



THE COMMODIFICATION OF ENGLISH IN THAILAND:
A CASE STUDY OF THE WALL STREET INSTITUTE

THIPPAWAN KOGAR

A THESIS SUBMITTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
MA-ELT

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH (GSE)
ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY
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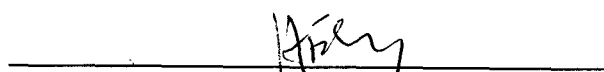
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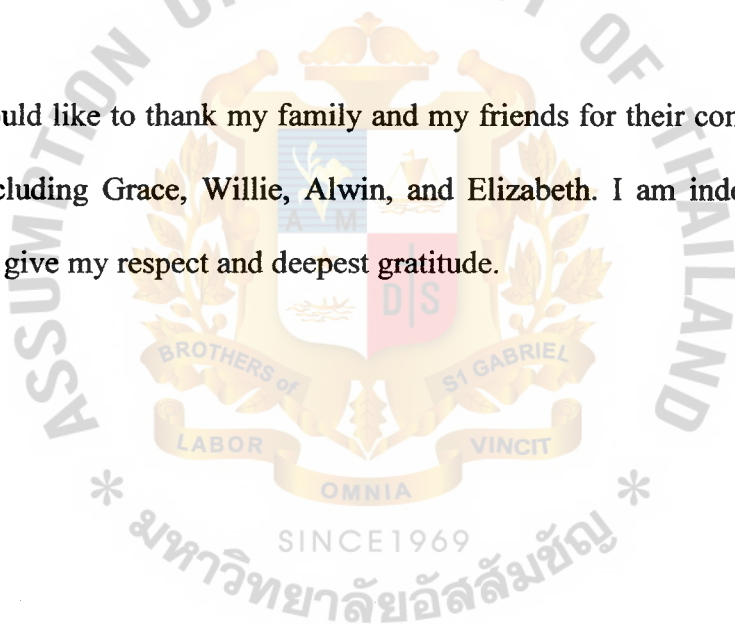

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PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

I certify that all the material in this study which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged, and that no material is included for which a degree has already been conferred upon me.

Signature: 

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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. The English language has achieved the status of a global language and is viewed as the key to a better life and future by many individuals across the world (Chang, 2004; Keyuravong, 2010), including in Thailand. As a result, private English language schools have sprung up across the country to meet the growing demands for English instruction. However, 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 (WSI), one of the most prominent private schools in Thailand. The research questions that I set out to answer in this study are: (1) What languages, symbols and images can be found in those materials? (2) What kinds of identities and meanings are constructed? And (3) What language ideologies are implicit in those materials? The study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework and performs content analysis 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. The findings also illustrate the ways in which various identities are constructed as part of the commodification of English in the advertisements. Based on these findings, some relevant implications for the English language education in Thailand and recommendations for future research are offered.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

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; Ryuko 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 recent media discourses such as this headline in the recent *Bangkok Post* article: “English fluency is critical if Thais are to thrive in the wide-open environment of the AEC” (Wongsamuth, 2012). Scholars are also increasingly engaging in the discussion on this link (Foley, 2013; Imperiani, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2003, 2008, 2010; Takahashi, 2012).

Against this background, there is a significant shift in the discourse of English language teaching (ELT). While in the past learning a foreign language was approached from its educational value, the appeal now is based on its value as a ‘product’ and on its association with career development and social status (Gimenez, 2001). Heller (2010) states that language has acquired centrality in the work process and work products of the new economy. As such it has become a commodity itself and acts as a resource to be produced, controlled, distributed and valued. Block and Cameron (2002) point out:

The commodification of language affects both people’s motivations for learning languages and their choices about which languages to learn. It also affects the choices made by institutions (local and national, public and private) as they allocate resources for language education (p. 5).

Learners of English as an additional language are thus increasingly seen as consumers of English, and language schools today are the producer and provider of such commodities. Their financial success lies in their ability to promote the discourse of English as access to international community and career development (Gao, 2012). In Pegrum's (2004) "Selling English: advertising and the discourses of ELT", it is argued that the English language is generally advantageous to many who learn it as it does to those who sell it. However, some scholars have argued that the advantages of English tend to be overstated by those with a vested interest in the further spread of English as a commodity (Piller, Takahashi, & Watanabe, 2010). At the same time, the process by which English is commodified remains under-explored in the field of ELT. It is thus significant to examine its underlying presuppositions, i.e., the discourses which promote English as a commodity (Pegrum, 2004).

1.2 Rationale

The current literature and debate on ELT in Thailand have paid scant attention to the role of private language schools in commodifying English (Bailey, 2002; R. Kubota, 2011; Piller, et al., 2010). As a result, there is little systematic understanding of the ways in which private language schools in Thailand promote English teaching and learning and what kind of impact the promotional discourses might have on identity construction and experience of learners and teachers. The present study aims to bridge this gap in literature by investigating the promotional discourses of Wall Street Institute, one of the largest private English language schools in Thailand.

1.3 Significance of the study

The aim of this study is thus to explore how the English language is commodified in the private sector by looking at promotional materials of a popular language school: the Wall Street Institute of English (WSI). The study is of considerable significance because it is one of the first attempts to focus on the role of the private education sector in setting discourses of English in Thailand and on its impact on constructing identities of students and teachers.

1.4 Wall Street Institute (WSI)

Wall Street Institute is a private English language school with branches all over the world including Bangkok, Thailand. Founded in Italy in 1972, WSI has over 420 centers in 28 countries worldwide. On their website, WSI presents itself as a leading provider of English language instruction services and is “the global leader in English language training for adults” (<http://www.wallstreet.in.th/en/WallStreetInternational.aspx>; last accessed on March 15, 2012). WSI was established in Thailand in July 2003 with nine branches in Bangkok. WSI schools, which are called “centers”, are usually located in mid to large shopping malls. In these shopping malls, WSI usually advertises its promotions and courses at another location in the same mall. This location is called a “booth” and it is where WSI distributes fliers and attracts the general public. Wall Street Thailand claims that it has served more than 50,000 individuals to date to help improve their English proficiency and attain better educational levels. The Wall Street Institute's curriculum is aligned to the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR), according to a study undertaken with the support of the University of Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages

Examination group (CESOL) ("Media Release: Wall Street Institute," 2012). One of the selling points of WSI is its unique method of teaching English (<http://www.wallstreet.in.th/en/WallStreetInternational.aspx>; last accessed on March 15, 2012). The Wall Street Institute Method focuses on teaching people to understand and speak English, integrates interactive lessons, self-study in workbooks, and small classes led by native English speaking teachers.

The name of the institute originates from the financial district "Wall Street" in New York City, USA. As a global financial centre in the world's biggest economy, the name, Wall Street, has come to be associated with financial interests and aspirations. The Institute's choice of the name is reflective of the wealth and prestige that comes with Wall Street, creating an image of English as a tool in the search for career success and wealth. WSI is now owned by Pearson Group and prides itself as the "international brand of choice" ("Media Release: Wall Street Institute," 2012). Pearson is a British multinational publishing and education company, providing educational materials, technologies, assessments and related services to teachers and students of all ages ("Media Release: Wall Street Institute," 2012). Pearson publishes across the curriculum under a range of respected imprints including Scott Foresman, Prentice Hall, Addison-Wesley, Allyn and Bacon, Benjamin Cummings and Longman. Pearson is also a leading provider of electronic learning programs and of test development, processing and scoring services to educational institutions, corporations and professional bodies around the world (<http://www.pearson.com/about-us/education>; last accessed on April 12, 2012).

I chose to analyze promotional materials of WSI for two main reasons. Firstly, WSI is one of the fastest developing commercial language schools in Thailand and their

promotional materials are highly visible in Bangkok's linguistic landscape. Secondly, their visibility on and offline makes it relatively easy to collect data in a short period of time. By building a database of WSI promotional materials, I examine what kinds of language ideologies are implicit, and are thus reproduced, in their products, i.e., English courses, and what kinds of identity options are constructed in their promotional materials.

1.5 Research questions

In order to explore the question of the commodification of English, this study sets out to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What languages, symbols and images can be found in the promotional materials of WSI?
- (2) What kinds of identities and meanings are constructed? And,
- (3) What language ideologies are implicit in those materials?

1.6 Definition of Terms

In this section, the major terms used in the study are defined.

Commodity

Commodity is an object that is given a value because of its properties that satisfy human wants (Duchêne & Heller, 2012).

Commodification

Commodification is a process which renders language amenable to redefinition as a measurable skill, as opposed to a talent, or an inalienable characteristic of group members (Heller, 2003).

World Englishes

World Englishes is a term used to refer to all varieties of English worldwide and the different approaches used to describe and analyze them (Jenkins, 2006).

Lingua franca

A lingua franca is a language used among speakers from different backgrounds (Jenkins, 2009a). English as a lingua franca is English used as a tool of communication with those from non-English speaking backgrounds (Baker, 2009).

Ideology

Ideology is the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group. It is a shared framework of social beliefs that organize and coordinate the interpretations and practices of groups which includes power (van Dijk, 1998). In this thesis, discourse and ideology are used interchangeably.

Identity

Identity is how a person understands their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed over time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future

(Norton, 2000). Identity is not a given entity, but is something we do, i.e., social practice, to negotiate who we are in relation to the people with whom they interact (Norton, 2000). Social identities are “hybrid and complex” (Piller, 2001, p. 153).

1.7 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: in Chapter 2, I review literature on the role of English as a global language, the issue of ELT, the notion of English as a commodity in Thailand and the concepts of ideology and identity. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this research. In Chapter 3, I discuss the types of data collected, methods of data collection and the theoretical and analytical frameworks, i.e., Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Content Analysis, respectively. Chapter 4 analyzes the macro data collected for the study. By looking at these advertisements, I describe how different ideologies of the English language are created and what are the identity options present in the advertisements. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, offer implications of the findings, and highlight the limitations of the present study. Finally, I conclude with suggestions for future research on commodification and its intersection with student identity and teacher identity.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide a review of literature relevant to the spread of English in the world, in Asia and in Thailand. Also, it will discuss the notion of English as a commodity and the concepts of ideology and identity in the context of ELT.

2.1 The Spread of English

There is a considerable amount of literature on the spread of English and English as a global language (Crystal, 1997; Pennycook, 1994, 2004; Phillipson, 1992, 1994). Crystal (1997) claims that “a language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country” and that it gains prominence by repeatedly finding itself “in the right place at the right time” (p. 78). English is widely considered as a global language today as it increasingly serves as a tool for international communication in various domains of importance including business, finance, education and tourism. Today, English is the most widely taught, learnt and spoken language in the world; it is used by over 300 million people as a first language in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA, and by over 700 million people as a second or additional language in the countries of Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, and of the island nations of the world (Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2006).

Graddol (1997) points out that there have been two main mechanisms by which English has spread. The first is associated with the colonial expansion of Britain. This has resulted in settlements of English speakers in many parts of the world, including South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa and the Caribbean (Graddol, 1997). The second was the increased

role of the US in the 20th century which surpassed that of Britain and helped ensure that the language is not only used for scientific and technical knowledge but also leads consumer culture (Graddol, 1997). According to Jenkins (2009b), despite the fact that most of England's former colonies had become independent, they retained the English language to serve various functions.

More recently, Kachru & Nelson (2006) have offered two viewpoints on how English has spread around the world. The first relates to the consequence of the migration of English-speaking people from Great Britain to Australia, North America, and New Zealand. The second is as the result of the diffusion of English among speakers of diverse groups of peoples and languages across the world as a result of colonialism and other political and economic factors (Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2006). As the most widely taught and learned additional language, a wide range of different forms of the language have emerged and it is important to understand these varieties and those who speak them.

Researchers investigating the spread of English have generally considered that there are three kinds of English speakers. There are those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language (Graddol, 1997). Through the work of Kachru's (1985) model of World Englishes, these three groups have become widely known as the 'inner circle', the 'outer circle' and the 'expanding circle'. The Inner Circle comprises the 'mother country' – England and the British Isles – and the areas where the speakers from Britain took the language with them as they migrated – Australia, New Zealand and North America. The Outer Circle is comprised of the countries, such as India, Nigeria and the Philippines, where the language was passed on by colonial administrators, businessmen, educators, and missionaries, and is now

nurtured by the majority of multilingual users. They use English as an additional language for their own purposes, which include many national and international domains. The Expanding Circle represents the countries (e.g. People's Republic of China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, countries of Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America) where the language is still spreading, mainly for serving the need for an international medium in business and commerce, diplomacy, finance, and other such spheres. Kachru (1992) introduced the term "World Englishes" to refer to various types of English spoken across the globe. It is meant to be inclusive and does not associate any privilege with English in any one circle or in any one of its specific varieties.

