

ENGLISH AND CHINESE IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF NANJING, CHINA

HASHIM, H. U.^{1*} – PARIDALUDDIN, N. F. M. S.¹ – ISMAIL, N. A. C.¹ – AZAM, N. S.¹ – SUKRI, H. I. M.¹

¹ *Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Selangor, Malaysia.*

**Corresponding author
e-mail: haidaumiera[at]uitm.edu.my*

(Received 19th April 2026; revised 05th June 2026; accepted 20th June 2026)

Abstract. This study examines the coexistence of English and Chinese languages in public signage across Nanjing, China, through the lens of linguistic landscape studies. As one of China's ancient capitals and a rapidly globalising metropolis, Nanjing provides a unique setting where historical heritage intersects with increasing internationalisation and multilingual communication. Public signs serve not only as practical tools for conveying information but also as visible markers of cultural identity, language policy, and socio-economic development. Adopting a qualitative research approach, this study analyses bilingual public signs collected from selected tourist attractions, transportation hubs, commercial districts, educational institutions, and public facilities throughout the city. The analysis focuses on three key dimensions: the visibility and prominence of English and Chinese, the communicative functions performed by bilingual signage, and the linguistic accuracy and appropriateness of English translations. The findings indicate that Chinese remains the dominant language across public spaces, while English is predominantly used as a supplementary language to facilitate communication with international visitors and expatriates. Beyond its informational role, English also performs symbolic functions by projecting modernity, global connectivity, and an internationally welcoming city image. Nevertheless, the analysis identifies several inconsistencies in English translations, including grammatical inaccuracies, lexical choices, and awkward phrasing, which may affect communication effectiveness and international perceptions. These findings suggest that bilingual signage reflects not only practical communication needs but also broader socio-cultural and economic aspirations associated with globalisation. Overall, the linguistic landscape of Nanjing illustrates China's evolving linguistic identity, balancing the preservation of its rich cultural heritage with the demands of international engagement. The study contributes to the growing body of research on linguistic landscapes by providing insights into bilingual public signage in contemporary urban China and highlighting the relationship between language, identity, and globalisation.

Keywords: *linguistic landscape, bilingualism, globalization, Nanjing, English-Chinese signage*

Introduction

Public signage serves as a visible reflection of linguistic diversity, cultural values, and globalization (Benu, 2025). Liu and Ma (2024) stated that in contemporary China, English is becoming increasingly visible in urban spaces, symbolizing not only international communication but also modernization and prestige. Nanjing, a city that blends ancient heritage with rapid development, provides a rich site for exploring how English and Chinese coexist visually and functionally. The linguistic landscape of Nanjing embodies this duality, where the traditional and the global meet (Han and Shang, 2024; Han and Wu, 2020). The present study aims to analyze the extent and nature of English–Chinese bilingual signage in public spaces and to interpret what these linguistic patterns reveal about cultural identity and globalization. Beyond mere translation, public signs function as semiotic resources that communicate power relations, target audiences, and institutional priorities (Rojas, 2025; Han and Wu, 2020;

Landry and Bourhis, 1997). The increasing presence of English on signage may indicate efforts to accommodate international visitors, attract global investment, and project a cosmopolitan city image (Wang and Gao, 2025; Han and Shang, 2024; Liu and Ma, 2024). At the same time, the persistence of Chinese as the dominant language reflects strong cultural continuity and national identity (Rojas, 2025; Han and Wu, 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws on the field of linguistic landscape studies, which examines the visibility and salience of languages in public spaces (Benu, 2025; Ayyub and Rohmah, 2024; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). Scholars argue that linguistic landscapes not only mirror language use but also shape social perceptions and language hierarchies (Duan and Fang, 2026; Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). In this context, the coexistence of English and Chinese in Nanjing's signage can be interpreted as both a practical communicative strategy and a symbolic representation of globalization (Wang and Gao, 2025; Han and Shang, 2024; Liu and Ma, 2024). The interplay between these languages raises important questions about accessibility, inclusivity, and the negotiation of local and global identities (Rojas, 2025; Han and Wu, 2020). Furthermore, the study considers different types of signage, governmental, commercial, and informational, which may reflect varying degrees of bilingualism and differing communicative intentions (Ayyub and Rohmah, 2024; Han and Shang, 2024; Han and Wu, 2020). For instance, official signs may prioritize clarity and standardization, while commercial signs may strategically employ English to convey modernity or appeal to younger audiences (Han and Shang, 2024; Han and Wu, 2020). Such variations highlight the dynamic nature of language use in urban environments and the influence of economic, cultural, and political factors (Duan and Fang, 2026; Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Wang and Gao, 2025; Han and Wu, 2020).

