RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN INNER MONGOLIA AUTONOMOUS REGION: A CASE STUDY OF BAYANNUR CITY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

As the main carrier of information, language signs can be seen everywhere in public, such as various shop signs, guideboards, warning signs, billboards and posters. However, people rarely pay attention to them and the meaning they embody. Linguistic landscape is one of the hot topics in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Therefore, based on the research framework of Rosenbaum's investigation of Keren Kayemet Street in Jerusalem, Israel, this paper intends to investigate the linguistic landscape of public signs in Bayannur City of Inner Mongolia, in order to understand the language use in the linguistic landscape of Bayannur City. In addition, relevant empirical data can provide some reference for the language planning and language policies of the City language Commission and government departments.

KEYWORDS

Bayannur City; Linguistic landscape; Multilingualism

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1997, Landry and Bourhis defined the linguistic landscape creatively, that is, "the language of public road signs, billboards, street names, place names, commercial signs and public signs on government buildings are combined to form the linguistic landscape of a specific region or city". In addition, they also mentioned two functions of linguistic landscape: informational function and symbolic function. Information function is the basic function of linguistic landscape, which refers to the linguistic features, regional limitations and linguistic boundaries of the areas that linguistic landscape can convey to people. The signs of linguistic landscape can be divided into private signs and government signs. Private signs include commercial signs on shops and commercial establishments (such as retail stores and banks), commercial advertisements on billboards, and advertising signs displayed on public transport and private vehicles.

Government signs are public signs used by national, regional or municipal governments in the following areas: road signs, place names, street names and inscriptions on government buildings, including ministries, hospitals, universities, town halls, schools, subway stations and public parks. The inclusion of group language on public signs provides a symbolic function with emotional color and complements the informational function of the linguistic landscape. In an environment where language has become the most important dimension of ethnic identity, the symbolic function of linguistic landscape is most prominent. It is in this context that the existence of group languages in the linguistic landscape can most directly promote the positive social identity of ethnic linguistic groups (Landry and Bourhis 1997).

Bayannur, meaning "rich lake" in inner Mongolian, is named after wuliangsuhai, the largest freshwater lake in the Yellow River basin, and many other lakes. Located in the north of the motherland, the west of Inner Mongolia, the top of the Yellow River "a few" word bay. The city covers an area of 65,000 square kilometers, with jurisdiction over one district, four flags and two counties, 59 sumu towns, 17 farms and pastures, and 650 administrative gacha villages. It is inhabited by more than 40 nationalities such as Mongolian, Han, Hui, Manchu and Daur, with a permanent population of 1,538,715 people. It enjoys a long history and profound culture. Humans thrived here as early as the Paleolithic period. Therefore, it can be seen from the above data that Chinese, and Mongolian are the most widely used communicative languages in Bayannur City.

At present, the linguistic ecology of China's minority areas shows a complicated picture. Linguistic landscape studies are mainly concentrated in megacity, and few studies are conducted in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The purpose of this study is to investigate the multilingual landscape of Bayannur City. Therefore, this paper takes Bayannur City as an example to explore the linguistic landscape of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and present the language ecological status of the region. At the same time, the empirical data of language landscape in Bayannur City can provide a certain reference for language planning and language policies of the city language committee and government departments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Studies at Abroad

Foreign scholars attach more attention to the phenomenon of multilingualism in linguistic landscape. The interaction between language and society in the context of globalization, mobility and multi-modal has become a new hotpot in the study of multilingual landscape. The existing studies abroad are mainly based on case studies in a certain field or cross-regional comparative studies. The research methods are mostly descriptive and quantitative based on field investigation. In recent years, the growing number of qualitative studies has gradually focused on three aspects: the rights of language, the spread of English, and the differences between language policy and language practice. These dimensions of research are not isolated, they are also related to each other. Backhaus believes that English is the symbol of the west and the embodiment of the internationalization of American culture.

Other scholars have explained it in terms of prestige, fashion and high

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quality, creativity, western consumerism and the economic function of language (Backhaus, 2006). All these studies reflect a common fact: what function English has in a particular field remains to be proved, but its dominant position has been further consolidated under the trend of globalization. In addition, some studies have found that the influence of English transmission on the local language has penetrated the language ontology, and language contact leads to the phenomenon of code mixing and new word creation (Huebner, 2006). This has important implications for studying the impact of globalization on the multilingual landscape. Studies generally find that the use of official linguistic landscape largely depends on the role of official language policy, and its language sequence is reflected in the basic pattern of "official language-common language-minority languages".

