

USING ANECDOTES IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Anecdotes are stories, usually from personal experience, that people tell to make a point or to entertain others during a conversation. [2] It may be as brief as the setting and provocation of a bon mot. An anecdote is always based on real life, an incident involving actual persons, whether famous or not, in real places. However, over time, modification in reuse may convert a particular anecdote to a fictional piece, one that is retold but is "too good to be true". [3] The literary history of the Anecdote carries us back to the classic ages; though this form of composition was scarcely employed by the ancients in the sense in which we now use it. 'Anecdote' from Greek anekdota "things unpublished," neutral plural of anekdotos, from an-"not" + ekdotos "published," from ek- "out" + didonai "to give". (in Greek: "unpublished", literally "not given out").

Anecdotes told in the classroom express our feelings, ideas, and experiences, just like the ones in daily conversations. However, since anecdotes are an excellent way to generate discussion to help students use their language skills, teachers usually have an additional intention in mind: a teaching objective to describe, explain, clarify, or emphasize an aspect of language or content. In practice, we can divide anecdotes used in class into three groups: planned anecdotes, semi-planned anecdotes, and unplanned anecdotes.

Anecdotes are extended speaking tasks which give students the opportunity to talk about things that matter to them. The main purpose of an anecdote is to develop fluency, improve accuracy and encourage the use of more complex linguistic structures.

Anecdotes are one of the most economical, easy, and enjoyable ways to introduce meaningful language and content, to practice language skills and subskills, and to help manage classes of various ages and proficiency levels. Experience shows that students are always highly interested in experiences of their teachers and peers. Although some teachers may not feel comfortable with the idea of sharing personal information with their students, others may love to share their experiences and ask similar questions about the students' experiences. How much the teacher shares and asks the students to share depends not on being friends with them but on creating a friendly atmosphere in the classroom. The ideas listed below summarize the benefits experienced while using anecdotes in the classes.

- Classroom management is an important aspect in teaching any course, regardless of subject matter. It is an issue for novice and experienced teachers, for teachers of young or adult learners, and for teachers of beginner to advanced levels. Thus, an attention grabbing anecdote may wake up sleepy students, engage unmotivated ones with the task, and reinforce a context so it is not easily forgotten.
- Genuine communication occurs in language classes when learners provide their own experiences and information. By listening to anecdotes from the teacher and classmates, asking questions for extra information or clarification, and contributing evaluative feedback as in real life dialogues, the language learners engage in authentic communication. Moreover, by telling an anecdote or responding to their friends' anecdotes, students organize their ideas and contribute to the discussion.[4] The language and conversational skills used while telling our stories are different from the skills we use in controlled, inauthentic classroom tasks.

Therefore, using anecdotes in language classes has the benefit of modeling the customary daily storytelling skills, and emphasizing those skills develops students' conversational skills.[1]

- Sharing anecdotes gives students the chance to reflect on their own and on others' concerns, perceptions, and values.[4] This reflection develops higher level cognitive skills, including the ability to evaluate and synthesize information, as well as affective skills such as empathizing.
- Anecdotes can also be used in content courses where the material is more demanding than language courses. Even advanced learners of English, especially at the tertiary level, may at times have difficulties in content courses. Thus, the use of anecdotes to explain, exemplify, and evaluate the new content aids learners' understanding, learning, and retention.
- When an anecdote is told by a native speaker English teacher or when it is about an experience in an English speaking country, the anecdote provides cultural information. In this respect, anecdotes represent a more realistic reflection of the target language culture and its people than the views presented in many textbooks.
- While students learn more about each other and their teacher, the teacher learns more about the students. Anecdotes therefore reinforce the friendly relationship between teachers and students and among the students themselves.

References:

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