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Linguistic landscaping from above in China: scale-making and language ideologies

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Abstract: The sociolinguistics of mobility is one of Jan Blommaert’s significant theoretical legacies vis-à-vis language interactions in the age of globalization. This paper investigates the mobilization of English as a semiotic resource in the public space of Chinese cities to reveal how the process of linguistic landscaping rescues English in China’s layered language regime. In the three investigated cities in eastern China, the English language has been conceptualized as a symbol of internationalization, and the affective potentials of English signs turn the cities into spaces of friendliness. I argue that the visual bilingualism for internationalization purposes is loaded with state ideologies, and English semiotization in the urban space demonstrates the state’s keenness for international recognition and integration into the global world. Inherent in this linguistic landscaping process are Englishization as internationalization ideology, standard language ideology, and linguistic purism ideology. While the translocal status of English in the world language system serves to upscale the cities to a higher scale level, the valorization of English in the official domain also reinforces the hegemonic power of English in the indexicality order, marginalizing social groups with limited English literacy. Thus, a critical, dialectical lens is needed to analyze the role of English in top-down linguistic landscaping.

Keywords: Blommaert; globalization; internationalization; sociolinguistic scales; visual bilingualism

1 Introduction

The multiple and complex language-related issues arising in the age of globalization have long been a hot topic in sociolinguistics (see, for example, Blommaert 2010; Coupland 2010; Fairclough 2006; Jacquemet 2015; Pennycook 2007). In order to characterize the changing languages “framed in terms of trans-contextual networks, flows and movements” (Blommaert 2010: 1), Blommaert (2010) proposed two paradigms of sociolinguistics of globalization, namely the *sociolinguistics of distribution* and the *sociolinguistics of mobility*, and introduced significant theoretical

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constructs to understand and examine the power and inequality underlying the movement of language resources. Among others, the notion of *scales* or *sociolinguistic scales* is a core concept to elucidate the complex nature of context and describe the various interrelated and interacting spatiotemporal frames “by means of which subjects bring order in their semiotizations of the social and material world” (Blommaert et al. 2015: 120). As a metaphor borrowed from social geography and political science, scales refer to a continuum of vertical and hierarchically stratified space “in which all sorts of socially, culturally and politically salient distinctions occur” (Blommaert 2010: 5). The social events and processes are operated on various scale levels, and different scales have different codes, norms, and expectations, carrying different indexical values. In social interactions, the linguistic and semantic differences in every horizontal space (such as a neighborhood, a region, or a country) are projected “onto stratified patterns of social, cultural and political value-attribution” (Blommaert 2010: 5). Blommaert used the concept of *orders of indexicality*, a notion inspired by Silverstein’s (2003) *indexical order* and Foucault’s (1984) *order of discourse*, to explicate this complex form of organization and order, proposing that “orders of indexicality are stratified and impose differences in value onto the different modes of semiosis, systematically give preference to some over others, and exclude or disqualify particular modes” (Blommaert 2010: 41). He suggested that “systemic patterns of indexicality are also systemic patterns of authority, of control and evaluation, and hence of inclusion and exclusion *by real or perceived others*” (2010: 38, italics in the original). Therefore, the jump from one scale to another in social interactions triggers “shifts in value and validity” (Blommaert 2007: 1), engendering power and inequality, as “access to and control over scales is unevenly distributed” (Blommaert 2010: 5). Moreover, there is *polycentricity* in social encounters in that various real or perceived centers coexist in communication as evaluating authorities or “super-addressees” (Bakhtin 1986) “to which people orient when they produce an indexical trajectory in semiosis” (Blommaert 2010: 39).

Taken together, the concepts of scales, order of indexicality, and polycentricity, all sharing an emphasis on power and spatiotemporal sensitivity, provide a useful analytical tool and critical perspective to approach sociolinguistic phenomena in the era of globalization. Based on these theoretical constructs, we can postulate that languages as semiotic resources are projected onto different scale levels, and the move across different scale levels involves the reordering of the indexical meanings and functions; the social and interactional context is a polycentric system with multiple norms operating simultaneously. According to Lanza and Woldemariam (2013: 494), these concepts form “fitting points of departure” for studying the linguistic consequences of semiotic mobility, particularly in regard to linguistic landscape (LL).

LL, namely the visible languages marking material environments, is a thriving field of inquiry in sociolinguistics. For LL researchers, the public space is not a neutral site, but a “social, cultural and political space [...] that offers, enables, triggers, invites, prescribes, proscribes, polices or enforces certain patterns of social behaviour” (Blommaert 2013: 3). In the literature, the visually multilingual representations in the LL of various cities across the world have been documented and interpreted extensively, and such endeavors help people appreciate the social, cultural, and political patterns in the contemporary world. However, the planning and mobilization of language resources by governments for the sake of city image are relatively underexplored. An examination of the official manipulation of public signs to market the cities can shed more light on how “the semiotization of space turns space into a social, cultural and political habitat in which ‘enskkilled’ people co-construct and perpetually enact the ‘order’ semiotically inscribed in that space” (Blommaert 2013: 16).

Inspired by the conceptual tools by Blommaert, I look into the top-down appropriation of English as a semiotic resource for city branding by Chinese authorities with the purpose of revealing how the official discourses of urban internationalization intersect with and reorganize the layered language regimes in Chinese society. The term *linguistic landscaping* is used in this paper to refer to the process and activities of planning, deploying, and managing the language items in the place to serve symbolic and/or utilitarian purposes. Linguistic landscaping can be performed by the government or bureaucratic institutions from above or by individuals or corporations from below, and the languages on signs in public space are scrutinized more as semiotic resources with indexical values than as visual items with various patterns of language representation. By analyzing the policy documents and discourses, this study examines the processes and implications of linguistic landscaping propelled by external forces of internationalization and globalization in Chinese cities. The specific research questions to address in this paper include:

- (1) How do local governments manage the English language as a semiotic resource in the public space?
- (2) What are the hidden social and ideological meanings in the official semiotization of English in the LL?

The answers to these questions can help us appreciate the significance of English language in city governance and the centrality of the craft of city branding in China’s context.

The structure of the paper is as follows. After introducing the general background, I analyze the policy discourses of internationalization for the sampled cities. Then the linguistic landscaping policies and activities are investigated to find out

how English is appropriated as a semiotic resource for city internationalization. The discussion then turns to affective regimes, language ideologies, and the scale-making operations underlining the governmental maneuvers. The conclusion highlights the potential perils of English valorization in linguistic landscaping for internationalization purposes.

2 City internationalization in the Chinese context

2.1 Internationalization as city branding

City image concerns the visual outlook of the city as well as its wider significance and values, and the construction of a positive and appealing city image is often in the agendas of urban development (Vanolo 2008: 230). In the current context of global competition, becoming an international city is often an aspired-to developmental goal for urban governors. International cities are defined as cities that have many transnational links in terms of investment, trade, business, services, information, migration, and culture (Huang et al. 2007). Maxxelli, an agency specializing in the evaluation of the internationalization levels of various cities, points out that “if cities show a higher degree of internationalization, they hold greater appeal for foreign companies due to their increased market potential, accessibility, liveability and growth prospects” (Maxxelli 2018). Internationalization is essentially a means of city branding, namely “the process of building a clear and positive set of images and associations for a city in the world’s mind in order to make it more attractive and, ideally, unique and thus more easily marketable” (Lang 2011). It is a strategic goal of city development “aiming to generate revenue from tourism and secure investments, as well as attract and retain a qualified workforce” (Björner and Berg 2014: 9). City internationalization can be measured using an array of indicators (Huang et al. 2007; Kourtit et al. 2014). Nowadays, mega-cities like New York, London, and Paris are widely recognized in the global world as international cities.

