

The Meaning of Store Names in Chinese: The Representation of Chinese Auspiciousness Beliefs of Thai-Chinese Hokkien in Phuket Old Town

Apinya Punribun and Pim Samara Yarapirom

Songkla University, Phuket Campus

Corresponding Author, E-mail: pimdejong2517@gmail.com

Abstract

This research mainly discusses about the meaning of Chinese shop names: a reflection of the beliefs about auspiciousness among Thai Hokkien Chinese people in Phuket Old Town. The aim of this study was to examine the language patterns inherent in Chinese shop names within the Thai community of Hokkien Chinese lineage. Additionally, the investigation sought to analyze the connotations embedded in Chinese shop names, specifically those indicative of beliefs and values associated with auspiciousness among individuals of Thai descent with Hokkien Chinese roots. The study focused on a sample comprising ten shops, where the names of the establishments were presented in the Chinese language. This research used qualitative research and the data analysis used Content Analysis, Thematic Analysis, and Historical Analysis. Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that the store sign survey results and interviews with store owners' states that store owners choose words with auspicious meanings. Language is also determined by attitudinal, language, commercial, and other factors. In conclusion, this study indicates that the significance of Chinese shop names mirrors the auspicious beliefs held by individuals of Hokkien Chinese descent in Phuket Old Town, Thailand.

Keywords: Chinese; Auspiciousness Beliefs; Chinese Store Meaning; Phuket Old Town; Thai-Chinese Hokkien

Introduction

Identity is the characteristic that identifies oneself and expresses the characteristics of a group. It can occur abstractly and concretely and change according to the conditions of time and history, which vary in each area with their preference for religious values and beliefs, ethnicity, and the environment (Fuengfusakul, 2003, p. 91). Identity arises in a community linked to a locality with three factors: a way of life, social system, and kinship, including beliefs and rituals related to religious beliefs. Such factors must be consistent with the cultural group of environment and dependence on nature (Rakngam, 2016, pp. 64-65).

The culture exhibits distinctive attributes, with Chinese immigrants to Thailand actively preserving key elements of Chinese cultural heritage, notably the language. Culture functions as the custodian of historical characteristics and Hokkien Chinese, evolving into Thai-Chinese Hokkien, commonly referred to as Baba Phuket, the prevalent linguistic accent is predominantly Hokkien the utilization of language as a tool, primarily through written records. Language, therefore, assumes a pivotal role as the nucleus of culture. The Chinese language, in particular, plays a crucial role in conveying cultural significance.

¹ Received: January 21, 2024; Revised: February 12, 2024; Accepted: February 15, 2024

Minnan serves as a prominent medium of communication among Chinese individuals residing in the five southern border provinces, encompassing Singapore and Malaysia, and holds the status of a national language in Taiwan. Given that the predominant population of Phuket comprises primarily Hokkien Chinese, evolving into Thai-Chinese Hokkien, commonly referred to as Baba Phuket, the prevalent linguistic accent is predominantly Hokkien.

Taoist Ontology or Beliefs is the doctrinal foundations of Taoist ideology trace their origin to Lao Tzu, a philosopher hailing from the Zhou Dynasty. Central to Lao Tzu's teachings is an emphasis on the inherent principles governing the natural order. Specifically, Lao Tzu imparts the wisdom of aligning human existence with the organic flow of the universe, positing that contravening these natural laws would inevitably result in disorder and affliction. The regulatory force underlying these natural laws is encapsulated by the term "Tao," signifying a primordial power that engenders all phenomena. This conceptual framework bears striking resemblance to the paradigm of Yin and Yang. Many Chinese still practice Taoism, as seen in many Chinese shrines (Thepsingh, 2010, pp. 22-23).

Confucianism, attributed to the intellectual legacy of Confucius, represents a profound influence on Chinese civilization and contemporary thought. The breadth of Confucius' teachings encompasses a spectrum that spans law, politics, governance, education, familial relations, virtue, personal development, and the paramount value of filial piety. However, the chief aim is for people to be prodigious people and live in society peacefully. Confucius emphasized morality or ren (仁), believing that morality makes a perfect human being (Thepsingh, 2010, pp. 23-25). Mahayana Buddhism, originating in India, exerted a substantial influence on the Chinese populace since the Han Dynasty. In the Chinese context, Mahayana Buddhism underwent modification, frequently assimilating with indigenous belief systems such as Taoism and Confucianism. Subsequent to migration to the Malay Peninsula, adherents propagated these syncretic beliefs. Evidences of Mahayana Buddhist influences manifest prominently in Phuket, where practices include the veneration of Kuan Yin and the dedication of merit to the deceased. Additionally, a cultural tradition persists, involving the observance of ethical precepts and the adoption of a vegetarian dietary regimen; this tradition combines Buddhism and Taoism (Thepsingh, 2010, pp. 25-26).

