



Thai Language

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

Four years of experience boiled down to less than 40 pages

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V Group

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INTRODUCTION

Let's get straight to the point. This booklet will reveal techniques on how to take on learning the Thai language. Many people have been in Thailand for decades without being able to keep a simple conversation, while some have been here a few years and can already do this with ease. So what makes the difference? Throughout "Thai Language. Straight to the point" I will share my experiences, tips and tricks on how you can master this beautiful language. Everyone that are, have been or are considering learning Thai should invest the time to read this booklet.

First off, don't tell me that you don't have the time. If you want to learn it, you will make time. Easy as that. Of course, I understand that taking on a second or third language beside a full time job is quite challenging, but defiantly not impossible. It's all about priority and time management. Invest your time in learning this language. The more minutes you practice, the better you will become. The more times you repeat the sentence, the more it will stick, simple as that. Let me make one thing very clear; THERE IS NO HALF WAY. Either you do it or you don't. Set your goal straight from day one. What level of proficiency do you aim for?

I firmly believe, that you cannot master the Thai language from abroad, you need to be in Thailand. Of course you can lay a solid foundation as a beginning, but to take your language to the next level, you need to mingle with Thai every single day. Remember; keep your roots and accept that you aren't a Thai. You need to make mistakes, a lot of them, in order to improve. Without mistakes you won't get challenged to get out of your comfort zone. Great things happens when you break the barrier. Keep your foreign way of thinking as well as the discipline and stay focused. There is no "I will start tomorrow" or "I will start on Monday", do yourself the favor and start at this very moment. Don't waste your time, nor mine. Let's plunge straight in to it.

MY JOURNEY

During my final year in high school I decided to set a path for my future. A path that my friends found strange. I retired from the Danish Karate National Team in order to take Thai lessons online. I found this great teacher, Mia (www.learn2speakthai.net), where we had lessons in the morning before my classes at high school. She was sitting in Chiang Mai and me in Denmark, connected through Skype. She taught me all of the basic and laid the best possible foundation for my further plans. Over a period of ten months I had 93 lessons. My focus shifted from doing hand-ins at school, to practice my Thai in the evening, and then again at 5am before my lesson started. Before I left Denmark I also studied Thai I, Thai II and Thai III courses at Studieskolen in Copenhagen. These courses also build a solid foundation, but I was ahead of the courses due to my private lessons with Mia.

In December 2010 I got enrolled into Stamford International University (Thailand) to study my bachelors degree in International Business Management, and I enrolled into the Thai program, which meant that I was going to be the only foreigner out of five-hundred Thai students. I passed the interview and were bound to start my first semester in June 2011. Graduating from high school June 25th I was attending my first class at Stamford June 27th. No summer break, straight on the path to follow my vision. Straight to the point.

Three years of being around Thai's have had its great advantages. I have learned how Thai's approach assignments, how they think, how to discuss issues and most of all, how to take the leadership role in a different culture. I have burnt my fingers numerous times, still burn them on a regular basic and probably will for many years to come. What I want to reflect in this booklet is, that learning Thai to a fluent state is possible. I am no wonder child, but I have put in the effort that it takes, and I challenge you to do the same thing. The more you put in, the more results come out.

SO YOU WANT TO LEARN THAI?

Time is your most important asset, so use it wisely. There are tons of language learning books out there saying something like; read this phenomenal book and you can master Thai in one night. Don't believe such nonsense. Learning a new language, and especially Asian languages, takes a lot of time and effort. As described above, I learned Thai before coming to Thailand. Private lessons on Skype as well as Thai courses in Copenhagen. Both techniques were very useful, because with the private lessons I got corrected in everything that I said or wrote, instantly. In the classroom I learned by listening to the mistakes made by my classmates. I will do my best to boil down four years of experience with the Thai language, in order to give you the essence. Follow the tips I provide in this booklet, take what you can use, discard what you can't. Create your own story, create your own path.

Buy:

Talking Thai (smart phone application)

This little application might be the best investment you can make on your journey. It's available at both the AppStore and the Android market. It's fairly pricy, but trust me, it will be worth every single penny. Forget about the paper dictionary, I have had one for all four years, but I still haven't used it, and probably never will. When you look up a word, it will also tell you, by a little symbol, how formal the word is, i.e. a man in suit will appear if formal, a Dharma buddhist logo appear if used in religious situations, a bomb represent slang and a skull will represent words that are very impolite which you should refrain from using. The dictionary has a list that explain all of these symbols under the "help" tap.

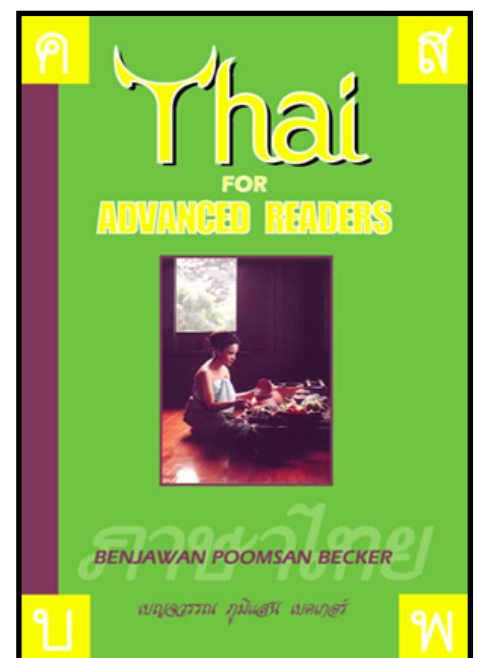
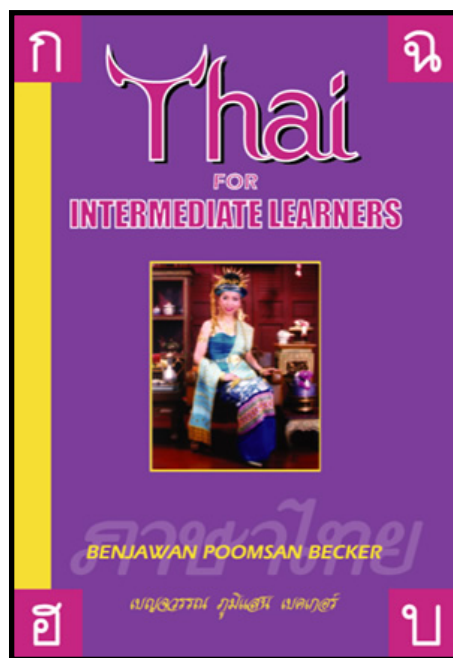
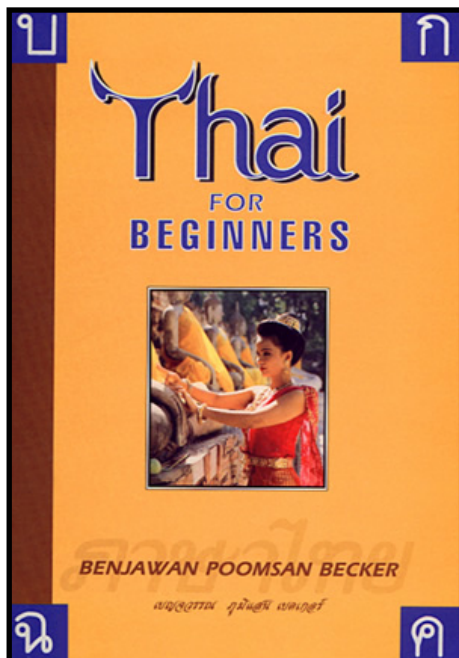
Whiteboard

