

Language Features of Signage in Mueang Ake Area, Pathum Thani Province, in Perspective of Linguistic Landscape

ลักษณะทางภาษาของป้ายชื่อสถานประกอบการในชุมชนเมืองเอก จังหวัดปทุมธานี ที่สัมพันธ์กับภูมิทัศน์ภาษาศาสตร์

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Abstract

The research objectives were to study the linguistic landscape of business and service signage in Mueang Ake area, a large residential community in Pathum Thani Province, and to analyze the language use and meanings conveyed through these signs, which reflect the social and cultural identity of the target area. The study relied on 237 purposively selected business signs located along the four main roads in Mueang Ake. The data were classified according to the types of businesses and services and analyzed statistically using frequencies and percentages.

The results revealed that the signs collectively contained a total of seven languages: Thai, English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, and Spanish. This demonstrates that Mueang Ake is a multilingual area that reflects natural linguistic diversity and multilingualism influenced by globalization. Among all signs, consumer goods businesses were the most prevalent, followed by healthcare and beauty businesses. As for font size and visibility of bilingual signs, Thai script was found to be the most visible and most prominent. Regarding linguistic function, the wording on the sign primarily served an informational function about product and service details, followed by contact information. As for the symbolic function, it was found that signs with store names that are partially consistent or related to the business were more common than signs with store names not consistent or related to the business. This demonstrated that signage played a crucial role in creating a modern and international image for communication, as well as establishing a

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distinctive and attractive presence that encouraged visitors to purchase products or use services at the location through advertising and public relations based on the place's name.

The study also revealed the influence of commercial, cultural, modernity, and local beliefs that affected this area. Moreover, the study demonstrated the role of the linguistic landscape as a communication tool that connects social identity and marketing in the Mueang Ake area.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape, Mueang Ake area, Signs, Signage, Language analysis

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษา (linguistic landscape) ของป้ายธุรกิจและบริการในพื้นที่เมืองเอกซึ่งเป็นชุมชนที่อยู่อาศัยขนาดใหญ่ในจังหวัดปทุมธานี และวิเคราะห์การใช้ภาษาและความหมายที่ถ่ายทอดผ่านป้ายต่าง ๆ ซึ่งสะท้อนอัตลักษณ์ทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรมของพื้นที่ดังกล่าว การศึกษาใช้ข้อมูลจากป้ายธุรกิจ จำนวน 237 ป้าย ที่คัดเลือกแบบเจาะจงจากถนนสายหลัก 4 สาย ในชุมชนเมืองเอก ข้อมูลจัดประเภทตามลักษณะของธุรกิจและบริการ และนำมาวิเคราะห์ทางสถิติด้วยค่าความถี่และร้อยละ โดยอาศัยกรอบแนวคิดภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษา

ผลการวิเคราะห์พบว่าป้ายธุรกิจในชุมชนเมืองเอกมีการใช้ภาษาทั้งหมด 7 ภาษา ได้แก่ ภาษาไทย ภาษาอังกฤษ ภาษาจีน ภาษาญี่ปุ่น ภาษาเกาหลี ภาษาเยอรมัน และภาษาสเปน แสดงให้เห็นว่าเขตชุมชนเมืองเอกเป็นพื้นที่แห่งความเป็นพหุภาษา บ่งชี้ถึงความหลากหลายอันเป็นลักษณะธรรมชาติของภาษาที่เกิดขึ้นกับพื้นที่ดังกล่าว อีกนัยหนึ่งความเป็นพหุภาษามีผลมาจากปรากฏการณ์ “โลกาภิวัตน์” ส่วนการจำแนกป้ายตามธุรกิจและบริการพบว่าสินค้าอุปโภคบริโภคมีจำนวนมากที่สุด รองลงมาคือธุรกิจด้านสุขภาพและความงาม ด้านขนาดและความเด่นชัดของตัวอักษรของป้ายสองภาษาพบว่า พบว่าอักษรภาษาไทยมีขนาดใหญ่และเด่นชัดมากที่สุด ด้านหน้าที่ของภาษาพบว่าข้อความบนป้ายส่วนใหญ่ทำหน้าที่ให้ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับสินค้าและบริการ รองลงมาคือข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับช่องทางการติดต่อ ส่วนหน้าที่เชิงสัญลักษณ์พบว่าป้ายชื่อร้านที่สอดคล้องหรือเกี่ยวข้องกับธุรกิจ มีจำนวนมากกว่าป้ายชื่อร้านที่ไม่สอดคล้องกับธุรกิจ แสดงให้เห็นว่า ป้ายชื่อสถานที่มีส่วนสำคัญในการสร้างความทันสมัย ความเป็นสากลในการติดต่อสื่อสาร รวมถึงสร้างความโดดเด่นและความดึงดูดใจในการโน้มน้าวให้ผู้คนที่พบเห็นได้เข้ามาเลือกซื้อผลิตภัณฑ์หรือใช้บริการสถานที่ดังกล่าวผ่านการโฆษณาและประชาสัมพันธ์จากชื่อสถานที่

