



Linguistic Landscape of The Legendary Century-old Bangkok Railway Station

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Received July 6, 2021 / Revised September 4, 2021 / Accepted September 13, 2021 / Publish Online September 13, 2021

Abstract

Linguistic landscape (LL) has been gaining ground because of an interest in multilingualism and globalization tendencies where languages interact in establishing a global environment. Studies of LL help improve images and services provided by the government and commercial organizations. In line with this, this paper proposes a computerized method of examining the linguistic landscape of the Bangkok Railway Station, known as Hua Lamphong Railway Station, in terms of language use and functions. Moreover, a top-down and bottom-up approach was used to analyze the organizations that created the signs. A total of 314 signs were collected and their contents were stored in a database. Then, the Query by Example (QBE) approach was applied to generate information based on the languages on the signs and their categories. The results showed that the following seven foreign languages were found: English, Chinese, French, Japanese, Burmese, Bahasa Melayu, and Yawee. Thai was the most predominant language used in this station, and English was the foreign language that was mostly used to help create a global environment. The signs were used for providing general information, giving direction, advertising, preventing diseases, prohibition, warning, conveying greetings, and welfare messages. Most of the signs were produced by government agencies, followed by companies, and then local shops. The image of the Bangkok Railway Station can be enhanced through cooperation between the public and private sectors and multilingualism should be promoted for more effective communication. Apart from creating a larger scale research opportunity, our proposed method could efficiently provide insights into linguistic diversity and the functions of language on signs. Importantly, the results can be applied to improve communication on signs for other railway stations throughout the country.

Keywords: *language diversity, language functions, linguistic landscape, Query by Example, railway stations, top-down and bottom-up approach*

1. Introduction

The Bangkok Railway Station, operated by the State Railway of Thailand (SRT), was officially opened on June 25th, 1916. Since then, it has played a major role in serving the nation's transportation needs. Hua Lamphong Railway Station, as shown in Figure 1, is one of the oldest train stations in Thailand. It was commissioned by King Rama V after he made a royal visit to Germany in 1907 and admired the Frankfurt railway. It is used by passengers from the suburbs and other cities throughout Thailand to travel into the city as well as across Bangkok. Not only does it serve domestic commuters, but it also accommodates tourists from around the world who flock to tourist attractions throughout Thailand. The constant flow of tourists requires different language use on signs to convey the intended messages. The railway station is closely connected to the development of tourist destinations that are further afield. The station has served as a hub of public service transportation and a famous Bangkok landmark for more than 100 years.



Figure 1 The Bangkok Railway Station (Hua Lamphong)

Thailand is an ethnically diverse and pluralistic country (Rappa, & Wee, 2006; Smalley, 1994). The official language of Thailand is Central Thai, Bangkok Thai. English is used as the lingua-franca and holds a special position as a language for communication in various sectors such as education, communication, politics, media, and tourism (Prasert, & Zilli, 2019).

According to Gorter (2006), language surrounds us in textual form as it is shown on shop windows, business signs, banners, official notifications, and traffic signs. The study of written languages appearing on signs in the public sphere has steadily been gaining ground from academics in fields such as applied linguistics and media studies. The languages of public street signs, street names, place names, public signs on government buildings, business shop signs and advertising billboards join to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration. Public signs are utilized to disseminate messages of public interest like directions and warnings and to pass on information to visitors from business, shops and organizations.

Literature Review

Research into the linguistic landscape (LL) has become of academic interest and has been conducted in many countries such as Singapore, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Spain, and Hong Kong (Rungswang, 2018). LL has drawn academic interest and has become a dynamic field of research in applied and sociolinguistics which endeavors to comprehend multiple forms of languages when presented in public spaces (Chanda, Hossain, & Rahman, 2018). Perhaps the most notable meaning of linguistic landscape was given by Landry & Bourhis (1997), who defined LL as the visibility and salience of languages on open and commercial signs in a given territory or region. LL presents the concept like environmental print (Huebner, 2006), the word on the street (Foust, & Fuggle, 2011) and multilingual cityscape (Gorter, 2013). Several scholars have coined the term to accentuate the written languages or text displayed and presented in public spaces (Pavlenko, 2010; Coulmas, 2009; Backhaus, 2006; Gorter, 2006). Reh (2004) emphasizes that the study of LL confers upon us the social layering of the community, the relative status of the various societal segments, and the dominant cultural ideals. These can be portrayed in the form of language use and functions, the objectives of signs, and prominent linguistic actors who concretely build and shape the landscape elements based on preferential tendencies, deliberate choices, or policies to promote good services and advertise products to target business groups. Gorter (2013) postulated that previous studies carried out LL in one specific geographic area such as a city, a street, a neighbourhood, or even the whole country, or a comparative study of those could be analyzed as well.

