



# Linguistic Landscape of China: A Case Study of the Language Use of Shop Signs in Wuhan

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## Abstract

This study with a focus on the shop signs of Wuhan, investigates the linguistic landscape in China. By taking and processing photos of 147 commercial shops, it aims to analyze the language use of shop signs in Han Street, Wuhan, China and provides feasible explanations for such language choice from three new perspectives, namely commercial drive, English as lingua franca and current Chinese language policy.

**Key words:** Linguistic landscape; Language use; Shop signs; Commercial needs; English; Language policy

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## INTRODUCTION

As Gorter (2006) points out, linguistic tokens scatter more intensively and weigh high in numbers in shopping areas in cities, thus linguistic cityscape can replace the name of linguistic landscape. Especially in metropolis, the number of shopping malls and markets is huge and as a result, there are more chances for people to see the commercial shop signs which play a significant role in constructing and shaping a city's linguistic landscape. The various types of shop signs and different languages they adopt can form unique linguistic landscape reflecting cultural

richness, language policy, power relations and lingual environment. The languages employed in signs manifest the influence of economic, social, cultural, ethnical, and historical and globalization development on the linguistic landscape in a given area. Many international studies have achieved great progress in shop signs investigation from varied perspectives such as their effects on marketing and brand promotion (Masai, 1972), global French linguistic fetish in certain industries (Ong et al., 2013), prestige and positive attitudes towards certain languages in shop signs (Hussein et al., 2015) and influence and wide spread of English in shop signs around the world (Nikolaou, 2006; McArthur, 2000; Schlick, 2002; Griffin, 2004). However, in China, most of researches focus on the translation of public signs like street names, inscriptions on tourist sites and so on. And investigation on shop signs is rare and limited. Therefore, this case study aims to investigate the languages employed in shop signs in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province, China, to enrich the study of linguistic landscape in China, find out the possible reasons of the language use pattern and help people have a better understanding of the linguistic landscape in China.

## 1. BRIEF REVIEW ON LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE RESEARCH IN CHINA

In China, linguistic landscape (LL) research mainly covers themes ranging from LL translation and the norms, characteristics of domain-specific LL to theory and methodology in LL study (Zhang, 2015; Zhang & Xu, 2015; Yang & Liu, 2010), which has achieved much progress in the past forty years especially in researches on public signs.

Zhang (2015) calculated the numbers of published journal articles about linguistic landscape from the database of China National Knowledge Infrastructure, and categorized the research objects in China in recent 34 years (see Table 1). According to his research, 520

journal articles and these were classified into several groups in terms of their research directions and themes, which revealed that public signs and translation of those signs were the focus of those researches. For example, Yang and Liu (2010) conducted a five-year research aiming to improve the translation of bilingual signs under the background of the success of 2008 Beijing Olympics and the approaching of the Shanghai World Expo 2010. Duan (1990) and Wu (1998) published their papers to list the examples of translation errors in linguistic signs in China and put forward strategies to solve these problems. Focusing on improving the quality of bilingual translation of public signs, many standards and regulations have been issued by the central and local Chinese governments and discussions about the translation theories and methods were held among Chinese scholars. And with the deepened reforms and opening-up, as an uprising economy, China is attracting more and more foreigners visiting or investing in this country. To establish and show a good image of the country and to create a good language environment for people who are coming to China, the translation of the bilingual signs should be of high-quality and avoid misunderstandings.

**Table 1**  
**Classifications of Researches on LL in China (1980-2014)**

Search word	Journal		Academic dissertation		Total
	Core+	CSSCI	Master	PhD	
Public signs/labels	81		195	0	278
Publicizing language	43		22	2	68
Couplets	28		10	1	39
Store/shop name	12		21	0	33
Language life	19		3	1	23
Billboard	17		6	0	23
Street/road name	10		7	0	17
Street nameplate	7		3	0	10
Slogan/ signboard	7		3	0	10
Institutional name	7		0	0	7
Propagation	1		6	0	7
Linguistic landscape	3		0	0	3
Total	236		280	4	520

Source: Zhang, 2015.