ผลการศึกษาข้างสะท้อนแนวโน้มด้านพาณิชย์ วัฒนธรรม ความทันสมัย และความเชื่อท้องถิ่นที่มีอิทธิพลต่อพื้นที่ดังกล่าว อีกทั้งยังแสดงให้เห็นบทบาทของภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษาในฐานะเครื่องมือสื่อสารที่เชื่อมโยงอัตลักษณ์ทางสังคมและการตลาดในพื้นที่เมืองเอก

คำสำคัญ: ภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษา, พื้นที่เมืองเอก, ป้าย, ป้ายโฆษณา, การวิเคราะห์ภาษา

Introduction

Linguistic landscape (or LL) studies can be seen as a sub-field of both sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, concerned with the “written form” of languages in public space (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006: 2) especially emphasizing “multilingual settings” (Coulmas, 2009: 14). This involves investigation of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration (Landry & Bourhis, 1997: 25). The linguistic landscape reflects an area’s social, cultural, and economic characteristics. Signage, for example, serves as a medium to attract people’s attention and communicate marketing information. They can also showcase the appropriate choice of language, presentation format, and design to align with the target group in that area. Studying the linguistic landscape through signage provides an in-depth perspective on the relationship between language and social identity, reflecting the changes and developments of society at both the local and national levels.

The Linguistic Landscape serves multiple significant functions in public spaces, influencing communication, cultural identity, representation, and power dynamics. Firstly, its communication function is evident in road signs, advertisements, and billboards, which provide essential information about directions, services, and social expectations. These elements guide people in navigating public spaces and understanding societal norms (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009). For instance, bilingual road signs in multilingual regions help local and international drivers interpret traffic instructions accurately. Secondly, LL plays a symbolic role in expressing cultural identity. The choice of language on signs often reflects local heritage and customs. For example, the presence of indigenous languages alongside national languages can affirm the importance of preserving cultural heritage (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). A study by Cenoz and Gorter (2009) found that signs written in Basque, alongside Spanish and English, in the Basque Country emphasized the cultural pride of the region.

Currently, studies of the linguistic landscape in Thailand are found in culturally diverse areas, such as the research of Pikulthong (2011), Seangyen (2015), Sarot and Kraisame (2019), Kaewbut and Muangkaew (2020), Meemongkol (2021), Anantawan and Buakaw (2022), and Pluemsuit (2023) among others. These studies clearly reflect the social and cultural characteristics, and reveal the functions and uses of language on signs, showing how they communicate with those who see them.

Meemongkol (2021) studied the linguistic landscape of Sukhumvit Soi 3 (Nana Nuea) and Sukhumvit Soi 63 (Ekkamai), and examined the linguistic and cultural diversity reflected in these areas. The findings indicated that most signs are restaurant signs, followed by hotel signs. Signs exhibited between 1 and 5 languages, with English being the most common language. Regarding the size and prominence of letters, English letters were found to be the largest and most prominent. In terms of cultural diversity, three prominent themes reflected in the study of the linguistic landscape were identified: the imitation of alphabetical styles from one language to another; the presence of pets as part of the family; and the transliteration of words and characters related to culture. The findings were beneficial to the study of linguistic diversity and multiculturalism of downtown areas in Bangkok.

Boonmalert and Hongsuwan (2024) studied the linguistic landscape of place names in the Chiang Mai municipal area, Chiang Mai Province, and found that the place names used a total of 9 languages, demonstrating that it was a multilingual area resulting from the phenomenon of “globalization”. The linguistic strategies used in place signs in Chiang Mai province exhibited distinctive characteristics. These strategies could be categorized into 5 types: word blending, loanwords, abbreviations, homophones, and expressive words. This reflected the significant role of place name signage in creating modernity and internationalization in communication, as well as establishing a distinctive and attractive presence that encouraged passersby to purchase products or use services at that location through advertising and public relations based on the place names.

