
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study on the Linguistic Landscape of Yuejiahu Park Based on the SPEAKING Model

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| ABSTRACT

Drawing upon Hymes's SPEAKING communicative model, this study examines the linguistic landscape (LL) of Yuejiahu Park in Fuyang City through the eight dimensions of Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre. Field observations and data analysis reveal that the park's LL plays a significant role in cultural expression, humanistic care, and functional services. However, challenges such as inconsistent language use, inaccurate translations, and inadequate signage are also evident. The study aims to provide theoretical guidance and practical suggestions for the construction of LLs in cultural theme parks and other public spaces.

| KEYWORDS

SPEAKING model; linguistic landscape; park signage; cultural communication; Fuyang.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Linguistic landscape (LL), a significant subject in sociolinguistics, refers to the language information displayed in public spaces through texts, symbols, and images (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). LLs not only serve communicative functions but also carry rich cultural connotations. In the context of accelerating globalization and urban cultural development, LLs have increasingly become carriers for shaping local identity, transmitting cultural values, and enhancing urban soft power (Shang & Zhao, 2014). Recent research has explored LLs in diverse settings such as tourist attractions, metro systems, airports, and historical districts, focusing on spatial distribution, code choice, power dynamics, and cultural representation (Li & Xu, 2017, Jin, 2016).

Yuejiahu Park in Fuyang City is a cultural theme park centered on the legacy of Yue Fei, integrating local history, cultural values, and ecological landscape. Its LL not only serves basic functions such as orientation, guidance, and behavioral regulation but also contributes to the dissemination of local culture, value promotion, and identity construction. However, existing studies often emphasize surface-level functions or translation accuracy, with limited attention to the communicative processes, social relationships, and cultural meanings embedded in LLs. Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model—comprising Setting & Scene, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre—offers a framework for analyzing the interaction between language behavior and sociocultural context (Hymes, 1974). Introducing this model into LL research enables a deeper exploration of the communicative strategies, cultural symbols, and social meanings underlying public signage (Wang, 2021).

This study applies the SPEAKING model to analyze the LL of Yuejiahu Park, aiming to investigate its roles in cultural transmission, social identity construction, and intercultural communication, while identifying existing problems and proposing feasible solutions.

2. Theoretical Overview of the SPEAKING Model

Proposed in the 1970s by sociolinguist Dell Hymes, the SPEAKING model is an analytical tool for interpreting communicative events within sociolinguistic contexts. The model highlights communicative competence, asserting that language is not merely a structured symbol system but a form of social practice embedded in cultural settings.

The eight components are: Setting & Scene (S): Physical and psychological context, including time, place, and atmosphere; Participants (P): Senders and receivers of messages—the “authors” and “readers”; Ends (E): Purposes and outcomes of communication; Act Sequence (A): Information delivery processes and organizational structure; Key (K): Emotional tone or psychological modality; Instrumentalities (I): Language codes, media, and communication channels; Norms (N): Social conventions and cultural constraints; Genre (G): Types and styles of language use (Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Applying the SPEAKING model to LL research not only reveals the social significance and cultural implications of public signage but also elucidates the intricate relationships between language, identity, and power.

3. Analysis of Yuejiahu Park’s Linguistic Landscape Using the SPEAKING Model

3.1 Setting & Scene

Located in Yingzhou District, Fuyang, Yuejiahu Park integrates cultural heritage, ecology, and recreation. Its site selection—linked to the historical residence of Yue Fei’s descendants—reflects rich cultural heritage. The layout revolves around traditional virtues like loyalty and filial piety, expressed through architecture, sculpture, landscaping, and signage. The park serves not only as a leisure destination but also as a platform for cultural education and patriotism, giving its LL both functional and symbolic significance.

3.2 Participants

The main “authors” of the park’s LL include the Fuyang municipal government, landscaping authorities, and cultural promotion bodies. The “readers” span a wide range: local residents, students, tourists, researchers, and cultural enthusiasts. These diverse audiences differ in language proficiency, cognitive habits, and aesthetic preferences, necessitating accurate, inclusive, and diversified language use to ensure accessibility and comprehension.

