Research on the Linguistic Landscape in Xishan Scenic Area from a Multilingual Perspective

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Abstract: The use of multiple languages is an important part of linguistic landscape. Taking the Xishan Scenic Area in Kunming, Yunnan Province as an example, this study examines the language ecology in the official linguistic landscape of tourist areas. It is found that the use of traditional Chinese is a prominent feature of the linguistic landscape in Xishan Scenic Area. Chinese plays a dominant role in the linguistic landscape, with the highest usage percentage and salience. Although English as a lingua franca is not salient enough compared with Chinese, it is widely used in the local linguistic landscapes. In addition to English, the official linguistic landscape of Xishan also features the use of languages such as Thai, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese. The findings provide an authentic portrait of the linguistic landscape in an international tourism destination in China.

Keywords: Xishan Scenic Area; Linguistic landscape; Language use; Salience

1. Introduction

Linguistic landscape research is a hot topic in international applied linguistics. The research on linguistic landscape has also shown a noticeable upward trend in the past decade in China, producing abundant research outcomes[1] [2][3][4]. Shang and Zhao[2][3] made a detailed introduction to the definition, research content and research methods of international linguistic landscape studies. They discussed the analytical dimension and theoretical construction of linguistic landscape studies. Xu & Ren[4] conducted a qualitative study from the perspective of tourism. They used the Shuhe Ancient Town in Lijiang City as the research site and discussed the impact of tourism on the Dongba linguistic landscape. Duan[1] elaborated on the viewpoint that linguistic landscape is a new path for studying multilingual phenomenon. Since 2019, this stage of linguistic landscape research has entered a prosperous period in China[5]. But there is insufficient research on the linguistic landscape of scenic areas in China.

This study provides an investigation on the use of language in the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area in Kunming City, Yunnan Province. The Xishan Scenic Are is located in the Xishan District of Kunming City. It has a long history, and has been renowned as the "top scenic spot in central Yunnan" since ancient times.

The investigation into the language use in the Xishan Scenic Area serves multiple purposes. It helps people understand the linguistic landscape of the tourist attraction, gain insights into the use of regional languages with rich historical and cultural heritage, and importantly, the findings can serve as a reference and basis for decision-making in reflecting national language policies.

2. Methodology

2.1 Survey Locations

The survey focuses on the Xishan Scenic Area, starting from the Gaoyao Tourist Center to Ling Xu Pavilion, excluding two remote areas with few tourists.

2.2 Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

(1) What types of language are used in the linguistic landscape along the selected tourist route?

(2) What is the situation of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual language use?

(3) What are the salient features of the use of various languages?

2.3 Data Collection

In linguistic landscape research, the primary method of data collection is through photography. The data sample for this study comes from exhaustive photography along the tourist route mentioned earlier, with the photos taken by the author alone on November 10, 2022. The

classification criteria for this study are mainly based on the method used by Cenoz & Gorter[6], where each independent unit or institution (not each symbol) constitutes a complete analytical unit. The data obtained from the language signs in this study consist of 226 analytical units.

3. Results

3.1 Types of Language Use

The types and numerical statistics of language use in the linguistic landscape are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of language use

Types of language use	Quantity	Percentage
Monolingual	134	59.29%
Bilingual	60	26.55%
Multilingual	32	14.16%
Total	226	100.00%

In terms of language use types, over half (59.29%) of the signs are monolingual, approximately one-fourth (26.55%) are bilingual (as shown in Figure 1), and the proportion of multilingual sign is relatively low (14.16%). Overall, the linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area exhibits greater diversity in language use with a variety of language types.

Figure 1. Bilingual linguistic landscape

3.2 Characteristics of Language Use

The different combinations of languages on various signs are analyzed. From the statistic data, traditional Chinese are the most salient language (33.63%), followed by Chinese (21.24%), with Latin being the least frequently used language (0.44%). Furthermore, in official signs such as road signs and area maps, multilingual signs are used.