Based on the aforementioned triad of belief systems, it is evident that irrespective of the particular doctrinal orientation, the emotional and cognitive dimensions remain integral to the Chinese cultural psyche. Regardless of the geographical locations to which Chinese communities disperse, a salient marker of their identity persists in the form of enduring beliefs instilled since antiquity. The heterogeneity in the characteristics of Chinese diasporic communities arises from the amalgamation of indigenous beliefs, introduced by the residing Chinese population. This trend is observable in the instances of Chinese migration to the Malay Peninsula and the southern region of Thailand, where their pre-existing belief systems accompany them.

Research objectives

1. To study the language patterns of Chinese shop names among Thai people of Hokkien Chinese descent.
2. To study the meaning of Chinese shop names that reflect the beliefs and values regarding auspiciousness of Thai people of Hokkien Chinese descent.

Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Belief

General understanding: the term "belief" in a general context denotes an unquestioningly accepted body of knowledge and practices, accruing over time through ancestral transmission, thereby forming a cumulative repository that is perpetuated from one generation to the succeeding one. Wipolchai (2021) classified the beliefs of people in Thai society into 2 levels:

1. Beliefs that are part of a major religious system or national religion are reasonable beliefs that clearly explain what people are wondering about, have a system, and determine the rituals and way of life of people in the country.

2. Folk beliefs are beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation until they are followed according to tradition.

2.2 The Concept of Naming

As posited by Deluzain (1996), the act of naming represents a ubiquitous cognitive process that manifests considerable variation across diverse cultures in terms of its procedural norms. The fundamental objective across cultures remains the linguistic and contextually apt designation of an individual. In essence, naming emerges as a cultural construct, delineating the identification of an individual through the application of culturally informed strategies within the given societal framework, and subsequently actualized through language. Consequently, names assume a pivotal role within each cultural milieu, bearing substantial significance for the bestower, the named individual, and the broader societal context, as underscored by Mbarachi and Igwenyi (2018).

2.2.2 The Chinese naming cultures

1. Use letters that are auspicious. Some people have names that are difficult to write and are letters that are not often found in everyday life because they use letters that have good or luxurious meanings that come from words in literature.

2. Most Chinese names have two syllables, but there are also a number of people who have names with just one letter.

3. Chinese names given by parents often reflect the parents' hopes or wishes for their children, such as using words meaning rich (富), noble or auspicious (贵), prosperous(荣), beautiful and elegant (华), virtuous, or loving fairness (义), etc.

4. In naming names, many Chinese people like to check their horoscopes by looking at their birth date and then name them according to their horoscopes with letters that are made up of various elements, namely 金 (gold), 木 (wood), 水(water), 火 (fire), 土 (earth) to enhance your destiny.

5. Some Chinese people like to name their names after seasons, places, or events on the day they were born, such as 国庆 (National Day), on the day of the earthquake 震生 (earthquake), or have characters representing the season or place of birth, such as 春 (spring), 河 (river), 山 (mountain), etc.

2.3 Phuket Old Town

2.3.1 Meaning of the Old City

The term "Old City," as explicated by The Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (2016), denotes a city or a delineated urban area possessing a distinctive character that has endured through epochs, characterized by the uniqueness of local culture, the presence of hybridized architectural styles, or manifestations of societal evolution patterns

inherited from diverse historical eras. Alternatively, an Old City may have served as the original settlement at a certain point in history or exhibits historical and architectural attributes of artistic, archaeological, and historical value. Notably, the physical evidence discernible in the city structure or ancient sites attests to the enduring and evolving nature of the locale. This perpetuity is underscored by Borivethanan (2023), who emphasizes that an Old City maintains its relevance as a living urban entity, persistently evolving from its historical origins into the contemporary era.

2.3.2 Phuket Old Town area

Phuket Old Town covers the area from Ratsada Road, Yaowarat Road, Dibuk Road, Phang Nga Road, Krabi Road, and Thalang Road. One of the oldest roads in Phuket Town is an old commercial area that tells stories of the way of life that used to be in the past. It has been a historical road along with Phuket Province for more than 150 years since the year 1850 when Phraya Phuket Lohakasettak (Tad) held the position of Phuket governor. This road has also been designated in the announcement of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment as an artistic environmental conservation area (Borivethanan, 2023).

2.3.3 Ethnic characteristics of Phuket Old Town

The present-day community within Phuket Old Town is characterized as a multicultural society, wherein diverse ethnic groups coexist harmoniously. This inclusivity encompasses Thai Muslims, Sikhs, and Baba Chinese or Peranakan individuals, who trace their lineage to the Hokkien Chinese, constituting the predominant demographic and playing pivotal roles in the social, cultural, economic, and developmental dimensions of the community. Within the Chinese Baba familial structure, there exists a discernible prioritization of significance accorded to men vis-à-vis women, predicated on the perception that men serve as the primary heirs responsible for perpetuating the family name, as elucidated by Brivethanan (2023).

