

I Can Speak Thai (Book I)



Sumaa Language and Culture Institute

by

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Name of student

Foreword

Spawned from the writer's teaching experience of more than twenty years, this set of Thai textbooks is prepared for foreigners who are interested in the Thai language as well as for those Thai teachers who endeavor to train foreigners to speak Thai and to foster their insight into Thai culture.

The full set of publications for the basic speaking level consists of two volumes comprising ten chapters each. The contents and exercises are designed to encourage learners to communicate in their daily life using the natural style of words and phrases like that used by Thai natives. The learners will be inspired to create their own sentences from the structures provided in each chapter. A cornucopia of exercises provides them with listening drills and so allows them to communicate with greater confidence. Nevertheless, an instructor is highly recommended in order for them to achieve the greatest extent of effective learning.

The I CAN SPEAK THAI, BOOK I contains a vocabulary of 213 words, excluding the long list of color and food terms, and a total of 44 sentence structures. The book also includes numerous cultural issues. It is the author's hope that both learners and instructors will benefit from the book.

This set of textbooks is also used by the **Sumaa Language and Culture Institute**, so if you have any question or suggestion, please do not hesitate to contact us at www.sumaa.net or sumaa48@gmail.com

Explanation

This textbook set aims to enable those who have never learned to speak Thai before to communicate in everyday life within a short period of time.

The textbooks use the IPA phonetic symbols, which are recognized worldwide especially in the field of linguistics, to represent the sounds of consonants, vowels, and tones in Thai. Writing and reading Thai is not recommended at this beginning stage since the writing system is relatively complex and involves a plethora of rules and exceptions. Beginning learners would require too much time to learn and remember these rules before they achieve proficiency in reading and writing. With that limitation in mind, these textbooks are designed for those who simply desire to be able to communicate to survive in everyday life. Reading and writing will be introduced at a more advanced level.

In addition, tones are not familiar to most foreigners, so learning to speak Thai with phonetic symbols will help enable them to concentrate on the unfamiliar sound system of the Thai language without needing to worry about the additional complexities of reading and writing Thai. This focus will encourage them to speak Thai clearly in a short time and they will find it much easier to learn to read and write at a later time.

Each chapter features the same structure as follows:

1. Conversation

Each chapter presents casual Thai conversations of a natural and current style and provides word-by-word translation so that the learners can examine the meaning of each individual word as well as the word order in Thai language.

Thai is an isolating language and the grammatical meaning of a word relies basically on its position in a sentence, that is to say, word order plays a vital role in Thai grammar. Once the sequential relationships of words in a sentence are identified, learners will be able to construct many more sentences on their own. Simultaneously, they will have an opportunity to develop better understanding of the thinking process and worldview of the Thai people.

2. Translation

Translation of the conversations allows learners to study the thinking process of the Thai people in comparison with that of native English-speakers. The translation thus provides the closest possible English interpretation of each Thai sentence. For example, **คุณไปไหนมา** is translated as “Where are you coming from?” or “Where have you been?”

3. Vocabulary List

4. Language Usage Note

Language Note presents additional meanings or usage explanation of words, phrases, and sentences to ensure learners can use them properly.

5. Grammar Note

Grammar Note illustrates word order and sentence structure so that learners can create sentences on their own based on the structures provided.

6. Culture Note

Culture Note provides learners with cultural issues of which they should be aware and so allows them to develop better understanding of the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs of the Thai people.

7. Exercise

Many exercises are provided in each chapter to encourage learners to memorize words and sentence structures learned and to communicate fluently and appropriately in different conversation situations. Learners will also be inspired to compose new sentences on their own.

The main objective of these exercises is to have learners review and practice what they have learned. The learners can study these exercises in advance with no need to write the answers down in the book. It is suggested that all the exercises be done under supervision of an instructor, i.e. by giving oral answers to the instructor so as to practice pronunciation and sentence composition. In this manner, learners will develop more confidence to communicate in Thai.

Basic Understanding of Speaking Thai Language

Each Thai syllable comprises an initial consonant sound, a vowel sound, and a tone. Several syllables also have a final consonant sound.

ค + -า + (pronounced in) middle tone = คา

ค + -า + (pronounced in) middle tone + น = คาน

There are five tones in Thai. A word will convey a different meaning when its tone changes.

คา middle tone means to get stuck

ค่า low tone means a galangal

ข้า / ค่า falling tone means I, the cost of

ค้า high tone means to trade

ขา rising tone means leg

In an isolating language like Thai, words are put in a sequence to make a communicative meaning. One can add the meaning in a sentence by adding a word. Nevertheless, it is essential to put the word into correct order. Basically, a sentence in Thai language is composed of SUBJECT + VERB + OBJECT. An adjective is placed following the noun it modifies.

