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# University Image Construction Based on Campus Linguistic Landscape System: A Case Study of Xiangnan University

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**Abstract:** This study takes Xiangnan University as the research subject and employs field investigation methods to systematically analyze the campus linguistic landscape, exploring the characteristics of university linguistic landscapes and their mechanisms in campus image construction. The findings reveal that the linguistic landscape of Xiangnan University demonstrates diverse functions in information transmission, educational guidance, management standardization, and cultural atmosphere creation. In terms of types, it encompasses five major categories: campus buildings, cultural stone carvings and sculptures, information signs, publicity notices, and environmental protection. Further analysis indicates that campus linguistic landscapes participate in school image construction through three-dimensional pathways: in the physical space dimension, standardized signs shape an orderly and professional material environment; in the social space dimension, cultural activities create an open and inclusive interpersonal atmosphere; and in the psychological space dimension, motivational slogans strengthen teachers' and students' emotional identification and sense of belonging. This study reveals the profound role of linguistic landscapes in the university educational environment and provides empirical references for the cultural construction of local application-oriented undergraduate institutions.

**Keywords:** Linguistic landscape; University campus; Image construction

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**Online publication:** November 26, 2025

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, linguistic landscape research has received widespread attention from academia as an emerging field in sociolinguistics. Since Landry and Bourhis proposed the classic definition of linguistic landscape in 1997, related research has expanded from simple analysis of linguistic signs to diverse issues including language policy, identity, and social power. However, existing research has primarily focused on linguistic landscapes in urban public spaces, with relatively insufficient attention to campuses as special domains. As important venues for language education and cultural inheritance, campuses possess unique educational functions and cultural values in their linguistic landscapes that warrant in-depth study.

Linguistic landscapes are powerful educational tools, and schools as social institutions can further advance cutting-

edge research in this field. Bagna and Bellinzona studied 12 secondary schools in Italy with high proportions of immigrant students and observed that campus linguistic landscapes serve as the “third teacher,” second only to homeroom teachers and learning materials or textbooks. Meanwhile, linguistic landscapes directly construct school images at both material and spiritual-cultural levels. Their external spatial arrangement and visual design shape the physical image of the campus, while their intrinsic values and cultural symbols convey the spiritual character of the school. These two aspects complement each other, making linguistic landscapes a direct expression and concrete carrier of school image.

The research subject selected for this paper, Xiangnan University, is the only public full-time comprehensive undergraduate institution in Chenzhou City, a famous historical and cultural city and an old revolutionary base area on the Hunan-Jiangxi border, renowned as a “century-old institution with a red heritage.” The school is rooted in the red land for education, adhering to the mission of “educating talents for the Party and cultivating talents for the nation,” and maintains its positioning as a “local, application-oriented” institution. This study examines the campus linguistic landscape of this university, exploring the characteristics of its linguistic landscape and investigating how linguistic landscapes function in its image construction process<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **2. Functions and types of campus linguistic landscape at xiangnan university**

As an important component of campus cultural construction, the development of campus linguistic landscapes helps transform the campus material space into a spiritual space and embed the campus’s intrinsic spirit within its physical construction. From the perspective of establishing entities, official institutions are one of the main establishing bodies of university campus linguistic landscapes. These official institutions typically include school administrative departments and teaching departments. They are responsible for setting up various official linguistic landscapes on campus, such as road signs, directional signs, bulletin boards, and electronic information boards, to provide navigation, information, and publicity services. These official linguistic landscapes usually maintain uniformity and standardization in content, form, and style to reflect the school’s overall image and management level<sup>[2]</sup>.

