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Towards linguistic landscapes and (re)making tourist spaces in West Lake, Hangzhou, China: A visual ethnography

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines linguistic landscapes in West Lake, Hangzhou, China, and our study shows that the Chinese language has played a dominant role in the scenic area, reflecting its practical value and cultural status. Further, the linguistic landscapes have integrated classical elements and modern features, presenting West Lake as a classical and modern space. The bilingual/multilingual signs have produced a modern/globalized space, and the language media/electronic signs create a dialogical and fluid space for tourists. The legend signs suggest a cultural and romantic space, and linguistic landscapes with rich information about plants and environmental protection construct an ecological space of harmony between people and nature. Thus, classical, modern, cultural, interactive, and ecological elements of the linguistic landscape combine in an effective integration to create immersive and inclusive tourist spaces. This paper contributes to literature on (re)making space and will advance understanding of the importance of linguistic landscape.

Keywords: Linguistic signs; Linguistic landscapes of tourism; (Re)Making space; Tourism development, Visual ethnography

1. Introduction

Landry and Bourhis (1997) defined linguistic landscape as any visible display of written language on public and commercial signs in a given area. As a visual symbol of public space, a linguistic landscape can reflect the characteristics of a space and can influence people's perception of that particular space. Linguistic landscapes play an important role in shaping social space by maintaining and interpreting the original features of an environment (Li et al., 2023). Tourism capitalizes on people's desire to experience unique spaces created by different environments and cultural contexts. Linguistic landscapes are an integral part of spatial reconstruction that promotes the prosperity and sustainability of local tourism.

The linguistic landscape plays a crucial role in shaping the space of tourism; in addition to having a basic indicative function, it contributes to the (re)making of tourist spaces. The linguistic landscapes of tourism are a focus of research (Hasni et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2020); these include public road signs, billboards, names of attractions, street names, commercial store signs, and the textual content of introductions to attractions (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). This paper draws on the frameworks of signs and spaces to analyze classical, modern, cultural, and biological features of linguistic landscapes in West Lake, Hangzhou, China. Fascinated by the interplay between languages/signs and space, we explore how this particular linguistic landscape (re)makes the tourist spaces, which can be compared to linguistic landscapes of tourism in other cities/areas around the world.

Language signs and space (re)making
Space is a research focus in sociocultural research (Kostogriz, 2006). Space is not an abstract concept but the medium and the producer of material objects and social relations (Gottdiener, 1985), while being reproduced by them. Social space is 'relationally constituted out of the simultaneous co-existence of social relations and interactions' (Barker, 2008, p. 376). 'Each state has its social space' (Lefebvre et al., 2009, p. 225). The particular ideology, culture and history of each nation or state shape its space and the performances of those who inhabit that particular space.

Space is not a static, objective entity; rather, it is a dynamic, socially constructed phenomenon, deeply influenced by societal, economic, and cultural forces (Leary, 2009). Within the linguistic landscapes of a space, signs help people to understand and process information from the external world. These linguistic landscapes are not merely external manifestations of language but reflect the language usage within specific regions or societies, including the types, distribution, and status of languages, deeply influencing people's perception and understanding of the space (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006).

Linguistic landscapes and identity construction
A linguistic landscape serves two major functions: informational and symbolic (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The informational function is seen in the practical dissemination of information about a place, while the symbolic function operates in the prominence, value, status, power, and social identity of language and its users within the social language community (Shang & Guo, 2017). The status and usage of different languages in linguistic landscapes can reflect power structures, cultural identities, and social status differences within a particular society. Overall, the linguistic landscape not only reflects the diversity of identity formation but also plays a significant role in the construction of both individual and spatial identity.

