

Advanced Thai Reading Reading Thai Newspapers Volume 1

A Talking Textbook



By Hugh Leong



With Thai News Reader feature

All articles are accompanied by a recording of the article read by a news reader, making this a *Talking Textbook*

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Introduction

Different language learners have different needs, skills, and personalities, and therefore they develop different ways in which they adapt to learning a foreign language. Some, like me, have an intense desire to learn to communicate as fast as possible. We learn to speak long before we attempt to read. Others are more visual and need to see something written down in order to learn and remember it. Whichever type you are, if you have picked up this book then you have probably already been working very hard on trying to learn to read Thai.

Like me, you probably went the route of starting with the equivalent of ABC books or the “ก ไก่ ขี ไข่” books, and you’ve been reading everything you can get your eyes on, including street signs, advertising billboards, and restaurant menus. Then you moved on to the “นิทานเด็ก” or Thai children stories including probably all of Aesop’s Fables in Thai. Now it might be time to graduate.

Thai newspapers are the logical next step. Thais are great newspaper readers. There are dozens of Thai newspapers that you can buy at almost every street corner. Most newspapers also have an on-line edition. If you read on-line you can also make quick use of on-line Thai/English dictionaries (a list of newspaper and dictionary URLs is given in the appendix). However you read, the problem with Newspaper-Thai is that it is a very different animal than what you have been practicing on. Reading Thai already has its serious difficulties. Not only are you dealing with a new (and huge) alphabet and unfamiliar vocabulary (newspaper vocab is quite different from everyday Thai), but, just to make a difficult task even harder, Thai doesn’t think that those cute little spaces separating words are important, let alone nice features like full stops or upper case letters for proper nouns.

But newspapers have even more obstacles. Even Thais find interpreting newspaper headlines an almost impossible task. Making things even worse, there are idioms (“ดับ” literally means “to extinguish” but in Newspaper-Thai it means “to die”, or “to be killed”), abbreviations (“ดร.” is an abbreviation for “ตำรวจ” or policeman, “ดร.” is just like the English “Dr.”), and contractions (“ขบ” is a contraction for “ขบเซา” meaning stagnant or sluggishness, as in “เศรษฐกิจขบ”, “economic stagnation”). These are things that one usually only finds in newsprint. They of course are completely absent from spoken Thai.

Headlines in any language are sometimes difficult to read. Some papers, like the New York Times, spell out the story more clearly than others. Thai newspapers are often not very clear. Here’s an example.

In Exercise 11 we have this headline from Thai Rath, loaded with slang, a weird contraction and an idiom for your reading pleasure:

**หนุ่มมะกันคลั่งกราดยิง 2 เมือง
ดับอย่างน้อย 10 ศพ**

A direct translation goes something like this:

*Youth 'Ma'gun Frenzy Indiscriminate Shoots 2 Cities
Extinguished at least 10 bodies*

Which I interpreted as:

*American Youth Goes On
Indiscriminate Shooting Frenzy In 2 Cities
At Least 10 Dead*

Here is how the New York Times reported the same story on the same day:

*Gunman Kills at Least 10 in Alabama,
Then Takes His Own Life After a Chase*

So don't be discouraged when after reading a Thai headline you have no clue what the story is about. Read a little further down and sometimes it will become clearer.

Thai is an extremely robust and colorful language, full of idioms, slang, and sophisticated word play. Many new learners of Thai don't realize this since their vocabulary is limited to daily, survival Thai. Here I have introduced the reader to hundreds of new complex and high level vocabulary words. Hopefully one of the results of these exercises will be to help the learner of Thai to better appreciate the beauty of the Thai language.

Little has been published recently to help the foreign reader of Thai to practice reading at this higher, and quite specific, level. I know, because when I started to try and improve my reading, I looked everywhere. I was able to find some out-of-print texts but nothing of recent publication. Ironically, there is a popular publication that many foreigners use to help with their reading of Thai Newspapers. It is a book written to help Thais learn to read English newspapers. (Although Thai and English language newspapers have a lot more differences than merely the language they are written in.)

I decided to use my teaching experience to help solve the problem. I began to produce my own reading materials and exercises to help myself. I developed a system that works for me and I have adapted it into this book with hopes that it will prove useful to those who really want to expand their knowledge of the Thai

language, and in so doing, learn more about Thai culture, Thai politics, and the Thai people.

This book is meant to be used by the individual as a teach-yourself tool to help practice some of the skills one needs to acquire in order to read a Thai newspaper or magazine article. If you have a teacher then all the better.

How to Use This Book

Each exercise is divided into 5 sections. These include:

1. The Original Article

An actual newspaper article, advertisement, announcement, etc. is presented in its original form. Your first step should be to scan and quickly look over the article seeing how much you can comprehend. See if you can separate the individual words in your head and try and get the gist of the article. Note the vocabulary words you may have trouble with.

Large Thai type is used in sympathy. Most of the information in a Newspaper article is contained in the first few paragraphs. So I have kept the reading selections fairly short. The shortest selections are in the early exercises and they grow longer as you progress through the book.

2. A Breakdown of the Article

The article is broken down by placing spaces between individual words (although compound word and phrases will be kept together as a unit). This would never be done in Thai but for us learners it might help to see how the phrases are made up. Proper nouns are in italics so you don't spend time looking up someone's name, or a place name, in a dictionary. English words rendered in Thai, some of the hardest words to read, are also identified. Various vocabulary words, slang words and idioms (many of which are Newspaper-Thai specific) are underlined and defined to the right side of the page to help you with the reading flow so you won't have to stop every few words to open that handy dictionary, although I recommend always having one by your side.