It also can be seen from Table 1 that compared to public signs, researches on store or shop names are limited in number, most of which mainly concentrate on the changes of shop names, their characteristics and naming methods, cultural and social indications as well as translations of Chinese shop names into English ones. Liu (2009) initiated a case study concerning the evolution of shop names located on Beijing Road, Guangzhou, China, which mainly revealed the changes of shop names in a period of time and possible reasons for such changes, such

as commercial needs for attracting customers, and prestige and brand promotion as well as shop image improvement. Zheng (2006) made an investigation on 1,783 names of shops in five cities and found that shop names involved language varieties and deficiencies in naming elements. She suggested that the shop names as language codes and commercial campaign should abide by the regulations and laws governing the use of language. Jia (2003) discussed linguistic characteristics and cultural connotations of shop names, indicating that shop names are not only sign system for identification but also social and cultural phenomena. As for the translation of Chinese shop names, a group of translators from Canada devoted themselves to finding the comparable store names and signage in North America to increase the cross-cultural awareness in translation (Fu et al., 2005).

Compared to those comprehensive and various foreign studies which cover varied aspects such as minority language, multilingualism and language policy, study on linguistic landscape in China in general is limited and needs to expand the scope of research. Although there is some progress in the field of research on shop names, more attention of researchers is needed as shop signs are an indispensable part of the linguistic landscape and are exerting greater influence on our life.

## 2. PERSPECTIVES OF STUDIES ON LANGUAGE USE OF SHOP SIGNS

### 2.1 Functions of Languages Used in Shop Signs

As Berlage et al. (1996) pointed out, the process of naming actually is associating symbolic meaning to a particular person, object or property, to label it and to define it. As for the languages used in shop signs, they can deliver information and construct certain symbols (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). "The configuration of languages present in the linguistic landscape can provide important information about the diagnostic nature of a particular bilingual or multilingual setting" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.26). In other words, language used on signs can deliver messages regarding the importance, significance, power and relevance of this language vis-à-vis other languages in a community or society (Shohamy, 2006). Especially in multilingual settings, the dominance of one language over others usually displays the higher status of its language group than other language groups. Thus languages presented in shops signs can be informational by delivering information to attract readers' attention and are symbolic in the way of indicating status and value of such languages compared to other languages.

Language use of shop signs also plays commercial functions in terms of marketing and brand promotion. Based on their research, Ong et al. (2013) suggested that the French and English blended shop signs in Singapore

indicated a global French linguistic fetish in beauty and food industries and a local Singaporean prestige and quality appealed to the needs of the local consumers. In this case, the global language played a great role in marketing and image establishment. Hussein et al. (2015) investigated 680 shop signs in Amman based on a three-section sociolinguistic questionnaire, revealing that shop signs using foreign names were connected with “prestige, positive attitudes towards foreign names, commercial interests, types of goods/services and the educational and economic levels of customers.” (p.154)

## 2.2 Types of Languages Used in Shop Signs

Languages used in shop signs can be either monolingual or multilingual. As the multilingual signs are increasing, more and more attention is paid to this important research subject. Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) studied three major languages of Israel-Hebrew, Arabic and English on private and public signs. Macgregor (2003) investigated the language of shop signs in Tokyo and analyzed the various languages used in those signs. Backhaus (2006) also conducted an empirical research on the multilingual signs in Tokyo.

Besides, in multilingual signs, English has become dominant over other languages. Nikolaou (2016) studied the linguistic composition of commercial signs in the linguistic landscape (LL) of cities like Athens, Greece. A total of 621 shop signs were collected and analyzed to get the result that a significant number of shops used English either monolingually or multilingually together with the home tongue, Greek. And he also pointed out that English plays the dominant role in languages employed which could attract customers and boost sales. His study demonstrates the wide spread of English and its dominance in the linguistic landscape. Other researchers also have paid attention to the use of English on commercial signs at different places across Europe (McArthur, 2000; Schlick, 2002; Griffin, 2004), which manifested the dominance of English over other languages coexisting with it for its attractiveness, refinement, fashion and poshness. For instance, McArthur (2000) found that 44% of 86 shop names in Uppsala adopt English language. Therefore, the study on the use pattern of English language in the linguistic landscape becomes necessary and important.

