



Language Choice and Rhetorical Persuasion in the Linguistic Landscape of Koh Samet, Thailand

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Abstract

This study investigates language choice and rhetorical persuasion in the English-containing linguistic landscape of Koh Samet, a popular tourist destination in Rayong Province, Thailand. Previous linguistic landscape research in Thai tourism contexts has primarily focused on the visibility and distribution of languages on public signs, with less attention paid to how rhetorical resources enhance persuasive communication. Addressing this gap, the analysis explores both language combinations displayed on signs and how rhetorical devices in English contribute to tourism branding, place representation, and the construction of local and global meanings. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, total of 226 publicly visible signs were photographed along the main road and accessible routes on Koh Samet and analyzed using linguistic landscape frameworks (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) in combination with rhetorical frameworks proposed by Leigh (1994) and McQuarrie and Mick (1996). Bilingual signs were the most prevalent within the English-containing corpus, with English-Thai combinations as the dominant pairing, followed by monolingual English, and multilingual signs appeared less frequently. This distribution suggests that English functions as both a communicative and symbolic resource in tourism signage, while Thai remains central to expressing local identity and audience accessibility. The rhetorical analysis identified 108 occurrences of tropes and schemes, especially imagery and alliteration, which help create memorable, appealing, and more commercially persuasive in tourist destinations. The study demonstrates that tourism signs should be viewed not only as multilingual displays of language choice but also as persuasive discourse that contributes to destination branding, potentially

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shape visitor expectations, and expressing the connection between local identity and globalization by incorporating rhetorical analysis into linguistic landscape research.

Keywords: bilingual signs, Koh Samet, linguistic landscape, rhetorical devices, tourism communication

Introduction

Tourism destinations are not only physical places for travel but also spaces where meanings and identities are created through language and visual communication. Public signs such as shop names, restaurant signs, and accommodation boards do more than provide practical information and identify location, but they also advertise and promote business, shape visitors' experience, and make the place more recognizable and attractive to visitors.

Linguistic landscape (LL) research offers important frameworks to understand how language is used and displayed in public spaces. Landry and Bourhis (1997) define the LL as the presence of language on public and commercial signs within a given area. Later studies suggest that visible language does more than identify places; it reflects how communities communicate, engage outsiders, and present their cultural identities to the world (Backhuus, 2006; Gorter, 2006; Huebner, 2006). In tourism settings, signs help visitors navigate the place and access services, while at the same time expressing local culture and identity. However, signs in tourism are also designed as commercial and symbolic resources to attract customers, promote business, and influence visitors' perception of the destination. Therefore, the study of tourism LL should consider both language visible and persuasive strategies in signs text.

While LL research highlighted the visibility, English use, and social meaning of language in signs and tourism. Studies of tourist destinations show that Thai, English, and other languages appear that reflect accessibility, globalization, tourism, and local identity (Chanthao & Kobbun, 2024; Choeirod & Chanthao, 2023; Low, 2022; Mu & Rungruang, 2013; Ngampramuan, 2022; Prasert & Zilli, 2019). Less attention to how signs are designed to attract and persuasive commercial discourse. Combining rhetorical analysis with LL research helps explain how language appears on signs and how signs persuade the audience and contribute to the commodification of tourism experiences.

In tourism settings, multilingual signs are used to communicate with diverse visitors and attract different customer groups. English is particularly important because it serves both as practical communication and as a symbolic international tourism (Cogo & Dewe6, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2005, 2011). In Thailand, English often appears in combination with Thai and other languages to support communication and enhance destinations' appeal (Bennui, 2024; Iamsamai, 2025). However, its significance in visibility and how it is used to construct tourism messages. Therefore, this study focuses on English-containing signs in Koh Samet's LL, where a well-known island in Rayong Province, Thailand. Despite its small size, Koh Samet plays an important role in Thailand's tourism industry.

This study addresses the gap by examining English-containing signs in Koh Samet, a tourism destination where commercial signs play a key role in attracting visitors and shaping the destination's image. Despite the visible multilingual environment of Koh Samet, there is still limited research on its linguistic landscape. Evidence from multiple tourism contexts in Thailand has focused mostly on the major urban or well-known tourist destinations, such as Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, and Koh Lipe, while less academic attention has been paid to smaller island destinations such as Koh Samet. This gap is significant because Koh Samet is a compact tourist destination where local identity, commercial communication, and international mobility are interlinked through public signs.

Using 226 of visible signs, this study investigated both language choices and rhetorical devices used in Koh Samet's English-containing LL. By analyzing not only which languages appear but also how English-language signs employ rhetorical strategies to attract and persuade readers, the study shows how signs function as both multilingual information and persuasive tourism communication.

The research questions of this study are:

- 1) What are the language choices and dominant languages appearing on English-containing signs in Koh Samet, Rayong Province, Thailand?
- 2) What rhetorical devices are used in the English scripts of those signs?