By focusing on Nanjing, this study contributes to a growing body of research on linguistic landscapes in rapidly globalizing cities (Duan and Fang, 2026; Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Wang and Gao, 2025; Wang, 2024). It seeks to provide insights into how language choices in public signage not only facilitate communication but also construct meanings about identity, belonging, and progress (Rojas, 2025; Wang and Gao, 2025; Wang, 2024; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). Ultimately, the research aims to deepen our understanding of how multilingual practices in urban spaces reflect broader societal transformations in contemporary China (Han and Shang, 2024; Liu and Ma, 2024; Han and Wu, 2020).

Research objective

The objectives of this study are: (1) To examine how English and Chinese are used together in Nanjing's public signage; (2) To categorize the communicative functions of bilingual signs (informative, directive, decorative, or commercial); and (3) To analyze what these linguistic choices reflect about cultural identity and globalization in China.

Literature review

The concept of linguistic landscape (LL) was introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997), who defined it as the "visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory". They argued that linguistic landscape (LL) serves two primary functions: an informational function, indicating which languages are commonly used or understood in an area, and a symbolic function, reflecting the social and cultural identity of the community (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). Subsequent

researchers such as Ayyub and Rohmah (2024) expanded the framework, emphasizing the interplay between top-down (governmental or institutional) and bottom-up (private or commercial) signage. This distinction has become central in understanding how authority, policy, and individual agency shape language visibility in public spaces (Han and Wu, 2020). In multilingual societies, linguistic landscape (LL) studies have become valuable tools for examining linguistic power dynamics, identity negotiation, and globalization processes (Duan and Fang, 2026; Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Rojas, 2025). Scholars such as Ayyub and Rohmah (2024) demonstrated how urban signage reflects not only communicative needs but also socio-political hierarchies. In Asian contexts, research conducted in urban settings has revealed recurring patterns in the use of English alongside local languages (Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Wang and Gao, 2025; Ayyub and Rohmah, 2024). For instance, studies in Singapore's Chinatown, Luang Prabang, and Malang highlight that English frequently functions as a symbolic resource associated with modernity, education, and global connectivity rather than purely as a practical means of communication (Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Wang and Gao, 2025; Ayyub and Rohmah, 2024). This aligns with broader discussions in sociolinguistics, where language choice is seen as a marker of identity, status, and aspiration (Rojas, 2025).

In the context of China, the increasing presence of English in public signage has been widely interpreted as part of the nation's strategy of internationalization and soft power projection (Han and Shang, 2024; Liu and Ma, 2024; Han and Wu, 2020). Liu and Ma (2024) argue that English signage reflects China's engagement with global economic and cultural systems. The visibility of English is particularly prominent in urban centres undergoing rapid development, where bilingual signage serves both functional and symbolic purposes (Wang, 2024). On one hand, English facilitates communication with international visitors; on the other, it conveys an image of cosmopolitanism and openness (Han and Shang, 2024; Liu and Ma, 2024). This dual role underscores the complex relationship between language, globalization, and national identity (Liu and Ma, 2024; Han and Wu, 2020). Further studies have examined how English is localized and adapted within Chinese linguistic landscapes. Research by Han and Wu (2020) in Guangzhou indicates that English often carries prestige value, even when it is not essential for communication. Similarly, Han and Shang (2024) observed that in China, English is widely used in commercial signage to project a modern and global image. However, scholars such as Wang (2024) have highlighted issues related to translation quality, including grammatical inaccuracies and inconsistent formatting. These findings suggest that English is sometimes employed decoratively, functioning more as a symbolic marker than as an effective communicative tool (Han and Shang, 2024; Han and Wu, 2020). Such practices raise questions about language standardization, authenticity, and the intended audience of bilingual signage (Wang, 2024).

