

Thai pupils in Essex Schools: an electronic toolkit for teachers



**Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service
Crays Hill Primary School
London Rad
Crays Hill
Billericay
Essex CM3 6JG
Tel/Fax: 01268 531291**



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Introduction

Essex LA and EMTAS have collected and analysed data and information about the county's minority ethnic pupils for some time. One of the outcomes of this ongoing analysis has been the identification of underachievement of particular groups of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Longitudinal analysis of SAT results by ethnicity in Essex shows that Thai pupils (along with Bangladeshi, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot pupils) are amongst the worst performing groups apart from Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils.

In 2010/11 EMTAS led a project focused on raising the achievement of Thai (and Turkish) – speaking pupils. Local primary and secondary schools were funded to support Thai (and Turkish-speaking pupils assessed by their schools as being more advanced learners of EAL. In the course of the project, EMTAS advisers and consultants researched academic issues/barriers which had arisen for these pupils and strategies used in schools to help raise these students' achievement. A report documenting outcomes for pupils is available from EMTAS.

This toolkit provides a variety of information for those working with Thai pupils:

- A. local and national contextual information
- B. hypotheses about Thai underachievement
- C. some suggestions for schools for effective practice
- D. the Thai language and Thai culture – useful things to know
- E. links to websites, literature and cultural and linguistic information about Thai pupils
- F. useful resources for classroom practice



A. Local and National Contextual Information

1. Thai pupils in Essex

Essex schools are receiving increasing numbers of pupils from Thailand. These pupils arrive in the county primarily because the mother has married an English man living in Essex, though not exclusively. There are also a very small number of Thai men who marry an English woman. These pupils should mostly be categorised as “Other (ethnic group)-Thai”.

In Foundation Stage and Primary, there are now also some pupils who were born in the UK, with one Thai and one English parent, who ethnically should be “Mixed-White and Asian”.

In the 2010 school census there were 42 pupils identified as being of Thai ethnicity:

Key Stage	Total pupils	Males	Females	No on FSM
Foundation Stage	7	6	1	1
KS1	7	6	1	1
KS2	12	6	6	1
KS3	9	2	7	0
KS4	7	6	1	0
Total	42	26	16	3

In Autumn 2010 there were 158 pupils identified as Thai-speaking on the annual EAL pupil returns from Essex schools.

However, there is a lack of clarity as regards the selection of ethnic category by schools, or possibly by parents. In the ethnicity column on the 2010 EAL pupil return only 87 of these 158 Thai-speakers were categorised as “Other-Thai”, which is usually the correct category. A further 27 were listed as “Mixed-White and Asian”, which is also feasible (as explained above). However, of the remaining 44 pupils the listed ethnic categories include “Other-Black”, “African Asian” and even “White British”. Regarding home language, this is generally correctly listed as “Thai”, but the terms “Tai” (sic) and “Thailand” also feature. Correct ethnic identification of Thai pupils has important implications for the monitoring of achievement.

There is almost a 50/50 split of girls and boys.

The number of listed Thai-speakers in 2010 is distributed in the county as follows:

Mid Essex	37	West Essex	34
North-East Essex	33	South Essex	54

There are no known Thai supplementary schools in Essex. The report documenting EMTAS’ recent ‘Thai and Turkish Pupil Project’ highlighted the fact that many Essex Thai pupils either have forgotten their Thai, or have little opportunity to use/understand Thai, or have never learnt Thai. This varies according to the child’s age, whether they were born/have lived in Essex or Thailand and also the presence of other Thai speakers in the vicinity. Where there is one Thai parent (generally the mother) and one English parent sadly the use of Thai in the home is sometimes discouraged. The opposite situation is also found, whereby (usually) the mother takes pains to maintain the child’s proficiency in Thai as well as English.

It is not uncommon to find families where the older sibling(s) know(s) Thai but the younger children are English-speaking only.

