
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Linguistic Landscapes and Signages in Focus: A Synthesized Self-Review of Multi Context Research (2021-2025)

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| ABSTRACT

This systematic review (SR) synthesizes empirical research conducted by the author between 2021 and 2025 on linguistic landscapes (LLs) in Saudi Arabia and selected international contexts, with a focus on the linguistic, translational, semiotic, and sociocultural dimensions of commercial and public signage. Drawing on four thematic clusters, morphosyntactic and orthographic issues, cross linguistic errors by human translators and AI, globalization and English hegemony, and sociocultural identities in naming practices, the corpus demonstrates that Arabic shop names, product names, and bilingual LLs frequently contain semantic, syntactic, and orthographic anomalies, and that transliteration remains the dominant strategy even when translation is possible or preferable. English and other foreign languages exert a strong presence in commercial naming, reflecting globalization as well as local perceptions of prestige, modernity, and marketability. Cultural identity is deeply embedded in naming practices, particularly in hotel names in Makkah and Madinah, where religious, historical, and spiritually connoted references are especially prominent. The corpus further reveals that AI systems fail to translate culturally embedded naming patterns such as Abu brand names, often producing literal or culturally inappropriate equivalents that highlight the limitations of AI translation in LL contexts. The findings also show that LLs are not random or superficial but are shaped by systemic, cultural, and ideological forces that influence how languages coexist in public space. Transliteration errors and structural anomalies indicate gaps in linguistic awareness among shop owners, manufacturers, and transliterators, while translation errors reflect inconsistent practices, lack of standardization, and reliance on literal strategies, particularly in bottom up signage. The AI related findings demonstrate that current AI tools frequently misinterpret culturally bound names, underscoring the need for culturally informed computational models in LL translation. The dominance of English emerges as a sociolinguistic response to globalization, where English is associated with prestige, internationalism, and consumer appeal, even as hotel names in Makkah and Madinah illustrate how LLs can simultaneously reinforce local identity and heritage. Overall, this SR highlights the importance of commercial and public signage as a site of linguistic inquiry and offers recommendations for transliteration standardization, translation quality control, balanced language policy, and expanded cross national LL research.

| KEYWORDS

Systematic self-review, Al-Jarf research program, Saudi linguistic landscapes, English hegemony, bilingual commercial signage, linguistic anomalies, signage translation errors, semiotic analysis, AI brand name translation, AI translation limitations

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 June 2026

PUBLISHED: 21 June 2026

DOI: 10.32996/jpda.2026.5.3.1

1. Introduction

Linguistic landscapes¹ (LL) refer to the "visibility and salience of languages on commercial and public signs in a given place or region. They cover² a wide range of sign types such as shop signs, commercial posters, street names, road signs, government

¹ [Linguistic landscapes](#).

² <https://timorlesteanddiasporas.exeter.ac.uk/research-areas/linguistic-landscape/#:~:text=The%20linguistic%20landscape%20of%20a,signs%20on%20government%20buildings%2C%20etc.>

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building signage, place names, public notices, advertisements, billboards, notice boards, product information, façade names, stickers, graffiti, commemorative plaques, and other forms of written display. They also include³ exterior/outdoor signage such as store brand/names, promotional deals and offers, informational, directional/wayfinding signs, sidewalk board signs, pylon signs, window graphics, banners, vehicle graphics, monument, pole, frame-mounted interior signs and construction site signs. LLs provide clear communication, informing the public, wayfinding and store navigation, attracting and guiding customers, advertising and marketing, brand awareness, enhancing branding and increasing profits, establishing brand aesthetics, generating impulse sales and increasing purchase decisions (Al-Jarf, 2021b).

LL studies⁴, examine the written text displayed on public and commercial signs to understand how language visibility, code preference, and semiotic design reflect broader sociocultural dynamics, including cultural identity, globalization, tourism, and official language policies within urban spaces. Research in this field typically categorizes and examines signs based on the following frameworks: (i) Top-down vs. bottom-up signs, with *top-down* referring to official government signs, street names, and warning notices regulated by public authorities, and *bottom-up* consisting of private or commercial signs like shop facades, billboards, and advertisements created by individuals and businesses. (ii) Mapping how different languages (e.g., Arabic, English, Chinese) compete or coexist for space on commercial signs, revealing urban modernization and the influence of international brands. (iii) Examining code-switching, transliteration loanwords and hybrid naming practices that shape the linguistic texture of urban spaces. (iv) Highlighting how misspellings and mistranslations on public signs can distort meaning or erase cultural context, especially in commercial signage. Understanding the public use of signage has even expanded into the digital age, with scholars using AI to classify and audit public language data to improve automated recognition tools.

LLs exist in public spaces in all countries and are typically written in the local language with some written in one or more foreign languages. The linguistic makeup of LL has attracted extensive scholarly attention, particularly regarding the impact and spread of English in advertising, brand naming, media, and commercial communication across global contexts. A review of the existing literature shows a clear gap in systematic reviews (SRs) that address the linguistic, translational, or semiotic dimensions of commercial shop signs and public linguistic landscapes. Although several SRs use the term “signage,” most of them originate from non-linguistic fields and focus on urban planning, spatial design, and architectural wayfinding. These reviews examined pedestrian visual preferences, urban sustainability, or navigation systems in complex indoor environments such as hospitals (Permatasari et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2024; Castor et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023). Other reviews approach signage from civil engineering and traffic-management perspectives, emphasizing pedestrian safety markings, school safety signs, and electronic message systems used for traffic control (Haratama et al., 2024; Lagoa et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). In addition, public health and marketing disciplines frequently use the term “signage” to refer to point-of-sale product labels, nutritional policy communication, or consumer engagement with commercial advertising regulations (Gupta et al., 2021; Giombi et al., 2022). These bodies of work do not address the linguistic or translational properties of public signs. Only a limited number of SRs have examined linguistic landscapes from a linguistic perspective. These include linguistic landscape research in the multilingual Philippines (Garlitos, 2025); visualizing the knowledge domain of linguistic landscape research (Peng et al., 2022); studies focusing on LLs in tourist spaces (Hasni et al., 2022); reviews of LLs in educational contexts and critical literacy competence (Kasimo, 2023), and Chinese-English translation of public signs (Amenador & Wang, 2022). However, none of these reviews provide a focused synthesis of the linguistic configurations, transliteration patterns, translation strategies, orthographic anomalies, or cultural meanings embedded specifically in commercial shop signs and everyday public signages.

Across all these bodies of work, no SR has synthesized the linguistic, translational, orthographic, or semiotic features of commercial shop signs, brand names, or product-related signage in public spaces. This gap is particularly evident in areas such as transliteration practices, translation errors, English dominance, culturally embedded naming systems and the role of AI in signage translation. To fill this gap, this study aims to conduct a systematic review (SR) of the author’s empirical research published between 2021 and 2025 on shop signs, street signs, linguistic landscapes, and product and brand names in Saudi Arabia and selected international contexts. This SR synthesizes this body of work to examine the linguistic, translational, semiotic, and sociocultural dimensions of commercial and public signage, offering an integrated account of how written language functions in everyday public spaces and contributes to broader patterns of LL meaning-making, translation practices, and cultural representation.

