

Applied Linguistics in Public Relations: Bibliometric and Thematic Trends in an Evolving Research Field

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to map and interpret the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research trends at the intersection of applied linguistics and public relations over the past decade. The primary objective is to identify the key authors, influential sources, dominant themes, and methodological shifts that characterize this emerging interdisciplinary field. Bibliometric data were retrieved from the Scopus database, covering peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2025 that explicitly addressed both applied linguistics and public relations. Using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix) for performance indicators, collaboration networks, thematic maps, and keyword co-occurrence, and NVivo 12 for qualitative content analysis, this study integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the field's evolution. The results revealed a significant increase in publication output and thematic diversification, indicating rapid intellectual growth. Five dominant thematic clusters were identified: AI (NLP), Digital and Social Media Communication, Health Communication, Discourse and Organizational Communication, and Cross-Cultural Communication. A strong methodological shift toward computational linguistics, big data analytics, and sentiment analysis is evident, accompanied by growing attention to ethics, transparency, and trust in digital public discourse. Emerging frontiers include AI-driven communication modeling, crisis discourse in digital media, multilingual brand communication, and ethnolinguistic perspectives on organizational trust.

Keywords: *Applied English Linguistics, Public Relations Communication, Bibliometric Analysis, Thematic Review, Research Trends*

I. INTRODUCTION

Applied linguistics provides analytical tools that are essential for understanding how messages are constructed, interpreted, and negotiated within public relations contexts. Techniques such as discourse analysis enable practitioners to examine persuasive elements, narrative structures, and audience reception (Jia, 2022). Specifically, understanding the rhetorical devices used in manipulative discourse can help PR professionals craft messages that effectively engage audiences while navigating the complexities of public perception (HOLOVATSKA & LEIBYCH, 2021). Social media discourse enables companies in the energy sector to move beyond mere disclosure and to engage in interactive communication with stakeholders. This is critical, as effective CSR communication relies heavily on the semantic construction of discourse, particularly in high-risk industries, where public perception is pivotal ((Paliwoda-Matiolańska et al., 2020)). Moreover, the language used in PR strategies is fundamental to framing corporate identity and narrative, making the understanding of linguistic nuances essential (Jha & Kumar, 2023). Another piece of evidence suggests that effective PR communication strategies incorporate insights from applied linguistics regarding audience engagement. Likewise, the promotion of linguistic representation and diversity in public service institutions in multicultural societies, such as Switzerland and Canada, demonstrates how linguistic inclusivity can enhance public trust and engagement in governmental communications (Kübler et al., 2013). Overall, applied linguistics plays a crucial role into public relation research for enhancing effective PR communication.

Building on the previous discussion, the role of linguistic choices in media discourse, especially during crises, as elucidated by Bhat and Ganai emphasizes the responsibility of PR practitioners to maintain ethical standards in language use. They argue that the framing and representation of crises through linguistic choices in print media shapes public understanding and thus molds the effectiveness of public relations efforts (Bhat & Ganai, 2023). Consequently, applied linguistics not only informs the methods of conveying messages, but also the ethical dimensions of PR communication. Furthermore, applied linguistics facilitates a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural contexts in which public relations operate. By examining linguistic strategies through the lens of established theories, practitioners can navigate the

complexities of audience comprehension and expectations better, leading to more effective communication outcomes. Applied linguistics offers tools for analyzing and improving communication efficacy in public relations by critically evaluating how linguistic choices affect perceptions, engagement, and narrative construction (Mahyuni et al., 2022; Wilton & Stegu, 2011).

In addition to ethical and socio-cultural dimensions, the analysis of linguistic landscapes—the visibility and salience of language in public spaces—illustrates how applied linguistics informs public communication strategies. Landry and Bourhis introduced the concept of linguistic landscapes as markers of sociopolitical dynamics among linguistic communities and proposed that these landscapes serve important informational and symbolic functions (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Specifically, understanding these landscapes enables PR professionals to communicate messages that not only inform but also resonate at cultural and social levels, enhancing the public's reception and engagement with the content (Tahir & Bidin, 2020). Moreover, effective PR campaigns often utilize this understanding to ensure that the language and symbols used in public communication reflect the values and identities of their target audiences (Grishaeva, 2017).

Beyond the visual and sociolinguistics dimensions, the integration of ethical considerations into applied linguistics research further amplifies its applicability in PR contexts. Shin advocates for a more socio-politically engaged approach in applied linguistics, promoting the construction of ethical subjectivity to advance the public good through language (Shin, 2022). This understanding is vital in PR, in which the ethical effect of communication has a clear impact on brand reputation and public trust. Similarly, organizations increasingly recognize that transparent and ethically sound communication strategies can foster stronger relationships with stakeholders (Zhang, 2019). Ultimately, the application of insights from applied linguistics to public relations results in more strategic, effective, and ethically responsible communications. By focusing on linguistic theory, message design, and ethical implications, applied linguistics empower PR practitioners to create messages that resonate, inform, and build strong community relationships (Wasi et al., 2024).

Despite these valuable contributions, the intersection of applied linguistics and public relations (PR) resonates with their usefulness in PR contexts. The intersection of applied linguistics and public relations (PR) remains an area of exploration, particularly in terms of systematic bibliometric analysis. Research across applied linguistics has grown steadily; however, the application of bibliometric techniques in this field is still emerging. Aryadoust highlights the rising trend of employing bibliometric approaches to discern patterns of citation, author impact, and thematic clusters within applied linguistics publications. Such analytic frameworks are crucial for mapping disciplinary connections and could be pivotal in elucidating how linguistic interfaces are applied with PR practices (Aryadoust, 2023). The diversity of applied linguistics as a field creates a multifaceted backdrop against which its application in PR can be examined. According to Baldauf and Kaplan (2010), applied linguistics entails numerous subfields and has evolved through international exchanges and trends, marking it as a broad and integrated discipline (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2010). From this perspective, the application of language research can greatly enhance communication strategies within PR, thus forming a solid basis for interdisciplinary collaboration.

