

## A Bibliometric Review of World Englishes (2010-2020)

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### ABSTRACT

This study conducts a bibliometric review of World Englishes (WE) from 2010 to 2020 using CiteSpace. Based on the articles in the four leading journals of WE retrieved from the Web of Science (WoS) database, several findings have been found. First, the number of articles has been gradually increasing from 2010 to 2020, with its citation frequency increasing enormously. Second, the landmark articles in WE research mainly focus on two aspects: the reconceptualization of theoretical frameworks, and the study of English varieties, with an emphasis on English in China. Third, WE research over the past decade includes four major areas: the study of Asian Englishes; language ideology, perceptions, and attitudes toward WE; WE in social media and popular culture; and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

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## 1. Introduction

World Englishes (WE) is the study of “new, increasingly stable and localized varieties of English with properties and functions of their own have grown in many countries” (Schneider, 2018), which has emerged as an academic discipline since the 1980s. In a seminal study of the spread of English around the world, Kachru (1985) proposed the most influential WE model, which divides Englishes into three concentric circles—the Inner Circle (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom), Outer Circle (e.g., India, Nigeria), and Expanding Circle (e.g., China, Russia, Brazil). *English World-Wide*, first published by John Benjamin Publishing Company in 1980, was the first leading journal of varieties of English. A year later in 1981, Wiley Online Library started publishing the international journal—*World Englishes*, which focuses on empirical research on Englishes. In 1985, Cambridge University Press published the first issue of *English Today*, which contains cutting-edge research on all aspects of Englishes. Due to the growing trend of English being used as a medium of international communication in the Expanding Circle, interest in WE continued to grow in countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. The journal *Asian Englishes*, which contains articles related to the sociolinguistic phenomenon of Englishes throughout Asia, was first published by Taylor & Francis in 1998.

These four leading international journals have become influential due to their investigations into the linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions of WE. The published articles are useful for tracing the development of WE by introducing significant research aspects and providing an outlook on future research trends. Therefore, this study will provide an overview of the development of WE from 2010 to 2020 by conducting a bibliometric analysis of articles published in these four international journals on WE over the past decade.

## 2. Research Methods

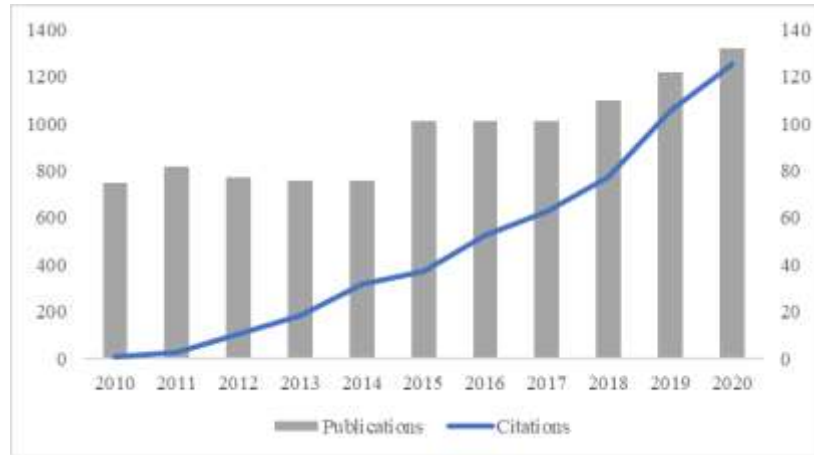
This study uses CiteSpace 5.8.R3 Chen, (2021) for the bibliometric analysis of research articles on WE. CiteSpace is a tool for “progressive knowledge domain visualization” Chen, (2004, p. 5303), and it supports networks of hybrid node types, such as terms, and hybrid link types, such as co-citation and co-occurrence. The global citation database WoS is the source of input data for this study. First, the publication titles of [*Asian Englishes* OR *English Today* OR *English World-Wide* OR *World Englishes*] were searched in All Database of WoS. Next, the document type “articles” was selected, the publication year “2010-2020” was selected, and conference articles were excluded. In this way, 1,053 articles published between 2010 and 2020 were selected. Finally, the

articles were added to the marked lists, and the search results (including full records and references) were exported to plain text files for further bibliometric analysis in CiteSpace.