Identity is not fixed; rather, it is a product of specific time periods. With the passage of time, changes in personal experiences, environments, and social roles all contribute to the evolution of identity (Leimgruber & Fernández-Mallat, 2021). In a multilingual and liquid society, diversification and inclusivity are built as individuals adapt to different social roles and identity needs by learning multiple languages. In the process of identity construction, individuals express and shape identities through language choice, usage patterns, and their associations with specific language communities. An organizational or a spatial identity can be constructed by language choices

and language practices in specific linguistic landscapes. The choice of words and the grammatical structure can reveal the social status, cultural identity, and other identity attributes of an organization or a place in a linguistic landscape.

Language practices in tourism industry

Tourist spaces are sites of interaction between tourists and their travel destinations and offer tourists a plethora of cultural, historical, and natural experiences. The linguistic landscape reflects the cultural and historical background of the tourist attraction, enhancing tourists' cultural experiences and their sense of cultural identity. Tourists may deepen their understanding of local culture and feel emotionally connected to the destination through exposure to local languages and cultural features (Li et al., 2023). Previous studies on language practice, including linguistic landscape, in China have predominantly focused on the translation quality of tourism signs (Ai, 2013), and the main research sites include major urban centers like Beijing (Xiao & Lee, 2022), and coastal cities such as Shanghai (Li, 2024), Guangzhou (Han & Wu, 2020), Shenzhen (Zheng et al., 2024), Hong Kong (Lai, 2013) and some particular sites such as airports (Li & Yang, 2023), business streets (An & Zhang, 2024), ethnic minority regions (Yao et al., 2020), and medical facilities (Wu et al., 2024). There are also projects to examine translanguaging practices in linguistic landscapes (Xu, 2024) and the interplay of translanguaging practices and space construction in a language education context (Tai & Wong, 2023). However, more research is needed to investigate the relationship between linguistic landscapes and space-making in cities with a developed tourism industry.

Linguistic landscapes can influence tourists' cognition, understanding, and experiences through language choice, usage, and dissemination. For instance, a city's linguistic landscape may reflect its multicultural characteristics, attracting tourists coming from different countries and regions. Linguistic landscapes in a cultural heritage site may emphasize historical value and cultural heritage, enhancing tourists' cultural experiences and helping them to understand the regional cultural identity (Qi et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2008). Researching the linguistic landscapes of tourism can provide crucial insights for enhancing tourist experiences and tourism space-making/management.

Methodology

About West Lake in Hangzhou, China

Hangzhou is the capital city of Zhejiang province, China, and it is one of China's seven ancient capitals, with a population over 12 million. West Lake boasts a long history and profound cultural heritage, which includes hundreds of classic poems and paintings left by scholars who visited West Lake during the Tang dynasty (618–907) and the Song dynasty (960–1279), as well as well-known folk legends and myths set in the scenic areas. West Lake is renowned for its picturesque beauty, ancient cultural traditions, and rich historical narratives. Today, with the rise of Hangzhou as a new first-tier city in China, West Lake has retained its historical and cultural significance; meanwhile, it has been influenced by globalization. West Lake's unique historical significance and modern identity have made it a tourist destination, and the scenic beauty, cultural traditions, and historical sites have made it one of the most prominent tourist destinations in China and even the world. West Lake offers various spaces for tourists; therefore, it is chosen as the research site for this study.

West Lake is located at 1 Longjing Road, Xihu District, Hangzhou, China. Situated in the western part of the city, the lake covers an area of 6.38 square kilometers. West Lake boasts over 100 scenic spots, and some are collectively known as Ten Scenes of West Lake (西湖十景). There are more than 60 national-level, provincial-level, and municipal-level key cultural relic protection units and over 20 museums in the lake area. In this study, the data collection route starts from Orioles Singing in the Willows (柳浪闻莺) and ends at Remnant Snow on the Bridge in Winter (断桥残雪), with a total length of 7 kilometers (Figure 1). It includes famous spots such as Leifeng Pagoda in the Sunset (雷峰夕照), Fish Viewing at the Flower Pond (花港观鱼), Dawn on the Su

Causeway in Spring (苏堤春晓), Wine-making Yard and Lotus Pool in Summer (曲院风荷), Moon over the Peaceful Lake in Autumn (平湖秋月), and other scenic spots around West Lake.

