

A Bibliometric Perspective of Regional Languages on Select Scholarly Articles

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ABSTRACT

Regional languages are spoken within a specific geographical area or by a particular ethnic group and may have official recognition or be used informally. Research on regional languages is essential for several reasons. First, it helps to preserve and promote cultural heritage and linguistic diversity. Second, it can inform language policy and education practices. Third, it can contribute to our understanding of human cognition and communication. This study examines the research publications on regional languages and their impact using data from the database Web of Science from 1990 to 2022. The results indicate that research publications on regional languages have steadily increased over time. The United States ranks first in total publications. The Ohio State University has the highest number of publications among all institutions. The most frequently published journal was *Zeitschrift Fur Dialektologie Und Linguistik*, and the leading authors were Cynthia G. Clopper and Robert A. Fox. The analysis of keywords used in these publications showed that dialect, language policy, dialectology, bilingual education, and local language were the main research areas of interest. Overall, this study provides insights into the growing interest in regional languages and the research focus areas in this field.

Keywords: Regional language; Dialect; Bibliometric; Language policy; Web of science

1. INTRODUCTION

Regional languages play a vital role in shaping their speakers' cultural and social identity, reflecting their distinctive heritage and historical significance within specific geographic regions¹. They are also essential for preserving a region's cultural heritage and connecting people to their roots. Moreover, regional languages promote linguistic diversity, essential for maintaining a healthy and vibrant society². In recent years, the proliferation of dominant languages such as English, Spanish, and Mandarin has threatened regional languages in numerous instances, potentially eroding linguistic variety and cultural legacy. According to a 2010 UNESCO study, nearly half of the world's roughly 7,000 languages will be endangered in the next century³. The economic progress of a region is also heavily dependent on the significance of its regional languages⁴. They can be used to promote tourism and support local businesses, such as restaurants, hotels, and transportation services⁵.

The incorporation of regional languages into education is crucial, as it enables them to serve as a means of instruction in schools, thereby enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of education for children from linguistic minority communities. Additionally, utilising regional languages in higher education can significantly enrich the learning experience for students. By using their native language as a medium of instruction, students can improve

their comprehension and retention of academic content⁶. Regional languages also help to promote multilingualism and linguistic diversity, which have been shown to have cognitive and societal benefits. India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 strongly emphasises the significance of regional languages in education. Recognizing that many students in India are more comfortable learning in their mother tongue or regional language, the policy advocates for using these languages as a medium of instruction whenever possible⁷⁻⁸.

The NEP 2020 suggests that schools and higher education institutions should be free to select the language-used for teaching. Students must be instructed in their regional language or mother tongue until the 5th grade. The policy also proposes to establish a three-language formula in which students will be taught in three languages, one of which will be their mother tongue/regional language, another will be a modern Indian language, and the third will be English or any foreign language⁹. This will promote multilingualism and allow students to connect with their cultural heritage. Moreover, the policy recommends that the curriculums, including literature, culture, and history of different regions of the country, be made to develop the necessary infrastructure and resources for teaching regional languages in higher education institutions¹⁰.

In the academic discourse, there is a growing interest in understanding the prominence and impact of research articles published in regional languages. However, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of select scholarly

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articles in regional languages is lacking. This research undertakes a comprehensive global analysis of scholarly work on regional languages. It spans from 1990 to 2022 and delves into various facets, such as the proliferation of publications, prominent articles, favored journals, noteworthy authors, esteemed institutions, and prevalent research themes. The central objective of this study is to gain insight into the perspectives and interests of the academic community regarding regional languages. This investigation is driven by specific research inquiries (RQ) that serve as guiding queries, directing the course of the research.

- RQ1. What are the types of regional language research publications, how have they grown over time, and what is the pattern of citations for these publications?
- RQ2. Which authors, journals, and institutions are the most productive in regional language research?
- RQ3. What are the most frequently occurring keywords in regional language research publications?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Regional languages are crucial for preserving the cultural heritage of a particular region and maintaining the diversity of languages worldwide. Research has shown that using regional languages can increase feelings of identity and pride among speakers, particularly for minority language communities where the regional language can serve as a cultural identity marker and help preserve traditional customs and practices¹¹. Regional languages can also promote social cohesion and build stronger communities, as their use in local government and community organisations can help bring people together and create a shared identity¹². However, despite their benefits, the spread of dominant languages such as English and Mandarin often threatens regional languages. Studies identify various challenges, such as language endangerment, language shift, and lack of institutional support, as threats to the survival of regional languages. Globalisation, urbanization, and media influence contribute to their decline¹³⁻¹⁴.

According to UNESCO¹⁵, over 50 % of the world's languages will likely become extinct as dominant languages continue to displace regional languages in areas such as education, media, and government. To preserve regional languages, it is essential to promote their use in all aspects of society, including education, media, and government. Language revitalization programs are one way to promote regional languages' use and prestige among children and adults¹⁶.

Programs revive and fortify endangered languages through youth education, promoting daily usage, and raising awareness. Language planning supports regional languages in specific areas like education and government¹⁷. This involves developing policies and programs to promote regional languages' use and prestige and creating opportunities for speakers to learn and use them in various settings¹⁸⁻¹⁹.

Regional languages are vital for cultural heritage and linguistic diversity but struggle against dominant languages.

We must promote their use, implement revitalisation programs, and embrace their diversity to protect them.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study systematically collected data from the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection database on January 15, 2023. The focus was on regional language, and specific search terms were applied in the title field, i.e., *Title = (“Regional Language” OR “Local Language” OR “Regional Dialect” OR “Local Dialect” OR “Regional terminology” OR “Local terminology” OR “Vernacular Language”).* A total of 220 documents published between 1990 and 2022 were gathered in plain text (.txt) format and later converted to comma-separated values (.csv) format for in-depth analysis. The study utilised open-source bibliometric tools and software to analyse the retrieved data: RStudio with bibliometrix-biblioshiny²⁰ and BibExcel²¹, both widely recognized in academic and research circles. These tools assist in mapping and understanding trends within the data. BibExcel allowed us to map the data, which helped us to identify patterns and trends in regional language research. RStudio bibliometrix-biblioshiny allowed us to perform various bibliometric analyses. They are freely accessible, making them valuable resources for researchers. These analyses helped us identify the most important journals and authors in the field and the most popular research topics.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Document Types

Table 1 shows that articles were the most common among 220 regional language research publications (126 publications) and got the most citations (995). The second most common were book reviews (68 publications) and early access articles (eight publications). Additionally, editorial material had the highest average citations per publication (12.67). This highlights that authors prefer articles for regional language research because they have

Table 1. Distribution of documents by types

Types of document	TP	TC	TCP	C/P	h-index	h-core
Article	126	995	95	7.90	18	530
Book review	68	0	0	0.00	0	0
Article early Access	8	5	5	0.63	1	2
Correction	5	0	0	0.00	0	0
Editorial material	3	38	2	12.67	2	38
Poetry	3	0	0	0.00	0	0
Review	3	16	3	5.33	1	7
Proceedings papers	2	4	1	2.00	1	4
News item	2	1	1	0.50	1	1

*TP: Total Number of Publications; TC: Total Citations; TCP: Total Cited Publications; C/P: Average Citations Per Publication; h-core: Citation Sum within the h-core

a significant and durable impact. Articles are a convenient way for authors to share their findings, reach a larger audience, and gain recognition and exposure.

4.2 Growth Trends in Publications and Citations

From 1990 to 2022, research papers on regional languages steadily increased, showing an average yearly growth of 9.05 %. This growth is visible in Table 2 and Figure 1, as more papers were published each year. The consistency of this upward pattern is supported by an R² value of 0.6212, though the growth rate is modest. In contrast, the R² value for received citations is lower at 0.1885. During 2015-2019, the most papers were published, totaling 69, followed by 46 in 2010-2014, and the period 2010-2014 gathered the most citations at 466, followed by 2015-2019 with 291, and 2005-2009 with 209. Interestingly, 2010-2014 also had the highest average citations per paper at 10.13, followed by 2005-2009 with 8.36. These findings show a growing interest in regional languages through increased research papers. However, more influential research is needed to boost the understanding and recognition of regional languages’ importance in today’s world.

Table 2. Growth and citation structure from 1990 to 2022

Year	TP	TC	TCP	C/P	h-index	h-core
1990-1994	11	22	2	2.00	2	22
1995-1999	19	35	5	1.84	3	33
2000-2004	12	6	1	0.50	1	4
2005-2009	25	209	15	8.36	13	201
2010-2014	46	466	30	10.13	22	446
2015-2019	69	291	38	4.22	21	259
2020-2022	38	30	13	0.79	20	20

*TP: Total Number of Publications; TC: Total Citations; TCP: Total Cited Publications; C/P: Average Citations Per Publication; h-core: Citation Sum within the h-core

4.3 Prolific Country

Numerous research papers about regional languages from 49 countries show some interesting findings. Table 3 summarizes the top 10 countries with the most publications. It also includes stats like total citations, average citations per paper, h-index, and h-core. The USA is in the lead with 44 publications, 582 citations, and an h-index of 13, showing significant American contributions. The United Kingdom comes next with 146 publications, 146 citations, and an h-index of 8, while Germany is in third place with 7 publications, 21 citations, and an h-index of 2. Switzerland has an outstanding average of 15.00 citations per paper despite having fewer publications and citations. Consequently, the USA and the UK emerge as active contributors, while Switzerland excels in research excellence.

