

A Study of the Three Dimensions of Linguistic Landscape——A Case Study of Five Star Commercial Pedestrian Street in Liuzhou, China

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Abstract: As a multi-national city with an international view, Liuzhou city reflects its social culture and development on the linguistic landscape. Based on the three-dimension space theory of linguistic landscape by Trumper-Hecht, this paper analyzes 178 pieces of the linguistic landscape of the Five Star Commercial Pedestrian Street in Liuzhou, Guangxi, China by methods of both quantity and quality to explore whether the linguistic landscape accords with the multi-nationality and internationality of Liuzhou. The results show that, in physical space, Liuzhou's preference code is Chinese, followed by a combination of Chinese and English. But there is no ethnic minority language found. In living space, people's attitude towards the linguistic landscape proves that there are some problems with improper translation, rare minority language, and a sense of disorder. And in conceived space, this study indicates three pieces of advice about policy management of linguistic landscape on translation, Zhuang language, and multimodality. To better highlight the international and ethnic characteristics, Liuzhou needs to improve its linguistic landscape.

Keywords: Linguistic Landscape; Liuzhou City; Physical Space; Living Space; Conceived Space

1. Introduction

Liuzhou is the second largest city in Guangxi, the south of China. With the popularity of local food “Luosi noodles” in recent years, the traditional industrial city, Liuzhou, has attracted tourists from inside and outside. Furthermore, the multi-minority nationality in Liuzhou also nurtures its unique southwest culture, as well as the ethnic minority language—Zhuang language. As the old downtown of Liuzhou, the Five Star Commercial Pedestrian Street has witnessed the history, culture, and change of the city. The linguistic landscape of a city can reflect the ecology of the city. The concept of linguistic landscape was first introduced by Landry and Bourhis in 1997: “the languages that appears on public street signs, billboards, street names, place names, store signs, and public signs on government buildings together constitute the linguistic landscape of a territory, region, or city group”[1]. The creation of linguistic landscapes is not arbitrary, and there are deep-rooted issues of policy orientation, power, and identity behind them[2]. Thus, this paper takes the case of Five Star Commercial Pedestrian Street (abbr. Five Star Street) to study the linguistic landscape of Liuzhou. Except for the introduction, literature review, and research design, this paper, based on the three-dimension mode by Trumper-Hecht, mainly analyzes the physical space, living space, and conceived space of Liuzhou's linguistic landscape and offers some advice on language management.

2. Literature Review

In China, research on linguistic landscape is mostly focused on theoretical frameworks and content of foreign studies, but less on empirical studies^[2]. Currently, most scholars in China have focused their empirical studies on linguistic landscape in large international cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Macau, and Guangzhou^{[3][4][5][6]}, or small and medium-sized cities inhabited by a certain ethnic group^{[7][8][9]}. China is a multi-ethnic country where official languages, national languages and foreign languages such as English coexist, but few scholars in China have studied the linguistic landscape of cities with both international and national characteristics, and the objects of linguistic landscape studies are mostly focused on written words, and multimodal symbols such as sounds are rarely discussed. Based on the background above, this study takes Liuzhou City, a regional international city with 48 ethnic minorities^[10], as an example, and conducts a multidimensional study on the linguistic landscape of Five

Star Street, aiming to explore the basic situation of multilingual landscape in Liuzhou City and its connection with internationalization and ethnic characteristics.

3. Research Design

This study collects language signs from the Five Star Street in Liuzhou and combines the survey of interviewees' attitudes on the language signs, investigating whether the multilingual landscape of Liuzhou is consistent with the city's positioning and can better reflect its international and ethnic characteristics. The following questions are designed for the purpose of this study: First, what are the characteristics of the linguistic landscape in Liuzhou? Second, what are the residents' attitudes on the linguistic landscape of Liuzhou? Third, what can be done to optimize the linguistic landscape of Liuzhou?

To address the textual research questions, this study uses the theory of three-dimension space of linguistic landscape proposed by Trumper-Hecht^[11] as the main theoretical framework for analysis. The three-dimension spaces are physical space, living space and conceived space respectively. The physical space refers to the concrete situation of the linguistic landscape of the street by means of photography; the living space refers to the ideas of residents and passersby about the space they live in; and the conceived space refers to the space operated by policy makers, i.e., official government ideology and legal documents. And Scollon & Scollon's^[12] geosemiotics is adopted to the analysis of physical space to further explain the linguistic landscape.