More recent developments in linguistic landscape (LL) research have also emphasized the multimodal and semiotic nature of public signage (Wang, 2024). Language does not operate in isolation but interacts with visual elements such as colour, layout, typography, and spatial positioning (Wang, 2024). These semiotic resources contribute to meaning-making and influence how messages are interpreted by different audiences. Additionally, digitalization and globalization have further expanded the scope of linguistic landscape (LL) studies, incorporating virtual spaces and transnational influences (Duan and Fang, 2026; Wang, 2024). This broader perspective highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of linguistic landscapes in contemporary urban

environments (Duan and Fang, 2026; Fang and Shangeetha, 2026). Within this scholarly context, Nanjing emerges as a particularly compelling site of investigation. As a historically significant city with a strong educational and cultural identity, Nanjing represents a convergence of tradition and modernization. Despite its importance, relatively limited research has focused specifically on its linguistic landscape, particularly in relation to bilingual signage. This gap presents an opportunity to explore how English and Chinese coexist, compete, and complement each other in shaping public space.

Therefore, this study contributes to the growing body of linguistic landscape (LL) research by providing an in-depth analysis of English–Chinese bilingual signage in Nanjing. It seeks to extend existing discussions by examining not only the distribution and functions of languages but also their sociocultural implications. By situating Nanjing within broader regional and global trends, the study offers insights into how linguistic landscapes reflect ongoing processes of globalization, identity construction, and cultural negotiation (Duan and Fang, 2026; Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Wang and Gao, 2025; Wang, 2024).

Materials and Methods

A qualitative, descriptive approach was adopted to explore the linguistic landscape of Nanjing. This approach is appropriate for examining naturally occurring language use in public spaces, as it allows for an in-depth interpretation of visual and textual data within their sociocultural context (Chand, 2025). The study focuses on capturing how English and Chinese coexist on public signage and how these representations reflect broader processes of globalization and identity construction (Duan and Fang, 2026; Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Wang, 2024). Data collection involved systematic photographic documentation of public signs from selected urban locations, including shopping streets, public transportation hubs, educational institutions, and tourist attractions (Ayyub and Rohmah, 2024; Wang, 2024). These sites were purposively selected to represent a range of communicative environments where bilingual signage is likely to occur (Chand, 2025). The data collection process was conducted over a specified period to ensure consistency, and only clearly visible, publicly accessible signs were included. To enhance reliability, duplicate images and unclear signage were excluded, and all photographs were catalogued with details such as location, date, and type of establishment (Chand, 2025; Ayyub and Rohmah, 2024).

A total sample of signs was compiled and organized for analysis. Each sign was treated as a unit of analysis and examined using a structured coding framework informed by linguistic landscape studies (Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Ayyub and Rohmah, 2024; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). The analysis was conducted across three key dimensions: (1) Language Visibility: This dimension examined the relative prominence, size, placement, and spatial arrangement of English and Chinese text. Attention was given to which language appeared first, font size differences, and visual hierarchy, as these elements indicate language dominance and intended audience (Duan and Fang, 2026; Wang, 2024; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). (2) Communicative Function: Signs were categorized based on their primary purpose, including informative, directive, commercial, and decorative or symbolic uses. This classification helped to identify how language choice varies according to communicative intent (Benu, 2025; Han and Shang, 2024; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). (3) Accuracy of English Usage: The quality of

English was evaluated in terms of grammar, spelling, lexical choice, and semantic clarity. Instances of translation errors, literal translations, or non-standard usage were noted to assess whether English functioned as a communicative tool or a symbolic resource (Wang, 2024; Han and Shang, 2024).

