

Current Trends in Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

The field of Applied Linguistics has been adjudged chaotic. This is because many practitioners in the field are yet to situate the word *applied* in the right perspective; and, because there has not been a disambiguated grappling of the twists and turns in the research approaches in the field. It has not been clearly set forth what the actual research domain of the field is, nor what the identity of the practitioners in the field is. Using a qualitative research outlook, this paper dealt with the question of the research domain for Applied Linguistics, the actual identity of the field's practitioners, and the phases, milestones or generations the field has undergone till date since its inception in the 1940s. It argued that, unlike other well-established disciplines that have spanned for centuries, Applied Linguistics is relatively a young discipline; and that there has been revision of perspectives across the decades following the emergence of the field as an independent, but interdisciplinary domain. The perspectives were examined in five milestones, viz.: Structuralism, Transformationalism, Functionalism, Constructivism, and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) Theorizing. The paper concluded with the clarion call for practitioners in the field of Applied Linguistics to narrow practice to language teaching and learning, contending that therein lies their identity as applied language scholars.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics, Constructivism, Functionalism, Structuralism, Transformationalism

Introduction

The phrase 'current trends' constrains this study to a focus on the research, scholarly or professional tendency that has prevailed in applied linguistics so far following the inception of the discipline, and by the same token, implies that the discipline is likely to trend other research traditions. Hence, we will attempt a historical mapping of those research traditions that have characterised applied linguistics down through the decades of its existence as a discipline.

However, it is usually worthwhile in any applied linguistic research to set out a researcher's bias about the notion 'applied linguistics' before delving into work in the field. It is logical to do so, especially when it is understood that there are claims and counter claims in studies on what applied linguistics is and is not. A researcher has to ruffle feathers on those claims, take a stand and then proceed to work. We, therefore, begin this paper by characterizing 'applied linguistics'.

Applied Linguistics is a nascent disciplinary domain, when compared to other fields of study such as Mathematics and astronomy that have a long, multi-century history. Since the field is young, there has been a need to define and re-define its identity (i.e., scope) while new theoretical developments and empirical findings accrue. This growing revision of the identity of Applied Linguistics creates uncertainty, making the field confusing as to what its research boundaries are, and raising questions as to what the identity of practitioners in the field is. Consequently, Applied Linguistics (henceforth, AL) has been given a wide range of interpretations (Corder, 1973; Widdowson, 1980; Kaplan, 1990; Stevick, 1990; Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Sridhar, 1993; James, 1993; Brumfit, 1995; Masny, 1996; Grabe, 2002; Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2002; Davies & Elder, 2004; Wei, 2007). Gunnarsson (2006: 1) believes that the traditional and widespread conceptualization of the term remains the narrowest point of view, which construes AL as 'the application of linguistic research to mother tongue education and to the teaching and learning of foreign and second languages'. Agiriga (2014, p.7), commenting on this view of AL, considers its implication, thus holds that this traditional perception of AL delimits it to educational problems, and according to this view, the central issues of AL are language learning and acquisition, error analysis, testing, and teaching methodology and technology— issues that circumscribe AL within an instructional setting or scope.

This traditional circumscription of AL noted by Gunnarsson has been under attack in the literature by counter views which contend for a Postmodernist perspective, hence, perceiving this view to be too conservative, and thus, not encompassing the growing multi-disciplinary areas of research interests in the field. This contention has forced a polarization of views on what constitutes AL. Exponents of a new view to AL (e.g., Van, Bongaerts, Extra, Van, & Janssen-van, 1984) argue for a more inclusive perception of AL, averring that the discipline has exceeded its inceptional limits given that it is an evolving discipline, and as such has raked in other hitherto excluded areas of research concerns. Hence, they advance a broader interpretation of AL which is widely inclusive, construing AL as not only limited to language education alone, but also covering different areas of language problems in society— practical and social problems of all kinds (Bygate, 2004; Chadlin& Sarangi, 2004). From the standpoint of this broad view of AL, Schmitt and Celce-Murcia (2002, p.1) offer one such broad perceptions. According to them, AL is concerned with increasing understanding of the role of language in human affairs and thereby with providing the knowledge necessary for those who are responsible for taking language-related decisions whether the need for these arises in the classroom, the workplace, the law court, or the laboratory.