2.3.4 Social Structure

Currently, Phuket Old Town holds significance as a commercial hub for souvenir retail and serves as a focal point for community tourism or cultural tourism endeavors. This role involves the preservation and promotion of enduring cultural traditions dating back to ancient times, tailored to meet the evolving demands of an expanding tourist demographic. Noteworthy examples include the Vegetarian Festival, which emphasizes culinary offerings and showcases the extraordinary abilities of mediums, and the Chinese New Year Rewind Festival, an initiative that extends the celebratory activities of the Chinese New Year by nostalgically revisiting historical ways of life. The deliberate utilization of Phuket Old Town as a venue for such events contributes to its characterization as an active historical precinct, marked by a synthesis of cultures and distinguished by notable architectural structures and public spaces. Descendants of the Baba, tracing their lineage to Hokkien Chinese ancestors, continue to be prominently engaged in commerce, particularly trade. Furthermore, some lineages stemming from forebears who held esteemed positions in mining or governance have diversified their careers into real estate, hotel management, and tourism, aligning with the strategic tourism development policies within Phuket Province, as detailed by Borivethanan (2023).

2.4 Previous Studies

Through studying the research related to the study of store names, they found that some researchers have studied them as follows:

The thesis on "The Naming of Streets in Bangkok" by Jitmung (2011) found that there are six types of origins and meanings of street names in Bangkok, in order from the most common to the least common, including 1) Origin and meaning from the place or environment. 2) Origin and meaning of names, surnames, royal titles, or positions of essential people. 3) Origin and meaning of beliefs and values regarding auspiciousness. 4) Origin and meaning of important events. 5) The origin and meaning of the characteristics of the people in the community that the road crosses. 6) The origin and meaning of the objects used.

The thesis "Survey and analysis of Chinese shop names of Thai Chinese people in Mueang District, Ubon Ratchathani Province" by Sodsongkrit (2012) found that a single component is the most famous structure of shop names. Regarding semantic analysis, the study found that most Chinese and Thai shop names relate to each other through translation, transliteration, and the use of words with similar sounds that carry auspicious meanings. It reflects that Thai Chinese people place importance on using language when naming Chinese and Thai shop names. The shop's name is essential because it is auspicious for business, such as prosperity, wealth, longevity, stability, smoothness, and success.

A research article, "Study of Chinese-language gold shops for Thai Chinese people in Bangkok," by Yothinsirikul (2018), found information reflected in the names of Chinese-language gold shops among Thai Chinese people in Bangkok. The study found that the area with the most Chinese gold shop names was the Phra Nakhon area, a Chinese clan family area. Researchers discovered that the majority of Thai Chinese people involved in the gold business are "Sae Tae" and "Sae Lim," which are commonly seen in the names of store-type businesses (行). It reflects that the names of Chinese-language gold shops among Thai Chinese people in Bangkok reflect information about the Chinese language, history, ethnicity, names, clan system, beliefs in Feng Shui, gold business, and auspicious meaning.

The thesis "Language on Shop Signs for Thai Chinese People in the Yaowarat Community: A Case Study of Chinese and Thai Shop Names" by Yothinsirikul (2020) found that the definitions of store names in both Chinese and Thai store signs include the number of syllables, the origin of the word, and the source from the store name. For shop sign names in Chinese, the most popular ones have three syllables. The origin of shop names in Chinese is popular in the monolingual Chinese. As for the origin of the shop's name, it is most likely a family name. Three syllables are the most popular for Thai shop names on store name signs. The origin of shop names in Thai is popular in monolingual Thai. The origin of the shop's name is most likely derived from the family name. This study reveals that the language on Thai Chinese shop signs in the Yaowarat community reflects the trend in naming shops as a reflection of Thai Chinese history, name systems, names, and related information with businesses in the Yaowarat community area.

The research article "Chinese Shop Signs: A Case Study in the Saphan Khwai and Yaowarat Areas" by Bowonphichayanurak (2018) found that there are two sides to the popularity of Chinese store names: the language component and the relationship between store names and products and services. Bowonphichayanurak (2018) found two types of shop signs regarding language components: multilingual and bilingual. The most common types are multilingual sign types, including Chinese, Thai, and English. The least common language signs are monolingual signs, namely Chinese. In terms of the relationship between store names and products and services, it was found that most stores named their stores with meanings similar to or related to products and services rather than naming stores after people or places.

The store's name reflects the community's way of life as a multicultural society. It represents the changes in today's society's acceptance of racial and linguistic diversity.

