

# Glocal Expression in Wudaokou Commercial Linguistic Landscape

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## ABSTRACT

From the perspectives of sociolinguistics and social semiotics, on the basis of Luke Rowland's theory of glocalization and Kress's theory of multimodal semiotics, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis methods, this study focuses on analyzing the commercial linguistic landscape of foreign languages in Wudaokou factors and laws with the highest proportion of medium density. It is found that the English presented in some commercial linguistic landscapes is more Chinese (such as U Center), and the use of foreign languages on the basis of combining indigenous elements is to show a sense of luxury on the basis of absorbing foreign languages. Wudaokou commercial linguistic landscapes absorb a large number of foreign languages that embody decorationism. The decorative usage of foreign languages is also a manifestation of the local culture's re-absorption and disposal of the global power. English is a strategic language for expression and decoration in bottom-up unofficial linguistic landscapes. There is no strict control on semantic grammar and normative use. The usage of English absorbs and integrates localized elements, reflecting the dynamics of the commercial linguistic landscapes.

**Keywords:** Commercial linguistic landscape, Glocalization, Multimodal semiotics, Decorationism, Dynamism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Literature Review

Based on Burke's five elements (the agent, the scene, the agency (means), the purpose and the act itself) [1], using motive analysis combining qualitative research methods, interviews were conducted with Japanese college students on their perceptions and motivational interpretations of a large number of English presentations on multilingual linguistic landscapes in Japan, and the factors that contributed to the presentation of a

large number of English in the Japanese multilingual landscape were discussed and analyzed. Through a combination of theory and practice to analyze the focus of Glocalization, the results show that there are three different characteristics of English language use motivation on Japanese language landscape signs, which are partly commercialism, cultural essentialism and glocalization. Jaworski (2019) proposes X-scape, he believes that X-scape is a global linguistic landscape, and X-scape embodies the symbolic ideology of transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and globalism [2].

To sum up, foreign linguistic landscape studies on the global localization of linguistic landscapes mainly focus on the macro level (Luke Rowland, 2016) [1]. Based on this, this research mainly starts from the perspective of Glocalization, refines the specific dimensions of Glocalization from the micro level, and focuses on discussing and analyzing the characteristics of Glocalization in the commercial linguistic landscape.

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1.2 Question Statement

In the process of exploring the theoretical model of social glocalization, Robertson (1992, 1995) introduced the theory of glocalization, which is specifically defined as the way in which global pressure conforms to local conditions and makes local culture not only manifest as Passive recipient, but able to absorb and reprocess global forces [3][4]. Glocalization is neither a way of denying the influence of global culture, nor a way of asserting the integrity of indigenous cultures. It is a way that will lead to unique peoples rooted in tradition cultural phenomenon, but operating in an increasingly interconnected world. The process by

which local cultures absorb and reprocess foreign influences breaks traditional proprietary relationships, so that symbolic resources that seem to be national and actually increasingly available for different global interpretations and consumption. Specifically, the core of glocalization lies in accepting the influence of global culture. On the one hand, allowing local culture to be deciphered, separated and easily accepted. The principle penetrates into the specific analysis process of the linguistic landscape, and discusses how the linguistic landscape absorbs and processes foreign elements, that is, how the two are combined in the linguistic landscape.

Table 1. Comparison table of collocation patterns of commercial linguistic landscapes in Wudaokou Shopping Center (n=180)

Token Type	Number	Frequency (%)	Commercial Linguistic Landscape Sample
Pure Chinese	28	15.56	
Pure English	38	21.10	
Chinese + English	114	63.34	
Totality	180	100	/

According to the types of symbols, this research divided the collected and photographed 180 commercial linguistic landscapes into three categories: pure Chinese characters, pure English, and Chinese characters + foreign languages (Table 1). The density ratio of the three token types also reflects the law of the combination of glocalization and localization. Based on this, this study attempts to answer the following two research questions, (1) How does the law of global localization in the commercial linguistic landscape manifested? (2) What are the characteristics of the commercial linguistic landscape from the perspective of the globalization paradigm?