EMTAS recommends the maintenance and development of first language skills as a strong foundation in a first language enables and supports the acquisition of English as an additional language.

Several years ago Thai pupils in Essex frequently came from Bangkok but there is now no particular location in Thailand from where our Thai pupils come and pupils are arriving from rural areas, Some Thai pupils re-visit Thailand regularly to visit relatives (sometimes the father) or for family holidays.

When a mixed-marriage takes place, it is quite common for the children to be left in Thailand with grandparents or other family members for anything up to 2 years whilst the mother is in England, joining her once she is settled.

Data on the academic performance of Thai pupils in Essex can be seen in the table below:

2009 results for Essex Thai pupils

AREA	FS no of pupils	Total FSP Points	KS1 no. of pupils	R L2+	W L2+	Ma L2+	KS2 no. of pupils	Eng L4+	Ma L4+	Sci L4+	No. of KS4 pupils	Eng L5+	Ma L5+	Sci L5+	No. of KS4 pupils	5+ A* to C	5+ A* to C inc Eng & Ma	Ave s96 Points
South	1	xx	1	√√√√	√√√√	√√√√	7	xxxx	√√√√	xxx	3	xxxx	xx	xxx	2	xxxx	xxxx	XXXX
West	2	xx	1	√√√√	xxxx	xxxx	5	xxxx	x	xxxx	5	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	2	xxxx	xxxx	XXXX
Mid	2	√√	4	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	3	√√√√	√√√√	√√√√	2	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	2	xxxx	xxxx	XXXX
North-East	1	x	-	-	-	-	2	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	2	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	1	√√√√	xxxx	√√√√

Indicators of average points above or below area average

Foundation Stage Profile

√√√√	9 ave points or more above area average
√√√	6 ave points - 8 ave points above area average
√√	3 ave points - 5 ave points above area average
√	2 ave points below - 2 ave points above area average
x	3 ave points - 5 ave points below area average
xx	6 ave points - 8 ave points below area average
xxx	9 ave points - 11 ave points below area average
xxxx	12 ave points or more below area average

Indicators of percentages (or points for KS4

Average s96 Points) above or below area average

Key Stages 1-4

√√√√	15 or more above (or 100%)
√√√	10 to 14 above
√√	5 to 9 above
√	4 below to 4 above
x	5 to 9 below
xx	10 to 14 below
xxx	15 to 19 below
xxxx	20 or more below

2. The Thai community in the UK

Thais living in the UK live with the stereotypical perceptions about them and their country which continue to persist in the British imagination. This view of Thailand is characterised on the one hand by a fascination with the food, and on the other with a particular view of Thai women. In between all this thousands of Thai people try to make their way in the UK and yet there is virtually no information about their experience of living here.

At the time of the 2001 UK Census, 16,257 people born in Thailand were residing in the UK. The Office for National Statistics estimates that, in 2009, 35,000 Thai-born people were living in the UK. The UK is home to the largest Thai expatriate community in the world outside of Asia and North America.

Of the Thai-born people in the UK in 2001 72% were women, which is considerably larger than the 50/50 breakdown of the UK as a whole. The overwhelming majority of new Thai immigrants to the UK became naturalized citizens through marriage. Many of the Thai women who migrate for marriage come from the North and Northeast areas of Thailand which are the most economically deprived, so marrying western men may be seen as synonymous with financial security. Also, there are fewer stigmas attached to having dual heritage children than there used to be. Now the latter (*Jeuk kreung*) are seen as beautiful in Thailand—it is common to see them as models, actors, musicians, Miss Thailand; etc.

The Thai community in the UK is surprisingly widespread, scattered across the country with their partners, rather than following the trend of migrant groups settling together in large cities. Despite this, London, Sheffield, Birmingham and Glasgow are all home to significant numbers of people of Thai origin. However recent figures show that Brighton has the most.