ผม กิน กาแฟ

I eat (drink) coffee

ผม จะ กิน กาแฟ ร้อน

I will eat (drink) coffee hot

ผม จะ กิน กาแฟ ร้อน พรุ่งนี้

I will eat (drink) coffee hot tomorrow

ผม จะ กิน กาแฟ ร้อน กับ เพื่อน พรุ่งนี้

I will eat (drink) coffee hot with friend tomorrow

An interrogative sentence must always have a question word. Unlike English, a question cannot be identified simply by intonation.

For example, “Is it raining?” can be said “It’s raining?” instead with a higher pitch at the end of sentence in a casual English conversation, but we cannot do the same in Thai language. In Thai, it must be said:

ฝน ตก ใช่ไหม

rain fall correct or not

And it will never be said:

ฝน ตก?

rain fall?

Name of student

Phonetic Symbols

Initial sounds

1. ph	sounds like /p/ in past, pie	ผ, พ, ภ
2. p	sounds like /bp/	ป
3. b	sounds like /b/ in bee, bank	บ
4. th	sounds like /t/ in to, time	ฐ, ท, ฒ, ถ, ฑ, ฒ, ฐ
5. t	sounds like /dt/	ต, ฏ
6. d	sounds like /d/ in do, done	ด, ฐ
7. ch	sounds like /sh/ in share, she	ฉ, ช, ฌ
8. c	sounds similar to /j/ in jar, jam	จ
9. kh	sounds like /c/ in cook, cold	ข, ฃ, ค, ฅ, ฆ
10. k	sounds like /gk/	ก
11. f	sounds like /f/ in far, fun	ฝ, ฟ
12. s	sounds like /s/ in see, sit	ซ, ศ, ษ, ส
13. h	sounds like /h/ in hen, hat	ห, ฮ
14. m	sounds like /m/ in man, mall	ม
15. n	sounds like /n/ in noon, north	น, ณ
16. ŋ	sounds like /-ng/ in sing, song	ง
17. r	sounds like /r/ in raw, role	ร
18. l	sounds like /l/ in long, list	ล, ฬ
19. w	sounds like /w/ in west, win	ว
20. y	sounds like /y/ in young, yell	ญ, ย
21. ʔ	sounds like vowel sounds in English, e.g. am, in, our, under	อ

Vowel sounds

Short vowels			Long vowels		
1. a	sounds similar to the vowel sound in cut, nut	อะ	1. aa	sounds like the vowel sound in far, car	อา
2. i	sounds like the vowel sound in bin, hit	อิ	2. ii	sounds like the vowel sound in see, she	อี
3. ɪ	-	อี้	3. ɪɪ	-	อี๋
4. u	sounds like the vowel sound in foot, fruit	อุ	4. uu	sounds like the vowel sound in zoo, rude	อู
5. e	sounds like the vowel sound in pet, set	เอะ	5. ee	sounds like the vowel sound in rain, lane	เอ
6. æ	sounds like the vowel sound in hat, cat	แอะ	6. ææ	sounds like the vowel sound in hair, bear	แอ
7. o	sounds like the second vowel in oh	โอะ	7. oo	sounds like the vowel sound in so, no	โอ
8. ɔ	sounds like the vowel sound in hot, pot	เอาะ	8. ɔɔ	sounds like the vowel sound in long, saw	ออ
9. ə	sounds like the vowel sound in further	เออะ	9. əə	sounds like the vowel sound in her, blur	เออ
10. iaɪ	-	เอียะ	10. ia	sounds like the vowel sound in here, near	เอีย
11. uaɪ	-	อัวะ	11. ua	sounds like the vowel sound in sure	อัว
12. ɪaɪ	-	เอือะ	12. ɪa	-	เอือ

Vowels with a final sound

13. am sounds like the vowel sound in some, rum อัม
14. ay sounds like the vowel sound in dry, wine ไอ, ไอ
15. aw sounds like the vowel sound in cow, how เอา

Tonal sounds

1. ไม้เอก	◌̑
2. ไม้โท	◌̒
3. ไม้ตรี	◌̓
4. ไม้จัตวา	◌̔

Final sounds

There are 8 final sounds in Thai.