With China's integration into the global economy, bilingual and multilingual signs are becoming more and more common and can be seen in many cities. For instance, Wang (2013) made an investigation on the multilinguistic signs in Beijing, China. He indicated the influence of current language policy on the construction of multilingual linguistic landscape. Besides, there are more and more foreigners choosing to travel or settle down in China and Chinese people embracing different cultures and languages, people speaking different languages get together and influence the languages used in public or

private signs in their community. Therefore, the further study on those signs in China should be made and valued.

## 2.3 Factors Influencing Language Use in Shop Signs

As shop names are commercial signs, commercial drive to seduce potential customers, promote brand prestige and establish cosmopolitan image plays an essential role in language use of those signs. Shohamy (2006) pointed out that sociologists like Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) had put forward three forces behind language choice and dominance in the linguistic landscape, namely power relationship, community identity, self-presentation and customer's reaction and influence. The last factor is also mentioned in other researches (Batra et al., 2004; Liu et al., 2006) which state that customers living in less developed countries might prefer products or brands from more developed countries. Campbell (2004) pointed out “need” and “prestige” associated with languages and customers also exerted influence on language used on shop signs.

In terms of the influence of language policy on linguistic landscape and the dominance of English, Wang (2013) investigated the multilingual environment of China by studying the names of 89 shop signs in Wangfujing Street. Wang referred to the language policy of China as “the standardization of Chinese, the propagation of English and the development of minority languages” (Wang, 2013, p45), which has an effect on the distribution of different languages on those shop signs. Shang and Guo (2016) argued that the phenomenon of multilingual signs in Singapore might result from a mixture of social and cultural factors among which the state's current macro language policy could not be neglected and underestimated.

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## 3. CURRENT STUDY: SHOP SIGNS OF HAN STREET

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### 3.1 Purpose and Research Questions

This paper centers on Han Street-the longest commercial street in the world to disclose the most popular language adopted in China's commercial business and reveal the language use patterns on shop signs. Based on that, this paper also aims to give explanations accounting for the shop owner's language choice. As the study on China's private signs especially the shop signs has received less attention, this study can also help to fill in the gap in this field. The research questions to be answered are as follows: a) What languages are displayed in the shop signs? b) How are those languages allocated in shop signs? c) What are the factors influencing language choices by shop owners? The answers to the questions may reveal the status quo of language use in Han Street, present us the picture of linguistic landscape and display the multilingual environment in China.

### 3.2 Methodology

Han Street, situated in China’s beautiful riverside city—Wuhan, is the capital city of Hubei Province and comprises three districts—Wuchang, Hankou and Hanyang, ranking the top 10 megacities nationwide. As an economic, industrial and transportation hub for central China, Wuhan boasts 10.22 million permanent residents with an area of 8,494 square kilometers by 2013 (“Introduction to Wuhan”, 2014). With Yangtze River, the world’s third longest river flowing through this city and dozens of railway roads and expressways passing through it, its convenient transportation attracts a vast amount of foreign investment and makes a great deal of contribution to the city’s development and prosperity. As part of Wuhan’s Central Cultural District, Han Street embraces commercial and cultural features and becomes the symbol of commercial prosperity of this city. With a length of 1,500 meters and the architectural style similar to that of the Republic of China, it covers an area of 210,000 square meters and has become the world’s longest city commercial pedestrian street. Its unique scenery line has attracted approximately 200 merchants at home and abroad to open commercial shops here to provide services like recreation, leisure, catering and shopping. It is now not only a cultural street but also a commercial one. The whole street is divided into three districts distributed with shops selling or providing such goods and services as fashion clothing, experience services, food specialties, gold and jewelry, etc. When shoppers or travelers strolling on the street, they are viewing shop signs and influenced by the language, color and size of the signs all the time.

