



## English Utilization of Thai Overseas Dhammaduta Monks in Buddhism Propagation

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**Abstract:-** Buddhism is now widely accepted and flourishing in Western culture. English is one of the most important mediums used for communicating and exchanging ideas, and it is also doubtless related to the dissemination of Buddhism, especially by Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks who conduct Buddhism propagation abroad. Many Dhammaduta monks are capable to use English effectively for missionary purposes. Similarly, many people continue to struggle with English. The lack of English language skills and fluency most likely hinders the dissemination of Dhamma teachings from being as effective as it could be. The prospective purpose of this research was to study the English utilization of Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks in diversified dimensions, including investigating the English language deficits of those Dhammaduta monks. The methodology of this present study was observation and case studies. In this investigation, the researchers themselves found the cause of insufficient improvements in the English usage of Dhammaduta monks when the researchers used to be Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks in Germany and the United States of America for many years. The study displayed the guidelines for improvement and development of learning English in various ways; (1) Studying English in a language institute with a native speaker (2) Practicing English in daily life (3) Practicing English for Buddhism propagation through Buddhism glossaries and materials. This will be presented to show the English usage, resolve weaknesses and develop the English language potential for maximum efficiency in Buddhist propagation of Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks.

**Keywords:** English; Dhammaduta Monks; Buddhism Propagation

### Introduction

As everyone has already realized, Thailand is one of the world's most considerable Buddhist centers, with many populations practicing Buddhism, especially the Theravada tradition (Phramaha Varasaya & Chanomkorn, 2020). Around the world, it seems to be more captivating to non-Buddhists. In this scenario, numerous overseas Dhammaduta monks from Thailand are residing abroad, particularly in the United States of America. They spread Buddhism to Thais and outsiders alike (Phramaha Suriya, 2015).

Since the time of the Lord Buddha, Buddhism has been practiced, and the Buddha's teachings have been preserved in the Tripitaka, which has served as its primary source of authority up to the present. There are many qualifications required of Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks who are charged with spreading Buddhism abroad. According to Phramaha Samarn, the desirable characteristics of Dhammaduta monks in the propagation of Buddhism in the United States of America should consist of five strategic leadership qualities as follows: (1) having a high level of understanding; (2) being capable of bringing various inputs together to formulate strategies; (3) having expectations and creating opportunities for the future; (4) practicing strategic thinking; and (5) having a determined vision (Phramaha Samarn Jataviriyo, 2020). And being able to speak English or other native languages in other countries is one of the most important things the monks need to do to spread Buddhism.

Undoubtedly, the English language is a very significant medium for communication. It is an international language used by people of different nations to communicate with one another. English is the most frequently used international language (Smith, L.E., 1976). Therefore, English is a crucial

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language for Thai Dhammaduta monks spreading Buddhism abroad. There are more than one hundred monks a year who enroll in and complete the training program, which is provided by Dhammaduta College, Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University, and Mahamukut Buddhist University. The training curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including basic construction, Vipassana meditation, Buddhist propagation, and the English language. However, even after completing the course, many Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks still struggle with the English language. This is obviously our deficiency as compared to Buddhist monks from other countries.

Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks typically work in a variety of fields. They can communicate with those around them in English on a daily basis. They occasionally shop alone and go there to buy goods. When they encounter difficulties, they can also communicate with the police in English. They visit the post office for things like sending letters. By using basic sentences, body language, and even facial expressions, they can communicate with one another pretty well. However, teaching Dhamma to people in English effectively is a huge challenge for Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks living abroad. With Buddhism's terminology, using English is really challenging.

Even though everyone agrees that meditation is the most important key for overseas Dhammaduta monks to spread Buddhism, P.A. Payutto told Phra Bodhinanathera (Luangpoo Cha Subhaddo), the most respected former abbot of Nongpa Pong temple, that he has a deep understanding of both Samatha and Vipassana meditation. He was adept at both his own self-practice and teaching the four companies of Buddhism how to greatly advance in the Dhamma. Excellent educational opportunities exist, though they are brief but potent. Despite the fact that he is illiterate in foreign languages, his ability to interact with his practitioners is seen as a unique quality. It's a very remarkable talent (Phra Brahmaganabhorn, 1996). However, Buddhism is still widely spread throughout the world thanks to English. Without the English language, it may not be completely successful. Buddhism will firmly flourish in western nations if overseas Dhammaduta monks effectively utilize English to teach Dhamma and meditation.

