



Temchon Punthasane from Buriram Pitthayakhom School, centre, wins the 2018 NJ Spelling Bee. He has been showered with many awards, including a scholarship to study the English language in the United States.

Buri Ram student aces 2018 NJ Spelling Bee

THE NATION

TEMCHONPUNTHASANE from Buriram Pitthayakhom School was the quickest – and best – speller in the 2018 Nation Junior Spelling Bee, the best-known English spelling competition in Thailand.

After running four regional contests in four provinces – Chiang Mai, Songkhla, Khon Kaen and Pathum Thani – in the second half of this year, 100 winners from these regions joined the grand national round held on Saturday at Rangsit University in Pathum Thani province.

The contestants not only prepared themselves with spellings that they expected to meet in this round, but they also kept their fingers crossed, as luck also played an important role.

The competition was tight in every round, until Temchon's name

was called out as the national winner.

He will receive his trophy from Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, and will also get a scholarship to study the English language in the US, which is funded by Education USA and the US Embassy in Bangkok.

Temchon also takes home a Bt15,000 cash prize from Magnolia Plus Ginkgo, as well as a TOEFL Total course from Enconcept. His adviser, meanwhile, will get a Bt20,000 cash prize from NJ Digital.

The runners up will each get a trophy, a Bt10,000 scholarship and an Ultimate Vocab Plus Reading course. Five merit awards were also presented, each with a Bt5,000 scholarship and a pre-admission GAT and O-NET course.

For his part, Temchon attributed his success to the love of reading.

“Since I was young, I have loved reading English articles, novels and anything else I can find on the Internet. When I find words I don't know the meaning of, I look them up in the dictionary.”

He also realised the importance of vocabulary.

“If we understand vocabulary, we can understand the entire sentence. For me, I think vocabulary is more important than grammar, because we don't need perfect grammar in conversation.”

Katriya Burkdoll, an English-language teacher's assistant at Fullbright Thailand who represented the US Embassy, said spelling bees in the US were more like game shows, unlike the NJ competition.

“I think that overall, for all the students who came and competed today, it's quite a big achievement,” she said. “They should all be very

proud of themselves.”

She also urged young Thais to work on polishing their English-language skills.

“Whether the object is to study abroad or just boost your communication skills, I think it [English language] provides a lot of opportunities for students to communicate with the world.”

The NJ Spelling Bee project began when the Nation Group, in collaboration with NJ Digital, saw the importance of young people knowing the English language, and encouraged them to learn more vocabulary.

The competition has over the past 21 years become more and more popular. This year's event was sponsored by F&N Magnolia Plus Ginkgo and the US Embassy in cooperation with educational institutions, government agencies among others.