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# Research on the Trends and Hot Topics of American Applied Linguistics: Analysis of the Changes of Strands and High-Frequency Words in AAAL Annual Conferences from 1999 to 2019

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to explore the trends and hot topics of American applied linguistics by the content analysis of AAAL annual conferences' handbooks. Making a diachronic research on topical strands of AAAL Conference from 1999 to 2019, the paper studies the dynamics and the trends of American applied linguistics by analyzing the changes of the strands in the conferences under study in 20 years. Based on self-built corpora of titles and abstracts of the presented papers in 2019 AAAL Annual Conference, high-frequency vocabulary and their collocations are detected by TagCrowd and AntConc in order to find the current hot topics of applied linguistics research. The conclusion is that the development of applied linguistics has speeded up in the past four years. Educational linguistics, corpus linguistics, research methodology, teacher education, lexical research, phonetics/phonology and oral communication are the new trends in this field. The hot words of applied linguistics in 2019 include academic writing, teacher education, Chinese and translanguaging. Finally, the study found that retrospective review study of international conferences could be a new research method in the field of review study, providing scholars with a comprehensive understanding of the discipline dynamics over a period of time.
**Keywords:** applied linguistics; AAAL conference; trend; self-built corpus; strand

## [ch] 美国应用语言学发展趋势和热点—1999-2019年AAAL年会线程变化和高频词分析

**摘要：** 本文旨在通过**AAAL**年会的会议内容分析美国应用语言学的发展趋势和热点。以**1999年-2019年AAAL**会议的线程（**strands**）为历时研究对象，通过分析线程的变化透视国际应用语言学的动态和趋势；聚焦**2019年AAAL**会议论文的标题和摘要自建小型语料库，以**TagCrowd**和**AntConc**为语料库分析工具，研究会议高频词汇和相关搭配，以期发现应用语言学研究的当下热点。研究发现近四年应用语言学进入了高速发展阶段，教育语言学、语料库语言学、研究方法论等是该领域的发展趋势；**2019**年应用语言学的热词包括学术写作、教师教育、中文和超语；推测**2020**年应用语言学最新发展动态可能是神经语言学。最后，该研究发现对国际会议的回顾性研究可以比较全面地了解科研动态，可作为一个新的研究方法在综述领域推广。
**关键词：** 应用语言学；AAAL年会；趋势；自建语料库；线程

**Contents.** 1. Introduction. 2. Analysis of the strands in AAAL annual conferences. 2.1. The overall changes of the strands from 1999-2019. 2.2. Analysis of new strands in recent four years. 3. The High frequency vocabulary of the 2019 AAAL Annual Conference. 4. Conclusion. References.

## 1. Introduction

Founded in 1977, the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) is an American affiliate of the Association of International Linguistics Appliquée (AILA), located in Washington, DC. It is an academic organization

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for applied linguistics in the United States, providing annual conferences for scholars in the multidisciplinary field of applied linguistics around the world, who share research results and promote multidimensional development of applied linguistics, including language teaching, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, language assessment, language policy, corpus linguistics, and translation, etc. The AAAL Annual Conference is known worldwide as one of the most comprehensive and professional linguistic conferences, therefore the hot topics at each conference often become the focuses of international linguists' interest, leading the trend of applied linguistic research in the next few years.

The research articles presented at international conferences are in many cases the prototypes of scholars' most recent research. The papers presented in well-known international conferences have a leading role (Becker et al., 2004), which can show new trends in the development of disciplines in advance, and provide new research ideas for other scholars. The strands, i.e. classifications of research topics at international conferences, have been changing over time, revealing the dynamics and the development of a research field. Because areas of interest are usually stated in the call for papers as "strands", their emergence and disappearance can be regarded as indicators of tendencies in a certain research field (Stapleton, 2013), which to some extent, are unable to be obtained from journal articles that usually take one year to be published after several rounds of editing, reviewing, revising and proofreading. Besides strands, abstracts, and topics submitted to the conference also can reflect scholars' most recent research interests, knowledge, experiments, approaches, models, etc. Therefore, the conference strands as well as the abstracts and the titles of the presented articles when combined can form an informative database that show the overall scientific blueprint in a field for a certain period. This paper will study AAAL annual conferences diachronically and synchronically from the two major aspects: the strands in the past 20 years and the high-frequency words of the 2019 conference. Such meta-analysis about conferences is one kind of review studies that investigate existing bodies of research, looking for patterns and trends beyond a limited specific situation (Torraco, 2005). It is hoped that such a systematic review study of a typical applied linguistic conference can expand the research scope of "review study" that is usually confined to journal articles, book chapters and doctoral theses, shed light on the "trend study" from a new perspective – conference analysis, and deepen and broaden the understanding of applied linguistics.