This SR is significant because it provides the first integrated synthesis of the author’s body of research on commercial and public signage in Saudi Arabia and selected international contexts between 2021 and 2025, offering a linguistically grounded account of how shop signs, brand names, product labels, and bilingual public signage construct meaning in everyday spaces. By

³ <https://www.apexsignage.com.au/signage-that-retailers-should-consider/#:~:text=Effective%20exterior%20retail%20signage%20works,information%2C%20either%20internal%20or%20external.>

⁴ [Linguistic landscape - Wikipedia](#)

organizing 9 studies into coherent thematic clusters, the review reveals recurring patterns of transliteration inconsistency, translation inaccuracy, orthographic deviation, and English dominance, while also highlighting the translation of culturally embedded naming practices such as Abu-brand names by AI models, an area that has been overlooked in global LL scholarship. Unlike previous SRs that focus on multilingualism, tourism, or wayfinding, this study uniquely foregrounds the linguistic, semiotic, and translational dimensions of commercial signage, including the emerging role of AI-mediated translation. The review therefore advances LL research by filling a clear gap in the literature, establishing a comprehensive empirical foundation for understanding commercial linguistic landscapes, and offering actionable insights for future LL research, translation quality, and policy development.

Moreover, this SR forms part of a broader, long-term research program in which the author has produced an extensive series of SRs and meta-analyses (MAs) across multiple domains of language education, linguistics, and pedagogy. These prior SRs have synthesized research on social media in EFL teaching and learning (Al-Jarf, 2026a), English for art education (Al-Jarf, 2026b), EFL reading instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026c), educational evaluation (Al-Jarf, 2026d), translation errors (Al-Jarf, 2026f), mobile-assisted language learning (Al-Jarf, 2026g), adult reading practices (Al-Jarf, 2026h), pronunciation instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026i), Arabic reading pedagogy (Al-Jarf, 2026j), grammar teaching (Al-Jarf, 2026k), electronic searching skills (Al-Jarf, 2026l), global dimensions in L1 school textbooks (Al-Jarf, 2026m), cultural learning in L2 contexts (Al-Jarf, 2026n), vocabulary learning (Al-Jarf, 2026o), specific-skill assessment (Al-Jarf, 2026p), Arabic–English transliteration (Al-Jarf, 2026q), children’s language development (Al-Jarf, 2026r), classroom writing enhancement (Al-Jarf, 2026s), collaborative digital learning (Al-Jarf, 2026t), distance learning during COVID-19 (2026u), mind-mapping strategies (Al-Jarf, 2026v), staffing challenges in EFL programs (Al-Jarf, 2026w), innovative word-formation processes (Al-Jarf, 2026x), interpreting pedagogy (Al-Jarf, 2026y), listening and speaking instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026z), online videos and podcasts for language learning (Al-Jarf, 2026aa), spelling error analysis (Al-Jarf, 2026bb), student autonomy in second language learning (Al-Jarf, 2026cc), AI Arabic translation (Al-Jarf, 2026dd), ESP innovation (Al-Jarf, 2026ee), LMS-supported instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026ff), and English–Arabic language dynamics (Al-Jarf, 2026),

Positioned within this extensive body of systematic inquiry, the current SR contributes a new and distinct dimension by synthesizing research on student autonomy in second language learning—a domain not previously reviewed in the author’s earlier SRs. It therefore extends the author’s methodological tradition while opening a new line of inquiry into the development, enactment, and technological mediation of autonomous learning among EFL and AFL learners.

2. Methodology

To be included in the corpus, studies had to meet the following criteria: (i) The study must be authored by the author. (ii) The study must focus on linguistic landscapes, including shop signs, street signs, product labels, brand names, or other forms of commercial and public signage. (iii) It must examine signage in Saudi Arabia, the Arab world, or selected international contexts. (iv) It must analyze actual physical signs (e.g., commercial façades, public notices, product labels, brand names) rather than theoretical discussions or conceptual papers. (v) It must address at least one of the following dimensions: linguistic, morphosyntactic, orthographic, translational, semiotic, or sociocultural aspects of signage. These criteria ensured that the corpus represented a coherent body of empirical research directly relevant to linguistic landscape analysis.

2.1 Study Corpus

The final corpus comprises nine empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025. These studies investigate the descriptive, sociolinguistic, translational, and semiotic realities of physical signs in commercial and public spaces. To synthesize the findings systematically, the studies were organized into the following thematic clusters:

Cluster 1: Morphosyntactic and Orthographic Linguistic Issues

This cluster includes studies examining the structural, semantic, and morphosyntactic properties of shop names and product labels. These studies highlight how irregular transliterations, ambiguous lexical choices, and syntactic distortions affect intelligibility and consumer interpretation within the LL.

- 1) *Semantic and syntactic anomalies of Arabic-transliterated compound shop names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2023d)*
- 2) *Deviant Arabic transliterations of foreign shop names in Saudi Arabia and decoding problems among shoppers (Al-Jarf, 2022a)*
- 3) *Definite or indefinite? The case of Arabic product names as judged by student translators (Al-Jarf, 2024a)*

Cluster 2: Translation Strategies and Cross-Linguistic Errors

This cluster includes studies that examine translation and cross-linguistic errors, and faulty translation strategies in bilingual or multilingual signage. It includes studies on both human and AI-mediated translation weaknesses, particularly in culturally embedded naming systems.

Sub-cluster A: Human Translation Weaknesses

- 4) *Pan Arab linguistic and translation errors and strategies in bilingual linguistic landscapes (Al-Jarf, 2025g)*
- 5) *To translate or not to translate: the case of Arabic and foreign shop names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2024d)*

a) Sub-cluster B: AI Abu-brand names Translation Weaknesses

- 6) *Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translate Arabic Abu-Brand Names with Different Prompts (Al-Jarf, 2025c).*

Cluster 3: Globalizations, Commercialization, and English Hegemony

This cluster captures studies that explore the sociolinguistic impact of globalization, particularly the dominance of English in commercial signage in the Saudi and selected international contexts. The cluster includes:

- 7) *English language representation in Korean linguistic landscapes (Al-Jarf, 2024b)*
- 8) *Dominance of foreign shop names over Arabic names in Saudi Arabia: promotional, sociocultural and globalization issues (Al-Jarf, 2022c)*

Cluster 4: Sociocultural Contexts and Local Identities

This cluster includes studies that examine how cultural identity, social values, and local traditions are embedded in linguistic landscapes such as hotel names.

