Hybrid Language Practices and Linguistic Errors in the Linguistic Landscape of Nakhon Sawan

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Abstract

This paper presents an empirical study of the linguistic landscape of Nakhon Sawan, analyzing language practices, hybridity, visual hierarchy, and linguistic inaccuracies in public signage. A total of two hundred signs were analyzed, indicating that bilingual signage was the most prevalent, accounting for 62% of the data. This was followed by monolingual signage at 33%, with Thai representing 24.5% and English 8.5%, while trilingual signage accounted for 5%. Thai appeared as the primary language across all types of signage, whereas English functioned as the main secondary language and carried both communicative value and symbolic meanings related to globalization, modernity, and social prestige. The findings reveal extensive hybrid language practices in monolingual and bilingual signs, including lexical borrowing, transliteration, and syntactic influence from English. An evaluation of language visibility based on font size, spatial positioning, colour, and overall visual hierarchy demonstrated that Thai occupied the most visually prominent position in 81.34% of the signs. In total, 194 linguistic errors were identified across 147 signs, with errors in word selection, spacing, and capitalization being the most commonly observed. While such errors rarely result in significant communicative breakdowns, they may at times alter intended meanings or generate unintended humorous effects. In conclusion, the linguistic landscape of Nakhon Sawan reflects a dynamic and hybridized environment shaped by both communicative needs and symbolic expressions of globalization and local identity. The findings also offer practical insights for improving the clarity and effectiveness of public signage in Thailand.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape, Thailand, language use, language mixing, language prominence, linguistic errors

1. Introduction

Thailand's tourism sector is a major driver of the national economy, as reflected in its high global and regional rankings for international arrivals and tourism revenue. According to the World Tourism Organization's World Tourism Barometer (UNWTO, 2020, as cited in Rungswang, 2023), Thailand ranked eighth worldwide in 2019 for international tourist arrivals, welcoming 39.8 million visitors, and second within the Asia-Pacific region. In terms of international tourism revenue, the country ranked fourth globally, generating 60.5 billion USD, and first in the Asia-Pacific. These figures clearly underscore the crucial role of tourism in

sustaining Thailand's economic growth.

The continued increase in international tourist arrivals in recent years confirms Thailand's enduring status as a leading global destination. In 2024, the country welcomed 35.5 million tourists, and from January to August 2025, arrivals already reached 21.9 million (Economics Tourism and Sports Division, 2025). The Kasikorn Research Centre projects that by the end of 2025, visitor numbers will rise to 37.5 million (Sirisattayawong, 2025)., surpassing the previous year's total (see Figure 1). This substantial influx of international travelers has reinforced the prominence of English in Thailand's linguistic landscape, evident in its widespread presence on road signs, place names, commercial signage, supermarket products, advertisements, graffiti, and public notices.
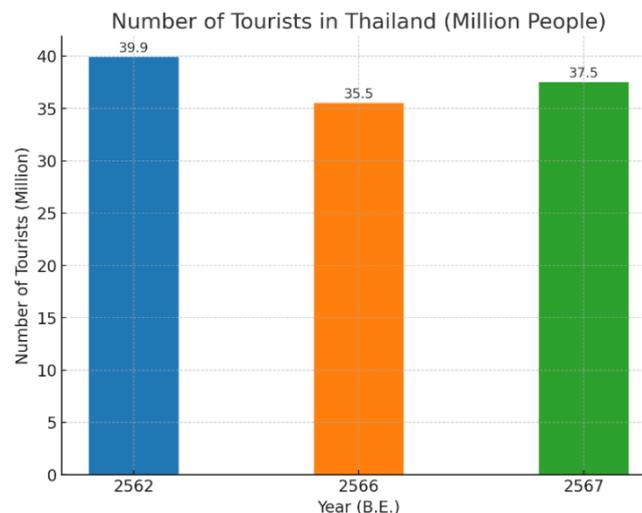

Figure 1: The number of international tourist arrivals to Thailand

Language on public signs represents a written form of the symbolic sign system, in which conventional linguistic units—such as morphemes, words, and sentences—convey meaning. Unlike spoken language, written signs are permanent, detached from the immediate context of production, and capable of transmitting information to unspecified audiences. Wienold's (1994, 1995 cited in Backhaus, 2007, p. 8) typology conceptualizes such language use as "inscriptions," characterized by the absence of "a recognizable emitter and the lack of a specified target group". This definition encompasses not only traditional public signs but also written messages on everyday objects, where the originator is typically an organization rather than an individual. Readers have no direct means of responding, and access to the sign is unrestricted—features that distinguish this form of language use from spoken interaction and other written texts, such as books or personal letters. These characteristics are fundamental to understanding the concept of the linguistic landscape.