The purpose of this academic article is to examine the use of English by Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks from various aspects which include the utilization of English in daily conversation, the propagation of Buddhism in English, including the problems and obstacles in the use of English and the ways to solve the English language issues faced by Dhammaduta monks. This study is intended to help the monks use the English language to spread Buddhism abroad more effectively.

### English Utilizing of Thai Overseas Dhammaduta Monks

Buddhism has been practiced for over 2500 years, dating back to the time of the Lord Buddha, when he sent his sixty disciples to spread the religion in Varanasi, which is now known as Benares or Banaras in India (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 1996). At that time, they used the Magadhi language, which was a language used in the Bihar state. Bihar would also firmly establish itself as the center of Buddhism through the support of the King; consequently, a large number of individuals speak Magadhi as a language, which was used to disseminate Buddhism in the early period (Phramaha Varasaya & Chanomkorn, 2020). Our Lord Buddha selected the Magadhi language because it was widely used at that time.

The Buddhism propagation strategies of Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks rely on the Buddhist monks since they are thought to be in charge of passing along the Dhamma instruction to people who are interested, and they must be skilled in all areas and need to give skeptics a chance to explain and ask questions. When promoting religion to non-believers, those who are interested in dispelling misconceptions and learning the truth about the teachings of the Buddha or Buddhism should do so.



Language communication skills are thus required. Possessing a strong capacity for spontaneous reaction and wisdom, Dhamma must always be steadfast and prepared (Phramaha Suthep Suwathano, 2019).

English is becoming a widely utilized international language in the modern world. For many years, Buddhism has been spread to western countries, both in Europe and North America, through the English language. Mahayana Buddhism, particularly Tibetan or Vajrayana Buddhism, has been one of the most successful propagators of Buddhism. His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama is an excellent spiritual teacher and capable of teaching Dhamma, including his compassion, to people very well in English (MARC, 2021). His auspicious and meaningful words always have an impact on the world, and many of his statements are translated attractively into English. Unquestionably, English is one of the paramount factors in this accomplishment.

According to the report, there are presently around 1,787 Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks residing abroad, especially in the United States of America. According to the Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the USA, there are 127 Thai temples and 605 Thai monks conducting Buddhism propagation in the USA (The Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand, 2022), which is not counted together with other countries with many Thai Dhammaduta monks conducting Buddhism propagation as well. English is used in several fields of the overseas Thai Dhammaduta monk's works. This can be mainly divided into two fields, as follows:

### **1. English Utilizing in Everyday Life**

English is usually used from the very beginning of the journey. Most of the Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks have difficulties with the U.S. Control and Border Protection, which is generally known as U.S. Immigration, since they arrive at the airport. They are nervous while they are talking to the officers and are unable to confidently respond to just a few questions, though they have already well prepared the answers before they arrived. The inability to use English fluently is one factor in this problem.

Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks use English to communicate with non-Thais when they visit the temple. It always begins with easy words or phrases like "hi," "good morning," and "how are you?" Simple greetings and everyday chat seem to be no big deal. Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks are able to go to the store and purchase things by themselves. They also know how to get directions from the locals. Additionally, they can access public transportation for cross-state travel by using their English skills.

For locals, there are several Thai temples abroad that are quite interesting. Many visitors are drawn to the temples for their distinctive architecture, which adds to their allure and increases their appeal. Thai Dhammaduta monks are required to act as guides and explain all of the fascinating items found within the temples. An example is Wat Nawamintararachutis, which is located in Boston and is considered the world's largest Thai temple outside of Thailand. There are many visitors each day, especially on weekends, and Thai Dhammaduta monks must be present to provide information to visitors at locations such as the main gate, reception section, meditation room, and temple main hall. Some are required to be on call every day at the office to answer the call.

For higher levels, Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks may occasionally need to contact the government or state sector; this is challenging for them due to the harder vocabulary and more formal language. Speaking and listening skills are required for this interaction. Many times, some Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks understand what the officers are talking about, but they do not know how to reply because of the lack of technical terms. However, this difficulty is being gradually solved.

### **2. English Utilizing in Teaching Buddhism**

Buddhism Propagation to non-Thais is the core of Thai overseas Dhammaduta residing or Buddhist conducting abroad. Thai Overseas Dhammaduta must be ready to pass on their knowledge to

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youth and adults. They need to have the knowledge and ability to disseminate both theoretical and practical training. Seriously, there is an appropriate way to present Dhamma content. Provocative presentation techniques must persuade listeners to give Dhamma more attention. Dhammaduta monks have to alter the approach and format while keeping pace with the times in order to successfully carry out the Dhamma's dissemination (Phramaha Suthep, 2019).

