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Linguistic Uniscape: A Comparative Study of Universities in Thailand

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Abstract

This study examines the linguistic landscape (LL) of university campuses in Thailand and proposes the term "linguistic uniscape" (LU). It attempts to examine whether there is a significant difference in the code preference for signage between the public universities (PUUs) and the private universities (PRUs) in Thailand and examines the different social meanings of the signage at the PUUs and at the PRUs by using place semiotics (PS) theory. A total of 30 university campuses were investigated, including 15 PUUs and 15 PRUs. The results revealed a significant difference in the use of English as the preferred language on the signage at the two types of universities. The signage at both types of universities revealed the different social meanings in language policy, institutional policy, and identity constructions. The PUUs focused on academic development, while the PRUs focused on the students' social activities.

Keywords

1   Introduction

Sociolinguistics, as one of the major linguistic branches, studies language diversity in various social contexts (Nosiani, Asiyah, and Mustikawati 2019). In the past two decades, linguistic landscape (LL), which mainly examines the languages that are used on signage in different social areas, such as neighborhoods in a city, to reveal the multilingual situations of signage, has gained traction as sub-field of sociolinguistics (Wu, Silver, and Zhang 2023).

In recent years, linguistic schoolscape (LS; Jocuns 2021, 2) has attracted much attention at different educational levels, including kindergarten (Pesch 2021), primary school (Sumarlam, Purnanto, and Ardhian 2021), high school (Andriyanti 2019, 2021), and university levels (Jocuns 2021). To align the definition of LS with LL, Brown (2012, 281–282) refers to LS as the linguistic landscape of educational spaces where place and text, both written (graphic) and oral, constitute, reproduce, and transform language ideologies. So far, the focus of LS has been on language dominance, multilingual situations, the ratio of the top-down (i.e., made by officials) and bottom-up (i.e., produced by non-officials) signage (Andriyanti 2019, 2021; Pesch 2021). Hence, studies of LS have hitherto been limited mainly to identifying the languages on signage, whereas how these languages within school areas reflect different social meanings for educators, students, parents, and other school visitors has not been fully identified. This phenomenon may be due to two factors. First, almost all studies of LS have involved only a limited number of schools or universities (Andriyanti 2021; Jocuns 2021). Given the fine-grained analyses of such studies, a holistic picture of the social meanings reflected by LS is inaccessible. In addition, most of studies of LS have followed the LL methodology, in which the examination of language dominance receives the most attention (Andriyanti 2019; Cao, Liu, and Chen 2022; Muriungi and Mudogo 2021; Siricharoen 2016; Sumarlam, Purnanto, and Ardhian 2021); thus, the social meanings of signage have been ignored.

Following this, the current study attempted to further research of the languages on signage and their social meanings on university campuses in Thailand, since the meaning potential embedded within a university's schoolscape can be quite complex and extends beyond simple analysis of the signage (Jocuns 2021, 2). With this in mind, this study separated the study of LL on university campuses from that of LS, an approach for which we suggest the term, "linguistic uniscape" (LU), which will be elaborated on in the following sections. Given these circumstances, a comparative analysis of LU at

public universities (PUU s) and at private universities (PRU s) in Thailand was conducted to examine differences in the language dominance and the social meanings of the signage. Two research questions (RQ s) were proposed for this study:

> RQ1: Is there a significant difference in code preference regarding signage at PUU s and at PRU s in Thailand?
> RQ2: What are the different social meanings of signage at PUU s and at PRU s in Thailand?