The photos of shops on Han Street were taken in January 2017. In order to fully present the linguistic

landscape in Han Street, we have tried our best to take photos of all shops distributed on both sides of this commercial street. Usually, the shop name presented on the shop front or top was photographed and nearly all shops had their names displayed on the front or top plate. Only several shops showed their names on the nameplate hung on the wall and in this case, we took photos of the plate. As some shops were in decoration and did not have their shop signs, a total number of 147 shops names were collected and the languages used were analyzed and put into our database for further reference.

After the collection of the data, we grouped the photos taken in light of their business types and coded them in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. By referring to the data coding method adopted by Shang and Guo (2016) in their research, this study paid special attention to the following aspects:

- a) Languages of the full shop name signs
- b) Number of languages used in the sign
- c) Forms of Chinese characters (i.e. traditional or simplified) and Chinese Pinyin

### 3.3 Findings and Analysis

#### 3.3.1 Languages Used in All Shop Signs

As the types of business of these shops are different, shop owners need to choose the fitful language to name their stores. In this part, the types of the languages used in shop signs are identified and classified. In light of the number of languages used, this study categorizes the shop signs into the following three groups: unilingual, bilingual and multilingual signs. The last group means the sign uses more than two languages. And it is found that the three types of signs are not equally used by the shop owners (see Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Number of Languages in Shop Signs**

	Unilingual	Bilingual	Multilingual	Total
Number	83	63	1	147
Percentage	56.4%	42.9%	0.7%	100%

From Table 3, it is clear that the unilingual or monolingual shop signs take the predominant position with a total number of 83 signs which surpass the total of bilingual and multilingual ones, accounting for about 56.4%. The last two groups account for 42.9% ( $n=63$ ) and 0.7% ( $n=1$ ) respectively. Thus, the unilingual and bilingual signs together take up nearly 100% of all shop signs and comprise the vast majority. Based on this result, it is inferred that shop owners in this street have a preference for unilingual and bilingual signs. However, they do not like to choose more than two languages to present their signs as there is only one multilingual sign. The feasible explanation may be due to the visual conciseness required by urban planning as Wuhan is planning to develop itself into a national civilized city and to create a good city image nationwide. Besides, too many languages appearing in the

shop signs in a limited place may get customers confused and difficult to understand the meaning of the signs.

Speaking of the types of language used in shop signs, it is found that there are in total 8 languages, which are: Chinese, English, French, Japanese, Spanish, German, Korean and Italian, among which English (67.3%,  $n=99$ , English-only, Chinese-English bilingual, English-Korean bilingual & Trilingual) is the dominant language followed by Chinese and French as well as others. Names on signs in Chinese ranks the second ( $n=94$ , 63.9%) with 31 in Chinese only and 63 in a combination of Chinese and other languages among which English is the dominant. Therefore, signs in Chinese and English ( $n=128$ , 87.1%), either in the sole linguistic code or a combination of the two take up the overwhelming majority. Table 4 displays the results.



**Table 4**  
**Number of Languages on Shop Name Signs of Han Street (n=147)**

Unilingual 83	Bilingual 63	Multilingual 1
Chinese 31(21%)	Chinese + English 54(36.7%)	Chinese +English +Korean 1(0.7%)
English 43(29.3%)	Chinese + French 2(1.4%)	
French 4(2.7%)	Chinese + Japanese 4(2.7%)	
Japanese 1(0.7%)	Chinese+ Italian 2(1.4%)	
Spanish 2(1.4%)	English + Korean 1(0.7%)	
German 2(1.4%)		

