

# **Analysing Types and Translation Approaches of Tourist Signs at Four Hot Springs in Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand**

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## **Abstract**

With wellness tourism growing in popularity worldwide and Thailand drawing a lot of foreign tourists whose primary goal is improved physical and mental well-being, quality information signs at wellness tourist destinations are thus vital. This article attempts to identify the types of tourist signs and their English translations at four hot springs—Mae Um Long, Ban Nong Hang, Pha Bong, and Sai Ngam—in the northern province of Mae Hong Son, Thailand. Calori and Vanden-Eynden's (2015) categorisation of sign types was applied as the analytical framework. Both literal translation and adaptation are employed for identifying the types of translation approaches used for the signs' messages. The study found seven types of signs that adhered to Calori and Vanden-Eynden's taxonomy and six types that differed from it. Regarding the translation approaches, both literal translation and adaptation were identified, along with the three further sub-types of adaptation: addition, reduction, and interpretation. The findings can contribute to both academic and professional domains, especially tourism translation.

*Keywords:* Health Tourism, Hot Springs, Thai to English Translation, Translation Approaches, Types of Signs

It is well acknowledged that the tourism industry can provide considerable revenue for a country. Approximately 25.7 million foreign tourists visited the Kingdom of Thailand and generated an estimated USD 31.3 billion for the local tourism industry in 2023 (Khaosod English, 2023). Health

tourism—which encompasses medical tourism, wellness tourism, and preventative healthcare tourism (Global Healthcare Accreditation, 2023)—plays a significant part in contributing to this monetary figure. According to the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) report, Thailand, whose wellness economy was worth USD 29 billion in 2020, ranked 24 out of 218 countries worldwide (Global Wellness Institute, n.d.). While medical tourism focuses on individuals who travel abroad for medical treatments and procedures such as surgeries or dental treatments, and preventative healthcare tourism is for those who seek proactive medical treatments to prevent potential health issues, wellness tourism emphasises non-medical activities and experiences that promote physical, mental, and spiritual health and well-being, such as spa treatments, yoga retreats, or hot spring baths (Global Health Accreditation, 2023). Thermal springs alone earned approximately USD 10 million for Thailand in 2020, based on the GWI's report.

Among the 112 hot springs scattered throughout the kingdom (Hanlon, 2024), one-third can be found in northern Thailand, especially in the mountainous provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Son. While Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are generally well-known and easily accessible both by land and air, Mae Hong Son is more physically remote for the average traveler. However, according to the most favourite hot springs and geysers in Thailand voted by Tripadvisor's reviewers, Mae Hong Son's Pai Hot Spring comes first (887 votes), and Sai Ngam Hot Spring comes fifth (199 votes) (Tripadvisor, n.d.).

To facilitate visitors, signs at hot springs are necessary to provide information for them. As these hot springs are open to both Thai and foreign visitors, bilingual signs using both Thai and English languages seem to be at least a minimum requirement. Thus, translation plays a significant role in transferring the Thai information into English correctly and appropriately. Not only do quality translations assist foreign visitors in terms of wayfinding, but they also matter in terms of safety, as these hot springs have surface temperatures ranging from 89 to 210 degrees Fahrenheit, or 31 to 98 degrees Celsius (Hanlon, 2024). It is therefore significant to examine the signs at hot springs in terms of their categorisation and translation in order to identify the types of signs available and the approaches to translation employed for those signs.

Although Thailand's tourism industry is vital to its economy, to the best of the authors' knowledge, only limited studies on tourist information signs and their translations have been conducted. For example, studies of the information provided to tourists about historical sites at the World Heritage sites of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya (Staiff & Bushell, 2003; Saipradit & Staiff, 2008) found that existing interpretations of these sites were poor, partially due to their English translations. Their studies, however, focused only on the information

related to art and history. Other studies have examined the needs of quality of tourist information at historical tourist attractions in Thailand and proposed improved English tourist signs (Limsiriruenrai, 2017; Nakplad, Mittajan, & Innarong, 2021; Nakplad, Jindachot, et al., 2023), suggesting that the translation should be verified by experts or native speakers in order to create quality signs. Their studies involved surveys and interviews, which tended to emphasise only general information signs and those of local stakeholders without examining the signs in terms of translation analysis. Examining attractions such as museums, Boonyavanich (2017) identified linguistic errors in museum translations. She suggested revisions but did not identify the specific approaches used in the translation. For documentary research of guidelines and proposals for the English information signs, Limsiriruenrai (2022) suggested two types of translation for tourist information signs in general that should be based on Larson's (1997) definition: form-based and meaning-based translations, but without analysing the text itself.

