



Exploration of Language Landscape and Optimization Strategies in Beijing's South Luogu Lane

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Abstract: South Luogu Lane is the oldest neighborhood in Beijing, preserving the architectural style of the Yuan Dynasty's alleyways, attracting a large number of domestic and foreign tourists. This study focuses on the official and private language landscapes of its main street. Through field visits and photographic documentation, the authors found that the national language dominates, accompanied by English translations, facilitating foreign tourists. However, there are issues of inconsistency and lack of uniformity in the language landscape, such as inconsistent positioning and font sizes. These problems affect the cultural image of South Luogu Lane. Therefore, the authors propose optimization strategies to strengthen the protection of the cultural landscape and promote the sustainable development of South Luogu Lane. The authors hope that these measures will enhance the cultural value of South Luogu Lane, provide a better experience for tourists, and promote its influence as a cultural symbol of Beijing.

Keywords: language landscape; historical and cultural neighborhoods; linguistic culture

1. Introduction

The language landscape refers to the visible written language in public spaces, typically manifested through signages. It is generally believed that the language landscape of a certain area or city consists of the collective language displayed on public road signs, billboards, street names, place names, shop signs, and government building signage. [1] Against the backdrop of Beijing's efforts to build an international cultural tourism city, comprehensively showcasing the language landscape of South Luogu Lane, analyzing its characteristics and issues, is of great significance to enhancing the city's soft power and building an international smart city. South Luogu Lane is located in the Xicheng District of Beijing, on the east side of the central axis, with Gulou East Street to the north, Di'anmen East Street to the south, Di'anmen Outer Street to the west, and Jiadaokou South Street to the east. It is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Beijing, with a history of more than 740 years, preserving the complete layout of the Yuan Dynasty and being the most resource-rich grid-style traditional residential area in China. [2] The surrounding hutongs are colorful with various forms of courtyards, and the complete hutong pattern is rich in cultural connotations, making it a well-preserved "jade" in the ancient capital of Beijing. In recent years, numerous restaurants, cultural and creative shops, and bars have become features of this area, making South Luogu Lane a hotspot for tourism in Beijing, with many foreign travelers listing it as a must-visit attraction in Beijing. Through field visits, the author has collected a large amount of first-hand data. After sorting and analyzing, the recent language landscape of South Luogu Lane can be presented, which is of great significance for the language landscape construction of key scenic spots in Beijing.

During the investigation process, the first step is to collect data on the language landscape of South Luogu Lane in Beijing, including all the shop signs, road signs, prompt signs, warning signs, propaganda signs, and traffic signs on the main street of South Luogu Lane, classify and statistically analyze the language landscape. Secondly, analyze the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the language landscape of South Luogu Lane in Beijing. Then, study the external economic effects brought by the language landscape of South Luogu Lane in Beijing, including summarizing and analyzing the economic and social effects brought by the language landscape of South Luogu Lane separately. Finally, based on the social environment, the relationship between the social environment and the language landscape of South Luogu Lane is discussed through photo analysis.

This study mainly includes field survey method and data analysis method, selecting the historical and cultural blocks of South Luogu Lane in Beijing as the research object, and taking photos of signs, road signs, prompt signs, warning signs, propaganda signs, and traffic signs on the main street of South Luogu Lane to obtain language data. Due to the large number of on-site photos taken, this study needs to use Excel and database to analyze and present the data in the form of charts.

By recording data through photography, then organizing the data, a total of 113 pictures were taken during the process, including 38 official language landscape images and 75 private language landscape images. Through content analysis of the photos, there were 55 instances of official language landscape and 92 instances of private language landscape.

2. Analysis of Cultural Characteristics in the Language Landscape of South Luogu Lane

2.1 Official Language Landscape Code Analysis

Studying the official language signs in South Luogu Lane not only allows us to understand the language policies and ideologies of authorities such as local governments but also highlights the level of language services in historical neighborhoods. This paper examines all the road signs, prompt signs, warning signs, propaganda signs, introduction signs, commemorative signs, and traffic signs in South Luogu Lane as the research objects of the official language landscape and conducts further analysis. [3]

2.1.1 Analysis of Language Code Composition



According to statistics, a total of 43 official language landscape samples were collected in the historical and cultural blocks of South Luogu Lane. Among the 43 official language landscapes, there are 43 instances of Chinese language codes, accounting for 100%, ranking first in frequency. The English language codes in the official language landscape amount to 25, accounting for 58% (rounded to 58.14% to two decimal places), with no other official language landscape codes appearing. Through analysis, it is evident that the language service image of South Luogu Lane has greatly enhanced the city's foreign language service capabilities and internationalization level, strengthening the capital's international language capabilities and creating a favorable international language environment. [4]

