

# Anecdotal Storytelling in the Adult ESOL and Literacy Classroom

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## Abstract

*This study investigates how anecdotal stories were used as a pedagogic tool in the teaching practice of trainee ESOL and literacy teachers. It analyses how trainees utilised anecdotal storytelling to enhance a 'participatory' approach to ESOL/literacy teaching. The data was collected in the form of short reflective posts written by the trainee teachers and uploaded on a Virtual Learning platform. The analysis focuses on the posts describing the features, uses and purposes of anecdotes used in the ESOL/literacy classroom. It provides a theoretical framework capturing the form, content, and primary and secondary functions of anecdotal storytelling.*

## Keywords

storytelling, anecdote, ESOL/Literacy, teaching adults, participatory approaches

## Introduction

Storytelling plays a key role in human communication. It permeates across all human cultures regardless of their geographical, ethnic or racial differences, and serves the role of educating, entertaining, warning or just informing (Benjamin, 2006; Goodson, 2011; Haigh and Hardy, 2011; Greene et al., 2015). Spiro (2007) describes storytelling as a 'sub skill of social life' during which people exchange information about imagined or real events, inviting audience participation and sharing ideas. Gibson (2012) proposes that we are wired for communicating and learning through stories, therefore it is not surprising that stories have been praised for their pedagogical value and used in variety of educational contexts with all learner age groups (Lucarevski, 2016).

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, there has been a rich tradition of incorporating storytelling into classroom practice (Morgan and Rinvolutri, 1983; Wright, 1997, 2009). However there is limited research into their use in the context of adult "multicultural language groups ... in their target language countries" (Lucarevski, 2016: 38) and also how different types of stories affect language development. This study therefore aims to explore how stories and anecdotal stories in particular can be embedded into multicultural adult literacy, the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classroom, and how they could be linked to a participatory approach to teaching adult ESOL/Literacy learners, also an area under-researched in the UK context. Moreover, there is also a very limited research into how trainee teachers of English and literacy incorporate storytelling and anecdotal stories in their practice. This study therefore focuses on the following two research questions:

- What is an anecdotal story and how is anecdotal storytelling used as a pedagogic tool in the teaching practice of trainee ESOL and literacy teachers?
- How do trainee teachers utilise anecdotal storytelling to enhance a participatory approach to ESOL and literacy teaching?

## **What is an Anecdotal Story?**

The National Storytelling Network (online, n.d.) defines storytelling "as an ancient art form and a valuable form of human expression". Storytelling in its basic form incorporates therefore the telling or writing of stories, which can take the form of oral face to face storytelling, or written stories in print or online. The words "story" and "storytelling" can be found in a variety of art forms and can be described in many different ways. A story can be synonymously called a narrative; a tale; a fable; a recital; or an account. It can be a real or imagined account of events that describes experience. The terms "story" and "narrative" are often used interchangeably. However, some researchers view a story as the informal account of lived experience, whereas a narrative is a structured interpretation of story, which includes narrator additions and omissions (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Haigh and Hardy, 2011). Drumm (2013) and stress that people use storytelling in order to create a vivid image

in the memory of the listener suggesting that storytelling lends itself well as a pedagogic tool in a classroom setting.

A good story often requires a personal angle that can combine fact and emotion together to tell an engaging story. How the story gets told depends on what needs to be communicated, who we are talking to, and what medium we are using (Kenton, 2011). Stories are often told in the form of an anecdotal account; a short amusing or interesting story about a real-life incident, or as a short personal narrative, often a reminiscence of a particular biographical event. An anecdotal story usually serves to make the listeners laugh, empathise or ponder over a topic. Eggins and Slade's (1997) note casual conversation often contains anecdotes which elicit empathy or sympathy from the listener. In general, an anecdotal story relates to the subject matter that a group of people are discussing encouraging participation from the audience that enables to bring a participatory practice approach to the classroom.

Mallows (2014: 3) advocates a "Participatory ESOL" approach to teaching language which draws out and builds upon the stories of students' experiences. In the same vein, Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke (2014: 11) argue for a participatory ESOL curriculum which would be driven by "the concerns and issues which affect students in their lives". They outline fundamental principles of the participatory ESOL classroom that emphasise the leading role of the student in the creation and production of "stretches of meaningful texts, spoken and written" (2014: 13). The lesson content in the participatory classroom is thus shaped by students who are provided with opportunities for conversational dialogue between the teacher and students, as well as among students themselves.

