PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

A Comparative Study of the Language Landscape Between Ganzi in Sichuan and Diqing in Yunnan: Taking Luding and Shangri-La Road Signs as Examples

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ABSTRACT

Language landscape is the image of a region, the embodiment of local cultural soft power, and an important way to inherit local culture. Through field investigation in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province and Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province, the author collected the road sign language landscape around Luding and Shangri-La. This study analyzes the status and language advantages of the road sign multilingual landscape in these two regions, discovers some problems and puts forward suggestions for improvement with a view to providing some reference for the road sign language landscape of ethnic minority regions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sichuan Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, located in the west of Sichuan Province and southeast of the Kangzang Plateau, is the second largest Tibetan region in China. It has profound cultural heritage, including love song culture, red culture, Gesar culture, and ancient tea and horse road culture. The Tibetans in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture mainly use the Kang dialect. The prefecture capital is Kangding, which is a famous plateau city with a long history and the hometown of love songs. With the proposal and promotion of "the Belt and Road initiative", China's trade with other countries in the world is more extensive, the fields of cooperation are more comprehensive and in-depth, and international personnel flows are more frequent. Ganzi Prefecture is located in the center of the Tibetan region of Sichuan, Yunnan, Tibet and Qinghai provinces. It is an important road to 'go out of Sichuan to Tibet and go directly to South Asia', adjacent to 'the Belt and Road strategic belt', and one of the important roads to

South Asian countries [1]. Luding region integrates red culture tourism and natural sightseeing tourism. It is also the transition zone from Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to Sichuan Basin, and the only way to enter Tibet and leave Sichuan. Whether it is to achieve the strategic deployment of the "Belt and Road" or the sustainable and healthy economic development of Tibet related areas in Sichuan, Luding and the section from Luding to Kangding are the inevitable roads to go. The road signs are very important and essential for the information guidance of businessmen and tourists.

Yunnan Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is in the northwest of Yunnan Province. It is the center of the Yangtze River, Lancang River, Brahmaputra River, etc. It is also the bridge connecting Bangladesh, India and Myanmar in China. Shangri-La is the capital of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and a county-level city of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. In Tibetan, it means "the sun and the moon in your heart". Shangri-La is located at the junction of Yunnan, Tibet and Sichuan, with beautiful natural scenery and pleasant climate. In July 2021, listed as one of the

"Top 100 Counties with Comprehensive Tourism Strength in 2021", Shangri-La is a paradise on earth that people yearn for. It borders Derong County in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture which is an important channel for Sichuan to enter Yunnan. Its position and role in the "The Belt and Road Initiative" strategy and the national deep poverty development strategy are self-evident.

Through field investigation and taking photos of road signs at the periphery and some sections of the two cities, the author collected 73 pictures of road signs from Derong to Shangri-La (road signs are only in Shangri-La, not in Derong County) and the periphery of Shangri-La, which were collected in July 2021. There are 106 pictures of road signs in the periphery of Luding City and the section from Luding to Kangding Expressway (including the road signs in Kangding, because there are many tunnels and the distance is short, the road signs in Kangding are also included in the corpus in order to collect more samples). The collection time is May 2021, and the corpus data is collected by mobile phones. The downtown of Shangri-La City and Luding City are not in the scope of corpus collection, and the signs with overlapping contents in all sections have been removed. By comparing the highway road signs collected in the two places, this article focuses on the current situation of multilingual use, the sequence of multilingual combination, and the characteristics of the use of dominant languages in the language landscape of the two Tibetan regions, in order to summarize the characteristics of the language landscape in the road signs of the two areas. At the same time, both research objects are ethnic minority autonomous regions. The study and comparison of the language landscape of the road signs in these regions will help to understand the current situation of the use of languages and characters in ethnic minority regions, as well as the degree of emphasizing by local governments on languages, and provide reference for the protection of ethnic minority languages.

2. CURRENT RESEARCH SITUATION OF THE LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE AND ROAD SIGN LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE

"Canadian scholars Rodrigue Landry and Richard Y. Bourhis believed that language landscape is the language symbols on various signs in the public space of an area, including place names, street names, street signs, slogans, posters, banners, shop names, government buildings, street or highway signboards, etc." [2]. The language landscape highlights the communication mode between the sign planner and the audience. Language signs are an important way for the public to obtain the information they need, bringing convenience or warning to the audience. At the same time, language landscape also implies different meanings and local language policies. Language landscape is the image of a city or region, the symbol of the local cultural soft power, and an important way of cultural inheritance and publicity.

