PASAA

ELT and AL Research Trends in Thai SCOPUS-indexed Journals

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Article information	
Abstract	Scopus currently plays a crucial role in guaranteeing the quality of journals included in this prestigious database, which in turns represents the reputation of world universities according to well-known rankings, e.g. The QS World University Rankings, The Times Higher Education World University Rankings, etc. Awareness of the research trends in Scopus can facilitate researchers in making their appropriate decisions on the topics and methodology that are gaining popularity, which will increase their opportunity to have their works published in Scopus journals. This study aims at investigating the current trends in ELT/AL publications based on 180 articles from three Thai Scopus-indexed journals, i.e., *PASAA*, *LEARN*, and *rEFLections*, published between 2019 and 2021. The results have indicated that the majority of studies in these fields centered around second/foreign language learning and teaching, with vocabulary being ranked first in popularity, and the most frequent research design was the survey study. Approximately 62.5% of the studies gathered data from students/learners, with undergraduate students being most frequently examined. Overall, there was a preponderance of authors whose affiliations were in Thailand, and a closer scrutiny has discovered PASAA published more articles by international scholars, while

	the other two contained more articles contributed by local academics.
Keywords	Research Trends, English Language Teaching, Applied Linguistics, Scopus-indexed Journals, Thai Journals
APA citation:	Phoocharoensil, S. (2022). ELT and AL research trends in Thai SCOPUS-indexed journals. *PASAA*, *64*, 163–193.

Introduction

University lecturers are currently required to disseminate findings from their research projects, most of which are funded by the institutes for which they are working. One of the best-known channels for sharing research results is to have research-based articles published in peer-reviewed journals mainly welcoming submissions in English, a language friendly to the international readership. As Lee (2014) has noted, writing for scholarly publications is crucially important for academics working in tertiary education around the world, due to the fact that universities in several parts of the world aim for higher international rankings through the number of international publications that their faculty contributes. While a number of faculty members publish internationally to share findings with other researchers, gain membership of the academic community, or even acquire satisfaction from achieving challenging goals, many consider international publication a passage to job security and career success (Lee, 2014; Yeo et al., 2022). Accordingly, 'playing the publication game' is now a prominent metaphor "to describe strategies of academic publishing in the contemporary university" (Butler & Spoelstra, 2020, p. 415). In addition to lecturers, graduate students are normally required to have papers based on their MA/Ph.D. theses published in high-quality international journals indexed in renowned databases, e.g. Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). Doctoral students in science and engineering at many universities in Hong Kong, for instance, have to have at least one publication in a journal listed in the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) (Li, 2016), and those in social sciences and humanities also need to publish in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), both of which are under WoS, prior to their graduation

approval. In a similar vein, many universities in Thailand require that doctoral students in international study programs publish their thesis-related articles in international journals, and some particularly encourage students to have their publication in Scopus or WoS.

It seems that becoming successful in world-class database publication proves to be a daunting task for academics in social sciences and humanities in Thailand. English Language Teaching (henceforth ELT) and Applied Linguistics (henceforth AL) are two related disciplines in humanities that have seen a low frequency of publication in Scopus/WoS in the Thai academic contexts. Despite presence of scholars with Thai affiliations publishing in leading ELT/AL journals indexed in Scopus/WoS, e.g. *TESOL Quarterly, Language Learning, System,* etc. (Watson Todd, 2021), the relative frequency appears to be much lower in comparison to that of disciplines in science, such as medicine, engineering, and biochemistry. However, more international publications of Thai researchers in Scopus have been seen after three journals of the country were accepted for inclusion in Scopus. This was in thanks to the TCI-TSRI-Scopus Collaboration Project, which expedited and facilitated the journal-quality screening procedure of the selected journals. Therefore, it is of paramount importance for researchers in Thailand to be aware of the research trends in ELT/AL through an analysis of the three Scopus-indexed journals. Even though there have been studies so far identifying such trends through graduate students' theses in Thai universities (e.g. Chaiyasook & Jaroongkhongdach, 2014) and Q1-Q2 Scopus journals by scholars with Thai affiliations (Watson Todd, 2021), an investigation into the ELT/AL research trends in the three Thai Scopus journals is still needed to uncover the current trend of research publication in this particular field.

Literature Review

    ELT/AL Journals and Quality Assurance

In the Thai academic context, Thai-Journal Citation Index (TCI) Center plays a vital role in carefully screening and monitoring the quality of journals published in Thailand. These journals are subsidized by a university, a government-based institute, or a private organization. One of the main responsibilities of TCI is to categorize Thai journals into three different groups according to quality, using the four major and eight minor criteria, as shown in Table 1. Based on the journal classification criteria in Table 1, journals in Thailand are classified into three tiers, with Tier-1 journals (16-20 points) being considered having the best quality, followed by Tier-2 (10-15 points), and Tier-3 (9 points or below) journals, respectively. All of the major criteria must be satisfied in order for a journal to receive the maximum score of 20, based on the minor criteria. The TCI tier classification lasts five years until the next round of evaluation.

