



Mapping the Linguistic Landscape in a Chinese University

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Abstract

Linguistic landscape is a field of study in sociolinguistics that focuses on the symbolic meaning of various types of linguistic signage in public spaces. Real-world linguistic landscapes reflect and shape the power and status of communities through the interaction of language and space. There are two ways to understand linguistic landscape. The easiest way is language in a public space. Academically, linguistic landscape can reflect road signs, billboards, street names, place names, store signs, and government buildings. The linguistic landscape of the place is composed of these collections. Through the analysis of public space signs, linguistic landscape research decodes the relationship between language and space, reflecting the different linguistic phenomena such as language conflict, language contact, language maintenance, language change, and language dynamics that exist in the real world, and revealing the explicit or implicit linguistic dominance, power relations and social status behind language use and choice. With the increasing of universities in this country, the population of college students is booming, especially after the year 2000, the private universities are also sprouting out. Due to the different nature between public and private universities, the life and performance of students on various campuses are equally distinct. The author pays more attention to the linguistic landscape which is a reflection of its mission and specialty. The author collects photos employing photography, classifying and analyzing by quantitative and qualitative methods, then exploring the states and features of students' study circles and life circles on campus by using Grice's "Cooperation Principle". It is found that Wuchang Shouyi University as a comprehensive university, not only attaches high importance to the academic development of students but also to their all-around development which can provide rich and colorful after-school life for the students, then enhance their practical ability.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Linguistic Landscape, University, School Philosophy, Cooperative Principle

1. Introduction

Landry & Bourhis (1997) [1] defined linguistic landscape as a reflection of road signs, billboards, street names, place names, store signs, government buildings, etc. This is the classic definition of the linguistic landscape. It has two main functions, namely, the Explicit Informative Function and the Implicit Symbolic Function. The Informative Function refers to the use of speech in a given space, while the Symbolic Function is the design of a linguistic landscape that reflects the associated power and status behind it. Over the past 20 years, linguistic landscapes, as the subject of research, have continued to rise in popularity. In recent years, the research on campus language landscapes has continued to heat up. Linguistic landscape not only can reflect the university's values, culture, and outlook, but also the students' cultural awareness and spiritual outlook.

Founded in 2000, Wuchang Shouyi University formerly is known as the Wuchang Branch of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, and is transformed into an independent private higher education institution in June 2015. Then it is renamed "Wuchang Shouyi University." According to its official website of this school in April 2021, it has two campuses in Wuhan and Jiayu, the Wuhan campus covers an area of more than 1000 mu with a total building area of 520,000 square meters. And there are eight departments in this school. Currently, the university has an undergraduate major construction point at a national level and seven undergraduate major construction points at a provincial level respectively. It is called the "small Tsinghua" among private universities.

Having been living in the college for almost four years, the author is particularly familiar with the linguistic landscape of this university. After studying the basic content of the linguistic landscape, the author chose to collect samples by taking photographs, classify them by using qualitative and quantitative methods, and apply the principle of cooperation to analyze the common slogans, public signs, and buildings in the linguistic landscape deeply.

This paper is to reveal the students' performance and life at Wuchang Shouyi university in terms of different values and teaching orientations. Studying the school's linguistic landscape can lead to a better understanding of the development of private universities and students' growth. Also, it can offer some authentic data and suggestions for future investigation by carefully and fully exploring the linguistic landscape of the university.

2. Literature Review

As one of the research hot spots in sociolinguistics, linguistic landscape research is concerned with the use of language in public spaces and places. Landry and Bourhis formally introduced the concept of linguistic landscape in 1997, and more and more scholars have begun to focus on this research. Overseas scholars have studied the linguistic landscape of different regions such as sociology, geography, semiotics, sociolinguistics, and education. However, in recent years, this research field has gradually attracted the extensive attention of domestic scholars, and the increasing scholars have started to conduct empirical research on linguistic landscapes.