A whiteboard is essential. What I do is using my fridge and mirrors as whiteboards. This will come in handy when you are doing your "words of the day" which will be described later. For me the whiteboard technique has worked just fine, but some people find it better to write on A4 paper and put it up around their room e.g. in the bedroom, living room or even the toilet wall.

RECOMMENDED THAI LEARNING BOOKS

These three books from Ajarn Benjawan is great weapons in your arsenal. They provide a solid understanding of sentence structure, expanding your vocabulary and in general help building a solid foundation. I have used all three books, and I must say that I felt the biggest progress from the second book “Thai for Intermediate Learners”. The book have great practice drills after each chapter for you to remember what you have just read. But the step from the second book up to the third is steep, the level defiantly change from intermediate to advance.

In general Thai grammar is reasonably straight forward, but there are many rules, especially when it comes to the written part. My Thai teacher, Mia, provided me with the Thai Cheat Sheets, which I can highly recommend. Straight to the point on the Thai alphabet and the different rules. Combine that with the tips I have provided and you are good to go. You can download the Thai Cheat Sheets here (<http://www.emil.dk/side.asp?ID=13810>).



TONES & SOUND

If the tone is wrong, or you put the pressure at the wrong place, the word can get a whole different meaning. Therefore, pay close attention to this chapter. This is just a guide line on how to help you on the right track, you will only progress if you do your homework. A key is: talk slow and clearly. There is no need to speed it up in order to “sound like a native”, because you won’t. Take it easy, take your time and get the pronunciation right. A little tip; put in some earplugs and speak out loud. This will help you to hear your voice more clearly so you can stop your mistakes and know where you need to improve. To record your own voice and play it over and over again is also a very good technique. In the beginning you will be embarrassed to hear your own Thai, but get over that because it will help you improve a lot. Then you can listen to your voice recordings everywhere; in the sky train, the car or just in your room.

I am not a fan of the phonetic alphabet, as a matter of fact I detest it. Who invented that ŋ should be written a K when it makes a G sound? and tʰ written as a T when it makes a DT sound? As you progress with the Thai alphabet you will, like me and many others, start to question it. I agree and understand that there are some sounds that you can’t write with the Roman alphabet, but your teacher can teach you the sounds, so don’t go too hard about learning the phonetic alphabet as it is a waste of time. Learn the basics and then forget about it. **(L)** behind the phonetic word meaning a low tone, **(H)** meaning a high tone, **(F)** meaning a falling tone, **(R)** meaning a rising tone and if there is no symbol then it’s a middle tone.

WORDS OF THE DAY

Words of the day is an essential step in expanding your vocabulary. To remember words there’s only technique that works; repetition. Choose no more than five words a day, write them on your whiteboard, fridge or mirror. The reason I want you to write them on the board and not on a paper, is because you need to be exposed to the words as often as possible. Write the word, read it out loud, erase it, write it again, read it out loud, erase it again. Continue this process until they stick. Then leave it for some hours and get back to them. Repeat these 5 words no less than three times a day. I recommend; do it in the morning. When you come home from work/university and then again before sleep. In the start it will be difficult to stay focused, but you will develop a habit within a week. Trust me on this technique.

As you progress so should the level of difficulty. Try to put up some more difficult words than last time, challenge yourself. I only want you to put up single words, no sentences. Why? Do these sentences on a paper or somewhere else. Keep them separated. You will slowly feel that your vocabulary is expanding and these words become more natural to you. However, a crucial factor is, USE THEM. If you only study them by yourself without trying them out in public or between friends, then forget about it. They will only be imprinted in your memory if it sticks to a certain situation. Use your dictionary (Talking Thai) and be creative. If you need inspiration then go do a quick search on Google or open a book, it's all about you being hungry for learning.

When I choose words I like to keep them in the same category for that day. Let's say I'm expanding my vocabulary in the **field of economics**, then I would choose words like this:

เศรษฐกิจ	{set ^(L) ta ^(L) git ^(L) }	(economy)
เศรษฐศาสตร์	{set ^(L) ta ^(L) saat ^(L) }	(economics)
เงินเฟ้อ	{ngen feer ^(H) }	(inflation)
เงินฝืด	{ngen fyd ^(L) }	(deflation)
ดอกเบี้ย	{dork ^(L) bia ^(F) }	(interest)
ผลตอบแทน	{pon ^(R) dtorb ^(L) tan}	(return)
เงินปันผล	{ngen bpan pon ^(R) }	(dividend)
ฝากประจำ	{faak ^(L) bpra ^(L) jam}	(fixed deposit)
บัญชี	{ban chii}	(account/accounting)
ออมทรัพย์	{orm sap ^(H) }	(save/save up)

In the **field of sports** it could be something like this:

แขน	{khaen ^(R) }	(arm)
ขา	{khaa ^(R) }	(leg)
มือ	{mue}	(hand)
เท้า	{tao ^(H) }	(foot)

เหงื่อ	[nguea ^(L)]	(sweat)
สนาม	[snaam ^(R)]	(field)
ผู้ชม	[puu ^(F) chom]	(spectator)
น้ำเกลือแร่	[naam ^(H) gluea rae ^(F)]	(mineral water)
ผ้าเช็ดตัว	[paa ^(F) chet ^(H) dtua]	(towel)
กรรมการ	[gam ma ^(H) gaan]	(judge)

In the **field of politics** it could be something like this:

การเมือง	[gaan muang]	(politics)
ประชาธิปไตย	[bpra ^(L) chaa tip ^(H) bpa ^(L) dtai]	(democracy)
ประธานาธิบดี	[bpra ^(L) taa naa ti ^(H) bor dee]	(president)
ประชาชน	[bpra ^(L) chaa chon]	(population)
ประชากร	[bpra ^(L) chaa gorn]	(population)
กองทัพ	[gorng-tap ^(H)]	(army)
นายกรัฐมนตรี	[naa-yok ^(H) rat ^(H) ta ^(L) mon dtree]	(prime minister)
ประชาสัมพันธ์	[bpra ^(L) chaa sam ^(R) pan]	(public relations)
ศาล	[saan ^(R)]	(court)
กฎหมาย	[got ^(L) maai ^(R)]	(law)

You get the picture. Be creative. Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. Remember; the vocabulary should be used to build sentences. Use the words from yesterday to build today's sentences, meanwhile you are imprinting five new words for tomorrow's sentences.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORDS FOR THE RIGHT OCCASION

Knowing when to choose the right word for the right occasion in Thai language is crucial. Many words have the exact same meaning, but are used in different contexts. Written and spoken language also differ a lot. In written language, Thai's tend to use many words with a similar meaning to strengthen the impact or make it more "beautiful", as weird as it sounds. When starting to get a hang of the language you can easily spot these differences, but it takes practice. This kind of practice will only come from books, news and spoken language. Combining all these learning methods will provide you the best possible overview of the right words for the right occasion. And of course, learn by doing. Make mistakes. Loads of them.

All of the words below means "eat", but they are used in different situations:

กิน [gin] (eat, this is the most common form of "to eat")

ทาน (ข้าว) [taan] (eat, more formal than กิน [gin]. Used in spoken Thai)

รับประทาน (อาหาร) [rab^(H) bpra^(L) taan] (eat, used in written Thai, formal)

บริโภค [bor ri^(L) pok^(F)] (consume, can also be used about "to eat", formal)

ฉัน [chan^(R)] (eat, used when talking to or about monks and other religious situations)

เสวย [sa wey^(R)] (eat, used when talking to or about the royal family)

หม่ำ [mam^(L)] (eat, used between friends, mainly teenagers who think that it is cute. Slang)

แดก [daek^(L)] (eat, only used between close friends. Not polite what so ever. Slang)

I

One thing that have frustrated me, and still do up to this very day is, how to call your self. There are tons of ways, and I promise you, that you will get it wrong. Follow me:

ผม [pom^(R)] (I, can be used with every one no matter age or status, but between close friends it can feel like you aren't close to them if you use ผม)

ฉัน [chan^(R)] (I, females will use this as males will use ผม)

ชื่อ [chye^(F)] (name, call your self by your name. 3rd person. Used between friends or people you know.)

เรา [rao] (we, but can be used as “I”. Used between friends or people you know)

เค้า [kao] (I, used between friends that you have known for a while. Mainly female will use this, but males can use it with close girl friends or their girlfriend). Also to be used as “him” or “her”.

ดิฉัน [di^(L) chan^(R)] (I, more formal way for females. Not used among friends, too formal)

หนู [nuu^(R)] (I, but meaning rat. Used by females talking to people with significant more age or status. Also used by homosexuals)

กู [guu] (I, only used between close friends. Not used between boy- and girlfriends)

If

ถ้า [taa^(F)] (If, used in both spoken and written language (non formal texts). This is most used and more than good enough for a start).

หาก [haak^(L)] (If, mostly used in written language, but can occur in lectures, or other semi-formal contexts)

e.g.

เช่น [chen^(F)] (e.g., for instance, for example, such as, consist of. Used in both spoken and written language. Can be used in semi-formal context).

ได้แก่ [dai^(F) gae^(L)] (e.g., for instance, for example, such as, consist of. Used in books and articles, though it is also common to find เช่น [chen^(F)] being used).

Know

รู้ [ruu^(H)] (know) e.g. ผมรู้แล้ว [pom^(R) rue^(H) laew^(H)] (I already know)

ทราบ [saab^(F)] (know, formal) e.g. รับทราบ [rab^(H) saab^(F)] (acknowledged)

To sum up this chapter; don't be too formal in your speaking or writing, neither be too rude. You have to find the right level depending on who you are talking with. But a good tip is, rather be a little too formal and too rude. But you will sound like a fool if you are trying to use too formal words, so please do your homework and try to be suitable for the given situation, though I promise you, that you will get it wrong. MANY TIMES.

Always pay attention to if it is friends, people you know or strangers. Do a quick analyze of age and status before entering the conversation. But a good rule is to start out formal and then lean it down. This is probably the most difficult part of the Thai language, so invest the time and study it a lot.

CLASSIFIERS

To describe a specific number of a given noun, different classifiers are used. This is quite difficult and takes a long time to remember. If you want to say two animals; สัตว์สองตัว [sat song^(R) dtua]. You can't say สองสัตว์ [song^(R) sat^(L)] like you would in English, the amount needs to come after the noun. So the structure is NOUN+AMOUNT+CLASSIFIER. If you want to order three beers it would go like this; ขอเบียร์สามขวด [khor^(R) bia saam^(R) khuat^(L)]. There are some groups that use the same classifiers e.g. round objects and fruits use both ลูก [luuk^(F)]. Stay with me as I give you a list of the most used classifiers, and some rarely used:

ลูก [luuk^(F)]

Used for fruits, round objects, bullets etc.กล้วยหนึ่งลูก [gluay^(F) nueng^(L) luuk^(F)] (one banana), but if that is a whole bunch you need to use หวี [wii^(R)] - กล้วยหนึ่งหวี [gluay^(F) nueng^(L) wii^(R)].

ขวด [khuat^(L)]

Used for bottles (both glass and plastic).

อัน [an]

Used in general for smaller objects. This is probably the first classifier you will learn, and many foreigners use it as a universal classifier for everything. That's okay for a beginning, but learn the correct ones before อัน becomes a bad, bad habit.

คน [kon]

Used for people/humans/friends etc.

ชิ้น [chin^(H)]

Used for smaller objects, mainly food. เค้กสองชิ้น [kake^(H) song^(R) chin^(H)] (two pieces of cake).

ตัว [dtua]

Used for animals, furniture, letters, numbers, pieces of clothes etc. เก้าอี้สี่ตัว [gao-ii^(F) sii^(L) dtua] (four chairs). Let's say you want to get ten fish at the market; เาปลาสิบตัว [ao bplaa sib^(L) dtua], but if that fish has been made into sushi you would call it ชิ้น [chin^(H)] because it is no longer a whole fish. The same goes for a steak etc.

