

I Can Speak Thai (Book I)



Sumaa Language and Culture Institute

by

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I Can Speak Thai (Book I)

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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 214 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, *khun pay•nāy•maa* 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.

kh + /aa/ + (pronounced in) middle tone = khaa

kh + /aa/ + (pronounced in) middle tone + n = khaan

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

khaa	middle tone	means	to get stuck
khàa	low tone	means	a galangal
khâa	falling tone	means	to kill, a cost of
kháa	high tone	means	to trade
khǎa	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.

phǒm kin kaafææ

I eat (drink) coffee

phǒm ca kin kaafææ rǒn

I will eat (drink) coffee hot

phǒm ca kin kaafææ rǒn phrûn-nii

I will eat (drink) coffee hot tomorrow

phǒm ca kin kaafææ rǒn kàp phian phrûn-nii

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:

fǒn tòk chây·má-y

rain fall correct or not

And it will never be said:

fǒn tók

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
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	ช, ฌ, ฌ
8. c	sounds similar to /j/ in jar , jam	จ
9. kh	sounds like /c/ in cook , cold	ข, ฌ, ฌ, ฌ, ฌ
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, ฌ, ฌ, ฌ
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, ฌ
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	ឡះ	1. aa	sounds like the vowel sound in far, car	ឡា
2. i	sounds like the vowel sound in bin, hit	ឺ	2. ii	sounds like the vowel sound in see, she	ឺ
3. ɪ	-	ឺ	3. ɪɪ	-	ឺ
4. u	sounds like the vowel sound in foot, fruit	ូ	4. uu	sounds like the vowel sound in zoo, rude	ូ
5. e	sounds like the vowel sound in pet, set	េ	5. ee	sounds like the vowel sound in rain, lane	េ
6. æ	sounds like the vowel sound in hat, cat	ែ	6. ææ	sounds like the vowel sound in hair, bear	ែ
7. o	sounds like the second vowel in oh	ៃ	7. oo	sounds like the vowel sound in so, no	ៃ
8. ɔ	sounds like the vowel sound in hot, pot	ោ	8. ɔɔ	sounds like the vowel sound in long, saw	ោ
9. ə	sounds like the vowel sound in further	េ	9. əə	sounds like the vowel sound in her, blur	េ
10. ia?	-	ឺ	10. ia	sounds like the vowel sound in here, near	ឺ
11. ua?	-	ួ	11. ua	sounds like the vowel sound in sure	ួ
12. ia?	-	ៃ	12. ia	-	ៃ

Vowels with a final sound

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

Tonal sounds

1. middle tone		khaa
2. low tone	˘	khàa
3. falling tone	ˆ	khâa
4. high tone	ˊ	kháa
5. rising tone	ˇ	khǎa

Final sounds

There are 8 final sounds in Thai.

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

Lesson 1

kaan·thákthaay

Greeting

Lesson 1 kaan-thákthaay

Greeting

Dialogue: Mike and Nida meet by chance

Mike: sawàtdii khráp khun Nida
all goodness F.P. Miss Nida

Nida: khun Mike sawàtdii khâ
Mr. Mike all goodness F.P.

pay-năy-maa khâ
go where come F.P.

Mike: phôm pay shopping maa khráp
I go shopping come F.P.

khun Nida sabaay-dii máy khráp
Miss Nida doing well or not F.P.

Nida: chán sabaay-dii khâ
I doing well F.P.

khòwpkhun khâ
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. sawàtdii all goodness (hello)
2. khráp final particle showing politeness (used by males)
3. khun Mr., Miss, Mrs., Ms., you
4. khâ final particle showing politeness (used by females)
5. pay•nǎy•maa Where are you coming from?
Where have you been?
6. khá final particle showing politeness in a question
(used by females)
7. phǒm I (used by males)
8. pay to go
9. maa to come
10. sabaay•dii doing well
11. máy or not
12. chán I (used by females)
13. khòǎpkhun thank you

Language Notes

1. **sawàtdii** means “happiness, prosperity, and safety.” It is used for greeting at any time of the day: morning, afternoon and evening. We also say **sawàtdii** when taking leave. Usually we accompany **sawàtdii** with the **wâay** gesture.
2. **kháp**, **khâ** and **khá** 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.
 - **kháp** is a final particle used by males either in an affirmative sentence or a question to show politeness.
 - **khâ** is a final particle in an affirmative sentence used only by females to show politeness.
 - **khá** is a final particle in a question used only by females to show politeness as well.
3. **khun** has two functions in a Thai sentence. First, **khun** is a title we put in front of a person’s name, either male or female, to show politeness, such as **khun** Nida, **khun** Mike, **khun** Sandra. Second, **khun** is a pronoun that means “you” used in a formal situation to show politeness. For example:

khun sabaay•dii máy khá
you doing well or not final particle
4. **pay•nǎy•maa** means “Where are you coming from?” and is used as a greeting. (See Grammar Note “Subject + **pay**.....**maa**”)
5. **ca•pay•nǎy** means “Where are you going?” This question is used for greeting, too.
6. **khun sabaay•dii máy** means “How are you doing?” Thai people use this question with a person whom we have met before, but haven’t seen for a long time.

