

English as a Lingua Franca in the Linguistic Landscape of Lop Buri's Tourist Attractions

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This study investigates English as a lingua franca in the linguistic landscape (LL) of tourist attractions in Lop Buri Province, Thailand. Using a mixed-methods approach, 211 signs from 24 sites were analyzed across historical, natural, recreational, and transportation settings. The findings show that most signs primarily serve informative functions, while symbolic, commercial, and mythological signs appear less frequently, reflecting English's practical orientation in local tourism communication. Translation strategies predominantly follow duplicating patterns, with limited use of fragmentary, overlapping, and complementary approaches. English is employed both as a prestige language and as a lingua franca for intercultural communication. However, variation in transliteration, spelling, and phrasing reveals local adaptation and a lack of standardization. This study addresses the gap in LL research beyond metropolitan areas by examining a semi-urban heritage site and considering how English functions as a lingua franca within a multilingual and culturally rich context. This study not only provides insights into Lop Buri's linguistic landscape but also contributes to broader debates on English as a lingua franca in tourism contexts.

Research Article

Abstract

Keywords

English as a lingua franca;
linguistic landscape;
tourism in Lop Buri;
English signage

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ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลาง ในภูมิภาคทางภาษาศาสตร์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยว จังหวัดลพบุรี

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การศึกษานี้มุ่งสำรวจภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลางในภูมิภาคทางภาษาศาสตร์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวจังหวัดลพบุรีโดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน โดยวิเคราะห์ป้ายจำนวน 211 ป้ายซึ่งเป็นป้ายที่มีภาษาอังกฤษปรากฏ โดยรวบรวมข้อมูลจาก 24 สถานที่ซึ่งครอบคลุม 4 ประเภท ได้แก่ สถานที่ทางประวัติศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรม สถานที่ท่องเที่ยวทางธรรมชาติ สถานที่พักผ่อนหย่อนใจ และสถานที่ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการคมนาคมขนส่ง ผลการวิจัยพบว่าป้ายส่วนใหญ่ทำหน้าที่ให้ข้อมูลเป็นหลัก ในขณะที่ป้ายที่มีความหมายเชิงสัญลักษณ์ เชิงพาณิชย์และเชิงตำนานปรากฏน้อยกว่า ซึ่งสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงการเน้นการใช้งานจริงของภาษาอังกฤษในการสื่อสารด้านการท่องเที่ยวในท้องถิ่น กลยุทธ์การแปลส่วนใหญ่เป็นไปตามรูปแบบการทำซ้ำ โดยมีการใช้แนวทางแบบแยกส่วน ทับซ้อนและเสริมเติมกันอย่างจำกัด ภาษาอังกฤษถูกใช้ทั้งในฐานะภาษาที่มีเกียรติและเป็นภาษากลางสำหรับการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรม อย่างไรก็ตาม ความแตกต่างในการถอดเสียง การสะกดคำ และการใช้สำนวนต่าง ๆ แสดงให้เห็นถึงการปรับตัวตามท้องถิ่นและการขาดมาตรฐาน งานวิจัยนี้จะเติมเต็มช่องว่างในการวิจัยภาษาศาสตร์นอกเมืองใหญ่ โดยการศึกษาแหล่งมรดกทั้งเมืองและพิจารณาว่าภาษาอังกฤษทำหน้าที่เป็นภาษากลางในบริบทที่มีความหลากหลายทางภาษาและวัฒนธรรมอย่างไร การศึกษานี้ไม่เพียงแต่ให้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกเกี่ยวกับภูมิภาคทางภาษาของลพบุรีเท่านั้น แต่ยังช่วยสนับสนุนประเด็นที่กล่าวถึงในวงกว้างเกี่ยวกับภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลางในบริบทการท่องเที่ยวอีกด้วย

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1. Introduction

English has become a lingua franca of global tourism, facilitating communication between people of diverse linguistic backgrounds. However, its role within Thailand's semi-urban linguistic landscape, particularly in heritage-rich yet mid-sized cities like Lop Buri, remains underexplored. As English continues to dominate global tourism discourse, understanding how it functions in local public signage offers crucial insight into both linguistic accessibility and cultural representation in tourist communication.

The concept of Linguistic Landscape (LL), defined by Landry & Bourhis (1997) as the visible language displayed on public signs, provides a window into multilingual practices and sociocultural dynamics in public spaces. Subsequent studies (Gorter, 2006; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009) emphasize LL's dual role as both an informative and symbolic medium, reflecting local identity and broader global influences.