1. -k	แม่กก
2. -t	แม่กด
3. -p	แม่กบ
4. -ŋ	แม่กง
5. -n	แม่กน
6. -m	แม่กม
7. -y	แม่เกย
8. -w	แม่เกว



Lesson 1

การทักทาย

Greeting

Lesson 1 การทักทาย

Greeting

Dialogue: ไมค์กับนิดาพบกันโดยบังเอิญ

ไมค์: สวัสดี ครับ คุณ นิดา
all goodness F.P. Miss Nida

นิดา: คุณ ไมค์ สวัสดี ค่ะ
Mr. Mike all goodness F.P.

ไป ไหน มา ค่ะ
go where come F.P.

ไมค์: ผม ไป shopping มา ครับ
I go shopping come F.P.

คุณ นิดา สบายดี ไหม ครับ
Miss Nida doing well or not F.P.

นิดา: ฉัน สบายดี ค่ะ
I doing well F.P.

ขอบคุณ ค่ะ
thank you F.P.

Translation

Mike: Hello, Nida.

Nida: Hello, Mike.

Where are you coming from?

Mike: I went shopping.

How are you doing?

Nida: I'm doing well.

Thank you.

Vocabulary

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 1. สวัสดี | all goodness (hello) |
| 2. ครับ | final particle showing politeness (used by males) |
| 3. คุณ | Mr., Miss, Mrs., Ms., you |
| 4.ค่ะ | final particle showing politeness (used by females) |
| 5. ไปไหนมา | Where are you coming from?
Where have you been? |
| 6. คะ | final particle showing politeness in a question
(used by females) |
| 7. ผม | I (used by males) |
| 8. ไป | to go |
| 9. มา | to come |
| 10. สบายดี | doing well |
| 11. ไหม | or not |
| 12. ฉัน | I (used by females) |
| 13. ขอบคุณ | thank you |

Language Notes

1. **สวัสดี** means “happiness, prosperity, and safety.” It is used for greeting at any time of the day: morning, afternoon and evening. We also say **สวัสดี** when taking leave. Usually we accompany **สวัสดี** with the **ไหว้** gesture.
2. **ครับ**, **ค่ะ** and **คะ** are final particles. A final particle is a word we put at the end of a sentence to express politeness, intention, approval, feelings, or attitude.
 - **ครับ** is a final particle used by males either in an affirmative sentence or a question to show politeness.
 - **ค่ะ** is a final particle in an affirmative sentence used only by females to show politeness.
 - **คะ** is a final particle in a question used only by females to show politeness as well.
3. **คุณ** has two functions in a Thai sentence. First, **คุณ** is a title we put in front of a person’s name, either male or female, to show politeness, such as คุณนิดา, คุณไมค์, คุณแชนดร้า. Second, **คุณ** is a pronoun that means “you” used in a formal situation to show politeness. For example:

คุณ สบายดี ไหม คะ
you doing well or not final particle
4. **ไปไหนมา** means “Where are you coming from?” and is used as a greeting.
(See Grammar Note “Subject + **ไป.....มา**”)
5. **จะไปไหน** means “Where are you going?” This question is used for greeting, too.

Grammar Notes

1.

Subject ไป.....มา

ไป means “to go.” มา means “to come.” However, มา is also a helping verb when it is placed after a verb.

When we say

Subject ไป + do something มา

it means “Subject went out and finished doing the action.”

เช่น: ไมค์ ไป shopping มา

Mike go shopping helping verb

It means “Mike went out and has finished shopping” or “Mike had been shopping.”

When we say

Subject ไป + place มา

it means “Subject went somewhere and has finished his/her business there already.”

เช่น: ไมค์ ไป Sathorn มา

Mike go Sathorn helping verb

It means “Mike went to Sathorn and has finished his business there.”

When we say

Subject ไป + do something ที่ + place มา

it means “Subject went to a place and finished doing the action.”

ที่ means “at.”

เช่น: ไมค์ ไป shopping ที่ Sathorn มา

Mike go shopping at Sathorn helping verb

It means “Mike went shopping at Sathorn.”

2.

Subject + verb or adjective ไหม

- **ไหม** means "... or not?" It occurs only at the end of the sentence.
- When replying to a question in this form, just repeat the verb or adjective to mean "yes" and **ไม่** + verb or adjective means "no."

QUESTION	Subject + verb or adjective ไหม
YES	(repeat same) verb or adjective
NO	ไม่ + verb or adjective

เช่น: คุณ จะ ไป shopping ไหม

you will go shopping or not

ไป Yes, I'll go.

ไม่ไป No, I won't go.

นิดา จะ มา ไหม

Nida will come or not

มา Yes, she will come.

ไม่มา No, she won't come.

คุณ สบายดี ไหม

you doing well or not

สบายดี Yes, I'm doing well.

ไม่สบาย No, I'm not doing well.