2.1. Theoretical Basis

Bryce Grice is a well-known American language philosopher, he came up with the “cooperative principle” when holding a lecture at Harvard University in 1967. In his opinion, when people carry on communication, they seem to abide by a principle intentionally or unintentionally. The communication aims to converse or collaborate effectively. This principle suggests both sides should follow the four elements to guarantee the accomplishment of the conversation. They are the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of manner, and the maxim of relation. Firstly, in the maxim of quantity, the speakers should make the contribution informative and required. Then, the maxim of quality requires the speakers to ensure the contribution is true and intact. The words should be simple and clear is the requirement of the maxim of manner. Finally, the maxim of relation refers to the words should be relevant to the topic.

2.2. Domestic Research

Domestic linguistic landscape research started late, and domestic scholars carried on related empirical studies only in the last decade. Zhang Yancui (2020) [2] analyzed the linguistic landscape of Jilin Foreign Language University. Mu Ya (2018) [3] used a questionnaire to analyze the needs of Korean students at the university. The study found that Chinese signage can provide a context for international students, raise their awareness of the Chinese language, and help them acquire Chinese culture. Liu Chang and Wang Yingjie (2021) [4] made use of field hiking, research, and judgment sampling to explore the use and arrangement of codes in the linguistic landscape of higher education at Shandong University of Finance and Economics Sunkeng Campus. Wang Xiaochen and Gao Yang (2021) [5] applied Cooperative Principle and Haugen Theory to explore the Linguistic Landscape of Chinese College Campuses in Dalian Maritime University. Jiang Shuai (2018) [6] studied the linguistic landscape of three universities in Jilin using Conformity Theory. Ma Biyuan (2020) [7] researched the Yunnan university road name language and cultural connotation to figure out the historical origin of the university, and its geography features. These studies provide other researchers with fruitful materials and perspectives to study other

linguistic landscape.

There are also some scholars to explore the linguistic landscape of tourism and the city. Zhang Aiheng and Sun Jiuxia (2021) [8] explored the changes in linguistic landscape in Yangshuo West Street by a sociolinguistic perspective, they concluded that changes in Yangshuo's linguistic landscape result from mobility weakening host-guest interaction and diversified tourism products. Feng Junying (2020) [9] studied the Marine Culture Linguistic Landscape in Nantong. He found that Nantong is famous for the city's rivers and seas, but the tradition and characteristics of marine culture have not been fully expressed in the linguistic landscape of scenic spots. This is different from the Jiangsu coastal development strategy in the 13th Five-Year Plan of Nantong City and the goal of creating a new city card of the river and sea culture. There exists a gap. And Gong Xianghong, Li Aijing (2020) [10] explored the Linguistic Landscape of the Qingdao's Marine Culture in the New Era, they suggested that Qingdao City government should take full consideration of the tourism demand and economic development to raise the presence of Korean in public language signs to further promote Qingdao's maritime culture and language vitality so that the maritime culture and language landscape better perform its information transfer function, better maintain a balance of Qingdao's marine cultural language ecosystem, and build a harmonious marine culture language ecology.

All the above researches take new perspectives to learn about the application and implication of linguistic landscape. They offer a fresh method to gain deep insight into college progress and life. But it is found that few scholars studied the linguistic landscape of universities in central China, especially in private universities.

2.3. Abroad Research

After collecting and sorting out foreign literature on linguistic landscape, the author found that scholars started to investigate linguistic landscape in the 1970s. Because there is no specific definition of this theory, few people could pay attention to getting to the bottom of it. It is not at the end of the 1990s until that Landry and Bourhis put forward the definition of linguistic landscape when studying the Quebec Province, Canada. Then, the study of the linguistic landscape begins formally. The linguistic landscape research was booming, the relevant concept was gradually created and the theory was established comprehensively. Researchers in various academic fields started to study the linguistic landscape, such as advertising, education, semiotics, geography, sociology. The author sees this phenomenon as the appearance of the research subjects of the linguistic landscape.

