

A Review of Researches on Linguistic Landscape

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Keywords: Linguistic landscape, Development trends, Research theories, Research methods, Research contents

Abstract: In recent years, linguistic landscape research has gradually become a popular field of sociolinguistics and has received more and more attention from scholars at home and abroad. This paper compares linguistic landscape research at home and abroad, in order to understand the current situation of linguistic landscape in terms of development trends, research theories, research methods and research contents, and clarify research characteristics and hot issues. It also analyzes the problems of linguistic landscape research in terms of theoretical perspectives, research methods and contents. with a view to providing references and proposing suggestions for the future development of linguistic landscape.

1. Introduction

Linguistic landscapes are concerned with the use of language in public spaces and places, and aim to reveal the symbolic meaning of various types of language signs. The study of linguistic landscapes is currently an active academic field in sociolinguistics, which analyzes and interprets the relationship between language and space. The purpose of studying linguistic landscapes is to examine the motives, social mechanisms, ideologies, identities, hierarchies of power, and other social issues in the setting of the landscape^[1].

The study of linguistic landscape first appeared in Landry and Bourhis in their academic paper “Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality”, which proposed that the linguistic landscape of a territory, region, or urban agglomeration is composed of language on public street signs, billboards, street names, place names, store signs, and public signage on government buildings^[2]. Since this concept was proposed, more and more scholars have begun to focus on this field of research, and the foreign scholars have studied the linguistic landscapes of different regions from different theoretical perspectives, such as sociology, geography, semiotics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and education, and they have achieved rich achievements^[3]. In contrast, domestic linguistic landscape research started later, but it has also gradually attracted the attention of linguists, and different research methods have been used to study the linguistic landscapes of different regions empirically. Therefore, this study provides an overview of theories, themes, and methods of linguistic landscape research at home and abroad, which is helpful to clarify the core research issues in this field and prepare for subsequent studies.

2. Review of Foreign Linguistic Landscape Research

2.1 Research Theories

Since the concept of linguistic landscape was introduced abroad, it has attracted widespread academic attention and related theories have followed, so it is said that foreign linguistics has created influential and widely applied research theories. Landry and Bourhis^[2] cited ethnolinguistic vitality theory, which explains language attitudes as well as language behavior and social identity in terms of social structure, and they argued that language prominence in signification is positively correlated with its vitality. In terms of semiotics, Scollon and Scollon^[12] have proposed place semiotics, which focused on the social meaning of signs or discourse in the linguistic landscape and

how language is used in the concrete material world. Kress^[13] inherited Scollon's semiotics and proposed the theoretical framework of socialsemiotics, which is a visual grammar framework that reproduces, interacts, and frames meaning. The representative of the study of linguistic landscape from a sociological perspective is Ben-Rafael^[14], inspired by sociological theories, followed the sociological concepts proposed by Boudon, Bourdieu and Goffman, and applied them to the exploration of linguistic landscape research, proposing four construction principles, the principle of presentation of self, the principle of good-reasons, the principle of collective identity, and the principle of power relationship. Spolsky^[15] proposed a theory of language choice for public signs, then pointing out that language choice on public signs should usually consider three aspects: "writing the signs in the language we know", "predetermining the readers of the signs", and "giving symbolic value to the signs". Trumper-Hecht^[16] followed Lehrer's "spatial theory" of spatial practice, conceived space, and lived space. He proposed that theoretical and practical research on linguistic landscape should integrate three closely related aspects: physical, political and experiential, and should also grasp the internal relationship between the three.

2.2 Research Perspectives

Foreign linguistic research takes a wide range of perspectives, from sociolinguistics to semiotics, sociology, ecolinguistics, and geography, etc. Research topics are mainly multilingual phenomena, the spread of English, minority languages, language policy, second language acquisition. In addition, the later studies go beyond the traditional research perspective of linguistic landscapes and begin to focus on virtual linguistic landscapes.