**3. Research Results**

**3.1 Analysis of Publications and Citation Frequency**

The number of articles and their citation frequency can indicate the development of WE and, to some extent, reflect the degree of academic and social interest in this topic (see Figure 1).



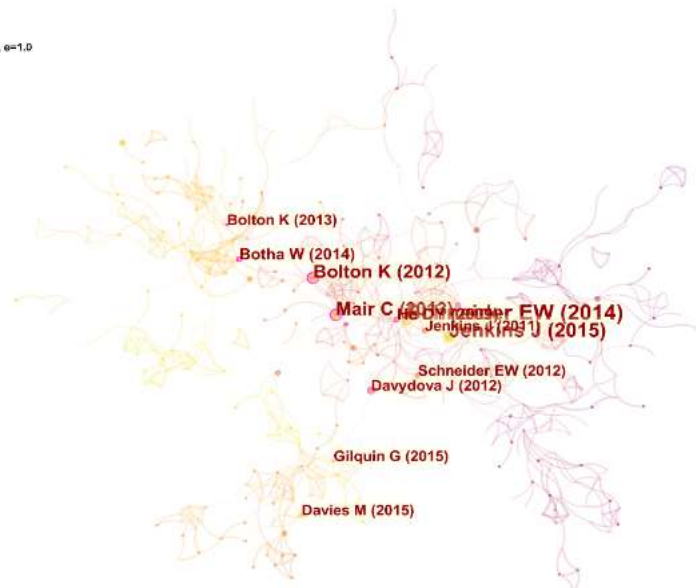
**Figure 1** Annual Publications and Citations from 2010 to 2020

The number of publications increased significantly from 2014 to 2015. Thereafter, the number of publications continued to rise, with an increasing trend from 2017 to 2020. The citation trend can be divided into three approximate stages: The first is the slow rise period (2010–2013), during which the frequency of citations grew steadily and continuously; the second is the turbulent development period (2013–2017), during which the frequency of citations rose and fell significantly, with a considerable increase in the number of publications compared to the previous stage; and the third is the rapid development period (2017–2020), during which the frequency of citations continued to rise dramatically, ushering in the heyday of the development of WE, with both the number of publications and the frequency of citations reaching record highs. In the following years, research on WE is expected to continue gaining momentum and attracting greater attention.

**3.2 Co-Citation Analysis of WE Literature**

CiteSpace was used to create a visual map of co-citation articles in WE research (see Figure 2).

CiteSpace, v. 5.8.R3 (64-bit)  
 November 19, 2021 at 9:04:21 PM CST  
 WoS: D:\Citespacedata\wc  
 Timespan: 2010-2020 (Slice Length=1)  
 Selection Criteria: q=Index (k=25), LRF=3.0, L/N=10, LBY=5, @=1.0  
 Network: n=564, E=1104 (Density=0.007)  
 Largest CC: 475 (84%)  
 Nodes Labeled: 1.0%  
 Pruning: Pathfinder



**Figure 2** Co-Citation Literature of Articles from the Four WE Journals

The density of the co-citation network was 0.007, with 564 nodes (N) and 1,104 connections (E). These data imply that WE research is extensive and interconnected. The nodes shown in Figure 2 represent citations, and the larger the node radius, the higher the co-citation frequency. The connecting lines between two nodes indicate that two different publications are cited by the same article. The warmer the color of the connecting lines, the more recent the co-citation. If an article has a distinct node, it can be considered landmark literature in the worldwide WE study. Based on the Citation Report given by WoS and the results of co-citation analysis in CiteSpace, Table 1 lists the top eight landmark articles in WE research.

**Table 1** Top Eight Landmark Articles on WE Research

Rank	Title	Author(s)	Journal	Year
1	"New reflections on the evolutionary dynamics of world Englishes"	Schneider, E. W.	<i>World Englishes</i>	2014
2	"The World System of Englishes: Accounting for the transnational importance of mobile and mediated vernaculars"	Mair, C.	<i>English World-Wide</i>	2013
3	"English in China today"	Bolton, K., & Graddol, D.	<i>English Today</i>	2012
4	"Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca"	Jenkins, J.	<i>Englishes in Practice</i>	2015
5	"Language attitudes and linguistic features in the 'China English' debate"	He, D., & Li, D. C. S.	<i>World Englishes</i>	2009
6	"English as an international language of scientific publication: A study of attitudes"	Ferguson, G., Pérez-Llantada, C., & Plo, R.	<i>World Englishes</i>	2011
7	"Expanding horizons in the study of World Englishes with the 1.9 billion word Global Web-based English Corpus (GloWbE)"	Davies, M., & Fuchs, R.	<i>English World-Wide</i>	2015
8	"The statistics of English in China: An analysis of the best available data from government sources"	Wei, R., & Su, J.	<i>English Today</i>	2012