Between 2003 and 2006, over half of all Thais to enter the UK were students. The UK is a popular destination for Thai expatriate students. Thais are a well-educated group of immigrants in the UK, and according to the 2001 Census, 39% of Thai-born Londoners had higher level qualifications, compared to the city's 31% average.

According to research, many Thai immigrants to the UK wish their children to be bilingual in Thai and English, but opportunities to learn Thai are limited.

According to the 2001 Census, Thai-born Londoners were most likely to be working in industries such as hotels and restaurants (40.8%, which is much, much higher than the capital's average of 4.6% of the population working in this industry), wholesale and retail (13.0%) as well as real estate and renting (11.8%). There are estimated to be almost 2,000 Thai restaurants in the UK owned primarily by Thai immigrants.

Despite their success in many professions, discrimination is cited by many Thais in the UK as a reason for limiting where they are employed. Many Thai women find themselves caught up in human trafficking, with 20 out of the 33 London boroughs reporting numerous female Thai sex workers. The Home Office suggests that Thailand is one of the most likely countries of origin for women trafficked into the UK for sex work.

Employment statistics for second and third generation Thai British people are not known, although it is thought they are becoming much more integrated into British society than previous generations.

B. Factors Potentially Influencing Thai Pupils Underachievement

- There may be a trend of low educational aspirations amongst Thai pupils. Maternal role models may influence this as many Thai mothers do not go out to work, work in the catering trade or work in low-status jobs e.g. beauty salons.
- Lack of English fluency has a major effect on achievement of Thai pupils. Levels of fluency vary from pupil to pupil. A younger pupil may have attended a private English-medium school and have good English. An older pupil may have come from a rural area and have dropped out of school in Thailand aged 12.
- Some younger Thai-speaking pupils will have had no prior schooling and will not be literate in Thai. This affects their ability to acquire literacy at the same rate as their monolingual peers.
- Thai-speaking pupils and their parents may find the culture of learning very different from that in Thailand, causing alienation or even disaffection. In Thai classrooms there are very different learning styles, classes of 50 and silent pupils are normal. For instance, a Thai pupil will probably not be used to completing a cloze activity or having a group discussion.
- Thai-speaking pupils may suffer from institutional racism, whereby schools may have low opinions of them or their parent(s). There is a popular perception of the Thai population in Britain: Thai women migrating to the UK as individuals (or with their children) as the wives of White British men. This stereotype of Thai women has unfortunately been fed by the television programme "Little Britain", with its (Thai bride) character Ting Tong Macadangdang.
- Thai pupils may be placed in low ability sets on arrival, especially if they have little or no English. This sometimes leads them to adopt poor behaviour and attitudes.
- When they first arrive, Thai children may be living with a parent, usually the mother, whom they have not seen for a year or more, often due to the distance/cost involved in travelling between the UK and Thailand. This can disorientate especially younger children and affect confidence or behaviour.
- Thai pupils may speak little English at home. Equally they may be discouraged from using Thai. Either way, pupils arriving in the UK often find themselves in a linguistic "no man's land" for several years, where they speak neither language fluently. This situation has obvious implications for learning/achievement.

C. Some Suggestions for Schools

- Encourage parents to continue to teach their children age-appropriate skills in Thai, including literacy. Point out that knowing Thai and English will support identification with both ethnic communities.
- Encourage parents to develop pupils' "Thai identity" so that, growing up in a combination of Thai and British cultures, children will not feel caught in between two worlds or marooned between communities. Their identity will be fluid, rather than only Thai, only British, or only mixed.
- Promote positive Thai role models, such as any other Thai pupils you know of who have succeeded academically in the UK, through a talent such as sport, or career-wise.
- Note that a key feature of Britain's Thai community may be its 'mixedness'. There is now a prevalence of dual heritage families and hence Thai/White British children. Policy that may be directed at the 'Thai community' should keep this composition in mind, and likewise policy directed at those with 'dual heritage' should include pupils with Thai heritage.
- Analyse data carefully and target resources appropriately for those Thai - speaking pupils who are no longer in the early stages of learning EAL who are making slow progress/less than expected progress across the curriculum.
- Set challenging targets to raise the achievement levels of Thai children and young people.
- Set up homework clubs or other educational projects for Thai children/young people.