### **2.1. Functional classification of linguistic landscapes**

The specific functions of campus linguistic landscapes are mainly manifested in the following four aspects. First is the information transmission function, commonly seen on various linguistic landscapes such as doorplates, traffic signs, notices, and posters. Examples include campus area distribution maps, various signs in buildings such as libraries, event arrangements, and regulations and rules, serving teachers, students, and campus visitors to facilitate daily study and life. Second, the educational function is an important function of linguistic landscapes, demonstrating a specific educational process aligned with the school’s talent cultivation and development positioning. The school attaches great importance to student education, and linguistic landscapes include content for cultivating students’ character, personality, study habits, and lifestyle. Third is the management function, such as “Please dispose of trash in bins” and “Clean Plate Campaign” on linguistic signs, reflecting specific management functions and advocating for teachers and students to protect the environment and cherish resources. “Phones in bags” and “Save electricity” reflect further refinement of classroom teaching management. Finally, the cultural atmosphere creation function: the school’s cultural spirit is expressed through a stone tablet inscribed with the school motto “Virtue, Erudition, Innovation, Practice” standing at the front, indicating that Xiangnan University follows the fundamental task of “cultivating virtue and nurturing talent,” emphasizing the educational philosophy of cultivating application-oriented talents and serving local development. Numerous such linguistic landscapes reflect the background and intrinsic spirit of school development, also demonstrating the vision of linguistic landscape creators to better create campus environmental and spiritual culture.

### **2.2. Types of linguistic landscapes**

The common types of linguistic landscapes on the Xiangnan University campus mainly include the following categories:

### **2.2.1. Campus building linguistic landscapes.**

Campus buildings are important carriers of educational activities, designed to achieve specific educational goals of the school. Campus buildings not only provide venues for learning, research, and exchange for teachers and students but also become important components of campus culture and external image. Campus buildings are closely related to school construction, and from the linguistic signs on campus buildings, one can glimpse the school's educational philosophy and cultural spirit. The four main teaching buildings surrounding the school motto square at Xiangnan University are named sequentially according to the school motto "Virtue, Erudition, Innovation, Practice" and arranged according to the disciplinary characteristics of each college; the linguistic signs on each teaching building are simple yet profound in meaning.

### **2.2.2. Cultural stone carvings and sculpture linguistic landscapes.**

Cultural stone carvings and sculptures on campus are not only part of the material landscape but also important manifestations of the school's spiritual culture. These cultural stone carvings and sculptures accumulate rich historical, traditional, cultural, and social values, possessing significant educational potential. They are not only concrete spiritual carriers but also reflect the school's spirituality, cultural level, and moral quality requirements, serving as valuable materials for moral and aesthetic education. For example, the school motto cultural stone carving at the entrance of Xiangnan University is a concentrated expression of the school's spirit. In addition to educational value, they also possess dual aesthetic value, and these unique cultural stone carvings or sculptures can better highlight the cultural connotations they express. They not only have strong appeal but also inspire people and enhance cultural literacy, reflecting the school's emphasis on spiritual nourishment and elevation. The statue of mathematician Hua Luogeng in front of the Duxing Building is a typical representative of campus culture. The statue not only symbolizes wisdom and knowledge but also conveys the school's respect for and inheritance of traditional culture.

### **2.2.3. Campus information sign linguistic landscapes.**

Campus information signs, as an indispensable part of the unique campus linguistic landscape, are not only numerous but also diverse in form, fully demonstrating the diversity and practicality of campus culture. These information signs cover various types, including road construction signs, detailed campus map indexes, concise campus introduction boards, colorful banners, timely updated notices and announcements, creative posters, and modern electronic display screens. They interweave throughout every corner of the campus, jointly weaving a rich network of campus information dissemination. As teachers and students navigate the campus daily, these information signs play a crucial guiding role, helping them quickly locate their position on campus and providing clear and convenient information guidance.

### **2.2.4. Publicity and notice linguistic landscapes.**

Publicity and notice linguistic landscapes on campus play a crucial role as the core channels for the school to release various information, event previews, and national educational policies and guidelines, ensuring timely and effective circulation of information and accurate transmission to all teachers, students, and staff. For example, the "Socialist Core Values" publicity boards on the walls of every classroom at Xiangnan University not only carry important information transmission functions but also profoundly reflect the school's consistent educational mission of "educating talents for the Party and cultivating talents for the nation," highlighting the high importance that China's higher education system places on ideological and political education for college students.

