

A Study on the Language Landscape and English Translation of the Shop Signboards in the Red Cultural City Luding in the National Strategic Context of “The Belt and Road Initiative”

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ABSTRACT

Language landscape is the image of a region, and standardizing language landscape is one of the effective ways to inherit local culture. Luding County, Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, integrates red culture and natural landscape, and conducts research on Luding language landscape, which is conducive to the construction of standardized language in Luding area and deepens tourists' impression on Luding cultural landscape and natural landscape. The article takes the language of shop signboards in the main streets of Luding County as the research object, and explores the current situation of multilingual use of shop signboards and their English translation patterns, in order to continuously improve the language landscape in Luding area.

Keywords: Luding, Shop signboards, Language landscape, English translation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of language landscape was first proposed and used by Landry&Bourhis (1997) in 1997. Landry&Bourhis (1997) believed that language landscape mainly refers to the language landscape composed of public signs such as road signs, place names, street names, billboards, shop signboards, and government buildings in public areas [1]. The focus of language landscape is on the current situation of all language usage within the public domain, which reflects deep-seated issues such as policy orientation, power, and identity within a specific domain. The language landscape has both informational and symbolic functions. The information presented on road signs, billboards, shop signboards, etc. clearly informs the audience of the corresponding information and language usage types in the region, which is also the informational function of the language landscape and its explicit function. The multilingual use, the font size of each language, and the positional relationship between each language (such as the position up, down, left, and right) of road signs,

place names, street names, advertisements, and government buildings in the language landscape of a region reflects the information of Language power, identity, and ideology in that place, which are latent function of language landscape. Language power, identity, and ideology are obtained by analyzing explicit language information, so this function is invisible. Language signs are an important component of language landscapes, and they are divided into official signs and private signs. Among them, "official signs mainly include street names, road signs, government building names, etc.; private signs mainly include shop signboards, advertising signs, etc." [2] Shop signboards are mainly used to introduce commercial information, that is, the types of products operated by businesses. The shop signboard not only presents commercial information, but also the cultural information of the region. It is a reflection of the use of major languages in the region, an important embodiment of the soft power of urban culture, and an important way to inherit the urban humanities and natural landscape.

Luding is located in the southeast of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, and is a transitional zone from the Qinghai Tibet Plateau to the Sichuan Basin. It is a must pass through place for entering and exiting Tibet and Sichuan. There are 17 ethnic groups living in Luding, including Han, Tibetan, and Yi. It is the "east gate" of Ganzi Prefecture and enjoys the reputation of "red city". Luding is on the route of the Red Army's Long March, and there are still many remains of the Red Army's Long March, such as the Luding Bridge Revolutionary Cultural Relics Exhibition Hall, the former residence of Chairman Mao, and the former headquarters of the Lan'an Red Army. Ludingqiao was designated as a national patriotic education demonstration base by the Central Propaganda Department in 2001. Luding is also one of the four routes of the "the Belt and Road". After the completion of Luding Bridge, the Sichuan Tibet Ancient Tea Horse Road had changed from Diaomen (Tianquan) through Lianghekou—Anzhou River—Lan'an—Cooking Dam—Arrow Shooting Stove to Tianquan—Liangkou—Menkan—Ma'anshan Mountain—Luding Bridge—Arrow Shooting Stove. Due to the geographical location, cultural history, natural scenery, and other factors of Luding, the number of domestic and foreign tourists traveling to Luding is constantly increasing, and research on the language landscape of Luding has become very necessary.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

The early research on language landscape mainly focused on the language usage of signs in public places. With the expansion of research fields and depth, the research objects of language landscape have also been continuously expanded. As scholar Xia Le (2020) pointed out, any language in the public environment can be considered as a research object, such as electronic displays, car advertisements, wall graffiti, posters, etc. [3]. In addition to expanding the research object of language landscape, scholars have also constructed a theoretical framework for language landscape research. Scollon and W Scollon's theory of place symbols has been widely recognized and used in the field of language research.

According to scholars Shang Guowen and Zhao Shouhui (2014a), place semiotics is used to analyze language systems such as code orientation, lettering and placement in the language landscape^[4]. The code orientation shows the priority order between various languages in a multilingual landscape, and

is also the social status of languages in a specific region. The priority of language codes is reflected in the order and position of language arrangement in the language landscape. Fu Tingting (2023) pointed out that the arrangement of language in the top, bottom, left, and right reflects the major or minor position of language in that region^[5]. In the context of upper and lower language code arrangement, upper language is superior to lower language; In the context of left and right code arrangement, left language is superior to right language; In the context of surrounded code arrangement, the central position code is superior to the surrounding position code. Engraving refers to the font, material, additional components or extensions of the sign language. This study only focuses on the multilingual font size in the language landscape of shop signboards in the urban area of Luding. The font shape, color, and writing method are not included in this study. Placement refers to the meaning activated by the act of placing a sign in a certain location. The placement method is not used as a distinguishing point in this study to distinguish the meaning expressed by the sign code, therefore, the placement method is not the object of discussion in this study. This study discusses the current situation of the language landscape in the famous red cultural city of Luding from the perspective of multilingual arrangement order, language types, and language size in shop signboards. At the same time, it analyzes the translation rules of Chinese English and Chinese Tibetan English shop signboards, providing a certain reference for the improvement and improvement of language landscape construction in the Luding region.

