

Issues and Methodologies in Ecological Linguistic Landscaping

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Abstract: Both of linguistic landscape (LL) studies and Ecolinguistics have been growing in separate ways in China and abroad in recent years, however, few LL researchers draw their attentions to the urgent global ecological crisis and address the linguistic issues therein, whereas scholars of ecolinguistics tend to approach the crisis mainly in the media with discourse analysis, overlooking the resources in public space. In an attempt to explore the possibility of an ecolinguistic landscape study combining the essences of LL and ecolinguistics, this paper provides an ecological reflection on the issues of language landscape studies, and argues that ecolinguistic landscaping is both the means and ends for ecological discourse analysis and harmonious discourse construction, also we should adopt a renewed version of ecolinguistic categorization of LL dataset, with an aim to address the eco-problems in LL.

1. Introduction

Parallel to the growing popularity of linguistic landscape (LL) studies, the increasingly prominent global ecological issues have spawned an ecological subfield of linguistics, namely ecolinguistics, which has been attracting attentions in China in recent years (Huang, 2016). International Symposiums on Ecolinguistics have been held in China for three sessions (2016 Guangzhou, 2017 Beijing and 2018 Guiyang), with the fourth session scheduled in Denmark, 2019. The development of ecolinguistics has exerted a certain influence on linguistics, translations and other fields, but seem to be overlooked by the LL researchers. Due to this lack of attention and interaction, the theoretical development of ecolinguistics are largely ignored, let alone studies on the analysis and construction of the ecologically oriented language landscape. This paper intends to explore a ecological approach to the study of linguistic landscape, namely, ecolinguistic landscape studies, a new form of LL studies guided by the harmonious ecological view and aiming at solving the ecological problems in the linguistic landscapes, by utilizing a reformed linguistic landscape research method with the harmonious discourse analysis, using the relevant ideas, theories and methods of ecolinguistics.

The study of Eco-linguistic landscape, that is, a study that aims at probing and solving the ecological issues in linguistic landscape, covers the ecological problems in traditional linguistic landscape topics, and should also include the new issues in linguistic landscape corpus that eco-linguistics focuses on.

2. Ecolinguistic Reflections on Issues of Language Landscape Studies

In 1997, Landry and Bourhis published *Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study*, a founding work in the field of linguistic landscape research. Its research topics include linguistic landscape and national linguistic vitality in multilingual environment, language planning, language behavior and so on, which opened up a new way for subsequent scholars to study multilingual phenomena. Gorter's collection of papers published in 2006: *The study of the linguistic landscape as a new approach to Multilingualism* is a sign of the preliminary establishment of linguistic landscape research. In this book, four empirical research papers in the field of linguistic landscape research are presented, and future research hotspots and directions are discussed, which has aroused great repercussions in the academic circles (Wu et al., 2017). The new research topics

covered in this book include language contact and change, power politics of language, global communication of English, comparative study of language policy and language status. The book's important contribution is in the diversity of research dimensions, focusing on the background of globalization, mobility and multimodality of language landscape. On the basis of foreign scholars' research, in addition to carrying out case studies of language landscape, half of the Chinese domestic language landscape studies are on the translation of public signs in LL (Wu et al., 2017). In Wu's comprehensive survey of linguistic landscape studies in China and abroad, we can have the following impressions: 1. Most LL studies originate from sociolinguistic field surveys, and have characteristics of quantitative case studies. 2. A majority of research topics reflect the sociolinguistic reality and study the ecology of language. These LL studies are of the "metaphorical" type, which has certain value for us to "understand" the linguistic ecology. 3. Due to the vagueness or shortage of ecosophies of most researchers, their studies of language landscape either ends in presenting the current situation of language ecology or falls into arbitrary value criticism after a brief discussion, which is a regret that the language landscape data has not been made full use of, to carry out effective ecological analysis and further serve for the construction of harmonious ecology.