The methods of this study mainly include observation, photography, and in-depth interviews. The observation method mainly focuses on the content of voice announcements in public places of Five Star Street in Liuzhou City, and four items are collected. The method of photography is mainly applied to collect the shop signs on the main road of Five Star Street as well as street signs, door signs and propaganda slogans set by the government, and a total of 178 valid photos are collected. In-depth interviews are conducted with 10 people, including three shop owners, two local residents, two local Zhuang residents (the Zhuang language is standardized by Liujiang Zhuang language), two tourists and one government employee.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Physical Space: Basic Situation of Linguistic Landscape

This study collects a total of 178 valid signs from the Five Star Commercial Pedestrian Street, including 62 signs in the east-west direction and 116 signs in the north-south direction. The collection follows two principles: (1) according to Backhaus^[13], "every linguistic entity, regardless of its size, is counted as one sign for statistical purposes". (2) If there are signs of different sizes in the same shop, they are counted as one.

4.1.1 The Lansign Usage of Five Star Street

Table 1: The mode of lansign usage of Five Star Street

Lansign	Count	Percentage	Examples
Chinese	74	41.57%	“城中区风情港便民夜市”
Chinese+English	70	39.33%	“开心吧”Happy Bar;
Chinese+English+Pinyin	10	5.62%	LEMON GUOZI “柠檬果子”
Chinese+Pinyin	9	5.06%	“东都百货”DONGDUBAIHUO
English	8	4.49%	innisfree; Starbucks Coffee
Pinyin	4	2.25%	QIAO DAN; SANFU
Chinese+English+Japanese	1	1.68%	“奈雪の茶”NAYUKI Pro
Chinese+Korean	1		“親故社”□□□
Chinese+Laotian	1		“暖吾里”ຊາວ ັ ມັ ັ ງ ດ ັ ມ
Sum	178	100%	

Lansign is language sign, including writing, sign and pinyin etc.^[14] The survey finds that pinyin appears in a high rate in landscape of Five Star Street. In order to record this phenomenon, this study classifies the language signs as Table 1 followed. The results show that 93.26% of language signs uses Chinese, 50% in English, and only 1.68% in other language. In addition, 0% of them use Zhuang

language. According to Lai^[15], this study classifies the landscape into monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs. Among the 178 language signs, 53.37% is monolingual; 46.47% is bilingual, and only 0.56% is multilingual. Therefore, the multilingual property of Liuzhou is not obvious(See Table 2).

Table 2: The multilingual usage of Five Star Street

	Amount	Percentage
Monolingual	95	53.37%
Bilingual	82	46.47%
Multilingual	1	1%

Excepting Chinese, the second largest mode of lansign collocation is the combination of Chinese and English, which arrives a proportion at 39.33%. It shows that the creators of the language landscape, whether the official government or the shop owners, tend to enhance the internationality of Liuzhou by adding English translation like City Sweet “都市甜心” or Chinese-pronoun translation, for example Yishion “以纯”. In most cases, official linguistic landscape uses standard translation and for non-official(shop) linguistic landscape, shop owners choose pronoun-translation as the second language code to improve the fashionable and international position of the shop.

4.1.2 Code Preference of Five Star Street

Scollon & Scollon^[12] indicates that when two or more language codes are present simultaneously on a linguistic signage, the code in prominent position dominates. This study investigates the arrangement of bilingual and multilingual language landscapes. In general, in a surrounded textual arrangement, the preferred code appears in the center; in a horizontal arrangement, the preferred code is placed above or on top of the sign; and in a vertical arrangement, the preferred code is placed on the left and the non-preferred code is placed on the right^[2]. The code arrangement of the linguistic landscape of Five Star Street is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Code preference in three arrangement types

Arrangement type	Preferred position	Code preference	Amount	Percentage	
Horizontal arrangement	above code	Chinese	53	64.63%	92.68%
		English	23	28.05%	
Vertical arrangement	left code	Chinese	1	1.22%	3.66%
		Japanese	1	1.22%	
		English	1	1.22%	
Surrounded arrangement	central code	English	2	2.44%	3.66%
		Chinese	1	1.22%	
Sum			82	100%	100%

According to the statistics in Table 3, it is clear that Chinese dominates the preferred position with a proportion of 67.07% in three kinds of arrangement and English follows Chinese in a rate of 31.71%. In horizontal arrangement, the government and shops mainly choose Chinese as the dominant language code. In addition to setting Chinese above the sign, the linguistic landscape creators (officials or shop owners) also highlight the status of dominant language code by other means such as increasing the size of the Chinese character, bright color, and decorative colored light. For example in Figure 1, Chinese code “莫阿姨” is above “Aunt Mo”. Besides, the shop owner makes the Chinese much bigger than the English translation and use the yellow background and Led lightening to highlight the existence of the Chinese code.



