

Task-Based Learning in Education (1976-2025): A Bibliometric Analysis of Publication Trends, Citation Impact, Collaboration and Research Themes

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Abstract

Task-based learning (TBL) has developed across diverse educational contexts, although its research base remains strongly associated with language education. This bibliometric study analysed 1,055 Scopus-indexed publications from 1976–2025 using BiblioSpy to examine publication trends, citation impact, collaboration patterns, and major research themes. The dataset accumulated 19,783 citations and showed an annual publication growth rate of 10.15%, with output reaching 114 publications in 2025. China, the United States, and the United Kingdom were the leading country contributors, while collaboration patterns reflected expanding international participation in TBL research. Keyword and thematic analyses identified sustained attention to language learning, communication, task complexity, technology-mediated instruction, and broader pedagogical applications. Overall, TBL scholarship has expanded considerably in volume, influence, and thematic scope, while opportunities remain to strengthen research across disciplines, educational levels, contexts, and learning outcomes beyond its established language-education tradition.

Introduction

Task-based learning has become an important learner-centred approach because it organizes learning around meaningful tasks rather than the simple transmission of information. Learners are expected to apply knowledge, communicate, solve problems, make decisions, and produce observable outcomes through active participation. This approach connects learning with purposeful activity and gives students greater responsibility for the learning process. Evidence from language education shows that task-based instruction can improve important dimensions of student performance when tasks are carefully designed and connected with clear learning goals (Wei & Zhao, 2024). Task-based learning is therefore closely related to current educational priorities such as active learning, authentic learning, collaboration, learner autonomy, and the application of knowledge.

Research on task-based learning has expanded as educational environments have become increasingly technology-rich and learner-centred. Digital platforms now support task planning, interaction, feedback, collaboration, and independent learning. S. Jin (2024), for example, demonstrated how task-based teaching can be integrated with motivational design and digital learning environments to support engagement and learning. More recent scholarship has extended task-based approaches into artificial-intelligence-supported environments. Y. Li et al. (2026) found that factors such as task planning, student AI literacy, and assessment practices can influence learning in generative-AI-supported task-based environments. At the same time, research continues to examine how task characteristics, implementation conditions, and learner differences affect performance and learning outcomes (Kim & Namkung, 2026). These developments demonstrate that task-based learning continues to evolve alongside changes in pedagogy and educational technology.

Despite this development, the task-based knowledge base remains distributed across different disciplines, educational settings, journals, countries, and research traditions. A large proportion of

established research comes from second-language education, where Task-Based Language Teaching has developed into a major field of scholarship. However, meaningful task-based activity has also been applied in broader educational contexts. This wider development is less visible when the literature is examined mainly through individual empirical studies or discipline-specific reviews. A long-term bibliometric analysis can complement these approaches by showing how publication activity, citation impact, collaboration patterns, and research themes have developed over time. The present study therefore examines Task-Based Learning in Education from 1976 to 2025, providing a 50-year perspective on publication trends, citation impact, scholarly collaboration, and the thematic development of the field.

Literature Review

Task-based learning places purposeful activity at the centre of the learning process. Instead of receiving information mainly through direct instruction, learners use their knowledge and skills to reach a meaningful outcome. A task may involve solving a problem, making a decision, communicating information, creating a product, or responding to an authentic situation. Shehadeh (2024) emphasizes that a task should be distinguished from a conventional exercise because the two differ in purpose, orientation, and expected outcome. The meaning of a task may also vary according to learner age and educational setting, particularly when tasks are designed for younger students (Timpe-Laughlin et al., 2024). Recent scholarship has therefore placed increasing emphasis on connecting classroom tasks with authentic needs and meaningful performance (East, 2025). Van den Branden (2025) similarly argues that task-based instruction becomes more educationally meaningful when classroom activities reflect situations that learners may encounter beyond the immediate learning environment. These perspectives position task-based learning as an outcome-oriented approach based on purposeful use of knowledge rather than the completion of isolated exercises.

The effectiveness of task-based learning depends greatly on task design. Tasks can differ in complexity, structure, cognitive demand, information requirements, sequencing, and the amount of support available to learners. Such differences may influence both the learning process and the quality of performance. C. Jin and Yan (2025) show that task complexity and task sequencing can affect different dimensions of learner performance, suggesting that the order and difficulty of tasks require careful consideration. Task demands also interact with cognitive and affective learner characteristics. C. Li et al. (2024) found that cognitive and emotional factors contributed to performance when young learners completed writing tasks of different complexity. Increasing task demands may also influence anxiety, particularly when learners have limited proficiency or experience (Donate & Leow, 2024). Jackson (2025) further demonstrates that cognitive task complexity can influence learner engagement during task completion. Task design should therefore balance challenge, cognitive demand, learner readiness, and instructional support rather than assuming that increasingly difficult tasks automatically produce better learning.

Individual learner differences represent another important area of task-based research. Students may respond differently to identical tasks because they differ in motivation, confidence, proficiency, working

memory, anxiety, aptitude, and previous learning experiences. Bryfonski et al. (2024), in their methodological review of task-based research, identified variables such as anxiety, motivation, working memory capacity, aptitude, and proficiency as important areas of investigation. Emotional experience during task performance is also increasingly recognized as an important component of learning. C. Li and Dewaele (2024) distinguish task-specific enjoyment from broader foreign-language enjoyment and highlight the importance of understanding emotions within individual learning activities. Anxiety can similarly affect the way learners respond to demanding tasks (An & Li, 2024). Task-based learning is also strongly social because many tasks involve pairs or groups. Sato et al. (2025) show that affective, social, and cognitive dimensions of engagement can interact during collaborative task performance. These findings demonstrate that task outcomes depend on both the characteristics of the task and the characteristics of the learners completing it.

A growing body of research has examined whether task-based approaches improve measurable learning outcomes. Evidence from writing research indicates that meaningful task-based instruction can support dimensions of functional performance rather than only grammatical development. Wei and Zhao (2024), for example, reported improvements in several aspects of functional adequacy following task-based writing instruction. Preparation before task completion may provide further benefits. Alzoubi (2024) found that collaborative pre-task planning supported aspects of writing performance and learner confidence within a blended task-based environment. Research has also extended into secondary-school contexts. Lu et al. (2025) examined localized Task-Based Language Teaching among secondary learners in an examination-oriented educational setting and found benefits for aspects of oral production. Nevertheless, learning outcomes do not depend on instructional design alone. Abdi Tabari and Goetze (2024) demonstrate that anxiety and self-efficacy interact with task complexity in ways that can affect written performance. These studies suggest that task-based approaches can support learning, but their effects depend on the interaction between task characteristics, preparation, learner factors, and educational context.

Technology has substantially expanded the environments in which task-based learning can occur. Digital tools can support information searching, communication, collaboration, content creation, feedback, assessment, and independent task completion. Kim and Namkung (2024) describe technology-mediated Task-Based Language Teaching as an important area connecting task-based pedagogy, instructed learning, and computer-assisted learning. Their review of 254 studies also shows that research has used a wide range of technologies, although some learner groups and learning contexts remain underrepresented. At classroom level, Morgana (2024) demonstrates that technology-mediated tasks can support speaking and writing when digital tools are closely connected with the purpose of the task. Bhandari et al. (2025) similarly identified potential benefits for learner engagement, motivation, and language development, while also reporting challenges involving technology access and teacher preparation. More recent developments include the integration of generative artificial intelligence into task-based learning environments (Y. Li et al., 2026). Technology therefore creates new possibilities for task design, but its educational value remains dependent on appropriate pedagogical use rather than technology itself.

The implementation of task-based learning is also influenced by teachers, learners, and institutional contexts. Teachers need to understand how to select tasks, manage interaction, provide scaffolding, evaluate outcomes, and respond when students experience difficulties. Gutiérrez (2024) found that instructors and students may hold different perceptions about the implementation of task-based programmes, demonstrating that curriculum design and classroom experience do not always align. Proficiency level is another important consideration because learners with limited knowledge may require greater support during task completion. Fujita and Shintani (2025) highlight the importance of evaluating task-based instruction carefully in lower-proficiency learning contexts. Teachers' and learners' beliefs can also influence how task-based approaches are understood and implemented (Dao et al., 2024). Age provides another important source of variation. Oliver and Bogachenko (2024) show that younger and older learners may differ in how they interact, use input, respond to feedback, and modify their output during task performance. Task-based learning should therefore be viewed as an adaptable pedagogical approach whose implementation needs to respond to learner and contextual differences.

Recent scholarship confirms that task-based research has developed into a mature but increasingly diverse field. Kim and Namkung (2026) examined five decades of task-related studies published in TESOL Quarterly and identified continuing attention to task design, implementation, language production, and learning outcomes. Research diversity is also visible across geographical and methodological settings. Cotsworth (2026), for example, synthesized 150 empirical studies on Task-Based Language Teaching conducted in Japan between 2008 and 2025 and showed substantial variation in educational settings and research designs. Newer work has also expanded the populations included in task-based scholarship. Torres (2025) reviewed task-based approaches and cognitive processes involving heritage-language learners, demonstrating that task-based research is extending beyond traditionally studied learner populations. At the same time, quantitative synthesis continues to refine understanding of specific instructional features. Abdi Tabari et al. (2025) found through meta-analysis that task repetition can influence several dimensions of second-language oral performance, although its effects vary according to task and implementation conditions. Together, these developments demonstrate the growing breadth and diversity of task-based research while also revealing variation across learner populations, educational settings, research designs, and instructional conditions. This expanding and diverse literature provides a strong rationale for a broader bibliometric investigation of publication trends, citation impact, collaboration patterns, and research themes across task-based learning in education.

