

A Study on the Linguistic Landscape in Public Virtual Space: Evidence from the Portal of Suzhou Industrial Park Administrative Committee

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With the digitization of the world, virtual linguistic landscape (VLL) takes precedence within the parameter of the online domain, which, on governmental websites, exists in abundance as the primary source of information. This study focuses on the Suzhou Industrial Park Administrative Committee (SIPAC) portal, including data obtained through photography and semi-structured interviews. The theoretical underpinning for the research is Trumper-Hecht's three-dimensional model, and the analysis is done using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study aims to provide an extensive description of the linguistic features, the audience's impressions and attitudes about the chosen virtual linguistic landscape through image data and semi-structured interviews. Moreover, the study also aims to probe into how pertinent language policy has shaped the current status of VLL. Using an analysis of the physical characteristics of SIPAC's VLL as a foundation, the paper delves deeper into the impact of political directives and the experiential dimension. The three-dimensional analytical model serves as a theoretical tool to see how the three dimensions interplay with one another. In light of the ongoing trends of globalization and human integration, this research advances the domestic VLL research and its implications are particularly essential for the construction of linguistic ecology in multi-cultural communities.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, virtual space, governmental websites, three-dimensional analytical model

After the concept of linguistic landscape (LL) was put forward, a great number of studies have been conducted in the burgeoning field (Gorter, 2006; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). With the digitization of the world, virtual linguistic landscape (VLL) has emerged and prevailed with the development of the Internet. It is of vital significance to extend the focus from the physical world to the virtual world. As a result, the frontiers of LL research have been pushed, and the study of VLL has emerged as a cutting-edge area of inquiry, which is closely related with new linguistic norms. Analysis of the linguistic ecology in virtuality is still pending, both in aspects of the underlying ideologies as well as language display. This presents an appealing opportunity to extend the universality of the laws of the physical world by applying them to the unique, uncharted, and ever-evolving virtual space.

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Literature Review

Virtual linguistic landscape springs up to the surface after the appearance of linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Many scholars put forward the definitions of linguistic landscape from different perspectives but with slight differences, which all emphasize the presence of "language" and "public space." Landry and Bourhis (1997) first define linguistic landscape as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration" (p. 25). Besides, Itagi et al. (2002, p. 9) put forward that linguistic landscape refers to "written language in public space." Ben-Rafael (2009, p. 41) also refers to linguistic landscape as "symbolic construction in public space." Jaworski and Thurlow (2010, p. 1) propose linguistic landscape as "the interaction between language, visual activity, spatial practice and cultural dimension,

especially the construction of spatial discourse, which use text as medium and symbolic resources.” In line with the backdrop of prevailing digitalization, the sociolinguistics academia should extend the horizon from the language in the physical world to the digital space (Deumert, 2014). Reminiscent of the function of physical LL, in the online world, VLL marks the power relations and displays hidden language policy in the digital world (McLuhan & Gordon, 2003; Ricento, 2006). Both in the social and economic spheres, VLL can be undeniably beneficial (Nong, 2010). As Nong puts it, “VLL abounds in its social and economic value” (2010, p. 131), through which the users are inclined to obtain sufficient and diverse data and information. They can facilitate communication and act as a link to exchange information, which pave the way for trade, social integration, and cross-cultural exchange.

VLL studies mainly fall into three categories, which focus on websites in commercial settings, governmental settings, and educational settings. Against the backdrop of multilingualism and prevailing commercialism, the bulk of research on websites in commercial settings is conducted to investigate how commercial websites capitalize on multilingual websites to satisfy the demands of multinational consumers (Backhaus, 2007). Relevant studies often observe that English is used as a hypercentral language (Kelly-Holmes, 2015), and the economics of language and the dynamics of the global market are closely linked to the way multilingualism is displayed on web pages (Tissen, 2004; Troyer, 2012). Just as the case in businesses, educational websites are regarded as an essential component of the virtual language environment. Studies have been conducted to examine how languages on university websites are used and what options are selected, with the goal of examining the dominant language, cultural implications, and power dynamics (Keles et al., 2020; Zhou, 2022).