3.3 Salience of Bilingual and Multilingual Use

In the linguistic landscape of countries and regions where multiple languages are used, the sequence of language use and the salience of language use can indicate the relative importance of languages. According to the standard of Scollon & Scollon[7], the investigation found that Chinese as the first-order language accounts for as high as 97.87%. As a lingua franca, English as the first-order language accounts for only 2.13% in the linguistic landscape. Although there are instances of using Japanese, Korean, and other foreign languages in the official linguistic landscape, none of these languages are used as the primary language. In terms of the first language order, Chinese holds an absolute advantage.

The salience of different languages on bilingual and multilingual signs is also analyzed. The results reveal that in the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area, Chinese stands out more salient than any other language on bilingual and multilingual signs, with Chinese texts accounting for 94.68% of the larger signs. While English is featured saliently in a few instances. There are three instances where languages are of equal size, and they all involve Chinese and English. In terms of language sequence and relative size, Chinese maintains a clear advantage, demonstrating its salience.

4. Discussion

Through the data and analyses above, the overall situation of language use in the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area have been obtained.

4.1 Types of Language Use

The official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area exhibits diverse characteristics in terms of language use. The phenomenon of multilingualism has complex causes, including internal factors and external factors[1]. In the case of the Xishan Scenic Area, the prevalence of multilingualism in the official linguistic landscape is mainly attributed to historical and economic factors. Historically, the Xishan Scenic Area has numerous ancient historical sites with couplets written in traditional Chinese. Economically, the Xishan Scenic Area attracts a large number of tourists from around the world each year. Although there are no explicit regulations, the linguistic landscape of the area still incor-

porates multilingual signs.

4.2 Use of Monolingual, Bilingual, and Multilingual Signs

In the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area, monolingual signs primarily use traditional Chinese characters. The languages primarily used on bilingual signs are Chinese and English. Chinese, as the national language, is extensively used in the area, not only on bilingual signs but also in multilingual signs and some monolingual signs. In terms of multilingual signs, they are mainly found on guide maps and road signs, incorporating languages such as Chinese, traditional Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Thai language, Vietnamese, serving an informational function. The survey results show that Chinese has the highest usage proportion in the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area, being the most salient language, indicating the significant effectiveness of promoting standardized Chinese characters.

4.3 The salient feature of various languages

This study found that Chinese, either as the first language in order or with a relatively larger proportion of signage, exceeded 90% in the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area. While other languages are used in the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area, they are not as salient, especially languages other than English are not only used less frequently but also lack salience. The primary function of a linguistic landscape in a tourist area is to construct a social system for conveying information, serving the dual purpose of providing tourism information services and shaping the destination's image[8]. In terms of linguistic landscape, the Xishan Scenic Area needs to enhance tourism information services and image building aimed at international tourists, and increase the salience of foreign languages appropriately.

5. Conclusion

The investigation shows that the official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area exhibits diverse characteristics. Influenced by historical factors, the use of traditional Chinese on signs is a prominent feature of the official linguistic landscape. Influenced by economic factors, a variety of languages are used in the official linguistic landscape. In terms of monolingual signs, traditional Chinese are the most commonly used language as a tourism resource. In bilingual and multilingual signs, although multiple languages are used in the official linguistic landscape, Chinese dominates the linguistic landscape with the highest proportion and salience. While English lacks salience as a lingua franca, its frequency of use is high. Finally, as a tool for constructing information systems in tourist areas, the linguistic landscape needs to strengthen its multilingual construction.

This study only examined the route starting from the Gaoyao Tourist Center to Ling Xu Pavilion, excluding two remote areas with few tourists. Although representative, this route does not fully reflect the overall official linguistic landscape of the Xishan Scenic Area. Additionally, during the research process, only the official linguistic landscape was collected, and qualitative data on the views of tourists and scenic area staff regarding linguistic landscape use were not obtained. Subsequent studies can conduct comprehensive surveys by combining qualitative and quantitative data to reveal the functions of the linguistic landscape in the construction of tourist areas and record authentic social language usage data.

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