Table 1

Major and Minor Criteria for Journal Classification

Criteria	
Major	A journal indexed in TCI is required to have:
	1. publication timeliness
	2. ISSN
	3. a website with all necessary information
	4. standard stylesheet template
Minor (20 points)	A journal indexed in TCI is required to have:
	1. citations (2 points)
	2. the Editorial Board with members from a variety of institutions (2 points)
	3. articles contributed by a variety of institutions (2 points)
	4. standard referencing style (2 points)
	5. a peer-review process prior to publication (3 points)
	6. an online journal management system (2 points)
	7. acceptable quality of articles (5 points)
	8. other qualitative criteria (2 points)

A number of referred journals in Social Sciences and Humanities, many of which publish articles written only in English, are available in Thailand. They will be regarded as international journals if and only if they are indexed in international databases, such as ERIC, DOAJ, or Scopus. In other words, the language of publication is not a determining factor of whether a journal is considered an 'international' one. This means that even if a journal only publishes articles written in English, it is still considered a national journal as it appears only in TCI rather than an international database. It is interesting to note that some TCI-Tier-1 and TCI-Tier-2 journals are also indexed in international databases, e.g. ERIC, and some TCI-Tier-1 journals have also been selected to be included in the world-leading database, i.e., Scopus.

When it comes to journals concerning ELT and/or AL, most of them accept only English articles, except for *Pasaa Paritat Journal* and *Language and Linguistics*, which publish both Thai and English articles. As presented in Table 2, *PASAA: A Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand* (or *PASAA* for short), *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* (henceforth *LEARN*), and *rEFLections* are indexed in TCI-Tier-1, ERIC, and Scopus, while those that are in TCI-Tier-1 but not in an international database include *Journal of Studies in the English Language (jSEL), NIDA Journal of Language and Communication (NIDAJLC), The New English Teacher, Thoughts, Journal of Language and Culture*, and *Language and Linguistics*. Among those in TCI-Tier-2, *THAITESOL Journal* is also viewed as an international journal being indexed in ERIC. While eight listed journals focus on language teaching/learning and applied linguistics, *Journal of Language and Culture, Language and Linguistics*, and *Thoughts* also call for submissions on cultural studies, theoretical linguistics, and English literature, respectively.

Table 2

Classification of ELT/Applied Linguistics Journals (as of July 2022)

TCI-Tier	Journal Title	Language(s) of publication	Other databases
1	*PASAA*	English	Scopus, ERIC
	LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network	English	Scopus, ERIC
	rEFLections	English	Scopus, ERIC
	Journal of Studies in the English Language (jSEL)	English	-
	NIDA Journal of Language and Communication, (NIDAJLC)	English	-
	The New English Teacher (NET)	English	-
	Thoughts	English	-
	Journal of Language and Culture	English	-
	Language and Linguistics	English, Thai	-
2	*THAITESOL Journal*	English	ERIC
	Pasaa Paritat Journal	English, Thai	-

Research Trends in ELT/AL

Research trends in ELT/AL can be examined by looking at the globally known international publications in the Western world, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, with which leading scholars in the fields are associated. A crucial subfield of AL that is a major force in ELT research is English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The development of different ELT theories and innovative practice relies on an in-depth knowledge of EAP, which is conducive to comprehension of the cognitive, social, and linguistic demands of specific academic disciplines (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). EAP in general has two main purposes: improving learners' English proficiency and providing learners with communicative skills essential to academic activities, such as research article

writing, oral presentation, and participation in academic discussions and seminars (Gao & Bartlett, 2014). EAP plays a pivotal role in language education, especially in countries in which English is the medium of instruction. Swales and Feak (2012) emphasize the need for researching EAP, considering the increasing use of educational technology, graduate and post-graduate students' greater contribution to research paper publication, the higher number of students presenting at conferences, and the emergence of World Englishes. The changing trends of EAP concern certain factors, such as a more prominent role of English as a language mainly used in the dissemination of research findings, a dramatic rise of internationalization and globalization of higher education, and English skill instruction for non-native English-speaking academics (Hyland, 2006).

Importantly, Tazik and Khany (2019) explored the current trends of research in EAP, based on the data from various sources, ranging from well-known books, book chapters, and research articles from top-12 journals in AL and ELT, i.e., *English for Academic Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, Modern Language Journal, Language Learning, System, Foreign Language Annals, Applied Linguistics, Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *TESOL Quarterly, Language Testing, Language Teaching,* and *Language Teaching Research*. The study revealed that among the most-researched topics in EAP are writing skills in academic contexts, EAP curriculum development, and critical EAP. In particular, academic writing and approaches to teaching writing have received far more attention now because academic writing is considered to be a means to convey research-based insights and ideas to other scholars (Swales & Feak, 2012), and thus learners are required to improve this specific skill through formal instruction. As regards EAP curriculum development, the prevailing research themes involve standard variety of English in academic contexts, preparing materials for EAP students, the discussions of English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic English (ESAP), and needs analysis. Lastly, the

areas of research in critical EAP primarily deal with critical thinking and pragmatism.