To explore the relationship between linguistic landscapes as signs and tourist spaces, the study addresses the following questions:
1. What are language choices and language practices like in the linguistic landscapes in West Lake?
2. Do these linguistic landscapes (re)make different spaces for attracting tourists? If yes, how do they (re)make different spaces？
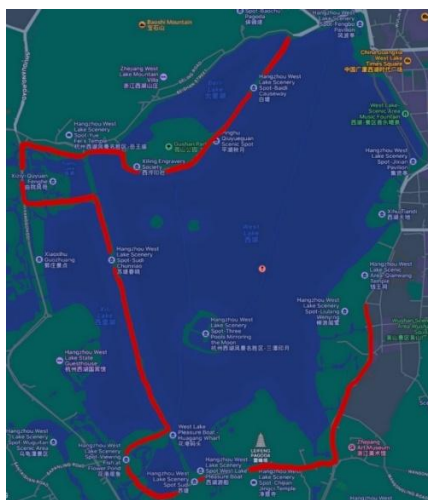

Figure 1. The research route at West Lake.

Data collection and analysis
Visual ethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes visual materials, such as photographs, videos, drawings, and other visual media, to study and understand social phenomena within their cultural context (Pink, 2008). It combines ethnographic methods of immersive fieldwork and participant observation with visual techniques to provide rich and nuanced insights into the lives, experiences, and perspectives of individuals and communities. Visual ethnography was used as a method to conduct this project. In the process of doing this ethnographic research, the second author, a native of Hangzhou, did her ethnographic walks along the planned route in the research site, observed the language signs and took photos of linguistic landscapes.

A total of 262 photographs of the linguistic signs in West Lake were taken in the winter of 2023, and 11 nonstandard photos were removed. The remaining 251 photos, including road signs, shop signs, billboards, guiding signs, explanatory signs, posters, and billboards within the visible range on both sides of the road were used as data for this study. The researchers made a statistical analysis of language practices in them. When analyzing these data, a sign with an obvious physical boundary is defined as one analysis unit. The prominence of language reflects power relations and influences visitors' perception of the tourist attraction's identity. The organization of items such as the frequency, size, order, and spatial position of different languages on the signs reflects people's code preferences and the status of the language in the community (Scollon & Scollon, 2003),. The researchers also conducted a statistical analysis of the number, proportion, arrangement, size, order, and combination of languages appearing in the collected linguistic landscape images.

Findings
Language choice and language practices in linguistic landscapes

The use of different language codes on the linguistic landscapes. Among the 251 samples, five languages, i.e. Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean and French are found in the linguistic landscapes of West Lake. The proportions of the five languages are represented in Table 1. Chinese language is widely used on these signs. Specifically, among the 251 signs, Chinese appears on 249 signs, accounting for 99.2%. The next most used is English, appearing on 107 signs and accounting for 42.6%. The other language codes such as Japanese, Korean, and French account for 4.4%, 4.4%, and 1.6% respectively.

Table 1. The percentage of five language codes on signs (N=251)

Language Code	Number	Percentage (%)
Chinese	249	99.2
English	107	42.6
Japanese	11	4.4
Korean	11	4.4
French	4	1.6

The five languages appear in three forms: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. In Table 2, among the 251 signs, monolingual signs appeared the most, 146 times, accounting for 58.2%. The second is bilingual signs, appearing 94 times and accounting for 37.5%. Multilingual signs are the least, appearing 11 times and accounting for 4.4%.

Table 2. The language type on signs (N=251)

Language Type	Number	Percentage (%)
Monolingual	146	58.2
Bilingual	94	37.5
Multilingual	11	4.4

It is found that there are five ways of using language codes on these signs, separately or together. In Table 3, the first form of single language sign is Chinese, accounting for 57.4%, mainly used on long texts such as a scenic spot introduction and a historical character description. Due to a limited display space, it is not feasible to translate into more languages for presentation. Another single language sign is English, accounting for 0.8%. The bilingual is Chinese and English, accounting for 37.5%. The multilingual signs have two scenarios: one is Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean, accounting for 2.8%. The other is a combination of Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, and French, accounting for 1.6%, and such signs are mainly used on road signs. These linguistic landscapes are primarily used on road signs in scenic spots.

