A Study of Hotspots and Trends in Family Language Planning from 2013-2023: A Visualized Overview Based on Web of Science

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Abstract: Language planning, a crucial component of sociolinguistics, has drawn significant attention as a primary research focus for numerous scholars. The promotion of national common languages, urbanization, and globalization has led to the emergence of multilingual families, prompting many scholars to change their focus from macro-level traditional language planning to the more micro-level realm of family language planning. Current visualization analyses have relatively limited focus on family language planning in international contexts. To comprehensively understand the current state of research in family language planning and to effectively present and analyze the forefront, hotspots, and trends in this field, this paper employs bibliometric methods. Specifically, this paper uses Citespace to visualize literature related to family language planning from the Web of Science database, analyzing data across four dimensions: annual publication trends, country and institution distribution, key researchers, theme and hotspot distribution. Through a visual analysis of the current state of family language planning internationally, this paper systematically organizes research trends and hotspots, presenting the current research status, cutting-edge trends, and future prospects in theory and practice, ontology, and application, with the aim of guiding future research in this field.

1. Introduction

Traditional language policy research predominantly concentrates on the macro-level and explicit actions of national and local governments, aiming to address "language problems" [1](Fishman, J. A., 1968). Most studies focus solely on language policy issues within the public domain. In the late 1980s, Cooper proposed that "language planning should occur not only at the macro level but also at the micro level, including smaller social groups" (Cooper, Robert L., 1989). [2]Subsequently, language planning research was no longer confined to the macro realms of national and local governments but gradually shifted its focus to the micro-level aspect of language policy, specifically family language planning. Family language policy refers to "explicit and overt planning related to language among family members, offering a comprehensive study on how to manage, learn, and negotiate language within the family" (Li, Yingzi, 2018).[3] It can involve conscious planning or occur naturally without conscious awareness and can be either explicit or implicit. Spolsky's language policy theory can also

be applied to the family domain, where language policy comprises three interrelated components: language beliefs or ideologies, are beliefs about language itself and its use; language practices, which are habitual patterns of choice among the various varieties in the linguistic repertoire; and language planning or management, referring to the methods of intervention, planning, or management to alter or influence specific language practices (Spolsky, B., 2004). [4]As the smallest unit of society, the family can reflect macro-level language policies the state and society from a micro perspective. It can also provide reference data for the formulation and adjustment of macro-level language policies of the state and society, serving as the starting and ending points for language learning and usage. Domestic scholars have conducted extensive research in the field of family language planning, but there is a lack of quantitative and scientific measurement in the literature on foreign family language planning. This includes a comprehensive examination of its research time span, annual publication trends, major research countries and institutions, principal authors, current hot topics, and highly cited works. Based on this, the paper employs bibliometrics and the CiteSpace software to visually present foreign family language planning literature related to "family language policy (planning)"and "parents' language policy (planning)"included in the Web of Science. It aims to thoroughly analyze and explore future research directions on this topic to provide references for its academic development.

2. Studies on Family Language Planning

This study uses the Web of Science Core Collection database as a data source, setting the search criteria to "Topic" with the keywords "family + and + language policy + or + language planning" and "parent(s) + and + language policy + or + language planning" for thematic searches. The search span covers the past decade, from 2013 to 2023, with the document type selected as "article." Samples such as conference papers and news articles were excluded, and a manual screening process was used to remove papers clearly unrelated to the field. The initial search yielded 570 documents, which were used as the analytical sample for this study. CiteSpace (5.8.R3) software was employed to analyze the relevant documents and generate a visual knowledge map.

2.1 Countries and Institutions Distribution

Figure 1 and Figure 2 are the co-occurrence maps of the main research countries and institutions, visually reflecting the key research organizations in this field. As shown in Figure 1, the top five countries by publication volume are the USA (86 papers), Australia (47 papers), England (46 papers), the People's Republic of China (41 papers), and Canada (25 papers). Research on family language planning is mainly concentrated in Europe and North America, but there is limited collaboration among these regions, and centrality is relatively low. Regarding the timeline of institutions studying family language planning, as shown in Figure 2, more institutions have engaged in research in this field since 2013, including Nanyang Technological University, Columbia University, and the University of Oslo. It is evident that research in the field of language studies abroad is flourishing and has become a focus of attention for many institutions. In terms of publication volume by institution, the institutions with more than five publications are the University of Hong Kong (12 papers), the University of Oslo (12 papers), the University of Amsterdam (8 papers), the University of Bath (7 papers), Nanyang Technological University (7 papers), Charles Sturt University (6 papers), Macquarie University (6 papers), Bar-Ilan University (6 papers), University of Malaya (6 papers), Columbia University (6 papers), and KU Leuven (6 papers). In conclusion, regarding the geographical distribution of research institutions, the leading institutions in publication volume are mostly located in economically developed regions. Institutions conducting research on family language planning are primarily key universities, indicating that universities are the main force in this

