


A Bibliometric Analysis of Mobile-Assisted English Learning

Xiyue Zhao¹, Hariharan N Krishnasamy², Lingqi Mo^{3*} , Ryma Guechi⁴, N. Ashokkumar⁵

¹ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Persiaran Perdana BBN Putra Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3579-7586>

² Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts/Centre for Education and Sustainable Development Strategies, INTI International University, Persiaran Perdana BBN Putra Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan/Shinawatra University, Thailand. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3008-0270>

³ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Persiaran Perdana BBN Putra Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4753-7387>

⁴ Department of English Language Skills, English Language Institute, University of Tabuk, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6436-8492>

⁵ Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, Mohan Babu University, Tirupathi-517102, Andhra Pradesh, India <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4034-484X>

*Corresponding Author: i23024564@student.newinti.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

The widespread use of mobile devices like smartphones and tablets has increased the frequency of usage for English learning. Meanwhile, with increasing globalization, English has been considered a bridging language to enhance cooperation and communication among different cultures. In this sense, the current bibliometric research assesses prior academic research on mobile-assisted English learning in schools, utilizing data from the Web of Science Core Collection Database. A significant amount of growth was noted for the Mobile-Assisted English Learning research genre, with 240 documents published. This research aims to portray the role of mobile technology in improving English language proficiency by analyzing existing bibliometric data for emerging trends, top research subjects, notable authors, and keywords in the research area using the VOSviewer software tool. The findings show an upward trend in the use of technology for learning English, highlighting the benefits of mobile applications, games, and multimedia tools in facilitating language learning and student engagement. Key themes that emerged included personalized learning approaches, the impact of devices in educational settings, and challenges related to technology accessibility and usability. This study gives instructors with methods for increasing learning opportunities and promoting English language learning through mobile devices, including those from developing countries.

Keywords: Mobile-assisted English learning, mobile technology, bibliometric analysis, Education quality, learning opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Learning strategies have gone through a major change, especially in international languages, as a result of the combination of technology with teaching methods. In the last few years, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) (Burston, 2015) has become one of the most widely researched topics because MALL introduced flexibility, adaptability, and interactivity into language learning for students and educators (Wardak, 2020). There have been more MALL studies performed throughout international areas as a result of studies demonstrating that making use of portable devices like smartphones and tablets has increased (Iftikhar, 2025). This change

enables language learning to exceed conventional classroom settings and become a much more tailored and contextualized approach for a broader range of learners (Kukulka-Hulme et al., 2017). With relevance to English language learning, the objective of this research is to study the current literature on Mobile-assisted English Learning (MAEL) (Huang et al., 2024). To recognize trends, key topics, and locations for further investigation, bibliometric analysis was utilized.

The tendency to use mobile devices to support learning English is expanding swiftly, involving several approaches, intellectual models, and contextual uses. According to some studies, mobile innovation can improve learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, and general language proficiency in certain areas. (Chen, 2011) (Hsu et al., 2017). These researches show that mobile applications and social networks can improve learner engagement, self-learning, and immediate feedback processes (Alismaiel et al., 2022). Under the umbrella of Automated Feedback Systems (AFS) (Almutawa, 2023), it can be seen that the system has been examined in works related to MAEL, revealing the possibility of students' self-regulation in language acquisition processes, specifically in a scholastic context. Moreover, some studies have actually examined the use of artificial intelligence or social networking websites, such as Twitter, to improve pronunciation and various other linguistic features (Hang et al., 2024). In this area of research, both theoretical and empirical techniques have been employed because several methods and procedures are related to technology.

Although there has been some research on MAEL, there has been a lack of attention given to how factors such as the background of the subjects, levels of digital literacy, or access to technologies affect their interaction with MAEL tools (Alakrash & Abdul Razak, 2021). Early studies have started to explore these issues, but there has been limited attention given to how diverse learner populations, especially in non-Western contexts, deal with and benefit from MAEL. In addition, the vast flexibility that MAEL embodies is a great opportunity for learning English, but it depends on the condition that teachers are being effectively trained in this incorporation of technologies for their own effective pedagogical practices (Grimaldi & Ball, 2021). This highlights the need for studies that examine education and professional development in light of MAEL and the concrete difficulties educators have in implementing these technologies at work.