คู่ [kuu^(F)]

Used for pairs e.g. shoes, earrings. NOT used for jeans nor socks. รองเท้าคู่ละเท่าไร [rong tao^(H) kuu^(F) la^(H) tao^(F) rai^(L)] (how much for a pair of shoes?).

เล่ม [lem^(F)]

Used for books and magazines.

คัน [kan]

Used for vehicles e.g. cars, motorcycles and bicycles etc.

เม็ด [met^(H)]

Used for pills, nuts, gems, and seeds in general. ต้องการไทลีนอลกี่เม็ด [dtong^(F) gaan Tylenol gii^(L) met^(H)] (how many Tylenol pills do you need?). Can also be used for drops/hard round pieces of candy.

ถัง [tang^(R)]

Meaning tank (container)/bucket and are being used in relation to tanks (containers)/buckets e.g. ยกได้ที่ถัง [yok^(H) dai^(F) gii^(L) tang^(R)] (how many tanks (containers)/buckets can you lift/carry?), where you simply answer; ยกได้สองถัง [yok^(H) dai^(F) song^(R) tang^(R)] (I can lift/carry two tanks (containers)/buckets).

แผ่น [pan^(L)]

Used for pieces of paper, CD's and other thin flat objects e.g. a thin cracker.

ผืน [puen^(R)]

Used for bed sheets, blankets, towels, mats etc.

จาน [jan]

Used for plates.

ใบ [bai]

Used for slips of paper e.g. bills.

ฟอง [fong]

Used for eggs and bubbles.

ถุง [tung^(R)]

Used for bags and pouches.

แท่ง [taeng^(F)]

Used for pencils and longer bars. Here is อั้น [an] often used by foreigners, which is acceptable but not correct.

ด้าม [daam^(F)]

Used for pens. Here is อั้น [an] often used by foreigners, which is acceptable but not correct.

เรือน [ruean]

Used for clocks and watches; นาฬิกาสองเรือน [naa li^(H) gaa song^(R) ruean] (two watches/clocks).

ครั้ง [krang^(H)]

Used for occurrence number e.g. third time; ครั้งที่สาม [krang^(H) thii^(F) saam^(R)]. And; กี่ครั้ง [gii^(L) krang^(H)] (how many times?)

หน [hon^(R)]

Same as ครั้ง [krang^(H)] though very formal. Never used in spoken language, but used in songs and poems. This is one of the classifiers rarely used. You probably will never use this one, but it is good to know the meaning.

เชือก [chueak^(F)]

Used for elephants. Even though an elephant is an animal they are not called ตัว [dtua].

ผล [pon^(R)]

Used for fruits, though very formal and is never used in spoken language. This is also one of the rarely used classifiers. For fruits use ลูก [luuk^(F)].

SLANG

Slang is a big part of mastering Thai. Slang become an important step in taking your level from great to phenomenal. To build close relationship with Thai friends, slang and jokes is an factor that cannot be overseen as it helps promote understanding of the Thai culture as well as tiering people together. Slang of various forms are widely used on the different social medias, so that makes it a great place to study. There is no Thai language book that will teach you real Thai slang nor tell you where to study it other than “talk with your Thai friends”. That is true, you need to mingle and don't be afraid to speak, but big effort are needed behind your computer screen studying Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social medias. Chatting is a great way of promoting slang. It is not only knowing the meaning of the slang, but even more important is when and where to use it, and when not to.

You will find out, that Thai's tend to leave out words and/or write it in an “easier” or more lazy way to save time, e.g. they tend to leave out some of the more “difficult” consonants. In the beginning you will think that it must be a typo, but in most cases it's not. Here, let me give you a few examples:

Slang	Correct form		
คับ/คื้าาบ/คัฟ	ครับ	[khrap ^(H)]	(polite particle for male speakers)
เปน	เป็น	[bpen]	(is)
สำคััน	สำคัญ	[sam ^(R) kan]	(important)
วันจัน	วันจันทร์	[wan-jan]	(Monday)
จู๊บบ/จู๊บบี้/มูบบ	จูบบ	[juub ^(L) juub ^(L)]	(kiss kiss)
กู/กฐู	กู	[guu]	(I, used between close friends only)
เม็ง	มีง	[mueng]	(you, used between close friends only)
เท่ว	เที่ยว	[tiaw ^(F)]	(travel, tour)
ปัย	ไป	[bpai]	(to go)
กั้	ก็	[gor ^(F)]	(also, as well)
ชมิ	ใช่ไหม	[chai ^(F) mai ^(R)]	(right?)

And the list goes on and on, but now you get the picture why Thai's chat the way they do. Another great way of learning is through proverbs.

Proverbs

Proverbs are also widely used in Thai slang. To give you a good overview I advice you to have a look at the proverb section in the “Thai for Advance Readers” book (more details in the chapter about recommended Thai learning books). A proverb that I find funny and defiantly true is:

แซ่บปากลำบากตุต [saeb^(F) bpark^(L) lam-bark dtood^(L)]

แซ่บ	[saeb ^(F)]	(delicious)
ปาก	[bpark ^(L)]	(mouth)
ลำบาก	[lam-bark ^(L)]	(difficult/cumbersome)
ตุต	[dthood ^(L)]	(anus)

I will let you figure out the meaning your self...

TYPING THAI

A great way to practice how to find the different consonants and vowels on the keyboard, www.thai-language.com got a very simple yet great game to play. I promise you this will increase your speed and accuracy on the keyboard. Challenge your foreign friends as well as Thai friends. They also got a game for you to choose the right consonant class for the given consonant. Both are very enjoyable. When using Windows, changing keyboards are easy with a switch-hotkey as standard. But on a Mac you need to configure this yourself. My preferred switch language hotkey on a Mac is “option-space”.

If you don't got a Thai keyboard then I would recommend you going to the nearest IT shop and buy stickers you can slap on your own keyboard. And of course, just add the Thai keyboard on your smart phone to use it there as well.

ALPHABET

You might think that Thai script isn't for you, but let me explain to you why you are wrong: Knowing the Thai alphabet will make your pronunciation a lot better, a lot. It is impossible to write the correct sound with Roman letters, because there are only 25 of them. The Thai alphabet consists of 44 consonants, which gives you a lot more sounds and variations. And not to mention the 43 vowels and five tones. I don't know anyone who can't read and write and are still sounding like a Thai (except for the ลูกครึ่ง [luuk krueng] (half Thai) that have been too lazy to learn the script). I recommend you going to YouTube to find a video on how the consonants are pronounced. First we say the sound of the consonant followed by a noun to relate to that consonant. For example, the first consonant is ก and is a G sound. We will pronounce it like this: gor gai. Gai meaning chicken. So, we relate the Gor sound to the chicken, because it is used in the word ไก่ [gai] (chicken).

