CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introducing Thailand and the Thai Language

Thailand is the country which is situated in South-East Asia with a population of 65.9 million as is mentioned in the National Statistical Yearbook Thailand (2011: 1). It borders Laos to the east and northeast, Cambodia to the southeast, Myanmar to the west and northwest, and Malaysia to the south. The total area is 513,000 square kilometers (198,000 square miles). Bangkok, the country’s capital, is the largest city with a population of 6.3 million (Iwasaki Shoichi and Ingkaphirom Preeya, 2005: 1). The country was known as Siam from the twelfth to the twentieth century and the language was known as Siamese. In 1939 the country was renamed as Thailand (Prathet Thai i.e. ‘country Thai’).

As Kheourai Wadee (1998: 117) describes Thai country is beautiful with a variety of natural resources. The north has teak forests, it has also rich deposits of fluorite, wolfram, and tungsten and its riverine valleys have a large number of orchards and farms. In the northeast, there is plenty of potash and mulberry plantations for the cultivation of silkworms. In the west there are mines of fluorite and gems. The finest sapphires in the world come from the east. The Chao Phraya basin is a vast network of irrigation canals which supply water to rice fields,
vegetable farms and fruit orchards. Natural gas deposits in the Gulf of Thailand are supplying energy for many developing projects, particularly along the Eastern Seaboard. The south has a lot of seafood and deposits of tin and plantations of coconuts, cashews, and other fruits such as rambutan, mangosteen and durian, etc.

Thai is the national and official language of Thailand. It is a member of the Tai group of the Tai-Kadai Language family. Comrie (1987: 757) says that 'Thai language' is the standard Thai which is used by the educated, middle class population in the central region of Thailand, particularly in Bangkok. Although Standard Thai is the native language of only about 19.5% of the population (Smalley 1994: 367), it is used and understood widely throughout the country due to its use at school and in the mass media. The Central dialect, to which Standard Thai belongs, is one of the four major dialects and has 20 to 25 million speakers. The other major dialects are the Northeastern dialect (Isam or Lao) with about 23 million speakers, the Northern dialect (Kam Muang, Lan Na or Yuan) with 6 million speakers, and the Southern dialect with 5 million speakers.

Besides these major dialects, a number of related languages are spoken in the country. Almost all of these languages belong to the southwestern branch of Tai (Li, Fang Kuei 1977: 142). Non-Tai languages include Khmer (Austro-Asiatic), Malay (Austronesian), Karen (Tibeto-Burman), and Hmong (Hmong-Mien). The 2000 census reports that 2.3% of the population speaks Khmer and 2.3% Malay. In addition, in cities and towns, southern varieties of Chinese such as Teochiu (or Swatow) and Hakka are commonly found.
1.1 Some Historical Background of the Thai Language

Rajadhon Phya Anuman (1956: 3) states that the current geographical spread of Tai languages is a result of the southwestward movement of the original Tai people from what is believed to be the Guizhou and Guangxi areas in southern China, just northeast of present-day Vietnam. The migration began during the first few centuries of the Christian era.

Wyatt (1982: 6) says that between the 5th to 8th centuries, the ancestors of the speakers of the Southwestern group of the Tai language family settled near the Black River, which runs from southern China into northern Vietnam, and northeastern Laos. From this location, this group of people spread out in a fan-shaped fashion. One group went northwestward as far as Assam in the northeastern corner of India. Some moved along the Mekong River, and settled in Laos and northern Thailand. Yet others went further south and settled in northeastern Thailand. By the 13th century, Tais had already settled in many parts of present-day Thailand.2

