

# A Comparative Study on the Syntactic Patterns of Russian and Chinese Restrictive Linguistic Landscapes\*

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**Abstract**—Certain patterns including correspondence and non-correspondence patterns are drawn from a comparative analysis on the linguistic characteristics of Russian and Chinese restrictive linguistic landscapes from the functional point of linguistic landscapes. In syntactic structure, imperative sentences are often used in Russian and Chinese restrictive linguistic landscapes; passive sentences and infinitive sentences are unique features of Russian syntax, while four-character structure is unique to Chinese syntax. The sentences started with "exclusive", "please" or "don't" have almost corresponding patterns, while the sentence started with "no" is a Chinese-specific pattern. This study aims to standardize the translation from Chinese linguistic landscape into Russian, provide reference for the writing and translation of Russian-Chinese linguistic landscapes, and provide reference for Russian-Chinese contrast and translation teaching.

**Keywords**—Russian and Chinese; restrictive; linguistic landscape; syntactic pattern

## I. INTRODUCTION

Western linguistic landscape research began in 1970s. The paper "A Empirical Study of the Vitality of Linguistic Landscape and National Language" issued by Landry & Bourhis on 1997 laid a foundation for researches on "Linguistic Landscape" from perspective of sociolinguistics. The research theme focuses on the use of multiple languages, the implementation of language policies, the use of regional or minority languages and the spread and diffusion of English. In Russia, there are only researches on linguistic landscapes from the perspective of linguistics, the research was started late, and there are few literatures about it. At

present, there is no consensus reached with respect to the name of linguistic landscape. Its expression is various and общественные знаки is mostly used. In China, the research on linguistic landscapes was begun in 1989 and flourished in the 21st century (Liu Lifen, 2016: 53). The literature mostly appeared in form of "public signs" and mainly based on non-empirical research; the research field is wide, and the signboards mainly show downtown and tourist attractions. In this paper, the quality of English translation on Chinese and English public signage will be analyzed and translation strategies and normative suggestions will be proposed.

The public sign words on public facilities such as guideboards, billboards, street nameplates, place nameplates, shop signs and government buildings jointly constitute the linguistic landscape of a region or a city cluster. Its main function is information and symbolic functions. Based on function, it can be divided into indicative, suggestive, restrictive, mandatory and advertising call-to-action types.

This paper takes the pictures taken in Russian cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Chelyabinsk and Blagoveshchensk and Chinese cities such as Beijing, Harbin and Heihe as well as the linguistic landscapes on Russian website, CNKI and other related websites as the linguistic data.

## II. SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE PATTERN

### A. Using Imperative Sentence

Imperative sentence represents an order or a request. In Russian and Chinese restrictive linguistic landscapes, imperative sentences are mostly used. The imperative sentences appeared in Russian restrictive linguistic landscapes mainly adopt verb imperative structure (as the core component of the sentence) and verb infinitive structure (as the main component of the sentence). For instance:

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Вставьте монету 10 рублей в замок тележки! (Please put RUB 10 coins in the shopping cart lock!) ПРОСЬБА! КЛЮЧИ, ТЕЛЕФОНЫ, МЕТАЛЛИЧЕСКИЕ ПРЕДМЕТЫ ВЫЛОЖИТЬ НА СТОЛ! (Please take out put your keys, mobile phone, metal objects on the table!) Chinese restrictive linguistic landscapes are often represented by words such as "please", "please don't", "don't" and other verbs having the meaning of command or request. For instance: "Please speak Mandarin for the convenience of you and me"; "Please don't spit everywhere"; "Danger! Deep water; please stay away"; "Please look forward for more exciting"; "Don't have a try, if you don't buy it."

#### B. Using Passive Sentence

The voice of Russian verbs is divided into active voice and passive voice. Only transitive verb has corresponding form of voice and only transitive verb can constitute a passive voice. The symbol of passive verb is -ся. Passive verb can constitute a Russian passive sentence. Russian restrictive linguistic landscape constitutes passive sentence by using passive verb, such as НЕ ПРИСЛОНЯТЬСЯ! (Don't lean on it!) Chinese restrictive linguistic landscape is not represented by using passive sentence.

