

Study on Multimodal Confucius Institute Linguistic Landscape

Fu Wen-li¹, Yang Na², Xu Li-sha²

¹ Beijing Language and Culture University, Beijing, 100083, China

² Nanchang Normal College of Applied Technology, Nanchang, 330038, China

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Abstract: The present study tries to explore the mechanism of symbolic meaning generation. It firstly introduces the concept of symbolic meaning, then we will further discuss symbolic meaning from multimodal perspective. It is found that the symbolic meaning of the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape plays an important role in constructing the contextual meaning in visual space, and the symbolic meaning is mainly achieved by attracting attention, shaping impression and cultivating interest. The multimodal Confucius institute linguistic landscape allows for an understanding of how different trajectories of multimodal semiotic resources meet at particular times and places, and therefore helps us to know the significance of symbolic meaning during the constructive process of multimodal linguistic landscape.

1. Introduction

The International Chinese Transmission is procedural and requires some preparatory work before entering the formal study and regular version of Chinese itself. However, relevant studies in the preparation stage of International Chinese Transmission are often ignored, therefore, this study on the one hand provides more effective paths for formalized Chinese learning, which is aimed to expand the scope of learners. On the other hand, after receiving classroom teaching, the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape can further consolidate the knowledge of Chinese learning. Foreign scholars have done a lot of empirical studies on language usage, globalization and teaching (Backhaus, P. 2007; Peck, A. & Banda, F. 2014; Shohamy, E., E. Ben Rafael & M. Barni 2010; Pennycook, A. 2019). However, in terms of the current domestic linguistic landscape research, most scholars focus on the combing of the theoretical systematic and the empirical discussion of urban multilingual linguistic landscape and linguistic landscape in ethnic minority areas. Based on this, this study mainly focuses on the social dimension of language learning, analyzing the leading function of Confucius Institute language landscape in Chinese Transmission, and discusses its important role and mechanism in language learning.

2. The Concept of Symbolic Meaning

The symbolic meaning of the linguistic landscape refers to the absence or the presence of one's own language on public signs, which has an important effect on how one feels as a member of a language group within a bilingual or multilingual setting. It is in the linguistic landscape field that issues related to the notion of symbolic function first emerged. Landry & Bourhis (1997) study the significance of symbolic meaning in both visual space and given contextual language environment.

The inclusion of the in-group language on public signs can serve a symbolic function that is effectively charged and that complements the informational function of the linguistic landscape (Quebec, 1996). As stated above, the symbolic function of the linguistic landscape is closely related to the settings. The language environment plays an important role in constructing the symbolic meaning in the linguistic landscape. Hence, the symbolic meaning of the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape is also connected to the language settings in given context.

It is reasonable to put forward that having one's own language marked on a large part of signs ought to devote to the feeling that the in-group language has value. And at the same time, the status

related to other languages within the social setting. Therefore, the inclusion of the in-group language on public signs can serve a symbolic function that is effectively charged and that complements the informational function of the linguistic landscape (Quebec,1996). The language environment plays an important role in constructing the symbolic meaning in the linguistic landscape. Hence, the symbolic meaning of the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape is also connected to the language settings in given context. Therefore, the next part will be discussed as it relates to the notion of reference in contextual meaning via analysing the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape from multimodal dimension.

3. The Symbolic Meaning and Language Settings

Within the tradition of linguistics, literary genre is associated with a function. Context refers to the environment in which the scene appears. Hence, the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape firstly enters into the space and then forms the language learning environment. Among the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape, Chinese serves symbolic function in visual space. The contextual function of the speech events, including symbolic meaning of the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape code. Symbolic meaning plays the significant part in contextual meaning of Confucius Institute linguistic landscape.

The symbolic function of Confucius Institute’s linguistic landscape is achieved through a stateful process that contains three primary elements. Firstly, attracting attention. Via space carriers, plates and other multimodal means, occupying students’ visual space before classroom teaching. Secondly, shaping impression. Multimodal interpretation of the same keyword in multiple ways to retrieve the meaning associated with the keyword for students to help them shape impression. Thirdly, cultivating interest. Shaping impressions can enable students to increase their interest in Chinese learning while in contact with Chinese elements, thus providing the solid foundation for interest in classroom teaching. The three basic elements generally take place diachronically and constitute the symbolic meaning of the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape in the preliminary stage of Chinese Transmission.

The mechanism that attracts the attention of foreign students is the primary link in the entire process. Linguistic landscape architects often achieve this effect through different design strategies. One of the typical strategies is transforming the spatial carrier. People will achieve the effect of attracting attention through the intervention of the linguistic landscape in different spatial positions. Figure 1 has presented this strategy clearly.



