An Analysis of the Linguistic Landscape of the University of Nottingham Ningbo, China

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Abstract: This research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies, to investigate the linguistic landscapes within the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) campus. The campus is delineated into two primary zones: living areas and teaching areas. Drawing upon Backhaus's seminal work from 2007, a comprehensive examination of 109 linguistic landscape samples across the campus is conducted, primarily utilizing a quantitative framework. The findings of this analysis reveal a predominant presence of bilingual linguistic landscapes incorporating both English and Chinese scripts within the living areas. In stark contrast, the teaching areas exhibit a notable prevalence of English linguistic landscapes, reflecting UNNC's English-based instructional environment. This disparity underscores the symbiotic relationship between English linguistic landscapes and academic contexts, while bilingual and Chinese-only linguistic landscapes serve the practical daily needs of the student body. In addition to the quantitative analysis, this study delves into a nuanced exploration of two specific linguistic landscapes, namely the signage of "Yuela Canteen" and "Arabica," employing Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal analysis framework from 2006.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, multimodality, applied linguistics

1. Introduction

According to Ben-Rafael [1], linguistic landscapes can be defined as "linguistic objects that mark the public space". All sorts of publicly visible written language, such as billboards, road and safety signs, shop signs, and advertisements, belong to linguistic landscapes [2]. The study of linguistic landscapes has been a present hotspot of sociolinguistic research because its study objects render the public space socially, economically, culturally, and politically [3]. Those are all valuable social study areas. In addition, Landry and Bourhis [4] state that informational and symbolic are two main functions of linguistic landscapes. These two aspects both function with visual communication. In that case, the visual representation of linguistic landscapes is highly influenced by its makers' motivation and intention [5]. For instance, commercial advertisements are mainly made to attract customers, which is the primary intention of the sign makers [6]. In this making process, there are three principles: (1) signs are made for specific motivation or meaning; (2) sign makers' motivation; (3) available resources [7]. The first two principles indicate the relationship between linguistic landscapes and their makers' motivation, reflecting some practical social issues. As a combination of written language and symbolic images, linguistic landscapes can be analyzed from different dimensions. According to Mulyawan, the approach of multimodal analysis is entirely appropriate for exploring the visual grammar of linguistic landscapes.

Nowadays, there is massive city-scale linguistic landscape research in developed countries, such as some European countries, the US, Korea, and Japan, which will be briefly introduced later in the literature review part. However, university-scale linguistic landscape study is rare in China. Therefore, this essay will focus on the linguistic landscapes at The University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) and explore the following research questions:

What are the percentages of linguistic landscapes in different languages in different parts of the campus of UNNC? Do the percentage change according to locations? If so, what is the reason?

How multimodal linguistic landscapes work at UNNC?

2. Linguistic Landscapes and Multimodality

Ben-Rafael [8] stated that the discussion of linguistic landscapes had been a new research trend in the past twenty years. In his research, he indicated patterns in which society copes with sign use within a given territory [3]. Later, Ben-Rafael [9] highlighted four perspectives on linguistic landscapes: (1) the presentation-of-self perspective; (2) the "good reason" perspective; (3) the collective identity perspective; (4) the power-related perspective. These four perspectives respectively correspond to (1) commercial purposes; (2) values, needs, propensities, and tastes of a certain target group; (3) belongings to a certain group; (4) a certain group's representative range in the public sphere. These subjects and their relationship with linguistic landscapes are worthwhile to explore for sociolinguists, which is the significance of linguistic landscape research.

The formerly mentioned Ben-Rafael's definition [1] of linguistic landscapes is broader than Landry and Bourhis's early definition: "language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings". The change of the definition of linguistic landscapes indicates that related research areas have been widened, including new inscriptions and non-linguistic signs in the public space, such as graffiti and posters [2]. Early linguistic landscape studies are mainly such sort of quantitative analysis, focusing on percentages of different languages in a given territory.

Motschenbacher [3] stated these studies as limited to the occurrence of "language", merely producing evidence of multilingual practices in public evidence. In recent years, the focus of linguistic landscape research has shifted towards the sociolinguistic issues behind. For instance, Motschenbacher chose sexuality on linguistic landscapes, a new heated topic of sociolinguistics, as an enlightening entry point and regarded it as a continuation of former research at the combination of geography and sexuality. Motschenbacher analyzed how the linguistic landscapes on Wilton Drive were used to construct sexual identity, desire, and sexual practices. In this study, Motschenbacher found out that homonormativity played a central role in Wilton Drive while heterosexuality and lesbian were marginalized, which can be reflected in the local linguistic landscapes. Another different aspect of Motschenbacher's research from former studies is the adopted methods. Motschenbacher followed Milani's call for analyzing queer linguistic landscapes with multimodal approaches [10].