4.4 Prolific Authors

A detailed study of research papers has revealed the most productive authors in the regional language domain. The top 10 authors ranked according to their publications, as presented in Table 4. Among them, six

Table 3. Productive countries on regional languages research

Country	TP	TC	C/P	h-index	h-core
USA	44	582	13.23	13	458
UK	20	146	7.30	8	138
Germany	7	21	3.00	2	21
France	6	27	4.50	2	27
Netherlands	6	15	2.50	2	14
Canada	5	50	10.00	3	50
Switzerland	5	75	15.00	2	70
India	5	1	0.20	1	1
Slovenia	4	4	1.00	2	4
Hungary	3	8	2.67	2	8

*TP: Total Number of Publications; TC: Total Citations; C/P: Average Citations Per Publication; h-core : Citation Sum within the h-core

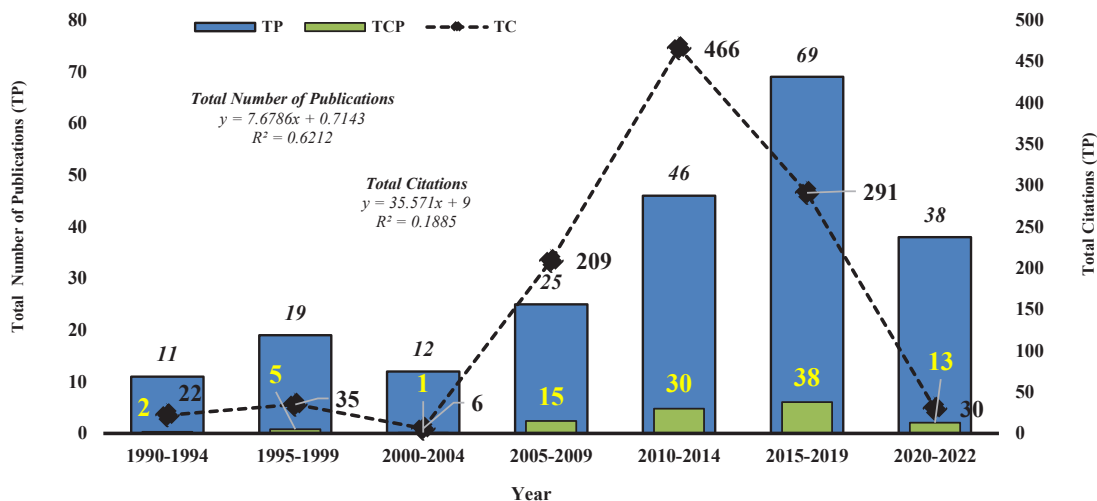
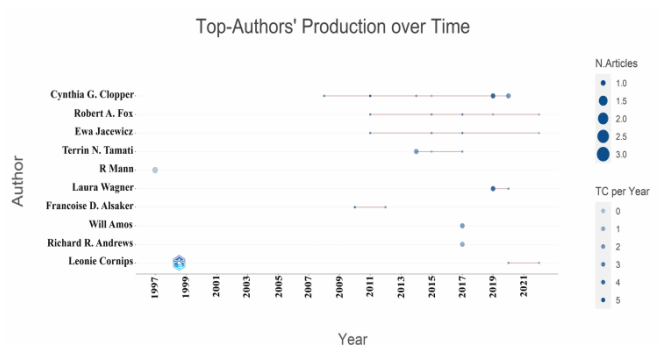


Figure 1. Growth and total citations trends by year of regional language publications (1990-2022).

authors hail from the USA, two from the UK, and one from the Netherlands. Cynthia G. Clopper, associated with the University System of Ohio in the USA, is the most prolific author among the top 10, with an impressive eight publications and the highest total citations of 144. Following closely in second place is Robert A. Fox, with five publications and 60 total citations. Notably, Francoise D. Alsaker from the University of Bern in Switzerland boasts the highest average citations per paper at 35.00, indicating the widespread recognition of her work by fellow scholars. Five of the top 10 authors are affiliated with the University System of Ohio in the USA, demonstrating the state’s active involvement in this field. These findings emphasize the significant contributions of these authors and their impact on the current research landscape. Furthermore, they suggest that the USA leads in research in this domain, implying potential benefits for international researchers through collaboration with US scholars.