- 9) *Linguistic-cultural characteristics of hotel names in Saudi Arabia: the case of Makkah, Madinah and Riyadh hotels (Al-Jarf, 2021b)*

2.2 Eligibility (Inclusion & Exclusion) Criteria

- *Duplicate studies as in the following: To translate or not to translate: The case of Arabic and foreign shop names (Al-Jarf, 2024c); dominance of English shop names over Arabic equivalents in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2022b); the interchange of personal names in Muslim communities (Al-Jarf, 2017c); and a linguistic-cultural investigation of hotel names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2016a).*
- *Studies focusing on pronunciation errors in AI-narrated videos of commercials, stories, and medical education as in: Can Students Learning Arabic as a Foreign Language Use Arabic YouTube Videos Narrated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Listening Practice (Al-Jarf, 2025e); Pronunciation Errors in Arabic YouTube Videos Narrated by AI (Al-Jarf, 2025h); Pronunciation Errors in AI-narrated Arabic YouTube Videos (Al-Jarf, 2025i); and Arabic transliteration of borrowed English nouns with /g/ by Artificial Intelligence (Al-Jarf, 2025a).*
- *Studies focusing on pedagogy, language teaching and learning, translation practice of advertisements, landscapes, announcements, product labels as medications, such as: Academic discourse in a Twitter translation learning environment (Al-Jarf, 2017a); Blogging about sustainable development in the EFL college classroom (Al-Jarf, 2025b); Can ESL students identify emphatic features of advertisements (Al-Jarf, 2025d); EFL students' difficulties with lexical and syntactic features of news headlines and news stories (Al-Jarf, 2021a); Issues in interactive translation practice on Twitter (Al-Jarf, 2020b); Issues in using twitter in interactive translation pedagogy (Al-Jarf, 2017b); Processing of advertisements by EFL Arab college students (Al-Jarf, 2007); Teaching English with linguistic landscapes to Saudi students studying abroad (Al-Jarf, 2021c); and Teaching interpreting for tourism purposes (Al-Jarf, 2021d).*
- *Studies analyzing communication among students, administrators, and instructors (announcements, posters, institutional communication) such as: Communication among language and translation instructors and students via Twitter (Al-Jarf, 2020a); and college administrator-student communication Via Twitter (Al-Jarf, 2015a; Al-Jarf, 2015b).*
- *Studies focusing on pronunciation errors by students and healthcare professional of product names especially medications: Faulty consonant gemination in the pronunciation of English biomedical terms by Arab healthcare professionals (Al-Jarf, 2025f); vowel pronunciation errors in English biomedical terminology by Arab healthcare professionals (Al-Jarf, 2025j); proper*

noun pronunciation inaccuracies in English by Educated Arabic speakers (Al-Jarf, 2022f); student-interpreters' foreign proper noun pronunciation errors in English-Arabic and Arabic-English media discourse interpreting (Al-Jarf, 2022g).

- Studies focusing on faulty transliteration of personal names on Facebook such as: *Absence of vowels in the English spelling of Arabic personal names on social media (Al-Jarf, 2023a); English spelling of Arabic compound personal names by educated Arabs on Facebook (Al-Jarf, 2023b); English spelling of the glottal stop and voiced pharyngeal fricative in Arabic personal names by educated Arabs on Facebook (Al-Jarf, 2023c); English transliteration of Arabic personal names with the definite article /al/ on Facebook (Al-Jarf, 2022d); Gemination errors in Arabic-English transliteration of personal names on Facebook (Al-Jarf, 2022e); Variant transliterations of the same Arabic personal names on Facebook (Al-Jarf, 2022h); and The interchange of personal names in Muslim communities: An onomastic study (Al-Jarf, 2023e).*

2.3 Corpus Characteristics

The final corpus consisted of studies examining linguistic landscapes, shop names, product names, hotel names, and bilingual signage across Saudi Arabia and selected international contexts. The corpus was organized into four thematic clusters, with Cluster 2 further divided into two sub-clusters to distinguish between human translation weaknesses and AI translation problems, particularly the challenges AI systems face in translating culturally embedded Abu-brand names. The clusters include: (1) morphosyntactic and orthographic linguistic issues; (2) translation strategies and cross-linguistic errors, subdivided into human translation weaknesses and AI translation weaknesses; (3) globalization, commercialization, and English hegemony; and (4) sociocultural contexts and local identities. The studies varied in scope, covering compound shop names, transliteration accuracy, definiteness and indefiniteness in product names, translation strategies in bilingual LLs, AI errors in translating Abu-brand names, and sociocultural meanings embedded in hotel names. The datasets were highly extensive and diverse, comprising a cumulative total of 500 commercial shop names across 12 Saudi cities, 500 public and commercial English signs across South Korean urban centers, 271 general shop names, 168 locally-coined compound shop names from a Saudi mall directory, 187 product labels collected from supermarkets and pharmacies, 100 culturally embedded Abu-brand names, 325 bilingual top-down and bottom-up linguistic landscapes from seven Arab countries, and a comprehensive corpus of hotel names spanning Makkah, Madinah, and Riyadh. Several studies incorporated multi-methodological approaches, including linguistic judgment tests, decoding and comprehension tasks given to college students and faculty members, and surveys exploring the perspectives of shop owners, workers, and translation students. Overall, the corpus reflects a wide range of linguistic, translational, cultural, and semiotic issues represented in LL research.

2.4 Information Sources

The studies in the corpus relied on multiple sources of naturally occurring linguistic data, including a sample of 168 shop names extracted from Saudi mall directories, 187 product names collected from supermarkets, commercial outlets, and pharmacies, and a total of 325 top-down and bottom-up bilingual LLs photographed in public spaces across Saudi Arabia and seven Arab countries. Additional sources included 500 English signage and brand names documented during field visits to South Korean cities and a comprehensive selection of hotel names compiled from major Saudi cities with religious and cultural significance, namely Makkah, Madinah, and Riyadh. Some studies incorporated AI-generated translations obtained from DeepSeek and Copilot to evaluate how artificial intelligence handles culturally embedded naming systems such as 100 Abu-brand names, providing insight into the limitations of machine translation in LL contexts. Human responses were also collected through surveys, judgment tasks, and decoding tests administered to undergraduate students, translation majors, faculty members, and shop owners and workers. These instruments offered both textual and perceptual evidence for analyzing linguistic, translational, semiotic, and sociocultural dimensions of LLs.

2.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction involved identifying key linguistic, translational, semiotic, and sociocultural features reported in each study. For linguistic studies, extracted data included semantic and syntactic anomalies, transliteration deviations, vowel and consonant inaccuracies, blending patterns, and definiteness/indefiniteness errors (such as faulty word order, misuse of the definite article {al-}, and syllable splitting). For translation-focused studies, extracted elements included translation accuracy, error types (semantic, syntactic, grammatical, orthographic), translation strategies (literal translation, transliteration), and contextual factors influencing translation quality. The synthesis also incorporated AI-related data, particularly the systematic errors produced by AI systems when translating 100 Abu-brand names, such as literal kinship renderings (e.g., translating "Abu" as "father of"), faulty annotations, extraneous inferences, and culturally inappropriate interpretations of grassroots, folk-coined nicknames. Studies on globalization and English hegemony contributed data on the distribution of English signage, types of businesses using foreign names (with food, beverage, and apparel shops emerging as the most frequent), and sociolinguistic motivations for preferring

English or other foreign languages, such as associations with modernity, prestige, glamour, and international market alignment. Sociocultural studies provided cultural classifications of hotel names and symbolic meanings embedded in naming practices, contrasting the spiritually loaded, Quranic eponyms of Makkah and Madinah with the mundane, prestige-driven toponyms of Riyadh. The synthesis followed a thematic approach, grouping studies into four clusters with one subdivided cluster, and identifying cross-cutting patterns such as transliteration inconsistency, English dominance, AI translation limitations, and the cultural embedding of naming practices in religious and urban contexts.