A research article, "Names of Chinese Shop Signs in the Upper and Lower Markets, Mueang District, Nakhon Pathom Province," by Leesakul (2019) found that the language characteristics that appear on Chinese shop signs, such as monolingual signs, signs that can be written entirely with Thai characters in Chinese or followed by Chinese characters written in Chinese. Nevertheless, Chinese people in the past wrote Chinese characters from right to left, but Thai characters that are Chinese pronunciations were written in the Thai style, from left to right. Bilingual signs are signs written in Thai characters in Thai words followed by Chinese characters in Chinese or in Thai or Thai characters in Chinese. This is the diversity of language and socio-cultural in the meaning or sound of Chinese shop signs. The reflections on Chinese shop signs reflect Chinese beliefs about auspiciousness. The study found that naming Chinese store signs using vocabulary units related to goodness and prosperity leads to a prosperous store business.

As for the meaning of store name signs and products and services, it was found that the meanings of store name signs and goods and services unrelated to each other are the most common in the upmarket area, such as Liang Heng 興聯. When translated together, it means a successful shop. This store is a grocery store that has products and services that are unrelated to the store name. There is a total of 45 such signs.

A research article, "Comparison of restaurant naming in Mueang District, Chiang Mai Province and Fuzhou City, China," by Chatwankhiri (2021) found that the language for naming restaurants in Mueang District, Chiang Mai Province, is less complex than restaurant names in Fuzhou, China, both in terms of semantic structure and linguistic strategies. It was also found that restaurant names in Mueang District, Chiang Mai Province, used fewer linguistic strategies than those in Fuzhou, China. As for social and cultural expressions in restaurant names, it was found that restaurant names in Mueang District, Chiang Mai Province, mostly expressed locality, while restaurant names in Fuzhou, China, mostly expressed values related to prosperity. The data analysis structure from the above research study can be divided as follows. The origin and meaning of the shop's name reflect beliefs about auspiciousness.

Most Chinese and Thai shop names are related using the strategy of translation, transliteration, and finding words with similar sounds that have auspicious meanings. It reflects that Thai Chinese people place importance on using language when naming Chinese and Thai shop names. The shop's name is crucial because it is auspicious for business, such as prosperity, wealth, longevity, stability, smoothness, and success. The corresponding research belongs to Thesis "Survey and analysis of Chinese shop names of Thai Chinese people in Mueang District, Ubon Ratchathani Province" by Sodsongkrit (2012), Research article on "Names of Chinese shop signs in the upper and lower markets, Mueang District, Nakhon Pathom Province" by Leesakul (2019), and Research article on "Comparison of restaurant naming in Mueang District, Chiang Mai Province and Fuzhou City, China" by Chatwankhiri (2021). Shop signs on shop signs divide the language characteristics and relationships between Thai and Chinese into monolingual, multilingual, and mixed language signs.

The thesis "Language on Shop Signs for Thai Chinese People in the Yaowarat Community: A Case Study of Chinese and Thai Shop Names" by Yothinsirikul (2020) found that the most common types of multilingual signs and bilingual signs were the multilingual sign types, which were Chinese, Thai and English. The least common language signs are monolingual signs, namely Chinese. In terms of the relationship between store names and

products and services, it was found that most stores named their stores with meanings similar to or related to products and services rather than naming stores with people or places. Which is inconsistent with the research article on "Names of Chinese shop signs in the upper and lower markets, Mueang District, Nakhon Pathom Province" by Leesakul (2019) that said, the meanings of store sign names and products and services were found to have the most unrelated meanings of store sign names and products and services in the upper market area. For example, Liang Heng 興聯, when translated together, means a successful shop. Most products and services are not related to this store, which is a grocery store. There are 45 such signs.

Research Method

Research on "The Meaning of Store Names in Chinese: The Representation of Chinese Auspiciousness Beliefs of Hokkien Chinese - Thai Phuket Old Town" uses Qualitative Research methods with research regulations as follows.

Population group and sample characteristics

This research's population group consisted of 10 shop owners with Chinese shop names in Phuket Old Town. The researchers purposely selected the sample using Purposive Sampling.

Data Analysis

The methodological framework employed in the analytical processes of this study incorporates a triad of distinct analytical techniques, namely Content Analysis, Thematic Analysis, and Historical Analysis. To systematically unravel and interpret the complexities inherent in the data, the research design mandates the partitioning of the data analysis into a sequential trifold process.

1. In the initial stage, data collection is executed and subjected to analysis within the parameters of a preliminary theoretical framework, which serves as a guiding conceptual structure.

2. Moving to the second step, the researchers meticulously engage in data triangulation, a process integral to enhancing the robustness and comprehensiveness of the dataset. This involves the collection of supplementary data to validate and corroborate the findings, thereby fortifying the overall integrity of the analytical endeavour.