However, while there is significant theoretical discourse on applied linguistics, including Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx), which engages with the social and ethical dimensions of language use, there is less articulation regarding its implications for PR practices. Pennycook provides insights into this critical lens (Carlson, 2004; Pennycook, 2016). The ethical concerns raised, particularly in relation to sociopolitical contexts, are increasingly relevant considering the public nature of PR discourse. Shin presented an imperative for applied linguistics to engage more critically with these sociopolitical aspects, aligning closely with the ethical obligations of PR practitioners to navigate public messaging responsibly (Shin, 2022). Moreover, the application of discourse analysis in health communication serves as a pertinent example of applied linguistics that influences PR strategies. Jia's research provides evidence of how linguistic theories can enhance public messaging in fields allied with PR, emphasizing effective message design (Jia, 2022). This collectively illustrates how integrating linguistics with public relations represents fertile ground for future research, particularly in crafting messages that resonate across diverse sociocultural contexts.

Similarly the importance of inclusive language practices, as discussed by Banegas and Sandoval, further underscores the relevance of applied linguistics in PR, particularly when addressing diverse audiences. Incorporating inclusive linguistic strategies can enhance the effectiveness of PR campaigns and align them ethically with community needs (Banegas & Sandoval, 2019). Research that merges applied linguistics with PR has the potential to advance academic discourse and address real-world problems through effective communication strategies.

Furthermore, one significant contribution of systematic reviews is the establishment of high methodological standards that are essential for the reliability of the synthesized evidence. For instance, adherence to methodological quality assessments such as the AMSTAR tool is vital for evaluating the credibility of systematic reviews. Research indicates that systematic reviews with poor methodological rigor can generate discordant results, leading to inconsistencies in practice guidelines based on these reviews (Moja et al., 2012; Shea et al., 2007). In contexts where conflicting evidence is prevalent, as highlighted by Moja et al. (2012), it becomes imperative for systematic reviews to employ explicit methodologies to enhance the transparency and validity of outcomes, thereby supporting more reliable policy and clinical decisions (Moja et al., 2012).

Additionally, the need for improved reporting standards in systematic reviews has been emphasized in multiple studies. For example, concerns have been raised about the quality of reporting in systematic reviews, especially those pertaining to adverse events in clinical research (Zorzela et al., 2014), and the necessity of following comprehensive reporting guidelines, such as PRISMA (Page et al., 2021). The findings by Zorzela et al. underscore that inadequate

reporting can severely undermine the utility of systematic reviews, making it challenging for practitioners and researchers to draw accurate conclusions (Zorzela et al., 2014). This sentiment is echoed in various systematic reviews where gaps in reporting methodologies potentially skew the understanding of treatment effects, putting forward the argument for rigorous methodological training and tools to enhance quality (Wasiak et al., 2016).

In addition to addressing methodological flaws, identifying gaps in the literature is another critical function of systematic reviews. They not only summarize existing knowledge, but also highlight areas where evidence is lacking or redundant studies exist (Penedones & Marques, 2018). Welch et al. emphasized the importance of Evidence and Gap Maps (EGMs), which systematically illustrate areas rich in research activity versus those lacking sufficient literature, thus guiding future inquiries and resource allocation in both health and social care (Abbott et al., 2023; Welch et al., 2021). This capacity to illuminate gaps facilitates the setting of a focused research agenda, prompting scholars and practitioners to direct their efforts toward under-researched topics that could significantly advance the field.

As the body of systematic reviews grows, their methodological diversity underscores the necessity for a common framework that promotes clarity and consistency (Sheikh et al., 2007). The guide provided by Shea et al. on the development and utilization of AMSTAR is an example of how systematic reviews can be structured to ensure high quality and reliability (Shea et al., 2007). Such measures are instrumental in maintaining the integrity of evidence within systematic reviews, and ultimately contribute to better health outcomes and informed policy decisions. Moreover, bibliometric analyses have begun to outline the scope and trends in English language teaching (ELT) and related fields. Seraj et al. (Seraj et al., 2024) present an overview of ELT research trends in recent years and identified significant themes and publication patterns. Their work, alongside the bibliometric portrait of the TEFLIN Journal by Syahid and Qodir (Syahid & Qodir, 2021), indicates a growing interest in both the methodological frameworks of language teaching and the pressures of publishing, not only in English but also in other languages. This dual focus complicates the traditional narratives of English dominance in academic publishing, as explored by Amano et al. (Amano et al., 2025), who reveal disparities that threaten inclusivity in scholarly communications.

Understanding how applied linguistics contributes to public relations has become increasingly urgent, as digital communication, AI-driven platforms, and rapid societal changes reshape how messages are produced and interpreted. Despite the growth of research in both fields, their intersection remains underexplored and lacks a systematic mapping. Without a clear overview of thematic developments, methodological shifts, and intellectual foundations, researchers and practitioners lack the evidence needed to design ethical, data-driven, and culturally responsive communication strategies. This study addresses this pressing gap by comprehensively examining how the field has evolved over the last decade. The novelty of this study lies in its position as the first comprehensive attempt to systematically map the intersection between applied linguistics and public relations through a bibliometric and thematic lens. Unlike previous works that examined linguistic discourse, media communication, or PR strategies in isolation, this study brings these domains together within a unified analytical framework. The integration of Biblioshiny-based bibliometric mapping with NVivo-driven thematic interpretation offers methodological innovation, allowing the research to capture not only structural publication patterns but also the conceptual depth embedded within the literature. This dual approach enables a holistic understanding of how theoretical, methodological, and topical developments have unfolded over the past decade.

