

Thai Language 1

Semester in Chiang Mai: Society and Culture of Thailand and Southeast Asia

Short Name: Thai Language 1

Credits: 6

Contact hours: 243 total

Classroom: 66

Homework/outside class: 60

Field Thai language exposure: 117

Course Description

This course focuses on conversational and functional Thai language acquisition. Language classes begin the first week of the semester and continue daily throughout the program, providing continuous immersive language instruction that runs alongside the rest of the curriculum. Thai is a challenging tonal language, and students study daily so that they are well prepared to live and learn in Thailand throughout the semester.

This course covers both written and spoken Thai. The course uses a competency-based approach and is designed for beginners for whom Thai is a second language. The emphasis on this course is on speaking, listening comprehension, and reading and writing skills.

This course provides fundamental language skills in Thai, helping students to practice and build vocabulary, use Thai in daily life, and use Thai during field studies, excursions, and independent learning throughout their time in Thailand.

The schedule and topics of the course are flexible and depend on student progress and comprehension.

Assessment includes both written and oral exams.

Course Objectives

The objectives for this course are that:

- Students will have a core working vocabulary and fluency sufficient for daily life in Thailand
 - Be able to carry out basic conversations in Thai with good comprehension and understanding
 - Will have the capacity to be independent learners of Thai, adding contextually appropriate vocabulary and phrases as needed in their studies and independent learning
 - Be able to apply Thai language skills in the field, using them to engage with local communities and community members during excursions, extended field studies, and homestays
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Methodology

Classes are conducted in small groups, primarily in Thai. Instruction emphasizes active student production over passive listening: students are guided to discover and practice language patterns through repetition, modeling, and situational context, rather than relying on direct translation or grammar-first instruction. Visual aids, gestures, and real objects are used to build vocabulary and comprehension without defaulting to English. This approach is designed to build learner independence and confidence early, helping students progress quickly to a basic and useful level of Thai language competency that they can apply immediately in daily life and in the field.

Grading and Assessment

Course Materials

Thai Speaking for Beginners Book: The purpose of this book is to supplement what you learned in class with more speaking practice. It includes vocabulary, sentence structure, examples of how to use question words, conversations, language notes, and culture notes.

Thai Reading for Beginners Book: The purpose of this book is to supplement what you learned in class with additional reading about Thai language rules. This includes a review of Thai grammar, consonant classes, tone rules, and vowels.

Thai Workbook for Beginners: The purpose of this workbook is to practice and review what you learned in class. There are various exercises and each lesson correspond to what your Thai language instructor has taught in class. Your assignments in this workbook will be graded by your Thai language instructor. Additional assignments may be given through at the course and will also be graded by your Thai language instructor.

Thai language audio: This will supplement your learning by helping you develop your listening comprehension skills, improve your pronunciation, and develop a more authentic accent, especially when learning Thai, where small pronunciation differences can change the meaning of words.

Course Component	Details	Total
Class Attendance and Participation	Class participation in this course means on-time attendance, active involvement in the classroom and during other activities, being responsive and active in peer teaching/learning, exhibiting locally appropriate dress and behavior, and regularly bringing personal experiences from outside the classroom to class for focused discussion.	10
Homework and Assignments	Homework will be assigned for you to review and practice on learned topics that relate to your daily living. This will include reading and writing assignments, and speaking in class about daily activities, interactions with Thai people and cross-cultural experiences. Late work will be graded down based on the instructor's criteria.	20
Tone Test	This test focuses on analyzing the word and correct pronunciation. You will have 20 minutes to write the tone that corresponds with the given words. One student per time, will then pronounce the words to an instructor who was not his/her primary language instructor.	10
Reading Test	This test focuses on comprehension of Thai vocabulary, conjunctions and question words. You will have one and a half hours to complete the test.	15
Oral Presentation	The presentation is a 10 minute individual presentation with Thai instructors assessing the presentation. The Thai language instructors will give students the topic rubrics during the course. The grade is based on the presentation content, organization, and language proficiency.	20
Final Oral Exam	The final oral exam is a 30 minute conversational interview with a Thai language instructor who is not the student's primary language instructor. Assessment is based on conversational ability, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and tones.	25
Total		100

Course Topics and Schedule

Class Schedule: Varies by block and week — see day tags below. Generally M/T/W in Blocks 2 and 3, with Thursday reserved for field studies; Block 1 (Weeks 1–5) follows the History & Politics course's daily schedule, with language class held each morning a lecture is scheduled. Classes meet from 8:30–11:30 AM on scheduled days.

