

# Current Status and Countermeasures of English Translation of Language Landscape in the Red Cultural City Luding in the National Strategic Context of “The Belt and Road Initiative”

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## ABSTRACT

Collecting language materials such as road signs, street names, and road names in the language landscape of the famous red cultural city of Luding through on-site photography, organizing and analyzing the English translations in the language landscape, it was found that there were problems with inconsistent translations, non-standard abbreviations, incomplete translations, and spelling errors in the English translations. In response to the problems in the language materials, measures were proposed to strengthen supervision, timely correct errors in the Chinese English translations of the language landscape, and establish a language landscape error correction hotline. This study helps to reduce errors in the Chinese English translation of the language landscape in the famous red cultural city of Luding, and continuously standardize the language landscape in the region.

**Keywords:** *Luding, Language landscape, Current situation of English translation, Countermeasures.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language landscape belongs to the field of sociolinguistic research. Canadian scholars Rodrigue Landry and Richard Y. Bourhis first proposed that “language landscape includes road signs, street names, shop names, building names, billboards, etc. that can be seen by the people in public areas.” [1] The language types, language order, and font size on signs reflect the local language environment and language policies. Language landscape carries ethnic history and cultural information, not only conveying information to the audience, but also promoting local culture to the audience. The Luding area is a red cultural and natural landscape tourism hub in the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. There are several red cultural and tourism destinations in the area, including the “prewar site of the Red Army’s capture of Luding Bridge”, “Luding Bridge”, “Luding Bridge Revolutionary Cultural Relics Exhibition Hall”, and “former site of the Lan’an Red Army Headquarters”. In 2001, Luding was designated as a national patriotic education

demonstration base by the Central Propaganda Department. In 2020, it was selected as one of the first provincial-level “List of Creating Comprehensive Tourism Demonstration Zones” and “List of Second Batch of Revolutionary Cultural Relics Protection and Utilization Areas and Counties” in Sichuan. With the increasing number of tourists visiting the Luding area, it is particularly important to shape the local image of the Luding area. Language landscape reflects the image of a country or place, showcasing its language service capabilities, level of civilization, and international communication and cooperation capabilities. The language landscape of Luding, a famous red cultural city, bears the mission of inheriting red culture. The standardization and audience acceptance of its English translation are directly related to the inheritance of red culture in Luding and even Ganzi Prefecture, reflecting its ability to serve the outside world and the overall image of the region.

## 2. A REVIEW OF LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE RESEARCH

The early research on language landscape began with Spolsky & Cooper's (1991) monograph *The Language of Jerusalem*. "Spolsky and Cooper investigated the language on street signs in the Old Town of Jerusalem and found that although street signs were written in three languages: Hebrew, Arabic, and English, while the order of language arrangement on signs varied in different historical periods. Different rulers always place their language at the top, and correspondingly, English translation is also based on the language of the rulers." [3] Subsequently, research on language landscape has emerged both domestically and internationally. By comparison, the research on language landscape in China started relatively late. In the late 20th century, domestic scholars only began to pay attention to language landscape. From 2000 to 2012, the total number of articles published on CNKI was only 7, and at this stage, the research on language landscape in China was very slow. The publication of Shang Guowen and Zhao Shouhui's (2014) article "Perspectives, Theories, and Methods of Language Landscape Research" has played a promoting role in the research of language landscape in China. Since then, the research on language landscape has been increasing year by year, especially from 2016 to 2017, with a doubling of related research. From 2013 to 2020, a total of 169 articles were published. Wu Xili et al. (2017) analyzed the research situation from 2006 to 2015 in the theoretical perspective, problem orientation, and research methods of language landscape research - a ten-year review of domestic language landscape research. They pointed out the problem orientation and shortcomings of language landscape research, further promoting the development of language landscape research. Liu Tao and Chang Hengxun (2022) conducted a survey on the red resource language landscape of Shihezi City, a famous military reclamation city, from the perspective of red resource language landscape. They analyzed the aspects of sign language code, sign font size, etc, and proposed strategies such as "relying on big data platforms, establishing expert consultation platforms, and tourist feedback systems." [6] Wu Xili's (2017) article "A Review of Multilingual Phenomena in Language Landscape Research" reviewed and sorted out the origin and development of language landscape research, and evaluated the research results related to multilingual phenomena in language landscape from three dimensions: the power position of

language, the dissemination of English, and the differences between language policies and language practices. Compared to the increasingly mature foreign research, domestic research still faces issues such as "homogenization of case studies, imbalance between quantitative and qualitative research, and the need to broaden research perspectives," [7] providing new ideas for further exploration of multilingual landscape issues.

With the continuous rise and maturity of red tourism, the language landscape of red tourism has gradually attracted the attention and interest of scholars. By typing the keyword "Red Tourism Language Landscape" on CNKI, a total of 8 relevant literature were retrieved, including 1 master's thesis and 7 journal papers, with publication dates of 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 4 papers in 2023. From the years and quantity of publications, research on the language landscape of red tourism has just begun, but the number of publications is increasing year by year. There are only 5 papers discussing the English translation of red tourism language landscapes. Lu Songzeng (2018) "A Study on the Standardization of Bilingual Language Landscape Translation in Red Tourism Scenic Spots - Taking the Red Tourism Scenic Spots in the Left and Right Rivers of Guangxi as an Example" collected language materials on site and found that there are problems in the language landscape of the region, such as "writing, translation expression, punctuation marks" [8], and proposed improvement methods. Zhang Wei et al. (2022) analyzed the English translation of language landscapes in Shandong's classic red tourism scenic areas and their acceptance from two aspects: language translation errors and pragmatic translation errors. Yao Peizhi (2020) "A Study on Chinglish in Foreign Propaganda Translation - Taking the English Translation of Language Landscape in Changsha Red Tourism Scenic Area as an Example" focuses on the current situation of English translation of red tourism landscapes in Changsha, shares the situation of Chinglish in English translation, and proposes strategies to avoid Chinglish. Deng Yadan and Song Xiaoting (2023) proposed a reconstruction of English translation norms from the perspective of social and cultural environment in the context of red tourism language landscape translation in Chenzhou. Li Qianjie et al. (2023) proposed strategies such as emphasizing the improvement of translators' English translation skills, standardizing policies, and strengthening supervision and management in their study on the

English translation of language landscapes in red tourism scenic spots - Taking Shazhou Village as an Example. However, there have been few studies on the English translation of the language landscape in the famous red cultural city of Luding, so this research can help further promote the standardization of language landscape in the Luding area.

### 3. CORPUS COLLECTION

The collection areas of this article's corpus include the urban area of Luding, Kangding to Luding (Luding section), Guzan Town to Luding (Luding section), and Luding Bridge Scenic Area. The content of the corpus includes road signs, street signs, road signs, and signage of the Luding Bridge scenic area within the corpus collection area, collected in November 2023. "Landry and Bourhis divided language signs into two categories: official signs and private signs." [11] This study only collected official signs, and private signs were not within the scope of this study. Therefore, private signs were excluded, and a total of 238 language samples were collected through photography. This study focuses on the phenomenon of English translation in the language landscape of Luding. Therefore, signs without English in the corpus were excluded, and signs with duplicate content were manually removed, resulting in a total of 87 effective signs. Further analysis of the English translation of signs was conducted, and the current situation of English translation in Luding language landscape was summarized in this study.

### 4. CURRENT STATUS OF ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF LUDING LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE

The English translation of Luding language landscape is generally relatively standardized, especially for tourist attractions where there are relatively few translation errors. However, there are still problems such as using "pinyin" instead of English, inconsistent translations, spelling errors, and pragmatic errors, among which the phenomenon of using "pinyin" instead of English is the most prominent.

