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Language Education Research in the Philippines: A Scoping of Literature

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Introduction

Several bibliometric studies have reported that developing countries are lagging behind in terms of research performance. One of these countries is the Philippines, which ranked poorly in research performance across various disciplines (Scimago Journal and Country Rank, 2022). One crucial step to advancing the country's research performance is by determining the research contour of a specific area of interest, such as language education. Although there are few studies that described the research landscape of language and linguistics research in Southeast Asia (SEA) (e.g., Barrot, 2017) and research performance of the Philippines in certain fields (e.g., Vinluan, 2011), no study has provided a detailed and comprehensive analysis of language education research in the Philippines. Thus, this study was undertaken. Specifically, this paper sought to address the following questions: (1) What is the research productivity, impact, and trajectory of language education research in the Philippines?; (2) What are the demographics of the selected studies in terms of document type, context, research designs, setting, and publication venues; and (3) What are the research themes commonly explored by Philippine-affiliated language education scholars? This paper hopes to provide direction on how language education research in the Philippines can move forward. First, it will provide the current research landscape in the Philippines by showing the over-explored and underexplored language and linguistics topics. Second, the findings can serve as one of the bases for crafting the language education research agenda in the Philippines.

Methodology

Data Search and Retrieval

A total of 130 articles from journals, conference papers, and book chapters, and notes during the period from 2012–2018 were examined. These publications were retrieved from the Scopus database, which is considered to be the largest abstract and citation system that tracks and analyzes research output in various fields of study (Scopus, 2022). While other databases (e.g., Web of Science and EBSCO) are

equally reliable, Scopus has more comprehensive collections with over 70 million records, 23,500 peer-reviewed journals, 301 trade publications, and 8.3 million conference papers (Scopus, 2022). As Chan, Tong, and Zhang (2013) explained, seven years is enough to provide sufficient data in examining the recent trends and progress of research in a particular field, as in the case of this study.

Published research outputs were searched and retrieved using "Advanced Search" from the Scopus database. To search and retrieve publications from Scopus, we used the following codes: *AFFILCOUNTRY(country) AND ALL(language teaching OR linguistics), AFFILCOUNTRY(country) AND ALL(ESL), AFFILCOUNTRY(country) AND ALL(ELT), AFFILCOUNTRY(country) AND ALL(English language), AFFILCOUNTRY(country) AND ALL(learning English), and AFFILCOUNTRY(country) AND ALL(EFL)*. To ensure that only the publications related to language education were displayed in the list, we limited the search to social sciences and humanities and arts and reviewed the abstract of the displayed titles. Moreover, articles that are not written in English were excluded from the analysis. It is also worthy to note that this review precludes scholarly literature not indexed by Scopus.

In retrieving the data for each university, we used the *Affiliation tab*. We then selected the specific university and clicked the *Limit to* tab to display the details for that particular university. We retrieved the data regarding the publication venues and international collaboration of each university by clicking the *Analyze search results* tab. To retrieve the number of citations per year, we selected all the published papers by each institution and clicked the *Citation overview* tab. The citation overview page displayed the *h*-index and the number of citations received by each institution per year.

Data Processing

After all the needed publications with their corresponding abstracts had been collected, we quantitatively analyzed the demographics of the selected studies. Specifically, we identified their publication year (i.e., 2012 to 2018) and document type (i.e., article, book chapter, conference paper, and note). We also classified the studies based on the context of the study: primary (preschool to grade 6), secondary (junior and senior high school), higher education (tertiary and graduate studies), general academic (involves all academic levels and school-related contexts), professional (contexts related to the profession other than academic), and community (other non-academic and non-professional contexts). Finally, we identified their research design, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods.

The research performance of HEIs in the Philippines was also analyzed quantitatively. It was measured using the following indicators: research productivity (*P*), research impact (*C*), impact factor or citations per publication (*CPP*), percent of non-cited articles (*%PNC*), and *h*-index (van Raan, 2003). In the context of the present study, research productivity (*P*) refers to the total number of publications an institution has published from 2012 to 2018 while research impact refers to the total number of citations received by an HEI in a defined period of time, excluding self-citations. Another indicator is the impact factor (CPP) which refers to the total number of citations an HEI received divided by its total number of publications. The last indicator used to measure the research performance of an HEI is *h*-index which measures research influence based on both productivity and citations. In short, an HEI with an index of *h* has published *h* articles, with each article receiving at least *h* citations (Hirsch, 2005). To illustrate, a university that has an *h*-index of 25 has published 25 articles under its name, with each article receiving at least 25 citations. Several scholars posited that *h*-index is a useful measure of a researcher's and institution's research performance on a micro scale (Hirsch, 2005; Tijssen et al., 2009).