A number of investigations into the AL/ELT research trends are based on journal articles. Albiladi (2020) explored the most researchable topics in four scholarly journals in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL). The journals, with unknown titles, were selected based on recommendations of TESOL professors at a USA university and the researcher. The first ten articles published in all the issues between 2011 and 2020 having been randomly selected, totaling 400 articles, the researcher reported on the frequency of the research topics and methodologies. The top-five topics were digital literacy and technology in TESOL, teaching methodology, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), testing and evaluation, and language planning and policy, respectively. This suggests that TESOL practitioners need to keep abreast of technology and digital skills for their teaching profession. The most common methodology was qualitative (47%), with interviews, observations, focus groups, and written essays being research instruments, followed by quantitative studies (32%) eliciting data using questionnaires, and mix-methods studies (21%). A bibliometric study by Lei and Liu (2019) furthermore, selected 42 journals published between 2005 and 2016 meeting the following inclusion criteria: 1) having a focus on language use and language teaching/learning, 2) being included in the SSCI journal list of linguistics, and 3) having an impact factor of 0.25 or above. Of all the 164 research topics identified, those exhibiting a significant increase in frequency over the past 12 years included social class, language policy, eye tracking, EFL learner, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), multilingualism, and language ideology.

Modern research trends and methods in AL were the focus of a recent study by Farsani et al. (2021), having gathered data from 18 top-tier AL journals with the minimum index of 2.5, e.g. *System, Foreign Language Annals, Modern Language Learning, Language Learning, Applied Linguistics, English for Specific Purposes,*

TESOL Quarterly, etc., from 2009 to 2018. Through synthetic techniques and bibliometric analysis, Farsani et al. (2021) found that only 4.5% of the articles were non-empirical, while the rest were empirical. The majority of the research approach was quantitative (42.6%), followed by mixed-methods studies (25.9%), and qualitative studies (24.9%), respectively. Despite being smallest in number (2.2%), systematic reviews, especially meta-analysis and methodological research synthesis, appeared to be the most cited in comparison to the three aforementioned categories. As clearly shown in the findings, current AL research began to shift to a new paradigm, which suggests that "…applied linguists have a tendency to collaborate on language-based problems with each other (intradisciplinary) and with other researchers (interdisciplinary), out of L2 studies" (Farsani et al., 2021, p.14). It was also reported that applied linguists studied L2 problems in collaboration with researchers in other disciplines, e.g. educational research, life sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, and arts & humanities.

More specifically, studies on ELT/AL research trends have also been done in an Asian publication context. An exploration of research trends of English education in South Korea was the focus of Ma and Kim's (2014) study. The data were garnered from *English Teaching (ET)*, as a domestic journal, and *TESOL Quarterly (TQ)*, as an international journal, from 2011 to 2013. In this study, four aspects were examined, namely participants, research methods, target language skills, and research topics. It was discovered that the majority of the participants in the studies from both journals were university students, probably because the authors who were interested in and capable of publishing their research findings in leading journals were higher-education academics. In terms of research methods, qualitative and quantitative methods were the most common in *TQ*, both being well-balanced, followed by mixed and theoretical methods, whereas quantitative methods were the most frequent in *ET*, followed by mixed, qualitative, theoretical, and synthesis methods. With regard to target language skills, the articles in *TQ* investigated the speaking skill most frequently, and most of the

studies in *ET* centered around 'writing.' It was claimed that Korean students learned English for standardized tests in which writing was a major part, and this may explain why a number of studies on writing have been undertaken. Lastly, the most common research topics in *TQ* addressed socio-cultural factors, followed by classroom, sociolinguistic, and affective ones. On the other hand, classroom research was the most researched in *ET*, with affective, learner traits, and language testing following, respectively. In the Middle East contexts, as clearly shown by Mohsen's (2021) bibliometric study of the applied linguistics output of Saudi institutions, with data collected from articles in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) in 2011-2020, the top-three areas on which ELT/AL scholars in Saudi Arabia often perform research include language learning and teaching, neurolinguistics, and discourse analysis.