This inclusive view of AL has however been under attack in research literature. The thinking is that with such broadening of perspective, practitioners in the field will lack definite knowledge of the precise tasks that make them applied linguists. The delimitation of AL to all language related social problems does not take into consideration the fact that such problems will continue to broaden, and that human language problems are too complex and large to be handled by a single discipline like AL. The implication of this inclusive view of AL is that both the discipline and its practitioners are in a state of flux as human language-related problems broaden and evolve, and as remarked earlier, this has occasioned the question of what the identity of practitioners in the field is, since precision is the hallmark of identification.

This wide-ranging, all-encompassing perception of AL gives the discipline an amoebic shape. Agiriga (2014, p.8), voicing out concern about this, submits that in the revolutionary zeal of making AL more inclusive in orientation, researchers have mapped 'language and cognition' (psycholinguistics), language and society' (sociolinguistics), 'language and writing' (orthography studies), 'language and technology' (as in computer-based Corpus Linguistics) etc onto AL.

An example to illustrate this can be taken from Grabe (2002) who, like numerous other sources (Widdowson 1980), includes in the realm of applied linguistics language contact problems as well as language use problems such as, for example, dialects and registers. The problem here is that these research areas also belong respectively to contact linguistics and sociolinguistics, much of which is not applied in any sense of the word. The problem with this inclusive perspective to AL is that it does not recognize disciplinary compartmentalizations. It gives AL more problems, more scope, than it can handle as a single discipline. The argument that AL is an evolving discipline is rather taken too far. It is our suggestion, therefore, that those growing areas of interests in language research should constitute fresh sublinguistic disciplines in their own right. It then follows that the traditional and narrow view of AL is still and should remain a respectable perspective, with its primary and defined concern on 'second language acquisition theory, second language pedagogy and the interface between the two' (Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2002, p. 2). In a nutshell, therefore, AL can be interpreted as concerned with language learning and teaching. That language is usually a second language, otherwise called, foreign language.

There has, however, been a remarkable revision on the traditional view. From the seminal view that AL entails the application of linguistic research in language education (be it first or, and especially, second language), the current thinking is that what is applied is internal in AL, and not loanable from linguistics. This revision came in response to the observation that linguistic theories are inadequate in the handling of language problems. In recognition of this insufficiency, researchers such as Widdowson (1979, 1980, 1984) call for the autonomy of AL from linguistic theories, arguing that linguistic models are inadequate for language teaching and that applied linguists should construct models of their own. The argument is that AL is no longer seen as a dependent of

linguistics. This is opposed to Corder's (1973) position that linguistics is relevant in providing the applied linguist with detailed descriptions of language. In his call for independence of AL, Widdowson (1980) introduces an important distinction between AL and linguistics applied. What Widdowson calls 'linguistics applied' is, as a matter of fact, the old understanding of AL as the application of findings made in linguistics to language-related, real-life problems. AL proper, in this view, constructs its own theoretical models, given that models are a distinguishing feature of a separate, independent discipline. In the words of Widdowson (1980, p.165),

For linguistics applied, therefore, the question of central concern is: how far can existing models of description in linguistics be used to resolve the practical problems of language use we are concerned with. For applied linguistics, the central question is: how can relevant models of language description be devised, what are the factors which will determine their effectiveness.

Other claims of the independence or distinctiveness of AL have been put forward in the literature. Davies and Elder (2004, pp.11-12) describe the difference between linguistics and applied linguistics. In their words: While linguistics is primarily concerned with language in itself and with language problems in so far as they provide evidence for better language description or for teaching a linguistic theory, applied linguistics is interested in language problems for what they reveal about the role of language in people's daily lives and whether intervention is either possible or desirable.

In our understanding, Davies and Elder's argument carries the implication that linguistics is basically concerned with language, while AL is concerned with the language user. They are not alone in this position. Wei (2007) takes the same stance as well, remarking that AL is a user-centred or user-friendly linguistics. We find this argument intuitive, and so lend support, given that AL is generally believed to be concerned with language learning (by implication, 'learner language').

From the foregoing, an inference can be drawn of what AL is currently viewed to be, that it is an independent discipline concerned with the application of paradigms (i.e., theoretical models) of language pedagogy (generated, in the main, within the field, and not retrieved from linguistics) that facilitate the acquisition of a second language. This is the mainstream thinking in research literature.

This introductory section has demonstrated a need for a precise definition of the scope of applied linguistics. The sections that follow trace the origin and history of applied linguistics, focusing on five milestones in professional and scholarly development, viz.: Structuralism, Transformationalism, Functionalism, Constructivism, and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) Theorizing. The final section presents a conclusion.