Moreover, the current study reveals that there are still some challenges that have not been completely addressed in studies using mobile-assisted English learning. As noted in many studies, much focus has been placed on the immediate learning outcomes that stem from the mobile technologies applied, while limited research has been conducted to understand the long-term effects of MALL interventions on learners' language retention and fluency (Rezaee et al., 2019). Additionally, further research is required on how mobile technologies can achieve a balance between accuracy and fluency in language acquisition (Jiang et al., 2023). The findings indicate that although technologies such as Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) (Ghai & Singh, 2012) positively affect phonological accuracy, they might unintentionally hinder learners' fluency. This underscores an important gap in the literature: the need for research on how mobile technologies can be designed or adapted to encourage a more balanced development of linguistic skills over time.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to analyze and summarize the literature on mobile-assisted English learning research to the present day, revealing trends, patterns, and gaps in the field. By employing bibliometric visualization techniques, the current study is intended to not only illustrate the intellectual landscape of MAEL but also identify influential researchers, journals, and key themes that have shaped this field of study. As a comprehensive review, this study is crucial for understanding the field and can act as a foundation for further research. Furthermore, the main focus of this study allows for a deeper examination of how MAEL has contributed to evolving English language learning, along with its practical implications for learners and educators.

The objectives of this study are to analyze key themes, most influential papers, and authors within the field of mobile-assisted English learning using bibliometric analysis; to examine the theoretical approaches frequently adopted in MAEL research that can reveal its diversity of perspectives; and to recognize research gaps and potential future directions with respect to the long-term influence of mobile-assisted English learning, the socio-cultural aspects of mobile learning, and the contribution of teacher education in effectively implementing MAEL. In light of these objectives, the following research questions are addressed:

- (1) What are the dominant themes and trends of research on mobile-assisted English learning characterized by bibliometric visualization?
- (2) What gaps exist in the present literature, especially concerning the long-term impact of MALL, sociocultural dimensions of mobile learning, and teacher training?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis applies statistical and mathematical methods to examine patterns in academic research and the associated literature (Chen et al., 2017). This field of study encompasses research outputs, articles, conference proceedings, and citations to graph the development, dissemination, and influence of specific topics within a particular discipline or field (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Over the last few years, bibliometric techniques have emerged as effective resources for understanding the growth of a specific research area and its impact, as well as for describing general trends, important literature, and collaboration networks (Mejia et al., 2021). With such techniques, one can design a landscape for a research area, stressing the emergence of new topics and areas.

Bibliometric analysis is of excellent value in this rapidly growing field of checking out how to integrate mobile innovation into the language learning atmosphere (Adeniji, 2019). This research seeks to establish influential authors, key articles, citation frequency, and collaboration networks that have shaped the field of MAEL. Consequently, bibliometrics supplies a better understanding of exactly how mobile-assisted learning technologies are evolving and how they affect English language teaching and learners' performance (Mohsen et al., 2025; Taddese et al., 2025).

Mobile-Assisted English Learning

The use of mobile-assisted devices in English language learning has completely changed conventional pedagogical methods. Nowadays, learners can access educational resources anytime and anywhere, allowing them to practice their language skills anywhere more conveniently to expose themselves to the language and have more opportunities to practice (Gikas & Grant, 2013). From the bibliometric analysis, a number of studies have focused on how MAEL has been used in English learning, with a particular emphasis on the aspect of vocabulary acquisition, training in pronunciation, and fluency (Rajendran & Yunus, 2021).

Most of the most dynamic and interactive language learning applications are available on portable equipment such as smartphones and tablets. One of the main benefits of mobile-assisted learning is the ability to provide learners with immediate feedback so that they can correct their mistakes in real time (Simonova, 2015). According to the study, immediate feedback can considerably enhance English learning outcomes, especially when it comes to pronunciation training and vocabulary retention (Darcy, 2018; Ikram et al., 2025).

Different researches have explored how MAEL promotes individual independence and self-regulation. Thanks to the personalized learning environment offered by mobile devices, students can set their own pace of English learning and track their progress more effectively than in a traditional classroom atmosphere (Grant & Basye, 2014). It has actually been reported that learners utilize automated feedback systems in mobile devices to engage in even more self-regulating behaviours when establishing personal language learning and monitoring progression (Alserhan et al., 2023). Studies have revealed that students can better moderate English learning methods to fulfill their requirements through mobile devices.

METHODS

The Web of Science (WOS) core collection served as the data source for this research, which included SCIE, SSCI, A&HCI, ESCI, and CPCI, providing a comprehensive data source that admits multidisciplinary research materials sourced from more than 18,000 high-impact scholarly journals, conference papers, and more than 80,000 academic books all over the world (Ibrahim, 2021).