Green:	low class consonants	[อักษรต่ำ]	(ak-sorn dtam ^(L))
Yellow:	middle class consonants	[อักษรกลาง]	(ak-sorn glang)
Red:	high class consonants	[อักษรสูง]	(ak-sorn sung ^(R))

Consonant	Phonetic	Related word	Phonetic
ก	{gor}	ไก๋	{gor gai ^(L) }
ข	{khor}	ไข๋	{khor khai ^(L) }
ช	{khor}	ชวด	{khuat ^(L) }
ค	{kor}	ควาย	{kwaai}
ค	{khor}	คน	{khon}
ฆ	{kor}	ระฆัง	{ra ^(H) kang}
ง	{ngor}	งู	{nguu}
จ	{jor}	จาน	{jaan}
ฉ	{chor}	ฉิ่ง	{ching ^(F) }
ช	{chor}	ช้าง	{chaang ^(H) }
ซ	{sor}	โซ่	{soh ^(F) }
ฌ	{chor}	เฉอ	{chur}
ญ	{yor}	ผู้หญิง	{puu ^(F) ying ^(R) }
ฎ	{dor}	ชฎา	{cha ^(H) daa}
ฏ	{dtor}	ปฏัก	{bpa ^(L) dtak ^(L) }
ฐ	{tor}	ฐาน	{taan ^(R) }
ท	{tor}	มณฑโท	{mon too}
ฒ	{tor}	ผู้เฒ่า	{puu ^(F) tao ^(F) }
ณ	{nor}	เนร	{neen}
ด	{dor}	เด็ก	{dek ^(L) }
ด	{dtor}	เต่า	{dtao ^(L) }
ถ	{tor}	ถุง	{tung ^(R) }
ท	{tor}	ทหาร	{ta ^(H) haan ^(R) }
ธ	{tor}	ธง	{tong}
น	{nor}	หนู	{nuu ^(R) }
บ	{bor}	ใบไม้	{bai-mai ^(H) }
ป	{bpor}	ปลา	{bplaa}

ผ	[por]	ผึ้ง	[pueng ^(F)]
ฝ	[for]	ฝา	[faa ^(R)]
พ	[por]	พาน	[paan]
ฟ	[for]	ฟัน	[fan]
ภ	[por]	สำเภ	[sam ^(R) pao]
ม	[mor]	ม้า	[maa ^(H)]
ย	[yor]	ยักษ์	[yak ^(H)]
ร	[ror]	เรือ	[ruea]
ล	[lor]	ลิง	[ling]
ว	[wor]	แหวน	[waen ^(R)]
ศ	[sor]	ศาลา	[saa ^(R) laa]
ษ	[sor]	ฤษี	[rue sii ^(R)]
ส	[sor]	เสือ	[suea ^(R)]
ห	[hor]	หีบ	[hiib ^(L)]
ฬ	[lor]	จุฬา	[ju ^(L) laa]
อ	[or]	อ่าง	[ang ^(L)]
ฮ	[hor]	นกฮูก	[nok ^(L) huuk ^(F)]

For learning the vowels you need to use in order to build words, I will recommend you using the books I have stated in the chapter about “RECOMMENDED THAI LEARNING BOOKS” as well as find pronunciation videos on YouTube.

LOW, MIDDLE AND HIGH CLASS CONSONANTS

You need to know what class the respective consonant fits in, in order to know how to pronounce the words correctly. There are 5 tones in the Thai language, but only 4 are marked, and they got the following signs (the mark on top of a consonant):

อ๋	ไม้เอก	[mai ^(H) ek ^(L)]	low tone
อ้	ไม้โท	[mai ^(H) to]	falling tone
อู๋	ไม้ตรี	[mai ^(H) dtii]	high tone
อ๊	ไม้จัตวา	[mai ^(H) jat ^(L) dta ^(L) waa]	rising tone

There are specific rules on which tones you can place above the different consonants. This can cause great frustration, so let me give you a few tips on how to learn the system:

- Any of the four tone marks can be put on-top middle class consonants.
- Only อ๋ [mai^(H) ek^(L)] and อ้ [mai^(H) to] can be on top low class consonants.
- Only อ๋ [mai^(H) ek^(L)] and อ้ [mai^(H) to] can be on top high class consonants.

These three steps should be easy. Now, here comes the tricky part:

- When อ๋ [mai^(H) ek^(L)] is put on-top low class consonants it will make a อ้ [mai^(L) to] sound, e.g. ไม [mai^(F)] meaning “no”. ม [mor maa^(H)] is a low class consonant, but with a อ๋ [mai^(H) ek^(L)] on top, a falling tone อ้ [mai^(H) to] comes out.
- When อ้ [mai^(H) to] is put on-top low class consonants it will make a อู๋ [mai^(H) dtii] sound, e.g. ม้า [maa^(H)] meaning “horse”. ม [mor maa^(H)] is a low class consonant, but with a อ้ [mai^(H) to] on top, a high tone อู๋ [mai^(H) dtii] comes out.
- When อ๋ [mai^(H) ek^(L)] and อ้ [mai^(H) to] are put on-top high class consonants it makes the sound that it is supposed to make. A high class consonant with no tone symbol will by nature make a อ๊ [jat^(L) dta^(L) waa] sound, e.g. เสือ [suea^(R)] (tiger).

- When either four of the tones are put on-top middle class consonants it makes the sound that it is supposed to make. With nothing on top, the tone is a middle tone.
- When referring to these sounds, they are called: เสียง [siang^(R)] (sound) and then followed by either เอก [ek^(L)] โท [to] ตริ [dtrii] or วัตวา [jat^(L) dta^(L) waa], e.g. เสียงเอก [siang^(R)-ek^(L)].
- NOTE: there are different other rules that mix up the rules I just stated above, it's called คำเป็นคำตาย [kam bpen kam dtaii] (live or death syllable). Please see the following sheet:

Cons. Class	Vowel Tone		Tone Mark				
	Live Syllable	Dead Syllable		◌̑	◌̑̎	◌̑̎̎	◌̑̎̎̎
		Short Vowel	Long Vowel				
Low Class	Mid	High	Falling	F	H	(H)	(R)
Mid Class	Mid	Low		L	F	H	R
High Class	Rising	Low		L	F	(H)	(R)

Live Syllables

คำเป็น kam bpen

- Final consonant is N, M, NG, Y, W
- Long vowels
- Vowels with live endings when no final consonant is present.