In Table 4, the unilingual signs ( $n=83$ ), are further classified into six categories, namely Chinese (21%), English (29.3%), French (2.7%), Japanese (0.17%), Spanish (1.4%), and German (1.4%). The majority of shop signs are in English ( $n=43$ ) which accounts for 51.8% of the unilingual group, and this finding is also in accordance with Wang's (2013) guessing that "English would have a significant presence in shop signs" (Wang, 2013, p43). In China, the status and importance of English Language as lingua franca in the world is highly promoted and emphasized as China is playing a greater role in the world arena and seeking to participate actively in global competition, either economically or politically. Shop names using Chinese monolingual signs ( $n=31$ ) account for 37.3% of all unilingual signs. There are only small numbers of shop signs in other languages, among which French is dominant. And these names actually are the original brand name such as "L'Oréal Paris" and "VERO MODA". Thus, brand name as the shop signs also plays a crucial role in the linguistic landscape in Han Street.

Non-monolingual shop signs including bilingual and multilingual types account for 43.5% of all shop signs, of which bilingual groups take up an overwhelmingly proportion, especially the Chinese-English bilingual ones ( $n=54$ ) that is 84.4% of the non-monolingual shop signs

(see Table 4). Other bilingual groups like Chinese and French (1.4%), Chinese and Japanese (2.7%), Chinese and Italian (1.4%), English and Korean (0.7%) are rarely seen in those shop signs (see Table 4). There is only one trilingual sign in Chinese, English and Korean (0.17%). The percentage of each language group is calculated by dividing the total number of all shop signs ( $n=147$ ).

Therefore, when choosing shop signs, shop owners prefer names written in the combination of Chinese and English which is the common case nationwide. Chinese and English used together can make it easy for Chinese and foreign readers to understand the shop name and at the same time make the shop name sound a bit "international". There is only one multilingual shop name sign which is written in English, Korean, and Chinese (Figure 1). This shop belongs to Korean fried chicken store chain. From Figure 1, it can be seen that the white scripts in Korean locates both in the middle of and at the left of the shop sign. And the Chinese characters are on the right side. Below them there is a rather small plate inscribed English words 'Fusion Chicken Factory' to tell what product it sells. So in this sign, English plays the informational function and the other two languages are used to identify the country of origin of the shop and indicate the linguistic community where the shop is located.



**Figure 1**  
**A Trilingual Sign in LL**

### 3.3.2 Shop Signs for Business Types

The type of business can affect the language choice by shop owners. In this research, it is found that signs for fashion or sporting clothing shops ( $n=23$ ) and experimental retail shops ( $n=14$ ) dominate the English-only group in unilingual shop signs (see Table 5). This phenomenon may be due to the fact that most of the fashion or sports clothing shops belong to international

famous brands such as 'ONLY', "JACK&JONES", "H&M", "GAP" and so on. Charmasson (2000) asserted that brand name could define the attributes of products and services and contribute to their marketing and acceptance by consumers. Using the original foreign brand name without Chinese translation can make the shop look trendy and leave customers with the impressions of internationalism and globalism.

Even some of the local Chinese experimental retail shops such as “CREACE”, “bampo”, “aojo”, and “SHINE”, use English only with the intention to make the shop names sound a bit “international” and establish a good image in front of consumers. Crystal (1997) suggested that English is popular and attractive for it symbolizes wealth and prestige. Though those English names make no sense at all, local Chinese shop owners still choose them in the purpose of making their shops appear vogue and high-end.

In terms of Chinese-only shop signs ( $n=31$ ), food specialties take the dominance, as most of them provide

Chinese specialties and local food like “恩施炕小土豆” (local dessert made of potato baked or dried by the heat of fire in Enshi, Wuhan) and “周黑鸭” (local fast food chain known for its spicy duck). The adoption of sole Chinese language is to represent local feature and attract local people. Besides, the shop sign of a store belonging to the foreign fast food chain-Pizza Hut is localized by using Chinese name “必胜客欢乐餐厅” only without its original English sign (Figure 2). Therefore, for restaurants and local food stores in this street, their names are localized by using Chinese to attract local customers who are mostly Chinese people.



**Figure 2**  
A Picture of Pizza Hut in Han Street

Some famous foreign boutique shops selling cloth or skin care products use their native languages to present the origin of their country and catapult brand awareness as

translation of their names in Chinese is not necessary due to the fact that they are already recognizable and stand for good taste.