The fundamental principles of the participatory ESOL classroom suggested by Bryers, et al., (2014) seem to be echoed in the conceptual framework of participatory education suggested by American adult literacy educator Sauv  (2001). Sauv  tentatively proposes specific foundation and working principles of participatory education that originate from her professional educational experience with culturally and economically marginalised groups of adult learners. The foundation principles include "profound *respect* [the author's emphasis] for the human spirit and its ability to conquer all the failures, challenges...of our past" (Sauv , 2001: 17). Sauv  also argues respect is then supported by "*hope*" and "*faith*" (2001: 17) that underlies belief

in the strength of the human spirit, and finally "*compassion*" which entails being able to understand "the other as ourself" (2001: 17). The working principles can be summarised as "participation" which entails engagement of all members of the group who act as "community" that demonstrate "commitment" to bring about a change in the quality of their lives (2001: 20 – 21).

In addition to the above-mentioned principles Bryers et al., (2014) highlight that classroom practice informed by the ideas of adult participatory education requires a serious rethinking of power distribution. They point out the change in the student – teacher role hierarchy, where traditionally the teacher initiates and leads the session, in the participatory classroom the teacher's primary role is "to enable the students to participate" (2014: 16), often following the students' lead in the choice of topics for discussions. However, balancing the role of a facilitator with that of an equal participant in a classroom seems to be challenging for teachers, (Bryers et al., 2014). This might be even more so for trainee teachers who still struggle with the basic classroom skills, including pedagogical content and subject knowledge skills and their professional placement's culture (Ellis, 2007; Shulman, 1986; Shulman and Shulman, 2004).

Anecdotal storytelling has a wide applicability in the ESOL/literacy class. It might involve learners telling anecdotal stories to a partner, who will then move on to find a new partner and retell their new partner the story (Heathfield, 2014). It can focus on the use of reported speech, for example reporting the gist of a conversation that took place in the past (Shafaei, 2012). Equally, these activities through equal "participation" enable the students to share the subjective view of their world in a more emphatic manner, creating thus a sense of "community" and bringing "commitment" to their learning.

## **Case study**

This is a qualitative case study which was part of a wider research study on the uses of storytelling as a pedagogic tool in the adult ESOL/ Literacy classroom by trainee teachers. The trainees who participated in the study were attending an initial teacher education (ITE) course at a University in Northern England. Two types of participants were considered in the study: The first was Pre-Service Trainee teachers who were

designated the code PST and the second was In Service Trainee Teachers coded as INST. No names were used to preserve anonymity and to ensure confidentiality and due to the small nature, and gender neutral focus of the study numbers were given rather than pseudonyms. The study focuses on the document analysis of trainee teachers' written reflective accounts that describe, evaluate and interpret their experiences of using storytelling strategies, techniques and tasks in their teaching practice. As advised by reviewers a summarised account of this analysis is shown in Appendix 1: Codes of Data - Anecdotal storytelling in the ESOL/Literacy classroom.

Traditionally, a "document" presents "data consisting of words and /or images which have become recorded without the intervention of a researcher" (Silverman, 2014: 276). This is considered one of the advantages of the use of texts as the data seem to occur "naturally" (Silverman, 2014: 276) when participants describe their experiences or explain their views of the world without having to be asked by researchers. However, when it comes to the process of analysing texts, researchers need to consider the context in which the text was produced, for example if it was "solicited or unsolicited, edited or unedited, anonymous or signed" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 157). Denzin and Lincoln also point out the "tension between the concrete nature of the written word, and the continuous potential for rereading meanings in the new contexts, undermining the authority of the word" (2003: 157). On the other hand, Silverman (2014) stresses the qualitative constructionist approach is less interested in the reliability of the descriptions, in "what 'really' happened" (2014: 277) but more in the determination of how the authors of texts construct and interpret the world or activities they are engaged with.

In the context of this study it is important therefore to clarify the material conditions under which the reflective accounts were produced. The first author of this study acted as an initiator for the reflective accounts to be written and uploaded on the university virtual learning environment, MOODLE. In order to investigate how storytelling was implemented, a cohort of existing ESOL/literacy class trainee teachers were approached after the ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee had been granted, and asked to volunteer to participate in the study. The participants were assured about anonymity and confidentiality once the findings of the study were to be published.