Previous Bibliometric Studies

Bibliometric research has already contributed substantially to understanding the development, intellectual structure, and thematic evolution of task-based scholarship. However, previous studies differ considerably in their disciplinary scope, database selection, temporal coverage, document volume, and analytical emphasis. Related scientometric studies have also examined the thematic development and evolving research patterns of task-based teaching and learning using CiteSpace, further demonstrating the growing use of quantitative mapping approaches in this field (Jia & Bava Harji, 2023; Jia et al., 2023).

As summarised in Table 1, Qin and Lei (2022), Abdulla and James (2026), and Azizah et al. (2027) represent important stages in the bibliometric examination of task-based research. Collectively, these studies demonstrate increasing methodological sophistication, progressing from performance-oriented analyses of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) towards broader science-mapping approaches incorporating collaboration networks, co-citation analysis, keyword relationships, bibliographic coupling, and thematic evolution. Nevertheless, important differences in scope remain, particularly regarding whether task-based research is examined predominantly as a language-teaching approach or more broadly as an educational pedagogy.

Table 1
Previous bibliometric studies of task-based learning

Authors	Objective	Data & Year Coverage	Source	Total Document Entries (TDE)	Bibliometric Attributes Examined
Qin & Lei (2022)	To provide a systematic quantitative overview of the status and developmental trajectory of task-based language teaching (TBLT), focusing on publication growth, major publication venues, productive authors, influential works, and changes in frequently studied topics.	TBLT journal research (1985–2020)	Web of Science Core Collection (SSCI & A&HCI)	518 articles	Annual publication trends; leading publication venues; productive authors; highly cited articles using raw and normalized citation counts; highly cited references; extraction of research topics from abstracts; topic frequencies and developmental patterns across three time phases.
Abdulla & James (2026)	To map the knowledge structure and thematic development of task-based learning (TBL) research across educational disciplines, including productivity, collaboration patterns, citation relationships, emerging themes, and future research directions.	Task-Based Learning across educational disciplines (1990–2025)	Scopus	469 documents	Annual scientific production; productive authors, sources, and countries/regions; co-authorship and international collaboration; author and journal co-citation; keyword co-occurrence; citation bursts; bibliographic coupling; thematic mapping and evolution; trend topics and emerging research fronts.
Azizah et al. (2027)	To integrate systematic review and bibliometric analysis to map the global development of TBLT research, including longitudinal	Task-Based Language Teaching (2000–Dec. 2025)	Scopus	1,360 publications	Annual publication and document-type trends; leading authors, countries, and journals; co-authorship networks across authors and countries; author/source co-
Note. TBL: Task-Based Learning; TBLT: Task-Based Language Teaching; WoS: Web of Science.					

Authors	Objective	Data & Year Coverage	Source	Total Document Entries (TDE)	Bibliometric Attributes Examined
	publication trends, thematic evolution, geographical distribution, scholarly networks, and influential contributors.				citation; keyword co-occurrence and thematic clusters; thematic evolution; geographical distribution; influential-author and collaboration networks.
Note. TBL: Task-Based Learning; TBLT: Task-Based Language Teaching; WoS: Web of Science.					

Qin and Lei (2022) provided one of the earlier systematic quantitative examinations of TBLT research. Using 518 articles indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection from 1985 to 2020, they investigated annual publication trends, major publication venues, productive authors, highly cited publications and references, and the development of frequently studied research topics. Their analysis also distinguished developmental patterns across different time periods, thereby illustrating how the intellectual interests of TBLT research changed over time. The study was particularly valuable for establishing the historical growth and influential literature of task-based language research. However, its corpus was specifically oriented towards TBLT journal research, meaning that task-based pedagogical applications occurring outside language education were not the central focus of the analysis.

More recently, Abdulla and James (2026) adopted a broader educational perspective by examining Task-Based Learning across educational disciplines using 469 Scopus-indexed documents published between 1990 and 2025. Their study extended beyond basic productivity indicators to investigate authors, sources, countries and regions, co-authorship and international collaboration, author and journal co-citation, keyword co-occurrence, citation bursts, bibliographic coupling, thematic mapping and evolution, trend topics, and emerging research fronts. This broader analytical design demonstrates that Task-Based Learning can be examined as an educational construct extending beyond its traditional association with second- and foreign-language instruction. At the same time, its 1990 starting point leaves the earliest period of task-based scholarship outside the analytical window.

Azizah et al. (2027) combined systematic review procedures with bibliometric analysis to examine 1,360 Task-Based Language Teaching publications indexed in Scopus from 2000 to December 2025. Their analysis addressed annual publication and document-type trends, leading authors, countries and journals, co-authorship networks, author and source co-citation, keyword co-occurrence, thematic clusters, thematic evolution, geographical distribution, and influential-author collaboration networks. The considerably larger corpus provided an extensive representation of recent TBLT scholarship and demonstrated the increasing diversity and geographical reach of task-based language research. Nevertheless, the disciplinary orientation remained primarily centred on Task-Based Language Teaching, while the period before 2000 was excluded.

Database scope

The existing bibliometric literature employs different database strategies, which may influence the composition and interpretation of the resulting research landscape. Qin and Lei (2022) relied on the Web of Science Core Collection, specifically records indexed within the Social Sciences Citation Index and Arts and Humanities Citation Index, whereas Abdulla and James (2026) and Azizah et al. (2027) used Scopus. Differences between bibliographic databases are important because database coverage can influence the journals, disciplines, countries, document types, and citation relationships represented in an analysis. Consequently, variations in document counts across the three studies should not be interpreted solely as differences in research growth, because they also reflect differences in search strategies, disciplinary boundaries, temporal coverage, and indexing systems.

The present study uses Scopus to construct a consistent bibliographic dataset for examining Task-Based Learning in Education. Rather than combining records retrieved from multiple databases, the analysis maintains a single-source dataset to reduce problems arising from duplicated records, inconsistent metadata, and differences in citation indexing. Scopus also provides the bibliographic fields required for performance analysis and science mapping, including authorship, institutional affiliation, country information, source titles, references, citations, author keywords, and indexed keywords.

Temporal span

Previous bibliometric studies differ substantially in their temporal coverage. Qin and Lei (2022) examined TBLT research from 1985 to 2020, while Abdulla and James (2026) analysed Task-Based Learning across educational disciplines from 1990 to 2025. Azizah et al. (2027) examined Task-Based Language Teaching publications from 2000 to December 2025. Although Azizah et al. (2027) was published after the temporal boundary of the present study, its bibliometric dataset likewise covers publications only through December 2025. It is therefore included here as a recent comparative bibliometric study rather than as part of the literature contained within the present study's 1976–2025 dataset. Collectively, these previous studies provide substantial evidence concerning the development of task-based scholarship over approximately two to four decades, but none provides a continuous bibliometric analysis extending from 1976 through 2025 across the broader educational literature.

The present study extends the analytical period to 1976–2025, providing a 50-year perspective on the development of Task-Based Learning in Education. This extended temporal window enables the early development of task-based scholarship to be examined alongside its subsequent expansion and diversification. It also permits investigation of whether influential publications, sources, authors, institutions, countries, and research themes emerged during the formative period of the field or became prominent during later stages of development. Accordingly, the study examines not only long-term publication growth but also citation impact, collaboration patterns, contributor development, and the evolution of research themes across the full historical period represented in the dataset.

Disciplinary and Analytical Focus

A further distinction concerns the disciplinary orientation and bibliometric attributes examined. Qin and Lei (2022) and Azizah et al. (2027) were primarily concerned with Task-Based Language Teaching. Their analyses provide extensive evidence regarding the development of task-based approaches within language education, including influential authors and publications, publication venues, thematic development, collaboration structures, and frequently investigated topics. Task-based pedagogy, however, is not necessarily restricted to language-learning environments, and its application across the wider educational literature requires a broader analytical frame.

Abdulla and James (2026) moved in this direction by explicitly investigating Task-Based Learning across educational disciplines. Their analysis incorporated a wide range of science-mapping techniques, including co-authorship, international collaboration, co-citation, keyword co-occurrence, citation bursts, bibliographic coupling, thematic mapping, thematic evolution, trend topics, and emerging research fronts. This represents an important expansion from TBLT-specific bibliometric research towards a broader conceptualisation of Task-Based Learning. The present study continues this wider educational orientation while extending the historical period and systematically integrating publication trends, citation impact, contributor analysis, collaboration patterns, and research themes across the 1976–2025 period.

Research Gap and Contribution of the Present Study

The existing literature therefore does not indicate an absence of bibliometric research on Task-Based Learning. Rather, it demonstrates that the field has already received substantial bibliometric attention but has been examined through different disciplinary boundaries, databases, temporal periods, and analytical configurations. Two of the three major studies summarised in Table 1 are predominantly centred on Task-Based Language Teaching, while the broader educational analysis of Abdulla and James (2026) begins in 1990. Although the more recent study by Azizah et al. (2027) was published after the temporal boundary of the present analysis, it remains focused specifically on TBLT and examines publications only from 2000 to December 2025. Consequently, there remains value in examining Task-Based Learning in Education across a longer historical period while integrating publication performance, scholarly influence, contributor patterns, collaboration structures, and research themes within a single analytical framework.