Jenkins (2006) offers three interpretations of "World Englishes". Firstly, it serves as an "umbrella label" covering all varieties of English worldwide and the different approaches used to describe and analyze them. Secondly, it is used to refer to the so-called new Englishes in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, or countries included in the Outer Circle in Kachru's model. Thirdly, the term is used to represent the approach to the study of English associated with Kachru and his colleagues, and often referred to as the Kachruvian approach, although there is considerable overlap between this and the second interpretation of the term. The first use is also sometimes represented by other terms, including World English (i.e., in the singular), international English(es), and global English(es), while the second is in fact more commonly represented by the terms nativised, indigenised, institutionalised, and new Englishes or English as a second language (Jenkins, 2006). Graddol (1997) claims that native speakers (or those belonging to the Inner Circle) may feel the language 'belongs' to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its future.

Jenkins (2009a) argues that another influential way in which the spread of English is studied is the notion of English as a lingua franca, a language used among speakers from different backgrounds. For instance, English is increasingly used as the lingua franca in Asia where people are starting to use English as a tool of communication with those from non-English speaking backgrounds (Baker, 2009). 79714 e-1

It should be noted, however, that English is now also seen as an “Asian language” in its own right. In the words of Kachru & Nelson (2006), it has been indigenized. They note that whereas the centre of gravity of English as a native language continues to be the North Atlantic (in insular Europe and continental North America), the centre of gravity of English as a second language or lingua franca is manifestly Asian (especially in the South and East).

Jenkins (2009a) points out a number of issues and challenges associated with approaches to World Englishes. For instance, various forms of EFL have been criticized for lacking standards and are seen as ‘deviations’ from Inner Circle Englishes (usually British and American). They are still often considered as ‘errors’. Jenkins (2009a) asserts that the native English speaker ideology, i.e., the idea that English spoken by native speakers is the norm, underpins these attitudes. This ideology, the researcher points out, seems to be exerting a significant influence on attitudes of many English teachers and their learners in the world. Even though non-native English speakers no longer learn or use English to communicate primarily with ‘native’ speakers, there is an attachment to ‘standard’ native speaker models which remains firmly in place (Jenkins, 2009a). Existing research suggest that indeed the Standard English, i.e., the variety of English spoken by the ‘native speakers’ is largely considered to be the norm to date (Chang, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Widdowson, 1994).

According to Jenkins (2009b), a standard language is a prestige variety, spoken by a minority of people occupying positions of power. English is now being used widely around the world which creates a great deal of variation in the language. In addition to regional variations, there are other variations related to age, gender, education, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and other factors within regional varieties (Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2006). However, there are some varieties of English that are preferred over the others. It is believed that there has to be a standard variety which is correct (Kirkpatrick, 2007) and there has been much debate on what Standard English is.

For instance, Kachru & Nelson (2006) state that Standard English is more a matter of grammar than of pronunciation and that the grammar of Standard English is practically fixed and uniform, so that among educated speakers, no matter how much they may differ in other respects: pronunciation, vocabulary and idioms, they will generally agree in using the same grammatical forms. It has also been pointed out that the issue of standard has more to do with matters of power and ideology than with language (Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2006). When English is considered in a national, Inner-circle context, it is easier to preserve a working notion of a standard language. The spread of English, with its various centers of norm-providing and modeling, has had significant effects on the conceptualization of 'English' as an entity, with very important ideological consequences (Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2006).

Crystal (1994) defined Standard English as a variety of the English language and the linguistic features are chiefly matters of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation. He also states that Standard English is the variety of English which carries most prestige and it is the variety that is presented as a desirable educational target. Much of the material such

as course books, teaching manuals and so on, that are available in many parts of the world, are written in this variety.

Another issue that has been largely debated is the difference in accents. Kirkpatrick (2007) writes that by 'native English' people usually mean a variety of English spoken by a native speaker of English and this speaker is usually thought of as being white even though speakers of these varieties are not always white. A native language is the first language a person learns (Kirkpatrick, 2007). So a native speaker of English is anyone who speaks English as a first language. According to Kirkpatrick (2007), one of the pressing issues is that many people believe that native speakers are necessarily better at English and that is why they are considered better teachers.

However, Graddol (1999) states that the number and importance of native speakers of English are declining with the rise of English as a global language. The decline of the native speaker in numerical terms is likely to be associated with changing ideas about the centrality of the native speaker to norms of usage. There has been a lively debate about the 'cult' of the native speaker: do native speakers have privileged access to an understanding of the language, and are they therefore more reliable informants and teachers? In many countries in which English is learned and spoken as a second or foreign language, the centrality of the native speaker is being challenged (Graddol, 1999).

In sum, while the current status of English as a global language or lingua franca is seemingly uncontested, the ways in which it has spread, its purposes and consequences are increasingly debated. Indeed, the last few decades have seen a growing number of scholars offering critical views on the spread of English, the issue of native speakerism and racialisation of linguistic identity.

For instance, critiquing the global dominance of English as a form of linguistic imperialism, Phillipson (1992) states that English is not a natural or neutral medium that allows equal access to international communication. From his point of view, English has served the political, cultural, and economic interests of the principal colonial powers, namely the UK and the US; “[T]he dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). Similarly, Pennycook (1994) states that the assertion that the spread of English is “natural, neutral and beneficial” is – in itself – ideological. He argues that research on the spread of English needs to illuminate political, social, cultural and economic interests which underlie the ideology of English-as-the-global-language (Pennycook, 1994). Furthermore, Piller et al: (2010) point out that while Asia is seeing a rapid spread of English, there is a lack of inquiry into who ‘buys’ and ‘sells’ the language, namely, English as a commodity and as a form of consumption, and its hidden costs. My study is a response to their call for such inquiry into the commodification of English.

In the next section, I will discuss literature on the commodification of English.

2.2 English as a Commodity

While additional languages have always been learned for various reasons, linguistic skills have taken on new importance in today’s “new economy”. The new economy involves “the circulation of people, goods and resources”; in short, knowledge- and service-based economy (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). The new economy relates to selling products within a globalised network society and languages are things that have become useful in order to

both produce and distribute resources and enter the globalised market (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). Against this background, communication skills as well as linguistic competence in one or more additional languages are increasingly valued:

“Languages are coming to be treated more and more as economic commodities and this view is displacing traditional ideologies in which languages were primarily symbols of ethnic or national identity” (Block & Cameron, 2002, p. 5).

Back in the 19th Century, Karl Marx defined a commodity as “an object outside of us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another” (as cited in Duchêne & Heller, 2012, p. 4). Commodities are then, things that are ‘given’ a value (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). English as a language, too, is given a value, and it is evident that its value is not the same for everybody. Heller (2003, p. 474) defines commodification of language as the process which “renders language amenable to redefinition as a measurable skill, as opposed to a talent, or an inalienable characteristic of group members”. Piller (2011), for instance, states that English proficiency has a differential value depending on who speaks it, where it is used, for whom, and for what purpose. Several recent studies have illuminated the role of private English language schools in promoting Standard English and linguistic identities while devalorising other varieties of English in the world hence producing a hierarchy of languages and identities.

For instance, in their case study, Piller et al: (2010) analyzed the commodification of English as a form of consumption in Japan and South Korea. The English language boom in Japan and Korea started when English was adopted as part of the national projects in the two countries and this has led to a rapid expansion of the private English language teaching sector. Following Pennycook (2007), the researchers argued that the two countries had a

firm investment in the promise of English, i.e., English brings more opportunities and prosperities both for individuals and nations. Piller et al: (2010) went on to examine a range of personal and social costs that resulted from buying into the promise of English. These costs included changes in the students' identity, experiences of discrimination, inability to secure desirable employment, and a sense of shame resulting from being unable to achieve the desired proficiency in Standard English. Of particular interest to my proposal is their analysis of the promotional materials of English language schools in Japan. They found that it is the 'native speaker' of English who appear as teachers and they were nearly always White (Piller, et al., 2010). They concluded that this advertising practice, i.e., representation of white people as English teachers, is part and parcel of the global discourse of native speakers in TESOL (See also Lin et al., 2004).

Chang (2004) also reports that the use of native speaking English teachers is a prevalent strategy to ensure the success of private language schools in Taiwan. The researcher found that learners tended to perceive white native speaking English teachers as ideal English teachers, because of their 'standard' native accents. This tendency was found in a large corpus of promotional texts produced by language schools including language school fliers, television commercials in addition to media discourses on the World Wide Web in Taiwan (Chang, 2004).

A similar finding was reported in Zhang's (2011) ethnographic study of language ideologies and linguistic practices during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Zhang (2011) analyzed promotional materials of English language schools. At the time of the Olympic Games, many advertisements of private English language schools found in the city depicted white people as English teachers. The researcher points out that such promotional materials

reproduce and further promote the native speaker ideology in which English is not seen as an international language but the property of White native speakers. Zhang (2011) concludes that private English language schools producing such advertisements function to perpetuate the ideology of “native speaker superiority” (Zhang, 2011).

In Thailand, a similar tendency has been reported by Takahashi (2012). The researcher found that Asian teachers of English face challenges of finding teaching jobs because they are often seen as unqualified teachers and commercial schools prefer hiring white teachers of English who are considered as ideal teachers. Her report is based on the experience of a Chinese teacher of English whose job application for English teaching position was rejected due to her not being ‘white’. The researcher argues that commercial discourse of ideal speakers of English and English teachers as white are prevalent practices in Thailand by giving an example of an advertisement of a commercial language school, Boston Bright. The school’s advertisement depicts two Asian models, with half of their faces Asian and the other as White. Takahashi (2012) concludes that the commodification of English needs to be investigated in relation to the construction of identities.

While Takahashi’s (2012) report is informative, there has been little systematic investigation into how English and identities are commodified in the private education sector in Thailand. My study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap in literature by drawing on Piller et al: (2010), Chang (2004) and Zhang (2011) by analyzing promotional materials of WSI.

In the next section, I will provide an overall picture of the spread of English in Thailand.

2.3 English in Thailand

Many countries in the Southeast Asian region are investing a great deal of resources in improving the quality of English language education (Foley, 2005, 2013). While the current key drive is the launch of the AEC in 2015, English has long been presented as the language of economic and technological progress, national unity and international understanding to people in Thailand. National language policies have also played a major role in heightening the status of English (Phillipson, 1994). In this section, I will explore the spread of English in the Thai context.

English was introduced to Thailand in the 17th century for the purpose of modernizing the country (Keyuravong, 2010). For two centuries that followed, English was offered only in the royal schools. In 1996, English was made compulsory for all primary children from Grade 1 (Foley, 2005). The status of English has, however, always remained as a foreign language (Keyuravong, 2010). According to the Thai Basic Education Curriculum 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008), students in Primary 1-3 study English for one hour a week while students in Primary 4-6 study for two hours a week. Lower secondary students have three English hours a week whereas upper secondary students have two hours with elective courses (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Rappa and Wee (2006) suggest that English is not a language that “Southeast Asian nations can afford to ignore...because of its importance in facilitating economic development...” (p. 125). Being part of Southeast Asia, the Thai Government has increasingly viewed the importance of foreign language education:

“In the present global society, learning foreign languages is very important and essential to daily life, as foreign languages serve as an important tool for communication, education, seeking knowledge, livelihood and creating

understanding of cultures and visions of the world community” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 252).

This quote, taken from Thailand’s most recent Basic Education Core Curriculum (BEC), goes on to state that “the foreign language constituting basic learning content that is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum is English...” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.252). Although there is some provision made in the curriculum for other foreign languages, it is clear where the Thai Government’s priorities lie (Fitzpatrick, 2011). English is increasingly used in a wide range of domains in Thailand including tourism, international trade, banking and media (Foley, 2005) and regarded as being crucial in order to obtain a well-paid job (Keyuravong, 2010) and to develop career further (Wiriyaichitra, 2002). Keyuravong (2010) states:

For Thailand, the English language is associated with a good and well-paid job. People with a good command of English have better opportunities in education and in their career. For students at school it is essential to develop a good command of English, as this increases their chances of gaining a place at a good university, after graduation from which a good and well-paid job will be likely to follow (Keyuravong, 2010, p. 76).

