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Bibliometric Analysis of Arabic Proficiency Based on Scopus-Indexed Articles

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of research on Arabic language competency, including which nations have made substantial contributions, what topics come up regularly, and what research subjects are available to those interested in the discipline. This research is a bibliometric analysis on academic papers dealing with Arabic speaking skills. The total of 155 articles are collected from the Scopus website, then uploaded to the biblioshiny application using R-studio Cloud. All information is extracted to CSV format for data analysis and then entered the VOS viewer. The results show that (1) due to historical reasons and proximity to the Arabic language, Israel is the country with the largest number of authors on "Arabic speaking proficiency", followed by Egypt; (2) the keywords that often appear in articles on Arabic speaking proficiency are "phonological awareness", "diglossia", and "literacy"; (3) in general, the trend of the quantity of publications on the themes studied is increasing from year to year, indicating the growing interest of academics on the topic being discussed; (4) based on theme mapping, the dominant linguistic-related keywords in relation to the issue are also very open to being associated with other aspects such as SES (socioeconomic status), dyslexia, diglossia, and bilingualism.

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Keyword

Arabic Speaking Proficiency; Bibliometric

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه المقالة إلى تحديد تطور الأبحاث المتعلقة بإتقان اللغة العربية، وما هي الدول التي لها مساهمات كبيرة في هذا الموضوع، وما هي الموضوعات التي تظهر غالبًا وما هي موضوعات البحث التي تمثل فرصًا للبحث من قبل المهتمين بالمجال. يعد هذا البحث بمثابة تحليل بليومتري للأوراق الأكاديمية التي تتناول مهارات التحدث باللغة العربية. تم جمع إجمالي 155 مقالة من موقع Scopus، ثم تم رفعها إلى تطبيق المكتبة باستخدام R-studio Cloud. تم استخراج جميع المعلومات إلى تنسيق CSV لأغراض تحليل البيانات ثم إدخالها في VOSviewer. ويخلص هذا البحث إلى (1) لأسباب تاريخية وقربها من اللغة العربية، فإن إسرائيل هي الدولة التي تضم أكبر عدد من المؤلفين في "إتقان التحدث باللغة العربية"، تليها مصر؛ (2) الكلمات الرئيسية التي تظهر غالبًا في المقالات حول إتقان التحدث باللغة العربية هي "الوعي الصوتي"، و"الازدواجية اللغوية"، و"محو الأمية"؛ (3) بشكل عام، فإن اتجاه كمية المنشورات حول المواضيع التي تمت دراستها يتزايد من سنة إلى أخرى، مما يشير إلى الاهتمام المتزايد للأكاديميين بالموضوع قيد المناقشة؛ (4) استنادًا إلى رسم الخرائط الموضوعية، فإن الكلمات الرئيسية ذات الصلة اللغوية السائدة فيما يتعلق بهذه القضية تكون أيضًا مفتوحة جدًا على الارتباط بجوانب أخرى مثل SES (الحالة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية)، وعسر القراءة، وازدواج اللسان، وثنائية اللغة.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, new methods in improving students Arabic speaking ability have continued to emerge, such as *suggestopedia* (Hurin'in, 2021), *Mimicri and Memorization* (Iqbal, 2018), and *Liquid Crystal Display* (Muslimah, 2016). These innovations show, among other things, how much interest the academic community has for the development of the Arabic speaking proficiency. On the other hand, it shows the dynamic growth of "Arabic speaking proficiency" as one of the important topics in Arabic language learning.

By the time this article is written, hundreds of scholarly articles have been produced by academics around the world on the above topic. Unfortunately, there is no bibliometric analysis mapping of the distribution of themes, references, and author networks in this theme. This research aims to build a science mapping on the growing trend on this theme by utilizing bibliometric network visualization.

In bibliometric analysis, there are at least three important points that need further elaboration, (1) what are the main happening topics in a particular field of science, (2) how these topics relate to each other, and (3) how a particular topic develops over time (Waltman et al., 2010). As the latest form of bibliography, which is the art of reading the history of written works (Maulen, 2003) that will always be related to one another (Tanselle, 1996, p. 5), bibliometrics has a major role in identifying research opportunities in a particular theme. It is notewitstanding however, that although text-mining algorithms may quickly classify and quantify trends found in big quantities of scientific literature, such approaches shouldn't take the place of careful research in a given topic (VanderWaal & Deen, 2018). That is the limitation of such a bibliometrix analysis that every user should be aware of.

Bibliometric studies have been extensively undertaken on the publication of papers in other topics, such as the field of library and information science (Dwiyantoro, 2018; Pattah, 2013; Setyowati, 2017), social and political science (Fauzi, 2022), mathematics education (Muhammad et al., 2022), oceanography (Royani & Idhani, 2018), Covid-19 management in Indonesia (Nurfauzan & Faizatunnisa, 2021) and others. At the same time, research on the dynamics of Arabic Language Education is still done manually (Fauzi, 2022). Thus, this research has at least two novelties. First, it uses bibliometric approach as a method of data analysis. Second, it focuses on the topic of *maharah al-kalam* in Scopus-indexed journal articles published in the last ten years (2013-2022).

This study aims to understand the dynamics of research on Arabic speaking skills in scopus-indexed articles to answer the following questions: (1) How have scopus-indexed articles on Arabic speaking proficiency developed in the last ten

years?; (2) Which countries and authors have made major contributions to this theme?; (3) What are the most common topics in the Arabic speaking proficiency studies? What research topics are still emerging as opportunities to be researched by those interested in the field?

METHOD

Bibliometric studies enable the creation of a distinctive viewpoint from a sufficiently in-depth analysis. Quantitative scientometrics and informetrics are the intended uses of the R package's bibliometrics utility (Shi et al., 2020). To obtain information from the repository, bibliometric technologies enable the categorization and analysis of significant historical data derived from research undertaken over a specified period. In contrast to systematic literature reviews, which typically rely on qualitative techniques and may be tainted by interpretation bias from scholars with different academic backgrounds, bibliometric analysis and meta-analysis rely on quantitative techniques and can therefore avoid or mitigate the bias (Donthu et al., 2021).

The main source in this research is the Scopus database that provides several key features, including links to both citing and cited documents and indexes to million relevant publishers' web pages (Burnham, 2006). Articles in the database containing the keyword Arabic Speaking Skill between January 2013 and November 2022 were collected. The data from Scopus was downloaded in BibText format on December 17, 2022 and resulted in an initial finding of 197 articles from various sources. For the purposes of this research, a filter of source scope selection was applied. Only sources from the social sciences, arts and humanities, psychology, and computer science were chosen. The formula applied in searching the Scopus database is: "TITLE-ABS-KEY (arabic AND speaking AND skill) AND (LIMIT TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2021) OR LIMIT TO (PUBYEAR, 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2019) OR LIMIT TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013) AND LIMIT TO (SUBJAREA, "SOC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ARTS") OR LIMIT TO (SUBJAREA, "PSYC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "COMP"))". This filter returned 155 results, the majority of which were journal articles, with a few being books, book sections, or reviews, all authored in English.

The files imported from the Scopus website were then uploaded into the Biblioshiny application (using R-Studio Cloud) to be analyzed to find the annual growth in the number of publications, document types and sources, publication

distribution by country, authorship analysis, keyword analysis, citation analysis, and title and abstract analysis. In a chart, the stages of the research that have been carried out are as follows:

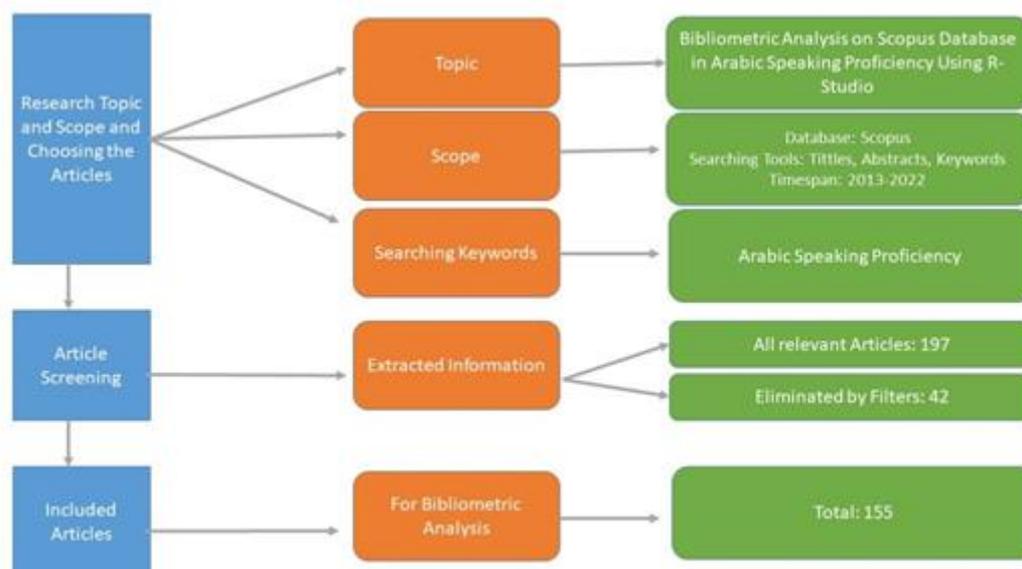


Figure 1. Bibliometric Research Flow

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Main Information

In the table, the main information displayed from this bibliometric review is as follows:

Table 1. Main Information

| Data | Number |
|---|-----------|
| Time Span | 2013-2022 |
| Source in the forms of article | 135 |
| Source in the forms of book | 2 |
| Source in the forms of book chapter | 5 |
| Source in the forms of conference article | 8 |
| Source in the forms of review | 5 |
| Average article growth | 10,36% |
| Average citation per documents | 3,981 |
| References | 7.280 |
| Authors' keywords | 539 |
| Authors | 424 |
| Authors of only single documents | 34 |
| International Collaboration | 26,45% |

Annual Publication growth

The bibliometric data on Arabic speaking skills from the biblioshiny program shows that out of a total of 197 documents found, most of them are journal articles (135), while the rest are divided equally into other types of papers (except for the book format which is only 2). Overall, the average citations per document is 3,981. This modest number corresponds to a modest number of overall documents (155 per 10 years, or an average of 15.5 per year). In more detail, the growth of document publications per year is as follows:

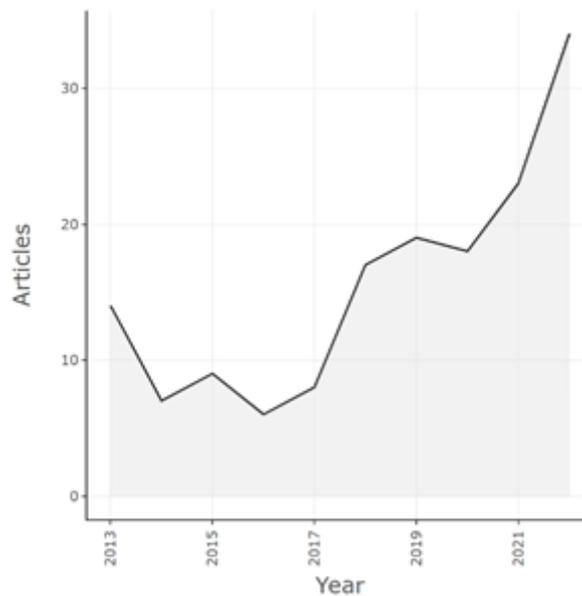


Figure 2. Article Growth Per-Year

The lowest point for the publication of articles on the topic "Arabic Speaking Skill" was in 2016 when only 6 articles were produced. In the following year (2017), the increase was also not too significant with only 2 articles added to a total of 8 publications per year. Only then in 2018, the publication leap occurred by more than 100%. Constantly, the number continues to rise to 17 (2018), 19 (2019), 18 (2020), 23 (2021), and 34 (2022) publications per year. Looking at the graph in the last 5 years, there is potential for the number of publications to increase in the coming years.

