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UNIT

1 Thailand



Phuket (the largest island of Thailand)

Thailand, a jewel of tropical Southeast Asia, has undergone various development phases, and the 21st century marks a new chapter in its growth. One of the key drivers of this new chapter is its Eastern Economic Corridor project, which is aligned with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This project includes the construction of the high-speed railway from Bangkok to Rayong, the reconstruction of U-Tapao International Airport, and the expansion of the deep-water port of Laem Chabang. These developments are helping to make Thailand a leading business center in the ASEAN region.

LEAD-IN

Scan the code. Watch a video about Thailand on Ucampus and answer the following questions.



1. What is Thailand known as, and why?
2. Why does the speaker like Thailand?
3. What is Thailand best known for geographically?
4. Why does the speaker say rivers have a huge impact on life in Thailand?

Word tips

demeanor /dɪ'mi:nə/ *n.* (反映某人性格特点的) 举止, 外表, 风度

tropical /'trɒpɪkəl/ *a.* 热带的; 来自热带的

infrastructure /'ɪnfərə'strʌktʃə/ *n.* 基础设施 (建设)

peninsula /pə'nɪnsjələ/ *n.* 半岛

plain /pleɪn/ *n.* (大) 平原

Bangkok /bæŋ'kɒk/ 曼谷 (泰国首都)

plateau /'plætəʊ/ *n.* 高原

Chao Phraya /'tʃəʊ prə'jɑ:/ River 昭披耶河

Mekong /,mi:'kɒŋ/ River 湄公河 (上游是中国境内澜沧江)

tributary /'trɪbjətəri/ *n.* (河流的) 支流

OVERVIEW



Country profile

Official name: The Kingdom of Thailand

Official language: Thai

Currency: Thai Baht (THB)

Capital city: Bangkok

Thailand, situated in the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, is a country with diverse ecological systems. Its landscape ranges from the hilly forested regions in the north and the vast plateau of the northeast to the fertile rice fields of the central plains and the rugged coastlines of the narrow southern peninsula, all within the tropics.

Thailand consists of two major geographical regions: a larger mainland

section in the north and a smaller southern peninsula. Thailand shares borders with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Malaysia. It is also surrounded by the Gulf of Thailand to the southeast and the Andaman Sea to the southwest.

Thailand has a diverse economy, with key sectors including services, manufacturing, and agriculture. Tourism and travel-related activities are prominent contributors to Thailand's GDP and employment generators. The nation's economy is also heavily dependent on exports, with its traditional major markets in China, the U.S., and the European Union. As a prominent exporter, it is renowned for its rubber and its agricultural exports such as rice and fruits, livestock, freshwater fish, and marine products. The country's industrial exports



Tuk-tuk



Water-splashing festival




Floating market

include agro-industry products, textiles, electrical appliances, automobiles, etc. Additionally, significant natural resources like limestone, sand, and natural gas also contribute to the economy of Thailand.

The cooperation between Thailand and China within the framework of the BRI stands as a prominent example of regional connectivity and economic partnership. This collaboration has paved the way for significant infrastructural projects, with high-speed rail projects being chief among them. Specifically, one key project aims to connect Bangkok with Kunming, promoting direct and efficient transportation between Thailand and China. The cooperation also extends to other sectors, such as energy, agriculture, and technology, where both countries have

engaged in knowledge exchange and joint ventures. The China–Thailand cooperation under the BRI framework is poised to enhance Thailand’s strategic position as a regional hub, improve its logistical efficiency, and contribute to its broader goal of connectivity and prosperity across Asia.

Scan the code and complete the exercises on Ucampus.



Key cultural concepts

Family

As the cornerstone of Thai society, family is given great value and importance. Families in Thailand are closely knit, and it is common to see several generations living under the same roof, with the eldest male member being the head of the family. The power structure within the family is also reflected in the business world, where the advice of the elders is expected to be heeded.

Indirectness

Being subtle and indirect is essential in Thai culture. In communication, a considerable part of the information lies in the underlying messages or non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, body movements, and gestures. To avoid losing face, Thais tend to steer clear of direct confrontation. Criticism should be conveyed indirectly, and displaying strong emotions publicly is best avoided. Behavior like raising your voice, expressing anger, or insulting others can lead your Thai business partners to form a negative opinion of you.

Hospitality

It is the nature of Thais to be warm and hospitable in both social and professional

settings. Thais will show their generosity by welcoming guests into their homes and offering the best they have. Generally, Thais are very easygoing – they have a *mai pen rai* (“no worries” or “you’re welcome”) attitude, which shows that they generally try not to get stressed about small issues. Service is treated very seriously in Thailand and is usually delivered with modesty.