However, Thai people’s English is generally considered as unsatisfactory (Raasri, 2005). For instance, Raasri (2005) reports that the Thais were deeply embarrassed with the ranking of the member states in terms of TOEFL scores; Thailand (201) scored only one above Cambodia (200); Singapore (252) scored the highest, followed by the Philippines (234), Malaysia (224), Myanmar (214), Indonesia (214), and Vietnam (205). Although these statistics do not take into consideration the number or age group of the test-takers, they have led to increased concerns in public and the reform into English learning and teaching is increasingly seen as a must if Thailand were to be transformed into a knowledge-based society.

Three factors have been identified as the root problems with Thailand's poor English proficiency; the language teaching methodology, teachers' qualifications and students' interest (Raasri, 2005; Takahashi, 2012; Wiriyaichitra, 2002). For instance, Michel le Quellec, President of Wall Street English (Thailand), the local franchisee of the UK-based Wall Street Institute, claims that:

[T]he problem for Thailand is that there aren't enough qualified teachers, while most teaching methods here are inefficient, so we need to change the teaching method and retrain the teachers. We also have to overcome the cultural problem of shyness and encourage students to dare to make mistakes because you need to make mistakes while learning a foreign language (Limsamarnphun, 2012).

As the quote above suggests, there is a widely spread view that English language education in schools is ineffective. In contrast, commercial English language schools claim to satisfy the desire of today's Thai learners who consider English not as a school subject, but a practical tool to succeed in career and education in the future. Although commercial English language schools are rapidly increasing in number in Thailand, research on private English schools in Thailand is limited. According to Napompech (2011), there were 1,243 tutor schools in Thailand in 2009. At present, there is no systematic record available on the guidelines tutorial schools have to follow. This also means that there is little understanding of their role in commodifying English and constructing identities of teachers and students. What kinds of ideologies of English are used in promoting the language as a commodity in the private education sector? How are 'learners' and 'teachers' presented in the commercial discourse by English language schools? In the next section, I will briefly discuss the notions of ideology and identity as they relate to this research.

2.4 Ideology and Identity

In my study, ideology is considered as “ideas, discourse, or signifying practices in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power” (Woolard, 1998, p. 8). As Fairclough (1989, p. 2) states, ideologies are closely linked to language as it is the major means used for the operation and maintenance of power but we are not aware that our everyday practices constitute ideological power. Van Dijk (1998) has also stated that discourse has a specific role in the reproduction of ideologies. He describes ideology as “the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group (p. 8)”. It is a shared framework of social beliefs that organize and coordinate the interpretations and practices of groups which includes power. I closely follow the work of Chang (2004) in that I view language school promotional materials as reflecting and (re)producing ideologies of English teaching and learning.

Furthermore, I will draw on Norton’s (2000) approach to identity as how a person understands their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed over time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. She argued that identity was traditionally considered as something that people ‘had’ in that their identity was seen as ‘fixed’. Based on her study with migrant women in Canada, Norton argued that identity is not a given entity, but is something we do, i.e., social practice, to negotiate who we are in relation to the people with whom they interact. Furthermore, our identity is not necessarily always our own making or construction: social identities are also often constructed, and therefore imposed, by the others on us, be they through research publications, media representations or everyday interaction. As such, Norton (2000) points

out that it is important to understand identity as multiple, fluid and something discursively constructed in language and images in negotiation with the others.

Similarly, Piller (2001) describes social identities as being “hybrid and complex” (p. 153). It is something we constantly build and negotiate all our lives through our interaction with others. People switch into different roles at different times in different situations, so each context requires a shift into different identities (Hashim, 2002). Van Dijk (1998) describes social identity as “the social practices, symbols, settings or forms of organization that are typical for a group and with which members identify, would in that case be the contextually variable manifestations of social identity” (p. 124). People construct their social identity by categorizing themselves as belonging to a social group through particular types of representation (Hashim, 2002).

Piller (2001) pointed out that the media play an important role in the construction of these identities. Advertising presents model identities and idealized images to the public and constructs social relationships (Piller, 2001). As such, the relationship between language and social identity is constitutive; they are constructed in discourse which is “perceived as a site of contestation” (p. 155). By associating commodities with personal and social meanings and aspirations that are not fulfilled in real life, advertising validates these commodities and we come to think that we will be able to acquire these desirable identities if we consume these commodities (Dyer, 1982, cited in Piller, 2001, p. 153).

Since the work of Norton (2000), much research has looked into the intersection between language learning and various identity categories. Two most salient identity categories that have been investigated are gender and teacher identity. For instance, Kinginger (2004) studied the personal, social, and material obstacles of Alice, an American

female learner of French as a second language. The study focuses on foreign language learning as identity reconstruction and found that her language learning trajectory involved negotiation of many facets of her identity: social and linguistic, but also gender and class identity. The most salient reason why Alice wanted to learn French was the fact that she wanted to obtain cultural refinement and broader social options through learning a prestigious language and acquiring French culture. Alice's efforts in learning French was thus an investment in her identity as culturally sophisticated. The study found, however, that despite her investment in learning the language including studying overseas in France, Alice was unable to achieve the desired level of proficiency. This was largely due to her overseas studying experience whereby she was rejected by French people (women in particular) and was disappointed by the sexist representation of women in the French society, which was, from her point of view, in sharp contrast to the American society (Kinginger, 2004).

In another study, American anthropologist Kelsky (2001) explored identity construction and desires of ambitious Japanese women. The Japanese women the researcher interviewed talked about their desire for white men and English as a strategy to survive in the chauvinistic society in Japan; by aligning with the West, the women sought to position themselves in a way that gave them an advantage in the context of increasing internationalization in Japan. Kelsky (2001) also illuminated the historical and contemporary construction of sexualized and racialized global images of white men and women, of and Japanese men and women. Dominant identities constructed for them in the global marketplace included: the white man as chivalrous, the Japanese man as oppressor of the native women, the white woman as too aggressive and demanding, and the Japanese woman as culturally flexible and ready to submit to and care for white men. Takahashi (2013)

further explored the desire of Japanese women in learning English driven by their desire for the West and Western men. The researcher stated that the Japanese media plays a crucial role in developing these desires by presenting English as a means of obtaining what is desirable: White Western men. Language desire among Japanese women is constructed at the “intersection between the macro discourses of the West and foreign men and ideologies of Japanese women’s life-courses” (p. 144).

Reviewing literature on teacher identity, one significant study was that of Chang (2004) which explored the ideologies of the ideal teacher in Taiwan by looking at various kinds of advertisements. The researcher found that Taiwanese people’s motivation for learning English derives from a desire to communicate orally. Furthermore, she found that the ideal-English-teacher for teaching English speaking proficiency is a native speaker with an American accent. It is assumed that people with these desired characteristics are Caucasian and if foreign teachers do not look white, they face job discrimination. Therefore, the selection of English teachers is more reliant on looks than on quality, they are hired regardless of their professional training, personality, and professional attitude (Chang, 2004). The study also pointed out that these issues shape the lives of the learners, the teachers, and policy makers, and they are much more complex than a simplistic dichotomy between being a native or a non-native speaker (Chang, 2004).

The commodification of language redefines the relationship between language and identity and produces new forms of competition and social selection (Heller, 2003). My study aims to explore the relationship between language and identity by looking into the promotional materials of WSI, and to examine the discursive construction of ideologies and

identities in the language school promotional discourses and ideologies and identities, I have chosen to adopt the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to my data analysis.

To understand CDA, one must first understand 'discourse'. Discourse is defined as language use in speech and writing (N. Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). CDA sees discourse as a form of social practice. CDA is a multidisciplinary approach devoted to the study of relations between discourse, power, dominance, and social inequality. CDA aims to reveal how texts operate in the construction of social practice by examining the choices that discourse offers (Wodak, 2004). Power is about relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures (Wodak, 2004). A defining feature of CDA is its concern with power as a central condition in social life. Fairclough (1992) states that CDA does not just describe discursive practices, but examines "how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief" (p. 12). CDA-oriented research closely look into issues such as class, cultural difference, ethnicity, ideology, identity, gender, and power, and how they are manifested in particular texts. Fairclough (1996) state that discourse analysts, including CDA practitioners, tend to agree that different audiences may interpret texts differently.

Kress (1990) writes that the 'angle of attack' of CDA is fundamentally different from forms of textual analysis which is founded on the notion of an autonomous linguistic system. By contrast, CDA works from the social to the linguistic, or more specifically, sees the linguistic as within the social (Kress, 1990). In CDA various aspects of textual/linguistic form are analyzed, described, and accounted for from within a framework of socio-cultural practice. CDA has examined language in the mass-media, in education, in advertising, in

objects of popular culture, and in professional settings (professional languages, and professional-client interactions). CDA is concerned with revealing the complex processes involved in the production, communication, and reception/reproduction of texts (Kress, 1990).

I will provide a further description of my research method in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Restatement of Research Questions

As stated in Chapter 1, this thesis aims to explore the commodification of the English language in Thailand by addressing the following research questions:

- (1) What languages, symbols and images can be found in the promotional materials?
- (2) What kinds of identities and meanings are constructed? And,
- (3) What language ideologies are implicit in those materials?

3.2 Research Design

In this chapter I will describe the research design adopted for this study. I begin by providing the rationale for the research method, and move on to describe the data collected and the method of data analysis.

To provide insights into the research questions, I adopt a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analyzing data in many forms and is chiefly non-numeric (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 1996). It focuses on exploring in as much detail as possible to produce an in-depth understanding of the research topic - the commodification of English in Thailand.

3.3 Method of Data Collection

The data that are collected for this study are macro discourses, i.e., promotional materials produced by WSI. As discussed earlier, several studies have collected and analyzed English language schools' promotional materials, and I will specifically draw on the work by Chang (2004) and Piller and Takahashi (2006, 2011). In her work on ideologies of English in Taiwan, Chang (2004) demonstrates how language schools' promotional materials both construct and reproduce ideologies of English language teaching and learning. The ideologies and the advertisements have a symbiotic relationship with each feeding into the other (2004, p. 50). In another study by Piller and Takahashi (2006, 2011), advertisements and other promotional materials for English language schools were analyzed to explore the language desire of Japanese women. Takahashi's (2013) study indicated that English can be linked not only with the desire for white men, but also with the image of the typical heterosexual romantic relationship that circulates in the international media. The studies above have provided insights into the commodification of English by private language schools, making an analysis of promotional materials a new way of understanding the commodification of language. Following Chang (2004) and Piller and Takahashi (2006, 2011), I have built a small corpus of WSI's promotional materials, including fliers, posters and websites in this study. A total of 95 advertisements were collected and the data have been obtained from the following sites (See Appendix 1 for the database of WSI advertisements and Appendix 2 for WSI advertisements):

WSI centers

The data in this category include pictures, texts and symbols in advertisements that can be found at WSI centers around Bangkok.

WSI website

Advertisements of WSI from the WSI website, <http://www.wallstreet.in.th/> are placed in this category.

Blogs on language schools

Advertisements of WSI seen on blogs discussing language schools fall into this category.

WSI in Bangkok's linguistic landscape

Linguistic landscape is the visibility of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory (Shohamy, 2008). In this category, advertisements posted at the BTS (Bangkok Mass Rapid Transit System) stations around Bangkok and seen in other public space were collected.

The data collected has been divided into six types: billboards and posters, fliers, electronic advertisements, advertisements on the WSI website, advertisements on the WSI Facebook page and advertisements of WSI as seen on other websites.

- *Billboards and posters*

In this group, the advertisements are easily seen by the public as they are placed at the BTS stations and at the Wall Street Institute centers. There are 26 advertisements in this category out of which 15 advertisements are written in English and 11 are in Thai.

- *Fliers*

The advertisements in this group are both monolingual in Thai and in English. There are three advertisements in this category. One advertisement written in Thai and two are in English.

- *Electronic advertisements*

These advertisements were shown on LCD screens at WSI centers. There are seven advertisements in this category. Five of the advertisements are written in English and two are written in Thai. The advertisements of this type are both bilingual in English and Thai and monolingual in English.

- *Advertisements on the WSI website*

The advertisements found on the WSI website are both bilingual in Thai and English and monolingual in English as there is a choice of language on the webpage. There are a total of 28 advertisements in this category.

- *Advertisements on the WSI Facebook page*

There are 29 advertisements collected from the WSI Facebook page out of which 15 are written monolingually in English and one is written monolingually in Thai. Eight advertisements are written in English and Thai and five advertisements have no language present.

- *Advertisements of WSI as seen on other websites*

The data in this category are advertisements of WSI shown in public spaces; such as the BTS Stations or on buildings. They have been shown in public spaces in previous years but have been removed or replaced with other advertisements. The advertisements in this category mainly feature students and show the past campaigns carried out by WSI. There are eight advertisements in this category and all are monolingual in English.

3.4 Method of Analysis

To investigate the commodification of English through media discourses in this study, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was adopted as a theoretical framework and Content Analysis was performed to examine the data collected.

I am particularly interested in using CDA as a theoretical approach as it focuses on how language mediates relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge (Rogers, 2008). Furthermore, CDA suits my inquiry into the commodification of English as it is highly inter-disciplinary. Lee and Otsuji (2009) state that CDA identifies itself as inter-disciplinary in orientation, and as such, it allows researchers to draw on a diverse array of data and analytical methods. What brings the different disciplinary and methodological approaches together, through all this diversity, is a problem-focused approach, a particular theoretical preoccupation with, and a consistent orientation to, power, and a transformative agenda flowing from that orientation (Lee & Otsuji, 2009, p. 66). CDA is “‘critical’, not merely because it critiques existing social and linguistic practices and structures, but also because it mediates linguistic practices with the

broader historical, social and cultural frame of activities, practices and ideologies” (Lee & Otsuji, 2009, p. 56). In keeping with the orientation of CDA, my research will explore how discourse of English as a global language is shaped by relations of power and its effects on the construction of social identities (e.g., learners and teachers) and of value of English in Thai society.

Furthermore, this study adopts the approach known as content analysis and applies it to all data collected from the sites identified as above. Content analysis is one of the most frequently used analytical strategies by qualitative researchers in social sciences. Berg (1998) has described this analytical tool as “a passport to listening to the words of the text and understating better the perspectives of the producer of these words” (p. 225). Content analysis is also increasingly used to analyze audio-visual data such as magazines and TV programs (Bell, 2003). Following Piller and Takahashi (2006, 2011), the present research will perform a content analysis in a way that the data will be examined without predetermined categories in the beginning of analysis.

In today’s world of hyperconnectivity through media, social networks and the internet, advertisements have an increasing impact on the public as presented above. They play a crucial role in the construction of identities and commodification of English and language proficiency. I hope that my research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the spread of English and spur discussions on the commodification of English in Southeast Asia in general and in Thailand in particular. In the next section, I will present my findings and discussion.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the commodification of English based on advertisements produced by WSI. The chapter attempts an exploration of meanings, ideologies and identities constructed in commercial advertisements in the context of AEC in Thailand. The chapter consists of three parts. First, the representation of English is examined. This will reveal how WSI advertisements capitalize on and reproduce the notion of English as the language for success and recognition. Secondly, I will discuss the ways in which English is heavily promoted in relation to the AEC. Next, the identities of the students constructed in WSI advertisements are examined, focusing on the ways in which prospective students are presented. These include the people selected for the advertisements, the attire chosen for them and the captions underlining the advertisements. Teacher identities are then explored to demonstrate who is/are constructed as an ideal teacher(s) of English.

Therefore, in the following sections, I wish to reveal the range of ways in which WSI construct English as a highly valued commodity and the student identities and teacher identities that are created through these advertisements as part of the commodification of English.

4.2 Representation of English

WSI claims to be the most successful English language teaching school, helping people around the world – not only in Thailand – to speak English with confidence and be more

successful in life (<http://www.wallstreet.in.th/index.php/wall-street-english/worth-price/?lang=en>; last accessed June 2, 2013). According to the WSI website, statistics indicate that more than 90% of Thais actively spend time and money to learn English but still cannot communicate in real life. With WSI's unique method of teaching, they claim that the chances of being successful are much greater (<http://www.wallstreet.in.th/index.php/wall-street-english/worth-price/?lang=en>; last accessed June 2, 2013). This section presents findings on how English is represented in the advertisements produced by Wall Street Institute Thailand.

4.2.1 English for a Better Future

One of the most typical ways in which WSI presents the English language is English as a necessity for success. In particular, the WSI advertisements market English as the language of communication, through which one can achieve success in the context of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) due to be launched in 2015. The AEC is to be a united economy which allows the free flow of goods and services (ASEAN, 2012) and has been a topic of discussion nationwide in newspapers, websites and research. English has been declared the working language of the AEC, and WSI seeks to promote itself as an institute that can prepare Thais for the AEC.

During my data collection, I noticed that WSI started an AEC-focused campaign in November 2012. I will demonstrate how English is commodified as an indispensable tool to join the AEC by examining the following two examples.



(Figure 4.1 WSI booth, Mega Bangna, January 2013)

This advertisement (see Figure 4.1) was found at the WSI booth at Mega Bangna, a large shopping center in Samut Prakarn, on the outskirts of Bangkok. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in a big shopping center such as this, WSI often advertises the promotions and distributes fliers on a different floor from the one on which the school is located. The advertisement above is bilingual in Thai and English and promotes English by linking it to the AEC 2015. It shows a young Asian man running towards something along a strip of land that carries many of the national attractions of many countries in ASEAN. The slogan claims “AEC ใกล้กว่าที่คิด ภาษาอังกฤษพลาดไม่ได้” (*AEC is closer than we think. You can't miss out on English [my translation]*), and one of the significant features of this advertisement is the fact that he

is at least three times larger than the national attractions. A link between English and the AEC is also created in the advertisement below (Figure 4.2).



(Figure 4.2: WSI Center Major Pinklao, January 2013)

The advertisement above was displayed on the glass doors at one of the WSI centers, Major Pinklao, a small shopping center with a movie theater in Thonburi, located on the opposite bank of the Chao Phraya River to central Bangkok. The center is visible from the main road as it is located at the entrance of the shopping center. The model in this advertisement is a young Asian man carrying national attractions of many countries in ASEAN along with a file that says Wall Street English. He is carrying all these in one hand with a smile on his face. The advertisement runs:

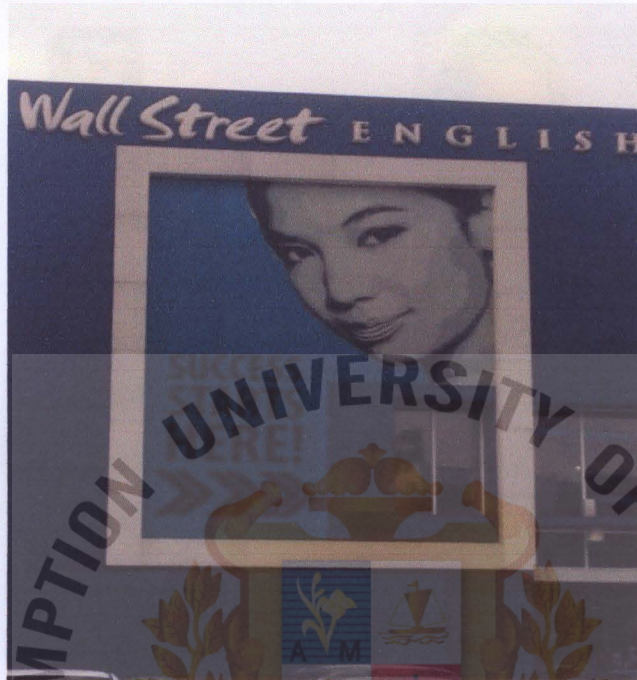
จะทันมั๊ย? อีกไม่นาน เราจะสามารถเข้าสู่ประชาคมเศรษฐกิจ AEC 2015 ภาษาอังกฤษจำเป็นสำหรับความสำเร็จของคุณ ถ้าคุณสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษไม่ได้คุณแยแน่ เพราะคุณไม่ได้แข่งขันเฉพาะในประเทศอีกแล้ว เริ่มตั้งแต่วันนี้ครับ

Will you be ready on time? Soon, we will be a part of AEC 2015. English is important for your success. If you can't communicate in English, you are in trouble because you are not competing within the country anymore. Start today [my translation].

In both advertisements, English is presented as crucial for being part of the AEC. In Figure 4.1, the running model with the national attractions of ASEAN behind him signifies the time towards the AEC 2015; it creates the sense of urgency that it is getting closer and closer and that English is indispensable in the race against time. The advertisement thus presents English as a necessity that people cannot afford to not have, if they want to be part of and benefit from the AEC. The slogan in the advertisement, *'you can't miss out on English'*, also implies that Thai people will lag behind in the race. As such, it functions to create a sense of fear in the viewers (...*closer than we think*). Furthermore, the difference in size of the model and the attractions signifies the benefits of being able to communicate in English. You become important, significant and will be recognized if you can communicate in English, and as such, English is commodified as a tool to win the race.

In Figure 4.2, the model carries all the attractions in one hand along with a file of Wall Street. This functions to create the view that by being able to communicate in English, you will succeed easily (signified by the model carrying everything in one hand). The statement *'English is important for your success. If you can't communicate in English, you are in trouble...'* creates the connection between English and the AEC in that without English, you cannot be a part of the AEC (*you are in trouble*). The only way to be able to compete is by studying English, and WSI is the place to do so.

Studying English is not only presented as a tool to be part of the AEC, but as a means of achieving all types of success. Some of the data collected function to produce the idea that in order to be a successful person, you *need* English (Figure 4.3).



(Figure 4.3 WSI Center, Future Park Rangsit, February 2013)

The advertisement in Figure 4.3 was taken from the WSI Center near a large shopping center outside Bangkok. It is a large poster situated on the WSI building and is visible from the main road and from the shopping center. The advertisement features a Thai woman's face with the caption *SUCCESS STARTS HERE!* and arrows pointing towards the institute. The product of WSI is English; therefore, English is commodified as a road to success which one can purchase at the Wall Street Institute. However, success can mean different things to different people. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/success>; last accessed July 23, 2013) describes success as a favorable or desired outcome or the attainment of wealth, favor or eminence. Although WSI

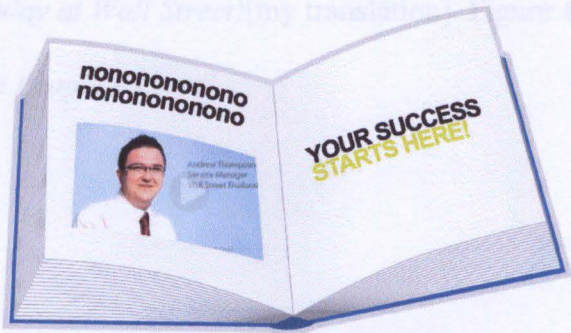
does not define success in any tangible form, success is implicitly defined as recognition, wealth and employment in the promotion materials. For instance, in Figure 4.4, WSI describes English as the key to a better job.



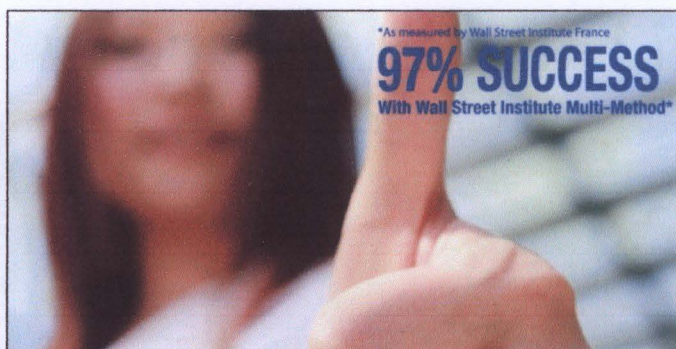
(Figure 4.4: BTS Adult Pass)

Figure 4.4 is an image found on the Internet of a BTS adult pass used before the smart pass system was implemented in 2007. The pass features a woman smiling brightly with the quote “*Better English = Better Job*”. A better job brings with it a higher position, higher salary and better recognition.