1.3 Research Methods

This research uses digital camera photography (2020.9.19-2020.11.3), quantitative analysis and interview method of statistical analysis, and qualitative analysis of microscopic specific analysis combined with the theory of literacy.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

1.4.1 Literacy Theory

In the article *Linguistic Landscape: the Semiotics of Public Signs*, Spolsky (2020) reviewed the existing diachronic research on foreign linguistic landscapes and believed that linguistic landscapes possess and provide a state of literacy [5]. Both reading and writing are equally important to the linguistic landscape. He believes that the main foundation of linguistic landscape comes from the study of social semiotics, and linguistic landscape can be regarded as a branch of social semiotics research. Therefore, it is also an important study to study linguistic landscape from the perspective of social semiotics. For example, Scollon & Scollon (2003) has already proposed the theoretical framework of place semiotics [6]. Jaworski & Thurlow (2010) regards space as a kind of *symbolic resource*, and proposes the definition of *symbolic linguistic landscape* [7]. It can be seen that the literacy theory proposed by Spolsky (2020) is based on the sociosemiotic theory of Scollon

&Scollon (2003) and Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) on the basis of the theory of *symbolic resources*, which was reconstructed and integrated [5].

#### 1.4.2 Place Semiotics Framework — Visual Semiotics Perspective

Scollon & Scollon (2003), based on the visual semiotic framework proposed by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), studied *discourse in place*, also known as *Geosemiotics*, mainly studying discourse how to express meaning in specific places [6]. Place semiotics is a subsystem of geosemiotics. It is a set of frameworks for analyzing the language symbol system in the real environment. It consists of code preference, inscription, emplacement and other subsystems. Code orientation refers to the position or priority relationship among various languages on multilingual signage. When language signs involve more than one language, the problem of code sequence arises, thus reflecting its social status within the language community. Word engraving refers to the meaning system of the way the sign language is presented, including fonts, materials, additional components or extensions, state changes, etc. Placement studies the meaning activated by the act of placing a sign at a location, which is the most fundamental concern of geosemiotics. Placement includes three forms, which are partly decontextualized placement, deviant placement, and scene placement.

#### 1.4.3 Multimodal Social Semiotics Perspective

Symbolic linguistic landscape is the combination and interactive generation of language and visual communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) [8]. The biggest goal of multimodal image-text combination is to achieve the interaction between language and visual communication and to exert its symbolic meaning and function. The text is composed of multiple compatible and coexisting languages in the context of a variety of written languages, which are mixed on the linguistic landscape logo. The colors, words and pictures on the logo are not just simple explicit decorations. Out of the necessary symbolism, this multimodal text forms a new visual. Literacy text, the written style itself is a form of visual communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) [8]. Linguistic landscape is a cultural linguistic landscape that is cultural, communicative and indicative.

## 2. GLOCAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMERCIAL LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

### 2.1 The Level of Spatial Organization

Starting from the spatial organization of commercial linguistic landscapes, and according to the place semiotics framework of Scollon & Scollon (2003) [6], we can find that from the perspective of the code orientation of this linguistic landscape, the main message is *May you are not thirsty* on the left and *marry book*, both are given information, the multimodal cartoon image *smiling plum* on the right as new information provides specific index and main information for the left main information and direction. From the top-down perspective, the *marry book* at the top is presented as idealized information, while the bottom *May you are not thirsty* is the real information.



Figure 1 Wudaokou Commercial Linguistic Landscape.

From the aspect of engraving, the background color of the sign and the multimodal image of plums reflect the color of plums, dominated by rose red, and *Plum you are not thirsty* is white. The use of contrasting colors can clearly present the information to the receiver, and will not affect the reader's acceptance and understanding of the information due to the ambiguity of the information. As far as the placement system is concerned, the commercial linguistic landscape is placed in the Wudaokou commercial shopping center as a leisure food to play its proper indicating function, that is, the *Mei* food, which belongs to the scene placement. From the point of the use of materials, it is metal material, which is sturdy and durable. The reflection of commercial linguistic landscape in global localization will be realized through the following process of discussion on translation, context and other dimensions.

