

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

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Abstract

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

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

Introduction

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

recent media discourses and scholars are also increasingly engaging in the discussion on this link (Foley, 2013; Imperiani, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2003, 2008, 2010; Takahashi, 2012).

While in the past learning a foreign language was approached from its educational perspective, the appeal now is its value as a ‘product’ and on its association with career development and social status (Lavankura, 2013). As such it has become a commodity itself and acts as a resource to be produced, controlled, distributed and valued. 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). 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). 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, namely the Wall Street Institute of English (WSI).

Founded in Italy in 1972, WSI is a private English language school with over 420 centers in 28 countries worldwide. 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.

One of the selling points of WSI is its unique teaching method (<http://www.wallstreet.in.th/en/WallStreetInternational.aspx>). 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). 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? And,
- (2) What language ideologies are implicit in those materials?

English as a Global Language

English is widely considered as a global language today, serving as a tool for international communication in various domains of importance including business, finance, education and tourism. English is indeed 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).

Kachru (1992) introduced the term “World Englishes” to refer to various types of English spoken across the globe. The concept 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 (2009) 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).

Jenkins (2009) 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 (2009) 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, 2009). 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).

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.

Commodification of Language in the New Economy

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).

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). In the similar way, English as a language, too, is increasing commodified, 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”.

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).

The Spread of English in Thailand

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). 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 (Wiriyachitra, 2002).

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.

Methodology

The data that are collected for this study are media discourses, i.e., promotional materials produced by WSI. I have built a 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 *WSI centers* which include pictures, texts and symbols in advertisements that can be found at WSI centers around Bangkok, the *WSI website*, <http://www.wallstreet.in.th/>, *Blogs on language schools* and *WSI in Bangkok’s linguistic landscape* from where 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 found on other websites.

Types of advertisements	Number of advertisements
Billboards and posters	26
Fliers	3
Electronic advertisements (LCD)	7
Advertisements on the WSI website	28
Advertisements on the WSI Facebook page	29
Advertisements of WSI as seen on other websites	8

(Table I: Types of WSI Advertisements)

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

CDA is a multidisciplinary approach devoted to the study of relations between discourse, power, dominance, and social inequality. Fairclough (1992) states that CDA does not just describe discursive practices, but focuses on “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). A critical approach on discourse analysis explores issues such as class, cultural difference, ethnicity, ideology, identity, gender, and power, and how they are manifested

in particular texts.

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. 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.

Findings

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). The AEC is to be a united economy which allows the free flow of goods and services 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.



(Figure 1: WSI booth, Mega Bangna, January 2013)

This advertisement (see Figure 1) was found at the WSI booth at Mega Bangna, a large shopping center in Samut Prakarn, on the outskirts of Bangkok. As mentioned previously, 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.

In Figure 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.



(Figure 2: WSI Center, Future Park Rangsit, February 2013)

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 2).

The advertisement in Figure 2 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;>) 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 3, WSI describes English as the key to a better job.



(Figure 3: BTS Adult Pass)

Figure 3 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 and Figure 5).



(Figure 4: WSI Website, January 2013)



(Figure 5: WSI Website, January 2013)

Figure 4 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 5) 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 6, the advertisement reads: เปลี่ยนแปลงอนาคตของคุณได้วันนี้ที่วอลล์สตรีท (*Change your future today at Wall Street*) [my translation].



(Figure 6: WSI Website, May 2013)

By using these taglines in the advertisements, WSI presents itself as a language school that can chance 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 7) reproduces this ideology:



(Figure 7: 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;>) English, then, is expected to reap a profit, according to Figure 8.

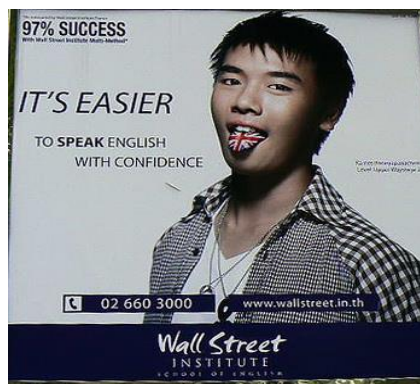


(Figure 8: WSI Center, Mega Bangna, January 2013)

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.

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 9). Below is an example of WSI promoting British English.



(Figure 9: Phrom Phong BTS Station, February 2012)

This particular advertisement of WSI was found on a wall of the Phrom Phong BTS Station in Bangkok. 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.

From the advertisements collected, 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 Singapore/Malaysian English are totally absent from WSI’s promotional campaigns. 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 10 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;>), as of September 2012. This means that large numbers of commuters potentially see WSI advertisements on a regular basis. Figure 10 also features these captions:



(Figure 10: WSI Center, Union Mall Ladprao, February 2013)

In Figure 10, 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;>), *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;). 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.

Conclusion

The study found that that English is presented as a language needed for potentially better future for Thai people 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 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. 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. By implying that the English spoken by Thais is incorrect, it also means that Thai English is not as prestigious and that it is inferior to UK and US 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 being associated with economic success has resulted in an

overemphasis on English language learning. 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 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 may also suffer a loss of identity. 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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