China has undergone profound and massive socioeconomic transformation since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s. Since then, it has been actively involved in the global world and ascended at spectacular speed to become a vital economic powerhouse. Encouraged by national development policies, many Chinese cities have set their sights on becoming international cities to boost the chances of economic success in the global economy. According to an earlier report in the state-owned *Guangming Daily* newspaper, 182 cities across China had set up a target of becoming international cities, accounting for 27 % of the 667 cities

in China (Yan 2003). These figures demonstrate Chinese people's craze for city internationalization, particularly in the governmental sector. For urban governors in China, the image or identity of being an international city can improve the city's competitiveness and its positioning in comparison to other cities, thus city internationalization often tops the city planning agendas. While the first-tier cities like Beijing and Shanghai are highly international, many second-tier cities are catching up and becoming increasingly international with the central government's encouragement to do so (Bjørner and Berg 2014). Apart from the local governments' passion and dedication for city internationalization, Chinese scholars are also actively engaged in city internationalization studies. A search of CNKI, the most used database of academic literature in China, shows that altogether 1,974 research papers use 城市国际化 'city internationalization' in their titles, keywords, or research topics,¹ demonstrating Chinese scholars' passionate contribution to the process of city internationalization.

2.2 City internationalization policies in three Chinese cities

In this study, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Ningbo, three geographically proximate yet functionally disparate metropolitan cities in China, are selected as cases for analysis. Located in the populated Yangtze River Delta area, one of the most open and economically affluent urban agglomerations in eastern China, these cities are the forerunners in the construction of internationalization-oriented cities. Among them, Shanghai (population size: 25 million), one of the centrally administered municipalities, is a major industrial and commercial center of China and a global center for finance, research, technology, manufacturing, and transportation. It tops the list of Chinese cities in terms of modernization and internationalization levels. Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang province (population size: 10.36 million), is the political, economic, scientific, educational, and cultural center of the whole province and one of the central cities in the region. Ningbo, a port city in the east of Zhejiang province (population size: over 6 million), is a local industrial and commercial center and one of the first open coastal cities in China. These frontier cities are, in terms of economic and social development, typical representatives of the modern and open cities in the country.

Rules and regulations issued by the governments are the most used official mechanisms and devices "that directly affect and create *de facto* language practices and thereby turn ideology into practice" (Shohamy 2006: 59). In these cities, the promotion of all-round internationalization is a recurrent topic in the official

1 The CNKI website, www.cnki.net (accessed on 1 May 2022).

discourses for city development and governance. In local policy documents, the term 国际化 ‘internationalization’ is almost always a keyword that sets the tone and the backdrop of the grand narratives. In Shanghai, the officially released *Masterplan for city development 2017–2035* (《上海市城市总体规划 2017–2035 年》), approved by the State Council in May (2018), the word 国际化 occurs 12 times to highlight the city’s desired positioning in the global world. Compared to the 1999–2020 masterplan released earlier, in which Shanghai aimed to build itself into a modernized international metropolis (现代化国际大都市), Shanghai is now no longer satisfied with the identity of an international city; it envisions instead building an “excellent global city” and a modern international metropolis with world influence by 2050.

In Hangzhou, city internationalization has been set as a medium- and long-term strategic mission of the urban development. In April 2015, the government issued its *Action plan for accelerating the internationalization of Hangzhou city (2015–2017)* (《杭州市加快推进城市国际化行动纲要 (2015–2017 年)》) to frame the city’s internationalized development. Later, the *Regulations on the promotion of city internationalization* (《杭州市城市国际化促进条例》), April 2018) were approved by Hangzhou Municipal People’s Congress as legislation to regulate urban internationalization. It states clearly at the outset that the regulations are mandated with the purpose of “promoting city internationalization, enhancing the city’s competitiveness and influence, and constructing a world-famous city with unique flavor and splendor” (为了促进城市国际化, 增强城市竞争力和影响力, 建设独特韵味别样精彩的世界名城, [...]制定本条例). In July 2016, *Opinions of the CPC Hangzhou Municipal Committee on elevating the internationalization level of Hangzhou city* (《中共杭州市委关于全面提升杭州城市国际化水平的若干意见》) was officially endorsed by the local government. In this policy document, the time-phased goals are set by the government, including the construction of an international city with high global reputation by 2020, a renowned world city with distinct features and global influence by 2030, and a renowned world city with significant international influence by 2050.