WSI presents itself as being a language school that is different from all the other language schools. One tagline often seen in WSI advertisements is “*Your success starts here*”. Four out of 95 advertisements have the word “success” (Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6).



(Figure 4.5: WSI Website, January 2013)



(Figure 4.6: WSI Website, January 2013)

Figure 4.5 says “*Your success starts here*” where “*here*” refers to WSI. This suggests that WSI sells not only the English language but success itself. WSI advertises the percentage of success it has achieved (Figure 4.6) which is 97%. This number was measured by Wall Street Institute France, as stated in the advertisement. However, the advertisement does not specify how they measured the success rate, who the subjects were and where they were from, or how long ago it was measured.

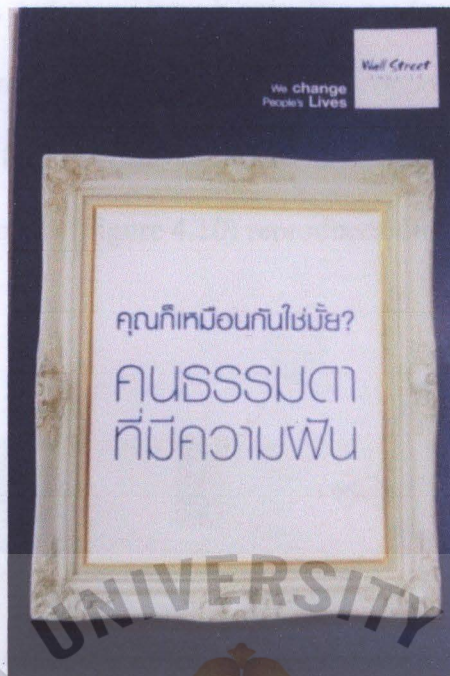
WSI advertisements also claim that “*We change People’s Lives*”. This campaign features success stories of WSI students including before and after photos and stories. Many of these students are presented as having achieved their dreams or are in the process of achieving them. In Figure 4.8, the advertisement reads: เปลี่ยนแปลงอนาคตของคุณได้วันนี้ที่วอลล์สตรีท (*Change your future today at Wall Street*)[my translation]. Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.9 feature the tagline “*We change People’s Lives*”.



(Figure 4.7: WSI Website, May 2013)



(Figure 4.8: WSI Website, May 2013)



(Figure 4.9: WSI Flier, May 2013)

By using these taglines in the advertisements, WSI presents itself as a language school that can change a person's life and make them what they wish to be through English. The campaign "CHANGE" shows the students who were able to transform themselves and their lives by studying at WSI. This type of advertisement is very popular in the weight loss or beauty industry. The effect of this type of advertisement is the fact that the result (weight loss or improved skin quality) is presented as if it were obtained instantaneously or immediately after they purchased the product. But language learning takes time and a lot of effort, and the result of such investment is not always straightforward. WSI's advertisements create an image that learning English will instantaneously transform students' professional and social lives, without much effort or struggle.

English is also presented as a prestigious language that if spoken by a person, gives them respect, recognition and professionalism. This has also been reported by Chang (2004)

as being the case in Taiwan and also Hong Kong. The predominant ideology of English in Taiwan is that without English, people do not get opportunities to enter the highly competitive job market and find themselves locked in marginal employment (Chang, 2004). One of the WSI's advertisements (Figure 4.10) reproduces this ideology:



(Figure 4.10: WSI flier, WSI booth, Central World, December 2012)

In this advertisement, a man is standing in a meeting room, presumably presenting his business ideas to people in a meeting room. The striking feature of the advertisement is the fact that although his clothes and accessories are visible, he himself is invisible. The catch phrase in the flier reads “Without English, It’s like you’re not even there...”

UPGRADE YOURSELF TO BE A PROFESSIONAL'. The underlying message is that if a person does not know English, however bright his ideas are or whatever he does, it is of no use. This kind of representation works to render a person (the viewer) invisible despite their other abilities and qualities, and promotes a view that unless you learn English, you are no one. The overall message is that WSI can help you upgrade yourself to that level. The invisible man in the advertisement is a white-collar worker, showing that WSI's target audience for this kind of advertisement are those in white collar jobs or wish to obtain one. This type of advertisement can have negative effects on a person's self-esteem. It can make the viewers doubt their self-worth and question their abilities which in turn may have effects on their work performance.

Consistently and explicitly presented as a ticket to a better future, English emerges as a worthwhile commodity to invest in. The notion of investment is part and parcel of their effort to commodify English. According to the Oxford Online Dictionary, to 'invest' means to put money into financial schemes, shares, property, or a commercial venture with the expectation of achieving a profit (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/invest?q=invest>; last accessed on April 28, 2013). English, then, is expected to reap a profit, according to Figure 4.11.



(Figure 4.11: WSI Center, Mega Bangna, January 2013)

This advertisement was located at the WSI center at Mega Bangna, visible to anyone who passed by the institute. It is monolingual in English with a young Asian female smiling brightly. It says '**INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE TODAY**'. The words 'invest', 'future' and 'today' are emphasized in bold. The word 'invest' suggests rewards in a later period which is the 'future'. Norton Peirce (1995) defines investment in a target language as "an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (p. 18). By investing in WSI, learners become consumers of English as a product, in an attempt to obtain the benefits of English WSI promises: recognition, career and wealth. However, the term 'invest' has a strong financial implication. Indeed this particular advertisement is similar to advertisements found in the financial sector. English is

presented as an attractive commodity to invest in for one's success later in life; money therefore should not be a concern as the more money you invest, the more rewards you receive in the future. The relationship between the investment and the rewards is presented as straightforward. These advertisements are created for the purpose of enticing viewers to consume the products presented as a guarantee for a better future. However, it is left unclear as to what that 'better future' entails and this is one of the striking common characteristic found in WSI's advertisements.

So far I have discussed the fact that English is constantly presented as a commodity of high value for those who wish to succeed in business in general and in the AEC in particular. The catch phrases and the images both draw on and reproduce the existing notion that English is necessary for job advancement, higher salaries and future success in life. More than two decades ago, Tollefson (1991) stated that if English becomes a way to get better jobs with higher salaries, it might result in unequal social and economic relationships. English is now a form of linguistic capital which provides access to employment and other economic advantages to those who are proficient in it (Chang, 2004). As such, the advertisements function to maintain and reproduce the hegemonic discourse of English as the language everybody should study if they want to succeed, especially in the race towards the AEC. It is therefore suggested that one should invest in learning English to secure their future. This is done so by advertising statements about English in a positive light. Similar to Chang's (2004) study, a strategy of WSI is to highlight the expected benefits of studying English. However, as Piller et al: (2010) have already highlighted, there can be several costs of purchasing this dream such as changes in identity, experiences of discrimination, inability

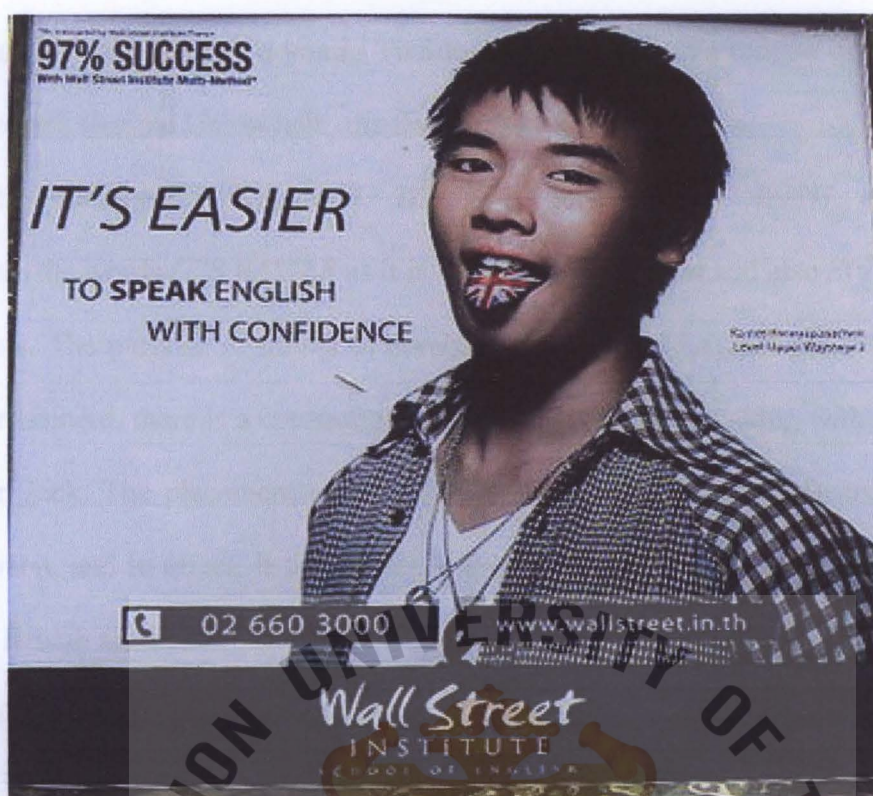
to secure desirable employment, or a sense of shame resulting from being unable to achieve native-like proficiency.

In the next section, I will discuss how WSI commodifies English by promoting different varieties of English.

4.2.2 Branded English

This section presents an analysis of the ways in which WSI advertisements present specific varieties of English. It has emerged that WSI claims to teach only a limited range of English varieties and these varieties include British English, American English and WSI's own English, namely Wall Street English.

In 2007, WSI started creating a series of advertisements which featured models with a painted tongue. The tongue was painted in the flags of two Inner circle countries: the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Then in 2008, the flags were painted on the models' lips instead of the tongues (see Figure 4.12). Below is an example of WSI promoting British English.



(Figure 4.12: Phrom Phong BTS Station, February 2012)

This particular advertisement of WSI was found on a wall of the Phrom Phong BTS Station. The language used in this advertisement is English. The top-left corner reads 97% *SUCCESS with Wall Street Institute Multi-Method** with a remark written much smaller, **as measured by Wall Street Institute France*. The statement below that reads *IT'S EASIER TO SPEAK ENGLISH WITH CONFIDENCE*. Opposite to that statement, on the right side is the model's name and level at the institute. At the bottom of the advertisement is the Wall Street Institute's telephone number 02 660 3000 and website www.wallstreet.in.th along with the logo of the institute *Wall Street INSTITUTE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH* written in white against a blue background. Unlike many other advertisements of private English schools, the advertisement is thoroughly monolingual in English. Finally, the main part of the

advertisement is the model, a young Thai man posing with his tongue out. The tongue is painted to look like the Union Jack, the flag of the United Kingdom.

The statement, *IT'S EASIER TO SPEAK ENGLISH WITH CONFIDENCE*, emphasizes the words *IT'S EASIER* as it is in a much larger font and also *SPEAK* which is in bold letters. The purpose of this is to attract the viewers to *EASIER* and *SPEAK*. So, from this advertisement, there is a connection being made between speaking with confidence and the Union Jack. The placement of this flag on the tongue denotes a British accent on an Asian person, and in effect, it transforms a normal young Thai man into a Thai male with desirable British accent.

In the next example, WSI promotes American English by showing lips painted to resemble the American flag.



(Figure 4.13: WSI advertisement obtained from a blog, Tutor schools in Bangkok [<http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1043633>; last accessed March 28, 2013])

Figure 4.13 shows a young Thai woman smiling with the American flag, the star spangled banner painted on her lips. This is different from the painted tongue in Figure 4.12 but both advertisements convey British English and American English as the desirable variety of English.

From both advertisements (Figures 4.12 and 4.13), it can be inferred that British English and American English are commodified as the standard forms of English, i.e., the right varieties which are worth paying for. On the flip side of the coin, other varieties of English, such as Australian English or Singaporean English are totally absent from WSI's promotional campaigns. As stated in Chapter 2, Standard English is the variety of English spoken by the 'native' speakers which is considered to be the norm and it is believed to be a prestige variety spoken by people in positions of power (Jenkins, 2009b), in this case, the British and American. By promoting these two varieties of English as their products, WSI advertisements reproduce the ideology of British and American English as the desirable varieties. It creates a hierarchy of English where British and American varieties remain at the top whereas other varieties are rendered invisible.