Peter Backhaus (2010) [11] conducted an empirical study of the linguistic landscape of Tokyo-the capital of Japan from the perspective of power and solidarity. The study found that official signs were established to express authority messages while unofficial signs were created to create a cosmopolitan atmos-

phere. Also, a study conducted by Adekunle, Temitope O.; Mheta, Gift; Ra-peane-Mathonsi, Maleshoane (2019) [12] revealed that sexuality subtly remained in unraveled areas in South Africa. More importantly, the degeneration of people with disabilities appeared to be prevalent at these institutions though this may not necessarily be reflected at all higher education institutions in South Africa. Máiréad Moriarty (2014) [13] explored multilingualism and mobility in the linguistic landscape. The articles presented in this volume are the results of research collaboration under the 3M: Identities in Motion research network funded by Nordforsk and the Peripheral Multilingualism project funded by the Finnish Academy.

Some other fields like second language acquisition, tourism, and environment also use the linguistic landscape as a point to study its features. Willans, Fiona, Gure, Jim and Koro Salanieta (2020) [14] explored multilingualism in the urban linguistic landscape of Fiji and Vanuatu. They drew some conclusions that the marked differences between the ethnic and ethnolinguistic makeup of Suva and Port Vila, the default language that businesses project as the logical language of commerce appears to be English. Melissa L. Curtin (2015) [15] researched the Creativity in polycrystal typographies in the linguistic landscape of Taipei, finding that creative practices in Taipei's commercial Linguistic Landscape are soundly pragmatic and engagingly helpful. They may toy with economic power relations or challenge the injustices of the past and present. These examples also share two common features of creativity: a breaking of prescriptive norms and a celebratory blurring of boundaries. And Im, Jae-hyun (2020) [16] studies the linguistic landscape of these departments that teach East Asian languages and cultures in a university in the U.S. Midwest. He explores the promotional materials produced by the Chinese, Japanese and Korean departments. The discursive constructions of "East Asianness" is visible. The linguistic landscape of East Asian departments tells how East Asian departments seek to maintain and express their own identities through publicly available linguistic and cultural resources.

From the domestic and foreign research on the linguistic landscape, there is no doubt that the prospect of linguistic landscape is very impressive and it also receives great attention in academic circles.

Based on the abounds of universities in China, the author reckons that various universities have a different linguistic landscape which represents their teaching goals and orientation. Besides, few researches are conducted on the linguistic landscape in private colleges. Therefore, it is worth researching the linguistic landscape in Wuchang Shouyi University

3. Research Methods

In this part, the linguistic landscape of Wuchang Shouyi University is analyzed by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods which allow the author to analyze the school's linguistic landscape fully under the qualitative and

quantitative method. The author takes the photos to collect corpus. Firstly, classifying them quantitatively. Secondly, analyzing the selected photos with the combination of qualitative and cooperative principle.

Gorter (2020) [17] pointed out that data collection through photography has become an important form for linguistic landscape research. Therefore, the author firstly photographed the sign language on the campus of Wuchang Shouyi University using a smartphone. After eliminating some duplicate and blurred images, the author obtained a total of 96 valid images. Li Yuyuan concludes (2018) [18] that quantitative studies are often conducted to test theories. Quantitative research qualifies the direction of the study through questionnaire questions, options, and surveys before the study is formally implemented, and identifies the study population through the selection of a sample. The sample is selected to determine the target population. Zhang Yun (2016) [19] reckons that qualitative research tends to use interviews, observations, and documentation to collect data and to conduct research based on subjective understanding and qualitative analysis. Its main methods are methods: participant observation, psychoanalysis, in-depth interviews, and action. The main methods include participant observation, psychoanalysis, in-depth interviews, action research, participatory action research, case studies, etc. The author applies these methods to get representative photos to analyze the linguistic landscape of Wuchang Shouyi University.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

After taking 150 photos, excluding dozens of blurred and duplicate photos, the author analyzed the remaining 96 photos by quantitative and qualitative methods with the cooperative principle. The detailed analysis is as follows.