The present study addresses this opportunity through a bibliometric analysis of Task-Based Learning in Education covering the period 1976–2025. Rather than positioning the study as the first bibliometric investigation of Task-Based Learning, it extends previous research by adopting a 50-year historical perspective and examining the field across educational contexts. The analysis investigates annual publication and citation patterns; influential sources and documents; prolific and influential authors, institutions, and countries; patterns of scholarly collaboration; and the development of research themes represented through keyword patterns and thematic analysis. Importantly, productivity and scholarly

influence are considered separately because highly productive sources, authors, institutions, or countries are not necessarily those exerting the greatest citation influence.

By integrating these dimensions, the study seeks to provide a longitudinal account of how Task-Based Learning in Education has developed from its early literature to its contemporary research landscape. The analysis complements previous TBLT-focused and cross-disciplinary bibliometric studies rather than duplicating them, while providing a longer temporal perspective through which shifts in publication activity, citation influence, collaboration, contributor patterns, and research priorities can be examined. This broader historical and analytical perspective provides the foundation for the research questions that follow.

Research Questions

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How has research on Task-Based Learning in Education developed from 1976 to 2025 in terms of publication growth, citation impact, and overall scholarly activity?

RQ2. Which publication sources are the most productive and influential in Task-Based Learning in Education research?

RQ3. Which publications and authors have contributed most prominently to the development and scholarly influence of Task-Based Learning in Education research?

RQ4. Which institutions and countries are the major contributors to Task-Based Learning in Education research, and what patterns of international collaboration are evident among countries?

RQ5. What major research themes and relationships among author keywords are revealed through keyword co-occurrence analysis?

RQ6. How have major themes and research priorities in Task-Based Learning in Education varied over time, and which topics show the most recent temporal prominence?

Methods

This bibliometric study initially identified 1,102 records from Scopus covering publications from 1976 to 2025. The search included all languages, document types, and subject areas within the defined search strategy. Following data screening and cleaning, 47 records were excluded, comprising four retractions or corrections, 32 non-education or irrelevant records, nine duplicates, and two records relating to team-based learning. The final analytical dataset therefore consisted of 1,055 documents. Bibliometric indicators and science-mapping analyses were generated using BiblioSpy (Ahmi, 2026), with the report dated 21 September 2026 serving as the analysis snapshot. Publications assigned to 2026 were excluded because they fell outside the predefined publication window. Bibliometric performance analysis

and science mapping were treated as complementary approaches for examining publication activity, citation impact, contributor patterns, collaboration, and research themes, rather than as evidence of instructional effectiveness (Donthu et al., 2021).

Search Strategy

The search combined task-based terminology with educational terms within titles, abstracts, and keywords, and applied a publication-year limit. The Scopus query recorded for this study was:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("task-based learning" OR "task based learning" OR "task-based teaching" OR "task based teaching" OR "task-based instruction" OR "task based instruction" OR "task-based approach" OR "task based approach" OR "task-based pedagogy" OR "task based pedagogy") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (educat* OR pedagog* OR teach* OR classroom* OR student* OR learner* OR school* OR universit* OR college* OR curriculum* OR "learning environment" OR "instructional design" OR "teaching method" OR "teaching methods" OR "teaching strategy" OR "teaching strategies") AND NOT TITLE-ABS-KEY ("machine learning" OR "deep learning" OR "neural network*" OR "computer vision" OR robot* OR robotic* OR "task allocation" OR "task scheduling" OR "job task*" OR "occupational task*" OR "labour market" OR "labor market" OR rehabilitation OR "motor task*" OR "clinical task*" OR "cognitive task*") AND PUBYEAR < 2026

Eligibility and Metadata Preparation

The Scopus search initially identified 1,102 records published between 1976 and 2025. No restrictions were imposed on language, document type, or Scopus subject area at the retrieval stage. Eligibility screening was subsequently undertaken to distinguish Task-Based Learning used as an educational pedagogy from unrelated uses of task-related terminology. A total of 47 records were excluded, comprising four retraction- or correction-related records, 32 non-education or otherwise irrelevant records, nine duplicate records, and two records concerning team-based learning rather than Task-Based Learning. Following these exclusions, the final analytical corpus consisted of 1,055 publications.

All document types represented within the eligible Scopus corpus were retained where they satisfied the conceptual scope of Task-Based Learning in education. The study was designed as a bibliometric analysis of the development and characteristics of the research literature rather than as a systematic review of intervention effectiveness; consequently, no full-text methodological quality appraisal or meta-analytic assessment of instructional outcomes was conducted.

Bibliographic metadata from the 1,055 retained publications were processed using BiblioSpy (Ahmi, 2026), with the analysis conducted using the dataset snapshot dated 21 September 2026. The metadata included authors, affiliations, countries or territories, source titles, publication years, citation information, and author keywords. Where equivalent author, institutional, or keyword variants could be reliably identified, harmonisation was applied to reduce unnecessary fragmentation. However, terminological

variants were retained where equivalence could not be established confidently, and such variations were considered when interpreting the resulting bibliometric maps. Missing affiliation or geographical information was not inferred from titles or other indirect information.

Indicators and Mapping

Bibliometric performance analysis was used to describe the development and scholarly visibility of Task-Based Learning research. The principal indicators included annual publication output, cited-publication counts, total citations, mean citations, h-index values, and related productivity and citation measures. Citation totals associated with a publication year represent the cumulative citations received by publications belonging to that annual cohort rather than citations generated within the corresponding calendar year. Citation-based comparisons were therefore interpreted cautiously because older publications have had a longer period in which to accumulate citations than more recent publications (Waltman, 2016).

Performance indicators were examined across sources, documents, authors, institutions, and countries or territories to distinguish research productivity from citation influence. This distinction was important because the most prolific contributors or publication venues are not necessarily those receiving the greatest scholarly attention. Rankings and citation indicators were interpreted as characteristics of the 1,055-document corpus and the 21 September 2026 analytical snapshot, rather than as universal measures of research quality or educational effectiveness.

Science mapping complemented the performance analysis by examining relationships within the literature. Collaboration analyses were used to investigate connections among authors, institutions, and countries, while author-keyword co-occurrence analysis was used to identify relationships among keywords and major research themes. Thematic mapping was interpreted using the complementary dimensions of centrality and density: centrality indicates the extent to which a theme is connected to other themes within the research field, whereas density reflects the degree of internal development of a theme (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Temporal patterns in research topics were additionally examined to identify changes in the prominence of themes across the 1976–2025 study period.

Network visualisations generated through BiblioSpy were interpreted as representations of bibliometric relationships rather than direct evidence of causal, pedagogical, or instructional effects. Similarly, publication frequency, citation impact, collaboration strength, keyword relationships, and thematic prominence were used to characterise the development and organisation of the scholarly literature and were not interpreted as evidence that a particular instructional approach was educationally superior or more effective (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021; van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

Data Identification and Screening

As shown in Fig. 1, the literature search was conducted exclusively in the Scopus database and initially identified 1,102 records. The search covered publications from 1976 to 2025 and applied no restrictions

on language, document type, or Scopus subject area. The search strategy combined terms referring to task-based learning, task-based teaching, task-based instruction, task-based approaches, and task-based pedagogy with education-related terms. Exclusion terms were incorporated into the search string to reduce the retrieval of records in which the expression task-based referred to non-educational applications such as machine learning, computer vision, robotics, task scheduling, occupational tasks, labour-market studies, rehabilitation, clinical tasks, motor tasks, and cognitive tasks.

All 1,102 records retrieved from Scopus were imported for data screening and cleaning. The records were examined to ensure that the final dataset represented Task-Based Learning (TBL) as an educational or pedagogical concept rather than unrelated uses of task-based terminology.

A total of 47 records were excluded during the screening and data-cleaning process. Four records were removed because they were retractions, corrections, or related publication notices and therefore did not represent substantive scholarly contributions. Thirty-two records were excluded because their use of task-based terminology was unrelated to education or did not address Task-Based Learning as an educational approach. Nine duplicate records were identified and removed to prevent double counting. An additional two records were excluded because they addressed Team-Based Learning rather than Task-Based Learning.

Following these exclusions, 1,055 records were retained as the final analytical dataset for the bibliometric analysis. No full-text methodological quality appraisal was undertaken because the objective of the study was to examine bibliographic characteristics, publication development, citation performance, scholarly contributors, collaboration patterns, and research themes rather than to synthesise intervention effectiveness or evaluate the methodological quality of individual empirical studies.

Data Cleaning and Harmonisation

The bibliographic records retrieved from Scopus were subjected to systematic data cleaning and harmonisation before bibliometric analysis. BiblioSpy® (Ahmi, 2026) was used to support the identification of duplicate records and the standardisation of bibliographic metadata, including author names, institutional affiliations, countries or territories, source titles, author keywords, and other relevant fields.

The dataset was initially exported from Scopus in comma-separated values format and subsequently screened for inconsistencies and duplicate entries. Titles, abstracts, and author keywords were examined to determine whether the publications addressed Task-Based Learning within educational contexts. Records in which task-based terminology referred to unrelated disciplinary applications were excluded according to the predefined eligibility criteria.

Metadata-cleaning procedures were undertaken to minimise fragmentation caused by variations in author names, institutional names, source titles, and keyword forms. Author keywords representing equivalent concepts, spelling variants, abbreviations, or singular and plural forms were harmonised

where appropriate. Ambiguous or incomplete metadata were manually inspected when necessary. Missing institutional, geographical, or other bibliographic information was not inferred unless reliable supporting information was available.