## 2.2 The Explicit and Implicit Aspects of the Commercial Linguistic Landscape

Hidden commercial linguistic landscape directly reflects internationalization and indirectly reflects localization. For example, Figure 2 is a typical plain English commercial linguistic landscape. From the perspective of code orientation, the sign is only presented in English as one code. But it is worth noting that there are two ways of presentation of the sign in pure English in the overall unit. On the front, the uppercase VERA MODA is presented in the most conspicuous and important position—the center of the sign, while the plain English characters are on the right side of the multimodal image symbol, occupying less space, and the image dominates the entire sign, while English characters are relatively secondary. To a certain extent, this can be explained the positive plain English characters that convey the main message to foreign consumers, and more of a symbolic expression to Chinese consumers. The multimodal symbols combined with side pictures and texts convey indexical information to the receiver, that is, the correlation between the multimodal images and words embodied in the sign and the third space (indoor clothes, decorative structures), and also reflects the two different tendencies of emphasis between linguistic signs and multimodal signs, code preference and visual preference. From the perspective of color, the background color of the front sign is black and the font is white; the background color of the side sign is white and powder, the image is presented in black and white, and the font is white. The use of contrasting colors can clearly present the information to the receiver, and will not affect the reader's acceptance and understanding of the information due to the ambiguity of the information. As far as the placement system is concerned, the sign is placed in the commercial shopping center as a European and American fashion sign to play its proper indicating function, which belongs to the scene placement. The side signs are made of paper, which is temporary and recent. The former embodies different information conveyed to receivers at different levels, while the latter embodies the association and combination of the multimodal commercial linguistic landscape and the third space, that is, from the explicit level, the multimodal image is directly related to the store. On the implicit level, intuitive multimodal images provide specific directions for Chinese consumers who do not understand English. Specifically, multimodal symbols play the role of a

*mock-Chinese identity* in such a linguistic landscape combining pure English graphics and text. Although the text presented by pure English signs reflects international characteristics, However, the multimodal image, as the augmentation of symbols, indirectly presents the characteristics of localization, and reflects the coexistence of glocalization and localization.



Figure 2 Wudaokou Commercial Linguistic Landscape.

Dominant commercial linguistic landscapes' internationalization and localization are directly reflected at the same time. "Figure 2" is selected as a typical example for analysis. From the perspective of the language code orientation on the surface, this sign appears in the form of Chinese characters + English, the font size is basically the same, and the language is separated by a separator. But it is worth noting that foreign characters are highly influenced by Chinese, and the translation of foreign languages is Chinese, which only translates the literal meaning. By absorbing English into Chinese (Reconfigured English), semantics can be managed, and the transformation of semantics is purely for viewing purposes. Cooperation, in fact, is a foreign community and serves as a further boundary between China and the outside world. Here, it may be possible to further elaborate on the decorative function and high-level sense function of the indirect index of foreign letters. From the perspective of color, the background color is green, the font color is white, the color contrast is bright, and the information function is strong. From the material Look, it is made of metal, which has durability and is aimed at domestic and foreign recipients. It not only shows the mock-western identity, but also reflects the localization characteristics.



Figure 3 Wudaokou Commercial Linguistic Landscape.

Taking Figure 4 as an example, the foreign language of You in Yousheng Building is translated as U, and U is a homophone of You, which has no practical meaning in grammar and vocabulary, but the context has been reconstructed. Most of the time, the use of this language has no traditional semantic meaning and is mainly for ornamental effect, but its popularity is so high that, for example, there are few signs without English in the commercial linguistic landscape of Wudaokou shopping center. Shohamy & Gorter (2009:1) regard linguistic landscape as *language in the environment, discourses and images presented in public spaces* [9]. The focus of linguistic landscape is not only the static linguistic landscape of language symbols presented on signage, but its presentation is also inseparably related to the dynamic environment in which it is located. It is mainly reflected in the combination of native Chinese and alphabet words, which makes discourse, context and meaning constantly reconstructed and integrated, while English plays an important role in the local language ecology. Constructing and integrating, the reconstruction of the context adapts to the local language environment and cultural environment.



Figure 4 Wudaokou Commercial Linguistic Landscape.

In the linguistic landscape of multilingual competition, the language in the dominant position can reflect the personal preferences of the founder and relevant stakeholders in the society. The degree of prominence of the text is reflected (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) [6]. From the perspective of the internal environment of the shops in Wudaokou

Shopping Center, whether it is the commercialization, delicacy and artistic sense that the merchants want to create, or the actual noise, neatness and cramps, all of them highlight the supreme status of commercial elements and commercial pursuits.

The former is a manifestation of the conscious use of symbol linguistic landscapes by commercialism to attract customers, while the latter is a manifestation of the ubiquitous commercial atmosphere and commercial atmosphere. Judging from the static linguistic landscape of shops, both the official language Chinese and the internationalized English have been squeezed to varying degrees in the commercial-oriented space. From the appearance, English seems to be stronger, but when it penetrates into its internal processes and links, it returns to the perspective of capital and the links that really involve buying and selling, English will take the initiative to give way to Chinese.

