International Journal of Linguistics and Discourse Analytics
Vol. 7, No. 1, September 2025
P-ISSN 2721-8899 E-ISSN 2721-8880

Bibliometric Analysis: Trends In Japanese Linguistics Studies (2004-2024)

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ABSTRACT

The study of Japanese linguistics has gained growing attention in recent decades as global interest in Japanese language and culture continues to expand. This research maps trends and emerging topics in Japanese linguistic studies from 2004 to 2024 using bibliometric analysis. Data were collected from Google Scholar through Publish or Perish and analyzed with VOSviewer, resulting in 29 relevant terms classified into five clusters. Network visualization revealed strong interconnections across research areas, with central terms such as Japanese linguistics, applied linguistics, and discourse frequently bridging multiple clusters, confirming the increasing relevance of discourse analysis in language studies. Overlay visualization highlighted the temporal evolution of research, showing that since 2020, topics such as cognitive linguistics and intercultural communication have gained prominence, reflecting a broader transition from structural approaches toward cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives. Density visualization further demonstrated that established areas like Japanese linguistics and applied linguistics are highly saturated, while emerging fields remain underexplored and present opportunities for innovation. This study provides valuable insights into evolving research directions and encourages further exploration of cognitive and intercultural perspectives in Japanese linguistics

Keywords: Japanese linguistics, bibliometric analysis, research trends, Publish or Perish, VOSviewer

1. Introduction

The study of Japanese linguistics has gained significant attention in recent decades, driven by the growing global interest in the Japanese language and culture (Mori et al., 2021; Mori & Mori, 2011). As this interest continues to rise, bibliometric analysis has emerged as an essential tool for understanding trends and developments in linguistic research (Arik, 2015).

Bibliometric tools provide essential insights into the structure and dynamics of research, which allows researchers to systematically examine the growth of scientific publications. This approach is beneficial in Japanese linguistics, where identifying thematic patterns and connections between studies is crucial for advancing academic discourse.

This study adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing bibliometric analysis as a framework to systematically review the evolution of Japanese linguistic research over the past two decades (Nayak et al., 2022). The bibliometric method allows for collecting comprehensive data on scientific publications, offering insights into collaboration patterns and developing specific research areas.

The data were gathered using Harzing's Publish or Perish software, known for its accuracy in retrieving publication metrics from platforms such as Google Scholar (Farisia, 2021). The collected data were then visualized using VOSviewer, a tool that facilitates the identification of trends and relationships between critical topics and contributors within the field (Hou & Yu, 2023). By applying this approach, the current study aims to map the evolution of Japanese linguistic research and highlight areas that have received significant attention within the academic community.

Recent bibliometric studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of this method in tracking and analyzing research trends across various disciplines, including linguistics (Crosthwaite et al., 2023; Kartal & Yeşilyurt, 2024; Lee, 2023; Mengliye et al., 2023). In Japanese linguistics, bibliometric analysis is very useful for understanding how important topics and study trends have changed over time.

Prior studies have utilized bibliographic coupling to investigate the framework of linguistic research (Dewanty et al., 2022; Guo, 2022; Yan & Zhang, 2023). Tools such as Publish or Perish and VOSviewer have become widely used for collecting and analyzing bibliometric data (CheshmehSohrabi & Mashhadi, 2023; Fuad et al., 2022; Hou & Yu, 2023; Min & Yu, 2023), enabling scholars to visualize connections and identify trends in linguistic studies.

Previous bibliometric research has revealed trends in various subfields of linguistics, including semantics (Shen & Ho, 2020), phonology (Ardianingtyas & Nurrohman, 2023) and pragmatics (Alduais et al., 2022). These studies have shed light on the most frequently studied topics, patterns of collaboration, and future directions in linguistic research. Moreover, bibliometric analysis has also contributed to understanding pedagogical trends, such as integrating technology in language teaching and innovative instructional approaches (Feng & Chen, 2022; Min & Yu, 2023). Additionally, it has been applied in applied linguistics, including forensic linguistics (Alduais et al., 2023), computational linguistics (Radev et al., 2016), and discourse analysis (Wang et al., 2022), further reflecting the growing relevance of linguistic research in various social and professional contexts.