#### 4.1 Inconsistent Translation

According to the "Guidelines for English Translation in the Public Service Field" (hereinafter referred to as the "the Guidelines") issued by the Language and Text Information

Management Department of the Ministry of Education, "the same place name should maintain consistency in its translation within the same region" [12]. In the corpus collected by the author, there are five different translation versions of the same place name, such as "Hailuogou", which is translated into "Hailuogou Valley", "Hailuo Valley", "Hailuogou", "Hai Luo Gou", and "HaiLuoGou". Among them, "Hailuo Valley" is used more frequently. Among the 10 collected "Hailuogou" corpus pictures, "Hailuo Valley" is used 4 times. However, the translation of "HaiLuoGou" still has the problem of non-standard English translation writing. In English writing, either the first letter should be capitalized or the first letter of each content word can be capitalized. Sometimes, in order to highlight the urgency of the situation, "especially those related to safety" [12] can be all capitalized. However, a writing style like "HaiLuoGou" that combines place names and capitalizes each initial letter does not comply with English writing rules. Hailuogou [13] is a famous scenic spot in Luding County, and an important part of Gongga Mountain Scenic Area and National Nature Reserve. The valley has high mountain snow peaks, glaciers, ice waterfalls, primitive forests, geothermal hot springs, wildlife parks, redstone parks, glacier forests and other scenic spots. It has been rated as a national AAAAA level tourist attraction, national glacier forest park, national geological park, and national ecological tourism demonstration zone. In May 2023, it was listed as one of the 10 national level tourism routes with the theme of the Yangtze River by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. According to *the Guidelines*, "Place and institution names can be distinguished between proper and common names, with proper names translated in Chinese 'pinyin' and common names translated in English." [12] Therefore, the translation method of "Hailuo Valley" is more standardized. In addition, the same place name should maintain consistency in its translation within the same region, while there exists a phenomenon of inconsistent translation of the same place name in the language landscape of Luding area.

Similarly, different versions of the English translation of the name "Niubei Mountain" have also appeared. Among the three collected language materials, two different translation versions appeared: "Niubei Mountain" and "Niubeishan Mountain". According to *the Guidelines*, "if the proper name is a monosyllabic syllable, its common name shall be regarded as part of the proper name.

First, it shall be spelled with the proper name in Chinese “pinyin”, and then repeatedly translated in English.” [12] For example, “Yu Garden” has only “Yu” as its proper name, which should be translated into “Yuyuan Garden” according to *the Guidelines*. However, the word “Niubei” in the scenic spot name “Niubei Mountain” is not a single syllable, so it is recommended to use the translation version of “Niubei Mountain” uniformly. In addition, there is inconsistency in the translation of the word “Fei Duo” in Chinese “pinyin” in the two road signs “Red Army Fly Wins Luding Bridge Memorial Hall” and “The Red Army Monument Park for Fighting for Luding Bridge”. The same word with same mean is translated into different versions. These two translation versions did not reflect the difficulties of “capture” the Luding Bridge and the heroic spirit of the Red Army when striving for the bridge. Similarly, there are three different versions of the English translation of Luding Bridge, one of the famous red cultural attractions in Luding, which is translated into “Luding Chain Bridge” “Luding Bridge” and “Lu Ding Qiao”.