Fig.1 Confucius Institute Linguistic Landscape

It can be seen from figure 1 that the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape is shown on metal plates, banners and posters, which is posted on the building in Confucius Institute. This spatial position means that before entering the classroom and in the practical activities within the Confucius Institute’s space, students are often accompanied by the influence of these linguistic landscapes that create a field full of Chinese elements, thus creating a preparatory and guiding symbolic function for students’ classroom learning.

These linguistic landscapes can be divided into three groups according to their spatial location. As shown in figure1, we identify them as group A, group B and group C. It can be found that first, when the viewer walks up the steps, the linguistic landscape of group A is directly above the groups,

occupying the center of gravity of its visual space. However, the linguistic landscapes of group B and group C occupy one side of the communication path in different visual spaces. This is a typical situational placement, its role is to give a scene of specific index function (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Here, the linguistic landscape of group A achieves this effect by referring to the Confucius Institute space. Group B and group C indicate that it is the space for Chinese learning through their reference to the intermediary of Chinese activities. Secondly, the Confucius Institute, as a Chinese learning space, is a direct place for learners to carry out daily practical activities. Foreign students will first accept the influence of this atmosphere before entering classroom teaching. In the meantime, in the long-term process of receiving classroom teaching, the influence of this visual atmosphere will be continuously repeated and strengthened, which factors depend on the spatial location design to a large extent.

In addition, another significant strategy is the choice of materials and the design of plate. Scollon & Scollon (2003:135-136) think that the hardness of materials is closely related to the fixation of places. One possible way of understanding is that metal materials are stronger and therefore more official and formal. What we usually see on the linguistic landscape of this type of material is the name and logo of Confucius Institute, this phenomenon also confirms this assumption. On the basis of the consideration, we select figure 2 as an example to investigate the linguistic landscape of group A.



Fig.2 Confucius Institute Linguistic Landscape

This set of linguistic landscapes includes a metal plate and a plastic image, and the English words of Confucius Institute are presented in green, large raised fonts, so that the attention of the viewer can be quickly focused on this. At the same time, the banners use red as the background color, and the yellow bilingual writing welcome to you at the Confucius Institute at Lagos university is distinctive and eye catching, and also serves to attract attention.

Creating an impression is one of the important components of symbolic function. Kress & van Lueewen (2006:15) point out that linguistic landscape symbols have a representational function. The reproduction function is not only the reproduction of specific things, but also the reproduction of its abstract features, which is particularly prominent in the design of the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape. Designers often promote Chinese images to viewers through the presentation of pictures of typical Chinese cities, buildings and cultural elements that correspond to textual content, in order to provide a certain foundation for classroom teaching.

The impression of Chinese characters accepted by the learner in the Chinese atmosphere is a kind of classical and popular impression. The keywords of the picture content of Confucius Institute linguistic landscape are mainly on the basis of two endpoints, which exactly correspond to the requirements of foreign students to learn Chinese. Based on this correspondence, the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape is able to fully mobilize the learner's motivation to achieve the aforementioned symbolic function. To this end, figure 3 provides a typical example of the impression and Chinese learning interest construction function.



Fig.3 Confucius Institute Linguistic Landscape

This poster fully demonstrates the strategy of creating an impression and cultivating interest through image content. Firstly, the man in the picture looks directly at the audience and smiles. In particular, the gaze movement of the figures in the picture, while writing the word success and communicating with the reader, has a strong sense of interaction (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006:118). Secondly, the man is well dressed in a white shirt and writes the word success on the blackboard in Chinese. These characteristics indicate that the man's image is a successful person, which point is closely linked to confidence. Thirdly, the word success is written on the blackboard in Chinese and the word Chinese is marked in bold yellow large English. This in turn encourages viewers to associate the two impressions of success and confidence with Chinese learning. Via the method, on the basis of the above three points, the linguistic landscape presents the strongly recommended image act to the recipients, thus successfully shaping the overall impression of learning Chinese that leads to success and inspires foreign students to cultivate Chinese interest.

4. Three Basic Ways of Achieving Symbolic Meaning

So far, we have seen that the symbolic function of the linguistic landscape is established based on such a sequence, that is, attracting attention-shaping impressions-cultivating interest. However, if we take a closer look at the existing linguistic landscape materials, we will find that there are more complicated mechanisms. It is mainly manifested in the fact that different linguistic landscapes create impressions in different ways. As a matter of fact, the basic process shown in the figure below actually exists in the action mechanism of each linguistic landscape, the links don't exist in an equal form but focus on different types of landscapes. Especially the orange part in the figure below, including three basic links of linguistic landscape text, information content and place function (Figure 4).