- Build good communication and information networks, sharing systems with the Thai parents and encourage them to participate in school life, school structures, curriculum and governance.
- Encourage parents to share with the school any skills which they have (e.g. art, cookery, dance), develop new skills themselves e.g. ICT sport) and to take part in helping Thai-speaking children and young people to do their homework.
- Deal effectively with all racist incidents.
- Produce clearly understandable reports for parents on their children to help parents understand and prevent misinterpretation.
- Allocate adequate time for parents' meetings/evenings. Avoid using children for interpreting.
- Ensure that resources, displays and the content of the curriculum reflect the linguistic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of pupils and their families.
- Consider a school link with a school in Thailand.
- Refer to the Thai and Turkish Pupil Project report for further strategies.

D. The Thai Language and Thai Culture – useful things to know

1. The Thai Language

Within Thailand, there are four major dialects, corresponding to the southern, northern, northeastern and central regions of the country; the latter is called *Central Thai* or *Bangkok Thai* and is taught in all schools, is used for most television broadcasts, and is widely understood in all regions.

Spoken Thai

Thai is a tonal language. There are five tones in Thai and each word has a defined tone. Get the tone wrong and you change the meaning. This means that the tone of the voice used for each word is more rigid than in English.

The English language also uses tone in a very different way to Thai. Speakers use a rising intonation to indicate a question, yet Thai speakers must use a defined 'question particle' or 'question tag' to communicate questioning.

Pronunciation of English

Tone can affect Thais' pronunciation of English syllables. Thai speakers of English tend to stress the final syllable in words, for example butter becomes **butter**, coffee becomes **coffee**, and shopping becomes **shopping**.

Many English loan words have been adopted into Thai, but they gain a Thai pronunciation which older Thai speakers may find difficult to shed when using English e.g. plastic *pat-tik*, style *sa-taay*.

The Thai sound system has no final s, nor final consonant clusters, so Thai speakers may produce a correct written form, but pronounce the same word incorrectly. Similarly, when discussing the past, a Thai may say *cook* without the *-ed* but write it correctly.

When pronouncing English words with vowel clusters not found in Thai (*dr, fr, fl, fj, tw, sl, sm, sw, sp, sk, st*) Thai speakers insert a short vowel, so the word *smoke* becomes *sa-moke*, similarly, *frown* becomes *fa-rown* and *screw* becomes *sa-crew*. In Thai, speakers drop the second segment of a two-segment consonant cluster at the beginning of a Thai word, so *khay* (who) and *plaa* (fish) become *khay* and *paa*. When speaking English, they may do the same, particularly with r, turning *brake* into *bake* and fried *rice* may become *fied lice*. English final consonant clusters are often shortened: *pump* becomes *pum* and *perfect* becomes *perfec*.

Similarities with English

Like English, Thai has an alphabet which is made up of consonants and vowels. It is not made up of characters like Chinese and Japanese script. It is also read from left to right.

While the English alphabet has a total of 26 letters; 21 consonants and 5 vowels, the Thai alphabet has 44 consonants and 28 vowels. In addition to this there are four tone markers and Thai numerals, as well as at least 5 extra symbols to indicate vowel length, silent syllables, repetition and so on.

Also similar to English is the sentence structure of Thai. Most Thai sentences follow the pattern of **subject, verb, object**. However, as in French, object details come after the

object in question, so a Thai-speaker says 'hair long', not 'long hair', or 'car red' not 'red car'.

Key differences from English

There are quite a few key areas where Thai speakers make frequent errors when acquiring English.

