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Thailand bans YouTube video-sharing site

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8th April, 2007

THE ARTICLE

Thailand bans YouTube video-sharing site

The Internet video-sharing website YouTube is desperately trying to appease the Thai government following Thailand's outrage at the posting of videos mocking the country's revered king. Thai authorities blocked the site after a video was uploaded showing a pair of feet positioned above a portrait of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Showing the bottom of one's feet is considered extremely offensive in Thailand. Criticizing or offending the Thai monarchy is a serious crime. Last week, a Swiss man was jailed for 10 years for vandalizing portraits of the king. New video clips show the king's face covered in graffiti, while another shows digitally altered pictures of the king made to resemble a monkey, with the message: "Thailand's leaders are evil and hate free speech."

Thailand's decision to block YouTube drew criticism from freedom of speech groups worldwide. They said the ban highlighted a disturbing trend for military governments to censor political expression on the Internet. A YouTube spokeswoman said: "We have asked the government to lift the block, and we look forward to the resumption of service to our Thai users." However, the Thai government is upset at the lack of action taken by YouTube. A Thai communications ministry spokesperson said: "Officials will meet this afternoon with an association of Internet users to discuss taking further action, after [YouTube's] parent company Google failed to give any cooperation." He added: "Thailand doesn't want to take this kind of action. We are just doing it temporarily." The Thai king is the world's longest reigning monarch.

WARM-UPS

1. THAILAND: Walk around the classroom and find out from other students what they know about Thailand. When you have finished, sit with your partner(s) and share and talk about what you heard. Did you learn anything new?

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

Internet / YouTube / Thailand / feet / kings / offensive things / graffiti / hate / criticism / trends / military governments / communications / cooperation

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. FREEDOM OF SPEECH: With your partner(s), talk about which of these things are OK to criticize. Rank them: 10 = "anything goes"; 1 = "the greatest respect must be given".

- your country's leader
- religion
- God
- TV personalities
- a monarch
- the country
- politicians
- dead heroes

4. BEING OFFENSIVE Brainstorm a list of actions that are offensive in your country – especially those against your culture or leaders. What do students from other countries think of these? Brainstorm another list of offensive things foreigners do in your country. With your partner(s), decide which are most offensive.

5. QUICK DEBATE: Have this quick debate with your partner(s). Students A think anyone should be able to say anything about anyone else; students B think there should be rules to protect people from freedom of speech. Change partners and topics every two minutes.

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

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. YouTube is trying to please the Thai government. T / F
- b. Showing the soles of one's feet will anger many Thai people. T / F
- c. Criticizing the Thai king in Thailand could land you in big trouble. T / F
- d. The Thai king is in a video with a message to stamp out graffiti. T / F
- e. Freedom of speech groups are very angry with the site YouTube. T / F
- f. Freedom of speech groups are worried about military censors. T / F
- g. The Thai government wants Google to act over videos of its king. T / F
- h. Thailand's king has been on the throne longer than any other king. T / F

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

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| a. appease | ruling |
| b. mocking | insulting |
| c. offensive | wrecking |
| d. vandalizing | attracted |
| e. resemble | remove |
| f. drew | edit |
| g. censor | ridiculing |
| h. lift | look like |
| i. resumption | win over |
| j. reigning | continuation |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| a. YouTube is desperately trying to | of action taken by YouTube |
| b. videos mocking the country's revered | offensive in Thailand |
| c. considered extremely | of speech groups |
| d. jailed for 10 years for | in graffiti |
| e. covered | trend |
| f. drew criticism from freedom | vandalizing portraits |
| g. the ban highlighted a disturbing | appease the Thai government |
| h. we look forward to the resumption | reigning monarch |
| i. upset at the lack | king |
| j. The Thai king is the world's longest | of service |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Thailand bans YouTube video-sharing site

The Internet video-sharing website YouTube is _____ trying to appease the Thai government following Thailand's _____ at the posting of videos mocking the country's revered king. Thai authorities blocked the site after a video was uploaded showing a pair of feet _____ above a portrait of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Showing the bottom of one's feet is _____ extremely offensive in Thailand. Criticizing or _____ the Thai monarchy is a serious crime. Last week, a Swiss man was jailed for 10 years for vandalizing portraits of the king. New video clips show the king's face covered in _____, while another shows digitally _____ pictures of the king made to resemble a monkey, with the message: "Thailand's leaders are _____ and hate free speech."