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

From the results in **Table 1** through the combination of the map and computer in WPS, the author made some conclusions. Firstly, the Chinese has the greatest

Table 1. The language on the linguistic landscape of WCSY university.

Code Forms	Kinds	Numbers	Examples	Proportion
Chinese	Chinese	56	机电实验大楼	58%
	Chinese + Bopomofo	2	孔子KONG ZI	2%
	Chinese + English	23	计算机中心 COMPUTER CENTER	23%
	Chinese + Number	7	11号教学楼	7%
English	English	0		0
	Chinese + Number + English	10	11 - 106 多功能报告厅 Auditorium	10%
Totality		96		100%

power, accounting for as much as 58 percent. According to the principle of collective identity proposed by Ben-Rafael, this can show the high sense of identification, cultural confidence, and sense of belonging shown by Wuchang Shouyi University towards Chinese. Then, the second highest number of occurrences of Chinese and English together shows the high level of usage and recognition of English as an international language, a phenomenon Rosenbaum calls “snob appeal”. Thirdly, the number of occurrences of Chinese, English, and numbers collectively indicates that the university, as a scientific and applied university, is also very scientific in its governance.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

After the quantitative analysis was completed, the author chose the qualitative analysis, among which are the college buildings, libraries, dormitories, cafeterias, and road signs. These are the trajectories of the daily lives of college students and teachers. The specific analysis framework is as follows (Table 2).

Under the cooperative principle, it is found that the names of the eight colleges of this school are in plain Chinese, such as Figure 1, “College of Mechatronics and Automation” with a distinctive font, which is in line with the principle of quantity and informs people directly. It also fits for the information function of the linguistic landscape. The words on the sign are for all faculty members, so they are simple and clear. Secondly, the characters are large, and the white background and the black font are very eye-catching, which is suitable for the principle of manner. Additionally, the sign refers to the same property as the building, which accords with the principle of relation. And this university’s eight colleges are dominated by science and engineering ones, which fits the university’s attributes.



Figure 1. Department of Mechatronics and automation.

Table 2. Analytical framework.

Cooperative principle	
Quantity	1) Make your contribution as informative as is required 2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
Quality	People should ensure that the words are true
Relation	What people say should be relevant to their ambiance, and topic.
Manner	The words should be crystal clear, unambiguous and succinct, organized.

Equally, according to the principle of cooperation, it shows that: First of all, the logo is composed of “Chinese + English + Number” (Figure 2). And the three English words “Student Apartment Building” convey information of the main residents and properties about the building, with the main body being students and the properties being apartments. This conforms to the principle of quantity and relation. The word “apartment” is slightly different from the general term “dormitory”. Secondly, the English translation of “Student Apartment Building” adopts a direct translation strategy, keeping the original text and content. Since there is no international student program at this university, this kind of translation method is also easier for its students to understand, which satisfies the principle of quality. The “No 11” directly indicates the area where the building is located and the order of the building. The number can also reflect this school’s thinking of running a science and technology school. It fulfills the principle of manner.

Under the framework of the cooperative principle, the author found: Firstly, the sign shown in Figure 3 is a road sign with five directions, only the Chinese and English names of the roads. And the meaning is very well expressed with few words and white characters on a blue background, which is simple and generous, tallying with the principle of quantity. Secondly, for contemporary college students, these Chinese characters are very easy and convenient to ask for directions, and the English translation is also the “transliteration plus direct” method, which is handy for foreigners to ask for directions and conforms to the principle of quality. Thirdly, the signage is located at the intersection in front of the West Square of the university, which is conducive to providing road information to the students passing by, it is in keeping with the principle of relation. In addition, the sign is bilingual, which reflects the internationalization of Wuchang Shouyi University, it provides information not only for domestic students but also for international exchange students. Finally, the graphic design of the road sign is also very atmospheric and practical, and it is known that Yangsi Port Bridge passes through this area, which also reflects the application and local development of Wuchang Shouyi University.