LL allows us to understand various key language perspectives such as sociolinguistic contexts and the use of different languages on signs (Cenoz, & Gorter, 2006). We can also learn the diversity of languages and culture underlying the messages since public signs are a sort of semiotic sign in that they also represent something other than themselves (Akindele, 2011). Besides, studying the diversity of languages and functions of signs helps establish better communication and service between service providers and customers.

In the Thai context, language use on public signs has changed dramatically resulting from globalization, immigration, and international trade. The advent of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) (Siwina, & Prasithratsint, 2020) allows the mobility of migrant workers from neighboring countries such as Myanmar and Laos to come to Thailand to find jobs that offer higher wages than their own countries. For this reason, Thailand has become an open country where immigrants have been employed in, for example, the fishing industry and industrial factories. Several LL studies in Thailand have investigated the choice of foreign scripts on signs. The results indicated that English was the most prominent foreign language used on signs (Prapobratanakul, 2016; Sutthinaraphan, 2016; Thongtong, 2016; Sirichareon, 2016). Research has been conducted to investigate the language use and functions of signs in a Thai community centre in Singapore. The language functions of shop signs were divided into shop names and shop details (Rungswang, 2018). The results showed that English, utilized in shop names, was employed as a transcription for Thai shop names because English is the language of global communication. The acceptance of English was also supported by another investigation conducted by Pikulthong (2011) on the status of language on business signs along Phra Arthit Road, an iconic street in Bangkok catering for tourists. The results showed that English was the most predominant, in both positioning and font size, on the signs because it was perceived as a lingua-franca for both foreigners and Thais. The font size, large or prominent, signified the importance of the national language (Scollon, & Scollon, 2003). In signs that are bilingual or multilingual, one language will stand out from the other to attenuate the significance of that language in the context of the national language.

Chuaychoowong (2019) concluded that LL results are useful information for policymakers or policy planners when examining a language policy or planning a language policy and its implementation. In addition, Wiriyaichitra (2002) stated that English played a crucial role in country development in developing countries including Thailand. The emergence of advanced technology like the internet has facilitated global collaboration with foreign enterprises in several domains: namely, business, education, science, and technology both domestically and internationally. This agrees with Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (2004), who proposed that the use of English, as well as its presence, was a mark of globalization that fostered economic activities such as marketing, production, and consumption, resulting in enhanced sales revenues and brand awareness. Moreover, the utilization of different languages in the sign mirrored the power, status, and economic significance of the different languages (Cenoz, & Gorter, 2009).

In light of globalization, it is undeniable that Thailand, one of the countries in the Expanding Circle according to Kachru's model of "World Englishes" (1986), has been immensely influenced by English usage particularly in tourism, digital technology, international business, politics and media (Bolton, 2012). In effect, numerous LL research conducted in Thailand has showcased the incremental spreading of English usage exhibited on signs around the country. Thai words have entered into English such as *acharn* (a teacher), *khun* (a polite title preceding the first name of a man or a woman), *muang* (city or town), *phi* (an elder brother or sister), and *phra* (a monk). The emergence of Thai-English words is interesting and a few Thai-English words have appeared at the Bangkok Railway Station. For example, the Thai-English word "Pad Thai", which is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as a Thai dish consisting of rice noodles stir-fried usually with any of various additional ingredients (such as bean sprouts, peanuts, chicken, shrimp, and egg), was found at the station.