Table 3. The use of language code on signs (N=251)

Combinations of language code	Number	Percentage (%)
Chinese only	144	57.4
English only	2	0.8
Chinese & English	94	37.5
Chinese, English, Japanese & Korean	7	2.8
Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean & French	4	1.6

Among the 251 signs, 105 signs are bilingual and multilingual. In Table 4, among the bilingual and multilingual signs, those with Chinese as the largest size language code appear 90 times and account for 85.7% of the total. The number of signs with a same-size language

code is 15, accounting for 14.3%, and they are bilingual, i.e. Chinese and English.

Table 4. The size of language code on bilingual and multilingual signs (N=105)

Size	Number	Percentage (%)
Chinese as a larger size	90	85.7
English as a larger size	0	0
Japanese as a larger size	0	0
Korean as a larger size	0	0
French as a larger size	0	0
Same size	15	14.3

On these signs, there are three ways to arrange a text: enclosing, horizontal, and vertical. If the texts are arranged in an enclosing order, the dominant code is arranged in the center. If the texts are arranged in a horizontal order, the dominant code is arranged on the left. If the texts are arranged in a vertical order, the dominant code is arranged on the above. In Table 5, among 105 bilingual and multilingual signs, Chinese is dominant in 103 signs, accounting for 98.1%. English is dominant in 2 signs, accounting for 1.9%.

Table 5. The order of language code on bilingual and multilingual signs (N=105)

Order	Number	Percentage (%)
Chinese	103	98.1
English	2	1.9
Japanese	0	0
Korean	0	0
French	0	0

Although these language signs present a multilingual phenomenon, Chinese is the dominant language on these linguistic landscapes, verified in three aspects: (1) all bilingual or multilingual signs contain simplified Chinese; (2) in terms of font size, when multiple languages appear simultaneously, Chinese texts are often presented in larger fonts; (3) in terms of order, when texts in multiple languages are placed side by side, the Chinese text is usually in the first place. Despite an increasing number of international tourists in the scenic area, Chinese tourists still occupy a dominant position, reflecting the fact that Chinese language is the most frequently used and of the highest practical value in the area. The importance of Chinese language on these signs is consistent with China's national language policy; the use of Chinese language in the translated landscapes has its practical value and symbolizes its national unity and its identity as a tourist attraction in mainland China.

In the West Lake scenic spots, besides Chinese and English, Japanese and Korean are the two foreign languages that appear most frequently. The high frequency of Japanese and Korean is closely related to the composition of foreign tourists, as Japan and South Korea are the top two source countries for inbound foreign tourists to China. This suggests that the proportion of Japanese and Korean tourists in the West Lake scenic area is higher than the proportion of tourists from other countries, probably due to geographic location and cultural similarities. In order to cater to Japanese and Korean tourists and to make them feel linguistically welcome, some signs feature Japanese and Korean. According to the data, most signs containing Japanese and Korean translations are road signs and attraction signs that are relatively short in the original Chinese language; their main function is

information transfer (informational function). Very few attraction introductions present all four foreign language texts at the same time.

The use of Chinese language on the linguistic landscapes. Among the collected data, Chinese language is found on 249 linguistic landscapes, and simplified Chinese is used 170 times, accounting for 68.3%; traditional Chinese is used 71 times, accounting for 28.5%; simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese are used 8 times simultaneously, accounting for 3.2% (Table 6). The Chinese language includes literary Chinese (文言文), a style used before 1919, and modern Chinese vernacular (白话文), a style used after 1919; the frequency of vernacular language is higher than that of literary language.