In the tourism context, public signage serves not just as guidance but also as a means of constructing narratives around place and identity. Clear and culturally appropriate English use enhances visitor satisfaction and fosters intercultural understanding, whereas errors or awkward translations may create confusion and damage the destination's image (Huebner, 2006; Backhaus, 2007; Puzey, 2016). In Thailand, linguistic landscape (LL) research has primarily concentrated on Bangkok, other major urban centers, and border regions, focusing on issues such as language policy, code-mixing, translation accuracy, and the visibility of English in public signage (Huebner, 2006; Pathanasin, 2025; Potisuan et al., 2020; Siwina & Prasithratsint, 2020; Savski, 2024). These studies have highlighted how English often symbolizes modernization, globalization, and access to international tourism. However, the English as a lingua franca (ELF) dimension, which examines how English is used as a functional and adaptive medium of communication among non-native speakers rather than as a marker of native proficiency, has received limited attention in Thai LL research.

In this regard, Lop Buri, a province renowned for its historical landmarks, cultural heritage, and symbolic association with monkeys, offers a valuable yet underexplored case. Despite its regional importance as a cultural tourism destination, Lop Buri remains linguistically and academically underrepresented in LL literature. Examining its public signage through an ELF lens provides new insight into how English mediates intelligibility, accessibility, and cultural expression in Thailand's semi-urban tourism contexts.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the functional categories of public signs in Lop Buri's tourist attractions to understand their communicative purposes, examine the multilingual strategies employed to facilitate understanding among local and international audiences, and investigate the linguistic features of English appearing on these signs to reveal how English operates as a lingua franca that promotes intelligibility and intercultural communication within a semi-urban tourism context.

Through this integrated approach, the study contributes to both linguistic landscape and English as a lingua franca by linking micro-level language practices to broader questions of tourism communication and policy. It also aligns with the objectives of the Lop Buri Province Development Plan (2023-2027), as outlined by the Lop Buri Provincial Office (2023), which emphasizes sustainable tourism and cultural revitalization.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Linguistic Landscape in Tourism Contexts

Landry & Bourhis (1997) introduced the concept of the linguistic landscape (LL) as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings,” representing the visible language presence of a territory. Further academic advancements have considerably broadened this definition. Gorter (2006) distinguished between informative functions, which aid communication, and symbolic functions, which convey identity and power. Shohamy & Gorter (2009) linked LL to language policy, suggesting that public signs act as informal language planning that may support or resist official policies. Reh (2004) classified multilingual signs as duplicating, fragmentary, overlapping, or complementary, revealing language hierarchies and sociocultural meanings. Methodologically, LL studies often employ mixed-methods designs, combining quantitative analysis of sign types with qualitative interpretation of functions and meanings (Backhaus, 2007; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). Commonly identified functions include informational, symbolic, and commercial (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2009; Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Piller, 2003). Hicks (2002) added the mythological function, referring to signs that evoke traditional stories or folklore, reinforcing shared cultural identity. Through this multidimensional framework, LL research reveals how public signage reflects linguistic diversity, social structure, and cultural expression.

In tourism contexts, LL functions as a key communicative interface between local communities and international visitors. Public signage shapes how destinations are imagined, experienced, and accessed, projecting messages about modernity, hospitality, and cultural identity (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Across Asia, multilingual signage is commonly used to balance global accessibility with local representation. In Japan, English is increasingly incorporated to signal internationalization (Lo Cigno, 2021; Nishijima, 2024), whereas in Singapore, English dominates official signs while other regional languages help appeal to diverse tourists (Teo & Cacciafoco, 2023). Similar dynamics occur in China, where multilingual signs blend English, Mandarin, and local scripts to promote heritage tourism while reinforcing cultural pride (Lu et al., 2020).