To fill the gap in these previous studies, as well as to make a useful contribution to the field of translation studies, with a particular emphasis on tourism translation, this study has two objectives: first, identify the types of signs found at the hot springs; and second, analyse the approaches of translation employed on those signs. Understanding different kinds of signs and translation approaches will help relevant agencies select the right sign and translation to enhance the quality of information and communication channels at hot springs and other tourist destinations, which in turn boost tourism.

### **Tourist Information Signs**

Calori and Vanden-Eynden (2015), from the graphic design perspective, classify signs into seven groups:

1) *identification*, placed at a location to designate that location within a setting. Identification signs serve as proof that “*you have arrived*” at a location.

2) *directional*, placed at a distance from their intended locations to point individuals in the direction of different locations within a certain setting.

Because they assist people in finding their way to destinations, directional signs are also frequently referred to as wayfinding signs. Directional signs nearly invariably use arrows to indicate which way to go—left, right, or straight ahead.

3) *warning*, uses words like “*Danger*” to inform individuals about potential risks or safety precautions in a given area.

4) *prohibitory and regulatory*, aim to control people's actions or forbid specific activities in a given area. In this category, “*Authorised Personnel Only*” and “*No Smoking*” are two such examples.

5) *operational*, informs individuals about the functions and uses of an environment; it is frequently extensive and takes some time to read and comprehend. An example are directory signs, sometimes known as directories,

which provide a list of tenants' locations within a space together with a locator map. Other instances include signs that specify their operating days and hours.

6) *honorific*, bestows honour upon people associated with a place. An example of this type of sign is a donor sign which lists the names of individuals who contributed money to a property. Honorific signage is most frequently found in civic and institutional locations.

7) *interpretive*, offers details on a location's history, topography, inhabitants, artefacts, and more to assist people in understanding the significance of the area or locations within it.

Although Calori and Vanden-Eynden's (2015) categorisation of sign types applies to signs in general, it can also be applied to tourist information signs, as the latter also provide information but in the more specific situation of tourist attractions.

### **Translation of Tourist Information Signs**

Several relevant studies have identified approaches used for translating tourist information signs. Ko (2010) analysed public signs in tourist areas of Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong and found three approaches to translation used in these signs. First, literal translation: every word in the source text is translated, although the English translation may be unclear. Second, semi-literal and semi-adaptive translation: every word in the source text is translated where possible, and those impossible to translate literally will be modified. Third, adaptation: descriptive and figurative words and phrases are modified or omitted.

Although different translation scholars use different terminologies, such as Vinay & Darbelnet's (1958) direct and oblique translation, Nida's (1964) formal and dynamic equivalency, Catford's (1965) rank-bound and rank-unbound translation, Newmark's (1988) word-for-word translation and adaptation, and Larson's (1997) form-based and meaning-based translation, it is widely acknowledged and well accepted in translation studies that there are fundamentally two equivalence approaches to translation: literal translation and adaptation. While the literal translation is mostly and similarly referred to as a translation that preserves the source text's form rather than meaning, adaptation varies from one scholar to another. In this study, we specifically define literal translation as an approach that the translator uses to attempt to render every word in the source text and preserve its original meaning. Adaptation refers to instances where the translator modifies the source text's meaning.

### **Methodology**

This study examines tourist information signs found at four hot springs in Mae Hong Son Province in the north of Thailand: 1) Mae Um Long Hot Spring (Mae Sareang District); 2) Ban Nong Hang Hot Spring (Khun Yuam

District); 3) Pha Bong Hot Spring (Mueang Mae Hong Son District); and 4) Sai Ngam Hot Spring (Pai District).<sup>1</sup> The rationale behind the choices of these four hot springs is because they are public hot springs run by local authorities (Sub-District Administrative Offices).

The data were taken from the tourist information signs from these four hot springs with numbers of sign and message, as shown in Table 1. The collected sign data included those that contain a single message or set of messages. Some of the signs are monolingual (Thai *or* English) while others are bilingual (Thai *and* English). The Thai or English monolingual sign data were collected for the purpose of sign categorisation only, not for the translation analysis. Therefore, sign categorisation is based on 73 signs, whereas translation approach identification is based on 233 messages.

**Table 1**

*Names of Hot Spring and Numbers of Collected Data*

Name of hot springs	Number of signs	Number of messages (words, phrases, and sentences)
Mae Um Long	16	26
Ban Nong Hang	18	52
Pha Bong	23	54
Sai Ngam	16	101
Total	73	233

The procedure was as follows: 1) All signs are deductively analysed and identified following Calori and Vanden-Eynden's (2015) seven classifications: identification signs, directional signs, warning signs, prohibitory and regulatory signs, operational signs, honorific signs, and interpretive signs. 2) Then the English translations were identified into either literal translation or adaptation.

## Findings and Discussion

The findings were then analysed in light of the two objectives of the study—to identify types of signs found at the hot springs and to identify approaches to translation of these signs.

