Representation of Linguistic Groups Through Restaurant Signage in Kunming

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Abstract: *This paper looks at how the linguistic landscape of restaurant signage in Kunming reflects the presence and traits of the language groups residing or interacting with various urban areas. A total of 2,104 signs were collected from nine streets known for their cultural, commercial, and demographic diversity. Categorized as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, these signs were examined for language combinations and distribution trends. The results indicated that although Simplified Chinese predominates the signage, suggesting the prevalence of Mandarin-speaking locals, the inclusion of English, Traditional Chinese, Thai, Japanese, Korean, and minority languages suggests the presence of tourists, regional visitors, ethnic minorities, and international communities. Language selections differ by neighborhood; locations like Wenhua Lane and Nanqiang Street show more linguistic variety in line with their more international or cosmopolitan nature. The linguistic landscape therefore operates as a visual mirror of those who inhabit and engage in these areas. Offering insight into the multilingual fabric and sociological complexity of Kunming, it shows how public signage reacts to, accommodates, and reflects many socioeconomic groups in an urban setting.*

Introduction

　　The linguistic landscape (LL), or the appearance and salience of languages on public signage, provides a useful window into the sociolinguistic and ideological fabric of metropolitan areas (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Backhaus, 2006). Public signage as a semiotic tool reflects power relations, identity building, and the socio-political positioning of various language communities in addition to just providing information (Shohamy & Waksman, 2009; Gorter & Cenoz, 2006). Recent studies highlight that LLs are not neutral but rather influenced by both top-down pressures like state language policy and bottom-up activities originating from local actors including business owners and ethnolinguistic communities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Huebner, 2016).

　　Given this background, Kunming, the capital of China's Yunnan Province, is a fascinating location for LL research. Located at the crossroads of China and mainland Southeast Asia, and home to 25 officially recognized ethnic minority groups, Kunming has a special multilingual and cosmopolitan environment (Wu & Techasan, 2016). Key economic and tourist hub, the city's urban signage, especially that found in restaurants along major cultural and commercial arteries like Wenhua Lane and Nanqiang Street, not only communicates but also reflects sociocultural representation, consumer targeting, and identity negotiation (Rungswang, 2023; Hayeesani & Vongvivut, 2022).

Often including Mandarin alongside English, minority languages (e.g., Yi, Bai, Dai), and culturally stylized characters, restaurant signage in Kunming provide a colorful show of linguistic variety. These multilingual signages physically reflect the inclusion or exclusion of many population groups within the commercial and social fabric of the city, not just serving functional communication but also symbolizing power relations, identity negotiation, and sociolinguistic dynamics in urban spaces. By doing this, they show how national language policies, which support Putonghua (Mandarin) while recognizing the symbolic significance of minority and foreign languages, are read and manifested at the grassroots level (The Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2001; Moriarty, 2015).

This paper examines restaurant signage in nine commercial streets of Kunming to investigate the representation of different linguistic and cultural groups within the city's linguistic landscape (LL). It analyzes the frequency, hierarchy, and multimodal presentation of various languages and scripts, and how these relate to the demographic composition of Kunming, its tourism-driven economy, and its implicit language policy. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: How do restaurant signs in Kunming reflect and construct the presence of various linguistic groups? By examining the languages, scripts, and visual arrangements used in restaurant signage, the study reveals how linguistic diversity is either made visible or concealed in urban commercial spaces. Without such an investigation, society risks overlooking how everyday visual texts shape public perceptions of belonging, access, and inclusion, especially in multicultural and multilingual settings (Crystal, 2003; Light, 2001).

Beyond contributing to broader discussions on multilingualism and cultural representation, this study also has implications for the hospitality sector. It highlights the need for culturally and linguistically responsive communication strategies in public-facing businesses, which can inform staff training, recruitment policies, and customer engagement practices. In recognizing the semiotic cues that influence consumer behavior and intergroup interaction, this research can guide professionals in developing more inclusive and effective service environments.

