

# Systematic Literature Mapping: Studies Related to ESL/EFL Oral Communication Skills (2018-2022)

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## Abstract

In our interconnected world, English has become the language used for communication in different contexts. It is used as the language employed to facilitate exchange of information in different fields such as business, academia, science, technology, and culture, among others. This paper describes the development of a systematic literature mapping (SLM) using 68 studies from the Scopus and WoS databases from 2018 to 2022 related to English language oral communication with the purpose of analyzing recent publications on the topic, the thematic lines that researchers have focused on, the methodology and tools used to carry out their research, the contexts in which investigations take place, the journals that publish these articles, and the recommendations for future studies. The results show the interest in EFL/ESL oral communication in different environments, the strategies used by teachers and learners, some of the cognitive and affective processes that impact oral proficiency, as well as the use of technology and how it contributes to the development of these investigations. The search for articles was limited to articles written in the English language that referred to oral communication in English as a second or foreign language. This work is of value for researchers and teachers interested in exploring the trends in this topic.

**Keywords:** ESL/ EFL, oral communication, higher education, systematic literature review

## 1. Introduction

The English language plays a vital role in today's world. To begin with, English has been deemed a lingua franca (Cambridge Assessment English, 2018; Harmer, 2007; Jinghui SI, 2019). Among the reasons that have made the English instrumental worldwide is, of course, its spread due to globalization, making it the preferred language to carry out numerous significant activities around the world such as travel, tourism, entertainment, trade and commerce, the media and, most importantly, it has become the language of information and technology, science and investigation (Crystal, 2012; Robert & Meenakshi, 2022). Science and technology alone, have led to key world changes that have created a global interconnection between nations (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO, 2018]).

On a worldwide scale, various international organizations have English as an official language, or as one of them (ISO, 2017; The World Bank, 2023; United Nations [UN], 2023), and it is many times used as the intermediary language to communicate between people who speak different first languages (Crystal, 2012; Harmer, 2007). Moreover, different organizations refer to a Global Citizenship to develop skills such as communication skills, which are considered essential to understand other backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives (UNESCO, 2018; United Nations, 2015). This shows the importance of speaking English, which is why, countries around the world have been investing resources in learning a foreign language (OECD, 2021). The English language becomes then, the bridge that connects individuals or groups of people that speak different languages by providing a sense of belonging to a more global community that works towards a specific common goal.

For quite some time, second or foreign language acquisition was primarily associated with correct use of sounds, intonation patterns, vocabulary, and grammar of that language (Harmer, 2007; Nunan, 2015). However, there has been a shift, expanding the scope beyond these aspects. During the last few years, oral communication in foreign or second language has been getting increased attention. It has become a major topic of interest due to growing necessity to effectively communicate or access information in different contexts including economic, professional, educational, and business settings. Speaking English has evolved into a social phenomenon since

people use it not only to exchange information, but also to structure the manner to relate to the community (Marlina & Xu, 2018; Norton, 2013).

It is common to mention the way language is used and learned in terms of four skills: Listening, reading, speaking and writing. Out of these four skills, writing and speaking are known to be the productive skills since they require speakers to actually produce the language being learned (Harmer, 2007). Moreover, these two skills can be divided into spoken and written, depending on the form of communication (Klimova, 2014). Speaking, or oral communication, is often considered the most difficult skill to develop and master. This difficulty arises from several factors, namely teaching strategies, cognitive factors related to learning such as perception (Jensen, 2005; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000), attention (Gass et al., 2013; Rost, 2016), memory (Schunk, 2012); or affective factors such as motivation (Gardner, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Spratt et al., 2011), anxiety (Brown, 2014; Hanifa, 2018), willingness to communicate (Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2019; MacIntyre et al., 1998) and risk taking (Ely, 1986; Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012).

Acquiring a second language involves going through a series of cognitive (Robinson & Ellis, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978), affective (Brown, 2014; Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2019) and even social (Jones & Saville, 2016; Vygostky, 1986) processes. To effectively communicate in different situations or contexts, both formal and informal, spontaneous and planned, speakers resort to diverse strategies to convey their intended message.

According to Nunan (2015), when someone claims to know a language, people tend to assume that they mean they speak the language, so it would be uncommon to claim to know a language by being proficient in reading or grammar only. Speaking is usually the main goal for people when they enroll in language classes, which means that oral communication becomes an important skill to develop in the language classroom. Therefore, the acquisition of oral communication in English as a foreign language is seen as the consolidation point of the English language learning.

Shumin (2010) mentions that speaking a language presents a notable challenge for foreign language learners, as effective oral communication requires the ability to use language appropriately in social interactions. In addition, several factors come into play affecting oral communication in English in adults, such as age or maturational limitations, environment, sociocultural factors, and affective factors. Krashen (1982) mentions that learners who feel comfortable and have a positive attitude towards language learning have a low affective filter, which allows them unrestricted access to clear information processing. Brown (2014) has identified various affective factors in second language acquisition such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion and introversion, personality type and motivation. Furthermore, Mulyono and Saskia (2021) have expressed that there is an association between affective variables such as self-confidence, speaking-related anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate (WTC) within individuals.