## 2. Analysis of the strands in AAAL annual conferences

### 2.1. The overall changes of the strands from 1999-2019

Since the first meeting in 1978, the AAAL annual conference has been successfully held for 41 years. AAAL and LSA (American Language Institute) jointly held annual meetings until 1991, when AAAL started to hold the annual conferences independently. The association has not kept the conference files and documents until 1997. In 1999, the AAAL annual meeting began to set up strands.

Scholars submitted paper titles and abstracts according to the categorization of conferences' strands, and the attendees participate in different sessions of their interest based on the strands too. In 1999, for example, the annual conference consisted of 23 strands: assessment/evaluation, critical linguistics, discourse analysis-oral, discourse analysis-written, first language acquisition, immersion/bilingual education, interlingual/cross-cultural pragmatics, language and culture, language and the deaf, language and gender, language and sociocultural theory, language and technology, language for specific purpose, language policy/planning, language socialization, literacy, mother tongue pedagogy, psycholinguistics, rhetoric and stylistics, second/foreign language pedagogy, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and translation and interpretation. From 1999 to 2009, these strands varied in number, naming, and combination. Some strands changed the name, some converged, some gradually disappeared, some suddenly appeared, some expanded the scope, and some separated from other themes and became independent. These changes reflect the exploration and trials of the scope in the early development period of applied linguistic research and also witness the vicissitude of some sub-fields and the transition of linguistics research interests. A typical example is the disappearance of the strands "language and deaf", "rhetoric and stylistics", "first language acquisition" and "mother tongue pedagogy" before 2002, demonstrating the research focuses of applied linguists shifted from first language to second language, from disabled learners to normal language learners. And the appearance of the strand of "language and learner characteristics" in 2003, its sudden disappearance in 2007 and 2008 as well as its resumption until 2016, prove that applied linguists have an unsteady interest in the effects of individual differences on language in these 13 years.

Between 2010 and 2015, the strands of AAAL annual conference were basically stabilized. Although there were occasionally merging or separating, the overall changes were relatively small. The strands during those five years mainly involve discourse analysis, language assessment and evaluation, language planning and policy, second language acquisition, etc. However, since 2016, the strands of AAAL annual conferences have undergone tremendous changes and suddenly several new topics have been added (see Table 1). These major changes in strands are the main concern of this study.

**Table 1**. The changes of the strands of AAAL annual conferences from 2010-2019

| | Strands | 2010–2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Analysis of Discourse and interaction | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2 | Assessment and Evaluation | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 3 | Bilingual, immersion, heritage and minority education | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 4 | Language and ideology | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 5 | Language and technology | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 6 | Language cognition and brain research | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 7 | Language, culture, socialization and pragmatics | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 8 | Language maintenance and revitalization | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| 9 | Language planning and policy | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 10 | Reading, writing, and literacy | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 11 | Second and foreign language pedagogy | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 12 | Second language acquisition, language acquisition, and attrition | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 13 | Sociolinguistics | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 14 | Text analysis (written discourse) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 15 | Translation and interpretation | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 16 | Research methods (methodology) | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 17 | Educational linguistics | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 18 | Corpus linguistics | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 19 | Vocabulary and lexical studies | | | √ | √ | √ |
| 20 | Phonology/phonetics and oral communication | | | | | √ |
| 21 | Teacher education, beliefs and identities | | | | | √ |

## 2.2. Analysis of new strands in recent four years

The recent tendency in applied linguistics can be best shown by the newly-added strands in the latest four years. Especially the appearance of research methodology shows the applied linguistics is reaching maturity and diversity.