Besides gender and sexuality issues, multimodal analysis is widely applied in other areas of linguistic landscape studies. For instance, Mulyawan [5] analyzed the visual grammar of commercial outdoor signs with multimodal approaches. He adopted Kress and Van Leuuwen's [7] framework of the grammar of visual design which is demonstrated in Figure 1, consisting of three main parts: representation, interaction, and composition. Therefore, Mulyawan [5] chose three billboard signs in Kuta villages and explored them in Kress and Leuuwen's [7] three dimensions. This study is a valuable practice of multimodal linguistic landscape analyses, indicating sign makers' intentions and the interaction with their viewers. However, there is no quantitative analysis nor an overview of Kuta's linguistic landscapes, causing a lack of representativeness and integrity.

As for locations of linguistic landscape research, developed big cities are popular choices, such as Seoul [11], Tokyo [12], Hong Kong [13], Bangkok [14], and Guangzhou [15]. These city-scale studies can provide an overview of a city's linguistic landscapes and relevant social matters. However, they are not specific enough to reflect slight distinctions among areas. For instance, Lawrence [11] analyzed the linguistic landscapes of different districts of Seoul to explore this city's multilingual phenomenon. In this study, Lawerence took pictures of public signs from different areas with distinguished social statuses and calculated their percentages of different languages, such as English, Konglish, Korean, and Chinese. From this analysis, Lawrence concluded that "high class" areas are more associated with English linguistic landscapes, which reflected the relationship between class identity and language use. According to Lawrence's data, this sort of phenomenon also exists in higher administrative areas, which can be reflected in the comparison of Seoul and Busan. However, there is a research gap at a smaller regional level, which is also valuable to investigate.

After consulting the former studies, this essay will focus on the linguistic landscapes at The University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC). As a university with a sino-foreign educational system, the campus of UNNC is an excellent sample to explore multilingualism and linguistic landscapes. Unlike Lawrence's research, this small-scale research can provide a different perspective of linguistic landscape studies. Moreover, referring to both early and present linguistic landscape research, this essay will adopt quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data, exploring the research questions.
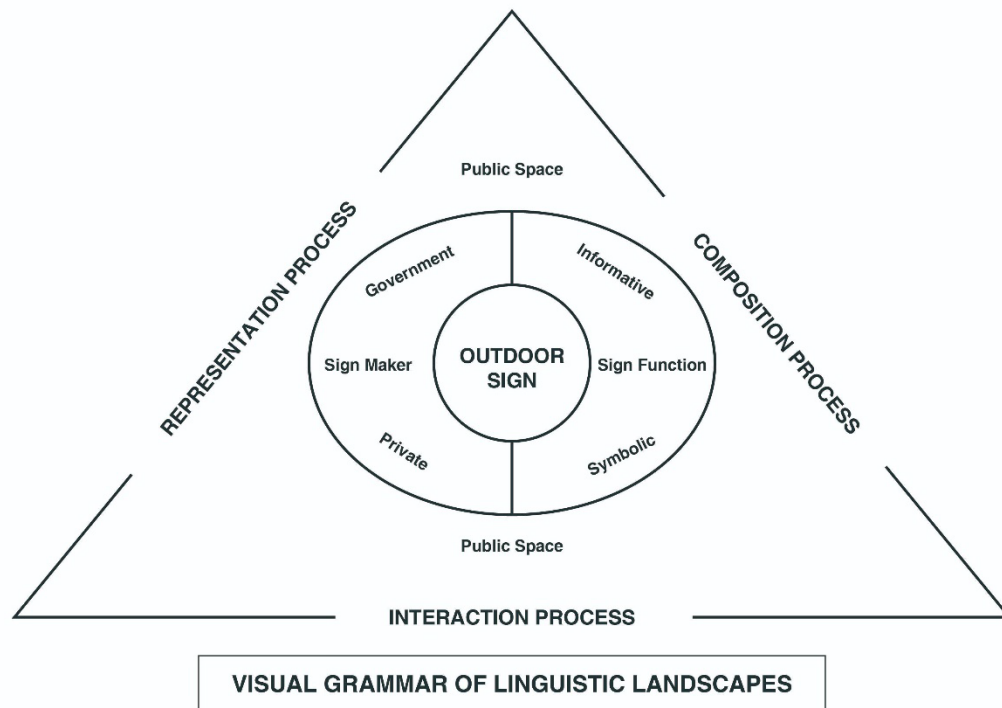
Figure 1. Concept analysis of multimodal linguistic analysis