In recent years, language landscape has become a new hotspot in sociolinguistic research, which has attracted many scholars' attention. More and more scholars have begun to study language landscape in various fields. As far as the number of language landscape studies is concerned, the author has made great achievements. By typing the term "language landscape" into the CNKI database, the total number of displayed articles in the database is 1376, including 1104 academic journals and 97 dissertations. After typing the terms "language landscape" and "city image" at the same time, the author searched 53 related articles. As far as the publication time is concerned, the earliest time to pay attention to the city language landscape was late, that is, the article "Translation of Shijiazhuang Language Landscape Guided by the Improvement of City Image" by Feng Xiaohui, a scholar in 2014, was the first article to pay attention to the city language landscape in China. Its content mainly discusses "the importance of city language landscape translation from the perspective of city image building" [3].

There are 16 studies on language landscape in ethnic minority areas. In terms of regional scope, Xia Na et al. (2022) analyzed the language landscape in the education field of ethnic minority areas from a primary school in Diqing Prefecture, Yunnan Province as a case, and discussed the language landscape in the area from the three dimensions of "entity, politics and experience" [4]. There are two articles focusing on the language landscape of road signs. Xie Chen and Zhang Shufeng (2019), taking the bilingual public road signs in Shanghai as a case, discussed the phenomenon of "language symbol mobility" from the perspective of sociolinguistics [5]. Zhu Lijun (1994) discussed Japanese traffic rules from "road signs and road sign language" [6]. However, research on the road sign language landscape in ethnic minority areas has not been found yet. Therefore, research on the road sign language landscape in Yunnan Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Sichuan Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is of practical significance to the construction of the language landscape in ethnic minority areas.

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3. THE ROAD SIGN LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE OF LUDING IN GANZI

3.1. Analysis on the Current Proportion of Multilingual Landscape of Luding Road Signs

There are 104 road signs in the periphery of Luding City in Ganzi, Sichuan, and the highway to Kangding. Among the 104 pictures collected, the language landscape with road signs only using Chinese accounts for a large proportion, with fifty-six in total, accounting for 53.85% of the total number, including forty-one prompts and eleven prohibited information. Trilingual proportion is 5.77%, totally six pictures, two of which are Tibetan, Chinese and "Pinyin" and others are Chinese, Tibetan and English. There are eighteen bilingual road sign language landscapes in Chinese and Tibetan, accounting for 17.31% of the total, most of which are prohibited information or prompts. A few road signs have no language but only symbols or Arabic numerals, including three pieces of line indication information and three pieces of speed limit information. Road sign information of pure Tibetan, pure English and Tibetan English bilingual combination was not available. Among all signboards, there are a total of twenty-four pieces of route indication information, including one in Chinese, Tibetan and English, accounting for less than 1% of all signboards. There are many all Chinese road signs in Luding, Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, most of which are safety tips or friendship tips, but some of the line signs, service information and prohibited information signs are also all Chinese signs.

3.2. Analysis on the Language Advantages of Multilingual Landscape of Luding Road Signs

"In the language landscape in the public service field of minority areas, the order and prominence of multilingualism show the importance of language to a certain extent" [7]. According to Li Lisheng (2017), the priority of languages is that the upper language is superior to the lower language, and the left language is superior to the right language. Among the language materials collected from Luding Road Signs, twenty-four road signs containing Tibetan language are in the form of Chinese and Tibetan, or Chinese, Tibetan and English or Chinese, Tibetan and Pinyin. The language order is basically Tibetan in the upper row and Chinese in the lower row. Either Tibetan is in the upper row, Chinese is in the middle row, and English or Pinyin is in the lower row. There are twenty-one road signs with Tibetan in the top row, accounting for 87.5% of the road signs in Tibetan. There are three road signs with Tibetan languages in the lower row while Chinese in the upper row, accounting for 12.5%. English is the bottom row of road signs for Chinese and English, or Chinese, Tibetan and English combinations. Among all road signs, the Chinese font is the largest and most prominent. As the official language of China, Mandarin is an important link for cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. *The Implementation Plan of the National Common Language and Characters Popularization Project* plans to "basically popularize the national common language and characters nationwide by 2020" [8]. In the Sichuan Ganzi Luding road sign language landscape, except for the six signboards with only symbols or Arabic numerals, other signboards all contain Chinese, which reflects the advantages of Chinese in this area. At the same time, according to the Tibetan Language Regulations of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, traffic signs in urban public places within the administrative region of the autonomous prefecture should use both Tibetan and national common characters. From the perspective of language order, Tibetan has prominent advantages. In terms of font size, Chinese is very prominent. Luding road sign language landscape is consistent with the national universal language popularization policy and Tibetan language use management policy.