Grammar Notes

1.

Subject **pay**.....**maa**

pay means “to go.” **maa** means “to come.” However, **maa** is also a helping verb when it is placed after a verb.

When we say

Subject **pay** + do something.....**maa**

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

chên: Mike **pay** shopping **maa**

Mike *go* shopping *helping verb*

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

When we say

Subject **pay**..... + place.....**maa**

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

chên: Mike **pay**.....Sathorn.....**maa**

Mike *go* Sathorn *helping verb*

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

When we say

Subject **pay**..... + do something.....**thii**..... + place.....**maa**

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

thii means “at.”

chên: Mike **pay** shopping.....**thii**.....Sathorn.....**maa**

Mike *go* shopping *at* Sathorn *helping verb*

It means “Mike went shopping at Sathorn.”

2.

Subject+ verb or adjective..... máy

- máy 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 mây + verb or adjective means "no."

QUESTION	Subject.....+verb or adjective..... máy
YES	(repeat same)....verb or adjective
NO	mây.....+verb or adjective

chên: khun ca pay shopping máy

you will go shopping or not

pay Yes, I'll go.

mây pay No, I won't go.

Nida ca maa máy

Nida will come or not

maa Yes, she will come.

mây maa No, she won't come.

khun sabaay•dii máy

you doing well or not

sabaay•dii Yes, I'm doing well.

mây sabaay No, I'm not doing well.

Exercise Lesson 1

kaan·thákthaay

Greeting

Exercise Lesson 1

kaan•thákthaay Greeting

Part I

VOCABULARY

Exercise 1

kham níi plææ wáa ?aray

What does this word mean?

NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES	PRONOUNS	OTHERS
khâaw	yím	?aròy	phǒm	thîi
rooŋ•rian	kin	?aŋk`rit	chán	máy
phaasáa	pay	dii	dichán	mây
	maa	sǔay	khun	khòwpkhun
	chòwp	sabaay		sawàtdii
	rian			
	phúut			
	tham•ŋaan			
	ca			
	wáay			

Exercise 2

What is the word?

1. It means "I" and is used by males. _____
2. It means "I" and is used by females. _____
3. You should say this word when someone shows hospitality or helps you to do something. _____
4. It means "not." You put this word in front of a verb or an adjective. _____
5. It means "or not" and is used in a question. _____
6. This expression means "Where are you coming from?" _____
7. It is a title before a person's name. _____
8. It means "you." _____
9. The final particle used by males to show politeness. _____
10. The final particle used by females to show politeness and occurs only in an affirmative sentence. _____
11. The final particle used by females to show politeness and occurs in a question. _____
12. It means "all goodness." You should use the **wâay** gesture while saying this word. _____

Exercise 3

Making proper conversation.

A:	sawàtdii	khâ/khráp
B:	sawàtdii	khâ/khráp

1. Tom: sawàtdii khráp khun Mike

Mike: _____

2. Mike: sawàtdii khráp khun Anna

Anna: _____

3. Anna: _____

Jane: khun Anna sawàtdii khâ

A:	pay•nǎy•maa
B:	pay... + do sth. maa
	pay... + place maa
	pay... + do sth. thii... + place... maa