Literature Review

1. Multilingualism and Multilingual Signs in Tourism Linguistic Landscape

In tourism contexts, multilingualism should be understood as more than the presence of multiple languages within a community, it is a strategic practice used to attract visitors and promote tourism services. Public signs serve both informational and symbolic functions, helping visitors access services while reflecting social, cultural, and commercial values (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Backhaus, 2006). Multilingual signs contribute to the visibility and marketability of tourism destinations.

From the perspective of language commodification, languages can also function as economic resources that enhance the appeal of places, businesses, and tourism experiences (Heller, 2010). In tourism contexts, multilingual signs may signal hospitality, professionalism, and international accessibility. Multilingual signs also involve language hierarchies. English often functions as a lingua franca in tourism communication (Seidlhofer, 2005, 2011; Cogo & Dewey, 2012) and commonly serves as a global tourism language and symbolizes international orientation, while Thai expresses location identity and authenticity.

In this regard, the use of the Thai language may reflect local identity, while English is used to create an international, modern, or tourism-oriented image. This reflects a language ideology because some languages, especially English, are associated with global connectivity and economic value. At the same time, multilingual signs can serve commercial purposes. Business owners may choose certain language combinations to convey information to visitors, make

their shop easier to understand, make their products or services more accessible, and reach target customers or wider groups of customers.

2. Linguistic Landscape

Linguistic landscape (LL) research examines the visibility of the display of language on road signs, shop signs, place names, billboards, and other written texts (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Early studies focused on identifying which language appears in particular areas and how they reflect multilingualism, language status, and social relations. Beyond their information function, signs also carry the symbolic side, they can reflect language status, cultural identity, authenticity, and economic value (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). For example, argue that linguistic landscapes may also reveal language ideologies, power relations, and the social meanings attached to different languages. Because of this, the linguistic landscape is especially useful in multilingual settings where signs do more than simply transmit information.

This framework is highly relevant to tourism areas. In a tourist destination such as Koh Samet, signs not only help visitors find places or services but also contribute to the image of the island. In other words, the linguistic landscape of Koh Samet may reflect both the sociolinguistic reality of the area and the way the island is presented as a tourism-oriented destination.

Recent LL research emphasizes that signs should be understood as multimodal and stoically situated resources. Their meanings are shaped not only by language but also by visual design and interaction with the surrounding environment. In tourism settings, signs function as part of a broader semiotic landscape in which language, image, and space work together to construct tourism experiences and destination identities (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010).

Tourism LL is closely linked to branding and the commodification of place. The strategic use of Thai, English, and other languages can communicate accessibility, local identity, and market orientation (Bennui, 2024; Ngampramuan, 2022). English often symbolizes international accessibility, while Thai reflects local identity and authenticity. In this sense, language operates not only as a communication tool, but also as an economic resource that add value to tourism destinations and services.

3. The Symbolic Role of English in Linguistic Landscape

Among the languages commonly found in tourism landscapes, English occupies a particularly prominent position. Its visibility in public signage is often explained through its role as a *lingua franca*, that is, a language used for communication among people who do not share a first language (Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2005, 2011). In tourism contexts, English can increase comprehensibility for international visitors, especially in settings where tourists come from multiple linguistic backgrounds. In this sense, English has a clear communicative utility: it functions as a practical resource for hospitality, service access, and cross-cultural communication.

However, the role of English in linguistic landscapes extends beyond communicative usefulness. In many public and commercial contexts, English also carries symbolic capital. It may index modernity, prestige, international orientation, lifestyle sophistication, or commercial legitimacy. As a result, the presence of English on signs cannot be interpreted only as evidence of linguistic accommodation. It may also reflect broader hierarchies of language value in which English is associated with global mobility, economic opportunity, and symbolic desirability. In tourism destinations, English often becomes a commodified linguistic resource that helps businesses position themselves as tourist-friendly, globally connected, and socially fashionable.

For this reason, it is important to distinguish between English as a communicative resource and English as a prestige-bearing symbolic resource, even though the two functions often overlap. A sign may include English because it helps foreign visitors understand a service, but it may also include English because English itself contributes to the branding of the business. In some cases, English may even be used where its informational value is limited, but its symbolic value remains commercially useful. This distinction is especially relevant in tourism settings, where businesses do not simply transmit information but compete for attention and shape the perceived atmosphere of a place.

Research in Thai tourism contexts supports this dual role of English. English has been shown to function as an important language of accessibility in transportation, hospitality, and tourist service environments, while also contributing to place branding, urban modernity, and international image-making (Bennui, 2024; Iamsamai, 2025; Ngampramuan, 2022; Potisuwan & Methitham, 2019). At the same time, English often appears alongside Thai rather than replacing it. This co-presence suggests that English and Thai may perform different but complementary roles: English may increase international readability and symbolic globality, while Thai maintains local anchoring, cultural resonance, and place-specific identity.

In Koh Samet, the symbolic role of English is likely to be especially significant because the island's signs are embedded in a tourism economy where businesses rely on visibility, memorability, and appeal to both domestic and international visitors. English on signs may therefore function simultaneously as a tool of communication, a marker of tourist accessibility, and a semiotic resource for constructing the island as an internationally legible destination. Examining the use of English in this way helps move beyond the simple claim that English is “dominant” and instead invites a more nuanced interpretation of how English participates in the commercial and symbolic organization of public space.

