



Analysis of English Translations of Metro Stations in China from the Perspective of the language landscape: A case study of Changchun

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Abstract. This article examines the bilingual (Chinese-English) translation of Changchun metro station name, which pays attention to the problems of lacking bilingual translation standards and insufficient knowledge of cross-cultural. Taking Changchun as an example, this study explores the impact of pinyin spelling regulations and language policies on the translation phenomenon. Through data analysis of the translation format and resources, the linguistic landscape theory is involved in qualitative analysis by information collection and coding analysis. The qualitative research method is used for the interaction between language policy, linguistic landscape, and the relationship between inconsistencies in translation format and form and language policy. It summarises the functions of bilingual station name translation in Changchun metro and its relationship with language and translation policy changes. The article stresses the importance of a standardised linguistic landscape to protect the city's cultural soft power, the promotion of the city's cultural "going out" and thus the promotion of Chinese culture "going out".

Keywords: language landscape; language policy; translation study

1 Introduction

With globalisation becoming increasingly prominent, the language landscape of China's metropolitan cities has become bilingual in Chinese and English. The translation of metro station names has been studied frequently because of its indicative role. However, because of the lack of bilingual translation standards and the insufficient knowledge of cross-cultural translators, English translations of urban linguistic landscapes present a variety of problems. Previous studies have found inconsistencies in the choice of words and spelling methods for translating station names in first-tier cities. On this basis, this article will analyse the reasons behind this phenomenon concerning the Chinese Pinyin spelling regulations, in conjunction with language policies and proposals to improve standardisation and consistency.

As the influence of language policy shapes the language landscape. As language policies are updated, previous studies have focused on past language policies. With the promulgation of the English Translation Regulation for Public Service Areas (Ministry of Education, 2017) in 2017 and the change in the English translation of metro station names made for the first time in 2021 in Beijing metro stations^[6].

While previous authors have used first-tier or new first-tier cities as case studies, this study will examine the linguistic landscape of the second-tier city, Changchun to fill the research gap. Through analyzing the current situation of the co-existence of multiple formats in the translation of Changchun's metro station names from the perspective of language landscape, the underlying reasons for the translation phenomenon will be revealed by taking the translation of Changchun's metro station names as an example and combining it with the changes in language policy. The analysis of the non-standard and inconsistent translation in metro stations in a second-tier city intends to provide a basis for future quantitative research on the linguistic landscape of metro station names in China with theoretical applications.

2 Methodology

Language landscape has an active role to play in English translations for public services (Angermeyer, 2023)^[1]. Data on the translation of Changchun metro station will be collected by online information and organized by using coded analysis, according to parameters such as the type of the station names, capitalization, contingency and the format of the translation.

Fu & Shen (2022) Taking Urumqi Metro Line 1 as an example, the linguistic landscape distribution and translation consistency of metro station names are analyzed to provide a theoretical basis for this research^[4]. The case study of the bilingual English translations of Changchun metro station names will generally focus on the current situation of English translations of metro station names in terms of capitalization of letters, translation of proper names and common names and translation of orientation words. The reasons behind the phenomenon will be analyzed with a combination of language policy and language landscape (Blommaert, 2006)^[3].

2.1 Dimensions of Language Landscape Theory

This study will adopt the language landscape theory, which was first proposed and applied by Landy and Bourhis (1997)^[5]. The focus is on the analysis and study within the social environment of linguistic signs, which are the material means of displaying the language. Language landscape focuses on public signage such as road signs, road names and advertising boards in cities of a specific territory or region, closely related to urban and personal life.

The application of language landscape theory has a proactive influence on the translation of public service linguistic landscapes. The application of linguistic landscape in China has concentrated mainly on the study of the translational linguistic

landscape for metro station names. In previous studies inconsistency and non-standardization in the translation of urban metro linguistic landscapes are universal.

3 Dissimilation and Assimilation in Bilingual Translation

Dissimilation and assimilation have become important aspects in the translation of bilingual public signs. In the field of English translation, assimilation stems from the commonality of language and culture, and dissimilation from the culture of the source language. Assimilation tries to integrate the translation with the cultural background of the participants and draws them closer to them; dissimilation maintains the characteristics of the source language and culture in the translation process and draws participants closer to the culture of the target language.

In the following section, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the forms of English translations of Changchun metro station names will be conducted using assimilation and dissimilation translation strategies. Assimilation and dissimilation have a wide range of applications in the field of intercultural literary translation. Analysis of the translation of linguistic landscapes from the perspective of the participants, using the theories of assimilation and alienation, will provide a better understanding of the translation phenomenon of the co-existence of multiple formats in the translation of metro station names. The English translations of Changchun metro station names are divided into three main forms: pinyin only, English only and a combination of English and hanyu pinyin. The evolution of the linguistic landscape of translations in Changchun metro station names is observed by analysing the proportion of the three forms of translation and the proportion of each form of translation and its development over time.

4 The Function of Bilingual Metro Station Translation in Changchun

Urban linguistic landscapes have an informative and symbolic function (Landry & Bourhis, 1997)^[5]. The directive function reflects the simplicity and clarity of the naming and is aimed at the public to facilitate passenger travel. It is functionally consistent with the positioning of the station site. The symbolic function of the linguistic landscape is reflected in the factors of culture, history, and geographical location. Changchun is the first city in mainland China where railway lines are operated. Changchun Rail Transit Line 3 is the first rail transit line to open for operation in Changchun, and the first light rail line in mainland China. It is therefore of value to select Changchun, a second-tier city, for this case study.