Dead Syllables

คำตาย kam dtai

- Final consonant is K, P, T
- Short vowels

Let me give you an example: ชาตื [chaat^(F)] (nationality) is ending with a T sound. Then we know that it is a dead syllable. Then we can see from the sheet, that with a short vowel it will be a high tone, but with a long vowel it will be falling. The vowel ๗ is a long A sound which makes the pronunciation sound of ชาตื [chaat^(F)] falling. Get the picture? ชาตื [chaat^(F)] starts with a low class consonant and have no tone mark, then it should be a middle tone, but due to it being a dead syllable the tone changes. Don't pay too much attention to this for a start, soon you will remember the sound of the word, and this sheet won't be to much use. And for the record, you will have problems with เสียงตรี [siang^(R) dtrii] for sure.

For these exotic rules we can only thank the founders of the Thai language.

Difficulty with pronouncing บ/ป and ด/ต

I have had so much trouble with these four consonants, just as any foreigner learning Thai. The sound are so similar to our ears, yet so different in Thai ears. บ [bor bai mai^(H)] is a clean B sound where ป [bpor bplaa] is more of a harder BP sound. ด [dor dek^(L)] is a softer D sound while ต [dtor dtao^(L)] sticks the tongue out more to make a harder DT sound. This point is difficult to explain, but it is crucial. You need to face this difficulty your self in order to learn it, but I recommend you doing it straight from the start. I waited one year before paying attention to it. Fix this and you are on the right path to sound like a Thai.

ห

The consonant ห [hor hiip^(L)] is a high class consonant that got a special skill; being put in front of a low class consonant, the word will get a เสียงวัตวา [siang^(R) jat^(L) dta^(L) waa] (rising tone) e.g. หญิง [ying^(R)] (girl). So, the ห [hor hiip^(L)] makes the word a “high class word”. According to that, if a high class word is a คำตาย [kam dtaai] (dead syllable) it is pronounced with a เสียงเอก [siang^(R) ek^(L)] (low tone), e.g. เหล็ก [lek^(L)] (metal) orหนัก [nak^(L)] (heavy). Don't pay too much attention to the live or dead syllable, because you will learn how the different words are spelled and you will remember what tone is linked to it automatically.

ทร consonant cluster

This consonant cluster should make a [tor ror] sound, but it makes it to an ช [sor] sound instead. why? I haven't got the slightest clue, but just remember it. E.g. ทราบ [saab^(F)] (formal word of to know). Try to run this through the live/dead syllable: The words ends with a b/p sound = makes it a dead syllable. ช [sor soh^(F)] is a low class consonant. The long A vowel (า) tells us that it should be pronounced with a falling tone.

รร consonant cluster

This cluster turns into an AM sound (อัม,อำ). Forget the [ror ruea] sound and just replace it. Here is a few examples: ธรรมดา [tam ma^(H) daa] (normal, ordinary, common), ธรรมชาติ [tam ma^(H) chaat^(F)] (nature), กรรม [gam] (karma), กรรมกร [gam ma^(H) gaan] (judge).

Consonants at the end of a word that creates a different sound

There are some consonants that doesn't make the sound you think they will when being the last consonant in the word. Here is a complete list of those:

ร [ror ruea] at the end of a word need to be pronounced as:

น [nor nuu^(R)] e.g. กรรมกร [gam ma^(H) gaan] (judge)

ล [lor ling] at the end of a word need to be pronounced as:

น [nor nuu^(R)] e.g. น้ำตาล [naam^(H) dtaan] (sugar)

จ [jor jaan] at the end of a word need to be pronounced as:

ท [tor ta^(H) haan^(R)] e.g. อำนาจ [am naat^(F)] (power, authority)

ช [chor chaang^(H)] at the end of a word need to be pronounced as:

ท [tor ta^(H) haan^(R)] e.g. อ่อนนุช [On^(L) Nut^(H)] (name of area in Bangkok)

ส [sor suea^(R)] at the end of a word need to be pronounced as:

ท [tor ta^(H) haan^(R)] e.g. รส [rot^(H)] (flavor)

ษ [sor rue-sii^(R)] at the end of a word need to be pronounced as:

ท [tor ta^(H) haan^(R)] e.g. การเกษตร [gaan ga^(L) set^(L)] (agriculture), NB. the ต and ร are silent in this word.

ศ [sor saa^(R) laa] at the end of a word need to be pronounced as:

ท [tor ta^(H) haan^(R)] e.g. ประเทศ [bpra^(L) teet^(F)] (country)

CULTURE

Culture in Thailand and Asian countries are probably the most important thing to learn. It is more important than the language it selves. Your understanding of culture and your manners will determine the first picture people get of you. In a business situation this is crucial. If the Thai's don't respect you, they probably won't do any kind of business with you. And if you don't show cultural understanding and acceptable manners when with your Thai friends, then they will loose the respect for you very quickly.

There are tons of books on Thai culture, but they are all over doing it, in my opinion. You can read through them, but take it with a grain of salt. The best book in my opinion is "Working With the Thai's" by Henry Holmes and Suchada Tangtongtavy. It gives a very subjective view on the cultural differences and what to avoid. It also gives examples from real life experiences which you can draw parallels to. Definitely worth the read.

Let me explain you the cultural iceberg concept; just like the Titanic iceberg collision, an iceberg is tiny on the surface, but 10 times bigger underneath. The same goes for culture. What we can see is only a tiny bit of it, while the main part lies in the unsaid and your gestures. Therefore, control and analyze your self at all times. Be aware what you do, say and even think. But no matter how much you study or prepare, you will run into situations where you wish that you could vanish. You will learn from these situations, so don't fear them. Take them as stepping stones in your learning process.