What is noteworthy is that in the realm of VLL on official websites, VLL displayed in government settings reflects specific social meaning. To go one step further, governmental websites play a significant role in carrying out the country’s language policy, and the language practices employed on these platforms have a significant influence on the language ecology of cyberspace. According to certain research, “governmental websites have become a central platform for communication between the state and the people” (Berezkina, 2018, p. 55). Language policy contributes to maintaining language status and serves to uphold the legal framework, as reflected in VLL, which entails the studies of official websites to target at the general public (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009). Nonetheless,

the power status of language has a direct bearing on some unfair displays of the virtual linguistic landscape. English, the lingua franca, has taken the position of the only available language on some official websites of international websites (Zhang, 2015). VLL on governmental websites is unique for the reason that it not only serves as an informational bridge but also plays a crucial part in putting language policies into effect. As pointed out by a researcher, there is no doubt that governmental websites are used as “guidance for the use of language” (Shi, 2017, p. 53). As Kelly-Holmes notes, the research on VLL allows for “the investigation of how national policies are implemented in cyberspace in a top-down way” (2015, p. 132). Thus, the researchers can enlist the help of governmental websites to decode how language policy and language practice interplay with each other, which merits scholarly attention.

Ingeniously applying the notion of space to the study of linguistic landscapes, Trumper-Hecht creates a three-dimensional analytical model based on the theory put forward by Lefebvre (1991). In Lefebvre’s notion, he views space from a triad perspective, which encompasses “spatial practice,” “conceived space” as well as “lived space.” Trumper-Hecht suggests investigating LL through the three perspectives and their interplay, from which the key implication drawn from this is studying VLL, much as a sociolinguistic-spatial phenomenon (Trumper-Hecht, 2010). She determines the extent to which locals are aware of “language facts” in their urban surroundings and the factors influencing the city’s identity by contrasting the experiential and physical dimensions of LL.

Nie and Liu (2019) focused on the experiential space of Korean Town Communities for the experience of minority groups, whose language usage is often left out of the picture. Such a study could potentially achieve the purpose of better serving all language groups and rounding language practice in our country. Zhang and Shang (2020) note that even though the three-dimensional analytical model has been used numerous times since its initial introduction, its level of popularity is not as great as that of other theories in the field of linguistic landscape studies. Furthermore, only a small number of these studies have been able to provide a thorough explanation of the relationship between the three dimensions times along with insightful systemic discussions. This justifies the need for the study to be carried out using a three-dimensional theoretical model in the hopes of advancing the pertinent field of study.

In the hope of investigating VLL to conduct further inquiries,

we selected the case of the portal of Suzhou Industrial Park Administrative Committee (SIPAC). As a hub of international trade and commerce, SIPAC serves as a gigantic platform for intercultural communication and information exchange. Under such circumstances, the language situation of SIPAC is receiving great attention, which justifies the need to gain insights into it. Hence, this paper is devoted to presenting the recent situation of LL in SIPAC and coming up with insightful observations and suggestions for improving it. Therefore, the purposes of this research are as follows: First, the research aims to investigate the use of language in the portal of SIPAC, by gathering the data in terms of language display, as well as to inquire into the audience's reception of the current state. Second, the research examines the underlying language power dynamics and ideologies, using the information garnered. Third, the research bids to offer some implications for the construction to better serve the role of an informative and interactive platform.

Research Design

Focal Case: SIPAC's Website

This paper selects the case of SIPAC as a typical website to research on. Suzhou Industrial Park, a shining pearl on China's economic landscape, is not only renowned for its outstanding economic and trade prowess but also serves as a significant window and benchmark for Suzhou and even China's opening up and global cooperation.

SIPAC serves as a bridge connecting the world inside and outside the park, and its importance far exceeds the scope of a single information release platform. It is not only the primary window for the park to showcase its innovation-driven development, international and lively environment, and efficient government services, but also a powerful tool for promoting global cooperation and exchanges and attracting international investment and talent. Through its multi-dimensional and comprehensive information display, SIPAC not only promotes openness and transparency in government affairs within the park and deepens public understanding of policy directions, social progress, and measures for improving people's livelihood. SIPAC has constructed a diverse language landscape through the setup of multi-language versions, which not only meets the information needs of visitors from different countries and regions but also reflects the park's respect and inclusiveness for diverse cultures. Furthermore, SIPAC's

VLL also reflects the dynamic and interactive nature of language. With the development of the park and the deepening of international exchanges, SIPAC continuously updates and improves its language content to adapt to new policy directions, project progress, and market demands. Meanwhile, the website collects feedback through user comments, online surveys, and other means to continuously optimize language services and enhance user experience.