In parallel with this research, De Los Reyes (2014) examined the linguistic landscape of two major Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Metro Rail Transit (MRT) stations on the Manila Metro in the Philippines. The paper sought to determine the languages utilized and give possible explanations as to how the language was used in 76 signs found in two stations. The findings indicated that English and Filipino languages were predominantly utilized in the signs; however, between the two languages, English dominated as there were more English signs than those in Filipino. In addition, research conducted into the two terminals of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport indicated that Malay was the most predominant language that appeared in the multilingual signage, whereas English was positioned as the second most important language (Woo, & Nora Riget, 2020). Besides, the linguistic landscape of a territory serves two fundamental functions which are informational and symbolic. Apart from the study of languages found on signs, Singhasiri (2013) studied the language functions of signs in a train station and classified them as follows: 1) providing general information, 2) greetings and farewell messages, 3) giving direction, 4) warning, 5) prohibition, and 6)

advertising. This classification was comprehensive, and it should be further studied and extended to analyze the signs in train stations and other contexts.

Top-down and bottom-up are a LL influential approach that can be applied to understand the roles of linguistic actors such as the government and commercial enterprises in a specific area. In Cenoz and Gorter's study (2006), top-down signs referred to the official signs placed by the government or related institutions, while bottom-up signs referred to the nonofficial signs installed by commercial enterprises or by private companies. This approach was used in various studies (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Hasan Amara, & Trumper, 2006; Cenoz, & Gorter, 2006). Similarly, Shohamy and Gorter (2009) coined the terms to differentiate signs into the following two types: top-down and bottom-up items. Understanding language functions and the top-down and bottom-up approach can help promote services and advertise products.

Therefore, this study proposes an innovative computerized method using a database and queries created by QBE to explore the signs in the Bangkok Railway Station. Instead of storing LL data on paper, word processing software, or spreadsheet software, a database and queries were used as it was a more efficient method of conducting linguistic landscape research on a larger scale. In addition, the study applied the classification of the language functions suggested by Singhasiri (2013) together with the top-down and bottom-up approach to analyze the linguistic diversity of the signs. It is hoped that this analysis of the Bangkok Railway Station linguistic landscape can serve as a blueprint for other railway stations to better manage their signs and improve domestic and international passengers' travel experience.

2. Objectives

1. To investigate the diversity of languages and functions of signs displayed in the Bangkok Railway Station.
2. To explore the linguistic landscape actors using the top-down and bottom-up approach in the Bangkok Railway Station.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Data Collection

A total of 314 signs were collected from the Bangkok Railway Station. The researchers classified them based on the diversity of the languages and their functions. The signs were classified into 1) monolingual signs, 2) bilingual signs, and 3) multilingual signs. The multilingual signs were signs consisting of more than two languages. Then, the signs were categorized as 1) providing general information, 2) giving direction, 3) advertising, 4) preventing diseases, 5) prohibition, 6) warning, and 7) sending greetings and farewell messages. Based on the top-down and bottom-up approach, the signs were classified based on the following linguistic landscape actors: 1) government, 2) companies, 3) shops, and 4) others.

3.2 Methods

Once the data were collected and stored in a Microsoft Access database, QBE was used to filter the contents of the signs according to their categories, functions, and linguistic actors. QBE is a visual approach where a user enters the queries, and it can be used by not only computer scientists but also social science researchers as it is easy to use. Instead of writing an SQL command, users can easily fill in fields or select items to create a query. Using the QBE grid, the user generally does not need to know how to write SQL queries for advanced searching. Table 1 shows the field names and data types (SignsInBangkokRailwayStation) used to store the sign data. The QBE example in Figure 2 was used to find signs consisting of Thai and English that function as prohibition.

Table 1 Field names and data type of the SignsInBangkokRailwayStation table

Field Name	Data Type	Description
ID	Number	ID
ImageNo	Short Text	Image number
Content	Long Text	Text on the sign
NumberLanguages	Number	Number of languages appearing on the sign
NumberFunctions	Number	Number of language functions
Thai	Yes/No	Thai language
English	Yes/No	English language
Chinese	Yes/No	Chinese language
French	Yes/No	French language
Burmese	Yes/No	Burmese language
Japanese	Yes/No	Japanese language
BahasaMelayu	Yes/No	Bahasa Melayu
Yawee	Yes/No	Yawee language
ProvideInformation	Yes/No	Content used for providing information
GiveDirection	Yes/No	Content used for giving direction
Advertising	Yes/No	Content used for advertising
DiseasePrevention	Yes/No	Content used for disease prevention
Prohibition	Yes/No	Content used for prohibition
Warning	Yes/No	Content used for warning
Greetings	Yes/No	Content used for sending greetings and farewell messages
Government	Yes/No	Sign created by the government
Company	Yes/No	Sign created by companies
Localshop	Yes/No	Sign created by shops
Others	Yes/No	Signs that were not created by the government and companies or shops