The data were analyzed thematically, with recurring patterns identified across the three dimensions (Chand, 2025). Codes were developed inductively and refined through iterative review of the dataset. To enhance analytical rigor, the researcher engaged in repeated examination of the data to ensure consistency in coding and interpretation (Chand, 2025). Where necessary, examples of signage were compared to identify common trends and deviations. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. As the data consisted solely of publicly displayed signs, no personal or sensitive information was collected. Nevertheless, care was taken to anonymize specific locations where appropriate and to use the images strictly for academic purposes. Overall, Benu (2025) agreed that this methodological approach enables a better understanding of how linguistic choices in public signage reflect the intersection of language, culture, and globalization in contemporary urban spaces.

Results and Discussion

Language visibility

English appears widely alongside Chinese in Nanjing's public spaces, particularly in commercial and tourist districts. In most instances, English text is displayed beneath or beside Chinese characters, ensuring accessibility for both local and foreign audiences. This spatial arrangement reflects what Landry and Bourhis (1997) describe as the informational function of linguistic landscapes, where multiple languages are used to facilitate communication across diverse audiences. At the same time, the consistent prioritization of Chinese in terms of placement and prominence suggests the continued dominance of the local language in maintaining cultural identity. However, the degree of visibility varies across different types of signage, revealing a more nuanced pattern of bilingual usage. In cases of high visibility, English appears alongside Chinese with equal prominence, particularly on official and tourist signage. This reflects a top-down institutional effort to position the city as globally accessible, aligning with findings by Han and Wu (2020), who highlight how language policy shapes public signage to project inclusivity and internationalization. Similarly, studies such as Wang (2024) demonstrate that bilingual signage in urban China contributes to the construction of transnational spaces, where multiple linguistic identities coexist.

In contexts of moderate visibility, English appears as a secondary element, often smaller in size or placed beneath Chinese text. This pattern suggests that English serves a supportive communicative function, rather than being the primary medium. Such findings resonate with Ayyub and Rohmah (2024), who observed similar hierarchical language arrangements in public signage, where dominant local languages are complemented by global languages to enhance accessibility. This layered visibility indicates a balance between local relevance and global outreach, reinforcing the idea that linguistic landscapes are shaped by both practical and symbolic considerations. In cases of low visibility, English appears primarily in brand names or decorative forms, often detached from clear communicative purposes. This aligns with the concept of language commodification, as discussed by Han and Shang (2024), where English is used to convey modernity, prestige, and commercial appeal rather than to transmit

information. Similarly, Liu and Ma (2024) note that in certain contexts, English functions as a symbolic resource that enhances the perceived value of products and spaces, even when comprehension is not the primary goal.

These variations in visibility collectively suggest a strategic and context-dependent use of bilingualism in Nanjing. English enhances global appeal and signals cosmopolitan identity, while Chinese maintains cultural continuity and local relevance. This dual function reflects broader processes of globalization, where cities negotiate between preserving indigenous identity and engaging with global networks. Comparable patterns have been observed in other multilingual urban contexts, such as Singapore's Chinatown, where multiple languages coexist to reflect both heritage and modern economic aspirations (Fang and Shangeetha, 2026). Furthermore, the findings highlight how linguistic landscapes can serve as a site of identity negotiation. The coexistence of English and Chinese reflects not only practical communication needs but also symbolic positioning within global hierarchies. As noted by Rojas (2025), multilingual practices often function as markers of identity, allowing communities to navigate between local belonging and global participation. In this sense, Nanjing's signage illustrates how language choices contribute to constructing an urban identity that is both rooted and outward-looking.

From a pedagogical perspective, the presence of bilingual signage also offers opportunities for language learning. Benu (2025) suggests that linguistic landscapes can function as informal learning environments, exposing learners to authentic language use in everyday contexts. The varying degrees of English visibility in Nanjing may therefore support incidental vocabulary acquisition and cultural awareness, particularly among students and visitors. In sum, the findings demonstrate that the linguistic landscape of Nanjing is not merely a reflection of language use but an active site where globalization, identity, and communication intersect.