2.3 Research Methods

Most research on linguistic landscapes has opted for quantitative methods, and Gorter^[17] pointed out that it is the increasing availability of computers and digital photography that has made taking photographs easy and facilitated the collection of field corpora for linguistic landscape research. Researchers often use digital cameras to photograph the linguistic landscape of the study area, and then use quantitative analysis to categorize and classify units of analysis, and finally to compile statistical data. With continuous development, Blommaert^[18] published his book 'Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes', which pointed out that it is proposed that the researcher's gaze must shift from the text to the ethnography of the text, from the concrete sign to the space of the dynamic history, and from the human consciousness to the process by which knowledge and skills are carried and used^[11]. Barni and Bagna^[5] reviewed the development of linguistic landscapes and pointed out that qualitative research methods are gaining importance and also qualitative analysis and quantitative research should be combined to understand the emergence and development of linguistic phenomena. In addition, there are action research, case studies, etc. Jaworski and Thurlow^[16] proposed the concept of multimodality to expand the study of linguistic landscape to the field of semiotics, and since then, linguistic landscape research has changed from unimodal to multimodal, which also greatly improves people's understanding of linguistic landscape more deeply and prompted the development of new fields.

3. Review of Domestic Linguistic Landscape Research

3.1 Development Trends

In this paper, the number of articles retrieved from China Knowledge Network with keywords for linguistic landscape and the period from 2000 to present is shown in Figure 1, it can be seen that the development of linguistic landscape research has gone through the following three main stages. The budding period: 2000-2014, the study of linguistic landscape did not attract the attention of scholars and showed a slow growth trend; the development period: 2014-2020, it is a steady development stage, the number of publications achieved a rapid growth, the research field gradually expanded, and the year 2014 is a turning point in the development of China's linguistic landscape, which opening a new chapter in the study of this field. The total number of related studies in 2020 is

152; the linguistic landscape research began to decline from 2020 to the present. In short, the overall trend of rising, it can be seen that the development of linguistic landscape has entered a prosperous period.

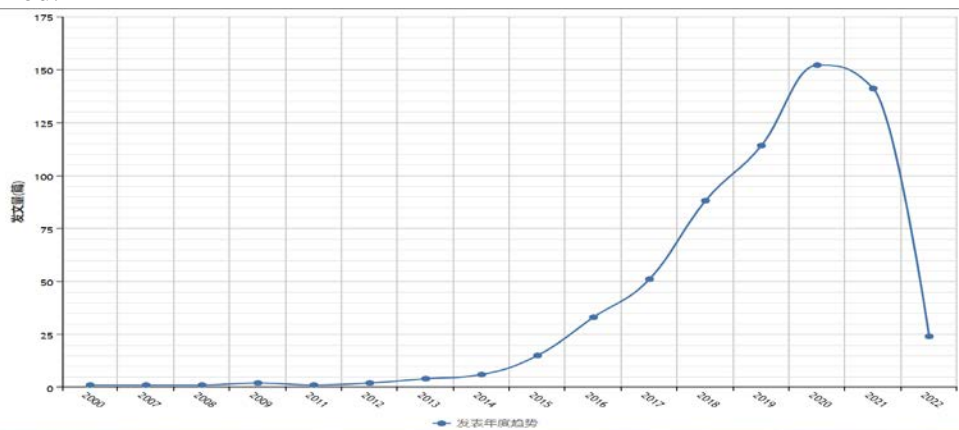


Fig.1 Statistics on the Number of Articles about Linguistic Landscape

3.2 Research Theories

The theoretical research on domestic linguistic landscape is mainly the introduction of foreign linguistic landscape achievements, the perspective and hotspot analysis of domestic linguistic landscape, and the attempt to establish a theoretical framework for linguistic landscape research in line with China's own national conditions. Shang examines the research background, research methods, theoretical perspectives, and development prospects of linguistic landscape. Yang and Liu^[7] constructed a theoretical framework of social cognition based on the background and current situation of bilingual public signs. Shang and Zhao^[6] explore the cognitive theoretical basis of linguistic landscape. Besides, there are also linguistic geography perspective, language economics perspective and language teaching perspective. It can be seen that foreign scholars have put forward different theoretical frameworks of linguistic landscape from different perspectives, laying a solid foundation for related research. Domestic scholars have relatively less research on the theory, but they are also exploring it continuously, while from the current situation of research, domestic and foreign scholars have also launched different applied research. Therefore, domestic scholars should try to establish relevant theories to enrich the research theoretical framework.