The cognitive processes involved in learning have an important role in the acquisition of a foreign language, and although not observable, their manifestation is evidenced through learning. Brown (2014) refers to the perception, memory (storage) systems, short and long-term memory, recall, motivation, learning styles and strategies, as some of the processes that come into play when learning a second language. According to Swain (2013) there is a link between cognitive and affective processes during the acquisition of English as a foreign language.

In addition, external factors such as the learning environment, teaching strategies, resources used by the teacher or resources to which the learner has access to, can influence the acquisition of a second or foreign language. Harmer (2007) and Aslan and Sahin (2020) mention factors like a good class atmosphere, the right choice of topics or the organization of the activity to be key components in fostering speaking in class. They also emphasize the teacher's role in these kinds of situations as crucial to enable participation, willingness to speak and motivation.

Regarding information technology, English language and technology have become allies not only as a means to get the latest information, but also in areas such as education, where technology provided a major support, especially during the pandemic, fostering 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as collaboration, autonomy, innovation skills, information literacy and problem solving among others. Also, the integration of technology has come to modernize traditional methods of English language teaching and learning (Rintaningrum, 2023). Nowadays, technology serves as catalyst for enhancing the efficiency of teaching and learning processes. Therefore, it should not be seen solely as a tool, but also as a medium that contributes to shaping culture and as a source of meaning creation (Cloete, 2017).

This study employed a systematic literature mapping (SLM) to analyze recent publications that refer to oral communication in English as a foreign language in order to identify the thematic lines in which researchers have focused on, the methodology that has been used in these studies and the recommendations researchers give for further research. Since the objective of a systematic review is to capture relevant evidence on a topic (James et al., 2016), the results of this literature review seek to contribute to the field of academic research in ESL and EFL education by providing relevant information about current studies related to oral communication in English as a foreign language.

The specific objectives for this study were:

- (1) To identify articles and journals on Scopus and Web of Science databases that mention ESL/EFL
- (2) To identify the methodology and the tools used in these studies
- (3) To identify the level of education in which the investigations take place
- (4) To identify what topics related to oral communication in EFL
- (5) To identify challenges and recommendations presented by the authors

The questions determined for this study were:

- (1) What is the geographic distribution of the journals that publish articles related to English language oral communication and how many articles are published in each country?
- (2) What is the journal's name, its quartile ranking, and the number of articles published in that journal?
- (3) Which are the most frequently cited articles?
- (4) What is the research method used in the articles?
- (5) What are the techniques and tools used in the articles?
- (6) What is the educational level context in which the articles take place?
- (7) What topics are investigated in the articles?
- (8) What are the challenges for future studies identified by the author(s)?

Whereas other literature reviews addressing the topic of ESL/EFL have already been published, there are still questions to be answered. This literature mapping provides differential value by focusing particularly on the analysis of articles that have EFL/ESL oral communication or speaking as their main topic.

Understanding and knowing the aspects related to the methodology (methods, variables, techniques, instruments, etc.) that researchers have used is valuable for future researchers who intend to either follow the path of previous research or to explore new horizons within the domain of EFL research. Valenzuela and Flores (2014) make reference to four methods for research: qualitative, quantitative, mixed and action research, Creswell (2014) mentions that the difference between the different research approaches lies in the method employed throughout the research process, encompassing aspects such as questions, data collection, data analysis, validation, interpretation and validation.

The identification of the research contexts in which the study of oral communication in English as a foreign language has been conducted is relevant because it serves to determine the level of schooling (whether primary, secondary, high school, professional) or other settings in which research concerning oral communication of English as a foreign language has been carried out.

It is also important to identify trends in EFL research, as well as the thematic lines on which studies have focused in recent years because it provides an opportunity for future researchers. In this regard, Kitchenham et al. (2011) mention that making a high-quality mapping with complete information is useful for future research, serves to follow research trends over time, as a justification for new studies, to identify relevant literature, and as an educational resource.

## 2. Method

A systematic literature mapping (SLM) was conducted in this study. A systematic literature mapping gives us a current overview of relevant literature, as well as how many and what type of studies have been made related to the topic in question (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Petersen et al., 2008). It is also conducted using a series of stages (James et al., 2016) which help us categorize these studies so that we can have a general idea of their topics and decide what areas present gaps that could be the investigated in future studies (Grant & Booth, 2009; Petersen et al.,

2008). This SLM will follow the stages using the guidelines mentioned by James et al.(2016), and Kitchenham and Charters (2007) (Figure1).

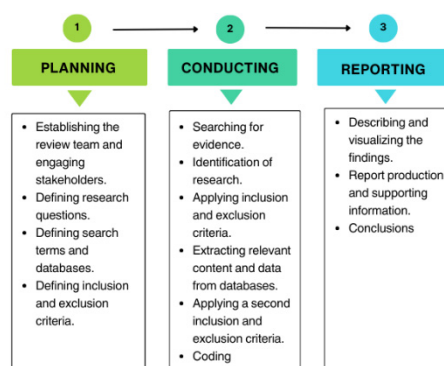


Figure 1. SLM Process

### 2.1 Planning

The most important part of a systematic review consists in identifying the research questions as they are the ones that guide the methodological part of the review (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). Research questions help us identify important information such as the type of research, where the topic is being published, and how often it is published, to be able to describe trends (Petersen et al., 2008). In the planning stage, the team defined the following research questions and their possible answers (Table 1).

