

Learning with the Irrawaddy 8

To accompany November 2005 Issue of Irrawaddy Magazine

Teacher's Notes

Here's the eighth issue of 'Learning with the Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to the Irrawaddy Magazine. It is designed for reading, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools on the Burma border.

With each issue of Irrawaddy magazine, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. We recommend that you use these exercises with students who have an Intermediate level of English. You don't need to use all activities suggested here – choose those that are most appropriate for your students.

In this issue we have included:

- this teacher's guide
- some copies of Irrawaddy magazine
- a class set of photocopies of the article
- a class set of worksheets.

Selected article: *Uncertainty Reigns in Shan State*, page 13

Activities to do Before Reading

Activity 1

Prediction: Analyse the title

- a) Tell students they are going to read an article about military presence in Shan State. Tell them to look quickly at the article, and to look at everything *apart from* the text. Write the title on the board. Brainstorm the meaning of *REIGNS*.

Examples of *REIGNS* in context:

- In Lesotho (Africa), the King *reigns* over the people;
- In the animal kingdom, the lion *reigns*;
- In Olympic basketball competitions, the USA *reigns*
- The *reign* of the current King of Thailand is the longest of all current monarchs in the world.

Answer: *verb – govern, control; noun – time in power.*

- b) Ask the students to look quickly again at the article (again, at everything *apart from* the text), and then to predict the meaning of the title ‘Uncertainty Reigns in Shan State’.
- i. The future of Shan State is definite.
 - ii. Presently in Shan State, the situations of all the different armies are unclear.
 - iii. Many different armies will rule Shan State in the future.
 - iv. In Shan State, every family has a member in the army.

Answer: *ii.*

Activity 2

What do you know?

Without looking at the article, ask the students how many armies they know in Shan State. For the armies that they don't know, can they guess the meaning of the acronyms? (Give the acronyms below, after the students have tried to guess which they know.)
SSA-N - Shan State Army (North); SSA-S – Shan State Army (South);
UWSA – United Wa State Army; SSNA – Shan State National Army;
PSLA – Palaung State Liberation Army;
SSNPLO – Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation;
MNDAA – Myanmar National Democracy Alliance Army;
NDAA-SA – National Democratic Alliance Army (Shan-Akha);
PNO – Pa-O National Organisation; KDA - Kachin Defence Army.

Activities to do During Reading

Activity 3

Vocabulary: Replace with another word

- a) *strained* (paragraph 1)

The relationship between my mother and my husband is strained because my mother thinks my husband is lazy.

- i. under pressure ii. easy iii. awful

b) *de facto* (paragraph 2) /de 'facto/

It is still common for many Thai couples not to register their marriages with the authorities. De facto marriages are acceptable in Thailand.

- i. illegal ii. expensive iii. unofficial

c) *granted* (paragraph 3)

The travel documents granted people security whilst traveling between Mae Sot and Chiang Mai.

- i. gave ii. denied iii. wished

d) *dubbed* (paragraph 3)

He was very clever, so the other students dubbed him "Brains".

- i. dreamt ii. named iii. painted

e) *dramatically* (paragraph 7) /dra'matic-ly/

She's very sick – her temperature has risen dramatically since yesterday.

- i. fast ii. very slowly iii. slowly

f) *lucrative* (paragraph 9) /'lucrative/

Modeling can be a very lucrative career, but being famous can make your life very difficult.

- i. good ii. well-paid iii. boring

g) *skepticism* (paragraph 9) /'skepticism/

I don't like our new accountant - my skepticism about his honesty makes it difficult for me to trust him.

- i. doubt ii. dreams iii. proof

h) *tensions* (paragraph 11)

There are tensions between my father and my sister at the moment – my sister keeps playing her music too loud, and my father gets very angry.

- i. feelings of happiness ii. fights iii. bad feelings

Answers: a) i; b) iii; c) i; d) ii; e) i; f) ii; g) i; h) iii;

Activity 4 Vocabulary: Guess the meaning

a) *hold out* (paragraph 1)

She said that she doesn't love me, but I don't believe her - I'm going to hold out.