2 Previous Studies of Linguistic Schoolscape

2.1 *Linguistic Schoolscape*

Given that this study makes a distinction between LS and LU, this section will elaborate on the previous studies of LS in school areas. Overall, recent studies of LS have mainly focused on the multilingualism on the signage in school areas with different school grades in different places. The results of these studies revealed that schools of different levels mainly used the official language on monolingual signs in kindergarten, primary school, and high school areas (Andriyanti 2019, 2021; Harbon and Halimi, 2019; Pesch 2021; Riani et al. 2021; Sumarlam, Purnanto, and Ardhian 2021). This finding is not surprising for two reasons. As illustrated by several studies, schools follow the language policy of the country or the local region in which the official language is the primary langauge used for a variety of purposes (Andriyanti 2019). Moreover, students who are being educated below the tertiary level have not fully mastered a foreign language; therefore, the official language on monolingual signs in school areas is sufficient to meet student needs (Riani et al. 2021). The main problem with the languages on signage in school areas is insufficient language diversity, as revealed by two phenomena. First, despite the use of English on signs, several studies have reported that English was used far less often than the official language due to the local language policy and cultural influence (Harbon and Halimi, 2019). Saviski (2021, 144) stated that the local authorities in certain regions treated English as a threat to the official language and the national culture; thus, they restricted the use of English to secure the status of the official language. Furthermore, minority languages on signage have largely been ignored. Despite having students from different linguacultural backgrounds, Pesch (2021, 363) found that a Norwegian kindergarten adopted practices that erased linguistic diversity and devalued multilingualism. Riani et al. (2021) reported that the multilingual signs in school areas in Indonesia

could not meet the needs of students whose first languages (L1s) were not Bahasa Indonesian or English.

Although the studies of LS lacked discussion of the social meanings of signage, two main findings were illustrated in several studies. First, the language dominance on the signage in school areas worldwide reflects local and national language policies, school identities, and school socio-cultural contexts (Cormier 2020; Gorter 2018; Riani et al. 2021). Overall, studies of LS have revealed a monolingual language policy in accordance with local and national language policies. Hence, cultural diversity, from the perspectives of internationalization and globalization, has not received attention, resulting in a dearth of awareness of the cultural diversity among school-related personnel (Pesch 2021). Second, several studies have investigated the major functions of signage (FoS) in school areas, finding that school signage mainly concerned the environment of the school areas and the healthy physical development of the students (Andriyanti 2021; Harbon and Halimi, 2019; Sumarlam, Purnanto, and Ardhian 2021). In this sense, the schools focused on their own development rather than paying attention to their relationship with the wider range of society or their global identities (Gorter 2018).

2.2 *Linguistic Uniscape*

Based on the definition of LS (Brown 2012) and the main focus of previous studies of LL on university campuses, LU refers to the LL on university campuses where the written text constitutes, reproduces, and transforms language ideologies. To have a better understanding of LU, six main differences between LU and LS have been identified based on previous research. Compared to the dominant position of monolingual signs in school areas, similar numbers of bilingual signs were found in several studies, such as the case studies of universities in Thailand (Chuaychoowong 2019) and China (Cao, Liu, and Chen 2022). Although the official language was also dominant on the signage, English was found more frequently on monolingual and multilingual signs at universities than it was in school areas (Chuaychoowong 2019; Muriungi and Mudogo 2021; Siricharoen 2016; Zhou and Li 2021). Unlike schools, universities have the authority to regulate their own institutional principles, including their language policies (Chuaychoowong 2019; Zhou and Li 2021).

Moreover, bottom-up signs were found more often on university campuses than they were in school areas (Muriungi and Mudogo 2021). Instead of the short expressions found on signs in school areas, longer discourses were found on signs on university campuses. These differences were due to the individual institutional campus policies and the scope of the studies of LU. Previous research found that many types of temporary signage, such as announcements,

posters, and flyers, were prominent in LU (Muriungi and Mudogo 2021; Wang et al. 2021). Since universities have more social connections than do schools, such as those focusing on students' future career development, knowledge exchanges, and innovative research for social development, many universities around the world allow bottom-up signs on campuses (Wang et al. 2021). Hence, they have been included in the scope of studies of LU.

Based on the differences mentioned above, the social meanings of signs on university campuses are much broader than are those at schools. Several studies have found that language diversity on signage on university campuses reflects institutional identity as well as a focus on recruitment involving the overt display of friendliness to attract international students (Cao, Liu, and Chen 2022; Chuaychoowong 2019; Savski 2021; Wang et al. 2021). The functions of the different types of signage on university campuses reveals the focus of a university (Wu, Silver, and Zhang 2023). Furthermore, discourses on signage on university campuses affect students' epistemic and affective stances (Jocuns 2021, 1). Hence, this study differentiated between LU and LS to examine LU from the above perspectives.