Despite the widespread use of bibliometric techniques in many linguistic research, there is still a clear gap of application in the systematic mapping. Studies that are now available focus only on specific subfields rather than provide a thorough summary of the Japanese linguistics study evolution. Moreover, no research has integrated large-scale bibliometric data with programs like VOSviewer and Publish or Perish to examine thematic clusters, key contributors, and collaboration patterns. This gap highlights the necessity for a holistic bibliometric analysis that identifies new trends and understudied topics in Japanese lingustics research.

While bibliometric studies have been conducted across multiple linguistic fields, there has been a noticeable lack of research using this approach, specifically on Japanese linguistics. This study looks into this gap by offering a detailed bibliometric analysis of trends in Japanese linguistic studies. This analysis looks to outline the current research trends in different areas of Japanese linguistics, including morphology, syntax, and semantics, while providing useful insights into the key topics in the field.

This study aims to offer the overview of how Japanese linguistic research has grown and changed over time. By mapping key themes, active researchers, and collaboration patterns, it highlights what has been studied most and what still needs attention. The findings are expected to guide future researchers, spark new ideas, and support the continued development of Japanese linguistics as an expanding discipline.

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2. Methods

This study employs bibliometric analysis to examine the research trends in Japanese linguistics. Bibliometric analysis provides a systematic way to explore large bodies of research and identify how a field develops over time. Performance analysis and science mapping are the two primary parts of the technique. Science mapping looks at the linkages between research components, including intellectual exchanges and structural links, whereas performance analysis focuses on the contributions of these components (Donthu et al., 2021).

The literature for this research were collected using Google Scholar, which were chosen for its ability to track citations across a wide range of open-access academic documents and its broad impact on citation types (Kousha & Thelwall, 2008). The search were conducted using Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) software, version 8.12.4612, as of March 12, 2024. PoP is a widely recognized tool for retrieving and analyzing citation data from Google Scholar, providing various metrics such as the number of papers, total citations, and h-index (Harzing, 2016).

Once the data were collected, it were processed and visualized using VOSviewer version 1.6.20. VOSviewer were used to map keyword patterns, author networks, and thematic clusters. The analysis followed three steps: data compilation, data cleaning, and visualization (Briones-Bitar et al., 2020).

The study used several bibliometric approaches, such as reference analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographical coupling, and conjunction word analysis, to uncover the conceptual framework and trends in Japanese linguistics research (Donthu et al., 2021). These steps ensured a comprehensive and replicable analysis aligned with the study's goal of mapping research trends in Japanese linguistics.

3. Findings and Discussion

Using Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) tool, the search term "Japanese Linguistics" were applied to gather research from 2004 to 2024, with a limit of 500 maximum results. A total of 358 research papers were identified, accounting for 2112 citations in total. After reducing the dataset by eliminating irrelevant studies based on two criteria—(1) studies whose content were not directly related to Japanese linguistics and (2) duplicate studies published by different publishers or republished on multiple platforms. A total of 339 research papers were identified, yielding 2,112 citations. The final data were exported in .ris format and analyzed using VOSviewer.

The bibliometric analysis were performed by identifying recurring terms across the titles and abstracts of the 339 papers. A minimum repetition of five occurrences were set to determine relevant terms. Out of 1416 terms, 50 were found to be interconnected and relevant, meeting the repetition criterion. A manual selection further reduced these to 29 terms specifically related to Japanese linguistics, which were categorized into five clusters. The following table presents the clustering of these terms.