### *Identifying Types of Signs*

After examination, the researchers categorised the sign data into two groups: a single type, which accounted for 62 signs, and a mixed type, or hybrid,

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<sup>1</sup> Pai Hot Spring, which was voted first in TripAdvisor, belongs to and is run by a private business.

which included 11 signs. The first group has a single type of content, which closely corresponds to Calori and Vanden-Eynden's (2015) taxonomy of signs; however, the second group differs in that it contains mixed types of content. Table 2 shows the seven different categories of the data that were identified by the analysis and corresponded to the classification proposed by Calori and Vanden-Eynden (2015). Sign types are presented in order from most to least: identification, prohibitory and regulatory, operational, directional, warning, interpretive, and honorific.

**Table 2**

*Single Type*

SINGLE TYPE								
Hot Spring	Identification	Prohibitory and Regulatory	Operational	Directional	Warning	Interpretive	Honorific	TOTAL
Mae Um Long	10 (66.66%)	0	1 (6.67%)	3 (20%)	1 (6.67%)	0	0	15
Nong Hang	6 (40%)	4 (26.66%)	1 (6.67%)	3 (20%)	0	0	1 (6.67%)	15
Pha Bong	10 (55.55%)	3 (16.67%)	2 (11.11%)	0	3 (16.67%)	0	0	18
Sai Ngam	4 (28.57%)	3 (21.42%)	5 (35.71%)	0	0	2 (14.28%)	0	14
TOTAL	30 (48.38%)	10 (16.12%)	9 (14.51%)	6 (9.67%)	4 (6.45%)	2 (3.22%)	1 (1.61%)	62

The following section will provide an example of each classification in order of most to least being found. Each example contains a photo of the sign and its verbal information.

*Identification*

This kind of sign contains the place name and is located right at that place, so viewers are aware of where they are. It can be regarded as the most prevalent sign type because the majority of the sites have their names appearing on the sign. Figure 1 was taken from a sign in Mae Um Long Hot Spring.

**Figure 1**

*THAI:* ห้องอาบน้ำแร่

*ENGLISH:* BATH ROOM



The four hot springs under study offer both shared and private baths for visitors, with a slightly higher fee for the latter. The wooden sign is placed in front of a private room for a mineral bath to let visitors know where they are and what the place is. However, the sign, in both languages, does not specifically identify a private room. Note the misspelling “*bath room.*”

#### *Prohibitory and Regulatory*

The purpose of this type of sign is to restrict certain behaviours and activities in a hot spring area. Figure 2, which was also taken from Pha Bong Hot Spring, showcases this specific type of sign.

**Figure 2**

*THAI:* ห้ามดื่มสุราและสูบบุหรี่บริเวณสถานที่แห่งนี้ ฝ่าฝืนปรับ 3,000 บาท

*ENGLISH:* Do not drink alcohol and smoking the violation will be 3,000 bath.



The sign prohibits two activities, drinking and smoking. These are two basic undesirable behaviours in most public places, as they disturb the peace. The sign also specifies the amount of the fine for violating the prohibition. Note that the Thai currency “*baht*” is misspelt as “*bath*.”

### *Operational*

Operational signs inform us about the functions and uses of a place, such as directories in shopping malls and operating days and hours. In the case of the hot springs, this specific type of sign informs visitors of the functions of and how to use the place. The operational sign below was taken from Ban Nong Hang Hot Spring.

**Figure 3**

*THAI: เวลาทำการ 08.30 น. - 19.00 น. ไม่เว้นวันหยุดราชการ*

*ENGLISH: Open 08.30 am – 19.00 pm Seven days a week*



This sign shows the hot spring’s working days and hours so that visitors are informed about when to visit the place. There is a redundancy in the English translation: “19.00 pm” should be either “7.00 pm” or simply “19.00”.

### *Directional*

This sign type is placed at a distance from the intended locations to direct viewers in the direction of that location. It is also called the wayfinding sign as it helps people find their way to destinations. Arrows are almost always used on directional signs to show the way to go left, right, or straight ahead. Figure 4 shows a directional sign at Mae Um Long Hot Spring.



**Figure 4**

*THAI:* ห้องอาบน้ำแร่

*ENGLISH:* Mineral baths



This wooden sign directs viewers to the mineral baths of the hot spring. The small right arrow points to the direction where the baths are located.

#### *Warning*

This kind of sign uses words to inform individuals about potential risks or safety precautions in a given area. Figure 5 below demonstrates a warning.

**Figure 5**

*THAI:* ระวังอันตราย

*ENGLISH:* DANGER



This warning sign is attached to a cement pond of a hot spring at Pha Bong. The verbal information uses the general word “DANGER”, and the visual illustration, an icon of the pond and rising steam, indicates the potential danger of the high-temperature water in the pond.