Figure 1: Aunt Mo

4.1.3 Function of Signs and the Purpose of Creators

According to the function and usage of signs, Spolsky & Cooper^[16] believes that signs can be classified into road nameplate, advertising sign, warning sign, architecture name, message sign, memory sign etc. With reference to his classification method, this paper divides the collected signs into six categories, as shown in Table 4. In addition, the usage of language code of each category is also shown together.

Table 4: Functions of linguistic landscape of Five Star Street

Function	Amount	Chinese	English	Chinese+English	Chinese+other languages
Sign of architecture, shop and institution	112	33.61%	6.56%	57.37%	2.46%
Message sign	27	51.86%	/	48.14%	/
Advertising sign +propaganda poster	17	76.47%	/	23.53%	/
Warning sign	13	46.15%	/	53.85%	/
Road nameplate	9	11.11%	/	88.89%	/
Doorplate	2	100%	/	/	/

First, for shops, advertising sign and propaganda poster are commercial signs aimed at promoting goods, services or activities, and the language used on the signs reflects, to some extent, the language preference group that these commercial activities are intended to cater to. Secondly, there are doorplate, road nameplate and warning signs, which are government-run signs that are legal national landmarks and serve mainly to indicate directions, priorities or warning messages. The writing, spelling and form of the place name signs are serious and political, and are usually set by local government departments. These official signs not only provide directional, warning and information-transfer functions for national people, but also consider the convenience of English-speaking groups.

To conclude, the linguistic landscape of Five Star Street is Chinese-dominant, English-auxiliary and less international. The linguistic landscape performs various functions in informing, interpreting and entertaining etc.

4.2 Living Space: People' Attitude towards Linguistic Landscape

4.2.1 Attitude towards English Linguistic Landscape

Understanding the attitude of people in the space towards the linguistic landscape is the foundation for exploring the interactiveness between linguistic landscape and the space surrounded it. English, as the second largest language code of Five Star Street, presents the inclusiveness and internationality of the city. Based on the interview questions, 10 interviewees, including three store owners, two local residents, two local Zhuang residents, two tourists, and one government employee give their own pictures of linguistic landscape of this city for us.

Table 5: People' attitude towards English use in linguistic landscape

	Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Number	6	3	1

First, the author raised mainly two questions to interviewees in the Five Star Street (except the government employee on phone): (1) Do you agree to add or add more English to the linguistic signs? (2) How do you think about the English presented in the signs?

According to Table 5, most of the interviewees fully agree or partially agree with the usage of English. Interviewee A further explained that with the development of tourism in recent 3 years, Liuzhou has attracted people from other provinces and some are foreign friends. Thus, the English signs can help them indicate their destination. Interviewee B hold the same opinion of agreement with reason that the foreign language brought a sense of fashion and young to the city. However, B also indicated that some signs combined with English were obviously wrongly translated, which might make bad impression to tourists, for example the haplography of "shpping"(shopping) and the cacography of "Mail"(Mall).

4.2.2 Attitude towards Minority Linguistic Landscape

As a multinational city, Liuzhou has 48 ethnic minorities with 36% Zhuang population^[10]. However,

there is no linguistic landscape of minority found in this study. The Five Star Street as the downtown of Liuzhou, has the advantage and source to present the distinctive national features and culture. In front of this confusion, the interviewees' reply towards minority language—Zhuang language is various. In short, 4 of them agree to add Zhuang language to signs while 6 of them are not.

Among the 4 voters, two of them (interviewee C and D) are Zhuang minority. C believed that there are a large population who take Zhuang language as the normal spoken language, especially in five remote counties in Liuzhou, many of whom have not familiar with the pronunciation of Mandarin. Different from C, D hold the opinion that, Zhuang language is the tradition and cultural treasure of Liuzhou people and if the government is aware of the importance of protection, the official should choose to make it appear in daily life, for example on the road signs. Other two supporters are local resident (non-Zhuang minority) and tourist. For them, Zhuang language is full of ancient mystery and provides an opportunity for new generations to learn Liuzhou's linguistic culture. For the 6 opponents, on the other hand, they believed that there is no need to add Zhuang language, because few people can realize it and it may influence the aesthetic appearance of the signs as well.