3.3 Ends

The LL in Yuejiahu Park serves three main purposes: Functionally, it provides orientation, behavioral guidance, and safety instructions; Culturally, it conveys historical narratives and values, particularly stories related to Yue Fei and local traditions; Symbolically, it projects the city’s management quality and international openness, especially through multilingual signage.

Nonetheless, field data show that some signs fail to meet these objectives due to issues like incomplete information, translation errors, and confusing layouts, undermining both practical utility and cultural impact.

3.4 Act Sequence

The dominant sequence in signage is “Chinese–Pinyin–English,” reflecting Chinese linguistic hegemony while accommodating non-Chinese speakers. Directional signs typically present core content first in Chinese, followed by phonetic aids and English translations. However, inconsistencies are frequent: mixed-language layouts, logical discontinuities, and omissions disrupt clarity and effectiveness.

3.5 Key

Many signs adopt a gentle and empathetic tone, using rhetorical or poetic language to encourage desired behavior. Examples include “Even the grass feels pain” and “Life is not a replay—do not climb,” replacing harsh commands with persuasive appeals. However, some signage remains rigid and directive (e.g., “No Entry”), disrupting the emotional coherence of the park’s LL.

3.6 Instrumentalities

The LL relies on physical signs, engraved panels, and electronic screens. Language forms are predominantly written, using Chinese, Pinyin, and English. While Chinese dominates, Pinyin serves learners and non-native speakers, and English reflects globalization. However, translation errors and underutilization of other languages (e.g., Japanese, Korean) limit inclusivity. Furthermore, the lack of digital and interactive media (e.g., QR guides, audio narration) restricts the richness and accessibility of LL content.

3.7 Norms

The park's LL reflects alignment with national language policies and socialist core values. Public service signs promote environmental protection, child welfare, and civility. However, repetition, inconsistent translation, and vague expressions undermine message clarity and standardization. This highlights the need for improved editorial control and normative design.

3.8 Genre

Yuejiahu Park features a variety of sign genres:

Directional (maps, arrows),
Expository (historical or cultural explanations),
Warning (safety alerts),
Promotional (public service announcements).

Most use plain, accessible prose, with some incorporating poetic or rhetorical elements. Yet, the lack of multimodal, interactive formats (e.g., digital displays, QR audio guides) limits user engagement and cultural immersion.

4. Problems and Recommendations

4.1 Identified Issues

Translation errors and low accuracy: Misspellings, grammatical issues, and awkward phrasing are common, especially in English, compromising comprehension and international image.

Inconsistency and lack of standardization: Sign content varies in detail, structure, and visual style, leading to visitor confusion and diminished aesthetic coherence.

Weak cultural expression: Some key locations lack interpretive signage, missing opportunities for cultural transmission and education.

Limited multilingual coverage: Non-English foreign languages are absent, failing to accommodate increasingly diverse international visitors.

Lack of multimodal and intelligent features: Most signs are static, lacking QR codes, audio guides, or interactive screens, which diminishes user experience and engagement.

4.2 Recommendations

Enhance translation and proofreading: Engage professional translators and establish a rigorous review system. Incorporate feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement.

Develop standardized design guidelines: Align with national standards to ensure consistency in content, format, and visual presentation across all signs.

Strengthen cultural content: Install more explanatory signage highlighting cultural narratives, historical backgrounds, and local identity.

Expand multilingual services: Add translations in Japanese, Korean, and other major languages at key locations to enhance inclusiveness.

Adopt digital and multimodal technologies: Introduce smart features like QR-guided tours, interactive displays, and mobile apps to enrich communication and user experience.

5. Conclusion

Using Hymes's SPEAKING model, this study provides a multidimensional analysis of Yuejiahu Park's linguistic landscape, revealing its layered functions in cultural transmission, service delivery, and humanistic expression. The findings demonstrate the model's analytical value and potential to inform LL development in other public spaces.

Despite progress, significant issues remain, including flawed translations, inconsistency, and insufficient cultural depth. Improvements should focus on systemic regulation, multilingual inclusivity, and technological enhancement. Future research may extend the SPEAKING model to broader urban LL contexts and intercultural communication studies to support local cultural promotion and urban image development.

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