Ranking	Source	Total Citation	Normalized Citation
18	Mercer, S. (2011). Understanding learner agency as a complex dynamic system. <i>System</i> , 39(4), 427-436. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.08.001">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.08.001</a>	134	3.79
19	Warden, C. A., & Lin, H. J. (2000). Existence of integrative motivation in an Asian EFL setting. <i>Foreign Language Annals</i> , 33(5), 535-545. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2000.tb01997.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2000.tb01997.x</a>	129	2.09
20	Huang, C. S., Yang, S. J., Chiang, T. H., & Su, A. Y. (2016). Effects of situated mobile learning approach on learning motivation and performance of EFL students. <i>Journal of Educational Technology &amp; Society</i> , 19(1), 263-276.	127	4.7

Table 3 enumerates the highly cited references extracted from the bibliographies of 1,007 articles. The most cited references underscored the seminal theories and pivotal concepts that have had a profound impact on the discipline. Pioneering contributions from scholars such as Gardner, Deci and Ryan, and Dörnyei, are particularly noteworthy. Their ground-breaking research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-determination theory, and motivational dynamics remains influential within the realms of educational psychology, applied linguistics and TESOL. The most cited work is Dörnyei's (2005) monograph *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*, with a total of 188 citations. Furthermore, ELT motivation researchers commonly referenced the examination of statistical power as proposed by Cohen (1988). The researchers' concerns regarding linguistic measures and statistical analysis align with the increasing quantity of empirical studies in this field of investigation.

**Table 3**

*Most Highly Cited References*

Ranking	Source	Total citations
1	Dörnyei, Z. (2005). <i>The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition</i> . Routledge.	188
2	Gardner, R. C. (1985). <i>Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation</i> . Edward Arnold.	126
3	Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). <i>Teaching and researching motivation</i> (2nd ed.). Routledge.	109
4	Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), <i>Motivation, language identity and the L2 self</i> (pp. 350-356). Multilingual Matters.	101
5	Dörnyei, Z. (2001). <i>Teaching and researching motivation</i> . Longman.	92
6	Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour. Springer.	83
7	Dörnyei, Z. (2001). <i>Motivational strategies in the language classroom</i> (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.	81

(continued)

Ranking	Source	Total citations
8	Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W.E. (1972). <i>Attitudes and motivation in second language learning</i> . Newbury House.	70
9	Bandura, A. (1997). <i>Self-efficacy: The exercise of control</i> . Freeman.	55
10	Dörnyei, Z. & Ryan, S. (2015). <i>The psychology of the language learner revisited</i> . Routledge.	49
11	Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and Motivating in the Foreign Language Classroom. <i>The Modern Language Journal</i> , 78(3), 273-284. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/330107">https://doi.org/10.2307/330107</a>	42
12	Taguchi, T., Magid, M. & Papi, M. (2009). The L2 motivational self-system among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), <i>Motivation, language identity and the L2 self</i> (pp. 66-97). Multilingual Matters. <a href="https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847691293-005">https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847691293-005</a>	37
13	Dörnyei, Z. (2007). <i>Research methods in applied linguistics</i> . Oxford University Press.	36
14	Cohen, J. (1988). <i>Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences</i> (2nd ed.). Routledge	32
15	Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: results of an empirical study. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> , 2(3), 203-229. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/136216889800200303">https://doi.org/10.1177/136216889800200303</a>	32
16	Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. <i>Language Teaching</i> , 31(3), 117-135. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/s026144480001315x">https://doi.org/10.1017/s026144480001315x</a>	29
17	Dörnyei, Z., & Ottó, I. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. <i>Working Papers in Applied Linguistics</i> , 4, 43-69.	29
18	Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2009). <i>Motivation, language identity and the L2 self</i> . Multilingual Matters.	29
19	Oxford, R. L. (1990). <i>Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know</i> . Newbury House.	29
20	Ryan, S. (2009). Self and identity in L2 motivation in Japan: The ideal L2 self and Japanese learners of English. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), <i>Motivation, language identity and the L2 self</i> (pp. 120-143). Multilingual Matters. <a href="https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847691293-007">https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847691293-007</a>	29