It must be acknowledged that as the participants were the first researcher's students, this might have created a conflict of interests for those taking part in terms of meeting their tutor's expectations. Therefore to address the position of power and authority, the first researcher made it very clear to all trainees contributing to the research study that participation was entirely voluntary and that it was not an officially assessed part of their course. However, as the posts were visible to all participants for reading and possible commenting, their content could have been therefore modified or edited due to the fear of being judged not only by their tutor but also by their peers. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) point out, trainee teachers are expected to conform to expectations of the environments they operate within, so this might have influenced them to present storytelling activities in a more favourable way to please their tutor (the first author of this study).

This purposive sampling enabled the researcher to focus on the experiences of her trainee teachers to investigate how they responded to the implementation of storytelling tasks in their practice. Being their curriculum tutor, the first researcher was also able, however, ensure the trustworthiness of their accounts through additional observations of their classroom practice and focus groups with the trainee teachers' learners (see Bacova and Telfer, 2016).

Overall, nineteen trainee teachers took part in the research project; out of these twelve were pre-service and new to teaching (novice teachers) and seven were in-service teachers (in post). The twenty-four documents in the format of reflective accounts were written following some, though very generic, instructions for the participants to "choose a storytelling activity or a task, describe it and reflect on your experiences". The participants then uploaded their posts on the virtual learning environment, MOODLE.

It is equally important to address the bias of researchers when embedding research in their practice (Gazdula, 2017). In this case analysing data was a particular area for consideration. In order to address the bias that comes from the position of authority as well as from the fact that the researcher might know more about the experiences and practice of her trainees than the textual data actually reveal, the stage of analysing and coding was conducted in collaboration with another academic (the second author of the study). This strategy contributed to researcher triangulation to help enhance the validity of the study (Cresswell and Miller, 2001).

The coding process took a number of steps. Both researchers analysed all the reflective accounts independently, taking firstly a deductive approach that enabled them to apply theoretical frameworks as being conceptualised through the literature review, mainly when defining principles and characteristics of anecdotal storytelling, pedagogical uses of storytelling and participatory ESOL practices. Both researchers considered the criteria of the form and authenticity of the content which enabled them to determine which accounts could be considered as 'anecdotes' and which were referring to a more general use of 'storytelling'. The initial coding process was therefore guided through viewing anecdotal storytelling as a genre with its "particular set of characteristics" (Cambridge Dictionary Online n.d.), which resulted in the exclusion of those accounts that related to non-anecdotal story forms such as the following: fictional story narratives, fairy tale examinations, collaborative story development, utilising visual resources to develop a fictional story; and stories from the English literature and film. The researchers instead focused their analysis on anecdotal accounts that were short, spontaneous, and related to the narrator's personal life. The posts were reviewed independently, and any differences were then negotiated through consensus. Following this process then, eleven posts out of the twenty-four accounts uploaded on MOODLE website were identified as instances of anecdotal storytelling uses in the ESOL and literacy classroom. The eleven posts were then re-read again for the "disconfirming evidence" (Cresswell and Miller, 2001: 127) to ensure all demonstrated examples of anecdotal storytelling as well as to determine what data emerged in addition to the principles identified through the literature review. This inductive approach to data analysis and interpretation contributed to the enrichment of theoretical understanding of the use of anecdotal storytelling in an ESOL/ literacy classroom (See Appendix 1. Codes of the data - Anecdotal storytelling in the ESOL/Literacy classroom). It was then possible to draw together a more comprehensive discussion on the key theoretical and procedural principles of using anecdotal storytelling in the ESOL/literacy classroom.

