

The impact of interpreting research in South Africa: A bibliometric study

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Abstract

Interpreting Research in South Africa (IRSA) is a database on interpreting research. It currently consists of 297 publications specifically on interpreting, which were produced in South Africa or by South Africans, from 1968 to 2021. The reasoning behind developing this database was to create a tool that would provide information on the research that has been conducted on interpreting in South Africa or by South Africans. IRSA clearly shows us that, over the past 50+ years, research on interpreting studies in South Africa have continuously increased and offer valuable insight into related research trends.

By means of a systematic literature review, one of the methods that can be employed as part of a bibliometric investigation, Kotzé and Wallmach (2020) and Kotzé (2020) make the following observations as regards the evolution of research on interpreting studies in South Africa: Research interest and publications resulting from these are likely to continue growing. Contextually, the focus of most studies are healthcare and education, and investigations follow mostly international trends and so-called 'recurrent themes' in interpreting studies (Wadensjo, 2011:13). The methodologies employed are mainly descriptive, and the suggestion is made that future studies should consider using other types of methodologies, including text-, discourse-, and conversation analysis and/or corpus studies to broaden and deepen interpreting research in the country.

Although insightful, the investigation can offer even more useful information. The next step in this bibliometric investigation is determining the impact of the existing body of research. The contribution of this paper is therefore to provide clear insights on the evolution and main trends of the scientific outcomes of recent interpreting research in South Africa, and to reveal the most significant contributors and most-cited authors of publications. In order to do so, this part of the investigation employed an evaluative bibliometric method (impact metrics) to give insight into the overall trends and performance of the interpreting research in terms of scholarly publications published between 2010 and 2020.

Keywords: interpreting; interpreting research; bibliometric studies; research trends

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