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The Linguistic Landscape of *Dali* Ancient City, China: A Geosemiotics Approach

Xing Lu [1], I Nengah Sudipa [2], I Ketut Artawa[3], I Made Suastra [4]

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to call for more attention to the language on the public sign in people's daily life and also provide a certain reference for the linguistic landscape construction of various countries in the world by sharing Chinese linguistic landscape data resources. The data collection technique is the comprehensive photographing of signs in various shops, hotels, restaurants at the streets of survey areas. The equipment used is a digital camera. The sampling technique is carried out by random sampling. In order to get the diversity, a wide range of signs is selected. Through analyze, the current situation of the linguistics landscape of Dali ancient city with geosemiotics approach is that Chinese is the main language in this region, and English is the most universally applied language among all foreign languages. In addition, Pinyin is also widely used by private sign and combined sign, but it has no practical significance. And a new type of sign has found in addition to the official and private signs that is combined sign which owned by official but took the characteristics of the private.

1. Introduction

Linguistic landscape is defined as the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration. (Landry, R., & Bourhis, 1997:24) It is considered to have two important functions: information function and symbolic function. Information function mainly refers to the language characteristics of a region, the social status of language, the use and the diversity of language. Information such as status, its symbolic function is mainly because it can reflect the value and status of language,

[1] *Chinese teacher of Confucius Institute at Cyprus University, Nikosia, Cyprus; Doctor Candidate in Udayana university, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia. Email: 124360898@qq.com*
[2] *Professor of Linguistics. Udayana University, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia. Email: nengahsudipa@yahoo.co.id*
[3] *Professor of Linguistics. Udayana University, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia. Email: tutartawa@gamil.com*
[4] *Professor of Linguistics. Udayana University, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia. Email: madesuastra@yahoo.co.id*

whether it is dominant or subordinate, and it symbolizes the strength or weakness of the use of a certain national language. Dali is located in the west of Yunnan Province, China. It is where the state government of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture is located. It was also the capital of the ancient Nanzhao Kingdom (AD 738-902) and the Dali Kingdom (AD 937-1094) (AD 1096-1253).

According to researcher in the field of linguistic landscape, Coulmas (2009) introduces linguistic landscape as a new approach to study multilingualism. Backhaus studied urban multilingualism in the Linguistic Landscape of Tokyo, the capital of Japan. He introduced three research questions, Linguistic landscaping by whom? Linguistic landscaping for whom? Linguistic landscape quo vadis? (Backhaus, 2007) Spolsky.B (2009) argues that linguistic landscape is a valuable tool for exploring and embodying urban multilingual ecology and for studying language choices. In the study 'Language Economy and Linguistic Landscape'. Shohamy & Gorter (2008) take a different approach to the study of the linguistic landscape by applying one of the methods used in the economic study of biodiversity. Shohamy et al (2010) cooperate and complete 'Linguistic Landscape in the City'. They use sociological related theories to study linguistic landscape.

This research takes the public signs on both sides of the 8 main roads in the ancient city of Dali as the object of investigation. Based on the Geosemiotics theory, a theoretical framework is proposed to deeply explore the current situation of the linguistic landscape with the hope that it will provides a reference of the linguistic landscape for the other ancient cities, and points out the existing problems so as to enhance the value of the linguistic landscape, thereby promoting the development of this field.

2. Theoretical Review

Geosemiotics studies the relationship between language and place from the perspective of Semiotics, aiming to study meaningful language in the material world. Taking the text at the certain place as the research object, interpret the interaction order and relationship between language and other factors in the place. Geosemiotics focuses on the social significance of signs, discourses, or behaviors in a given space. It mainly analyzes the construction process of linguistic landscape from several aspects such as code preference, inscription and placement.

The research object of Geosemiotics, according to Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon (2003), is the meaning system that enables language to be combined with the material world. Scollons, taking the text or languages of public places as an example, suggest that their meaning cannot be explained without considering the social and physical environment in which they are located. Based on this point of view, Scollons first systematically analyzed how the language in the material world should be interpreted and explored the profound meaning of geosemiotics.