### **Application of anecdotal storytelling in the ESOL/Literacy classroom**

To answer the first research question of 'What is an anecdotal story and how is anecdotal storytelling used as a pedagogic tool in the teaching practice of trainee ESOL and literacy teachers?' it was significant to note that anecdotes were mainly

used for modelling purposes, often taking place through impromptu 'incidental anecdotal story chat. This means their use was unplanned and spontaneous, springing from a sudden moment of inspiration or from noticing learners' mistakes in the process of language acquisition. In this case examples drawing on personal lives and experiences of trainee teachers were particularly prevalent (See Appendix 1. Example 1). Moreover, the trainees' accounts illustrated varied and innovative uses of anecdotes in contexts that ranged from pre-entry ESOL classes to high level literacy classes and classes preparing learners for international English language proficiency tests (IELTS). It is interesting to highlight that trainee teachers reflected with some surprise on how they used stories naturally and incidentally while noticing their positive, unexpected impact on learners. This seemed to motivate trainees to further, more ambitious exploration of storytelling as an effective technique to support language learning (Appendix 1. Example 3).

Another account illustrated a trainee's somewhat hesitant approach to anecdotal storytelling in the form of asking the learners to write a more personal mini-autobiography than the one found in the standardised C.V. format: "*I must say I was a little unsure how the group would take to writing about themselves in a far more personal way than is required for a C.V.*" (PST0). However, he not only recognised clearly the positive impact on the learners, "*they found writing about themselves and their lives ... an enjoyable task*" but also how these personal anecdotes provided him with "*an insight into their lives before they came to England that far exceeded what is revealed in a 'Getting to know you' icebreaker session.*"

One trainee used a particular ice-breaker activity of asking her learners to tell a short story from their lives to introduce themselves via telling their classmates "*something interesting that has happened to them*" (PST2). The trainee appreciated this activity as a strategy to conduct effective diagnostic assessment of her learners' speaking and listening skills at the beginning of the course.

Trainees frequently emphasised the value of anecdotes that enabled them to contextualise the target language in a more authentic context while critically reviewing traditional teaching materials, as is evident from the Example 4 (Appendix 1.). This account seems to support the suggestion that content brought through stories and

anecdotes can act as a powerful motivator for learning other aspects of the target language, such as

.....the vocabulary, grammar, ... and literacy skills that drive from it, not vice versa as in most traditional pre-written language syllabuses and schemes of work. (Bryers, et al., 2014: 12)

A similar example where anecdotes were purposefully introduced into the classroom discussion to serve as engaging and contextualising strategies for vocabulary development, is found in an account of a trainee working with a mid-level IELTS class. The trainee asked the learners "*to provide an account of a superstition from their own culture*" (INST1) to prepare the learners to read a demanding text. The trainee appreciated anecdotes told by learners as means to effectively introduce some key vocabulary that was to be encountered in the reading sample, and therefore had a highly communicative and personal value for the learners.

A more sophisticated approach to embedding anecdotal storytelling into a high ability literacy classroom is illustrated in the account of a trainee who utilised his own personal experience of a mountain climbing to create an allegory between lesson objectives and learning a language (Appendix 1. Example 5). The trainee's personal story in this case was interweaved with short anecdotes elicited from learners to encourage them to relate the topic and practise language structures naturally occurring in this context. Anecdotes created a sense of dialogue which is one of the key fundamental principles of participatory ESOL/literacy classroom, and provided opportunities "for more genuine interaction" between the teacher and students (Bryers, et al., 2014: 13)

Storytelling was also seen in the form of an exchange of short, personal anecdotes which became a part of an established classroom routine. One trainee reflected on how he would start each lesson with an anecdotal story telling activity that lasted from 35 to 45 minutes (Appendix 1. Example 6). It could be argued that the trainee justified the use of anecdotes as a flexible means to fulfil a number of functions in the teaching and learning process, including language development, behaviour management as well as an effective introduction of the session's objectives. The learners had to tell a short narrative but were also required to re-tell someone else's anecdote, a strategy cited in another post as well (Appendix 1. Example 16).

During the process of reviewing and analysing the reflective posts it became clear that trainee teachers used stories predominantly in the format of short anecdotes that often referred to their own personal lives. They often acted as initiators of the classroom discourse and through this they became storytellers, using words, gestures and vocalisation to engage their learners in the process of listening and language acquisition. The stories build "compassion" (Suave, 2001) which helped learners understand the world of the teacher and the culture that is new to them, as examples 3, 4, and 7 in Appendix 1.

While the incentive to use anecdotes was primarily focused on the subject pedagogy-language development, the trainees simultaneously acknowledged other benefits of anecdotal storytelling which could be associated with the principles of participatory pedagogy, the second research question. These included for instance changes in power distribution in which they felt they were perceived as more "*human and likeable*" (PST2). Consequently, personal anecdotes were consciously used to bridge cultural and social differences that inevitably exist between the teacher and their learners (Appendix 1. Example 8).

In another example (Appendix 1. Example 7A), the trainee used anecdotes not only to support language learning but most importantly, to encourage a shared understanding of the world, to create a space for a free dialogue between the teacher and students based on mutual trust, the principles of participatory approach to teaching English as advocated by Mallows (2014), Bryers, et al., (2014) and Sauv  (2001). The trainee who was telling a story about her own house (PST11) also appreciated a change in the atmosphere in the class as the story "*promoted a feeling of inclusion and relaxation*" which contributed to the sense of trust in the community where teacher was perceived as its equal partner (Appendix 1. Example 3).

In a number of posts there were several cases of unplanned, spontaneous use of anecdotes, which enabled learners to lead classroom discussion and debate. In one post (Appendix 1. Example 9), the anecdotes told by the learners were inspired by their reaction to sensitive material shown in a film clip, showing a mental health condition that they were exposed to as part of warmer activity. The anecdotes engaged the learners in shared understanding of this particular human condition and evoked the feelings of empathy and compassion (Sauv , 2001).

Furthermore, anecdotal stories relating to authentic childhood experiences were also utilised in the format of written accounts after the learners explored a fictional story discussed in the lesson. The childhood anecdotes incorporated again, the willingness of learners to become more open and risk taking when sharing much more 'emotive' accounts from their lives (Appendix 1. Example 2).

Using a funny and intriguing topic of culturally specific superstitions also led to a spontaneous use of anecdotes, even though not without its challenges (Appendix 1. Example 11). However, the same trainee (Example 10) recognised that anecdotes told by learners seemed to enliven the process of language acquisition, enhanced engagement with the topic through sharing, appreciating and enquiring about culturally determined social practices, creating thus a sense of "community" (Sauvé, 2001).

A few posts, as mentioned above, referred to the use of anecdotal stories at the beginning of a course or a lesson emphasising their purpose as ice-breakers to develop a sense of community through shared values, developing trust and respect. This can be illustrated in the post describing 'scenarios' which further acknowledged the benefits of social bonding (Appendix 1. Example 12).

The theme of social bonding appeared in other posts too, mainly in the ones that describe classroom contexts which enabled learners to develop engaging dialogues with each other. The post (Appendix 1. Example 13 and 15) describing the incorporation of an anecdotal storytelling activity at the beginning of each lesson acknowledged subject related as well as participatory pedagogy benefits. However, it can be argued that having this flexibility can be restricted only to the context of a community-based ESOL/Literacy class where the content of the course is not strictly linked with the exam preparation and its funding is not dependent, as it is often the case of the courses delivered in a more formal FE environment.

Despite this constrain, however, some trainees found various innovative ways to include personal anecdotes into their lessons and as a consequence recognised their positive impact on learner participation and interaction while building mutual respect a sense of shared understanding, as is evident from Appendix 1., Example 14 when the trainee describes the task of writing personal autobiographies instead of formal C.V.s.

Only one out of the eleven accounts acknowledged the failure of using anecdotes in the lesson. As previously stated, due to the public nature of the reflective accounts the trainees might have experienced difficulties or challenges when using stories, but may have decided to avoid posting negative accounts in a public domain. This needs to be considered as the main limitation of this study. Moreover, some of the posts were more detailed than others. Finally, it is acknowledged that the sample was quite small, so future continued studies in this area would require a larger pool of data with the focus on how anecdotes affect language learning in specific areas of language acquisition.

## Discussion

Applying a genre analysis of anecdotes implemented in the classroom practice of the trainee teachers, it is possible to propose a theoretical framework that captures their characteristics. The framework is based on the three core components of their use: the form and content; the role of the narrator and their purpose.

It could be argued that the framework might enable literacy practitioners to better appreciate the versatility and adaptability of anecdotal storytelling, as it demonstrates how anecdotes can contribute to genuine classroom communication and how they enhance learner motivation, engagement, and a sense of belonging.

