A Study on the Translation of Language Landscapes in Chengdu City

Jiayi Li

School of Foreign Languages, University of Electronic Science and Technology, Xiyuan Avenue, Chengdu, China

450752272@qq.com

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Abstract: As a city's calling card, linguistic landscapes are crucial for enhancing urban image and improving tourism influence through planning and construction. The accuracy of linguistic landscape translation directly reflects an international city's level of civilization and image. Thus, based on the investigation of the current language landscapes in the main urban area of Chengdu, this paper analyzes the sample data, discusses the translation problems, and puts forward the corresponding solutions from the perspectives of the government, the public, and the translators, hoping to provide a reference for the improvement of urban language landscapes and future related researches.

1. Connotation and Classification of Language Landscapes

1.1. Connotation of Language Landscapes

Linguistic landscapes are "visual symbols in the environment," which often appear in written form and are attached to specific carriers to provide practical guidance information for tourists (readers). Language landscapes mainly include public road signs, billboards, street names, place names, shop signs, slogans, public instructions, etc. Language is the most valuable regional cultural landscape and an important cultural symbol of a city. Constructing the city's humanistic image not only provides practical information but also has aesthetic value. The creation of language landscapes is also an essential part of the construction of an urban tourism image. As a significant representation of human geography and cultural existence, urban language landscapes are essential to urban tourism image. Therefore, the language landscapes discussed in this paper refer to the specific presentation of all languages and characters in the urban public space. It includes not only various common fixed language signs, such as public transport signs, billboards, shop signs, street names, place names, public signs, and prompts of government buildings, but also car body advertisements, banners, posters, and electronic screens with movable positions and changeable contents[1].

1.2. Classification of Language Landscapes

Linguistic landscapes research usually divides the corpus into two categories: one is the top-down sign, that is, the sign set up by the government to represent the position and behavior of the government, such as road signs, traffic signs, or tourist attractions sign, also known as official sign; the other is the bottom-up sign, that is, the sign set up by private or enterprises to disseminate commercial information, such as shop names, billboards, etc. also known as unofficial sign[2]. Official titles reflect the government's emphasis on language landscapes, which is generally more standardized and rigorous, reflecting the vane and overall authority of the local language landscapes. Unofficial signs are initiated by the people, which are less normative and rigorous but reflect residents' actual utilization and preference for a specific (multiple) language at that time. The corpus of Chengdu language landscapes collected in this paper is divided into two categories: official signs and unofficial signs.

2. Investigation of Language Landscapes in Chengdu

2.1. Collection Scope of the Investigation

The data is mainly from the core area under Chengdu's jurisdiction, including Wuhou District, Jinjiang District, Qingyang District, Jinniu District, Chenghua District, Longquanyi District, Wenjiang District, Xindu District, Qingbaijiang District, Shuangliu District, Pidu district, Xinjin district, Hi-tech West District, and Tianfu New District.

2.2. Standard for Sample Collection

When determining the language landscapes specimen, the Backhaus standard is adopted. Each language with a clear border is marked as a statistical unit. The following principles are followed: (1) If the language landscapes carrier has multiple sides, then each side is regarded as a single, independent research sample[3]; (2) Language signs with unclear language or without text content are not included in the sample; (3) Only static and fixed-location urban language landscapes are collected; (4) Language landscapes with the same content in the same sampling range are counted as only one sample.

2.3. Collection Time of the Samples

From September 2021 to January 2024, all team members collaboratively conducted field Investigations under coordinated planning. Team members photographed the language landscapes using personal mobile phones in designated areas. Each team member worked individually in designated areas to photograph the language landscapes. Subsequently, the team aggregated all the photos for classification and verification.

3. Current Situation of Language Landscapes in Chengdu

3.1. Language Use of the Language Landscapes in Chengdu

A total of 1388 photos were taken in this investigation, of which 1385 were valid. The types involved include restaurant shop names, place names, advertising billboards, road signs, shop signs (company brands), prompts, and information boards. These photos reflect the problems of the bilingual language landscape in Chengdu from multiple angles and perspectives, providing strong support for data analysis. When the 1385 data were annotated and extracted separately, the numbers contained in the pictures were also recorded in a foreign language. The following are the results of the statistical analysis:

Table 1 Language use of language landscape in Chengdu City.