2.6 PRISMA Flow Description

The PRISMA flow process began with the identification of all studies related to linguistic landscapes, shop names, product names, hotel names, and bilingual signage. A total of 49 records were initially identified and screened. After initial title and abstract screening, studies were excluded because they did not involve physical, public signage or geographic linguistic landscapes. Specifically, 40 studies were excluded at this stage because they focused on classroom pedagogical methods, reading comprehension of print and media advertisements rather than on-site urban landscapes. Full-text assessment was conducted for all remaining studies to ensure alignment with the inclusion criteria, which required that studies analyze real-world physical LL data, shop names, product names, hotel names, or bilingual signage, or examine user perceptions and decoding behaviors of such data. This systematic filtration yielded a final corpus of 9 empirical studies. The included studies were then categorized into 4 clusters based on their primary focus: linguistic issues, translation issues, globalization and English hegemony, and sociocultural issues with Cluster 2 subdivided into human and AI translation weaknesses reflecting the methodological need to distinguish between human-produced and AI-generated translation errors. Additionally, the final corpus included studies that provided empirical data on linguistic forms, transliteration accuracy, translation practices, and cultural meanings. The PRISMA flow reflects a transparent progression from initial identification to final inclusion, documenting the rigorous rationale for excluding studies that did not meet the spatial and LL-based criteria.

3. Results

3.1 Corpus characteristics

The screening process yielded a final corpus of nine empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025. These studies represent a comprehensive longitudinal trajectory mapping the evolution of LLs, commercial signage, and naming practices from both structural micro-linguistic perspectives and macro-societal cultural frameworks. Geographically, the dataset is dominated by the linguistic realities of Saudi Arabia, with extensive mapping across major urban centers, complemented by comparative international data from South Korea. Methodologically, the corpus bridges qualitative textual analysis with quantitative empirical assessments. The structural configurations and translation strategies of public signages are analyzed alongside cognitive and perceptual data gathered via linguistic judgment tests, comprehension surveys, and decoding tasks administered to students, professional translators, faculty members, and shop owners. To provide a structured and rigorous synthesis of these findings, the nine included studies are systematically organized into four core thematic clusters (See Section 2.1 above). Each study is described below.

Cluster 1: Globalizations, Commercialization, and English Hegemony

1) Dominance of foreign shop names over Arabic names in Saudi Arabia: promotional, sociocultural and globalization issues (Al-Jarf, 2022c)

Analysis of 500 shop names in 12 Saudi cities revealed that 64% of the shops have foreign names (25% international foreign names and 39% local names); 24% have pure Arabic names and 12% have mixed names. Some shops with a foreign name add an Arabic descriptor which is a translation of the foreign name (Perfume عطورات بارفيوم). Foreign names are used in some mall and shop names, although Arabic equivalents exist. The sample of students, faculty and shop owners and workers gave promotional, sociocultural, linguistic and globalization factors, and lack of a business naming policy. They indicated that foreign shop names are used as a marketing strategy to attract customers who prefer foreign merchandise to local ones. They think it is more glamorous to use a foreign name as foreign names are associated with modernity, prestige, and elitism. They can reach more customers. A foreign name gives the impression that the store is keeping abreast of the latest international markets. The faculty added that in our cognition, foreign names are connected with high quality. Our culture looks at English as more sophisticated and fancier. An English name has a different effect. Shop owners indicated that new entrepreneurs adopt a foreign name because they are worried about their ability to compete with other shops. Shops like to Imitate shops in the West. Some think that translating a shop name to Arabic creates a barrier between the customer and the foreign franchised company, as the original name is in English. As an example, foreign names are used for promoting the Riyadh Season (Oasis, Winter Wonderland, Park Avenue, بوليفارد).

2) English language representation in Korean linguistic landscapes (Al-Jarf, 2024b)

Analysis of a corpus of 500 public and commercial English signs (clothing, shoes, accessories, beauty products, children's toys restaurants, cafes, hotel names, supermarket, mall names and street names, tourist attractions and street names) in South Korean cities demonstrated that while most business and street signages are still in Korean, there are notably a good amount of English signages which represent international and local brand names. The most frequent businesses with English signs are food and beverage shops (27%), clothing, shoes, handbags, lingerie and beauty product shops (24%), hotel name signs (17%), directional signs (11%), malls, supermarkets and convenience stores (5%), entertainment shops, games, gyms, clubs, music, and theme parks (4%) and miscellaneous kinds of shop, businesses and public service names (5%). Businesses, shops, directional and service signs with English sign names include international hotel chains, clothing shops, cafes and Franchised shops with English names are *Sheraton, Marriott, Starbucks, Burger King, McDonalds, Pizza Hut*; local Korean brand names transliterated in English, and local English names created by the Korean shop owners. A sample of Korean professors believe that use of foreign names attract shoppers' attention more than Korean names. More international tourists and foreigners who are residing in South Korea can be reached. They also gave globalization factors that affect the preference for English sign names.

Cluster 2: Morphosyntactic and Orthographic Linguistic Issues

3) Semantic and syntactic anomalies of Arabic-transliterated compound shop names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2023d)

Analysis of a sample of 168 compound shop names consisting of locally-coined English shop names and mixed shop names collected from 12 major cities in a Saudi Mall Directory showed that 69% of the Arabic transliterations of the compound shop nouns in the sample have syntactic and/or semantic anomalies; 22% have syntactic anomalies as opposed 14% semantic anomalies and 23% have both semantic and syntactic anomalies combined. Some compound shop names are meaningless because the two elements of the compound are incongruous (Operation Falafel فلافل أوبريشن; Rude Shake رود شيك). Others have faulty word order (Mama Batata ماما بطاطا ; قوركان شيف); faulty use of the definite article (المنيو دوتنس); use of constituents in the compound with the same meaning from two foreign languages (THE BEAU WOW); the English plural /-s/ is added to the Arabic word ملهم in Max Molhams ماكس ملهم; splitting words into syllables or two parts (اكسسوريز و ريز Accessories); (Climax) كلاي ماكس combining two words and spelling them as one lexeme (شرميشاك). Responses to the judgment test of the semantic and syntactic anomalies in shop names showed that the students majoring in languages and translation could identify more semantic than syntactic anomalies (90% vs 80% respectively). They had difficulty understanding - قوركان شيف - ماكس ملهم that have both semantic and syntactic anomalies. They found them unacceptable and difficult to comprehend.

4) Deviant Arabic transliterations of foreign shop names in Saudi Arabia and decoding problems among shoppers (Al-Jarf, 2022a)

Analysis a sample of Arabic transliterations of foreign shop names in Saudi Arabia showed that 52% are vowels and diphthong inaccuracies; 36% are inaccurate and inconsistent transliterations of consonants. In 11.6%, ch was reduced to sh; and /g/ was transliterated in 3 ways; 13% of the consonant transliteration deviations occurred in words containing a silent letter; in 6%, the Arabic vowel was double; in 8%, compound shop names were spelled together (blended) in the Arabic transliteration; In 7%, foreign names from French, Italian, Japanese, and Turkish were transliterated as they are pronounced in English, not in the original language. Findings also showed variant spellings of the same name shop names especially from French, Italian and Turkish (Parfois بارفواه بافويس; Spring سبرينج سبرينق; Semit Sarai سميت/سيميت; Chocolate شوكليت/شوكليت). Results of a decoding test given to a sample of college students and faculty who have a low proficiency level in English showed that the subjects could decode shop names such as but had difficulty decoding, اماكدونالدز, بيرغر كينج, هارديز, كوستا, ساريكس, نسكافيه بيرجر كينج, تويزار اص, دلس قوستو, أدفتورا, جارليشوز لاونج, أميركان إيجل أوتفترز, أكسسوريز, بايليس, باركيوتونايت, لولو سليريت, ذا تشيلدرز بليس and others. The students and faculty had difficulty decoding Arabic transliterations because they are not familiar with the shop name in the foreign language, and because of the absence of short vowels in the transliteration, which makes it difficult to pronounce the transliterated names correctly. Deviant transliterations are attributed to transliterators who are non-native speakers of Arabic, English and other foreign languages.