GRENG JAI (เกรงใจ)

This term deserves it own space. There are various articles online trying to describe this single word. It is important to understand that in order to know why Thai's think and act the way that they do. Thai's don't like to be a burden or trouble to someone else, they want to avoid the problem/hassle. Let's say that you are offering them a glass of cold water because you can see they are feeling hot, they will rather say no, because they know you have to all the way to the fridge and fill up the glass. So they want to "spare you" the hassle of doing it for them. When you are offering snacks from your home country to a group of Thai's, some of them feel greng jai and probably will pass the bag. Though, today the greng jai is fading more out, but is still a major reasons why Thai's act like they do as it is imprinted in their blueprint.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The Thai national anthem is played on all TV and radio stations at 8 in the morning, and then again at 6 in the evening. Everyone, no matter nationality, should stand up to pay respect to Thailand and the Thai people. Knowing the lyrics of this song is a must for an expat in Thailand. And if you are trying to obtain Thai citizenship, the anthem also becomes an important tool, because you are required to sing it out loud. I have here the lyrics of the Thai national anthem as well as a sentence that tells you how each word should be read both in Thai script and phonetic, because it can get quite tricky. Play the song from YouTube and follow the lyrics:

ประเทศไทยรวมเลือดเนื้อชาติเชื้อไทย

[ประเทศไทย รวม เลือด เนื้อ ชาติ เชื้อ ไทย]

[bpra-tet-thai ruam lyad nya chaat chya thai]

เป็นประชารัฐ ไผทของไทยทุกส่วน

[เป็น ประชารัฐ ไผท ของ ไทย ทุก ส่วน]

[bpen bpra-chaa-rat pa-tai korng thai tuk suan]

อยู่ดำรงคงไว้ได้ทั้งมวล

[อยู่ ดำรง คง ไว้ ได้ ทั้ง มวล]

[yoo dam-rong kong jai dai tang muan]

ด้วยไทยล้วนหมาย รักสามัคคี

[ด้วย ไทย ล้วน หมาย รัก สามัคคี]

[duai thai luan maai rak saa-mak-kii]

ไทยนี้รักสงบ แต่ถึงรบไม่ขลาด

[ไทย นี้ รัก สงบ แต่ ถึง รบ ไม่ ขลาด]

[thai nii rak sa-ngob dtae teung rob mai khlaat]

เอกราชจะไม่ให้ใครข่มขี่

[เอกราช จะ ไม่ ให้ ใคร ข่ม ขี่]

[ek-ga-raat ja mai hai krai khom khii]

สละเลือดทุกหยาดเป็นชาติพลี

[สละ เลือด ทุก หยาด เป็น ชาติ พลี]

[sa-la lyad tuk yaat bpen chaat plii]

เถลิงประเทศชาติไทยทวี มีชัย ชโย

[เถลิง ประเทศ ชาติ ไทย ทวี มี ชัย ชโย]

[ta-lerng bpra-tet chaat thai ta-wii mii chai cha-yoo]

ROYAL ANTHEM

Another anthem which is a good idea to learn is the royal anthem, in Thai it is called “เพลงสรรเสริญพระบารมี” [pleng san seen pra baa ra mii]. It is played in the cinema before every movie starts. When this song is played you ought to stand up in order to show respect to the father of Thailand, his majesty the king and the rest of the royal family. I assure you, that when this anthem is played, and you know the lyrics, it will make the hair on the back of your neck stand up. Again, play the song from YouTube while you study these lyrics:

ข้าวรพุทธเจ้า เอามโนและศิระกราน

[ข้า วอ ระ พุท ธะ เจ้า เอา มะ โน และ ศิ ระ กราน]

[kha wor ra put ta jao ao ma no lae si ra gran]

นบพระภูมิบาลบุญดิเรก เอกบรมจักริน

[นบ พระ ภู มิ บาน บุน ยะ ดิ เรก เอก บะ รม มะ จัก กริน]

[nob phra phuu mi baan bun ya di reek ek ba rom ma jak grin]

พระสยามินทร์พระยศยิ่งยง เย็นศิระเพราะพระบริบาล

[พระ สยามิน พระ ยอ ศะ ยิ่ง ยง เย็น ศิ ระ เพราะ พระ บอ ริ บาน]

[phra sayaa min phra yor sa ying yong yen si ra pror phra bor ri baan]

ผลพระคุณ ฐ รักษา ปวงประชาเป็นสุขศานต์

[ผล พระ คุณ ฐ รักษา ปวง ประชา เป็น สุข ศาน]

[pon phra khun ta rak saa bpuang bprachaa bpen suk saan]

ขอบันดาล ฐ ประสงค์ใด จงสถษดีตั้ง

[ขอ บัน ดาน ฐ ประ สง ไต จง สถธิ ตัง]

[khor ban daan ta bpra song dai jong sarit dang]

หวังวรหฤทัย ดุจถวายเป็นชัย ชโย

[หวัง วร ะ หั ทรี ทัย ดุ ท จะ ถวายเป็น ชัย ชะ โย]

[wang wor ra hat rue tai dut ja tawaai chai cha yo]

FROM GOOD TO GREAT

It takes a lot of effort to go from good to great, but it is far from impossible. You just need to undertake certain activities and practice routines. Here is my take on how you take your Thai language to the next level:

Make even more mistakes

Now your language are at a level where you need to push yourself in order to get better. This is probably the most important rule in you learning the Thai language; don't be afraid to make mistakes. The more the better. No matter how fluent your Thai is or will be, you will always make mistakes. I make mistakes on a daily basic, but I'm glad that I do, because it help me to get better. This rule can't be stressed enough.

News, radio and songs

Start listening to Thai news in the television or radio. Even though you might not understand much from the news, radio or songs at this moment, but being exposed to Thai language all of the time will make it become more natural as it will linger. You might hear a few new words that you would like to learn, then write them down and try to find the meaning and how it should be used. I understand that language used in television news and radio is of high level,

but the more you listen, the more it lingers. Regarding Thai songs, you need to print the lyrics on a paper in front of you. Then listen to the song over and over again. You will start to get the meaning of the song as well as discovering new words. Many words used in songs are often very describing, and aren't normally used that way in everyday talk. But you will discover many beautiful proverbs and twists to the Thai language.

Thai friends

If you don't already have Thai friends, I would highly recommend you getting some. They can help you a lot and are crucial in your learning process. Often they will teach you and correct your mistakes, in return you also help them improving their English skills. This should not be seen as a trade-off. Build friendships and make connections, this will ease your stay in the Kingdom and make your everyday living more enjoyable. A Thai girl- or boyfriend is also a great way to help you improve, though this should not be the main reason for you being with your partner. The key here is: ask, ask, ask. The more you ask, they more you will know. Mingle is also a keyword worth remembering.

Children books

The process from good to great also involves a solid understanding of the Thai alphabet. I am a strong believer that knowing how to read and write Thai is a fatal factor. If not born in Thailand or with Thai parent(s), how can you know how a specific word should be pronounced? By knowing the alphabet you are able to study and expanding your vocabulary and skills exponential. A good place to start is children books, they are easy to read with big letters and a low level vocabulary. They can be bought from any book store at a low price, so I would defiantly recommend you buying a big stack to go through a couple of times. Write in it, tear it apart or what every technique you use. To reach "great" you need to be able to read such books without opening your Talking Thai too often and read with an acceptable pace. I remember my first children's book; little red riding hood.