If we start from the original ecological aspiration of "maintaining the sustainable relationship between man and nature, between man and man", and fuse this idea between conventional language landscape research with the ecological view of harmonious discourse and social responsibility, we will open up a brand-new research field. In conventional LL research, the study of saliency signs is to reflect the struggle between multilingualism and reflect the differences of social status among different linguistic groups. In the study of ecolinguistic landscape, we can reflect whether this multilingual phenomenon is conducive to promoting the harmonious coexistence of different linguistic groups. If the answer is no, we can further analyze how to construct ecolinguistic landscape. To achieve the goal of ecological harmony between people. Traditional LL studies the phenomenon of English communication, which shows the influence of globalization and internationalization of English. In the study of ecological linguistic landscape, we can examine how to deal with the ecological relationship between English and native languages, which is more valuable to tackle the ecological issues of language diversification, native language protection, harmonious development of local languages and ethnic groups. The study of public signs translation, which is characteristic of the Chinese language landscape circle, often focuses on the English translation of public signs and puts forward translation strategies. However, if we analyze it from an ecological perspective, we will come up with translation suggestions with better ecological and social values.

3. Language Landscape: Means and Ends for Ecological Discourse Analysis and Harmonious Discourse Construction

As eco-discourse analysis has a potentially positive role in building a harmonious social and natural ecology, it is becoming the mainstream approach in ecolinguistics. Early critical analysis are limited to purely environmental and ecological texts, Alexander and Stibbe (2014) argued that the ecological discourse analysis should be transformed from "criticism of ecological discourse" to "ecological criticism of discourse". They advocated that we must jump out of the confinement of ecological texts, because all discourses may have an impact on human behavior, and all human actions have potential impacts on the ecosystem of life. However, it should be noted that in the past 10 years, most of the foreign ecodiscourse analysis still focuses on the critical analysis of various media discourses, such as advertising, environmentalism, natural resources, energy, animals, ecotourism, climate change and ecological sustainability (Xiao & Fan, 2017). Little attention has been paid to the language landscape corpus and discourses visible in public places.

There are some preliminary studies in eco-discourse criticism and harmonious discourse construction by Chinese scholars utilizing LL data, such as Huang's (2016b) eco-discourse analysis of a queuing ticket in a bank and the tips in a university toilet, which could be regarded as mobile data and public signs corpus in language landscape research. On January 11, 2017, Huang used

family planning slogan corpus in the rural language landscape to discuss ecological issues in the seminar "Rise and Development of Ecolinguistics" held in Xinhua College of Sun Yat-sen University. When Huang and Zhao (2017) talked about the harmonious discourse analysis in Chinese context, they enumerated the linguistic differences in several cities in China about "reminding everyone not to litter". To sum up, using LL resources to conduct the ecological discourse analysis and carry out the construction of harmonious discourse has just begun, but there is still a lot to do to dig deeper into the "big data" of linguistic landscape and to interpret and reconstruct it in an ecolinguistic way.

4. Methodology

In addition to the conventional quantitative approach of LL, ecolinguistic landscaping also relies on using qualitative analysis in combination with triangulation in ecolinguistics to carry out comprehensive investigation and analysis of ecological problems in LL, and aims at offering suggestions on the reconstruction of ecolinguistic landscape.