Signage commonly found in cities, offices, public spaces, and along streets constitutes one type of "little text" (Halliday, 1994). According to Halliday, various forms of little texts include newspaper headlines, telegrams, titles, product labels, short instructions (e.g., recipes), signboards, and lecture notes (p. 392). He explains:

> These are certain texts which the context of situation determines have to be
> short …since they have to achieve quite a lot in that limited space, they
> tend to have their own grammar for doing so, which differs in certain respects
> from the grammar of other registers of English not constrained by such
> limitations. (1994, p. 392)

Signage in countries where English is used as a second or foreign language is typically created by non-native speakers of English. Its main purpose is to help tourists and foreign visitors understand messages and navigate more easily in unfamiliar environments. The objectives of signage may include communicating, informing, teaching, educating, guiding, or transmitting social and cultural values to visitors (Imbert-Bouchard Ribera, 2021). The use of English on such signs not only facilitates communication with international audiences but also reflects broader forces of globalization, international commerce, modernity, and prestige. However, errors in English usage on signage can result in miscommunication or even humorous interpretations. This phenomenon highlights the need to examine how English functions within Thailand's linguistic landscape and the implications it holds for tourism and cultural representation.

1. Taxonomy of languages in Thailand

The official language of government, politics, and high-prestige cultural domains, as well as a symbol of national identity, is Standard Thai (Smalley, 1994). It functions as the primary language of education, administration, and media, while also reinforcing national identity and unity. For most Thais, Standard Thai is acquired through formal schooling, with regional languages used in the home and community. Four major regional languages are identified: Thaiklang (spoken in central Thailand), Lao/Isan (spoken in the northeast), Kammeang (spoken in the north), and Paktay (spoken in the southern provinces). Other marginal and minority languages include Tai Yai, Northern Khmer, and Pattani Malay. With the exception of Pattani Malay, these languages do not generally challenge national cohesion (Huebner, 2006).

In Thailand, English functions as a foreign language and, though once confined to a small elite in the 1960s, is now widely used by professionals engaging with the international community. While Standard Thai remains the primary medium of instruction, English has been compulsory from elementary levels and serves both as the language of specialized knowledge in higher education and as a marker of modernity.

2. Research site

Nakhon Sawan, literally translated as "Heavenly City" and often called the "Gateway to the North," is a strategically important province in central Thailand. It is the origin of the Chao Phraya River, the country's principal waterway, formed by the confluence of the Ping (which merges with the Wang in Tak Province) and the Nan (which joins with the Yom in Chumsaeng District). Because of this strategic location, Nakhon Sawan has developed as a key transportation and commercial hub linking Bangkok with the Northern provinces. The province is also noted for its agricultural productivity, especially rice cultivation, alongside its growing role in regional trade and education.

A large Chinese community has long been a vital part of Nakhon Sawan's cultural and economic landscape. Traditionally, this community is divided into five major linguistic groups: Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka (Ke-jia), and Hokkien. Many families settled in the province generations ago, contributing to trade, business, and local markets, where their influence remains visible today. The city is particularly renowned for its spectacular Chinese New Year celebrations, featuring dragon and lion dances that attract visitors from across Thailand. Temples, shrines, and festivals continue to highlight the community's rich heritage and its integration with local Thai traditions. This cultural and linguistic diversity is also reflected in the province's signage, where Thai, English, and Chinese appear together, symbolizing the interplay between local identities and globalizing influences.

2. Literature Review

The concept of the linguistic landscape (LL) has been described using various terms, including the symbolic construction of public space (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006), language items in public spaces (Shohamy, 2006), and environmental print (Huebner, 2006). Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25) provided the foundational definition, describing the linguistic landscape as the collection of languages displayed on public signs such as road signs, billboards, street names, and government buildings within a given territory. Since then, LL has developed into a dynamic research field within applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, focusing on how languages are represented in public spaces.