Origin of Applied Linguistics

On inception, the field of Applied Linguistics knew nothing related to *applied*. Although there were foreign language teachers, the problem of lack of trained applied practitioners in the field was a ready challenge that would take over a decade to surmount. Evert (2013, p.2) makes a claim that modern foreign language teaching began in the second half of the 19th century, when economic and cultural changes led to increase in international trade and provided more travel opportunities, thus raising the awareness of foreign language knowledge as a personal asset.

She, however, admits that there was nothing applied in activities associated with the practice (i.e., language teaching) at the time. Following the birth of foreign modern language teaching, teachers and philologists (e.g., Viëtor, 1882; Sweet, 1899; Jespersen, 1904; cf. Howatt, 1982, 1984) began to publish their recommendations on how best to embark on the enterprise of foreign language teaching. Professionals in modern language teaching did not consider themselves applied linguists, but designated themselves as foreign language teachers. This was well becoming, given that at that time, the main preoccupation was with the history of languages, which had little to offer that could in any sense be deemed applied (Evert, 2013). At the turn of the century, in America, there were

already a number of professional associations for foreign language teachers and there were modern language departments at a number of universities (Kayser, 1916).

The advent of Formalism, precisely structuralism (an analytical and language teaching tool designed for characterizing the syntactic structures of sentences in terms of their grammatical categories and surface arrangements (Hakuta & Cancino, 1977)), in linguistics created a potential for productive interaction between language teaching and linguistics. According to Fisiak (1984), the first efforts to produce teaching materials based on structural comparison of two languages were undertaken by Czech authors in the 1920s). However, as widely reported in the literature (e.g., Evert, 2013), it was World War II that brought the potential to fruition. The United States' entry into World War II and the subsequent Cold War period created a need for effective foreign language instruction for military personnel, hence, the establishment of the first secret US Army foreign language school in 1941 (DLIFLC, 2012), followed by numerous other similar facilities. The military foreign language programmes set up new standards for foreign language teaching by creating what was then colloquially referred to as the 'Army method' (Brown, 1987) and later on as the audiolingual or aural-oral method, a teacher-dominated approach to language teaching (Nunan, 1995) characterized with 'isolated practice in drilling language patterns' (Yule, 1999:133). The method, firmly rooted in Behaviourism (Richards & Rodgers, 1995) in psychology and Structuralism in linguistics, was considered the first truly scientific (and hence, applied) language teaching method. Bloomfield's (1933) concept of 'language habit', previously unknown to psychologists, which viewed language learning as learning a set of habits, became the platform on which this method rested. Other structural approaches to language teaching include: Lado's (1957) **Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis**, which stimulated research in contrastive linguistics with a view to applying the results of these studies to the practical end of preparing teaching materials; the **grammar translation method**, which entails the learning of grammatical rules of the target language and the presentation of vocabulary in the form of a bilingual list (Krashen, 1995); the **direct method**, also known as 'natural approach' (Askes, 1978), where rules of the target language are learnt inductively, that is, through using the language; and the **oral approach** or **situational language teaching**, which views language as a set of structures related to situations (Rugare & Shumirai, 2012). Thus, the field of AL was born, in its first generation espousing the tenets of Behaviourist and Structural linguistics. However, as remarked by Guiora (2005), the very term 'applied linguistics' was probably officially used for the first time in a title of the Language Learning Journal, which was subtitled as A Journal of Applied Linguistics until the 1970s.

Trends/Milestones/Generations of Applied Linguistics

As said elsewhere in this paper, AL is relatively a young discipline of a few decades old. In the words of Weidemann (1998:4), 'Applied linguistics is a fairly modern phenomenon'. Along its historical path, milestones of both theoretical and practical concerns can be established in their successive evolutions, each representing a generation of distinctiveness in both philosophical and practical orientations. In this section, we will attempt to impose some order in the myriad of developments in AL as an effort towards categorization. The outcome of this effort will be a representation of the stages or generations the discipline has undergone since its inception in the 1940's.