### **2.2.5. Environmental protection linguistic landscapes**

Globally, conserving resources and promoting environmental protection have become core concepts commonly followed by all countries. These concepts need to be rooted in the hearts of college students. In the construction of campus linguistic landscapes, linguistic landscapes that inspire ecological awareness and environmental protection have become

indispensable key factors, guiding students to understand the importance of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

### 3. Current distribution of linguistic landscapes at xiangnan university

To more accurately analyze and statistically examine campus linguistic landscapes, this study employs field investigation methods: walking along main roads, sports fields, colleges, cafeterias, dormitory areas, and other areas with frequent student activities to take photographs on-site. The linguistic landscapes recorded mainly include campus road names, campus building names, campus cultural stone carvings and sculptures, campus information boards, school signs, banners, electronic display screens, publicity notices, environmental protection and other linguistic information signs. After eliminating some duplicate and blurry images, the images were numbered and categorized; based on Backhaus's perspective, each linguistic sign with a distinct border was regarded as a counting unit. A total of 425 valid linguistic samples were retained, and the following statistical analysis is based on this data<sup>[3]</sup>.

#### 3.1. Distribution of landscape types

According to the collected linguistic data, the statistical results of the quantity and proportion of the five types of linguistic landscapes mentioned above are shown in **Table 1**. The distribution of linguistic landscape types at Xiangnan University reveals the meticulousness and diversity of its campus management. Data shows that campus information sign linguistic landscapes rank first with a proportion of 45.8%, highlighting the core position of information indication and navigation guidance functions. Following closely are publicity and notice linguistic landscapes, accounting for 31%, which serve not only as windows for campus spiritual civilization dissemination but also as important media for promoting campus cultural exchange and activity participation.

Campus building linguistic landscapes account for 11%, primarily constituting the campus outline and helping teachers and students quickly identify and locate specific buildings, reflecting the college's clear planning of spatial layout and functional zoning. Cultural stone carvings and sculptures and environmental protection linguistic landscapes account for 8% and 4% respectively. Cultural stone carvings and sculptures are unique characteristic identifiers of the campus itself, possessing high recognition and often serving as distinctive landmarks of the campus; environmental protection information appears not only on linguistic landscapes but is also reinforced through teaching content and various activities on and off campus.

Overall, the distribution of linguistic landscapes at Xiangnan University is reasonable, meeting both basic navigation and information transmission needs while also considering cultural display and environmental education functions, demonstrating the college's attention to detail and wisdom in management. As the school's scale and educational level continue to improve, the school will continue to optimize linguistic landscape layout and design to further enhance the overall quality and service level of the campus environment.

**Table 1.** Types of linguistic landscapes at xiangnan university

Linguistic Landscape Category	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Campus Buildings	47	11
Cultural Stone Carvings and Sculptures	34	8
Campus Information Signs	195	45.8
Publicity and Notices	132	31
Environmental Protection	17	4

### 3.2. Code selection

According to the collected linguistic data, the statistical results of code selection in public linguistic landscapes at Xiangnan University are shown in **Table 2**. The analysis of campus linguistic landscape codes can be approached from two dimensions: first, exploring the phenomenon of multiple codes coexisting within the school, and second, examining code selection and application in social activities. To deeply analyze this phenomenon, we conducted statistical analysis on 425 linguistic sign samples. The results show that Chinese codes occupy an absolutely dominant position in campus linguistic landscapes. This finding not only reflects the core status of Chinese in the school environment but also reveals the close connection between campus language planning and cultural identity.