The eight articles focus on two major aspects. The first aspect is related to the modification and reconceptualization of theoretical models and frameworks of WE, and the classification and modeling of varieties of English (Articles 1, 2, and 4). Schneider (2014) evaluates the advantages and drawbacks of the Dynamic Model (Schneider, 2007) a decade after it was first proposed, especially regarding the limitations in its applicability and suitability of varieties in the Expanding Circle. The dynamic model is one of the most influential models of the classification of Englishes and outlines five phases of the evolution of WE from the perspective of settlers and indigenous residents— "foundation, exonormative stabilization, nativization, endonormative stabilization, and differentiation," each defined by four parameters— "extralinguistic background, identity constructions, sociolinguistic conditions, and typical linguistic consequences" Schneider, (2007, p. 33). In this article, Schneider admits the limitations of the original model in reacting to the dynamic features of new Englishes. Schneider (2014) suggests that the conceptualization of "Transnational Attraction" is appropriate for describing the current dynamics of the transnational expansion of Englishes, which represents the "appropriation of (components of) English(es) for whatever communicative purposes at hand, unbounded by distinctions of norms, nations, or varieties" (p. 28). Mair (2013) elaborates on the "World System of Englishes" model based on de Swaan's (2010) model to complement existing models of WE, which is "better equipped to handle uses of English in domains beyond the post-colonial nation-state" (p. 253). Mair (2013) argues that the most remarkable breakthrough of this model is "in shedding light on the differential power of non-standard varieties of English, particularly in the post-colonial world, in currents of migration and the global mediasphere" (Appadurai, 1996, as cited in Mair, 2013, p. 262). In the "World System of Standard and Non-Standard Englishes" model, American English is regarded as the "hyper-central variety," which is an essential breakthrough because the "mutual influence of the varieties in this model and the transmission of features from one variety to another is generally held to be top-down and not bottom-up" (Siemund, 2008, p. 3), and it "extends beyond the traditional topics of research on varieties of English around the world" (Mair, 2013, p. 265). Finally, Mair (2013) mentions that the "English language complex" is an inclusive

notion in the "World System of Englishes" model because "what dominates the linguistic ecology of the world today is not one standard language but the whole English-language complex" (p. 275). The connection between this model and the research on the sociolinguistics of globalization is more strengthened than solely focusing on the study of "varieties of English around the world" (Mair, 2013, p. 276). Jenkins (2015) argues that ELF needs reconceptualization that should "position it within multilingualism, rather than seeing multilingualism as an aspect of ELF" because of the increasing diversity of English use nowadays. This "ELF 3" phase, namely "English as a Multilingua Franca" (EMF), is defined as "multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen" (p. 73). Jenkins (2015) defines four key aspects of the EMF, including a focus on multilingualism rather than "English," the interlocutor's linguistic repertoire in the interaction, the concept of "repertoires in flux" (p. 76), and research into the feasibility of the notion of "contact zones" (p. 77). Finally, Jenkins (2015) argues that the EMF should "harness [multilingual] repertoires more effectively in both our pedagogical and assessment practices" (May 2014, p. 216, as cited in Jenkins, 2015, p. 79).