- There are no articles (*a, an, the*) in Thai and Thai pupils often have a lot of trouble with English definite and indefinite articles and when to omit or use articles e.g. *He very nice man, The buffalos are the important animals in Thailand.*
- Thai plurals are generally unmarked from the singular and indicated only by the context of the other words e.g. *he has 3 brother.*
- While Thai and English both have the **subject + verb + object** order, Thai often omits the subject when it is clear who is being talked about, causing sentences such as, *My brother was angry when came home.*
- The most common third-person pronoun in Thai makes no distinction between gender or number, resulting in Thai speakers using *he* and *she* interchangeably and producing sentence pairs such as, *My sister studies at the university. He work very hard.*
- Thai only has one relative pronoun, so in English *who* and *which* are frequently confused e.g. *My friend which I met.*
- In Thai a question is created by adding a question word at the end of a sentence, so in English Thai speakers often put the question word at the end e.g. "You go when?" The question words have no equivalent in English. Also Thai speakers can often use a rising intonation to make a question in English e.g. He go?
- Negatives in Thai are created by adding the word *mai* before the verb. There can be confusion about whether to translate this as *no* or *not* e.g. *He not go; He no go.*
- Thais often answer "Yes" to English questions which require a "No" answer e.g. "You're not going, are you." Double negative questions should be avoided at all costs as they can often lead to confusion.
- Thai speakers often omit the verb from sentences e.g. This car not good. In Thai there is no distinction between adjective/adverb pairs as in English e.g. good/well, clear/clearly and produce sentences such as *You speak Thai very good.*
- Thai uses the equivalent of *more than* and *the most* for superlatives (e.g. biggest, most expensive) and so Thai speakers tend to disregard *-er* and *-est* in English and produce sentences such as *This dress is beautiful more than others.*
- Thai does not have a possessive pronoun (e.g. *him, it*), so in English "of" is frequently omitted.
- English **verb+ preposition** or **adjective + preposition** combinations have a single word Thai equivalent, leading to e.g., *I angry you, We interest it, He frighten you.*

Punctuation

Thai does not have punctuation marks as there is simply no need for them, though there is a growing trend in using English punctuation marks in written Thai, especially in advertising and novels. In English we would indicate a written question by using a question mark. Thai would use the 'question particle' deeming question marks redundant.

Written 'sentences' or 'thoughts' are separated by leaving a space. There are no full stops or commas in written Thai although it is common to see colons and brackets used in the same way as in written English.

There are no spaces between written words. The reader must judge where one word starts and one word ends by identifying the syllables. The ability to judge this comes through exposure to Thai and increases over time.

Words

Unlike English the form of words are rigid. There is no addition made to words to indicate pluralisation, past tense or even ownership. To help explain take the word 'go' in English. English can adapt the word 'go' to indicate the context in which it is used. 'Go' could become 'going' to indicate something occurring in the present or future, 'gone' to indicate the past, or could be substituted for 'went' or 'been' changing the form of the word all together. Yet in Thai, there is only 'go'.

Spelling

The mismatch between spelling and pronunciation in English can cause many pronunciation problems for Thai pupils learning English. Another problem can be that where Thai has adopted English words these can be spelt differently in Thai, so that the user has trouble adjusting to the correct spelling.

Classifiers

In the Thai language every object has a classifier group to which it belongs. The classifier attached to each object is defined by the shape, size and characteristics of an item. Fruit for example has the classifier "*luuk*", which means child, but also refers to small, round-shaped things. Flat, slim objects such as papers are classified as "*bai*" which means leaf, yet "*bai*" is also a classifier for spectacles. Living things are classified as "*dua*", meaning bodies and so on. (There are too many to mention here.)

Language and Society

Thai society operates under a fairly rigid social-hierarchy. There are clear social boundaries which exist and the Thai language speaker must select appropriate language depending on who they are addressing and in what situation.