Relevant research articles, review articles, conference papers, books, book chapters, and other eligible scholarly document types were retained because the study imposed no document-type restriction. The resulting cleaned dataset of 1,055 publications was subsequently used for bibliometric performance analysis, collaboration analysis, author-keyword co-occurrence analysis, thematic mapping, temporal topic analysis, and associated network visualisations.

Data Analysis

Bibliometric analysis was employed to examine the development, scholarly impact, research productivity, collaboration patterns, and research themes of Task-Based Learning in Education from 1976 to 2025. The analysis began with an overall bibliometric summary covering the publication timespan, total publications, annual publication growth, document age, citation performance, authorship characteristics, contributing institutions and countries or regions, and author keywords.

Annual publication and citation patterns were analysed to examine the historical development and scholarly visibility of TBL research. Source-level analysis was undertaken to identify the most productive publication outlets and to distinguish publication productivity from citation impact. Highly cited documents were examined to identify influential publications contributing to the development of the field.

Author, institutional, and country or regional analyses were conducted to identify major contributors to TBL research. Full counting was applied to authors, institutions, and countries or regions, meaning that each publication was credited to every contributor represented in its bibliographic metadata. Consequently, aggregated authorship, institutional, and geographical publication counts may exceed the number of unique documents in the dataset.

Author-keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted to identify prominent research themes and relationships among frequently occurring keywords in the TBL literature. A minimum keyword occurrence threshold of five was applied, resulting in 50 author keywords being retained for network visualisation.

Research performance was assessed using indicators including total publications, contributing authors, cited publications, total citations, citations per publication, citations per cited publication, citations per author, authors per publication, citations per year, citable year span, h-index, g-index, m-index, e-index, and citation sum within the h-core. These indicators were interpreted collectively because publication productivity and citation influence represent related but distinct dimensions of bibliometric performance.

Analytical Tool

BiblioSpy® (Ahmi, 2026) was used to support data cleaning, metadata harmonisation, bibliometric indicator generation, science mapping, and network visualisation. The software facilitated analyses of publication years, citation patterns, source productivity and impact, highly cited publications, authors, institutions, countries or regions, and author keywords.

BiblioSpy was also used to generate the principal bibliometric visualisations employed in the study, including annual publication and citation trends, source-productivity analyses, geographical publication mapping, and author-keyword co-occurrence networks. For the author-keyword co-occurrence analysis, a minimum occurrence threshold of five was applied, retaining 50 keywords for visualisation. Network outputs were interpreted according to the relationships among nodes, links, and clusters to identify prominent research themes and patterns of association among author keywords within the TBL literature.

Results

Results are organised around the six research questions. Tables and figures report the BiblioSpy analytical snapshot (Ahmi, 2026), while percentages and combined totals were calculated from its numerical outputs. The distinction between publication performance, citation influence, contributor patterns, collaboration, and research themes is maintained throughout the analysis.

Publication Growth and Citation Impact

Table 2. *Bibliometric profile of the analytical corpus*

Indicator	Value
Publication period	1976–2025
Total publications	1,055
Annual growth rate	10.15%
Mean document age	9.3 years
Total citations	19,783
Mean citations per publication	18.75
Cited publications	827 (78.39%)
Mean citations per cited publication	23.92
Contributing author occurrences	2,195
Unique authors	1,918
Institutions	966
Countries or territories	82
Single-authored publications	448 (42.46%)
Mean authors per publication	2.08
International co-authorship rate	10.33%
Unique author keywords	2,393
References	73,281
h-index	65
g-index	115
Citations within the h-core	10,826 (54.72%)

Table 2 profiles a substantial, established literature comprising 1,055 publications and 19,783 citations across fifty publication years. Most records received citations, although influence was concentrated: the h-core accounted for 54.72% of all citations. Single-authored publications represented 42.46% of output, indicating that individual scholarship remained important alongside collaborative work. The 10.33% international co-authorship rate describes cross-country participation within this corpus; it does not measure collaboration quality, research effectiveness, or the inclusiveness of diverse individual educational settings.

Figure 2 separates publication growth from citation accumulation by publication cohort. Output increased to 114 publications in 2025, and 2021–2025 contributed 404 records, representing 38.29% of the corpus. However, the 1996 cohort accumulated 1,624 citations from only eight publications. This

contrast reflects enduring influence alongside unequal citation exposure. Recent cohorts have had less time to attract citations, so lower totals cannot establish declining quality, reduced educational relevance, or weaker theoretical contributions within the research field.

Productive and Influential Publication Sources

Table 3. *Productivity and citation influence of the ten leading sources*

Publication source	TP	TC	C/P	h
System	30	1,455	48.50	19
Language Learning and Technology	19	1,172	61.68	17
Journal of Language Teaching and Research	17	79	4.65	5
Task-Based Language Teaching	16	712	44.50	12
Language Teaching Research	15	1,216	81.07	13
Theory and Practice in Language Studies	14	87	6.21	6
International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature	13	29	2.23	3
ELT Journal	12	685	57.08	11
Interpreter and Translator Trainer	12	371	30.92	8
Recherche Et Pratiques Pedagogiques En Langues De Specialite - Cahiers De l'APLIUT	12	11	0.92	2

Note. TP = publications; TC = citations; C/P = citations per publication; h = h-index within this corpus. Sources include journals and the Task-Based Language Teaching book series. External journal quartiles and impact factors are not used here.

Table 3 distinguishes source productivity from citation influence. System contributed the most publications among the listed outlets, with 30 papers and 1,455 citations. Language Teaching Research produced fewer papers but achieved the highest mean citation count, at 81.07 per publication. The ten sources together contributed 160 records, or 15.17% of the dataset. Their predominantly language-oriented identities indicate a strong linguistic research base, although source labels alone cannot classify every publication's discipline, educational level, or setting.

Influential Publications and Authors

Table 4. *The ten most cited publications in the corpus*

Authors and year	Publication title	TC	NTC
Skehan (1996)	A framework for the implementation of task-based instruction	748	3.68
Foster & Skehan (1996)	The influence of planning and task type on second language performance	717	3.53
Ellis (2009)	Task-based language teaching: Sorting out the misunderstandings	578	13.82
Skehan (2003)	Task-based instruction	486	6.33
Skehan & Foster (1997)	Task type and task processing conditions as influences on foreign language performance	420	1
Robinson (2011)	Second language task complexity, the Cognition Hypothesis, language learning, and performance	306	8.51
Ellis (2000)	Task-based research and language pedagogy	270	2.65
Hsu (2017)	Learning English with Augmented Reality: Do learning styles matter?	268	13
Ellis (2016)	Focus on form: A critical review	255	7.57
Mak & Coniam (2008)	Using wikis to enhance and develop writing skills among secondary school students in Hong Kong	255	6.9

Note. TC = accumulated citations in the database snapshot, not citations received only within this corpus. NTC = citations normalised against the mean for the publication year in the corpus. These are publication rankings, not a co-citation analysis.

Table 4 identifies the publications receiving the most citations within the indexed corpus. Skehan's instructional framework and Foster and Skehan's planning study lead the ranking, highlighting the visibility of task design and language performance. The ten papers collectively account for 4,303 citations, or 21.75% of the total. Digitally supported learning also appears through augmented reality and wiki-based writing. These rankings measure accumulated visibility, without establishing methodological superiority, classroom effectiveness, or relationships among jointly cited references.

Table 5. *Productivity and citation influence of the ten listed authors*

Author	TP	TC	C/P	h
Ellis, Rod	14	1,777	126.93	12
Skehan, Peter	9	2,528	280.89	7
Kim, Youjin	8	382	47.75	7
Carless, David Robert	7	791	113.00	7
Lan, Yu-Ju	7	404	57.71	5
Tsai, Shu-Chiao	6	98	16.33	5
Harden, Ronald M	6	297	49.50	5
Oliver, Rhonda	5	49	9.80	4
Pérez-Llantada, Carmen	5	75	15.00	4
Lee, Lina	5	538	107.60	4

Note. Indicators describe publications included in the study, not complete career records. TP = publications; TC = citations; C/P = citations per publication.

Table 5 reveals distinct patterns of author productivity and citation influence. Ellis contributed the largest number of publications, whereas Skehan accumulated the most citations and the highest average among the listed authors. Kim, Carless, Lan, and Lee also demonstrate substantial visibility within differing publication volumes. These indicators describe contributions captured by this particular search and reporting snapshot. They should not be interpreted as complete career assessments, current institutional appointments, or direct measures of teaching quality.

Institutional and Country Contributions

Table 6. *Productivity and citation influence of the ten listed institutions*

Institution	Country or territory	TP	TC	C/P	h
University of Auckland	New Zealand	13	915	70.38	9
Georgetown University	United States	9	431	47.89	8
Georgia State University	United States	9	410	45.56	8
Islamic Azad University	Iran	8	48	6.00	3
National Taiwan Normal University	Taiwan	8	669	83.62	5
University of Hong Kong	China	8	541	67.62	6
University of Zaragoza	Spain	8	85	10.62	5
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	China	7	155	22.14	5
Lancaster University	United Kingdom	7	166	23.71	4
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Greece	6	20	3.33	3

Note. Countries and territories follow the report labels. TP = publications; TC = citations; C/P = citations per publication. Multiple affiliations can receive credit for the same publication.

Table 6 shows that institutional productivity and citation influence do not coincide. Auckland leads the listed institutions in publication count and total citations, while National Taiwan Normal University achieves the highest citations per publication. Institutions with similar output display markedly different citation profiles, reflecting variation in influential publications and citation exposure. Institutional counts may overlap when publications have multiple affiliations. These descriptive rankings therefore cannot establish institutional research quality, collaboration intensity, or comparative educational effectiveness.