Watson Todd (2021) has recently conducted his survey on trends in Applied Linguistics research in Thailand. Since Scopus assigns four different quartiles (Q) to the journals that it indexes, with Q1 being the most reputable due to the highest citations, the study was focused on applied linguistics articles published in Scopus Q1 and Q2 journals as these two quartiles represent the highest citations in Scopus, known as CiteScores. An initial search for journal articles in the Linguistics and Language sub-category in Scimago Journal Ranking with at least one author with a Thai affiliation was conducted, and then the articles in Q3 and Q4 and those not relevant to applied linguistics were excluded. Approximately five articles were published annually between 2000 and 2008, before the average rose to ten in 2009-2017. Interestingly, the number of articles saw a sharp increase from 2018. Watson Todd identified five different research methods of these studies using the information in the abstracts: *Experimental, Survey, Discourse Analysis, Corpus*, and *Academic/Review*. A keyword analysis based on the 85 selected articles published since 2017 demonstrated that the top-20 key words, e.g. *English, language, Thai, students, EFL, learning, study, listening, writing, teaching, teachers, learners, classroom,* and *test*, were mainly related to ELT research.

According to the findings, applied linguistics research in Thailand ¥was closely associated with issues in ELT. For instance, 'listening' and 'writing' were two language skills over which several researchers in Thailand expressed concern. In terms of the research methods, the most popular was experimental, which suggests that the prototypical applied linguistics research in Thailand involves an evaluation of an intervention in ELT.

In addition to the journal articles in ELT/AL, there have also been efforts to identify research trends in ELT M.A. and doctoral theses. Among studies in the Middle East contexts, Kirmizi (2012), having surveyed MA ELT theses from five Turkish universities in 2005-2010, revealed that most of the research topics concerned not only English language skills, e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, but also ELT methodology and curriculum/material development, and Karadağ's (2010) study on unpublished Ph.D. theses in Turkey in 2003-2007 clearly showed the experimental design was the most frequently used, followed by survey research, correlational studies, and case studies, respectively. In line with Karadağ (2010), Özmen et al. (2016), analyzing 144 ELT Ph.D. theses in Turkey between 2010 and 2014, reported that mix-methods research was the most popular design, followed by quantitative studies. It was claimed that such Ph.D. studies required quantitative designs as most of them were heavily based on positivism. Three major research topics were identified, namely Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Foreign Language Teacher Education, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), with tertiary education being the most common contexts of the studies.

With regard to the research trends in Asia, Lin and Cheng (2010) examined 493 abstracts of M.A. TESOL theses in Taiwan between 2003 and 2007. The findings on research topics were along the same line with those of Kirmizi (2012) in that the most popular topics included language skills, ELT methodology, and curriculum/material development, with computer-assisted language learning

(CALL) being added. It is worth mentioning that in Taiwan many M.A. studies in ELT are devoted to secondary and undergraduate contexts. In the Thai ELT contexts, Chaiyasook and Jaroongkhongdach (2014), conducting a content analysis of 194 M.A. theses in ELT done at seven Thai universities from 2003 to 2011, revealed that the largest proportion of the theses was concerned with student performance and undergraduate level was the most common educational level of research context. Regarding the research methods, a quantitative research design involving human participants was the most frequent, and the major source of data was students. Moreover, a combination of a questionnaire and a test and a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis were found to be used most frequently on the grounds that triangulation of different research instruments enabled them to achieve in-depth data from the participants.

In South America, Bailey and Corrales (2020) looked at 156 abstracts of M.A. theses in ELT and related fields in Colombo between 2012 and 2017. The researchers, using data from theses of seven Colombian universities, pointed out the research contexts, areas, and methods. The results on the ELT research contexts were consistent with those in other regions as earlier reviewed in that the majority of contexts concern higher education. Similar to Kirmizi (2012) and Lin and Cheng (2010), Bailey and Corrales (2020) also discovered that language skills, teaching methodology, and curriculum design were most common. Of all the target language skills, reading and speaking were researched with the highest frequency, respectively. Regarding ELT methods, teaching methodology and teacher beliefs received the highest level of attention. As for the research methods, qualitative research was the most popular, followed by mixed-methods research, while most of the data were elicited using observations and interviews, respectively. However, a major limitation of this study lied in the researchers' sole reliance on the abstracts in the research trend identification, and a lack of information on any investigated research aspects found in the abstracts meant an incomplete picture

of M.A. ELT research in Colombia, especially in the research methodology and data collection methods.

While past studies in Thailand endeavored to analyze Thai scholars' ELT/AL papers published in Scopus (Q1-Q2) journals worldwide (Watson Todd, 2021) and identify research trends in M.A. ELT theses (e.g. Chaiyasook & Jaroongkhongdach, 2014), there is still a need to explore the ELT/AL research trends in Scopus journals of Thailand, which is a new phenomenon in the Thai ELT/AL arena since the inclusion of three Thai journals, i.e., *PASAA, LEARN,* and *rEFLections*, whose scopes and aims relate to language education and description, in Scopus. This study thus aimed to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Who are the research participants joining the current ELT/AL research published in Thai publications indexed in Scopus?
2. What are the current ELT/AL research trends regarding research topics and methodology in Thai publications indexed in Scopus?
3. What is the proportion of Thai authors to international authors in Thai publications indexed in Scopus?