Literature Review
Linguistic Landscape (LL)

Linguistic Landscape (LL) has developed as a major lens for academics to investigate the visibility and salience of languages in public areas. LL is the display of languages on signs in a specific area, therefore providing both informational and symbolic purposes (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Among these signs are public announcements, store names, business ads, and official road signs. LL has become a crucial tool for grasping language policy, identity building, and sociolinguistic hierarchy since it is the physical manifestation of language presence. In research on multilingualism, Backhaus (2006) underlined that both top-down forces, e.g., government rules, and bottom-up practices, e.g., private company decisions, shape LL. This double impact exposes the intricate interplay of power and identity in multilingual environments. Shohamy and Waksman (2009) likewise define LL as an ecological arena where several modalities, text, typography, color, and layout constantly negotiate meaning.

Apart from the descriptive aspect, LL has been acknowledged as a possible influence for language development (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). Written forms of several languages in daily settings can enhance official language study and influence students' perceptions of other languages. Huebner (2016) emphasizes LL's teaching potential and its development from a descriptive tool to a critical approach integrated in sociolinguistic theory, hence following LL's academic path. When considered together, these studies show that LL is an active locus of ideological expression, cultural negotiation, and identity performance rather than a passive mirror of language presence. The studies agree that LL provides a strong analytical tool for grasping how languages interact in urban space, and how they are controlled, sold, ignored, or praised. Thus, the prominence of certain languages over others in public spaces can reflect and reinforce existing social hierarchies and power relations.

Previous studies have broadened LL study into several sociopolitical settings. Gorter and Cenoz (2006), for instance, investigate how LL acts as a medium for portraying minority languages, therefore proving that public signs prominence may indicate ethnolinguistic vibrancy or marginalization. Moriarty (2015) looked at signage in an Irish town in the context of tourism and said that LL may be used to mark authenticity and commercialize cultural identity for financial benefit. LL studies in Asia have shown certain trends in symbolic representation and multilingualism. Wu and Techasan (2016) looked into Bangkok's Chinatown and discovered a hybrid LL representing both local legacy and commercial globalization where Chinese, Thai, and English coexist. Hayeesani and Vongvivut (2022), Rungswang (2023), and Thongtong (2016) show that LL also reflects regional dynamics, such as the cohabitation of local ethnic identities and governmental language regulations. In addition, the studies in China expand the significance of LL as Zhang's (2024) and Zhang and Zhang (2024) contribute to the broader discourse on LLs by illustrating how public signage functions as a medium for identity construction, cultural negotiation, and the manifestation of globalization's local impacts. Thus, the LL can be considered as dynamic and strategic tools in the ongoing dialogue between local traditions and global influences Light (2001).

Restaurant Signage in Kunming

As the capital of Yunnan Province, Kunming is a culturally and linguistically diverse city, home to several officially recognized ethnic minority groups. It functions as a regional hub for commerce, tourism, and international exchange. Despite this rich diversity, research on Kunming's linguistic landscape (LL), particularly in commercial domains such as restaurant signage, remains limited. In China, the LL is primarily shaped by state language policy. While these policies promote Mandarin (Putonghua) as the national standard (Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2001), they also acknowledge the cultural and symbolic value of minority and foreign languages (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). However, the implementation of these policies often varies by location, sector, and public attitudes, raising important questions about language visibility, representation, and practice in specific contexts like restaurant signage.

Research Methodology

Setting

The nine selected sites—Laojie, Nanqiang Street, Wenhua Lane, Yuanxi Street, Daguan Street, Shuangqiao Street, South Asian Garden, Shilin, and Juxian Street—present a complete image of Kunming's linguistic environment. Every area exhibits various language use patterns formed by cultural legacy, travel, education, and demographic diversity. While Laojie and Daguan Street stress traditional Chinese cultural identity, Wenhua Lane and South Asian Garden reveal foreign and cosmopolitan tendencies. Nanqiang Street and Shilin cater to both locals and tourists by use of multilingual signage. While Yuanxi Street and Juxian Street emphasize youth-driven and creative expressions, Shuangqiao Street reveals the blending of minority languages.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected by means of direct field observations and photographic documentation of restaurant signs in nine commercial streets spread throughout Kunming. Deliberately selected, these streets represent a mix of cultural, commercial, and linguistic environments comprising both large cities and peripheral neighborhoods. Among the factors considered were pedestrian density, diversity of food enterprises, and presence of multilingual signs. Photos of restaurant signs were taken during four weeks in the first quarter of 2022. Recorded were only publicly accessible signs; those on business fronts, windows, or outdoor banners. Signage within buildings was excluded unless readily visible from the street. Every picture has metadata designating detected languages/scripts, company type, and location. Data gathering followed ethical standards. Photos taken in public places had no accompanying recording of identifying personal information.