### *Anecdotes as a genre – form and content*

From the point of view of the narrative length of anecdotes, the research confirmed that anecdotes usually consist of short spoken but also written accounts, describing “miniature adventures” that relate to real-life experiences of the narrator. Anecdotes can relate to events that happened recently or in the more distant past. They are often linguistically simplified reminiscences of a particular autobiographical event, as they can be used with lower language ability groups. However, a sensitive and an emotionally charged topic can stimulate learners to use more advanced language structures and vocabulary in their anecdotes, tapping into individuals’ willingness to communicate, defined by MacIntyre, et al., as “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons” (1998: 547).

Anecdotes can be metaphorically called “windows” to a speaker’s life, their beliefs, opinions, and cultural norms. Being short, they encourage listeners’ immediate

response, engaging them in reflections on and evaluations of a speaker's feelings and attitudes. They stimulate 'genuine' communication (Chappel, 2014) in which learners and teachers explore, share, and enquire "about things that matter to them in their lifeworlds" (Chappel, 2014, p. 6).

#### *Anecdotes relating to personal lives of trainee teachers - teacher as a narrator*

When introducing and utilising anecdotes in classroom contexts teachers often initiate the discourse. Teachers' anecdotes can be carefully pre-planned when they aim to introduce and/or control a new topic or they use them spontaneously in order to model a correct answer, explain a linguistic item or clarify a grammatical structure. Conversely, teachers adopt a role of participant in the classroom discourse, sharing their personal accounts spontaneously in the reaction to their learners' anecdotes. This latter aspect of the use of anecdotes in the literacy classroom enables the shift of power distribution, an aspect of the participatory ESOL approach (Bryers, et al., 2014).

#### *Strategies to elicit spontaneous anecdotal output - learner as a narrator*

Anecdotes can be part of a classroom routine, which enables learners to develop language skills through authentic and personalised tasks as well as to become initiators of the classroom discourse. Even though this can be quite problematic in educational contexts that are focused on exam preparation, it can be argued that as anecdotes are quite short, they are authentic examples of learners' emergent spoken language that further student talk, and help teachers diagnostically assess learners' levels within a short period of time. More importantly they can prepare learners for accessing more advanced language tasks that might be otherwise quite daunting. For example, as evidenced in our findings, through anecdotes learners spontaneously engaged in using new vocabulary that they found personally relevant, and therefore their motivation for the task was much higher (Dörnyei, 2003). In addition, through anecdotes learners are invited to share, value, empathise with, and respect their classmates' contributions. This is a fundamental characteristic of anecdotes, which enhances the participatory approach in the ESOL/literacy classroom.

#### *The purpose of anecdotes*

The valuable aspect of anecdotes is their versatility. Primarily, anecdotes can be seen as valuable pedagogic tools, addressing learner needs from the point of view of the

subject relevant pedagogy (literacy/ESOL/IELTS). As previously suggested, anecdotes can develop the language skills of learners when acquiring language in a communicative context. The secondary purpose of anecdotes can be seen in their impact on group cohesion and group bonding, based on mutual trust and compassion. Anecdotes often invite listeners to laugh, or ponder over the topic raised by their narrators, who are either teachers or learners. They invite 'power' sharing as they encourage the equal ownership of discourse and become valuable tools for engaging in participatory pedagogy.

## Conclusion

This study indicates that anecdotal storytelling is a valuable pedagogic tool that enhances participatory practice in the ESOL and Literacy classroom. Analysis of trainees' reflective posts highlight the varied and complex uses of anecdotal stories in the professional practice of trainee teachers. The aspects of subject specific pedagogy and a participatory approach to ESOL education were closely interlinked and demonstrated in various combinations in all of the posts.

The trainees' posts suggest that in understanding something as intensely personal as teaching, it is critical for students to see the teacher as 'human'. They felt it was vitally important that the teacher shared her/his own narrative, as this gesture placed him/her as an equal participant in the storytelling process rather than an expert or voyeur. This power distribution seemed to be embraced by all the trainees, which contradicts Bryers et al., (2014) argument that teachers in general find the balancing of power quite unacceptable. Even though trainee teachers are advised against getting too personally involved with learners and to maintain clear private boundaries, by consciously or unconsciously choosing to share personal anecdotes, they are entering into a more intimate relationship with their learners. It is significant to highlight however, that these areas were not noted as an issue in any of the trainees' reflections. On the contrary, despite the constraints of fully implementing a participatory approach in the ESOL/literacy classroom, trainee teachers appreciated the sense of "community", "participation" and "commitment" (Sauvé, 2001) that anecdotal stories brought into their classrooms.

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## Appendix 1. Codes of Data - Anecdotal storytelling in the ESOL/Literacy classroom

**Key: INST = In Service Trainee Teacher – in employment**

**PST= Pre Service Trainee Teacher – not in employment**

Themes	Examples from posts
<p><b>Form &amp; content: Short narratives</b></p>	
<p><i>Often simplified versions of real life events and experiences;</i></p> <p><i>a reminiscence of a particular biographical event;</i></p> <p><i>can require more advanced language skills when providing accounts on sensitive and emotionally charged topics.</i></p> <p><i>The content relates to the course curriculum topics.</i></p>	<p>...miniature adventures I have the students can relate to... (INST6). <b>Example 1</b></p> <p>By engaging the learners with the story of Forrest Gump and focusing on his emotional reactions their writing about their childhood was much more emotive that it would have been if storytelling had not been incorporated as a tool to teach the learners. (PST6) <b>Example 2</b></p> <p>I have a list of several 'scenarios' - such as my first day at work, by favourite holiday, my family etc (INST2)</p>
<p><b>Teacher as a Narrator</b></p>	
<p><i>Teacher as a provider of a model answer, determining the focus of the narrative;</i></p>	<p>I recently used storytelling in an ESOL class without realising I was doing it! The class was a mixture of pre-entry and Entry 1 learners. ... I feel that starting the lesson with a short story about</p>

	<p>my own home promoted a feeling of inclusion and relaxation. ...The story I told was impromptu and anecdotal. With hindsight I would fully plan the lesson around a fictional story about the home and use this as the focus of the whole lesson....(PST11) <b>Example 3</b></p> <p>I also find it somewhat easy to talk about life experiences as these are real happenings rather than artificial situations which don't happen with modern life ... (INST6). <b>Example 4</b></p> <p>I incorporated my own anecdote using a personal experience... The lesson objectives would follow the trail up a mount simulating my story. At each milestone I tailored tasks such as sharing their own experiences and ultimately leading to the language point; using the present perfect to speak about experiences. (PST3) <b>Example 5</b></p>
<p><i>Teacher as a participant – sharing personal accounts spontaneously as a reaction to learners' stories;</i></p>	<p>The learners would work in pairs and discuss the week they have had and any interesting news or events they may wish to share.... As each learner took their turn to speak, I would often stop them and perhaps discuss the issue raised with the class as a whole. Any new concepts or words would be written on the whiteboard and if possible I would attempt to steer the conversation towards that session's subject. .... At the end of the task, the session would then progress smoothly as all the learners were engaged yet had no need to chat among themselves as they</p>

	<p>had already said what they had to say. (PST1).</p> <p><b>Example 6</b></p> <p>When learners are struggling with a particular grammar point it is often necessary for it to be put into context for clarification. To do so I often draw upon my own life experiences, not just to help clarify the grammar point with which they are struggling (<b>Example 7</b>)...but also to help them engage with their teacher.(PST6) <b>Example 7A</b></p>
<p><b>Student as a narrator</b></p>	
<p><i>Student as an active listener to retell the stories;</i></p>	<p>... The group then gathers together and takes turns to tell the class of their fellow learners [sic] week. The conversation had to be carried out in English and then shared in English. (PST1)</p> <p><b>Example 16</b></p>
<p><i>Student actively sharing personal life story accounts;</i></p>	<p>...they found writing about themselves and their lives ... an enjoyable task ... an insight into their lives before they came to England that far exceeded what is revealed in a 'Getting to know you' icebreaker session. (PST0) <b>Example 8</b></p> <p>The majority of the class embarked on this with enthusiasm except for one learner who claimed he did not know of any. However, after each learner gave an example, the aforementioned student put his hand up and told the class a superstitious practice from his culture, which</p>