### Honorific

Honorific signs confer honour upon individuals or organisations that have a connection to a place. An example of an honorific sign is a sign that displays the names of those who have made financial contributions to a property. This can be seen in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*THAI:* น้ำพุร้อนบ้านหนองแห้ง ได้รับการสนับสนุนงบประมาณในการพัฒนาโดย  
กรมการท่องเที่ยว จังหวัดแม่ฮ่องสอน องค์การบริหารส่วนตำบลเมืองปอน  
*ENGLISH:* n/a



This honorific sign is placed at the information office of Ban Nong Hang Hot Spring to acknowledge the physical development of the hot spring sponsored by certain agencies. It is a monolingual sign, i.e., only in Thai, except for the organizational emblems containing “DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM” and “MAEHONGSON THAILAND”, which contain both languages. The literal translation of the Thai is “*Ban Nong Hang Hot Spring receives a budget to develop (the place) from the Department of Tourism, Mae Hong Son Thailand, the Mueang Pon Sub-District Administration Office.*” Unfortunately, without the English translation, the information of sponsorship is not passed to foreign visitors.

### Interpretive

The interpretive sign helps visitors comprehend the value of the place or sites by providing information about topography, history, people who lived there, artefacts, and other objects. Figure 7 is a sign taken from Sai Ngam Hot Spring.

Figure 7



This large vinyl hanging sign contains considerable information both in terms of verbal and visual elements. In addition to the three circular emblems of the relevant authorities on the top, two columns of photos on both sides and the background photo, the verbal content in both languages is displayed in the middle of the sign. The Thai and English headings are “*คำชี้แจงวิสาหกิจชุมชนบ่อน้ำแร่บ้านไทรงามจะเรียกเก็บค่าบริการ ๒๐ บาทต่อคน*” and “*Community enterprise statements of Sai Ngam mineral hot spring. Entrance fee is 20 baht per person. Why?*” Then it displays a long list of facilities provided for visitors and how the income has contributed to the community.

Apart from the types of signs found to correspond with Calori and Vanden-Eynden’s (2015) taxonomy, the researchers also found emerging hybrid types, certain signs containing combinations of different sign types, which differ from Calori and Vanden-Eynden’s (2015) classifications. Table 3 demonstrates the different hybrid types, from most found to least found.

Table 3

Hybrid Type

HYBRID TYPE							
Hot Spring	Operational and Prohibitory and Regulatory	Identification and Interpretive	Identification and Operational	Greeting and Directional	Identification, Interpretive, and Operational	Identification, Interpretive, and Invitation	TOTAL
Mae Um Long	1 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	1
Nong Hang	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)	0	0	0	0	3
Pha Bong	2 (40%)	0	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0	5
Sai Ngam	1 (50%)	0	0	0	0	1 (50%)	2
TOTAL	6 (54.55%)	1 (9.09%)	1 (9.09%)	1 (9.09%)	1 (9.09%)	1 (9.09%)	11

Operational and Prohibitory and Regulatory

This specific type of hybrid sign was found the most; it combines the data on both the use and the rules of the place. Figure 8 was taken from Sai Ngam Hot Spring.

Figure 8

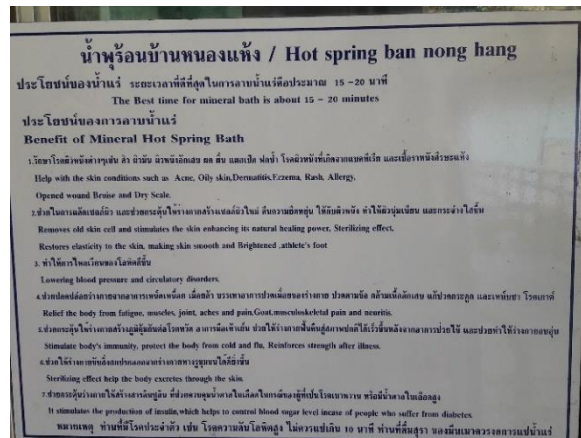


Figure 8 showcases the first hybrid sign type that informs visitors what they are not allowed to do (Items 1-4) together with the operational hours of the hot spring (Item 5), which seems rather irrelevant to the preceding information.

### *Identification and Interpretive*

Figure 9 displays a hybrid sign found only in Ban Nong Hang Hot Spring. It identifies and describes benefits in the use of the place.

### Figure 9



The top of the sign displays the name of the hot spring “น้ำพุร้อนบ้านหนองแห้ง” in Thai and “*Hot spring ban nong hang*” in English to indicate that this hot spring has this specific name. Then it lists benefits of the mineral hot spring bath to enable guests to be aware of its importance. The English name, however, should be capitalised “*Ban Nong Hang Hot Spring*” and “Benefit” should be plural, according to correct English usage.

### Identification and Operational

This hybrid sign both identifies the current location and informs about how it operates. Figure 10 showcases this kind of sign.