Upon further inspection of Tables 2 and 3, it needs to be clarified that, since the theme of this review is motivation research in ELT, the retrieved articles were mainly empirical studies. Dörnyei's contributions primarily focus on theoretical construction, and his highly cited works are mostly monographs or book chapters. This may account for the absence of Dörnyei's works among the most highly cited articles in Table 2. Moreover, the normalized citations provided in Table 2 serve as an additional reference metric for the most highly cited articles. Nevertheless, the most highly cited references in Table 3 are presented solely through total citations, as the references encompass various types, rendering normalized citations metric infeasible. Overall, Tables 2 and 3 illuminate the landscape of research on motivation in ELT, offering valuable insights for prospective studies.

## Research Topics

### *The Most Frequently Explored Topics*

Keyword co-occurrence analysis is a commonly employed technique to identify and evaluate conceptual connections within academic fields (Lozano et al., 2019). By examining the co-occurrence patterns of keywords, researchers can reveal hot topics, dominant trends, and understand the interactions between different concepts (Hsu et al., 2023). In the present study, we computed the frequency and connection strength for each keyword determined. Frequency refers to the total number of times a specific keyword appears in the literature. Link strength measures how often a keyword appears together with other keywords. Figure 2 visualises the clustering of 85 co-occurring keywords extracted from our dataset. The clusters are differentiated by distinct colors and densities, offering an extensive overview of the relationships and correlations among the keywords. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the critical role of motivation in second language acquisition (Wu, 2022; Zhang, 2020).