2.1.2 Analysis of Language Code Combinations

In this study, signs are divided into single-language and bilingual signs based on the number of language codes. Language code combinations are divided into three types: single-language, bilingual, and multilingual. Single-language signs refer to signs with only one language code; bilingual signs refer to signs with two language codes; multilingual signs refer to signs with three or more language codes (no multilingual phenomenon was found in the official language landscape in this survey, so the following research did not involve multilingual code analysis). [5]

Among the 43 official language sign samples, there are 18 single-language sign samples, accounting for approximately 42% (rounded to 41.86% to two decimal places). There are 25 bilingual sign samples, accounting for approximately 58% (rounded to 58.14% to two decimal places) (as shown in Table 1). Through data comparison, it is found that bilingual samples have the highest proportion. Therefore, in the historical and cultural blocks of South Luogu Lane in Beijing, bilingual signs are the most numerous and have the widest coverage.

Table 1. Composition and Configuration Chart of Official Language Landscape Codes

Analysis of Official Language Landscape and Code Combinations.			
Type	Quantity/piece	Proportion	Language Sign
Single-language	18	41.86%	
Bilingual	25	58.14%	



2.1.3 Classification of Official Language Landscape Signs

Among the 43 official language landscapes, there are a total of 40 evacuation instruction signs, accounting for 93% (rounded to 93.02% to two decimal places); there are 3 propaganda signs, accounting for 6.9% (rounded to 6.98% to two decimal places). The types of evacuation instruction signs include warning signs, prohibition signs, directional signs, route signs, and tourist area signs. Warning signs warn vehicles and pedestrians of dangerous locations; prohibition signs indicate

prohibited or restricted traffic behavior for vehicles and pedestrians; directional signs indicate the direction of travel for vehicles and pedestrians; route signs convey information about road directions, locations, and distances; tourist area signs provide directions and distances to tourist attractions.

Among the 40 evacuation instruction signs, there are 4 warning signs, 5 prohibition signs, 13 directional signs, 4 route signs, 17 tourist area signs, and 4 introduction signs (as shown in Table 2). It can be seen that the evacuation instruction signs in South Luogu Lane, Beijing, are comprehensive with a wide coverage, and provide a good language service environment.

Table 2. Composition and Configuration Chart of Official Language Landscape Evacuation Signs




Classification of Official Language Landscape Signage.			
Type	Quantity/piece	Proportion	Language Sign
Evacuation Direction Signs	40	93.02%	
Promotional Logo	3	6.98%	



2.2 Private Language Landscape Code Analysis

2.2.1 Analysis of Language Code Composition

According to statistics (Table 3), among the 52 private language landscape samples in South Luogu Lane, five language codes appeared, namely Chinese, English, Japanese, Thai, and Russian. Among them, there are 50 samples of private language landscapes containing Chinese language codes, accounting for 96.15% of the total samples; there are 19 samples of private language landscapes containing English language codes, accounting for 36.54% of the total samples; there are 2 samples of private language landscapes containing Japanese language codes, accounting for 3.84% of the total samples; there is 1 sample of private language landscape containing Thai language code, accounting for 1.92% of the total samples; there is 1 sample of private language landscape containing Russian language code, accounting for 1.92% of the total samples.

Table 3. Chart of Private Language Landscape Codes

Analysis of Private Language Landscape Code Composition			
Type	Quantity/piece	Proportion	Language Sign
Chinese Language Codes	50	96.15%	
English Language Codes	19	36.54%	
Japanese Language Codes	2	3.84%	

Analysis of Private Language Landscape Code Composition			
Type	Quantity/piece	Proportion	Language Sign
Thai Language Codes	1	1.92%	
Russian Language Codes	1	1.92%	

Through comparison, it is evident that among the 52 private language signs, Chinese language codes have the highest usage rate. English, Japanese, etc., as foreign languages, are mainly used in South Luogu Lane when the type of product or service offered by the shops is related to elements from other countries, in order to achieve promotional purposes.

2.2.2 Analysis of Language Code Combinations

According to statistics, among the 52 samples of private language landscape on the main street of South Luogu Lane, there are mainly two types of language code combinations: single-language and bilingual. Among them, there are 31 samples composed of single-language, accounting for 59.62% of the total samples; there are 21 samples composed of bilingual, accounting for 40.38% of the total samples. (As shown in Table 4)



(1) Single-language Phenomenon.





Through investigation, it was found that the language codes in the single-language private language landscape on the main street of South Luogu Lane can be categorized into two types: pure Chinese language codes and pure English language codes. Among them, 29 samples of private language landscapes with pure Chinese language codes were found, accounting for 93.55% of the total single-language samples; 2 samples of private language landscapes with pure English language codes were found, accounting for 6.45% of the total single-language samples. (As shown in Table 4)

(2) Bilingual Phenomenon.