Research Questions

This thesis, based upon Trumper-Hecht's three-dimensional analytical model, aims to probe into the characteristics of the virtual linguistic landscape and the interplay between the three dimensions. In order to achieve such a purpose, this research utilizes the three-dimensional analytical model, for interpreting the flat texts in the pluralistic societal context from multiple aspects: language, society and ideology. Due to the constraints of efforts and capacity, this thesis selects the case of SIPAC as a typical website to research. By combining solid quantitative analysis and detailed qualitative interpretation, this present paper intends to answer the following specific questions:

1. What are the features of VLL in SIPAC in the three dimensions (physical dimension, experiential dimension, and political dimension)?
2. How do the three dimensions (physical dimension, experiential dimension, and political dimension) interconnect with one another?

Semi-Structured Interview

In order to examine the ways in which the three dimensions of the VLL may be interconnected, the research includes a qualitative analysis and compares the VLL in the audience's notions with the reality on signs as it is recorded in the physical dimension. This comparison enables us to learn to what degree residents notice the VLL, or in other words, to what degree residents notice the linguistic ecology "in the urban space they live in" (Trumper-Hecht, 2010, p. 238). In this case, it alludes to the virtual space in which they reside. In this study, the researcher developed nine open-ended interview questions (see Appendix I), in line with the research objectives. To explore the VLL of the portal of SIPAC, from the lived space perspective, and to figure out the impressions and evaluations of tourists on the VLL in selected websites, this research made a semi-structured interview with three interviewees to get a comprehensive understanding of their experience and attitudes towards the official websites.

Data Collection

In this study, what is explored is the Chinese version, the English version, and the Japanese of SIPAC's official website. This study mainly includes the homepages of each language option. The case selection in this study is the portal of SIPAC, which is a rather internationalized district with a consistent group of foreign residents and international trades. What is selected is these major administrative homepages, since they are directly related to the user's gathering of the main information and serve the function of telling the users what service these websites can offer. In addition, the English and Japanese versions are targeted to provide information about international trade and learning, which appeals to visitors overseas.

After the selection process, we collect the data from SIPAC's official website from March to June 2023. We first collect data from the Chinese homepage and then its English and Japanese equivalents and save them in folders for Chinese, English and Japanese of each homepage. Each sign, regardless of its size, serves as an analysis unit. After obtaining all the data from the English and Chinese content of each homepage, we proceed to the next one. To maintain the synchronic focus, we take screenshots ($N = 89$) from all pages. During data collection, we browse the major web pages, and in the process, screenshot, download, and archive data. The selected photos entail a meticulous archiving and recording process. Altogether, 89 pieces of VLL on the web pages are archived.

Data Analysis

Once we collect and store the data on the computer, we start data analysis utilizing qualitative content analysis of the materials to address the research question. We first count the number of (1) the monolingual VLLs, (2) the bilingual VLLs, and (3) the multilingual VLLs. Then, we organize the findings in tables. Next, we examine the language choice in downloadable documents (e.g., information sheets, forum, advertisements) provided on Chinese, English and Japanese webpages. After going through all the data, an analysis from the perspective of Trumper-Hechet's three-dimensional principle is conducted.

Results and Discussion

Physical Dimension

According to the definition of LL proposed by Landry and

Bourhis (1997), 89 photos in total are taken from the portal of SIPAC. The following table can offer a detailed display of the results of the number of language codes, which can be divided into the following three aspects: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual.

Number and Distribution of Language Codes on Signs

Out of all the units being analyzed, the proportion of monolingual units is predominantly high, making up 77.53% of the total. Monolingual signs account for over seventy percent of all signs, in comparison with bilingual signs accounting for a quarter. Conversely, multilingual signs constitute a mere five percent of the total, with a maximum of three language codes represented.