The second aspect is the study of varieties of English "from a synchronic and historical perspective" (Bolton, 2020, p. 745; Article 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8). There are three articles dedicated to English in China. Bolton and Graddol (2012) find that most Chinese people use English for educational purposes, and the authors suggest that more field-based research be conducted on the use of English in other sectors. Moreover, future research can investigate the influence of linguistic landscapes of the English language on Chinese people, especially on young bilinguals. He and Li (2009) generalize the linguistic features of "China English" (CE) and define it as a "performance variety of English which has the standard Englishes as its core but is colored with characteristic features of Chinese phonology, lexis, syntax, and discourse pragmatics, and which is particularly suited for expressing content ideas specific to Chinese culture through such means as transliteration and loan translation" (p. 83). The authors explore the feasibility of introducing CE into English courses in Chinese universities by conducting an empirical study. The findings demonstrate a growing awareness of CE being a "legitimate alternative to native speaker-based pedagogic models of English" (He & Li, 2009, p. 85). However, more basic research on the salient linguistic features of CE in different regions of China is needed to achieve the goal of incorporating CE into college English instruction. Wei and Su (2012) reveal the results of the "Survey of Language Situation in China" and discuss the situation of learning and using English in China from three perspectives—the number of English learners, frequency of English use, and English speaking and reading proficiency. They conclude that more research is needed on English and/or other foreign languages in China, and the research methods of documenting and assessing the development of English and/or other foreign languages in China need to be improved.

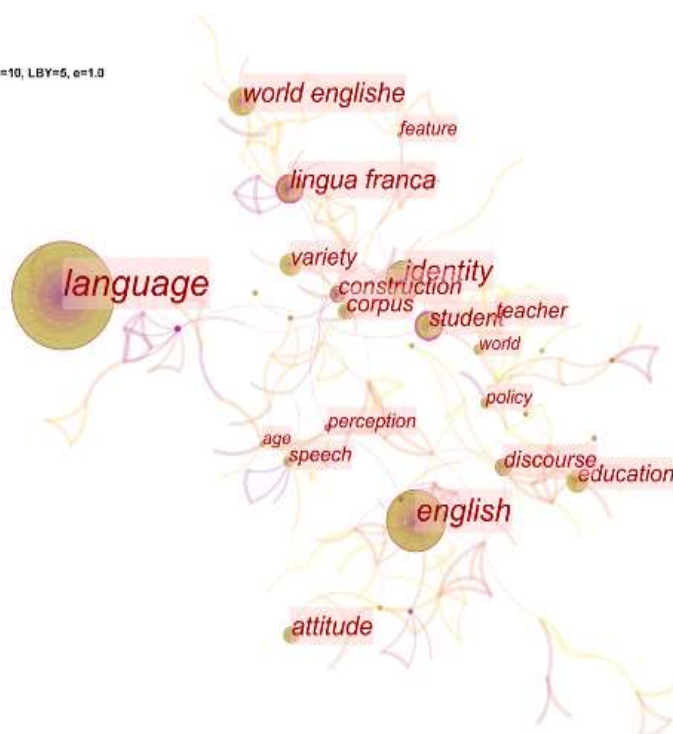
Besides the research on CE, Ferguson et al. (2011) examine the attitudes of Spanish scholars toward the possible disadvantage of participating in academic activities under the dominance of English. Ferguson et al. (2011) receive mixed results from the subjects and argue that the issue of language attitudes is "situated and context-dependent" (p. 54), especially regarding the perspective of linguistic disadvantage. Therefore, more research and appropriate interventions are needed to focus on the mitigation of linguistic inequality among non-Anglophone scholars to improve the linguistic ecology. Moreover, Davies and Fuchs (2015) introduce the new GloWbE Corpus—the Corpus of Global Web-based English, which has a distinguished advantage in analyzing variation in different English dialects at the lexical, morphological, syntactic levels, variation in meaning, and the relationship between discourse and culture. GloWbE outperforms other similar corpora of English in aspects such as its size, which can influence the number of different varieties, tokens, and collocates included. Nevertheless, there remain some problems in GloWbE that entail researchers of WE to adopt it to complement other different corpora to investigate the types of variation thoroughly. Some recent publications also demonstrate the trend of corpus-based investigations into WE (e.g., Grafmiller & Szmrecsanyi, 2018; Unuabonah & Oladipupo, 2020).

Figure 2 also demonstrates that the node with the purple outer circle has a high centrality and that the number of citations in the field of WE is rapidly increasing. Bolton and Graddol (2012), He and Li (2009), Mair (2013), and Botha (2014) have higher centrality, according to CiteSpace statistics (0.38, 0.36, 0.21, and 0.21, respectively). These publications can be considered "turning points" (Chen, 2004, p. 5303) in the field of WE, and they are useful in understanding the essential path of WE research development. Three of these four studies are concerned with the study of CE, indicating that the study of CE could signal a research frontier in WE research.