Most Relevant Institution

The figure below displays the ten most productive affiliates based on the number of publications year-on-year. In the top ten, four Israeli universities are ranked 1st (Haifa University), 2nd (Bar-Ilan University), 4th (Oranim Academic College of Education), and 8th (Beit Berl University) respectively. Egypt followed in second place as the campus contributor producing the most publications on

Arabic speaking skill, although it is ranked 9th (Mansoura University) and 10th (Alexandria University). The other four countries that complete the top ten are Oman (Sultan Qaboos University, 3rd), Algeria (El-Oued University, 5th), Jordan (Jordan University, 6th) and the United Kingdom (University of York, 7th). For more details, see the following diagram:

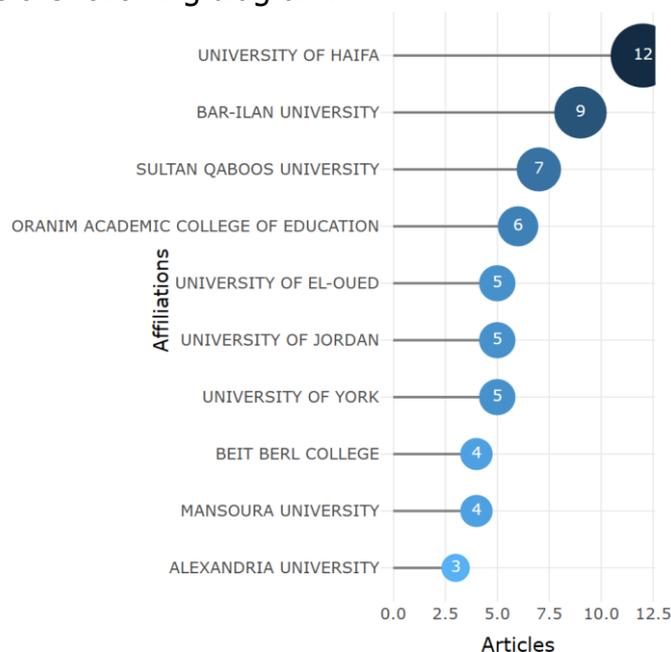


Figure 3. Top Ten Most Productive Affiliates by Number of Publications

It is interesting to note that of these ten universities, only one university is not from the Arabic speaking countries and its population does not use Arabic as a daily language, namely University Of York. While the other universities, although their inhabitants speak Arabic, the Arabic used in daily life is local Arabic which is far different from standard Arabic (*fushha*). Egypt, for example, has its own dialect and Arabic vocabulary that can only be understood by the people of the country of the Pyramids, although classical Arabic is still used in certain tribes and regions (Willmore, 1905; Yacoub, 2015). It is natural that the topic of Arabic speaking is most in demand in these countries.

Israel is a special case. In this country, Arabic is no longer one of the National languages, as of July 19, 2018. Nevertheless, Arabic has a special status according to the State Law. This change in the status of Arabic, according to Omer-Man, is a two-way message: that Israel is a Jewish state and that Palestinians (represented by Arabic) have no place there (Arabic Was an Official Language in Israel for 70 Years, 2 Months, and 5 Days, 2018). However, this change in the status of Arabic does not necessarily diminish the interest of academics in Israel to conduct research on Arabic. This can be seen in the following discussion.

In contrast to other countries that have not devoted serious academic attention to mainstreaming research on Arabic, the state of Israel shows the opposite. According to the bibliometric data analysis above, Israel ranks first in relation to publications on Arabic language, especially on the theme of "Arabic Proficiency". This is not a coincidence or a surprise. As mentioned in the book *The politics of Arabic in Israel: A sociolinguistic analysis* by Camelia Suleiman, Arabic language training on Israeli campuses is oriented towards the Israeli government's need to have Arabic speakers from Israeli Jews to ensure state security. After undergoing a certain level of education with a good command of Arabic, these graduates are then employed in the military and police, to monitor the communication circulating on social media and monitor movements that they think are suspicious and threaten state security (Suleiman, 2018). It is security factor that has prompted Israel to intensively expand the study of the Arabic language.