Similarly, in Ningbo, the *Action plan to accelerate the internationalization of Ningbo city* (《宁波市加快推进城市国际化行动纲要》) was mandated by the Ningbo Municipal Committee and People’s Government in December 2013, which states that accelerating the promotion of urban internationalization is a strategic measure to confront economic globalization and improve the competitiveness of the city. The guiding principles for the actions include speeding up the progress of city internationalization, expanding the city’s international influence, and creating a modern and internationally renowned port city (加快城市国际化进程, 提升城市国际化水平, 扩大城市国际影响力, 打造现代化国际港口名城). In terms of internationalization goals, the *Action plan* highlights that it strives to build an international city in the Asia-Pacific region with substantial world influence by 2030.

By and large, the policy documents of the local governments set out specific visions for city internationalization in all possible aspects. These official discourses have been oriented toward internationalized city identity and branding, which may have far-reaching impacts and implications not only for the city itself but also the world at large (Shi-xu 2015). In order to achieve the city identity reconceptualization goals, massive urban transformation projects have been carried out by the city governments. One of the key planning strategies involved linguistic landscaping projects, namely, to emplace Chinese–English bilingual signs in the public space, which is the focus of this study.

3 Linguistic landscaping in Chinese cities

3.1 Linguistic landscaping as urban policy

In this section, the urban development policies and the linguistic landscaping measures on public signage in Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Ningbo are examined to illustrate the planning endeavors to appropriate the English language for city internationalization. The local governments take the physical environment as one of the key aspects of city image and branding. In order to achieve the internationalization goals, particular attention is paid to the public signage system. As indicated by Mr. Feng Dao, the chief designer of the public signage system in Shanghai, the public signage system is a demonstration of the city's internationalization edge:

这不是单纯的标识系统，是世界级、国际化城市竞争的一个要素，我们要从这个高度出发来做标识设计，才能做得好。

[This is not merely a signage system, but a key element of world-level, internationalized city competition. Only by starting off at such a high level can we design public signage well.] (Yan 2021)

The keen need to bring the public signage to an international level is clearly and constantly spelled out in Hangzhou and Ningbo. In the Hangzhou government's *Opinions* (2016) mentioned above, it states that the measures to upgrade the internationalized public service include, inter alia, implementation of internationalized signage transformation projects, standardization of the language uses on public signs, and the creation of internationalized communities (实施国际化标识改造工程，规范城市公示语标志，建设具有杭州特色的国际化街区和社区). Similarly in Ningbo, as the *Action plan* (2013) highlights, the formation of an internationalized “soft environment” (软环境) relies partly on international language environment construction, including the compilation and implementation of public signage

system construction plans and the transformation to bilingual signage in public places and buildings (编制实施城市公共标识系统建设规划, 加强公共机构和公共场所双语标识工程改造).

In order to achieve the stated goals, the Hangzhou City Internationalization Promotion Committee issued the *Action plan for the internationalization of the urban signage system (2016–2017)* (《杭州市城市标识系统国际化行动计划 (2016–2017 年)》), indicating that the emplacement of public signage must meet the requirements of city internationalization, and all of the key informational signs shall be rendered bilingual for the convenience of foreigners (城市标识要从城市国际化要求出发, 对于重点信息牌, 都应该双语标注, 便于外国友人使用). Hangzhou government also chaired the compilation of a number of practical guidelines concerning public signage design, such as the *Guidelines for the internationalized design of the signage system in Hangzhou city* (《杭州城市标识系统国际化设计导引》, 2015) and *Guidelines for the internationalized signage system of Hangzhou city* (《杭州城市国际化标识系统导则》, 2021). Similarly, the Ningbo government issued the *Implementation scheme for construction of the bilingual public signage system* (《宁波市城市公共双语标识系统建设实施方案》) in July 2015.

One interesting point to note is that the word “English” is rarely mentioned in the official documents on bilingual public signage. Instead, the term 外国文字 ‘foreign language’ is deliberately used to refer to the English language on signs. Take Shanghai’s policy documents as an example. In September 2014, the Shanghai Municipal Government mandated the *Provisions of Shanghai Municipality on the use of foreign languages in public places* (《上海市公共场所外国文字使用规定》) to regulate the use of foreign languages in the public places. It stipulates that foreign languages *shall* (应当) be used together with Chinese in some public places (e.g., airports, train and subway stations, wharfs, bus terminals, public utilities, parking areas), and *can* (可以) be used in other places if necessary (such as tourist spots, sports venues, and commercial, medical, postal, communication service sites). It also mentions that the management of the foreign languages in public places shall be understood as part of urban governance and spiritual civilization construction work. Here the word “English” never occurs in the policy texts.