5) Definite or indefinite? The case of Arabic product names as judged by student translators (al-jarf, 2024a)

Analysis of 187 product names (food, teas, coffee, herbs, spices, supplements, and beauty products) collected from supermarkets, shops, and pharmacies showed that 60% of the product names are definite and 40% are indefinite. 49% were judged by undergraduate student translators as correct (38% indefinite and 11% definite) as Beef burger برجر بقري; توت مشكل mixed berries & دجاج كبة chicken kibbeh; 51% were judged incorrect (49% definite and 2% indefinite) as *the zinc الزنك; مربي apricot fruit spread; شيش طاووق الدجاج shish tawook. In some cases, definite and indefinite forms of the same product names are used due to differences in the manufacturer. Few faulty indefinite forms should be definite (سمك البهارات fish spices instead of سمك), and few definite forms were considered correct (BBQ spices توابل المشويات). The highest frequency of

faulty {al-} occurred in two-word product names. It seems that manufacturers are unaware of the rules of making product names definite/indefinite, especially those with a generic and ubiquitous reference as opposed to those referring to specific and unique entities as in oil names. Analysis revealed no transfer of definiteness/indefiniteness from English, in which product names are usually indefinite.

Cluster 3: Translation Strategies and Cross-Linguistic Errors

Sub-cluster A: Human Translation Weaknesses

6) Pan Arab linguistic and translation errors and strategies in bilingual linguistic landscapes (Al-Jarf, 2025g)

Analysis of 96 Arabic-English and 229 English-Arabic LLs showed that top-down LLs constituted 54% of the Arabic-English and 46% of the English-Arabic LLs, whereas bottom-up constituted 41% of the Arabic-English and 59% of the English-Arabic LLs. About half of the LLs are commercial/promotional, followed by directional and safety/regulatory LLs. 32% were translated correctly (Keep a safe distance, Road ahead closed) as they are top-down LLs issued by government bodies, hospitals, airports, or municipalities that typically employ professional translators, use standardized terminology, context-aware phrasing, cultural and idiomatic sensitivity, ensuring accuracy, clarity, and functional equivalence. 15% have syntactic errors (Danger Forklift Traffic Area خطر...رافعة البضائع منطقة المرور, and 20% contain grammatical errors with faulty agreement, singular/plural, definite/indefinite, derived forms, and faulty interpretation of prepositional phrases and idioms prevalent in bottom-up signs (Care for Life > نهتم بالحياة; Slow Down > تحت تمهل). Semantic errors as meaning misidentification, contextual misfit, idiom misinterpretation, inappropriate collocation, and incorrect word choice constitute 26% (Custard Apple كسترد تفاح). Orthographic errors accounted for 3% (*Ciub street for Club street, نعتذر instead of نعتز). 13% contained multiple errors with overlapping semantic, grammatical, syntactic, lexical, and/or contextual inaccuracies. Some Arabic equivalents sound awkward and meaningless (Clearance Price تصفية السعر; Prepared Meats استعداد اللحم). In most LL translation, literal word-for-word translation was the dominant strategy, followed by transliteration. Linguistic and translation errors in bilingual LLs are attributed to DIY (Do It Yourself), complex, long, or technical source phrases, cultural and linguistic mismatch, lack of standardized glossaries, lack of standardization of equivalents and transliterated forms, and low translator training.

7) To translate or not to translate: the case of Arabic and foreign shop names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2024d)

Analysis of 271 shop names (clothing, accessories, beauty products, restaurants, cafes... etc.) indicated that 24% have pure Arabic names, 25% have international brand names (Starbucks, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Zara, Sony); 39% have local English names (Operation Falafel أوبريشن فلافل); and 12% mixed names (Arabic + foreign). Only 6.7% are fully translated (العربية للعود Arabian Oud; الركن السويسري Swiss Corner). 3.3% are partially translated (Cotton Home قطن هوم; Mama Batata ماما بطاطا) and 90% are transliterated using Arabic letters (Bershka بيرشكا, MANGO مانجو). Many shop names are transliterated although they are translatable. They are difficult to decode as the grapheme sequence does not fit the Arabic graphological system (Dr Nutrition دكتور نيوتريشن & Natural Touch ناتشرال). It was recommended that Franchised International brand names such as *Debenhams* & *Samsung* should be transliterated not translated. Some foreign shop names can be fully or partially translated rather than transliterated (Dr Nutrition < الدكتور التغذية). The Arabic version is for Arab shoppers who do not know English and the English version is for foreigners. Shop names containing *café*, *chocolate*, *garden* and others can be partially translated (Caribou Café مقهى كاريبو; Atayf Garden أطياف حديقة). French and Italian shop names should be transliterated according to their pronunciation in the source language, not in English (Parfois بارفوا, not بارفويس). The word order in compounds should be correct, and the vowels, diphthongs and consonants should be transcribed accurately. The transliteration should be consistent for all shop branches.

Sub-cluster B: AI Abu-brand names Translation Weaknesses

8) Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translate Arabic Abu-Brand Names with Different Prompts (Al-Jarf, 2025c).

A sample of 100 Abu-brand names was collected and translated by MC and DS using three different tasks. In the three tasks, MC gave literal word-for-word translations of all 100 brand names, where it translated Abu as "father of" and the following noun semantically, whether the prompt specified the phrase type or not and whether each brand name was associated with the product name or not. Like MC, DS gave a literal word-for-word translation of all the brand names in tasks 1 and 2. However, when the product name was added, DS treated the brand names as Proper Nouns and transliterated them all in English regardless of whether they were coined by the manufacturers, business owners or consumers. However, 66% of the transliterations by DS were correctly used, but 34% were not supposed to be transliterated as they were grassroots (folk-coined) brand names, based on the packaging image, not the original English brand name which some consumers find difficult to pronounce and remember as a result, they coin a nickname based on the image on the packaging. Instead, the original English brand name should have been given by AI as an equivalent in the case of grassroots brand-names (Tiger balm instead of Abu Nimr Ointment for ابو نمر مرهم). Other interesting findings were that MC and DS gave identical English equivalents to 83% of the items in tasks 1 and 2. Additionally, DS gave double equivalents to 14.5% of the items in set 1, and faulty

annotations/explanations of the brand name that show extraneous inferences and faulty guesses based on kunyas and nicknames that do not match a commercial context.