In the principle of visual culture, the position of each component in the visual image has its special status and effect. It is proposed that the content at the top of the image is ideal or perfect, the one at the bottom is true, and the left part is assumed while the right part is new information. (Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen. 1996) Based on the visual culture theory, Scollons visualize the text in the space, and then study the relationship between its various components, which can better reflect the influence of text on space. Not only had that geosemiotics symbolized the text or language to study the text only in the place.

The research focuses on the following three aspects: 1. after the text is visualized, how the visual image represents the activities in the real world? 2. How dose their position reflects the index of the real world? 3. The reactions of social actors' face to discourses in Place.

3. Research Method

This research mainly adopts quantitative as basic research methods. Use a digital camera to photograph all the public signs on the streets within the scope of investigation. The photos were downloaded to the database and sorted. Analysis is then carried out to clarify the language situation at the time of data collection and to determine the language selection mode.

Photo 1 below shows the survey area in this study. The eight streets are located in the core part of the tourist attraction in the Dali ancient city, with the largest population flow and the most representative.



Photo 1 Research Area

The data collecting of this study is not confined to any particular type of sign. In order to get the diversity of linguistic landscape, a wide range of signs has been selected rather than a specific sign, which could enhance the reliability. The method of data collecting is the comprehensive photographing of signs in various shops hotels restaurants governments at the streets of survey areas. In order to understand the characteristics of linguistic landscape resources, the data analysis is carried out under the framework of geographic symbols. And not only analyze how many languages are displayed, but also analyze their order to make the data clearer. There are several ways to take the methods and techniques of presenting data. First was the tabulation. Second were pictures. Third was the histogram and pie chart as they can clearly show the proportions of different variables in the same condition.

4. Discussion

The research is based on the theoretical basis of Geosemiotics which introduced three parts: code preference, inscription and emplacement. Code preference means, in bilingual or multilingual signs, the order of language arrangement and the spatial positional relationship of each other, which reflects the status of the language in its linguistic community. Inscription is the presentation of the sign language, embodied in the font of the signage, the material of the sign, the superposition of the sign and the change of the status of the sign. Placement including decontextualized, transgressive, and situated is the most fundamental element in geosemiotics.

Language are the key to linguistic landscape research, mainly referring to typical language entities on the signs such as public road signs, billboards, street names, place names, shop signs, and bus station signs. After delineating the scope of language resource collection, a digital camera was

used to photograph and record all public signs in the area, and a total of 1722 linguistic landscapes were counted.

According to the classification methods commonly used in linguistic landscape research, the collected samples can be divided into official signs and private signs. In this research, a special type of sign was also found to be a combination of official and private signs, private signs set up on official signs. This kind of sign is special because it belongs to the government, but the theme of the sign is private.

Official signs (Top-down signage)	Road nameplate	127	235	Total 1722
	Public service advertisement(PSA)	76		
	Bus stop sign	32		
Private signs (Bottom-up signage)	Catering signs	436	1185	
	Shopping signs	653		
	Other store signs	96		
Official and private combination signs (New type)	Multifunctional board	87	302	
	Indicator board	215		

Table 1 Sign Classification and Quantity Statistics

Based on the collected data, combined signs include multifunctional billboards and signs. The multifunctional billboard is an advertising column added to the trash can in the area. Not only can provide certain practical functions for pedestrians, but also provide convenience for businesses to promote goods, it can be described as killing two birds with one stone. The sign is a reminder sign that can be used by both private and official establishment in a unified display form at a location uniformly specified by the government. As shown below;



Photo 2 Multifunctional Board



Photo 3 Indicator Board

4.1 Code Preference

Code preference refers to the priority relationship between various languages on bilingual or multilingual signs to reflect their social status in the language community. Generally speaking, in the surrounding text arrangement, the priority code appears in the center, and the non-priority code is placed at the edge; when the text is arranged horizontally, the priority code is placed at the top or top of the sign, and the non-priority code is placed at the bottom; in the vertical arrangement, the priority code is placed on the left, and the non-priority code is placed on the right. Of course, for

those languages whose writing direction is from right to left (for example: Arabic), the code priority method may be just the opposite.