4.1 Ecolinguistic Reflections on the Coding Scheme in Conventional LL

The quantitative method used in conventional linguistic landscape research is to understand the general situation, usually multilingual situation of the linguistic landscape in a certain place, by counting the number and proportion of various scripts in the data. However, the goal of ecolinguistic landscape research is not limited to this survey level, but is to achieve the harmonious coexistence between people and the sustainable relationship between people and nature through the analysis and construction of a potentially ecological linguistic landscape. Therefore, ecolinguistic reflections should be carried out in the conventional method. The quantitative method depends on the coding scheme. It concerns not only monolingual signs, such as Chinese, English and other natural languages, but also multilingual signs, such as Chinese-English, Chinese-Japanese and even Chinese-English-Japanese. We have noticed that with the deepening of globalization, the language landscape in most places is not monolingual, but bilingual or even multilingual. The diversity of codes is comparable to the ecological relationship between languages. To reveal the "ecological" or "non-ecological" characteristics in the dataset of multilingual language landscape, the first coding scheme is to classify the signs by their relative power status, namely dominant signs or subdue scripts (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). A statistical analysis is desirable to reveal this ecological relationship between strong and weak codes, which is fundamental to the realization of our ecological aspiration. The second coding scheme narrows the scope to study only multilingual signs, and counts the number and proportion of signs that belong to the following four categories, duplicated, fragmented, overlapping and complementary (Reh, 2004), so as to reveal the strong and weak ecological relationship in multilingual signs. The difference between this method and the first method is that only multilingual codes are inspected, which could be supplementary for the first method. Quantitative methods are conventional in the study of linguistic landscape. Statistically, by revealing the strong and weak scripts, we can be assured of the starting point of achieving our goals of ecolinguistic objectives, such as the construction of harmonious relations among multilingual communities, the promotion of the inheritance of local culture and the coordination between local culture and world culture.

4.2 Ecolinguistic Categorization of Data: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Under the guidance of ecolinguistics, the conventional quantitative methods of linguistic landscape research can be deepened and developed. Eco-classification is based on Stibbe (2015) triangulation. By analyzing the LL dataset, we can divide signs into three categories: 1) eco-friendly signs; 2) eco-destructive signs; 3) signs with ambivalent ecological effects. Since this classification involves the judgment of the ecolinguistic meaning in the corpus, researchers must proceed from a certain ecosophy to make a comprehensive analysis and examination by means of harmonious discourse analysis, visual presentation analysis, situation analysis of the signs and people's interpretations therein. Among them, Harmonious Discourse Analysis involves the analysis of the

ecosystem of the signboard maker and the ecological significance of the sign discourse itself; the visual presentation analysis of the signs begins with the presentation effect of the signboard and text, examining the traces of natural ecological elements; the situation analysis of the signs focuses on the relationship between the signboard and its physical environment, examining whether it is harmonious or not; and the analysis of people's interpretation of signs relies on interviews and surveys to study the ecological view of the sign users and the interaction between signs and users. Finally, after the comprehensive evaluation, specific proposals could be put forward to construct a language landscape beneficial to ecological harmony. Eco-categorization is the greatest contribution of ecolinguistics to the study of language landscape. It is also an innovation and breakthrough to the study of language landscape. It is conducive to the study of language landscape to solve the ecolinguistic problems, and to achieve the goal of "harmonious coexistence between human beings and between human and nature".

5. Conclusion and Future Directions

The study of ecolinguistics in China is gaining popularity in recent years, it is still in early stage, and a lot of research work has to be done. This paper offered an ecological reflection on the issues of language landscape studies, and pointed out that ecolinguistic landscaping is both the means and ends for ecological discourse analysis and harmonious discourse construction, also we should adopt a renewed version of ecolinguistic categorization of LL dataset, with an aim to address the eco-problems in LL. Researchers of ecolinguistic landscape should comprehensively use conventional quantitative methods and the renewed ecolinguistic categorization to carry out ecological analysis and criticism of language landscape, and propose specific suggestions on the construction of a harmoniously green ecolinguistic landscape.

It's tentative to say that, constructing an ecological language landscape could be helpful to the harmonious coexistence of all ethnic groups in a region, to the promotion of the local culture and its exchange with the world cultures, to the economic transformation and upgrading from traditional industries to green high-end ones, and stimulate people's awareness of environmental protection and green action. Huang (2016) put forward that both scholars and the public can "think and act ecolinguistically". This quote is especially fitting for ecolinguistic landscape studies, because it can enable scholars to observe, think and practice in real ecological settings, and putting their results under direct observation and test. In unification of ecological means and ends, ecolinguistic landscape study has a bright future.

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