II. METHODS

To assemble the corpus for this review, I relied on one of the biggest and leading bibliographic databases: Scopus. The database was selected because it provides broad international coverage of peer-reviewed journals and is widely used in bibliometric research owing to its reliability and consistent indexing practices. Accordingly, the search process was guided by a set of keywords that reflected the intersection of applied linguistics and public relations. Specifically, I used combinations of terms that I wrote in Boolean search string as follows ("applied linguistics" OR "linguistics" OR "language" OR "language in communication") AND ("public relations" OR "PR communication" OR "corporate communication"). This keyword configuration was intended to encompass both broad and specialized research trajectories and ensure the inclusion of studies addressing language use, communication practices, and public relations contexts. This approach effectively narrowed the dataset to publications most relevant to applied linguistics within organizational and public relations domains, while simultaneously excluding unrelated fields such as engineering, medicine, and natural sciences.

The initial search returned several documents. To focus on contemporary scholarly development, the dataset was limited to articles published between 2016 and 2026. Further refinement was performed by restricting the document type to English-language journal articles that had reached their final publication status. This filter produced 2,629 records. Additional refinement was conducted by limiting the dataset to the three most relevant subject areas—Social Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting, and Arts and Humanities—thereby excluding STEM-oriented publications. In this step, the corpus was reduced to 1,773 articles. Although this sampling approach may not capture all literature referencing linguistics in public relations, it prioritizes studies with the strongest relevance and scholarly impact.

Both manual and automated screening processes were applied to ensure the validity and accuracy of the datasets. A subsequent content analysis was conducted to further refine the selection of studies that explicitly addressed applied linguistics in public relations. This procedure involved independent verification by a three-member co-author team. The full text of the article was consulted when the abstract information was insufficient to determine relevance. Following the

final screening, citation data, bibliographic records, abstracts, and keywords were exported for subsequent bibliometric analysis.

First, to portray the data, we conducted a bibliometric analysis using the Biblioshiny interface of the R-package Bibliometrix. The dataset was processed using Biblioshiny (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) to generate quantitative insights into the scientific production and intellectual structure of the field. The Bibliometrix R package is particularly notable for its versatility in conducting bibliometric analysis. It allows for the extraction of various bibliometric indicators such as authorship patterns, citation counts, and publication frequency over time. For instance, bibliometric studies have leveraged this package to map scientific production in fields ranging from medicine to environmental science, highlighting the growth of specific research areas over time ("African Journal of Biological Sciences," 2024; Barbosa & Galembeck, 2022; Liu et al., 2025). Through this process, the creation of knowledge maps, Bibliometrix, helps illustrate the connections between different research themes, showcasing co-authorships, citation networks, and keyword distribution (Agbo et al., 2021; Andrade et al., 2022). Moreover, the analysis included performance indicators, such as source impact, productivity trends, and author contributions, as well as structural indicators, such as co-word networks, thematic mapping, and factorial analysis. Taken together, these procedures ensure that the bibliometric workflow allows for a systematic examination of publication patterns, research themes, and scholarly influence within the selected corpus, providing a comprehensive overview of the research landscape.

In addition to bibliometric mapping, to deepen thematic analysis, we explored the conceptual structure of the field using NVivo 15. Many researchers have employed in vivo bibliometric analyses (Ali et al., 2021; Collings et al., 2008; Kuntari et al., 2023; Raza et al., 2021; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Soliman et al., 2023; Yulsaini et al., 2024). In this study, we focused on exploring recurring themes and concepts based on word frequency. Furthermore, we also employed the analysis based on the previous results under biblioshiny, specifically from the co-word network and Thematic Map.

First, I imported the titles, abstracts, and author keywords of all articles into NVivo. These textual fields were chosen because they concisely captured the central focus of each study and provided a reliable basis for identifying recurring themes. After importing the data, a word-frequency query was conducted to identify the most common terms appearing across the dataset. This initial step highlights high-frequency concepts and provides an overview of the dominant vocabulary used in the literature. Next, I performed a text search query that allowed me to trace how specific terms and concepts were used across different articles. The results of this search were coded into thematic nodes, each representing a distinct topic or line of inquiry. Through iterative coding, these nodes were gradually refined into broader categories or themes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion derived from bibliometric and thematic analyses, focusing on the main research trends and thematic developments that have evolved over time. For this purpose, Biblioshiny was used to draw results. Furthermore, by integrating both quantitative indicators (publication and citation data) and interpretive insights through qualitative analysis in vivo, the following section provides a comprehensive overview of the intellectual landscape and emerging research directions characterizing this cross-disciplinary field.

Table I. Annual Scientific Production

Year	Articles
2017	119
2018	124
2019	145
2020	176
2021	213
2022	218
2023	230
2024	290
2025	256
2026	2

The initial phase (2017–2019) marked growing academic interest in the intersection between “applied linguistics” and “public relations” at the end of the 2010s. This trend was followed by a substantial increase in publication activity in 2020 and 2021, with growth rates of +21.38% and +21.02%, respectively. These years likely reflect the academic response to rapid changes in digital communication, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public communication practices, and the rising adoption of computational methods, such as *Natural Language Processing (NLP)*, which facilitated large-scale corpus analysis. The consistent growth over two consecutive years suggests a phase of consolidation in research interest, marking the emergence of applied linguistics (PR) studies as a coherent subfield.