Data Analysis

2,104 restaurant signs were tagged for study and reported. Signs were analyzed based on (1) the number and sort of languages used, (2) the visual hierarchy of languages (e.g., font size, positioning), and (3) the presence of culturally styled elements such as traditional motifs or calligraphy. The researchers additionally noted if the sign belonged to a locally owned firm or a national/international franchise, given that only the former was kept for analysis to ensure emphasis on localized linguistic expression. The photographs were forwarded to a computer for categorization and analysis following data collection. Each sign's classified coding was established by key factors like language(s) used, content kind (e.g. menu, promotional, informational), and location defined. Using the method of counting and distributing languages on the signs, categorization and visual content analysis identified patterns of language dominance, co-occurrence, and multilingual representation.

The classification method allowed the research to track the distribution and frequency of several language combinations over the selected streets. It also provided a systematic way to see how language diversity appears in the restaurant signs of Kunming. Each signal was classified by a particular coding technique depending on the amount and sort of languages displayed.

Monolingual Code (M): Monolingual Code (M): Signs that display just one language are classified as monolingual. The prefix "M" followed by the language used denotes these. "M-Ch", for instance, refers to a sign written only in Chinese; "M-En" indicates a sign written solely in English.

Bilingual Code (B): Signs showing two languages are designated as bilingual and indicated with the prefix "B". The code contains the two language names' initials. "B-ChEn", for example, denotes signage in both Chinese and English; "B-ChTh" denotes signs in Chinese and Thai.

Trilingual Code (T): Labeled with the prefix "T", signs including three distinct languages qualify as trilingual. Its English first letter identifies each language. "T-ChEnTh", for instance, denotes a sign with Thai, English, and Chinese.

Apart from the prefix codes showing the number of languages on a sign—M for monolingual, B for bilingual, and T for trilingual—every single language in the sign is denoted by a particular code. These codes help to spot and examine linguistic combinations in the sign. To be consistent, the following abbreviations were used:

- **CM (Chinese-Modified):** Refers to Simplified Chinese, the standardized written form used in mainland China.
- **CT (Chinese-Traditional):** Refers to Traditional Chinese characters, often used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and for stylistic or cultural purposes in signage.
- **E (English):** Represents the English language, commonly used for international accessibility and tourism.
- **T (Thai):** Represents the Thai language, reflecting the influence of Southeast Asian communities and tourists in Kunming.
- **K (Korean):** Refers to the Korean language, sometimes seen in areas popular with Korean tourists or cultural businesses.
- **J (Japanese):** Denotes the Japanese language, used in establishments with Japanese cuisine or themes.
- **L (Laos):** Refers to the Lao language, which may appear due to regional prox-imity and cross-border interactions.

- **I (Italian):** Represents the Italian language, typically used in Western or themed restaurants.
- **M (Minority):** This code is used to represent any officially recognized Chinese minority language that appears on signage. Specific minority languages were not individually coded but grouped under "M" due to the scope and visibility level of these languages in the data.
- When paired with the prefix codes (M, B, or T), these language codes enable precise classification of every sign. For instance, a bilingual sign in Simplified Chinese and English is labeled B-CME; a trilingual sign in Chinese, English, and Thai is coded T-CMET. This approach allows for both qualitative investigation of language use trends across several metropolitan areas in Kunming and quantitative frequency study.

Findings

Restaurant signage in Kunming as a representation of linguistic groups

A total of 2,104 restaurant signs gathered from nine main streets in Kunming were examined in this study. The signs were classified into monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual categories depending on the number of languages utilized. Language codes were used to identify particular language combinations including Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), English, Thai, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Italian, and minority languages. The findings are represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Linguistic Groups through Restaurant Signage in Kunming (n = 2,104)

	Frequency	**%**
Monolingualism	**1054**	**50.09**
MCM	866	82.18
MCT	62	5.88
MK	11	1.04
MJ	8	0.76
ME	102	9.68
MT	5	0.47
Bilingualism	**942**	**44.77**
BECM	699	74.2
BCMJ	12	1.27
BCTM	54	5.73
BCML	2	0.21
BCMK	18	1.91
BECT	13	1.38
Monolingualism	**1054**	**50.09**
BCTCM	125	13.26
BCTK	3	0.32
BCMM	8	0.85
BCTJ	8	0.85

Table 1: (Cont.)