Table 6. The number of Chinese characters on signs (N=249)

Chinese Character	Number	Percentage (%)
simplified Chinese character	170	68.3
traditional Chinese character	71	28.5
both	8	3.2

Although Chinese signs are dominated by simplified and vernacular characters, traditional and literary characters also appear. According to the language policy in mainland China, public service industries should use standardized Chinese as a language service script. In the West Lake scenic area, the dominance of simplified Chinese is obvious. However, traditional Chinese is allowed in special cases, such as cultural relics, monuments and calligraphic seal carvings. Indeed, a large number of traditional Chinese characters are found. The reason is that West Lake has a long history as a scenic spot, and many famous artists have visited this lake, so many cultural heritage sites are presented in traditional Chinese.

Traditional Chinese is also evident in the old-style plaques that are common in historical buildings and cultural relics sites; some of these were written by famous writers (Figure 2).

Figure 2. An old-style plaque named 楼外楼 (Louwailou) in traditional Chinese characters.

Integration of traditional elements for (re)making a classical Chinese space
The use of fonts. In terms of Chinese fonts, 149 signboards appear in regular script (楷书), accounting for 59.8% of all the linguistic landscapes containing Chinese; 87 signboards appear in traditional fonts, accounting for 34.9%, among which the most frequent fonts are running script (行书), clerical script (隶书), regular script, and handwritten script. Simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese appeared 13 times, accounting for 5.2% (Table 7).

The frequent use of classical fonts on plaques, signs and boards highlights the features of these buildings which represent the cultural heritage of ancient and classical cultural spaces.

The running script is written in a dashing and elegant manner without losing its dignity; it has ornamental properties and is clear and easy to recognize, so it has a higher usage rate (Figure 3). The clerical script is characterized by a heavy and dignified style (Figure 4), and the regular script is characterized by a thick and elegant style, which are widely used in West Lake (Figure 5); the handwritten script is written by specialists or experts, so the economic cost of using it is relatively higher, but in West Lake people still can see handwritten scripts (Figure 6).

Table 7. The number of different Chinese fonts on the language signs (N=249)

Chinese Font	Number	Percentage (%)
regular font	149	59.8
traditional font	87	34.9
both	13	5.2

Figure 3. A Chinese sign with running script.

Figure 4. A Chinese sign with clerical script.

Figure 5. A Chinese sign with regular script.

Figure 6. A sign with handwritten script.

These Chinese characters as language signs have two basic characteristics: practical (recording and transmitting information) and artistic (writing and appreciation). After each major evolution of Chinese character scripts, the old scripts do not die out, though they are replaced; they are transformed from a practical identity to an artistic expression, such as running script, clerical script, and regular script, all of which show the charm of calligraphy. The use of regular script, clerical script, running script and handwritten script demonstrates the practicality of the different Chinese fonts. These fonts are appreciated as art and symbols of cultural heritage (Zhang et al., 2008). Their use contributes to the construction of a traditional Chinese cultural space.

Traditional poems and literary texts as language signs. The use of traditional Chinese is also reflected in the traditional poetic works represented in some of the signs. Tourists who are interested in traditional Chinese culture and poems may be attracted by the use of traditional Chinese characters and their visiting experience enhanced. The integration of poems and literary texts enriches these linguistic landscapes and highlights the traditional classical features of West Lake as well. For instance, in the Leifeng Pagoda, there are four poem carvings displayed on the third floor, each with three poems, totaling twelve. The poems are selected from famous pieces of writing in praise of Leifeng Pagoda and Leifeng Sunset from different periods (Figure 7).

Figure 7. The ancient Chinese poems in the Leifeng Pagoda.

Traditional classical poems are diverse in form and rich in content, and the cultural connotations carried by these poems are an important foundation for tourism product development. Culture and tourism can complement each other with benefit to the economy, Traditional classical poems can represent regional characteristics and be used to create a unique cultural brand for the regional tourism industry. The recreation of literary works as linguistic signs can be used to build up a cultural identity or a sense of classical space in the West Lake scenic area.