Religion

Most Thais practice Buddhism. During important Buddhist festivals in Thailand, businesses are usually closed for holidays.

In Buddhist culture, the feet as the lowest part of the body are considered unclean. If you point at your Thai business partner using any part of your foot, show the sole of your foot, or use your foot to move anything, you would be considered rather rude and disrespectful. Also, be sure to take your shoes off when entering your Thai business partner’s home, places of worship, and specific hotel rooms. Do not put your foot on a table, and avoid stepping over anyone sitting on the floor.

For Thai Buddhists, the head is the most sacred part of the body. The action of touching someone’s head to show affection is often deemed inappropriate in Thailand.



Scan the code and complete the exercises on Ucampus.

Business etiquette



Greetings

Even though business is most often conducted in English or with the help of interpreters, you may still encounter traditional Thai greetings. Learning to greet Thai people in the traditional way will create a positive first impression, which is crucial for future business relationships.

Greetings in Thailand have a slight variation based on gender. Thai people usually greet each other by saying *sawatdee* with an ending that reflects their gender. Women add *kha*, and men say *khraph*. Therefore, when being introduced to your Thai counterpart, you should say *sawatdee kha* if you are female or *sawatdee khraph* if you are male.

The iconic gesture traditionally used in greetings is the *wai*. This gesture is performed by putting your hands together and bowing slightly. When you meet your Thai business partners, you are not required to initiate a *wai*, but it would be rude not to return a *wai* if someone offers it to you. Furthermore, *wai* gestures are typically offered to a person of equal or higher status. Those who are younger or of lower status are expected to offer a *wai* to those who are older or hold higher seniority. The higher the hands are placed, the more respect is conveyed.

Names and titles

Like in most English-speaking countries, in Thailand, the first name refers to one's given name, while the last name refers to one's family name. It's important to note that Thais tend to use first names rather than last names, even in business situations, so you can expect to be addressed by your first name and title.

Most Thai people have nicknames – shorter and easier-to-remember names given by their parents. These nicknames are useful because Thai people's full names are often long and complicated for non-Thai speakers, making them hard to spell and remember. You may call your Thai business partners by their nicknames once you become more familiar with them. However, you should avoid being too informal in business meetings or with people who hold much higher positions in the company hierarchy than you.

Punctuality

Punctuality is highly appreciated. You are expected to arrive on time for meetings and social gatherings. In formal situations, it is preferable to arrive a few minutes early. Arriving just on time, or even a minute or two late for a business meeting, may be viewed as unprofessional.

Patience

Thais are very prudent in making decisions; therefore, it is usually unlikely for them to make decisions in the first meeting. Several business meetings are needed to reach a consensus. Thus, having patience is essential when you negotiate with Thais.

Dress code

Although the business dress code is not strictly formal in Thailand, it is important to wear appropriate attire when you are invited to formal business meetings. This practice helps ensure you are taken seriously by your Thai counterpart. For men, conservative-colored suits with a shirt and tie are appropriate. Wearing a jacket is a good idea, especially for meetings with senior business partners. For women, a blouse or shirt paired with long trousers or a knee-length skirt is

suitable. Tight-fitting and sleeveless clothes should be avoided. Since shoes may need to be removed in some offices and homes, it is advisable to wear shoes that are easy to slip on and off. Smart casual is acceptable for business networking events.

Gift-giving

Giving gifts is an appreciated gesture. Small gifts from your home country, such as sweets and souvenirs, are thoughtful choices. It is customary to wrap your gift in colorful wrapping paper or cloth, but avoid colors white and black since they are typically for mourning. When presenting and receiving gifts, use both hands. Do not open a gift in the giver's presence, as it is considered rude.

Table manners

Paying close attention to dining etiquette will make a good impression on your Thai counterpart. The most senior person usually sits at the head of the table, and you should not sit down before they do. Most Thai food is eaten with a fork and a spoon rather than with chopsticks. Hold the fork in your left hand and the spoon in your right. Use the fork to push food onto the spoon. Certain dishes are supposed to be picked up with your fingers. When doing so, always use your right hand. Unless you are extremely hungry, don't finish all the food on your plate, as an empty plate indicates that you are still hungry, and it will be refilled by your host.



Scan the code and complete the exercises on Ucampus.



Business practices



Bangkok's city view

Structure and hierarchy in Thai companies

Thai companies emphasize hierarchy and respect for the elders; thus, senior staff and executives are highly respected. This business culture shares characteristics with the working practices in many other Asian countries. Regardless of a company's size or nature, hierarchy is an integral part of business culture in Thailand.