- i. accept the thing that the other person wants
- ii. wait until you receive the thing that you want
- iii. pressure the other person until they give you the thing that you want

b) *allegedly* (paragraph 2) /a'legedly/

Allegedly, China is going to stop its human rights abuses.

- i. Something that is proven
- ii. Something that will definitely happen in the future
- iii. Something that is said but not proven

c) *concessions* (paragraph 3) /con'cessions/

The government gave my father concessions to build on forestry land.

- i. rights
- ii. tools
- iii. money

d) *turned in* (paragraph 4)

I found 100B on the floor of a shop, so I turned it in to the shop owner.

- i. give it to the authorities
- ii. sell it to the authorities
- iii. lend it to the authorities

e) *elaborate* (paragraph 9) /e'laborate/ (adj.)

(note: /elabo'rat/ (v) – to give a more detailed explanation)

The bride's wedding dress is very elaborate, it must have taken a long time to make.

- i. long
- ii. wonderful
- iii. detailed, with many parts

f) *farce* (paragraph 9)

His graduation party was a farce – everyone knew that he had cheated on his exams.

- i. dangerous situation
- ii. foolish situation
- iii. unhappy situation

g) polish (his) image (paragraph 9)

My brother upset a lot of people last year, and many people don't like him now. He needs to polish his image.

- i. do things so that people like you
- ii. apologise to people you upset
- iii. clean your mirror

h) buffer (paragraph 10)

The cliffs are a buffer between the sea and the land.

- i. something that pushes one thing away from another
- ii. something that pulls one thing towards another
- iii. something that stops one thing from touching another

i) enmity (paragraph 11) /'enmity/

A strong enmity still exists between the two old men, who had fought on opposite sides during the war.

- i. a situation of being friends
- ii. a situation of being enemies
- iii. a situation of being brothers

j) veteran (paragraph 11) /'veteran/

His father is the oldest First World War veteran I know – many of the other veterans are dead now.

- i. someone who has very little experience
- ii. someone who has a lot of experience
- iii. someone who is alive

k) arbitrary (paragraph 12) /'arbit-ry/

There was no reason why the police stopped my motorbike – their decision was completely arbitrary.

- i. a decision that is made because someone orders you
- ii. a decision that is made for a reason
- iii. a decision that is made for no reason

l) extrajudicial (paragraph 12) /extraju'dicial/

A corrupt police force is not a fair police force. A corrupt police force does many things that are extrajudicial.

- i. unlawful – not within the law
- ii. has respect for human rights
- iii. lawful – within the law

Answers: a) ii; b) iii; c) i; d) i; e) iii; f) ii; g) i; h) iii; i) ii; j) ii; k) iii; l) i;

Activity 5**Referencing**

- a) ‘Complicating the situation still further...’ (paragraph 2)

Complicating which situation still further?

- i. The situation between the Shan groups and several ethnic leaders.
- ii. The situation between the Rangoon regime and Shwe Ohn.
- iii. The situation between Shan groups and the regime.

- b) ‘They also allowed the groups to remain armed...’ (paragraph 3)

Who allowed the groups to remain armed?

- i. The first ceasefire agreements.
- ii. The regime.
- iii. The original agreements.

- c) ‘Despite these developments...’ (paragraph 6)

Which developments?

- i. The Shan State Army (North) abandoning their base. (paragraph 5)
- ii. The Shan State National Army turning in their arms and the Palaung State Liberation Army surrendering. (paragraph 4)
- iii. The merge of some of the SSNA with the SSA-S. (paragraph 4)
- iv. The regime expecting the groups to disarm after the groups had been assured they could keep their arms. (paragraph 3)
- v. All of the above. (paragraphs 3-5)

Answers: a) iii; b) i; c) v;

Activity 6**Comprehension**

- a) Members of two armies abandoned their bases. Which armies were the soldiers from?