Figure 3 identifies China, the United States, and the United Kingdom as the leading country contributors, followed by Spain. Asian, European, North American, and Australasian participation is visible, but output varies across the displayed countries. The chart represents affiliation-based publication credit, rather than the locations of research participants or teaching interventions. Its top-twenty selection also cannot demonstrate that unlisted countries produced no research. Geographical coverage and collaboration require complementary interpretation alongside database and affiliation limitations.

Figure 4 displays country relationships within the collaboration network. China, the United Kingdom, Spain, and several Asian and European partners occupy connected positions, while smaller groups extend across the map. These patterns indicate multiple collaborative communities rather than one isolated national research system. However, layout proximity is not geographical distance, and visual prominence cannot substitute for calculated centrality. Without numerical link strengths or network-density statistics, the figure supports descriptive interpretation rather than rankings of collaboration.

Conceptual Themes and Keyword Relationships

Figure 5 depicts an interconnected literature centred on task-based learning and language teaching. Surrounding terms connect task complexity, accuracy, fluency, communication, classroom interaction, and digital learning environments. The network also contains education, gamification, virtual reality, and problem-based learning, suggesting links with broader pedagogical interests. Nevertheless, co-occurrence denotes shared appearance within bibliographic records, not equivalent meanings or demonstrated instructional relationships. Separate spelling variants remain visible, so cluster boundaries and apparent prominence require cautious interpretation before conclusions.

Figure 6 places task-based language teaching, English for specific purposes, and communicative language teaching within the motor-theme quadrant. General task-based learning occupies the basic-theme area, while action research and virtual reality appear within a more specialised cluster. These positions describe connectedness and internal development in the mapped vocabulary. The emerging-or-declining quadrant remains ambiguous without longitudinal evidence. Consequently, the thematic map should characterise conceptual organisation rather than establish whether particular approaches are newly emerging or disappearing.

Topic Timing and Recent Research Directions

Figure 7 summarises topic timing using the numerical quartiles and medians. Needs analysis has the latest median year, 2021, with its upper quartile reaching 2025. Several language-teaching terms cluster around 2020, while CALL has a median of 2019. The intervals indicate sustained publication across multiple years rather than sudden emergence. Frequency and temporal position answer different questions; neither establishes recent acceleration, effectiveness, or replacement of older themes without additional annual counts and comparable time-sliced analyses.

Discussion

The growth in task-based learning publications indicates expanding scholarly attention, but it does not establish cumulative pedagogical progress. The 2025 peak contrasts with the much greater citation density of earlier cohorts, demonstrating why output and influence require separate interpretation. As Waltman (2016) explains, citation indicators depend on observation windows and disciplinary practices; Donthu et al. (2021) similarly distinguish performance analysis from mapping relationships. The persistence of influential work on planning and task design suggests continuity in the problems organising the field, rather than successive replacement of older theories (Ellis, 2009; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan, 1996). Moreover, the h-core's 54.72% citation share indicates concentrated visibility, not a corresponding concentration of reliable teaching evidence. This distinction matters because programme-level effectiveness depends on implementation and evaluation, as Bryfonski and McKay (2019) demonstrate. Publication expansion should therefore be interpreted as a growing research opportunity whose educational value still requires outcome-sensitive synthesis, transparent designs, and replication across settings (Donthu et al., 2021; Plonsky & Kim, 2016).

The source and author analyses further demonstrate that productivity and scholarly influence represent distinct dimensions of the TBL research landscape. System contributed the largest number of publications among the leading sources, whereas Language Teaching Research recorded the highest mean citation impact, indicating that publication volume does not necessarily correspond with citation visibility. A similar pattern emerged among authors: Rod Ellis contributed the greatest number of publications among the listed contributors, while Peter Skehan accumulated the highest total and average citation counts. The most highly cited publications were likewise concentrated around task design, planning, performance, and language pedagogy, with the ten leading documents accounting for a substantial share of total citations. These patterns reinforce the need to interpret bibliometric prominence through multiple indicators rather than treating productivity as equivalent to scholarly influence. They also strengthen the broader finding that the historical development of TBL remains closely associated with language-oriented theoretical and empirical traditions, even as applications have expanded across educational contexts.

These findings also clarify the contribution of the present study relative to earlier bibliometric research. Previous analyses have predominantly examined TBLT specifically or have adopted shorter analytical periods, whereas the present 1976–2025 corpus extends the historical window while framing TBL across education. Despite this broader retrieval strategy, the continuing prominence of language-oriented sources, highly cited publications, influential authors, and author keywords indicates that expansion beyond language education has not displaced the field's established language-oriented research traditions. The present findings therefore extend earlier bibliometric studies by showing that broader publication coverage can coexist with substantial continuity in the topics, contributors, and scholarly works receiving the greatest visibility. This suggests that diversification in application does not necessarily imply an equivalent shift in the dominant research themes or citation patterns of the field.

The dominance of language-oriented journals, influential authors, and keyword connections suggests that the corpus retains a strong linguistic orientation despite its broader educational framing. Skehan (1996), Ellis (2009), and Robinson (2011) provide different accounts of how tasks organise attention, interaction, and learning; their citation visibility should not be treated as evidence of theoretical consensus. A citation to a framework may endorse, adapt, extend, or challenge it. Earlier bibliometric mappings likewise foreground task difficulty and cognitive or psycholinguistic concerns (Qin & Lei, 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2019). In the present study, citation rankings identify historically influential publications, while author-keyword co-occurrence analysis shows that language learning, task complexity, communication, interaction, and related concerns remain closely connected within the thematic landscape. The prominence of these topics demonstrates continuing continuity with Task-Based Language Teaching and second-language acquisition research. Transfer beyond language education is consequently a research proposition requiring discipline-specific task definitions and outcome measures, not a demonstrated result of this bibliometric dataset. Establishing such transfer would require explicit classification and substantive examination of non-language studies (Donthu et al., 2021; Plonsky & Kim, 2016).

Country and institutional patterns show uneven research visibility, but they provide limited evidence about the geographical distribution of classroom practice. China, the United States, and the United Kingdom lead affiliation-based output, whereas Auckland and National Taiwan Normal University occupy different positions when publication counts and mean citations are compared. Bibliographic databases differ in disciplinary, linguistic, and regional coverage, so representation reflects indexing as well as scholarly activity (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Visser et al., 2021). Likewise, the 10.33% international co-authorship rate should not be interpreted as weak collaboration without appropriate disciplinary comparisons and network statistics (Donthu et al., 2021; van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The more useful educational question is whether collaborations connect researchers working across contrasting curricula, resources, learner populations, and implementation conditions. Teacher mediation and local adaptation are central to task-based instruction, making contextual diversity substantively important rather than merely desirable for geographical balance (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Ellis, 2009; Van den Branden, 2016). Future studies should therefore distinguish author location, study setting, and institutional partnership before inferring international reach.

The keyword structure suggests that digital environments are increasingly integrated into established task-based concerns rather than constituting a self-contained pedagogical transformation. The temporal prominence of blended learning and CALL, together with the presence of virtual reality and gamification, supports continuity between technological change and task design. Lai and Li (2011) and Chong and Reinders (2020) emphasise the interaction between technological affordances and pedagogical purpose; Kim and Namkung (2024) further identify methodological constraints in this research. Accordingly, prominent digital terms cannot demonstrate that technology improves learning or that newer tools displace earlier practices. The quartile intervals describe when topics occur rather than their growth rates, while an emerging-or-declining quadrant cannot by itself distinguish opposite temporal trajectories (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). More informative evaluations would examine what learners actually do, how teachers scaffold participation, and whether gains persist beyond immediate task performance (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Van den Branden, 2016). Technology should therefore be evaluated through its contribution to task processes and durable learning outcomes.

The principal methodological implication is that breadth must be demonstrated through reproducible retrieval and transparent analytical procedures. The search includes several task-based phrases but does not explicitly include the phrase “task-based language teaching,” while some exclusion terms may also occur in legitimate educational studies. These choices warrant sensitivity checks before the corpus is interpreted as comprehensive. Database selection and metadata standardisation can substantially influence bibliometric representations (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Visser et al., 2021; van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Although metadata harmonisation reduced unnecessary fragmentation, residual keyword variants may still separate conceptually related terms, while the absence of some network-level statistics limits stronger structural interpretations. A useful extension would combine citation analysis and co-word mapping with systematic classification by discipline, educational level, instructional setting, and study context, followed by methodological appraisal of selected empirical studies (Aria &

Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021; Plonsky & Kim, 2016). Such an approach would distinguish growth in terminology and publication activity from growth in robust educational evidence. For educational practice, the priority should therefore be to examine clearly specified tasks under documented implementation conditions rather than infer instructional effectiveness from bibliometric prominence alone (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Ellis, 2009).

Limitations

The analysis represents the Scopus-indexed corpus and its citation snapshot rather than the entirety of Task-Based Learning scholarship. Database coverage, search-term selection, and exclusion criteria may have omitted relevant publications using alternative terminology or indexed in other databases. Citation indicators are also affected by publication age because older documents have had longer periods to accumulate citations and should not be interpreted as direct measures of research quality or instructional effectiveness. Author and institutional indicators depend on the accuracy and harmonisation of bibliographic metadata, while full counting results in overlapping institutional and country contributions when publications involve multiple affiliations.

