

ИНОСТРАННЫЕ ЯЗЫКИ И МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ
(Английский язык) /
FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
(English Language)

10-11 классы / 10th and 11th Grades

Вариант 1 / Version 1

The test consists of 2 parts: Language and Culture Studies and Analytical Writing.
Duration – 80 minutes.

PART 1. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE STUDIES (50 points)

Task 1. For questions 1-6, read the text below and answer the questions (24 points).

Pragmatism and Fatalism

Sometimes, in life, bad things happen. Many people would approach bad situations by blowing up, shouting obscenities and devoting all their energy to finding a way out of the situation. But in Japan, it might be more likely to be met by a ubiquitous phrase with a different meaning: *shou ga nai*.

This phrase is often used in common situations that are generally negative, but leave you no alternative but to get over it. Its loose English translation is “it can’t be helped”. Rochelle Kopp, a consultant that helps companies to communicate better, has dealt with the phrase plenty of times. When working with Japanese companies, “someone I have been working with will be rotated at short notice, often with very poor timing,” she says. The response? Shou ga nai. “I realise that my likelihood of ever changing it is the same as the likelihood of my stopping the earth turning.”

In such situations, she feels that “from my American cultural perspective, it sounded like people were giving up just when I thought that they should be putting up a fight.” In this sense, this pragmatism is predicated on the idea that the truth or meaning of something lies in its observable practical consequences rather than in any metaphysical attributes and it can be summarized by the phrase “whatever works, is likely true.” Pragmatists believe that all philosophical concepts should be judged according to their practical uses and successes, not on the basis of abstractions. Fatalists, on the contrary, believe that everything that happens has already been decided by some higher power, and there is nothing we can do to change it.

And it isn’t a cultural concept unique to Japan. Rather, it expresses a universal sentiment, as there are similar phrases to shou ga nai in cultures around the world. In English, for example, we have “It’s what it is”. “C’est la vie” is a bit similar in French. Each can have unique nuances and contexts

within their cultures. But one thing they have a bit in common is the feeling of resignation – knowing when to accept fate rather than struggle against the status quo.

Some studies show that accepting bad things that can happen can help reduce anxiety. Accepting a bad situation is the sort of “cognitive reframing” that can be beneficial. If you’re good at thinking of those stressful events in a way that minimises their emotional impact on average, you do better in terms of your wellbeing. When you learn to let go, “you feel more at peace, and you put your resources and efforts into changing situations that you can actually change.”

If it’s a one-off event with little consequence, then it’s a good strategy. But when it’s a systemic problem – like you have a terrible boss that yells at you there might be a need to find a way to eliminate the structural problem. The sentiment in these fatalistic phrases might be similar to a phenomenon called social defeat. But it’s all about context. Some systemic situations might call for immediate resistance and change, but with more day-to-day stuff, like a slow-moving traffic jam, sometimes it’s just better to shrug and say something like “shou ga nai”.

People use those coping mechanisms because it’s easier than holding on and trying hard in stressful situations. A sense of resignation also leads into some deeper understanding of yourself, and knowing your limits: a unique human ability, and that’s very important to maintaining feeling OK. That’s why a phrase like “shou ga nai” can be used in both bad and good ways.

by Bryan Lufkin

1. According to the author, the feeling of inevitability of certain events is not restricted to a particular country and might be common for different cultures.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. The feeling of resignation allows us to (choose all that apply)..
 - a. disagree with all the situations happening to a person.
 - b. analyse our abilities and limitations.
 - c. accept our physical weaknesses.
 - d. be more relaxed.
3. The positive effect of accepting the situation that is beyond your control lies in the...
 - a. ability to devote time and energy to solving a problem.
 - b. minimization of efforts put into solving a problem.
 - c. minimization of stress and negative emotions involved in a situation.
 - d. ability to accumulate the resources to deal with the situation.
4. The willingness and ability to change a situation that is systematically negative are culturally predetermined.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Not stated
5. Match these characteristics with ‘Fatalism’ or ‘Pragmatism’ descriptions given in the text.
 - a. All the situations in life are predetermined. **FATALISM/PRAGMATISM**

- b. The concentration on practical implications and results being possible to achieve.
FATALISM/PRAGMATISM
 - c. The idea of exerting control over your own life and the ability to overcome difficult situations. FATALISM/PRAGMATISM
 - d. The inevitability of the situation makes it impossible to do anything about it.
FATALISM/PRAGMATISM
6. Find the word from the text that means the following: 'omnipresent, being everywhere' = _____ (*type it in in small letters*).