Table 1. Research questions and possible answers

Question	Possible answers
<b>RQ1: What is the geographic distribution of the journals that publish articles related to English language oral communication and how many articles are published in each country?</b>	Journals names and countries
<b>RQ2: What is the journal's name, its quartile ranking, and the number of articles published in that journal?</b>	Journals names Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, NA Number of articles published
<b>RQ3: Which are the most frequently cited articles?</b>	Most cited articles
<b>RQ4: What is the research method used in the articles?</b>	Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed, Action Research, Theoretical
<b>RQ5: What are the techniques and tools used in the articles?</b>	Techniques: Interview, Observation, Questionnaire, Focus group Tools: Questionnaire, Interview, Survey, Likert scale
<b>RQ6: What is the educational level context in which the articles take place?</b>	University, High school, Secondary school, elementary school, language school, other.
<b>RQ7: What topics are investigated in the articles?</b>	Strategies, Factors, Technology usage, Processes, Evaluation
<b>RQ8: What are the challenges for future studies identified by the author(s)?</b>	Methodological, Education management

Note. RQ= Research Question

After establishing the research questions, the terms and search chains were defined. Scopus and Web of Science are known as the two leading, most extensive databases because of their impact, prestige and influence (Aghaei Chadegani et al., 2013; Zhu & Liu, 2020). Additionally, they were chosen as the search databases due to their broad coverage on different topics to identify studies on oral communication in EFL. Finally, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered. Defining inclusion and exclusion criteria is important because it helps to set the boundaries of the analysis to be carried out by finding a more precise balance between the objectives of other

researchers and one's own (Hornberger & Rangu, 2020). As for this literature mapping, defining inclusion and exclusion criteria allowed us to focus only on recent research articles (last five years) that referred to the teaching and/or development of oral communication skills in EFL/ESL, in order to identify the topics that researchers have focused on regarding the oral communication or speaking skills, and to analyze the investigation challenges regarding this skill. The final criteria were as follows (Figure 2):

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Articles reporting oral communication in EFL.</li> <li>✓ Articles contained in the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases.</li> <li>✓ Articles published between the years of 2018 to December 2022.</li> <li>✓ Articles written in English language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Books, book chapters, conference papers or meetings.</li> <li>✗ Articles not written in English.</li> <li>✗ Published before 2018.</li> <li>✗ Duplicate articles: Leave one article only in case of duplicates.</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

## 2.2 Conducting

During the conducting stage and in order to identify the most suitable articles that possibly answered the research questions, an identical search chain was defined for the two databases that were selected (Table 2).

Table 2. Search chain

### SCOPUS

#### SEARCH CHAIN

**TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "oral communication" AND efl ) AND PUBYEAR > 2017 AND PUBYEAR < 2023 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "english" ) )**

### WEB OF SCIENCE (WoS)

#### SEARCH CHAIN

**Results for "oral communication" efl (Topic) and 2018 or 2019 or 2020 or 2021 or 2022 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages)**

After establishing the search chain with all the inclusion criteria , the next step was to apply the exclusion criteria (book chapters, conference papers, books, meetings). Following this, the databases were exported to Excel to proceed with the elimination of duplicate records that were identified in both databases. In cases where identical articles were detected in both databases, only one was selected for consideration. In addition, two articles were found to refer to teaching another language other than English and were therefore discarded. Finally, a total of 68 articles were selected for this literature mapping (Figure 3).