Table 1

Language Numbers on Signs

Monolingual signs		Bilingual signs		Multilingual signs		Total amount	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
69	77.53	15	16.85	5	5.63	89	100

Discussing the allocation of various codes on the signage, it's evident that Chinese characters constitute a significant proportion of landscape signs. Focusing on signs with a singular language representation, the table reveals that, besides Chinese, English stands out as the other prominent language among all foreign tongues, exhibiting a notable advantage. Additionally, it's noteworthy that mixed code patterns have emerged in landscape signs. According to the table, signs that combine two codes also make up a considerable share, accounting for 16.85%. Among these VLL signs, the count of those featuring both Chinese and English has reached 11, representing 12.36% on SIPAC's major webpages. With the proportion of signs featuring Chinese and Japanese characters somewhat being reduced, it is evident that English, as a language of global significance, occupies a prominent position among foreign languages and has indisputably emerged as a pivotal language in official website settings. Such a trend can be seen from the vast space it occupies in monolingual and bilingual signs.

Moreover, upon careful examination of the data outlined in Table 2, we notice that the number of signboards incorporating Chinese, English, and Japanese or exclusively English and Japanese is comparatively sparse, yielding the lowest percentage across all signboards. Although this percentage may not seem substantial, it nonetheless provides valuable insights into the extent of globalization in this region,

reflecting the interactions and exchanges between Chinese and other foreign languages. In certain instances, the employment of English and other foreign languages serves primarily as an informative tool, aimed at facilitating communication among foreigners. Notably, foreign languages, particularly English, are increasingly prevalent, carrying a strong symbolic significance for locals. In a way, the utilization of English or other foreign languages in signage has become somewhat commonplace, in contrast to the sole use of the native language. Overall, the aforementioned tables indicate that single-language landscape signs, primarily Chinese, occupy the largest share on SIPAC's official webpages. Conversely, multilingual signs constitute a smaller proportion. However, their development trend cannot be overlooked.

Table 2

Language Combination Patterns on Signs (N = 89)

Language Combination Patterns	N	%
Chinese only	37	41.57
English Only	24	26.97
Japanese Only	8	9.00
Chinese & English	11	12.36
Chinese & Japanese	3	3.37
Japanese & English	1	1.12
Chinese, English & Japanese	5	5.61

Code Preference

Followed by the analysis of the number and distribution of the languages on the websites of SIPAC, in this section, the VLL signs will be examined through the lens of code preference. The interpretation of code preference on SIPAC's websites helps to decode the power relations and implicit language policies.

The following elements can uncover the actual preferred code on the portal of SIPAC, which includes the order of characters and the allocation of space. This, in turn, offers insights into the social status of a particular language within a given regional community, which are essential for spotting the prior codes and auxiliary codes on the signs of more than one single language. Previous studies have primarily relied on two factors to determine code preference: the size of characters and their order. Typically, if a sign features characters of varying sizes, the preferred code tends to occupy a larger space. Conversely, when characters are of the same size, the preferred code is often placed at the top when arranged horizontally, or to the right when arranged vertically. Guided

by these principles, we aim to gain a holistic understanding of the prominence of different languages across SIPAC's three major webpages by analyzing the order and size of the languages used.

Table 3

Code Preference on Bilingual and Multilingual Signs (N = 20)

Order	N	%
Chinese first	10	50
English first	6	30
Japanese first	4	20
Total	20	100

Drawing insights from Table 3, it becomes evident that Chinese holds a significant share as the primary language across the bilingual or multilingual landscape signs. Notably, English, with a 30 percent share, ranks second among the preferred languages, outpacing Japanese, which seldom appears as the primary language on these signs. Based on these findings, it is generally observed that Chinese remains the most prominent language, occupying a pivotal position. This may be attributed to various factors, including the nation's language policy, the level of local economic development, and the degree of openness to the outside world.

After an examination of the aforementioned three tables, what first comes into the horizon is the apparent prominence of Chinese on linguistic signs. The preceding tables underscore the fact that the frequency of Chinese occurrence is unparalleled, topping the list, with English trailing closely behind and Japanese rounding out the top three. As the official language of China, Chinese is regarded as the prior language code in the linguistic practice, which echoes with the legal status. In other words, in the majority of VLL signs, other languages primarily function as supporting elements, playing a subordinate role.

Experiential Dimension

For the audience's general impressions and attitudes of the VLL of the portal of SIPAC, this research interviews three people for their perspectives and attitudes. The sample presents diversity of the participants regarding their gender (two males and one female), educational background and workplace. On the whole, the interviews revolve around three major aspects: overall impressions of VLL, evaluation of language use, and evaluation of implementation of language policy.