Figure 2 displays a clear line chart illustrating an author’s work progression over time. The graph showcases the author’s timeline, using differently sized bubbles to indicate the number of papers produced yearly. The horizontal axis denotes the years of the author’s activity, while the vertical axis represents various authors. A



(Source: Biblioshiny)

Figure 2. Authors’ production overtime (1989-2021).

Table 4. Top 10 Most prolific authors on regional language with their citations impact

Author	Affiliated institution	TP	TC	C/P	h-index	h-core
Cynthia G. Clopper	University System of Ohio, USA	8	144	18.00	6	142
Robert A. Fox	University System of Ohio, USA	5	60	12.00	3	59
Ewa Jacewicz	University System of Ohio, USA	4	59	14.75	3	59
Terrin N. Tamati	University System of Ohio, USA	4	27	6.75	3	27
R Mann	University of Colorado Boulder, USA	3	0	0.00	0	0
Laura Wagner	University System of Ohio, USA	3	26	8.67	3	26
Francoise D. Alsaker	University of Bern, Switzerland	2	70	35.00	2	70
Will Amos	University of Warwick, UK	2	13	6.50	1	13
Richard R. Andrews	University of London, UK	2	8	4.00	1	8
Leonie Cornips	Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), Netherlands	2	6	3.00	1	5

*TP: Total Number of Publications; TC: Total Citations; C/P: Average Citations Per Publication; h-core : Citation Sum within the h-core

deep blue circle signifies a significant output during a particular year. This chart enables the comparison of authors’ productivity. It is a valuable tool for pinpointing peaks and troughs in an author’s career. This, in turn, aids in understanding the factors influencing fluctuations in their output, making it a valuable analytical resource.

4.5 Prolific Institutions

A study found 196 global institutions researching regional languages. Table 5 ranks the top 10 prolific institutions based on their research output from 1990 to 2022. Ohio State University leads with 14 publications, showcasing its exceptional standard and influence. Indiana University follows closely with five publications. McMaster University (Canada) and the University of Helsinki (Finland) have four publications each, solidifying their reputable positions.

The list reflects research quality, guiding researchers, educators, and students in finding regional language studies. The study emphasizes universities’ and research institutions’ vital role in generating knowledge, advancing regional languages, and preserving cultural diversity.

4.6 Highly Cited Papers

The study presented in Table 6 provides a detailed analysis of the top 10 highly cited papers in the field of regional languages from 1990 to 2022. The data is presented using various parameters such as total citations, total citations per year, and normalized total citations. The results reveal that the most highly cited paper in this field is “Effects of gender and regional dialect on prosodic patterns in American English”²², published in the Journal of Phonetics in 2011. This paper received a total of 69 citations, with a TCPY of 5.75 and an NTC of 3.78.

Following this, “Immigrant children’s peer acceptance and victimisation in kindergarten: The role of local language competence”²³, published in the British Journal of Developmental Psychology in 2010, secured the second

Table 6. Highly cited published articles on regional languages

Paper	Authors & Year	Journal	TC	TCPY	NTC
Effects of gender and regional dialect on prosodic patterns in American English. ²²	Clopper & Smiljanic; 2011	Journal of Phonetics	69	5.75	3.78
Immigrant children's peer acceptance and victimisation in kindergarten: The role of local language competence. ²³	Von Grünigen, <i>et al.</i> ; 2010	British Journal of Developmental Psychology	50	3.85	2.22
Learn English, not the local language! Ethnic Russians in the Baltic States. ²⁴	Toomet; 2011	American Economic Review	49	4.08	2.68
Language as an issue in international internal communication: English or local language? If English, what English? ²⁵	Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta; 2012	Public Relations Review	45	4.09	4.09
The 2007 general election in Kenya and its aftermath: The role of local language media. ²⁶	Ismail & Deane; 2008	The International Journal of Press/Politics	36	2.40	1.55
Effects of semantic predictability and regional dialect on vowel space reduction. ²⁷	Clopper & Pierrehumbert; 2008	The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America	34	2.27	1.46
Regional dialect variation in the vowel systems of typically developing children. ²⁸	Jacewicz, <i>et al.</i> ; 2011	Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research	31	2.58	1.70
Local-language literacy and sustainable development in Africa. ²⁹	Trudell; 2009	International Journal of Educational Development	27	1.93	2.45
Sustaining local language relationships through indigenous community-based tourism initiatives. ³⁰	Whitney-Squire; 2016	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	25	3.57	4.87
Non-native English-speaking professors' experiences of English-medium instruction and their perceived roles in the local language. ³¹	Kim & Tatar; 2017	Journal of Language, Identity & Education	21	3.50	4.00

