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Thailand jails US man for insulting king

9th December, 2011

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

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THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

A Thai court has given a U.S. citizen a 30-month prison sentence for insulting the country's monarch. Former car salesman Lerpong Wichaikhammat, aka* Joe Gordon, received the jail term for translating parts of a book on Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej and then posting the translations on Facebook. He did all this at his home in Colorado five years ago, but was arrested in Bangkok earlier this year. Mr Gordon was born in Thailand but has spent the past 30 years living in the USA. He returned to the land of his birth to get medical help for his high blood pressure. Thailand has very strict laws for anyone who insults the monarchy. Last month, a 61-year-old Thai man was sentenced to 20 years for text messages that insulted the king.

The book Mr Gordon partially translated into Thai is an unauthorized and critical biography of Thailand's monarch called "The King Never Smiles". It was written by freelance journalist Paul Handley and has been banned in Thailand since its release in 2006. Gordon protested his innocence after the verdict was read out in court. He said: "I am an American citizen, and what happened was in America. This is just the system in Thailand - they put people in prison even if they don't have proof." An American Embassy official expressed her anger over the court's ruling, calling it severe, "because he has been sentenced for his right to freedom of expression". The Thai government said it would continue to clamp down on those who insult the monarchy.

* also known as

WARM-UPS

1. INSULTS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about insults. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

court / prison sentence / translating / Facebook / arrested / medical / blood pressure / critical / biography / freelance journalist / innocence / proof / severe / monarchy

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. BIGGEST INSULT: What would the biggest insult be to these people? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

| Insult to... | The insult | Why so bad? |
|------------------|------------|-------------|
| your best friend | | |
| a teacher | | |
| a parent | | |
| your country | | |
| a classmate | | |
| yourself | | |

4. WRONG: Students A **strongly** believe it is wrong to insult people and should never happen; Students B **strongly** believe the opposite. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. ANGRY: What insult would make you angriest? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the worst at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- your face
- your English ability
- your family name
- your sense of humour
- your religion
- your country
- your parents
- your country's leader

6. PRISON: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'prison'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. A Thai court sentenced an American man to 30 years in prison. | T / F |
| b. The man wrote a book about Thailand's king. | T / F |
| c. The American is Thai born but has lived in the USA for three decades. | T / F |
| d. A Thai man recently got 20 years jail for insulting the Thai king. | T / F |
| e. Mr Gordon translated the whole of a book on the Thai king. | T / F |
| f. Gordon accepted his guilt after the court read out the verdict. | T / F |
| g. The American Embassy did not approve of the sentence. | T / F |
| h. Thailand said it would continue to be strict if people insulted their king | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. citizen | a. uploading |
| 2. former | b. judgment |
| 3. posting | c. fault-finding |
| 4. help | d. evidence |
| 5. strict | e. national |
| 6. unauthorized | f. stamp out |
| 7. critical | g. harsh |
| 8. verdict | h. aid |
| 9. proof | i. ex- |
| 10. clamp down on | j. unofficial |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. a 30-month | a. on Facebook |
| 2. translating | b. journalist |
| 3. posting the translations | c. translated into Thai |
| 4. returned to the land | d. parts of a book |
| 5. sentenced | e. his innocence |
| 6. The book Mr Gordon partially | f. proof |
| 7. freelance | g. prison sentence |
| 8. Gordon protested | h. of expression |
| 9. even if they don't have | i. of his birth |
| 10. his right to freedom | j. to 20 years |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A Thai court has given a U.S. (1) _____ a 30-month prison sentence for insulting the country's monarch. Former car salesman Lerpong Wichaikhammat, aka Joe Gordon, received the jail (2) _____ for translating parts of a book on Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej and then (3) _____ the translations on Facebook. He did all this at his home in Colorado five years ago, but was (4) _____ in Bangkok earlier this year. Mr Gordon was born in Thailand but has spent the past 30 years living in the USA. He returned to the land of his (5) _____ to get medical help for his high blood (6) _____. Thailand has very strict laws for anyone who insults the (7) _____. Last month, a 61-year-old Thai man was sentenced to 20 years for text messages that (8) _____ the king.