This research gathered academic articles on "mobile-assisted English learning" from the WoS core collection. To create the research dataset, several search terms related to mobile-assisted English learning were employed. As shown in Table 1, the search contents are TS= ("mobile-assisted" OR "mobile-aided" OR "mobile-based" OR "mobile-driven" OR "mobile-enhanced") AND TS= ("English learning" OR "English study" OR "EFL" OR "ELL"), with English selected as the language. This study obtained publication data for 245 articles through the identification process. In the next step of the screening process, two duplicate articles were removed, leaving 243 articles for further research. Three irrelevant articles were identified and removed from the search, and the remaining 240 articles were used in the study.

Table 1 Search String

Wos Database	Core Collection
Time Period	Up to AUGUST 2024
Search field	TOPIC
Search keywords	Mobile-assisted English learning
Document Type	ALL
Language	English

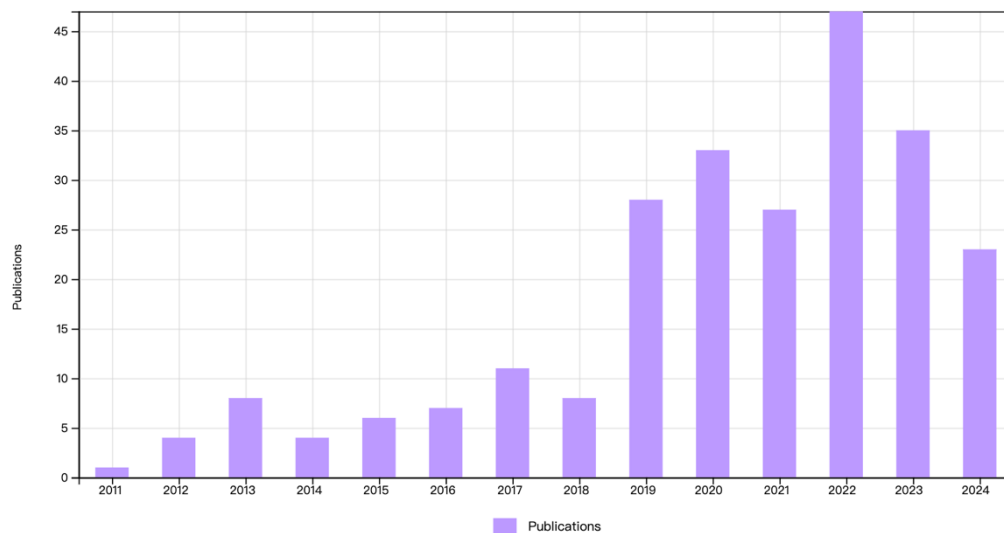
Initially, the total number of citations of articles published each year was calculated, and basic linear regression analysis was employed to identify the trend of publications in the field. Based on the interactions between these issues, VOSviewer was used to conduct visualization and citation network analyses, which generated maps of articles, countries, and keywords. When seeking highly cited articles, the methods of normalization and raw citation counts (Mutz & Daniel, 2019) are not excluded to prevent bias toward earlier publications, which typically accumulate more citations. (Teplitskiy et al., 2022). This study sought to provide a more comprehensive view of the most recent outstanding publications in the field by examining the top 10 reports that have been cited most frequently according to the measures. To obtain concrete outcomes, this research sought to present and examine the most productive countries. Finally, keyword items were screened and filtered for value to offer a fuller explanation of research trends in mobile-assisted English learning. The rest of the terms were calculated to create a keyword co-occurrence map.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This section examines the findings concerning the research questions, covering the publication trend, key sources of publication, most prolific countries, most highly cited articles, and most frequent co-occurrence keywords.

Publication Trends

Initially, an analysis was conducted on the yearly distribution of MAEL articles within the WoS Core Collection database. The results are shown in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1** Publication Trends

This figure shows the trend of MAEL publications during the period from 2011 to 2024. Although varying, it is an ever-increasing graph during the period, with peak publications in 2022, followed by a subsequent decline. In the initial years, 2011-2012, the publications were low owing to the early period of mobile learning technologies and their applications in teaching and learning English. The large increase in 2013 marks the beginning of a wider diffusion of smartphones and mobile devices, which coincided with a growth in the interest in exploiting these technologies for language learning. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of publications generally stood at a reasonable level with some variation, which indicated a period of exploration and consolidation when researchers started to look at the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities presented by MAEL. According to the study, there were more articles published on MAEL between 2019 and 2022 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which switched to remote learning. During

this period, studies on mobile-assisted English learning reached a critical level as educators urgently sought innovative ways to maintain educational continuity. Despite these obstacles, the peak in publications in 2022 highlights the importance of developing and improving mobile-assisted learning resources to sustain growth and progress in students' language learning achievements.