Most Productive Affiliates Year-on-Year

The following diagram shows the publication productivity from year to year. The University of Haifa has significantly increased its publication rate compared to the other universities which have stagnated their publications and tended to fluctuate.

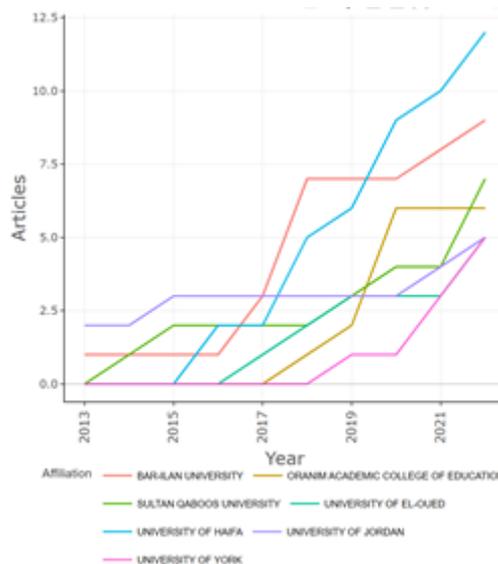


Figure 4. Top Ten Most Productive Affiliates by Publication Year

While 2018 was a turning point for Arabic for Israelis, the number of publications on the subject, and perhaps on Arabic in general, took a significant leap forward. In that year, Haifa University outperformed all but its Israeli compatriot, Bar-Ilan University. These two campuses are still the champions of publishing articles on Arabic speaking skills in the last 3 years. Their closest competitor is Sultan Qaboos University, which although still far behind in terms

of quantity, has managed to record a significant increase, especially in the last year. Stagnation was recorded by the University of Jordan, which for 5 years (from 2015 to 2020) was stable at 3 publications / year. Only in 2020, the performance of this campus rose slightly.

Co-authorship between writers of different nationalities

This research also provides output in the form of information related to the existence of correspondence between countries and authors who are active in research related to the theme of Arabic language skills. MCP code (orange color) is Multi-Country publication or correspondence between countries and authors. While SCP (blue color) is a single-country publication. USA ranks first in the correspondence of scientific publications related to the theme of Arabic skills followed by Saudi Arabia. The explanation for this phenomenon is that in the last 20 years, post 9/11, the attention of students and academics to Arabic in Uncle Sam's country has continued to increase. In 2006, President Bush issued the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) which strongly recommended that citizens learn at least one additional language in addition to English. This policy is believed to be a natural form of national defense, as well as to increase America's competitiveness in the future (Brosh, 2013). So, although American universities do not rank among the top 10 in terms of published articles on the theme under review (as outlined in Table 2), American academics have the highest level of international collaboration compared to other countries. Consider the following table:

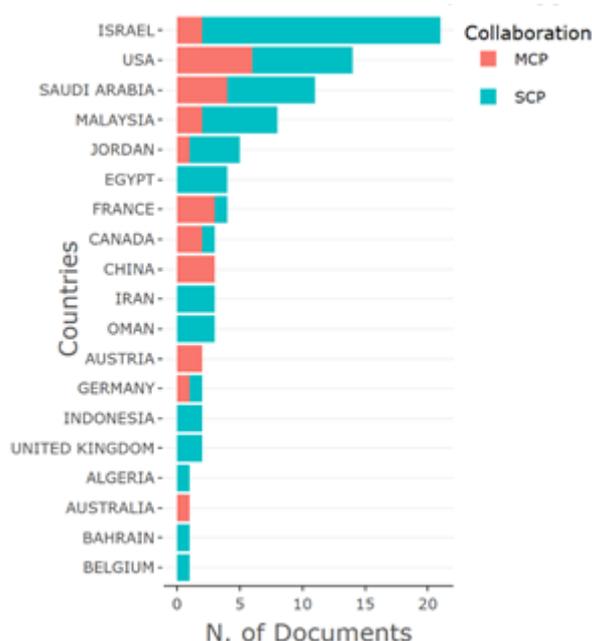


Figure 5. Countries and Authors with International Correspondence

This figure shows that Israel is the country with the most authors on the topic under study. To reinforce what has been stated above, Arabic was one of the official languages of Israel, until the establishment of the state of Israel. However, due to political factors, Arabic then became a second language, even though most Israeli people still use Arabic. The second position as the country with the highest number of writers is occupied by Egypt, which until now speaks two dialects: local Egyptian (Arabic masri) and Fusha (Hamel, 1998).

Journal Productivity Ranking

Bibliometric analysis of Scopus journal articles from 2013-2022 related to Arabic speaking proficiency shows that there are only 7 journals that have more than 4 articles published. The seven journals, along with their affiliations are:

Table 2. Most Productive Journals

| No. | Journal Name | Affiliation/ Nations | Article Numbers |
|------------|---|--|------------------------|
| 1. | Reading and Writing | Springer/ Netherland | 7 |
| 2. | Language Related Research | Tabiat Mordares University/ Iran | 6 |
| 3. | Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences | University of Jordan/ Yordania | 4 |
| 4. | Frontiers in Psychology | Frontiers Media S.A./ Swiss | 4 |
| 5. | Gema: Online Journal of Language Studies | Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia/ Malaysia | 4 |
| 6. | Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development | Routledge/ United Kingdom | 4 |
| 7. | Journal of Psycholinguistic Research | Springer/ United States of America | 4 |

Frequently Occurring Words

Keyword analysis identifies trends in the field (Choi et al., 2011). The more frequently a word is found, the more closely it is related to the themes emerging in the field. In the diagram, the larger the text appears, the more frequently the word is used by the writers. The word "Arabic" has the most frequency compared to other words. The word with less scope, "Arabic language", had only 11 repetitions, the same as the keyword "phonological awareness". In order, the words diglossia, literacy, bilingualism, dyslexia, reading, ses (socioeconomic status) and Arabic orthography followed.



Figure 6. Keyword Frequency

The "Diglossia refers to the use of two languages (or two dialects of the same language) in a society under various circumstances, frequently by the same speakers. The phrase is typically used to describe languages like Arabic that have distinct "high" and "low" (colloquial) variations" (Ryding, 1991; Yacoub, 2015). The idea of diglossia is close to the notion of bilingualism, a "native-like control of two languages" or "an ability to produce complete meaningful utterance in the other language" (Wald, 1974). Meanwhile, discussions on dyslexia are sometimes connected with the mastery of second languages (Elbro et al., 2012), while Ses (socioeconomic status) has been considered one of the determinant factors in the raising literacy related to oral and written language skills (Asadi et al., 2022). This is how these topics are linked with the Arabic speaking proficiency studies.

The next figure below is a depiction of what themes have been studied very frequently and what have not. The bottom right is called the fundamental/basic theme, which is a common core keyword that often appears in research. In this case, there are "Arabic Speaking Children", "Arabic Phonology", and "Alzheimer's Disease". The one at the top right of the diagram is called the motor theme which shows the most frequently used research keywords. The number of keywords in this cluster is very large and is divided into several clusters, as follows: (1) "transcoding", "arithmetic", "language", "longitudinal study"; (2) "child disability", "listening skill"; (3) "language acquisition", "Arabic speakers", "cultural adaptation", (4) "Arabic language", "speaking skills", "Arabic vocabulary", "e-learning", "heritage language", "home literacy environment", "language maintenance", "speakers of other languages", (5) "Arabic", "phonological awareness", "diglossia", "literacy", "bilingualism", "reading", "ses", "Arabic orthography", "early literacy", "morphological awareness". The keywords on the bottom left are called emerging or disappearing themes due to their nature of appearing and disappearing in research, a sign that these keywords still have promising prospects to be researched. These include "English

language learners", "literature", "dyslexia", "rapid automated learning", and "reading disability". Meanwhile, the ones on the top left are called niche/specialized themes that have only been used by a handful of authors and need a little more effort to make it a widely accepted discussion. These keywords are: "higher education" and "English as a Foreign Language". Here is the diagram, table and network visualization:

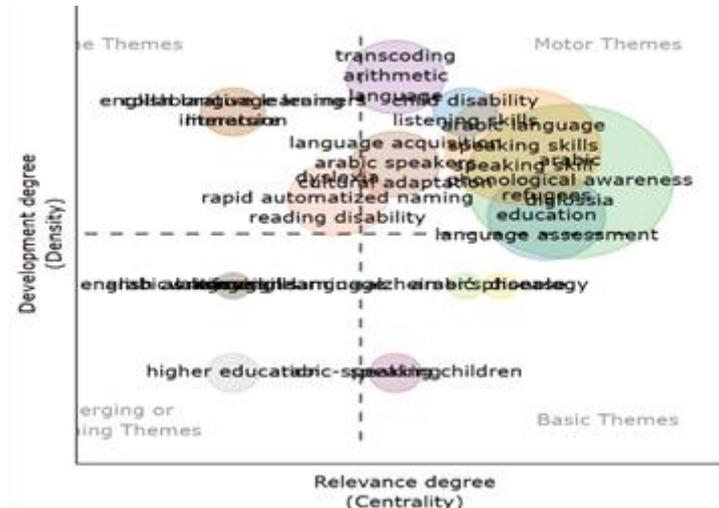


Figure 7. Thematic Map

This is the last interesting thing to discuss here. Research on Arabic speaking skills associated with "higher education institutions" and "language learning for foreigners" has not been popular. In the context of Arabic language courses at the university level (both undergraduate and postgraduate), it appears that this theme is only part of the learning curriculum which may be interesting to discuss in classrooms, but not to study its application in the field. The effectiveness of teaching Arabic speaking skills in high-level lecture halls has thus not been thoroughly explored.

In addition, the study of Arabic language in Indonesia according to the data above, shows that it has not been fully developed and is less integrated and interconnected with other countries than other non-Arabic speaking countries, such as Malaysia, the Netherlands and America. Indonesia in relation to this theme only ranks fourteenth, showing its lag behind Malaysia which ranks fourth.

From the bibliometric data above, several factors lag behind Arabic studies in Indonesia in terms of lack of correspondence with other universities, journal productivity, in terms of diversity of thematic studies as material objects, extra-academic factors such as Israel and other factors. Certainly, in addition to the factors above, there are other factors that can still be explored again, both by bibliometric analysis and by qualitative library analysis, so that it could make

Arabic research and Arabic studies in Indonesia more palatable and more developed.

CONCLUSIONS

The number of publications on Arabic speaking skills published internationally is relatively diverse in terms of the distribution of themes, authors, and references used. This trend will continue to grow in the future. In addition, this article has revealed that due to historical reasons and proximity to Arabic, Israel is the country with the highest number of authors on "Arabic speaking proficiency", followed by Egypt. Furthermore, based on the mapping of themes, key words related to linguistics are still very dominant in relation to the issue of "Arabic language proficiency". Several research topics have emerged to have the potential to receive greater academic attention in the future. Furthermore, this topic can be linked to other factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), dyslexia, diglossia, and bilingualism. In the case of Indonesia, although courses on Arabic speaking proficiency has been taught for many years in many Islamic Universities, their effectiveness has thus not been thoroughly explored, and it is apparent that the role of its academics in enlivening studies in this field is not yet (or even not) visible.

Hence, this bibliometric mapping is a start to better understand the latest research trends on Arabic speaking skills. It is advisable for researchers in Indonesia not to stop at the search for bibliometric data, but to continue research and deepen a more comprehensive understanding and analysis of Arabic, by also deepening and expanding bibliometric research with matters relating to socio-political, cultural and other scope issues.

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