Qualitatively, a two-stage coding scheme was used to determine the major areas of research in applied linguistics and language teaching and learning. The first stage of coding involved the identification and labelling of relevant terms/codes. To do this, we carefully read the abstract of each paper and highlighted its relevant terms/codes. Once the relevant terms/codes of each abstract had been identified and labelled, they were matched with each of the applied linguistics subfields drawn from American Association for Applied Linguistics (2019), Barrot et al. (2020), and Barrot (2021). These subfields are as follows:

Analysis of Discourse and Interaction (DIS), Assessment and Evaluation (ASE), Bilingual, Immersion, Heritage, and Minority Education (BIH), Corpus Linguistics (COR), Educational Linguistics (EDU), Language Cognition and Brain Research (COG), Language and Ideology (LID), Language and Technology (TEC), Language Maintenance and Revitalization (LMR), Language Planning and Policy (LPP), Language, Culture, Socialization and Pragmatics (LCS), Phonology/Phonetics and Oral Communication (POC), Reading, Writing, and Literacy (RWL), Research Methodology (REM), Second and Foreign Language Pedagogy (PED), Second Language Acquisition, Language Acquisition, and Attrition (SLA), Sociolinguistics (SOC), Teacher Education, Beliefs, and Identities (TED), Text Analysis (Written Discourse) (TXT), Translation, Interpretation and Language Access (TRI), and Vocabulary and Lexical Studies (VOC).

Results and Discussion

Research Performance of the Philippines

This study sought to examine the research performance of the Philippines in language education. Using Barrot's (2017) earlier report as a baseline, data shows that the Philippines registered a significant increase of publications during the period 2012 to 2018 with a global share of 0.12%, which is higher than 0.067% in 2015. Research productivity was gradually increasing until 2017 and has significantly improved in 2018 totalling 130 publications, 244 citations, and an *h*-index of 7. This performance is relatively lower compared to its SEA counterparts, such as Singapore and Malaysia. The research performance of these two countries is highly notable because of the very stringent recruitment and promotion requirements of these two countries (Lee, 2003). A different scenario happens in the Philippines, where almost all HEIs are classified as teaching universities and colleges which do not focus and rely primarily on research. Despite the increase in language education research in the Philippines, it still remains to be left behind by some of its ASEAN counterparts. This may be attributed to several reasons, such as low gross expenditure in research and development, number of researchers, and lack of support for scientific and technical journals (Symaco, 2013).

TABLE 1
Bibliometric Analysis for Selected Philippines HEIs

HEIs	P	C	CPP	%PNC	*h*-index
De La Salle University-Manila (DLSU-M)	41	110	2.68	31.70	6
National University, Philippines (NU)	16	38	2.38	43.75	4
University of the Philippines-Diliman (UP-D)	7	24	3.43	28.57	3
Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU)	7	15	2.14	42.86	2
Mapua Institute of Technology (MIT)	7	15	2.14	28.57	2
Mindanao State University (MSU)	5	9	1.80	20.00	2
University of Santo Tomas (UST)	4	8	2.00	0.00	2
University of the Philippines System (UPS)	4	7	1.75	50.00	2
Pangasinan State University (PSU)	4	2	0.50	75.00	1
Philippine Normal University (PNU)	4	1	0.25	75.00	1

To determine the research performance of each Philippine HEI in the field of language education, *P*, *C*, *CPP*, *%PNC*, and *h*-index were computed. Table 1 shows the bibliometric analysis of the research performance of selected Philippines HEIs in the field of applied linguistics and language teaching and learning. Results reveal that DLSU-M has the highest share in research productivity (*P*) and citations (*C*) and posted the highest *h*-index among the Philippine HEIs. However, UP-D has outperformed other HEIs in terms of *CPP*. While more and more HEIs are publishing in Scopus-indexed journals, research productivity remains to be concentrated in the ten most productive universities. In fact, 76 percent of all the analyzed papers were affiliated with these ten universities. These results may be linked with the

profile of faculty employed in these universities. Note that the most productive and highly cited scholars in the field of language education are employed in these universities. Furthermore, citations and research collaborations are centered among these scholars (Barrot, 2017; Radev et al., 2016). Another possible reason for the increase in research productivity of these five universities is their transparent research incentive program that includes monetary incentives, decreased teaching load, and recognition (Schroen et al., 2012) as well as priority on research during faculty hiring and promotion.