According to Hudak (1987: 798), as the once-powerful Khmer empire of Ankor and Burman empire of Pagan started to decline in the 13th century, Tais began to gain power in the region. Lan Na and Payao in the north and Sukhothai in the central region are important Tai kingdoms in this period. Among them, Sukhothai Kingdom is the most significant not only because it marked the beginning of the official history of Thailand, but also because it marked the beginning of the written record using the Thai script. King Ramkhamhaeng (1275-1317), the third king of the Sukhothai Kingdom, is said to have created the Thai writing system,
and he is believed to have inscribed the first historical record on a stone monument dated in 1292. It is generally held that the Sukhothai dialect is the ancestor of present-day Thai. Sukhothai fell into decline when the Ayutthaya Kingdom had emerged. After the Ayutthaya Period (1351-1767) and a brief Thonburi period, the current Bangkok period started in 1782 with King Rama the I (King Buddha Yot Fa Chulalok), the first king of the Chakri dynasty. The Ayutthaya period saw a large number of Sanskrit and Pāli words borrowed, although this phenomenon was not strictly limited to this period. These Indic loanwords comprise a large portion of the technical vocabularies for science, government, education, religion and literature. Gedney (1947: 1) states that these loanwords are as common in spoken Thai as Latin and Greek forms are in spoken English. Sanskrit, and, to a much lesser extent, Pāli assume the same cultural importance for Thai as Latin does for English.

As already mentioned according to tradition the Thai alphabet was created in 1283 by King Ramkhamhaeng. The writing system of King Ramkhamhaeng was modeled after the Khmer writing system based on the system originated in India. Unlike the modern version, it placed all the vowel symbols on the same line as the consonant symbols, but by the middle of the 14th century, some vowels were already placed either above or under a consonant letter, as in the modern version. By the late 17th century, the system added more consonant and vowel letters. There were only two tone marks as rising tone mark (´) —the symbol in Thai is (€), for example, khā: = 'leg' and low tone mark (˘) —the symbol in Thai is (€), for example, khà: = 'a kind of galangal root' in the Ramkhamhaeng system, but in the late 18th century the remaining two tone marks were
added as falling tone mark (̂) — the symbol in Thai is (ง), for example, khā: = ‘servant’ and high tone mark (ˊ) — the symbol in Thai is (ง), for example, khā: = ‘to do a business’ and a mid tone (unmarked), for example, khaː = ‘to be lodged in’ was added later on.

1.2 The Historical Background and the Present Status of the Pāli Language in Thailand

It is well accepted that Thailand has received immense influence from India so far as the religion, especially Buddhism, culture, and language are concerned. The Ministry of Thai Education recognized the Pāli language as a foreign language. So wherever the term ‘foreign’ is used in the present work in connection with Pāli, it is not strictly used in the linguistic sense, but it is used according to the policies of the government of Thailand. Pāli is a Middle Indo-Aryan language. It is most famous as the liturgical language in which the scriptures of the Theravada Buddhism (also known as the Pāli Canon or the Pāli Tripiṭaka) were written down in Sri Lanka in the 1st century B.C. in the Sinhalese script. Pāli has been written in a variety of scripts, developed from Brahmi, Devanāgarī and other Indic scripts through a romanised form devised by Rhys Davids Thomas William (1952: VI).

Hazra Kanai Lal (1932: 1) explains the word ‘Pāli’ as the language of the Tripiṭaka (or Tipiṭaka), the sacred scriptures or the Buddhist canon of Southern Buddhism. A Buddhist scholar named Kosambi (2008: 152) mentions that the name is derived from the root pāḷi ‘to protect, to preserve’ and means the book or literature in which the preservation of the Buddhist canon has taken place. So Pāli means the text of the
Buddhist scriptures. He says further that the Great Commentator Buddhaghosa (2006: 13) refers to the Tipitaka or its language by the name Pāli. According to some scholars, ‘Pāli’ takes its meaning from ‘path’ or ‘village’ (for details see section 2.1).

Pāli has great influence on the Thai language. Impact of Pāli is noticed at every level of the structure of the Thai language. Thai has borrowed many words from Pāli to use not only in the religious scriptures but also in the spoken and written varieties (Thichinphong 1991: 8). It is necessary to study both the phonological and grammatical structures of Pāli vis-a-vis Thai for understanding the influence of it on Thai clearly. According to the Buddhist tradition preserved in the Ceylonese Chronicles, Buddhism came to South East Asia at the time of Asoka (3rd century B.C.). King Asoka had sent Phra Soña and Phra Uttara who were Indian missionaries to Thailand to preach the gospel of the Lord Buddha. They came first to Suwannabhumi which is in Nakhornpathom province in the central Thailand. Along with Buddhism Pāli in which the scriptures were written was thus introduced to Thailand. There are many archaeological evidences in Thailand, recorded in Pāli. The oldest archaeological evidences in Pāli are the inscriptions called ‘Ye thammā hetupabbhavā’ “Of conditions that arise from a cause, the cause and cessation has been declared by the Great Contemplative” and ‘Dhammachaka’ “the wheel of Law” (Thichinphong 1991: 9)

According to Manorat (2006: 191) the influence of Pāli and Sanskrit on Thai is found in the following areas:
1. Thai phonetics-phonology.

2. Thai grammatical structure.

3. Thai vocabulary, and,

4. Thai writing

From time to time Pāli was used to record the doctrines of the religion. It was also used to teach the religion to the people. In the past only Buddhist monks used to study Pāli and the teaching of Pāli did not reach the common people until the period of King Phra Chullachomkluang V (1868-1910). He built two universities for imparting Pāli education in Thailand viz, the Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University and the Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya University. During his period Pāli had reached the common people and whoever was interested in studying Pāli could study it at these two universities. It was still used for teaching the religion until the reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej IX (1946-till date). Later on, the Ministry of Education in Thailand organized the curriculum of Pāli for teaching and learning at the university and school levels. According to the policies of the government of Thailand, it is a foreign language and it begins at the primary level and continues to the graduate level (Phadungsat 1987:213-214).

According to Somin (2003: 136), for Buddhist monks and novices in Thailand there is a traditional system of education consisting of the Dhamma (‘religion’) studies and Pāli studies at the temple. Thus, Pāli studies in Thailand have two systems. In one system the Pāli studies have nine levels of study at the temple for the Buddhist monks. The Sangha of Thailand organizes the curriculum of Pāli for this system. In the other
system the Pāli studies belong to the stream of foreign languages at the school, college and university levels for both Buddhist monks and common people. It is the Ministry of Education in Thailand that organizes the curriculum of Pāli for this system (for details see section 2.6).

The Continuing Education Center of the Chulalongkorn University reports that (1987: 27), there are ninety-five per cent of Thai people who believe in Buddhism. So it is obvious that Thai monks and Thai people would like to learn the Pāli language because they want to know and understand the doctrine of the Lord Buddha. The word “Pāli” means “text” and its vocabulary has a special significance for the study of Buddhism, because its words have been well defined for the need of Buddha’s teachings. For example ‘Paṭiccāsamuppāda’ (the Law of Dependent Origination) is used in the Sutta Pitaka. Dependent Origination is the doctrine of the conditionality of all physical and mental things or phenomena. It forms the indispensable condition for the realization of the teaching of the Buddha. This shows the conditionality and dependent nature of the flux of manifold physical and mental phenomena of existence conventionally called the ‘self’ or the ‘ego’. The Pāli language is called the language of mankind’s philosophy. It is the language of the Buddhist religious scriptures – “Tripitaka” (or the three baskets) (Gair James W. and W.S. Karunatillake 2005: xvii). These are:

- **The Vinaya Pitaka** (the collection of rules for monks).
- **The Sutta Pitaka** (the main body of collected teachings).
- **The Abhidhamma Pitaka** (the more advanced teachings).
Pāli and Thai are two different languages belonging to two different language families. Moreover, Pāli is a classical language documented only in the religious scriptures used as a superimposed variety in the domain of religion whereas Thai as a living language is used in all the domains by Thai speakers. Pāli is a Middle Indo-Aryan language belonging to the Indo-Aryan sub-branch of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. On the other hand, as traditionally admitted, Thai language belongs to the Thai-Chinese branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. According to some scholars it belongs to the Tai-Kadai language family. Since these are two different languages having autonomous grammatical systems, structural differences between the two are obvious. Therefore, the problems of teaching Pāli to Thai students will center on these differences along with other factors.

Thus, in view of the above it is apparent that an exhaustive analysis of these differences is an essential for investigating the problems of teaching Pāli to the Buddhist monks particularly, at the upper secondary level and for searching the remedies to solve the problems from the viewpoints of phonetics-phonology, grammar and lexicon.

1.3 Previous Literature

The present research work aims at studying the problems of teaching Pāli to Thai students with special reference to the Buddhist monks at the upper secondary level from the linguistic point of view. There are several works on the history of the Pāli language and literature in Thailand. There are also some studies on the relation between Pāli and
Thai and on the Pāli teaching materials. Mention can be made of the following studies:

**LIKHITANON, LIKHIT (1969)** in his dissertation gives an account of the history and development of Pāli literature in Thailand from the earliest period to the present period.

