

Out-of-The-Box Teaching Activities to Develop Creativity and Critical Thinking in a Second Language

Good News/Bad News

*Adam Brod**

Notre Dame Seishin University, Japan

Duration: 25-30 minutes

Target student proficiency level: Intermediate

Target student age: High school age and above

Objectives: To develop

- Language skills: Fluency, using superlatives and comparatives.
- Content knowledge: Varied daily topics.
- Cognitive abilities: thinking on their feet to evaluate what was just said and form a quick, spontaneous response.
- Social abilities: helps develop cultural competency in terms of expressing opinions.

Materials: None

Preparation: Brainstorming your own interesting and ridiculous examples beforehand might be helpful.

Procedure:

1. Show a glass filled to the halfway point. Ask: *Is the glass half-empty or half-full?*
2. After student responses, point out that there is a positive and negative view for any situation.
3. Model the sentence stem: *The good news is the glass is half full, but the bad news is the glass is half empty.*



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Website: Hawaii Pacific University <http://www.hpu.edu>

*Email: Abrod@my.hpu.edu. Address: 366-8 Ayauta Gun, Utazu Cho, Kagawa Ken, JAPAN

4. Tell students they will play a game called **Good News/Bad News**. This is a game between two people, so everyone will need a partner. One person starts by saying, “*The Good News is + (any sort of fact or opinion—the weather, his or her feelings, the best food in the world, etc.)*.” Then the other person says, “*But the bad news is + (any sort of fact or opinion that contradicts the good news of the first person)*.” Then it is the first person’s turn again. He/she should say something which contradicts the bad news statement from his or her partner.

5. Demonstrate the form of this activity by playing both roles in front of the students. For example,

“The good news is it is sunny.”

“But the bad news is there is no water to grow food.”

“But the good news is everything that does not use water is really cheap, and if you sell bottled water you can make a lot of money.”

“But the bad news is we have to buy millions of bottles of water, and that creates a lot of trash.”

“But the good news is we can recycle the water bottles and make greenhouses and plastic bottle ecosystems that capture water from the air. So now there is lots of water to grow food and go swimming.”

“But the bad news is water bottle prices will drop, and everybody will lose all of their money.”

And so on.

Do another demonstration, but make your examples more creative and ridiculous so that the students understand this is a game and not an exercise. For example:

“The good news is it is raining.”

“But the bad news is there will be a huge flood, and everybody will have to move.”

“If there is a huge flood, the good news is we can build an underwater city and live with dolphins.”

“But the bad news we can’t watch TV or use computers underwater.”

“But the good news we will learn Global Sonar Communication from the dolphins, and we will not need electronic devices anymore.”

“But the bad news is we will lose our ability to calculate, compute and think logically.”

“But the good news is we will become super emotionally intelligent. There will be world peace, no more wars, no more miscommunication, and no more bad things.”

“But the bad news is....”

And so on.

6. Tell everybody to choose a partner and play rock paper scissors or decide who goes first.
7. Tell students they have 3 minutes “to battle,” then change partners.
8. After each round, tell the students to change roles.

Variations & Extensions:

- Teachers may introduce the activity with Pixar’s short film “Day and Night” <https://vimeo.com/159700216> to illustrate opposing views about the same situations.
- Teachers may also make groups of 3 and ask 1 person in each group to judge who wins the battle. As a cool-down activity, after a final assignment like writing an opinion essay

or delivering a formal speech, ask the students to talk about their own topics. Ask the students to think of ridiculous reasons why their topic is better than another person's topic. For example, if one student gives a speech about cats, and another student gives a speech about cars, ask the students to "argue" that "cats are better than cars because X" or "cars are better than cats because Y." The main goal is for students to have fun expressing *an* opinion or arguing for and against any idea.

About the author

Adam Brod holds an MA TESOL degree from Hawaii Pacific University and is currently teaching English at the university level as a part time instructor in Kagawa and Okayama, Japan. His research interests include corpus linguistics, bilingualism, and EFL writing instruction.