After 2021, the growth rate slowed in 2022 (+2.35%) and 2023 (+5.50%) before rising sharply again in 2024 (+26.09%), the most productive year for publications addressing the convergence of applied linguistics and public relations. Meanwhile, partial data from 2025 may reflect indexing delays rather than an actual decline in publication activity. Overall, the cumulative increase demonstrates the growing theoretical and practical relevance of this interdisciplinary domain, encompassing both linguistic perspectives and organizational or crisis communication contexts. Notably, external factors appear to have influenced these trends: the surge in 2020–2021 can be attributed to COVID-19 as a catalyst for crisis communication research, while the peak in 2024 may relate to major research initiatives or special journal issues. Moreover, the broader adoption of computational techniques, such as *text mining* and *NLP*, continues to accelerate data-driven approaches, enhancing the analytical capacity and methodological sophistication of research in this field.

In addition to publication productivity, an equally important dimension of scholarly influence is citation performance. Thus, Table 2 explores the *average citation per year* to assess how impactful this growing body of literature has been across time.

Table II. Average of citation per year

Year	MeanTCperArt	N	MeanTCperYear	CitableYears
2017	26.24	119	2.92	9
2018	21.10	124	2.64	8
2019	23.39	145	3.34	7
2020	22.09	176	3.68	6
2021	15.63	213	3.13	5
2022	9.87	218	2.47	4
2023	10.73	230	3.58	3
2024	5.01	290	2.50	2
2025	0.96	256	0.96	1

The average citation per year metric reflects the scientific impact of publications and is measured by the frequency of citations received annually by articles within a given period. This study presents the average citations per year between 2017 and 2025, accompanied by detailed indicators such as MeanTCperArt—the mean total citations per article representing how often each publication is cited throughout its lifetime. Another indicator, MeanTCperYear, measures the average number of citations per article per year, thus showing the intensity of citations relative to an article's age. Finally, the CitableYears column records how long articles from each year are available for citation; older publications naturally have a higher chance of being cited because of their longer exposure to academic discourse. Together, these indicators provide a comprehensive view of both the longevity and immediacy of citation performance within the intersection of applied linguistics and public relations research.

During the early phase (2017–2020), the academic impact, as measured by citation rates, was both high and stable, averaging 26.24 citations per article in 2017, the highest throughout the examined period. Moreover, the yearly average (2.92) remained consistent, suggesting that earlier publications continued to attract scholarly attention over a span of nearly nine years (CitableYears = 9). Similarly, 2018–2020 maintained strong performance, with MeanTCperArt values between 21 and 23 and MeanTCperYear ranging from 2.6 to 3.7. This stability reflects the enduring conceptual relevance and visibility of early studies in applied linguistics and public relations, indicating that foundational work from this period has become an important reference point within the field. These findings imply that earlier contributions helped shape the theoretical and methodological core, which continues to influence subsequent research.

In contrast, the years 2021–2022 show a decline in citation impact, with the average total citations dropping to 9.87 and MeanTCperYear falling to 2.47. This pattern can be attributed to the shorter lifespan of newer publications, which have less time to accumulate citations, as well as the diversification of research topics, reflecting the expansion of the field into more empirical and specialized subdomains. However, a rebound occurred in 2023–2024, as MeanTCperArt increased to 10.73 and MeanTCperYear rose to 3.58, signifying a resurgence of scholarly attention and the emergence of articles closely aligned with current and urgent issues such as AI, social media, and crisis communication. While the 2025 data remain incomplete owing to indexing delays, the overall pattern suggests that newer publications are gaining citations more rapidly. The dominance of highly cited earlier works underscores the persistent relevance of classical theoretical frameworks, whereas newer research broadens the field's practical and analytical applications. Taken together, this trend highlights the necessity of integrating both quantitative (productivity) and qualitative (citation) indicators to achieve balanced bibliometric mapping that accounts for the temporal dynamics of publication and citation cycles.

Following the analysis of publication trends and citation impact, this section extends the discussion by examining the structural and productivity patterns of scholarly communications in the field. Specifically, it applies two classical bibliometric laws, Radford's Law and Lotka's Law, to identify the most influential journals and assess author productivity within the intersection of applied linguistics and public relations. Together, these analyses provide insights into the dissemination of knowledge, collaboration tendencies, and the evolving intellectual organization of the field.

Table III. 10 highest core sources by Bradford's Law

SO	Rank	Freq	cumFreq	Zone
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS	1	25	25	Zone 1
SUSTAINABILITY (SWITZERLAND)	2	22	47	Zone 1
PUBLIC RELATIONS REVIEW	3	18	65	Zone 1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION	4	17	82	Zone 1
IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION	5	13	95	Zone 1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION	6	12	107	Zone 1
DISCOURSE, CONTEXT AND MEDIA	7	11	118	Zone 1
JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS	8	11	129	Zone 1
ACCOUNTING, AUDITING AND ACCOUNTABILITY JOURNAL	9	9	138	Zone 1
FRONTIERS IN COMMUNICATION	10	9	147	Zone 1

The application of Bradford's law in this study aims to identify the core sources, or Zone 1 journals, that form the intellectual foundation of the field under investigation. The fundamental principle of Bradford's law states that scientific publications within a given discipline are not evenly distributed but are instead concentrated within a small number of core journals. The present analysis identified ten journals with the highest article contributions, all belonging to Zone 1, the central zone of knowledge dissemination in "applied linguistics" and "public relations." In this context, the variable Freq (frequency) represents the number of articles from each journal included in the dataset, while "CumFreq" (cumulative frequency) indicates the total number of articles accumulated in that journal. Collectively, these ten journals constitute the most influential and productive sources, forming the intellectual nucleus of research in this interdisciplinary area.