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

This research refers to Lou's [16] method of data collection. To observe the linguistic landscapes at UNNC, I started from student residence 19 and walked to the high street, taking pictures of shop signs and advertisements from both sides. After getting out of the high street, I walked southwesterly and across the Nottingham Bridge to the teaching areas. Finally, I arrived at Trent Building through the ornamental gardens. Along the route, I took over 100 pictures, including shop signs, public signs, commercial advertisements, non-commercial advertisements, and noticeboards. The aim was to cover the linguistic landscapes on the campus of UNNC and later analyzed in the following part of this essay.

3.2 Methods

This research will refer to Lawrence's research methods and adopt a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach to examine the linguistic landscapes on the campus of UNNC. According to Backhaus [12], quantitative analyses of linguistic landscapes in different areas with different statuses can reflect Ben-Rafael's [9] collective identity perspectives, answering the research questions. After the quantitative analysis, some representative samples of linguistic landscapes will be examined with multimodal approaches from Kress and Van Leuuwen's [7] framework. Under this framework, representation, interaction, and composition process analysis will be adopted to figure out sign producers' intentions and the interaction between linguistic landscapes and their viewers.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Quantitative analysis

According to the data collection, there are three basic patterns of the linguistic landscapes at UNNC: English, Chinese and both English and Chinese. In this part, percentages of these three patterns will be examined. Firstly, the situation of living areas (student residences, the high street, and roads in this area) will be analyzed. Because of homogeneity, student residence 19 will represent other residences.

According to Table 1, the percentages of Chinese, English and bilingual linguistic landscapes are 12.5%, 6.25% and 81.25%. It is obvious that bilingual linguistic landscapes are the majority of those in student residence 19, which can be explained by the sino-English system at UNNC. Additionally, in this residence, Chinese linguistic landscapes are slightly more than English ones because the administrators and residents are all Chinese. Therefore, Chinese is the most effective language to convey information, conforming to Ben-Rafael's [9] "good reason" and collective perspectives. Another important location of the living area is the high street, where most of the shops gather.

Table 1. Numbers of different linguistic landscapes in student residence 19

	Noticeboards	Public Signs	Shop Signs	Commercial Advertisements	Non-commercial Advertisements
Chinese Only	1	0	1	0	0
English Only	0	1	0	0	0
Chinese and English	1	4	1	1	6

Table 2. Percentages of different languages in the high street's linguistic landscapes

	Chinese Only	English Only	Chinese and English
Linguistic Landscapes	14.29	4.76	80.95

In the high street, 42 samples of linguistic landscapes are collected, 37 of which are shop signs. In these samples, there are only 2 English signs and 6 Chinese signs. The rest majority is 34 bilingual signs. According to Table 1 and Table 2, it is obvious that in the living areas, the percentages of bilingual linguistic landscapes in student residences and the high street are both over 80%, indicating the dominant position of bilingualism at UNNC.

After the analysis of the living areas, the linguistic landscapes teaching areas (teaching buildings, the new library, Trent Building, and roads in this area) will be examined. As for the teaching buildings, this research will choose the Portland Building as a representative. Different from the living areas, the linguistic landscapes of the teaching areas are mostly public signs, such as road names, location names and slogans.

Table 3. Percentages of different languages in the teaching building and Trent Building's linguistic landscapes

	Chinese Only	English Only	Chinese and English
Linguistic Landscapes	7.89	65.79	26.32

Table 4. Percentages of different languages in the new library's linguistic landscapes

	Chinese Only	English Only	Chinese and English
Linguistic Landscapes	0	69.23	30.77

From the teaching areas, 51 samples are collected (38 from teaching buildings and Trent Building and 13 from the new library). According to Table 3 and Table 4, the significant distinction from living areas is the growth of the percentages of English linguistic landscapes, which have been the majority of teaching areas. Meanwhile, the percentages of Chinese and bilingual linguistic landscapes sharply reduce from living areas to teaching areas.