Field:	ImageNo	Content	NumberLanguages	Thai	English	Prohibition
Table:	SignsInBangkokRailw	SignsInBangkokRailw	SignsInBangkokRailw	SignsInBangkokRailw	SignsInBangkokRailw	SignsInBangkokRailw
Sort:						
Show:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Criteria:			2	Yes	Yes	Yes
or:						

Figure 2 QBE to find the content of the signs consisting of Thai and English languages that function as prohibition

Based on the QBE, the query showed the texts in the ImageNo, Content, NumberLanguages, Thai, English, and Prohibition fields when the number of languages was two and the value in the Thai, English, and Prohibition fields was “Yes”. Queries were created to search for results based on the criteria including languages on the signs, language functions, and linguistic landscape actors.

4. Results

4.1 Diversity of Language Use

The signs in the Bangkok Railway Station were classified into three categories: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. The findings indicated that bilingual signs were mostly found (57.96%), followed by monolingual Thai signs which accounted for 40.13%, and multilingual signs accounted for 1.91%. A total of 176 signs containing both Thai and English languages were reported, and 86 signs were

monolingual Thai. Only a few signs were written in Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, French, Bahasa Melayu, and Yawee. The percentage of each type of sign and languages used are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Type of the signs in the Bangkok Railway Station

Type of sign	Signs & percentage	Languages used
Monolingual signs	126 (40.13%)	Thai = 86 (68.25%), English= 39 (30.95%), Japanese = 1 (0.79%)
Bilingual signs	182 (57.96%)	Thai-English =176 (96.72%), Thai-French = 1 (0.55%), Thai-Yawee = 1 (0.55%), English-Chinese = 3 (1.64%), Thai-Bahasa Melayu = 1 (0.55%)
Multilingual signs	6 (1.91%)	Thai-English-Burmese = 1 (16.67%), Thai-English-Japanese = 1 (16.67%), Thai-English-Chinese = 3 (50.00%), Thai-English-Chinese-Japanese = 1 (16.67%)

4.2 Language Functions

Figure 3 shows examples of signs in the Bangkok Railway Station and their language functions.



Providing information



Giving direction



Preventing diseases



Prohibition



Warning



Advertising



Greetings and farewell

Figure 3 Functions of signs

The number of signs and percentages categorized according to their language functions are shown in Table 3. The results revealed that 11 language functions consisting of seven main language functions and the other four combined functions were found. These language functions were providing information (I=33.76%), giving directions (D=13.69%), advertising (A=22.29%), disease prevention (DP=6.37%), prohibition (P=10.51%), warning (W=9.24%), greetings and farewell messages (G=1.91%), providing information and giving directions (I&D=0.96%), providing information and prohibition (I&P=0.64%), providing information and warning (I&W=0.32%), and warning, advertising and sending greetings and farewell messages (W&A&G=0.32%). It appeared that the signs had more than one language function. 1.91% and 0.32% of signs had two and three language functions, respectively.

Table 3 The number of signs and percentages according to their language functions

Language	Language functions										
	I	D	A	DP	P	W	G	I&D	I&P	I&W	W&A&G
Thai	25 (7.96%)	6 (1.91%)	12 (3.82%)	3 (0.96%)	19 (6.05%)	17 (5.41%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	1 (0.32%)	1 (0.32%)
English	10 (3.18%)	2 (0.64%)	26 (8.28%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Japanese	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English	68 (21.66%)	35 (11.15%)	27 (8.60%)	17 (5.41%)	11 (3.50%)	12 (3.82%)	3 (0.96%)	3 (0.96%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-French	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-Yawee	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
English-Chinese	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (0.96%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-Bahasa Melayu	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Burmese	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Japanese	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Chinese	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (0.64%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Chinese-Japanese	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Total	106 (33.76%)	43 (13.69%)	70 (22.29%)	20 (6.37%)	33 (10.51%)	29 (9.24%)	6 (1.91%)	3 (0.96%)	2 (0.64%)	1 (0.32%)	1 (0.32%)