A total of 147 documents, representing approximately 8–9% of the entire dataset of 1,773 articles, belong to the core literature zone. Corporate Communications: An International Journal (25 articles) and Public Relations Review (18 articles) emerged as leading outlets, reflecting the field's central focus on organizational communication and public relations strategies. Both journals have consistently published conceptual and empirical studies addressing linguistic representation, corporate image construction, and strategic messaging, thus serving as reference points for subsequent research. The presence of sustainability (Switzerland) (22 articles) and the Journal of World Business (11 articles) further underscores the increasing intersection between communication studies and non-linguistic domains such as sustainability, management, and global business. This integration indicates a disciplinary shift—from traditional linguistic inquiry to a more applied, interdisciplinary orientation—that aligns language studies with broader social, environmental, and economic contexts. IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication (13 articles) ranked fifth, highlighting the growing role of technological and professional communication approaches within the field. This finding corresponds to the increasing adoption of computational tools such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), corpus linguistics, and other digital methodologies in analyzing public communication, signaling a convergence of linguistics, communication science, and computational research.

Furthermore, the inclusion of Discourse, Context & Media (11 articles) reinforces the continuing relevance of discourse-oriented approaches in public communication studies. This journal features research on critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, and semiotics, bridging linguistic meaning with media practices and social identity. Its consistent representation within the core zone indicates that despite the rapid expansion of computational linguistics, qualitative and discourse-based perspectives remain foundational to applied linguistics research. Taken together, the findings reveal a distinctly interdisciplinary character: applied linguistics no longer confines itself to the study of language use in communication, but actively engages with themes of sustainability, technology, and business management. The formation of a stable core zone further demonstrates the field's growing maturity, signifying the establishment of a coherent knowledge base that serves as a theoretical and methodological foundation for future research in applied linguistics and public relations.

Building on the identification of core journals, it is important to understand who contributes to this body of knowledge and how scholarly productivity is distributed. Therefore, the following analysis applies Lotka's law to examine author productivity patterns and reveal the extent of collaboration and engagement among researchers within this evolving interdisciplinary domain.

Table IV. Author Productivity through Lotka's Law

Documents written	N. of Authors	Proportion of Authors	Theoretical
1	4168	0.912	0.650
2	305	0.067	0.163
3	55	0.012	0.072
4	19	0.004	0.041
5	13	0.003	0.026
6	6	0.001	0.018
7	2	0.000	0.013
8	1	0.000	0.010
10	1	0.000	0.007

The application of Lotka's law in this study aims to examine patterns of author productivity within the research domains of applied linguistics and public relations. According to this law, the number of authors is inversely proportional to the number of articles they produce. The results showed that 4,168 authors (91.2%) contributed to only one publication. The empirical proportion (0.912) was substantially higher than Lotka's theoretical value (0.650), indicating that this field is predominantly composed of new or single-contribution authors. Consequently, this pattern reflects the characteristics of an emerging research field, where participation is broad, but long-term scholarly engagement remains limited, suggesting that many contributors are still in the exploratory or early stages of involvement in this area.

Overall, the findings reveal a highly skewed distribution of author productivity, where the vast majority of researchers have published only once, while a small number accounts for a disproportionately higher level of output. Although this aligns with the general expectations of Lotka's law, the greater-than-average concentration of single authors highlights a unique imbalance in the field's productivity structure. Such a pattern suggests that applied linguistics–public relations research is still in a developmental and consolidative phase, characterized by diverse yet fragmented scholarly contributions. The dominance of single-author works implies that sustained collaboration networks and established research communities are still in the process of formation, marking the field's status as both dynamic and emergent within the broader academic landscape.

Building on the bibliometric indicators of journal and author productivity, this section advances the *conceptual and thematic dimensions* of the research domain. Specifically, it explores how intellectual patterns and thematic linkages emerge in *applied linguistics* and *public relations* through *factorial analysis*, *thematic mapping*, and *co-occurrence network evolution*. Together, these methods uncover the conceptual architecture and temporal progression of the field, revealing how scholarly focus has evolved from traditional linguistic studies to data-driven AI-enhanced communication paradigms.