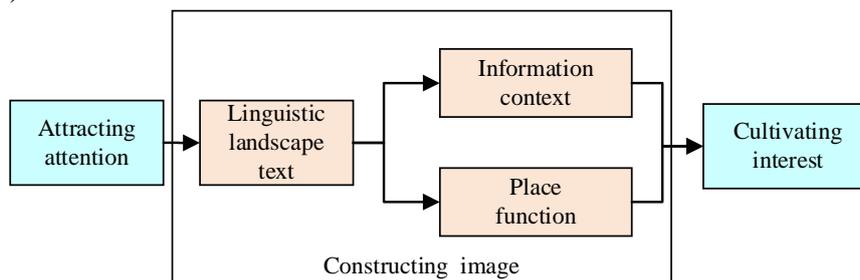


Fig.4 Three Basic Ways of Achieving Symbolic Meaning

For different linguistic landscapes, the relative positions of these three basic links are also different. The first case is that when linguistic landscape text is dominant, the multimodal text of linguistic landscape plays a more significant role in the generation of meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), this kind of linguistic landscape is called text-oriented linguistic landscape. Another situation is that when the information content is dominant, the multimodal design of the linguistic landscape text is not prominent. On the contrary, this type of linguistic landscape seeks to present an appropriate transparency and the content of information is delivered directly to the recipient, which kind of linguistic landscape is called the information-oriented linguistic landscape. The last case is that when place meaning is dominant, the linguistic landscape is neither presented in a complex multimodal form nor directly provided with information content as its main function. In this situation, the linguistic landscape tries to use its own text to give a certain function and meaning to its space (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), this kind of linguistic landscape is named space-oriented linguistic landscape. The following analysis will particularly discuss how these linguistic landscapes achieve symbolic function.

The above three basic links are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they coexist in the leading mechanism of action in any linguistic landscape. The dominance we are talking about here emphasizes a relative and cooperative role. For example, in a text-oriented linguistic landscape, there may be certain information functions and place functions, but the latter two are relatively weakened in the linguistic landscape.



Fig.5 Confucius Institute Linguistic Landscape

The text-oriented linguistic landscape attempts to create a certain impression for the recipient directly through the visual grammar and is less dependent on other functions such as information content and place meaning. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006:2) propose that the linguistic landscape itself has the grammar and one of its important functions is to reproduce reality. Figure 5 provides a typical example. The two posters on the Lantern Festival in the figure both attempt to directly shape the impression of the Lantern Festival to recipient through the visual grammar of the linguistic landscape text itself.

At the same time, the performance of Lantern Festival and dumplings is quite different. The Lantern Festival is cartoon-like, while the dumplings are actually shot. These two different representations actually represent different modalities (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006:161). The cartoonized Lantern Festival is considered impossible to be true, which means that there is an idealized sweet dumplings image, which is pleasant and sweet. Although the sweet dumplings are presented as actual images, the background is blurred and replaced by a snow scene, a small house and a piece of ink. As a result, dumplings are shaped as a warm symbol. Based on design of the picture modality, this set of posters realize the impression of the Lantern Festival, which are sweet and warm. This way of shaping impression through the visual grammar of the linguistic landscape itself is the most direct symbolic meaning. This impression directly presented by the linguistic landscape helps learners to understand the image of Chinese and has some interest in it.

The information-oriented linguistic landscapes don't directly use the visual grammar of the linguistic landscape to create an impression or cultivate interest for the recipient, but merely pass on some basic information and hope to attract the recipient through further events pointed by related information. This type of linguistic landscape is usually less designed and mainly posters, as shown in Figure 6.



Fig.6 Confucius Institute Linguistic Landscape

It can be seen that the main purpose of the color and shape of the poster in the above picture is to attract attention, not to create an impression. The main function of this poster is simply to inform the recipient of specific information about a lecture. The notification function first refers to the lecture itself, not any other impression. Here, the linguistic landscape and other interaction orders are combined with each other, and the specification of academic lectures should be serious and the linguistic landscape are biased towards serious design form as an intertext. This form of intertextuality helps the recipient to advance the atmosphere of the lecture.

5. Conclusion

Effective International Chinese Transmission should not only be limited to the Chinese classroom teaching, but also focus on various language practices outside the classroom. Before the rule learning, in the leading stage of Chinese learning, the leading function of the Confucius Institute linguistic landscape in the International Chinese Transmission plays a pivotal role in the process of Chinese learning. At the same time, the linguistic landscape of the Confucius Institute, as a supplement to classroom teaching, and the filling of visual space is obviously different from Chinese textbooks and test papers, which take text reading as the main filling content. And the linguistic landscape, in addition to the text, also provides more other symbolic means, such as image symbols, board architecture, color style and other multimodal visual media. This pioneering form of transmission can greatly improve foreign students' understanding of Chinese culture and their interest in Chinese language learning, and the linguistic landscape and Chinese classroom teaching complement each other, so as to carry out more effective international Chinese language communication.

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