The review of the literature on linguistic landscapes, nevertheless, revealed that studies done in Bangkok suburban areas are relatively few, particularly those focusing on LL of Rangsit and other business areas in Pathum Thani Province. Population data from 2566-2567 shows that the registered population is approximately 1.2 million, but including the unregistered population, the number rises to almost 1.9 million, making it the province with the highest population growth rate among the provinces surrounding Bangkok (Pathum Thani Provincial Office, 2025). Furthermore, Rangsit has a long and rich history, being a multilingual and multicultural area with numerous businesses and services, ranging from small shops to shopping malls that have increased in proportion to the population. Currently, there are 7 such malls. Muang Ake area is one of the districts in Rangsit that stands out and is well-known to locals because it is a major commercial area adjacent to housing estates and communities. A study of cosmetics stores frequented by students from both private and public universities in Pathum Thani province found that imported branded cosmetics are

particularly popular, with 84.16% of respondents indicating a strong preference for these products (Sakulaobromdee & Khongsawatkiat, 2011). This may lead to the need for more modern and foreign-language signage and advertising in shops and advertisements. Furthermore, with numerous schools and universities, the area has undergone modern changes, providing valuable information that highlights the distinctive characteristics of a multilingual and multicultural society.

There are 4 main roads that connect various areas within Muang Ake area, namely Ake Prachim, Ake Taksin, Ake Burapha, and Ake Udorn. They are important routes of economics, society, and education, as reflected in the linguistic landscape visible in the area in many aspects. These roads allow for various trades and businesses, such as restaurants, shops, institutions, and other service businesses. The advertising and business signs in this area signal the competitive business and marketing environment, with eye-catching language and design used to attract customers. The roads run around Rangsit University, a major educational institution that draws a diverse population of both Thai and international students, creating a community with varied cultural backgrounds.

The reason why this area was chosen is the diverse linguistic landscape along the four main roads. For example, there is the use of Thai alongside English, Chinese as the main language on signs, and local Thai dialects used as selling points for certain shops. In addition, the linguistic landscape along the roads reflects social and economic changes, such as the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and online businesses. It also highlights the shift in consumer behavior, with a growing emphasis on the image of the shop or business. This includes the increasing demand for attractive and creative shop designs that communicate the products being sold and stand out rather than focusing solely on product quality, as was the case in the past. All in all, this study addresses the framework of linguistic landscape to help understand the role of language as a communication tool that reflects social and cultural changes within the community, and naming strategies of business as shown in the language used on shop signs.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims 1) to investigate the language patterns of signage in Muang Ake, Pathum Thani Province, and 2) to analyze the function of the business and service commercial signs in the area.

Research methods

1. Data collection

The researcher collected data by walking along the 4 roads: Ake Prachim, Ake Taksin, Ake Burapha, and Ake Udorn and taking photos using a smartphone camera during May 2025. A total of 237 photos of business and shop signs were taken from public areas. They were from the shops on both sides of the roads, the total distance of which was 6.9 kilometers. All photos did not include individuals and were used for educational purposes only.

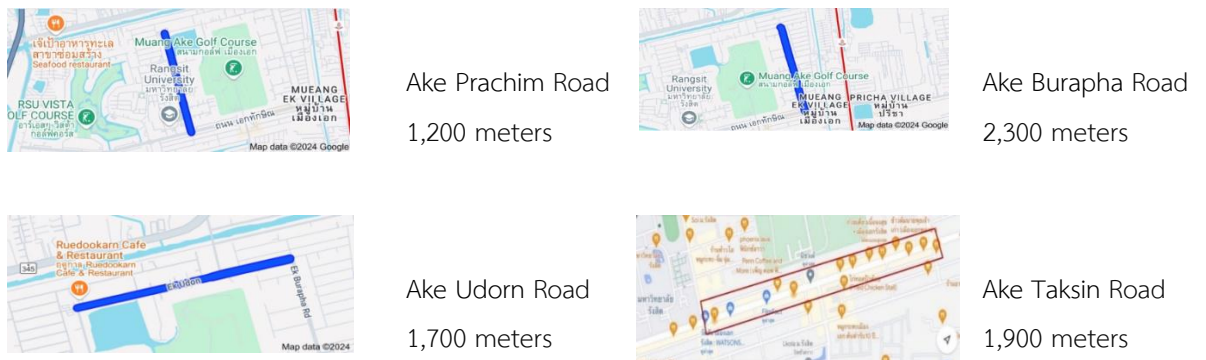


Figure 1: Data collecting areas (pictures from Google Maps)

In this study, the researcher used the data selection criteria proposed by Rekhililit (2020), which include physical characteristics and location criteria. These criteria can be classified into three types:

1. Major signs: These are permanently installed signs that are physically difficult to move or cannot be moved, as shown in Figure 2.

2. Extended signs: These signs have physical characteristics that can be moved or changed. But it is a sign that stores regularly install, such as a Japanese flag sign, a sign with wheels on the bottom, or a sign located along the sidewalk, as shown in Figure 3.