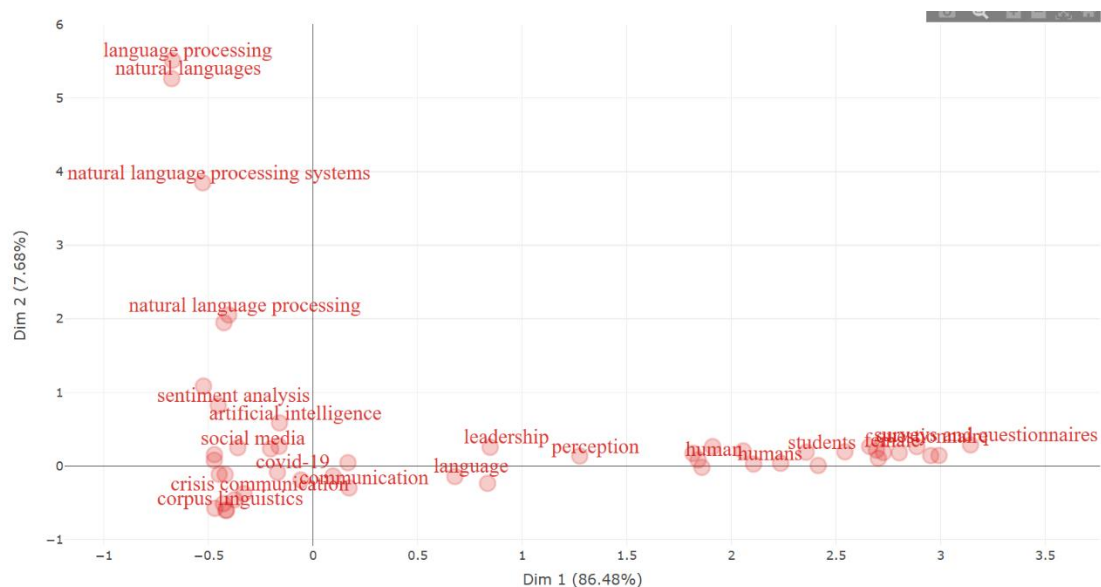


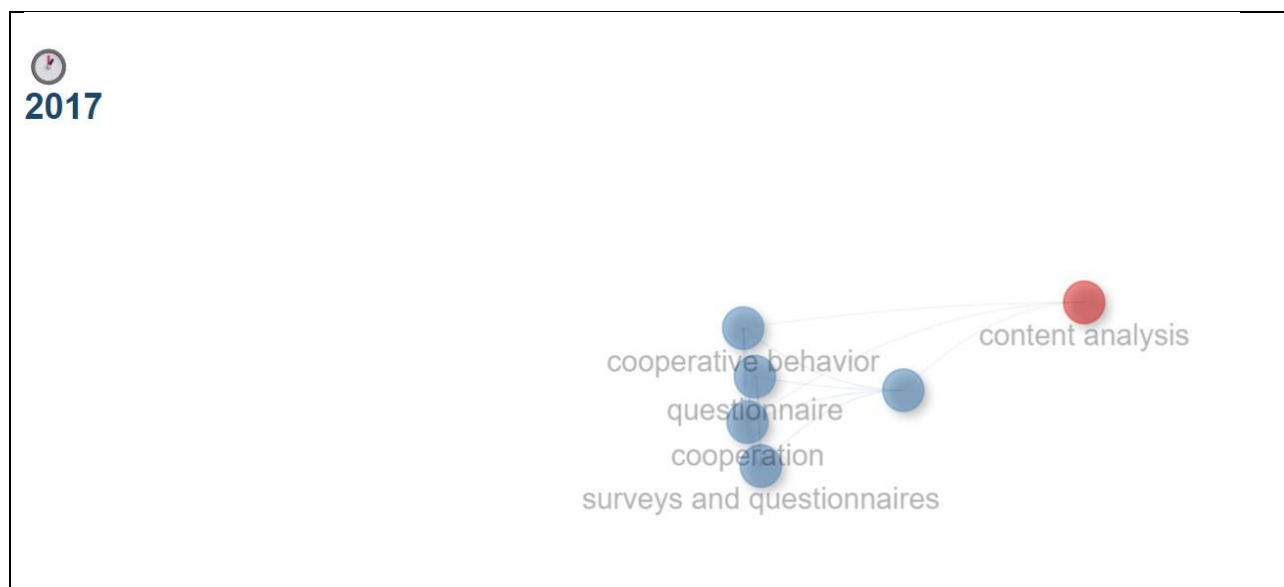
figure 1. Factorial Analysis

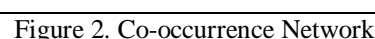
This analysis represents one of the most critical stages in bibliometric research as it reveals the *underlying conceptual structure* of the entire body of literature through factorial mapping. Using two primary dimensions (Dim 1 and Dim 2), the *Conceptual Structure Map* visualizes the interrelations among keywords and how they cluster into distinct

thematic areas, effectively outlining the “conceptual brain” of the field. Dimension 1 (horizontal, 86.48%) captures the continuum from *technological* to *human-centered linguistics*, reflecting the balance between computational and social orientations, while Dimension 2 (vertical, 7.68%) differentiates between *systemic and theoretical foundations* at the top, and *applied and educational practices* at the bottom. Together, these axes explain approximately 94% of the total variance, indicating a highly representative conceptual structure of the research domain, encompassing *applied linguistics* and *public relations*. Essentially, the horizontal axis, spanning from digital linguistics to human communication, reveals a methodological transition from machine-based analysis to a socially grounded interpretation. The vertical axis demonstrates the field’s progression from the development of AI and NLP systems toward broader educational and communicative applications, underscoring its multidimensional evolution.

From this analysis, four major clusters emerged. First, The Technological Linguistics and AI Cluster (upper left) encompass keywords such as *natural language processing*, *sentiment analysis*, *artificial intelligence*, and *social media*, highlighting the field’s methodological and computational frontiers. This cluster defines the domain of *digital applied linguistics*, where language is not only analyzed but also modeled through AI to assess public perception and reputation. Second, The Communication, Perception, and Ethics Cluster (central–lower right) represents the humanistic dimension, with keywords such as *communication*, *public relations*, *leadership*, and *perception*, illustrating the social and behavioral aspects of applied linguistics in organizational and educational contexts. Third, The Crisis and Digital Discourse Cluster (central left) bridges the technological and humanistic poles, uniting themes like *crisis communication*, *COVID-19*, and *corpus linguistics*—indicative of research exploring how language mediates public discourse and crisis management in digital settings. Finally, the Experimental and Educational Cluster (lower right) reflects traditional pedagogical and psychological approaches, featuring keywords such as *students*, *female*, and *decision making*, which trace the field’s empirical roots before digital transformation. Conceptually, these clusters illustrate a disciplinary trajectory from *manual to computational linguistics*, while maintaining a balance between *technological innovation* and *human-centered communication*. *crisis communication* as an intermediary theme, underscores its multidisciplinary role, linking ethics, discourse, and technology. Collectively, this map demonstrates the field’s transition from *pedagogical linguistics* to *strategic and AI-driven communication linguistics*, signifying an advanced synthesis of language, technology, and social responsibility in contemporary research.

Complementing factorial analysis, the *Co-occurrence Network Evolution* further traces the development of research themes over time. By analyzing temporal keyword associations, this approach captures the chronological progression of research interests, demonstrating how conceptual emphasis has shifted from traditional linguistic approaches to technologically integrated frameworks.



