

OMENS AND SUPERSTITIONS IN THE UK AND BELARUS**R.R. Kutsko**, form XScientific adviser – **I.A. Novik**, English language teacher**V.S. Starik**, English language teacher**State Educational Establishment «Pinsk Secondary School № 18»**

Man's desire to protect himself from unknowable forces or to create a good fortune has led to the emergence of thousands of superstitions and spread all over the world. Life is unpredictable, but sometimes people notice some coincidences, events that followed a succession of fortunate or unfortunate situations.

Relevance of the study: although the roots of this topic go far back in time, its relevance is obvious. Nowadays, many people remain superstitious; superstitions and prejudices have become so ingrained in our lives that they have become an integral part of our nature. Belief in the supernatural influences the behavior of people of all ages and nationalities.

Research hypothesis: let us assume that omens and superstitions of Great Britain and Belarus have certain similarities and differences.

Research aim: identification of the most widespread omens and superstitions, similarities and differences of these omens and superstitions in Great Britain and Belarus.

Practical significance of the study: the practical value of the study lies in the use of research materials in English lessons.

Superstition is an erroneous, false belief in something; a belief in cause and effect where there is no connection [1].

An omen is a sign that portends something [2]. An omen is a reaction of the human mind trying to identify the connection between processes and phenomena.

The main difference between omens and superstitions can be considered in the place assigned to them.

The concept of a superstition of particular people depends on their standard of living, education, religious inclinations and historical roots. The geographical location and historical development of the UK and Belarus is also considered an influential factor in the emergence of certain superstitions.

So, the main prerequisites for the emergence of superstitions are [3]: historical superstitions and omens, pagan rituals, traditions, legends, fear of the unknown and unknowable, fear of the evil eye, curses, etc.

The forms of omens and superstitions are: religious prejudices, pagan customs and rituals, astrology, runic magic [4, p.256].

The most traditional superstitions are: the mystical number 13. Both in Britain and Belarus, the number 13 is an unlucky number [5, p.54].

Another traditional superstition is the legacy of the Druids and the Magi. «If you touch wood, your good luck will continue». In Belarus it is also believed that if you touch a tree, you will not only be lucky, but you won't get sick this year [6, p.17].

As for wedding superstitions, the most superstitious are those who are getting married. «If you marry in Lent, you will live to repent» - the English say, which corresponds to a Belarusian saying that getting married during Lent is not good, that newlyweds will constantly quarrel and regret the marriage, and there will be no happiness for their family [7, p.34-35].

The most common superstitions are also those associated with birds .

No less traditional are Christmas superstitions: «The way you meet the year, the way you spend it» and an omen connected with the pagan festival of the British peninsula is Samhain - a Celtic pagan celebration during which a dying god is honoured [8].

Among humorous Scottish rites and traditions is the Hogmanay (New Year's Eve) which has been celebrated in Scotland for centuries. Scottish tradition is called «First footing» [9].

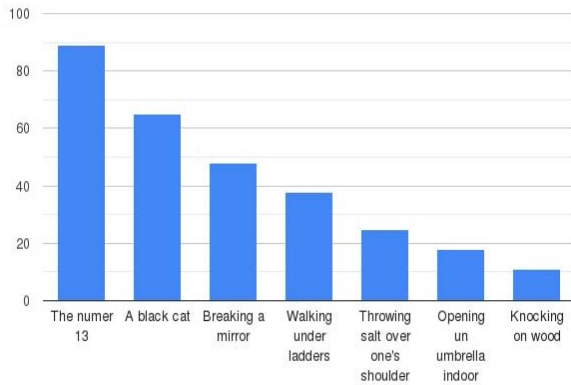
Having studied the linguistic forms of the British and Belarusian omens and superstitions, we can conclude that the most important linguistic difference is their interpretation. For example, when a black cat crosses your path, the British say: «If a black cat crosses your path, you will have good luck», i.e. a black cat symbolizes just the opposite - happiness and good luck. Perhaps, that is why many famous people in Great Britain choose black cats as pets to attract more luck. In Belarus a black cat is a carrier of all misfortunes.

The similarities between Belarusian and British superstitions lie in the forms of superstitions related to mirrors, lucky and unlucky numbers, weather conditions, money. From the foregoing we can conclude that the interpenetration of cultures has occurred quite a long time ago.

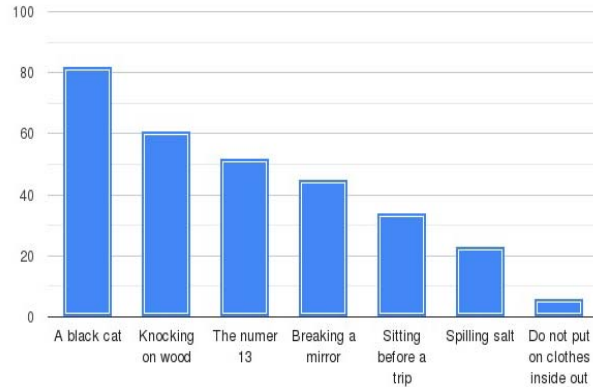
To detect the most popular omens and superstitions in Belarus and the UK the study was conducted in two specific areas in the UK, Tiffield and in Belarus, Pinsk. Firstly, we find out what superstitions and beliefs are the most popular in these areas and outlined the reasons for their popularity. Secondly, we reflect how current research reveals similarities and differences in superstitions and beliefs across age groups and how the personalities of people in each group influence the extent of their beliefs. The third part presents a case study to describe the most interesting and unusual superstitions and omens.