2.2 Studies at Home

Before the introduction of the concept of linguistic landscape, domestic linguistic landscape studies were mainly focused on traditional studies such as public characters, public signs and shop names. In 2014, Shang and Zhao made a panoramic introduction to the linguistic landscape research system from the aspects of theoretical framework, research methods and research dimensions (Shang and Zhao, 2014). The study of linguistic landscape has gradually entered the field of vision of domestic scholars and has begun to turn to the perspective of sociolinguistics. The amount of research literature increases year by year. Nevertheless, the multilingual phenomenon of linguistic landscape has not been systematically studied. The existing research takes urban case study as the main paradigm. The research focuses on traditional topics such as the power of language, the spread of English, language policy and language practice gap.

First, the priority of language in the linguistic landscape is one of the main issues discussed by domestic researchers. A studied the use of language and characters in Macao's public space (Zhang and Zhang, 2016). After analyzing 1391 valid samples of linguistic landscape collected from four sample areas in Macao, they found that the linguistic landscape in Macao shows that Chinese takes precedence over English, English takes precedence over Portuguese, and minority languages are at the most disadvantage. Some scholars are interested in the linguistic landscape of urban "sub-communities" in the new context of globalization. Some scholars have compared the linguistic landscape features of Korean diaspora areas in Beijing and Shanghai and found that Chinese is the strongest language, Korean has the dominant language status in some areas, and English plays a more important role as an auxiliary language (Yu, 2016). Wu and Zhan investigated the multilingual landscape of African immigrants in Guangzhou, and the results showed that Chinese was the absolute dominant language, and English was the preferred foreign language for signs in the area, followed by Arabic (Wu and Zhan, 2017). The French and Uighurs are the most disadvantaged.

Secondly, some scholars have turned their attention to the study of multilingual landscape in ethnic minority areas. The results show that language power in minority areas has a more complex situation. Chinese retains its position as the strongest language. The linguistic advantage of English is not obvious. Minority languages have weak information functions, but they are regarded as culture in the linguistic landscape and are widely used as commercial symbols (Nie and Munaireha, 2017). The sampling sites and research emphases are different, but the results show that the phenomenon of multilingualism in modern urban linguistic landscape is significantly related to population structure, level of internationalization, regional orientation, language policy orientation and other factors. Differences in the field of study will influence the final form of the linguistic landscape. How to construct a harmonious language ecology with the help of the interactive relationship between linguistic landscape and social context is of great practical significance.

Finally, the spread of English is also a common theme in case studies of the domestic linguistic landscape. Research shows that with the advance of globalization, English is widely used as the first auxiliary foreign language for commercial signs in many cities or tourist areas and various signs in immigrant settlements. In addition, the globalization of English has brought new linguistic phenomena and linguistic problems. In the diachronic study of multi-language signs on Beijing Road in Guangzhou, Li Yi found language phenomena with global localization characteristics, such as "Chinese-English neologisms" (Li, 2011). Domestic researchers have also discussed the language choice of public signs around the gap between language policy and language practice. The study found that the consistency of the most important language (Chinese), official signs and nonofficial signs differ in the frequency and significance of foreign languages, regional lingua franca and minority languages (Zhang and Zhang, 2016). In general, nonofficial signs are more multilingual than official ones. Therefore, it can be seen from the above that the research on

linguistic landscape in China mainly focuses on priority, linguistic landscape in ethnic minority areas, English transmission and other aspects.

3. THE RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Data Collection

In order to conduct this study, the author will conduct field visits. The linguistic landscape was filmed with a high-definition mobile phone. Based on the research framework of Rosenbaum's investigation of Keren Kayemet Street in Jerusalem, Israel, this study selected some commercial streets, residential areas and government districts. Take Bayannur city Linhe district as the research site to research the new development zone and old town public space in the use of sign language. In the new development zone and old town, there were 2 sampling area with 317 textual sign linguistic landscape samples. Among them, 156 sign sample in the new development zone and 161 old sign sample were under the close analysis. These areas include the residential and commercial mixed zone of Linhe new development zone, whose scope and boundary are Xiyuan Road - Hetao Street - Jinchuan Avenue - Shuafeng Street - Wulan Buhe Road - Huifeng Street.