To sum up, from the living areas to the teaching areas, the status of English rises while the position of Chinese and bilingual linguistic landscapes declines. Because the courses of UNNC are conducted in English, English is closely associated with academic atmosphere in this university. As a branch campus of an English

university, UNNC mainly adopts English linguistic landscapes in the teaching areas to show a higher status of English language in education on the campus. In other words, in this university, English has a dominant position and higher status in the field of education because of the English educational system, while Chinese and bilingualism has a higher position in students' daily life because most of the students are Chinese.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

Figure 2. Shop sign of Yuela Canteen

Figure 2 is the shop sign of Yuela Canteen in the campus of UNNC. In term of narrative representation, there are simplified Chinese characters of "Yuela", which means "reading spicy", in running script font, traditional Chinese characters of "canteen" in seal script font, handwritten English "real hot" and three images of a book, a flame and a chili. In this sign, the simplified Chinese characters "Yuela" is presented in the biggest portion, showing their salience. The design of the sign makes the canteen's name the most salient with the purpose of attracting customers, conforming to Ben-Rafael's [9] presentation-of-self perspective. After the representation process analysis is the interaction process analysis, aiming to figure out the intended meaning that the producers want to convey to the audiences or viewers of this sign. According to the representation process analysis, the simplified Chinese characters "Yuela" are the most salient, indicating that the restaurant, Yuela Canteen mainly serves Chinese customers, explaining the salience of simplified Chinese characters. On the other hand, because of the international background of UNNC, there are prospective foreign customers. In that case, there are English words "real hot" on the sign to show the canteen's styles. In addition, the traditional Chinese characters of "canteen" and the image of a book can producer wants to draw the attention of those who can recognize them. As a Sichuan cuisine create a link between this canteen and Sichuan Province's cultural deposits on the audience's mind, showing its orthodoxy. This approach fits Ben-Rafael's collective perspective because Chinese, who live in a specific cultural circle, share this information as a common sense and will be attracted. Another two images of a flame and a chili indicate the taste of the restaurant and attract target customers even though they cannot recognize the words. Finally, this sign will be analyzed from the perspective of composition process. Different from other high up placed billboard whose salience is in the center, this sign uses top position because it is placed at the height of a person. In that case, persons can view this sign from a comfortable angle. In the following part, another shop sign will be analyzed and compared with the this one to show their difference and the reason behind.

Figure 3 is the shop sign of Arabica, a café that provides coffee, alcoholic beverages, and food in Trent Building. In the level of representation process, there is a symmetric flower figure formed by repetitive coffee bean patterns as well as block English words "arabica" and "Bar & Restaurant". Another image is an arrow indicating the entrance of the café. Compared to the shop sign of Yuela Canteen, this sign is more inerratic

and rigorous with more intelligible and recognizable printed letters. Unlike capital letters which may produce visual tension, the lowercase letters "arabica" with serif font can create a sense of coziness and order for its viewers. This sort of interaction with viewers its the casual and leisurely atmosphere of a café, enhancing customers' experience. As for the composition part, this sign is similar to the former one. However, the shape of the sign is round, which can be combined with the flower image of coffee beans to form concentric circles. This design can correspond to the orderly environment and of Trent Building where English is in the dominant position.

Figure 3. Shop sign of Arabica Bar & Restaurant

Through the qualitative analysis, these two shop signs can represent the language environments and features of the living areas and teaching areas. The multilingual features and elegant handwritten characters of Yuela Canteen's shop sign indicate the diversity, vitality, and Chinese traditional culture in the living areas. By contrast, the symmetric design and the lowercased printed letters of Arabica shows the orderliness and elegance of Trent Building. Meanwhile, the monolingualism also reflects the high status of English in the teaching areas.

5. Conclusion

This research has conducted a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach to explore the linguistic landscapes at UNNC. The whole campus is roughly divided into two main parts: living areas and teaching areas. Referring to Backhaus's [12] research, 109 samples of linguistic landscapes on campus are analyzed with a quantitative approach. The result of the analysis shows that bilingual linguistic landscapes in English and Chinese account for the vast majority of those in the living areas. As for the teaching areas, the percentage of English linguistic landscapes sharply exceeds that in the living areas because of the English-based teaching of UNNC. Through the analysis, it is obvious that English linguistic landscapes are closely associated to academic filed while bilingual and Chinese-only linguistic landscapes are designed for serving students in their daily life. Moreover, two shop signs of Yuela Canteen and Arabica have been analyzed under Kress and Leuuwen's [7] framework of multimodal analysis to explore their effects in different areas. In this analysis, the intentional interaction between linguistic landscapes and their audiences can be linked to Ben-Rafael's four principles, explaining how can they conforming to the physical linguistic context and the surrounding environment.

However, this research roughly divides the campus of UNNC into living areas and teaching areas, causing ambiguity of features of different locations. Consequently, the producers' intentions and the interaction may be not specific enough [17]. To make up for the limitation, before the analysis, more possibilities need to be considered to figure out the most suitable classification methods.

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