Cluster4: Sociocultural Contexts and Local Identities

9) Linguistic-cultural characteristics of hotel names in Saudi Arabia: the case of Makkah, Madinah and Riyadh hotels (Al-Jarf, 2021b)

Linguistically, most hotel names (HNs) in Makkah, Madinah and Riyadh consist of two-word compounds. Culturally, HN in Makkah and Madinah are loaded with meaning and reflect the country's rich past and present Islamic cultures and heritage. Most HN in the two holy cities contain words and phrases from the Quran (Elaf, AlFurqan); notable events in Islamic history (Al-Hijra, Al-Fath); ancient Islamic place names (AlSakifa, Ohod); use of other names of Makkah and Madinah (Bakka, Umm AlQura, Taiba); and words with spiritual connotations (Alhuda, AlEman, AlEhsan). Islamic and spiritual words are even combined with names of international hotels as in Dar Al-Eman/Dar AlTaqwa/Dar AlHijra Intercontinental. The word 'Dar' which means 'house' is added to HN to make hotel residents feel at home in the company of other Muslim visitors. In Riyadh, HN mostly consist of single- and two-word compounds, but none of them has an Islamic or religious denotative or connotative meaning. Rather, they reflect the local mundane Saudi culture. They utilize typical Saudi eponyms (AlMutlaq, AlGhanem); toponyms (AlYamamah, AlJanaderia). Diyafa (hospitality) and Raha (Rest) impart a sense of generosity and comfort; and AlMokhmalia, Amjad, Asala, Qasr and Royal give a sense of grandeur and prestige. Global culture is reflected in retaining the names of international hotel chains such as "Hilton, Marriott, Sheraton"; or combining a local designation with the English and French descriptors such as " Plaza, Palace Tower, Royale, Crowne, Coral" as in (AlFonar Palace, AlFahd Crown; Coral AlHamra).

4. Discussion

4.1 Meta-Conclusion

Across the four clusters, the studies collectively show that linguistic landscapes in Saudi Arabia and selected international contexts are shaped by a combination of linguistic irregularities, transliteration practices, translation choices, sociocultural meanings, and globalizing forces. The corpus demonstrates that Arabic shop names, product names, and bilingual LLs frequently contain semantic, syntactic, and orthographic anomalies, and that transliteration remains the dominant strategy even when translation is possible or preferable. English and other foreign languages exert a strong presence in commercial naming, reflecting both globalization and local perceptions of prestige, modernity, and marketability. Cultural identity is embedded in naming practices, especially in hotel names in Makkah and Madinah, where religious and historical references are prominent. The corpus also reveals that AI systems struggle to translate culturally embedded naming patterns such as Abu-brand names, producing literal or culturally inappropriate renderings that highlight the limitations of automated translation in LL contexts. Overall, the corpus reveals that LLs operate at the intersection of language structure, translation norms, cultural symbolism, and global linguistic trends.

4.2 Meta-Interpretation

The findings across clusters suggest that linguistic landscapes are not random or superficial linguistic artifacts but are shaped by deeper systemic, cultural, and ideological forces. The prevalence of transliteration errors and structural anomalies indicates gaps in linguistic awareness among shop owners, manufacturers, and transliterators, especially when foreign-origin names are adapted into Arabic. Translation errors in bilingual LLs reflect inconsistent practices, lack of standardization, and reliance on literal translation strategies, particularly in bottom-up signage. The AI-related findings further show that machine translation tools often misinterpret culturally bound naming systems such as Abu-brand names, underscoring the need for culturally informed computational models in LL translation. The dominance of English in commercial naming can be interpreted as a sociolinguistic response to globalization, where English functions as a symbolic resource associated with prestige, internationalism, and consumer appeal. At the same time, the cultural embedding of hotel names in Makkah and Madinah shows that LLs can also reinforce local identity and heritage. Taken together, the corpus indicates that LLs reflect a dynamic negotiation between local linguistic norms, global linguistic pressures, and cultural identity.

4.1 Meta-Interpretation

The findings across clusters suggest that linguistic landscapes are not random or superficial linguistic artifacts but are shaped by deeper systemic, cultural, and ideological forces. The prevalence of transliteration errors and structural anomalies indicates critical gaps in linguistic awareness among shop owners, manufacturers, and non-native transliterators, especially when foreign-origin names are adapted into Arabic. This is macro-linguistically evident in how manufacturers fail to recognize the structural boundaries of definiteness, yielding a 51% error rate in product labeling—predominantly through the faulty application of the Arabic definite article {al-} to ubiquitous, generic entities (e.g., *the zinc*). Furthermore, the structural

degradation observed in blended lexemes (e.g., *Shrimphack*) or syllable fragmentation (e.g., *Climax* split as *Clay Max*) indicates that the commercial desire to mirror Western orthography often overrides native Arabic morphosyntactic rules.

Translation errors in bilingual LLs reflect inconsistent practices, lack of standardization, and an over-reliance on amateur "Do-It-Yourself" (DIY) workflows, particularly in bottom-up signage which suffers from severe grammatical agreement and idiom misinterpretation (e.g., *Care for Life* rendered awkwardly as *We care for life*). This contrasts sharply with top-down, state-mediated signage where professional, context-aware translation maintains functional equivalence. Similarly, the AI-related findings show that machine translation tools often misinterpret culturally bound naming systems such as Abu-brand names, underscoring the need for culturally informed computational models in LL translation. The tendency of models to output identical literal kinship glosses across differing prompts, or to generate erroneous annotations based on traditional socio-cultural *kunyas*, proves that current AI architectures lack the contextual sensitivity required to decode grassroots, consumer-coined commercial branding (such as folk-nicknames derived solely from packaging imagery).

The dominance of English in commercial naming, seen in the overwhelming 64% foreign-name saturation in Saudi retail environments and its massive presence in South Korean commercial hubs, can be interpreted as a sociolinguistic response to globalization. Here, English functions as a symbolic resource associated with prestige, internationalism, elitism, and a defensive marketing strategy used by new entrepreneurs to maintain competitive parity. At the same time, the cultural embedding of hotel names in Makkah and Madinah shows that LLs can also reinforce local identity and heritage. By actively deploying sacred Quranic intertexts and spiritual descriptors (*Dar*), these sacred landscapes intentionally construct a localized, theological geography that fosters a sense of spiritual belonging for global Muslim visitors. This creates a distinct ideological bifurcation when contrasted against the mundane, status-driven hospitality landscape of Riyadh. Taken together, the corpus indicates that LLs reflect a dynamic negotiation between local linguistic norms, global linguistic pressures, and cultural identity.

4.3 Cross-Cutting Insights

Several themes cut across the four clusters. (i) Transliteration emerges as a central issue: it appears in linguistic anomalies, translation problems, decoding difficulties, and even in globalization-driven naming practices. (ii) English hegemony intersects with linguistic, translational, and sociocultural dimensions, influencing shop names, product labels, and public signage in both Saudi Arabia and Korea. (iii) Comprehensibility is a recurring concern: students and shoppers struggle to decode transliterated names, and translation errors reduce clarity in bilingual LLs. (iv) AI translation limitations, particularly the misinterpretation of Abu-brand names, highlight the challenges of applying automated tools to culturally embedded naming systems. (v) Cultural identity interacts with global linguistic trends, as seen in hotel names that preserve religious and historical meanings while coexisting with international branding. (vi) standardization gaps appear across clusters, whether in transliteration rules, translation practices, or naming conventions. Finally, these cross-cutting insights show that LLs are multi-layered phenomena shaped by linguistic form, communicative function, cultural meaning, and global influence simultaneously.