#### ***4.2 Improper Abbreviations in the English Translation***

There are irregularities in the English translation versions and abbreviations of “road” collected in the urban area of Luding, such as “Yi Hai Road”, “Rui Jin Road”, “Yongshi Road”, “Chengwu Lu”, “Hongjun Rd”, “Zunyi Rd”, “Chishui Rd”, and “CHISHUI LU”. Some English translations of “road” are directly expressed in Chinese “pinyin”, while others are translated as “road” using common names in English; In addition, there are also inconsistencies in the abbreviation of “road”, such as “Yi Hai Road”, “Rui Jin Road”, and “Yongshi Road”. These road signs do not use abbreviations, while “Hongjun Rd”, “Zunyi Rd”, and “Chishui Rd” use abbreviations that abbreviate “Road” to “Rd”. There is also an inconsistency in the way proper names are written, with proper names written separately and each initial letter capitalized, such as “Yi Hai Road” and “Rui Jin Road”. Some proper names are written together with only the first letter capitalized, such as “Yongshi Road”, “Chengwu Lu”, “Hongjun Rd”, “Zunyi Rd”, and “Chishui Rd”. Some place names are written with all the letters capitalized, such as “CHISHUI LU”.

#### ***4.3 Incomplete English Translation and Spelling Errors***

The overall situation of English translation in the language landscape of the red cultural city of Luding is good, but there are also a few cases of incomplete or misspelled translations. For example, “Huangcaoping Village, Pengba Town –the Hometown of Snow Field Apple” is translated as “Huangcaoping Village, Pengba Town-Land of Snow-field”. This translation highlights that the place name “Huangcaoping Village, Pengba Town” is “Snow Field”. However, the original intention of this sign is to express that “Huangcaoping Village, Pengba Town” is the “Hometown of Snow Field Apple”, highlighting the uniqueness of the “apples” here. The omission of the central word “apple” in the sign emphasizes the uniqueness of the “Huangcaoping Village, Pengba Town”. Therefore, omitting “apple” in the English translation here is somewhat inconsistent with the original intention to be expressed. It is recommended to use “Huangcaoping Village, Pengba Town - The Hometown of Snow field Apple”. At the same time, there are a few spelling errors in the English translation, such as “emergency shelter” being translated as “EMERGENCY SHECTER”, and the correct English spelling is “shelter” not “shecter”.

### **5. IMPROVEMENT COUNTERMEASURES FOR ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF LUDING LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE**

#### ***5.1 Strengthening Regulatory Efforts***

The government management department and the tourism bureau work together to regularly organize translation teams, experts, teachers or scholars to conduct research on the language landscape in their jurisdiction, collect and organize language materials, and identify problems and errors in the language landscape. In response to problems and errors in the language landscape, the government management department and the tourism bureau should organize translation teams and experts to develop their own translation guidelines based on the existing *Guidelines for English Translation in the Public Service Field*, and further review the translation guidelines they have developed, putting the approved translation guidelines into use.

### **5.2 Timely Correcting Errors of the Chinese English Translation of Language Landscape**

Government management departments, tourism bureaus, and responsible persons in the field should regularly organize relevant personnel to check and correct errors in capitalization, inconsistency in English translations of the same place name, spelling errors, punctuation errors, and improper vocabulary selection in English translations of language landscapes.

### **5.3 Establishing a Language Landscape Error Correction Hotline**

In the process of improving the language landscape, the power of the citizens and tourists cannot be ignored. The suggestions of the citizens and tourists can make up for the errors in the language landscape, the errors in the English translation, and the lack of culture in the English translation. When the citizens and tourists discover problems in the language landscape, they often do not know who they should report these errors to. However, the staff are also helpless and do not know how to handle the problems reported by the citizens and tourists. Therefore, establishing a language landscape correction hotline not only allows government management departments, tourism bureaus, and industry leaders to easily collect language landscape issues within their jurisdiction, but also provides channels for the citizens and tourists to reflect on language landscape issues. Through everyone's joint efforts, we believe that the language landscape in Luding will become increasingly standardized.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Luding County, a famous red cultural city, is the gateway to Ganzi and the throat of Sichuan and Tibet. It is one of the battlefields where the Red Army fought bravely during the Long March, and is home to multiple red cultural relics. Studying the current status of English translation of language landscapes in this region not only helps to spread its unique red culture, but also enhances the international exchange and cooperation capabilities of the Luding region, promoting local economic development.

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