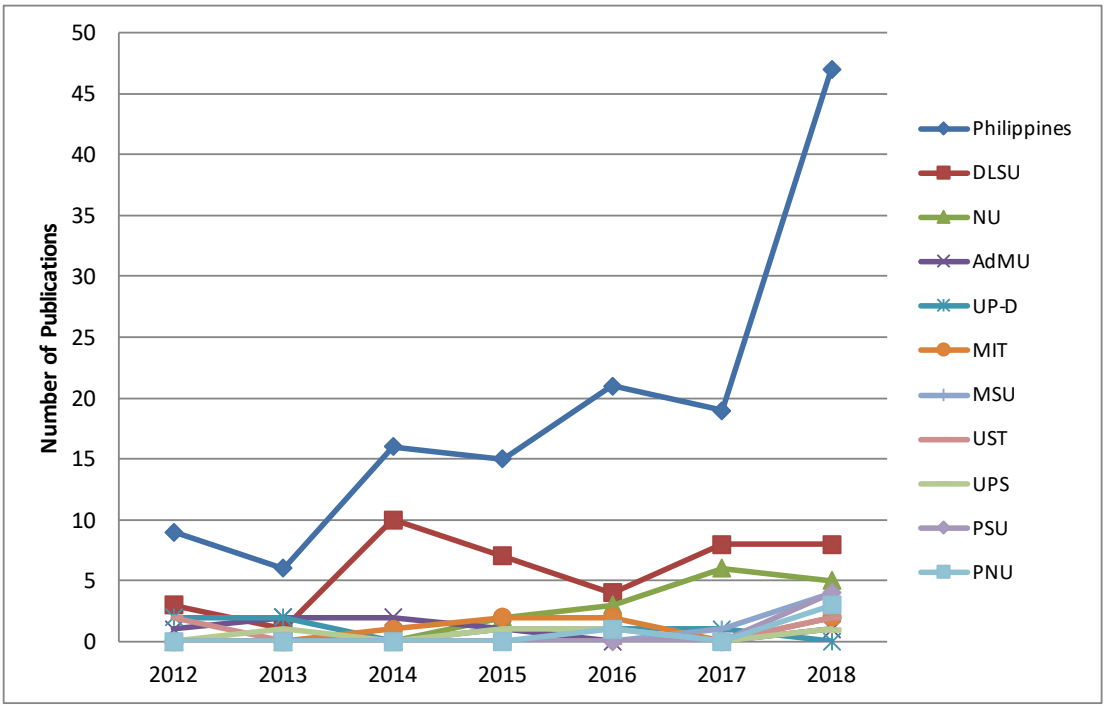

Figure 1. Research productivity trend in the Philippines and selected HEIs.

Looking closely at the performance of the most productive HEIs in the Philippines, the data reveals that more and more HEIs are publishing in Scopus-indexed journals; that is from 7 Philippine HEIs in 2012 to 29 in 2018 (see Figure 1). However, data reveals that research productivity does not progress equally among selected Philippine HEIs. For instance, few HEIs (e.g., NU and MSU) made significant progress while the rest have relatively plateaued (e.g., DLSU and UP-D) and are lagging behind. Overall, publications in language education in the Philippines were gradually increasing from 2012 to 2017 and spiked up in 2018 because of the 19 papers published in the Asian EFL Journal.

Several factors may be attributed to these findings. First, the country's educational reforms in higher education may have contributed to the increase in research productivity of HEIs in the Philippines. One of these reforms is making publication a pre-requisite to graduate degree conferral and graduation. Second, local accreditation agencies require HEIs to produce and publish quality research to achieve higher accreditation levels for their academic programs (e.g., teacher education programs, English programs, and graduate studies programs). Finally, the country's scientific research and development policies and programs have intensified over the six years. Similar to the arguments of Gong et al. (2018), policy resources are crucial factors in shaping the research landscape in one country. For instance, the Journal Incentive Program helps Philippine journals meet the minimum requirement for Scopus indexing and increase research productivity in the Philippines across fields. There is also the *Republica Awards* that recognizes and rewards outstanding research outputs of HEI academic personnel. In terms of policies, various government agencies have developed research development plans that aim to boost the research performance of the Philippines. Among these are Harmonized Research and Development Agenda (2017–2022), Philippine Development Plan (2017–2022), and National Higher Education Research

Agenda (2009–2018). Nonetheless, further studies are needed to confirm the direct impact of these programs and policies on the research productivity of HEIs.