Language use	Number	Percentage (results retained in two decimal places)
Bilingual (Chinese + English)	900	64.80
Multilingual (Chinese + Other language)	22	1.50
Bilingual (Chinese + Pinyin)	165	11.88
Multilingual (Chinese + Pinyin + English + Numbers)	15	1.08
Multilingual (Chinese + Pinyin + Numbers)	1	0.07
Multilingual (Chinese + Pinyin + English)	277	1.95
Multilingual (Chinese + English + Number)	5	0.36
Invalid Data	3	0.22
Total	1388	100%

Based on the data in Table 1, the language usage in Chengdu's linguistic landscape. Firstly, bilingual signs (Chinese + English) are the most common form, accounting for 64.80% of the data. This indicates Chengdu's significant efforts in promoting urban internationalization and facilitating foreign residents. Secondly, bilingual signs (Chinese + Pinyin) make up 11.88% of the population, showing that Pinyin mainly helps those who cannot read Chinese characters, especially tourists and new immigrants. Multilingual signs, including combinations of Chinese and other languages (such as Chinese + Pinyin + English, Chinese + English + numbers, etc.), occupy a small portion of the total data: Chinese + other languages (1.50%), Chinese + Pinyin + English + numbers (1.08%), Chinese + Pinyin + numbers (0.07%), Chinese + Pinyin + English (1.95%), Chinese + English + numbers (0.36%). These data indicate that while there have been efforts to promote linguistic diversity in Chengdu, the proportion needs to be higher, calling for improvement. Invalid data account for 0.22%, which is relatively small, indicating that data collection and processing are generally accurate and efficient.

Overall, the high proportion of bilingual signs (Chinese + English) reflects Chengdu's significant efforts towards internationalization, enhancing the city's global image and attracting more foreign tourists and investors. However, the lack of linguistic diversity is still a problem, especially with the shallow usage of other foreign languages (non-English), which may affect the convenience for certain foreign groups. While bilingual signs (Chinese + Pinyin) have played an essential role in helping non-Chinese character readers, there is still a need to improve the standardization and coverage of Pinyin signs.

Furthermore, English is the primary foreign language, which is consistent with the international status of English as a powerful language. As an important city in central and western China, Chengdu has the highest frequency of English use in the language landscape. It uses French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and other languages, highlighting the remarkable improvement in the city's international popularity and attractiveness. This multilingual landscape not only improves the internationalization of Chengdu but also facilitates the life of foreigners in China, reflecting the inclusiveness of Chengdu as an international city. From the code preference, inscription, and emplacement of language landscape, Chinese dominates the sign, with larger font size, more eye-catching font, and color.

Although English is more influential, Chinese is still the dominant language in the multilingual landscape, and English is usually the second dominant language. This reflects that the language landscapes in Chengdu mainly serve the Chinese people. In terms of facilitating the lives of foreigners in China, English has become the primary consideration and choice of language.

3.2. Classification of Language Landscapes in Chengdu

A total of 1385 valid samples were obtained in this investigation, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Classification of Chengdu language landscape.

Function	Official Sign			Unofficial Sign				Total
	Spot Name	Guide-board	Warning	Restaurant Name	Advertising Board	Shop Name/ Company Brand	Information Board	
Number	155	200	241	191	40	389	169	1385
Bilingual	96	85	241	173	31	259	193	1087
Multi-lingual	59	119	2	17	15	69	17	298

It can be seen from the above that there are 596 official signs, accounting for 43.03% of the total number; there are 789 unofficial signs, accounting for 56.97% of the total. The number of monolingual and multilingual landscapes of public service organization signs differs from that of the other unofficial signs. However, in both official and unofficial signs, the bilingual landscape language is still the mainstream; in contrast, there are fewer multilingual language landscapes.

Although bilingual signs have a clear quantitative advantage, the proportion of multilingual signs

is more significant in official signs than unofficial signs. This indicates that the authorities are consciously working on constructing a multilingual linguistic landscape in the city, indirectly reflecting Chengdu's internationalization process.

4. Non-standard Translation of Language Landscapes in Chengdu

Bilingual or multilingual signage involves transferring between two or more languages. In transferring, scientific, reasonable, and accurate translation and unified norms are essential indicators of good expression of language landscape[2]. The following problems need to be settled regarding translation norms through the analysis of the collected landscape samples.

4.1. Non-uniform Translation Standards

The translation standards of the language landscape in transportation must be standardized and unified. For example, at Chengdu South Railway Station, three Chinese side-by-side signs indicating prohibition are translated into three different English expressions: "No Smoking," "No Lying," and "Do Not Throw Rubbish," which should be translated more unified as "No Littering."

In addition, the translation of guideboards could be made more explicit. For example, "Road" is the English translation of "Lu," and "Lu" is the Chinese spelling of "road". The mixed use of the two translation methods leads to the chaos of road signs, the profound disunity of the target language, and the lack of strict norms, which could be more conducive to constructing a unified bilingual language landscape.

Thus, the translation of guide boards can be unified according to urban road planning, depending on local conditions to adjust measures, such as "Road" for the general road translation and "Avenue" for the Boulevard in the busy urban area. By distinguishing parts of speech, the guideboards can be more accurate.

4.2. Missing and Omission of Translation

First, it was found that the bilingual linguistic landscape translation in Shuangliu Airport and subway station is more comprehensive and complete compared with the bare language landscape in railway stations and bus stations, where there needs to be more English translation. Taking Shiyang Station as an example, there is no corresponding English translation for the departure information, arrival information, and waiting platform on the electronic signs at the ticket gate in the waiting room. Although there is basic English information on the train timetable, the city of the departure station and the terminal station need Pinyin, which makes it inconvenient for foreigners to travel by train.