Increase the difficulty on your daily words

Your "words of the day" need to take a huge step up the difficulty ladder in order for you to improve. Challenge yourself and be creative. Start to find words in books, magazines or even the news.

FROM GREAT TO PHENOMENAL

In order to take the next step up the ladder, enormous effort are needed. This in the step where the sheep are separated from the goats. Stay with me on this one, undertake these techniques and grow from great to phenomenal.

Texting and chatting

Make your texts or chats in Thai. It will take longer time in the beginning, you will get frustrated and being close to beat the living ghost out of your innocent smart phone, but trust me, it is worth the struggle.

Newspaper articles

The headline says what is needed to be said. This is a difficult task, because the vocabulary is though. The words used in newspapers and news in general is difficult to the point where it doesn't make any sense until you have practiced a lot. There is no finishing line at this step, it is an on going process for the rest of your time in Thailand. Now you can please yourself with, that it isn't going to get more difficult than this (unless you decide to go into the religious and royal vocabulary, but let's stay away from that for a beginning...).

Read out loud

By now you ought to be reading out loud from a book, article or such. If not, you better hurry up! Read out loud as much as possible, even talk with your self is not such a bad idea after all. At this point many people are good at reading, but their pronunciation is lacking. The reason is, that they don't practice out loud often enough. I challenge you to read out loud at least 15 minutes a day. I did this mistake my self, by starting to read out loud too late. Please don't repeat my mistakes.

Karaoke

Karaoke is an important part of the Thai social life, therefore you need to learn a few songs that you can sing when you are out with your Thai friends or colleagues. Prepare one or two songs for a start, so that you can sing one when they hand you the microphone. And trust me,

one day they will. I remember my first song was “กรุณาฟังให้จบ [ga^(L) ru^(H) naa fang hai^(F) job^(L)],” after that one I learned “ขอนไม้กับเรือ [khon^(R) mai^(H) gab^(L) ruea],” and from then on I have expanded my arsenal. On YouTube there is a lot of karaoke versions of Thai songs, but if you can’t find the one you are looking for, then just search for the lyrics and read it your self. A little tip regarding karaoke is to stay updated on which songs are hits at the moment in order for you to know them when your friends are singing and having a blast. If not, you will probably be bored out of your mind if you don’t know a single song. Even though singing isn’t your thing you should forget about that and go with the flow, just like your friends and colleagues. And don’t forget; karaoke is also good training for your pronunciation and reading skills. Win-win situation. Also know the classics!

Esaan language

Wherever you are in Thailand you will always bump into some people from the Esaan area. They have their very own dialect (just like Northern and Southern people), and you need to learn the basics of Esaan as well. If you are working in Bangkok you can be sure that a big part of your employees/colleagues are from Esaan. Being able to speak a few words or sentences of this dialect and you will win their respect in seconds. Thai is one thing, but if you can get a little bit of Esaan as well it will be terrific. You can now get closer to the Esaan Thai’s in a whole different way. Joking becomes a lot easier and they will open more up to welcome you. This is not a must, but will help you progress and build friendships.

Telephone hotlines

When you are calling one of the many hotlines pick number one when they ask you if you prefer Thai or English. This will be frustrating for a start, but it will teach you to listen through a phone where the quality varies, and it will expose you to a new vocabulary as well. Do it every time. The couple of first times they will want to send you to the English speaking department, but refuse and speak slow and clearly. Don’t let another person tell you what language to use, if you want to improve your Thai you need to speak Thai.

Banks

When ever entering a bank pick a number without pressing the English flag first, or when approaching an ATM choose the Thai menu screen. These might seem like tiny factors that can't change much, but it sure can. It keeps your mind on your target.

Slang

As explained earlier, slang is very important. This will make you sound like a Thai. But I promise you, you will burn your fingers a few times before you know how to use the slang correctly. In the situation this is very uncomfortable, but afterwards you will look back at it with a smile on your lips, because you learned from the situation. But, be careful as not everyone think that your joke or use of words are suitable for a given situation.

Fonts

The Thai script can be difficult to read when different fonts are used from what you have studied. Therefore, go look for different fonts; on products, posters etc. etc.

IDOLS

You need idols in order to set your goals and aim for your vision. A vision to “speak like a Thai” is too broad for a start. You need to have idols along your path that have done what you are about to do. Throughout my learning process I have had two foreign idols who's videos I have watched numerous times. Go look up their names on either Google or YouTube to find some of their work. It is damn good learning for you. Listen to people that have already achieved what you are about to achieve, they will give you the best advice, but don't be blind; take what you can use, discard what you can't and then lay your own bricks. My two foreign idols are:

Adam Bradshaw

Ajarn Adam is teaching English to Thai people at his own language school. Doing weekly YouTube videos who are great for learning English, but we can also learn a lot from them in learning Thai. Adam is a funny teacher with exceptional slang skills. In my eyes, Adam is the number one foreigner in mastering Thai.

Mark Abbot

Marc is running Thai Top Fitness as well as working for a big Thai company. Marc is putting up videos on YouTube on a regular basis. The videos are mostly about sports, but you can defiantly learn a lot from them as well. Fantastic language skills and a huge vocabulary.

I challenge you to go find some idols as they become crucial, because you need to compare your self with them in order to measure your progress. People say that you shouldn't compare your self with others, but that is bullshit. In order to be number one, you need to know what you are up against. I'm not saying that you need to be number one, but always set your vision higher than what is possible, so when you fall short you will still achieve a lot more than you normally would.

SUMMARY

It is difficult to sum up this booklet which has already been extracted, but let me finish off with a few important tips. First off, refrain from using Google Translate unless there is no other solution. Take the time and translate it step by step. Look it up on Google, your dictionary or something else. Google Translate or other direct translators won't be imprinted in your brain, trust me on this one. There is two paths to follow: the easy and the tough. It is up to you which one you choose, but I will highly recommend you to finish what you have started. Invest a few years now and enjoy those years for the rest of your life. Things become much easier and you will get a lot more respect from the people around you. You also have to understand, that learning a language is an ongoing process. There is no finish line. You can always improve something, even the best can get better. And remember; it is not the destination - it is the journey. If you forget this very important point, then you will not have fun along the way. Thailand is a beautiful and lovely country, please enjoy the journey as that will leave you with the best memories.

If you have any questions, suggestions or comments, please feel free to contact me through my website: www.emil.dk