2.3   *Place Semiotics*

Methodologies in the LS field have diversified in accordance with research questions (Krompák, Fernández-Mallat, and Meyer 2022, 12). Following the LL approach, quantitative analysis of written text on signage was first brought into studies of LS to examine the multilingualism of signage in school areas (Andriyanti 2019; Cao, Liu, and Chen 2022). Meanwhile, Huebner's (2006) framework on LL was used in LS to identify the language dominance of signage (Siricharoen 2016). However, these studies have mainly focused on code preference, while there has been little discussion about presentation of social meaning on signage. In addition, case studies were primarily carried out in the LS field. Despite the benefits of comprehending the multilingualism of signage in certain school areas, they have provided contradictory results. For example, Chuaychoowong (2019) found that English was used frequently on signage on a university campus in Thailand, whereas Savski (2021) reported limited use of English at another Thai university. Such contradiction may be due to differences between the two universities.

To examine the social meanings of signage on university campuses in Thailand, this study adopted PS (place semiotics) as its theoretical framework (Scollon and Scollon 2003). PS attempts to investigate more than simply signage itself; it also examines the relationship between a sign and society, thus revealing a sign's social meaning in its geophysical place. PS describes a sign's social meaning via three interconnected elements (illustrated in Figure 1): code

```
            ┌─────────────────────┐
            │   The sign-maker:   │
            │   Code preference   │
            └──────────┬──────────┘
                       │
            ┌──────────┴──────────┐
            │  Sign with language │
            └────┬───────────┬────┘
                 │           │
    ┌────────────┴───┐   ┌───┴──────────────┐
    │ The social     │   │ The material world│
    │ situation:     │   │ of the sign:      │
    │ Inscription    │   │ Emplacement       │
    └────────────────┘   └───────────────────┘
```
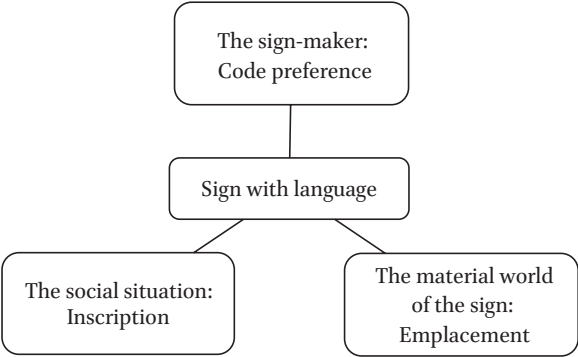
FIGURE 1   Theoretical Framework of Place Semiotics adapted from Scollon and Scollon
              (2003)

preference, which examines the indexicality from both the sign-makers' and the sign viewers' perspectives; inscription, which examines the symbolization; and emplacement, which examines the geophysical placement.

Code preference concerns the predominant language used on signage with respect to the fonts, sizes, and vectors of its text. It is believed that the preferred language essentially indexes the one that the community speaks. Inscription concerns the meaning system of a sign in association with the language inscribed on it, revealing its geopolitics, indexicality, or symbolization (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 133). Emplacement identifies the interconnection between a single sign and its closely associated geophysical environment, with a focus on whether the language on a sign has a social meaning relevant to its geophysical place. Situated semiotics refers to language on a sign with a close association with the place in which it is located, such as an exit sign, while decontextualized semiotics refers to language on a sign that is not context-dependent, such as a brand name. According to Scollon and Scollon (2003, 159), situated semiotics override decontextualized semiotics to a great extent because signage fundamentally indexes and symbolizes the world in which people live, thus revealing a relationship between the sign and its surrounding environment.

PS not only gives focus to the language dominance of signage, but also expands the studies of signage into the social meanings whereby each sign owns the features of code preference, inscription, and emplacement (Andriyanti 2021; Wang et al. 2021). By using PS, the study of signage avoids solely focusing on the language dominance of signage. Hence, PS can be utilized to reveal the social meanings of signage in LU.