At the 2016 AAAL conference, "research methods" was incorporated as a new strand, and the study emphasis was put on systematization and scientization of applied linguistic methods. In 2018 the name of this strand changed from research methods to research methodology, indicating that research methods of applied linguistics have gradually become a separate research sub-field. Generally speaking, there are two changes in research methods that can be observed in the past four years: first, research methods have become increasingly diverse; second, the qualitative approach has been re-emphasized. As an interdiscipline, applied linguistics is always associated with different research methods in different disciplines. This interdisciplinary nature makes it constantly pursue and absorb new scientific methods from other disciplines. Observing AAAL annual conferences, research methods used by presenters showcase a diverse and interdisciplinary tendency. Various new technologies related to neuroscience, computer science, cognitive science, psychology, and experimental science have been introduced into linguistic research, such as keyboard strokes, eye tracking, screen recording, fMRI, ERPs, PET, etc., working in tandem with quantitative, qualitative and mixed research methods. Statistical methods are also constantly being updated, from the widely-used Pearson correlation, ANOVA, t test to mixed effect models and Bayesian statistics that are popular in recent years, thanks to the development of statistics and programming languages, such as R and Python.

What's more, the importance of the qualitative research method was reestablished. For example, in 2016 AAAL annual conference, the first colloquium discussed the value of a qualitative method under the title "Identity in Action:

Moving forward with Membership Categorization Analysis". It discussed the use and development of MAC (Membership Categorization Analysis), which is proven to be an undervalued, underutilized qualitative research method commonly used in sociological research, providing evaluators with unique insights into the boundaries of behavior between different identity categories (e.g. teachers, students) (Paulsen, 2018). Another example is a roundtable discussion organized by Takuji Aso from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, titled "A Case Study on the Learning of Research Methods by SLA Graduate Students in Japan: Resisting Quantitative to Become Qualitative". It discussed a phenomenon in which a SLA graduate student who is good at qualitative research is marginalized in the Japanese academia where quantitative method is popular.

The diversity of research methods and the re-recognition of qualitative research methods present the new tendency in applied linguistics as well as the shift of research focuses in a certain subfield. Such kind of shift can also be found in the newly added strand "vocabulary and lexical research", from grammar-oriented to vocabulary-focused, from rule-dominated to experience-based. Vocabulary research has been in the field of applied linguistics for a long time, but it has not received enough attention under the influence of generative grammar theory until the end of the 20th century. With the publication of Phraseology: Theory, Analysis and Applications (Cowie, 1988) in combination with the popularity of phraseology, the vocabulary research is re-emphasized. At the same time, the advent of corpus linguistics has been accelerating the development of formulaic language theory. From the 1990s, the research focus of phraseology has shifted to the collocation research driven by corpus linguistics (Sinclair, 1991). At the AAAL annual conference in 2019, a colloquium on vocabulary research was arranged, in which Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig from Indiana University organized four scholars to give lectures on the Research Methodology for Studying Formulaic Language in L2 Pragmatics. Yunwen Su from University of Utah gave a presentation titled Student Reports, Reference Materials, and Native-Speaker Performance in Chinese, examining how database-driven methods can be used to determine Chinese collocations and their context of usage. Obviously, the focus of contemporary vocabulary research is closely related to corpus research. The emergence of the corpus linguistic strand in 2016 is a concentrated demonstration of this tendency. The rapid development of corpus research and technology has enabled linguistic research to return to being experience-driven from theory-focused, and also to make computer linguistics move from rule-based to statistics-driven. Such variation has had a tremendous impact on the development of linguistics. Corpus has been widely used in language teaching, machine translation, dictionary compilation, discourse analysis, artificial intelligence and many other aspects.