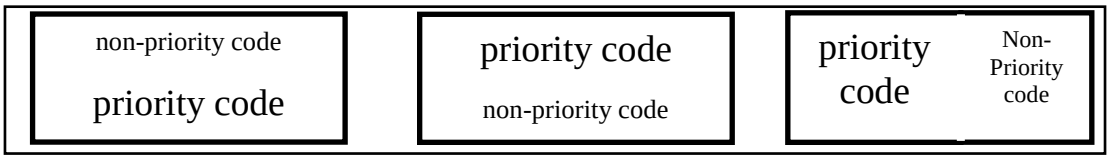


Table 2 Code Preference Arrangement

This part analyzed the code size, coding sequence, and multilingual situation of the official signs, private signs, and combination signs. The different size of the language makes different prominence. People are more likely to notice the larger code on the sign. Different sizes of language code names in stores may influence consumers' decisions. The coding sequence of a language can reflect the main language used in a region and highlight the social status of that language. Multilingual signs can reflect the development of multiculturalism in a region, especially in the degree of tolerance of foreign languages and cultures, and the degree of internationalization of the region.

Category / Signs	Code Size			Code Sequence		Multilingual		
	Chinese bigger	Foreign language bigger	The same	Chinese priority	Foreign language priority	Mono-lingual	Bilingual	Multi-lingual
Official signs	235	—	—	235	—	48	60	127
Private signs	910	171	104	1014	171	48	1137	—
Combined signs	302	—	—	302	—	87	67	148

Table 3 Code Preference

Among the official signs, the bigger Chinese code presents an absolute value, and the coding sequence is also based on Chinese as the optimal position, which reflects Chinese as the dominant language code preference. All official signs are bilingual or multilingual, indicating that this scenic spot has an international trend. The most prominent use of foreign languages is English, which shows the prominent position of English in this scenic spot, except for Korean and Japanese. Private signs are more diverse but the multilingual situation is not as rich as the official signs. The coding order with larger foreign language sizes is also with the priority of these foreign languages. There is a few of this kind of signs showed the phenomenon of monolingual with only mandarin. Although some Chinese monolingual signs do not have foreign languages, Chinese pinyin in the form of letters has also appeared.

In addition, a special type of signage form was discovered. They are a combination of official and private signage. The language code preference is based on the standard of official signage, and they also have the diversity of private signage styles. Chinese has an absolute dominant position, and has different language code characteristics according to different service targets. It is worth noting that the language resources on the combined signs are not monolingual, at least bilingual (Chinese and English) or multilingual (Chinese, English, Korean, Japanese). The establishment and development of such combined signs are worthy of attention. The signs are shown as below;



Photo 4 official Signs



Photo 5 Private sign with Pinyin



Photo 6 Combined Sign

4.2 Inscription

Inscription refers to the meaning system related to the presentation of sign language, including fonts, materials, additional components, state changes, etc. As the language of the linguistic landscape are all written forms, the writing style of Chinese characters as a representative of pictographs and alphabetic characters very different. Due to the development and evolution of Chinese characters, the same Chinese character can be divided into traditional and simplified characters and different Chinese character font styles, which will leave people with different impressions. For example, traditional characters have a certain sense of history and a strong cultural atmosphere, while simplified characters can convey information more directly and have a modern feel. The style of the font will also leave a feeling of cuteness, fashion, or intimacy, which will affect people's perception and subconsciously change people's impression of the language landscape. The materials and colors of the language signs displayed in the public area are also attractive and leave a different impression. Different materials are used selectively to show their own style.

Category / Signs		Display mode			Font form		
		print	Sculpture	others	Simplified Chinese	Traditional Chinese	Combination (Traditional and Simplified)
Official signs	Road nameplate	127	—	—	127	—	—
	PSAs	76	—	—	76	—	—
	Bus stop signs	32	—	—	32	—	—
Private signs	Catering signs	112	239	85	141	18	277
	Shopping signs	39	476	138	111	16	526
	Other store signs	28	36	32	73	—	23
Combination signs	Multi-functional board	87	—	—	87	—	—
	Indicator board	215	—	—	210	—	5

Table 4 Inscriptions Table

On the whole, the display methods and fonts used in official signs are relatively uniform. The font of the road nameplate uses simplified characters and is printed on PVC foam board. The font format of the public service advertisement is simplified, and the materials used are PVC foam board and canvas. The Chinese characters used in the bus stop signs are all simplified, and the material is printed with adhesive paper pasted on transparent plastic or iron shelves of the stop signs. In sharp contrast to the uniform official signage style is the rich variety of private signs. In terms of material selection, in addition to signs printed with canvas, there are also wood-carved signs, painted signs, diode light signs, iron art signs, etc.