#### C. Using Infinitive Sentence

The Russian verb infinitive is the original form of the verb; however, Chinese does not have this statement. The one-member sentence with main component just represented by verb infinitive is called infinitive sentence (Zhang Huisen. 2010: 484). Russian restrictive linguistic landscapes uses infinitive sentences wherein verb infinitives often serve as predicate; however, Chinese does not have such sentence pattern. For instance: При пожаре звонить с городского 101 с мобильного 112. (Dial 101 (for city call) or 112 (for mobile phone) in case of fire.) ВНИМАНИЕ! В случае возникновения пожара необходимо СОРВАТЬ ПЛОМБУ. (Note: Please always pull off the lead sealing in case of fire.) ВНИМАНИЕ! ВЪЕЗД ВО ДВОР АВТОМОБИЛИ НЕ ПАРКОВАТЬ! (Note: Please don't stop after driving into the courtyard!)

#### D. Customary Four-character Structure

The Chinese restrictive linguistic landscapes prefer four-character structure, and Russian does not have such sentence pattern. The four-character structure of Chinese has a short configuration, profound meaning and strong expressiveness. The four-character structure is mainly formulated by imitating idioms. There is a sense of rhythmic and sonorous in voice, the form is antithesis, the expression is clear, concise and appropriate (Huang Zhonglian, Li Yashu. 2004: 235). For example: "Staff only"; "Danger of electric shock! Do not touch"; "Under resetting and updating! Keep looking forward"; "Fire equipment! Don't move it in other time than alarming"; "Prohibit visit" and so on.

### III. RESTRICTION TYPES

Restrictive language landscape imposes restrictions and constraints on the behavior of the relevant public. The

expression applied is straightforward, but it does not make people feel tough, rude and unreasonable (Bei Zhu, Shan Aimin. 2002: 77). Restrictive linguistic landscapes can be divided into 4 types.

#### A. "Exclusive" Type

Exclusive-type linguistic landscape only limits the behavior of the relevant public to facilitate a specific group of people. In Russian, this type mostly adopt a sentence pattern containing только для кого-чего, по кому-чему, кроме кого-чего; in Chinese, this type can be expressed by using words such as "only/private (share)", "...at sight", "except...". It is mainly used to implement notice, request and ask linguistic acts. Such as: стоянка только для клиентов (parking space for customers only) / parking spaces for the disabled only; Вход строго по пропускам. (Prohibit entry without traffic permit) / free bath for once at sight of this voucher; кроме служебного транспорта (except buses) / bicycles.

#### B. "Please" Type

Restrictive linguistic landscapes often contain obvious words that are makes the expression a little gentle and euphemistic, such as "please", "please don't" and so on. Euphemistic request type mostly apply imperative sentence and is generally verb command type in Russian and "please..." structure in Chinese. The "please" type indicates a polite tone and is more moderate. It is used to guide, remind, or prevent the occurrence of specific behaviors (Liu Lifan. 2016: 87). The Russian common mode is (пожалуйста) + plural verb second-person imperative mode. In Russian, this type is represented by the perfective and imperfective verb second-person imperative mode. Perfective imperative mode focuses on the completion and result of an action and is usually used to ask or command the other party to do a specific, simple and easy action, while imperfective imperative mode focuses on doing this action and emphasize on doing something (Zhang Huisen. 2010: 258-259). For instance: УВАЖАЕМЫЕ ПОКУПАТЕЛИ! Пожалуйста, пройдите в соседнюю кассу. (Dear customers! Please go to the nearby checkout counter to check out.) Для получения подробной информации считайте QR-код с помощью мобильного устройства. (For more information, please scan the QR code with your mobile phone.) будьте+adjective short-tail plural form mode has the meaning of enjoining and warning. For instance: ВНИМАНИЕ! БУДЬТЕ ОСТОРОЖНЫ! ДВЕРЬ ОТКРЫВАЕТСЯ АВТОМАТИЧЕСКИ. (Note: Please be careful! The door may open automatically.) With respect to the (Убедительно) просим Вас + (не) + verb infinitive mode, if the request is highly sincere, it is often attached with adverb having unshaken tone such as убедительно. For example: Убедительно просим Вас не оставлять в карманах верхней одежды деньги и ценные вещи. (Please do not put money and valuables in the outside pocket.) Wherein, he is used before the infinitive and imperfective verb infinitive is used, which means to "let someone not do sth". УВАЖАЕМЫЕ ПОКУПАТЕЛИ! При выборе хлебобулочных изделий просим Вас использовать одноразовые перчатки и пакеты. (Dear customers! Please