On the one hand, the changes in the strands of international academic conferences can reveal the new trends in a field. On the other hand, these changes can also promote the development of a sub-field. AAAL annual conferences collect papers and hold meetings based on the categorization of research focuses, i.e. strands. Once new strands are added, it will inevitably attract academic attention. So to some extent, the variation of strands in the AAAL conferences has guided the research direction of international applied linguistics. Take the newly added strand "educational linguistics" in 2016 as an example. Although in 1972 Bernard Spolsky first proposed the concept of educational linguistics at the Copenhagen AILA conference and defined it as a branch of applied linguistics (Spolsky, 1999; 2008), which was also supported by Hult, Halliday, Hornberger and others, (Hult, 2008; Halliday, 1988; Hornberger, 2001), the idea of making educational linguistics an independent branch has not been realized for a long time. Observing the AAAL conference papers, we find that the topics of educational linguistics actually involve many aspects such as second and foreign language acquisition, language teaching, sociolinguistics, language and culture, teacher education and beliefs, etc., because it is actually influenced by many superordinate disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, and ethnology, and thus has transdisciplinary characteristics. Therefore, in the past these papers were submitted directly under other strands. However, the 2016 AAAL Annual Conference launched eight colloquia under the exact term of educational linguistics, the titles of which are Critical Take(s) on Systemic Functional Linguistics: "Academic Literacy Development, Multilingualism and Social Equity"; "Narrative Analysis for L2 Literacy Development: A Systemic Functional Approach"; "Investigating Methodological and Conceptual Understandings of Agency in Language Teacher Identity"; "Developing Science Teachers' Knowledge about Language"; "The Breaking away from Multilingual Solitudes"; "Explicit Focus on Language in the Teaching of Disciplinary Writing"; "Building a Theory of Teacher Interculturality: Investigating Immersion Field Experiences in Culturally and Linguistically Different Spaces"; "Integrating Service-learning into Applied Linguistics: Practices, Challenges and Results". The colloquia brought together these social cultural topics related to educational linguistics under the same strand. This newly-added strand has promoted the systematization of educational linguistics and also had a positive impact on the rapid development of the subfield. Such impact is demonstrated by a rapid increase in the number of the educational linguistic papers published in last three years. Search for the keyword "educational linguistics" in the core collection of Web of Science and 431 articles on educational linguistics were found (query time 30/12/2019). As shown in Table 2, although the concept of educational linguistics was proposed in 1972, it was not until 1992 that the first paper appeared in the international core journals. Before 2006, there were less than two articles related to educational linguistics per year found in core journals. From 2007 to 2011 was a period of slow development in educational linguistics, and the number of publications gradually increased from 6 to 24. Between 2012 and 2015 the number of the relevant articles published was very unstable. However, year 2016 becomes an important turning point when the number

of publications achieved a major breakthrough: the number of annual publications doubled and remained stable for the next four years. Without doubt this increase is related to the newly added strand "educational linguistics" in 2016 AAAL conference. In addition to the colloquia, there were 46 papers and posters on educational linguistics at the 2016 AAAL conference. It is undeniable that AAAL's new strand "educational linguistics" has contributed to the development of this field.
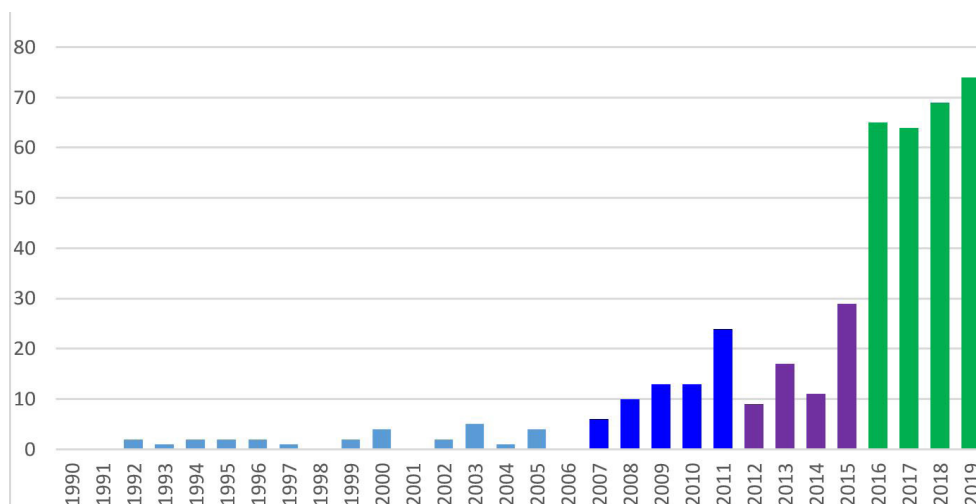


**Figure 1.** The number of the papers on educational linguistics published in core journals

In addition, the new strands "teacher education, beliefs and identities" and "corpus linguistics" have the similar trend of the increasing publications. Space permits no further elaboration here. All in all, the study suggests that there is a positive correlation between the newly-added strands of international conferences and the development of the corresponding sub-fields under discussion.


### 3. The High frequency vocabulary of the 2019 AAAL Annual Conference

From March 19 to 22, 2019, in Georgia, Atlanta, applied linguists from all over the world gathered at the AAAL annual event. Nick C. Ellis, a world-renowned expert in cognitive linguistics and corpus linguistics, was invited to make a speech titled "Usage-based language acquisition: Implicit and explicit learning and their interface" in the plenary session, discussing the important influence of cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics and psycholinguistics on second language acquisition. This lecture reflects the gist of his latest book Usage-Based Approaches to Language Acquisition and Processing: Cognitive and Corpus Investigations of Construction Grammar (Ellis et al., 2016). The speech is a concentrated expression of the usage-based tendency in applied linguistic research recently. When exploring the handbook of the AAAL conference this year, more detailed discoveries can be found. We build two small corpora: the title corpus, and the title + abstract corpus, using TagCrowd to extract the high-frequency words of the title corpus, and using AntConc to analyze the matching of high-frequency words in the title + abstract corpus. Such corpus-based method can reveal the hot topics of the applied linguistic research in 2019, in a visualized and objective way.

The title corpus of 2019 AAAL Annual Conference consists of 770 titles with 9966 words, while the title + abstract corpus is composed of 770 texts with 224813 words, with the stands of "Second and foreign language pedagogy" (88 articles), "Second language acquisition, language acquisition, and attrition" (79 articles), "Reading, writing, and literacy" (63 articles), "Teacher education, beliefs and identities" (58 articles), "Assessment and Evaluation" (52 articles) attracting most submissions (See Table 2). With the help of TagCrowd, the high-frequency words are extracted from the title corpus, and the results are further refined by manually excluding the general vocabulary (for example, linguistic, research, analysis). Finally a visualized picture is obtained as follows (see Figure 2).

It is obvious that the words of "learning", "learners", "students", "teachers", and "teaching" are high-frequency words in the field of applied linguistics, because the first and most important research object in this field is language teaching and learning. After using AntConc to query the word combination with "teacher/teachers", it is found that "education" co-occurs with the word "pre-service/preservice" or the word "in-service/inservice" 174 times, indicating that the language teacher's education, including pre-service training and in-service training has become hot topics in the field of foreign language teaching research. This is consistent with the previous finding that although "teacher education, beliefs and identity" is a newly established strand in 2019, the number of the relevant presented papers is as high as 58 in the first year, ranking the fourth in the number of articles at the 2019 AAAL conference (see Table 2), only fewer than those regarding language acquisition, language pedagogy and

literacy. This finding echoes Lantolf's claim that second language teacher education is one of the most dynamic research fields in the education discipline (Lantolf, 2000). A shift from what and how language teachers are teaching to what and how language teachers are learning indicates a growing concern for language teachers' career development. For example, the individual paper submitted by Aylin Tekiner Tolu discusses pre-service teachers co-constructing interculturality with linguistically diverse students through field-based interactional learning (Tolu, 2019). And language teachers' beliefs, cognitions, motivation, and emotions are also touched upon at the 2019 conference, such as Julia Goetze's research on foreign language teacher emotions, linking teachers' feeling states and cognition (interest, anxiety, optimism, and determination) through appraisal theory (Goetze, 2019), and Jianping Xie's study on three English teachers' identity evolution trajectories over the past ten years in southern China, which underwent three phases: the honeymoon phase, the confusion phase and the dilemma phase (Xie and Dong, 2019). The concern for language teachers' lives and emotions beyond language classrooms is another proof of social-cultural transition in the field of applied linguistics.

**Table 2**. The number of articles and the word count of titles and abstracts of 2019 AAAL Annual Conference

|   | Stands | Number of Articles | Word Count of Titles and Absctract |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Analysis of Discourse and interaction | 43 | 13242 |
| 2 | Assessment and Evaluation | 52 | 15019 |
| 3 | Bilingual, immersion, heritage and minority education | 49 | 14528 |
| 4 | Corpus linguistics | 29 | 9088 |
| 5 | Educational linguistics | 40 | 12006 |
| 6 | Language and ideology | 36 | 10980 |
| 7 | Language and technology | 36 | 10572 |
| 8 | Language cognition and brain research | 19 | 5683 |
| 9 | Language, culture, socialization and pragmatics | 46 | 13623 |
| 10 | Language planning and policy | 14 | 4239 |
| 11 | Language cognition and brain research | 26 | 7702 |
| 12 | Phonology/Phonetics and oral communication | 10 | 3093 |
| 13 | Reading, writing, and literacy | 63 | 19128 |
| 14 | Research methodology | 24 | 6841 |
| 15 | Second and foreign language pedagogy | 88 | 26294 |
| 16 | Second language acquisition, language acquisition, and attrition | 79 | 24271 |
| 17 | Sociolinguistics | 18 | 5517 |
| 18 | Teacher education, beliefs and identities | 58 | 17654 |
| 19 | Text analysis (written discourse) | 9 | 2790 |
| 20 | Translation and interpretation | 6 | 1790 |
| 21 | Vocabulary and lexical studies | 25 | 753 |
|   | TOTAL | 770 | 224813 |