3   Methodology

3.1   *Areas of Current Study and Data Collection*

As mentioned previously, this study included both PUUs and PRUs in Thailand as the LU. On June 18, 2022, the official website of the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand, listed 79 public higher education institutions and 71 private higher education institutions recognized by the Thailand Ministry of Education. According to the Thailand Ministry of Education, PUUs, which were originally referred to as government universities, are mainly funded by the Thai government, whereas PRUs are institutions of higher education that are not government funded.

This study randomly selected 15 PUU campuses and 15 PRU campuses from the list on the website, resulting in a total of 30 university campuses, each of which belonged to a different university; therefore, 30 universities were included in this study. When selecting the campuses for the LU study, if a university had more than one campus in Thailand, the campus on which the university's main administration center and most of its undergraduates were located was chosen. In this way, this study attempted to identify the social meanings of LU on different university campuses with regard to the university administrators and the undergraduates, as well as the educators, the university staff, and other visitors, such as the students' parents.

The university campuses in this study were mainly located in Bangkok and the neighboring provinces. Of the 15 PUU campuses in this study, nine campuses were in Bangkok; two campuses were in Pathum Thani Province; two campuses were in Nonthaburi Province; one campus was in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province; and one campus was in Nakhon Pathom Province. Of the 15 PRU campuses in this study, eight campuses were in Bangkok; two campuses were in Samut Prakarn Province; two campuses were in Pathum Thani Province; one campus was in Nakhon Pathom Province; one campus was in Nonthaburi Province; and one campus was in Samut Sakhon Province. In line with previous research (Jocuns 2021), the gates and the fences surrounding each university campus were also regarded as within the area for the current study.

The researcher conducted data collection from 20 June 2022 to 7 December 2022. Using the camera on an iPhone 11, the researcher collected 6,655 photos of the 15 PUU campuses and 7,961 photos of the 15 PRU campuses, totaling 14,616 valid photos. Each photo was marked from 1 to 14,616 with Arabic numerals and was preliminarily categorized by the university in which it was taken.

To examine the code preference on the signage and the social meanings of the signage in depth, this research included both fixed and non-fixed

signage. The signage included signs outside and inside the buildings, including inscribed texts on buildings, campus maps, direction signs, road names, billboards, posters pinned onto walls, banners, announcements, pamphlets, digital panels or screens, information regarding vegetation, texts outside of any businesses, shops, and vendor stalls, flyers, and any other signage in any language on each campus.

3.2 Data Analysis

This study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the languages on the signage. The data were first divided into monolingual signage, bilingual signage, and multilingual signage. Bilingual and multilingual signs were then analyzed with regard to code preference. Guided by PS, the code preference can be revealed by the major indexed fonts of the language, the size of the font, and the main vector of the language on the signage. To answer the first research question, the frequencies at which the languages were preferred were inputted into a Pearson's chi-squared test to examine differences in code preference on the signs at the PUUs and the PRUs in Thailand.

A bottom-up analysis was subsequently conducted to identify the different social meanings of the signage at the two types of universities. The social meanings of the signs on the campuses were analyzed according to the three elements of PS, namely, code preference, inscription, and emplacement. The code preferences on the signs were used to answer the first research question. The four elements in the inscriptions – namely, the fonts of each language, the material, the layering, and the state change – were used to identify the social meanings. With regard to the emplacement of the signage, each situated sign was categorized according to its emerging function. Following previous research (Andriyanti 2021), this study investigated the major emerging FoS at PUUs and PRUs (i.e., those with occurrences of more than 10%) to analyze the social meanings.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Code Preference

In the photos, 14 languages were found: Thai, English, Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, Korean, French, Spanish, Arabic, German, Italian, Latin, Lao, and Burmese. Thai and English were the predominant languages. Hence, this study categorized the preferred language types as 1) Thai as the preferred language, 2) English as the preferred language, and 3) another language as the preferred language. Each preferred language type was analyzed and determined based on the fonts,

sizes, vectors, and colors on the signage. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive data for each preferred language type at both the PUUs and the PRUs, including the raw frequencies and the proportions (P) of the monolingual signs (Mono), bilingual signs (Bi), and multilingual signs (Multi).