Methodology

Data Collection

In an investigation into the current trends in research publications in ELT and AL in international journals published in Thailand, three international peer-reviewed journals, i.e., *PASAA, LEARN,* and *rEFLections*, were purposively sampled due to the fact that they are all indexed in Scopus, i.e. one of the most world-renowned databases accepted by a variety of university ranking systems worldwide. The three journals share similar areas of publication in ELT and Applied Linguistics, e.g. second or foreign language learning and teaching, teaching methodology, language testing and assessment, curriculum design and development, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English as a Lingua Franca

(ELF), teacher training and professional development, innovations in language teaching and learning, and applied linguistics. The inclusion of the journals in Scopus started in 2019 for *PASAA* and *LEARN* and 2020 for *rEFLections*. According to SCImago Journal Rank (SJR), which retrieves information for various indicators from the Scopus database and provides a web-based environment to view the performance of journals and countries in various disciplines, as of July 2022, *PASAA*, *LEARN*, and *rEFLections* are all in Quartile 2 (Q2) in Linguistics and Language. While *PASAA* and *LEARN* annually publish two issues, *rEFLections* has published three issues since 2021. They all publish three categories, i.e. research articles, academic articles, and book reviews, with *PASAA* accepting a special type of papers known as short discussion articles, including interviews and idea sharing. Table 3 presents the proportion of different types of publications in the three journals. The number of articles in *rEFLections* is lower than that of the other two as it was indexed in Scopus later.

Table 3

The Proportion of Different Publications in PASAA, LEARN, and rEFLections (2019-2021)

Journals	Types of Publications					Total
	Research articles	Academic articles	Book reviews	Short discussion articles		
				Interview	Idea sharing	
PASAA	52	3	5	2	3	65
LEARN	94	13	3	-	-	110
rEFLections	34	2	3	-	-	39
Total	180	18	11	2	3	214

Regarding article selection in the present study, the articles analyzed were required to meet the following criteria. First, only research articles, rather than the

other kinds of publication, were selected. Second, the articles had to be published in one of the three aforementioned Scopus-indexed Thai journals between 2019 and 2021 (i.e. *PASAA* and *LEARN*) and 2020 and 2021 (i.e. *rEFLections*), i.e. the periods in which the journals were indexed in Scopus. It should be noted that the data of research articles were pooled from multiple sources, i.e. the three different journals, for the purpose of triangulation, a research strategy to test validity of data through the convergence of information from different sources (Mackey & Gass, 2021). The total number of research articles published each year in these three journals is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

The Number of Research Articles in PASAA, LEARN, and rEFLections

Journals	2019		2020		2021			Total
	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	
PASAA	6	10	7	10	10	9	-	52
LEARN	3	6	16	27	20	22	-	94
rEFLections	-	-	6	7	7	7	7	34
Total	9	16	29	44	37	38	7	180

Data Analysis

The classification of data was based on the framework adapted from those of Ma and Kim (2014) and Watson Todd (2021). The present study focused on the identification of participants, research methods, research topics, and authors' affiliations, the latter of which was added. First, the participants were classified into four major categories: 1) students/learners, 2) teachers/lecturers/tutors, 3) stakeholders, and 4) texts. It was found that some studies involved more than one participant category. For example, one survey research study could gather data from both students and teachers. In such a case, double marking would be

permitted, resulting in the number of participants tallied being higher than that of the other aspects under investigation.

Second, based on the key information in the article abstracts and 'Research Method' section, the research methods were identified according to the definitions proposed by Nunan and Bailey (2009) and Watson Todd (2021). It is worth noting that documentary research, which concerns meta-analyses, was excluded as non-empirical academic articles and were not under the scope of this study. The coding scheme for research method identification is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Research Method Classification

Research Methods	Characteristics
Survey research	Use of a questionnaire and/or an interview to elicit data on participants' attitudes, beliefs, or opinions
Experimental study	Measurement of effectiveness of an intervention/treatment
Case study	A detailed longitudinal investigation or naturalistic inquiry not involving any kind of treatment/intervention
Corpus study	Analysis of a principled collection of data in electronic files using a corpus-based approach
Linguistic analysis	Analysis of linguistic features, e.g. phonetic, semantic, pragmatic, syntactic features, etc.
Discourse analysis	Analysis of discourse features, e.g. moves, genres, etc.

In the next step, the research topics were categorized according to the research areas specified in the aim and scope of the journals, as exemplified in Table 6. Some articles addressed more than one topic, and the decisions on topic assignment were made based on the keywords in the titles and the abstracts. In

identifying the research topics, the most challenging task among all the four aspects in terms of classification, a well-trained intercoder holding a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics was asked to code the data. The total number of articles coded was 189, and both coders analyzed all the articles. The expected average inter-reliability score was 70% or above (Jaroongkhongdach et al., 2011).