Words can have more than one meaning. We define the words in the way they are being used in the article.

🔊 **Thai News Reader feature:** All articles in the "Article Breakdown" section are accompanied by a high quality recording made by native Thai News Reader. This makes it a *Talking Textbook*. Besides reading and learning the new vocabulary you will be able to hear how the actual Thai sounds. Just click on the button below the headline in the "Article Breakdown" section of the lesson.

3. Vocabulary in Context

Many vocabulary words that are defined in section 2 will take on a slightly different meaning when they are in the context of a complete phrase or sentence. This section helps to put the words in context. At this point your comprehension of the article will have improved to the point that you should be able to discuss its basic contents.

4. Comprehension Questions

Now you can test yourself by answering the comprehension questions. First, write your own headline for the article which is basically the article's summary. Then try and answer the other questions before looking at the article translation section. For a really challenging exercise, try answering the questions in Thai.

5. The Article Translation

The translations are placed at the end of the book after the exercises. The words in the article are now put back into their original spacing and the article is broken up into logical parts and a translation (or more accurately an interpretation) is given.

Finally, go back and read the original article. By this time you should be able to read the whole thing through.

After the translations there are appendices which contain a glossary of all vocabulary words defined in the exercises, a list of Thai abbreviations (something that Thai newspapers love to use and which are the bane of many a novice newspaper reader) and many close-to-unreadable English words and how they are rendered into Thai. I have also given the URL links to many on-line Thai newspapers and also to a few on-line Thai/English dictionaries.

Good Luck and Happy Reading

Hugh Leong, Chiang Mai 2009

Exercise 1

Newspaper and magazine ads are always fun to read. They are usually illustrated and you can guess pretty accurately at what the ad is about. They may contain strange words though that turn out to be really English words (“แฟมิลี่” - family) but will be understood by most Thais. Learning to quickly identify these English words will be helpful.



Original Article Advertisement

แค่มาเป็นครอบครัวเดียวกัน
ก็ได้สิทธิพิเศษเพียบ!

ตอบแทนสมาชิกบัตรบุญถาวรแฟมิลี่ ด้วยสิทธิพิเศษมากมาย รวมมูลค่ากว่า 50 ล้านบาทหรือเพียงแค่คุณสมัครเป็นครอบครัวเดียวกับเรา สมัครฟรี! แล้วรับเลยสิทธิพิเศษเพียบ รีบสมัคร แล้วรับเพียบ! ก่อน 31 มี.ค. นี้ ที่ บุญถาวรทุกสาขา

Boon Taworn

Advertisement Breakdown

แค่ มา เป็น ครอบครัว เดียว กัน
ก็ ได้ สิทธิพิเศษ เพียบ!



ตอบแทน สมาชิก บัตร บุญถาวร แฟมิลี่

ด้วย สิทธิพิเศษ มากมาย รวม มูลค่า กว่า
50 ล้าน บาท หรือ เพียงแค่ คุณสมัคร เป็น
ครอบครัว เดียว กับ เรา สมัคร ฟรี! แล้ว รับ
เลย สิทธิพิเศษ เพียบ รีบ สมัคร แล้ว รับ
เพียบ! ก่อน 31 มี.ค. นี้ ที่ บุญถาวร ทุก
สาขา

สิทธิ - right

สิทธิพิเศษ - benefit

เพียบ - loaded

ตอบแทน - reward

สมาชิก - member

แฟมิลี่ - family

มูลค่า - value

เพียงแค่ - only

สมัคร - apply

ฟรี - free

สาขา - branch

Vocabulary in context

สิทธิพิเศษเพียบ

loaded with benefits

รีบสมัคร

hurry and apply

มูลค่ากว่า 50 ล้านบาท

more than 50 million baht of values

ทุกสาขา

at all branches

Comprehension Questions

1. Write an English headline for this ad.
2. What is being offered?
3. How much does it cost to apply?
4. When do you need to apply?
5. Where can you apply?

Translations

Wanting to stay away from word by word translations I have given here more or less interpretations of the newspaper articles in the exercises. You might come up with a different way to say something. I have tried to keep to colloquial English to express the general ideas in the article and dropped a word or phrase here and there when it just isn't the way we would say something. After becoming familiar with the contents of the article you can try doing your own translations, or interpretations. If you come away basically "knowing what the article is about" then we have succeeded in what we set out to do.

Exercise 1

แค่มาเป็นครอบครัวเดียวกัน
ก็ได้สิทธิพิเศษเพียบ

*Become One of the Family
You'll Be Loaded Down With Benefits*

ตอบแทนสมาชิกบัตรบุญถาวรแฟมิลี่ ด้วยสิทธิพิเศษมากมาย รวมมูลค่ากว่า 50 ล้านบาท

Get rewarded for applying for the Boon Taworn Family card with many benefits adding up to 50 million baht in value

หรือเพียงแค่คุณสมัครเป็นครอบครัวเดียวกับเรา สมัครฟรี!

or simply join our family for free

แล้วรับเลยสิทธิพิเศษเพียบ รีบสมัคร แล้วรับเพียบ! ก่อน 31 มี.ค. นี้ ที่
บุญถาวรทุกสาขา

*and loads of benefits will be yours. Hurry to apply before this March 31, at all
Boon Thaworn branches.*