3. Door and window signs: These are signs attached to doors or windows. However, they are signs that take a long time to install or are permanent, such as adhesive stickers or large posters, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 2: Major sign



Figure 3: Extended sign



Figure 4: Door or window sign

Additionally, the content of the business signs selected for this research must include at least two components. Apart from the shop name, a sign may include phone numbers, and business hours, excluding logo, symbols, or illustrations. As for the materials used for the sign, the researcher does not consider paper or temporary materials such as flyers, campaign signs, or announcement boards. Electronic signs are excluded. The selected signs must be visible, with all texts easily readable, made of durable materials that can be seen to last for a period of time.

2. Analysis of data: The researcher identified four steps as part of the analysis:

Step 1: Collecting 237 signs that meet the selection criteria as mentioned above. Every sign must be classified with information about the type of business or service it represents. The researcher uses the business classification criteria based on the conceptual framework by Pikulthong (2011), which divides businesses into five categories: 1) Consumer goods business: restaurants, beverage shops, and bakery stores, 2) Retail, wholesale, and general service business, 3) Healthcare, beauty, and wellness service business, 4) Accommodation and Housing business, and 5) Education and tourism business.

Step 2: Analyzing the language data on the signs by applying the concept of Linguistic Landscape as proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997). The researcher uses Microsoft Word to create tables and process the data through Microsoft Excel to generate charts.

Step 3: Categorizing the signs based on the number of languages on each; namely, how many signs with one language, two languages, and three languages, and also the number of signs for each type. Also, identify which language was shown in the largest and most prominent font size, and how many signs fall into each category. The signs should be sorted out before the data were summarized.

Step 4: Examining the data for each sign by analyzing the role of the language to see whether it serves an informational or symbolic function. The conceptual framework is displayed below.

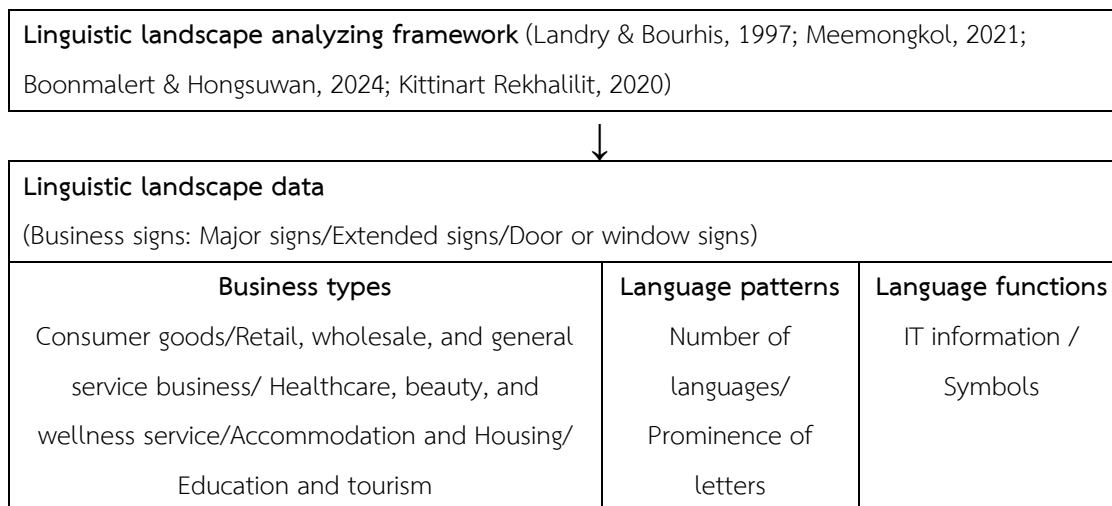


Figure 5: Conceptual framework of the study

Research Findings

The types of businesses and services displayed on all signs were categorized and classified according to its objectives before the presentation of research results. The data were then analyzed in terms of linguistic landscape based on the framework of Landry and Bourhis (1997) as follows:

Objective 1: To investigate the language patterns of the business and service commercial signs

1.1 The types of signs and business and service categories

Table 1: Format of language appearing on the signage as classified by business types

Language format on signs	Consumer Goods	Retail wholesale and general service	Healthcare beauty and wellness service	Accommodation	Education and tourism	Total	Percentage
Monolingual signs	55	16	28	5	2	106	44.7%
Bilingual signs	42	27	35	5	3	112	47.3%

Trilingual signs	16	0	3	0	0	19	8%
Total	113	43	66	10	5	237	100%
	47.68%	18.14%	27.85	4.22%	2.11%		

Table 1 shows the frequency of various types of businesses and services. It reveals that 44.7% of the signs are monolingual, the most common language in consumer goods businesses. At a lower percentage, the second most common type is signs for retail and general services. Bilingual signs account for 47.3%, with the highest occurrence in consumer goods businesses. Additionally, businesses in the medical, beauty, and wellness also have bilingual signs in a similar proportion. Trilingual signs make up 8%, found exclusively in consumer goods businesses, and healthcare and wellness service.