3. CURRENT SITUATION OF LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE OF SHOP SIGNBOARDS IN LUDING

Language landscape not only provides information to the audience, but also reflects the main language situation in the region. The font size and position of different language codes on the signs reflect the official recognition of the status of the language. By analyzing the language types and dominant language codes in the language landscape of Luding, the findings are that multilingualism coexists in this area, but the dominant position of Chinese is prominent.

3.1 Language Types in Language Landscape

Through smartphone photography collection, manual selecting, and elimination of the same shop signboard names, a total of 355 shop signboard samples were obtained in the urban area of Luding. From the collected samples, it can be seen that there are a total of 170 cases of Luding shops using Chinese as their signboards' language, accounting for 47.9%; Secondly, there are a total of 109 bilingual cases between Chinese and Tibetan, accounting for 30.7%; There are a total of 61 bilingual Chinese English samples, accounting for 17.2%; There are a total of 9 samples in Chinese, Tibetan, and English trilingual, accounting for 2.5%; There is 1 sample collected in Tibetan and English, accounting for 0.3%; There are a total of 5 samples in English, accounting for 1.4% and a total of 100%. Luding County is a multi-ethnic gathering area, with 17 ethnic groups residing within its jurisdiction, of which the majority are Han Chinese. According to the 6th National Population Census Bulletin of Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, "the Han population accounts for 82.08% of the total population of Luding County; the Tibetan population ranks second, accounting for 11.74%; the Yi population ranks third, accounting for 5.46%; and other ethnic groups account for a relatively small proportion, totaling 0.72%" [8]. Luding County is under the jurisdiction of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, so the use of Tibetan in the signboard language of Luding shops is more prominent, with a total of 119 cases, accounting for 33.5% of all shop signs. But Chinese accounts for the largest proportion, with 349 out of 355 cases containing Chinese. Therefore, Chinese is the main language and also the dominant language in the Luding region.

3.2 Advantage Code

"The dominant language code refers to the language code that occupies the dominant position in the bilingual or multilingual samples. The dominant language code is identified according to the font size, position, etc. of the language in the signboard." [9] In the sample of Luding shop signboards, from the number of languages in the shop signboards, Chinese occupies the absolute advantage. There are 170 Chinese shop signboards alone, 109 Chinese and Tibetan bilingual shop signboards, 61 Chinese and English bilingual shop signboards, and 9 Chinese Tibetan English trilingual shop signboards. There are a total of 349

samples containing Chinese language in all shop signboards, accounting for 98.3% of shop signboards containing Chinese language, with only 6 shop signboards not containing Chinese language. In terms of the layout of language codes in the sign, Chinese is in the most prominent position, and Chinese is located at the center of the sign. From the perspective of font size, regardless of the combination of language codes, as long as the sign contains Chinese language codes, the Chinese font is the largest or the same size as other language codes. No matter it is the font size, font position, or the proportion of language codes in the shop signboards, all highlight the superior position of Chinese in the shop signboards of Luding.

4. RULES OF ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF LUDING SHOP SIGNBOARDS

All the 355 collected language materials for shop signboards in Luding, 76 of them contain English, accounting for 21.4% of the recruitment. Among them, there are 61 bilingual cases in Chinese and English, 9 bilingual cases in Chinese, Tibetan and English, 1 bilingual case in Tibetan and English, and 5 shop signboards in only one language of English. The article only discusses the translation rules of English in Chinese and English, or Chinese, Tibetan and English, totaling 70 cases. One Tibetan and English bilingual shop signboard and 5 English monolingual shop signboards collected will not be discussed in this paper. Landry&Bourhis (1997) believed that language landscapes have both informational and symbolic functions [1]. The information function provides basic information for the audience, and the main function of shop signboards reflects the information function of language landscapes, such as "noodle shops, hotels, clothing shops, small shops, etc. These languages provide guidance services for customers." [2] According to the function of language, Sun Li (2009) talked about two forms of translation expression: semantic translation and communicative translation. Semantic translation tries to maintain the same contextual meaning of the original work as much as possible, and tries to maintain the same semantic and syntactic structure, such as the translation of literary works; Communicative translation aims to convey information, and the target language and source language have equal effects on readers, emphasizing communicative functions, such as the translation of product trademarks, road signboards, shop signboards, and other content [10]. The

translation of shop signboards often adopts translation methods such as literal translation, transliteration, and free translation. According to data statistics and analysis, it can be seen that the English translation of shop signboards in the urban area of Luding mostly adopts transliteration, followed by literal translation, with the least number of free translation cases.