	Frequency	**%**
Multilingualism	**108**	**5.13**
TECMJ	14	12.96
TECMK	9	8.33
TECML	2	1.85
TECTCM	45	41.67
TCMCTM	3	2.78
TTECT	6	5.56
TTECM	22	20.37
TTCML	2	1.85
TECMI	4	3.70
Total	**2104**	**100**

The general distribution of signs per language category is seen in Table 1. The figures indicated that monolingual signs make up 50.09% of the whole, with Simplified Chinese (MCM) being quite dominating at 82.18% under this group. Other monolingual signs are tiny percentages of Japanese, Korean, and Thai as well as English (9.68%), Traditional Chinese (5.88%). These numbers imply that although Chinese is still the main language in public restaurant signs, non-Chinese-speaking populations also have some visibility, especially with the usage of English.

Comprising 44.77% of the total, bilingual signs show the interaction between various linguistic groups. Chinese-English (BECM) is the most often pairing, accounting for 74.2% of all multilingual signs. Particularly for tourists, this combination shows the city's dual focus on home and foreign consumers. Other significant bilingual pairings are Chinese-Traditional Chinese (BCTM, 5.73%), Chinese-English-Thai (BECT, 1.38%), and Chinese-Korean (BCMK, 1.91%), suggesting linguistic accommodation for certain regional or ethnic groupings.

Though they only account for 5.13% of the total, multilingual signage are quite important for cultural expression. Among them, TTECTCM (Chinese, Traditional Chinese, English) is the most frequent combination, accounting for 41.67% of multilingual signs. Reflecting the city's multicultural intersections and its appeal to a broader international audience, other frequent combinations include TECMJ (Chinese, English, Japanese) and TTECM (Thai, Traditional Chinese, English, and Chinese-Modified). Although minority languages (M) are less common, their appearance in combinations like BCMM (Chinese and minority language) and TTCML (Thai, Traditional Chinese, Chinese-Modified, and Lao) shows symbolic inclusion of ethnic groups.

The proportionate distribution of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs discovered in the study is shown in Figure 1. Monolingual signs make up the biggest share as seen in the chart at 50.09% of all gathered signs. This emphasizes the prevalence of single-language communication, especially via Simplified Chinese, which fits national language regulations and the language preferences of the majority people. Bilingual signs, which make up 44.77%, show a notable degree of linguistic interaction and reflect the

pragmatic requirement to serve both local and foreign audiences, particularly via Chinese-English pairings. Though they only make up 5.13%, multilingual signs are symbolically significant since they reflect larger efforts to include other linguistic groups including minority populations and regional visitors from Southeast Asia. The graph supports the idea that although Chinese is still king, Kunming's restaurant signage also shows significant levels of language adaptation and cross-cultural interaction.
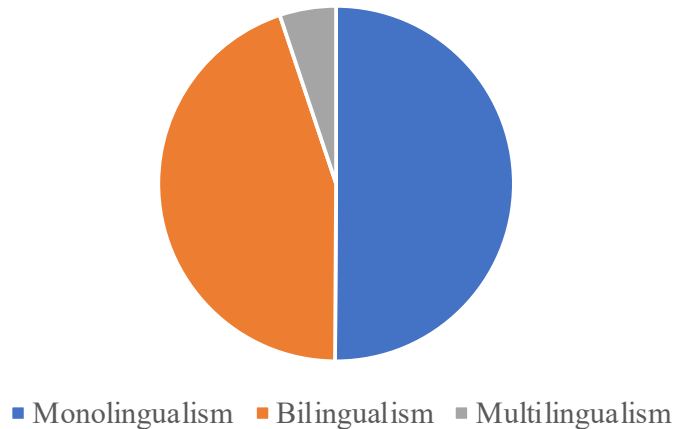