**SARAPADNUKE, CHAMLONG (1994)** studies the influence of Pāli on Thai from the lexical point of view only.

**KHANONGMART, PHRAMAHASARAWUT (2004)** describes the development of pronunciation of Pāli consonants from a computational point of view.


But no study has so far been conducted on the topic proposed here from this particular angle as mentioned before.

1.4 Scope and Objective of the Research

The present work aims at analyzing the problems of teaching Pāli exhaustively. So, the objective of the present treatise is to offer a detailed description of the problems of teaching the Pāli language to Thai students in relation to phonetics-phonology, grammar and lexicon. It aims at studying the problems of teaching Pāli to the Thai students at the upper secondary level with special reference to the Buddhist monks only. In this
connection it can be mentioned that the upper secondary level consists of the X, XI and XII classes. The fundamental objectives of the present work are therefore, as follows:

1. To study and analyze the theories and approaches of teaching Pāli as a foreign language in Thailand.

2. To understand the errors made by the Thai students studying Pāli.

3. To find out the problem areas related to the teaching of Pāli.

4. To study the testing and evaluation procedures in teaching Pāli.

5. To recommend the ways of solving problems in teaching Pāli.

6. To highlight indirectly the historical connection between the two countries viz, Thailand and India.

1.5 Methodology of the Research

The present work involves 200 informants who have passed out class XII standard of the upper secondary school stage from the rural and the urban areas in the North of Thailand.

The study has been carried out in the descriptive and analytical model. The research work has used error analysis as the premier methodology and for that purpose had to apply the survey method. The details of the methodology are described below.
1.5.1 Selection of Informants

The informants are 200 students of class XII consisting only of Thai Buddhist monks studying in different educational institutions from both the rural and urban areas in the North of Thailand. The logic behind their selection is that they have already studied Pāli from class VII to class XI and obtained some knowledge in Pāli. So problems of teaching and learning Pāli can be detected at this level. Further, as the medium of instruction at the school is the standard Thai, so it is expected that the students are conversant in the standard Thai though they belong to different dialectal areas.

1.5.2 Selection of Educational Institutions

Two hundred students from twenty different schools were brought under this survey. There are some common matters about all of these schools. The first common thing is that ten schools are located in the rural areas and ten schools are located in the urban areas. All of them are located at the North of Thailand. Another similar point is that they are Thai medium schools and meant for Buddhist monks only. The point of difference is that ten schools located in the urban areas have modern materials of teaching and learning, but ten schools located in the rural areas have less modern materials of teaching and learning.

The names of the institutions along with the number of students, who took part in the survey, are shown in table 1.
### Table No. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of the Institution</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Watbunruengwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Huaikhaokamwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Watyuanwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Watpotharamwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Napangwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ratchakhruewitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Watbuadoywitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pakhamwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Watmuangchumwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Watsannongbuawitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Watkuengtaiwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Watammatwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Watchediluangwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Watsophonchariyathamamwitthaya school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Phutthiwongwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Watmaekhamwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Watwiangchaiwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Watmaiwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Watchaiyasatthamwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Watsuwanthananusonwitthaya School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.5.3 Framing of Questionnaire

Three types of questionnaires have been prepared. One is on the phonetics and phonology of Pāli. This has been prepared to test the learners’ basic knowledge of the pronunciation of Pāli sounds, the second is on the grammar, prepared to test the learners’ basic knowledge of the structure of Pāli and the third one is on the vocabulary prepared to test the
learners' basic knowledge of the vocabulary of Päli. The questionnaires have been designed following the syllabus of Päli of the upper secondary level.

The questionnaire No. 1 on phonetics and phonology consists of three sections. The test items are set to test the correct pronunciation and reading. Section No.1 consists of reading the words containing consonants and consonant clusters, section No.2 consists of reading the consonant clusters and No.3 consists of a short passage for testing their understanding and pronunciation.

The questionnaire No. 2 on grammar consists of four sections. Questions are set to test the use of noun, pronoun, adjective, personal pronoun, tense, affix, conjunctions and prepositions etc. Section No.1 consists of making the sentence complete by selecting a correct answer to fill in the blank and section No. 2 contains arranging the words in a correct order. Section No.3 consists of writing Päli sentences (10 sentences) to test their ability, section No.4 consists of Päli sentences to be translated into Thai (10 sentences).