1.2 Linguistic diversity of signs

The study observed 237 business signs along the 4 main roads in Muang Ake area and the purposive sampling method was used to collect the data. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 2: Language patterns appearing on the signage

Language format on signs	Language on signs	Number of signs	Percentage
Bilingual signs	English-Thai	107	45%
	English-Chinese	2	0.85%
	Chinese-Thai	2	0.85%
	Korean-English	1	0.42%
	Total	112	47.3%
Monolingual signs	Thai	68	28.7%
	English	38	16%
	Total	106	44.7%
Trilingual signs	English-Thai-Japanese	8	3.37%
	English-Thai-Chinese	4	1.7%
	English-Thai-German	3	1.26%
	English-Thai-Korean	3	1.26%
	English-Thai-Spanish	1	0.42%
	Total	19	8%
Grand total		237	100%

As seen in Table 2, the signs were classified into three main language forms. The most common are bilingual signs, at 47.3%. The second most common are monolingual signs, at 44.7%, followed by trilingual signs, at 8%. The breakdown of monolingual signs shows that 28.7% are in Thai, and 16% are in English.

There are 4 language pairs for bilingual signs, most commonly English-Thai, making up 45%. This is followed by English-Chinese and Chinese-Thai signs, equally at 0.85%. Among all, there is only one Korean-English, making up the third (2%) in the rank. Regarding the trilingual shop signs, the most common is English-Thai-Japanese (2.52%), and second to that is English-Thai-Chinese (1.7%). Examples of the different types of signs are shown in the Figures below.



Figure 6: Monolingual sign (Thai)



Figure 7: Monolingual sign (English)

Figure 6 shows an example of a monolingual sign in Thai, which displays the shop's name, details about the services, phone number, and prices.

Figure 7 shows a case of a monolingual sign in English, displaying the name of the shop and the services provided by the business.



Figure 8: Bilingual sign (English-Thai)



Figure 9: Bilingual sign (Chinese-Thai)

Figure 8 shows an example of a bilingual sign featuring both English and Thai on the same sign. The Thai text “หอพักแวนต้าเพลส” is displayed using Thai characters, positioned above the English text “Vanda Place,” which is written using the Latin alphabet. If we consider the phrase, the word “Vanda” is an English proper noun written in English letters, while the word “Place” is an English term that means “a place to stay,” which serves as a

description of the business. This bilingual sign highlights both the business name and a description of the type of service offered.

Figure 9 shows a bilingual sign using both Chinese and Thai text. The Thai text displays the name of the shop, “ต้า-หว่าน-เมี้ย,” which corresponds to the Chinese characters “大碗面的面” (pronounced “dà wǎn miàn”) and means “big bowl noodles,” describing the business’s highlight and product offering. The next line of Chinese text, “每天都要见面呀,” translates to “I want to see you every day,” adding a friendly or welcoming touch to the sign, aimed at inviting customers.



Figure 10: Trilingual sign (Chinese-English-Thai)

Figure 10 illustrates of a trilingual sign, using Chinese, English, and Thai. The Thai text showcases the shop’s name, “ฮ็อตเกิร์ล,” which corresponds to the English text “Hot Girl.” The most striking part of the sign is the Chinese text, which is divided into two sections. The first part, written in large characters, “辣妹” (pronounced “Là-mèi”), directly translates to “Hot Girl”. The second part, “麻辣烫” (pronounced “Má-là-tàng”), refers to a type of Chinese hot pot dish that the restaurant specializes in. The owner’s practical goal to cater to clients who speak multiple languages is evident in the sign’s use of three languages, which enhancing accessibility and appealing to a broader audience.

Considering the overall language used on all shop signs, it was found that signs using Thai were the most prevalent, including monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual signs, totaling 190 signs (80.16%). This is because Thai is a standard language, meaning it is accepted as the official language for official communication and education nationwide. Furthermore, Thai is the national language, or the standard language primarily used for communication within the country (Nimmanheminda et al, 2009, cited in Boonmalert & Hongsuwan, 2024). Naming places using the Thai language is considered a common language for communication in the area. It serves to inform people about the place name, type of product, location, meaning of the name, as well as quality and services, which helps them make informed decisions that meet their needs.