It can be seen that monolingual linguistic landscapes are the most numerous on campus, mainly concentrated on campus buildings, cultural stone carvings and sculptures, campus information boards, and publicity and notice linguistic landscapes. This indicates that the main readers of campus linguistic landscapes are domestic readers, and using Chinese can achieve corresponding publicity effects. The few bilingual and English monolingual linguistic landscapes appear on road name signs, guide signs, and some notice linguistic landscapes in the School of Foreign Languages and the School of Literature, which also reflects the development issue of insufficient internationalization of the campus and the current situation of limited numbers of foreign teachers, students, and visitors. Publicity and notice slogans are basically Chinese monolingual, including publicity of campus culture and policies, promotion of Mandarin, higher education talent cultivation concepts and socialist core values, as well as some propaganda slogans focusing on civilized etiquette, environmental sanitation, and advocating behavioral virtues.

**Table 2.** Code selection in linguistic landscapes at xiangnan university

Code Distribution	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Chinese	359	84.4
Chinese + English	35	8.2
Chinese + Pinyin	10	2.4
English	21	4.9

## 4. The role of linguistic landscapes in campus image construction

The role of campus linguistic landscapes at Xiangnan University in school image construction mainly unfolds from three aspects: first, image construction in physical space, primarily involving campus spatial layout and facility setup; second, image construction in social space, mainly reflecting campus cultural atmosphere and interpersonal relationships; and third, image construction in psychological space, mainly influencing teachers' and students' emotional experiences and values.

### 4.1. Image construction in the physical space dimension

Physical space is the most intuitive presentation carrier of linguistic landscapes and the basic component of campus visual image. Xiangnan University shapes an orderly, professional, and humanistic campus material image through scientifically standardized building signs, information signs, and other public facility linguistic landscapes.

First, comprehensive campus building signs and campus information signs lay the foundation for constructing a clear and orderly campus physical space. Various buildings on campus, including teaching buildings, libraries, and gymnasiums, are equipped with clear and accurate linguistic information signs using standardized language and writing, providing clear direction guidance for teachers, students, and visitors. Campus road signs indicate road names and directions, and traffic signs are standardized and conspicuous, providing guidance for teachers' and students' campus transportation and ensuring campus traffic safety and order, conveying to the outside world the organizational temperament of orderly school

management and rigorous academic governance.

Second, linguistic landscapes in public areas transform functional spaces into culturally meaningful educational venues. Details such as trash bins, corridor walls, and bicycle parking areas on campus all participate in campus image construction through the establishment of linguistic landscapes. For example, labels such as “Recyclables” and “Non-recyclables” on trash bins guide teachers and students to correctly sort and dispose of waste, reflecting the educational philosophy of green environmental protection; famous quotes and aphorisms engraved on teaching building corridor walls create a strong learning atmosphere between steps. In addition, bulletin boards serve as important carriers of linguistic landscapes, centrally displaying school notices, event posters, and outstanding student works; electronic display screens scroll through campus news, event previews, and famous quotes, providing timely information services and cultural edification for teachers and students, making physical spaces truly become “speaking” educational environments.

#### **4.2. Image construction in the social space dimension**

Social space is an important domain where linguistic landscapes participate in social interaction and cultural expression. Xiangnan University shapes an open, inclusive, and vibrant campus social image through the linguistic expression of diverse cultural activities and the construction of language environments for teacher-student interaction.

The linguistic landscape expression of campus cultural activities constructs a rich and diverse social image. Various cultural activities held by the school—such as cultural performances, academic lectures, and sports competitions—create specific cultural atmospheres through linguistic forms such as activity names, publicity posters, and host scripts. Xiangnan University’s campus activities themed “Red Culture Art Festival” and “Intangible Cultural Heritage on Campus” use publicity posters with language and writing rich in traditional cultural charm to transform regional cultural resources into perceptible cultural experiences. The poster language for academic lectures is professional and standardized, highlighting lecture themes and speakers’ academic backgrounds, effectively attracting teacher and student participation; slogans for sports competitions are full of vitality and passion, stimulating students’ competitive awareness and team spirit. These linguistic landscapes together constitute the symbolic landscape of campus cultural life, reflecting the richness and vibrancy of campus public life.