The Pearson's chi-squared test revealed no significant differences between the PUUs and PRUs in Thailand with regard to Thai as the preferred language on signs (Sig. = 0.363, df = 28, P Value = 0.05). This result is unsurprising since Thai has been the only language recognized by the Thai government as an official national language throughout the country's long history. However, differences were found when examining the descriptive data. Based on Table 1, the preference for the Thai language on signage was relatively less common at the PRUs than at the PUUs on both monolingual and bilingual signs.

By contrast, a significant difference between the PUUs and PRUs in Thailand regarding the preference for English on signage was found (Sig. = 0.031, df = 28, P Value = 0.05). Based on the descriptive data in Table 1, the PRUs used English as the preferred language on signage more frequently than did the PUUs, including on monolingual signs, bilingual signs, and multilingual signs. Furthermore, at the PUUs, the difference between the number of signs on which Thai was the preferred language and number on which English was the preferred language (4,799 signs, 72.11%) was much greater than the same figure

TABLE 1 Descriptive Data of Each Preferred Language

Preferred Language	'Lingual' of Signage	PUUs	P (%)	PRUs	P (%)
Thai	Mono	3,009	45.2	1,624	20.4
	Bi	2,196	33.0	1,947	24.5
	Multi	443	6.7	864	10.9
	All	5,648	84.9	4,435	55.7
English	Mono	285	4.3	775	9.7
	Bi	529	8.0	1,510	19.0
	Multi	35	0.5	767	9.6
	All	849	12.8	3,052	38.3
Others	Mono	80	1.2	192	2.4
	Bi	54	0.8	214	2.7
	Multi	24	0.4	68	0.9
	All	158	2.4	474	6.0

at the PRU s (1,383 signs, 17.37%). Therefore, the PRU s appear to favor English as the preferred language on campuses more than do the PUU s.

Both of the above findings are in line with those of Chuaychoowong's (2019) case study of a private Thai university where, per its language policy, English was used as the dominant language on monolingual and bilingual signs on the campus in order to accommodate international students of different linguacultural backgrounds. Moreover, these findings are in line with the results of previous case studies of signage on university campuses in other countries, such as China and Kenya (Muriungi and Mudogo 2021; Zhou and Li 2021). Zhou and Li (2021, 71) argued that the use of English as the preferred language on signage on university campuses was influenced by Western culture.

Finally, no significant difference was found with regard to the other languages as the preferred languages used on signage at the PUU s and the PRU s in Thailand (Sig. = 0.082, df = 28, P Value = 0.05). Based on Table 1, it is clear that signs on which languages other than Thai and English were the preferred language at both types of universities were much less common than were signs in Thai and English. This finding reveals that Thai and English were the two predominant languages at universities in Thailand. However, there were more signs with a preferred language other than Thai or English at the PRU s than the PUU s. This finding further reveals insufficient signage in minority languages in the LU (Wu, Silver, and Zhang 2023). According to the quantitative results shown above, the reason for the insufficient signage in minority languages on the university campuses may have been the dominance of English as an international language (EIL); thus, other languages did not receive attention. These quantitative results will be combined with the results of the qualitative analysis to demonstrate the social meanings of signage at both PUU s and PRU s in Thailand in the following sections.

4.2   *Language Policy*

As discussed in previous studies of LS, code preference on the signage in school areas and on university campuses reflects language policy and language hierarchy (Gorter and Cenoz 2022; Krompák, Fernández-Mallat, and Meyer 2022). Compared to school areas where the school administration may need to follow the language policy of local or national officials (Andriyanti 2021), the language policy of universities may be determined by the institution's administration (Gorter and Cenoz 2022; Savski 2021). Accordingly, code preferences and language hierarchies on signage reveal the aims and educational purposes of the university as well as those of the its personnel and students (Wu, Silver, and Zhang 2023). Based on the quantitative results presented in the previous section, the greatest difference in language policy

between the PUUs and PRUs, as evidenced by the preferred language on signage, surrounded the use of English. The PRUs tended to select English as the preferred language, as demonstrated in Figures 2 to 5.