Age and occupation play a large role in defining the social standing of those in Thai society. Elders command most respect and language is adjusted accordingly by minors addressing them.

The words "*phi*" and "*nong*" meaning older brother/sister and younger brother/sister respectively are the most obvious example of the relevance of age in Thai society, and the influence this has had upon Thai language use. Before addressing an individual the Thai speaker must make a quick assessment as to whether the person they are talking to is older or younger than them or of a significantly higher social status.

If the person is clearly older the use of "*phi*", older brother/sister, is employed, (providing the person is not old enough to be your grandparent in which case there are specific, age-relative terms to use) indicating respect and to a certain extent inferiority.

On the other hand if the person appears younger, then they would be addressed as "*nong*". This quite often not only indicates a younger age but a slight inferior standing. For example when calling a waitress in a restaurant customers would use this term. However, at the same time, the word "*nong*" can also be used as a means of showing affection to a younger person, implying that the person is part of the family of the speaker, even if they are not directly related.

In addition to this people that are regarded as having highly respected careers such as teachers, professors, doctors etc will be addressed by their job title by those that are not even their students or patients (providing that their occupation is known by others).

In addition to these 'titles' being placed before names you may be familiar with the words, "ka" and "khrab" which are 'polite particles' used at the end of most sentences of spoken Thai. "ka" is used by female speakers and "khrab" by males.

Using these 'polite particles' shows good manners and demonstrates that you respect the individual you are talking to. They are also used in place of "yes" during conversation to indicate that you are following the conversation or to agree with a point raised.

2. Some cultural considerations for pupils coming from Thailand to the UK

Religion

Religion plays a very important role in Thai life. Religion is considered an essential pillar of society; it is not only the major moral force of Thai family and community but has also contributed to the moulding of freedom loving, individualistic, and tolerant people for many centuries.

Theravada or Hinayana Buddhism is the national religion of Thailand but there is total religious freedom and all major religions can be found in practice. There is absolute freedom of religion - Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and other faiths are practised and protected by the constitution.

Buddhism is the faith of 95 percent of the population, 4 percent are Muslims, 0.5 percent and Christians, and the remainder Hindus, Sikhs and other religion. Despite the fact that Buddhism is the faith of majority, both the king and the government uphold and support all the religions accepted by the people. Amidst rich diversity of beliefs, people of Thailand have always lived together in peace and harmony.

School life

In Thailand, primary education lasts 6 years (Primary 1- 6, ages 6-12), lower secondary education is 3 years (Secondary 1-3, aged 12-15), and upper Secondary is 3 years (Secondary 4-6, ages 15-18). Hence a pupil arriving at age 6 may never have attended school and a 12-yr old may have been still in Primary School when leaving Thailand.



In the first year of Primary lessons focus on respect toward parents, a green world, helping each other, taking care of the forests, not cutting trees to avoid floods, taking care of public belongings, not forgetting one's word, disliking robbery, respecting Thailand, listening to the parents, and reading in order to gain knowledge. A 6-year old pupil will have this as their prior knowledge.

After compulsory schooling is completed (Primary and Lower Secondary), attendance rates may drop by up to 50 percent. A 15-year old from Thailand may not therefore expect to have to attend school until age 16.

Only a small percentage of students continue their education beyond secondary school. Hence to older arrivals the idea of e.g. sixth form may not be obvious.

Even though the government mandates nine years of free education, a large percentage of rural students drop out after Grade Six - at only 12 years of age. Transport and uniforms are some of the added costs that may make school unaffordable to poorer families.

Thai classrooms often contain classes of 50 students or more.

Every morning, Thai pupils line up before the flagpole, listen to the head teacher and show respect to the Thai flag. Pupils have to stand up very straight while singing the Thai national anthem.

Children remove their shoes when entering the school building and put their shoes in front of the classroom wall.