Table 6

Research Topics

Research Topics
Second/foreign language learning and teaching
Teaching methodology
Learner
Language testing and assessment
Curriculum design and development
Teacher training and professional development
English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)
Applied Linguistics

The last aspect on which this study concentrated dealt with the authors' affiliations, i.e. domestic (THAI), international (INTER), and both domestic and international affiliations (BOTH). The label BOTH was assigned where there were multiple authors representing both domestic and international affiliations. In contrast, any publications with non-Thai authors who taught or studied at institutions in Thailand were counted as domestic in compliance with the criteria set by the Thai-Journal Citation Index (TCI) Center. Analysis of the authors' affiliations can reveal how the journals are internationally known and accepted.

Results

Table 7

Research Participants in Studies in Thai AL/ELT Scopus-indexed Journals

Participants		LEARN	PASAA	rEFLections	Total
1.students/learners	undergraduate students	38	19	15	72
	secondary students	11	9	1	21
	graduate students	7	1	2	10
	general EFL learners	6	2	2	10
	primary students	1	4	1	6
	vocational students	1	0	0	1
	TOTAL	64	35	21	120
2.teachers/lecturers/ tutors	university lecturers	8	3	2	13
	pre-service teachers	4	4	0	8
	primary teachers	3	2	0	5
	secondary teachers	4	1	0	5
	private tutors	1	0	1	2
	TOTAL	20	10	3	33
3.texts		14	8	11	33
4.general people/stakeholders		2	3	1	6
TOTAL		**100**	**56**	**36**	**192**

In response to the first research question, the results indicated that the research participants joining the current ELT/AL research published in Thai publications indexed in Scopus fell into four major categories based on Ma and Kim's (2014) framework, i.e., students/learners, teachers/lecturers/tutors, stakeholders, and texts. In Table 7, approximately 62.5% (120 studies) of the studies collected data from learners/students, followed by 33 studies (17.19%) from teachers/lecturers/tutors and the same number from text analysis. General people/stakeholders were the least frequently found in six studies (3.12%). Moreover, 72 studies (37.5%) were conducted on undergraduate students. In fact, this group of students was highest in frequency in all the three journals. The findings of undergraduate students as the majority of the research participants in the Thai Scopus-indexed journals were consistent with those reported by Almuhaimeed (2022) who found this particular group of students to be the most common. Likewise, Ma and Kim (2014) confirmed the highest level of popularity of undergraduate students as research participants in not only a domestic journal published in South Korea, i.e. *English Teaching*, but also an internationally well-known journal, i.e., *TESOL Quarterly*. In a similar vein, this also provided support for Chaiyasook and Jaroongkhongdach (2014) in that, based on the M.A. (ELT) theses of seven Thai universities conducted between 2003 and 2011, undergraduate students were researched the most. The popularity of research studies on undergraduate students in Thailand seems to be attributed to the fact that, compared with those teaching in other study levels, it is the academic at the university level who is the most likely to conduct research and have its findings published in English-language scholarly publications due to the pressure from their universities striving for more reputation and higher international rankings (Lee, 2014). It is also worth noting that while studies on graduate students appeared to be the lowest in number between 2003 and 2011, as noticed by Chaiyasook and Jaroongkhongdach (2014), AL/ELT researchers undertook more research on this group of learners from 2019 to 2021. It was also found the research participants who were studied least often were vocational students. This is probably because

the faculty at the vocational level may be faced with less stringent publication requirements.

Table 8

Research Methods in Studies in Thai AL/ELT Scopus-indexed Journals

Design	LEARN	PASAA	rEFLections	Total	%
survey	54	32	19	105	58.33
Experiment	19	5	2	26	14.45
corpus	5	4	6	15	8.33
case study	5	6	3	14	7.78
discourse analysis	7	1	3	11	6.11
linguistic analysis	4	2	0	6	3.33
action research	1	1	0	2	1.11
ethnographic	0	0	1	1	0.56
TOTAL	95	51	34	180	100

In relation to the second research question, the present study revealed that the most common research method used in the studies published in Thai Scopus-indexed journals was survey research (58.33%), as shown in Table 8, followed by experimental research (14.45%), corpus-based research (8.33%), and case study research (7.78%), respectively. Among the least popular research designs were action research (1.11%) and ethnographic research (0.56%). The preponderance of survey research, which is a kind of quantitative research, in the articles published in the target journals was in line with previous studies that identified quantitative research as the most common research design in ELT (e.g. Chaiyasook & Jaroongkhongdach, 2014; Farsani et al., 2021; Ma & Kim, 2014). To be more precise, as clearly presented in the findings of the current study, the top-three research categories, namely survey, experimental, and corpus research, were

all regarded as quantitative by nature, accounting for 81.11%, whereas qualitative research, including case studies, action research, and ethnographic research, ranked second (9.45%), followed by discourse analysis (6.11%) and general linguistic analysis (3.33%), respectively. Interestingly, while Watson Todd (2021) found that the highest number of Thai scholars' studies published in Scopus Q1-Q2 journals in AL/ELT, e.g. *TESOL Quarterly*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *Language Learning & Technology*, *ELT Journal,* and *System*, is experimental research (40.96%), the present-study results, based on the data of Thai Scopus journals having just been assigned Q2 by the time the data collection took place, demonstrated that the frequency of experimental studies (14.45%) was second to that of survey research (58.33%). This fact has two implications. First, journals newly added to Scopus welcome more survey-research articles, whereas more prestigious journals with far higher citations seem to prefer more complicated, advanced, and time-consuming research design, such as experiments. Secondly, ambitious authors who aim at increasing the chance of successfully publishing in top journals with very high quartiles and CiteScores in Scopus may consider submitting experimental research papers, rather than those based on other research types. Nonetheless, Watson Todd's (2021) results are inconclusive and therefore should be interpreted with some caution as only 73 research articles were included in the analysis, in comparison to up to 180 articles in this study. The limitation on the amount of data in Watson Todd's study could restrict the generalizability regarding the popularity of research designs in those leading journals.

Table 9

Research Topics in Studies in Thai AL/ELT Scopus-indexed Journals

	Research topics	Total	%
1. Second/foreign language learning and teaching	vocabulary	19	
	writing	14	
	reading	13	
	grammar	12	
	listening	9	
	speaking	8	
	culture	5	
	thinking skill	1	
	Total	**81**	**44.98**
2. Applied Linguistics	discourse/conversation analysis	9	
	phonetics/pronunciation	6	
	pragmatics	6	
	intercultural/ cross-cultural communication	5	
	translation	5	
	English in media	1	
	interpreting	1	
	Total	**33**	**18.32**
3. Teaching methodology	mobile assisted language learning/online learning	5	
	teaching methodology	4	
	boot camp	3	
	blended learning	2	
	shadow education	2	
	EMI	1	
	L1 use	1	
	social media	1	
	teaching practicum	1	
	textbook	1	
	Total	**21**	**11.7**
4. Learner	motivation	6	

	Research topics	Total	%
	learner autonomy	4	
	learner characteristics	2	
	learning strategies	2	
	self-regulated learning	2	
	bilingualism	1	
	self-efficacy	1	
	Total	**18**	**10**
5. ELF	ELF/ EIL/ Global Englishes	8	
	Total	**8**	**4.44**
6. Teacher/ teacher training and professional development	professional development/teacher training	2	
	teacher attributes	1	
	teacher beliefs	1	
	teaching practicum	1	
	Total	**5**	**2.78**
7. language testing and assessment		7	
	Total	**7**	**3.87**
8. curriculum design and development	course evaluation	2	
	curriculum development	1	
	program evaluation	1	
	Total	**4**	**2.23**
9. ESP		3	
	Total	**3**	**1.67**
TOTAL		**180**	**100**

Table 9 shows that the most popular research topic was second/foreign language learning and teaching (44.98%), which dealt with teaching different language skills, with vocabulary research being the most frequent, whereas the next top-three skills included writing, reading, and grammar, respectively. The research topic ranked second in frequency was concerned with research in applied linguistics (18.32%), with discourse/conversation analysis conducted with the

highest frequency, followed by phonetics/pronunciation and pragmatics and intercultural/cross-cultural communication and translation, respectively. The next most popular topics were related to teaching methodology (11.7%) and learners (10%), respectively. What seemed to be an emerging trend in teaching methodology involved mobile assisted language learning (MALL)/online learning, while motivation in L2 learning appeared to be highest in popularity in research on learners. The results identified ESP research as the least popular (1.67%) in the three Thai ELT/AL Scopus-indexed journals.

The fact that research in second/foreign language learning and teaching, especially those focusing on language skills, was found to most frequently provided support for past studies (e.g. Bailey and Corrales, 2020; Karadağ, 2010, Kirmizi, 2012; Lin & Cheng, 2010; Mohsen, 2021; Özmen et al., 2016). This demonstrated that language skill instruction could be considered important in Asian ELT contexts as a number of authors contributing to the journals were from Asian countries both in the Asian EFL contexts, e.g. Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc. and ESL contexts, e.g. Malaysia, the Philippines, etc. It is also interesting to note that discourse studies, including genre, move, and conversation analyses, prevailed among AL research, which was in line with Mohsen's (2021) bibliometric study in that discourse analysis was among the most frequently found topics. Likewise, discourse analysis was also the most common AL method revealed by Watson Todd (2021). This could confirm that discourse analysis was among the current AL research trends in Thai Scopus-indexed journals.