graffiti
positioned
altered
desperately
offending
outrage
evil
considered

Thailand's decision to _____ YouTube drew criticism from freedom of speech groups worldwide. They said the ban highlighted a _____ trend for military governments to censor political _____ on the Internet. A YouTube spokeswoman said: "We have asked the government to lift the block, and we look forward to the resumption of _____ to our Thai users." However, the Thai government is upset at the lack of action taken by YouTube. A Thai communications _____ spokesperson said: "Officials will meet this afternoon with an association of Internet users to discuss taking _____ action, after [YouTube's] parent company Google failed to give any cooperation." He added: "Thailand doesn't want to take this kind of action. We are just doing it _____." The Thai king is the world's longest _____ monarch.

ministry
service
disturbing
reigning
temporarily
block
further
expression

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Thailand bans YouTube video-sharing site

The Internet video-sharing website YouTube is _____ appease the Thai government following Thailand's outrage _____ videos mocking the country's revered king. Thai authorities blocked the site after a video was uploaded showing a pair of feet _____ portrait of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Showing the bottom of one's feet is _____ offensive in Thailand. Criticizing or offending the Thai monarchy is a serious crime. Last week, a Swiss man was jailed for 10 years for _____ of the king. New video clips show the king's face covered in graffiti, while another shows _____ of the king made to resemble a monkey, with the message: "Thailand's leaders are evil and hate free speech."

Thailand's decision to block YouTube _____ freedom of speech groups worldwide. They said the ban highlighted a disturbing trend for military governments _____ expression on the Internet. A YouTube spokeswoman said: "We have asked the government to lift the block, and we look forward _____ service to our Thai users." However, the Thai government is _____ action taken by YouTube. A Thai communications ministry spokesperson said: "Officials will meet this afternoon with an association of Internet users to discuss taking further action, after [YouTube's] parent company Google _____ cooperation." He added: "Thailand doesn't want to take this kind of action. We are just doing it temporarily." The Thai king is the world's _____.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'you' and 'tube'.

- 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. STUDENT "FREEDOM OF SPEECH" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about freedom of speech.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• desperately• revered• portrait• serious• covered• evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• block• trend• resumption• upset• parent• temporarily
---	---

DISCUSSION

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

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) Do you respect monarchs?
- c) Have you ever visited the site YouTube?
- d) Do you think Thailand is right to ban YouTube?
- e) What are the dangers of a site like YouTube?
- f) Should people be allowed to put anything on the Internet?
- g) How important is freedom of speech in your country?
- h) What offensive things do foreigners do in your country?
- i) Do you agree with the ten-year prison sentence the Swiss man received for defacing a portrait of the Thai king?
- j) What would happen to you in your country if you spoke out against or said shocking things about the leader?



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 put lies about you on the Internet or made a nasty image of you?
- c) What do you think someone has to gain by posting images of the Thai king on YouTube?
- d) Is it OK for a government to ban sites it doesn't like?
- e) Is it OK for newspapers to say bad things about world leaders?
- f) Do you think the people who posted the images of Thailand's king should be punished?
- g) Should the Thai government also ban Google – YouTube's parent company?
- h) How can we regulate the Internet properly without censorship?
- i) What do you think is the best solution to the problem between YouTube and Thailand's government?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b) Was there a question you didn't like?
- c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d) What did you like talking about?
- e) Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

FREEDOM OF SPEECH:

Ask three different students questions about which of these it is OK to put on the Internet:

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
	_____	_____	_____
Disrespectful photos of monarchs			
Photos of terrorists			
Pornography			
Lies			
Other _____			

Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Make a mini-presentation you the class. Vote on the best one(s).

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Thailand bans YouTube video-sharing site

The Internet video-sharing website YouTube is (1) _____ trying to appease the Thai government following Thailand's outrage (2) _____ the posting of videos mocking the country's revered king. Thai authorities blocked the site (3) _____ a video was uploaded showing a pair of feet positioned above a portrait of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Showing the bottom of (4) _____ feet is considered extremely offensive in Thailand. Criticizing or offending the Thai monarchy is a serious crime. Last week, a Swiss man was jailed for 10 years for vandalizing portraits of the king. New video clips show the king's face covered in graffiti, while another shows digitally (5) _____ pictures of the king made to (6) _____ a monkey, with the message: "Thailand's leaders are evil and hate free speech."

