

HE Tej Bunnag at BALAC Talks

On Saturday, February 3, 2018, His Excellency Tej Bunnag, Ph.D., a former Foreign Minister and a former ambassador of Thailand to several countries was invited to share his experience at the BALAC Talks organized by the BALAC Program on the topic of *Language and Culture in the Life of a Thai Diplomat* .

The two-hour talk covered His Excellency's experience since childhood until his time at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Being a son of a diplomat and a renowned translator, Dr. Bunnag was immersed into the context of literacy since childhood. His reading novels aloud to his Mon caretaker since he was very young led to his passion to read and sharpened his skills in the Thai language. When he started his undergraduate studies at Cambridge University, his parents insisted on him speaking 100% Thai at home to improve his Thai. Language mixing was prohibited in the household. Although the former diplomat agreed that being a bilingual or trilingual speaker these days is a desirable quality for most careers, he stressed that as a Thai citizen, one must be fluent in Thai to work in Thailand. As a Thai diplomat, he had to deal with Thai people more than foreigners. His skills in Thai became useful when he had to negotiate with his Thai colleagues, which was, ironically, far more challenging than with foreigners. When the Cambridge and Oxford graduate was asked about the qualifications of a good diplomat, he stated that skill in negotiation is the primary quality. Additionally, knowledge in history is also essential. He commented that expertise in international law or international relations does not make a good diplomat. This is because what the career requires is a good negotiator, especially one representing a developing country such as Thailand .

The Faculty of Arts was extremely honored to have HE Tej Bunnag joining us at this event. With his warm and amiable personality, the former Foreign Minister provided beneficial insights for both the students who aspire to be diplomats and those who wish to learn about the importance of language, culture, and literacy in the life of such a truly international person as Dr. Tej Bunnag .