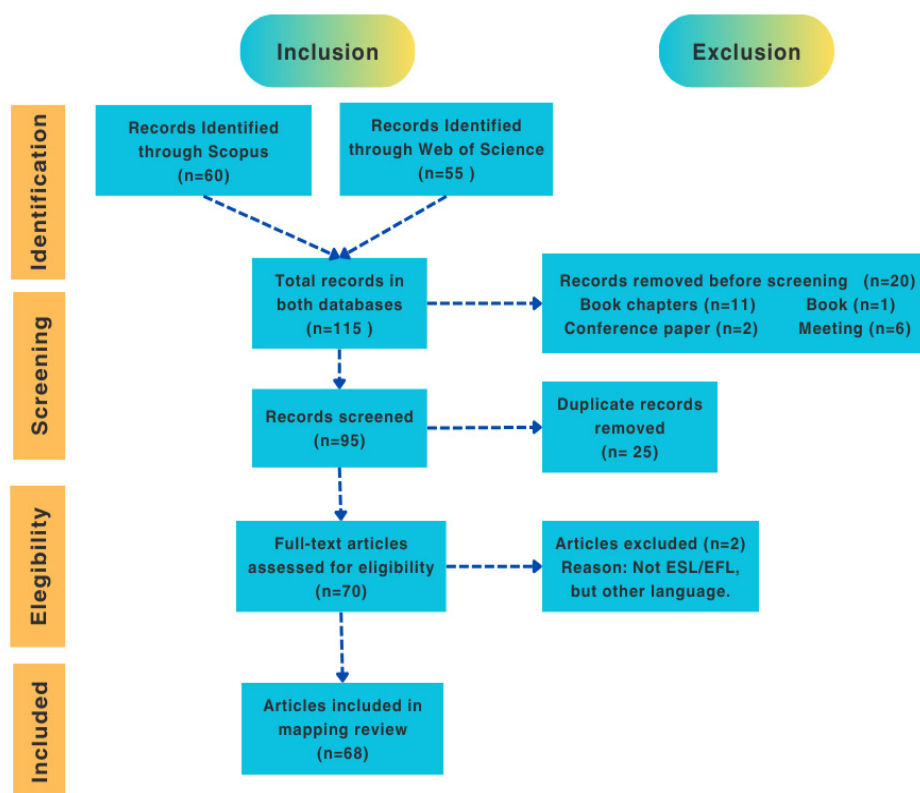


Figure 3. Systematic Review Process

The analysis process was carried out based on the defined objectives and questions mentioned in section 1, and the answers were coded in an Excel spreadsheet. For data on the articles, see the database of article mapping for this paper at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8247999>

### 2.3 Reporting

The data included in the Excel spreadsheet were graphed using graphic design programs so as to effectively and clearly present the information obtained from the analysis of the 68 articles.

## 3. Results

In this section, we describe the findings of our SLM to answer the investigation questions (Table 1). We identified the information about the journals (names, quartile ranking, geographic distribution, number of articles published), the most frequently cited articles, the research method, techniques, and tools used in the investigations, the educational level context in which the investigations take place, the topics the articles talk about, and what are the challenges for further studies mentioned by the authors.

RQ1: What is the geographic distribution of the journals that publish articles related to English language oral communication and how many articles are published in each country?

The geographic distribution of the journals that publish articles that investigate English language oral communication shows that the United Kingdom has the highest number of scientific publications (23.5%), followed by Malaysia (11.7%), South Korea (11.7%), Turkey (11.7%), and the United States (8.8%). (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Map showing journal's country and number of publications

RQ2: What is the journal's name, its quartile ranking, and the number of articles published in that journal?

Regarding the journals with more publications about the topic, we find TESL-EJ (United States), 3L-Language Linguistics Literature (Malaysia), Journal of Asia TEFL (South Korea), Cogent Education (United Kingdom), Arab World English Journal (Malaysia), and International Journal of Instruction (Turkey) with three publications each.

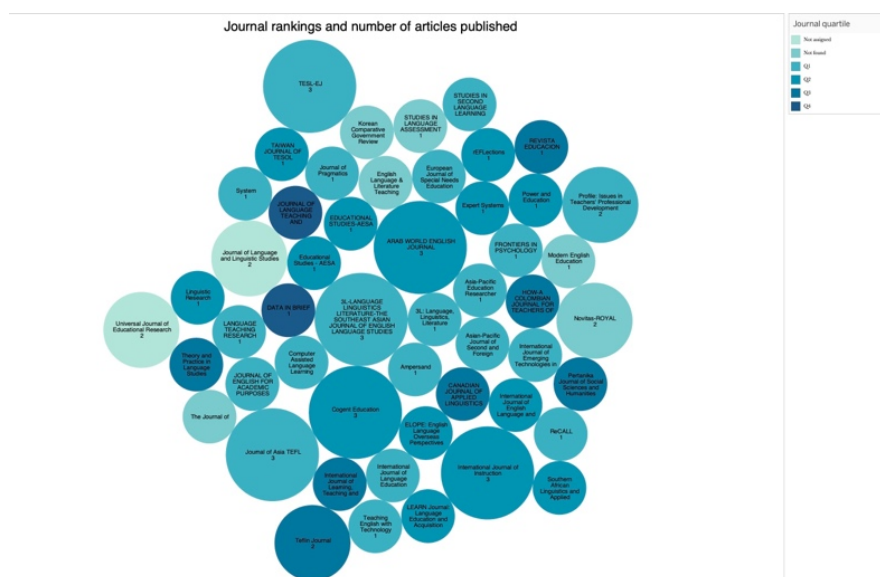


Figure 5. Journal rankings and publications

RQ3. Which are the most frequently cited articles?

The most frequently cited article (#26) refers to a task-based language teaching (TBLT) project developed through a three-week period that involved a mobile application to provide linguistic and task scaffolding (Fang et al., 2021). The second most cited article (#49) discusses the difficulties of lack of vocabulary in Saudi EFL learners and how it impacts their performance in listening and conversation classes, which takes a toll on their speaking proficiency (Khan et al., 2018). The third most cited article (#11) talks about foreign language anxiety (FLA) among Egyptian EFL learners and tries to investigate the role of AI-driven chatbots in both, FLA and speaking (El Shazly, 2021).