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Synthesizing this temporal trajectory (2017–2026), the field exhibits a clear evolution from experimental and psychological methodologies (content analysis and surveys) to AI-driven communication studies integrating NLP and social media analytics. Linguistics, once a descriptive discipline, has evolved into a strategic analytical tool to understand public opinion and shape corporate narratives. Despite technological dominance, the enduring presence of humans as a central keyword affirms the persistent importance of human-centered communication ethics within an AI-mediated environment. Academically, this evolution underscores growing interdisciplinarity, as future research increasingly requires collaboration among linguists, communication experts, data scientists, and policy scholars. This trajectory ultimately illustrates a paradigm shift toward AI-enhanced applied linguistics, where technology and humanity intersect to redefine how language, reputation, and meaning operate in the digital public sphere.

This section provides a comprehensive interpretation of the thematic, conceptual, and theoretical dimensions emerging from bibliometric analysis. Specifically, it highlights the dominant research clusters, intellectual linkages, and interdisciplinary trajectories that define the evolving relationship between applied linguistics and public relations. By examining the conceptual mappings and keyword-based associations, the discussion identifies the major themes, frameworks, and paradigms that structure the current scholarship while also revealing areas of convergence and fragmentation within the field.



The comparative analysis delineated two primary clusters of inquiry: traditional communication frameworks and technological paradigms. The traditional cluster comprises themes such as discourse analysis, digital social media, health crises, and cross-cultural communication, all rooted in the study of public relations, rhetoric, and social interaction. Conversely, the technological cluster encompassing AI and NLP focuses on computational modeling, large language models (LLMs), and sentiment analysis.

The results underscore that Discourse Analysis acts as a conceptual bridge connecting conventional communication scholarship with technological domains, exhibiting cross-linkages with Public Relations, Relationship Studies, and AI/NLP. However, the AI/NLP cluster remains relatively isolated, interfacing only through the concept of relationships, which implies limited epistemological integration between linguistic computation and social communication studies. Notably, the absence of any link between Health Crisis Communication and AI/NLP highlights an existing research gap, a potential area for future studies aiming to merge digital intelligence with crisis communication frameworks.

Taken together, these findings collectively suggest a transitional phase in communication research, wherein traditional discursive paradigms coexist and are gradually influenced by computational advancements. Building on the conceptual patterns identified above, the subsequent analysis employed a network-based visualization to further reveal how these themes interact and overlap. In particular, it explores how different areas of research connect through shared concepts, offering insights into the structural relationships that underpin interdisciplinary dialogue within the field.

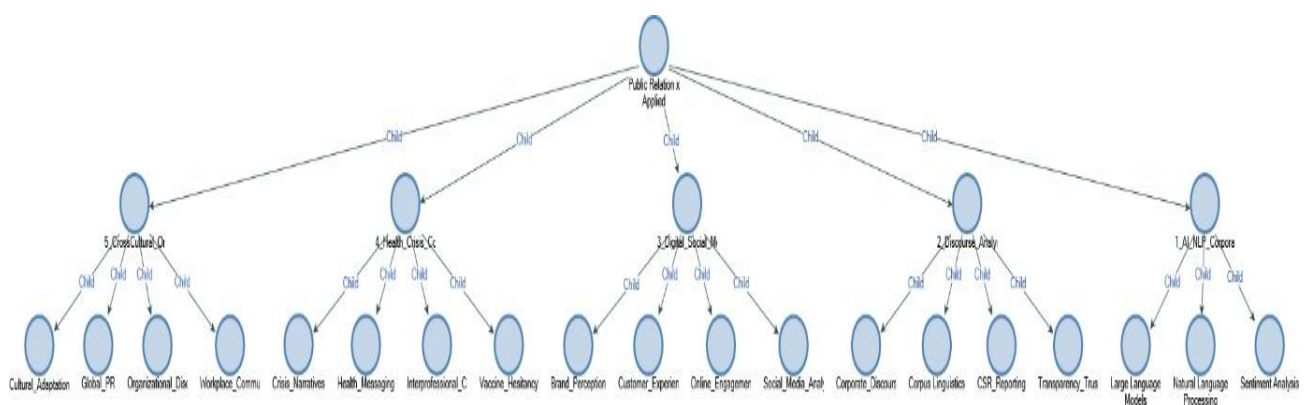


Figure 4. conceptual interconnections among research themes

The visual structure and layout of this network visualization (figure 4) employs a dynamic diagram designed to illustrate conceptual interconnections across research themes. In this model, each node represents a specific topic or theme, whereas the edges connecting them signify conceptual relationships or instances of collaboration between themes. Nodes positioned in close proximity indicated a high degree of semantic or thematic similarity, whereas distant nodes suggested weaker associations. Several unlabeled nodes appear within the network, reflecting emerging or yet-to-be-defined concepts that are still under theoretical development. Therefore this visual representation not only maps established thematic structures but also identifies evolving areas within the broader research domains of applied linguistics and public relations.

Three major clusters were identified in the visualization, each representing a distinct yet interconnected thematic focus. Cluster A: Health and Crisis Communication encompassed nodes such as Health_Messaging, Crisis_Narratives, Vaccine_Hesitancy, and Interprofessional, reflecting research on health communication, crisis response, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Cluster B: Linguistics and Textual Analysis includes Corpus_Linguistics, Large_Text_Models, and Natural_Language_Processing, representing computationally driven linguistic research that utilizes corpus-based and NLP methodologies to analyze language patterns in public communication. Cluster C: Organizational and Corporate Communication features Organizational_Disc, Workplace_Comm, CSR_Reporting, Brand_Perception, and Customer_Experience, indicating strong emphasis on internal and external organizational discourse, stakeholder relations, and corporate reputation management. Together, these clusters demonstrate the multidimensional nature of the field, linking health, technology, and organizational studies within a shared communicative framework.