4.1 Informative Functions of Metro Station Naming

Referring to the setting of rail transit stations in Changchun, the Chinese naming of stations is mainly kept between 2 and 5 characters in number. At the same time, the

station names of each line have an overall uniformity in terms of text style. The English naming of stations can be divided into four main categories according to the function of the information conveyed by the English translation. The first type of names after historical places or old locations, such as the Puppet Regime Palace Museum and DONGDAQIAO Bridge, while the second type is based on the name of the road that intersects with the metro line, such as "QINGFENG Rd." The third type is the naming of a public space or a professional facility, such as "RENMIN Square", "Institute of Geography Station", etc. The fourth type is the naming of a community, such as HONGZUIZI, XIAONAN, etc..

According to the above four classifications of Changchun city rail transit language landscape naming approach. Table 1 shows that 58% of stations are named after transport interchanges, accounting for the highest percentage. The second highest percentage of stations named according to urban public space in Changchun is 32%. Naming after historical places and communities accounted for a smaller share at 2% and 9% respectively.

Table 1. Percentage of types of naming for Changchun Metro station

Type of Names	Number	Percentage
Historical Places	2	2%
Transport Interchange	53	58%
Urban Public Space	29	32%
Community	8	9%
Total	92	100%

Among these types of naming, the transport interchange has the strongest message and the highest percentage, indicating that the naming of metro stations mainly follows the information function of the linguistic landscape.

4.2 Translation Format of Metro Station

There is inconsistency in the English translation of Changchun metro station names in terms of formatting, capitalisation and choice of position of orientation words.

Firstly, according to the theories of assimilation and dissimilation in the translation of metro station names, the data of 92 station names of Changchun rail transit were summarized in Table 2. It was found that the most widely used form of translation was the combination of Chinese Pinyin and English, for example, SHENGLI Park and FANRONG Road. Data has shown that 11 stations were translated entirely into Pinyin instead of English, using the translation strategy of dissimilation, accounting for 12%. While 15 stations were translated entirely into English, using the translation strategy of assimilation, which accounted for 16%. However, the form of translation that accounts for the largest proportion is that of a combination of English and Pinyin, accounting for 72%.

Table 2. Percentage of the format of translation for Changchun Metro stations

Format of Translation	Number	Percentage
Pinyin	11	12%

English	15	16%
Pinyin + English	66	72%
Total	92	100%

5 Language Policy: Reasons Behind the Phenomenon

To enhance the standardization of the use of Chinese pinyin for geographical names, in 1984 China first standardized the spelling of Pinyin related to geographical names and issued Rules for the Spelling of Chinese Geographical Names in the Hanyu Pinyin Alphabet (Part of Chinese Geographical Names). With the increased internationalisation of China General Principles on Bilingual Signage in Public Places (Beijing Municipal People's Government, 2006) was first promulgated in 2006^[2]. The names of metro stations are generally in capital Chinese Pinyin, e.g. "SHUANGFENG", but the proper names of venues are usually translated into English, e.g. "Puppet Regime Palace Museum" .

The Scheme of Chinese phonetic alphabet is of great significance for the standardization of language in both national and urban traffic signs (Wu, 2023)^[7]. The names of metro stations where Chinese pinyin is used should be revised by the Scheme of Chinese phonetic alphabet and Basic rules of Chinese phonetic alphabet orthograph for the outline. According to this scheme, a new standard was released in December 2017 that the first letter of each spelling unit should be capitalized and the remaining letters in lowercase. And the spacing should be under the rules of Chinese Pinyin (Ministry of Education, 2017)^[6]. In principle, metro station names are spelt in Roman letters, taking into account both English and pinyin conventions, i.e., the first letter of the word is capitalised and the other letters are lower-cased, and split according to English pronunciation conventions. For example "Qiche Gongyuan", and as "Jieda Dalu". Both show dissimilation in the translation.

In the policy of 2006 dissimilation was adopted in the translation of common names, preserving the typical features of the Chinese language^[2]. However, metro stations which are named after historical places of interest, monuments, and so forth, or stations with agreed, long used and generally accepted English names in both China and abroad, applying rules of assimilation, which will continue to use the English transliterations. The standardisation policy of 2017 sees the increased use of pinyin and its expansion into the translation of station names related to urban public spaces^[6].

Overall, as time grows the use of pinyin as well as the use of English in the translation of metro station names is gradually increasing, which relate to the increase of international status and soft power of China. There was a significant increase in the use of pinyin in 2017, which is linked to the promulgation of new language landscape translation standards 2017. Thus, language policy and the format and form of the linguistic landscape are closely related and mutually influenced.

6 Conclusion

In terms of audience theory, the multilingual translation of urban language landscapes focuses on specific audience groups and provides accessible information for people who speak different languages. Some station names are used in an assimilative manner to showcase the local character to foreign audiences. Others are translated in an assimilated manner to create an atmosphere where foreign audiences feel at home, and as a reflection of cultural confidence.

Pinyin in the names of transport stations represents the will of the state and is a symbol of Chinese cultural elements, while also carrying the characteristics and essence of Chinese cultural elements. The standardisation of the language landscape of urban regulated rail transport means that it can reflect urban civilisation and is an important element in improving the cultural construction of urban public spaces. By standardising the urban language landscape, it is not only possible to protect the soft power of urban culture, but also to promote the 'going out' of the city, and thus the 'going out' of Chinese culture. Further, this study will provide the basis for a quantitative study of the extension of the metro linguistic landscape flipping to the inter-city level.

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