The English language is typically applied in the field of Buddhist propagation both inside the temple itself and outside of the temple, such as during international Buddhist or other religious conferences. Dhammaduta monks are occasionally asked to give a speech or statement about Buddhism and meditation practices in a variety of settings, such as colleges and schools. The technical terms used in Buddhism must be utilized by the monks themselves. It contrasts sharply with everyday English.

In fact, many teachers or Buddhist monks brought insight meditation to western countries in the 1970s, and it became very popular (Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, 2009). The practice of meditation is particularly attractive to foreigners. They access the temple to learn about insight meditation, even though they are not Buddhists, which can be classified into two groups: those who have been practicing meditation for some time and those who are new practitioners and have no previous experience with it. For new meditation practitioners, Dhammaduta monks can advise them in English on the fundamentals of meditation by using simple words to ensure that practitioners are able to comprehend the overall concepts and techniques of meditation. It doesn't seem challenging to teach to individuals who have been practicing for some time because they are already familiar with meditation. Some people keep practicing until they master a skill. In actuality, however, Dhammaduta monks must cope with complex issues. Buddhist jargon of the higher kind must be used. Those terms are simple to locate. However, only words that are widely used around the world may be utilized to achieve consensus.

Besides using the English language of the Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks to teach about meditation, there are various forms of English utilized to propagate Buddhism as well, such as when retelling the Buddha's life story, teaching the Buddha's Dhamma in English, and giving disciplinary advice to monks. As a result, English is used to propagate Buddhism in many dimensions (Phramaha Suthep, 2020).

1. English Utilising in Everyday Life	2. English Utilising in Teaching Dhamma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•greetings &amp; casual conversation</li><li>•getting the direction</li><li>•using public transportation</li><li>•guiding the temple's visitors</li><li>•answering the call</li><li>•sending letters</li><li>•shopping at the market</li><li>•interacting with the government or state sector</li><li>•etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•teaching Dhamma &amp; meditation</li><li>•giving a speech in public</li><li>•attending the international meetings</li><li>•preaching Dhamma in English</li><li>•etc.</li></ul>

Figure 1 English Utilizing of Thai Overseas Dhammaduta Monks

### Inadequacy in English Skills of Thai Overseas Dhammaduta Monks

The lack of communicative English language proficiency affects not only Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks but also all Thais in general. In daily life, speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities are not as effective as they could be, although there are quite a lot of classes in English compared to other neighboring countries. The emphasis of English instruction in the Thai school system





is on reading and writing abilities, therefore learners are not sufficiently exposed to speaking and listening abilities (Punthumasen, 2007). Similarly, English instruction in Thailand is teacher-centered and places too much emphasis on correct grammar and vocabulary. Likewise, the ability of Thai Dhamma monks to use English for propagating Buddhism abroad is also quite low if compared to monks from other Buddhist nations. Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks' progress in becoming fluent in English remains sluggish due to a variety of factors, including the following:

1. The majority of individuals in the temple still speak Thai, despite the fact that Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks live in countries like the USA where English is a common first language. On the other hand, while it is ordinarily common to encounter and converse with Thais, English is hardly ever spoken by Thai monks in the temple. Most Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks use only Thai in all four skills for almost the entire day. English is the language of ordinary use in Thai temples abroad, and not all Dhammaduta monks go outside the temple and utilize English. Therefore, this is one main reason that the English language is taken for granted by Thai monks. Many Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks always ask for someone to help them with translation when they interact with non-Thai speakers. They commonly do not practice by themselves.

2. Even if there are some English natives sitting alongside Thais, Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks usually only deliver sermons in Thai. When compared to Sri Lankan monks, they preach in English for around 15 minutes after chanting or having meals. While the majority of Thai monks refrain from preaching in English despite being able to do so (Phra Dhammakosajara, 2017), Due to the difficulties of the terminology used in the Tipitaka, meditation practice, or even other Buddhist scriptures, Thai monks have trouble conveying those things in English to other people.