From the perspective of the theoretical framework of the principle of cooperation, the author can draw the following conclusions. Firstly, the slogan in Figure 4 is composed of two words on the left and four words on the right, and the meaning of the slogan is very clear, it is in line with the principles of quantity



Figure 2. Student apartment building.



Figure 3. Road signs.



Figure 4. Publicity banner.

and quality. The four-character idiom of “Magnificent” reflects that the process of struggle and the result are exciting. While the seven characters on the right can reflect that Wuchang Shouyi University warmly welcomes and blesses the Party for its centennial birthday. Secondly, Wuchang Shouyi University is close to Wuchang District, where the “Wuchang Uprising” as we know it originated, which also shows the strong patriotic love of Wuchang Shouyi University, which is in line with the principle of relation. Finally, the red background also symbolizes the color of the Party. As the Party emblem appears at the top of the slogan, which is simple and clear without too much explanation, which is in line with the principle of manner.

It is shown from **Figure 5**: Firstly, the word “Library” directly indicates the attributes of the building, which is a place for students to study and read. The word is simple and easy to understand, and the font is large, which is in line with the principle of quantity and manner. Secondly, these three characters are all traditional Chinese characters, reflecting the strong Chinese culture and the orientation of the local private university, which is in line with the principle of relation. Finally, there are three libraries at this university, and **Figure 4** belongs to the main library, which is located on the left side of the main entrance of the school. The three big yellow characters can show the magnificence of the school. Although it is a private polytechnic university, it also attaches high importance to the cultural development of students while improving their practicality, and is committed to cultivating fully developed talents.

It is found from **Figure 6**: Firstly, the text of **Figure 5** consists of Chinese and English, “Wuchang Shouyi University” and “Huawei Cloud College” which can directly reflect that this is a department composed of school and enterprise. Secondly, “I CS & S” is the abbreviation of The Chinese Software International without the complicatedly full English. Thirdly, the top of the figure is the school



Figure 5. Library.



Figure 6. Directional signal.

logo and enterprise logo, placed in the highest position, emphasizing the cooperation and friendly relationship between the two sides so that people directly. Finally, the two sides have established a department, which shows the importance of this cooperation. It cooperates with Huawei, a famous enterprise in China, which shows that the school is committed to providing the best employment opportunities for students. Also, the school is diligently developing a practical and local private university.

The cafeteria is one of the places where students and teachers must go. Among the dozens of photos of the cafeteria, the author selects the following three photos (Central and West canteens) as the object of analysis and comes to the following conclusions: Firstly, the “Entrance to the cafeteria” in **Figure 7** directly indicates that this place is to dine. The four words are simple and clear, which is in line with the principle of quantity and relation. Secondly, the picture in **Figure 7** was taken in the central cafeteria, which has Chinese characteristics, and the word “Shouyi Ju” again indicates that this is Shouyi University. The three elegant characters next to it indicate the new products promoted by the cafeteria without much explanation, which is in line with the principle of manner. Thirdly, **Figure 7** shows one of the windows of the cafeteria, which consists of Chinese and numbers, indicating the variety and price respectively. These words “Go to struggle”, which is also in line with the principle of quality, reflecting the spirit of hard work and hardship in science and technology schools.

This banner was taken in the cafeteria (**Figure 8**). This slogan is a combination of Chinese and English. Firstly, it specifies the time, the theme, and the initiator of the activity. There are no unnecessary words, which is in line with the principle of Manner. Secondly, three six-word phrases are arranged side by side, rhyming back and forth, which is in line with the principle of quantity. Thirdly, this closely follows the content requirements of the activity and also sublimates the theme, which is in line with the principle of quality and relation. The author



Figure 7. Canteens.



Figure 8. Slogan.

can feel the enthusiasm of the initiator of the activity. As the old saying goes, 21 days can form a habit, which fully demonstrates the importance of experience and shows that the students of this school are more practice-oriented.