Vintage-style brand names as language signs. When examining the brand names of business stores in the West Lake scenic area, it is easy to see the use of vintage-style brand names. These stores choose to connect their brand names to the history and culture of ancient poems, historical events, and geographic features relating to West Lake such as. For instance, '白娘子冰糖葫芦' (Bainiangzi Bingtanghulu), the heroine Bainiangzi in the legend named 'White Snake' (Figure 8), inspires the name of a business brand . The vintage-style of brand naming is also reflected in handwriting styles. For example, on the sign of the coffee brand Starbucks, 'Starbucks' is replaced and presented in a traditional calligraphy (Figure 9). This sign suggests a traditional classical atmosphere, achieving an integration of a western coffee brand and the beauty of Chinese traditional calligraphy. This combination can attract tourists to consume in the store and make a strong historical and cultural space for them, offering them an opportunity to experience and appreciate the charm of Chinese calligraphy and the taste of the coffee when visiting the lake.

Figure 8. 白娘子冰糖葫芦 (Bainiangzi Bingtanghulu) as a brand sign with a vintage style.

Figure 9. 星巴克咖啡 (Starbucks coffee), a handwritten brand name sign.

The use of vintage-style names in the branding names reflects the business owners' emphasis on Chinese cultural traditions and their desire to engage tourists' emotions by expressing their emotional attachment to Chinese history and culture. The tourists can appreciate the rich historical heritage and cultural atmosphere of the local community in their tourism experience (Nie & Yao, 2024). The use of vintage-style names becomes a business strategy for merchants to profit by promoting the unique culture of their district (Lee, 2019; Shang & Guo, 2017). It is a good example of language commodification (Bruzos, 2023; Dlaske, 2014; Leeman & Modan, 2009). Through the branding names, tourists may be curious about the historical and cultural space represented by them, and become more willing to explore the attractions of the West Lake scenic area.

Bilingual/multilingual signs for (re)making a modern/globalized space
In bilingual landscapes, the presentation often comprises a Chinese text and its corresponding English translation. In multilingual signs, English is included and usually ranked second. English is undeniably a lingua franca today (House, 2014; Martin-Rubió & Cots, 2016; Pan & Block, 2011). Among the 251 samples, English appears in 107 signs, constituting 42.6%. English, as a global language, often serves as the optimal means of communication, catering to visitors who may not understand Chinese and alleviating the discomfort and stress tourists may experience when they enter an unfamiliar language space, while fulfilling the informative function of linguistic landscapes. The presence of English gives an internationalized atmosphere to the region.

In addition to Chinese and English, Japanese, Korean, and French are also observed in the West Lake scenic area. However, the simultaneous existence of four-language signs is rare, and they mainly appear on the road signs of key scenic spots, such as the Yue Temple scenic spot (Figure 10). A three-language text is also found on road signs (Figure 11). These multilingual signs create a modern and welcoming space for international tourists and cross-cultural communication and exchange. Linguistic servicescapes provide information and directions in multiple languages (Touchstone et al., 2017) for consumers from different countries and regions, enhance their touring experience, and promote communication and understanding among different cultures. Multilingual landscapes also help to expand the tourist market and attract more international tourists, thereby increasing tourism revenue.

Figure 10. A guiding sign containing four languages in the Yue Temple.

Figure 11. A trilingual sign in the scenic area.

Electronic linguistic landscapes for (re)making an interactive and fluid space
Some new types of language mediums have emerged in this project, such as electronic touch screens (Figure 12). These electronic screens present information and offer an interactive space for tourists. They can convey information to readers and gather feedback from them. Some linguistic landscapes with QR codes allow visitors to scan and access more detailed information. Although there is only Chinese language on the introduction sign (Figure 13), scanning the QR code provides more detailed pictures, bilingual Chinese and English texts, and audio explanations (Figure 14). Compared to traditional signs, these electronic signs can be edited at any time, and they, like handwritten signs in public spaces (Li & Zhu, 2021), act as fluid signs to enable tourists to access information and audio explanations; they can be reused as well, which has greatly improved their utilization rate.