■ Monolingualism   ■ Bilingualism   ■ Multilingualism

Figure 1: Distribution of Monolingual, Bilingual, and Multilingual Signs (n = 2,104)

The distribution of monolingual restaurant signs in Kunming by language type is depicted in Figure 2. The figures show that monolingual signage is mostly dominated by Simplified Chinese (MCM), which accounts for the great majority of signs in this category. Especially in places aiming to recall legacy or classic aesthetics, classic Chinese (MCT) seems to be the second most frequent language used monolingually, probably for cultural or aesthetic reasons. Though its use is still quite low without Chinese, English (ME) ranks third, mostly employed to draw foreign tourists or communicate current, worldwide branding. Furthermore, very little of the signage is made up of languages like Korean (MK), Japanese (MJ), and Thai (MT). Though they are seldom used alone without Chinese, their appearance may be connected to particular ethnic restaurants or districts catering to niche tourist or migrant populations.
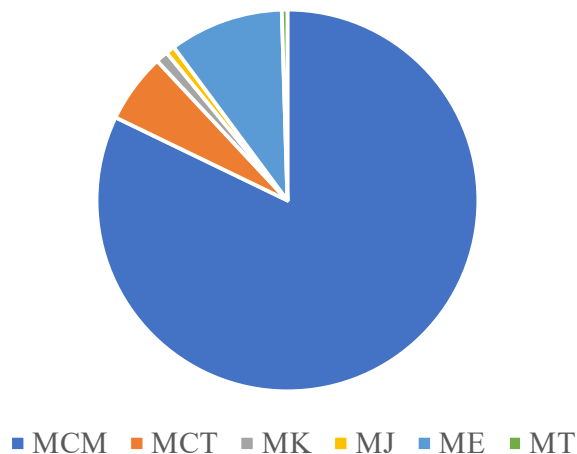

■ MCM   ■ MCT   ■ MK   ■ MJ   ■ ME   ■ MT

Figure 2: Distribution of Monolingual Signage by Language (n = 2,104)

Legend: BECM BCMJ BCTM BCML BCMK BECT BCTCM BCTK BCMM BCTJ
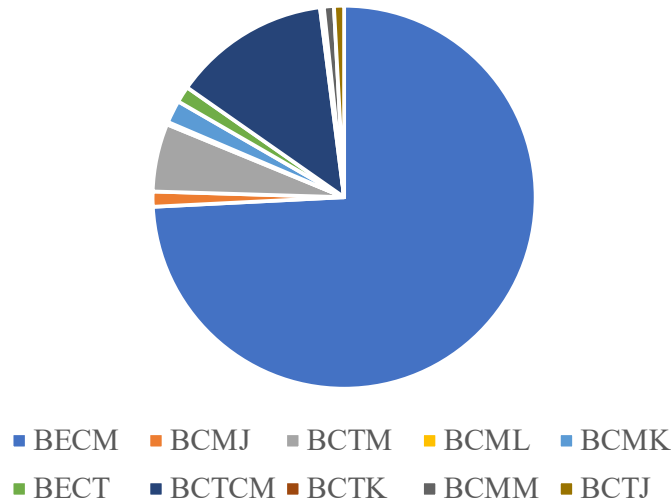
Figure 3: Distribution of Bilingual Signage by Language (n = 2,104)

Of the 942 multilingual signs gathered, some language combinations stand out in frequency (Figure 3). Chinese-Modified and English (BECM) is the most prevalent combination, making up 699 signs (74.2%). It also implies that among non-Chinese speakers visiting or residing in Kunming, English is still the most acknowledged foreign language. With 125 signs (13.26%), Chinese-Modified and Traditional Chinese (BCTCM) is the second most common bilingual pairing.

Other notable bilingual pairings include:
- Chinese-Modified and Thai (BCTM) with 54 signs (5.73%)
- Chinese-Modified and Korean (BCMK) with 18 signs (1.91%)
- Chinese-Modified and English-Traditional (BECT) with 13 signs (1.38%)
- Less frequent pairings including Chinese-Modified and Japanese (BCTJ), Chinese-Modified and Minority languages (BCMM), and Chinese-Modified and Lao (BCML) show in extremely small quantities, suggesting more specialized or localized language use.