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, English was the preferred language on top-down signs outside of university buildings, while Figures 4 and 5 show English as the preferred language on top-down signs inside buildings. Conversely, the PUUs used Thai as the preferred language on the signage both outside and inside of campus buildings, as illustrated by Figures 6 and 7.

The announcement in Figure 6 concerns regulations for students, while the one in Figure 7 concerns parking rules. The PUUs may still be following the national language policy requiring that Thai is the only official language in Thailand (Huebner 2006), since PUUs are mainly funded by the Thai government. Although the PRUs also follow national language policy, they aim to attract more international students to improve their financial situations and increase their global influence (Jampaklay, Penboon, and Lucktong 2022, 184). Since EIL is generally used in the southeast Asia in intercultural communication (Chuaychoowong 2019), the PRUs naturally used English as the preferred language on the different types of signage on their campuses.

FIGURE 2   A monolingual banner in English

FIGURE 3   English as the preferred language on location and
            direction signs

Moreover, the differing language policies of the PUUs and the PRUs in
Thailand had an impact on the preferred language on the bottom-up signs, as
demonstrated in Figures 8 and 9.

   The print shop at a PUU (Figure 8) used Thai as the preferred language, while
the print shop at a PRU (Figure 9) used English as the preferred language. In
the examples, the language policy of each university influenced language use
on both the top-down and bottom-up signs. For example, at PRUs, although
Thai is still at the top of the language hierarchy at both types of universities,
English is at the top among the foreign languages. The PUUs, on the other
hand, by mainly using Thai as their code preference, signify the dominance
of the national language, both on the top-down and bottom-up signs. This
phenomenon reflects the maintenance of Thai culture on the PUU campuses,
as the preferred language on signage mirrors cultural values in the LS (Wu,
Silver, and Zhang 2023). By contrast, as the English language is used more
widely on the PRU campuses in Thailand, it communicates to international
visitors a sense of welcoming and cultural diversity, thus resulting in a more
internationalized and globalized campus environment compared to the PUUs.

FIGURE 4   English as the preferred language

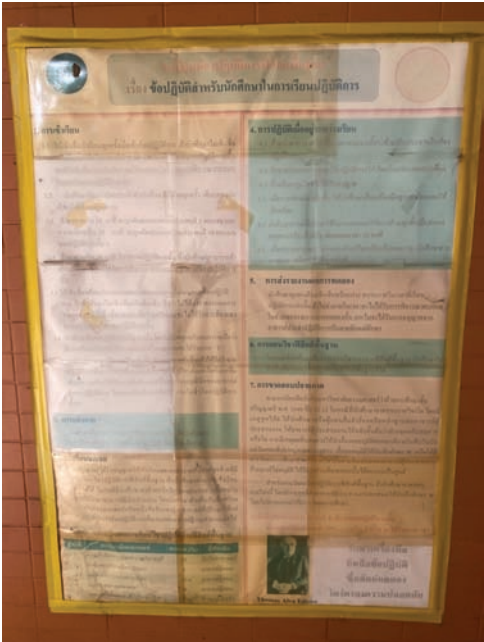FIGURE 5   English as the preferred on an event guide

FIGURE 6   An announcement in Thai outside a building at a PUU

4.3   *Institutional Policy*

The management of signage on university campuses reflects the regulations of campus administrations. In the current examination of the four elements of inscription, differences were found with respect to the fonts and the materials used on the signage at both types of universities in Thailand, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 shows discrepancies between the university types in the management of bottom-up signs, with the PRU s using a greater variety of fonts in terms of the indexicality and symbolization of the signs produced by non-university administrations, as further illustrated in Figures 10 to 13.

The bottom-up signs in Figures 10 and 11 demonstrate that use of Thai or English on the signage was an attempt to index the information on the posters, while the signs in Figures 12 and 13, and specifically, the aesthetic fonts used, demonstrate that English was employed for symbolization more so than indexicality. Moreover, there were more bottom-up signs at the PRU s that used both fixed and non-fixed materials than there were at the PUU s. These are shown in Figures 11 and 12 above.

FIGURE 7   An announcement in Thai inside a building at a PUU

The bottom-up signs at the PRUs in the examples came from a diverse range of non-university administrators, including students and commercial businesses. This phenomenon reflects the social meanings of these signs, and more specifically, a more open attitude on the part of the PRUs toward bottom-up signs. As mentioned in previous research, more so than PUUs, PRUs attempt to involve private businesses on their campuses, collaborate with different commercial businesses for financial gain, and promote the university (Zhou and Li 2021). As discussed previously, English was used quite often on

FIGURE 8   A print shop using Thai at a PUU

FIGURE 9   A print shop using English at a PRU

the bottom-up signs at PRU s in Thailand for indexicality and symbolization of the inscription, thus adding aesthetic value to the campus (Siricharaoen 2016).

By contrast, the non-fixed top-down signs inside buildings at the PUU s outnumbered the ones at the PRU s, as shown in Table 2 and further illustrated in Figure 7 above. The top-down signs inside buildings at the PUU s were mainly announcements and posters from the university administrations. This

TABLE 2   Fonts and Materials on Signage of Both Types of Universities in Thailand

Type of Sign		Top-down Signs				Bottom-up Signs			
	Location	Outside		Inside		Outside		Inside	
		No.	P (%)	No.	P (%)	No.	P (%)	No.	P (%)
Font at PUU s	Index	3,108	46.7	2,429	36.5	288	*4.3	86	*1.3
	Symbol	318	4.8	173	2.6	179	2.7	74	*1.1
Font at PRU s	Index	2,715	34.1	1,891	23.8	947	*11.9	1,004	*12.6
	Symbol	181	2.3	156	2.0	405	5.1	662	*8.3
Material in PUU s	Fixed	3,398	51.1	1,390	20.9	304	*4.7	151	*2.3
	Non-Fixed	28	0.4	1,212	*18.2	163	*2.4	9	*0.1
Material in PRU s	Fixed	2,853	35.8	2,002	25.1	1,286	*16.2	1,087	*13.7
	Non-Fixed	43	0.5	45	*0.6	66	*0.8	579	*7.3

Note: Asterisks * mark differences in the proportions of the total number of signs of a given type of greater than 3x between the PUU s and PRU s

FIGURE 10 A Thai-language poster demonstrating exercise methods

situation reflects the supremacy of the administrations of the PUU s in that they were able to post different types of information inside the buildings on campus for various purposes. The university administrations at the PUU s made full use of areas inside buildings to place announcements and posters targeting educators, staff, and students, as they are the main visitors to campus buildings. Hence, administrations at the PUU s intended for such frequent visitors to notice the institutional information on non-fixed signs that could be changed easily as required.

4.4 *Identity Construction*

The current study investigated the emplacement of situated signs at PUU s and PRU s, looking specifically at their primary emerging functions (i.e., those occurring on more than 10% of signs) to further identify the social meanings of the signage. Table 3 illustrates the main emerging FoS found at the PUU s and PRU s in Thailand.

Similar to the findings of previous research on both LS and LL (Andriyanti 2021; Huebner 2006), the emerging function of locations and directions was the main function in the LU. Andriyanti (2021, 124) pointed out that this emerging function in LS was closely related to the traditional definition of LL, in which signs indicating locations and directions are essential components. The findings in this study further confirmed that situated signs functioning

FIGURE 11   A sign at a coffee shop in English

as markers of locations and directions were extremely important in the scope
of LU. The emerging function of providing academic information the second
most common function at the PUUs, whereas this function was ranked fourth
at the PRUs, as illustrated in Table 3. The academic information function was
mainly seen on campus posters displaying academic information about the
university or the faculties, as shown in the examples in Figures 14 and 15.

The emplacement of the academic information in Figure 14 was inside a
building at a PUU, whereas that in Figure 15 was inside a building at a PRU. One
feature separating universities from schools is the former's division into faculties
and programs that students can select based on their interests and grades from
their previous studies. Hence, universities post academic information on their
faculties, programs, or projects to attract students (Muriungi and Mudogo
2021). Here, the differences between the PUUs and PRUs suggest that the
former pay more attention to the promotion of academic information than do
the latter, resulting in a greater focus on academics.