Linhe old city center and eastern residential and commercial mixed zone, its regional scope and boundary are Renmin Road - Tuanjie Road - Baolan railway - Shuofang Road - 110 National Road around the city - Anbei Road - Binhe Street - Jianshe Road - Jiefang Street. The two areas are densely populated, mixed with residential and commercial areas, and rich in linguistic landscape, which facilitates investigation. The selection of samples in this paper meets the following criteria: First, there are multiple signs in a photo, with only one linguistic landscape sample being counted. Second, the text content of the sign which is blocked or unclear is not included in the total sample. Third, if the same enterprise or shop has more than one branch of linguistic landscape signs. These are viewed as one sample.

3.2 Research Questions

Through data collection and analysis, this paper tries to focus on the following research issues: First, language use in the language landscape of Bayannur City. Second, compare the difference between official and nonofficial signs of Bayannur City. Third, the linguistic landscape difference between Linhe new development zone and old town.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Language use in Linguistic Landscape of Bayannur City

4.1.1 The number and types of languages in the linguistic landscape of Bayannur City

According to the *Regulations on Mongolian Language Work in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region*, the policy stipulated from the very beginning that all documents should be written in both Mongolian and Chinese. The region's policies are reflected not only in official symbols from the top down but also in nonofficial symbols from the bottom up. Table 1 shows the comparison of single, double and multilingual samples of linguistic landscape in two sampling areas of Bayannur City.

Table 1: Comparison of Monolingual, Bilingual and Multilingual Samples of Linguistic Landscape in Two Sampling Areas of Bayannur City				
The Sign Type	**The Number**		**The Percentage**	
	The New Development Zone	**Old Town**	**The New Development Zone (%)**	**Old Town (%)**
Monolingual	2	17	1.3	10.6
Bilingual	128	139	82.1	86.3
Trilingual	26	5	16.6	3.1
Total	156	161	100	100

According to Table 1, both the new development zone and the old town have the largest proportion of bilingual languages, accounting for 82% and 86.3% respectively, mainly Chinese and Mongolian. This data shows the impact of the policy on the linguistic landscape of the region. Monolingual language accounts for a relatively small proportion, mainly Chinese. In the new development zone, the proportion of trilingual accounted for 16.6%, mainly Mongolian, Chinese and English. Comparatively speaking, the proportion of trilingual in the old town is relatively small.

We can conclude that Chinese and Mongolian are the dominant languages,

and the linguistic landscape reflects this fact. Mongolian, the minority language in language signage, has more signs than English, and this difference shows the impact of strong language policies to protect minority languages on the linguistic landscape. The effect of this policy can be seen not only in the top-down signs designed by city halls or county governments, but also in commercial signs. In the linguistic landscape, the use of Mongolian is much higher than that of English. This reflects the importance of visibility in top-down and bottom-up signage under the influence of language policy. English as a foreign language also obviously plays a vital role, except for large enterprises, banks, state-owned enterprises, the frequency of other private signs is not high.

Another important finding of this study is the spread of English in the signage analyzed in this study. English is the language of international communication, but it only appears in a small amount in the data of Bayannur City. The use of English is less common in Bayannur than in the big cities. It shows that there are fewer floating foreigners in Bayannur City. This research also shows that linguistic landscape has both informational and symbolic functions. The informational functions displayed by the signs in different languages indicate the languages to be used in communication in stores and other businesses, and also reflect the relative power of different languages. The use of different languages in the linguistic landscape also has symbolic functions, mainly when language is a prominent aspect of a linguistic group. On the one hand, according to Landry and Bourhis, the use of a specific language can most directly promote the positive social identity of ethnic language groups (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). On the other hand, the use of English in commercial signs can be interpreted as mainly providing information for foreign tourists, but it is obvious that there is still little English presence in Bayannur city. But it also has a strong symbolic function for local residents.