Introduction of Participants of the Semi-Structured Interview

Participant A is 31 years old and works as a photographer in the communications department of an official agency in SIPAC. His job is to document the official events hosted in SIPAC, and his working experience makes him more policy-sensitive than others, which is an advantage for the researcher to capitalize on. Participant B is a senior college student, majoring in English, who is relatively proficient in English. She is currently studying in Suzhou and is passionate about cross-cultural communication. She has taken courses in linguistics, which makes her more language-sensitive. Participant C works as a project manager in an intelligent decorative technology company in Suzhou. He is a postgraduate from a 985-Project school in Guangdong, which in a sense means he can demonstrate how businessmen perceive the LL on the portal of SIPAC.

Table 4

Detailed Information of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Workplace	Academic Background
A	Male	31	Administrative institution	Undergraduate
B	Female	22	Student	Undergraduate
C	Male	34	Foreign-funded enterprise	Postgraduate

Overall Impressions of VLL

Regarding the general impressions of the VLL on the portal of SIPAC, the audience is satisfied and appreciative of the overall VLL on the webpages of SIPAC. The interviewees (A & B) mentioned the sufficient number and informative message of the signs online, which provided them with an abundance of information. Also, the interviewees (A, B, and C) think the use of multi-languages is distinctive in that there are different language speakers living in Suzhou Industrial Park.

Extract 1

Personally, I appreciate the signs and posts on the portal. You can find various language pages on the website, which is convenient for different language users. It provides Chinese, English and Japanese service. A number of the advertisements are bilingual, mostly benefiting foreigners. (Interviewee 2)

Extract 2

I think the signs on the website are sufficient. They provide us with diverse information through various methods, such as images, audio and so on. They basically meet our daily needs. The bilingual signs and multilingual signs are impressive. They show that Suzhou Industrial Park is a highly-international area. This would produce better social benefits. It also shows the area's openness. (Interviewee 1)

Based on the replies from the interviewees, it is not hard to find out that the key impression is that the portal provides multilingual service. They think highly of the VLL on the websites, which cover a range of languages. For the interviewees, the coexistence of Chinese and other languages is convenient for local residents and foreign visitors. It is also a symbol of globalization and openness.

Although the supportive voice dominates, there are still some unfavorable comments about the VLL, mainly about the translation problems and the insufficient number of bilingual and multilingual signs.

Extract 3

The overall impression is good, but some of the signs in the English language have problems, such as poor translation. Although, I think the number of monolingual signs is much larger than that of multilingual signs and bilingual signs. (Interviewee 3)

Extract 4

On the whole, the signs reflect the international image, but the translation is unsatisfactory. Compared to other websites, the quality of translation is rather good but still sees some room for improvement. Because of rapid development and the increase of foreign residents, these translations that are not standard will affect the image of the city. (Interviewee 2)

Generally speaking, the interviewees hold positive attitudes towards the current situation of VLL on the webpages, but the translation remains to be perfected and the number of bilingual signs and multilingual signs can be increased. This confirms the data collected in the physical dimension, for monolingual signs occupy a large proportion of the signs.

Evaluation of Language Use

In terms of the co-existence of languages on VLL, all the interviewees reckon that it is beneficial and satisfactory.

They mention the fact that it could reach the effect of smoothing communication and bring convenience for daily communication.

Extract 5

The coexistence of languages can facilitate the lives of people from all cultural backgrounds and promote cultural exchange. (Interviewee 3)

Extract 6

The use of English and Japanese is quite good, representing the fact that we harbor consideration for people from different groups. It is also a feature of Suzhou Industrial Park and provides convenience to some people who cannot read Chinese. (Interviewee 2)

Additionally, when it comes to the practical placement of languages, the interviewees respond that the portal of an international community should principally place Chinese in a more noticeable position.

Extract 7

I think Chinese should be placed more prominently, such as enjoying a larger size or in a more noticeable color. After all, Chinese people are the majority group here, and the country's law states that Chinese must appear in a larger font size. (Interviewee 1)

Extract 8

Chinese should stand out a bit more compared to other languages. Also, using English is a general trend. In the online world, we encounter English in studies and entertainment. I am still in favor of foreign languages being seen everywhere in the city. (Interviewee 2)

Extract 9

The signs had better be written in both English and Chinese. At present, Chinese and English are the two most widely used languages in the world. Writing in English helps foreigners living in Suzhou Industrial Park understand better. (Interviewee 3)

Generally speaking, people lay much emphasis on Chinese as the prior language. They share the perception that it should be used dominantly. Moreover, interviewees hold a positive attitude towards the use of English-led foreign languages. It is believed that the use of foreign languages stands for

globalization and evolving into a more diverse culture.