In the previous section, it was suggested that the Second World War was the agent of the birth of AL. The war effort required American soldiers to be able to speak the languages of the Pacific or of other places where they were dispatched to make war. Consequently, according to Weidemann (1998:4), 'some theoretical linguists, who had an intimate knowledge of the structure of especially the indigenous, American Indian languages, took up this concern'. Therefrom, AL was birthed, and at this fledgling stage, was concerned with the application of linguistic structural analysis to language teaching. Thus, Structuralism became a foundational theoretical learning base, with audio-lingualism as the touchstone for language teaching which hinged on the Skinnerean learning approach (i.e., Behaviourism) (Richards & Rodgers, 1995; Weidemann, 1998). Audiolingual method majored on pattern practice, that is, it held that the more a learner repeated patterns of the target language, the more likely he would remember and acquire the language. The approach was fraught with the assumption that learning takes place incrementally, in small portions (Weidemann, 1998). Because audio-lingualism borrowed from the academic psychology of learning (Behaviourism), and hence, viewed language as habit formation, learning activities in this method

included memorization of structure-based dialogues, repetition, substitution, transformation and translation drills. In short, learning under this method was by rote. Rooted in Behaviourist psychology, the method did not recognize the cognitive power of the mind in learning, since Behaviourism, according to Rotfeld (2007:376), provided a method 'that would allow control and measurement of all relevant variables by ignoring human thought or cognition'. The major proponent of the Behaviourist school after Watson, Skinner himself, as reported in Gregory (1987), stated that the mind and mental processes are mere "metaphors and fictions," and that "behaviour" is a function of the "biology" of the organism. He expressed no interest in understanding how the human mind functioned, because of his belief that thoughts, feelings, intentions, mental processes, and so forth have no bearing on what humans do, but their environmental experiences. Learning was viewed as mindless response to stimulus through conditioning occasioned by 'mechanized' rote learning. Therefore, audio-lingualism on which this theory was based, approached instructed foreign language in points of views that drew on Behaviourist thought. One feature of the method, according to Richards and Rodgers (1995), was non-contextualization of the chunks of language taught as evident in methods based on the communicative approach. Remarking on this feature, Yule (1999:133) observes that 'apart from the boredom associated with the method, its other major weakness is that...isolated practice in drilling language patterns bears no resemblance to the interactional nature of actual language use'. Furthermore, emphasis was on linguistic competence, as opposed to Hymes' (1962, 1964, 1972) notion of communicative competence that was yet to make its entry in language learning methodology. In addition, accuracy was held in primacy, as production was 'expected to be error free' (Krashen, 1995:129). Thus, error came to be seen as a bad egg that must be eradicated by punishment; and as an evidence of inoperative teaching method and imperfect learning. The method, far from being a parody of naturalist learning, was mechanical. It was teacher-dominated (Nunan, 1995) through the use of fronted classroom.

At its inception phase, AL was indebted to linguistic theory. Put precisely, practitioners in the field were applying linguistics in the defined goal of developing mastery of foreign languages in learners.

That the Behaviourist-Structural approach to language teaching saw language merely as an environmental input, a conditioning stimulus capable of establishing itself as habit in a language learner, without accommodating within its sphere of concern the cognitive aspect of learning, soon made the approach fall out of repute by the formulation in the late 50's of a linguistic theory that soon transformed into a movement, known as 'Transformationalism'. The theory was the Transformational Generative Grammar, credited to the American linguist, Chomsky (1957). This marked the second generation of AL with its recognition of cognition in language learning. Although Chomsky's theory was psychological as was its predecessor, Behaviourism, it was rather based on a mentalist (i.e., competence, by extension, 'knowledge'), as opposed to a behavioural (i.e., performance), view of language learning. And again, although its major concern was a delineation of how children acquire their mother-tongue, his cognitive view of language learning brought a lot of insights into how foreign or second languages are acquired; led to serious research in second language acquisition (SLA), thus, SLA came to be seen as a special object of inquiry in the late 60's (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Cook, 1993; Ellis, 1994; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Ortega, 2009), with the extension of Chomsky's notion of language cognition into second language research. His argument was that all about language learning did not constitute in environmental input (which would pass as 'stimulus' in Behaviourism), and that the human mind (i.e., a child's) has a natural tendency to generate language novel sentences that are independent of learning, but innate. The argument made a sensational impact in second language acquisition research. Researchers in the field began to rethink the acquisition processes involved in learning a language using a set of powerful transformation rules formulated in the theory. Under the influence of the Chomskyan thought that a child's grammar demonstrates an independent, evolving rule system in its own right, researchers in second language acquisition began to view learners' developing language as a linguistic system in its own right that should be studied on its own, and not as a deviation from some perfect form of language. Selinker (1972) would eventually conceptualize this independent linguistic system as 'interlanguage'. (An interlanguage incorporates characteristics of both the native and the target language of the learner). This view revised the attitude towards learner errors. Rather than being seen as products of imperfect learning, as held by the Behaviourists, learner errors came to be regarded as inevitable results of an underlying, rule-governed system which evolved