Guided by the official guidelines and action plans, the urban construction sectors have implemented massive infrastructural projects and replaced Chinese monolingual signs with Chinese–English bilingual signs. In our fieldwork carried out in the central districts of the three cities in 2015 and 2016, we found that the public signs for metro (subway) stations, road signs, public toilets, and dustbins were fully rendered bilingual, presenting Chinese and English for national and international communication. On other public signs, English was also highly visible. The increasing visibility of English in the top-down LL shows that visual bilingualism on public signs, as an

instrument of urban image construction, has become the *de facto* urban language policy in these metropolitan cities.

3.2 Standardizing language uses in public spaces

Apart from putting up bilingual public signage, the local governments are also taking measures to improve the English language on signs to ensure their accuracy, appropriateness, and conformity to international standards. To guarantee the correctness of English translations displayed on signs, the Shanghai Municipality, along with neighboring Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, published the *Guidelines for English translations in public places* (《公共场所英文译写规范》) in August 2009 as local standards for translating the Chinese terms in local contexts. The promoted standards cover one general rule and nine main areas (i.e., proper names, public transportation, tourism, culture and sports, education, banking and finance, health and medicine, post and telecommunication, commercial and service industries), and provide over 2,000 items of suggested English translations for reference. According to these policy documents, legality (合法性), standardization (规范性), accuracy (准确性), comprehensibility (通俗性), and civility (文明性) are the overarching principles to be followed in the English translation. It also highlights that the national standards on language use for public signs need to be followed.

A close examination of the English translation *Guidelines* suggests that both British English and American English are taken as the evaluative authority or “super-addressee” (Bakhtin 1986) for the English uses. For instance, it is recommended that some terms be translated in alternative ways (e.g., 邮箱 ‘postbox’ or ‘mailbox,’ 加油站 ‘petrol station’ or ‘gas station,’ 外卖 ‘take out’ or ‘take away’), indicating that the lexicalization norms in British English and American English are equally accepted (see, for instance, Davies 2005; di Carlo 2013 for the differences between British and American English). Nevertheless, in many other cases, the listed lexical and spelling choices suggest that American English norms are preferred (e.g., 天桥 ‘overpass,’ 货车 ‘truck,’ 中心 ‘center,’ 往返票 ‘round-trip ticket’), though a few instances seem to be based on the norms of British English (e.g., 人行横道 ‘pedestrian crossing,’ 剧院 ‘theatre’). Another interesting example that merits attention is the translation of public signs for toilets. In the *Guidelines for the internationalized design of the signage system in Hangzhou city* issued in 2015, we notice that it suggested changing the English translation of 公共厕所 (*lit.* ‘public toilet’) from “TOILET” to “restroom,” without giving any reasons. As “restroom” is a term more commonly used in the USA, this modification seems to indicate that American English is the ultimate standard to follow for the English on signage.

In addition to the regional standards, there are also other local policy documents to standardize the English language on signage in each city. In Hangzhou, for example, the *Guidelines for the use of foreign languages in the public service of Hangzhou* (《杭州市公共服务领域外文译写导则》) was issued by the Hangzhou Public Signage Foreign Language Standardization Committee in October 2021 to guide foreign language uses (mainly English) in public spaces. In Ningbo, the *English translation guidelines for public bilingual signage in Ningbo* (《宁波市公共双语标识英文翻译规则(试行)》) was published in December 2015 by the city's Bilingual Signage Construction Office, which offers thousands of suggested English translations in ten different registers. The format of these documents and the suggested English translations are largely the same. However, it should be mentioned that the bilingual representation of street names is materialized differently in these cities. While Shanghai and Hangzhou governments choose to inscribe Chinese and English on street name signs, Ningbo government chooses to present street names in Chinese and Pinyin.² This difference demonstrates the tension between the national language standards and the local needs in the era of globalization (Shang 2020).