### **3.3 Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis**

The keyword co-occurrence mapping of the WE articles was analyzed using CiteSpace and is shown in Figure 3.

CiteSpace, v. 5.8.R3 (64-bit)  
 November 19, 2021 at 4:12:54 PM CST  
 WoS: D:\Citespacedata\we  
 Timespan: 2010-2020 (Slice Length=1)  
 Selection Criteria: g-index (k=25), LRF=3.0, L/N=10, LBY=5, e=1.0  
 Network: N=257, E=336 (Density=0.0102)  
 Largest CC: 204 (79%)  
 Nodes Labeled: 1.0%  
 Pruning: Pathfinder



**Figure 3** Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

The higher the frequency of keywords, the larger the node, which corresponds to the most common topics of WE research. The representative keywords include "language" (114), "English" (50), "identity" (38), "lingua franca" (29), "world Englishes" (28), "attitude" (25), "student" (20), "construction" (19), and "variety" (18). These fields are closely related and form a complex and diverse network (N = 257, E = 336, Density = 0.0102). Additionally, by calculating the centrality of keywords, seven high-centrality keywords were obtained: "language attitude" (0.65), "lingua franca" (0.27), "China" (0.27), "American" (0.27), "gender" (0.26), "student" (0.21), "perception" (0.21), and "identity" (0.19), indicating that the emerging research interests in WE research are closely related to these aspects.

According to the keywords of WE research, it can be summarized that WE research mainly focused on 4 research areas from 2010 to 2020. The first research area is the gradual increase of attention to Asian Englishes, as can be seen in recent publications dedicated to this topic (e.g., Bernaisch et al., 2014; Gries & Bernaisch, 2016), especially English varieties such as CE (e.g., Bolton & Botha, 2015; Bolton & Graddol, 2012), Hong Kong English (e.g., Chan, 2013; Evans, 2011), Singapore English (e.g., Alsagoff, 2010; Bolton & Ng, 2014), English in Japan (e.g., Rudolph et al., 2018), Korean English (e.g., Lawrence, 2012), and Indian English (e.g., Bernaisch & Koch, 2015; Kaushik, 2011). As is stated by Graddol (2006), "Asia, especially India and China, probably now holds the key to the long-term future of English as a global language" (p. 15). Most research on Asian Englishes is descriptive and comparative studies of the language features and variation of the varieties in different regions. Additionally, these studies frequently employ research approaches such as using corpus-based data, multimodal analysis, and discourse analysis. Recently, some researchers have been paying close attention to the linguistic landscape in Asian countries (e.g., Lawrence, 2012; Li, 2015), which has shown its strength of "investigating the dynamics of major aspects of social life" (Li, 2015, p. 27). For example, Lawrence (2012) finds that the use of English in Korea is generally influenced by sociolinguistic domains relating to "modernity, luxury, and youth" (p. 70), and further research needs a "much finer-grained analysis of social class patterns" (p. 89). Similarly in the Korean context, Tan and Tan (2015) aims at exploring the linguistic landscape in Seoul. Tan and Tan (2015) also find that the use of English represents modernity and affluence, which is "very much a language of symbolic and market value, with little or no intent to inform in its content" (p. 77). Future research on the linguistic landscape could expand its attention to regions of less popularity, and focus on the trend of multilingualism in the linguistic landscape of different modalities.

The second research area is the importance of research on language ideology, the perceptions of identity, linguistic features, varieties, and attitudes toward the use of WE, particularly in the Expanding Circle (e.g., Ahn, 2015; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2020; Fang, 2017; Si, 2019; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). It has been found that the results depend primarily on the educational and social context of each country, and more contributions need to be made toward the acknowledgment and confidence in the English varieties of their own country, especially regarding the foreign accent. Moreover, more researchers have been exploring the possibility of infusing indigenized English features into the local English curricula to improve students' awareness of embracing

non-native-like forms of English. Future research could also investigate identity and social meaning in local stylistic interaction in more depth, as well as "meso- and macro levels of social structure in larger social categories such as the community of practice, town, region, [and] social class" (Schleef, 2020, p. 628). Moreover, the research designs on sociolinguistic perceptions could focus on combining direct methods (e.g., survey, interviews) and indirect methods to gain more profound results toward how people process sociolinguistic variation (Alderton, 2020). Regarding the research on foreign accents, more discussion is needed to avoid subjectivity or misunderstanding involved in analyzing its variety. Interest in the study of ideology under English-medium instruction is also increasing, and more empirical research is needed to consider opinions from more students, teachers, and even other stakeholders of various linguistic and social backgrounds. The ideology, perception, and attitude of English use could also be explored in domains other than education.