**Figure 2**

*Co-occurrence Network of Keywords*

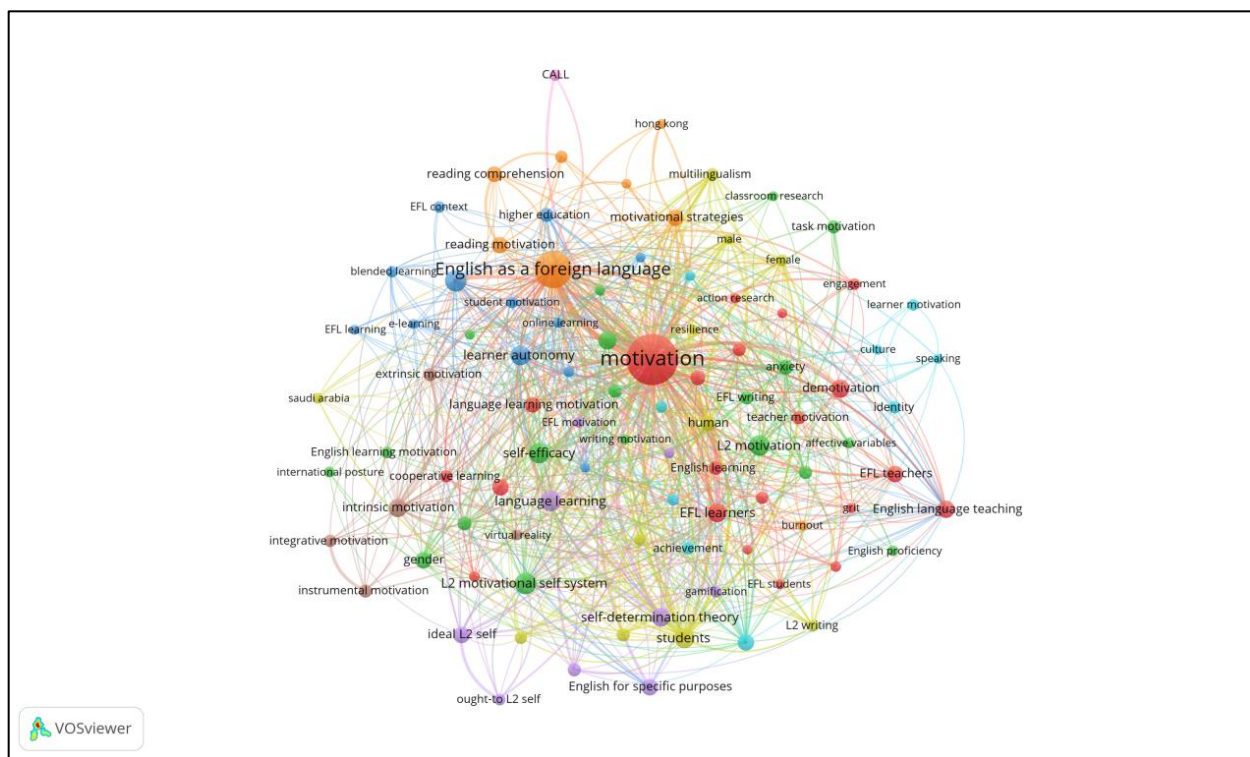


Table 4 lists the 20 most frequent keywords among the co-occurrence networks. These keywords, such as ‘motivation (frequency = 330)’, ‘attitudes (frequency = 39)’, ‘self-efficacy (frequency = 36)’, ‘learner autonomy (frequency = 31)’, ‘demotivation (frequency = 26)’, ‘willingness to communicate (frequency = 25)’ and ‘motivational strategies (frequency = 21)’ highlight the relevance of psychological factors in the

academic literature, underscoring the importance of individual beliefs and motivational orientations in learning processes. Additionally, L2 motivational self-system (frequency = 38) and self-determination theory (frequency = 29) have received substantial attention as the theoretical underpinning of motivation in ELT research.

**Table 4**

*The Top 20 Frequent Keywords*

Ranking	Keywords	Frequency	Link Strengths
1	motivation	330	522
2	English as a foreign language	145	180
3	attitudes	39	38
4	L2 motivational self-system	38	51
5	language learning	36	29
6	self-efficacy	36	53
7	L2 motivation	35	44
8	learner autonomy	31	36
9	students	31	110
10	self-determination theory	29	44
11	EFL learners	28	47
12	demotivation	26	37
13	intrinsic motivation	26	61
14	willingness to communicate	25	40
15	English language teaching	23	4
16	ideal L2 self	21	41
17	motivational strategies	21	39
18	EFL teachers	20	23
19	English as a second language	20	25
20	gender	20	34