Comprising 5.13% of the whole dataset, multilingual signs were 108 (Figure 4). Though less in number than monolingual and bilingual signs, these ones are quite important for showing the diversity and complexity of Kunming's linguistic environment. Particularly in tourist destinations, international business, or multicultural visibility, the mix of three or more languages on one sign shows a desire to interact with several linguistic populations at once.

On 45 signs (41.67%), TECTCM (Traditional Chinese, English, and Chinese-Modified) is the most common multilingual combination. This mix reflects a significant convergence of national, international, and culturally symbolic languages. It also shows the cohabitation of modern language use Simplified Chinese and English with historical or stylistic components, Traditional Chinese.

Other prominent combinations include:
- TTECM (Thai, English, and Chinese-Modified) with 22 signs (20.37%), suggesting the influence of regional Southeast Asian tourism and cross-border mobility.

- TECMJ (Chinese-Modified, English, and Japanese) with 14 signs (12.96%), indicating Japanese cultural or culinary influence in certain districts.
- TECMK (Chinese-Modified, English, and Korean) with 9 signs (8.33%), showing similar dynamics related to Korean cuisine or businesses.
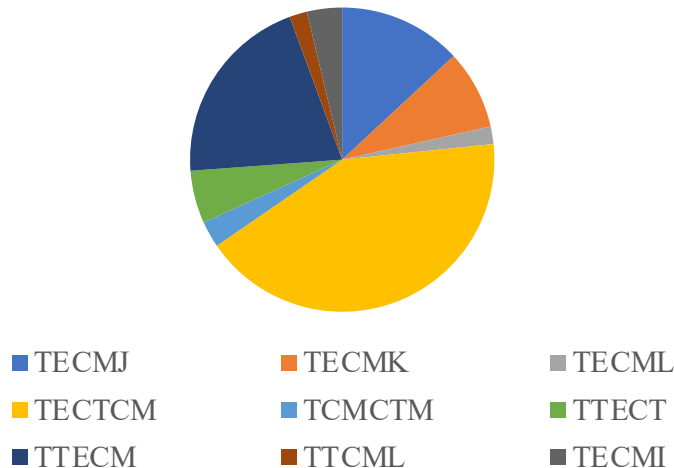

Figure 4: Distribution of Multilingual Signage by Language (n = 2,104)

Less frequent combinations include:
- TTECT (Traditional Chinese, English, and Thai) with 6 signs (5.56%)
- TECMI (Chinese-Modified, English, and Italian) with 4 signs (3.70%), likely used in Western or Italian-themed restaurants
- Rare signs like TCMCTM, TECML, and TTCML, which combine minority or regional languages, highlight specific efforts to include ethnolinguistic minorities or represent local cultural fusion.

Thus, the multilingual combinations found in Kunming's restaurant signage reflect not only global and regional cultural influences but also reveal how commercial language use negotiates identity, audience engagement, and symbolic inclusivity.

Discussion

Examining restaurant signage in Kunming reveals a layered, dynamic picture of language groupings in the public dining spaces of the city. Most signs were monolingual, with Simplified Chinese (Chinese-Modified) dominating, reflecting the prevailing influence of Mandarin in both daily speech and visual representation in metropolitan Kunming. This dominance implies that many local businesses prioritize Mandarin-speaking customers as their primary goal and aligns with state language policy favoring Putonghua as the national standard (The Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2001).

At the same time, the vast number of bilingual and multilingual signs reveals a purposeful effort to accommodate bigger crowds, particularly ethnic minorities and foreign tourists. The most common bilingual mix Chinese-Modified and English (BECM) points to a purposeful inclusion of English to attract non-Chinese-speaking tourists and imply global accessibility. This finding supports earlier research by Cenoz and Gorter (2008) and

Moriarty (2015), who argue that English in the linguistic environment often fulfills both a communicative and symbolic role linked with modernity, cosmopolitanism, and status.