### Figure 10

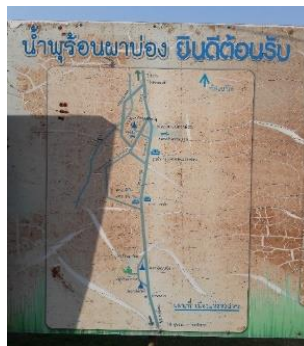


This example was taken from Pha Bong Hot Spring. It identifies the air-conditioned massage room and operational charges. The Thai words in red, “นวดห้องแอร์”, identify that this is a massage room. It includes the three types of massage services that are provided along with their corresponding costs below (“นวดไทย (Thai massage) 150”; “นวดน้ำมัน (oil massage) 200”; “นวดเท้า (foot massage) 200”). Although the identification part is only in Thai, the operational one is in both Thai and English. Therefore, foreign visitors can infer that this is a massage room.

#### *Greeting and Directional*

Figure 11 shows a type of sign in which the researchers identified a kind of content—Greeting—not categorised by Calori and Vanden-Eynden (2015). As the term indicates, it shows a welcoming statement, such as “welcome” or “สวัสดี,” which is “Hello” in English.

**Figure 11**



The sign displays a welcoming statement in Thai, “น้ำพุร้อนผาบ่อง,” which can be translated as “Welcome to Pha Bong Hot Spring.” Underneath it, a directional map is displayed. A greeting such as this can be commonly seen in tourist destinations. However, Pha Bong Hot Spring is the only place of the four that displays the welcoming statement, and it is only in Thai.

#### *Identification, Interpretive and Operational*

Figure 12 shows a kind of hybrid sign comprising identification, interpretive and operational in one single sign.



Figure 12



This identification sign showing “น้ำพุร้อนผาบ่อง” and “Pha Bong Hot Spring” informs visitors about their current location. It also carries information regarding the hot spring's history, geography, mineral components, benefits, etc. It includes photos showing the uses of the hot spring in addition to the costs.

#### Identification, Interpretive, and Invitation

This hybrid sign shown in Figure 13 also comprises three types of signs: here, identification, directional and invitation. The last type is not comparable to Calori and Vanden-Eynden's (2015) classification. The researchers define the invitation as a statement that invites or persuades guests to visit the place. It can be in the form of a slogan, such as “Amazing Thailand,” that invites foreign visitors to explore the country, which is full of amazing things and places.

Figure 13



The sign indicates the current location of “*ไทรงาม*” and “*Sai Ngam*.” Below, there is a map of Sai Ngam Village showing different interesting spots, focusing on the local products, including the hot spring. On the right of the sign, it informs about what each spot is both in Thai and English, for example, “*ข้าวเจ้า*” “*Khao Sa Jeu (Corn Cupcakes)*.” At the lower right corner, an invitation message appears next to the QR code “*หมดยุคเรื่องเล่า เราต้องไปเอง*” in Thai, and “*STAY DISCOVER EXPERIENCE*” in English.

Seven types of signs found for analysis comparable to Calori and Vanden-Eynden's (2015) taxonomy were identified; from most found to least found they are identification, prohibitory and regulatory, operational, directional, warning, honorific and interpretive, respectively. The researchers also found six hybrid types of signs, which are not comparable to Calori and Vanden-Eynden (2015): operational and prohibitory and regulatory; identification and interpretive; identification and operational; greeting and directional; identification, interpretive, and operational; and identification, interpretive and invitation.

Both signs with a single message and those with several messages belong to the first group, which is the single type of sign. The four hot springs have the highest concentration of identification. This makes sense because this type of sign informs people of their current location. The second most found sign is prohibitory and regulatory, which advises visitors on what they should and should not do when visiting the hot springs and using their amenities. In the hybrid category, the operational and prohibitory and regulatory is shown to be the most prevalent. This type of placard presumably alerts guests of the applications and limitations of the hot springs. While Calori and Vanden-Eynden (2015) do not classify hybrid signs, it is not unusual to combine multiple types of signs. The hybrid sign can be inclusive in that it can both tell visitors about the uses of the area but also warn them about engaging in specific behaviour and activities. Nonetheless, a singular style of sign containing identical data typically exhibits greater clarity and emphasis.

### ***Identifying Approaches to Translation of the Hot Spring Signs***

To achieve the second objective of the study, this section investigates the approaches used in translating the hot spring signs. As was briefly stated at the outset, this paper categorises two primary translation approaches into: literal translation and adaptation. Literal translation refers to an approach in which the original meaning is preserved. Adaptation, meanwhile, changes the original meaning. Apart from literal translation, the study found three types of adaptation: adding extra information in the translation, reducing the original meaning in the translation, and interpreting the original meaning to a new one in



the translation. From the analysis, the total of 73 analysed signs comprises 233 messages (26 from Mae Um Long, 52 from Nong Hang, 54 from Pha Bong, and 101 from Sai Ngam) because some signs contain multiple messages. However, only 164 messages can be analysed for translation approaches because 46 messages have no English translated version, 14 messages are written in English only, and 9 messages are pictorial signages. The analysis found the literal translation was used more than adaptation (86 versus 74). Table 4 shows the numbers of literal translation identified in each sign type.