field. Universities have greatly contributed to the development of language planning research, playing a significant role in advancing the field.
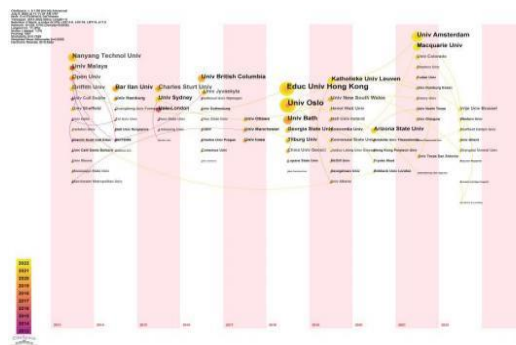

Figure 1: Countries analysis in WOS.

Figure 2: Institutions analysis in WOS.

2.2 Key Issues and Hot Topics

In a network, the influence of a keyword may depend on how it is connected to other keywords in the network. The centrality of a node is a graph-theoretical property that quantifies the importance of the node's position in a network commonly used centrality metric is the centrality (Freeman, 1979). [5]It measures the percentage of the number of shortest paths in a network to which a given node belongs. Nodes with high-centrality tend to be found in paths connecting different clusters. Keywords often represent the core concentration of papers, and their frequency can directly reflect the importance and influence of the term in the research field. The higher the frequency of a keyword, the more research is associated with it, thus highlighting the research hotspots in the field. The top five high-frequency keywords are "family language policy," "language policy," "language ideology," "heritage language," and "language maintenance." The top five keywords in terms of centrality are "family language policy," "language ideology," "language policy," "bilingual," and "language maintenance." The statistics of high-frequency keywords indicate that research on family language policy mainly focuses on language policy, heritage language, language ideology, language maintenance, and bilingual education.

2.3 Annual Publication Trend

The annual publication trend demonstrates the varying levels of attention the field has received over time.[6] Moreover, it provides a clearer depiction of the overall developmental trends within the field. According to Figure 3, the study of family language planning from 2013 to 2017 has gained widespread attention in the academic community. The journals with the most publications this field are the Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development (JMMD), the International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (IJBEB), and Language Policy (LP) (Yin Xiaorong, Li Guofang 2016). During this period, the number of publications in this field remained around 20 articles per year, as international research on family language planning was in a developmental stage. Since 2017, a series of special issues have been published in this field, leading to a significant increase in the number of articles, reaching 37 in 2018. In 2019, the field of family language planning began to flourish, with the number of publications increasing steadily. During the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, there was a surge in the number of articles published, reaching over 70 in 2021. Although there was a slight decline, the overall trend in the field has been upward, with 2021 seeing a record high of 75 articles.
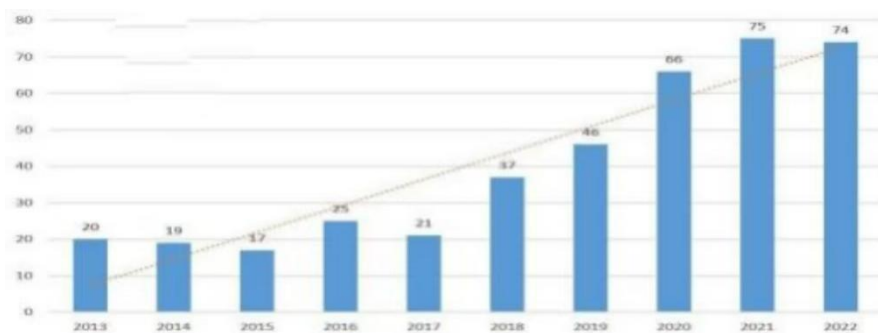
Figure 3: Published Items in Each Year