However, the decline in publications after 2022 can be attributed to several factors. This advancement probably results in a shift of research emphasis towards emerging technologies and methodologies, including artificial intelligence and systems of personalized learning. These newer areas have started attracting much attention and resources. Ultimately, the trends of publications in MAEL reflect the dynamic influence of technological advancement, global events, and the evolution of a maturing research field.

Distribution of Publication Sources

Table 2 Top 10 Publication Sources

Journals	No. of Publications	Total Citations
Computer Assisted Language Learning	25	819
Education and Information Technologies	18	212
ReCALL	15	197
Language Learning and Technology	11	114
Journal of Computer Assisted Learning	8	43
Arab World English Journal	8	94
Journal of Asia TEFL	6	76
Interactive Learning Environments	6	50
Asia-Pacific Education Researcher	5	57
Sustainability	5	59

This research examined the citations of journals that had the highest number of publications on MAEL. **Table 2** displays the leading 10 journals, each of which has published at least five relevant articles on the subject.

The two journals with the most articles are *Computer Assisted Language Learning* and *Education and Information Technology*. Significantly, all of these journals are high-impact publications indexed, indicating the broad recognition and acceptance of Mobile-assisted English Learning (MAEL) as an effective approach in the teaching and learning of English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL). An analysis of citation frequency revealed that journals such as *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *Language Learning & Technology*, *ReCALL*, and *Education and Information Technologies* stand out prominently. This underscores the crucial role these journals play in advancing the field, demonstrating how MAEL is being rigorously monitored, implemented, and enhanced by researchers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) through the application of cutting-edge technology and digital methodologies.

Distribution of Most Prolific Countries

Figure 2 shows the global distribution and collaborative nature of MAEL research in the literature. China, the USA, and Spain are the three leading countries based on the contribution of the research output. China is the leading country with regard to overall research production with high international collaboration. China cooperates with other regions that have extended to the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East, illustrating the great influence of China in academic research on mobile-assisted English learning. China's high productivity in this field shows that with the rapid development of China, English as the international language has become more and more important. The popularity of mobile technology offers a more convenient way to learn English, so China invests more in research on this topic than other countries. The USA has strong links to a wide variety of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Australia, and South Korea. The USA and Spain also hold prominent positions, indicating high research output and intensive collaboration, mainly within Europe and Asia. Other relevant countries are Saudi Arabia, Iran, South Korea, Australia, and Indonesia, which bring relevant outputs and partnerships into the global network. Emerging contributors such as Malaysia, Japan, and Bangladesh, have also become increasingly involved in this landscape of research. This in total underlines the global interest in MAEL and shared research across diverse regions of the world.