**Table 4**

*Literal Translation*

Translation Approach	Type of Sign							Total
	Interpretive	Operational	Identification	Prohibitory and Regulatory	Directional	Warning	Operational Prohibitory and Regulatory	
Literal	26 (30.23%)	25 (29.06%)	21 (24.42%)	7 (8.13%)	4 (4.65%)	2 (2.32%)	1 (1.16%)	86

***Literal Translation***

In this paper, literal translation is the process of rendering a source language into a target language while maintaining its meaning without considering the natural flow of the target language or cultural context. The literal translation approach can effectively convey meaning when both the original and translated languages share equivalent or similar meanings. The analysis found that literal translation was used the most. Following are examples from the interpretive, operational and identification types because literal translation was found to be the most common in these three signs.

**Example 1**

THAI:ทุนการศึกษาเด็กนักเรียนโรงเรียนบ้านไทรงาม

ENGLISH: Scholarship for Sai Ngam school students

This example is taken from a sign at Sai Ngam Hot Spring. The sign describes how the admission fee of 20 baht is used, and one contribution is to scholarships. (See Figure 7 for the image.) The literal translation retains the original meaning. However, there is a linguistic issue that needs to be noted. Because the Thai version does not specify the precise number of scholarships awarded, the translator thus had a choice of translating it into either singular or plural form if he or she was unsure of this information. Nevertheless, there are

minor grammatical errors that can be seen in the English translation, which are “*school*” that should be capitalised as it is the proper name “*Sai Ngam School*,” and “*Scholarship*” that should be plural “*Scholarships*” to reflect the plurality of “*students*,” implying more than one scholarship has been awarded.

### Example 2

THAI: ห้องแช่น้ำแร่ส่วนตัว 50 ฿

ENGLISH: Private mineral bath 50 ฿

### Example 3

THAI: ทางเข้า

ENGLISH: ENTRANCE

Examples 2-3 are selected from Ban Nong Hang Hot Spring and Pha Bong Hot Spring, respectively. The first one is an operational sign that indicates a fee of 50 baht per room for a private mineral bath, and the second one is an identification sign. The Thai version of each example is translated literally into English while the original meaning is preserved. This can be achieved due to the close similarity in vocabulary between Thai and English.

### Adaptation

Adaptation in this study is the approach by which the original meaning of the source text is altered. It usually occurs when there is non-equivalence between the language pair. Thus, the translator has attempted to make the translation sound natural and be understood by the target audience, even by means of changing the original meaning of the source text. This can be achieved by replacing references with ones that the target audience will recognise. The researchers found five subtypes of adaptation in order of frequency: addition, interpretation, reduction, interpretation and addition, and addition and reduction, respectively, as shown in Table 5. One example of each type will be presented for clarification.

**Table 5***Adaptation Approach*

Translation Approach	Type of Sign							Total
	Interpretive	Operational	Identification	Invitation	Operational Prohibitory and Regulatory	Prohibitory and Regulatory	Warning	
Adaptation (Addition)	28 (96.55%)	1 (3.45%)						29
Adaptation (Interpretation)	7 (25.92%)	9 (33.33%)	2 (7.40%)	1 (3.70%)		6 (22.22%)	2 (7.40%)	27
Adaptation (Reduction)	5 (33.33%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)		1 (6.67%)	3 (20%)		15
Adaptation (Interpretation and Addition)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)						2
Adaptation (Addition and Reduction)	1 (100%)							1
Total	42 (56.75%)	14 (18.91%)	5 (6.75%)	1 (1.35%)	1 (1.35%)	9 (12.16%)	2 (2.70%)	74

*Adaptation by addition*

This approach involves supplementing the target text with additional information in order to enhance its clarity for the target audience. A total of 29 messages were identified and translated using this specific method: 28 from the interpretive sign and 1 from the operational sign.

**Example 4**

THAI: กวาเซี๊ยะ (เต๋นลีซุ)

ENGLISH: Gwa Si Yi, a traditional dance form that is an inseparable part of Lisu culture.

This example was from the sign at Sai Ngam Hot Spring (see Figure 13). The message “กวาเซี๊ยะ (เต๋นลีซุ)” is identified in an interpretive sign. The translator transliterates the first term as “*Gwa Si Yi*”. The information in the parentheses “เต๋นลีซุ” can be translated as “*Lisu dance*.” The translator, however, chooses to provide cultural information to the target audience by adding cultural information with the terms “*traditional*” and “*an inseparable part of Lisu culture*”. This shows that the dance is a traditional performance that belongs to the Lisu people, and it can be witnessed here where the Lisu ethnic group inhabit. It also provides additional cultural information by using the phrase “a

*traditional dance form*” to inform the target audience that Lisu dance does not have only one form. Therefore, it can be said that the additional translation technique allows visitors to learn additional information that is not provided in the original language.