3.3 Campaigns to eradicate “problematic” English on signs

In addition to setting up bilingual public signs, the city authorities have also launched massive campaigns to eradicate “problematic” English on signs and replace it with standard English translations. Such language standardization activities can be seen as top-down language corpus planning endeavors (Zhang 2021). Since the English competence of the Chinese people is low in general, the English translations displayed on signs often contain misspellings, incorrect grammar, or Chinglish, i.e., English translated literally and often imprecisely from the Chinese, causing confusion for English readers. For the city governments, only correct and standard English on signs is deemed compatible with the image of an international city. The nonstandard English translations, often associated with pejorative meanings, are conceived of as being harmful to the desired city image, and thus must be cleared up completely from the signage. As indicated by one expert in Shanghai's language use inspection team, “the inspection acted as a vital measure in building a civilized environment [...] and achieving the city's goal of becoming a global hub of excellence” (Cao 2018). In all of the three investigated cities, large-scale language

² This is evidenced in official documents such as *Guidelines for the English translation of road names in Shanghai* (《上海市道路名称英译导则》), published by the Shanghai government in April (2015), the *English translation standard for road and traffic signage* (《道路交通指示标识英文译写规范》), published by the Hangzhou government in June (2018), and *Ningbo administrative regulations on geographical names* (《宁波市地名管理条例》), which took effect in May (2020).

correction campaigns are usually referred to as “Woodpecker” actions, which are participated in by local authorities, language experts, volunteer students, and residents of the city. The removal of nonstandard language uses is espoused by the general public as well. The intensive check and rectification of the nonstandard English is believed to be vital for the identity of an international city, and thus the public commend the governments’ endeavors to wipe out bad English like Chinglish from the LL (Shang 2021).

4 Discussion

4.1 Linguistic landscaping and affect construction

In this study, the local authorities in Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Ningbo have envisaged that city internationalization is contingent on visual bilingualism in public spaces, and a series of linguistic landscaping activities have been undertaken to achieve the city development goals. Such endeavors and “desires” are evidently motivated by numerous sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and emotional factors, among which the role of affect is particularly prominent in the internationalization-oriented linguistic landscaping.

Affect is a vital dimension of linguistic landscaping in that the texts and signs turn the city space into “a place of affect” (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010), where specific emotional responses are invoked, and particular city characters shaped (Wee and Goh 2020). LL is often appropriated by the governments as affective regimes to encourage and regulate people’s affective orientations. In this study, it is shown that the local governments of the three cities strive to create an English-saturated language environment, suggesting that the “friendliness”-affective regime plays a significant role in the process of international city construction. The affective affordances of visual bilingualism are what the local governments have invested in, as the public spaces replete with English signage are imagined to index welcomeness and inclusion to the inbound foreigners, thus gaining affective economy. The visual appeal of the English lettering is intended to “convey a mood as much as a message” (Kay 1992: 542). Consequently, the official discourses on the public signage system are formulated to regulate the semiotic representations in the material world. That is, through linguistic landscaping, the cities are semiotically constructed to be an inclusive space embedded with higher affective potentials in favor of others. Moreover, the standardization of the English translations and the English correction campaigns are also measures to ensure that the affective regime of friendliness operates properly in sociolinguistic life. Therefore, the linguistic landscaping from above is

fundamentally a management and regulation of the desired affects in the public space.

4.2 Language ideologies in linguistic landscaping

Linguistic forms carry social values of distinctiveness as defined by social actors' language ideologies, which refer to "a system of ideas, presuppositions, beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding languages, their status, and their use in society" (Zhou 2019: 36). As "morally and politically loaded representations" (Woolard 2021), they constitute a useful theoretical perspective to examine the power relationships and identities underlying language uses and practices. In the investigated cities, the emplacement of English on public signs is an ideologically loaded action. We can identify at least three language ideologies prevalent in the linguistic landscaping process from above.