2.4 Authors and Cooperation Network

The development of family language planning research relies on scholars with solid theoretical foundations and rich experience. By counting the number of publications, ranking authors, and displaying their collaboration networks, we can reflect the strength of scholars primarily conducting research in this field and identify the most productive authors in the area. On one hand, this provides high recognition for prolific authors, and on the other, it helps researchers find potential collaborators. Through analysis, only one author has published five or more papers in this field: Curdt-Christiansen, Xiao Lan (7 papers). A time-zone map of the main authors was created using CiteSpace, as shown in Figure 4. The number of connections between scholars indicates that some foreign scholars have formed small-scale collaboration networks, which are generally sparse and overall quite dispersed. Some authors have engaged in single-instance collaborations, but there is a lack of team cooperation.

Figure 4: Authors and Cooperation Network

2.5 Categories

Figure5 is the categories of co-occurence network. After clustering the literature, the modularity value (Q value) of the clusters is 0.89 > 0.3, indicating a significant clustering structure; the average silhouette value (S value) is 0.93 > 0.7, suggesting convincing clustering results. The top ten clusters obtained through CiteSpace are analyzed, as shown in Figure 5, and include: "#0 family language policy," "#1 language policy," "#2 bilingual education," "#3 language ideology," "#4 children's agency," "#5 language attitude," "#6 speech and language therapy," "#7 transnational families," "#8 heritage maintenance," and "#9 language shift" (from a cross-linguistic perspective). Spolsky's (2004) theory of language planning is widely used in the study of family language planning. Spolsky proposed that language planning in a speech community can be divided into three components:

language practices, which involve habitual patterns of choice among different language variants in the linguistic repertoire; language beliefs, which refer to the beliefs about the language itself and its use, also known as language ideology; and language management, which refers to the interventions, planning, or management efforts that aim to alter or influence specific language practices. [7]Language beliefs stem from language practices and can also influence them. Language management can alter language beliefs, and language practices provide tools for language management while also being its target. Spolsky's theory has been extensively applied in the study of family language planning. In family language planning, how caregivers perceive pertains to language beliefs; the use of a particular language in everyday communication between parents and children constitutes language practices; and the strategies used to maintain, transmit, or abandon a language fall under language management.

By summarizing the cooccurence maps, the research hotspots on family language planning abroad mainly focus on the following aspects.

Firstly, describing the role of family language planning in bilingual education for transnational families. Due to increased global connections and mobility, the life trajectories of transnational families have become more diverse. Bilingual education aims to cultivate students' proficiency in two languages. However, achieving this goal is not done by treating the target languages as separate subjects, such as teaching English and Chinese as two independent courses. More precisely, bilingual education refers to using two languages as the medium of instruction to achieve the ultimate goal of proficiency in both. Family language planning refers to the process in the family domain where language managers, typically parents or guardians, purposefully and systematically intervene in and manage the use of language and script within the family, comprising three elements: family language beliefs, family language management, and family language practices. It is a special mode of using language and conducting language practices among family members according to family language planning within the domestic sphere, where the entire family domain is the space of implementation, and all family members are the subjects of implementation. Like other levels of language planning, family language planning is also influenced by both internal and external factors. Li Guofang and Sun Zhuo pointed out in their 2017 study that language planning in any family is not static but changes with internal and external environmental shifts (Li Guofang, Sun Zhuo 2017). The study found that there is a conflict between top-down government language policies and bottom-up family language practices. These conflicts arise because government policies overlook the critical support system that parents provide for children's language learning at home. When transnational families seek external control to support the sociolinguistic environment for L1 and L2 development, they can plan several relevant strategies and implement them as part of their family language policy. Choosing bilingual education is a crucial step in actualizing family language ideology, and selecting a bilingual education program is closely tied to the decision-making process of family members. Secondly, they often emphasize creating a context within the family for children's language acquisition and practice, as context has a profound impact on children's language learning and usage. Thirdly, it emphasizes increasing the time that foreign parents spend with their children. The time foreign parents spend with their children directly influences the child's mastery of the language and their understanding and acceptance of the culture. Lastly, parents' language awareness has a profound impact on family language planning. Parents' language awareness directly influences the family's language management strategies and practices. Families with indifferent or neglectful attitudes towards children's language education often fail to effectively utilize the naturally advantageous multilingual environment of transnational marriages. The root cause of this failure lies in the parents' past life experiences and future imaginations, as well as their polycentric and large-scale language ideologies, leading to intergenerational emotional, linguistic, cultural, and social frictions. Therefore, when studying family language policies, it is essential to critically adopt a cross-linguistic framework, drawing on narratives of both success and failure within families, and to carefully consider the long-