Communication function

The bilingual signs observed in Nanjing serve multiple communicative and symbolic purposes, reflecting the multifunctional nature of linguistic landscapes. Consistent with the framework proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997), these signs fulfill both informational and symbolic functions, depending on their context and intended audience. In the case of informative signage, such as those found in metro stations and tourist information boards, English is used alongside Chinese in a clear and standardized manner. These signs demonstrate a strong commitment to accessibility, particularly for international visitors. The accuracy and consistency of translations suggest the influence of top-down institutional control, aligning with findings by Han and Wu (2020), who emphasize the role of government policies in regulating public signage. Similarly, Wang (2024) highlights how such bilingual signs contribute to the formation of transnational spaces by enabling cross-cultural communication in urban environments.

For directive signage, including warnings and instructions such as "No Smoking" or "Keep Clean," English serves a functional role in communicating rules to non-Chinese speakers. However, instances of literal translation and minor grammatical awkwardness indicate that communicative clarity is sometimes secondary to the presence of English itself. This observation resonates with Ayyub and Rohmah (2024), who found that directive signs in public spaces often prioritize bilingual presence over linguistic precision. Such patterns suggest that English, while functional, is not always fully

localized or adapted to ensure natural usage. The dominance of commercial signage in the dataset highlights the growing commodification of English in urban spaces. Shop names, advertisements, and product labels frequently incorporate English in creative and stylized ways. This supports the argument by Han and Shang (2024) that English is increasingly used as a marketing resource to convey modernity, prestige, and global appeal. Similarly, Wang and Gao (2025) note that merchants often adopt English not for communicative necessity but to attract consumers and enhance brand image. The presence of grammatical inaccuracies in such signage further reinforces the idea that English functions symbolically rather than communicatively in commercial contexts.

Decorative signage represents the most symbolic use of English, where words or phrases are employed primarily for aesthetic or stylistic purposes. In these cases, English operates as a visual marker of cosmopolitanism, aligning with broader processes of globalization. This phenomenon is also observed in other multilingual urban settings, such as Singapore's Chinatown, where English and other languages are strategically displayed to reflect both heritage and global orientation (Fang and Shangeetha, 2026). The decorative use of English underscores its role as a semiotic resource that communicates values of sophistication and modernity, even when it does not convey clear meaning. The predominance of commercial and decorative signage in Nanjing's linguistic landscape points to a broader trend of language commodification and symbolic globalization. As noted by Liu and Ma (2024), English in such contexts becomes a form of cultural capital, associated with upward mobility and global connectedness. This aligns with the concept of bottom-up language practices, where private actors such as business owners shape the linguistic landscape based on market demands and social aspirations (Han and Wu, 2020).

Moreover, the coexistence of functional and symbolic uses of English reflects ongoing processes of identity negotiation in multilingual urban environments. As argued by Rojas (2025), code-switching and language choice serve as mechanisms through which individuals and communities position themselves within both local and global contexts. In Nanjing, the use of English alongside Chinese allows for the construction of a dual identity, one that is rooted in local culture while simultaneously oriented toward global engagement. From a pedagogical perspective, these findings also suggest that public signage can serve as an informal learning resource. Benu (2025) highlights the potential of linguistic landscapes as tools for language learning, providing authentic exposure to vocabulary, structures, and cultural meanings. Even in cases where English is used symbolically, its visibility contributes to learners' familiarity with the language and its social functions.

In summary, the functional categorization of bilingual signage in Nanjing reveals a complex interplay between communication, commerce, and cultural representation. While informative and directive signs emphasize clarity and accessibility, commercial and decorative signs highlight the symbolic power of English as a marker of globalization. Together, these patterns demonstrate that the linguistic landscape is not merely a reflection of language use but an active site where meanings about identity, modernity, and global belonging are constructed and negotiated.

Accuracy of English usage

The analysis of signage in Nanjing reveals that the quality of English translation varies considerably across contexts, reflecting differences in institutional control, communicative intent, and resource availability. This variation can be broadly

categorized into high, moderate, and low levels of accuracy, each corresponding to distinct functions within the linguistic landscape. High-accuracy translations are predominantly found in government-managed and institutional signage, such as transportation systems, public facilities, and tourist information boards. These signs typically employ standardized and professionally produced translations, ensuring clarity and consistency. This pattern reflects strong top-down regulation, where language use is carefully controlled to meet international standards and support effective communication. Such findings align with Han and Wu (2020), who argue that official signage often reflects national language policies aimed at promoting accessibility and projecting a globally competent image. Similarly, Wang (2024) notes that accurate bilingual signage plays a key role in constructing transnational urban spaces by facilitating interaction between local and international audiences.

In contrast, moderate-accuracy translations are commonly observed in small businesses, where English is often produced through literal translation or machine-assisted tools. While these translations generally convey basic meaning, they may include awkward phrasing or non-standard expressions. This reflects a bottom-up approach to language use, where business owners prioritize accessibility but may lack the linguistic expertise or resources for precise translation. Similar observations were reported by Ayyub and Rohmah (2024), who found that semi-accurate translations in public signage often emerge from practical rather than professional considerations. The presence of such translations suggests an increasing awareness of the need to engage with non-local audiences, even if linguistic accuracy is not fully achieved. Low-accuracy translations, often found in decorative or creative signage, demonstrate the most symbolic use of English. In these cases, grammatical errors, unconventional phrasing, or even nonsensical expressions are common, indicating that communicative clarity is not the primary objective. Instead, English is employed as a stylistic or aesthetic element to evoke modernity and global appeal. This supports the notion of language commodification, as discussed by Han and Shang (2024), where English functions as a cultural and commercial resource rather than a tool for communication. Likewise, Liu and Ma (2024) highlight that in many contexts; English is valued more for its symbolic capital than for its linguistic accuracy.

Despite these inconsistencies, the widespread presence of English across varying levels of accuracy reflects a broader trend of global orientation and tourism-driven communication. The intentional inclusion of English, even when imperfect, signals a desire to position the city within global networks. This observation is consistent with findings from other multilingual urban contexts, such as Singapore and Luang Prabang, where English is strategically used to enhance international visibility and economic engagement (Fang and Shangeetha, 2026; Wang and Gao, 2025). From a sociolinguistic perspective, these variations in translation quality also reflect processes of identity negotiation and linguistic adaptation. As noted by Rojas (2025), multilingual practices, including imperfect or hybrid language use, can serve as markers of evolving identities in globalized contexts. In Nanjing, the coexistence of accurate and non-standard English suggests a dynamic linguistic environment where global and local influences intersect.

Furthermore, the findings carry important pedagogical implications. The presence of varied translation quality in public signage offers authentic learning opportunities for language learners. Benu (2025) argues that linguistic landscapes can function as informal educational resources, enabling learners to critically engage with real-world language use. Exposure to both accurate and erroneous forms may enhance learners'

awareness of language conventions, translation challenges, and cross-cultural communication. Methodologically, the identification of these variations also underscores the value of qualitative observational approaches, as highlighted by Chand (2025). By systematically documenting and analyzing naturally occurring signage, the study captures the complexity of language use in situ, revealing patterns that might not be evident through controlled data collection methods. In sum, the variation in English translation quality across Nanjing's linguistic landscape illustrates the interplay between institutional authority, commercial practice, and symbolic representation. While high-accuracy translations support functional communication, lower-accuracy instances highlight the growing role of English as a marker of globalization and modern identity. Together, these patterns reinforce the idea that linguistic landscapes are not static but are continuously shaped by social, economic, and cultural forces.

