

**MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY**

**ISSUES OF INTERDISCURSIVITY IN THE COMMERCIALISATION OF  
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: THE CASE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
TEACHING**

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on how commercialisation affects professional practices, specifically those of English language teachers. The study takes as its setting the private English language teaching sector in Australia, known as the ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) sector. The research question is *'How does commercialisation affect the professional practices of teachers who work in ELICOS colleges in Australia?'*.

To investigate this question, a "multi-perspectived" (Candlin 1997, p. xiv) approach to discourse analysis is developed. This seeks to address the implications of Cicourel's (1982, 1992, 1996) call for "ecological validity" (1982, pp. 1ff) in social and sociolinguistic research. These implications include the need to account for interrelations between language and context, for macro and micro social phenomena, for choices in research methodology, for the position of the researcher within discourse analysis, and, more generally, for the social-situatedness of discourse analysis itself.

The framework integrates theoretical and research traditions from linguistics and sociology within five 'perspectives': that of the analyst, the participants, the social resource, the social practice, and the social/institution. To enable their operationalisation in research, these perspectives are integrated with the "interactive" model of data analysis developed by Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 12ff). This offers a reflexive and iterative model in which the stages of the research process inform each other, and are continually refined in response to emergent findings.

The research design employs this framework to investigate the discourses which shape teachers' ability to maintain their standards of professional practice. In operationalising the *analyst's perspective*, my resources as the analyst are explained in relation to those of the participants, to the study itself, and to the social-theoretical account

of commercialisation developed throughout the study. The other perspectives are operationalised using five data sets, the *participants' perspective* draws on critical incident diaries kept by ELICOS teachers; the *social resource* perspective on promotional brochures produced by ELICOS colleges; and the *social/institutional perspective* draws on published data – the News-letter of the sector's peak body, regulations of the industry regulatory authority, and teacher training materials. *The social practice perspective* is not operationalised because this would have exceeded the scope of the current study by including data reflecting examples of teachers' practices.

As part of this design, the findings of the diary and brochure analyses are compared to seek evidence of interdiscursive relations between them. This comparison yields a pattern of correlations which evidences the operation of the 'discourse of commercialisation'. As the dominant discourse within the colleges, this, it is argued, advances the construction of managers, teachers and students as a 'community of consumption', within which teaching and learning are 'consumption processes'. Based on the analysis of the social/institutional data, and explained by the social-theoretical account of commercialisation developed through the study, these constructions are, it is argued, themselves advanced by the operations of macro actors and legitimised by "neoliberal discourse" (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 95).

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JAC', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jonathan Alexander Crichton

June 23, 2003

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AEI	Australian Education International
AV-CC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
CTEFLA	Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
EA	ELICOS Association
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESLE	English as a Second Language Educators
ESOS Act	Education Services for Overseas Students Act
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
National Code	National code of practice for registration authorities and providers of education and training to overseas students
NEAS	National ELT Accreditation Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate