

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.