term impacts of these practices on children's language development. Numerous studies have shown that language is closely linked to cultural identity (Curdt-Christiansen 2009; Tannenbaum 2012). Most foreign studies have found that the sense of identification with one's own cultural identity is a significant factor influencing family language ideology. As a crucial carrier of identity and cultural transmission, intergenerational heritage language has thus become an important component of family language planning (Curdt-Christiansen 2009; Schwartz 2010).
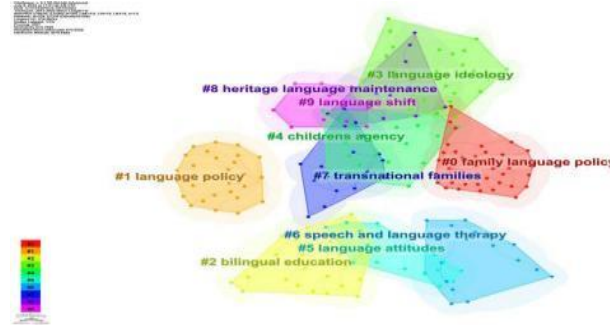

Figure 5: Categories Co-occurence Network.

3. Summary of Related Previous Studies

As it has shown above, this study is based on an analysis of 570 articles related to family language planning research included in the Web of Science database, focusing on annual publication trends, country and institutional distribution, disciplinary distribution, as well as themes and hotspots. The study found the following characteristics in international research in this field: First, the number of publications on family language planning research abroad has shown an overall upward trend in the past decade, indicating a positive development trend in this field. Second, it reflects an interdisciplinary pattern. Research on family language planning abroad increasingly shows an interdisciplinary trend, with linguistics at its core, and a comprehensive focus on the social, cultural, psychological, and emotional aspects of family language planning and practice. One of the characteristics of language planning is "multidisciplinary participation." It is beneficial to examine methods and approaches from different disciplinary perspectives. As an interdisciplinary field, language policy and language planning require an understanding and utilization various methods to explore language status, language identity, language use, and other critical issues in this research area. Family language planning, at the micro level, provides a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue, with research perspectives involving sociology, psychology, education, anthropology, cultural studies, and ecology, among others, using methods and achievements from various disciplines to expand its research domain. Third, the research themes are rich, continuously expanding new research content and deepening existing content, creating a fertile research field. According to the data from this paper, the following problems exist in this field: First, there is the issue of dispersed research and relatively sparse collaboration networks. Second, the research perspectives should be expanded to focus more on the interaction and influence between family language planning and other levels of language planning. Although many scholars have recognized the interrelationship between economic, political, and other factors with language, these factors are often overlooked. Third, research methods need to be expanded. Triangulation and longitudinal studies should be strengthened. Family language planning has characteristics of dynamism, privacy, and complexity, making it difficult for a single research method to conduct in-depth and detailed observational studies. Longitudinal studies are even more scarce, resulting in a general lack of depth in research related to family language planning.

4. Suggestions

Research on family language planning not only holds significant theoretical implications for China's language policy studies but also bears practical importance in addressing issues such as language rights protection, the preservation of dialects or minority languages, and foreign language education. A micro-level, "bottom-up" approach to more detailed research on China's language policies can provide a more scientific and comprehensive theoretical and practical foundation for formulation of macro-level language policies. Therefore, systematically reviewing international research on family language planning is crucial for the future development of such research in China, and analyzing the current state of foreign scholars' research in this field offers valuable insights for advancing studies by Chinese scholars. Admittedly, this study has certain limitations. The data collected does not cover all literature on family language planning, as the research was confined to a specific foreign database, possibly resulting in omissions. Furthermore, the analysis of the data is somewhat lacking, making it challenging to uncover deeper underlying causes. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this paper will serve as a catalyst, drawing attention from domestic scholars and deepening research on family language planning.

Acknowledgement

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