First, there is the Englishization as internationalization ideology. English is widely recognized as a global lingua franca due to its significant role in international business, travel, information, and technology. More importantly, it has immense indexical and emblematic potentials in the age of globalization due to its connections with United Kingdom and the United States. In these cities, presenting English on public signs is endorsed by the authorities as imperative for intercultural communication and symbolic construction. In other words, the Chinese–English bilingual signage in the public service sector is conceptualized as a semiotic normality of city internationalization. Our walking tour in the central districts of the investigated cities showed that the frequency of English on public signs was high, suggesting that the imagery of an English-rich bilingual environment was coming into being. It should be noted that the local governments have never explicated in the official discourse to what extent the identity of an international city is correlated to English-visible public signage, and the Englishization as internationalization is largely an implicit policy mandated by the authorities. It should also be mentioned that in international European cities such as Paris, Rome, and Barcelona, presenting English on public signs is not a common practice, although bilingual signs with English could obviously cater to the semiotic needs of more people.

The second language ideology inherent in linguistic landscaping is standard language ideology, which relates to a belief in elevating a particular variety of a named language spoken by the dominant social group to a high status while diminishing other varieties to a low status (Lippi-Green 1994; Milroy 2001). As the chief social actor in language planning, the Chinese national government has made tremendous efforts to manage the language issues that loom large in the society (e.g., Spolsky 2014; Zhou 2004). One fundamental principle in its language policy and

planning is to sustain the legitimately predominant role of Putonghua or Standard Chinese in its language regime. In terms of language uses on public signage, numerous standards, decrees, guidelines, and governmental notices have been issued by national and local governments to ensure language accuracy and appropriateness. With regards to the English language, the guidelines for English translations on public signs are mandated to promote standard English on specific signs.

Another relevant language ideology implied in the linguistic landscaping discourse is the linguistic purism ideology, which concerns the desire “to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements, or other elements held to be undesirable” (Thomas 1991: 12). For the local governments, the only accepted English forms for public display are the standard variety of English. The nonstandard English forms (including Chinglish) are considered as a barrier for intercultural communication, as a source of embarrassment, and as harmful to the aspired-to city image or affective regime. The local governments make determined efforts to create an urban environment free from errors or nonstandard translations. They police the English language uses and launch massive campaigns to remove incorrect or improper English displayed in public spaces. These linguistic landscaping measures show that only Standard Chinese and standardized English are legitimate forms on public signage as they conform to the national interests and the city internationalization goals.

4.3 Rescaling and orders of indexicality in linguistic landscaping

The signs transform public spaces into social places and generate ordered identities, actions, and meanings. As Blommaert (2013: 15) put it, “signs demarcate spaces, cutting them up in precisely circumscribed zones in which identities are being defined and enacted, forms of authority can be exerted, ownership and entitlement can be articulated – a complex range of social, cultural and political effects results from the semiotization of space.” The theorization of sociolinguistic scales as a practice has gained academic attention in recent years. In fact, “this notion of scale as a verb rather than a noun gives importance to constructs such as rescaling, scale jumping, and scale differentiation – all relating to the ways scales are practiced in social life” (Canagarajah and De Costa 2016: 3). In the scales-as-practice approach, the central foci in the analysis are, as Brenner (2011: 35) states, “not scales in themselves but rather the processes of scaling (scale differentiation) and rescaling (scale re-differentiation) that underpin the dynamics of institutional evolution and socio-political struggle.” Here social actors are scale-makers, and their agentive roles

and subjectivity in the scaling process are accentuated. In this section, I analyze the Chinese government's mobilization of English as a social resource across socio-linguistic scales to create orders of indexicality.

English is securing its position as a global language largely due to its symbolic indexicalities such as modernity, cosmopolitanness, sophistication, fashion, and progress. It is thus positioned on a translocal scale, while other languages such as Chinese are generally located on a local or regional scale. The scale affordances of the English language or Englishness can accord the users a symbolic power higher than the local languages. For the internationalization-oriented cities, English has been appropriated as an instrument and resource for semiotization in the public space, an enregistered practice geared to city branding and identity construction. It is no longer a foreign language that "can be used if necessary" on signage (Wang 2016) as the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese* (in effect since 2001) stipulated. Instead, it is rescaled and planned as a must-have code on public signs. That is, English is emplaced in the LL to index higher-order scales for the cities.