Additionally, the language environment of teacher-student interaction reflects the degree of harmony in campus interpersonal relationships. Classroom teaching serves as the main venue for teacher-student interaction, where teachers’ instructional language and students’ classroom speech jointly construct a professional and open educational image. In daily campus life, greetings and conversations between teachers and students and among classmates use polite and appropriate language, creating a harmonious and friendly interpersonal atmosphere. The school conducts civilized etiquette education activities through bulletin boards, continuously guiding teachers and students to improve their language literacy and civility, making linguistic landscapes a hidden curriculum for cultivating campus civilization.

#### **4.3. Image construction in the psychological space dimension**

Psychological space is the spiritual level where linguistic landscapes influence teachers’ and students’ emotional attitudes and values. Xiangnan University constructs a campus image full of appeal and sense of identity at the psychological level through the establishment of motivational linguistic landscapes and the conveyance of campus cultural values.

The establishment of motivational linguistic landscapes stimulates emotional resonance and enterprising spirit among teachers and students. Classic quotations widely cited on campus, such as “A scholar cannot but be resolute and broad-minded, for he has taken on heavy responsibilities and a long journey” and “Be quick to learn and not ashamed to ask questions” from the *Analects*, subtly cultivate the spiritual character of teachers and students. Slogans such as “Words must be trustworthy, actions must be resolute” hanging in teaching building corridors, and messages such as “Books illuminate life, scholarly fragrance fills the campus” set up in reading corners, all convey positive value orientations in a subtle and silent manner. It is worth noting that some publicity slogans cleverly combine the characteristics of different disciplines, such as the School of Foreign Languages’ “Language connects China and the world, comprehensive development” and the

School of Chemistry and Environmental Science's creative welcome slogan "If you are ammonium well, then cyan is sky" (a pun on chemical terms), which not only demonstrate disciplinary characteristics but also add a sense of familiarity and belonging in a professional context.

The systematic conveyance of campus cultural values strengthens the identity of teachers and students. The linguistic sign "Educating talents for the Party, cultivating talents for the nation" on the school motto square behind the school gate highlights the cultural heritage of Xiangnan as a "red hot land" and its educational mission. Through the daily use of linguistic symbols such as the school motto, school song, and school emblem, as well as the continuous development of campus cultural construction activities, teachers and students deeply understand and identify with the school's cultural values in shared spiritual immersion, gradually forming an identity consciousness of "I am a Xiangnan University person" and shared value pursuits. Commemorative inscriptions and alumni inscriptions bearing collective memory, while evoking shared emotions, also enable teachers and students to establish emotional connections and spiritual inheritance with the school's historical traditions at the psychological level.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper systematically examines the current characteristics and image construction functions of linguistic landscapes at Xiangnan University. The study shows that the school's linguistic landscape layout is reasonable and functionally diverse, meeting both basic navigation and information transmission needs while inheriting the historical heritage of "century-old institution with a red heritage" through characteristic carriers such as school motto stone carvings and red culture slogans, reflecting the school's dual attention to material space management and spiritual cultural construction.

However, current campus linguistic landscapes exhibit a tendency toward code simplification, with insufficient proportion of bilingual landscapes concentrated in specific areas, limiting the presentation of the campus's international image; the educational function of linguistic landscapes still has room for improvement. In the future, when planning linguistic landscapes, universities should pay more attention to cultivating multilingual ecology, visualizing disciplinary characteristics, and integrating environmental protection concepts, making linguistic landscapes truly become three-dimensional educational carriers that demonstrate educational characteristics, cultivate cultural character, and promote international exchange. This study provides an analytical framework for understanding how local universities achieve image dissemination and value guidance through linguistic landscapes.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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