*TC: Total Citations; TCPY: Total Citations per Year; NTC: Normalized Total Citations

Table 7. Most prolific journal in the field of regional languages

Journal	TP	TC	C/P	h-index	h-core
Zeitschrift Fur Dialektologie Und Linguistik.	12	2	0.17	1	2
Journal of the Acoustical Society of America.	6	77	12.83	4	75
Annales-Anali Za Istrske in Mediteranske Studije-Series Historia Et Sociologia	6	4	0.67	2	4
Language in Society.	4	11	2.75	2	11
Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development.	4	4	1.00	1	2
Dialectologia et Geolinguistica.	4	1	0.25	1	1
Zeitschrift Fur Romanische Philologie.	4	0	0.00	0	0
American Speech.	3	15	5.00	2	15
International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism.	3	4	1.33	1	3
English Today.	3	6	2.00	1	6

*TP: Total Number of Publications; TC: Total Citations; C/P: Average Citations Per Publication; h-core: Citation Sum within the h-core

have overlooked relevant citations and publications in databases like Scopus and Dimension, potentially impacting the study's outcomes. Future research should incorporate AI-powered text-mining tools and methods from multiple academic databases to address this limitation for a more comprehensive analysis. Manual filtration and database screening were time-consuming and complex, potentially influencing the results. As research progresses, continuous monitoring of the relevant literature is necessary to update findings due to evolving citation counts. The

study also highlights the importance of standardising author and institutional names across databases to ensure accurate and reliable analysis, avoid confusion, and ensure correct citations.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive global bibliometric analysis of regional language and its related areas from 1990 to 2022. It examines growth, key articles, authors, journals,

institutions, and research topics to answer specific research questions. Between 1990 and 2022, research publications on regional languages have consistently increased at an average annual growth rate of 9.05 %. The peak occurred in 2019 with 19 publications, followed closely by 2017 and 2022, each with 16 publications. The USA leads in research output, with 44 TP, 582 TC, and an h-index of 13, signifying a significant contribution to regional language research. Similar research trends were also highlighted in the previous language studies³²⁻³³.

Among the top 10 authors, Cynthia G. Clopper, from the University System of Ohio, stands out with eight publications and the highest total citations (TC) of 144. The Ohio State University, also in the USA, tops the institution rankings with 14 high-quality and impactful publications. This study highlights the substantial contributions made by authors, institutions, and countries in regional language research and their influence on the current research landscape. A total of 220 research papers focused on regional languages were identified from 157 different journals.

The journal “Zeitschrift Fur Dialektologie Und Linguistik” emerged as the most productive, closely followed by “Journal of the Acoustical Society of America” and “Annales-Anali Za Istrske in Mediteranske Studije-Series.” The “Journal of the Acoustical Society of America” garnered the highest citation count, averaging 12.83 citations per publication, while “American Speech” achieved an average of 5.00 citations per publication. These journals have significantly contributed to regional language studies through extensive research and publications. The TreeMap effectively visualises regional language research, aiding comprehension of research themes. Dialect emerges as the primary focus, followed by language policy, dialectology, bilingual education, local language, and minority languages. This underscores regional language preservation. Preserving diverse linguistic and cultural heritage is crucial, as dominant languages pose a threat. Efforts are being made to conserve and revive these languages.

Nonetheless, it remains vital to wholeheartedly support these initiatives to preserve the rich tapestry of our global linguistic and cultural heritage from gradual erosion. The insights gleaned from this inquiry hold the potential to serve as a guiding light for scholars, researchers, and policymakers, enabling them to pinpoint neglected domains necessitating additional exploration and construct tactics to enhance the prominence and efficacy of regional language research. In our collective pursuit, we can contribute to the protection and commemoration of the extraordinary linguistic and cultural heterogeneity that our world embodies.

By sustaining ongoing research endeavors and promoting collaborative efforts, we strengthen our commitment to upholding this invaluable legacy, ensuring that the diverse languages and cultures that define our world continue to thrive and flourish.

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His contribution to the present study includes conceptualising ideas and developing the research framework, editing the manuscript, refining language, and ensuring proper referencing.