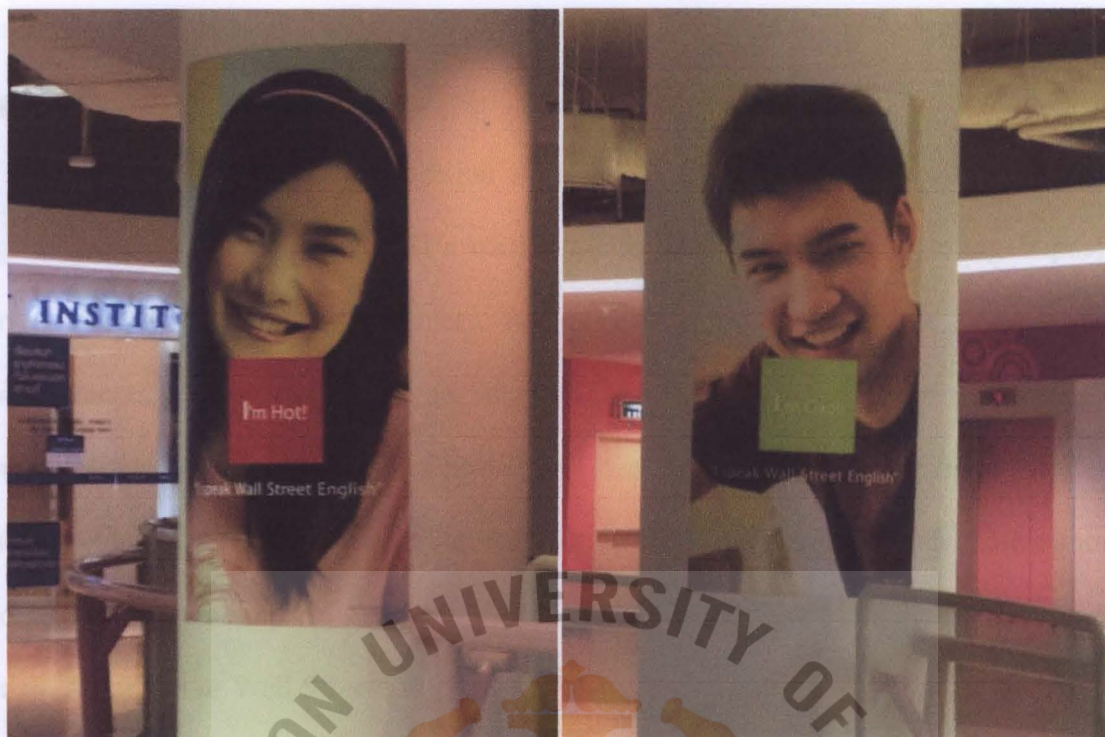
Despite the popular rhetoric that English is for everyone and there are new Englishes emerging in Asia (Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2006), British English and American English remain the most dominant varieties, and from the advertisements above, the two varieties imposed on the lips and tongues of Asian speakers, provide clear evidence. The concept of World Englishes has been completely overlooked even though the language has undergone many changes in different parts of the world, including Thailand. These advertisements are also examples of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) where national imagery (the British and American flags) is used to create positive associations with a product, i.e., English (Piller,

2011). The advertisements imply that the English language belongs to these two nations, the UK and the US, as seen from the use of flags. WSI draws on the existing market value of the two varieties to sell their products and such marketing discourse further valorize and reproduce the value of these two. This is symbolic of the relationship between the West and Asia in terms of English as a global language.

In addition to the existing variety of Englishes, WSI has also created a variety called Wall Street English. It refers to the type of English taught with the WSI method. Wall Street English first caught my attention when I saw advertisements with the captions “*I’m Hot!*” and “*I’m Cool!*”. Figure 4.14 is an example of such an advertisement which was advertised at several BTS stations. According to an article in the Bangkok Post, the BTS Skytrain serves around 600,000 passengers on an average day, with a peak of 715,000 (<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/transport/309806/sukhumvit-bts-line-to-get-four-car-trains-in-october>; last accessed on March 28, 2013), as of September 2012. This means that large numbers of commuters potentially see WSI advertisements on a regular basis. Figure 4.15 also features these captions:



(Figure 4.14: WSI advertisement at BTS Stations)



(Figure 4.15: WSI Center, Union Mall Ladprao, February 2013)

Figure 4.14 shows a woman smiling with the caption *I'm Hot!* "*I speak Wall Street English*". In Figure 4.15, a young woman and a young man are smiling brightly with the captions *I'm Hot!* "*I speak Wall Street English*" and *I'm Cool!* "*I speak Wall Street English*". According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hot>; last accessed March 22, 2013), *Hot* can be defined as something involving sex, such as being sexy whereas *cool* can mean something or someone fashionable or hip (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cool>; last accessed March 22, 2013). The woman is captioned *hot* while the man is captioned *cool*. These advertisements imply that if a woman speaks Wall Street English, she can be seen as sexy and if a man speaks Wall Street English, he is considered fashionable. In both cases, men and women are

presented as desirable and they achieved that state through learning to speak Wall Street English.

The issues raised in this section such as the preference for specific varieties of English and the promotion of WSI's own Wall Street English have a strong impact on learner identity and the wider society. By excluding other varieties of English in the advertisements, whether it be the other Inner Circle countries or the rest of the world, WSI reproduces the ideology of British English and American English as prestigious varieties. Also, by branding WSI's students as *hot* or *cool* because they speak English creates another ideology that desirability can also come from speaking the right kind of English, be they British, American or Wall Street English.

In the next section, I will explore another typical way in which Wall Street Institute commodifies English. That is, through the use of celebrities.

4.2.3 Celebrities

During my data collection period, WSI was opening a new center at Central World, a major shopping center in Bangkok. The opening ceremony was advertised at many places in Central World. WSI invited many guests to come to their opening ceremony including popular Thai celebrities. The use of celebrities to promote a product is a common marketing strategy in today's commercialized world, and according to Chang (2004), "when a spoken text is addressed by a well-known public figure or a celebrity...it becomes relatively authoritative, formal and credible" (p. 118-119). The Thai celebrities in the examples below include Film Rattapoom Toekongsap, Naowarat Yuktanan and Nadech Kugimiya.



(Figure 4.16: Naowarat and Film, WSI Facebook Page)



(Figure 4.17: Nadech at WSI Central World)

Film Rattapoom, a well-known singer in Thailand, has previously been a presenter for WSI. He is seen in Figure 4.16 with his tongue painted in the Union Jack along with Naowarat Yuktanan. Naowarat is a famous Thai actress. She has appeared in videos promoting WSI where she endorses WSI's program by relating her experience as a WSI

student. Nadech is currently one of the most popular actors in Thailand. He was invited as a guest to WSI's opening ceremony at Central World.

Although it is unclear whether these three celebrities can indeed speak English, they do not speak English when they address the audience at WSI's events, promotions or when interviewed (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isilcNMxPAQ>; last accessed March 28, 2013).



(Figure 4.18: Advertisement for Wall Street Silom Center)

WSI claims to be a total English environment school (Figure 4.18) in many of its advertisements and also on its website: “No need to study abroad. With our Total English Environment, we simulate an ideal environment that immerses you in the English world” (<http://www.wallstreet.in.th/index.php/courses/corporate/?lang=en>; last accessed March 28, 2013).

These pictures featuring celebrities also show how commercialized education has become. Schools and universities in Thailand do not usually hire celebrities to promote education. Nor has it been employed as a marketing means for any other language school. WSI invests heavily in the promotion of its product, English, by hiring celebrities to appeal

to a wide audience. The locations of these promotions are in famous shopping centers which are favorites of young Thai people. Hiring celebrities who do not speak to the audience in English implies that promoting English is not the priority for WSI, it is the promotion of the school.

In this section, the representation of English in WSI advertisements has been examined. It was found that the ideologies of British and American English as the desired varieties are implicit in WSI advertisements and that WSI promotes itself by using celebrities, who are and are not able to speak any English. In the next section, student identities in WSI advertisements will be examined.

4.3 Student Identity

This section explores the discursive construction of student identities in WSI advertisements. From the advertisements collected, one major theme that emerged was that males and females in WSI advertisements are presented differently and that the identity of Thai students is constructed as shy in the advertisements. Therefore, this section explores the intersection of gender, ethnicity and cultural identity.

4.3.1 Gender

Among the data collected, 70 advertisements featured models who were depicted as students of WSI. Out of these 70 advertisements, 12 advertisements featured only males, 31 had only females and 27 showed both males and females (see Table 4.1).

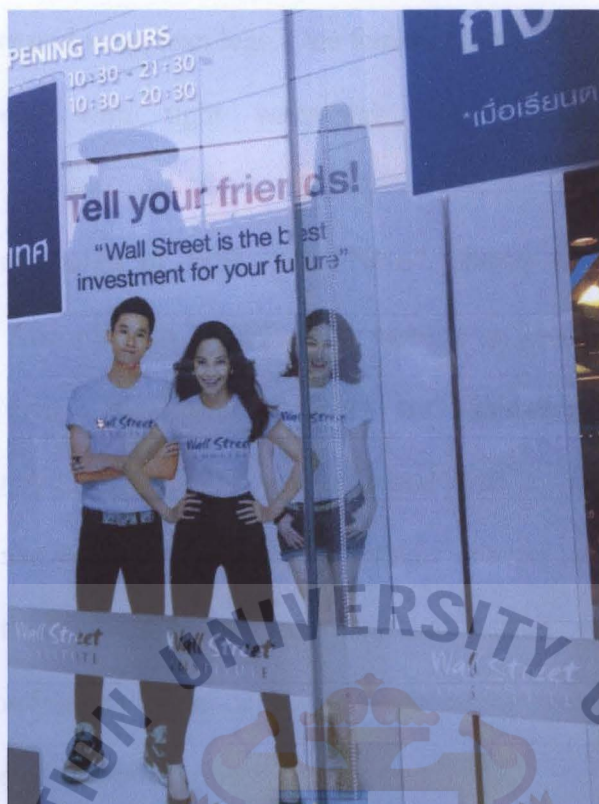
Gender	Number/70	Percentage
Males	12	17
Females	31	44
Males and Females	27	39

(Table 4.1: Gender distribution in WSI advertisements)

Table 4.1 shows that females are seen more often than males in WSI advertisements. This may suggest that WSI targets females more than males and consider women as the primary customers of WSI. At the same time, I found that the male and female models in these advertisements are presented differently. Below are two examples:



(Figure 4.19: WSI Center, Mega Bangna, January 2013)



(Figure 4.20: WSI Center, Major Pinklao, January 2013)

Both the man and the woman in Figure 4.19 are young and dressed casually. The male model is seen standing straight with his arms folded and wearing a “Wall Street” T-shirt with skinny jeans and stylish sneakers. The female model is standing in a relaxed pose, also wearing the “Wall Street” T-shirt and wearing high-heels and shorts. The male model is representing a young Thai male student body whereas the female model represents a young Thai female student body.

In the next advertisement (see Figure 4.20), another female model is added to the picture, also dressed casually. She is standing between the two models and closer to the camera. Again, this female model is dressed contemporarily, wearing skinny jeans and high heels. Skinny jeans are currently a fashion trend in Thailand for men and women as they

emphasize the figure and long, lean legs. One female model shows off her legs and the other model covers them with tight waist-high jeans, emphasizing her figure and cosmopolitanism.

The latest campaign of WSI, “CHANGE”, shows young men and women in a professional space. According to ThaiPR.net, a website on Thailand press releases, WSI has invested more than 20 million baht for launching this new campaign (<http://www.thaipr.net/general/464852>; last accessed June 2, 2013). In this campaign, men and women are shown to have achieved their dreams by studying at WSI. The advertisements in this campaign, in fact, show the “before” and “after” photos of WSI students. The following are some of the advertisements seen at BTS Stations all over Bangkok at the time of data collection.



(Figure 4.21: WSI advertisement at Onnut BTS Station, May 2013)

In Figure 4.21, a young woman dressed as a flight attendant is shown with her photo on a traveling bag. The photo on the bag shows the woman before WSI. Figure 4.21 reads *ก่อนมาเรียนที่วอลล์สตรีท ฉันฝันอยากเป็นแอร์โฮสเตส ส่วนตอนนี้ความฝันเป็นจริงแล้วค่ะ (Before coming to study at Wall Street, I dreamed of being an air hostess. Now, my dream has come true)* [my translation]. The next example (Figure 4.22) shows a young man who achieved what he did not expect.



(Figure 4.22: WSI advertisement at Onnut BTS Station, May 2013)

In Figure 4.22, a young man is shown in formal clothes carrying his photo. This photo is most probably his photo before studying at WSI. Figure 4.22 reads *ก่อนมาเรียนที่วอลล์สตรีท ผมฝันอยากเป็นสจ๊วต ส่วนตอนนี้ผมกำลังจะได้เป็นนักบิน (Before coming to study at Wall Street, I dreamed of studying at a good university. Now, I am about to graduate my university, but a personal dream. It was also observed that most of the*

dreamed of being a steward. Now, I am going to be a pilot) [my translation]. Another advertisement (Figure 4.23) shows another young woman.



(Figure 4.23: WSI advertisement at Onnut BTS Station, May 2013)

In Figure 4.23, a young woman dressed in casual clothes is shown leaping in the air with a wide grin. She is also carrying a ‘before’ photo of herself. Figure 4.23 reads *ก่อนมาเรียนที่วอลล์สตรีท หนูฝันอยากเรียนมหาวิทยาลัยดีๆ ส่วนตอนนี้กำลังจะรับปริญญาแล้วค่ะ* (*Before coming to study at Wall Street, I dreamed of studying at a good university. Now, I am about to graduate*) [my translation]. This advertisement is different from the previous two in that it does not show employment achieved, but a personal dream. It was also observed that most of the

advertisements in this campaign featured females whereas males rarely appeared. However, the males were shown having secured employment in engineering, multinational companies and on the way to become a pilot. Females, on the other hand, were shown with employment in several companies, TV host, flight attendant and others are not related to employment (including graduation from Chulalongkorn University, a top university in Thailand, traveling, and confidence in speaking English). By presenting men as achieving high-ranking, well-paid jobs and women as engaged in the highly feminized service industry and in unspecified positions in companies, the WSI campaign functions to reproduce the gender ideology that is present in the Thai society. While English is presented as a tool of identity transformation for both men and women, the advertisement presents feminized employment as ideal for women, limiting their professional success beyond service jobs and other feminized jobs.

In addition to the link between the construction of gender and employment, I found that students' relationship with their teachers is also highly gendered. In February 2013, WSI held a campaign to promote online learning via the iPad and posted advertisements at the BTS Stations, on posters and fliers. Students do not have to attend classes and can study English and interact with their English teacher virtually on the iPad. Below are the advertisements that were commonly seen during this campaign:



(Figure 4.24: WSI advertisement at Asoke BTS Station, February 2013)



(Figure 4.25: WSI Center, Mega Bangna)



(Figure 4.26: WSI Booth, Mega Bangna)

The advertisements above (Figure 4.24-4.26) show a young woman posing as a student of WSI holding and pointing towards an iPad. The advertisement reads: ใหม่ เหมือนพกอาจารย์ไปด้วย (New. Like carrying your teacher everywhere.) [my translation]. Here, the advertisement promotes online learning by carrying an iPad in her hand that has a teacher's photo on it. The teacher shown on the iPad is a White male, presented as a good-looking, attractive teacher, dressed neatly and smiling.

As far as my data are concerned, there were no advertisements featuring a female student with a White female teacher, a male student with a White female teacher or a male student with a White male teacher. This goes to show that the White male is deliberately and particularly presented as desirable for female students of English. The camera-shot of the White man is "close-personal" (including only head and shoulders) which minimizes the space between the student and the teacher (Takahashi, 2013). The position of the female student clearly shows young Thai women as potential targeted consumers. Similar to Zhang, (2011), the juxtaposition between the White man and the Thai woman in these advertisements constructs two discourses that has been discussed in Takahashi's (2013) study about Japanese Women's desire to study English. Takahashi (2013) analyzed media discourses about learning English in Japan, and found that handsome Western men dressed in suits and ties are constantly presented as "desirable and effective English teachers" and young women as "desirous consumers of Western masculinity and of English as an international language" (p. 125). This particular WSI advertisement is motivated by and thrives on the existing desire that many Thai females see Western men as an ideal partner.

Cohen (2012) wrote that White men (farang in Thai) are popularly perceived as rich, and marriage to them is primarily justified as a means to dramatically improve one's

material standing, security and prosperity. The use of a female student alongside a White male teacher shows the market value of White men and WSI's attempt to appeal to young women in the Thai society. The gender representation and possibility of romance shown in this advertisement is one way that English is gendered, commodified and sold. This is also shown by the difference in the number of males and females present in WSI advertisements. This difference and the advertisements analyzed in this section suggest that WSI commodifies English by gendering, sexualizing and racializing prospective students and teachers.

In the next section, the identity construction of Thai students will be discussed.

4.3.2 Thai Cultural Identity: “Too shy to speak English”

Just like other corporate businesses, WSI runs a series of campaigns all year round. Back in 2011, for instance, WSI ran a campaign titled “Too shy to speak English” where White men went around Bangkok, especially at major BTS stations, to ask Thai people, “Are you too shy to speak English?” The reactions to this question were various (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdXz_nuFcAA&list=PLEF09BCC28E29946B; last accessed March 28, 2013). Some did not answer the question; others just smiled and walked away while there were some others who simply said “yes” and “a little”. The discourse of Thai people as shy and the issue of confidence has been a major marketing strategy of WSI. From the advertisements collected, 12 portray Thais as shy to speak English or having low English proficiency because they do not have confidence in speaking the language. Below are a few examples:



(Figure 4.27: WSI Center, Mega Bangna, January 2013)



(Figure 4.28: WSI Facebook Page)

Figures 4.27 and 4.28 contain the phrases “*Speak English with confidence*” and “*Too shy to speak English?*” These phrases are common among WSI advertisements. The statement “*Speak English with Confidence*” emphasizes on the speaking skill rather than other skills in English. However, adding the emphasis on confidence suggests that being able to speak English alone is not enough. It has to be spoken with confidence and that is the correct way to speak English.

These advertisements draw on and reproduce the circulating discourse of Thai people as being shy and unconfident to speak English. Much of academic and popular literature paint Thai people as shy, curious and unwilling to show their feelings (<http://www.lets-tour-bangkok.com/Thailand-culture.html>; last accessed May 22, 2013). According to Chaidaroon (2003), Thai people conceptualize and strategically choose to present themselves as shy and that Western people consider Thais shy, easy going, fun loving, polite, kind, and reluctant to be in conflict or direct confrontation. However, from the Western perspective, shyness is normally considered an unfavorable trait and is the opposite of assertiveness (Chaidaroon, 2003). WSI uses such widespread discourse to promote their program as a ‘cure’ for such undesirable identity.

Wiriyaichitra (2002) points out that many Thai students already think that they are too shy to speak English even with their classmates. Chaidaroon (2003) states that the ideology of communicative competence varies from culture to culture and shyness is not incompetence. In the data I collected, shyness is often presented as a problem that needs to be solved. Advertisements like those produced by WSI contribute to reproducing the stereotype of Thais being shy, and WSI uses the existing discourse of Thais being shy in their attempt to commodify English.

Another notable characteristic of identity of Thai students in WSI advertisements is their ethnic identity. Most of the models identified in my data seem Thai-Chinese; for instance, they typically look like the students in Figure 4.20 and 4.27. Ethnic Thais make up 75% of the population, and Thais with Chinese background represent only 14% and other groups represent 11% of the Thai population (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>; last accessed June 7, 2013). Obviously, Thai-Chinese are a minority in terms of numbers. However, according to Ockey (1999), they are economic majority in that they are dominantly middle to upper class. WSI advertisements rarely feature individuals from other ethnic backgrounds and predominantly feature the Thai-Chinese as prospective students or teaching assistants in the WSI advertisements. The absence of Thais from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds is representative of how WSI reproduces the image of Thai people.

In this section, I have discussed the discursive construction of gender, professional and cultural identities in WSI advertisements. It emerged that there is an imbalanced and differential representation of men and women in WSI advertisements. The women in the advertisements are presented as having feminized jobs, mainly in the service industry, whereas men are shown in the high-paying, professional employment. I have also discussed gendered relationship between students and teachers where the White man was presented as being desirable for Thai female students. The cultural identity created in WSI advertisements is that Thais are shy and need to change this habit which can be achieved through WSI. In the next section, I will move on to discuss the construction of teacher identities.

4.4 Teacher Identity

In this section, I will explore the construction of identity as the ideal English teacher in the WSI advertisements. First, the differences in the number of appearances of the White English teachers and Asian English teachers will be discussed, followed by the difference in gender appearances.

4.4.1 Racial Identity

Like many Asian countries, foreign teachers are employed to teach English in Thailand. I have taught English in Bangkok for a number of years, and I have observed that Thai teachers of English are often hired to teach grammar, reading and writing whereas foreign teachers are hired to teach conversation. Foreign teachers who teach English in Thailand are usually from an English-speaking country, which includes the Philippines, Singapore and India. Native-speakers of English, in particular White teachers, are also popular and considered to be “the owner of the language”.

This ideology of white native speaker as ideal teachers is also seen in my data. The differences between White teachers and Thai teachers of English are constructed through differential representation of White and Asian teachers, and I will demonstrate this point through the frequency of appearances in the advertisements and job descriptions for the position of “ESL teacher” and “Personal Tutor”.

To begin with, at WSI, the position of ESL Teacher is given only to Western English teachers whereas Asian English teachers are hired for the position of Personal Tutor. According to the job description, the actual teaching and learning is with the ESL teacher

while the Personal Tutor is there to help students with any problems they face during self-study (<http://www.wallstreet.in.th/index.php/jobs/?lang=en>; last accessed May 22, 2013). The teacher identity distribution is given below (Table 4.2). 19 advertisements feature teachers. In some advertisements, both male and female teachers are seen. These are counted separately. 18 advertisements show male teachers and three show female teachers. Out of these advertisements, 20 white teachers were seen: 18 males and two females. There was only one Asian-looking teacher.

Teachers	Males/18		Females/3	
	White Male	Asian Male	White Female	Asian Female
Number	18	0	2	1
White teachers=20	18		2	
Asian teachers=1		0		1

(Table 4.2: Teacher distribution in WSI advertisements)

As can be seen from Table 4.2, Asian teachers are almost invisible in WSI advertisements. The teachers commonly seen are White Westerners. Figure 4.29 is one example of a White teacher found on the WSI Website.



(Figure 4.29: WSI website, January 2013)

In Figure 4.29, a young White man is sitting casually among small models of buildings. The advertisement reads “*No more obstacles to learn English. Meet teach anywhere*”. This advertisement refers to the Wall Street English Channel where students can communicate with the teachers online without having to go to the WSI center. By presenting the White man as a teacher in the WSI advertisements, WSI promotes White males as the ideal English teacher. Chang’s (2004) analysis of advertisements indicated that White teachers are considered as the ideal English teacher in Taiwan, and this is consistent with the findings by Takahashi (2013). The advertisement is designed to give viewers the impression that students will study only with White teachers at WSI. However, what is not shown is that students have to attend classes with a Thai teacher before going on to study in sessions with White teachers. In fact, Thai teachers are the first point of contact at WSI, and yet they remain largely invisible in WSI advertisements.