Although the study examines collaboration networks, author-keyword relationships, and thematic patterns, these network analyses remain primarily descriptive because measures such as node centrality and overall network density were not systematically used to evaluate structural importance quantitatively. Residual keyword variants may also fragment conceptually similar terms despite metadata harmonisation. Temporal distributions of keywords indicate when topics were prominent but cannot independently demonstrate citation bursts, abrupt thematic transitions, or definitive emergence or decline of research areas. In addition, affiliation-based country data identify author locations rather than the geographical settings in which studies were conducted. Finally, disciplinary fields, educational levels, and instructional contexts were not systematically coded across the entire corpus, limiting conclusions about the distribution of Task-Based Learning across specific educational settings.

Conclusion

This study provides a 50-year bibliometric account of the development, scholarly influence, collaboration patterns, and research themes of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in education from 1976 to 2025. The analysis of 1,055 Scopus-indexed publications demonstrates substantial expansion of the field, particularly in recent years, with 404 publications produced between 2021 and 2025 and annual output reaching 114 publications in 2025. However, publication growth and citation influence followed different trajectories, as earlier publications and cohorts continued to account for substantial scholarly impact. Differences between the most productive and most influential sources, authors, and institutions further demonstrate that publication volume alone does not adequately represent scholarly influence within the field.

Despite the study's broader educational scope, the findings show that TBL research remains strongly associated with Task-Based Language Teaching and second-language acquisition. Highly cited publications, influential authors, and prominent author keywords continue to reflect language-oriented traditions, while keyword co-occurrence and thematic analyses revealed strong concentrations around language learning, communication, task design, task complexity, and technology-mediated instruction. At the same time, connections with broader educational approaches and digital learning environments indicate increasing thematic diversification. These findings suggest that contemporary TBL scholarship is expanding conceptually and technologically while retaining substantial continuity with its established language-education traditions.

The temporal analysis further indicates sustained rather than abrupt thematic change. Topics such as needs analysis, blended learning, content and language integrated learning, and computer-assisted language learning remained visible across overlapping periods, meaning that their temporal prominence should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of sudden emergence or replacement of earlier research priorities. Overall, the findings position TBL as an expanding and increasingly diverse educational research domain whose broader disciplinary development requires further empirical clarification. Future research should combine bibliometric mapping with systematic coding of disciplines, educational levels, instructional settings, and learning outcomes, while examining how task design and implementation operate beyond language education. Such work would help determine whether the increasing visibility of TBL across education is accompanied by stronger disciplinary diversification and robust evidence of its pedagogical applications.

Declarations

Author Contribution

G.K. has conducted the study and prepared the full manuscript, including the abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

Data Availability

The bibliographic records analysed in this study were retrieved from the Scopus database. The analytical dataset is publicly available: xxx, xxx (2026), "Task-Based Learning in Education (1976-2025): A Bibliometric Analysis of Publication Trends, Citation Impact, Collaboration and Research Themes", Mendeley Data, V1, doi: 10.17632/4x4sc82sgk.1

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Figures

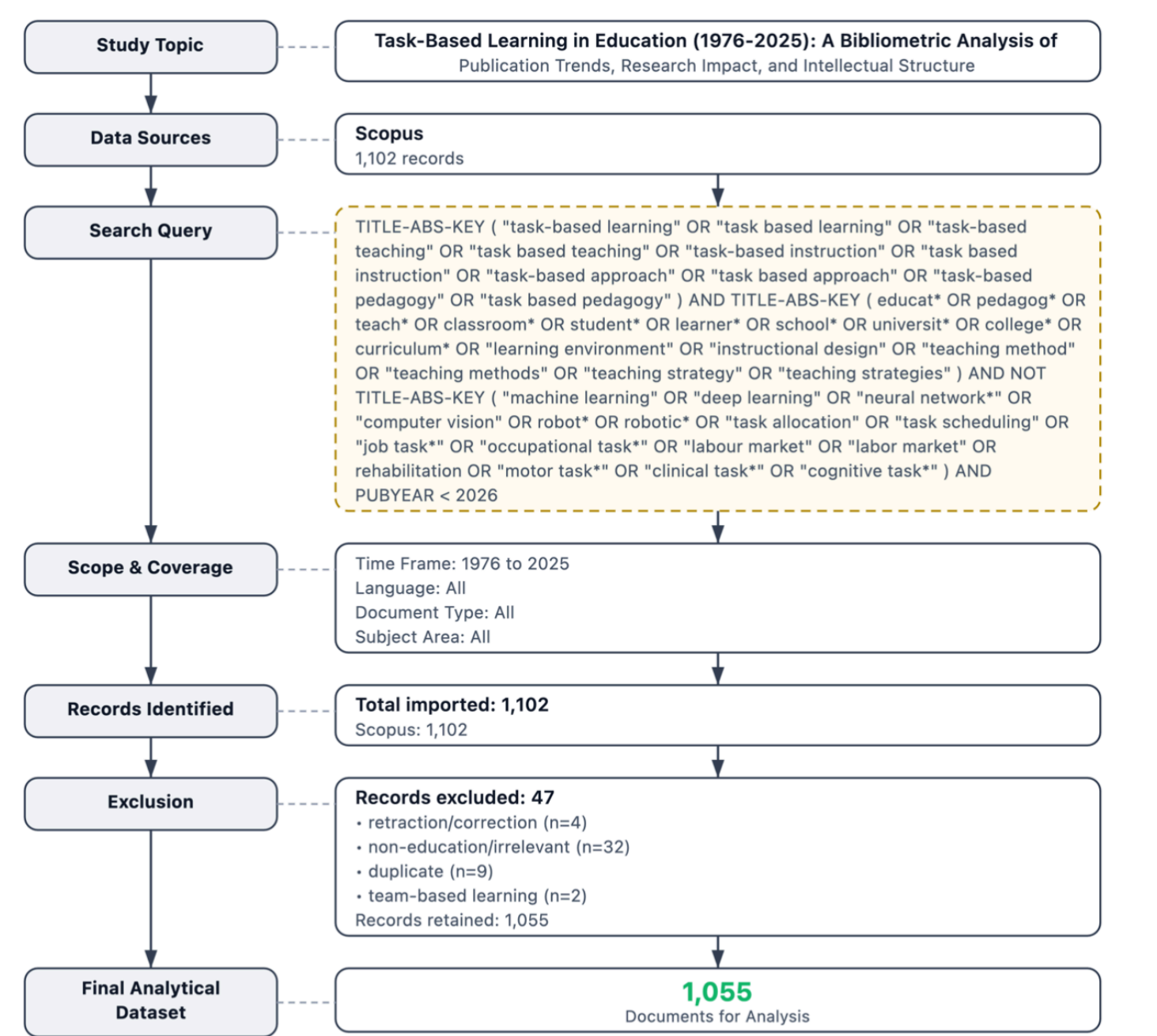


Figure 1

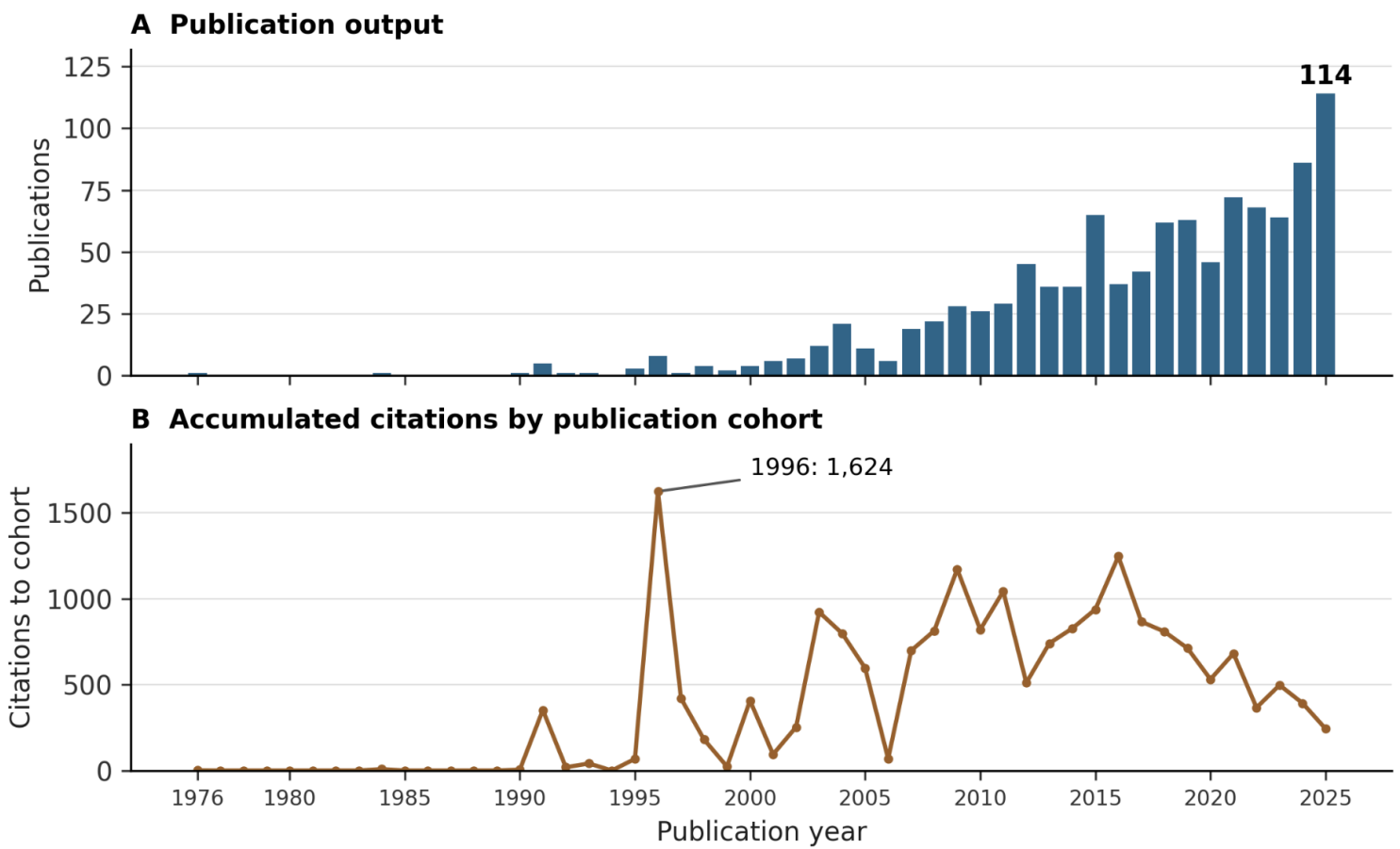


Figure 2

Annual publication output and accumulated citations by publication cohort

Note. Years without publications are shown as zero. Citation totals refer to publication cohorts at the analysis snapshot.