Different types of signs, the specific differences and materials used will be detailed later analysis. The choice of language is also more diverse. Most signs combine traditional and simplified characters. There are more signs with pure simplified characters than those with pure traditional characters. The materials and forms of combined signs tend to be in the style of official signs. However, a few signs also show the characteristics of private signs, using a combination of traditional and simplified fonts. As shown below:



Photo 7 Official Sign



Photo 8 Private Sign



Photo 9 Combined Sign

4.3 Emplacement

It is the most fundamental issue that geographic semiotics pays attention to study the information function and value meaning brought by the behavior of placing a sign in a certain place. The official signs of Dali ancient city tourist attractions are mainly in the form of de-contextualized placement and scene-based placement. Among them, road nameplates are used to identify road names, directions, and the relationship between roads; public welfare billboards are used to warn and remind behaviors that are prohibited in a specific place or space, and advocate and encourage behaviors that should be done in this space; The stop sign is restricted to the route of public transport, and provides passengers with information about the route of the transport that they need to take, such as price, stops, travel time, etc. The objects are all people who appear at any time, any place and space. Such official signs usually appear in a de-contextualized form.

Private signs are the most important part of the language landscape of Dali ancient city. The language signs in this study are mainly placed in scenes. The shops distributed on both sides of the road within the observation area are mostly private small businesses such as restaurants, clothing, daily necessities, etc. Whether it is shop name signs, billboards, posters, or recruitment advertisements, they must be combined with the specific location of the shop, to convey information about its business content, service features, and business hours. It is worth mentioning that among these private signs, there are also shop signs that are placed in a de-contextualized manner. Mainly found in international or domestic well-known chain brands, such as China's well-known domestic travel agency brands, China's domestic well-known fast food brands, and some internationally well-known brands such as Huawei.



Photo 10 Decontextualized Private Signs

Since the combined sign is essentially planned by the government, the type of placement is also consistent with the official sign. Multifunctional billboards belong to de-contextualized placement. According to function and language service content, the signs can be subdivided into de-contextualized placement and scene-based placement.

It is found that there is a small class of special language signs in the tourist attractions of Dali Ancient City. These language signs are mostly flyposting or unauthorized advertisements, which are repeatedly pasted or printed on any visible material existence within the public space, such as pavements, walls, public facilities, language signs, etc. Such advertisements affecting the overall beauty of the city and even hidden illegal and criminal behaviors, which are deviant placements, but there are not many such cases, only a few, so there isn't counted into the sample collection.



Photo 11 Transgressive Advertising Attached to the Linguistic Landscape

Situated and transgressive show the advantages and management issues of the public space in the area from both pros and cons. The number of that kind of language signs in this scenic spot is not large, which also shows that the management of this scenic spot is relatively in place, and the aesthetics of the entire scenic spot is within an acceptable range. The language signs in the ancient city of Dali are based on situated signs, and decontextualized placement is only a minority. The characteristics of this form of placement are closely related to the dispersion and small amount of capital in the space, and it also reflects that the degree of internationalization of the scenic spot needs to be enhanced, and the level of economic development needs to be improved.

5. Conclusion

In general, language is the core of information and the best embodiment of symbols of linguistic landscapes in a certain area. Designers transmit certain information, promote a certain product, and provide certain services through linguistic landscape, while viewers receive information and find products that meet their own needs. With Geosemiotics theory, it is better found the code preference, inscription and emplacement of a city or a country.

This study used quantitative analysis to analyze the current situation of 1722 linguistic landscape in the 8 core blocks of Dali Ancient City. Through observation, it is found that Chinese is the main language in this region, and English is the most universally applied language among all foreign languages. In addition, Pinyin is also widely used by private sign and combined sign, but it has no practical significance.

In addition, this area not only has two major types of linguistic landscape in the traditional concept, namely, official sign and private sign, but also a new type, combined sign. This kind of sign is based on the officially designated placement scene and placement form, and allows personalized display or instructing private shops in the performance content, and is a sign set up for the promotion of profitable services. This kind of sign has both the integrity of the official sign and the uniqueness of the private sign.

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