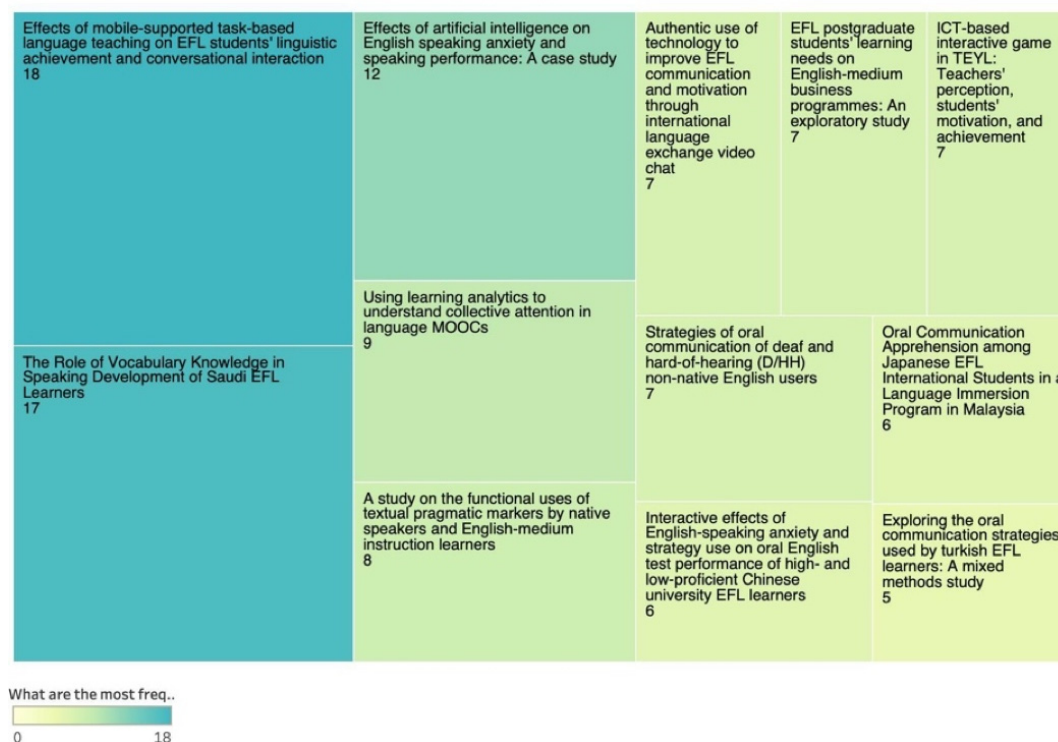


Figure 6. Most frequently cited articles

RQ4: What is the research method used in the articles?

A total of 68 articles were reviewed in this mapping. The methodology in each study comprising the SLM database was reviewed, analyzed, and grouped into types of research methodologies (Figure 7). 25% percent of the articles analyzed did not specify the type of research method used. The most common specified research method was Quantitative with 23.5% followed by the Qualitative method with 19.1%.

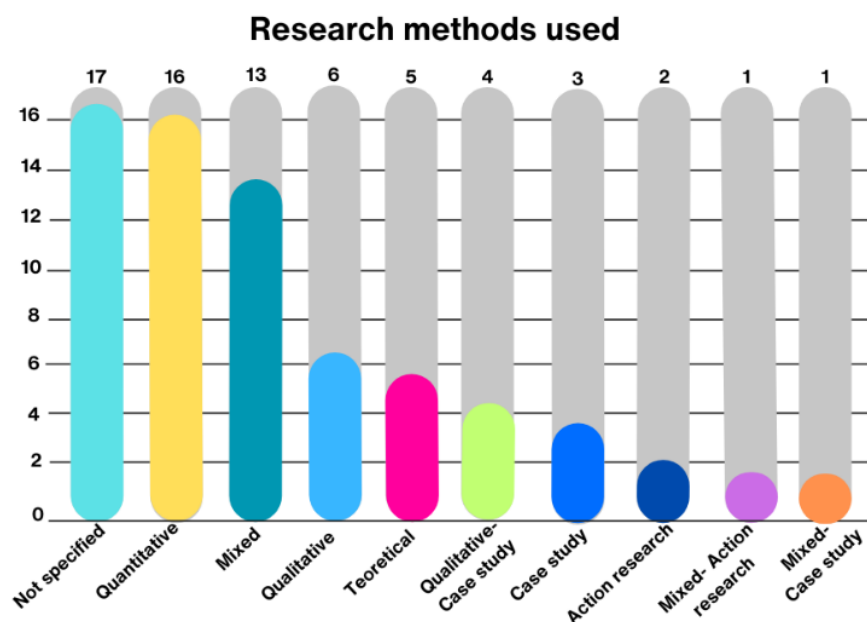


Figure 7. Research methods used



RQ5: What are the techniques and tools used in the articles?

25% of the articles reviewed included more than one data collection technique, which is why the total number is higher than the number of articles. The highest data collection technique was Questionnaire with 58.8%. The second highest was Interview with 26.5% followed by Observation with a 17.6% (Figure 8).

As for the data collection tools, once again, 35% of the articles used more than one data collection tool. Interview was the most employed tool with a 23.5%. The second most applied tool was Questionnaire with a 19.1%. Pretest -Posttest and Likert scale came next with 16.1% (Figure 9).