It is also found that Thai teachers are marginalized as seen from the job advertisements below (Figure 4.30):

ESL Teachers:

Benefits:

- ▶ Competitive salary of 47,500 Baht/month
- ▶ visa service
- ▶ Work permit and Teachers license
- ▶ Medical Insurance
- ▶ Paid annual leave
- ▶ 'Flight Bonus' on completion of a year of service
- ▶ Assistance in relocation (for international applicants)

Your profile:

- ▶ Native English speaker
- ▶ University Degree*
- ▶ 120-hour CELTA or equivalent*
- ▶ Excellent interpersonal skills
- ▶ Eager to learn and develop professionally
- ▶ Dedicated and dynamic in a team environment
- ▶ Inspiring and supportive to your students

Personal Tutors:

Benefits:

- ▶ Competitive salary of 19,000 Baht/month
- ▶ Medical Insurance
- ▶ Generous bonus scheme
- ▶ Paid annual leave
- ▶ Free unlimited access to the WSI English course (up to 100,000 Baht value)

Your profile:

- ▶ Thai Nationality with a University Degree
- ▶ Excellent command of spoken and written English
- ▶ Excellent interpersonal skills
- ▶ Eager to learn and develop professionally
- ▶ Dedicated and dynamic in a team environment
- ▶ Previous teaching or training experience an advantage

(Figure 4.30: WSI Website, February 2013)

The job advertisement shows the required qualifications and benefits for two positions at WSI, i.e., the ESL Teachers and the Personal Tutors. These jobs are nationality-specific; the position of ESL Teacher is for a native English speaker whereas the Personal Tutor is for Thai citizens. The position of ESL Teacher requires a university degree and a 120-hour CELTA or equivalent certificate. The other position also requires a university degree but the requirement for a teaching certificate has not been specified. Furthermore, previous teaching experience is not required for the ESL Teacher but it is an advantage for someone who applies for the position of the Personal Tutor. The other job requirement difference is that the Personal Tutors need “excellent command of spoken and written English” whereas this is not a job requirement for the ESL Teacher. It is taken for granted that the Native English speaker will have “excellent command of spoken and written English”.

Examining the job advertisements above in terms of salary, job qualifications, job benefits and nationality, the first striking difference between ESL Teachers and Personal Tutors lies in that of salary. The Native English teachers receive a salary of 47,500 Baht while the Thai teachers receive a much lower salary of 19,000 Baht. According to the National Education Commission's website, the average salary of Thai teachers in public schools is roughly 150,000 baht per year or 12,500 baht per month (<http://www.edthai.com/reform/jan20d.html>; last accessed May 23, 2013) whereas the average salary of foreign teachers range from 25,000 baht to 60,000 baht per month (<http://www.onlinetefl.com/tefl-jobs-abroad/tefl-jobs-in-asia/tefl-jobs-in-thailand/>; last accessed May 23, 2013). This shows that the native speaker is valued more and has the more prestigious status than local Thai teachers.

The next notable difference is that of job benefits. It is clear from the job advertisement that ESL Teachers are entitled to more benefits than the Personal Tutors. The ESL Teachers get some extra benefits such as visa service, work permit, teacher's license, "flight bonus" on completion of a year of service and assistance in relocation. Personal Tutors, on the other hand, receive a generous bonus scheme and free unlimited access to the WSI English course. By giving free access to the English courses, WSI gives less value to the English proficiency level of Thai teachers, implying indirectly that their English is in need of constant improvement and is thus not as good as that of the ESL Teachers. I will further demonstrate this issue by examining the representation of these two positions in other WSI advertisements.

In WSI advertisements, the White teachers or the ESL Teachers are depicted much more often (20) than the Personal Tutors (1). Through this kind of advertisement, "native

English speakers” are given a priority and identity as the ideal teacher of English, while Thai nationals, even with “excellent command of spoken and written English”, will always be second-class as an English teacher with less salary than their foreign counterparts. This is further seen in the examples below from the WSI website page: “10 Reasons Why People Choose Wall Street English”

5. Someone to Boost Your Confidence When You Need It



You'll have your own Personal Course Consultant who will get to know you and prepare your study plan and then be there whenever you need them for support, encouragement, and guidance.

(Figure 4.31: WSI Website, February 2013)

9. A Relaxed and Easy Going Atmosphere



Your classes will be run by professionally trained and qualified foreign teachers. These friendly experts will keep the atmosphere relaxed and informal, and make sure that you're always enjoying things while you're learning.

(Figure 4.32: WSI Website, February 2013)

Figure 4.31 describes the Personal Tutor sessions and Figure 4.32 shows the classes with the ESL Teachers. The Personal Tutors are shown as ‘consultant(s)’, not as teachers. The picture in Figure 4.31 shows a Thai female tutor. They are presented as the nurturer who supports the students and motivates them to reach their goals. In Figure 4.32, a white male teacher is presented as teaching the classes and described as informal, relaxed and fun. However, the words ‘professionally trained’, ‘qualified foreign teachers’ and ‘friendly experts’ all describe the ESL Teacher who is given a superior role and more professional description than the Thai teachers.

By separating the positions of English teachers, WSI creates a clear hierarchy where native speakers come on top and Thai teachers, no matter how qualified, will always be at the bottom because of their race and linguistic identity. English is therefore sold and commodified as a language of the native speakers and that native-like proficiency in English is not given the same status as that of the native speakers. WSI advertisements reproduce the existing ideology of native speakers being the ideal English teacher, and restrict the identity of the Thai English teacher as below the native speakers as assistants to them. The Thai English teachers at WSI are therefore an “appetizer” before the main course with the native speaker teachers who, by definition in the job advertisements, are the *actual* and *real* teachers.

From all these examples, it can be seen that there is not just a preference of ‘native’ over ‘non-native’ but also of White over non-White. Even though native speakers of English are not necessarily “White”, it is the assumption in many Asian countries that native speakers are equated to being White. Advertisements such as those shown above capitalize on the discourse of white superiority, reproducing and reinforcing the problematic assumption in Thailand.

In this study I have examined ideologies, student identities and teacher identities created by the advertisements of Wall Street Institute. I have shown how English is commodified by this particular institute in different ways such as the representation of English, student identities, teacher identities and corporate identity. In the next chapter, I will provide some implications of the findings.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I begin by revisiting my research questions and providing a brief summary of my findings. I will then move on to offer a number of implications, discuss the limitations of the study and offer recommendations for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The first part of Chapter 4 explored discourses of English implicit in WSI advertisements. I found that English is presented as a language needed for the better future of Thai people in Thailand in the context of the AEC 2015. English is identified as a key to success which is narrowly defined in terms of wealth, social recognition and white collar employment. Moreover, WSI advertisements present the kind of corporate world where, without English, one has little chance of being able to gain respect, prestige or status. It is therefore proposed as profitable to invest in learning English with WSI who, in a vague way, guarantees success. Other than identifying English as a key to a better future, WSI advertisements also brand English as the language of the UK and the US and as a language which brings desirability to the person who speaks it by labeling the speakers as ‘hot’ and ‘cool’.

The second part of Chapter 4 investigated the identity construction of students. To begin with, I found that there is a sexual relationship created in the advertisements between female students and White male teachers. In the recent campaign, CHANGE, men and women of WSI are shown having achieved jobs. However, it was also found that job types shown to have been achieved by women are different from the job types shown to have been

achieved by men. For both male and female students, a cultural identity of 'shyness' is created in the advertisements. Thais are presented as shy, and their shyness is in turn presented as the cause of their limited success in learning English.

The last part of Chapter 4 explored the construction of teacher identities in WSI advertisements. It emerged that priority is given to White native speakers of English and that Asian or Thai teachers of English are sidelined in the WSI advertisements. This was seen most profoundly in the job advertisement and several advertisements featuring teachers.

In the next section, I will provide some implications of the findings.

5.2 Implications

The study has provided insights into the research questions formulated in Chapter 1. These questions are: "What languages, symbols and images can be found in the materials?", "What kinds of identities and meanings are constructed?" and, "What language ideologies are implicit in those materials?" In this section, I will provide the implications of the study.

The study has demonstrated that the lack of English proficiency is constantly presented as a major setback for Thai people to develop a desirable career, particularly towards the launch of AEC. What emerges in the WSI advertisements is thus the decisive role of English in determining who will or will not be able to develop professional career. English has been advertised as having many benefits for the country especially in the context of the AEC. And, many Thai English learners believe that their efforts to acquire proficiency in English will result in a well-paid job and a better future.

This promotional practice of presenting English as a property of the UK and the US has a significant implication for the field of World Englishes. The fact that these two Englishes are constantly promoted as the standard varieties necessarily renders other types of Englishes less legitimate and attractive. There is an implication of Thai English as incorrect. By implying that the English spoken by Thais is incorrect, it also means that Thai English is not as prestigious and therefore should not be desired. Thai English is inferior to these two varieties. However, language is not only a tool of communication, but also serves as a carrier of cultural heritage (Chang, 2004), and as such Thailand stands to lose its culture through this change.

English can lead to a variety of inequalities rather than bring about social change. For instance, as English has increasingly become a major criterion for employment, English language education may lead to inequality between urban and rural areas and between English speakers and non-English speakers. However, what the government needs to realize is that although mastering English may be an important goal for learners, the learners may desire something else which has greater importance to them, such as their personal lives and family.

English as a key to success has resulted in an overemphasis on English language learning. For instance, Chang (2004) points out that despite a widespread belief in Taiwan that Hong Kong and Singapore perform better than Taiwan in terms of English proficiency, Taiwan in fact outperformed both places during the recent Asian economic crisis. This shows that economic success is not determined merely by English language ability. In reality, a variety of other factors may be far more important. It does not mean that English will be the only determiner in employment or success. On the other hand, if you are not a

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white-collar worker, English may bring more costs than benefits. This has been seen in Piller et al: (2010) where many Japanese students go abroad to study English but instead of getting recognized or achieving their dreams by studying English, they suffered a loss of identity.

By stressing continuously that Thais are shy, the advertisements can have a profound effect on the identities of students. Identities are not innate, but they are created, performed and constantly negotiated. Students who can speak English confidently may receive negative effects of this stereotype. This type of stereotype does not give anybody any confidence. Moreover, it can lower their confidence level as the whole society is constructed as shy.

Also, constructing Thai students as shy can have unwanted effects on student ability in the classroom. Shyness is seen as a negative quality because students who are shy do not participate well in class activities, contributing little to class projects, thereby receiving less benefits from the lesson. These advertisements may thus have the effect of spreading this quality in students as they start identifying themselves as being shy. As Chaidaroon (2003) has argued, shyness in Thai society is often intentional and can even benefit their learning process. It has been stated that Thais sometimes deliberately appear to be shy in order to maintain social harmony. Shyness, for the Thai, is then a strategic performative behavior which is not a result of external factors or incompetent behavior (Chaidaroon, 2003).

Furthermore, the study has also demonstrated that WSI advertisements present native English speaking teachers as the ideal teachers. The advertisements function to perpetuate the ideology of “native speaker superiority” (Zhang, 2011). However, there have been many debates on the efficiency of native English speaking teachers over the efficiency of non-native English speaking teachers or vice versa. WSI advertisements may contribute to

creating inequalities between the native speakers and Thai speakers of English. From the job advertisement (Figure 4.30) in Chapter 4 alone, we already see several ways in which the native speaker teacher is valued more than the Thai teacher. Thai teachers will always be second-class as an English teacher, as seen from the difference in the salary given, the benefits and the bonus for studying English. The bonus of 100,000 baht for studying English shows that Thai teachers' English is not perfect and needs improvement. A 100,000 baht is a large amount for learning a language at a private language school. The improvement needed is then, not little, but significant. The implication is that the self-esteem, self-worth and motivation of Thai teachers of English can be seriously affected. It can have serious negative effects on the identity of Thai teachers, causing a loss of hope, regret in learning English, and a drastic effect on job performance.

Finally, the effect of these advertisements may manifest itself in the English classroom, where students value native speakers of English more than the Thai teachers and consider Thai teachers to be good in English, but not as good as the White teachers. What the Thai teachers teach in the classroom is then, not as important as the content of the White teachers because they are considered to be the owners of the language.

5.3 Limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations of this study. First, these findings may be seen as limited as the number of advertisements collected was over a short period of time and that I was selective in choosing these data from the corpus of advertisements available. The number of advertisements was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of key ideologies and identity options. To achieve such a goal within a limited time span of a Master's thesis, it is more

productive to work with a limited number of advertisements than a large number. The findings discussed can therefore provide a framework for a much larger study and future research.

5.4 Recommendation for future studies

Future research should look at many language schools in Thailand in order to broaden our understanding of how English is commodified in Thailand. As little research has been conducted on commercial language schools, there is a broad scope of exploring in detail the discursive construction of student and teacher identity as compared to those in public schools. In writing this thesis, I realize that the study does not take a heteroglossic approach to language and that this is a weakness of this study. Future study will benefit from adding interviews of students and teachers which may provide deeper insights into the intersection between macro and micro discourses of English, identity construction and power. Such insights are urgently needed in the context of growing importance and value attached to English as a commodity in Thailand.

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