The book Mr Gordon (9) _____ translated into Thai is an unauthorized and (10) _____ biography of Thailand's monarch called "The King Never Smiles". It was written by freelance journalist Paul Handley and has been (11) _____ in Thailand since its release in 2006. Gordon protested his innocence after the (12) _____ was read out in court. He said: "I am an American citizen, and what happened was in America. This is just the (13) _____ in Thailand - they put people in prison even if they don't have (14) _____. " An American Embassy official expressed her anger over the court's ruling, calling it (15) _____, "because he has been sentenced for his right to freedom of expression". The Thai government said it would continue to clamp (16) _____ on those who insult the monarchy.

posting
monarchy
term
pressure
insulted
citizen
arrested
birth

verdict
severe
critical
system
down
partially
proof
banned

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

A Thai _____ citizen a 30-month prison sentence for insulting the country's monarch. Former car salesman Lerpong Wichaikhammat, aka Joe Gordon, received the jail _____ of a book on Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej and then posting the translations on Facebook. He did all this at his home in Colorado five years ago, _____ Bangkok earlier this year. Mr Gordon was born in Thailand but has spent the past 30 years living in the USA. He returned to _____ to get medical help for his high blood pressure. Thailand has very strict laws for _____ monarchy. Last month, a 61-year-old Thai man was _____ for text messages that insulted the king.

The book Mr Gordon _____ Thai is an unauthorized and critical biography of Thailand's monarch called "The King Never Smiles". It was _____ Paul Handley and has been banned in Thailand since its release in 2006. Gordon _____ after the verdict was read out in court. He said: "I am an American citizen, and what happened was in America. This is just the system in Thailand - they put people in prison even if they _____." An American Embassy official _____ over the court's ruling, calling it severe, "because he has been sentenced for his right to freedom of expression". The Thai government said it would _____ on those who insult the monarchy.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'prison' and 'sentence'.

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| prison | sentence |
| | |

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• citizen• parts• five• spent• high• text | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• critical• since• read• system• proof• down |
|--|---|

STUDENT INSULTS SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

Write five GOOD questions about insults in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

| | STUDENT 1 _____ | STUDENT 2 _____ | STUDENT 3 _____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. | | | |
| Q.2. | | | |
| Q.3. | | | |
| Q.4. | | | |
| Q.5. | | | |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

INSULTS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'insult'?
- c) What do you think about what you read?
- d) Do you think posting translations of a book someone else wrote is an insult?
- e) Should topics like monarchy and religion be off limits for criticism?
- f) Should people be more careful about what they post online?
- g) Have you ever posted something you wish you hadn't?
- h) What's the biggest insult you've ever received?
- i) What's the biggest insult you've ever given?
- j) How would you feel if someone insulted your country's leader?

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INSULTS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What would you do if someone insulted you to your face?
- c) Should Mr Gordon have been sentenced?
- d) Is Mr Gordon wholly innocent?
- e) Do people have to be careful in today's globalized world about breaking another country's laws even if they are not in that country?
- f) Should insults of any kind be against the law?
- g) Should there be restrictions on freedom of speech?
- h) Why do people find it necessary to insult people?
- i) What's the biggest insult someone could throw at you?
- j) What questions would you like to ask the Thai judge?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

A Thai court has given a U.S. citizen a 30-month prison sentence (1) ____ insulting the country's monarch. Former car salesman Lerpong Wichaikhammat, (2) ____ Joe Gordon, received the jail (3) ____ for translating parts of a book on Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej and then posting the translations on Facebook. He did all this at his home in Colorado five years ago, but was arrested in Bangkok (4) ____ this year. Mr Gordon was born in Thailand but has spent the past 30 years living in the USA. He returned to the land of his birth to get medical help for his (5) ____ blood pressure. Thailand has very (6) ____ laws for anyone who insults the monarchy. Last month, a 61-year-old Thai man was sentenced to 20 years for text messages that insulted the king.