Scholars emphasize that language displays in public spaces offer rich data for interpretation and reveal symbolic meanings beyond their functional purposes (Shohamy, 2019; Gorter and Cenoz, 2023). As a visual manifestation of public life, the linguistic landscape functions as a semiotic resource reflecting communication practices, identity construction, power relations, and intercultural interaction (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). LL studies aim to identify patterns of language presence or absence and to uncover the ideological, social, and political motivations underlying language choices in public signage.

Research on language use in signage provides insights into the social structure and cultural values of a community. Reh (2004) argues that signs reflect social stratification and dominant cultural ideals, while Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) highlight how individuals and institutions negotiate symbolic meanings in public space. Public signage also reveals language policies, attitudes, and long-term effects of language contact. As part of the "textual décor" of public life (Gorter and Cenoz, 2023), signs often constitute foreigners' first encounter with a country's linguistic environment and play an important role in guiding, informing, regulating, and advertising within urban spaces.

Landry and Bourhis (1997) distinguish two main functions of the linguistic landscape: informational and symbolic. The informational function marks language boundaries and signals which languages can be used to access services, reflecting sociolinguistic composition and power relations through unilingual, bilingual, or multilingual patterns. The symbolic function conveys messages about the status, vitality, and legitimacy of ethnolinguistic groups. The visibility or absence of a language on signs can strengthen group identity or, conversely, contribute to marginalization and language shift, making linguistic visibility a key site of intergroup competition.

Interpreting multilingual signage is complex due to hybridity, code-mixing, and competing visual cues, often making language dominance unclear (Hueber, 2016). The widespread use of English on public signs frequently leads to linguistic errors caused by limited competence or first-language interference, which may affect comprehension and national image (James, 2013; Corder, 1967; Nenotek, Beeh, and Benu, 2024).

Linguistic landscape (LL) research has developed through three waves: quantitative, qualitative/ethnographic, and critical approaches focusing on power and identity (Gorter and Cenoz, 2023). Previous studies have examined symbolic meanings in signage and identified common grammatical and translation errors in English public signs (Tran, 2021; Ariani and Artawa, 2021; Mohebbi and Firoozkohi, 2021; Nenotek, Beeh, and Benu, 2024).

In Thailand, LL studies highlight the prominent role of English alongside Thai, reflecting globalization, tourism, and prestige (Huebner, 2006; Sutthinaraphan, 2016; Prapobratanakul, 2016; Pipattarasakul, 2021; Rungswang, 2023). Regional research shows strategic language mixing to attract tourists and serve economic and identity functions, while errors in English signage—particularly in Bangkok—can affect foreigners' understanding and national image (Thongtong, 2016; Klebsamut et al., 2022; Bennui, 2023; Kavilanan, 2024; Pathanasin, 2025; Kongkaew and Lerdpaisalwong, 2025).

However, most Thai LL studies focus on major tourist cities and symbolic language use rather than linguistic accuracy. Secondary cities such as Nakhon Sawan remain under-researched, especially regarding the types and causes of errors in public signage. This study addresses this gap by examining linguistic errors in public signs in Nakhon Sawan.

1. Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to investigate and systematically analyze the linguistic landscape of Nakhon Sawan's public signage. Specifically, this research aims to:

1. identify the languages used in public signs in Nakhon Sawan.
2. analyze the patterns of language mixing that appear in the signage.
3. determine the language that is most prominently displayed in public signs.
4. identify and categorize the types of linguistic and orthographic errors found in the signage.

2. Research questions

Given the lack of studies on error typology within the local context of Nakhon Sawan, the present study aims to examine the types of errors occurring in the use of English within Nakhon Sawan's linguistic landscape. Accordingly, this research seeks to address three specific research questions:

1. What languages are used in the public signage of Nakhon Sawan?
2. What patterns of language mixing are evident in the signage?
3. Which language is most prominently displayed?
4. What types of linguistic and orthographic errors are present in the signage?