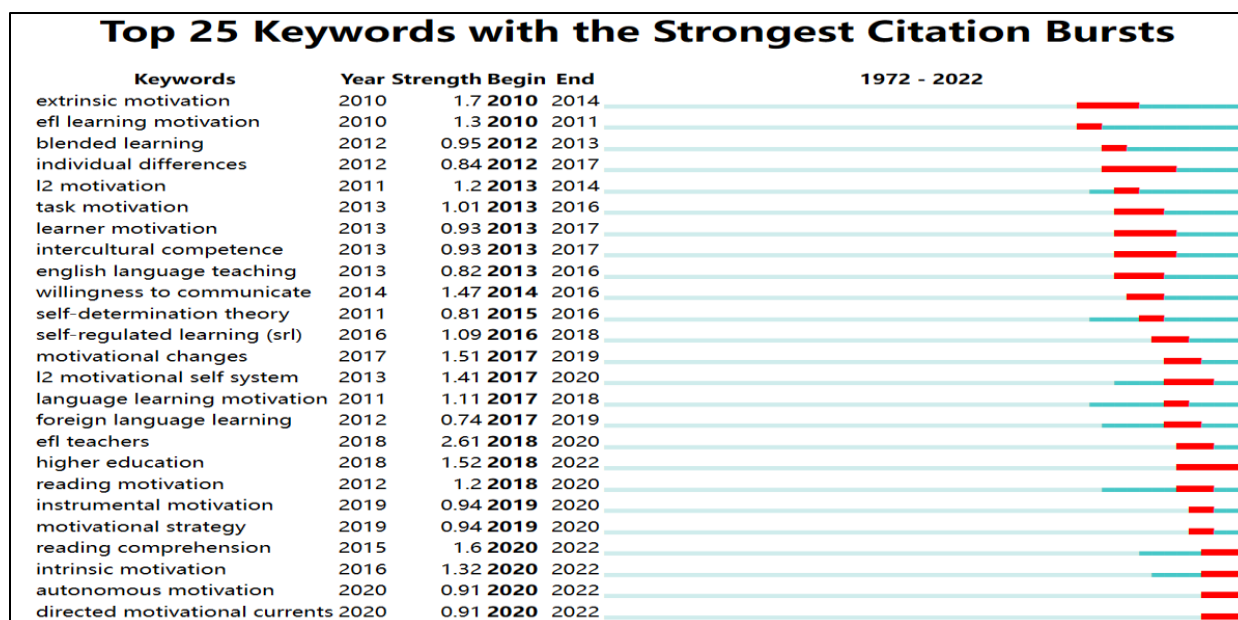
Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that some keywords with less frequency and link strengths, like ‘computer aided language learning (frequency = 9)’, ‘blended learning (frequency = 8)’, ‘online learning (frequency = 7)’, and ‘virtual reality (frequency = 7)’ have showcased the research tendency of motivation in ELT within a technology-enabled learning environment. This tendency aligns with the extensive integration of information technology across all sectors in the early 21st century.

***The Emerging Theme within Motivation in ELT Research***

Furthermore, the keywords analysis from CiteSpace visualisation provides a comprehensive overview of the trends and emerging themes in the field of motivation in ELT. Figure 3 reveals a list of Top 25 keywords with significant citation bursts from the year 1972 to 2022.

**Figure 3**

*Top 25 Keywords on Motivation in ELT Research with the Strongest Citation Bursts*



First, the early prominence of ‘intrinsic motivation’ as a keyword burst reflects the fact that people have always been interested in understanding the mental processes that make people want to learn a new language. The subsequent upsurge of ‘self-determination theory’ supplements this by providing a strong theoretical framework for investigating individual agency and intrinsic drive. Secondly, a paradigm change in teaching approaches is signaled by the rise of ‘blended learning’. Prompted by technological improvements and the changing educational landscape, researchers are studying the effects of combining online and traditional learning settings on student motivation. Third, the attention paid to ‘individual differences’ emphasizes the realization that age, personality, and learning style are individual factors that significantly impact levels of motivation and accomplishments. Furthermore, the focus on ‘task motivation’ and ‘learner motivation’ indicates an effort to find out how learner-oriented methods and particular activities influence the results of motivation. A crucial component of language acquisition, the emphasis on ‘willingness to communicate’ lends credence to this. Then, the concept of ‘intercultural competence’ has also gained popularity, which shows that learning a language involves more than just mastering vocabulary or grammar knowledge; it also involves getting to know different cultures and being able to communicate effectively across borders.

Furthermore, the literature also reveals that there has been a continuous focus on the development of motivation throughout the course of time. This is especially clear from the use of phrases such as ‘motivational changes’ and ‘L2 motivational self-system’. It is obvious from this that there is a strong interest in the dynamic components of motivation, as well as the psychological frameworks that drive the study of language acquisition skills. ‘Autonomous motivation’ and ‘directed motivational currents’ have recently garnered a lot of attention, which indicates that innovative conceptual frameworks for understanding and directing language learning motivation are always being refined. It is possible that these themes are reflective of current trends and that they identify potential possibilities for future research in the field of motivation in ELT. The findings are in line with the further agenda that was mentioned in the