Reflecting efforts to maintain cultural legacy while remaining accessible to readers from other Chinese-speaking regions including Hong Kong and Taiwan, signage in culturally significant places like Laojie and Wenhua Lane frequently featured Traditional Chinese alongside Simplified Chinese (e.g., BCTCM and BCTM). This trend matches findings by Shohamy and Waksman (2009), who define the LL as a realm where visual negotiation of numerous concepts and identities occurs. Traditional Chinese characters in business could also inspire authenticity and cultural legacy (Zhang, 2024; Zhang & Zhang, 2024). Extra signage included Thai, Japanese, Korean, and Lao among other languages especially in internationalized districts like South Asian Garden and Wenhua Lane. These language combinations suggest knowledge of cross-border travel, diasporic populations, and Southeast Asian tourist presence. Though less typically visible, these languages' existence on public signs meets Gorter and Cenoz's (2006) assertion that LL can be a platform for minority or non-dominant language visibility, even if simply symbolically.

Those with three or more languages provided additional insights on how visually transmitted complex linguistic identities for the multilingual signs. Signage types including TTECTCM (Traditional Chinese, English, Chinese-Modified) and TTECM (Thai, English, and Chinese-Modified) demonstrate a deliberate approach to symbolic inclusivity and layered identity branding. These signage patterns, often observed in areas frequented by tourists or attracting global attention, support Shohamy and Gorter's (2009) claim that the linguistic landscape serves as a site of ideological struggle and audience alignment. Though the prominence of minority languages in signs was minimal, their presence was discovered in combinations including BCMM and TTCML. Though their uncommon occurrence implies little practical integration, these examples reflect awareness of racial diversity. Though it raises questions about the degree of their incorporation into public life, as Landry and Bourhis (1997) point out, symbolic visibility can help one identify ethnolinguistic communities.

All things considered, the restaurant signs in Kunming reveal a purposely constructed but subtle linguistic hierarchy. Although simplified Chinese is still the main mode of communication, the addition of English, regional Asian languages, and minority languages indicates a larger effort to engage with sociolinguistic diversity and economic globalization. The visual linguistic landscape in Kunming's evolving urban environment not only transmits information but also serves as a semiotic space for expressing belonging, targeting different audiences, and negotiating cultural identities (Crystal, 2003; Huebner, 2016; Trumper-Hecht, 2009; Zhang, 2024).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

Though this article offers insightful fresh views on the portrayal of linguistic groups via restaurant signage in Kunming, it also has several weaknesses that should be acknowledged. Data came from nine urban streets, which may not fully represent the greater language diversity present in suburban or rural areas of the city. The study also focused only on visual data, so limiting knowledge of the motivations behind language choices and the readings of different linguistic groups by excluding the perspectives of

restaurant owners, staff members, and consumers. Low visibility led to the classification of minority languages under one category, which could obscure notable variations among different ethnic groups.

Furthermore, the photographic data only capture a specific instant and may not reflect ongoing or seasonal variations since the language scene is dynamic and evolves with time. Future research should consider expanding the geographic range to cover more diverse locations, using stakeholder interviews or surveys to explore decision-making processes and audience reaction, and disaggregating minority languages to provide more complicated cultural insights in order to overcome these limitations. Research on digital signage and online language representation, as well as studies comparing or over time across different multilingual cities, would also serve to clarify how linguistic diversity is presented and controlled in changing urban environments.

Conclusion

Emphasizing how language is used to mirror several linguistic groups in public commercial environments, this article investigated the linguistic landscape of restaurant signage along nine distinct streets in Kunming. The findings indicated that while Simplified Chinese obviously dominates signage, implying the importance of Mandarin in daily communication, there is also strong evidence of multilingualism reflecting the cultural variety of the city and its role as a regional and international hub. Bilingual signs, especially those combining Chinese and English, show a strong tendency for internationalization and tourist appeal. The presence of Traditional Chinese, Southeast Asian languages, and limited minority languages points to local efforts to maintain cultural identity and acknowledge regional diversity. Though less common, multilingual signage suggests a more sophisticated approach to audience participation and symbolic inclusiveness. Kunming's restaurant signs thus provide a rich linguistic tapestry blending social representation with functional communication. The signs are tools for leading and informing as well as visual markers of identity, cultural sensitivity, and urban dynamics. Public language use, this article argues, reflects both sociolinguistic reality and purposeful cultural positioning, hence supporting larger general discussions on multilingualism in urban China.

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