3. Research Methodology

The sign in this study refers to "any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame" (Backhaus, 2006, p. 55). The data were 200 signs collected between June 2024 and June 2025 to examine language choice, language mixing, language prominence, and English inaccuracies within Nakhon Sawan's linguistic landscape. Unlike most previous linguistic landscape (LL) studies that have focused on specific neighborhoods, this research adopts a broader, city-wide perspective. Accordingly, a diverse range of sites was selected for investigation including large shopping malls, hotels, governmental and non-governmental institutions, hospitals, city landmarks, food stalls, restaurants, diners, and bus stations, as well as road signs to provide a more comprehensive and representative portrayal of the city's linguistic landscape.

The dataset for this study comprised authentic language displays photographed by the researcher using a mobile phone. All data were primary, collected directly from original sources. The signs were obtained from various public areas in Nakhon Sawan, encompassing both governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations. Each sign included in the study met the following criteria:

1. It was installed in a public area and intended for a broad audience.
2. It was independent and designed for immediate comprehension. Texts from notice boards, information points, leaflets, or other materials intended for later reading were excluded.
3. The message could incorporate written language and visual elements such as icons, symbols, or pictograms.

This sampling approach ensured that the dataset represented authentic, publicly visible language use, facilitating an analysis of linguistic choices, language mixing, language prominence, and English errors in signage.

Data Analysis

The signs' photos were moved to the computer and organized into files, so they could be easily categorized and analysed. Each sign was systematically numbered and classified according to their language use as monolingual, bilingual, or trilingual. Monolingual signs were further examined for language mixing using Huebner's (2006) code-mixing framework, such as Thai script with English lexicon or syntax, or Thai syntax combined with English lexicon. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate percentages.

For bilingual and trilingual signs, language prominence was assessed using Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) and Huebner (2006)'s studies as a framework. Language prominence refers to the visual salience of languages on signs, with the most noticeable language considered the prominent one from the viewer's perspective. Font type and size, colour used, order of appearance and placement were used as analytical codes and key indicators of prominence; languages displayed in larger or bolder fonts were coded as more prominent. When all fonts on a sign were identical in size and style, they were coded as equal; any variation was coded as distinct. Signs often conveyed multiple types of information simultaneously.

The analysis of English errors on signs was carried out in three main stages: initial identification of all errors, categorization of errors, and identification of the cause of errors. To ensure accuracy, the Oxford English Dictionary was employed as the reference source for detecting and verifying the errors. Errors on each sign were analyzed following the linguistic error taxonomy established by Vettorel and Franceschi (2013), Wing and Baddeley (1980) and Cook (2004), with modifications to suit the present dataset. It should be noted that some signs contained multiple errors. The final taxonomy comprises six error types, defined and exemplified as follows:

1. Word choice: The use of an inappropriate or inaccurate word that distorts the intended meaning (e.g., 'Landtransport Office' instead of 'Transport Office restaurant').

2. Word spacing: The incorrect insertion or omission of spaces between words (e.g., 'Nakhonsawan' instead of 'Nakhon Sawan').

3. Capitalization: Inconsistent or incorrect use of uppercase and lowercase letters (e.g., 'Uthai thani' instead of 'Uthai Thani').

4. Syntactic errors: Inaccuracies in syntax, morphology, or punctuation (e.g., 'Stop dress immodestly' instead of 'Stop dressing immodestly.').

5. Missing word: The omission of a necessary word that affects meaning or grammatical completeness (e.g., 'Government Center' instead of 'Provincial Government Center').

6. Misspelling: Errors arising from incorrect spelling of words, including typographical mistakes and misformed letters (e.g., 'costomer' instead of 'customer').

7. Word order: The incorrect arrangement of words within a phrase or sentence that violates English syntactic norms (e.g., 'No Turn Right' instead of 'No Turn Right').

8. Redundancy: The unnecessary repetition of words or information within the same message (e.g., 'WAT NAKHONSAWAN ROYAL TEMPLE' instead of 'NAKHONSAWAN ROYAL TEMPLE').