4.1.2 Priority codes and prominence in the linguistic landscape of Bayannur City

According to article 22 of the *Regulations on Mongolian Language Work* in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Mongolian and Chinese should be used in the social market in the administrative region of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Therefore, it can be seen that most signs in Bayannur City, Inner Mongolia, which have Mongolian language. However, through the statistical analysis of the collected signs, the Chinese takes the lead in the code layout of signs. Chinese characters are always in the most prominent position and have the largest font size, while Mongolian is in the second dominant position and English is in the least prominent position with the smallest font size and area. Figure 1 and Figure 2:

Figure 1: Trilingual Sign Sample

Figure 2: Trilingual Sign Sample

Scollon proposed "code first". When making multi-language signs, it is inevitable that various languages will form visual hierarchy in space. Some languages dominate, while others take a back seat due to size, arrangement, and order, and look more like translations of the dominant language.

In this study, code is preferentially defined as text. The higher or more centered the text, the larger the font, and the stronger the code. Therefore, these bilingual and multilingual signs can be analyzed according to the position of language on these signs. The way these languages are displayed relative to other languages provides further information about the relative importance of each. In the first place, look at the first language on the sign, then the font size of the language, and finally the font used for the letters. When this paper summarizes the dominant order of these three languages, we can see that Chinese is the most prominent language in the linguistic landscape of Bayannur City, Mongolian is the second, and English is the third, which only exists in a small amount.

Compared with other languages, Mongolian and Chinese are also more prominent in the font size, text placement and information provided in the text. Look at signs in Mongolian and Chinese. Bilingual signs in Mongolian and Chinese also have a similar code layout, with Chinese being the most prominent and the largest font. Mongolian, though located above Chinese, is not as obvious as Chinese in terms of font size or layout. Therefore, in the linguistic landscape selection of Bayannur City, the priority is Chinese, Mongolian, and English, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4:

Figure 3: Sign Priority Sample

Figure 4: Sign Priority Sample

4.2 The Similarities and Differences between Official Signs and Nonofficial Signs of Bayannur City

In the linguistic landscape, a distinction should be made between official and nonofficial signs. In the survey, all signs erected by government organizations were considered official. Potential sponsors of the official

logo are government agencies such as land, infrastructure and so on. Signs associated with public transport facilities count as official signs, even if they are operated by private companies. All other signs are classified as nonofficial. Landry and Bourhis summarized the interaction between official, government-related signs and nonofficial, private signs in the linguistic environment as follows: In some cases, the linguistic profiles of private signs and government signs may be very similar, thus contributing to the formation of a consistent and coherent linguistic landscape (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

However, in some cases, the language of the nonofficial sign and the language of the government sign are very inconsistent. More often, nonofficial signs have greater linguistic diversity than government signs. Thus, official and nonofficial signs make different contributions to the linguistic landscape of a particular place. According to the classification above, through the analysis of the linguistic landscape sample of Bayannur City, it is found that both official and nonofficial take Chinese as the dominant language, which reflects the consistency of the official and nonofficial language landscape. Monolingual samples are mainly Chinese monolingual, bilingual samples are mainly Chinese and Mongolian, and Chinese is more prominent. Trilingual samples are mainly Chinese, Mongolian and English, and the order of prominence is Chinese, Mongolian and English. According to Table 1, the number of trilingual signs in the new development zone is 26, while the number of trilingual signs counts 5 in the old town.

Although trilingual signs in Bayannur City overall quantity are few, but still shows that more trilingual sign language appears in the new development zone than in the old one. Because the former has more official signs, after the development of the new city, Bayannur City, government agencies and other offices have moved to the new city, so greater number of trilingual and official sign can be seen in the new development zone. Therefore, as can be seen from the data in Table 2, almost three-quarters of the signs in the sample were nonofficial. Most of the signs are mainly Mongolian and Chinese bilingual, which shows that even non-official signs are also affected by local language policies. According to the *Regulations on Mongolian Language Work in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region*, Mongolian and Chinese bilingual policies are implemented.

Table 2: Comparison of Official and Nonofficial Samples of Linguistic Landscape in Two Sampling Areas of Bayannur City

Types of Flags	The Number	The Percentage
Official	81	25.6%
Nonofficial	236	74.4%
The Total Number of	317	100%

In the linguistic landscape of Bayannur City, Mongolian appears more frequently on official signs than nonofficial ones. Among all nonofficial multilingual signs, most of them contain Mongolian, while official multilingual signs without Mongolian are rare. Few official logos, whether monolingual or multilingual, do not contain Chinese. The choice of language on official signs is determined by power relations, while nonofficial signs tend to use foreign languages to express solidarity. The relationship between power and solidarity is even more clearly reflected in the order and size of the language. Of all the official logos analyzed, 99 percent data showed the Chinese is more prominently than those contained in other languages.