In the linguistic landscaping discussed above, we can see that the "spatial repertoire" (Pennycook and Otsuji 2014: 167) in public spaces was not produced purely out of the bottom-up needs of the international visitors or expatriates in the cities, but rather, it was mandated by the city authorities in a top-down manner to brand the international profile of the cities. The metanarrative of the significance of English for city development and the LL practices in the metropolises demonstrate the authorities' keenness for international recognition and integration in the official ideologies. Due to the predominant role of the Chinese language in the local socio-linguistic life, the display of English on public signage is mainly to enhance the appeal of the city environments for foreigners, thus serving more symbolic than informative functions. On the other hand, the governments have issued guidelines to correct English translations and launched campaigns to remove nonstandard English, showing their desire to improve the communicative value of the English on signs. For the governments, substandard English "may invoke stereotypical identity characteristics of marginality, low levels of education, the countryside versus the city, a lack of cultural and intellectual sophistication and so forth" (Blommaert et al. 2015: 122). Therefore, the English in the public space is expected to position the cities on a scale level of high-standard internationalization. The visual bilingualism created by the cities is also a polycentric indexical space, with various sociolinguistic norms and perceived appropriateness criteria. Influenced by the standard language ideology, varieties other than the elite English are not tolerated. American and British English are adopted as the default centers or evaluating authorities toward which linguistic landscaping orients itself. For street names, cities like Ningbo choose to inscribe Pinyin, showing that the Chinese national standard for geographical

names is taken as the authoritative standard. This contrasts with Shanghai's and Hangzhou's English translations on street name signs, a move oriented toward the local standards.

The upscaling of English in the language regime may have far-reaching implications. From the perspective of language ecology, the explicit empowerment of English reinforces its hegemonic power in the language system, intensifying the inequalities between English and other languages or varieties in the indexicality order. In China, English has been valued as a language resource on a translocal scale level, thus rescaling it from a foreign language to a vital language apparently central to the sociocultural life. The urban LL practices, as *de facto* language policies, add to the symbolic capital of the English language in Chinese society. For the local people interacting within a local order of indexicality, they are likely to be marginalized as a result of their low literacy in English. In recent years, the education authorities have kept planning to reduce the weight of English in education and the national college entrance examination (Gaokao) in order to shift more importance to the Chinese language (Pan 2016). The contrast between the local governments' decisions to valorize English in city spaces and the state's plans to downplay English in educational/curriculum reforms leads to what Blommaert (1999) called *language ideological debates* surrounding the positioning of the English language in the country.

5 Conclusions

In the age of globalization, having the profile of an "international city" plays a critical role in city image construction and branding to the outside world. The local authorities in China take city internationalization as an urban developmental goal, and visual bilingualism on public signage has been accorded particular significance in the process. This study has shown that local governments are actively engaged in linguistic landscaping, and English is deployed as a semiotic resource to foster a favorable language environment. The display of English on public signs is charged with state ideologies, demonstrating the state's keenness for international recognition and integration into the global world. For the policy-makers, the visual appeal of English contributes to the construction of landscape affect, and a foreigner-friendly language environment is discursively constructed to be inherent to city internationalization. The language ideologies underlying the process include Englishization as internationalization ideology, standard language ideology, and linguistic purism ideology. The translocal status of English in the spatial repertoire serves to upscale

the cities to an international scale level, and the norms of American and British English as centers of authority are upheld to symbolize prestige in code choice. The marking of public spaces with English raises the indexical value of English in sociolinguistic life and enhances the role of the cities as main players in the global economy. However, the low English competence of the residents cannot sustain effective cross-cultural communication, reducing the English semiotization to more of an emblematic project. The valorizing of English also reinforces its hegemonic power in the indexicality order, intensifying the inequalities between English and other languages/varieties. Moreover, the upscaling process for Chinese cities may strain and marginalize social groups with limited English literacy, perpetuating their disadvantaged status in globalization. Therefore, the embrace of English in linguistic landscaping for internationalization ends needs to be scrutinized through a critical and dialectical lens.

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