4.1 Transliteration

Through analyzing the collected language materials of shop signboards, it was found that the main use of transliteration translation methods for shop signboards in Luding. The required corpus collected in this study was 70 cases, of which 38 cases were all transliterated, accounting for 54% of the bilingual and Sino Tibetan English translations. The main methods for transliterating the signboards of Luding shops include pure transliteration, transliteration with free translation, and transliteration with literal translation. Among them, there are 17 cases of pure transliteration, such as aiqin, XIAO JU ZI, BOBOYU, FANGXIANG, XUESHANFEICUI, DAIYAAIFEI, SANSU, etc. In addition to pure transliteration, there is also one example of transliteration plus free translation, such as YOSUN GOOD; There are 3 examples of transliteration and literal translation, such as Xinhua Bookstore. Some transliterated shop signboards adopt an incomplete transliteration strategy, but only transliterate some parts of the trademark content, such as SHUYI; Some trademarks only transliterate the sound image of the signboard, such as CHAMING, TRYHO, etc; Some use acronyms to only transliterate the first letter of the sign, such as the Li Ren Yuan (LRY); Wade-Giles romanization is also shown on the signboard of Luding shops, such as CHOW TAI SENG. This translation is consistent with the official translation of the product. Transliteration mainly transliterates Chinese characters using pinyin, which is equivalent or similar in pronunciation, and this translation method of using sound for meaning occupies an absolute proportion in the signboards of shops in Luding. The purpose of translation is to enable the target language audience to understand the meaning of the source language, play a directive role, and guide the audience to make corresponding actions. However, pure transliteration is not conducive to the target language audience's understanding of the source language. To some extent, the efficacy of transliteration cannot be compared to literal and free translation.

4.2 Literal Translation

Out of all the required shop signboards corpus, there are 19 literal translations, accounting for 27%. Among these 19 literal translation corpora, some are completely literal translations with equivalent forms and information in both Chinese and English, such as: Sino Gem, China Mobile, COLORFUL CRADLE, Growupone&one, Romantic Spring, China TELECOM, and LUCKY PHONENIX. Some of them adopt a translation strategy of literal translation and omission, such as Mercury Home Textile (MERCURY), where the "home textile" information is omitted and only "Mercury" is translated into English. Mercury Home Textile is a famous bedding brand in China, and its trademark is expressed as MERCURY in English. This product is well-known in China, but for foreign audiences who are not familiar with Chinese brands, so MERCURY alone cannot smoothly achieve the intended trademark indication. In addition, this translation strategy is also adopted by Gold Bank of China. Gold Bank of China is translated into GOLD OF CHINA, where the word 'bank' is omitted; Besides, Hisense, a shop selling TV, uses the same translation strategy. There also exists a translation strategy of literal translation and free translation, such as "the translation of 'City Beauty' is translated into 'COSMO LADY', in which the first word is literal translation, and the second word is free translation of 'Beauty'" [11]; Extreme fitness, the first word "extreme" translated as "extreme" is a literal translation, and the second word "jian" translated as "fitness" is a free translation. The literal translation method makes the translation and the original text have the same or similar language expression forms, retaining the cultural characteristics of the source language and enabling the audience to better understand the meaning of the original text, which is conducive to the communication and development of the two languages.

4.3 Free Translation

In the signboards of shops in Luding, the author has collected a small amount of free translation language materials. According to Baidu Chinese, "Liang" has two pronunciations, one is "liang" with falling tone. The basic definition is: beautiful, good-looking; Another pronunciation is "jing", with also falling tone. The basic definition is "dressing up". And the Chinese meaning of "Scenic" is: beautiful scenery. Another example is TEENIX Petty Life, which is an imported beauty

product. “TEENIX” in Chinese means: teenagers; “Petty” means trivial, small, stingy, or minor; “TEENIX Petty Life” in Chinese means “the trivial life of a teenager”. Translating ‘petty bourgeoisie’ into ‘TEENIX’ belongs to a free translation. Free translation uses simple words to express the original meaning, avoiding the lengthy and obscure translation, making the translation more fluent. But this kind of free translation is far from the meaning expressed in the source language, and if it is not explained or explained with annotations, it cannot provide information guidance for the target language audience.

5. CONCLUSION

The most commonly used English translation method for shop signboards in the Luding area is transliteration. This translation strategy of transliteration is very simple for source language translators, but it is not very effective for target language readers because even if target language readers can read Chinese’s ‘Pinyin’, they do not understand the Chinese characters and their meanings corresponding to ‘Pinyin’. This translation method cannot convey the information that the language should have for target language readers. In terms of language landscape, literal translation is an ideal translation strategy, which not only maintains the expression form of the source language structure, but also preserves the cultural characteristics of the source language. Compared to cultural gaps or unequal language landscapes, the translation strategy of free translation can be adopted. This article does not discuss the ‘translation standards and accuracy’ in the signboards of shops in Luding [12], which provides a certain research direction for scholars studying the language landscape of Luding in the future.

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