4.2.1 Thai Language Functions

The results show that the monolingual Thai signs exhibited 10 out of 11 language functions, while bilingual Thai-English signs had eight functions. This was because Thai was the main official medium of communication inside the Bangkok Railway Station. The Thai language often co-occurred with other languages on the signs to perform the following functions: providing information, giving directions, preventing diseases, prohibiting smoking and alcohol drinking, warning, advertising, and conveying greetings and farewell messages. For example, bilingual Thai-English signs were used to give information on how to book tickets via the phone. Thai-English signs such as ทางออก Exit, สุขา-อาบน้ำ TOILET-SHOWER, and ทางเข้า ENTRANCE were used for giving directions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it became evident that many signs exhibited the new normal lifestyle and preventive measures that passengers should follow strictly for hygiene reasons. Some examples of signs for disease prevention included: ปกป้องตัวเราจาก COVID-19 ทำความสะอาดมือ ด้วยเจลแอลกอฮอล์ Prevent COVID-19; Wash Your Hands with Antiseptics. For prohibition, signs such as บนรถไฟและสถานีปลอดบุหรี่และสุรา No smoking and drinking alcohol on the trains and inside the stations; and ห้ามขายห้ามดื่มสุราบนรถไฟและสถานี No selling, no drinking alcohol on the trains and inside the stations were shown at the station. Warning signs were displayed to advise passengers to check departure times and platforms, to care for their belongings, and not to leave their luggage unattended while waiting in the station. For instance, กรุณาตรวจสอบทรัพย์สินของท่านก่อนออกจากที่นี่ PLEASE CHECK YOUR BELONGINGS BEFORE LEAVING is an example of a Thai-English warning sign found in the Bangkok Railway Station. Regarding advertising, the names of the shops such as ร้านกาแฟลิ้นแค้นยอนคอฟฟี่ BLACK CANYON COFFEE comprised of both Thai and English to target both local and foreign customers. It is customary that the greetings and farewell signs like ยินดีต้อนรับ WELCOME; and ขอให้ทุกท่านเดินทางโดยสวัสดิภาพ Bon voyage are situated in train stations to greet and wish passengers safe trips. In addition, bilingual Thai-English signs performed multifunctions which were providing information and giving directions. For instance, a large directory map that illustrated venues and provided directions was installed inside the Bangkok Railway Station so that the passengers could know where they were going. Apart from the bilingual and multilingual signs, the functions of the monolingual Thai on signs were investigated and examples are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Examples of Thai language functions on monolingual Thai signs

Language Functions	Example
Providing information	ประวัติศาสตร์รถไฟกรุงเทพ (History of Bangkok Railway Station) ขอความร่วมมือผู้ขับขี่รับจ้างสาธารณะทุกประเภทโปรดแต่งกายให้สุภาพและเรียบร้อย (Please cooperate: All public taxi drivers are kindly requested to dress modestly and neatly.)
Giving directions	ทางไปรถไฟ ทางไปรถไฟฟ้า the way to trains, the way to the electric locomotives
Disease prevention	ชีวิตวิถีใหม่ สวมหน้ากากอนามัย - เคารพกฎจราจร ปลอดโควิด - ปลอดภัยดีทุกคนที่ยังถนน (A new normal life, Wear a mask, Respect traffic rules, COVID-free, Safe from road accidents)
Prohibition	ห้ามทิ้งขยะ (Do not litter) ห้ามนำสินค้ามาวางขายตลอดแนว หากฝ่าฝืนมีโทษปรับ 500 บาท หรือทั้งจำทั้งปรับ (Do not sell products along the pathway. If violated, there is a penalty of 500 baht or both imprisonment and a fine)
Warning	ตรวจสอบป้ายข้างรถไฟให้แน่ชัดก่อนขึ้นขบวนรถ หากสงสัยกรุณาสอบถามเจ้าหน้าที่ (Be sure to check the sign on the side of the train before getting on. If in doubt, please ask the staff.)
Advertising	เครื่องดื่มมอลต์สกัด โอวันติน (Malt beverage, Ovaltine) กระทิงแดง ของกินมีประโยชน์ (Red Bull, healthy food)
Providing information & Prohibition	ประกาศการรถไฟแห่งประเทศไทย เรื่องการเปิด-ปิดให้บริการผู้โดยสารและข้อห้าม (State Railway of Thailand Announcement: Opening & Closing time for passengers and prohibitions)