4.4 Implications

The findings across the 4 clusters carry several implications for linguistic practice, translation policy, cultural preservation, and language education. First, the high frequency of semantic, syntactic, and transliteration anomalies in shop names and product labels indicates a need for standardized linguistic guidelines for naming practices in commercial sectors. The studies show that inaccurate transliterations, faulty word order, inconsistent vowel and consonant rendering, and incorrect definiteness patterns reduce intelligibility and create decoding difficulties for shoppers and students. This suggests that regulatory bodies, municipalities, and commercial organizations could benefit from developing clear orthographic and transliteration standards to ensure accuracy and readability in public signage.

Second, the translation errors documented in bilingual LLs across Arab countries highlight the importance of professional translation training and the need for institutional oversight in bottom-up signage. Literal translation strategies, misinterpretation of idioms, incorrect collocations, and grammatical inaccuracies indicate that many translations are produced by untrained individuals. This has implications for public safety, clarity of communication, and the functional effectiveness of signage. Improving translation quality requires training programs, standardized glossaries, and quality-control mechanisms for public and commercial translation.

Third, the findings also show that AI systems frequently misinterpret culturally embedded naming patterns such as Abu-brand names. This implies that AI-generated translations cannot yet be relied upon for accurate analysis of culturally grounded linguistic landscapes. This also underscores the need for culturally informed AI-translation guidelines and the integration of

LL-specific datasets into AI training. Researchers must therefore treat AI output with caution and avoid assuming that technological advancement automatically translates into cultural or sociolinguistic competence.

Fourth, the dominance of English and other foreign names in commercial signage has implications for language policy and cultural identity. The studies show that English is often used for prestige, modernity, and marketing appeal, which contributes to the erosion of Arabic visibility in public spaces. This raises questions about how to balance global branding practices with the preservation of national linguistic identity. Policymakers may need to consider naming regulations, incentives for Arabic naming, or dual-language signage policies that maintain cultural representation while accommodating global commercial trends.

Fifth, the sociocultural analysis of hotel names demonstrates that LLs can serve as repositories of cultural memory, especially in cities with religious and historical significance. This implies that naming practices can be intentionally used to reinforce cultural heritage, promote local identity, and differentiate regional linguistic landscapes. The contrast between the culturally loaded names in Makkah and Madinah and the more neutral or globalized names in Riyadh suggests that context-sensitive naming policies may be necessary to preserve cultural symbolism in specific urban environments.

Overall, the implications of the corpus point to the need for linguistic standardization, translation quality assurance, balanced language policy, and cultural preservation of LLs. These implications highlight the multifaceted role of linguistic landscapes as linguistic, cultural, and educational resources.

4.5 Positioning This SR Within the Global Interpreting SRs

Within the broader landscape of global linguistic landscape (LL) research, this SR occupies a distinct position because it addresses an area that remains largely underrepresented in existing syntheses. Most global LL SRs focus on broad thematic mappings, historical trajectories, or specific sociolinguistic environments such as tourist destinations, educational contexts, or bilingual public signage. While these contributions provide valuable insights into LL research as a field, they do not offer a focused synthesis of the linguistic, translational, and cultural complexities embedded specifically in commercial shop signs, product labels, hotel names, and public commercial signage.

This SR diverges from global LL SRs by centering its analysis on the author's empirical corpus, which spans linguistic anomalies, transliteration patterns, translation practices, and cultural symbolism within commercial and public signage. Unlike existing LL SRs that tend to generalize across broad categories of public texts, this SR provides a fine-grained linguistic and semiotic examination of everyday commercial naming practices. It highlights issues such as semantic and syntactic anomalies in Arabic transliterations, inconsistent rendering of foreign names, faulty definiteness patterns in product labels, and the dominance of English in commercial naming, topics that are rarely synthesized in global LL reviews.

Furthermore, this SR expands the scope of LL scholarship by integrating sociocultural naming practices (e.g., hotel names in Makkah, Madinah, and Riyadh), areas that global SRs often treat separately or only tangentially. By consolidating linguistic, translational, cultural, and educational dimensions into a single analytical framework, this review positions itself as a specialized contribution that fills a clear gap in the global LL literature. It shifts the focus from architectural, engineering, or urban-planning interpretations of signage toward a linguistically grounded understanding of how commercial and public signs function as sites of meaning-making, identity construction, and language contact.

Finally, although SRs on shop signs, street signs, and public signage in Arab cities are scarce, this does not mean that Arabic LL research itself is limited. In fact, there is a substantial body of Arabic studies examining shop signs, linguistic landscapes, street signage, and even food menus across different Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia. However, these studies are typically stand-alone empirical investigations, often focused on a single city, a specific commercial district, or a narrow type of signage. They do not follow SR methodologies, nor do they synthesize findings across regions or signage types. As a result, despite the abundance of Arabic LL studies, the field still lacks comprehensive, methodologically unified SRs that consolidate linguistic, translational, and sociocultural insights from these scattered works. In doing so, this SR not only complements existing global LL syntheses but also extends them by offering a targeted, linguistically oriented perspective on commercial signage, an area that has been largely overlooked in SRs to date.

4.6 Limitations

This SR has several limitations that arise from the scope of the corpus and the nature of the available literature. First, the corpus is author-bounded, drawing exclusively on studies conducted by a single researcher across different years, contexts, and datasets. While this provides a coherent methodological trajectory, it also limits the diversity of theoretical perspectives,

analytical frameworks, and data-collection approaches that typically emerge from multi-author or multi-country SRs. The findings therefore reflect the author's research agenda, geographical focus, and methodological preferences, which may not fully represent the broader global landscape of LL scholarship.

Second, this SR itself is constrained by the limited availability of prior LL-focused SRs. Because the field lacks comprehensive syntheses on commercial signage, transliteration practices, or shop-name translation, the contextualization of this SR within global scholarship is necessarily limited. The absence of comparable SRs restricts benchmarking, methodological triangulation, and cross-review validation.

Third, although Arabic research on linguistic landscapes is abundant, covering shop signs, street signs, food menus, and public signage across various Arab cities, these studies are mostly stand-alone empirical investigations with small, city-specific samples. They do not follow SR methodologies, nor do they synthesize findings across regions. As a result, the present SR could not rely on a strong foundation of prior LL-focused SRs for benchmarking or methodological comparison.

Fourth, it is not feasible for any researcher to cover all types of signage in a country as large and diverse as Saudi Arabia. The present corpus focused primarily on shop names extracted from mall directories, resulting in a large dataset of more than 500 names. This dataset is broader than those used in previous Arabic studies, which typically examined small samples from a single street or neighborhood. However, the urban-centered sampling frame means that the review does not capture the full range of signage types found in public spaces, such as streets, or rural areas.

Fifth, the author's research trajectory evolved organically. The initial study examined English dominance in shop names, and subsequent studies emerged as new linguistic issues became visible, such as transliteration errors, semantic and syntactic anomalies, and translation inconsistencies.

Sixth, the corpus predominantly focuses on commercial and hospitality signage, such as retail outlets, food and beverage shops (comprising 27% of the Korean signages), and hotel naming conventions. Other vital sectors of the public linguistic landscape, such as institutional top-down government signages, digital public transit interfaces, and healthcare regulatory markers, were less represented across the clusters, limiting the scope of the synthesis to primarily commercialized public spaces.