4. Jane: khun Tom sawàtdii khâ

pay•nǎy•maa khá

Tom: _____

_____ eat

5. Anna: sawàtdii khâ khun Mike

pay•nǎy•maa khá

Mike: _____

_____ eat at Silom

6. Mike: _____

Tom: sawàtdii khráp
phǒm pay rian phaasǎa Thai maa khráp

A:	ca•pay•nǎy
B:	ca pay + do sth.
	ca pay + place
	ca pay + do sth. thii + place

7. Nida: sawàtdii khâ khun Mike

Mike: _____

Nida: khun Mike ca•pay•nǎy khá

Mike: _____ study Thai at Sumaa school

8. Nida: ca•pay•nǎy khun Tom

Tom: _____ eat

khun Nida pay•nǎy•maa khráp

Nida: _____ eat

9. Jane: sawàtdii khâ khun Nida

pay•nǎy•maa khá

Nida: _____ work

khun Jane ca•pay•nǎy khá

Jane: _____ Sukhumvit

A:	sabaay•dii máy khá/khráp
B:	sabaay•dii khòɔpkhun khá/khráp

10. Nida: sawàtdii khá khun Jane
 Jane: _____
 Nida: khun Jane sabaay•dii máy khá
 Jane: _____

11. Tom: sawàtdii khráp khun Nida
 sabaay•dii máy khráp
 Nida: _____

12. Anna: sawàtdii khá khun Mike
 Mike: _____

Anna: sabaay•dii khá
 khòɔpkhun khá

13. Tom: _____
 Mike: sawàtdii khráp khun Tom

Tom: sabaay•dii khráp
 khòɔpkhun khráp

Mike: phòm pay tham•ngaan maa khráp

14. Nida: khun Tom sawàtdii khâ
Tom: _____

Nida: khun Tom sabaay•dii máy khá
Tom: _____

Nida: khun Tom pay•nǎy•maa khá
Tom: _____

work

15. Jane: _____

Nida: sawàtdii khâ
Jane: _____

Nida: sabaay•dii khâ
khòopkhun khâ
Jane: _____

Nida: chán pay rian phaasǎa ʔaṅkʰrít thii Sathorn maa khâ

Exercise 4 Put the words into correct order

1. khâ / sawàtdii / Tom / khun

.....

2. khun / Nida / máy / sabaay•dii / khráp

.....

3. khá / Tina / pay•nǎy•maa

.....

4. pay•nǎy•maa / khá / Sandra / khun

.....

5. chán / shopping / pay / khâ / maa

.....

6. rian / phǒm / maa / pay / khráp

.....

7. sawàtdii / khâ / Nida / khun / máy / sabaay•dii / khá

.....

Part III SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Exercise 5

ตอบ kham•thām “khun pay•nǎy•maa”

Answer the question “khun pay•nǎy•maa”

Q: khun pay•nǎy•maa

- A:
- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ | eat at home |
| 2. _____ | study Thai language at Sumaa school |
| 3. _____ | work |
| 4. _____ | eat pizza at Silom |
| 5. _____ | study English language at AUA |
| 6. _____ | work at Sukhumvit |
| 7. _____ | MBK Shopping mall |
| 8. _____ | school |
| 9. _____ | study |
| 10. _____ | England |

Exercise 6

ตอบ kham•thām

Answer the questions

1. khun chǎw kin tǒmyam (Thai spicy soup) máy
2. khun chǎw pay MBK máy
3. khun chǎw maa roong•rian Sumaa máy
4. khun chǎw rian phaasǎa Thai máy

5. khun chǎw phūut phaasǎa ʔaŋkɨt máy
6. khun chǎw phūut phaasǎa Thai máy
7. khun chǎw yím máy
8. khun chǎw tham·ŋaan máy
9. khun chǎw Bangkok máy
10. Bangkok sǔay máy

Exercise 7

thǎam kham·thǎam pen phaasǎa Thai

Asking questions in Thai

1. Do you like the English language?
2. Is Phuket beautiful?
3. Is (the film) *Batman* good?
4. How are you?
5. Will you speak Thai at home?
6. Will you go to work?
7. Do you like to speak Thai?
8. Is tǎomyam delicious?
9. Do you like Bangkok?
10. Will you come to school?

Culture Notes

Lesson One: kaan•thákthaay

1. Actually, **sawàtdii** is not a real Thai word. It is derived from the Pali “sotthi” and the Sanskrit “Svasti.” Thai people use the word as a blessing when they meet or say goodbye to each other.
2. **sawàtdii** means goodness, prosperity, or safety.
3. **sawàtdii** is usually accompanied with the gesture of **wâay** (to show respect by placing palms together at chest and bowing a little), except when it is said to a friend.
4. Among friends, the word **sawàtdii** is usually shortened as **wàtdii**.
5. In general, **sawàtdii** is not said to family members. When family members meet each other in the morning, they just show a smile and talk about anything they would like to.
6. Smiling is a form of greeting in Thai culture.
7. As customers or service users, Thai people do not say **sawàtdii** to service providers such as shopkeepers, taxi drivers, and street vendors.
8. There are three types of **wâay**:
 - A **wâay** gesture with the tips of the thumbs placing between eyebrows while bowing, performed to show respect to Buddhist monks.
 - A **wâay** gesture with the tips of the thumbs placing at the nose tip while bowing, performed to show respect to the senior people including parents and teachers.
 - A **wâay** gesture with the tips of the thumbs placing at the chin while bowing, performed to show respect to people of similar ages.