Secondly, part of the language landscape misses translation, which is the mixed use of omission and missing translation. The omission is to delete the words that do not conform to the target language's thinking habits, language preferences, and expressions to avoid the translation's redundancy[4]. Missing translation means leaving out some information in the source text, resulting in a lack of information in the target text, mainly shown on unofficial signs. The missing translation in the shop name or company brand must be more evident in the collected samples. For example, " "Silver" should be translated as "Silver Square"; "Queen" can be modified as " Queen Studio." The missing translation of primary information in Chinese would fail to achieve the function of transmitting the information.

4.3. Pervasive Rigid Translation

Rigid Translation is one of the standard translation problems. It is a translation process that mechanically transforms the form of the language but needs to accurately transform the meaning of the language, resulting in dissimilarity between the translation and the original. Rigid Translation is characterized by word-by-word translation and preservation of forms.

Rigid Translation is more prominent in warnings like "Warning Gap." Here, the meaning of "Warning Gap" is inconsistent with the sign, which is far from the word meaning in the source text, which is the typical word-by-word translation. Thus, it should be translated as " Mind the Gap". In

addition, rigid translation is shown in the store's interior, such as the sign of a hotel's independent water intake: "Free use water." This translation is also a rigid Chinese-English translation, without taking into account the perspective of the target text reader. It should be better to translate it as "Drinking water for free."

Moreover, rigid translation needs to consider the context and mood of the source text. This is mainly reflected in the translation of warnings, in which the number of imperative sentences accounts for the most significant proportion. However, most translations adopt the literal translation of imperative sentences. However, imperative sentences have the function of command in English, so they should be translated differently than imperative sentences in English, which should reduce language affinity quickly in some cases. "Keep Silent" should be revised to "Keep Silent Please" or "No Noise Please". The addition of the word softens the tone of the source text, reduces the seriousness of the language, and improves the affinity of the language.

5. Effective Strategies for Standard Translation of Linguistic Landscape

5.1. Enhance the Government Supervision and Management

The investigation found that many things could be improved in the C-E translation of the language landscape in the railway and bus stations. In contrast, Shuangliu Airport and the subway station are more standardized. As the airport is more international and the subway stations have been built in recent years, the bilingual translation of the language landscape is more perfect[5]. However, the railway and bus stations were built earlier, and the government departments must pay more Attention to supervising and managing these language landscapes. Therefore, the relevant departments should revise and improve the English translation of the language landscape in time. Especially for the names of railway stations, it is suggested that transliteration be adopted because it is more convenient and practical for foreigners to ask Chinese to find their way according to Chinese Pinyin than free translation. In addition, English should be added to the electronic signs at the ticket gate in the waiting room.

5.2. Pay Attention to the Cultural Differences

When translating the language landscape, the translator should ensure standardization and accuracy. At the same time, they must understand and respect the cultural differences between China and other countries and effectively transfer the cultural connotations.

Translators can first adopt the principle of "bringing doctrine," learn more from language landscape translations in foreign cities and domestic mega-cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, and use international standard terms. If there is no corresponding standard terminology, translators should respect the stylistic differences between different languages and be close to the expressive function of the target language in terms of word selection, sentence selection, rhetoric, language appearance, and discourse cohesion to ensure that the English language landscape is authentic and accurate.

5.3. Unify Translation Standards

To settle the problems of "inconsistent translation standards" in the investigation, it can refer to the National and Provincial English Translation Standards for Public Places requirements to deal with translation in a unified way. One can refer to the Handbook of Translation of Geographical Names in the United States to translate guide boards to achieve a unified and correct translation.

5.4. Improve Public Participation

The government departments should encourage publicity efforts by using the Internet, television, and other media to make the public understand the importance of language landscape in urban development, encourage English learners and scholars as well as native speakers to correct the errors in the translation of language landscapes, take pictures of problematic signs, and submit them through micro-blogs, micro-letters, e-mails, and letters. The government organizes experts to revise the information submitted incorrectly and publishes the revision results in the media, giving certain

rewards to the citizens who actively participate.

6. Conclusion

As a window to show the city image, the standardization and accuracy of language landscape translation are related to the textures of the city. According to the on-the-spot investigation, there are still some problems in the language landscape translation in Chengdu, such as inaccurate English translation, grammatical errors, and missing English translation. The authorities should pay Attention to this, strengthen dynamic management and supervision, and solve the existing problems on time. The public should enhance their awareness of participation, find problems, and give timely feedback to relevant departments. Translators should improve their professional skills and understanding of cultural differences between China and other countries. Only with full cooperation and joint efforts can Chengdu enhance its good international image and build its cultural self-confidence.

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