**Table 5**  
Unilingual Shop Signs by Business Type

Business type	Unilingual						Total
	English	Chinese	French	Japanese	Spanish	German	
Food specialty	0	18	0	0	0	0	18
Experience services	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Western food	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Experimental retail	14	6	2	0	0	0	22
Dessert/drinks	3	3	1	0	0	0	7
Fashion/sports clothing	23	0	1	1	2	2	29
Bar	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	43	31	4	1	2	2	83

In non-monolingual group, shop owners prefer to present their shop signs in Chinese-English combination. So this section just focuses on different types of business using a combination of English and Chinese to display their shop names. From Table 6, it is clear that owners of food specialty stores, experimental retail shops and dessert or drinks stores tend to choose bilingual signs in a combination of Chinese and English because they want to attract both local and foreign customers. Especially for

the food specialty shops, all of which are local Chinese restaurants or local snack bars, they use English aiming to attract foreigners to have a taste of their cuisine or food. Besides, English name can also make the shop sound high-end and appealing. As for desserts or drinks which are popular in English-speaking countries like UK and USA and get introduced to China not long ago, shops selling them usually adopt Chinese-English names to explain what they are and mark the country of origin.

**Table 6**  
**Chinese-English Shop Signs by Business Type (n=54)**

Business type	C-E signs
Food specialty	13
Experience services	5
Western food	3
Experimental retail	14
Dessert/drinks	11
Fashion/Sports clothing	3
Gold/Jewelry	5
Total	54

### 3.3.3 Forms of Chinese Characters and Pinyin on Shop Name Signs

Chinese character can be written in two script forms. One is the simplified Chinese and the other is the original complex form, called traditional Chinese. For now, the simplified Chinese character as the official and standard form is widely used in Mainland China, in publication and education. There is no wonder that the majority of Chinese shop names either in monolingual, bilingual or multilingual form in this area is presented in simplified forms. The simplified form can make the name recognizable and modern. Only eight shop signs are displayed in traditional Chinese characters. For instance, the traditional Chinese character “華” combined with other simplified characters forms the shop sign “文華書城”, which makes the book store elegant and special. And the traditional character seems to tell the customers that this shop is trustworthy with a long history and deliver antique sensibility to the viewers.

Interestingly, there are seven shops using both Chinese characters and Chinese Pinyin in their shop signs (Table 7) (a system of Romanized spelling in China used to transliterate Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet). At the first look, people may think they are English names but a closer look at those alphabetic scripts can make people realize that they are Pinyin annotation of the corresponding Chinese names. Pinyin, the Romanized spelling, is regarded as the symbol of state sovereignty and concerns about national identity and dignity. So the appearance of Pinyin reflects China’s language policy which highlights national identity. And the functions of these signs are decorative and symbolic in an attempt to make the shop mark identity and culture. Their resemblance to Roman letter also make the shop keep abreast with the trend that English is widely spreading and used over the world.

**Table 7**  
**Chinese Shop Signs With Chinese Pinyin**

Chinese-only signs	Chinese pinyin	Business type
周黑鴨	ZHOU HEI YA	Food specialty
探魚	TAN YU	
川城	CHUANG CHENG	
擇物	ZEWO	Experimental retail
阿吉豆	AJIDOU	
大卡司	DAKASI	Dessert/Drinks
幔城鮮果	MANCHENG	