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, this study employed a paired-researcher coding protocol to establish intercoder consistency. The two coders initially evaluated the signs independently and subsequently compared their assessments to calibrate understanding and recode the data, thereby maintaining consistency across the entire dataset (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

4. Results

1. Language use in Signs

The distribution of signs indicates a predominance of bilingualism, with 62% of signs incorporating two languages. Monolingual signs accounted for 33%, while trilingual signs were relatively rare at 5%. This pattern suggests that while Thai remains the dominant language in the public space, English or another secondary language is frequently paired with it, reflecting both practical communicative needs and the influence of globalization. The details of language use in signage are presented in Table 1. This finding reflects the multicultural characteristics of the city.

Table 1: Language use on signs

Types of signs	Total signs	Percentage
Monolingual signs		
Thai	49	24.5%
English	17	8.5%
(Total)	66	33%
Bilingual signs		
Thai-English	120	60%
Thai-Chinese	4	2%
(Total)	124	62%
Trilingual signs		
Thai-English-Chinese	8	4%
Thai-English-Japanese	2	1%
(Total)	10	5%
Total	**200**	**100%**

2. Language mixing in monolingual signs

Although Nakhon Sawan's linguistic landscape is dominated by bilingual Thai–English signage, closer analysis of monolingual signs reveals fluid language boundaries. Many so-called monolingual signs contain lexical borrowing, transliteration, and syntactic influence from other languages, illustrating the hybrid and dynamic nature of public written discourse. Both monolingual and bilingual signs exhibit language mixing or "hybridity," defined as the blending of Thai and English lexicon, syntax, and orthography (Huebner, 2006, 2016). This mixing reflects the functional and symbolic roles of English within the Thai linguistic landscape. The distribution of language combinations involving Thai and English script, lexicon, and syntax is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of language mixing in monolingual signs

Script	Lexicon	Syntax	Total signs	Percentage (%)
Thai	Thai	Thai	30	45.45
Thai	English	English	8	12.12
Thai	Thai and English	Thai	7	10.61
Thai	Thai and English	English	3	4.55

Thai	Thai and Japanese	Thai	1	1.51
English	English	English	13	19.70
English	Thai	Thai	2	3.03
English	Japanese	English	2	3.03
	Total		66	100

Monolingual signs in this study reveal subtle multilingual practices, as Thai, English, and Japanese resources often coexist within the same textual space. This hybridization shows how sign producers flexibly draw on multiple languages to serve communicative and symbolic purposes, with English functioning as a stylistic marker of modernity, global connectedness, and prestige. The use of transliteration and English orthographic features further illustrates how language mixing in signage mediates between readability and the expression of a cosmopolitan identity.

3. Language prominence in signs

Language prominence in public signage in Nakhon Sawan was examined by identifying the visually dominant language on each bilingual and trilingual sign, following the criteria proposed by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) and Huebner (2006), including font size, placement, colour, and language order. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Language prominence in signs

Types of signs	Thai dominance	English dominance	Equal dominance
Bilingual signs	103	17	4
	(76.86%)	(12.68%)	(2.99%)
Trilingual signs	6	4	
	(4.48%)	(2.99%)	
Total	109	21	4
Percentage	81.34%	15.67%	2.99%

As illustrated in Table 3, Thai overwhelmingly dominates the linguistic landscape (81.34%), while English appears in a secondary role (15.67%), and instances of equal prominence between languages are rare (2.99%). In bilingual signs, Thai dominance (76.86%) far exceeds that of English (12.68%), with a similar trend observed in trilingual signs. These patterns indicate that Thai continues to serve as the primary medium of communication and cultural expression in public spaces, whereas English assumes supportive, functional, or decorative roles. The observed hierarchy of language prominence underscores the interplay between local identity and global influences in urban signage.

4. Language Errors

An analysis of the distribution of linguistic errors in the signs across Nakhon Sawan's linguistic landscape is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Language errors

	Total signs	Signs with no errors	Signs with errors
Monolingual signs (English)	17	12 (70.59%)	5 (29.41%)

Bilingual signs	120	31 (25.83%)	89 (74.17%)
Trilingual signs	10	1 (10%)	9 (90%)
Total	147	44	103
Percentage	100	29.93%	70.07%

The distribution of language errors across monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual signs. Out of the total 147 signs examined, 103 signs (70.07%) contained at least one language error, while only 44 signs (29.93%) were error-free, indicating that language errors are common in public signage. Monolingual signs tend to be more accurate, whereas bilingual and trilingual signs, which involve mixing scripts, lexicon, and syntax, are more susceptible to spacing, word choice, misspellings, capitalization, and syntactic errors.