Evaluation of Language Policy

When inquired about the knowledge of the language policies, the interviewees' understanding stays on a superficial level. They are not aware of the relevant rules when inquired about whether they know anything about the latest regulation. They basically just know about the legal status of Chinese, and the regulations about the use of other languages are out of the picture.

Extract 10

I do not know much about our national or local language policy, but I think that the use of Chinese is a must on most occasions. (Interviewee 2)

Extract 11

I know that Chinese is the legal language, but I don't know about the regulations about other languages or the translation requirements. (Interviewee 1)

After being informed about these rules and regulations, the interviewees are inquired about their attitudes towards the policies. Three demonstrate their sense of approval when it comes to the promotion of Chinese. Moreover, two express their perception that the multilingual service emphasized in the regulations of Suzhou Industrial Park needs to be strengthened.

Extract 12

The policies have kept the Chinese language in the most prominent position. The method of management reinforces the dominance of the Chinese language, which is quite understandable for the widespread use. (Interviewee 1)

Extract 13

I think the multilingual method adopted by the websites adapts to the new norm, which is quite advanced. Though there exist foreign language signs, I think the implementation could be better by inserting more bilingual or multilingual signs. (Interviewee 3)

As evidenced, the regulations' goal of promoting Chinese in Chinese-speaking environments has received positive feedback. Additionally, the supplement of other languages could be reinforced with the aim of better putting the policies

into practice.

Political Dimension

On the basis of the observations of the physical dimensions of LL stated before, this part aims to find out how national and local language laws shape the VLL on the portal of SIPAC.

As Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) put it, LL is used as tools that comply with language policy and exercise control over public space. In this section, national and provincial language rules will be explored to discuss how VLL fulfills the implementation of language policy and planning. To achieve such an aim, a double-structured body of policy is adopted (Shang & Zhou, 2020). The primary stratum is dictated by the wishes of the central administrative entity, serving as the core decision-making mechanism. Local municipal administrations occupy the second tier. These governments, operating under the umbrella of national directives, tailor their rules and regulations to cater to specific local demands.

National and Provincial Laws of Language

National language regulation showcases political direction and roughly determines the direction of development of VLL. As the official language in China, the status of Mandarin is guaranteed in the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese* in 2001. It officially approves that Mandarin should be used as the medium language of instruction in schools and for television broadcasts. Additionally, where signs, advertisements, notices, signboards, etc. use foreign languages and Chinese at the same time, standardized Chinese characters shall be used. As can be observed, Mandarin is the only officially recognized national common language. Generally speaking, these laws and regulations mentioned above center around the enhancement of the status of Chinese as the dominant language, which reflects the government's effort to regard language as a resource to achieve social and ideological solidarity. As a result, Chinese predominates in the selected pages of the portal of SIPAC. Moreover, Chinese enjoys a priority status in the bilingual and multilingual LL, rather than foreign languages. The high use of Chinese, as proved in the physical dimension before, undoubtedly echoes the role of Chinese in social language life, which encourages the use of Chinese as a national cultural symbol and a significant aspect of national identity.

At the provincial level, the LL in Jiangsu is regulated by the *Measures of Jiangsu Province for Implementing the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken*

and Written Chinese issued by the provincial government in 2007. This provincial law mirrors the national language law, while incorporating additional provisions. The use of standard Chinese is strictly regulated, as the words on screens, directional signs, signage, notices, advertisements, and posts aimed at the public shall be Chinese. The general guidance of common language use is greatly similar to the national laws about language, both reinforcing the status of Chinese. This interprets the official websites of SIPAC using standard Chinese principally.

Prefectural Regulations of Language

Prefectural-level regulations grant a more diverse use of language in areas in China, where people of different cultural backgrounds flock together. In accordance with the national language laws, municipal language regulations display a higher degree of self-administration. As a highly-autonomous area, Suzhou Industrial Park has its distinctive language features as a diverse community. *Major Points of Language Work of Suzhou Industrial Park* launched in 2022 points out the necessity of constructing a multilingual service and improving the level of language service for the new social norm. This echoes with the existence of bilingual and multilingual signs witnessed in the physical dimension, which can satisfy the daily needs of various language speakers.