Finally, only one study in this self-review examines AI-generated translations, specifically, the mistranslation of Abu-brand names. The study represents a narrow and technologically time-bound subset of the overall corpus. The dataset is not balanced across human-produced and AI-produced linguistic material.

Despite these limitations, the review provides a focused and coherent synthesis of linguistic, human and AI translational, and sociocultural issues in commercial and public signage, offering a foundation for future research in underexplored areas of LL scholarship.

5. Recommendations & Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings synthesized across the 4 clusters, several recommendations can be proposed for improving linguistic accuracy, transliteration practices, translation quality, and cultural representation of linguistic landscapes in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. These include:

- Developing standardized linguistic and transliteration guidelines. The high frequency of semantic, syntactic, and orthographic anomalies in shop names and product labels indicates the need for official transliteration norms, consistent vowel and consonant rendering, and clear rules for definiteness and word order. Municipalities, commercial registries, and signage-approval bodies could adopt unified guidelines to reduce inconsistency and improve readability.
- Establishing translation quality-control mechanisms for public signage. Bottom-up bilingual signs frequently contain literal translations, misinterpretations, and grammatical errors. Introducing professional translation review, standardized glossaries, and training for sign makers would enhance clarity and functional accuracy in public communication.
- Encouraging balanced language-policy approaches in commercial naming. While English dominance reflects globalization and marketing appeal, it also reduces the visibility of Arabic in public spaces. Policymakers may consider dual-language naming, incentives for Arabic naming, or context-sensitive regulations that preserve cultural identity without restricting commercial creativity.
- Promoting culturally grounded naming practices in heritage-rich cities. The analysis of hotel names in Makkah and Madinah shows how naming can reinforce religious and historical identity. Similar culturally informed naming strategies could be encouraged in other cities where heritage, local identity, or regional symbolism is central to the urban experience.

- Integrating LLs into language teaching and translation training. Linguistic landscapes provide authentic material for developing decoding skills, transliteration awareness, translation competence, and sociolinguistic sensitivity. LL-based tasks can be incorporated into EFL curricula, translation courses, and experiential learning programs.
- LL-based instructional interventions could be tested with learners in Saudi Arabia and abroad to evaluate how real-world signage enhances linguistic awareness, decoding skills, and cultural understanding.
- Encouraging collaboration between researchers, municipalities, and commercial sectors. Joint initiatives can help ensure that shop names, public signs, and commercial displays meet linguistic standards while remaining functional and culturally appropriate. Collaboration can also support data sharing and facilitate large-scale LL documentation.
- Building regional LL databases for research and policy development. Creating shared repositories of shop names, street signs, and public signage across Arab cities would allow researchers to track trends, compare regions, and support evidence-based language policy.
- Although AI models still struggle with culturally embedded naming systems such as Abu-brand names, they remain valuable tools for shop owners and stakeholders when used with human oversight. AI can assist in generating initial translations, transliterations, and error-free drafts of shop signs, menus, and public signage. Stakeholders can use AI to check spelling, grammar, and semantic clarity, explore alternative name renderings, and ensure consistency across multilingual signage. However, culturally sensitive elements—especially brand-name structures—should be reviewed by a human translator or a culturally knowledgeable consultant to avoid literal or culturally inappropriate translations.
- There is a need for **thematic expansions** into underexplored areas such as street signs, food menus, digital signage, temporary event signage (e.g., festivals, seasons, exhibitions), digital displays and multilingual branding in online commercial spaces. These domains veal additional layers of linguistic and cultural meaning not captured in mall-based datasets. They are also increasingly visible in urban environments and can reveal new patterns of language contact, code-mixing, and cultural representation.
- Promoting methodological diversification in LL research. Future studies should combine corpus analysis, field observation, sociolinguistic interviews, and experimental tasks to capture the structural and perceptual dimensions of LLs.
- Supporting cross-national and longitudinal LL studies. The observed shift in South Korea between 2008 and 2023 demonstrates the value of longitudinal observation. Comparative research using datasets from other Arab and foreign countries can illuminate how multilingualism, tourism, and globalization shape LLs differently across regions.
- Future research could explore **policy-oriented questions**, such as the impact of naming regulations, standardization guidelines, or transliteration norms on the quality and clarity of public signage. Studies could examine how municipalities, commercial sectors, and translation agencies respond to linguistic recommendations and whether policy interventions improve signage accuracy.
- More research is needed on AI translation of different types of linguistic landscapes and signage. Future studies should compare AI output with human translation, critically evaluate AI performance in handling culturally embedded naming systems, and develop evaluation frameworks that benchmark AI output against human linguistic intuition. Collaboration with computational linguists is also essential to improve AI processing of culturally specific naming conventions.
- Future AI development should prioritize training AI models on culturally embedded naming systems, particularly Arabic brand-name structures such as Abu-brand names. Researchers and developers should work together to build culturally aware translation modules that move beyond literal rendering and incorporate sociolinguistic knowledge.

Overall, these recommendations aim to enhance linguistic accuracy, cultural representation, and educational value in public signage, while supporting more systematic and comparative LL research in the region and beyond.

6. Conclusion

This SR brings together a wide range of studies examining linguistic, human and AI translational, sociocultural, and globalization-related dimensions of commercial and public signage. By synthesizing findings from 9 empirical studies comprising a cumulative corpus of shop names, 187 product labels, hotel names, 325 top-down and bottom-up bilingual public signs, and English-dominated commercial landscapes, the review provides a comprehensive picture of how linguistic landscapes function in Saudi Arabia and in selected international contexts. Across the 4 clusters, the corpus reveals persistent patterns of transliteration inconsistencies (evidenced by a 52% vowel/diphthong error rate), semantic and syntactic anomalies (affecting up to 69% of compound shop names), translation errors, and the growing influence of English as a marker of prestige, modernity, glamour, and global connectivity. At the same time, the studies highlight the continued presence of culturally grounded naming practices, especially in heritage-rich cities such as Makkah and Madinah, where hotel names preserve religious, historical, and symbolic meanings via sacred Quranic intertexts, sharply contrasting with the mundane, status-driven toponyms of Riyadh.

The review also demonstrates that linguistic landscapes are shaped by multiple forces operating simultaneously: linguistic norms, commercial motivations, cultural identity, globalization, and user perceptions. The findings show that LLs are not merely visual

elements in the urban environment but are active semiotic resources that communicate identity, signal social values, and mediate interactions between local and global linguistic practices.

By consolidating the author's empirical trajectory, this review fills a clear gap in global LL scholarship, which lacks systematic syntheses focused specifically on commercial signage and everyday public naming practices. The review also highlights the methodological challenges inherent in LL research, including sampling limitations, the impossibility of covering all signage types, and the need for more systematic cross-national and longitudinal studies. Despite these constraints, the corpus offers a rich and coherent foundation for understanding how linguistic landscapes evolve, how they reflect sociocultural realities, and how they can inform language policy, translation practice, and educational innovation.

Overall, this SR positions commercial and public signage as a significant site of linguistic inquiry, demonstrating that linguistic landscapes provide valuable insights into language contact, cultural representation, transliteration and translation practices, and the sociolinguistic effects of globalization. The findings underscore the importance of continued research in this field and point toward new directions for expanding LL scholarship in the Arab world and beyond.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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