The questionnaire No. 3 on vocabulary consists of three sections. Questions are set to test the use of vocabulary and understanding of the concept of the vocabulary. Section No.1 consists of reading the common vocabularies of Päli and Thai, section No.2 consists of finding out the Päli words denoting the concepts unknown and section No.3 consists of finding out the Päli words denoting the concepts known.
1.5.4 Collection of Data

The study involves the collection of data through questionnaires. The papers containing the sections 1-2 of the questionnaire on Pāli phonetics and phonology were first distributed to the informants with necessary instructions and received back with the recording of the informants' reading. The papers containing the section Nos. 3-4 of the questionnaire were later distributed to the informants with necessary instructions. The informants returned the filled-in papers after an hour as stipulated.

Next, the questionnaire on Pāli grammar was distributed among the informants with necessary instructions. The informants returned the filled-in papers after an hour as stipulated and the last item of questionnaire was collected with the recording of the sound of the informants' reading.

Lastly, the questionnaire on the vocabulary of Pāli was distributed among the informants with necessary instructions and recorded the informants' reading. The papers containing the section Nos. 2-3 were distributed among the informants with necessary instructions again and the informants were asked about their knowledge of the concepts and corresponding words. Thus the data were collected.

1.5.5 Analysis of Data

The questionnaires related to phonetics and phonology, grammar and vocabulary of Pāli were preserved carefully and different tables were prepared for recording those information. The information of all questionnaires were examined and recorded under four different
categories - Correct (C), Incorrect (I), Known (K) and Unknown (U). Simple statistical methods have been applied for the accuracy of the analysis of data. The results of the analysis have been presented first in the form of detailed descriptions and then in tabular forms.

1.6 Plan of Work

The present work aims at studying the problems of teaching Pāli as a foreign language to the Thai students at the upper secondary level with special reference to Buddhist monks only in Thailand. The present work has been divided into eight chapters including the conclusion. The details of each chapter are presented as follows:

CHAPTER I is the introduction comprising a brief description to Thailand and the Thai language, the historical background and the present status of the Pāli language in Thailand, previous literature, objective, methodology, plan of work etc.

CHAPTER II deals with the situation and role of the Pāli language in Thailand.

CHAPTER III comprises the methods of language teaching, the analysis of the curriculum of Pāli, language skills, techniques of teaching, teaching aids, testing and evaluation procedures adopted and time allocated for teaching/learning the Pāli language at the upper secondary level.

CHAPTER IV aims at describing important contrastive features of the Pāli and Thai structures at different levels.
CHAPTER V deals with the problems of teaching Pāli at the phonetic-phonological level.

CHAPTER VI describes the problems of teaching Pāli at the grammatical level.

CHAPTER VII is concerned with the problems of teaching Pāli at the lexical level.

CHAPTER VIII forwards conclusions and the recommendations.

Notes

1. As Iwasaki Shoichi and Ingkaphirom Preeya (2005:1) states that the languages of the Southwestern branch of Tai are found not only in Thailand but also in Laos, northern Vietnam, Myanmar, India, and also in southern China. The other two branches are the Central and Northern branches. The Central branch includes languages spoken in northern Vietnam and southern China (e.g. Nùng, Tày). The Northern branch includes other languages of southern China (e.g. N. Zhuang, Bouyei, Seak). The Tai language family with three sub-groups is related to other sister and parent branches to make up a larger language stock called Kadai or Tai-Kadai. However, the exact relationship within these branches is still being worked out. In the tripartite division, Thai falls into the Southwestern branch.

2. Prior to the arrival of the Tai people and culture into what is now Thailand, the region hosted a number of indigenous Mon-Khmer, and Malay civilizations.
3. The term ‘questionnaire’ is used to refer to a list of items to be investigated. These are to be answered by a number of people especially to collect statistics or as parts of survey.

References


Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya Press.

Bangkok: The National Culture Institute Press.


Sarapadnuke Chamlong. 1994. *The Influence of Pāli on Thai*. Thailand:
Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya Press.


The continuing education center Chulalongkorn University. 1987.


London: Yale University Press.