#### *Adaptation by interpretation*

In this study, interpretation refers to an approach in which meaning of the source text is adjusted by means of interpretation in the target text. For example, the traditional Thai New Year Day “วันสงกรานต์,” or “*Songkran Day*,” is usually interpreted and referred to as the “*Water Festival*” from the activity that is practiced on this day. From the analysis, a total of 27 messages were translated using the interpretive adaptation and are distributed across 6 sign types in descending order: operational (9), interpretive (7), prohibitory and regulatory (6), identification (2), warning (2), and invitation (1).

#### **Example 5**

THAI: เวลาทำการ 08.30 – 19.00 น. ไม่เว้นวันหยุดราชการ

ENGLISH: OPEN 08.30 am – 19.00 pm Seven days a week.

The example was taken from Nong Hang Hot Spring (see Figure 3). The source message that was displayed on the operational sign says that the operational time of the hot spring is every day, including public holidays. In the translation, “*OPEN*” is written in all capital letters, which may be to emphasise the topic of the sign. “*19.00 pm*” was mistakenly used. The appropriate way to express the time in the 12-hour format, which is commonly used in American English, should be “*7.00 pm*”. “*Seven days a week*” is changed from the supposed literal translation of “*including public holidays*.”

#### *Adaptation by reduction*

Adaptation by reduction refers to the approach whereby translators intentionally omit certain information from the source text to better suit the context of the target language, and the omission does not cause any misinterpretation. Fifteen messages on five sign types were identified that employ this approach.

#### **Example 6**

THAI: ๒. ช่วยเหลือด้านสาธารณสุขและคุณภาพชีวิตชุมชนบ้านไทรงาม

๒.๑ ผู้ด้อยโอกาสคนพิการในชุมชนบ้านไทรงาม

ENGLISH: 2. Helping public health and quality of life in Sai Ngam village community

Example 5 is a sign from Sai Ngam Hot Spring (see Figure 7). It is identified as an interpretive sign, which provides information about the inhabitants. The example is one of a long list of reasons explaining why the entrance fee is charged at this hot spring. The collected fees support various community initiatives within the village. The message "ผู้ด้อยโอกาสคนพิการในชุมชนบ้านไทรงาม" which means "the disadvantaged and disabled in Ban Sai Ngam community" is omitted. However, this omission does not adversely affect the overall meaning of the sign since it is a sub-heading of the No. 2 heading.

Apart from the three adaptation approaches above, Table 5 also shows that three messages are identified as employing mixed adaptation approaches: interpretation and addition, and addition and reduction. According to the data, the mixed adaptation approach is preferred for translating messages that are considered long, as shown by Examples 6 and 7 below.

#### *Adaptation by interpretation and addition*

##### **Example 7**

THAI: คำชี้แจงวิสาหกิจชุมชนบ่อน้ำแร่บ้านไทรงามวิสาหกิจชุมชนบ่อน้ำแร่บ้านไทรงามจะ  
เรียกเก็บค่าบริการ ๒๐ บาทต่อคน

ENGLISH: Community enterprise statements of Sai Ngam mineral hot spring.  
Entrance fee is 20 baht person. Why?

Example 7, which comes from the sign in Sai Ngam Hot Spring (see Figure 7), presents the mixed approach that combine interpretation and addition. The term "ค่าบริการ" is interpreted from the context and translated as "entrance fee". At the same time, the word "Why?" is added to correspond to the subsequent texts explaining how the revenue from the entrance fee is spent, such as for toilet service and cleaning around the hot spring area.

##### **Example 8**

THAI: 1. รักษาโรคผิวหนังต่าง ๆ เช่น สิว ผิวน้ำมัน ผิวน้ำอัดเสบ ผด ผื่น แผลเปิด ฟกช้ำ  
โรคผิวหนังที่เกิดจากแบคทีเรียและเชื้อรา หนังศีรษะแห้ง

ENGLISH: "Help with the skin conditions such as Acne, Oily skin, Dermatitis, Eczema, Rash, Allergy, Opened wound Bruise and Dry Scale."

This example is found in a sign in Nong Hang Hot Spring (see Figure 9), showing the mixed approach: addition and reduction. The sign with numerous messages explains the benefits of mineral water to the skin. The term "ผิวหนัง

อักเสบ” can be rendered into two terms, dermatitis and eczema, while the message “โรคผิวหนังที่เกิดจากแบคทีเรียและเชื้อรา” is omitted. However, the inconsistent use of capital letters also requires attention. “Soothe various skin conditions including acne, oily skin, skin inflammation, itchy rashes, open wound, bruise, bacterial and fungal skin infections and dry scalp.” is a suggested translated version.