Additionally, what is worth noticing is the significance attached to the Suzhou dialect by the prefectural government. In the local guidelines in 2022, the government also aims to advance the protection and promotion of the Suzhou dialect. However, none of the signs online include elements of the Suzhou dialect. They just use Mandarin or English to describe some of the traditional elements and local traditions in Suzhou.



Figure 1. Poster of Winter Foods in Suzhou

This is a typical example of an English sign on the website. Besides English, it includes elements of Mandarin (Daxue), but traces of the Suzhou dialect cannot be found. This phenomenon reveals the discrepancy between the regulations of language usage and implementation and the lack of

attention to the Suzhou dialect.

Conclusion

Based on extensive research and analysis, this paper aims to provide answers to the posed research questions and offers an overview of the VLL of SIPAC's portal, examining it from the perspectives of physical, experiential, and political dimensions. Subsequently, it delves deeper into the intricate relationships among these three dimensions.

Regarding the physical dimension, Chinese stands out as the most prominent language in the VLL of these websites, regardless of whether they employ monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual signs. This underscores its significant preponderance as the official language of our country, which embodies China's language policy to enhance cultural identity. This phenomenon is closely related to the novel linguistic norm and local language regulations. The satisfying quality of these signs shows that the sign designers carefully considered both the needs of the intended readers and Suzhou Industrial Park's international characteristics.

In view of the research findings, we reckon that in the future of planning VLL, what is worth noticing is the intricate synthesis of selected languages. The proportion of bilingual or multilingual signs is relatively scant. Suzhou Industrial Park, a global hub attracting visitors from diverse backgrounds eager to immerse themselves in Suzhou's way of life, stands to benefit greatly from an increased presence of multilingual signage. This would not only enhance the welcome extended to foreign visitors but also underscore the city's commitment to inclusivity.

From the experiential perspective, the audience's general sentiment towards the VLL of SIPAC's portal is overwhelmingly positive, corroborating the credibility of the physical dimension's data. However, some observers suggest that the quality of language services could be enhanced. Occasional translation errors can mislead both native speakers with English proficiency and foreign visitors. Meanwhile, a majority of interviewees acclaim the simultaneous presence of diverse languages. Chinese is not merely a legal requirement here; other languages also fulfill an informative role for those unable to read Chinese, fostering cross-cultural communication and national cohesion. People display a lenient attitude towards foreign languages like English, viewing them as emblems of globalization and openness.

Accordingly, the construction of bilingual and multilingual

signs should be strengthened and the translation quality of some VLL requires refinement. To foster a truly international atmosphere, promote economic prosperity, and cater to foreign tourists, it is imperative to introduce a wider range of foreign languages and pay attention to the translation quality of these signs. While translating, translators should take appropriate translation strategies to improve the readability of foreign tourists.

Turning to the political dimension, the language policies primarily serve two objectives: upholding the preeminent status of Chinese as the official language and cultivating a high-level international linguistic environment. When juxtaposed with the findings of the physical dimension, it becomes evident that the VLL on official webpages is in harmony with the official language policy, strengthening the cultural identity of the Chinese language within China and reflecting the policy's implementation within Suzhou Industrial Park. This provides profound insights for VLL research regarding language change, social participation, and information dissemination mechanisms.

This linguistic practice of seeking innovation within norms provides new perspectives and thinking space for language landscape research, namely, how to meet communication needs in the context of globalization while maintaining language purity. The implications here lie in the awareness of the equal importance of language standardization and innovation. While adhering to national language policies and norms, future VLL construction should also actively explore expressions that meet internationalization needs, such as adopting internationally accepted terminology. Local cultural elements can also be encompassed to reflect the richness of Suzhou's traditional dialect, thus highlighting local cultural representation.

However, it must be acknowledged that this current study is not comprehensive. Firstly, constrained by time and manpower, the research primarily focused on collecting and analyzing the LL of the key web pages, despite the portal of SIPAC encompassing numerous web pages. Secondly, the participants in this paper excluded foreign tourists, thereby limiting the exploration of their perceptions and attitudes towards the LL on the web pages, particularly those signs featuring bilingual or multilingual content. Thirdly, a subsequent inquiry could involve conducting face-to-face interviews with local government agencies to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons behind linguistic landscaping decisions among the architects of the VLL.

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