Conclusion

The linguistic landscape of Nanjing illustrates how English and Chinese coexist in dynamic and complementary ways, reflecting both functional communication needs and broader sociocultural aspirations. English operates not only as a practical tool for informing and directing international audiences but also as a symbolic resource associated with modernity, prestige, and global connectivity. Chinese, on the other hand, retains its central role as the primary medium of communication and a powerful marker of cultural identity and continuity. This duality highlights the layered nature of urban multilingualism, where languages serve different yet interconnected purposes. Although instances of linguistic inaccuracy are present, particularly in commercial and decorative signage, these do not significantly hinder the overall communicative effectiveness of bilingual signs. Instead, they reveal the evolving nature of language use in public spaces, where precision may at times be secondary to visibility and symbolic value. Such patterns underscore the idea that linguistic landscapes are not solely governed by correctness but are shaped by social intentions, economic motivations, and cultural meanings. More broadly, the findings reflect China's ongoing engagement with globalization. The increasing visibility of English in public signage signals a strategic openness to international interaction, tourism, and economic development. At the same time, the consistent prominence of Chinese demonstrates a deliberate effort to preserve linguistic heritage and identity amidst global influences. This balance aligns with observations in linguistic landscape research that multilingual urban spaces often negotiate between global integration and local rootedness.

Furthermore, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how cities construct their identities through language. In Nanjing, bilingual signage functions as a semiotic representation of a city that is both historically grounded and forward-looking. The coexistence of traditional Chinese elements with globally oriented English expressions reflects a process of transformation that is neither linear nor uniform, but adaptive and context-sensitive. From a broader perspective, these findings also carry implications for urban planning, language policy, and education. The strategic use of bilingual signage can enhance accessibility and inclusivity, particularly in cities seeking to attract international visitors and investors. At the same time, attention to translation quality and linguistic appropriateness can further strengthen communication and cultural representation. Additionally, the linguistic landscape offers valuable opportunities for informal learning, enabling individuals to engage with language in authentic, real-world

contexts. Ultimately, Nanjing's public signage captures the spirit of a city, and, more broadly, a nation, navigating the intersection of tradition and transformation in an increasingly globalized world. The interplay between English and Chinese in the urban landscape not only reflects current sociolinguistic realities but also points toward future trajectories of multilingualism, identity, and global engagement.

Acknowledgement

This research is self-funded.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ayyub, S., Rohmah, Z. (2024): The linguistic landscape of Kotabaru Malang Train Station: language representation in public space. – *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11(1): 14p.
- [2] Benu, N.N. (2025): The linguistic landscape as a pedagogical tool: enhancing language learning through signages in public space. – In: Benu, N.N., Jonathans, P.M. (eds.): *Innovations in Language Learning: Pedagogical Strategies and Linguistic Insights*. Artha Wacana Press, Kupang 31p.
- [3] Chand, S.P. (2025): Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. – *Advances in Educational Research and Evaluation* 6(1): 303-317.
- [4] Duan, A., Fang, Z. (2026): Mapping urban multilingualism: a spatial signature approach through street-level language patterns of seven U.S. immigrant cities. – *Cities* 170: 12p.
- [5] Fang, L., Shangeetha, R.K. (2026): One country, many languages: exploring the linguistic landscape of shop signage in Singapore's Chinatown. – *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 36(2): 284-309.
- [6] Han, Y., Shang, G. (2024): Displaying and commodifying English on shop name signs. – In: Han, Y., Shang, G.: *The Linguistic Landscape in China: Commodification, Image Construction, Contestations and Negotiations*. Springer Nature Singapore, Singapore 23p.
- [7] Han, Y., Wu, X. (2020): Language policy, linguistic landscape and residents' perception in Guangzhou, China: dissents and conflicts. – *Current Issues in Language Planning* 21(3): 229-253.
- [8] Landry, R., Bourhis, R.Y. (1997): Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: an empirical study. – *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 16(1): 23-49.
- [9] Liu, G., Ma, C. (2024): English in a rural linguistic landscape of globalizing China: language commodification and indigenous resistance. – *English Today* 40(1): 62-69.
- [10] Rojas, B.G. (2025): Code-switching as identity negotiation in multilingual communities. – *Bulletin of Language and Literature Studies* 2(1): 13-23.
- [11] Wang, X., Gao, Y. (2025): The role of English in the linguistic landscape of Luang Prabang: perceptions from merchants and consumers. – *English Today* 41(2): 85-95.
- [12] Wang, Y. (2024): Translation of signs and the formation of a transnational space: a multimodal study of street signs in the African inhabited areas of Guangzhou. – *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 45(9): 3729-3743.