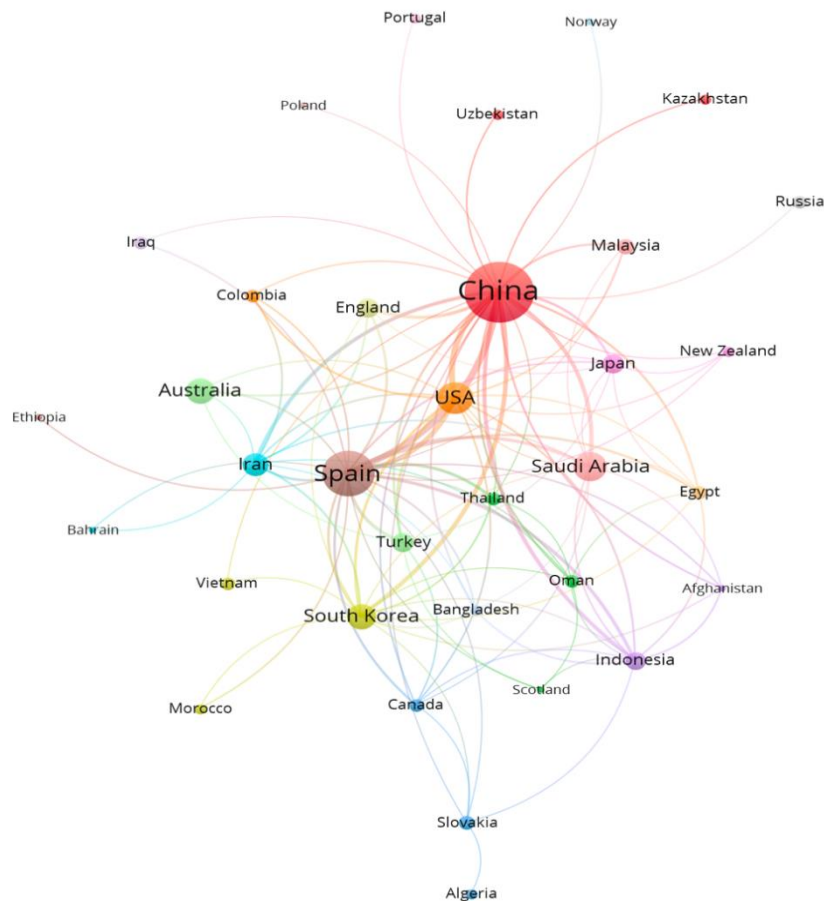


Figure 2 Map of Co-countries network

Distributions of Most Highly Cited Authors

VOSviewer was used for co-citation examination analysis to identify key influential authors in the field of MAEL. This co-citation network map offers a representation of the academic domain related to MAEL research topics and methodologies by illustrating their interrelatedness through prominent authors and their published works (Giamellaro et al., 2022). As shown in **Figure 3**, the central red cluster is notably distinguished by scholars such as Kukulka-Hulme, A. and Stockwell, G., whose contributions have been crucial, in integrating technologies into language learning practices. This group of studies investigates the theoretical system and the methods that are required to identify the effectiveness of using mobile devices in language acquisition. Their work has impacted a wide range of studies; hence, this cluster is the core of MAEL research.

In the yellow cluster, some of the major scholars such as Shadieff R., Hwang, Wy., and Chen, Cm. emphasize the technological aspects and innovative teaching methods applied in MAEL. Their work examines the use of mobile apps and gamification to enhance language learning experiences while providing perspectives on utilizing digital tools to boost educational results through studies and practical assessments of various mobile learning strategies.

The blue cluster is the group of scholars, including Burston, J., Godwin-Jones, R., and Nation, Isp., who study the cognitive aspect of the process of language acquisition, focusing on the learning and evaluation of vocabulary terms. This group explores the role of portable devices in retaining words and understanding as well as assessing language proficiency levels. Their research plays a role in comprehending the benefits of mobile-assisted English learning and how it can be evaluated and optimized.

Authors like Dornyel, Z. and Bandura, A. in the green cluster, concentrate on modern teaching approaches and the application of mobile technology in school environments. Their research emphasizes the use of mobile devices by teachers and schools to enhance students' engagement and motivation in learning experiences. They frequently explore educational approaches that take advantage of mobile technology.

At the edges of the network lies a group referred to as the purple cluster that comprises significant scholars such as Rosell-Agullar, F. and Wong, Lh. concerning the sociocultural and psychological underpinnings of MAEL. Their studies delve into second language acquisition to investigate the interpersonal and mental aspects

of mobile-assisted learning. Their contributions illuminate how motivation, self-regulation, and interaction affect the effectiveness of mobile learning environments.

Smaller, more peripheral clusters that stand out focus on specialized topics and new trends in MAEL research are also observed. For instance, researchers like Nikou, Sa., MacIntyre, Pd., and Liontas, Ji. are linked to studies about learner anxiety, motivation, and other emotional aspects. They also explore the challenges of integrating learning in particular settings like developing countries or various educational levels. These clusters reflect emerging areas of interest that could play a prominent role as the field progresses.