In Thailand, LL studies similarly highlight the interplay between multilingualism, cultural representation, and tourism-driven globalization. Huebner (2006) identified a shift from Chinese to English as the primary lingua franca in Bangkok, marking English as a symbol of prestige and modernity. Gu & Bhatt (2024) further demonstrated multilingual coexistence in Soi Arab, where Arabic, English, and Thai serve both commercial and religious tourism purposes. In Chiang Mai, code-mixing between Thai and English is commonly used to attract visitors (Yanhong & Rungrung, 2013), while the inclusion of Lanna script reinforces local identity and cultural heritage (Thongtong, 2016). Studies in southern and coastal areas have identified hybrid “Tinglish” forms and English-dominant signage shaped by tourism and global mobility (Vivas-Peraza, 2020; Bennui, 2024; Low, 2022). At heritage sites such as Ayutthaya and Sukhothai, bilingual English-Thai signs foster glocalization by linking local traditions with international communication (Kosashunhanan, 2024; Methitam & Channuan, 2024).

Collectively, LL research in tourism underscores how signage simultaneously communicates essential information and represents cultural identity. These insights form the foundation for examining multilingual signage in Lop Buri’s tourist attractions, where language choices reveal how local contexts engage with global tourism.

2.2 The Role of English in Thailand from an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Perspective

The increasing presence of English in multilingual public spaces aligns with the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF), understood as a flexible, adaptive form of English used by speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). Within the linguistic landscape (LL), English signage often embodies this communicative function rather than conforming to native-speaker norms. Many signs display localized linguistic features, such as simplified grammar, creative or non-standard phrasing, direct translations, and Thai–English code-mixing, that reflect practical communication needs and cultural blending (Cogo & Dewey, 2012). These adaptations can enhance intelligibility for international audiences while maintaining local identity. However, inappropriate lexical choices or pragmatic errors may lead to misunderstandings (Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018).

Building on this perspective, recent research on the presence of ELF within linguistic landscapes across specific regions and communities has gained momentum, reflecting the growing influence of globalization and English’s pivotal role in international tourism, communication, and commerce (Magdaléna & Ingrida, 2019; Rhekhalilit & Huebner, 2024). Such studies underscore how the LL serves as a dynamic site for observing real-world ELF practices, where English functions as both a communicative tool and a symbol of global interconnectedness.

In the Thai context, English has long held symbolic value as an indicator of modernity and internationalization, yet its communicative effectiveness varies across regions. While existing LL studies have primarily examined urban centers, semi-urban tourism locations remain underexplored. Applying

an ELF perspective to Thailand's LL enables a deeper understanding of how English functions not only as a prestige language but also as a tool for meaning-making and visitor orientation. This study addresses this gap by analyzing English signage in Lop Buri's tourist attractions, focusing on how linguistic features such as accuracy, clarity, pragmatic appropriateness, and local adaptations support or hinder intelligibility for international visitors. Through this lens, the study demonstrates how English, as a lingua franca, mediates global-local interaction within Thailand's semi-urban tourism landscape.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Objective

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study aims to 1) analyze the functional categories of public signs in Lop Buri's tourist attractions to understand their communicative purposes. 2) examine the multilingual strategies used on public signs to facilitate communication among local and international audiences. 3) investigate the linguistic features of English appearing on public signs to determine how English functions as a lingua franca in promoting intelligibility and intercultural communication within a semi-urban tourism context.

3.2 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives, this study addresses the following research questions that explore the functions, multilingual strategies, and linguistic features of English in Lop Buri's tourist signage.

1. What are the functions of public signs in the linguistic landscape of Lop Buri's tourist attractions?
2. How do public signs employ multilingual writing strategies to facilitate understanding among local and international audiences?
3. What English linguistic features are used on public signs, and how do they reflect their role as a lingua franca in achieving intelligibility and appropriateness?

3.4 Data Collection and Analytical Framework

Data were collected from public signs containing English text displayed at selected tourist attractions in Lop Buri Province between December 2024 and January 2025. The study employed purposive sampling to ensure the relevance and representativeness of signs used in real tourist communication contexts. Using purposive sampling, both government and private sector locations were selected by two main criteria: 1) official recommendations from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

website, which lists Lop Buri's key tourist destinations, and 2) visitor popularity, determined by the total number of domestic and international tourists reported for each site. The selected sites were categorized into four types: historical and cultural, natural, recreational, and transportation hubs, following Yanhong & Rungrung's (2013) framework to ensure broad contextual coverage. A mobile phone was used to capture images of public signs in both indoor and outdoor settings. Only signs containing English text were included for analysis, as these directly reflect English as a lingua franca in tourism communication. In contrast, duplicates (identical messages in different sizes or formats), damaged signs, and brand-specific store names were excluded. Store signs were excluded because they primarily function as brand identifiers rather than communicative or informational tools, and thus fall outside the analytical focus on public communication. While this exclusion slightly limits the generalization of findings to the broader commercial landscape, it strengthens the study's focus on functional and public English use intended for general tourist audiences. At last, a total of 211 signs were analyzed.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine language use in public signage. The quantitative data were systematically classified into functional categories to identify their communicative purposes in tourist contexts. Qualitatively, the study examines multilingual strategies and the linguistic features of English on public signs to understand how English functions as a lingua franca, promoting intelligibility and intercultural communication in a semi-urban tourism setting. To ensure validity and reliability, two experts in applied linguistics were consulted to evaluate the coding scheme, classification framework, and the consistency of interpretation. As a Thai native researcher with experience in the sociolinguistic fieldwork, the author remained aware of potential bias, particularly in interpreting the symbolic and mythological functions of signage, and sought to mitigate it through systematic coding procedures and expert validation.

The LL sign analysis form was adapted from Backhaus (2007), distinguishing between official and non-official signs following Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) classification. Functional analysis drew from Landry & Bourhis (1997) and Hicks (2002) to identify informative, symbolic, commercial, and mythological purposes. For multilingual signage, Reh's (2004) framework was applied to interpret translation strategies and the distribution of meaning across Thai and English. In duplicating signs, Thai and English convey identical content, whereas fragmentary signs translate only selected segments, with English serving as a partial supplement to Thai. Overlapping signs contain both shared and language-specific information, and complementary signs distribute different but coordinated content across languages such that complete understanding requires reading both versions. These categories help clarify how multilingual practices shape accessibility and communicative intent within Lop Buri's tourism landscape.

To examine how English functions as a lingua franca, the study analyzed linguistic features grounded in ELF principles outlined by Seidlhofer (2011) and Jenkins (2015). The analysis considered lexical patterns such as word choice, literal translations, and locally innovated expressions common in ELF communication. Grammatical features and pragmatic appropriateness were also examined to evaluate

whether expressions were contextually suitable for international audiences. Finally, overall intelligibility was assessed to determine how effectively signs conveyed meaning to diverse non-native speakers. Together, these dimensions illuminate how English is adapted in real-world signage to promote clarity, accessibility, and intercultural communication, reflecting its practical role as a lingua franca in semi-urban tourism settings.

4. Findings

To address the research question, the functions of signs were categorized into four distinct types: informative, symbolic, mythological, and commercial, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

LL functions by signs performed in Lop Buri tourist attractions

Function	Number	Percent
informative	188	89.10
symbolic	11	5.22
mythological	2	0.95
commercial	10	4.73
Total	211	100

Table 1 shows that most signs in Lop Buri's tourist destinations serve an informative function, providing practical details such as directions, place names, and visitor instructions. In contrast, only a small number reflect symbolic, commercial, or mythological functions. Overall, the linguistic landscape emphasizes practical communication over symbolic or promotional representation. To interpret this dominance of the informative function, it is necessary to consider the displayed language of the signs. The majority of signage is bilingual (Thai-English), accounting for 205 signs (97.15%), while only six signs (2.85%) are multilingual and none are monolingual English. This bilingual pattern aligns with Landry and Bourhis's (1997) concept of ethnolinguistic vitality, in which Thai retains symbolic and communicative authority, and English fulfills an instrumental role for international visitors. This displayed language directly supports the prevalence of informative signs: Thai conveys detailed local information, while English ensures accessibility for non-Thai speakers.



Figure 1. Sample of informative function sign



Figure 2. Sample of symbolic function sign



Figure 3. Sample of mythological function sign



Figure 4. Sample of commercial function sign

From Figure 1, this sign serves an informative function, providing practical location-based directions. It informs visitors where feeding monkeys is permitted. Figure 2, in contrast, is not intended as a directional marker, as a place name sign is already present nearby. Instead, this sign emphasizes Lop Buri's regional identity through carefully selected imagery. It serves a symbolic function, reflecting the community's local identity, cultural status, and power, rather than providing practical information. Monkeys symbolize the city's association with Phra Prang Sam Yod, where macaques are both tourist attractions and cultural icons. Sunflowers represent Lop Buri's natural beauty and agricultural significance, and brick patterns evoke the province's architectural heritage, reminiscent of ancient Khmer ruins. Figure 3 exemplifies the mythological function, conveying a cultural narrative that intertwines history, belief, and memory. This function is identified through the sign's intent to share local legends and beliefs, as seen in the recounting of the Luk Sorn Shrine legend featuring Hanuman from the *Ramayana*, which embeds the site within a spiritual and historical context. Finally, Figure 4 exemplifies a commercial function, using persuasive language such as “ลดสูงสุด 60%” (up to 60% off), “รับฟรีคูปอง” (get free coupons), and “แบ่งจ่าย 0%” (0% installment). A key component of LL's commercial function is consumer behavior, which is influenced by various factors. Overall, to clearly distinguish each function, it is necessary to consider the sign's purpose, content, designer's intent, and visual composition.