Thai behaviours

Thai people often show feelings and emotions differently to that typical in Britain. To show one's feelings to others is not valued in Thai society; hence some Thai pupils may have been brought up to keep their problems to themselves. Thai people also try to avoid hurting other people's feelings ("*kreng chai*"). "*Chai yen*" is a way of life; this is to keep your temper whatever the situation. Therefore, it is possible that anger may "erupt" with no previous warning.

Respect of others is highly valued. Elders are usually not criticized at all. For example teachers are highly admired because they represent knowledge. No student dares to ask a question that could embarrass the teacher. Children are held in high esteem too. It is not unusual to see an adult give a bus seat up to a child.

Thai people love to have fun together ("*sanuk*"). "*Sanuk*" can represent many things: eating together, chatting or going out with friends. When coming back from business, Thai people often ask "*was it fun?*" before "*was it successful?*"

In Thailand, there is more of an emphasis on group identity. An individual belongs to a group, such as family, institute or social class. These groups determine who you are, what you are entitled to, how important you are, and so on. Belonging to a group is the key is to maintaining relationships with others.

Open and direct criticism is not valued in Thai society e.g. flattery about someone's good qualities is preferable to voicing direct criticism.

Many Thai people will place a greater emphasis on the present time than a British person might, with less focus on the past or future.

The traditional Thai greeting is known as the *wai*. In English we might compare it to the hand movement used when praying. The hands are placed together with fingers tips touching to form a cup-like shape and are then brought up towards the face. As the tips of the index fingers near the nose the head should be bowed to bring the tip of the fingers and nose together. This is a standard *wai*. The *wai* is used as a greeting as well as to say goodbye, to say sorry, to show gratitude and generally as a sign of respect.

If a person who is subordinate to you, say waiting staff, *wai's* you, there is no need to *wai* back. This is because in Thai society it is the job of that person to serve you.

Books are highly respected in Thailand as they are a source of knowledge. They should be well cared for, kept off the ground (away from the feet) and never stepped over.

Money is not only highly revered for its face value but also because it features the image of His Majesty the King of Thailand. The fact that the face of the King appears on money means that it should never be on the ground or anywhere near to close contact with the feet. It should not be damaged and should be kept as clean as possible.

Like books, money should not be stepped across, as this is akin to stepping over the head of the King himself.

Thai culture respects food to a particularly high degree. Thai people recognise that food is key to sustaining life and must be treated accordingly. Wasting rice is avoided at all costs and other food products are also held in high regard. Food should not be stepped across or treated disrespectfully.

Thai body language

The head is the most sacred part of the body in Thai culture and is where one's spirit resides. You should try your best not to touch a Thai person on the head unless you are extremely close to them.

You may notice Thai people dipping their head when crossing someone's path. This is a mark of respect seen very often in everyday life. The intention is to lower the head below that of the other person.

At the opposite end of the respect scale are the feet. As the lowest part of the body physically, feet are held in equally low regard mentally in Thai culture. In former times the feet were notoriously hard to keep clean in the hot and dusty Thai environment and the view of feet has not changed. Therefore it is considered rude to show the soles of one's feet to others. For instance, feet will be tucked under when sitting on the floor. Pointing with feet is out of the question and pointing with a finger is equally disrespectful.

Thais use an up-turned, outstretched palm instead to gesture towards an object or person. Equally when calling an individual over to see something or hailing a cab, Thais use a kind of downward waving of the hand, a bit like a cat pawing a piece of string.

An alternative method of pointing, which is particularly Thai, is pointing with the lips or chin. Using pursed lips or a flick of the chin towards the object may look odd to the outsider but is perfectly normal for Thais.

Do not be alarmed if a Thai person laughs or smiles at a time that seems to us inappropriate. Instead, be aware that they may feel uncomfortable or may not know how to react to the situation.