1.3 Size and prominence of letters on the signs

This study focuses specifically on the signs' largest and most visible letters without considering the layout of the text or the order in which the languages appear. Figure 11 shows a sign with two languages, Thai and English. The visual impact of the larger Thai text is clearly larger. This shows that the Thai language dominates the sign and is easier to see than the English text. This suggests the letter sizes significantly influence the visibility and prominence of the language on the sign.



Figure 11: Thai script larger and more prominent than English

Table 3: Prominence of letters on bilingual and trilingual signage

Language format on signs	Size and visibility	Number of signs	Percentage
Bilingual signs	Thai larger than English	54	41.2%
	English larger than Thai	52	39.7%
	Thai larger than Chinese	2	1.52%
	English larger than Japanese	1	0.76%
	English larger than Korean	1	0.76%
	English larger than Chinese	1	0.76%
	Chinese larger than Thai	1	0.76%
	Total	112	85.5%
Trilingual signs	Thai largest	8	6.1%
	Chinese largest	4	3%
	English largest	3	2.3%
	Japanese largest	3	2.3%
	Spanish largest	1	0.76%
	Total	19	14.5%
Grand total	131	100%	

Table 3 shows that the language with the most prominent and largest letters on bilingual signs is Thai, which appears larger and more noticeable than English (41.2%). The second most common case is when the English text is larger and more prominent than the Thai text, accounting for 39.7% of the signs. In terms of trilingual shop signs, there are 8 boards where Thai text is the largest, making up 6.1% of all. And second to Thai, 4 trilingual signs were found with Chinese text the most prominent, and this accounts for 3%.

Regarding the foreign languages used, it was found that there were 167 shop signs using English, including monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual signs, representing 70.46%, making it the second most numerous after Thai signs. This is likely due to the Muang Ake area being home to a large university and having a significant number of foreigners residing and working there, resulting in English being easily understood by foreigners for communication. In addition, the use of English is of paramount importance in business communication, serving as a tool for creating added commercial value for products and services in that location (McKay, 2002). The use of English to express positive feelings in this way also reflects a shared perception within the region that Western culture is the norm for prestige, luxury, high standards, and modernity (Methidharma, 2017, cited in Boonmalert & Hongsuwan, 2024).

The use of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean in place names on signs is likely to stem from the rise of communication technology as a medium for connecting information and entertainment with a large number of people in the area. This has led to the development of pop culture—things created and disseminated through various mass media, such as food culture expressed through TV series, which people in the area tend to imitate to express their tastes (Kacha, 2011, cited in Boonmalert & Hongsuwan, 2024). This has led to a change in the food consumption habits of local people, shifting from consuming local food to consuming trendy foods. This is especially true for younger generations who embrace trendy culture and appreciate novelty and different flavors. Having a wide variety of food choices has resulted in them adopting trendy eating habits, transforming the area into a hub of trendy culture (Grant, 2002).

Objective 2: To analyze the functions of the business and service commercial signs

2.1 Informational function

According to the research findings, 171 signs come up with an informational function, with the majority providing information in Thai. In terms of contact information, 97

signs included phone numbers for contact, 22 signs provided contact information through Line, and 22 listed Facebook as a contact platform. Tik Tok and QR codes were the least common contact methods, appearing on only 3 signs. In addition, regarding business hours, 53 signs included opening and closing times, most of which used Thai for communication. And 32 signs were found with pricing information for products or services offered. As shown in Table 4 below, other information like branches, menus, and year established was also found. The details are displayed in the table below.

Table 4: Details of the informational functions of the signage

Informational Function	Frequency
1. Product and service details	171
2. Contact Information	
- Phone number	97
- Facebook	20
- Line	22
- Instagram	9
- e-mail	3
- Tik Tok	1
- QR Code	2
3. Business hour	53
4. Other	
- Prices	32
- Branch	15
- Menu	4
- Year established	3

It can be suggested from the data that, currently, communication technology and social media have transformed the role of store signage from mere name-displaying signs into modern, proactive marketing tools. Connecting to the online world via QR codes, LINE OA, or NFC tags allows customers to scan and receive promotions, follow pages, or make purchases instantly. Modern signs must have attractive, contemporary, or unique designs to encourage customers to take photos, check in, and share on social media, fostering word-of-mouth marketing without incurring additional costs. With the emphasis on clarity in content and promotions, social media communication prioritizes quick decision-making (Sujittavanich

& Khongkhaluang, 2020). Therefore, store signage must adapt to use concise messaging and clear promotions to respond to customer behavior that demands information quickly. Overall, technology has transformed store signage from mere information display devices into mobile advertising and interactive media that effectively drives sales and builds an online presence.