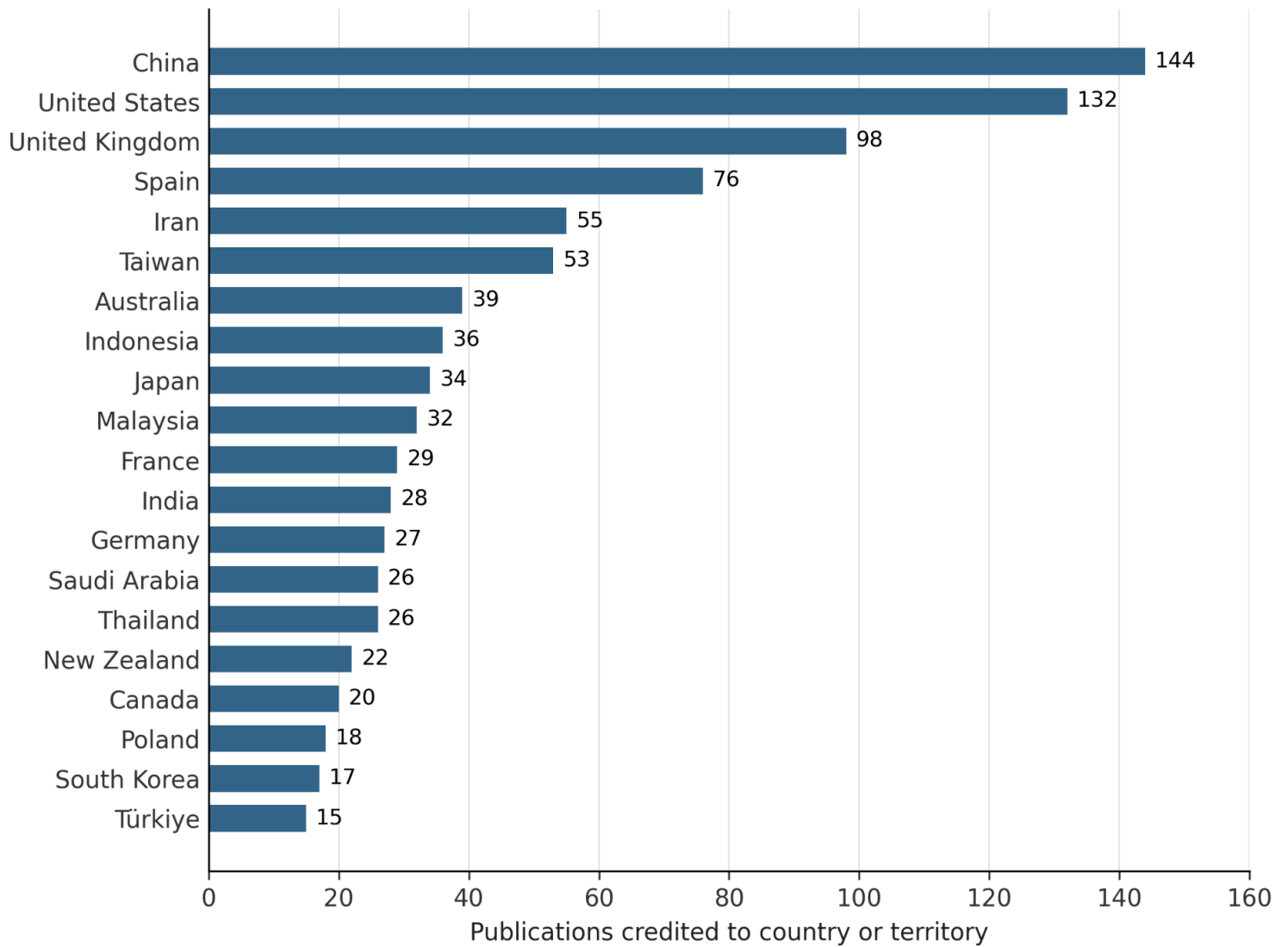


Figure 3

The twenty most productive countries and territories

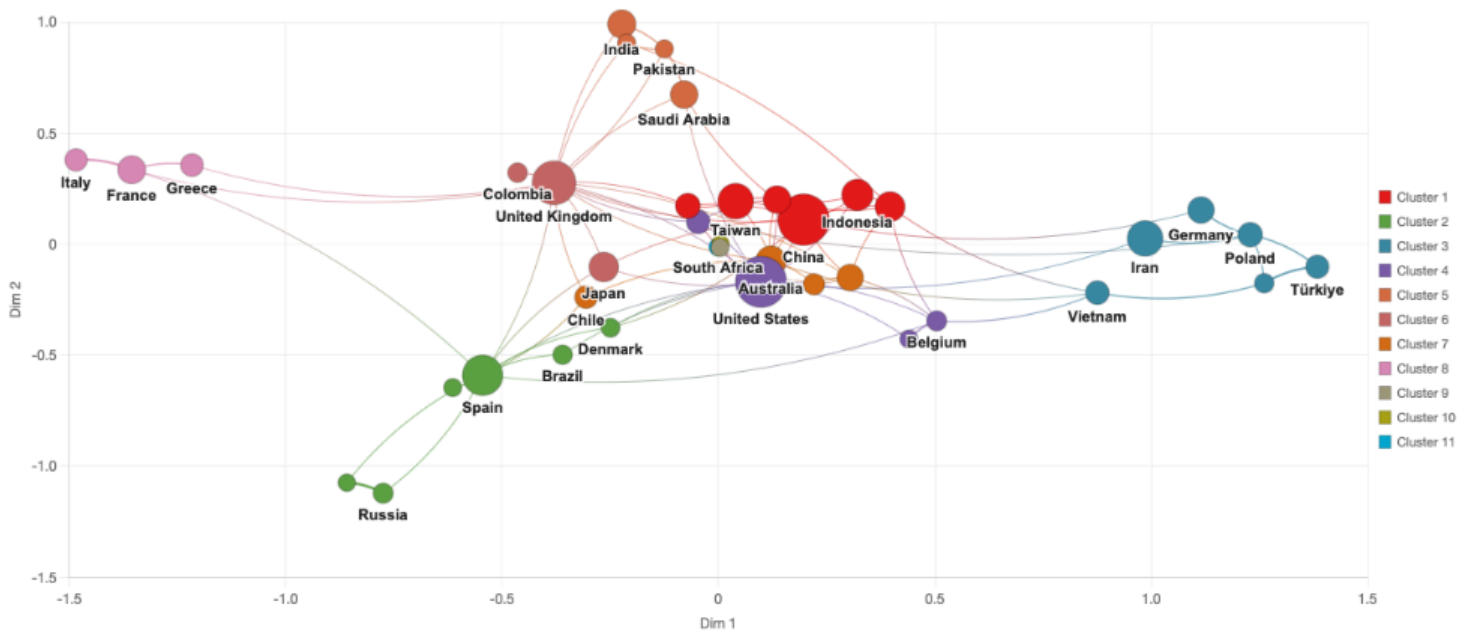


Figure 4

Country collaboration network

Note. Colours indicate the clusters shown in the BiblioSpy export; coordinates are layout dimensions, not geographical positions.