	ended up being the most interesting example given. (INST1) <b>Example 11</b>
<i>Student is an initiator of the classroom discourse;</i>	<p>... we had a discussion about OCD in general. Many learners offered accounts of people they knew to have the condition and it appeared that they were really engaged with the subject ...This approach instantly engaged the interest of the learners. (INST1) <b>Example 9</b></p> <p>The use of personal anecdotes made the class lively as they all wanted to contribute a practice the [sic] reflected their culture, whilst learning about others. I particularly felt this was successful since it, eventually, engaged all learners, and allowed them to realise that all cultures have these beliefs. (INST1) <b>Example 10</b></p>
<b>Primary purpose – Pedagogical content and General pedagogical knowledge</b>	
<i>To illustrate a language or a grammar point;</i>	When learners are struggling with a particular grammar point it is often necessary for it to be put into context for clarification (PST6)
<i>Stretch and challenge – encourage Learners to develop longer stretches of their narrative to enhance their speaking skills;</i>	I offered suggestions and prompts as to how to expand their stories, for example, answering 'wh' questions, which I eventually wrote on the board to help all students expand their stories (PST 7)

<p><i>Engage in the process of communication;</i></p>	<p>One-by-one, the learners, are asked to pick out a folded slip from the cup and tell a story based on their experience of that scenario. If they haven't been in that situation before, they are free, to put the slip back in the cup and choose another. In order to evoke discussion, their peers are requested to ask at least one question each (INST2)</p>
<p><i>Part of the classroom routine;</i></p>	<p>With the literacy class I used to teach on a Thursday, I would begin each session with an anecdotal story telling activity. (PST1)</p>
<p><i>Using as an Ice-breaker / also to engage and develop classroom cohesion;</i></p>	<p>I like to use story telling as an ice-breaker, whereby groups of three learners are assigned. (INS2)</p> <p>I explained that I wanted them to introduce themselves and tell me something interesting that has happened to them ... I asked the students to listen and make notes and then selected one student to tell me what one of the other students had said. (PST2)</p>
<p><i>To manage behaviour;</i></p>	<p>The activity was also useful in so much that it allowed the learners to socialize and chat among themselves yet <b>in a controlled and educational manner</b>. (PST13)</p>
<p><i>To motivate learners for reading a difficult text and develop their vocabulary;</i></p>	<p>A mid-level IELTS class that I taught wanted more help with their reading in preparation for their test. The last reading samples are the most</p>

	<p>difficult and rely on the learner making meaning from words using the context of the sentence/paragraph around them. A practice example was on the topic of Superstition, but first the learners would need to know what 'superstition' is ... to provide an account of a superstition from their own culture. (INST1)</p>
<p><i>To conduct diagnostic assessment – to focus on the learner language;</i></p>	<p>This activity works really well as an assessment to see how confident your new students are and to check their speaking and listening abilities. (PST2)</p>
<p><i>To enhance language acquisition;</i></p>	<p>I found this to be an interesting and very useful activity. Interesting because as the weeks went by, the learners would get to know each other better and the stories they shared became more varied and vivid as their vocabulary improved (PST 1) <b>Example 13</b></p>
<p><b>Secondary purpose - Participatory pedagogy</b></p>	
<p><i>To motivate through the development of a sense of wellbeing;</i></p>	<p>There was much laughter in the classroom, which added to a sense of well-being. (PST 11)</p>
<p><i>To enable creating bonds with classmates;</i></p>	<p>I like to use story telling as an ice-breaker...The exercise helps group bonding and confidence building.” (INST2 ) <b>Example 12</b></p>

	<p>The activity was useful as it helped the learners to become familiar with each other and the stories shared were generally relevant to the class as a whole and therefore helped the learners bond. <b>(PST 1) Example 15</b></p> <p>...the fact they were willing to share their own stories with other members of the group helped to cross both cultural and personal boundaries. <b>(PST0) Example 14</b></p>
<p><i>To create trust and compassion between the teacher and students;</i></p>	<p>... an insight into their lives before they came to England that far exceeded what is revealed in a 'Getting to know you' icebreaker session. (PST0)</p>
<p><i>Change in power distribution;</i></p>	<p>... the teacher should introduce herself and tell them something interesting about herself too. This makes the teacher more human and likeable. (PST2) <b>Example 8</b></p> <p>... To do so I often draw upon my own life experiences, not just to help clarify the grammar point with which they are struggling but also to help them engage with their teacher.(PST6) <b>Example 7A</b></p>