toward the full native-speaker grammar. Under the impetus of Chomsky's breakthrough in the inquiry on how languages are learnt by children, many investigators (e.g., Corder, 1967; Dulay & Burt, 1972; Richards, 1973) noted similarities between the types of errors reported in the first language acquisition literature and the errors made by second language learners. These errors could not be accounted for within the contrastive analysis framework. On the basis of this similarity, researchers speculated that the processes of first and second language acquisition are essentially the same. Like children learning their first language, second language learners were characterized as proceeding through a series of intermediate grammars (Corder, 1971; Nemser, 1971; Selinker, 1972). At any given time a learner was credited with having an 'interlanguage,' a genuine language in the sense that it consists of a set of systematic rules that can be described in a grammar. This cognitive view of language learning by Chomsky shifted concern to the acquisition of linguistic knowledge and internal mental structures of students' learning processes and to the issues of how information is received, organized, stored, and retrieved by the mind.

According to Merrill, Kowalis and Wilson (1981), this shift from a behavioural orientation (where the emphasis was on promoting a learner's overt performance by the manipulation of stimulus material) to a cognitive orientation (where the emphasis was on promoting a learner's mental processing) also created a similar shift from procedures for manipulating the materials to be presented by an instructional system to procedures for directing learner processing and interaction with the instructional design system.

Although Transformationalism drew massive following and created a milestone in AL's development, in that it gave serious theoretical and practical bearing to second language research, the movement was fraught with shortcomings. In the first place, its Structuralist, non-contextualized description of language came under suspicion. It was purely linguistic, and implied a teaching method that focused on inculcating grammatical competence on learners insensitive to the sociolinguistic or contextual functions of language. Focus was on the form as opposed to the function of language in a social setting. This lapse created an agitation among second language researchers (e.g., Campbell & Wales, 1970) prominent among whom was Hymes (1962, 1964, 1971), who contended that context should be taken into accounting in any language description and learning situation with his famous notion of 'communicative competence'. Hymes conceived 'communicative competence' as not only comprising the ability to produce well-formed, grammatically correct sentences, but also the ability to match linguistic knowledge with situational contexts. He conceded to Chomsky's (1965) notion of linguistic competence as enshrined in the transformational generative theory, but added that grammatical competence should involve knowledge of how to apply the competence in a variety of communicative situations. Thus, he brought the sociolinguistic perspective into Chomsky's linguistic view of competence. This inaugurated an era of AL where emphasis was placed on the functional use of language in situational contexts. Angling his proposal from the point of view of the native speaker of a language, he contended that other than linguistic competence, the native speaker has another rule system without which the rules of grammar will be useless; that the native speaker knows intuitively what is socially appropriate or inappropriate and can adjust his language use to such factors as the topic, situation and human relations. The pedagogical impact of this development was the birth of the communicative language teaching approach with its emphasis on the functional or pragmatic use of language in context. Functionalism argued for a style of pedagogy where immersive exposure to the target language would be the order, and where fluency would supersede accuracy in pedagogical concerns.

Functionalism did not bring about a halt on transformationalism, but rather expanded its applicability to language description and learning. From the late 60's, the functionalist outlook dominated, with the communicative language teaching tool to drive its tenets in the language classroom. But as observed by Weidemann (1998, p.6), there was obviously something missing. For example, what was missing - at least initially - in the communicative approach, was a theory of language learning... While many could readily agree that not the forms of language but also its functions were important considerations in designing language courses, how students would actually learn better was not clear at the inception of communicative teaching.

At the wake of Hymes' suggestion for a communicative approach, there was no theoretical base to translate his proposal into classroom practice. Although the communicative approaches in pedagogy employed 'notions' and 'functions', and hence, **notional syllabus or notional-functional syllabus** (which is based on the general concepts and contents that a learner will need to express) for general language competence development in learners; and **needs analysis-based course design** (which specifically deals with the area of language use that a learner will need to gain competence and the extent of attainment in such competence) for restricted competence development, however, as a theory, Communicative Competence was deficient in itself in accounting for the pedagogical applicability of its claims. Pedagogues experimented with various instructional designs in a bid to bring home the tenets of this theory to the classroom.