- i. SSNA and SSA-S.
- ii. SSA-S and SSA-N.
- iii. SSA-N and SSNA.

- b) Who merged with the SSA-S?

- i. The SSNA.
- ii. Several members of the SSNA.
- iii. Colonel Sai Yi.
- iv. The PSLA.

- c) In which month did the merge happen?

- i. April
- ii. May
- iii. June
- iv. September

Answers: a) iii; b) ii; c) ii.

Activity 7

Linking words

Although and despite (paragraphs 1 and 6)

- e.g.1 Although it rained a lot, we enjoyed our holiday.
- e.g.2 Although I had all the necessary qualifications, I didn't get the job.
- e.g.3 Although Saw Nay Blute says that his friendship with Saw Po Kler is good, Saw Po Kler says that they are not talking to each other.

a) We use *although* when:

- i. The second sentence is an expected continuation of the first.
- ii. The second sentence is not an expected continuation of the first.

b) We use *despite* in a similar way:

- e.g.4 Despite it raining a lot, we enjoyed our holiday.
- e.g.5 Despite having all the necessary qualifications, I didn't get the job.
- e.g.6 Despite Saw Nay Blute saying that his friendship with Saw Po Kler is good, Saw Po Kler says that they are not talking to each other.

Change this '*although*' sentence into a '*despite*' sentence:

Although the Rangoon regime insists that Shan State is stable, one armed opposition group continues to hold out against government pressure to disarm.

c) The clauses can change order:

- e.g.7 Despite it raining a lot, we enjoyed our holiday.
We enjoyed our holiday, despite it raining a lot.

- Although it rained a lot, we enjoyed our holiday.
We enjoyed our holiday, although it rained a lot.

Change the order of these clauses:

- i. Despite having all the necessary qualifications, I didn't get the job.

- ii. Although I had all the necessary qualifications, I didn't get the job.

d) Look at the sentence you wrote in b. Change the order of the clauses, writing it once with *although* and once with *despite*.

i. (*although*) _____

ii. (*despite*) _____

e) We re-phrased paragraph 6 like this:

Despite many Shan groups refusing to disarm, Kyaw Hsan claimed that “peace” had been secured with armed ethnic movements.

Change this ‘*despite*’ sentence into a ‘*although*’ sentence, and change the order of the clauses (write only one sentence).

Answers: a) ii;

b) *Despite* the Rangoon regime insisting that Shan State is stable, one armed opposition group continues to hold out against government pressure to disarm. (Ensure that the students see that with *despite*, the verb that follows it should be in the –ing form, changing *insists* to *insisting*.)

c) i. I didn’t get the job, despite having all the necessary qualifications.
ii. I didn’t get the job, although I had all the necessary qualifications.

d) i. One armed opposition group continues to hold out against government pressure to disarm, although the Rangoon regime insists that Shan State is stable.
ii. One armed opposition group continues to hold out against government pressure to disarm, despite the Rangoon regime insisting that Shan State is stable.

e) Kyaw Hsan claimed that “peace” had been secured with armed ethnic movements, although many of the Shan groups refused to disarm.

Activity 8

Contradictions

A *statement* is something that is said by someone.

e.g. “Peace has been secured with armed ethnic movements”, said Kyaw Hsan.

Kyaw Hsan made a *statement* claiming that “peace” had been secured with armed ethnic movements.

A *contradiction* is a statement that is the opposite of a previous statement or action.

e.g. Many Shan groups refused to disarm. Kyaw Hsan's statement that "peace" had been secured was a *contradiction*.

In groups of 2-3, do the exercises below.

a) The article begins with a contradiction in paragraph 1. What is it?

b) There is one more contradiction in paragraphs 11 and 12. We have started it for you, please finish it.

Although the regime proposed that ceasefire groups who participated in the National Convention could form into political parties, _____

Answers:

- a) (1st sentence, paragraph 1) Although the Rangoon regime insists that Shan State is stable, one armed opposition group, the Shan State Army (South), continues to hold out against government pressure to disarm.
- b) **Although the regime proposed that ceasefire groups who participated in the National Convention could form into political parties,** a group of Shan leaders were arrested and taken into custody in February for participating in a meeting in Taunggyi.