Task 2. For questions 7-12, think of one word which can be used appropriately in all three idioms, proverbs, or expressions from around the world. Type the word in small letters (12 points).

7. If mind is _____, fate is good. (Mongolian proverb)
 God looks to _____ hands, not to full ones. (English proverb)
 A _____ mouth and an honest hand will take a man through any land. (German proverb)
8. Everything in _____ comes to him who knows how to wait. (French proverb)
 All are architects of fate working in these walls of _____. (American proverb)
 An inch of _____ cannot be bought with an inch of gold. (Chinese proverb)
9. After bad luck comes good _____. (Gypsy Proverb)
 As _____ is sought, so it is found. (German proverb)
 _____ is with you for an hour and against you for ten! (Arabian Proverb)
10. Fate can be taken by the horns, like a goat, and pushed in the right _____. (American proverb)
 If we don't change our _____ we're likely to end up where we're headed. (Chinese proverb)
 It's useless to tell a river to stop running; the best thing is to learn how to swim in the _____ it's flowing. (African proverb)
11. Fate leads those who are _____ but must push those who are not. (Chinese proverb)
 If there is something one really wants to achieve, one is _____ to go an extra mile and overcome the difficulties to achieve it. (African proverb)
 To be _____ is only half the task. (Armenian Proverb)
12. _____ seeks those who flee and flees those who seek it. (German proverb)
 _____ is like having a rice dumpling fly into your mouth. (Japanese proverb)
 He who moves with each day is better than another who waits for _____. (African proverb)

Task 3. For questions 13-19, match the sociocultural facts with their countries of origin. There are more countries than you will need (14 points).

A	Great Britain	D	India	G	Belarus
B	USA	E	China	H	Kenya
C	Chile	F	the Philippines	I	Ireland

13. In this country red symbolizes luck and happiness, it is also used during wedding ceremonies during which the bride must be dressed from head to toe in red.
14. It is customary to give money as a gift on different occasions or celebrations but it should always be an odd number as it is considered to bring good luck.
15. In this country if the first thing you say on the first day of the month is "rabbit rabbit," you'll have good luck for the rest of the day.
16. The distinct feature about the people of this country is their belief in individualism as they consider themselves responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies.
17. In this country, eating circular fruit like apples, Asian pears, and peaches is believed to attract abundance, wealth and luck in the coming 12 months of the new year and almost anything associated with round shapes is considered good luck, including wearing polka dotted clothing and throwing coins at the stroke of midnight.
18. Almost all the tribes of this country believe owls are messengers of evil spirits or something unfortunate and they have to shoo the owl away after seeing it.
19. Yellow is a colour of luck in this country – it is worn on New Year's Eve, exam days and other important events where luck is needed.

PART 2. ANALYTICAL WRITING (50 points)

Task 4. Now you have learned about the notion of Fatalism and Pragmatism in different cultures. Write an essay analysing the role of Fatalism and / or Pragmatism in a person's life from the perspective of your cultural experience and background. Your essay should have an introduction, two/three body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

You must:

- define the cultural phenomenon using your own words;
- explain how this cultural phenomenon impacts intercultural communication;
- analyse how this cultural phenomenon is reflected in your culture in the given sphere providing examples.

ANSWER KEY

TASK 1

- 1) A
- 2) B, D
- 3) C
- 4) B
- 5) a – FATALISM; b – PRAGMATISM; c – PRAGMATISM; d – FATALISM
- 6) ubiquitous

TASK 2

- 7) Clean
- 8) Time
- 9) Fortune
- 10) Direction
- 11) Willing
- 12) Luck

TASK 3

- 13) E
- 14) D
- 15) A
- 16) B
- 17) F
- 18) H
- 19) C