

Language Activities

My Pencil Brings Me Luck in the Exam!

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Name of the Activity: My pencil brings me luck in the exam!

Skill Focus: Integrated (Reading, Speaking, Writing, and Listening)

Sub-Skill Focus: Expressing one's own point of view

Level: High school/university students

Estimated Time: 1 hour

Group Size: 30 and over

Learning Objectives: To develop awareness of cultural superstition and conducting independent research

Materials: A4 sheets for sharing the story, a projector and speakers for presentations

Methodology

1. Write the following sentence on the board 'Good luck or bad luck leads you to success or failure in an exam', have students read this and think about it for a while (one or two minutes).

2. Ask your students to read the story and answer or discuss the following questions:

From time to time, I have to proctor exams due to a few research assistants available or I wish to be the proctor as I think my students might need extra instructions or I feel the need to be there as some of them might have unexpected questions in their minds.

In one class, before beginning to watch students in the examination to ensure that everything ran smoothly and nobody cheated, I noticed that one of my students was holding a pencil, which was almost finished.

I thought that he forgot to bring new pencils and therefore, he had to manage with this one. I slowly approached him and kindly asked, 'Do you need a new pencil? One of your friends can lend you one.' Since I strongly believed that it was not possible to write with that small pencil and if it were, it would be a real torture.

To my surprise, he responded calmly, 'Thank you, sir, my pencil is fine'. I just stood there for a while with questioning eyes and told him that he would have difficulty in writing legibly and added that it would be better to have another pencil for that reason.

Feeling rather disturbed by being forced to explain himself clearly, he replied that, 'I know it would be difficult to write with this. But, this is the pencil that I have been using for a year in the examinations, and it never failed me. It brings me good luck in my examinations, and so far I have never failed a class.'

- (a) Do you know anyone like the student in this story?
- (b) Do you believe that something brings good luck or back luck to you before you do anything? Why do you think so?
- (c) Do you think that keeping the same pencil can lead to good luck as in this story?
- (d) Such things as irrational beliefs and/or practices that lead to good or back luck are called superstitions. Why do you think that this student believes his pencil will bring him success in the exam?
- (e) Do you know any other superstitions that people do to have good luck for exams or any other similar or different situations?
- (f) Do you think that you can achieve something without preparing, studying, or working hard for it?
- (g) Can different countries/cultures have different superstitions? Do you know any specific examples?
- (h) Humans might have superstitions. Can animals have superstitions?

Follow-on Activity: As homework or out-of-class assignment, have students work in pairs/groups and create PowerPoint/Prezi slides or Pixton to create comics based on the superstitions that people have in different cultures and/or countries. The aim of this activity is to enable participants to collaborate to find and report different superstitions,

which will both improve their intercultural knowledge and the skill to work together.

- (a) The slides/comics should include at least five superstitions that people have in a country or a culture.
- (b) These superstitions should be obtained from valid resources such as books or educational websites.
- (c) The superstitions can be presented in the Present Tense.
- (d) Each pair/group will present the superstitions that they have found in different cultures and countries and obtain their classmates' opinions on these.
- (e) As the homework/assignment will be digital work, they can be uploaded to the class blog or the students' personal blogs to reach a wider audience.

Evaluation: Students will be encouraged to present what they have prepared on superstitions next class, which will serve as an opportunity for both speaking and listening as well as peer learning and assessment. It is believed that the discussion of superstitions in our lives will encourage students to express their views based on their personal experiences. Moreover, the further activity to be given as the homework or assignment will make them aware of the other practices in other countries or cultures, contributing to their intercultural awareness.

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