Table 1. Cluster Division

No.	Cluster 1 (8 items)	Cluster 2 (5 items)	Cluster 3 (6 items)	Cluster 4 (5 items)	Cluster 5 (5 items)
1	*analysis*	*general linguistic history*	*aspect*	*culture*	*cognitive linguistics*
2	*application*	*japanese language*	*comprehensive survey*	*intercultural communication*	*construction*
3	*applied linguistics*	*japanese linguistics*	*discourse*	*linguistics*	*japanese korean linguistics*
4	*development*	*national institute*	*japanese applied linguistics*	*literature*	*perspective*
5	*english*	*structure*	*social perspective*	*university*	*sentence*
6	*japanese*	*history*	*teaching*		
7	*language*				
8	*translation*				

These 29 topics represent the focus areas guiding the analysis of Japanese linguistic research trends. The findings of the research were separated into three sections:

Network Vizualisation

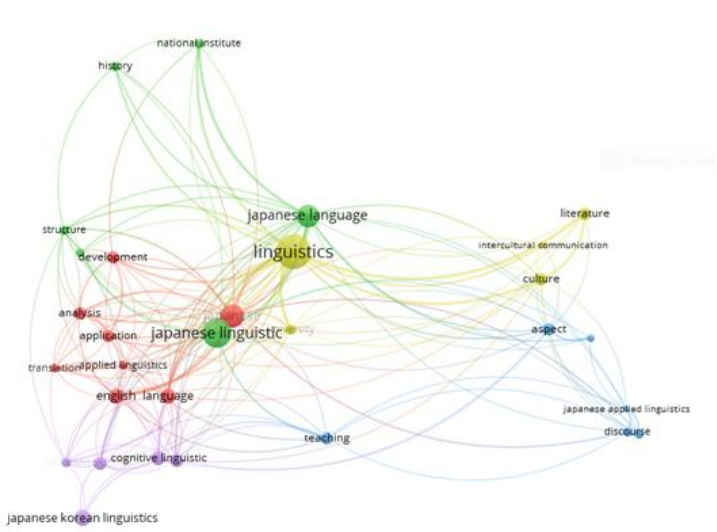

Figure 1. Network between Clusters and Topics

Figure 1 represents the relations between clusters and topics. The visualization shows how topics are interconnected, highlighting critical areas of research that overlap or influence each other. For example, terms such as "Japanese linguistics," "applied linguistics," and "discourse" appear to be central within multiple clusters, indicating their importance in current Japanese linguistic research. This result aligns with previous studies emphasizing the growing attention to discourse analysis in language studies.

Novelty in Japanese Linguistics Research

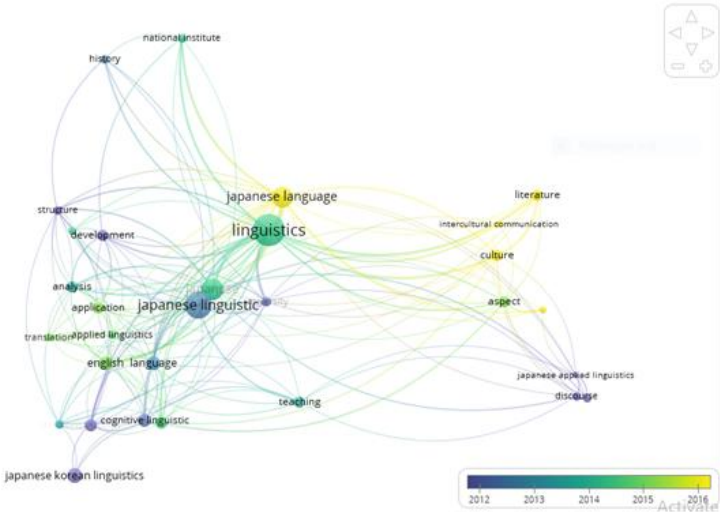

Figure 2. Topic Novelty

Figure 2 represents the level of novelty within Japanese linguistic studies. It is illustrated using an overlay visualization, which maps the temporal aspect of research trends. This analysis showed that recent studies (from 2020 onward) focus increasingly on topics such as "cognitive linguistics" and "intercultural communication," reflecting the current shift towards cognitive and socio-cultural approaches in language studies. This finding is consistent with the growing interest in understanding language beyond grammar and exploring its cognitive and cultural dimensions.