Table 2 shows the prevalence of these translation strategies across 211 signs at attractions in Lop Buri.

Table 2

The translation strategies

Translation	Number	Percent
Duplicating	131	62.08
Fragmentary	59	27.97
Overlapping	16	7.58
Complementary	5	2.37
Total	211	100

Table 2 summarizes the translation strategies found in the 211 signs. Although the analysis of translation strategies was conducted qualitatively to explore how meaning is distributed across languages, a quantitative overview is included here to contextualize the patterns observed. These strategies follow Reh's (2004) framework, including duplicating, fragmentary, overlapping, and complementary translations. At Lop Buri tourist attractions, the most frequently employed multilingual strategy is duplication (Figure 7), accounting for 62.08% of the signs. For example, the Thai text *เปิด วันพุธ-อาทิตย์ เวลา ๐๘.๓๐-๑๖.๓๐ น. ปิด วันจันทร์-อังคาร และวันหยุดนักขัตฤกษ์* is directly mirrored in English as *"Open Wednesday-Sunday, 08:30-16:30; Closed Monday-Tuesday and national holidays."* In this strategy, the English text fully reproduces the Thai text's informational content, ensuring maximum clarity and ease of comprehension for both local and international audiences. The second most common strategy is fragmentary translation (Figure 8), which appears on 27.97% of the signs. Thai text shows *ทางขึ้น-ลง สำหรับคนพิการ (Ramp/ Access Way for Persons with Disabilities)*, which is rendered in English simply as *"Disabled Way."* Here, only part of the original meaning is transferred, resulting in a reduced and less precise message in English. Overlapping translation (Figure 9) is less frequently used, occurring on 7.58% of the signs. In this case, some elements of the message are shared across languages but are not completely duplicated. For instance, the Thai warning *โปรดระวังลิง!!! แกะ จิก ทำลายสิ่งของยานพาหนะ (Beware of monkeys!!! They may tear, peck, or damage belongings or vehicles)*, while the English text provides *"Beware of the monkeys attacking your belongings or vehicles."* The least common strategy is complementary translation (Figure 10), found on only 2.37% of the signs. An example is the Thai phrase *นิทรรศการ เรียนรู้วานรเข้าใจมนุษย์ (Exhibition: Learning about primates to understand humans)*, which is paired with the English title *"Primates and Me."* In this strategy, distinct pieces of information appear in each language and jointly construct the overall meaning when read together.

Overall, the strong dominance of duplication suggests an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) orientation, in which communicative effectiveness, clarity, and accessibility for international visitors are prioritized over linguistic variation or creative translation strategies.



Figure 7: Sample of duplicating sign



Figure 8: Sample of fragmentary sign



Figure 9: Sample of overlapping sign



Figure 10: Sample of complementary sign

5. English linguistic features observed in Lop Buri tourist attractions

To address the final research question, this section analyzes the English linguistic features found in the linguistic landscape (LL) of Lop Buri's tourist attractions. The analysis draws on core principles of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), in which English is used primarily as a communicative tool among speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds. In ELF contexts, language use typically prioritizes intelligibility, communicative efficiency, and adaptability over adherence to native-speaker norms (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). The following subsections explain how these principles inform the analytical framework used here. The findings are organized into two thematic categories.

5.1 English as a Prestige Language

In many global tourism settings, English carries symbolic value associated with modernity, technological advancement, and internationalization, often referred to as the prestige function of English (Phillipson, 2013; Piller, 2003). In Lop Buri, this prestige manifests through linguistic choices such as acronyms and loanwords, which not only serve communicative purposes but also index alignment with global norms.

Acronyms, formed from the initial letters of multi-word phrases, appear prominently in transportation signage. For example, the sign "SRT DRIVE THRU TICKET" uses "SRT" to represent the State Railway of Thailand, while "TTS" stands for Train Tracking System. These acronyms serve not

only to enhance functional efficiency but also to reflect the institutional and technological modernity associated with English use.

Loanwords, English terms incorporated into Thai signage without translation, also underscore the prestige status and practical communicative value. These words retain their original form and meaning, signaling global alignment. For instance, “QR CODE”, derived from “Quick Response Code,” appears as a widely recognized digital term. Similarly, the word “PROMOTION” is commonly used in commercial signage to refer to sales or special offers, favored for its conciseness and appeal to both Thai and international audiences. These lexical items possess global recognizability, enabling rapid semantic processing and functioning as shared communicative resources in ELF contexts, while also signaling prestige through their association with modernity and international connectivity. Overall, the use of acronyms and loanwords in Lop Buri’s signage demonstrates how English functions as a lingua franca, enhancing intelligibility, projecting modernity, and increasing global accessibility, thereby reinforcing its symbolic and communicative role in the local tourism landscape.

5.2 Accessibility vs. Accuracy

One prominent strategy used in Lop Buri’s place-name signage is transliteration, especially in tourist areas where it balances cultural preservation with international accessibility. For example, the sign for “Wat Phrasri Rattana Mahathat” demonstrates a typical Romanization of the Thai name “วัดพระศรีรัตนมหาธาตุ,” where “Wat” signifies a temple and syllable clusters are segmented for phonetic approximation. Transliteration retains cultural nuances while enabling cross-linguistic intelligibility, an essential feature of English as a Lingua Franca. (Yuan & Hou, 2024).

This transliteration practice reflects Reh’s (2004) duplicating strategy, where equivalent content is presented for different audiences, Thai readers, and foreign visitors. However, in specific tourist destinations, transliterated place names are used inconsistently with various spellings. For instance, signs for “Prang Sam Yod” also appear as “Pra Prang Sam Yod,” reflecting uncertainty about including honorific prefixes. Similarly, variations like “Thale Chup Son Palace” and “Phra Tamnak Tale Choobsorn” illustrate spelling inconsistency. However, such inconsistency illustrates flexible adaptation to local pronunciation and orthographic interpretation, where meaning remains generally intelligible to international visitors.

Beyond transliteration, signs also exhibit lexical and grammatical variation. There are a few signs in several tourist attractions with misspelled English lexicon, such as “Phra kal Shrine” written as “Prakarn shrie”, “Ambassador House” written as “Ameasssdor House”, and “Extinguisher at Robinson Department Store written as “Extingu sher”. At Phra Thinang Yen, “the official residence” is written as “offical”. Also, incorrect word separations appear at Pasakjolasit Dam, “Spillway”, which is written as “Spill way”. However, from an ELF perspective, it shows that writers often rely on flexible, approximate forms to convey meaning, prioritizing intelligibility over perfect accuracy (Seidlhofer, 2011; Cogo & Dewey, 2012). In this

sense, misspellings represent the negotiation of meaning, where writers draw on available linguistic resources, such as phonological similarity, shared orthographic patterns, and contextual cues, to ensure that international readers can still recognize the intended word. Even in non-standard forms, it retains enough visual and phonetic resemblance to its standard equivalents to remain comprehensible. Thus, when viewed from an ELF standpoint rather than a deficit model, these variations reflect adaptive and functional meaning-making practices that support successful communication in multilingual tourism contexts.

A pattern of compartmentalized bilingualism is also observed, where Thai and English perform distinct communicative roles. English is often limited to taxonomic functions, such as naming or scientific classification, while Thai provides the informational content (e.g., animal behavior, habitat, and cultural explanations). This reflects Reh's (2004) concept of complementary multilingual writing and aligns with Scollon & Scollon's (2003) notion of geosemiotic layering, in which the dominant language carries the communicative load for local audiences. However, English serves as an accessible lingua franca.

Moreover, unnatural or non-idiomatic phrasing further limits the effectiveness of English signage. For instance, "Plastic Spoon Fork" would be more appropriately phrased as "Plastic Spoons and Forks" or "Plastic Cutlery." Similarly, "Animals Prohibited" is understandable but less natural than standard expressions like "No Pets Allowed." Other phrases, such as "Plastic Box" (instead of "Plastic Food Container"), "Plastic Bulb" (intended to mean "Plastic Straw"), and "Alcohol Drink" (more naturally "Alcoholic Beverages"), illustrate literal translations that lack cultural appropriateness and idiomatic clarity. While these expressions deviate from native-speaker norms, ELF research shows that simplified, literal, and semantically transparent forms can enhance international comprehensibility, especially among non-native English users who may not be familiar with idiomatic expressions (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2015). Such phrasing relies on basic vocabulary and direct lexical mapping, which reduces ambiguity and cognitive load for multilingual audiences.