In terms of language skills, the word frequency of "writing" is much higher than the second "reading" (26 times), indicating that the research on writing skill at the AAAL annual conference is the top priority among the all. The collocation of this word mainly includes "academic writing" (47 times), "writing task" (30 times), "writing process" (26 times), "writing class/classroom" (24 times), "writing development" (18 Times), "writing instruction" (18 times), and "writing course" (14 times). These word combinations reveal that the focus of writing research is the academic writing and the writing process, especially under the environment of the classroom teaching. The main reason why academic English writing is highly valued in language learning may be that it is the key to the academic success of

students, especially at the college education level. The assessment of students' academic performance by most of higher education institutions over the world is primarily based on the level of academic writing (Tran, 2013). Another reason is probably that the research on students' writing is easier to keep records and collect study materials due to the written evidence, especially compared with the study on speaking, which demands much more time and energy for transcribing and the quality of coded transcripts may greatly influence the research result. Therefore, although both are newly-added strands in 2019, there are only 10 presenters for "Phonology/Phonetics and oral communication" while there are 58 presenters for "Teacher education, beliefs and identities". The writing study is more scientific and better-designed thanks to the expansion of COCA and other written corpora, while the speaking study has a long way to go due to the insufficiency of spoken corpora. The establishment of "Phonology/Phonetics and oral communication" as an independent strand indicates American association of applied linguistics' determination to boost the research in this area, despite more technical difficulties in studying pronunciation and speaking, more efforts are expected to be made for the development of oral research.



**Figure 2.** Top 50 high-frequency words in the 2019 AAAL Annual Conference

At this conference, among all the language-related keywords, "Chinese" surpassed "Spanish" to become the second most frequently mentioned word just after the word "English", indicating that the research on Chinese is gradually becoming a hot topic. The most frequently used phrase with Chinese is "Chinese immigrant" (18 times). The Asian American population grew 72% between 2000 and 2015 (from 11.9 million to 20.4 million), displaying the fastest growth rate of any major racial or ethnic group. As of 2015, 24% of Asian Americans (4.9 million) were of Chinese origin, constituting the largest single origin group (López et al., 2017). The increasing number of Chinese American students and the stronger social networks that their parents are armed with may have gradually changed the education system in the US in an invisible way. For example, a roundtable discussion was held at the 2019 AAAL conference under the title of "Understanding Chinese Immigrant Parents' Use of Capital to Navigate Communication in US K-12 Schooling Communities", which utilized Bourdieu's argument of cultural capital, habitus, and field as an analytical tool to make a qualitative interview study of how Chinese immigrant parents navigate communication in US K-12 schooling communities. They revealed that the school policies and practices unintentionally compromise communication with Chinese immigrant parents, and found how Chinese immigrant parents use their social capital and assets to facilitate communication with educators. The social-cultural tendency of applied linguistic study in recent years enables more American scholars to notice the variation of modern American education system thanks to the increase in the number of American ethnic minorities. What's more, the huge decline in the enrollment of college students all over the U.S.A and the increasing dependence on the tuition resource from international students, arouse more interest in the research on Chinese international students. Apart from the study of Chinese immigrants and international students who live in America, recent years has also witnessed a rise in the number of Chinese linguists attending international conferences and presenting their research. In 2019, 22 scholars from Chinese-speaking areas presented at the AAAL annual conference, including five from Hong Kong and two from Taiwan. A colloquium in which the organizers and presenters are all Chinese scholars is very noticeable and worth mentioning. It focuses on communities and ethnic minority families speaking the less used dialects in China. This study is academically and socially meaningful in that there are over 130 languages and nearly 2000 dialects spoken in China (Li, Yuming and Wei Li, 2015), and the research on the influence of Chinese government's language policy on individuals' linguistic and social developmental trajectories can help us understand multilingualism and intergenerational linguistic and cultural transmission in today's Chinese society.