2.2 Symbolic functions

The research findings show that, out of all 237 signs, 145 business names (61.2%) are related to the nature of the business, while 92 (38.8%) are not. This is shown in the pie chart below.

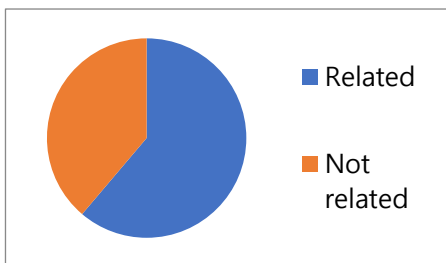


Figure 12: Relationship between business names and nature of the products or service

The investigation of language functions of all shop signs in Muang Ake area focused only on signs with at least two components rather than just the business name. For example, a sign might include the business name, type of business, and contact information. As a result, all signs included in the study serve informational and symbolic functions. In terms of the informational function, two categories were identified.

1) Business names related to the type of business: This refers to signs where the company name is closely tied to the goods and services it provides. For example, a name that reflects a specific product category the business specializes in or a restaurant name that hints at the type of cuisine it offers. One example is “Say Chic,” a dental clinic that uses its name to play on the common photography phrase “say cheese,” replacing it with “chic” to emphasize a stylish approach to dentistry. Saying “cheese” is a popular photographic technique to produce a smile which is associated to the mouth by nature.

2) Business names not related to the type of business: This category includes names that do not directly reflect or characterize the business or service provided. These names may be simple or abstract, aiming instead to create a specific image or evoke an emotional response. This can be seen in the case of “อารยา” (Araya), a Thai health massage

parlour, whose name means “noble” or “exalted” in Thai. The name does not directly reflect the business’s services. Instead, it serves a symbolic function, conveying a sense of elegance or high status, which aligns with the tastes and preferences of the target customers. This name helps create a particular atmosphere or identity for the business, even though it does not directly describe the service offered.



Figure 13: Dental clinic “Say Chic”



Figure 14: Sign of “Araya” massage parlour

Conclusion and Discussion

The study’s results, which classified business signs by type of business and service, reveal that the area is characterized by significant language and cultural diversity. This is particularly evident in the community area of Muang Ake, which hosts many businesses catering to consumption, especially Thai restaurants, international cuisine, beverage shops, and dessert stores. These findings align with the research conducted by Meemongkol (2021), which also identified restaurants as the most common type of business sign, particularly in the areas of Sukhumvit Soi 3 (Nana Nuea) and Sukhumvit Soi 63 (Ekamai).

The areas of Ekamai and Muang Ake are similar in terms of their inhabitants, as reflected in the study results. The main difference in the case of monolingual signs is that MeeMongkol’s study primarily focused on English. Another study by Pikulthong (2011) found that businesses most used bilingual signs, specifically Thai and English. The result is consistent with the current study, which found that most shops used bilingual signs, specifically Thai-English. On the other hand, the research by Pluemsuit (2023) found that most shops used bilingual signs, primarily in Thai and English. Although the surveyed areas in both studies were close to each other, a closer examination of the findings in this current study reveals that the number of Thai-only and English-only signs and bilingual signs (Thai-English) differ by only one.

This result reflects that the population in this area has a high demand for consumer goods as it consists of residents, school students, and university students. Most of these individuals are already knowledgeable in languages, particularly English. This suggests a community of educated people, with occasional visitors who may use the services from time to time. There are also many types of accommodation, both permanent and semi-permanent, in the area. The use of languages other than Thai in signs in this study reflects the value and importance placed on multilingual communication by business owners. They do not rely only on Thai, the community's primary language, but also show a willingness to serve a wider customer base and recognize the significance of using other languages.

Furthermore, businesses in the community show great importance in creating a strong brand image and identity for their businesses and services. This is evidenced by the logos, symbols, and product/service images on signs, which serve as powerful communication tools. They are not allowing customers to recognize business information quickly. But also help create a memorable image of the business, making it more appealing to potential customers.

Another noticeable trend in signs is the growth of technology, such as the inclusion of social media applications or QR codes, seen in up to 40 stores. This technological adoption reflects the community's comfort with digital tools and enhances businesses' accessibility to a larger client base. Additionally, these modern designs and creative messaging reflect the competitiveness of businesses in the area, a hallmark of Muang Ake as a small economic hub within Pathum Thani Province.

The study on linguistic diversity in signs found that most signs were bilingual, specifically in English-Thai. The next most common type of sign is Thai-only monolingual. Notably, the language choices on the signs are often influenced by the primary customer base or the group of potential customers. The findings regarding the types of businesses and services in the area indicate that 145 signs are related to consumer goods. From the analysis of language choice on these signs, this may also be linked to legal requirements and regulations concerning business signage.

