

# **SUMMARY OF RESEARCH REPORT: GERMAN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THAILAND - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

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This article deals with the history, development and trend of German teaching in Thailand. German was taught for the first time at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in 1920 – 3 years after the establishment of the university. Most of the courses were developed and operated by native as well as Thai lecturers, who had studied in Germany. After being suspended during World War II, the German programme was revived in 1957 and has been continued until now. Although the German programme was inaugurated at the Faculty of Arts, the first group of students was from the Faculty of Education.

After more than half a century, the German programme has been developed from the undergraduate to the postgraduate levels. Moreover, the doctoral degree is planned to start in 2006. Apart from Chulalongkorn University, German programmes have also been made available at other universities, both public and private, all over the country: To name but a few: Thammasat University, Chiang Mai University, Silpakorn University, Kasetsart University, Srinakharinwirot University, Prince of Songkhla University, Ramkhamhaeng University, Khon Kaen

University, Payap University and Assumption University.

In Thailand, the German programme has also been made available as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language at the high school level in both ordinary and vocational schools. Bopitpimuk Commerce School was the first school, which provided the high-school programme. A survey conducted among high-school students showed that one of the reasons for studying German is a higher opportunity for passing the entrance examination to university.

As for the content of the curriculum, in comparison with the German Studies (Germanistik), it can be said that most of the German programmes in Thailand concentrate on communicative skills and general knowledge about Germany more than any other specialized fields. Literature-oriented study can be continued at the postgraduate level. This is because the aim lies in preparing the students for their possible future careers.

With the aim of establishing German programmes in Thailand, different forms of support have been provided; for instance, native lecturers sent to different universities by the German Academic Exchanges Service (DAAD), short and long term scholarships to Germany, the exchange of students and lecturers by DAAD, the Goethe Institute and cooperation among Thai and German universities, for example, the University of Siegen and the University of Heidelberg etc.

As regards the obstacles to German teaching, one of them has been the lack of materials and other audio-visual media suitable for different levels. At present (2004), the lack of German teachers, both at the university and high-school levels, seems critical because of the unattractive income and retirement package. The

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number of German students has decreased as well because English is more important as an international language. Moreover, the popularity of such Asian languages as Japanese and Chinese for future careers is another factor.

In order to encourage German teaching and act as a center of academic resources, the Association of German Teachers (Thailändischer Deutschlehrerverband) was founded in 1993. To realize such aims, a wide range of activities have been organized. To name but a few of the more important: the annual Journal "TDLV-Forum, Zeitschrift fuer Sprache, Literatur und Kultur" (the Journal of German Language, Literature and Culture), "Deutsche Tag" The academic and recreational meeting for German students, the biennial Conference of German Teachers (Internationaler Deutschlehrerverband) and the training scholarship in Germany sponsored by the Foundation of Thai-German Culture.

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