"Translanguaging" is one of the most frequently heard keywords at the conference in 2019, with 34 appearances in the title of the paper and 271 appearances in the title and abstract collectively. Through the AntConc software query, the common combinations of the word are: "translanguaging pedagogy/pedagogies" (35 times), "translanguaging practices" (29 times), "translanguaging space/spaces" (11 times). The term "Translanguaging" was created by Baker (2001) in Welsh and translated into English. Cen Williams (1994) first used "translanguaging" to describe bilingual classroom

teaching strategies that did not strictly distinguish between two language teachings, and later used it to describe the use of language in bilingual and multilingual classrooms (Hornberger et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2012a, 2012b). As an increasing number of scholars begin to study bilingualism and multilingualism through cross-language perspectives in an era of transnational mobility, their theoretical propositions have expanded, referring to language as a dynamic repertoire, from which the speakers use diverse languages and multimodal symbols together (e.g. using visuals, gestures, bodily movement) in meaning making to form the their own communication skills. With the focus on the actual use of language, translanguaging must transcend Chinese, English, French and other naming languages (Otheguy et al., 2015, 2018), and be widely used inside and outside the language classroom as a synthetic semiotic system. After reviewing the papers related to translanguaging at the 2019 AAAL annual conference, we found that the process-based descriptive research is getting popularity compared with the normative and evaluative research of students' and teachers' languages. Observing and recording students' home/school practical language practices is an effective qualitative research method for the translanguaing studies, many of which try to prove that heteroglossic language usage is a common practice for pluralingual students, and translanguaging pedagogy may enhance students' learning and facilitate teachers' teaching. Through these process-oriented researches as regards translanguaging, a tendency is found that students' or teachers' mother tongues and even dialects and body language will play a greater role in education. The standardized and normalized language teaching dominated by the target language may be replaced by mixed and fluid language pedagogy with more multilingual, multidialectical and multimodal elements in the future.

## 4. Conclusion

The world's major international conferences on applied linguistics mainly include AAAL, AILA, JALT, TESOL and IATEFL. The topics of JALT, TESOL and IATEFL are mainly focused on language teaching, and more related to applied linguistics in a narrow sense. AAAL, similar to AILA, set the research scope much broader, involving many sub-fields of applied linguistics in a broad sense. In the past four years, six new strands have been added in AAAL annual conferences: research methodology, educational linguistics, corpus linguistics, vocabulary and lexical research, phonetics/phonology and oral communication, as well as teacher education beliefs and identities, reflecting the new trends in contemporary applied linguistics research, such as the revival of qualitative research, the transition from grammar research to vocabulary and corpus research. In turn, the emergence of new strands at the conferences can also promote the development of sub-fields such as educational linguistics. Focusing on the titles and keywords of the AAAL annual conference in 2019, teacher education and career development, as well as academic writing research are gaining momentum in the field of applied linguistics. The research concerning Chinese language and Chinese people has become the second important object of study after English. "Translanguaging" is one of the most popular technical terms in this year's AAAL conference, and has the potential to change the language teaching and research model in the future. In a nutshell, we find usage-based, process-oriented and descriptive research trends in recent applied linguistics, which may have been greatly influenced by many other disciplines like sociology, anthropology, statistics, etc.

Just as sociocultural turn has ushered in the prosperity of sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics, applied linguistic research may usher in new development opportunities with the advancement of neuroscience and brain science. At the beginning of the 21st century, neuroscience research on early childhood language processing has made explosive progress, and non-invasive and safe brain function measurements have been proven to be available for newborn children. Studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to measure cerebral blood flow constitute a promising research area, which is able to find out the internal connection between language and brain. For example, Patricia Kuhl used fMRI (Kuhl, 2010) to study the brain's response to language stimuli and discovered the effects of innate state and language learning on the brain.

The 2020 AAAA annual conference has begun to collect papers. The themes of the invited colloquia have been set, one of which is "Neuroscience of second language acquisition: Opportunities and challenges". American, European and Japanese scholars have already taken the lead in this field, benefited from the brain programs launched by the United States, Europe and Japan in the late 20th century. In 2018, China also launched the "China Brain Initiative", which was included in the national "13th Five-Year Plan" as a major scientific and technological project, and neurolinguistics became one of the national research priorities. Chomsky's linguistic competence research has faded due to the prosperity of corpus study, but the rise of neurolinguistics may lead to the revival of theoretical linguistics. Reason and experience always circulate in a cycle. In the face of new research trends, linguistic scholars may need to make corresponding preparations.

Finally, the study concludes that retrospective research on international conferences can provide a comprehensive understanding of disciplinary dynamics and can be promoted as a new research method in the field of review study and trend study.

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