Please note: An important part of this course happens outside of seminars, including field studies, extended field studies, and other experiential learning opportunities. Each of these field studies are an integral part of the course, and will include assignments for the course.

Week 1 (M/T/W/Th)

Course orientation and introduction to the Thai writing system, including consonants, vowels, and tone marks. Students learn basic greetings, self-introductions, and polite particles, along with numbers and currency for everyday transactions such as shopping, paying for transportation, and handling money in daily life.

Week 2 (T/Th)

Continued practice with Thai script, building reading and writing fluency. Vocabulary and conversation practice center on food: ordering at restaurants and street food stalls, describing tastes and preferences, and navigating markets — practical skills for daily meals in Chiang Mai.

Week 3 (T/W)

Continued practice with Thai script, building reading and writing fluency. Vocabulary and conversation focus on beverages and fruit, including ordering drinks, describing flavors and textures, and shopping for fresh fruit at local markets — extending the food-related vocabulary from Week 2 into related everyday contexts.

Week 4 (T/W)

Continued script practice. Vocabulary expands to describing tastes in more depth, alongside locations and directions: location verbs, naming places around the city, and describing where things are — foundational skills for navigating Chiang Mai independently.

Week 5 (M/T/W)

Continued script practice. Vocabulary and conversation focus on family: describing family members, relationships, and basic kinship terms. Week concludes with a tone and pronunciation test assessing progress from the first five weeks of instruction.

Week 6–7

Language classes pause during the Vietnam Integrative Field Study, a ten-day program excursion to Hanoi and surrounding areas.

Week 8

No language classes during the semester break.

Week 9 (M/T/W)

Continued script practice, building toward more advanced reading and writing. Vocabulary and conversation focus on describing people's physical characteristics and personalities, social relationships, and describing objects and things in more detail.

Week 10 (M/T)

Continued script practice. Vocabulary and conversation cover feelings and emotional expression, along with health-related vocabulary — describing symptoms, visiting a pharmacy or clinic, and communicating basic health needs.

Week 11 (No class)

No language classes this week due to the full week off campus in Hua Hin.

Week 12 (M/W)

Continued script practice. Vocabulary continues the daily activity/time/calendar theme, focusing on parts of the day and units of time — describing daily schedules and routines in greater detail. Week includes a graded oral presentation delivered in Thai.

Week 13 (M/T/W)

Continued script practice. Vocabulary and conversation focus on telling time and naming days of the week, building the practical skills needed to schedule activities and describe routines. Also includes vocabulary for sports and languages — describing hobbies and discussing what languages people speak.

Week 14 (M/T)

Continued script practice. Vocabulary expands to adverbs of time and frequency — describing how often and when activities happen. Week concludes with a reading test assessing comprehension of vocabulary, conjunctions, and question words covered throughout the course.

Week 15 (M/T/W)

Continued script practice. Vocabulary and conversation return to locations and directions in greater depth — describing the location of objects and giving directions — along with basic geography vocabulary.

Week 16 (M/T/W)

Final week of instruction. Vocabulary and conversation cover weather and seasons, followed by a comprehensive review of material covered throughout the semester. The course concludes with the final oral exam.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes. If you are ill or otherwise need to miss a class, please inform your instructor or teaching assistant.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in ISDSI courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing an academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Grading Standards

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B	83–86	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C	73–76	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D+	67–69	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D	60–66	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an Incomplete.