Language Functions	Example
Providing information & Warning	ตรวจสอบสัมภาระติดตัว ก่อนขึ้นหรือลงจากขบวนรถ สัมภาระที่เกินสิทธิ์ต้องชั่งและเสียค่าระวางที่สถานี (Please check your belongings before getting on and off from the train. Excess luggage must be weighed and passengers have to pay for freight)
Warning, Advertising & Greetings and farewell messages	ตื่น ตื่น ตื่น ง่วง เมา เราไม่ขับ กลางคืนขับช้ำปลอดภัย ขอให้เดินทางโดยสวัสดิภาพ ด้วยความปรารถนาดีจากวัดบ้านไร่และเสือชุมพลร์ ตราเสือ (ปูนตราเสือ) (Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Sleepy or drunk, don't drive - the magic spell for life-saving on the roads, bless you have a safe trip - the best wishes from Baan Rai Temple and Super Tiger (Tiger cement))

The results show that none of the monolingual Thai signs were found to convey greetings and farewell messages. Often the Thai language together with English or French was used to perform this function.

4.2.2 English Language Functions

English has become an increasingly global language. The results show that monolingual English signs performed four functions and the signs comprising of Thai and English performed eight language functions. The bilingual Thai-English signs were predominantly used for advertising products and services such as food and drinks and providing information to passengers. Monolingual English was found to notify foreigners about an automated external defibrillator (AED), a portable electronic device that assists in life-threatening situations when passengers become unconscious due to a sudden loss of blood flow leading to heart failure. English was used for shop names, as well as products and services because some business owners focused more on foreign travelers. Another important function of English was to give directions such as identifying assembly venues or meeting points as well as providing package tour information to foreign travelers. Table 5 shows examples of the functions of monolingual English.

Table 5 Examples of monolingual English functions

Language Functions	Example
Providing information	AED Automated External Defibrillator
Advertising	Café Amazon, BLACK CANYON COFFEE, DUNKIN'S DONUTS, Enjoy! Coca Cola, Anna's home-style bakery, Bangkok Airways, Thai Smooth as silk (Slogan of Thai Airways), Bus direct to Siem Reap (Angkor Wat)
Giving directions	If you booked any bus ticket from "other agency." Your meeting point is at "BLACK CANYON COFFEE" on your right -> NOT HERE

4.2.3 Chinese Language Functions

As indicated in the findings, the signs containing Thai and Chinese language communicated two functions which were advertising and prohibition. Monolingual Chinese signs were not found. The Chinese language co-occurred with other languages. For instance, bilingual English-Chinese signs in front of a restaurant were used to advertise and promote food and drinks especially coffee to attract Chinese customers. Multilingual signs in Thai-English-Chinese were used to convey prohibition messages about smoking and drinking alcohol inside the Bangkok Railway Station. No passengers are allowed to smoke at any time on the trains or at any of the stations.

4.2.4 Japanese Language Functions

In a similar vein, the results revealed that a sign written in monolingual Japanese exhibited the function of providing information. One monolingual Japanese sign was posted to provide information about Japanese language facilitators. Bilingual Japanese signs were not found in the Bangkok Railway Station. However, a multilingual sign in Thai-English-Chinese-Japanese prohibited smoking and drinking inside the train station and on the trains. There was one poster used to advertise green tea drinks that was written in Thai-English-Japanese.

4.2.5 French Language Functions

A sign written in the French language expressed welcoming and greeting purposes. No monolingual French signs were found. The bilingual Thai-French signs were to greet and wish passengers farewell when they visited Thailand. A large sign with “Bon voyage” on it was used to express good wishes to passengers or tourists about to go on a journey.

4.2.6 Burmese Language Functions

The Burmese language that appeared on a sign was used to advise passengers on how to top up their mobile phones. One banner containing multilingual Thai-English-Burmese was found. It was used to give instructions on how to use a machine to top up a mobile phone.