Overall, English use in Lop Buri's signage reveals a shift from accuracy-oriented norms toward intelligibility, adaptability, and inclusivity, key principles in ELF communication. Rather than being viewed as linguistic errors, these variations may represent local strategies for achieving adequate cross-cultural understanding in a multilingual tourism environment.

6. Discussion

This section discusses the findings in relation to broader sociolinguistic, policy, and ELF-related issues, examining how English functions within Lop Buri's linguistic landscape in terms of global tourism, local identity construction, and multilingual signage management.

6.1 Functions of Public Signs

The dominance of informative signs in Lop Buri's linguistic landscape reflects a cost-effective, policy-oriented approach to signage in a semi-urban heritage destination, where intelligibility and practicality outweigh promotional goals. As Lop Buri attracts mainly domestic and regional tourists, English is primarily used to support orientation, safety, and accessibility rather than commercial persuasion. This contrasts with highly commercialized destinations such as Pattaya or Koh Lipe, where English signage is often designed to attract international visitors and stimulate consumption (Bennui, 2024; Prasert & Zilli, 2019).

Nevertheless, the smaller presence of symbolic and mythological signs indicates an awareness of the cultural and semiotic value of public signage. Symbols such as monkeys or sunflowers reinforce Lop Buri's identity as the "Monkey City," contributing to place branding and local distinctiveness (Gorter, 2006; Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Similarly, mythological references at sites like Luk Sorn Shrine embed cultural narratives and spiritual meanings within the tourist landscape (Hicks, 2002).

Overall, while English in Lop Buri's LL serves predominantly informative and practical functions, its selective integration with symbolic and mythological elements reflects a balance between intelligibility, functionality, and local identity, distinguishing it from more commercialized tourist landscapes.

6.2 Translation Strategies in a Semi-Urban ELF Context

The dominance of duplicating translations must be interpreted not only as a preference for clarity but also as a reflection of institutional practices, translation capacity, and tourism policy orientation. While duplicating supports accessibility, it also signals limited adaptation of English to audience needs, suggesting that sign producers prioritize direct equivalence rather than nuanced or context-specific translation. This finding resonates with research in other Thai contexts (Yanhong & Rungrung, 2013), showing that literal translation reflects both resource constraints and low translation expertise rather than deliberate multilingual strategy.

The less frequent use of overlapping and complementary translations indicates a degree of strategic multilingualism in which English visibility is balanced with Thai cultural authenticity. This hybrid practice reflects an ongoing negotiation between global communicative norms and local linguistic identity, a characteristic of English use in emerging semi-urban ELF contexts (Cogo, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011). However, the limited use suggests that such complex multilingual practices require linguistic awareness that is not yet systematically supported, highlighting the need for more straightforward guidelines and training for signage producers to avoid reduced intelligibility or unintended distortion of cultural meaning.

6.3 English Linguistic Features on Public Signs

The English linguistic features observed in Lop Buri's signage such as transliteration variation, acronyms, loanwords, and simplified or unconventional phrasing demonstrate how English functions as a flexible and adaptive resource within a multilingual environment. Transliteration practices, for example, *Wat Phrasri Rattana Mahathat*, reflect efforts to preserve cultural identity while enhancing international accessibility. However, variations such as *Prang Sam Yod* and *Pra Prang Sam Yod* reveal the lack of standardized Romanization and inconsistent translation practices among local authorities (Thongtong, 2016; Methitam & Channuan, 2024). While such variability is common in ELF contexts (Backhaus, 2007), it also points to policy gaps in signage management and the absence of unified linguistic guidelines.

The use of acronyms and loanwords further illustrates English's dual role as both a symbolic and communicative resource. These forms signal modernity and technological connectedness (Vivas-Peraza, 2020; Yanhong & Rungrung, 2013) while facilitating intelligibility through globally recognizable terms, aligning with ELF's emphasis on efficiency and shared meaning rather than native-speaker norms. Similarly, the bilingual layering of Thai and English reflects Reh's (2004) complementary multilingual writing, in which English provides orientation and global reach, while Thai conveys cultural depth, reinforcing Lop Buri's locally grounded yet internationally accessible identity.