4. Rhetorical Devices in Tourism Signs

Although linguistic landscape studies often focus on language presence, order, and visibility, public signs, especially commercial signs, also deserve attention as rhetorical texts. In tourism settings, signs do not merely identify businesses or provide directions. They compete for attention, construct atmosphere, suggest quality, and invite consumption. This means that tourism signage often performs persuasive work. A sign may be designed not only to be understood, but also to be memorable, attractive, playful, elegant, relaxing, or emotionally

evocative. For this reason, rhetorical analysis offers an important extension to LL research because it allows scholars to examine how sign language is crafted to persuade rather than merely to inform.

Rhetorical devices are linguistic strategies that create effect through patterned deviation, sound repetition, semantic association, or structural arrangement. In advertising research, such devices have long been recognized as resources for attracting attention and increasing memorability (Leigh, 1994; McQuarrie & Mick, 1996). Leigh (1994) and McQuarrie and Mick (1996) provide a useful framework for analyzing rhetorical figures in persuasive language, especially in commercial texts. Their framework is particularly suitable for the present study because many of the signs in Koh Samet are business signs that function in ways similar to advertising: they identify a service, present an image, and attempt to attract customers in a competitive tourism marketplace.

Within this framework, rhetorical devices are broadly divided into tropes and schemes. Tropes involve a deviation in meaning and include devices such as imagery, metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, simile, and paronomasia. They work by inviting semantic association, comparison, exaggeration, or imaginative interpretation. Schemes, by contrast, involve a deviation or patterning in form, sound, or structure and include devices such as alliteration, assonance, repetition, parallelism, and internal rhyme. Whereas tropes tend to operate through meaning-based creativity, schemes tend to create effect through rhythm, sound, balance, or structural repetition. This distinction is useful for the present study because it helps clarify whether persuasive effects in tourism signs are created primarily through evocative meanings or through memorable linguistic patterning.

However, rhetorical analysis of signage also requires caution. Unlike highly controlled advertising copy, public signs in tourism spaces are often brief, visually embedded, multilingual, and context dependent. Some rhetorical readings are therefore more interpretive than others, particularly when a sign's persuasive force relies on local knowledge, cross-linguistic association, or tourism-specific cultural cues. For this reason, rhetorical classification in the present study is treated as an interpretive analytical procedure rather than a claim about guaranteed audience response. The purpose of identifying rhetorical devices is not to prove that all readers experience a sign in the same way, but to examine the stylistic and persuasive possibilities that sign language makes available within a tourism setting.

Previous studies in Thailand suggest that rhetorical features do appear in commercial signage and may contribute to branding and memorability (Weerasin & Tantiranat, 2022). Yet such features have not been widely integrated into LL research in Thai tourism contexts. Bringing rhetorical analysis into the study of Koh Samet signage, therefore, helps address an important gap. It makes it possible to examine not only which languages are visible on signs, but also how sign-makers use English stylistically to produce commercial appeal, atmosphere, and persuasive force. In this way, rhetorical analysis complements LL research by revealing how tourism signs function as multilingual and rhetorical resources at the same time.

For the present study, Leigh's (1994) classification of figures of speech was adopted as the primary framework. While McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) framework was used to support the distinction between schemes and the interpretation of rhetorical figures as artful deviations. The classification of rhetorical devices used as the initial coding framework is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Classification of Rhetorical Devices Based on the Framework of Leigh (1994) and McQuarrie and Mick (1996)

Trope	Scheme
1. Metaphor	1. Asyndeton
2. Hyperbole	2. Assonance
3. Litotes	3. Repetition
4. Simile	4. Ellipsis
5. Allusion	5. Antithesis
6. Parody	6. Polyptoton
7. Personification	7. Alliteration
8. Imagery	8. Internal Rhyme
9. Anthimeria	9. Parallelism
10. Periphrasis	10. Anastrophe
11. Rhetorical Questions	11. Apposition
12. Antanacsis	12. Climax
13. Paronomasia	13. Parenthesis
14. Syllepsis	14. Polysyndeton
15. Puns	15. Anadiplosis
16. Irony	16. Anaphora
17. Oxymoron	17. Antimetabole
18. Paradox	18. Epanalepsis
19. Onomatopoeia	19. Epistrophe
20. Metonymy	20. End Rhyme
21. Euphemism	

Note. Adapted from “The use of Figures of Speech in Print Ad Headlines” by J. H. Leigh, 1994, *Journal of Advertising*, 23(2), pp. 17-33. The distinction between schemes and tropes was also informed by McQuarrie and Mick (1996).

In business contexts, a sign often serves multiple communicative functions simultaneously: identifying a place, advertising it, creating a particular atmosphere, constructing symbolic meaning, and persuading potential customers. This is why rhetorical devices should be considered alongside language choice when examining how signs work in this tourism setting.

Previous studies show that tourism signs function not only as sources of information but also as symbolic and persuasive resources.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To investigate the language choices and identify the dominant language(s) appearing on English-containing signs in Koh Samet, Rayong Province, Thailand
2. To examine and categorize the rhetorical devices employed in those signs

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative analyses. The quantitative analysis focuses on identifying the number of languages used on signs and reporting the most commonly occurring languages, and determining whether the signs are monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. Qualitatively, this study adopts qualitative content analysis to examine the stylistic features of English sign language, particularly rhetorical devices, which required interpretive analysis informed by rhetorical theory, to understand how these devices shape meaning and persuasion in a tourism setting. Combining these approaches with 3xamine both what kinds of language choices appeared on signs and how sign language was rhetorically constructed within tourism settings.

2. Data Source

The study was conducted on Koh Samet, Rayong Province, Thailand, a tourism-oriented island characterized by a high concentration of hospitality, food, retail, and leisure businesses. To address the objectives of the study, the data were collected between 1 and 30 June 2024 through photographic documentation of publicity visible signs located along the main road and publicly accessible routes between Ao Noina to Ao Kiew Nanai. This route was selected because it covers a substantial portion of Koh Samet's active tourism and commercial zone, where signs associated with restaurants, bars, accommodation, shops, massage businesses, and public services are concentrated.

The dataset consisted of publicity visible signs containing English. For the purpose of the study, a sign was defined as a written public major displayed used to identify, name, advertise, or communicate information about a business, service, place, or public function. In total, 226 signs were included in the study if they met all the following criteria:

1. They were visible major signs on roads of publicity walkways
2. They were readable and photographable at the time of data collection
3. They contained written scripts, rather than being image-only displayed
4. They contain at least one English word, English phrase, or English script

Repeated signs were counted only once. Signs that were damaged, unreadable, or not clearly visible were excluded. Interior text, handwritten temporary notices, and purely graphic displays without script were not included.

In this study, monolingual signs refer to signs written in entirely in English containing because the study focuses on the role of English in the LL. Bilingual signs refer to signs containing English and one additional language, and multilingual signs refer to signs containing English and two or more additional languages. This operationalization was designed to support the study's focus on the role of English in Koh Samet's tourism signs. However, it also means that the study does not capture Thai-only signs or entirely other non-English signage on the island. Therefore, any discussion of language distribution must be understood within the boundaries of an English-containing corpus rather than a complete representation of Koh Samet's full LL.

3. Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected by photographing signs that met the inclusion criteria along the selected routes in Koh Samet. The selected route because it contains a concentration of tourism signs and provides the interaction of language choice, tourism communication, and commercial persuasion. Although the routes do not represent every part of Koh Samet, they contain a substantial and commercially active section of the island's tourism signs. Figure 1 presents the area covered in this study in Koh Samet, Rayong Province, Thailand, between Ao Noina and Ao Kiew Nanai.

Figure 1

The Studied Area in Koh Samet, Rayong Province, (from Thailand Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024)

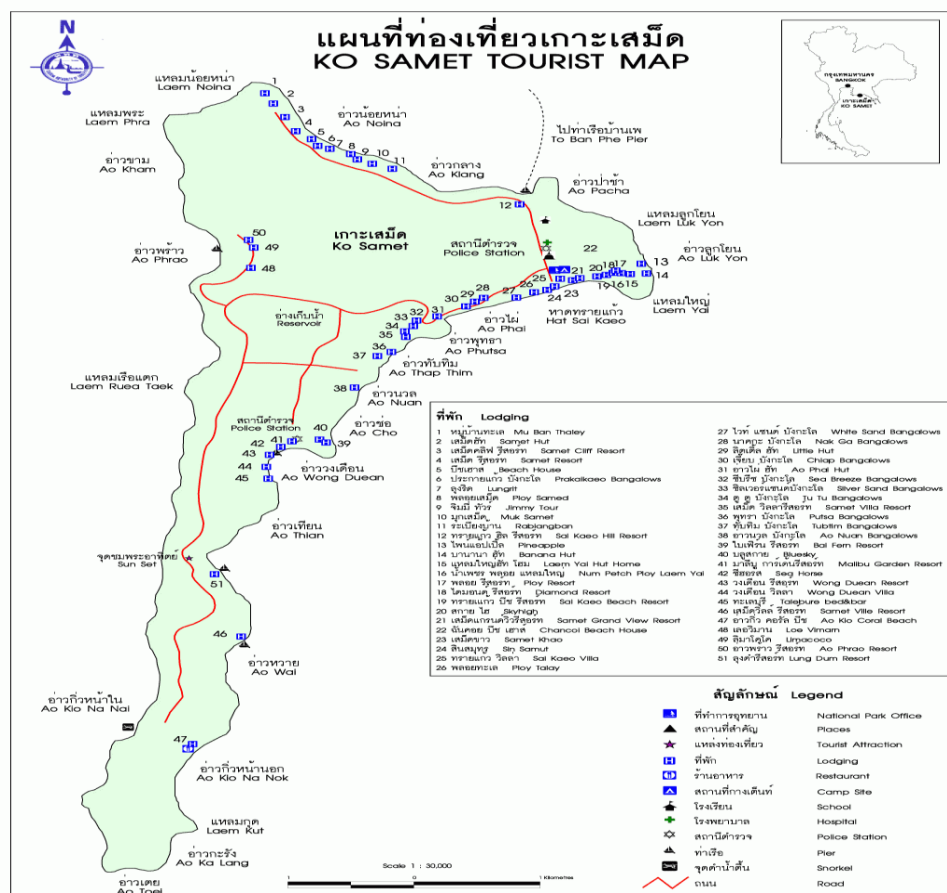


Figure 1 shows the study area along the main road and publicity routes from Ao Noina to Ao Kiew Nanai, Koh Samet, between 1 and 30 June 2024. Each sign was coded and assigned an identification code and recorded for later classification according to its language choices as monolingual (English only), bilingual (English combined with one additional language), and multilingual (English with two or more additional languages). The same dataset was then used for rhetorical analysis, with attention to the English scripts on the signs.

1. Data Analysis

For the analysis of language choice, 226 signs were collected and examined. The analysis proceeded in two stages: language choice analysis and rhetorical analysis.

First, the signs were coded and categorized into three groups following the general distinctions used in multilingualism studies (Backhaus, 2006; Huebner, 2006; Weerasin & Tantiranat, 2022). Each sign was classified as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. The frequency and percentage of each type were then calculated to identify the dominant language patterns found on signs.

To analyze rhetorical devices in the second stage, the English scripts on the signs were examined using Leigh (1994)'s and McQuarrie and Mick (1996)'s frameworks to classify rhetorical devices into two major categories: schemes (patterns of sound and structure) and tropes (patterns of meaning). Finally, the rhetorical devices found in the data were counted and converted into percentages to show how often each type appeared.

2. Coding Reliability and Analytical Validation

Because rhetorical analysis involves interpretive judgment, special attention was given to coding consistency and analytical transparency. The researcher first conducted an initial reading of the full corpus and identified signs containing potential rhetorical features. The signs were then revisited several times, and the rhetorical categories were refined through repeated comparison with the operational definitions of tropes and schemes. Ambiguous cases were re-examined in relation to sign context, lexical meaning, sound patterning, and possible cross-linguistic associations.

To strengthen reliability, the researcher maintained a coding record that documented the rhetorical category assigned to each sign and the reason for that classification. Borderline cases were reviewed carefully to avoid over-classification. In reporting the findings, examples are discussed as analytical interpretations rather than as definitive claims of rhetorical effect. This is especially important for signs whose rhetorical force may depend on local phonological knowledge, tourism context, or associative reading rather than explicit linguistic marking.

Although the study did not calculate a formal intercoder reliability statistic, the analysis was conducted with an explicit awareness of the interpretive nature of rhetorical classification. For this reason, the discussion section avoids overstating rhetorical certainty and treats some examples as possible or plausible instances of rhetorical strategy rather than indisputable cases.

This cautious approach helps align the analysis with the reviewer's concern that rhetorical categorization in tourism signage should be transparent, justified, and methodologically self-aware.

Results

The 226 signs were categorized into public signs (e.g., road signs, local government office signs) and private signs, including five business types: cafés, resorts/hotels/hostels, restaurants/bars, and shops, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Signs found in Koh Samet

Type of sign	Frequency of occurrences	Percentage (%)
Café	16	7.08%
Resort/Hotel/Hostel	54	23.89%
Restaurant/Bar	61	26.99%
Shop	61	26.99%
Public sign	34	15.04%
Total	226	100.00%

The most common sign types in this study were Restaurant/Bar and Shop, each accounting for 61 signs (26.99%), followed by Resort/Hotel/Hostel at 54 signs (23.89%), and public signs at 34 signs (15.04%). Café signs were the least frequent category, with 16 signs (7.08%).

1. Language Choices on Signs

Table 3 presents the types of language choices on signs.

Table 3

Types of Language Choices on Signs

Type of language choice	Language combination	Frequency	Percentage
Monolingual	English	67	29.65
	English-Thai	127	56.19
Bilingual	English-Chinese	6	2.65
	English-Japanese	1	0.44
Multilingual	English-Thai-Chinese	20	8.85
	English-German-Chinese	1	0.44
	English-Thai-Russian	3	1.33
	English-Chinese-Japanese - Thai	1	0.44
Total		226	100%

Bilingual signs made up the largest portion, accounting for 134 signs (59.29%). Monolingual English signs accounted for 67 signs (29.65%), while multilingual signs represented the smallest group, totaling 25 signs (11.06%).

Three language pairings were found on the bilingual signs: English-Thai, English-Chinese, and English-Japanese. Among these, English-Thai was clearly the dominant, appearing on 127 signs (56.19%). English-Chinese appeared on six signs (2.65%), while English-Japanese was found on only one sign (0.44%). Figure 2 shows a bilingual sign in English and Thai reading “KRATOM KOH-SAMED” and “ใบกระต่อม.” The Thai word “ใบกระต่อม” (/bai krà-thôm/) refers to *kratom* leaves, a plant commonly known in Southeast Asia. The English script appears in the central position, uses capital letters, and is larger than the Thai script.

Figure 2

An Example of a Bilingual Sign (English-Thai)



The much smaller number of English-Chinese and English-Japanese signs suggests that these languages are used for more specific groups of visitors, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3 illustrates a bilingual sign containing the Chinese characters “海鲜” (hǎixiān), meaning “seafood,” which appears alongside the English word “Seafood.” This bilingual sign targets both international and Chinese-speaking customers. The English word “Seafood” provides a direct and easy to understand message for international visitors.

Figure 3

An Example of Bilingual Sign (English-Chinese)



Figure 4 shows a bilingual pairing of English and Japanese scripts, “SUNCLOUD KOH SAMET” and “サンクラウド” (/san.ku.ra.u.do/), which is the transliteration of “SUNCLOUD,” along with additional English words, namely “ROOMS,” “BREAKFAST,” “COFFEE,” and “COCKTAILS,” which indicate the services offered by the business. English scripts are larger than the Japanese scripts.

Figure 4

An Example of a Bilingual Sign (English-Japanese)



This example illustrates how signs in Koh Samet use bilingual signage to reach diverse audiences.

The second most frequent language choice found in this study was monolingual English signs. As shown in Table 3, monolingual signs accounted for 67 signs (29.65%) of the total data. Figure 5 presents an example of a monolingual English sign reading “BARBER SHOP,” along with additional information such as “HAIRCUTS AND SHAVES” and contact details.

Figure 5

An Example of the Monolingual English Sign



The least frequent type of language choice was multilingual signs, with a total of 25 signs (11.06%). Three sets of three languages were (English-Thai-Chinese, English-Thai-Russian, and English-German-Chinese). Among these, the set of English-Thai-Chinese was the most frequently set found, appearing on 20 signs (8.85%). One four-language set (English-Chinese-Japanese-Thai) was also found.

As depicted in Figure 6, the sign presents a business name in Chinese characters, followed by Thai and English scripts. The Thai script “แพรวเส้มดินนวดแผนไทย” (/pʰrɛːw sa.mèt nùat phěːn tʰaj/) means “Praew Samet Traditional Thai Massage” and appears in the largest and most visible font. The Chinese form “帕娅美·萨梅德” (/Pà yà měi · Sà mēi dé/) is a phonetic transliteration of the Thai script, approximating its pronunciation for Chinese readers rather than conveying a literal meaning, while “泰式按摩” (/tài shì àn mó/) literally means “Thai-style massage.”

Figure 6

An Example of the Most Frequently Found Multilingual Sign (English-Thai-Chinese)



Remarkably, English and Thai were found in all sets of multilingual signs, and English appeared to be dominant among the foreign languages found in the LL of the study area. The only four-language combination found was English-Thai-Chinese-Japanese. Figure 7 shows a multilingual sign that includes Thai “กัญชา” (/kan.cha:/), Chinese “大麻” (/dà má/), Japanese “マリファナ” (/marifana/), and English (“High Samet”). All four languages refer to the same

concept, allowing the sign to reach different groups of visitors, including Thai, Chinese, Japanese, and broader international audiences. The Thai script was larger than the other scripts.

Figure 7

An Example of a Multilingual Sign (English-Thai-Chinese-Japanese)



Rhetorical devices on signs

To address RQ2, the analysis shows that 88 signs (38.94%) of the collected signs contain rhetorical devices based on Leigh (1994)'s and McQuarrie and Mick (1996)'s frameworks, while 138 signs (61.06%) did not. Among the signs with rhetorical devices, 108 occurrences of rhetorical devices were identified and classified into two main categories: tropes and schemes. Since one sign could contain more than one token of a rhetorical device, the number of rhetorical occurrences was higher than the number of signs.

Only 14 rhetorical device types out of the 41 types proposed by Leigh (1994) and McQuarrie & Mick (1996) were identified in this study. These devices were classified into two major categories: tropes and schemes. Overall, tropes were found more frequently than schemes. Tropes appeared in 52 signs and accounted for 61 occurrences (56.48%), while schemes appeared in 36 signs and accounted for 47 occurrences (43.52%).

Table 4 shows the ranking of tropes found on signs. Among the tropes, imagery was the most dominant type, occurring 39 times (63.93%). This was followed by paronomasia, with six occurrences (9.84%). Hyperbole and metonymy were less frequent, each occurring four times (6.56%). Other tropes, including allusion, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, and simile, appeared only in a small number of cases.

Table 4

Rank of the Trope Found on Signs

Item	Type of tropes found on the studied signs	Frequency of occurrences	Percentage (%)
1	Allusion	2	3.28%
2	Hyperbole	4	6.56%
3	Imagery	39	63.93%
4	Metaphor	3	4.92%
5	Metonymy	4	6.56%
6	Onomatopoeia	1	1.64%
7	Paronomasia	6	9.84%
8	Personification	1	1.64%
9	Simile	1	1.64%
	Total	61	100.00%

The most frequent trope found on the signs was imagery, with 39 occurrences (63.93%). Figure 8 shows a sign for a massage parlor, “Heaven’s Feels Thai Massage,” that contains imagery.

Figure 8

An Example of Imagery in a Bilingual Sign



As also shown in Figure 9, the monolingual sign for the “BLUEOCEAN” hotel may be classified as imagery because the name gives readers a clear image of the sea, the blue color, and a relaxing atmosphere related to accommodation and tourism.

Figure 9*An Example of Imagery in a Monolingual Sign*

The second most frequent trope was paronomasia. Figure 10 shows an accommodation sign, “LE MAR Villa,” which can be interpreted as an example of paronomasia. Paronomasia refers to the use of words with similar sounds but different meanings. In this case, “LE MAR” may be interpreted as a possible instance of paronomasia because create a phonological association with the Thai word “ละเมอ” (/la.mɔː/), which means “to dream” or “to talk in one’s sleep.” Although “LE MAR” and “ละเมอ” differ in meaning, their similar sound structure allows for a cross-linguistic connection.

Figure 10*An Example of Paronomasia on a Sign*

The less frequent tropes among the top-ranked items were hyperbole and metonymy, with the same share of 6.56%. Hyperbole refers to the use of a word or phrase that exaggerates or overstates something beyond reality. It is used to emphasize quality, condition, or experience to attract attention and create a strong impression. As demonstrated in Figure 11, the English name “Narsan” (/ˈnɑːr.sæn/) can be interpreted as a transliteration of the Thai expression “หน้าสั้น” (na san), which appears in the phrase “ไม่อร่อย ตบหน้าสั้น” (/mâi ʔa.ròi tòp nâ: sân/), meaning “If it is not delicious, you can slap me until my face shakes.”

Figure 11

An Example of a Hyperbole Sign



In contrast to tropes, schemes were less frequently observed but still played a significant role in enhancing the stylistic quality of signs. A scheme refers to a type of rhetorical device that creates an effect through the patterned arrangement of language rather than through a change in literal meaning.

The analysis of schemes shows that sound patterning and structural repetition were the main rhetorical strategies used in the signs. Table 5 shows the rank of schemes found on signs. Among the schemes, alliteration was the most frequent type, with 30 occurrences (63.83%). This was followed by parallelism with 8 occurrences (17.02%) and assonance with 5 occurrences (10.64%). Internal rhyme and repetition were found only rarely, with 2 occurrences each (4.26%).

Table 5

Rank of the Schemes Found on Signs

Item	Type of Scheme found on the studied signs	Frequency of occurrences	Percentage (%)
1	Alliteration	30	63.83%
2	Assonance	5	10.64%
3	Internal Rhyme	2	4.26%
4	Parallelism	8	17.02%
5	Repetition	2	4.26%
	Total	47	100.00%

In the present study, schemes were found in five types: alliteration, parallelism, assonance, and internal rhyme with repetition. Alliteration was the most frequent scheme found on signs in Koh Samet, accounting for 63.83% of the total scheme occurrences, as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12*An Example of Alliteration Sign*

The name “Samed Sand Sea” demonstrates strong alliteration through the repeated initial /s/ sound in “Samed,” “Sand,” and “Sea.” It begins with the same consonant sound in each word.

The second most frequent scheme was parallelism (Figure 13). The phrase “Wash - Dry - Fold” is considered an example of parallelism because it uses a sequence of verbs in the same grammatical structure. This parallel form creates rhythm, clarity, and easy memorability, which are key effects of rhetorical schemes.

Figure 13*An Example of a Parallelism Sign*

The third most frequent scheme was assonance, which means the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds. It accounted for 10.64%. As shown in Figure 14, the “Naga Bar” sign, the words “Naga” and “Bar” share a similar /a/ vowel sound, although its classification as assonance is less clear-cut than some other examples.

Figure 14

An Example of Assonance on Sign



Discussion

1. Language choice

The findings show that English-containing signs in Koh Samet function not only as sources of information but also as multilingual, commercial, and persuasive tourism texts. Within the corpus, signs helped businesses communicate with visitors, promote services, and construct Koh Samet as an accessible and tourism-oriented destination. By combining linguistic landscape analysis with rhetorical analysis, the study demonstrates that public signage in tourism contexts should be understood as both a communicative and symbolic resource.

Regarding language choice, bilingual signs were the most prominent pattern, especially English–Thai combinations. This suggests that businesses on Koh Samet use bilingual signage to address both local and international audiences. Thai anchors the signs in the local linguistic and cultural context, while English increases accessibility for foreign visitors and signals international readiness. This finding is consistent with previous studies of Thai tourism linguistic landscapes, where English frequently appears alongside Thai in commercial and public signs (Bennui, 2024; Chanthao & Kobbun, 2024; Iamsamai, 2025; Low, 2022; Ngampramuan, 2022; Prasert & Zilli, 2019). In the Koh Samet context, however, bilingual signage appears to serve as a strategic balance between local identity and global tourism communication.

The presence of monolingual English signs also indicates the symbolic value of English in the tourism economy. English functions not only as a practical lingua franca but also as a marker of modernity, professionalism, and international orientation. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution because the study examined only signs containing English. Therefore, the results do not suggest that English dominates the entire linguistic landscape of Koh Samet. Rather, they show that English plays a central role within the English-containing signs collected in the study area.

The smaller number of English–Chinese, English–Japanese, and multilingual signs involving Chinese, Japanese, Russian, or German suggests that these languages were used more selectively. Unlike Thai and English, which formed the core linguistic pairing, additional

foreign languages appeared to target specific tourist groups. This reflects the commercial logic of tourism signage, where languages are selected not only for communication but also for their perceived market value. In this sense, multilingual signs in Koh Samet represent selective multilingual commodification, as languages are used to expand audience reach and enhance tourism appeal.

2. *Rhetorical devices on signs*

The rhetorical findings further show that signs in Koh Samet are not merely informative but also persuasive. Rhetorical devices appeared mainly in business-related signs, suggesting that commercial signs often use stylistic language to attract attention, create memorability, and promote a desirable tourism experience. Tropes were more frequent than schemes, indicating that meaning-based strategies were especially important. Imagery, the most common trope, helped signs evoke associations with relaxation, the sea, comfort, pleasure, and island leisure. Such language allows businesses to promote not only products or services but also feelings and experiences associated with tourism.

Other tropes, such as paronomasia, hyperbole, and metonymy, also contributed to the persuasive function of signs by making business names more playful, memorable, or distinctive. However, rhetorical interpretation should be approached carefully, especially when it involves cross-linguistic wordplay or culturally specific meanings. The study does not claim that all rhetorical effects were intentionally designed by sign-makers. Rather, it shows that English sign texts contain stylistic features that can function persuasively within the commercial tourism environment of Koh Samet.

Schemes, although less frequent than tropes, also played an important role. Alliteration, repetition, assonance, internal rhyme, and parallelism helped make signs more rhythmic, catchy, and memorable. These devices are useful in tourism settings where visitors often encounter signs quickly, and businesses compete for attention in visually crowded public spaces. The use of schemes, therefore, supports the idea that persuasion in signage can be created not only through meaning but also through sound and structure.

Overall, the findings suggest that Koh Samet's English-containing linguistic landscape reflects the interaction between local identity, global tourism, and commercial persuasion. Thai helps maintain local grounding, while English and other foreign languages support international accessibility and tourism branding. Rhetorical devices add another layer by transforming some signs into persuasive micro-texts that promote atmosphere, experience, and business identity. This study, therefore, contributes to linguistic landscape research by showing that tourism signs should be analyzed not only in terms of language visibility but also in terms of how language is stylistically used to persuade, brand, and construct tourism space

Conclusion

This study examined language choice and rhetorical persuasion in the English-containing linguistic landscape of Koh Samet, Rayong Province, Thailand. The findings show that

bilingual English–Thai signs were the most frequent pattern, followed by monolingual English and multilingual signs. This suggests that English and Thai play complementary roles in tourism-oriented signage: English supports international accessibility, while Thai anchors the signs in local identity.

The rhetorical analysis shows that signs in Koh Samet are not merely informational. Devices such as imagery and alliteration help create memorable and attractive messages, supporting the persuasive and branding functions of tourism signage. By combining linguistic landscape analysis with rhetorical analysis, this study demonstrates that public signs can function as multilingual, symbolic, and commercial resources.

The study contributes to linguistic landscape research by extending the analysis of signage from language visibility to rhetorical persuasion and tourism meaning making. However, because the corpus included only English-containing signs, the findings should not be generalized to the entire linguistic landscape of Koh Samet. Future studies should include Thai-only and non-English signs to provide a fuller picture of language distribution on the island.

Recommendations

The findings suggest that businesses and tourism stakeholders in Koh Samet should consider language choice as part of tourism communication and destination image. English–Thai bilingual signage can support both international accessibility and local identity. Clear, readable, and well-organized signs may improve visitor understanding while also strengthening the image of Koh Samet as a welcoming tourism destination.

Businesses may also benefit from using rhetorical features carefully. Devices such as imagery and alliteration can make signs more memorable and appealing, especially in competitive tourism areas where many businesses seek visitors' attention. However, rhetorical language should remain clear and appropriate to the service being offered.

For future research, studies should include Thai-only signs and other non-English signs to examine the full linguistic landscape of Koh Samet. Future studies may also compare different business types, such as restaurants, bars, hotels, cafés, shops, and public signs, to see how language choice and rhetorical devices vary across sectors. In addition, multimodal analysis of font size, color, layout, images, and sign placement would provide deeper insight into how signs create meaning. Interviews with business owners, sign-makers, and tourists would also help clarify how language choices and rhetorical devices are intended and interpreted.

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