The types and frequency of errors were further analysed. Eight error categories were identified, namely spacing, word choice, misspelling, word order, capitalization, syntactic error, missing word, and redundancy. The occurrence of errors was calculated as percentages. In total, 194 errors were detected across 147 signs, with some signs containing multiple error types. It should be noted that the analysis of errors in this study also used the spelling guideline proposed by the Office of the Royal Society of Thailand. The findings of each language error type and frequency are provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Type and Frequency errors

	Monolingual signs	Bilingual signs	Trilingual signs	Total	Percentage
Spacing	2	35	2	39	20.10
Word choice	1	34	9	44	22.68
Misspelling	-	16	-	16	8.25
Word order	-	8	-	8	4.12
Capitalization	2	36	-	38	19.59
Syntactic errors	4	15	5	24	12.37
Missing word		17	7	24	12.37
Redundancy		1		1	0.52
Total	9	162	23	194	100

5. Word Choice

Word choice errors were the most common type identified, occurring when inappropriate English words altered the intended meaning of signs. For example, the use of *"NO GO"* and *"Men"* instead of *"Restricted"* and *"Female"* reflects difficulties in selecting context-appropriate vocabulary. Such errors likely result from limited English proficiency, literal translation from Thai, or lack of familiarity with specific usage, leading to reduced clarity and accuracy in public signage.

6. Word spacing

Word spacing errors were the second most frequent in the dataset, involving either

unnecessary spaces or the omission of required ones. Several such errors appeared on a bus terminal sign, including incorrectly spaced district and subdistrict names. These errors are likely caused by structural differences between Thai and English writing systems, as Thai uses spaces to separate phrases rather than individual words, unlike English.

7. Capitalization

Capitalization errors were the third most common type, mainly involving the incorrect use of capital letters in proper names such as "Nakhon Sawan", which frequently appeared as "Nakhonsawan", contrary to the Office of the Royal Society of Thailand's official conventions. Similar errors were found in place names such as "Lat Yao". These mistakes likely result from differences between Thai and English capitalization rules, as English requires capitalization for proper nouns and specific word categories, whereas Thai script does not vary according to position or grammatical function.

8. Syntactic errors

Syntactic errors were the fourth most common type identified and involved deviations from Standard English grammatical structures. An example is the phrase "the taxi service to the public" instead of the correct form "Taxi service point." Such errors are often caused by literal translation from Thai or limited knowledge of English syntax, particularly differences in noun phrase structure, where modifiers precede the head noun in English but follow it in Thai.

9. Missing word

Missing word errors occur when essential words are omitted, resulting in incomplete grammar or altered meaning. For example, the omission of "CENTER" in a road sign changes the meaning from "Tourist Information Center" to "Tourist Information," thereby reducing clarity and consistency with the Thai message.

10. Misspelling

Misspelling errors involve incorrect word forms, such as "Phya" instead of "Phraya" and misspelt common words like "customer." These errors may result from the irregular relationship between English sounds and spellings, as well as inadequate proofreading or limited familiarity with Standard English orthography.

11. Word order

Word order errors involve incorrect sequencing of words that violates English syntactic norms, such as "counter cashier" and "Baht 150" instead of "cashier counter" and "150 Baht." These errors are likely due to interference from Thai word order patterns.

12. Redundancy

Redundancy errors involve unnecessary repetition of meaning, such as the use of the Thai word "wat" alongside the English word "temple." These errors result from literal translation without considering semantic overlap and may confuse non-Thai readers unfamiliar with Thai terms.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the linguistic landscape of Nakhon Sawan and demonstrated that public signage in the province reflects a multilingual and hybrid environment shaped by the interaction of local identity, globalization, and economic considerations. Thai retains both functional and symbolic dominance, serving as the primary medium of public communication

and reinforcing national identity. English functions as the principal foreign language, strategically employed to enhance international accessibility and convey modernity and cosmopolitan prestige. The frequent occurrence of language mixing, transliteration, and hybrid forms highlights the creative integration of English within a predominantly Thai linguistic context. At the same time, the presence of linguistic errors reveals ongoing challenges in ensuring accuracy and communicative effectiveness in public signage.