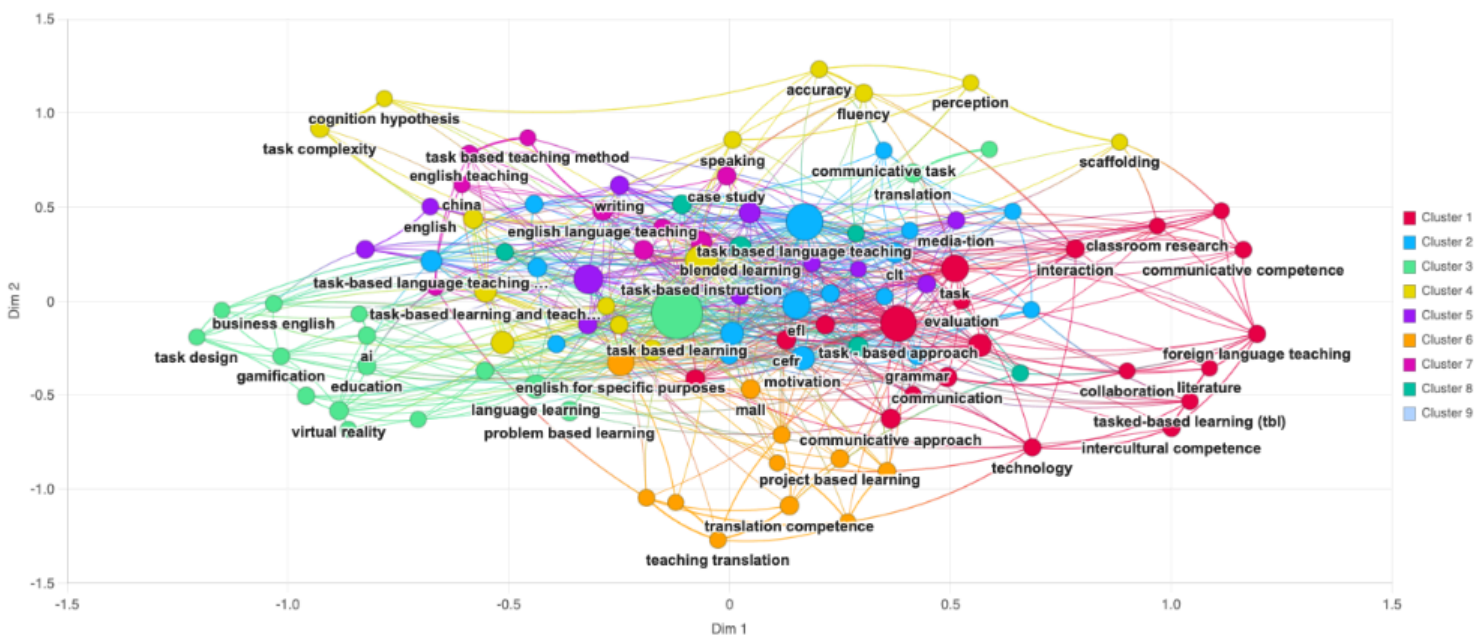


Figure 5

Author-keyword co-occurrence network

Note. Colours reproduce the nine labelled clusters in the export. Several keyword spellings remain separate. Cluster positions are descriptive, not causal.

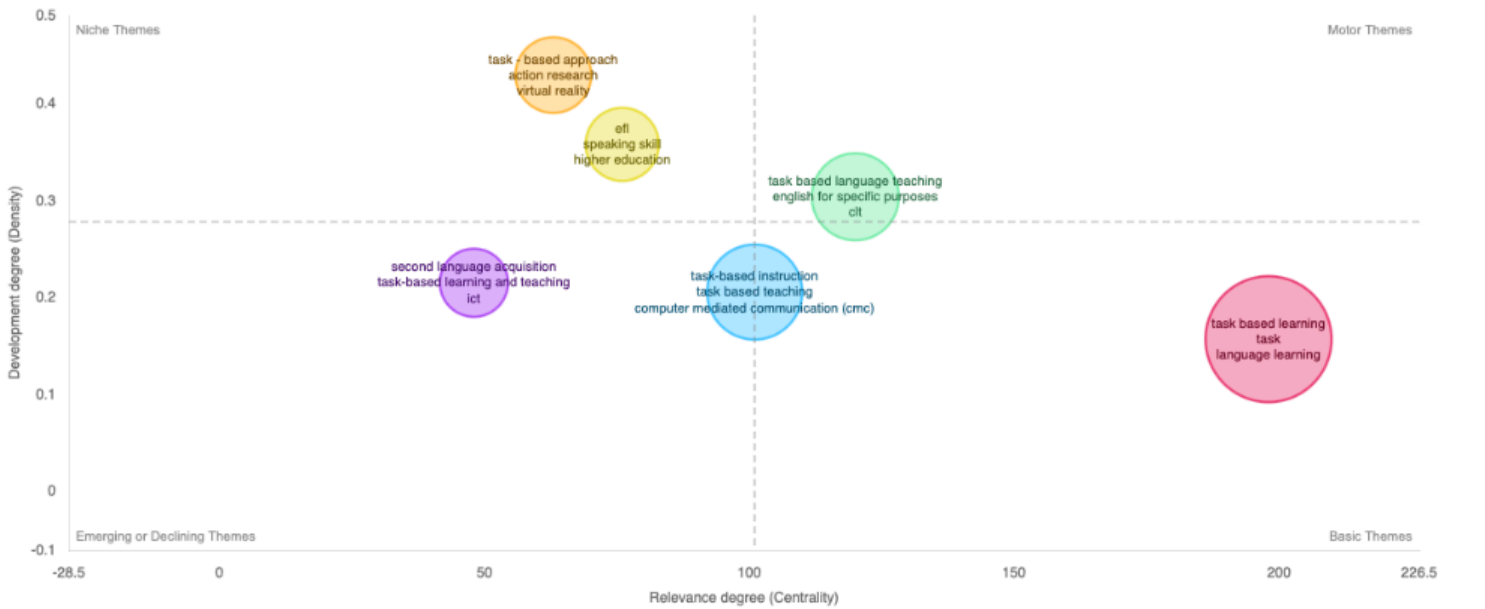


Figure 6

Thematic map of author-keyword clusters

Note. The horizontal axis is thematic centrality and the vertical axis is density. CLT = communicative language teaching; EFL = English as a foreign language; ICT = information and communication technology.

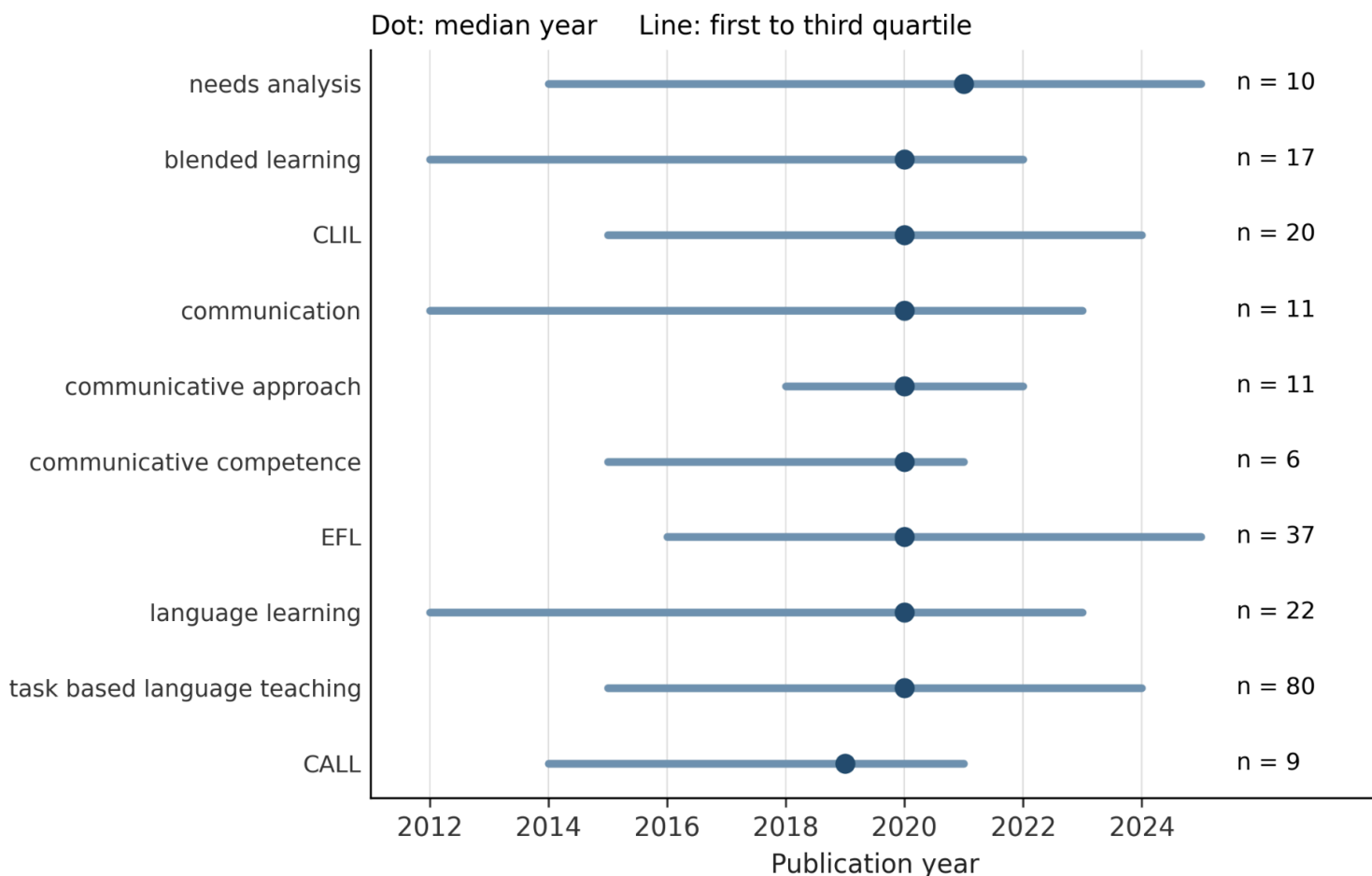


Figure 7

Publication-year distributions of selected trend topics

Note. n = keyword frequency. CLIL = content and language integrated learning; EFL = English as a foreign language; CALL = computer-assisted language learning. Intervals are quartile ranges, not confidence intervals.