3. In addition, most Thai Dhammaduta monks hesitate to speak English when they ought to. There could be various causes; for instance, the monks might have feared pronouncing it properly because they are afraid to speak English in public. Speaking and pronunciation skills have not developed as a result. According to Price (1991), second-language English learners are embarrassed to pronounce words incorrectly and emphasize the improper words and sentences. They show significant humiliation at their poor pronunciation and believe they are unable to pronounce words like a native speaker. Additionally, they find they are incapable of performing well because their linguistic abilities are inferior to those of their classmates.

4. A significant proportion of Thai Dhammaduta monks working abroad work in various activities to spread Buddhism, leaving little time for English classes or language practice. These activities include temple construction and renovation, Buddhist festivals, and Thai fairs, which are held on a monthly basis.

Consequently, the proficiency of Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks in the English language is not as strong as it should be. Most of them prefer speaking Thai to English and still struggle with utilizing English for communication. It can be summarized by saying that they lack motivation to practice English because they think they do not even need to speak it in the temple.

### **Improving and Developing English Skills of Thai Overseas Dhammaduta Monks**

Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks who live abroad consistently improve their English capacities. The majority of them enroll in English courses at schools, colleges, or other institutions, and they generally take a test to gauge their level of proficiency in English before entering the classroom. Every week, a volunteer English teacher comes to the temple to teach. Furthermore, they unintentionally absorb English by themselves every day through various media such as television, Facebook, YouTube,





newspapers, etc. Especially on YouTube, is one of the most popular websites on the planet and a vast resource for educational content. Some people learn better by watching than by reading (Dhanya G., 2016). The following are some guidelines for developing English for Overseas Dhammaduta monks in Buddhist propagation:

### **1. Learning English in Language Institute**

For interested Dhammaduta monks who would like to increase their competence in English, the primary method is to study the language in a language institute or school. Dhammaduta monks should set aside time for study at specific times of the day or on the weekends. Learning is commonplace in the countries of native speakers, but skipping a language school is a big mistake. In the area, there are many language schools that are easy to locate, and monks themselves will be more motivated to learn English if they have international students and are studying alongside native speakers. Attending English in class gives Dhammaduta monks an understanding of the principles and methods of using English properly. An English proficiency test is administered prior to the start of class in order to assign students to the appropriate classrooms based on their knowledge levels. Language competency can be developed through classroom activities. A certificate from the language school will also be given to the monks when they graduate.

### **2. Practicing English in Everyday Life**

The environment will assist Thai Dhammaduta monks who reside overseas to improve their English. Even when speaking to Thai people, they should utilize more English and less Thai in order to advance the language's development. Speaking English with the kids who visit the temple can be very beneficial for improving their English abilities. Due to the child's distinct accent and the ease with which children use words. In contrast to grownups, Dhammaduta monks have the guts to speak English to kids. They can therefore learn English by conversing effectively with the kids. Dhammaduta monks can swiftly and effectively enhance their English by listening. The monks benefit from daily interactions with native speakers in all contexts. Many of the finest ways to acquire skills are to travel while paying attention to symbols and signs, go market shopping, have neighborhood conversations, deliver mail, and interact with government or state officers. These will increase the training's potency.

### **3. Practicing English for Buddhist Teaching**

It is crucial that English be developed for the Buddhist teachings of Dhammaduta monks. The sources of knowledge available to Dhammaduta monks are numerous. In actuality, they were well knowledgeable about Buddhism. For non-Thais, only the translation from Thai into English necessitates familiarity with the language's Buddhist terminology. There are many books written in English that contain Buddhist terms that Dhammaduta monks can use to teach meditation and Dharma. The Dictionary of Buddhism, written by Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto), is one of the most popular Buddhist glossaries and is well-known among Thai Buddhist monks. The vocabulary of Buddhism is covered in full in this book. By looking up vocabulary in this book, Dhammaduta monks are able to practice using English for Buddhist teaching.

Overseas Thai Dhammaduta monks must learn more about the terms used in Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism, as well as Buddhist scriptures from the Theravada tradition. due to the prevalence of Mahayana Buddhism and its widespread acceptance in the West. As a result, it is important for monks to understand more about diverse concepts and meanings such as Bodhisattvas, Bodhicittas, and Tantric practices.

Moreover, more English-language Buddhist sermons and Dhamma talks are required to be delivered by Dhammaduta monks, as doing so is equivalent to the practice of speaking English in public. Practice performing the Buddha's teachings in English should commence with straightforward subjects and simple words. This is done to keep the monks from being anxious while expressing themselves in



front of a large audience. It will broaden Buddhism's vocabulary to routinely preach in English. Usage will become more proficient in line with that.

