Study on language landscape of ancient city streets

-- Taking Guan Yinggu Street in Yibin as an example

Jingjing Luo [1], Yongyi Wen [2]

[1] School of Humanities and Management, Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xian yang, Shaanxi, China
[2] School of Foreign Languages, Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xian yang, Shaanxi, China
[a]1321351589@qq.com
[b]1121602719@qq.com

Abstract. Through the investigation of the linguistic landscape of Yibin Guanying Ancient Street, this paper attempts to explore the multilingual phenomenon in the area and the linguistic characteristics behind it. The study proves that in Yibin Guanying Ancient Street, Chinese occupies a dominant position in language codes, and the phenomenon of multilingualism is significant, and it also contains certain dialects and regional characteristics.

Keywords: language landscape, historical and cultural district, store name signage

1   Introduction

Landry & Bourhis [1] defines "linguistic landscape" as a language that appears on public street signs, billboards, street names, place names, shop signs, and public signage in government buildings. The names and signage of shops in the historical and cultural district are "slices" of living language use, which is an ideal corpus for exploring the language landscape. At present, the research of domestic language landscape mostly focuses on the language itself, and rarely analyzes the social and economic issues behind the language landscape [2]. Taking Yibin Guanying Ancient Street as an example, this paper fully explores the deep-seated motives behind different landscapes through the two perspectives of comparison between different languages and internal comparison of the same language, and attempts to make some breakthrough attempts in the study of the language landscape of domestic historical and cultural districts.

2   Review of studies

In the study of language landscape at home and abroad, the law of language competition and variation is a research hotspot, and the objects are mostly international common languages, especially the changes in language order and the phenomenon of

multilingual mixing caused by English in contact with a country's native language. The phenomenon of multilingualism has become the norm in different regional language landscapes, and the competition mechanism between local lingua franca, native non-lingua franca and foreign languages has become more and more complex. The main language code in the language landscape is generally the local lingua franca, and English maintains the status of the first foreign language in most cases, and its symbolic value is higher than the information value.

3 Research methods

3.1 Overview of sampling sites

Yibin, the capital city of the Yangtze River, where the Minjiang, Jinsha and Yangtze rivers meet, and the culture of the great river has a long history. At the confluence of the three rivers in Yibin, Sichuan, China, there is an ancient street built in the Qing Dynasty with a history of more than 100 years - Guanying Street. Built in the Ming Dynasty, this ancient street is 204 meters long and 3.5 meters wide, so it is also known as "the world's shortest ancient street". Guanying Ancient Street Project is a large-scale ancient architectural landscape commercial block integrating tourism, shopping and leisure, business entertainment, vacation leisure and cultural experience, covering a total area of 90,000 square meters and a total construction area of 89,000 square meters. The above-mentioned sampling area is a representative historical and cultural district and tourist attraction in Yibin urban area, and exploring the distribution, characteristics and functions of language codes in its store name signage has its unique value for in-depth study of the "global localization" feature in the language landscape.

3.2 Study design and process

The research material is mainly derived from the image records of fieldwork. In July 2023, we photographed the names and signage of shops on both sides of Guanying Street, and collected a total of 122 valid samples. When counting the corpus, we followed the method used by Backhaus [3], counting each sign with an independent border as a statistical unit, and encoded the corpus according to variables such as the sign's code type, multilingual text type, salient code, and primary language code.

3.3 Study results

According to Zhao Xueqing's [5] method to collect data found that on Guanying Ancient Street, Chinese was an overwhelmingly dominant language code. A total of 122 language signs were collected in Guanying Street, of which Chinese monolingual signs accounted for half, accounting for 50%; followed by bilingual signage in Chinese and English, accounting for 23%; The rest were Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean multilingual signage (20.4%), English monolingual signage (3.3%), and Chinese-Thai bilingual signage (3.3%). See Table 1 for details.

Table 1. Language usage of signage in Guanying Ancient Street

Number of languages	Language variety	Number of signage	Percentage
monolingual	Chinese	61	50%
	English	4	3.3%
bilingual	Chinese and English	28	23%
	Chinese and Thai	4	3.3%
multilingual	Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean	25	20.4%
Total		122	100%

According to Scollon's [4] theory of place semiotics, code orientation is an important dimension of linguistic landscape analysis. "Codex orientation refers to the priority relationship between languages on bilingual or multilingual signage to reflect their social status within the language community." When multiple language codes or scripts are involved on language signage, which comes first becomes a question worth considering. Among the signage set up in Guanying Ancient Street, the signage with the advantage of Chinese accounts for the largest proportion, accounting for 96.7%. Signage with the advantage of other languages accounted for 3.3%. This reflects Chinese's overwhelming predominance in the region, as detailed in table 2.

Table 2. Guanying Ancient Street signage priority code

	Quantity	Percentage
Take advantage of Chinese	118	96.7%
Take advantage of other languages	4	3.3%
Total	122	100%

According to the historical particularity of Guanying Ancient Street, it is found that there are still certain differences in the distribution of Chinese signs on the ancient street, Chinese signs using modern vernacular script accounted for the largest proportion, up to 80.4%, the combination of Chinese and pinyin accounted for 13.1%, followed by traditional character signs, accounting for 4.9%, and finally Chinese and dialect signs, accounting for 1.6%. It can be seen that Guanying Ancient Street still retains certain historical and cultural characteristics and regional dialect characteristics, although these two are in a weak position, but their existence itself also means that the local government and management departments think about and protect these cultural components. See table 3 for details.

Table 3. Description of the signage Chinese Guanying Ancient Street

	Quantity	Percentage
Simplified characters	49	80.4%
Chinese and pinyin	8	13.1%
Chinese and dialects	1	1.6%
Traditional characters	3	4.9%
Total	61	100%

Yibin City, where Guanying Ancient Street is located, is one of the cities in Sichuan that has vigorously developed in recent years, with rich and diversified language resources, language competition mainly involves Mandarin, Sichuan dialect and English, on the one hand, the promotion of Mandarin as a basic language has affected the use of Sichuan dialect; On the other hand ,as a northern dialect, Sichuan dialect will inevitably affect the use of Mandarin, thus deriving "Trump", a Mandarin with Sichuan characteristics. Although the proportion of monolingual and multilingual signage is not as good as the proportion of pure Chinese, it can be seen that the efforts of the local government basically respond to the local cultural inheritance of Guanying Ancient Street and the practical needs of international standards. For example, Yibin Burning noodles means Yibin Ranmian. This mixed form of Chinese-based, English-supplemented code is readable to audiences with different language backgrounds, highlighting the localization characteristics and indicating friendliness to foreign language audiences.

Yibin Guanying Ancient Street as a historical and cultural district naturally carries the responsibility and mission of spreading history and culture, there are 15 houses distributed in the block, and the block has specially introduced in four languages, which highlights the humanistic feelings and historical heritage of this street.

4   Conclusion

In this study, the shop names and signage of Guanying Ancient Street reflect the open and variant characteristics of the language landscape [6]. Chinese, English, other languages and other language codes have a clear hierarchy and are multilingual. Chinese is the main code, followed by English, while multilingualism mostly exists in signage and store names are missing. The use of pinyin, dialect, traditional characters, these Chinese internal language landscapes is displayed with the help of Chinese signs, or bilingual Chinese and English signs, reflecting local cultural characteristics and playing a corresponding functional role. [7]

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