3. The final step entails a comprehensive scrutiny and analysis of the theoretical framework itself, undertaken with a view to extracting nuanced insights and facilitating the formulation of thorough and definitive conclusions based on the amassed dataset.

In essence, this layered analytical approach seeks to foster a holistic and in-depth understanding of the researched phenomena, ensuring methodological rigor and scholarly integrity throughout the analytical continuum.

Limitations of the study

The primary objective of this investigation is to conduct a comprehensive exploration into the morphological and linguistic attributes of Chinese shop names, concurrently delving into the nuanced meanings encapsulated within these names. Furthermore, this research aspires to elucidate the underlying beliefs and values pertaining to auspiciousness among the Thai Chinese Hokkien community situated in the Phuket Old Town region. The rationale behind selecting the Phuket Old Town area as the focal point of this study lies in its historical significance, spanning over a century. During the historical period when Phuket functioned as a prominent mining locale, a confluence of diverse communities, notably Chinese immigrants, played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape. The enduring Chinese identity evident

in contemporary times, particularly in the preservation of traditional linguistic elements such as Chinese characters on store signs, serves as a compelling reason for situating the research within the historical confines of Phuket Old Town. The deliberate selection of this locale is substantiated by its rich cultural tapestry, thereby providing a nuanced and historically rooted backdrop for investigating the form, language, and symbolic significance of shop names. The delineation of population and sample characteristics is meticulously defined in the subsequent sections of this research endeavor.

Results

From collecting data, especially in-depth and observing the pattern of observing a variety of results of the study titled “The Meaning of Store Names in Chinese: The Representation of Chinese Auspiciousness Beliefs of Thai-Chinese Hokkien in Phuket Old Town” research study. The following analysis information is presented.

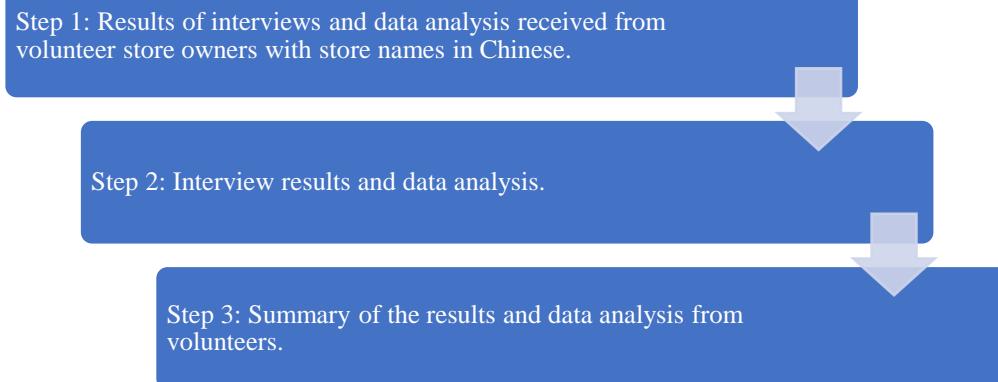


Figure 1. The Steps of Analysis Information

Data Analysis on Interviews

The researchers analyzed the data in detail as follows:

The researchers visited shops with Chinese signs in Phuket Old Town area and personally interviewed the owners of all 10 shops. Introduced myself and formally explained the purpose of the research to the store owner and requested permission to conduct an audio interview. Details of the recording are as follows:

Table 1. Language Patterns of Chinese Shop Names Among Thai People of Hokkien Chinese Descent

| No | Chinese Shop Names | Analysis |
|----|-----------------------|--|
| 1. | shang dé Building 尚德樓 | 尚 Shàng means to respect. 德dé means morality. 樓Lóu means building. |
| 2. | Yuán Chūn Táng 堂春元 | 堂Táng means hall. 春Chūn means spring. 元 Yuán Refers to Yuan, the first leader. |

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 3. | Hào Yuán Fēng 號源豐 Sunthon Sangkhaphan | 號 Hào means a loud cry. 源 Yuán means water source, source, origin. 豐 Fēng means abundance. |
| 4. | Wan Fang 万芳港茶 | 万 Wàn means ten thousand. 芳 Fāng means fragrant. |
| 5. | Sin Yoo Chang 創裕新 | 創 Chuàng means start, start doing. 裕 Yù means abundance, wealth. 新 Xīn means new, new thing. |
| 6. | BAN CHIN THYE 泰振萬 | 泰 Tài means peace, stability. 振 Chéng means to move. 萬 Wàn means ten thousand. |
| 7. | Sin & Lee 利永新 | 利 Lì means smooth, profitable. 永 Yǒng means long, eternal. 新 Xīn means new, new thing. |
| 8. | Hong Yu 裕豐 | 裕 Yù means abundance, wealth. 豐 Fēng means abundance. |
| 9. | Shān 山 Coffee Phuket Old Town | 山 Shān means mountain. |
| 10. | Ài 爱 | 爱 ài means love. |

In the context of Thai Chinese Hokkien shops situated in Phuket Old Town, this study formulates comprehensive guidelines delineating the criteria for naming establishments. Specifically, these guidelines encompass the incorporation of both Chinese and Thai languages on shop signage, facilitating a nuanced and culturally resonant nomenclature. The nomenclatural principles applied to shop names are explicated based on the etymological origins of the constituent words. The ensuing analysis reveals a taxonomy comprising four distinct types, as meticulously elucidated in the following table.