Thailand is known as “The Land of Smiles” because the Thai people really do smile a lot! Generally, as a people, Thais are very warm and accommodating. However, Thai people may sometimes wear a smile to cover their true emotions and prevent “losing face”, known in Thai as “*sia naa*”. When a Thai does something wrong, a simple smile may avoid a conflict and returning the smile can defuse a tense situation.

E. Useful Websites

Recent research by the Runnymede Trust (an independent policy research organisation focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society) has enabled Thai women to express their views about being Thai in Britain.

“Empowering Individuals & Creating Community – Thai Perspectives on Life in Britain” is available to download free from www.runnymedetrust.org

Diary/blog, which clearly shows daily life in Thailand through the words and pictures of a Thai teenager:

www.thailandlife.com

Information about Thai festivals:

<http://www.swp.in.th/festivals/index.html>

Website, written by an English teacher in a Thai school, with information about school in Thailand. Ideal for use with pupils:

www.thaischoollife.com

The official Thai tourism website, with a good deal of information on the country:

www.tourismthailand.org.uk

A popular website with good Thai language resources:

www.learningthai.com

Information site on Thai culture. Also has a good section on famous Thais:

www.thailandsworld.com

Website with Thai lessons both for those just wanting to learn a few phrases or for those requiring in-depth study. Covers Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing and has stories and articles in Thai:

www.thai-language.com

Newbury Park School in London has developed its website to include a language of the month. Follow the link below to listen to a child speaking in Thai.

<http://www.newburypark.redbridge.sch.uk/langofmonth/index.html>

From the same website you can download A4 posters for a classroom display about Thai:

<http://www.newburypark.redbridge.sch.uk/langofmonth/resourcepacks.html>

A map of Thailand with the surrounding countries:

<http://www.thailand-maps.com/>

F. Useful Classroom Resources



Part of the BBC website, this page contains clearly-explained information for parents (in English only) about how the English school system works, including Key Stages, assessment and the curriculum:

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/national_curriculum/

Colourful, downloadable A4 posters are available from this site. Posters include Hello, Welcome, subject names and numbers. These have several languages on each poster, including Thai:

www.schoolslinks.co.uk/resources_dl.htm

Bracknell Forest Inclusion Team have a section on their site called “Forms/Resources”. From here you can download a very comprehensive booklet of school phrases in Thai and English, also a list of Maths words:

www.bfinclusion.org.uk

Books in Thai, including bilingual Thai-English picture dictionaries and posters, for pupils of all ages can be ordered online from The Thai Bookshop:

www.thai-bookshop.com

A list of basic phrases in Thai and English:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZWR1YnV6ei5vcmd8ZW5nbGlzaC1hcy1hbi1hZGRpdGlvbmFsLWxhbmd1YWdlfGd4OjEzMGU1OGE1OTdhZjE0Zg>

An online bookstore selling dictionaries, English course for Thai speakers, dictionary of Thai-English idioms etc:

www.dcothai.com

Cambridge University Press publishes a self-study grammar textbook called “English Grammar in Use” in an edition for Thai-speakers. The book is available at Elementary Level for those with some basic English knowledge (ideal for learners at Level 1 Threshold and above, or more advanced learners with poor mastery of grammar)

http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk/de/elt/catalogue/subject/project/pricing/isbn/item1114495/Essential-Grammar-in-Use:-Thai-edition-Book-with-answers/?site_locale=de_DE¤tProject=404488

A second book covers Intermediate level, ideal for learners at Stage 2 onwards:

[http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk/de/elt/catalogue/subject/project/pricing/isbn/item1114498/English-Grammar-in-Use:-Thai-edition-Book-with-answers,-Intermediate-to-Upper-Intermediate-\(AB\)?site_locale=de_DE¤tProject=404924](http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk/de/elt/catalogue/subject/project/pricing/isbn/item1114498/English-Grammar-in-Use:-Thai-edition-Book-with-answers,-Intermediate-to-Upper-Intermediate-(AB)?site_locale=de_DE¤tProject=404924)