4. THE ROAD SIGN LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE OF SHANGRI-LA IN DIQING

4.1. Analysis on the Current Proportion of Multilingual Landscape of Shangri-La Road Signs

There are 73 language landscapes in the periphery of Shangri-La City, Diqing and the road between Shangri-La and Derong. Although the number of all Chinese signboards in Shangri-La road signs is the largest, the proportion is not high, only 28.78%. There are sixteen Chinese, Tibetan and English road signs, all of which are route signs, accounting for 21.9%. There are also sixteen road signs in Chinese and English, accounting for 21.91%. There are thirty-six road signs with Tibetan language signs, accounting for 49%. Road signs with only Tibetan language signs are not available. There are thirty-two road signs containing English signs in all signs, which are expressed in Chinese, Tibetan and English or Chinese and English, accounting for 44%. No road signs only in English have been collected, though the proportion of English signs is large. It can be concluded that the signs with Chinese in Shangri-La Road have the largest proportion, and each sign contains Chinese.

4.2. Analysis on the Language Advantages of Multilingual Landscape of Shangri-La Road Signs

Each signboard of the Shangri-La road sign language landscape contains Chinese, which reflects the language advantage of Chinese in the region. As far as ranking of road sign language landscape is concerned, Chinese is in the upper row, Tibetan is in the middle row, and English is in the lower row. There are also Tibetan in the upper row, Chinese in the middle row, and English in the lower row. There are sixteen road signs containing only Chinese and English, with Chinese in the upper row and English in the lower row. There are also six road signs with Chinese in the upper row, English in the middle row, and Tibetan in the lower row. In terms of language order, Chinese has outstanding advantages. The number of road signs with Chinese in the upper row is sixty-seven, and the font is the largest, which highlights the dominant position of Chinese as a national language in Shangri-La. The number of Tibetan road signs is thirty-six, in line with Regulations of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan Province: "Important publicity signs in the autonomous prefecture should be in both Chinese and Tibetan" [9]. At the same time, the proportion of English in road signs is also large, with a total of thirty-two pieces, reflecting that English has received due attention as the world's lingua franca.

5. SUGGESTIONS ON THE ROAD SIGN LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE IN GANZI, SICHUAN AND DIQING IN YUNNAN

5.1. Improving the Multilingual Environment

The multilingual environment of Ganzi in Sichuan and Diqing in Yunnan road signs needs to be improved. Road signs need to provide effective and correct route indication information to all road users, but according to the survey, the multilingual situation in these two places is not optimistic. For example, half of the road signs in Luding are only in Chinese, and the proportion of bilingual or multilingual in Shangri-La section is not more than 50% (thirty-two road signs in Chinese and English or Tibetan, Chinese and English, thirty-six in Chinese and Tibetan or Tibetan, Chinese and English), which cannot provide complete and effective information guidance for road users and foreign tourists in ethnic minority areas who only know ethnic minority languages or English. The construction of a multilingual environment should be strengthened to maximize the information guidance function of road signs.

5.2. Improving the Language Ecological Environment

There are different translations of the same place name in the road signs of Luding, Ganzi and Shangri-La, Diqing. For example, in Luding road signs, there are different translations with "Luding Bridge", "Luding Chain Bridge" and "Lu Ding Qiao". The translation of "Hailuo Valley" includes "Hai Luo Gou", "Hailuogou Valley", "Hailuogou", etc. In the road signs of Shangri-La, "Tiger Leaping Gorge" is translated into "Tiger Leaping Gorge" and "Hutiaoxia". The translation of "Shangri-La" is inconsistent with that of "Xianggelila". In addition, there is a multilingual code inconsistency between different route information in the same road sign for both routes. For example, on the road signs at some intersections, some places' names are expressed in three languages, while some places' names are expressed in two languages. The English translation of places' names is not standardized in road signs. For example, some places' names use all capital letters, while some places' names only use initial letter capitally.

5.3. Specifying Translation Rules

First of all, the same place name should be translated consistently in all road signs. According to *A COMPANION TO THE USE OF ENGLISH IN TOURISM,* "if the names of places and institutions belong to place names, they should be spelled in Chinese Pinyin in place name signs, and other occasions can be explained in English as needed" [10], so people can use "Luding Bridge", "Hailuo Valley", "Hutiao Gorge" to translate the place names mentioned in the last item. But for "Shangri-La", the translation should be consistent with the official website. What's more, the format of place name should keep consistency, not matter capitalizing all letters or just capitalizing the initial letter of a word. The abbreviation form of general name shall clearly specify the writing format. Last but not least, it is necessary to improve the road sign supervision system, encourage the public to point out the misuse and non-standard use of road signs, and arrange special departments to correct them in a timely manner.

6. CONCLUSION

The language landscape reflects the current situation of multilingual use in the region, highlights the dominant language situation in the region, and also reflects the language policy and "cultural survival state" of the local government [11]. Although the language landscape in many places has been greatly

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improved, it still needs to be improved in terms of accuracy and preciseness, and the improvement of language landscape is still on the way.

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