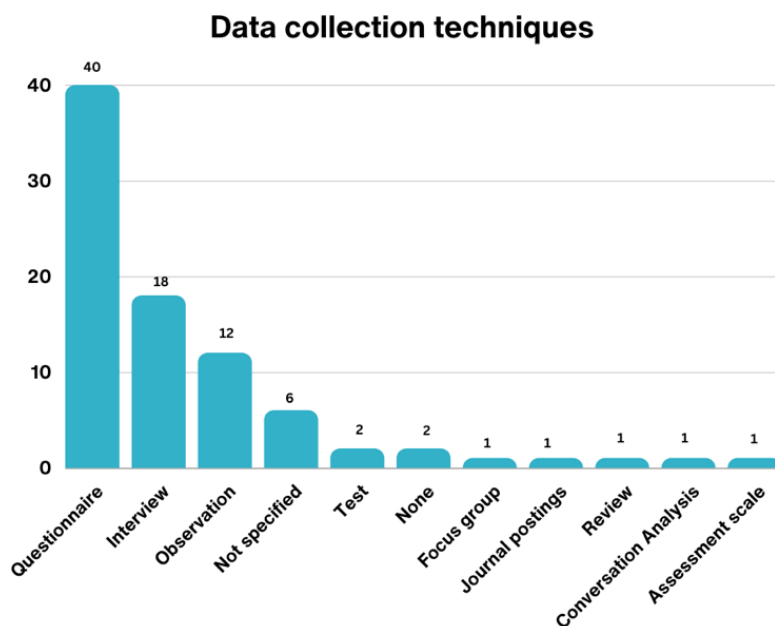


Figure 8. Data collection techniques

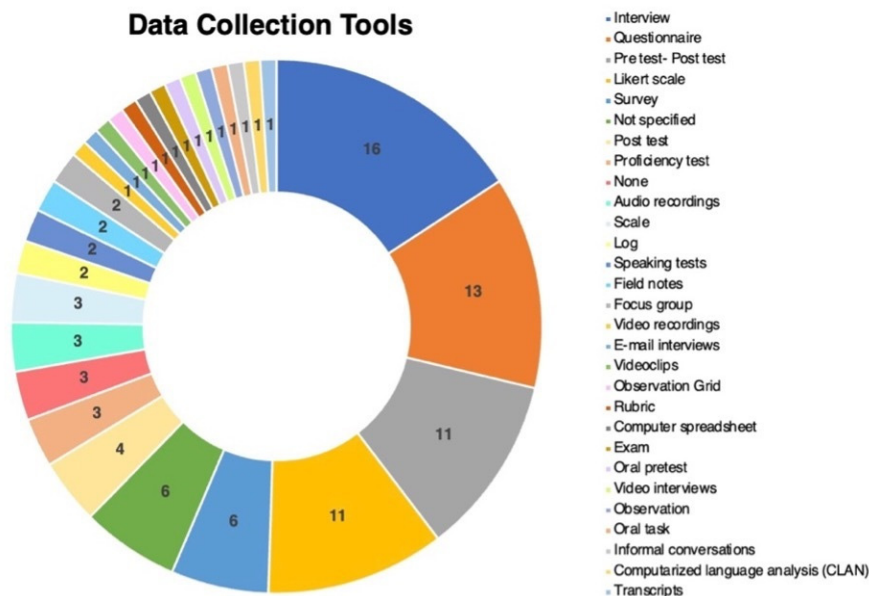


Figure 9. Data Collection Tools

RQ6: What is the educational level context in which the articles take place?

Some investigations took place in more than one context, which is why the number is higher than the total number of articles analyzed (Figure 10). University was the context where most research took place (70.6%). The second context was secondary school with a 13.2%.

The five most cited articles (#8, #11, #23, #26, and #49) have University as the context where the investigation was carried out.

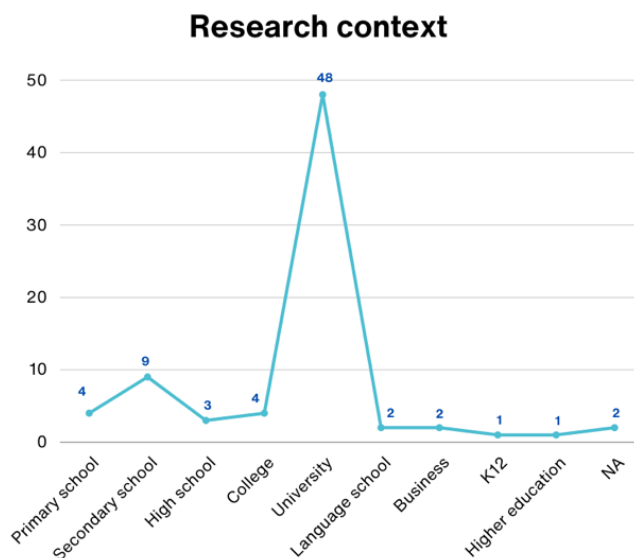


Figure 10. Research context

Note. NA= not applicable

RQ7: What topics are investigated in the articles?