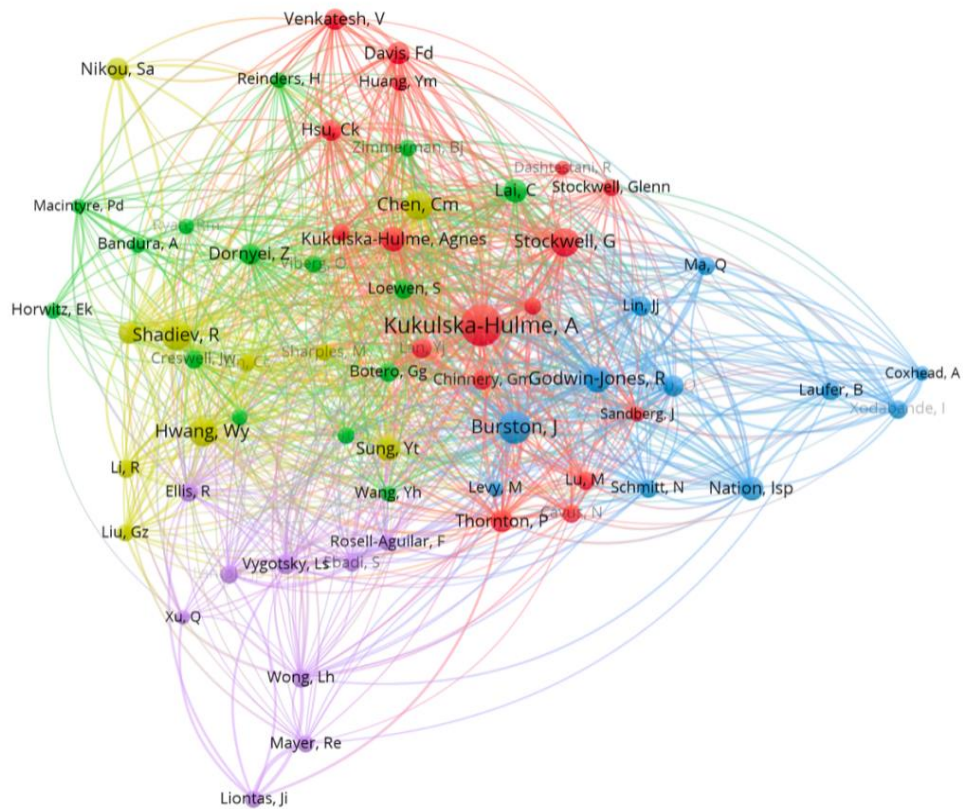


Figure 3 Co-citation of Authors network

Distributions of Most Frequently Co-occurrence Keywords

The network of keywords working together gives us a comprehensive view of the MAEL research landscape, showing the main topics and how they are connected, while also highlighting new areas of study that are emerging in this field. In the core of the network stands out Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, Technology, English, MALL, and Students as the important keywords that show their fundamental significance in this area of study. The visual depiction reveals distinct groupings, each representing separate but interrelated areas of study.

The study reveals that the variety of publications on mobile-assisted English learning (MAEL) boosted between 2019 and 2022. Owing to students switched over to remote-learning methods throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and mobile modern technology facilitates English language learning and overcomes the gap created by the restrictions of conventional educational environments. The surge in publications in 2022 highlights the focus on developing and boosting mobile-assisted English learning resources to maintain progression and accomplishments in English education. Artificial intelligence has already affected English language learning, making the number of publications on MAEL decline from 2023.

The research of MAEL shows that China, the United States, and Spain have made outstanding contributions in this field, which shows that there is a solid international cooperative network for research in the field of English learning. The high representation of these countries reveals that MAEL has attracted a wide range of interest from the worldwide community and that the study outcomes have been widely recognized. China's leading position in scientific study and its extensive international partnerships are particularly considerable, underscoring China's dedication to improving English language acquisition outcomes through educational technology.

The key researchers' contributions to the area of mobile-assisted English learning were determined throughout the evaluation of the citations. In relating mobile technology to theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), prominent scholars such as Kukulska-Hulme and Stockwell play a crucial role in our understanding of how strong feedback systems and engaging learning environments can facilitate the English learning experience on mobile devices.

The study also points out the importance of teacher education in effectively implementing mobile-assisted technology for enhancing English learning. Despite the fact that mobile facilities such as smartphones can help boost English learning, their impact relies on the quality of educators in terms of incorporating these tools into classroom instruction. Research indicates that numerous teachers encounter challenges in integrating technologies into their practices because they are not well supported and trained. This emphasizes the importance of exploring ways to provide teachers with the essential capabilities to make effective use of mobile learning resources.

To sum up, this study lays the foundation for future MAEL research by outlining significant trends and notable figures in the field as well as highlighting potential areas for deeper investigation, which could pave the way for progress in this area of study. As mobile device technology continues to evolve, researchers need to expand upon these findings by investigating innovative techniques to enhance the efficacy of mobile-assisted English learning.

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