The book Mr Gordon partially translated into Thai is an unauthorized and (7) ____ biography of Thailand's monarch called "The King Never Smiles". It was written by (8) ____ journalist Paul Handley and has been banned in Thailand since its release in 2006. Gordon protested his (9) ____ after the verdict was read out in court. He said: "I am an American citizen, and what happened was in America. This is just the system in Thailand - they put people in prison even if they don't have (10) ____." An American Embassy official expressed her anger over the court's ruling, calling it (11) ____, "because he has been sentenced for his right to freedom of expression". The Thai government said it would continue to clamp (12) ____ on those who insult the monarchy.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. (a) from | (b) of | (c) by | (d) for |
| 2. (a) aka | (b) ala | (c) aha | (d) ok |
| 3. (a) semester | (b) phrase | (c) term | (d) cell |
| 4. (a) past | (b) earlier | (c) ago | (d) faster |
| 5. (a) tall | (b) high | (c) angry | (d) red |
| 6. (a) struck | (b) stroke | (c) strict | (d) stoke |
| 7. (a) critical | (b) criticize | (c) criticism | (d) critically |
| 8. (a) freebie | (b) freeloader | (c) freely | (d) freelance |
| 9. (a) innocent | (b) innocently | (c) innocents | (d) innocence |
| 10. (a) a roof | (b) proof | (c) poverty | (d) failproof |
| 11. (a) severe | (b) several | (c) severed | (d) sever |
| 12. (a) up | (b) in | (c) down | (d) over |

WRITING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111209-insults.html>

Write about **insults** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

[illegible]

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about Thailand's king. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. INSULTS: Make a poster about insults. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. FREEDOM OF SPEECH: Write a magazine article about freedom of speech. Include imaginary interviews with Joe Gordon and the Thai judge who sentenced him.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the Thai judge. Ask him/her three questions about the prison sentence. Give him/her three of your opinions on it. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. citizen | a. national |
| 2. former | b. ex- |
| 3. posting | c. uploading |
| 4. help | d. aid |
| 5. strict | e. harsh |
| 6. unauthorized | f. unofficial |
| 7. critical | g. fault-finding |
| 8. verdict | h. judgment |
| 9. proof | i. evidence |
| 10. clamp down on | j. stamp out |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. a 30-month | a. prison sentence |
| 2. translating | b. parts of a book |
| 3. posting the translations | c. on Facebook |
| 4. returned to the land | d. of his birth |
| 5. sentenced | e. to 20 years |
| 6. The book Mr Gordon partially | f. translated into Thai |
| 7. freelance | g. journalist |
| 8. Gordon protested | h. his innocence |
| 9. even if they don't have | i. proof |
| 10. his right to freedom | j. of expression |

GAP FILL:

Thailand jails US man for insulting king

A Thai court has given a U.S. (1) **citizen** a 30-month prison sentence for insulting the country's monarch. Former car salesman Lerpong Wichaikhammat, aka Joe Gordon, received the jail (2) **term** for translating parts of a book on Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej and then (3) **posting** the translations on Facebook. He did all this at his home in Colorado five years ago, but was (4) **arrested** in Bangkok earlier this year. Mr Gordon was born in Thailand but has spent the past 30 years living in the USA. He returned to the land of his (5) **birth** to get medical help for his high blood (6) **pressure**. Thailand has very strict laws for anyone who insults the (7) **monarchy**. Last month, a 61-year-old Thai man was sentenced to 20 years for text messages that (8) **insulted** the king.

The book Mr Gordon (9) **partially** translated into Thai is an unauthorized and (10) **critical** biography of Thailand's monarch called "The King Never Smiles". It was written by freelance journalist Paul Handley and has been (11) **banned** in Thailand since its release in 2006. Gordon protested his innocence after the (12) **verdict** was read out in court. He said: "I am an American citizen, and what happened was in America. This is just the (13) **system** in Thailand - they put people in prison even if they don't have (14) **proof**." An American Embassy official expressed her anger over the court's ruling, calling it (15) **severe**, "because he has been sentenced for his right to freedom of expression". The Thai government said it would continue to clamp (16) **down** on those who insult the monarchy.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d 2 - a 3 - c 4 - b 5 - b 6 - c 7 - a 8 - d 9 - d 10 - b 11 - a 12 - c

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