Saturation of Research Topics

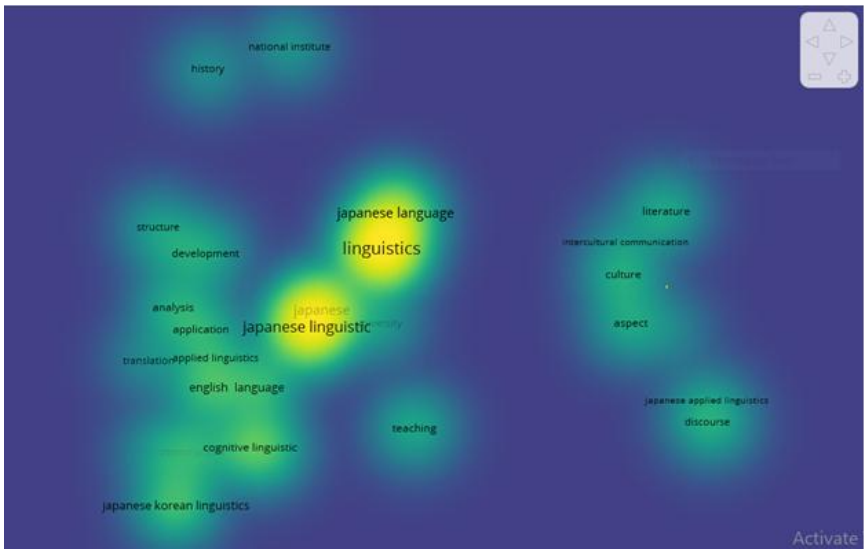

Figure 3. Topic Saturation

Figure 3 represents the density visualization, which shows the saturation level of each topic. The more frequently a topic has been studied, the more intense its colour (ranging from yellow to red). The results show that topics such as "Japanese linguistics" and "applied linguistics" have reached a saturation point, suggesting that these areas are well-researched and may offer limited opportunities for groundbreaking studies. In contrast, topics like "cognitive linguistics" and "intercultural communication" appear in lighter colours, indicating emerging fields with room for further exploration.

All things considered, these results demonstrate that Japanese linguistics is continuously changing. While certain subjects have been researched for a long time, other recent fields are gaining importance, such as cognitive and intercultural studies. This change implies that scholars are now examining language from a wider perspective, making a stronger connection between language and human thought, communication, and interaction. These modifications help the discipline develop further and provide new avenues for future research.

4. Conclusion

This study mapped and identified clear patterns in the twenty years of Japanese linguistics research. The analysis showed that topics like Japanese linguistics, applied linguistics, and discourse remain central, while newer areas, such as cognitive linguistics and intercultural communication, have started to gain attention. These trends show a shift toward more interdisciplinary and socially oriented research.

These findings help us understand where it is heading and how the field is changing. They highlight that Japanese linguistics is moving beyond traditional language-focused studies. It began to explore how language connects to thinking, culture, and communication. This offers useful insights for researchers who want to position their work within current developments.

However, this study has limitations. It only used Google Scholar as the data source. Also, it focused on a specific time range, which means some relevant studies may not have been captured. Future research could include more databases or compare different linguistic subfields. Extending the analysis to more recent years is also suggested. These steps would provide a clearer picture of how Japanese linguistics continues to evolve and grow.

5. Acknowledgement

The funding for this project came from DIPA BLU Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, under the grant number SP DIPA-023.17.2.677530/2024 Revision 07, dated May 24, 2024, by Research Contract Number 1165/UN48.16/LT/2024. Sincere appreciation is extended to Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha for providing the funding that allowed us to conduct this study. We also deeply appreciate the assistance provided by all colleagues involved in the data collection and analysis.

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