Figure 12. An electronic touch screen in the Leifeng Pagoda.

Figure 13. A Chinese sign of introduction with a QR code.

Figure 14. A bilingual introduction page after scanning the QR code.

These linguistic landscapes facilitate dialogical communication and enhance visitor experiences, and they reflect the dynamic nature of tourism in such a digital and globalized age. By embracing multilingualism and adopting emerging linguistic landscape media, these signs can meet the demands of an increasingly diverse tourist population, thereby contributing to the construction of a dialogical and global space for tourists.

Making a cultural and romantic space by putting the legend on the signs

The Leifeng Pagoda was built in the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127) in West Lake, and it underwent numerous repairs over the centuries. On September 25, 1924, the Leifeng Pagoda collapsed, and the current pagoda was rebuilt based on the original design in 2002. For most Chinese visitors, the pagoda is closely associated with a legendary tale, The Legend of the White Snake, which has endowed West Lake with a romantic place. In the legend, the Leifeng Pagoda was a sacred place for the White Snake in the form of a human heroine; Fahai, the abbot of the temple, suppressed the White Snake and imprisoned her under the Leifeng Pagoda. The legend is that only when the pagoda collapses can the White Snake be released; but the collapse of the pagoda was almost impossible, symbolizing that the White Snake would forever remain trapped beneath it. In reality, the collapse occurred, and people believe that the love story had a happy ending.

Now, the presence of The Legend of the White Snake can be seen in the linguistic sign (Figure 15). The sign vividly illustrates the connection between the legend and the Leifeng Pagoda; this connection highlights the function of the landscape in storytelling. The texts and images emphasize that the legend will continue, bringing hope for young tourists and their love stories. By showcasing the texts, images, and iconic buildings related to the legend, visitors' cultural experiences and emotional resonances are evoked in a cultural space of legendary love. This linguistic landscape can deepen visitors' understanding of the local history and culture and evoke a sense of mystery and romance in them.

Figure 15. The Legend of the White Snake on a sign in the Leifeng Pagoda.

(Re)Making a harmonious ecological space via linguistic signs

In West Lake, the linguistic landscapes play a significant role in building up a harmonious ecological space. For instance, botanical information signs (Figure 16) have provided visitors with opportunities to learn about the surrounding vegetation, enhancing their understanding and respect for the local ecosystem by introducing plant

species, characteristics, and habitats. This can promote tourists' environmental awareness and provide them with more knowledge to appreciate the natural landscape.

Environmental protection signs are also seen in the scenic area (Figure 17). These signs kindly remind visitors to cherish the natural environment and behave respectfully. These signs advocating for environmental protection help people to maintain ecological balance and sustainable development in the scenic area. This initiative contributes to the preservation of the ecological environment while nurturing environmental awareness and actions among tourists.

Figure 16. A language sign providing botanical information for tourists.

Figure 17. A sign calling for environmental protection.

Through these linguistic landscapes, West Lake has shaped an ecologically-friendly tourism space, providing visitors with a holistic experience and an ecological space that is mentally enriching and culturally enlightening. Further efforts can be made to enhance ecological conservation and cultural inheritance in the scenic area, thereby creating an even higher-quality tourism space for more visitors.

Discussion and conclusion

Using linguistic landscapes to promote tourism industry

This paper contributes to understandings of the interrelationship between language and space in (re)making spaces of tourism in linguistic landscapes. In the West Lake scenic area, Chinese language plays a dominant role in the linguistic landscapes. The dominant status of Chinese language in these linguistic landscapes is consistent with the country's language policy; it has a practical value for tourists and symbolizes the identity of the Chinese nation. Although simplified characters and vernacular characters are mainly used, traditional characters and classical Chinese also appear frequently, reflecting the importance of traditional culture and layers of history in (re)making a tourism space.