Many Thai companies adopt a vertical structure, with power centralized at the top. Discussions are typically led by senior executives, who are responsible for supervising and caring for their subordinates. Building strong relationships with key executives can be important, as they play a significant role in the decision-making process.

Appointments

Business appointments are generally scheduled well in advance and confirmed a day beforehand. The traffic in big Thai cities such as Bangkok can be unpredictable, so it is

a good idea to consult the company you are visiting about the traffic conditions before you leave for the appointment. If you find yourself running late, it is advisable to call and inform the people you are about to meet.

Business cards

Exchanging high-quality business cards is important in Thailand and should be done when initiated by the host. When you receive a business card, make sure to read it before putting it away. Offer your card first to the most senior person present at a meeting, and always give and receive cards with both hands. Ensure that your business card includes your position within your company, helping your Thai counterpart understand your role in the company hierarchy.

Business languages

The use of English in international business exchanges is common, especially with Thai people from large companies in Bangkok, where presentations, proposals, and contracts in English are acceptable. In some cases, an interpreter should be provided, particularly when you are dealing with traditional Thai firms.

Communication

The communication style in the Thai business environment is sensitive and courteous. Great care should be taken to avoid offending your Thai business partners. While honesty is valued, it is typically expressed in a more tactful and considerate manner. When responding negatively to an offer, you should try to be indirect. If a direct, confrontational statement cannot be avoided, it is advisable to begin with something like “if you will allow me to be very frank”, as this kind of wording can excuse the occasional blunt statement.

Business negotiations

As mentioned in the early part, business decisions can be reached quite slowly. Thus, it is important to remain patient during negotiations and avoid pressure tactics.

Small talk is expected at the beginning of business negotiations. Jumping straight into negotiations without engaging in some friendly chat is viewed as bad manners.

Business relationships

Thais tend to do business with people that they know well. Thus, establishing a good relationship with a company before any deal is imperative in Thailand. Thai people may ask for personal information, such as your age, marital status, and educational background, to understand your status in society and build familiarity with you. It is also common to be invited to a round of golf or other social activities. These efforts by your Thai business partners are meant to get to know you better, so accept the invitation and take it as an opportunity to forge a successful partnership.



Scan the code and complete the exercises on Ucampus.





Pitfall 1

Make jokes about or criticize the Thai king or queen.

Do not speak ill of the Thai king or queen. National pride is deeply ingrained in the Thai psyche, and the royal family is held in extremely high esteem. Speaking negatively about the monarchy is dangerous in Thailand. Not only will it offend your potential business partners, but it could also lead to legal consequences.

Pitfall 2

Behave inappropriately in a temple environment.

In Thailand, temples are highly respected locations that require extreme reverence and observance of rules. It is considered inappropriate to act boisterously in these places. One should dress modestly at temples and other sacred places. It is improper to wear revealing clothes, such as beachwear, sleeveless shirts, or shorts.

Pitfall 3

Point with your finger.

Using your finger to point is considered impolite in many cultures, particularly in Thai culture. Instead of pointing with your finger, it is more respectful to gesture with your palm facing up toward the object you want to indicate.

CASE STUDY

Work in groups and analyze the following cases. Identify the proper and improper behavior of the non-Thai character in terms of Thai culture and business etiquette. Then, role-play the whole situation with your group, showing the proper behavior.



Log on to Ucampus to engage in an interactive Q&A session with your AI tutor about Thai culture and business etiquette.

CASE

1

Daniel Smith, a U.S. export business representative, arrived in Bangkok for a crucial business meeting with a prominent Thai company. On the day of the meeting, after introducing himself, Daniel tried to engage in a friendly conversation with his Thai business partner, Mr. Sompong. Daniel was given a small gift, which he immediately opened with appreciation.

After the meeting, they had a business dinner together. During the dinner talk, Daniel found a grain of rice on the hair of Mr. Sompong and tried to help him remove it, thereby touching Mr. Sompong's head.

On the following day, Daniel was invited to Mr. Sompong's home for a social visit. Upon arriving, Daniel removed his shoes at the door. When he saw the parents of Mr. Sompong, Daniel put his hands together, bowed slightly, and said, "*Sawatdee khrap.*"

CASE

2

In the vibrant city of Bangkok, a Chinese businessman named Liu Hua was preparing for a crucial business appointment with a leading Thai company. Aware of the city's unpredictable traffic, he confirmed the appointment a day beforehand and inquired about the traffic conditions.

On the day of the appointment, Liu Hua encountered unexpected delays on the road, causing him to run late. Realizing his tardiness, he promptly called his Thai business partner to apologize and inform them of his situation.