### 2.3 Translation Level

Figure 1 is a commercial linguistic landscape, which is also a typical register expression. The left side is guided by *Mei*, and the top left of the sign is presented in the form of prominent Chinese and supplemented by English. The translation of *Mei you are not thirsty* into marry book is a typical transliteration, and it is also the localized application of English by Chinese brands. *Mei you are not thirsty* comes from the allusion of *Wangmei to quench thirst*, *Wangmei* corresponds to *Mei you*, and *quenching thirst* corresponds to not thirsty. The name of this store signage is derived from idiom allusions, but in order to consider the commercialized context of the sign and the consumer groups it faces, the founder of the sign takes the idiom as the foundation, and actively mobilizes the language factor under the premise of adapting to the expression content and language environment, use *Mei you are not thirsty* to name the store.

*Mei you are not thirsty* is the source language, and marrybook is the target language. The source language and the target language are phonetically equivalent. In addition, *mei you* in *mei you are not thirsty* is homophonic with marry, and not thirsty is homophonic with book. In the process of naming the store, the merchant (the sign maker) took into account the expectations of domestic and foreign consumers to the greatest extent, and aroused consumers' interest in *defamiliarization*. On the

right, *smiling plum* is used as an image modality to assist with language symbols, further highlighting the theme element dominated by *mei*. On the other hand, it is a hot word on the Internet of contemporary teenagers, a kind of identity construction (going in means identity and fashion).

## 2.4 Context Level

### 2.4.1 Evoking the Internationalization

Firstly, the locales in the commercial linguistic landscape overlap. The linguistic landscape of the Starbucks advertisement (Figure 5) combines Chinese and Western language usage. The Chinese say it with starbucks appears in a larger font at the top, and the smaller English translation say it with starbucks is used below to reveal the Starbucks brand. It is worth noting that the homonym of star with heart not only expresses the brand name, but also conveys the meaning of serving with heart in combination with the wrapping paper that is transformed into a dialog box on the picture cup. The English brand name, as the most basic information provided, only appears in the margin area. The creative connotation of the advertisement is reflected in the structural fusion of Chinese and English texts and images, which fully demonstrates the overlapping of language environments.



Figure 5 Wudaokou Commercial Linguistic Landscape.

Secondly, the cultural context in the commercial linguistic landscape overlaps. Taking the Uniqlo commercial advertising linguistic landscape (Figure 6), the female star in the picture is wearing a Uniqlo T-shirt and presents a confident, young and smiling image, reflecting the cultural dominance of international fashion. Since English has a symbolic function in its essence (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) [10], a large number of English is a consumerist international language that embodies the trend of internationalization to the receivers (consumers, foreign tourists, etc).



Figure 6 Wudaokou Commercial Linguistic Landscape.

### 2.4.2 Evoking the Localization

At first, the advertising linguistic landscape of traditional cultural customs with Chinese characteristics is transparent. That is, these advertisements often use models with Chinese characteristics instead of matching international elements in some fashion advertisements. At the same time, their images are also full of Chinese elements. Taking the advertisement linguistic landscape of Nanmen Shabu-shabu (Figure 7) as an example, first of all, traditional culture will affect the choice of text. This Chinese text is presented in Chinese fonts (regular style). Secondly, the use of English also shows a tendency to be casual and Chinese, such as Nan Men Hotpot. Thirdly, the images of shabu-shabu, dishes and meat products in the advertisements are not limited to the connotative meaning of the superficial form, but have multiple extended meanings. The hot pot is like a melting pot, which not only symbolizes the traditional Chinese food culture, but also shapes the image symbol of harmony and unity of the Chinese people.



Figure 7 Wudaokou commercial linguistic landscape.

## 3. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of Glocalization, this study is based on Spolsky's literacy theory, and uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis methods to focus on analyzing the characteristics of Glocalization in the commercial linguistic landscape. The research found that English presented in some commercial linguistic

landscapes is more Chinese, and the use of foreign languages on the basis of combining indigenous elements is to show a sense of luxury on the basis of absorbing foreign languages. Wudaokou commercial linguistic landscapes' absorption of a large number of foreign languages reflects decorationism. The decorative use of foreign languages is also a manifestation of the local culture's re-absorption and disposal of global power. English in the bottom-up unofficial linguistic landscape is a strategy for expression and decoration. The emergence of sexual language forms a visual ornamental effect and decorative effect, and there is no strict control over the use of semantic grammar and norms, the use of English absorbs and integrates localized elements, reflecting the dynamics of the commercial linguistic landscape. At the same time, the typical commercial linguistic landscape is also a specific contextual manifestation of fixed-point globalization.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

In this paper, Wenli Fu wrote the whole manuscript, collected related linguistic landscape digital pictures and conducted the associative experiment. Lisha Xu and Na Yang contributed to revising and editing the whole paper.

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