4.2.7 Bahasa Melayu Functions

The Bahasa Melayu was used on a sign to advise passengers that an Islamic prayer room was available. A bilingual sign consisting of Thai and Bahasa Melayu “ห้องละหมาด SEMABAHYANG” was found in a prayer room for Islamic passengers who could worship Allah during their journey.

4.2.8 Yawee Language Functions

A sign written in the Yawee language served two functions: providing information and prohibition. Regarding religious practices, the sign written in Yawee provided information pertinent to the proper conduct when using the Islamic prayer room. One bilingual sign with Thai and Yawee was found. The sign was posted to advise Islamic passengers to keep the prayer room clean and pay respect to the place of worship, and not to use the room for sleeping, eating, and drinking after worshipping. It announced to Muslims that they could come to pray and worship and that they had to keep the room clean and respect the sacred place. Meanwhile, the sign also indicated that the passengers were not permitted to sleep and eat food there.

4.3 Linguistic Landscape: Top-down/bottom-up Signs

Top-down refers to signs which were created by government agencies. The percentage of signs created by government agencies was 67.20%, as shown in Table 6. Top-down signs emphasized declaring SRT regulations, restrictions, policies, announcements, and services including disease prevention. It was assumed that these signs were created by the SRT and by the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Public Health, the Department of Disease Control, and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security.

Bottom-up refers to signs which were created by local businesses and international companies operating in the Bangkok Railway Station such as banks, restaurants, money exchange bureaus, convenience stores, baggage services, fast food chains, book shops, and travel agencies. The local shops included book kiosks, food stalls, and food shops in the food court. Local shops created signs advertising services such as foot massage, battery charging services, and tattooing. The companies created signs to display the names of their shops and their brands such as Coca-Cola, Dunkin’ Donuts, Black Canyon, Café Amazon, and the Bangkok bank.

The percentage of signs created by companies and local shops was 21.66% and 10.19% respectively. The results indicated that many signs created by the companies consisted of English because English represented globalization and the intended messages targeted foreign customers. For local shops, most advertising signs containing monolingual Thai and bilingual Thai-English were used to sell food and drinks to both local people and foreigners. Only 0.96% of signs were not created by the government, companies, and local shops. One Thai sign was used to recruit housewives and babysitters. The other two Thai-English signs were used to ask for donations.

Table 6 Language distribution in signs created by LL actors (Number of signs and percentages)

Language	Government	Companies	Local shops	Others
Thai	71 (22.61%)	8 (2.55%)	6 (1.91%)	1 (0.32%)
English	7 (2.23%)	22 (7.01%)	10 (3.18%)	0 (0.00%)
Japanese	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English	128 (40.76%)	30 (9.55%)	16 (5.10%)	2 (0.64%)
Thai-French	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
English-Chinese	0 (0.00%)	3 (0.96%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Language	Government	Companies	Local shops	Others
Thai-Bahasa Melayu	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai -Yawee	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Burmese	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Japanese	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Chinese	2 (0.64%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thai-English-Chinese-Japanese	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.32%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Total	211 (67.20%)	68 (21.66%)	32 (10.19%)	3 (0.96%)

5. Discussion

Inside the Bangkok Railway Station, Thai was the most predominant language that appeared on official, non-official and commercial signs. Government agencies regulate the use of signs to some extent and were categorized in prior studies as “top-down”. The signs written in bilingual Thai-English were categorized as bottom-up. Signs in monolingual English showcased commercial activities. As the tourism industry expands, the use of English geared toward international tourism creates a multinational atmosphere. Signs in English were used to raise brand name awareness.

The current findings showed that Thai and English were the two main languages prevalently used in the Bangkok Railway Station. The number of signs written in monolingual Thai was greater than those written in monolingual English. Furthermore, regarding the font size, large signs were written in Thai script using a large font size, signifying the prominence of the Thai language in the Bangkok Railway Station. This might stem from the fact that many passengers are local blue-collar workers who travel by train for whom the fares are not overly expensive. In other words, the signs in the Bangkok Railway Station mostly targeted local people who made up the majority of the passengers that use the services. English was important but was not the major language used. English was featured as a language of wider communication among international passengers. The findings obtained from the Bangkok Railway Station were different from those found in the train stations in the Philippines (De Los Reyes, 2014) and similar to those found in the two terminals of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (Woo, & Nora Riget, 2020). In the Bangkok Railway Station and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the national language was dominant, however, in the Philippines English was dominant. Although Filipino is the official language in schools and various media, it is less important than English.