Table 2. Language Patterns in Chinese Shop Based on their Language used in Phuket

| No | Origin of the word | Chinese shop name |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | Monolingual Chinese (Use Thai characters to transliterate the Chinese pronunciation with a Hokkien dialect) | 堂春元 (Hokkien, pronounced Nguan Chun Tong) |
| | | 尚德樓 (Hokkien dialect, pronounced Song Tek Building) |
| | | 號源豐 (Hokkien dialect, pronounced Hong Nguan Hong) |
| | | 裕豐 (Hokkien dialect, pronounced Hong Yu) |
| 2 | Monolingual Chinese (Using English and Thai characters to | 泰振萬 (English over Hokkien dialect reads BAN CHIN THYE) |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | transliterate Chinese sounds with Hokkien dialect) | 創裕新 (English with Hokkien dialect pronounced Sin Yoo Chang) |
| 3 | Monolingual Chinese (Using English and Thai characters to transliterate Chinese sounds with a Mandarin accent) | 万芳港茶 Pronounced Wan Fang |
| 4 | Different foreign languages | 利永新 Pronounced Sin Yong Lee But the message on the sign appears in English as Sin & Lee, where "&" is the English word that comes from the word "and." And on the sign, it also appears in Thai as ชิน แอนด์ ลี, which is another pronunciation from English. |

The nomenclature exhibited on the signboard of Thai Chinese Hokkien shops within the precincts of Phuket Old Town is intricately linked to the etymological roots underpinning the shop's nomenclature. This intrinsic connection between the shop's name and its origin assumes paramount significance, serving as a crucial informational conduit for prospective consumers and service users. The discernible importance of elucidating the origin of the shop name lies in its role as a comprehensive descriptor, conveying essential details such as the identity of the proprietor, the geographical location, the nature of products or services offered, and the overarching business model. As a consequence, the interpretative framework for discerning the meaning of the shop name is categorically delineated, encompassing a nuanced classification to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the semantic layers inherent to the nomenclature.

Table 3. Language Patterns in Chinese Shop Names Based on their components in Phuket Old Town

| No | Origin of the shop name | Chinese shop name |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | Name and surname form | 利永新 (It's the name of the daughter of the first-generation business owner) |
| 2 | Name and surname form + auspicious word form | 創裕新 (創 is a surname or surname; 裕 is an auspicious word meaning rich; 新 is an auspicious word meaning something new) |
| 3 | Auspicious name form | 尚德樓 (尚 is an auspicious word meaning to respect, to have faith in. 德 is an auspicious word meaning morality. 樓 means building) 堂春元 (堂 means hall) |

| | | |
|---|--------------------|---|
| | | 春 is an auspicious word meaning the spring season. 元 is an auspicious form meaning Yuan, Yuan currency) |
| | | 泰 振 萬 (泰 is an auspicious word meaning peace, stability 振 means to move 萬 means ten thousand, tens of thousands) |
| | | 裕 豐 (裕 is an auspicious word meaning rich. 豐 is an auspicious word meaning abundance) |
| 4 | Business word form | 万芳 港茶 (万芳 means fragrant for ten thousand li 港茶 is a business word meaning Hong Kong tea) |

An in-depth exploration into the appellation displayed on the signboard of Thai Chinese Hokkien establishments situated in Phuket Old Town is presented herein. This comprehensive investigation was undertaken through a systematic approach involving rigorous surveying, interviewing, and analytical scrutiny of the diverse array of signage adorning Thai Hokkien Chinese shops within the geographical expanse of Phuket Old Town. The research discerns a multifaceted narrative wherein the Chinese language featured on these distinctive signs unveils a rich tapestry of meanings, encapsulating a spectrum of semantic nuances, as meticulously elucidated in the ensuing discourse.