According to the Signboard Tax Act B.E. 2534, signs with only Thai characters are subject to the lowest tax rate, with 68 signs in this study fitting that category. There are 112 bilingual signs (English-Thai, English-Chinese, Chinese-Thai, and Korean-English) in total. According to the criteria, signs that feature Thai characters alongside foreign languages are taxed more than those with only Thai characters but are still taxed less than signs that use

only foreign characters. This indicates that the inclusion of foreign languages on signs reflects the reality of today's society, which is truly multilingual and multicultural.

This aligns with the concept of Landry and Bourhis (1997) regarding the study of linguistic diversity, which provides a good understanding of the linguistic landscape. This is because the community in this area includes residents, teachers, professors, students, and people from different countries, both Thai and foreign. As a result, business owners have adapted by creating modern and internationally recognized names for their shops and services. This international recognition clearly reflects the influence of linguistic diversity on business practices, catering to the customer base in this area, who use languages other than Thai.

With regard to the size and prominence of bilingual signs, the findings reveal the adaptability of English, which is more prominently used than Thai, particularly in medical, beauty, and health businesses. This adaptability extends to other sectors like retail, wholesale, general services, and hospitality businesses. It is not just because English is a global language but also because it is utilized in ways that reflect the local characteristics of the community. The blending of Thai and English characters on signs, as noted by Huebner (2006), is a testament to this adaptability, reflecting not just translation needs but also consumer culture and the influence of creating a modern, global image—particularly in commercial and tourist areas.

The study of the function of business signs found that signs serving an informational purpose most frequently provide details about products and services in Thai. This is to target the local consumers, who are native speakers, to help them quickly and clearly understand the product or service details. The intention is to give customers enough information to help them decide quicker so they can visit the store immediately when they see the sign. Contact details are also included, the most frequent being phone number. Since numbers are universal, anyone who sees the sign, regardless of nationality, can access this information. If a customer needs to inquire further or more clarification on the information on the sign regarding the products or services offered, at least they can make initial contact via the phone number listed. It helps facilitate the customer's decision to visit the business more conveniently.

Regarding the symbolic function of signs, the study of the alignment between business names and the type of business offered revealed that more store names are related to the business or service than those that are not. In other words, business owners

use signs to help customers better remember the store and its services. For signs where the store name aligns with the business or service, the alignment often relates to the products offered, such as in the case of ‘The Tiew’ (a noodle shop). On the other hand, names that do not directly related but still connect with the business are typically based on the location or the owner’s name, such as ‘Mala Na Mo’ or ‘Kamolphan Pharmacy.’ Some store names, like “Pee Ya” (พี่ยะ) or “Cox”, have nothing to do with a coffee shop business they are running. These entrepreneurs pick store names to reflect their brand or to appeal to client preferences that complement their goods and services.

Recommendations

1. General Suggestions

1.1 Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies should focus on the linguistic landscape in other business districts with linguistic diversity. Interviewing people in those communities would also be beneficial to learn about their opinions and attitudes toward linguistic and cultural diversity in connection to the language shown on signs. Additionally, research should look into language-related subjects, such as how language is translated on signs. Specifically, the study could investigate whether the meaning of multilingual signage changes or remains the same after translation. Another area of interest could be the mixing and switching of languages, such as signs that use multiple languages in a single sentence and how such language combinations reflect different cultural diversities.

1.2 Expanding the Scope of Study

More research should be conducted to better understand the marketing influence of signs, for example, interviews with customers who frequently use businesses or residents. The study might determine how individuals react when they view a business sign. For example, do they feel compelled to use the service because of the message on the sign, the attractive design, or the emotional appeal conveyed by the sign that reflects the business’s identity?

2. Suggestions for Application

2.1 The data from this research can be used to analyze trends in designing appropriate signage for businesses and shops, such as using Thai alongside English in a clear and easy-to-understand format to accommodate both residents and foreigners.

2.2 The findings from this study can be applied to provide guidance on language use, helping business owners, community members and foreign customers better understand each other. This can foster coexistence and smooth adaptation between people in a society with diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

2.3 The data obtained from this research can serve as a foundational resource for businesses to understand the needs of the local population regarding the businesses. The data can help analyze target markets, such as surveying whether the customers using the services are more likely to be Thai or foreign. This analysis help guide future business development by identifying the kinds of firms that appeal to cultures. The company sign's designs that successfully interact with the target market or clients can also be guided by this information. For example, if a restaurant is located next to a university or dorm, the sign should include more than just a phone number; it should also include a social media account or a QR code that may be used to contact the establishment directly. Customers could use this to schedule a time to use the service or place an order.

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