Demographics of the Studies

Table 2 shows the demographics of the studies per year. From 8 in 2012, the published studies each year rose to 47 in 2018; 113 (86.9%) of all the studies are journal articles, 12 (9.2%) are conference papers, 4 (3.1%) are book chapters, and 1 (0.8%) is a note. In terms of the context, the majority of the studies were conducted in higher education (N = 45) and general academic contexts (N = 41), and very few were conducted in primary (N = 10) and professional (N = 10) contexts. As for the research design, 58 (44.6%) of the selected studies are qualitative. Most of these qualitative studies are descriptive research (N = 47), while the rest employed case study (N = 6), ethnography (N = 2), phenomenology (N = 2), and grounded theory (1). Of the 45 (34.6%) studies that employed the quantitative design, a great majority are descriptive studies (N = 30). Very few studies employed correlational (N = 8) and quasi-experimental (N = 7) designs. The least used research design was the mixed-methods approach (N = 27). Similar to quantitative and qualitative studies, the most widely used research design is descriptive (N = 24), followed by quasi-experimental (N = 2) and correlational design (N = 1).

TABLE 2
Demographics of Selected Studies

Demographics	Year of Publication														Total	
	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018			
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
Document																
Type	6	4.6	2	1.5	12	9.2	13	10.0	17	13.1	17	13.1	46	35.4	113	86.9
Journal article	2	1.5	3	2.3	2	1.5	1	0.8	3	2.3	1	0.8	–	–	12	9.2
Conference	–	0.8	–	–	1	0.8	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	1	0.8	4	3.1
paper	–	–	1	0.8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	0.8
Book chapter																
Note																
Context																
Primary	1	0.8	1	0.8	3	2.3	1	0.8	1	0.8	1	0.8	2	1.5	10	7.7
Secondary	3	2.3	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	1.5	1	0.8	7	5.4	13	10.0
Higher	2	1.5	–	–	5	3.8	7	5.4	9	6.9	5	3.8	17	13.1	45	34.6
Education	1	0.8	4	3.1	6	4.6	6	4.6	8	6.2	7	5.4	9	6.9	41	31.5
General	1	0.8	1	0.8	1	0.8	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	6	4.6	10	7.7
Academic	–	–	–	–	–		–	–	1	0.8	4	3.1	6	4.6	11	8.5
Professional																
Community																
Research																
Design	2	1.5	3	2.3	8	6.2	7	5.4	5	3.8	5	3.8	15	11.5	45	34.6
Quantitative	4	3.1	2	1.5	7	5.4	5	3.8	12	9.2	11	8.5	17	13.1	58	44.6
Qualitative	2	1.5	1	0.8	–	–	2	1.5	4	3.1	3	2.3	15	11.5	27	20.8
Mixed Method																
Total	8	6.2	6	4.6	15	11.5	14	10.8	21	16.2	19	14.6	47	36.2	130	100.0

Regarding the publication venues, most of the articles were published in regional journals such as *Asian EFL Journal* (19), *3L Language Linguistics Literature* (13), *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (10), *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* (9), and *Gema Online Journal of Language Studies* (7). This result is expected because most of the topics of these published studies are highly localized in the Philippine context and are appropriate for regional journals. The same findings were obtained by Barrot (2017), Levine (2010), and Vergidis et al. (2005). Only 11 (8.27%) of the selected articles were published in international high impact (Quartile 1 or Q1) journals in education, social sciences, and language and linguistics. Similarly, very few studies (N = 24) were published in SSCI-indexed journals.

One possible reason for this is that majority of the studies did not use sophisticated research designs and are too localized and do not appeal to an international readership.

Research Areas

As mentioned in the methodology section, the research theme of each study was classified using the pre-determined subfields of applied linguistics and language pedagogy as proposed by AAAL (2019).

TABLE 3
Research Themes over the Seven-year Period

Demographics	Year of Publication														Total	
	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018			
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
DIS	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	2	1.5	2	1.5	1	0.8	3	2.3	10	
ASE	1	0.8	1	0.8	1	0.8	2	1.5	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	7	5.4
BIH	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8
COR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	2	1.5	4	3.1
EDU	1	0.8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	–	–	2	1.5
COG	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
LID	1	0.8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	2	1.5
TEC	1	0.8	3	2.3	–	–	2	1.5	2	1.5	4	3.1	4	3.1	16	12.3
LMR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
LPP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	1	0.8	3	2.3
LCS	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	2	1.5	3	2.3	7	5.4
POC	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	4	3.1	7	5.4
RWL	–	–	1	0.8	–	–	2	1.5	2	1.5	–	–	5	3.8	10	7.7
REM	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
PED	1	0.8			3	2.3	2	1.5	5	3.8	2	1.5	6	4.6	19	14.6
SLA	1	0.8	–	–	2	1.5	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	3.8	8	6.2
SOC	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	1.5	–	–	2	1.5	4	3.1
TED	1	0.8	–	–	1	0.8	–	–	2	1.5	2	1.5	6	4.6	12	9.2
TXT	1	0.8	–	–	5	3.8	3	2.3	2	1.5	2	1.5	2	1.5	15	11.5
TRI	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
VOC	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	–	–	–	–	1	0.8	1	0.8	3	2.3