literature review articles written by Al-Hoorie (2017), Dornyei (2019), and Waninge et al. (2014). Their review studies pointed out that research currently being pursued is on the new trend of motivational dynamics. As the field continues to undergo further development, the insights that were acquired from such analyses will be crucial for scholars and practitioners who are endeavoring to improve motivational techniques in ELT.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current bibliometric analysis illustrates the continuity and transformation of the motivation in ELT research landscape through a comprehensive review of publication dynamics, top journals, most influential papers and references, high-frequency related topics, and emerging themes in this area. Altogether, the findings furnish an integrated perspective on the previous developments and future directions in this domain. To begin with, for the last fifty years the number of publications started growing substantially, especially from the year 2011, and it is projected that by December 2022 this figure will exceed 200 publications per year. This trend is a clear indication that research on motivation in ELT is becoming a focus of more and more scholars.

Additionally, more recent studies continue to examine motivation in ELT with respect to integrative motivation, self-determination theory, and the L2 motivational self-system. Among the most influential is the concept of integrative motivation, which emphasizes the learners' need to assimilate the real-life communication fundamentals of the target language and culture. In comparison, self-determination theory deals with the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation regarding the aspect of autonomy, competence and relatedness in language learning. As an answer to the complexities involved in motivation, Dornyei (2019) adduces the L2 motivational self-system theory where the 'ideal self' and the 'ought-to self' function as dynamic frames of students' language acquisition objectives.

Moreover, the theoretical emphasis has increasingly transitioned to a dynamic perspective. This transition is highlighted by the development of terms like 'directed motivational currents' in co-occurrence network visualizations and citation burst analyses, indicating a substantial change in research paradigms. Directed motivational currents (DMCs), a term formulated within this dynamic framework, delineate the intense, continuous motivational urges that can move learners toward their linguistic objectives. This innovative perspective highlights the dynamic and context-dependent characteristics of motivation, in contrast to more static traditional models. The recognition of DMCs as a new theoretical framework from this dynamic perspective underscores a viable path for future academic inquiry. The DMCs framework posits that motivation in language acquisition is not a static characteristic but a dynamic force that can be cultivated and managed, providing a rich foundation for novel research and practical applications in ELT.

The empirical studies on subjects connected to motivation in ELT have proliferated with dynamic and novel concepts. These studies have broadened their focus beyond the conventional examination of the intricate relationship between motivational factors and language competency, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in relation to task motivation. Moreover, scholars have demonstrated increasing interest in investigating the incorporation of technology in the field of ELT. These advanced technology-driven ELT strategies have proven to help augment student engagement and motivation by

fostering immersive and interactive learning experiences. Furthermore, the convergence of motivation and emotional states is attracting interest, as researchers leverage positive psychology to comprehend how happy emotions foster a more favorable environment for motivation. Finally, willingness to communicate, a construct that evaluates an individual's inclination to participate in communication utilizing the target language, is a prevalent theme in motivation research. These varied domains of investigation represent a complex strategy for comprehending and improving motivation within the ELT domain of study.

This study may have limitations due to the possibility of missing some relevant literature during the retrieval process. The researcher only retrieved articles from the Scopus database and excluded book chapters, as well as doctoral dissertations. The collection of resources from the database literature sometimes did not include earlier works. The earliest document related to motivation in ELT identified in the Scopus database was the work by Cartier (1972), which is why the year 1972 was chosen as the starting point for the bibliometric analysis of the literature in this study. Additionally, there might be some slight discrepancies in the timing of when an article was first published online and when it was officially published in a journal. This could lead to minor variances in the data analysis statistics regarding the year and number of publications.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the findings of this bibliometric analysis are expected to be valuable for researchers investigating motivation in ELT and are intended to serve as an impetus for such scholars to broaden and deepen the scope of research on motivation in ELT in the future. Implications for both research and practice include the need to consider the individuals involved in language acquisition, the use of technologies, and the importance of the diverse range of learners, target languages, and learning contexts. The analysis also highlights the importance of research in offering knowledge and guidance for instructional practices in the field of motivation in ELT.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

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