Upon arrival, Liu Hua suggested that the negotiation session start immediately to save time. During the negotiation, Liu Hua found that his Thai business partner was fluent in English, and their communication flowed smoothly. However, when discussing more technical or cultural aspects, Liu Hua occasionally relied on a Chinese-Thai interpreter to ensure accuracy and prevent misunderstandings.

CASE

3

Lin Ya, a Chinese businesswoman, arrived in Bangkok for a business meeting with a Thai businessman, Mr. Songsak. As a token of appreciation, Lin Ya had prepared a box of Chinese tea as a gift and wrapped it in black paper.

On the day of the meeting, Lin Ya wore a white short-sleeved shirt and long trousers. Upon arrival, Lin Ya greeted Mr. Songsak with a warm smile and offered the gift with both hands.

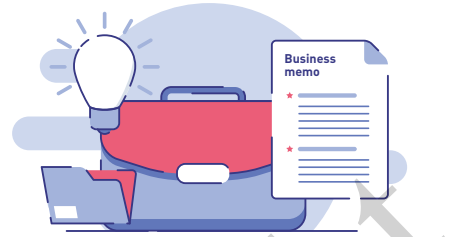
The meeting progressed smoothly as both parties delved into discussions on various business opportunities. During a break, Lin Ya initiated small talk and asked questions about Thai customs and traditions, and Mr. Songsak was delighted to share his knowledge.

As the meeting drew to a close, Mr. Songsak expressed enthusiasm for future collaborations and invited Lin Ya to a cocktail party at night. However, Lin Ya turned down the invitation, as she thought it would not help broker the deal.



CAREER SKILLS

Skill sharpening



Writing a business memo

A business memo is a simple and efficient document used to convey information within an organization. Memos are used for a wide variety of purposes. They can inform recipients about policy and personnel changes, request office supplies, arrange meetings, suggest procedural changes, address problems, or provide feedback on products or programs. As memos are used for internal communication, the tone can be more relaxed than that of business letters.

Structure

A business memo usually begins with a header section listing the recipient and other details in the following format:

- **To:** Include the name and title of the recipient. If you are writing to a designated group, simply state the name of that group (e.g., the Accounting Department).
- **From:** Include the name and title of the sender.
- **Date:** Write the full date (e.g., June 30, 2024).
- **Subject:** This should be a brief phrase indicating the memo's purpose (e.g., Meeting Cancellation). Make sure the subject is concise and descriptive.

The body of a memo should be short and focus on one idea in each paragraph. For

memos with three or more paragraphs, it is advisable to begin each paragraph with a heading in capital letters to indicate the paragraph's topic. You can also number the paragraphs for easy reference.

Business memos usually skip the salutation and go directly to the body. Whenever you start a paragraph in your memo, ensure that the main content of that paragraph is clear and prominent. Generally, memos do not include a complimentary closing.

Writing tips

- Read your memo and cut out unnecessary messages, clarify your main points, and proofread it for grammatical and factual errors.
- Memos can be sent to a person or a group, so tailor your message to the audience's focus.
- Remain professional and courteous even if you have to deal with a negative topic.
- Consider getting feedback from a colleague to ensure your message is effective and professional.

Scan the code and complete the exercises on Ucampus.



Writing task

Write a business memo based on the following situation.

Imagine you are the Director of Shipping at an international shipping company, and your company has just issued a new loading procedure. You need to communicate this procedural change to the loading dock staff. Read the following business memo and identify all the weak points in this memo. Then rewrite it in a more appropriate way.

TO: Loading Dock Staff
FROM: Philip Yuan, Director of Shipping
DATE: May 30

So, I have a message for you all. As you all know, we've had a rough year, but we've been slowly but steadily recovering. Of course, something went wrong. Because Anurak shipped three pallets to the wrong customer last week, the board decided to update the entire loading dock's loading procedures.

It's just something we have to get used to, even if it wastes all our time in the process.

Whenever we have an order ready, everyone in the loading dock needs to check with me for shipping first. Nothing will be allowed on the load car until I have signed off on it. This new change will help prevent more careless mistakes.



Log on to Ucampus to get writing guidance from your AI tutor. After completing your writing, you can receive real-time feedback to improve your work accordingly.

Useful expressions

- Please be informed that ...
- Please note that ...
- It has come to my attention that ...
- This month's staff meeting is to be held on ...
- Due to some recent ... issues, the board has decided to ...
- The board urgently requires feedback on ...
- We need an update on ...
- In response to your request, I am writing to provide you with information on ...
- I am writing to follow up on ...
- Thank you for your attention to this matter.
- If you have any questions, please feel free to stop by my office.
- Please be sure to fill in the forms and return them to the Administrative Office by ...
- Thank you all for everything you have done. Your hard work is appreciated.