From the 80's, research in AL began to tap its roots in constructivist psychology towards not only clarifying the processes by which a learner develops linguistic knowledge, but also mapping out more effective classroom practice in second language learning. Constructivism was formulated through the works of Piaget, Bruner, and Goodman (Perkins, 1991). It is a theory that equates learning with creating meaning from experience. Although constructivism is considered a branch of cognitivism in that both conceive learning as a mental activity, it essentially differs from traditional cognitive theories: Most cognitive psychologists think of the mind as a reference tool to the real world; constructivists believe that the mind filters input from the world to produce its own unique reality (Jonassen, 1991). Constructivist applied linguists averred that learners develop knowledge of a second language through experience (Clancey, 1986). Under this theory, the belief was that learners *create* meanings as opposed to *acquiring* it, and that learners do not transfer knowledge from the external world into their memories; rather, they build personal interpretations of the world based on individual experiences and contextual interactions with the external world (and in this case, language). Constructivists emphasized learners' flexible use of pre-existing knowledge (i.e., experience) to filter pre-packaged incoming information, and their construction of meaning thereby. Translating this into actual classroom practice, constructivist classroom practitioners recognized individual learner's uniqueness in both learning styles and strategies, and structured instructional designs to accommodate learner differences in learning. Since experience is context-based, task-engagements methods were employed in such a manner that reoccurrence of same tasks in similar environment (i.e., context) provided basis for experiential learning. Based on repeated tasks, learners are able to construct knowledge. An essential notion in the constructivist view was that learning always takes place in a context and that the context forms an inexorable link with the knowledge embedded in it. Therefore, according to Ertmer and Newby (2013:57), 'the goal of instruction under constructivism was to accurately portray tasks, not to define the structure of learning required to achieve a task. The ultimate measure of learning in constructivism was based on how effective the learner's knowledge structure is in facilitating thinking and performance in the contexts in which those tasks were used. Learners were encouraged to construct their own understandings and then to validate them, through social negotiation or interactions. In the words of Ertmer and Newby (2013, p.58), some of the specific strategies utilized by constructivists include: situating tasks in real world contexts, use of cognitive apprenticeships (modelling and coaching a student toward expert performance), presentation of multiple perspectives (collaborative learning to develop and share alternative views), social negotiation (debate, discussion, evidence-giving), use of examples as real "slices of life," reflective awareness, and providing considerable guidance on the use of constructive processes.

With the growing recognition of Second Language Acquisition as the object of enquiry in AL and the proposed separation of AL from 'linguistics applied' owing to the supposed inadequacy of linguistic theories in accounting for many language related issues, there has been a strong preoccupation in theorization of second language acquisition among researchers. (Those working in the field have begun to borrow from other disciplines: pedagogy, psychology and especially that branch of the latter that deals with learning theory Weidemann, 1998). Many of such theories link up with insights from other disciplines other than linguistics. This endeavour is motivated by two factors, viz.: to further knowledge on how second languages are learnt and to provide pedagogical paradigms to facilitate second language learning. Thus, this generation of AL has become a multi-

disciplinary enterprise. This is the current situation in AL, and it is easy to predict that with a consequent deluge of theoretical models, research in AL will develop other ideological directions.

Conclusion

This work has attempted to map out the theoretical perspectives that have governed practice in the field of AL since its inception in the 1940s. The paper has also espoused the question of identity, both for the discipline and for its practitioners. The strength of this study is the fact that it organizes historical and current research perspectives in the field in a way that they classify into neat generic and generational families. This throws light on the paths or developments the field of AL has charted out from its humble beginning to the current practice in the field. The paper considers the trends in terms of milestones or generations, accounting for the emergence of the trends and the factors that led to that. It is pertinent to note that any similar endeavour at tracing the trends in AL will likely toe a different direction because of differences in opinions and the complicated historical mixes of theories and practices in the field that pose difficulty for the neat, crystalized separation of movements, theories and practices. We, however, recommend, based on our submissions, that our typological mapping of the theoretical-cum-research developments in the field be seen as a template for accounting for the historical developments of the field. The idea is to have a common voice, and to rest the question of identity that has bedevilled the discipline since its inception.

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