Activities to do After Reading

Activity 9

Summaries

Below are some summaries of the article. Some are contradictions, some are not. Decide which are contradictions.

- a) "The situation is improving in Shan State, less people are fleeing into Thailand."
- b) "Ceasefire groups that participate in the National Convention will not be arrested if they form political parties."
- c) "In the "Exchange Arms for Peace" programme, we are not asking the ceasefire groups to give up their arms."
- d) "Colonel Sai Yi joined with the SSA-S because neither of them want to disarm."
- e) "Colonel Sai Yi joined with the SSA-S because he wants to persuade them to disarm."

- f) “The de facto ceasefire between the UWSA and the regime does not mean that they are no longer involved with the drugs trade.”
- g) “Disarmament will bring peace to Shan State.”
- h) “The Burma Army and the SSA-S were not direct neighbours.”
- i) “The SSA-S is the only opposition group that refuses to disarm.”
- j) “The Burma Army does not have a strong presence in Shan State.”

Answers:

- a) **Contradiction.** The whole article talks about how things are not improving in Shan State, and in paragraph 7, SSA-S spokeswoman Nam Khur Hsen says “If things are improving, why are people fleeing to Thailand every day?”
- b) **Contradiction.** Paragraphs 11 and 12 discuss how Shan leaders were arrested in February for participating in a meeting in Taunggyi.
- c) **Contradiction.** Paragraph 3 mentions how the regime has been pressing the ceasefire groups to disarm.
- d) **Not a contradiction.** Paragraph 4 says how 170 soldiers of Colonel Sai Yi’s SSNA turned in their arms. Because Col Sai Yi did not do the same as the 170 soldiers and chose instead to merge with the SSA-S, this implies that he did not agree with the 170 soldiers.
- e) **Contradiction.** This must be a contradiction, because the statement is the opposite of d).
- f) **Not a contradiction.** Be careful of the double negative! Paragraph 3 states that although the UWSA maintains a de facto ceasefire, they are allegedly still involved with the drugs trade.
- g) **Contradiction.** The whole article discusses how the ceasefire groups are not happy with being asked to disarm. Therefore if they disarm and are not happy, there will not be peace.
- h) **Not a contradiction.** Paragraph 10 states that the Burma Army and the SSA-S were not direct neighbours, as the UWSA is between them.
- i) **Not a contradiction.** Paragraph 1 says “...one armed opposition group, the SSA-S, continues to hold out against government pressure to disarm.”
- j) **Contradiction.** The whole article talks about how the majority of the opposition groups are engaged in ceasefires, which implies that they cannot keep the Burma Army off their land. Paragraph 12 states “The growing strength of the Burma Army in Shan State is also causing concern...”

Activity 10

Research and role play

The regime has continually made contradictions relating to the situation of Aung San Suu Kyi. Do some research – recent publications such as Bangkok Post, Irrawaddy; radio; interviews; and find out what these contradictions are. In small groups, role play your results.

- e.g. Person 1: Regime spokesperson, relates the information.
- Person 2: Aung San Suu Kyi, relates the truth of what really happened.
- Person 3: Democratic newsreporter, gives a one-sentence summary, using ‘*although*’ or ‘*despite*’.

Example answers:

- i. The regime says that Aung San Suu Kyi is being detained in her house for her own protection.
- ii. The regime says that Aung San Suu Kyi will be released in 3 months/6 months/1 year.
- iii. The regime says that it had no involvement in the Depayin massacre, despite many people believing otherwise.

Activity 11

Discussion

In small groups discuss the reasons why some groups think ceasefire agreements with the junta are a good idea, and why some groups think they are not.

Consider:

- the positive and negative effects of agreeing to ceasefire.
- the positive and negative effects of not agreeing to ceasefire.