These findings underscore the need for greater institutional attention to multilingual signage in non-major tourist destinations. The development of standardized guidelines increased linguistic oversight, and improved English proficiency among sign producers would contribute to clearer communication and a more positive public image. From a theoretical perspective, this study extends linguistic landscape research beyond major urban and tourist centers, confirming that the negotiation between local linguistic identity and the global influence of English represents a shared regional pattern across Asian contexts (Huebner, 2006).

6. Discussion

This study examined language use, mixing, dominance, and errors in Nakhon Sawan's public signage. The results showed that most signs were bilingual, primarily featuring Thai and English, which aligns with the findings of Sutthinaraphan (2016). Monolingual signs were predominantly in Thai, while trilingual signs most often included Thai, English, and Chinese, rather than Japanese. Among foreign languages, English was the most prominently displayed, highlighting its dominant role in public signage.

Despite Nakhon Sawan's linguistic diversity and growing Chinese tourism, English remains the primary international language on signs, consistent with recent Thai linguistic landscape studies (Ngampramuan, 2022; Kavilanan, 2024; Pathanasin, 2025). Chinese appears modestly, suggesting emerging recognition of Chinese visitors even though Nakhon Sawan is not a major tourist destination.

Language mixing between Thai and English occurs systematically across script, lexical, and syntactic levels, creating hybrid forms that balance national identity with cosmopolitan appeal. Thai maintains visual and structural dominance while English adds prestige and modernity, particularly in commercial contexts. This pattern mirrors findings from Bangkok (Chaiyasit & Richter, 2025), indicating consistent linguistic hierarchies across Thailand.

Error analysis revealed that monolingual signs were more accurate than bilingual and trilingual signs. Common errors included word choice, spacing, capitalization, syntax, missing words, word order, and redundancy—likely caused by Thai structural interference, literal translation, limited English proficiency, and inadequate quality control.

The findings offer several practical implications for stakeholders in Nakhon Sawan. First, municipal authorities and urban planners should develop standardized guidelines for multilingual signage to reduce errors and improve communication effectiveness. Second, sign makers and businesses would benefit from quality control measures, including professional proofreading services and consultation with language experts before finalizing bilingual or trilingual signs. Third, local educational institutions could offer training programs in English for commercial purposes, focusing on common signage vocabulary, proper capitalization, spacing conventions, and grammatical structures. Fourth, tourism development agencies should consider gradually incorporating more Chinese language elements in strategic locations to accommodate the growing number of Chinese visitors while maintaining Thai cultural identity. Fifth, policymakers could establish a signage review system or advisory board to ensure linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness in public spaces. Finally, these findings suggest that investing in language education and professional translation services represents a cost-

effective approach to enhancing the city's international image and improving communication with both tourists and foreign residents.

7. Suggestions

The presence of linguistic errors in public signage underscores an urgent need for language authorities and local administrations to formulate standardized guidelines to ensure accuracy, consistency, and communicative clarity in multilingual signage in non-major tourist destinations such as Nakhon Sawan. Establishing a dedicated provincial agency responsible for verifying linguistic accuracy and promoting adherence to standard English writing conventions in public signage is likewise imperative. Enhancing the English-language proficiency of sign producers would further strengthen the overall quality of signage. In addition to these practical implications, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how provincial cities negotiate global linguistic trends within their specific socio-economic contexts. The findings extend existing scholarship on linguistic landscapes outside major urban and tourist centers, indicating that the interplay among local identity, English globalization, and multilingualism constitutes a shared regional trajectory across Asian contexts (Huebner, 2006).

The dataset of this study comprised 200 signs in Nakhon Sawan, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions of Thailand. Future research should adopt a comparative approach across multiple provinces outside major tourist destinations to investigate regional variations in linguistic landscapes. Given that this study relied solely on textual analysis, incorporating the perspectives of sign producers, readers, and business owners could provide deeper insight into motivations underlying language choice and audience interpretations. Moreover, comparative analyses of top-down and bottom-up signs with respect to language use, spatial arrangement, and linguistic errors could further provide a more comprehensive understanding of the distinction between these types of signage and the error patterns

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