Among the 56 private language landscape samples on the main street of South Luogu Lane, there were 20 bilingual signs, accounting for 35.71% of the total samples. According to statistics (Table 4), there are four types of combination forms in the bilingual private language landscape on the main street of South Luogu Lane, namely Chinese + English, Chinese + Japanese, Chinese + Thai, and Chinese + Russian. Among them, the “Chinese + English” language code combination type of private signs appeared 17 times, accounting for 85% of the total samples; the “Chinese and other foreign languages excluding English” language codes appeared three times, accounting for 15% of the total bilingual samples.

Table 4. Bilingual Code Samples

Analysis of Private Language Landscape Code Composition			
Type	Quantity/piece	Proportion	Language Sign
Single-language	31	59.62%	
Bilingual	21	40.38%	

Analysis of Private Language Landscape Code Composition				
	Type	Quantity/piece	Proportion	Language Sign
Single-language Phenomenon	Pure Chinese Language Codes	29	93.55%	
	Pure English Language Codes	2	6.45%	
Bilingual Phenomenon	Chinese + English	17	85%	
	Chinese + Other Foreign Languages Excluding English	3	15%	

From the above data, it can be seen that the “Chinese + English” language code combination type has an absolute advantage among bilingual signs. Chinese and English, as the two most widely used languages internationally, occupy an irreplaceable position in international communication, and this language code combination is indispensable.

3. South Luogu Lane Language Landscape: Economic and Social Environment Analysis

3.1 Economic Effects

The language landscape in historical districts holds significant economic value, particularly in the realm of tourism. [7] Official language landscapes predominantly employ bilingual signage, facilitating foreign visitors’ understanding of the district’s culture and providing comprehensive, accurate, and convenient information, thus saving translation costs and enhancing visitor experiences. Private language landscapes, through diverse fonts and presentation styles, attract tourists, allowing businesses to tailor signage according to customer preferences, maximizing benefits. As a tourist city, Beijing utilizes bilingual signage in public spaces not only to convey historical and cultural information, showcasing the charm of Chinese culture, but also to provide convenient services for tourists, thereby fostering an open, inclusive urban image. In summary, the language landscape in historical districts not only reflects cultural characteristics but also brings significant economic benefits, driving the development of tourism and shaping the city’s image.

3.2 Social Effects

The language landscape is closely intertwined with the social environment, serving not only as a vital component of cultural identity but also as a bridge for information communication.[8] During emergencies, leveraging the language landscape to provide emergency language services can innovate response methods and enhance response efficiency. Scientific planning of the language landscape not only enhances the city’s image but also strengthens urban emergency management and social governance capabilities. [9]

4. South Luogu Lane Language Landscape Issues and Optimization Strategies

Through on-site investigation of the language landscape in South Luogu Lane, it was observed that there are certain problems with both official and private language signage in the area. This section will list the identified issues and propose corresponding suggestions or recommendations based on relevant policies and experience.

(1) Aging, Fading, and Wear of Language Landscape Signs [10].

Language landscapes serve the vital function of guiding and warning visitors, making their importance evident. How-

ever, signs that appear aged, faded, or worn can impede visitors' ability to promptly discern and obtain crucial information, thereby affecting the overall aesthetics of the historical district. This problem can be addressed by refurbishing and maintaining damaged signs.

(2) Placement of Language Signs in Obscure Locations, Lack of Prominence.

In addition to the above issues, it was also observed during the investigation that some language signs were obscured by advertisements or buildings. Official directional signs play a crucial role in guiding people's daily travels, and the prominence of official language signs significantly affects their directional function. When visitors are unable to quickly and accurately locate their desired destinations due to obscured signs, it becomes necessary to standardize and regulate the placement of language signage.

(3) Excessive Commercialization.

As commercialization intensifies, it is essential to preserve the historical and cultural characteristics of South Luogu Lane as a traditional ancient district. During the exploration process, it was noted that some private language landscapes feature various decorative fonts, while others solely utilize foreign language codes, lacking Chinese elements and contradicting the district's historical positioning. As a protected historical and cultural area, South Luogu Lane should emphasize the use of national standard languages and unique cultural elements, showcasing authentic and profound Chinese history and culture to visitors. Injecting local characteristics into private language landscapes can address such issues arising from excessive commercialization.

5. Conclusion

As a historic district in Beijing, South Luogu Lane attracts a large number of domestic and foreign tourists. Our on-site investigation revealed that Chinese remains the primary language code, with a high coverage of English, providing convenience for foreign visitors. Official language landscapes primarily use Chinese, actively promoting policy ideologies and reflecting official language consciousness. Private language landscapes reflect a blend of diverse cultures. Culturally, South Luogu Lane boasts local characteristics, with landscape signs highlighting regional historical significance. The economic value of the language landscape is significant, with distinctive landscapes attracting tourists and enhancing economic benefits. However, there are also issues: aging official directional signs, obscure placements, and severe commercialization and damage to private landscapes. It is recommended to strengthen signage maintenance, standardize official signage, integrate Chinese culture, enhance the historical charm of the district, and provide a better touring experience for visitors.

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