The researchers have observed that literal translation approach was used slightly more than adaptation. It seems that literal translation was the primary attempt when the source and target texts shared the similar meanings or if the translator thought that they were identical. Otherwise, adaptation was then applied as deemed appropriate, that is, when the translator realised that literal approach was unable to convey the original meanings. The study found that although there are only four interpretive signs identified in the four hot springs, they contain most of the translation, both literal (26 places, or 30.23%) and adaptation (42 places, or 56.75%). This may be because one interpretive sign at Sai Ngam Hot Spring (see Figure 7) contains descriptive information regarding contributions made from the admission fee. The operational sign's messages are counted as the second highest in number as a result of informing guests of the uses of the hot spring. Thus, it also affects the number of translation approaches.

The analysis has shown that the relation between the sign type and translation approach is inconclusive. Although it is not the objective of this paper to justify the best translation approach, the authors see that literal translation should be chosen first, wherever possible, to preserve the original intended messages in the target text. Otherwise, adaptation is better suited to make sense of the translated text, especially when it concerns safety issues. The translation approaches defined in this article sufficiently informed the authors about how signs were translated. Since the previous studies mentioned earlier did not use the same translation approaches, the current study has made a useful contribution to the field of translation studies.

One observable point worth mentioning is the low English proficiency, as seen in several messages. This coincides with previous studies conducted by Staiff & Bushell (2003), Saipradit & Staiff (2008), Limsiriruengrai (2017), and Nakplad, Mittajan, and Innarong (2021), and Nakplad, Jindachot, et al. (2023). They also found the same issue and suggested that the translations should be verified by experts or native speakers to obtain quality signs. In addition, the translators should visit the hot spring by themselves to see whether or not their translations need to be revised before the sign in question is displayed. For example, “ห้องอาบน้ำแร่,” which means “room with a mineral bath,” is meant to identify a private room with a hot spring pool; if the translator visits the actual place, then he or she will be aware that extra information should be added for the

purpose of clarity as “*private mineral bath*.” This will comfortably accommodate foreign visitors.

Apart from the issues regarding the quality of the English language used in the signs, it is briefly worth mentioning here that a number of the signs were made of temporary and relatively inferior material, such as wood planks, PVC, paper, even though they may appear rustic and exotic to overseas guests. Furthermore, the installation of certain signs, those nailed to trees, fastened to walls, needs to be more professionally executed and sustainable. All of these issues, both verbal and non-verbal, might be caused by local management and/or the operations of local authorities, as well as limited budgets. Therefore, with sufficient financial support, improvement can be made in both the language on the signs, the materials and placement of the signs, and the overall quality of the hot springs. Consequently, this will benefit the local community, improve the local economy, and promote both local and nation tourism.

### **Conclusions, Limitations, Suggestions**

This paper first identified the types of tourist signs at four hot springs: Mae Um Long, Ban Nong Hang, Pha Bong and Sai Ngam, in the northern province of Mae Hong Son. Then Calori and Vanden-Eynden’s (2015) classification was applied as an analytical framework. The study found seven single and six mixed types of signs. The former are comparable to Calori and Vanden-Eynden’s taxonomy, whereas the latter are not mentioned by them. The researchers also identified greeting and invitation types, which are incomparable to Calori and Vanden-Eynden. Identification and prohibitory and regulatory were found to be the two most common types, indicating the identification of different spots and the limitations of certain activities within each hot spring.

Then the researchers observed the translation approaches employed in the messages of those signs. Both literal translation and adaptation were almost equally prevalent, with 86 and 74 instances, respectively. The adaptation approach can be further classified into addition, reduction and interpretation. A few instances of mixed adaptations were also identified. Although the identification signs were the most frequently observed, the interpretive signs, which provided detailed information, appeared to be translated the most. From the analysis, the researchers noticed that apart from the need to enhance the quality of English translation, the physical appearance of most signs also required improvement, both in terms of materials and placement.

The findings from this study, both in terms of sign types and translation approaches, can be beneficial to Thai to English translation classes where informative texts concerning tourism and safety are used as the material. In the professional realm, it can be an example of choosing proper sign types and translation approaches, especially in the context of hot springs or other tourist destinations.

With the small number of hot springs from one province alone, the data in the current study are indeed limited. Consequently, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to the types of signs found in other hot springs or the types of translation approaches employed. Also, by focusing solely on verbal resources, the study is not multimodal, because it did not consider non-verbal cues, such as fonts, colours, materials, positions, of the analysed signs, which contribute to the meaning-making process of those signs. Should further examinations be conducted, a multimodal approach is suggested, along with a comparison of signs between the publicly operated and privately-owned hot springs, both in terms of types and translation approaches.

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