Note. *Analysis of Discourse and Interaction (DIS), Assessment and Evaluation (ASE), Bilingual, Immersion, Heritage, and Minority Education (BIH), Corpus Linguistics (COR), Educational Linguistics (EDU), Language Cognition and Brain Research (COG), Language and Ideology (LID), Language and Technology (TEC), Language Maintenance and Revitalization (LMR), Language Planning and Policy (LPP), Language, Culture, Socialization and Pragmatics (LCS), Phonology/Phonetics and Oral Communication (POC), Reading, Writing, and Literacy (RWL), Research Methodology (REM), Second and Foreign Language Pedagogy (PED), Second Language Acquisition, Language Acquisition, and Attrition (SLA), Sociolinguistics (SOC), Teacher Education, Beliefs, and Identities (TED), Text Analysis (Written Discourse) (TXT), Translation, Interpretation and Language Access (TRI), and Vocabulary and Lexical Studies (VOC)*

As shown in Table 3, the research areas explored by Philippine-affiliated language and linguistics scholars have expanded from 8 in 2012 to 16 in 2018. Of the 21 research areas, the areas that attract the greatest attention among Philippine-affiliated scholars are *Second and Foreign Language Pedagogy* (*N* = 19), *Language and Technology* (*N* = 16), *Text Analysis (Written Discourse)* (*N* = 15), and *Teacher Education, Beliefs, and Identities* (*N* = 12), while others have only recently started to emerge (e.g., *Bilingual, Immersion, Heritage, and Minority Education*, *Corpus Linguistics*, and *Language Planning and Policy*). These findings are consistent with the previous studies which identified language teaching/pedagogy as a frequently recurring theme. The recent emergence of studies on language planning and policy may be attributed to the recent implementation of curriculum reform and policies in the Philippines, such as the K-12 basic education program and the mother tongue-based multilingual education. Data also shows that researchers are becoming more and more interested in technology integration in language classrooms. Meanwhile, no studies have been published yet in the areas of *Language Maintenance and Revitalization*, *Research Methodology*, and *Translation, Interpretation and*

Language Access. Despite the expansion in the explored research areas over the seven-year period, the trend is not consistent, as suggested by the fluctuating number of studies in many of the identified research areas. This finding may have been the result of the absence of a research agenda in language education in the Philippines.

Conclusion

This examination of the language education research in the Philippines, covering a seven-year period, showcases the breadth and depth of research undertaken in the country. The findings highlight the great interest of Philippine-affiliated scholars in improving the country's research performance in the field of language education as indicated by the increasing trend in research productivity and citations. As shown, teaching methodologies, technology integration, teacher education, and discourse analysis have been particularly well-established domains of inquiry in the Philippines. While the trend looks promising, most of the publications remain to be concentrated among the top-performing universities, and very few were published in high-impact journals.

Compared to our neighboring countries, definitely, the Philippines is lagging behind. So, many things remain to be done. First, the Philippines need to continue developing home-grown researchers and bringing in migrant talents to further enrich the applied linguistics research in the Philippines not only in terms of productivity but also of quality and breadth. Second, a clear and detailed language and linguistics research agenda may be developed to provide direction to Filipino researchers and educators. One basis for its development is bibliometric studies such as the current study. But because this study precludes unpublished theses and dissertations as well as research published in non-Scopus-indexed journals, the data may be limited in concluding about the base and future directions of Philippine language education research. Thus, future studies may focus on surveying the unpublished theses and dissertations in the country and research published in other indexed journals. Third, case studies may be undertaken about the best practices of the top-performing Philippine HEIs and cascade such findings to low-performing HEIs for possible adoption. Finally, there is a need to strengthen language education research courses and mentoring at both the graduate and undergraduate levels to prepare future researchers for high-level research engagements. However, such an effort requires continuous professional development in research for the HEI teachers and thesis supervisors.

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