Table 4. The Aspect of Language Patterns reflected in words on Chinese shop names in Phuket Old Town

| No | Sides reflected in the words on Chinese shop signs | Chinese words | Meaning |
|----|--|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | In terms of Natural environment | 春 | Spring season |
| | | 源 | Source of water, Source |
| | | 茶 | Tea, Tea leaf |
| | | 山 | Mountain |
| 2 | In terms of goodness and prosperity | 尚 | Respect |
| | | 德 | Moral |
| 3 | In terms of wealth | 裕 | Rich, Wealthy |
| | | 豐 | Abundance |
| | | 利 | Profit, Smooth |
| | | 泰 | Peace, Stability |
| 4 | In terms existence | 永 | Long, Eternity |
| 5 | | 創 | Surname Chang |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | In terms of name and family lineage | 新 | 新 Here it refers to a person's name |
| | | 利 | 利 Here it refers to a person's name |
| 6 | In terms of love | 愛 | Love |

Discussions

The act of naming shops in Phuket Old Town serves as a linguistic conduit facilitating communication of meaning between purveyors of goods and services and prospective buyers. The linguistic strategies employed in this context are notably diverse, particularly within the Phuket Old Town locale, where a preponderance of shop signage incorporates all three languages—Chinese, Thai, and English. This linguistic diversity is historically rooted in the period spanning from 1906 to 1932, marked by a significant influx of Chinese immigrants settling in Thailand. During this epoch, Chinese immigrants, grappling with a limited command of the Thai language, predominantly communicated in Chinese, given the communal cohabitation of Chinese individuals. Subsequently, during the latter part of King Rama I's reign, the Thai government implemented measures to regulate Chinese schools, culminating in the nationwide closure of such institutions. This policy shift compelled the Chinese community in Thailand to acquire proficiency in the Thai language and consequently communicate primarily in Thai. Consequently, the nomenclature of shops also reflects this linguistic transformation, with many establishments adopting Thai names in addition to Chinese, mirroring the evolving linguistic dynamics and cultural assimilation within the Thai-Chinese community.

An examination of the findings derived from the survey of store signs and interviews with shop owners reveals a predilection among proprietors for selecting words imbued with auspicious meanings. The linguistic choices in store naming are influenced by a multifaceted interplay of various factors, including attitudinal considerations, linguistic preferences, commercial imperatives, and other contextual determinants.

1. A reflection on nature and the environment: A discernible aspect of Chinese cultural thought is the coexistence of nature and humans, aligned with Taoist principles advocating acceptance of nature's cyclical processes. Additionally, the ancient Chinese concept of Feng Shui, emphasizing the significance of the orientation of structures, is deeply ingrained. This cultural legacy is manifested in shop signs using vocabulary units associated with natural elements such as rivers, forests, seasons, and mountains.

2. A reflection of the goodness and prosperity of the Chinese: Store naming assumes particular importance in reflecting aspirations for good fortune and prosperity. The selection of a store name is driven by the desire to bring auspicious energies that augur well for the business.

3. A reflection of wealth: Rooted in a historical legacy of business acumen, many Chinese individuals have a lineage in commerce, and this extensive commercial experience is believed to correlate with business prosperity. Consequently, naming a store with words connoting wealth or financial success is perceived as a strategy to enhance business affluence.

4. A reflection of existence: The stability of a business is highly valued in Chinese cultural ethos. Consequently, store names are crafted with the intention of attracting positive energies that promote business continuity and longevity.

5. A reflection on the name and family lineage of the Chinese people: Chinese individuals place significant value on preserving their identity and familial lineage. This is reflected in the naming of shops, wherein the use of clan names or vocabulary units with auspicious meanings rooted in the local environment symbolize and convey one's identity. To convey one's identity and believe it will make the business prosperous, such as 福, etc.

6. A reflection on love: Naming a business with a theme centered around love serves as a reflection of the importance placed on interpersonal relationships among the Chinese community. This naming strategy is seen as a means to convey trust and strengthen business partnerships within the community.

The aforementioned reflection aligns with Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation, wherein the establishment of connections between cognitive constructs, such as "mind maps," and semiotic symbols, or "signs," involves the systematic organization or compilation of these constructs into diverse linguistic forms, thereby substituting or referencing associated concepts. At the crux of the theory is the foundational significance of the interrelationships among "things," conceptual notions, and signs, constituting the fundamental underpinning for the generation of meaning within the linguistic domain. The process that connects these three elements is called "representation" (Hall, 1997, pp. 17-19). The Chinese language on shop signs reflects the meanings hidden in the lexical units, which language acts like a mirror to reflect those meanings, or what Stewart Hall calls the Reflective Approach. The Chinese store naming convention also represents the "Intentional Approach," which believes that the owner determines various meanings through language. The words, therefore, have the meaning that the owner intended them to have. Such as 万芳, the owner of the business, intended to convey that the drinks he was selling were very fragrant, with a fragrance that could go a thousand miles away. Alternatively, 利永新, besides having an auspicious meaning, it also means the name of the business owner's daughter who named the shop. These store names are assigned meanings based on what the owner intended them to mean.