In these linguistic landscapes, classical elements and modern characteristics are integrated, showing that West Lake is a culturally mixed tourist space. Through different language media and emerging electronic screens and QR codes, the West Lake scenic area is represented as having an identity rich in cultural and tourism spaces. Specifically, traditional fonts and literary texts highlight a classical and traditional space; the bilingual and multilingual signs have promoted the modernization and internationalization of the scenic space; the electronic screen and the QR code on the signs have provided tourists with an interactive and fluid space. In addition, the West Lake scenic area uses legends as a medium to provide visitors with a romantic space. The signs contribute to preservation and enjoyment of an ecological space, with a harmonious blend of natural beauty and environmental conservation. These linguistic landscapes showcase an effective integration of language, culture, and technology to create immersive spaces and memorable experiences for visitors. The West Lake linguistic landscape showcases how tourism managers can create linguistic landscapes to enrich visitors' experience and promote cultural heritage preservation and innovation.

Putting multilingual/translanguaging practices on the linguistic landscape

Most of these linguistic landscapes in the West Lake scenic area are limited to Chinese, English and a few other languages, and some long introduction texts are presented in Chinese. Yet a limited variety of languages in a tourist area can lead to various problems. Firstly, insufficient information for tourists can be a major communication obstacle. If the tourist area only offers limited language services, visitors who do not understand that language may not be able to access enough information, hindering their understanding of the particular historical, cultural, and distinctive features of the attractions, thus affecting their travel experience. Secondly, cultural exchange may be restricted. Multilingualism is 'increasingly spread across different social classes, professions, and sociocultural activities' (Cenoz, 2013, p. 4); multilingual services can facilitate communication and interaction among tourists with different cultural backgrounds, enhancing their mutual understanding and friendship. Thirdly, when tourists are not satisfied by their visual and cognitive experience of a landscape mediated by signs, the reputation of the tourist spot and its market competitiveness are impacted. Attracting more tourists is crucial for the development of tourist areas. If a tourist spot only provides local language signs and services, it may fail to attract international tourists, thereby affecting its market position and revenue. Therefore, expanding the variety of language signs and services is essential to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist areas.

Nowadays, Hangzhou is moving to an international stage, so it is urgent to build more bilingual and/or multilingual linguistic landscapes for tourists. Such bilingual/multilingual linguistic landscapes of tourism should be well produced to create an inclusive in-between space (Bhabha, 1994) for visitors with different cultural backgrounds and also serve the local community and tourism economic development. Multilingual services should meet the needs of different visitors. More staff with multilingual competence, such as tour guides and interpreters, should be recruited to provide language support and interpretation services for visitors. Multicultural communication training is also needed to enable staff to understand and respect visitors with different cultural backgrounds and provide services. Tourism managers should utilize technologies such as audio devices and smart translation systems to offer multilingual services for visitors.

Translanguaging practices, full of 'playful creations' (Gao, 2014, p. 67), can create an inclusive space characterized by innovation, diversity, and humor for tourists. Translanguaging space is 'not a space where different identities, values and practices simply co-exist, but combine together to generate new identities, values and practices' (Li, 2011, p. 1223). Through more dialogical and inclusive measures, the quality of linguistic landscapes in the scenic area can be raised, so as to provide visitors with more spaces and more enjoyable travel experiences.

The linguistic landscapes in West Lake successfully demonstrate an interplay between language/culture and spaces, (re)making different spaces to embody cultural identity and historical heritage. In tourism development, it is important to incorporate traditional and modern elements when (re)making spaces to enrich tourists' experience. This approach will contribute to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage and attract more international tourists, promoting tourism's sustainable development. Overall, linguistic landscapes need to be well managed to integrate language, culture, and space, injecting new vitality into tourism industry and fostering economic and cultural prosperity in regional development.

Limitation and future studies
Due to certain restrictions related to the pandemic, the researchers were unable to conduct interviews with tourists, which is regrettable, and collecting interview data would make similar projects more comprehensive and contribute significantly to the existing literature.

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