Some investigations described more than one topic, which is why the number of topics is higher than the total number of articles. 51.4% of the articles analyzed were related to the use of Strategies namely, Teaching strategies (32.3%) and Learning strategies (19.1%). 45.6% of the articles investigated Processes such as Anxiety (17.6%), Willingness to communicate (11.7%), and Motivation (10.2%). 20.6% of the articles involved the use of technology in their investigations. 14.7% of the articles reviewed referred to a form of Evaluation including Grammar discourse, Self-assessment, and Feedback. 13.2% of the articles mentioned some Factors such as socio-cultural, economic, and psychological (Figure 12).

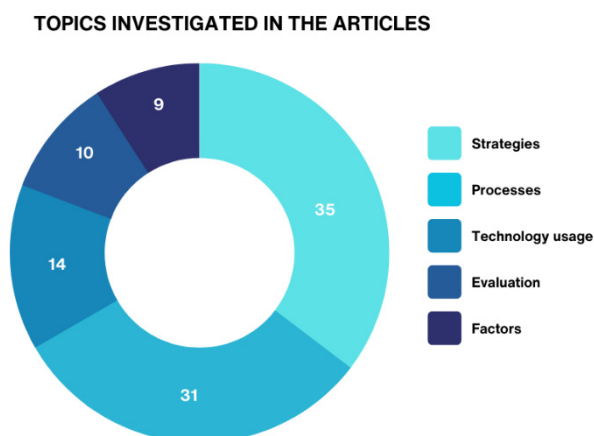


Figure 11. Topics Investigated in the articles

Some of the teaching strategies mentioned in the articles with more citations used project-based learning, which consisted of creating videos and e-posters; and role-playing simulation activities after being given certain scenarios established in the course. Regarding the learning strategies used in some of the investigations we find: pragmatic markers usage, oral communication strategies employed by deaf and hard-of-hearing students,

students' use of certain strategies such as body language, facial expressions, repeating utterances, fillers usage, etc. In terms of the processes some articles mention the motivation and learning achievement after being taught with an ICT-based interactive game, apprehension levels experienced by learners when trying to communicate and English-speaking anxiety during oral tests. About the factors mentioned in the articles, writers mention: lack of vocabulary knowledge, the relationship between classroom environment factors and willingness to communicate (WTC), learning program duration and other contextual variables such as parents' socio-economic status, social setting, and schools' type and geographical location. It is also worth mentioning that in recent years the integration of technology has become more popular when it comes to learning a foreign language. In the articles analyzed, resources or tools are mentioned such as: Asynchronous online support, online journal forum, AI Chatbots, video chat, LMOOCs, mobile usage, WhatsApp, video feedback. and interactive games among others.

RQ8: What are the challenges for future studies identified by the author(s)?

During the review process, the team found two categories mentioned as challenges for future studies: Methodological (52.9%) which referred to sample, variables, methodology, population, tools, and Education management (25%) which mentioned strategies, learning styles and technology usage among others. Lastly, 20.6% of the articles analyzed did not mention any challenges for future studies.

Some of the challenges for future studies mentioned by researchers in their articles were: (#1) investigate the relationship between students' WTC and the quality of classroom communication (Havwini, 2019), (#2) integration of ICT-based interactive media in the teaching-learning process of younger learners (Ratminingsih et al., 2018), (#5) further research with children to help them engage from an early stage in critical thinking activities that improve their oral communication in English (Pinza-Tapia et al., 2021), (#7) foster intercultural sensitivity of language teachers (Egitim, 2022), (#10) conduct more studies on students' use of oral strategies in relation to variables such as academic performance, prior experience, learning styles, student interest and motivation, and oral proficiency (Dinsa et al., 2022), (#11) identify the exact level of anxiety that may be permeable to FL learning, empirically examine AI technologies in FL teaching (El Shazly, 2021), (#13) work to refine a rubric for student engagement (Spring, 2021), (#44) partnerships of higher education institutions with industries in various sectors to provide opportunities for language teachers to learn about real business communication processes (Glomo-Narzoles & Glomo-Palermo, 2021), (#46) more research addressing the balance between fluency and oral accuracy in initial EFL teacher training (Robaina & Larenas, 2020), (#49) more experimental studies to support, develop and affirm vocabulary knowledge with EFL students' oral proficiency (Khan et al., 2018), (#53) examine the effect of emotional constructs on learners' English oral communication in various situations, both in and out of class, examine instructors' perceptions of their learners' communicative behaviors (Ma, 2022), (#59) examine how learners' engagement relates to their oral competence, and explore learner confidence (Liu & Aryadoust, 2022).

#### 4. Discussion

As part of the reporting process,

The objectives set out in this literature mapping were:

- (1) To identify articles and journals on Scopus and Web of Science databases that mention ESL/EFL
- (2) To identify the methodology and the tools used in these studies.
- (3) To identify the educational level in which the investigations take place.
- (4) To identify what topics related to oral communication in EFL.
- (5) To identify challenges and recommendations presented by the authors.

The results of these are synthesized and shared in this section.

(1) In relation to the context, we found that the journals with the highest number of publications on oral communication in English as a foreign language are located in different continents: America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania (Figure 4). We therefore deduce that the learning of English as a foreign language is seen as a focal point of education. We consider it to be of interest to know the information related to the journals that have the most publications on the subject analyzed as it allows us to identify the publishers interested in this topic. In addition, it helps to identify relevant data from various researchers, with the possibility of creating research networks or sharing data and experiences in the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. According to Kitchenham et al. (2011) having this kind of information is useful in education and for future research as it provides an overview of the literature. On the other hand, 70.6% of the publications analyzed

corresponded to research carried out at the university level; this leads to infer that studying this subject at this educational level is associated with the mastery of this language before entering the labor market.