Thailand's decision to block YouTube (7) _____ criticism from freedom of speech groups worldwide. They said the ban highlighted a disturbing trend for military governments to (8) _____ political expression on the Internet. A YouTube spokeswoman said: "We have asked the government to (9) _____ the block, and we look forward to the resumption of service to our Thai users." However, the Thai government is upset at the (10) _____ of action taken by YouTube. A Thai communications ministry spokesperson said: "Officials will meet this afternoon with an association of Internet users to discuss taking further action, after [YouTube's] (11) _____ company Google failed to give any cooperation." He added: "Thailand doesn't want to take this kind of action. We are just doing it temporarily." The Thai king is the world's longest (12) _____ monarch.

- | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. | (a) despairing | (b) desperation | (c) desperately | (d) desperate |
| 2. | (a) of | (b) at | (c) on | (d) of |
| 3. | (a) after | (b) during | (c) following | (d) resulting |
| 4. | (a) sole | (b) one | (c) heel's | (d) one's |
| 5. | (a) alteration | (b) altar | (c) altered | (d) alter |
| 6. | (a) resembling | (b) resembles | (c) resemble | (d) resemblance |
| 7. | (a) coloured | (b) drew | (c) sketched | (d) painted |
| 8. | (a) censor | (b) censors | (c) censored | (d) censorship |
| 9. | (a) shoulder | (b) lift | (c) carry | (d) throw |
| 10. | (a) lack | (b) slack | (c) flack | (d) lacking |
| 11. | (a) cousin | (b) relative | (c) uncle | (d) parent |
| 12. | (a) rein on | (b) rein in | (c) raining | (d) reigning |

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 more information about YouTube. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. FREEDOM POSTER: Make a poster about freedom of speech in different countries around the world. Show your poster to your class in the next lesson. Vote on the best one(s).

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about the problems of the Internet. In particular, write about the dangers of people being allowed to put anything they want to on the Web. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the CEO of YouTube. Give him/her three pieces of advice about the problem in Thailand. Ask him/her three questions. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| a. appease | win over |
| b. mocking | ridiculing |
| c. offensive | insulting |
| d. vandalizing | wrecking |
| e. resemble | look like |
| f. drew | attracted |
| g. censor | edit |
| h. lift | remove |
| i. resumption | continuation |
| j. reigning | ruling |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| a. YouTube is desperately trying to | appease the Thai government |
| b. videos mocking the country's revered | king |
| c. considered extremely | offensive in Thailand |
| d. jailed for 10 years for | vandalizing portraits |
| e. covered | in graffiti |
| f. drew criticism from freedom | of speech groups |
| g. the ban highlighted a disturbing | trend |
| h. we look forward to the resumption | of service |
| i. upset at the lack | of action taken by YouTube |
| j. The Thai king is the world's longest | reigning monarch |

GAP FILL:

Thailand bans YouTube video-sharing site

The Internet video-sharing website YouTube is **desperately** trying to appease the Thai government following Thailand's **outrage** at the posting of videos mocking the country's revered king. Thai authorities blocked the site after a video was uploaded showing a pair of feet **positioned** above a portrait of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Showing the bottom of one's feet is **considered** extremely offensive in Thailand. Criticizing or **offending** the Thai monarchy is a serious crime. Last week, a Swiss man was jailed for 10 years for vandalizing portraits of the king. New video clips show the king's face covered in **graffiti**, while another shows digitally **altered** pictures of the king made to resemble a monkey, with the message: "Thailand's leaders are **evil** and hate free speech."

Thailand's decision to **block** YouTube drew criticism from freedom of speech groups worldwide. They said the ban highlighted a **disturbing** trend for military governments to censor political **expression** on the Internet. A YouTube spokeswoman said: "We have asked the government to lift the block, and we look forward to the resumption of **service** to our Thai users." However, the Thai government is upset at the lack of action taken by YouTube. A Thai communications **ministry** spokesperson said: "Officials will meet this afternoon with an association of Internet users to discuss taking **further** action, after [YouTube's] parent company Google failed to give any cooperation." He added: "Thailand doesn't want to take this kind of action. We are just doing it **temporarily**." The Thai king is the world's longest **reigning** monarch.

LANGUAGE WORK

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