From the sample of the survey, we can see the relationship between official multilingual signs and nonofficial multilingual signs. First, the linguistic diversity of nonofficial signs is roughly the same as that of official signs. In the official logo of this study, there are two situations of languages combination, namely Chinese, Mongolian, and Mongolian, Chinese and English. Bilingual and trilingual signs also account for some of the nonofficial signage. Generally speaking, the proportion of the trilingual tends to be consistent. Secondly, in the vast majority of official language signs, the information conveyed by different languages is often the same or overlapping, which is the relationship of mutual translation, while a considerable number of nonofficial signs of various languages usually convey supplementary information. The official multilingual sign mainly reflects that "power" constructs the relationship of inequality, while the nonofficial sign constructs the relationship of "unity" in various ways.

4.3 The Difference of Linguistic Landscape Between New Development West Zone and Old Town in Linhe District of Bayannur City

According to Table 3, on the one hand, in terms of trilingual landscape, the proportion of trilingual landscape in new development zones is 16.6%, and that in old town areas is 3.1%. Therefore, the trilingual landscape in the new development zone of Bayannur City is richer than that in the old city. One is that since the municipal government planned to develop the new area, a large number of office agencies, such as the government affairs service center, water conservancy Bureau, meteorological bureau, finance bureau, have moved to the new area. The second reason is that the road signs in the new area are all newly changed in recent years, mostly in Mongolian, Chinese and English. However, judging from the overall language landscape, the trilingual language landscape of Bayannur City is not very rich. On the other hand, in terms of monolingual landscape, the monolingual landscape in the new development zone accounted for only 1.3% of all samples, while the monolingual landscape in the old town area accounted for 10.6%.

In contrast, the monolingual landscape of the old city is more than that of the new development. The signs in the old city have a long history, but also a small part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region issued in 2005 "Mongolian Language Work Regulations" before, so only monolingual that is Chinese signs. It is obvious that both the new development zone and the old town have a large proportion of bilingual landscape, but proportionally, the bilingual landscape in the old town is richer than that in the new development zone. Therefore, the difference between the new development zone and the old city of Linhe District of Bayannur City is obvious. The trilingual landscape of the new development zone is richer than that of the old city, while the monolingual signs of the old city are more than that of the new development zone. The bilingual signs of the two regions are roughly the same, but the old city has richer number than the new development zone.

Table 3: Comparison of monolingual, bilingual and trilingual samples in the linguistic landscape of the two sampling areas of Bayannur City

The Sign Type	The Number of			The Percentage		
	Monolingual	Bilingual	Trilingual	Monolingual (%)	Bilingual (%)	Trilingual (%)
The New Development Zone	2	128	26	1.3	82.1	16.6
Old Town	17	139	5	10.6	86.3	3.1

5. CONCLUSION

Through the investigation and analysis of the linguistic landscape of Bayannur City, there are three conclusions which can be made. First of all, the language usage of Bayannur City is as follows: in the 317 samples investigated, there are 19 monolingual signs, accounting for 6%, and the main language is Chinese. There are 267 bilingual signs, accounting for 84.2%, and the main languages are Chinese and Mongolian. There are 31 signs in trilingual, accounting for 9.8%. The main languages are Chinese, Mongolian and English. Secondly, the difference between official and nonofficial Bayannur City is mainly reflected in its role. The linguistic landscape shows the great difference between official signs and nonofficial signs, especially the bilingual and multilingual signs. Chinese plays the most prominent role in all official symbols of two or more languages.

However, nonofficial signs, among some bilingual and multilingual signs, Mongolian is the most prominent. Finally, the difference between old town and the new development zone is obvious. The trilingual landscape of the new development zone is richer than that of the old town, while the monolingual signs of the old city are more than that of the new development zone. The bilingual signs of the two areas are roughly the same, but the old town is relatively richer than the new development zone. Therefore, it is found that the linguistic landscape in Bayannur city shows a clear feature of multiple languages. This paper lists and analyzes the related concepts of linguistic landscape, investigates and analyzes the current situation of linguistic landscape resources in Bayannur City, Inner Mongolia, in order to provide reference for the construction, development and utilization of linguistic landscape in Bayannur City.

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