Non-idiomatic phrasing observed in the signage likely results from limited translation resources and weak inter-agency coordination rather than intentional linguistic choices. From an ELF perspective, such forms should not be viewed simply as errors but as outcomes of resource-driven variability, where communicative sufficiency takes precedence over linguistic accuracy. Addressing these issues requires coordinated policy measures, including standardized transliteration systems, translator training, and adequate funding for public signage.

Beyond written text, Lop Buri's linguistic landscape also draws on multimodal resources, such as images, colors, and layout, to enhance meaning-making (Cipria & O'Rourke, 2024; Kress, 2009). Visual symbols such as monkeys, sunflowers, and historical temples interact with English text to construct local identity and brand Lop Buri as the "Monkey City" and a heritage destination. From a multimodal discourse perspective (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Scollon & Scollon, 2003), these visual elements compensate for linguistic limitations by enhancing intelligibility and reinforcing meaning, thereby supporting an ELF-oriented focus on communicative effectiveness.

Overall, English use in Lop Buri's signage highlights both the adaptability and institutional challenges of ELF communication in semi-urban tourism contexts. Strengthening policy frameworks for translation quality and linguistic consistency would enhance not only intelligibility but also the professional image and cultural value of Thailand's tourism landscape.

7. Implications

This study carries important implications across three key areas: Policy and Administration, Tourism and Place Branding, and Education.

1. Policy and Administration

Local authorities should establish clear governmental guidelines for multilingual signage that promote standardized transliteration, accurate translation, and consistent visual design to ensure clarity and professionalism. Implementing an ISO-based transliteration system would enhance uniformity and international readability. In addition, training programs for local signmakers, tourism officers, and business owners should be provided to strengthen translation competence and cross-cultural communication awareness, ensuring that English use aligns with both ELF principles and Thailand's tourism development goals.

2. Tourism and Place Branding

Integrating more symbolic and mythological elements into signage can strengthen place identity and enhance the visitor experience. Visual symbols tied to local culture can turn signage into a tool for emotional engagement and storytelling.

3. Education

Public signage offers rich material for language learning, translation practice, and local studies. Incorporating real-world examples into classrooms can foster critical awareness of language use and deepen students' connection to local culture.

Ultimately, enhancing the quality, consistency, and cultural relevance of multilingual signage in Lop Buri can support inclusive tourism development, foster intercultural understanding, and contribute to the region's long-term socio-economic and educational objectives.

8. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the data collection was conducted in a specific place and during a particular period, which may not reflect the broader or evolving linguistic landscape in other locations at different times in Lop Buri Province. Secondly, the study is based solely on observations of public signs, without incorporating interviews or perspectives from stakeholders, including tourists, residents, local authorities, or business owners. As a result, it does not capture the intentions behind the signage or how these signs are perceived and interpreted by various audiences. Moreover, the research does not distinguish between top-down and bottom-up signage, which could provide deeper insights into the power dynamics and social roles embedded in the linguistic landscape.

9. Conclusion

This study examined English use in the linguistic landscape of Lop Buri's tourist attractions to understand how English functions as a lingua franca in a semi-urban heritage context. The findings reveal that English is employed primarily for practical and informative purposes, with bilingual Thai-English signage facilitating accessibility and visitor orientation. The predominance of duplicating translation strategies reflects an institutional emphasis on intelligibility and cost-effective communication. In contrast, the limited use of overlapping and complementary strategies indicates emerging yet uneven multilingual practices.

From an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) perspective, linguistic features such as transliteration variation, acronyms, loanwords, non-standard spellings, and non-idiomatic phrasing should not be viewed as deficiencies but as adaptive meaning-making practices shaped by local resources and communicative needs. These features highlight how English is locally negotiated to prioritize intelligibility over native-speaker norms.

This study extends linguistic landscape and ELF research to semi-urban heritage destinations, moving beyond metropolitan, highly commercialized tourist hubs. This underscores the need for clearer transliteration standards, improved translation practices, and stronger inter-agency coordination in public signage management. Overall, Lop Buri's linguistic landscape illustrates how English, as a lingua franca, operates practically within local limits while contributing to the construction of place identity in Thailand's evolving tourism landscape.

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