By contrast, the second-ranked function of signage at PRUs surrounded
non-academic activities. These are exemplified in Figures 16 and 17. Business

FIGURE 12   An aesthetic English font design a poster

advertisements on these campuses were the third most common. These are exemplified in Figures 18 and 19.

At the PUUs, signage concerning environmental matters was the third most common. These signs were mainly related to protecting the campus environment and cleanliness, as shown in Figures 20 and 21. Signage promoting academic activities was fourth most common at the PUUs. Examples are shown in Figures 22 and 23.

FIGURE 13   A symbolic design of the English letter "W"

TABLE 3   Major Emerging Functions of Signage in Both Types of Universities in Thailand

FoS in PUUs	No.	P (%)	FoS in PRUs	No.	P (%)
Locations and directions	1,464	22.0	Locations and directions	1,595	20.0
Academic information	1,102	16.6	Non-academic activities	1,368	17.2
Environment	856	12.9	Advertisements	1,124	14.1
Academic activities	673	10.1	Academic information	831	10.4

Based on the emerging functions of the signage outside and inside the buildings on the campuses of both types of universities in Thailand illustrated by the examples above, it can be seen that academics were a major concern of university administrations, as evidenced by the top-down situated signs. Here, academic information and activities were promoted around the campuses. Non-academic activities were more commonly promoted on the PRU campuses than on PUU campuses, reflecting the universities' respective identity constructions. That is, the PUUs focused more on academics, while the PRUs focused more on a diversity of activities to fulfill student needs. Moreover, the PUUs, as evidenced by their signage, paid greater attention to the campus environment, while the PRUs allowed a wider range of advertisements to be posted. Based on these differences in emplacement, it appears that PUUs in Thailand tend to create their social images by promoting their academic strengths. Although the academic information function was also frequently seen on signage at the PRUs, these universities focused on nurturing and developing students' campus and social lives during their undergraduate

FIGURE 14   Academic information regarding graduate study

FIGUIRE 15   Academic information on a bilingual program

FIGURE 16   A Thai food festival
poster

FIGURE 17 An art gallery poster

studies. Such identity constructions of the PUUs and PRUs further confirmed the different institutional policies discussed above, which were also partly suggested in previous research (Cao, Liu, and Chen 2022; Chuaychoowong 2019; Muriungi and Mudogo 2021). These differences intrinsically lead to divergence in areas such as academic vs. non-academic focus, the types of students targeted for recruitment, and the national vs. global identities of the universities.

5   Conclusion

Bernardo-Hinesley (2020, 13) argued that the language policy of each university can either foster or hinder monolingual and bilingual education. Following this, the code preference for English at both types of the universities in this study may further influence monolingual and bilingual education in Thailand through its impact on broader language policy. In addition, the PRUs appear to have a more open attitude toward bottom-up signs than do the PUUs, while the university administrations in the PUUs take more control of the signage on

FIGURE 18   A promotional poster for a beverage shop

their campuses than do the PRUs. Moreover, the PUUs focused on academic development, while the PRUs focused on the student social activities.

The findings of this study further differentiated between the social meanings of signage in LU and LS. The social meanings of signage in LU mainly reflected

FIGURE 19   An advertisement banner

FIGURE 20 A poster prohibiting smoking

FIGURE 21 A poster on proper disposal of face masks

FIGURE 22 An academic activity poster

FIGURE 23 An academic poster pertaining to an online course

the development of the academic and student social lives, whereas those in LS focused on the physical and mental health of the students and the school environment (Andriyanti 2021; Harbon and Halimi 2019; Sumarlam, Purnanto, and Ardhian 2021).

The PS reveals the social meanings of signage in LU. However, further research may place more importance on the visitors' viewpoints regarding signage in LU because discourses around signage apply also to visitors on a campus (Gorter and Cenoz 2022). However, the differences in the signage at the PUUs and at the PRUs as reflected in both the quantitative and the qualitative results may lead to a reconsideration of the plethora of case studies of LS because case studies do not appear to be able to fully reveal LS as entities.

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