Respondents were asked to name three superstitions or omens that came to their mind at once. The ranking order and percentage of their popularity are shown in the tables below.

Graph 2.1 Great Britain



Graph 2.2-Belarus



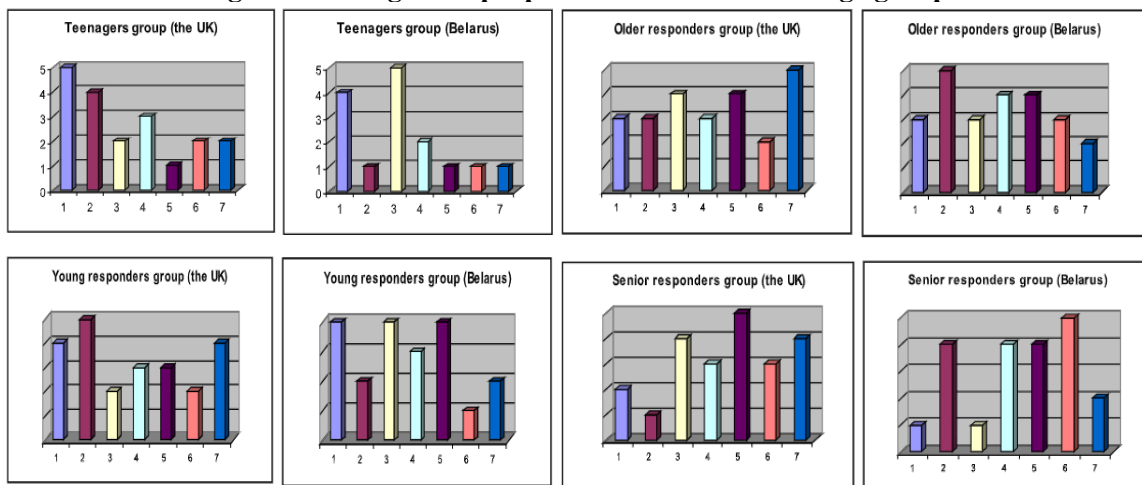
To find out the extent to which people of different age groups believe in the most popular superstitions and beliefs, they were divided into four groups. Those aged 13-19 years were defined as 'teenagers', those aged 20-35 years were defined as 'young respondents', those aged 36-50 years were defined as 'older respondents', and those aged 51 years and above were defined as 'senior respondents'. They rated these superstitions and omens on a five-point scale.

Graph 2.3-Great Britain

Graph 2.4-Belarus

No. Names of superstitions and beliefs	No. Names of superstitions and omens
1. Number 13	1. Black cat
2. Black cat	2. Knocking on a tree
3. Break the mirror	3. Number 13
4. Walking under the stairs	4. Break the mirror
5. Throwing salt over the shoulder	5. Sit before travelling
6. Opening an umbrella indoors	6. Waking up with salt
7. Knocking on wood	7. Don't wear clothes inside out

Figure 2.1 - Degree of people's beliefs in different age groups



It turned out that the group of 'teenagers' and the group of 'younger respondents' were more superstitious about «Number 13» and «The black cat».

The 'older respondent group' and 'the senior respondent group' played a big role in knocking on wood, breaking the mirror and scattering salt. This was because these superstitions and omens are related to everyday things: the mirror, salt and things made of wood.

No significant differences were found between the group of 'younger respondents' and 'older respondents'. This result could be explained by the lack of large boundaries between these groups.

Summarizing the results, it can be confirmed that the awareness of superstitions and omens and their perceived importance depend on various factors, including countries, regions and age.

The result of the study fully confirmed the hypothesis. Superstitions and omens of Great Britain and Belarus definitely have both similarities and differences in both cultures. Also, the study has showed that some superstitions and omens exist only in Belarus or only in Britain. The study has revealed that the degree of superstitiousness depends on the age group of the person.

Finally, it must be noted that superstitions and omens will live on for a very long time. They are an inherent part of the culture, of the people.

Next, we would like to suggest the ways of using the knowledge gained throughout the research.

Nowadays, reading is an unfashionable pastime. To draw attention to this problem, a new trend has emerged: bookcrossing. It consists in the fact that people can leave any book on the bookshelf and take any book in return, i.e. exchange it. Based on this trend, the idea arose to develop booklets about omens and superstitions in the UK and Belarus and distribute these booklets to different places. Such booklets could be left at train stations and airports so that foreign tourists could avoid misunderstandings.



A short animated video was developed about the difference in meaning of the same superstition between Belarusians and Britons.

In addition, we present a short video which introduces you to the most popular omens and superstitions in Britain and Belarus.



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