3.3 Research Themes

There are many research themes and sub-themes in linguistic landscape research, so it has a wide range of applied researches. The main research themes of domestic linguistic landscape are: landscape culture, multilingual phenomenon, urban language research, linguistic landscape research in minority areas, landscape investigation and construction, language services, translation of linguistic landscape, multimodality and the newly emerged virtual linguistic landscape research.

The process of globalization is deepening and multilingual culture is unstoppable, so the studies of multilingual language phenomena in language landscapes are emerging. Backhaus^[8] studied multilingual language landscapes in Tokyo, comparing official and unofficial multilingual language signs and explaining the reasons for the existence of differences in terms of both rights and solidarity. The linguistic landscapes of ethnic minority regions have also received a lot of attention from scholars. Fu^[10] analyzed the meaning of multilingual linguistic landscapes of Qinghai ethnic minorities and explored the basis of multilingual coexistence. The study of multimodal linguistic landscape is also a new perspective. Zhang^[11] investigated the scenic area of Zhaoqing Xinghu in the field from the two major functions of linguistic landscape, information function and symbolic function. Liu^[12] chose the Beijing Road commercial district, the oldest and most developed commercial civilization in Guangzhou, to carry out a related linguistic landscape study. Studies of language landscapes and language policies have also gained a foothold. Yang analyzed the linguistic landscape of store signs in Lijiang Dayan Ancient City, which was set up under government

intervention.

3.4 Research Methodology

Domestic linguistic landscape studies generally use the field investigation method. Generally, empirical studies of linguistic landscapes use the quantitative analysis method, using digital cameras or only collecting and recording unique types of linguistic signs, and then screening and classifying them, which can present data and results intuitively. Other common methods such as questionnaires, interviews, etc. In addition to the quantitative research methods, qualitative analysis is gradually being applied. Qualitative research is represented by the ethnographic linguistic landscape research method, which combines qualitative and historical.

4. Conclusion

Since its inception in 1997, linguistic landscape research has gained significant momentum, with shifting research perspectives and significant breakthroughs in interdisciplinary fields. There are similarities between domestic and foreign linguistic landscape research in terms of research objects.

In short, foreign research on linguistic landscape started early and has made great achievements. There are mainly the following characteristics. Firstly, the research is rich in cutting angles, and great achievements have been made from interdisciplinary fields such as linguistics, semiotics and sociology. Secondly, the theory of difficult pieces is rich, and the perspective of multilingual research is deeply developed, and the unique cultural characteristics of its region can be expressed through the use of different languages. Finally, there is a focus on the impact of the globalization context on the use of language landscapes.

In comparison, domestic research on linguistic landscape is slightly inferior. Although the research on linguistic landscapes in China is rich and has a wide scope for development, but there are also many problems, such as the emphasis on measurement rather than interpretation, the relative weakness of theory. The research objects of linguistic landscape are mostly in urban areas, while remote rural areas are neglected. Therefore, future linguistic landscape research should improve the level of domestic theoretical research, fill the research gaps of emerging topics such as multimodal linguistic landscape research, the influence of linguistic landscape on second language acquisition, rural linguistic landscape research, virtual space linguistic landscape, etc., and discover research topics with Chinese characteristics. Under the flourishing development of linguistic landscape in the international academic community, linguistic landscape research in China has been gradually developed. With the continuous development of economy and society, it is urgent to study the influence of linguistic landscape on economic and social development and its mechanism. The study of linguistic landscape should look around the world and should not be limited to just some places, but should also actively focus on poor rural areas. With the continuous development of globalization, cross-cultural language issues are becoming a hot spot for research. The study of linguistic landscapes should not only stop at the linguistic level of error correction, but also adopt a sociolinguistic or cross-cultural perspective to analyze the language policy, cultural identity, economic and social issues behind them.

Acknowledgement

This paper is sponsored by “Star of Innovation” project for outstanding Graduate Students of Gansu Province in 2022.

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