Figure 9 shows the slogans on the lobby displayed on the first floor of the academic building, from which it can be seen that: First, the slogans are aligned in two rows and displayed in large red font, emphasizing the importance of the text. It conforms with the principle of quantity. Secondly, “Preventing the epidemic” and “Wearing a mask” reveals that it is during the epidemic period, which is in line with the principle of relation. Thirdly, in addition to the professional development of the students, the school also values the physical health of the students.

This is a warning sign in one of the campus flowers, a lovely leaf shape. First of all, the slogan includes Wuchang Shouyi University and the warning content. Secondly, the simple four-word phrase “One point with your hand, ten points

for beautification” rhymes with the principle of quantity and relation. Finally, the green background and white font form a sharp contrast. Through the principle of cooperation, the author can know that the school attaches great importance to hygiene. The playful and innovative signage can show the students’ active creativity (Figure 10).

Figure 11 is one of the main school buildings, and the three characters “成学楼” can be seen in block letters. This is in line with the principles of quantity and manner, very short and simple, with no complicated text to be figured out, which also reflects the school’s philosophy of pursuing simplicity and practicality. According to the author’s understanding, “成” should refer to success, achievement, and help; “学” refers to students and learning, so the three words mean to achieve and help students.



Figure 9. Slogan.



Figure 10. Warning banner.



Figure 11. Teaching building.

4.3. Discussion and Findings

It is found that as a comprehensive development university, Wuchang Shouyi University has solidly established the power of Chinese in its daily slogans, public signs, buildings, etc, but also pays high attention to the comprehensive development of Chinese and English. In terms of pure Chinese language, the school focuses on the revolutionary culture and traditional culture, say, the slogans on both sides of the road. When it comes to the combination of Chinese and English, the school actively promotes its international development, such as the use of Chinese on top and English on the bottom in the apartments and teaching buildings. Under the principle of cooperation, it also showed that the linguistic landscape of Wuchang Shouyi University conformed to the four contents of the principle with simple text and relevant and clear content.

5. Conclusions

It is found that few scholars in China have embarked on the study of the linguistic landscape of universities, therefore, the author takes the research object as a point and conducts a study on Wuchang Shouyi University. 96 photos were validly collected by the smartphones and several representative photos were selected for quantitative and qualitative analysis. It can show that the linguistic landscape of Wuchang Shouyi University clearly shows its school philosophy and students' living circle and studying circle, in which Chinese as the native language, has a greater proportion. It is especially reflected in the propaganda language and slogans. At the same time, the school also focuses on international development, so the frequency of combined Chinese and English is followed occurring in teaching buildings and apartments. The study shows that Wuchang Shouyi University as a private local college, demands with strict standards and has a distinctive red culture, but also follows the pace of the times.

The shortcoming of this thesis is that the sample is too small and the information collected is not complete. Due to the epidemic, the author was unable to visit the school in Wuhan to carefully study the linguistic landscape of each department and to study the Jiayu branch of Wuchang Shouyi University in person. Therefore, the collected information in this paper is not too comprehensive,

and one local private university cannot reflect the general feature of the wholly private university in the country.

Therefore, it is suggested that researchers can study several similar colleges and universities at the same time and get the same points to generalize the feature of the linguistic landscape in a private university.

To sum up, from an economic point of view, this thesis can help society to pay more attention to the linguistic landscape. Since linguistic landscapes can be reflected by physical objects such as buildings and signs, this thesis allows social workers to enhance the quality of architecture and can optimize the social environment. From the perspective of culture, culturalists will attract high importance to the output of language and focus on the multiple roles of language, which will help campus culture designers to improve the presentation of campus language and thus create a diverse cultural atmosphere. And this thesis will enrich the study of the linguistic landscape in higher education and can help promote the teaching and learning of languages. A distinctive linguistic landscape will attract students who have special ideals, promote multiculturalism in schools, and enhance its inclusiveness. It will regulate the linguistic landscape of universities, and improve their images and shape their own school culture.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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