The "Constructionist Approach" posits the perspective that meaning in language is not inherently preserved within entities or individual language users. Instead, this approach contends that meaning is constructed through representation systems that encompass diverse conceptual frameworks and signs. Consequently, the act of naming a store by a proprietor with the intention of conveying specific meanings through the vocabulary employed on the sign does not guarantee a uniform understanding of that meaning among consumers. The interpretative process for consumers involves varied perspectives, resulting in diverse understandings of the meaning encapsulated within store names.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this research is to delve into the intricate linguistic patterns characterizing Chinese shop names within the Thai community of Hokkien descent. Specifically, the study endeavors to unravel the semantic nuances embedded in Chinese shop names among individuals of Hokkien heritage in Phuket Old Town, with a particular focus on the meanings that convey beliefs and values related to auspiciousness. Through a meticulous analysis of the nomenclature of ten selected shops, the research elucidates a discernible trend wherein proprietors intentionally select words imbued with auspicious connotations. This linguistic choice is revealed to be influenced by a confluence of factors, including attitudinal, linguistic, commercial, and various other considerations. The visual representation of these

chosen words on store signage emerges as a poignant reflection of the deep-seated beliefs surrounding auspiciousness, thereby underscoring the historical and linguistic significance of store names within the Thai Chinese cultural milieu. Predominantly, these beliefs manifest through the selection of names imbued with positive meanings, as individuals of Hokkien descent believe that a positively connotated name augurs favorable outcomes for both themselves and their familial lineage, thereby also serving as a testament to underlying religious convictions.

Suggestions

1. It is advisable to conduct an investigation into Chinese signage across other categories, including but not limited to signage denoting tourist attractions and advertising, to comprehensively understand the semiotic practices and communicative strategies employed in these domains.
2. A comprehensive scholarly inquiry should be undertaken to explore the etymological foundations of the meanings ascribed to shop signs in both Chinese and Thai languages. This investigation should encompass an analysis of the reflections and beliefs manifesting in various facets portrayed on shop signs, elucidating the intricate interplay of cultural, symbolic, and linguistic elements embedded in the nomenclature of commercial establishments.

References

Rapeephat, A. (2008). วัฒนธรรมคือความหมาย ทฤษฎีและวิธีการของคลิฟฟอร์ด เกียร์ซ, กรุงเทพ
มหานคร: ศูนย์มานุษยวิทยาสิรินธร, 71-81.

Borivethanan, P. (2023) Phuket Old Town. *Online*. Retrieved November 15, 2023. From:
<https://wikicommunity.sac.or.th/community/1096#>

Bowonphichayanurak, S. (2018). *Chinese Shop Signs: A Case Study in the Saphan Khwai and Yaowarat Areas*.

Chatwankhiri, L. (2021). *Comparison of restaurant naming in Mueang District, Chiang Mai Province and Fuzhou City, China*.

Deluzain, H. E. (1996). Names and personal identity. Behind the name. *Online*. Available:
<http://www.behindthename.com/articles/3.php> (November 16, 2023)

Fuangfusakul, A. (2003). Identity: Review of theory and conceptual framework. *Bangkok National Research*.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representations Cultural: Representations and Signifying Practices*, 17-19.

Jitmung, P. (2011). *Naming streets in Bangkok*. Master of Arts Thesis in Thai Language, Chulalongkorn University.

Leesakul, T. (2019). *Names of Chinese shop signs in the upper and lower markets*, Mueang District, Nakhon Pathom Province.

Mbarachi, C.S. & Igwenyi, E. (2018). 'Language, identity and the cultural context of names in selected Nigerian novels', *International Journal of Language and Literature*. 6 (1), 29-37. <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijll.v6n1a5>

Natthaphong Rak Ngam. (2016). The concept of local identity under the context of change in the era of globalization. *Nakhon Lampang Buddhist College Journal*. 5 (2).

Sodsongkrit, M. (2023). *Survey and analysis of Chinese shop names of Thai-Chinese people in Mueang District, Ubon Ratchathani Province*

Thepsingh, P. (2010). Background of Phuket's relationship with Western nations and China. In the community in the PSU wisdom warehouse. *Online*. Retrieved on 26 September 2022, from <https://kb.psu.ac.th/psukb/bitstream/2553/5354/20/ch2.pdf>

Wipolchai, N. (2021). ภาษา สีอ ความ หมาย: ภาษาสะท้อนคติความเชื่อจากการตั้งชื่อยาและชื่อโรคใน ตำราแพทย์ศาสตร์ สงเคราะห์. *Suratthani Rajabhat Journal*. 8 (1), 29-54.

Yothinsirikul, S. (2020). *Language on shop signs for Thai-Chinese people in the Yaowarat community: A case study of Chinese and Thai shop names*.

Yothinsirikul, S. (2018). *A study of Chinese-language gold shops among Thai-Chinese people in Bangkok*.