LL research on language choices on Nimmanhemim chill-out road and Phra Atit road in Bangkok concluded that English was the most dominant language used on the signs found there. This is because Phra Atit Road, a fun Bohemian street next to Khao San Road, is an iconic street featuring a collection of quaint shophouses, guesthouses and restaurants, and a vibrant mix of art where international tourists choose to stay when visiting Bangkok.

The results of this research show that the following languages were used in the Bangkok Railway Station: Thai, English, Chinese, French, Burmese and Japanese, Bahasa Melayu, and Yawee. The following multilingual variations were found: Thai-English-Chinese and Thai-English-Chinese-Japanese, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 A sign consisting of four languages

Regarding language functions, disease prevention was included because monolingual Thai and bilingual Thai-English signs were posted to advise passengers of preventive measures for COVID 19 in the Bangkok Railway Station.

Based on the current findings, it seems that the Chinese language was used to communicate with Chinese passengers relating to product advertising and prohibition. However, none of the signs were solely written in Chinese. The Chinese language normally co-occurred with Thai, English, or Japanese, and its use was not as significant as English and Thai. Over the past decades, the mobility of the population, as well as government and commercial activities, have changed dynamically. This has greatly affected the way signs are used. Many signs were found to be bilingual written in English and another language to target not only local people but also foreign tourists, multilingual signs should be endorsed to create self-reliance among international tourists. Further qualitative research should be conducted to obtain more information about the LL found in this study. Questionnaires and interviews could be used to derive more profound information that could be used for communication planning and creating an attractive atmosphere for tourists.

For the data analysis, this research used a computerized method applying Microsoft Access and QBE to facilitate data storage and queries while minimizing the time spent and providing accuracy of the analysis. Researchers do not need to write computer programs. They can derive results that are stored in a database which is much faster than using the time-consuming manual approach. Manual investigation techniques produce errors and do not support data changing and large-scale data analysis. Most importantly, the derived results are useful sources to assist language policymakers and planners in creating more effective communication on signs in railway stations and other public venues.

6. Conclusion

This paper investigated the diversity of languages, the functions of the signs displayed, and the top-down and bottom-up linguistic landscape actors at the Bangkok Railway Station. The languages used varied according to the number of passengers from each nation and the amount of information the government agencies and the companies intended to convey. The number of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs accounted for 40.13%, 57.96%, and 1.91% of the total signs, respectively. More than half of the signs were bilingual Thai-English (56.05%), 27.39% were monolingual Thai, and 12.42% were monolingual English signs. Most of the signs provided information, followed by advertising, giving directions, warning, prohibition, disease prevention, and greetings and farewell. An increase in the number of signs was observed due to Covid 19 which accounted for 6.37% of signs.

Thai was the most dominant language displayed in the Bangkok Railway Station while English was represented as a global language. English was the foreign language that dominated the linguistic landscape of the station. Due to the increasing number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand annually, Chinese was also used for prohibition and commercial purposes especially food advertising in restaurants. French was used on greetings and farewell signs. Bahasa Melayu and Yawee were used solely in the Muslim prayer room. Signs with Burmese characters were associated with using the telephone and included instructions for topping up smartphones. Japanese signs indicated that language facilitators were available for Japanese tourists to get information. The linguistic landscape was produced by the SRT and other government agencies as well as private companies. Furthermore, regarding language use, businesses and financial institutes tended to use multilingual signs more than local shops. The use of languages was dependent upon the passengers. To create international images, multilingualism should be promoted particularly in main railway stations, while retaining a local Thai identity. This study can fill a gap in knowledge of previous work and assist in the process of creating a global linguistic landscape for other future train stations.

Multilingual signs with well-designed content empower travelers to navigate transport terminals easily and they feel welcome while travelling abroad. They also enhance positive images of host countries, resulting in mutual understanding and trust among different countries. In the future, it might be interesting to conduct a comparative linguistic landscape study of the Bangkok Railway Station with the Bangkok Skytrain (BTS), and the Bangkok Subway (MRT). Consequently, research on LL should be continually conducted to unravel strengths and pitfalls which can ameliorate the semiotic landscape to provide more effective communication.

7. References

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