

WISHING AFTER CLASS, AN ACTIVITY

by A. Thonnaya Anopa
s

The use of this activity commenced a few semesters back with me giving a simple wish to my students before they left the classroom for another class or home. I always uttered a wish to them like "Good luck to you all; Happy and safe trip back home; Have a beautiful day", to mention just a few. I asked them to answer me in unison using the same wish I gave them instead of saying the answer, "Thank you and same to you". I purposely told them to repeat my wish as their answer in order to let them learn the wishes. This was done on every class day I had with them, which was three days per week.

However, after that first semester when I started having this activity in my classes, to my great astonishment and happiness, this incident happened ... One morning while I was on my way to my office, I met one of my old students. He greeted me and we talked for a short time. Before going on my way and that student on his way, he wished me like this, "Good luck and have a beautiful day, Teacher." With a big smile, I answered him. Then I asked myself, "Did the activity we had last semester encourage this student to speak a wish to me?" In my mind I answered my question, "Who knows?"

On another occasion, I met another old student of mine one evening before going home. This time it was a girl student. As usual, I smiled and talked a few sentences with her. (It is always my habit to smile and talk to my students I happen to meet if time permits). When we parted, she wished me like this, "Have a pleasant and safe trip back home, Teacher". I felt a bit sure that the wishing-after-class activity had borne some fruit. On several other occasions my former students I met on the campus did the same thing as the two students I mentioned above.

From that time on, I continued using the activity with my new students in the following semester but this time there was a modification for improvement. Few weeks after the start of the activity with me to give the wish, I urged my students to speak out the wishes by themselves instead of me. On some days, I asked two or more students to make a wish to the class instead of the usual one student in every class meeting. This was done until the end of the semester.

Here I thought of writing an article about this activity aiming at sharing its good and beneficial effects to others. I hope that some may venture using this activity in their own classes. So I decided to make a questionnaire and asked my students to voice out their opinion concerning this activity. Below you will find my findings based on the students' ideas.

I conducted a survey and one hundred and twenty four students participated. They were asked to answer three questions namely:

1. Do you like this activity? Why or why not?
2. Do you want this activity to be done in all English classes in our English Department? Why or why not?
3. Write the wish or wishes you will say after class if you have a chance to do so.

For the first and second questions, one hundred and twenty-two students answered "Yes" while two said "No". They gave varied reasons to support their answers. I have listed their reasons and grouped them into nine levels starting from 1 as the most common answer and 9 as the least common based on the number of students who gave the same reasons.

These are the reasons and their level of popularity:

1. Improve language skills particularly listening and speaking. (46.83 %)
2. Feel happy and optimistic and learning becomes fun and relaxing. (40.48 %)
3. Encourage class participation and develop the courage to speak. (15.88 %)
4. It is a good and new activity in the English class. (13.5 %)
5. The number of friends in class and relationship with them are improved.
(13.49 %)
6. Helps to think fast and be creative. (11.98 %)
7. Can share feelings and opinions with others. (10.32%)
8. Acquire an ability to make a wish which is useful in life. (8 %)

9. Learn new words and wishing expressions. (3.17 %)

For number 3, the students gave a variety of wishes and I summarize them as follows:

1. Wish your dreams and plans come true.
2. Have a sound sleep and sweet dreams tonight to feel strong tomorrow.
3. Hope you'll get an "A" in every subject and pass English III.
4. May you have happiness in whatever you do.
5. Have a delicious lunch and be ready for your next class.
6. Be healthy and strong to finish your education in ABAC.
7. May you find a good life partner.
8. Wishing you all to be happy always.
9. Have the best things to come to you and your family.
10. I wish you have a good and successful future.
11. Be lucky in your career and family life in the years to come.
12. Wishing you good health and along life.
13. Return home safely and happily and feel relaxed this evening.
14. Be happy with your friends and family.

15. Wishing you success in your studies and happiness in your future work.

In conclusion, I believe this wishing-after-class activity can be a factor to help some students, if not all, to have a good mood. More than this, some may think positively or see the brighter side of things, in other words, become optimistic. Researchers have said that optimism can help a person manage stress better, live longer and be more productive and healthier physically and emotionally.

A. Thonnaya Anopas received her Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Assumption University and has been a lecturer in the Institute for English Language Education (IELE) at Au since 1992. She has 23 years of previous teaching experience in Thailand and the Philippines.