(2) Having a clear definition of the research method is important because it allows to answer the research questions in a precise and detailed manner. Furthermore, it is useful for other researchers to recognize the process followed by the researchers before them and the results that were obtained. In this mapping, we found that 25% of the articles we analyzed did not precisely define the research approach and, in some articles, only the design or the tool used during the process was mentioned (Figure 7). Creswell (2014) explains the importance of a precise definition of the approach, design and method used when conducting research, as well as the contributions and influence of the various existing philosophical paradigms.

(3) In relation to the variables that make up the sub-themes of the thematic lines, it has been interesting to find that some authors study the association of cognitive and affective variables with the development of oral communication in English as a foreign language (see Figure 12). Brown (2014) mentions that developing theories of second language acquisition based solely on cognitive aspects would overlook a fundamental side of the human being, since there are a large number of affective variables involved in learning. Although the percentage of research that has analyzed teaching-learning strategies for learning English as a foreign language is comparable to the percentage of studies that analyze affective-cognitive processes, it is important to deepen the study of the various variables associated with these processes. The identification of cognitive-affective variables provides a reference to broaden the field of study with respect to cognitive-affective processes.

(4) One construct that has been analyzed in research in recent years is the integration of information and communication technologies (Figure 12) in connection with oral communication or speaking English as a foreign language. The articles analyzed explore the use of cellphones, WhatsApp, video chat, chatbots, e-poster, videos and LMOOCs, in the process of teaching-learning English as a foreign language. Rintaningrum (2023) mentions that the integration of technology in the English language acquisition process motivates learners and helps them to build confidence. The use of diverse digital tools and applications in language teaching could contribute to the development of oral communication skills; however, this is a topic that still requires further research as some research shows that the results have not been favorable in all contexts.

(5) The recommendations that the researchers show through the narrative of their articles focus on two areas: a) methodological recommendations and b) knowledge management recommendations, which refer to expanding the sample, applying the research in other contexts in order to have elements to expand the results, employ different methods, and study other variables. Other researchers recommend teaching and student learning strategies for practicing and improving oral communication in English as a foreign language. The recommendations provided by researchers on the topic of oral communication of English as a foreign language are useful for future research projects, as mentioned by Kitchenham et al. (2011), a literature mapping can be of great use to other researchers in establishing a basis for future research as it provides a view of a body of literature on a given topic.

Considering the findings presented above, it is convenient to highlight the gaps we found in relation to the research on oral communication of English as a foreign language: We have found that, in some articles, the approach, design and scope of the investigations are not defined in a clear and specific manner. In some articles, it is recommended to broaden the sample so as to generalize the results to other contexts; at this point, it is also noteworthy that most of the research has focused on the university level, leaving a field of possibilities for research on this topic at lower school levels. Among the variables analyzed in the various articles, the least studied are those related to assessment and the factors that affect oral communication in English as a foreign language. This presents an opportunity since certain topics such as cognitive-affective processes and oral communication evaluation can be further explored.

## 5. Conclusions

Education in the 21st century is immersed in the dynamics of an interconnected world that demands citizens that possess skills to interact with others and offer joint solutions to local, regional, and global problems. The OECD (2018) mentions how important it is for children and youth to develop global competence to examine issues and situations of local, global and cultural significance, in order to understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews, to establish positive interactions with people from different backgrounds, and to take constructive action towards sustainable development and collective well-being. From this perspective, oral communication in English is a very important skill when interacting, learning, and collaborating with others, given that English is used as a lingua franca in a variety of contexts. The findings of this mapping show the importance of investigating the development of oral communication in English as a foreign language in different

contexts. It is relevant for educational practice to identify the strategies and resources used for teaching a second language as well as the learning strategies employed by students, and to analyze how information and communication technologies have been integrated to facilitate students' ability to speak English. In addition, studies of cognitive-affective processes and factors show that there are multiple variables that can be positively or negatively related to the ability to communicate effectively in the English language. This article presents original data that can serve as a starting point for future research. therefore, we recommend that in subsequent investigations related to the study of oral communication in English as a foreign language: a) specify the research method (research design, scope and instruments used), b) consider assessment, diverse factors and/or cognitive-affective processes (integrated) as study variables that may be associated with the achievement of oral communication in English as a foreign language. In the context of knowledge management, we would like to emphasize that the integration of information and communication technologies into English language learning cannot be overlooked or underestimated since these technologies have become an integral component of our daily activities.

## 6. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

This literature review was limited to articles published in English and to research published in the Scopus and WoS databases, in order to be consistent with the topic analyzed. However, due to this delimitation, articles published in another language and in other databases were not analyzed, which could be a limiting factor in terms of the topics investigated regarding English language oral communication and the methods used by other researchers, but at the same time it could pose an opportunity for future researchers interested in considering these criteria.

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