## DISCUSSION

First, prestige and brand awareness have an influence on shop owner’s adoption of foreign names. For instance, the multilingual character of shop signs can deliver symbolic meaning in order to project ‘cosmopolitan, sophisticated and trendy outlook’ (Nikolaou, 2006). Many foreign language-only shop names are famous international brand names which are interpreted as symbol of internationalization and identified with a given country which can signal specific attributes of the products or services to customers, such as high grade and quality as well as exotic culture (Tufi & Blackwood, 2010; Low, 2000; Palumbo & Herbig, 2000). As Simonson (1997) stated “foreign influences are strong in business, because the access to different culture is increasingly present in daily life, where consumers are subject to the influence of foreign images” (Hussein et al., 2015, p.155), with the increasing familiarity with foreign brands and improving economic conditions in China, Chinese customers are used to perceive those brand names as the symbol of prestige and wealth, value them more than local brands and can afford to purchase the products with willingness. Second, the main purpose of the designing of commercial shop names signs is to attract customers and gain economic profits. In this sense, consumers’ attitude towards shops signs has a considerable impact on shop owners’ preference for languages used in signs. Piller (2001) concludes that global customers’ linguistic identities are multilingual and English-dominant. There is no exception for Chinese consumers. Their high exposure to English or other foreign languages make them bilingual speakers, which also has an influence on their consumption behavior such as having preference for foreign brands.

Schlick (2003) revealed that English plays the primary and dominant role in store signs. Such phenomenon can be ascribed to the powerful and high status of English serving as lingua franca and becoming the language of media and international presence in the world (Hussein et al., 2015). Crystal (1997) is of the view that “A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country.”(p.2) And English is an example considering its wide spread and global status as the undisputed language of education and business. After entering the World Trade Organization (WTO) and adopting the opening-up policy, China has received English as the priority foreign language to increase its competitiveness and opportunity in globalization. In business, employees are expected to develop proficiency in English and the mastery of this language is a measurement of job seeker’s qualification for job (Nunan, 2003). Many companies register English names for entering the global competition. Proficiency in English can enhance economic advantage in business and the use of English names can make the company internationalized.



Language policy serves as the guidance for language use in a nation or society. To promote the normalization, standardization and healthy development of the standard spoken and written language, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* was adopted in the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China on October 31, 2000 and went into effect on January 1, 2001. According to Article 2, "the standard spoken and written Chinese language means Putonghua (a common speech with pronunciation based on Beijing dialect) and the standardized Chinese characters", most local Chinese shop owners in Han Street follow this regulation and adopt standardized Chinese Characters in their shop names and present them as the primary names. Furthermore, in Chapter II of the law: *Use of the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*, Article 13 states that

The standardized Chinese characters shall be used as the basic characters in the service trade. Where both a foreign language and the Chinese language are used in signboards, advertisements, bulletins, signs, etc., as is needed by the trade, the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as far as the Chinese Language is concerned.

This provides guidance for use of languages in shop signs. Foreign languages and Chinese language can coexist in signs to meet the needs of shop owners. There is no restraint on the use of foreign language as long as the use is conformed to the law. So many shops employ bilingual names in Chinese combined with another foreign language which, in most of the cases, is English. Besides, Article 18 points out how to use Chinese Pinyin, which says "The 'Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet' shall be used as the tool of transliteration and phonetic notation for the standard spoken and written Chinese language." In this study, some local shops in Han street adopt Chinese Pinyin which is the "Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet", the unified norm of Roman letters for transliterating their names for convenience. In this way, the layout of shop names on the signs in Han Street is influenced by language policy in China.

## CONCLUSION

This study conducts an empirical study on the use of languages in shop signs in Han Street, Wuhan and makes an attempt to find out the factors that contribute to such language pattern. The fact that different languages contribute to the multilingualism in this city can be ascribed to commercial needs, the prevalence of English around the world and the influence of Chinese language policy.

It should be made clear that the results of this study cannot apply to account for the linguistic landscape of other cities in China. It is just a small-scale study limited

to a commercial street in Wuhan. The purpose of this study is to expand the scope of research of linguistic landscape in China to enrich the study on multilingualism in China like what Wang (2013) did before. There are many big cities in China where commercial shops are emerging like mushrooms after rain. The languages used in shop signs can contribute to the richness of linguistic landscape and reflect the multilingual environment, language policy, and commercial considerations, influence of western culture and language and globalization in China. Therefore, researches on linguistic landscape can be conducted from these varied perspectives and enrich the content of linguistic landscape.

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