Table 10

Authors' Affiliations in PASAA, LEARN, and rEFLections

Journals	Affiliation	2019		2020		2021			Total	%
		Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3		
PASAA	THAI	4	3	1	4	3	4	-	19	10.56
	INTER	2	7	6	5	7	4	-	31	17.22
	BOTH	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	1.11
LEARN	THAI	3	6	13	22	14	13	-	71	39.44
	INTER	-	-	3	4	5	9	-	21	11.67
	BOTH	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	1.11
rEFLections	THAI	-	-	3	6	5	7	7	28	15.55
	INTER	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	5	2.78
	BOTH	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.56
Total		**9**	**16**	**29**	**44**	**37**	**38**	**7**	**180**	**100**

From Table 10, the majority of the authors contributing to the three journals were from Thai institutions (65.55%), with *LEARN* publishing up to 39.44%, followed by *rEFLections* (15.55%) and *PASAA* (10.56%), respectively, while *PASAA* had the highest number of articles written by international authors (17.22%), followed by LEARN (11.67%) and *rEFLections* (2.78%) respectively. Both *PASAA* and *LEARN* had the same small number of articles co-authored by scholars from Thai and international institutes (1.11% each), whereas only one co-researched article (0.56%) was found in *rEFLections.* On the whole, articles written by scholars from Thailand ranked first in frequency (65.55%), followed by those contributed by international authors (31.67%) and those that were a collaboration between domestic and international scholars (2.78%).

Conclusion and Implications

For tertiary educators to be granted tenure in universities around the globe, having articles published in journals indexed in highly-regarded databases, e.g. Scopus or WoS, is of paramount importance. They are required to follow the rules of the publication game (Gioia, 2019) by trying their best to publish in journals in such databases, i.e. the mandatory publication venues for academics in higher education due to institutional requirements for job security and promotion (Paltridge, 2020). With such importance of publication in mind, ELT/AL scholars are likely to make a strenuous effort to maximize their opportunity to publish in Scopus journals with high quartiles. Due to the fact that three Thai journals in ELT/AL have been included in Scopus since 2019, looking at the articles in these journals between 2019 and 2021 can reflect current research trends which may enable researchers in this discipline to understand and respond to the publication needs, thus increasing their chance to successfully get published in Scopus-indexed journals. This study examined four areas, namely participants, research methods, research topics, and authors' affiliations. It was revealed that most research participants were undergraduate students. This demonstrated that most of the researchers publishing in the three Scopus-indexed journals were from the university context, given data drawn from undergraduate students, which is indicative of their publication requirements in their teaching career. In terms of research methods, survey research was found to be the most frequent, followed by experimental designs, which implies the popularity of quantitative research. With regard to research topics, studies on second/foreign language learning and teaching were the most frequent, with vocabulary being highest in popularity. Furthermore, most of the authors of the three journals represent Thai institutions. It is then anticipated that the number of manuscripts from international academics will increase as *PASAA, LEARN,* and *rEFLections* are now in two prestigious databases, i.e. Scopus and ERIC.

The findings of this study should benefit ELT/AL scholars in the following ways. First, it is hoped that Thai researchers who wish to become successful with their publication in the Thai Scopus-indexed journals will keep abreast of current research trends in these fields. In other words, they will learn which research topics are popular and trendy, which will possibly increase their chance to conduct studies that are in demand. Based on the results of the present-study, researchers should manage to have their papers published in one of these Scopus-indexed journals, thereby increasing the number of Thai academics' publications in the Scopus database. Second, M.A. and Ph.D. students, as well as early-career researchers, who are looking for viable topics for their theses/dissertations or research projects will also find this study useful. As publishing is a part of 'the game of survival,' young researchers should know and play by the rules of the publication game (Mongkolhutti, 2020). Knowing the current research trends in ELT/AL, novice researchers can explore under-researched areas and discover some research gaps for their own studies so that they will have higher chances to subsequently successfully publish their thesis/dissertation-based articles or articles sponsored by research funds in Scopus-indexed journals.

It is worth acknowledging certain limitations of the present study. First, the number of research articles constituting the dataset of this study was only 180; therefore, the generalizability of findings of the research trends in ELT and AL can only be enhanced if more data are added in the near future when new issues are published. Since the present study focused on the Thai journals in Scopus, the results may not be representative of Thai scholars in general who also have their research works published in the domestic, i.e. TCI, journals. Future studies may also incorporate articles in TCI-Tier-1 and TCI-Tier-2, comparing the research output between Thai Scopus journals and those in both tiers of TCI in terms of methods, topics, participants, and authors' affiliations. Another feasible research project concerns analyzing the ELT/AL research trends between Thai Scopus journals and those from other Asian countries having been included in Scopus

earlier and thus having higher CiteScores, e.g. *English Teaching and Learning* (Taiwan), *The Journal of AsiaTEFL* (South Korea), *RELC Journal* (Singapore), *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature* (Malaysia), *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (Indonesia), etc.

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Acknowledgements

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