"WE CHANGE PEOPLE'S LIVES": COMMODIFICATION OF ENGLISH IN THAILAND

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Abstract

This study explores the commodification of English in Thailand by examining promotional materials produced by a private English language school. There is a lack of research that has investigated the ways in which the English language has been commodified in the private sector in the Thai context. This study provides some insights into the process of commodification of the language by examining marketing materials of Wall Street Institute of English, one of the most prominent private language schools in Thailand. The study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework to shed light on these questions. The study found several ideologies present in advertisements of Wall Street Institute and a major ideology is that of English as the key to a better future. Based on these findings, some relevant implications for the English language education in Thailand and recommendations for future research are offered.

Keywords: commodification, language ideology, English as a global language, Thailand, ASEAN

Introduction

A significant amount of research has been conducted on teaching English as an additional language in various national contexts (Chang, 2004; Deyun, 2000; Foley, 2005; Kubota, 2002; Niño-Murcia, 2003; Nunan, 2003; Park, 2009). In Thailand, there has been much debate over English language education as English is being proposed as the official lingua franca for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which is set to emerge in 2015. English language learning (ELL) and AEC are typically linked in