The third research area is WE research in the social media and popular culture (e.g., Martin, 2019; Moody, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Podhovník, 2018; Trotta, 2018), which is "distinct from the sole focus on geographically defined 'varieties' in the classic sense" (Bolton, 2020, p. 750). In a study on computer-mediated discourse in British social media platforms, Podhovník (2018) conducted a qualitative sociolinguistic analysis of meowlogisms— "word formations that, in a cat-inspired wordplay, have been given a purified, or catified, twist" (p. 2)—on the Instagram hashtag #blackcat that investigates "special internet language varieties" (Herring et al., 2012, as cited in Podhovník, 2018, p. 4). Within this "social media paradigm of communication" (KhosraviNik, 2017), some scholars are dedicated to critical discourse analysis in social media (e.g., Chu & Ruthrof, 2017; Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik, 2020). Several publications have also been dedicated to WE in television commercials and programs (Amos, 2019; Bhatia, 2019; Raedts et al., 2015; Vettorel & Franceschi, 2019).

The fourth research area is ELF, English teaching under the ELF context, and the discussion between the WE and ELF paradigm (e.g., Chan, 2016; Fang, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2011; Mauranen, 2018; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015). According to Fang (2017), the "WE-or-ELF argument has caught scholars' attention and raised several debates in various geographical contexts" (p. 19). For example, it has been discovered that it is a complex phenomenon regarding CE from the WE or ELF paradigm, and the attitude toward CE among Chinese people remains an issue to be addressed if it is to be regarded as a WE variety. Moreover, CE demonstrates the feature of fluidity and variability, which might "function as a lingua franca in the international setting" (Fang, 2017, p. 23). Nevertheless, the codification of CE entails a prolonged process, especially regarding its core phonological features, and it is more appropriate to be recognized as a performance variety. Although there remain issues regarding the classification of varieties into different paradigms, there are also scholars who explore the reorientation of English for Speakers of Other Languages teachers' beliefs toward their English teaching and learning practices under the framework of WE combined with ELF (e.g., Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015). Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015) have found that these in-service teachers gain their self-confidence as non-native speaker teachers through the transformation of ELF/WE-aware engagement, which is beneficial for teachers in the Expanding-Circle contexts to "more readily endorse the integration of WE in their classroom once they have understood and appreciated the validity and function of their own ELF varieties" (p. 482). As is appropriately claimed by Jenkins (2017), who represents the ELF perspective, that "ELF and WE are not competing but complementing paradigms" (p. 12).

#### **4. Conclusion**

According to the results of the bibliometric analysis of articles in four leading WE journals from 2010 to 2020, it is found that the research on WE has been receiving increasing attention from scholars. Through the analysis of the landmark articles of WE, it is found that some theoretical models and frameworks have undergone reconceptualization due to the variability and multilingual nature under the globalization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The research on linguistic and sociolinguistic features of English varieties in different regions is central to the WE research. Moreover, some research areas have left significant importance to the development of WE and might lead the trend of future WE research, including the research on Asian Englishes (especially on CE), language ideology, perception, awareness, and attitudes toward English varieties, WE in the social media discourse and popular culture, English instruction, and ELF. Admittedly, this study has some limitations. For example, this study mainly focuses on articles published in the four representatives' WE journals. However, there are other articles and even book chapters that have had a significant impact on WE over the decade. Moreover, the mappings of keywords and clusters can be displayed in a timeline zone in CiteSpace to better trace the development of WE, which is not included in this study. It is hoped that a more comprehensive review can be made based on a wider range of published sources. Additionally, more empirical and field-based research can be conducted in more multilingual regions (e.g., Macau and those inhabited by ethnic minority groups in mainland China) on WE-related topics due to their significance in exploring the sociolinguistic phenomenon.

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