4.2.3 General Attitude towards Linguistic Landscape of Liuzhou City

When asked about their overall impressions of Five Star Street and Liuzhou's linguistic landscape, most interviewees expressed positive attitude. However, some people describe it as "chaotic and difficult to find the place", mainly because the location of directional signs is not conspicuous enough and the signs are small and messy. Furthermore, there are still some people mentioning that the shops are densely packed, the signs are in different colors, and the promotional music of the shops is disturbing. It is clear that government management and the implementation of relevant regulations are imperative.

To summarize, the linguistic landscape of living space meet the demand of the majority of people. However, there are still unsolved problems such as improper translation, the need of multi-language and management of multimodal linguistic landscape. Thus, the conceived space discussed in next section is necessary.

4.3 Conceived Space

4.3.1 Standardization of English Landscape

The official laws and regulations represent the attitudes and decisions of the nation and local government. Therefore, this study offers some advice to optimize the situation of the linguistic landscape in terms of conceived space.

First and foremost, there are two main problems on English landscape in Liuzhou: one is improper translation and the other is spelling. For the former one, the translation of some official linguistic landscape is Chinglish and ungrammatical, for example in the introduction of Liuzhou fountain, the tense of "did" (should be do) is out of the real context. As the propaganda sign of Liuzhou, it is not responsible of the creator of the linguistic landscape to ignore the accuracy of translation; for the latter problem, the phenomenon of haplography and inconsistent case can sometimes be seen in warning signs like "Be careful 'The' steps". Therefore, Liuzhou government and relevant departments should raise awareness, strengthen management, and standardize the translation in signs and improve translation quality according to the *English Translation and Writing Standards for Public Services*^[17] jointly issued by AQSIQ and the National Standards Committee.

4.3.2 Policy of Minority Language

Second, the government can increase the public's recognition of Zhuang language and culture through multiple channels. In addition to continuing to strengthen the translation of English landscape, experts can be invited to calibrate the translation of Zhuang language. They can help to standardize the mutual translation on bilingual and multilingual signs so that Zhuang and English signs can give full play to their information functions. According to a survey in 2016, 150 new plaques written in both Zhuang and Chinese were added to statutory units in Liuzhou urban areas^[10]. However, adding Zhuang language to the linguistic landscape of statutory units only has minimal impact on the general public. Therefore, the government departments should introduce relevant policies to integrate Zhuang language into the linguistic landscape of daily life, so that people can see the script, touch the culture and remember their ethnicity. In the face of the huge Zhuang group, the number of Zhuang signs in Liuzhou is still far from adequation, and the government should consider increasing the number of signs in Zhuang accordingly. However, everything needs to consider the physical truth. If a minor step above

can be put forward, that is also a great success.

4.3.3 Management of Multimodal linguistic landscape

Third, the improvement of linguistic landscape in Liuzhou should consider the shape of multimodality. In linguistic landscapes, a lot of research has recently focused on analyzing a city's public texts in a broader sense, including both different semiotic resources and the communicative construction of space/place. However, one aspect has been largely ignored so far: "a city's semiotic landscape is not only visible, but also audible and perceptible in a tactile manner"^[18]. That is, multimodality. It means that the promotion of distinctive linguistic landscape should not only focus on typical signage language, but also involve atypical language signage with mobility and variability, as well as multiple modalities such as sounds, images, and even scent graffiti. In line with international cities and other local ethnic cities, English and Zhuang could be added to Liuzhou's transportation voice announcements of bus and subway accordingly. The 21st century is an era of new media, and the promotion of linguistic landscapes can also involve virtual spaces. The widespread popularity of WeChat and microblogs poses a new challenge for the government to promote Liuzhou's landscape and Zhuang language as well as culture in a digital age.

5 Conclusion

Linguistic landscape examines the linguistic ecology of a region. Especially for Liuzhou, Guangxi, China, a region integrating ethnic minority and internationality, the linguistic landscapes reflect the social culture and social change of the city. This study explores the basic situation of the linguistic landscape and the constructing principles behind it.

First, for the physical space, the preference of linguistic code of Five Star Street is mainly consistent of Chinese as well as combination of English and Chinese, and none is minority language; Second, for the living space, most of the interviewees satisfy with the status of linguistic landscape in Liuzhou but there are still some unsolved problems like improper translation and irrational design of the signs; Third, for the conceived space, this paper believes that the government needs to improve the linguistic landscapes in Liuzhou in factors of multilingual translation, promotion of Zhuang language and multimodality in future direction. In short, the linguistic landscape of Liuzhou has to improve for developing the advantage of ethnic minority and internationality in a long way.

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