Furthermore, the interconnections among the clusters revealed critical interdisciplinary linkages. Strong ties were observed between Health_Messaging and Crisis Narratives, underscoring the close association between health communication strategies and crisis management discourse. Within the organizational cluster, Organizational_Disc and Workplace_Comm formed a core structural relationship, highlighting the centrality of workplace discourse in shaping institutional communication dynamics. Meanwhile, CSR_Reporting connects with transparency, signaling the integration of ethical considerations into corporate and public communication research. Notably, the interprofessional node acts as a bridging element between the Health and Crisis Communication and Organizational Communication clusters, symbolizing the growing collaboration across domains such as healthcare, management, and linguistics. Overall, this network visualization captures both the structural cohesion and conceptual fluidity of the field, depicting an increasingly interconnected research landscape where technological, ethical, and communicative dimensions converge.

Complementing network visualization, the following section deepens the conceptual analysis through item similarity clustering. By examining how keywords align semantically and contextually, this approach provides a clearer view of thematic density and overlap, illustrating the multidimensionality of applied linguistics and public relations within the evolving digital and intercultural landscapes.

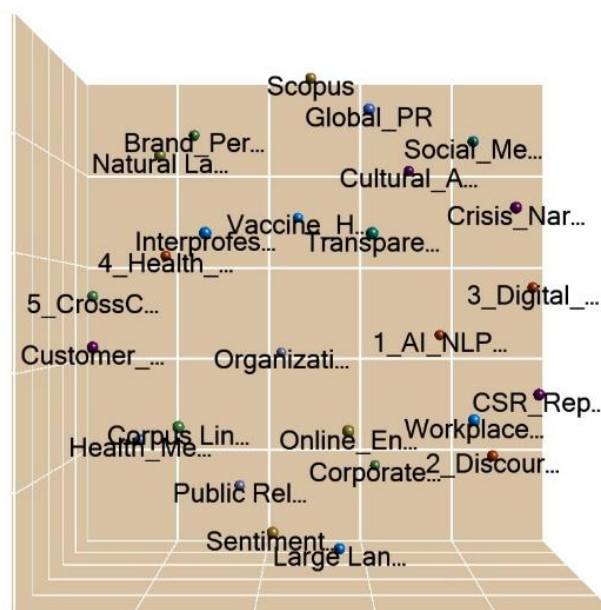


Figure 5. Conceptual Structure based on word similarity

Item similarity clustering analysis visualizes the conceptual structure of a research field by grouping keywords based on their semantic proximity. In this visualization, each node represents a keyword, and the spatial distance between nodes reflects the degree of similarity in meaning or contextual usage within the corpus. The closer two nodes appear, the more semantically related they are. Each color-coded cluster denotes a distinct thematic category, enabling the identification of dominant research areas and their interplay. The resulting map reveals five major thematic clusters: AI/NLP, Discourse, Digital, Health, and Cross-Cultural Communication, which together capture the core directions of scholarly work in this domain. The AI/NLP cluster contains terms such as AI, NLP, sentiment, large language models, and natural language, indicating a technologically driven focus on artificial intelligence and computational linguistics in communication analysis. The Discourse cluster includes concepts such as discourse, corporate communication, the workplace, CSR, and reputation, which highlight research examining organizational discourse, strategic communication, and meaning construction within corporate contexts. Digital clusters, composed of terms such as digital, social media, crisis narrative, and transparency, reflect the prominence of online public relations and digital crisis communication.

The Health cluster gathers terms related to health, vaccine, interprofessional, and customer health, illustrating the growing scholarly attention to public health communication, vaccination-related discourse, and collaborative professional engagement. Meanwhile, the Cross-Cultural cluster covered keywords such as cross-cultural, global PR, brand perception, and cultural adaptation, underscoring research linked to cultural diversity, global communication strategies, and message adaptation across sociocultural settings. Spatially, the proximity among these clusters reveals conceptual overlaps; for instance, transparency is situated between Digital and Health clusters, suggesting its dual relevance in both public health messaging and digital media discourse. Similarly, although the AI/NLP cluster stands somewhat apart, it remains connected through nodes such as sentiment analysis and public relations, indicating the increasing integration of computational approaches into digital and organizational communication studies. Collectively, this spatial interpretation highlights the intertwined technological, social, and cultural dimensions that shape the evolving landscape of applied linguistics and public relations research, where digitalization and artificial intelligence function as key bridges, linking traditional communication theories with contemporary analytical methodologies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a comprehensive overview of the intersection between applied linguistics and public relations, illustrating an interdisciplinary field that is rapidly transforming through both humanistic and technological development. The analysis shows a clear shift from traditional discourse-based research to data-driven approaches, particularly those involving artificial intelligence and Natural Language Processing. This evolution reflects a growing reliance on computational tools to understand complex communication patterns and digital media dynamics. The bibliometric results indicate consistent growth in publication output, diversification of sources, and the emergence of new thematic directions since 2017. The field remains anchored by established communication journals, yet increasingly expands into technology-

and sustainability-oriented outlets. The conceptual structure is defined by five dominant clusters: AI/NLP, discourse, digital communication, health communication, and cross-cultural studies, with AI/NLP and digital communication showing the fastest progression. Despite offering a broad mapping of trends and themes, this study acknowledges limitations related to the database scope and the constraints of bibliometric techniques in capturing deeper semantic nuances. Future research should integrate broader data sources and employ qualitative or mixed-method approaches to enrich interpretive depth. Strengthening cross-disciplinary collaboration and advancing methodological innovation are essential for developing a more robust and globally relevant understanding of how language shapes public communication in an increasingly digital world.

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Ethical Compliance

This study did not involve human participants, interventions, or identifiable personal data. Therefore, ethical approval was not required. All procedures related to data processing adhered to established academic and publication ethics.

Data Access Statement

The bibliometric dataset used in this study is obtained from the Scopus database. Owing to licensing restrictions, raw data cannot be shared publicly. Processed datasets generated during analysis are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript.

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