

Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 42

To accompany the **January 2010** issue of The Irrawaddy magazine.

Selected article : **Taking Over the Airwaves**

TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the 42nd issue of 'Learning with The Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to The Irrawaddy magazine. It is designed for reading/writing, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools and adult education classes on the Burma border. With each issue of The Irrawaddy, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. The language level in this month's article is intermediate.

NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES LISTED IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE. YOU CAN CHOOSE WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE MOST APPROPRIATE DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE, AND THE LEVEL OF ABILITY OF YOUR LEARNERS.

In this issue we have included:

- ★ this teacher's guide
- ★ a copy of the student worksheet
- ★ a copy of The Irrawaddy magazine
- ★ a copy of the article from The Irrawaddy magazine

A. **Activities before reading**

Activity 1

Discussion (prompted by photograph)

These discussion questions are designed to get your class warmed up, speaking English and prompt some first thoughts about the medium of radio. You could suggest students discuss this in pairs or small groups, and then report the thoughts from their group to the whole class. This will help to get all students involved in the discussion.

Activity 2

Technical Vocabulary: matching exercise

Answers: 1.c. 2.e. 3.b. 4.g. 5.a. 6.h. 7.f. 8.d

Activity 3

Grammar Review: practice with question-forms

Write down what question you would ask someone to find out

Answers:

- A. Who is your favourite singer?
- B. Who is the person you admire most?
- C. What sport do you enjoy?
- D. What food don't you like?
- E. Are you interested in national news?

Teacher checks the accuracy of the questions with the whole class, and writes the correct version on the board. Students then have spoken practice asking one question each to 5 people in class, and writing down the answers.

This could be extended by asking students in turn to say one thing they found out about one of their classmates (in the third person): eg 'Hla Min enjoys volleyball' etc

B. Activities during reading

Activity 4 Types of programme

Answers

news (local; from abroad)	celebrity interviews	political programmes,
weather	celebrity gossip	light entertainment
sports	fortune-teller/ astrologers'	movie reviews
Burmese and Western pop	predictions,	science and technology,
music.	Buddhist monks' recitals	programmes promoting
folk songs	and texts,	government policies.

[Note: Other possible programmes are mentioned in the text, though these are topics that are not covered by FM radio. These are programmes about *education and health care*; '*sensitive topics*' and *opposition politics*. If students have listed these as well, that is correct since they are mentioned in the text]

This list is the starting-point for activity 8 so it is good if it is as comprehensive as possible.

Activity 5 True or false?

1. Shortwave radio signals only travel short distances FALSE
(Shortwave signals travel the longest distances)
2. The sound quality of FM radio signals is better than AM signals TRUE
(FM – Frequency Modulation – has higher fidelity than AM Amplitude Modulation)
3. Independent radio in Burma started in 2001 TRUE
4. Yangon City FM can be received all over Burma FALSE
(All FM stations have limited range)
5. Private radio stations in Burma are allowed to broadcast 24 hours a day FALSE
6. Some FM radio stations broadcast programmes in local languages TRUE
7. Hi-fi is short for high-fidelity TRUE
8. Frequency is measured in Hertz TRUE

Activity 6 Comprehension

Answers:

- a. Any four of these: Yangon City FM (Rangoon); Mandalay FM (Rangoon, Mandalay, Taungoo); Cherry FM (Taunggyi in Shan State; parts of Karenni State); Shwe FM (Pegu and Moulmein, Karen / Mon States); Padamyar (Sagaing and Kachin); Padaukmyay.
- b. BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation); VOA (Voice of America); RFA (Radio Free Asia); Democratic Voice of Burma.
- c. 65 km – 110 km (paragraphs 7 and 8)
- d. *Padaukmyay* broadcasts at these popular listening times, to attract listeners away from the foreign radio stations which broadcast news at these same times.
- e. This asks for the student opinion. The article suggests that the taxi firm plays Yangon City FM as instructed by the owner (Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings) in order to prevent passengers listening to other (eg foreign) radio stations.
- f. There are many reasons why people are turning away from foreign radio stations. These are the reasons given in the article: political programmes can be boring – light entertainment is fun (para 10); some FM stations deliberately attract listeners away (paras 15-16); listening to foreign stations in public can lead to arrest (para 17); sound quality of foreign shortwave stations can be poor; FM sound quality is good (para 18);

C. Activities after reading

Activity 7

Discussion:

In what ways are FM stations independent; and in what ways are they not?

These are some of the points that could be made.

Independent: run by private companies; do their own programming.

Not independent: licensed by the government (para 4); run by people and companies with a stake in the existing regime - 'military cronies' (para 5), big companies like UoM Economic Holdings (para 23); do not criticise the government (para 14) – ie self-censorship.

Activity 8

Radio Programming

This activity asks students to plan one day's radio programming. To do so they have to think about a number of different things. Some questions to think about are in the student worksheet.

Put the students into groups of 5-6 people, and tell them how much time they have to do their plan. If possible, give each group a large sheet of newsprint on which to write their programme. While the students are working in their groups, go round the class-room and spend a couple of minutes listening to each group. If they seem stuck, ask them a question to help them think about the topic.

When the plans are finished, ask each group to present their plan and explain the decisions they have made.

Activity 9

Survey of opinion

This activity gives some practice in research techniques. Students can work in the same groups as for Activity 8, to build on that work.

The stages

1. In groups, draw up a questionnaire with 5-10 questions to find out what local people like / would like from a radio station.
2. Each student conducts interviews with at least two people (family, friends etc) in their home-language – *this could be done as homework.*
3. Put together all the answers in each group, and analyse the results, giving percentages if possible: *percentages will only be possible for those questions that lead to answers that can be expressed as numbers (eg if 8 of 10 people questioned say they would listen to Burmese pop music)*

Presentation

Students present their questionnaire and their findings. This may well lead naturally into the reflection discussion (below). Some groups may have constructed better questionnaires than others; some groups may have been able to make a statistical analysis, and some may not. The whole class can learn from these differences.

Reflection

This can be done in the whole class group. Constructing questionnaires to give useful and meaningful information is a skill. If the students found that some of the information they got did not tell them anything, they need to think about what changes they would make to get better information. For example, if everybody questioned said they would like to listen to everything – this is too general to be helpful. A question that asks people to rank preferences may give more precise information.