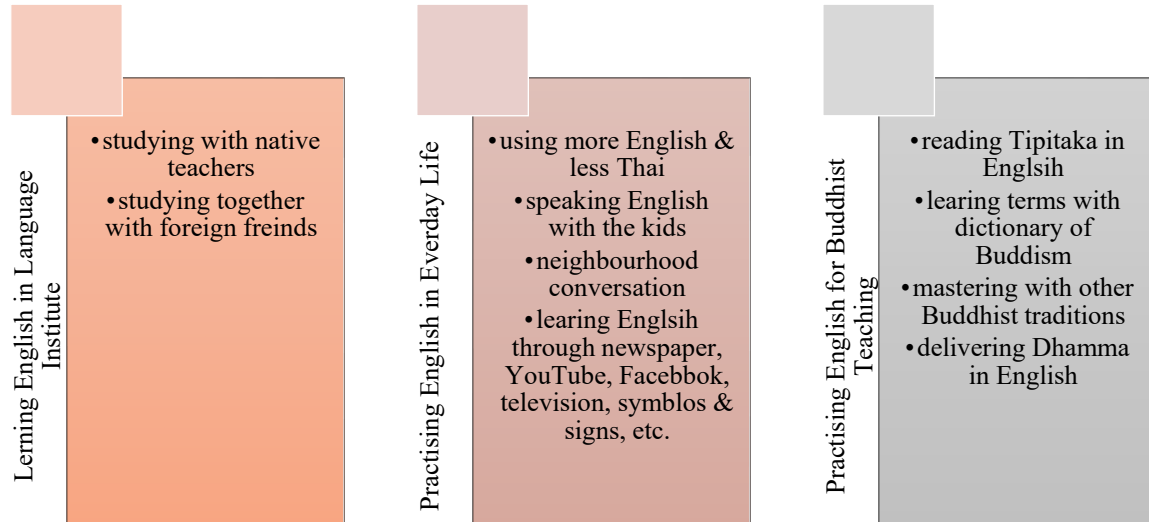


Figure 2 Improving and Developing English Skills

### Conclusion and Suggestion

Currently, Buddhism is becoming more and more widespread. For example, Buddhism was declared to be one of the major religions in Italy. And in some countries like England, there is a tendency toward applying the concepts of meditation to a variety of occupational disciplines. The basics of Buddhist meditation have been covered in English elementary schools. Furthermore, in many institutions, meditation hours are added to the weekly class plan. There are Buddhist temples and Buddhist monks in large numbers engaged in activities aimed at spreading Buddhism. The Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks are among them. According to reports, there are a large number of Thai Dhammaduta monks and Thai Buddhist temples located throughout the world, particularly in America and Europe. Because of this, English plays a significant role in the spread of Buddhism. Even though it is not the most influential concern in the global expansion of Buddhism, English proficiency is just as crucial as any other expertise.

The English usage of Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks who are living abroad is performed in several situations, which include: firstly, in everyday life, where Thai Dhammaduta monks working abroad must interact with natives who do not speak Thai. The majority of Thai Dhammaduta monks in this situation can communicate effectively in English. This is not a big deal for communication because it is usually done with simple words or sentences for greetings and casual conversation. Almost all Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks can deal with this routine situation. There are some difficulties with formal contact between Dhammaduta monks and the government or state sector for daily life English. More complex sentences, technical terms, and even the individual accents of the officers have added more hardship and discomfort. Secondly, due to a lack of Buddhist vocabulary and the difficulty of communication necessary for understanding, most Thai Dhammaduta monks are still unable to effectively teach and convey the Dhamma in English. This is something that every Dhammaduta monk should be aware of because it is an important factor in spreading Buddhism to non-Buddhists and non-Thais alike. Self-transmission of the Buddha's teachings in English is inefficient when compared to





monks from other countries. Translators may only be a short-term solution. There are many ways for Thai Dhammaduta monks to improve their English skills, such as attending a language school, having real conversations with native speakers, practicing sermons in English, reading Buddhist scriptures in English, and practicing public speaking. In fact, Thai Dhammaduta monks are well aware of such things. Finally, despite the fact that English is not the most important aspect of Buddhist propagation, However, if Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks can effectively use English, Buddhism will spread quickly, effectively, and sustainably in the modern world.

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