use disposable gloves and plastic bags when choosing bread products.) просьба +не+ +verb infinitive mode, such as: Уважаемые посетители! Во избежание недоразумений, просьба не оставлять ценные предметы в карманах вещей, сдаваемых в гардероб. (Dear visitors! Please don't put valuables in the pockets of clothing in locker room to avoid misunderstanding.) With respect to Большая (убедительная) просьба mode, if the request is highly sincere, it is often attached with adjective having unshaken tone such as большая and убедительная. For instance: УВАЖАЕМЫЕ ПОКУПАТЕЛИ! УБЕДИТЕЛЬНАЯ ПРОСЬБА, ЦЕННЫЕ ВЕЩИ В ЯЧЕЙКАХ ДЛЯ ХРАНЕНИЯ НЕ ОСТАВЛЯТЬ. (Dear customer! Please don't leave valuables in the storage box!) With respect to the Не+ соверюем+ verb infinitive negative structure mode, the infinitive generally adopts imperfective structure, indicating "don't want to do sth", "let sb. not do sth". For instance: МЫ НЕ КУРИМ! И ВАМ НЕ СОВЕТУЕМ! (We don't smoke, so please don't smoke.) In Chinese, it is presented by the pattern such as "please/please don't/please do not ..." For instance: temporary stop, please take care of; please don't litter the place with wastepaper; opening soon, please look forward to; please do not trample on green space.

The Russian-Chinese restrictive "please" linguistic landscapes have the following corresponding structures: the plural verb second-person imperative mode, the просим + verb infinitive structure and the просьба + verb infinitive structure in Russian is corresponding to the Chinese "please" structure; не + plural verb second-person imperative mode, просим +не+ imperfective verb infinitive structure, просьба+не+ verb infinitive structure and Не+ соверюем+ imperfective verb infinitive structure in Russian are corresponding to the "Don't" and "Please don't" patterns in Chinese.

### C. "Never" Type

The "Never" type structure means to do not have some behavior. This linguistic landscape has stronger tone than that of "please" pattern and is more restrictive. The activities restrained by this structure are generally behaviors that are greatly prevented and should be put to end.

The corresponding general pattern in Russian is the negative structure of не+ imperfective verb infinitive, which means "no need, unnecessary to do something". For example: Внимание! Стаканы с жидкостью в мусорные баки не бросать! (Note: Do not get the cup filled with liquid thrown into dustbin!) ОСТОРОЖНО! СХОД СНЕГА! МАШИНЫ БЛИЖЕ 10 М НЕ СТАВИТЬ! (Be careful! Danger of snow falling! No parking within 10 meters!) However in Chinese, it is expressed as "Never ... /No... / Do not ..." For instance: "Be careful! Never press or fall"; "Power distribution area! Authorized personnel only"; "Watch out! Danger of high voltage! No entry"; "Don't spit everywhere".

### D. "No" Type

"No" means resigning and refusing, reminding the relevant public not to do something. This sentence pattern is gentler in tone than the tone of "prohibition" and is beneficial to public acceptance. This type is commonly used in Chinese,

such as: "No taking pictures", "No merchandising", "No credit charge", "Clearly-marked price! No bargaining", "No entry! Staff only!" and so on. In Russian, there is not a term corresponding to "No", but it can be represented by a negative structure of не+ imperfective verb infinitive, such as: С ЕДОЙ И НАПИТКАМИ НЕ ВХОДИТЬ! (Don't bring food and drinks in!) ; "Prohibit bringing your own drinks, beverages and food."

## IV. CONCLUSION

Over a comparative analysis on the linguistic characteristics of Russian and Chinese restrictive linguistic landscapes from function point of linguistic landscape, it is concluded that: in syntactic structure, imperative sentences are often used in Russian and Chinese restrictive linguistic landscapes; passive sentences and infinitive sentences are unique features of Russian syntax, while four-character structure is unique to Chinese syntax. The sentences started with "exclusive", "please" or "don't" have almost corresponding patterns, while the sentence started with "no" is a Chinese-specific pattern. This study result can standardize the translation of language landscape from Chinese into Russian, provide convenience for Russian nationals in China, provide a blueprint for the national and local governments, enterprises and even individuals in formulating linguistic landscape and promote Chinese culture to go to the countries speaking Russian.

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