

УДК 398.23

**THE ESSENCE, CONTENT AND CLASSIFICATION OF ANECDOTES AS
A LITERARY AND FOLKLORE GENRE**

Usanova Mehriniso Abduvahob qizi

*Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan*

This article explores the concept of the anecdote as a concise narrative form in literary studies. It examines the origin and theoretical interpretation of the term, analyzes the essential features of anecdotal content, and presents a classification of anecdotes across different cultures. The research is grounded in classical literary theory and draws upon well-established academic sources. Special attention is given to the communicative, cultural, and pedagogical functions of anecdotes.

Keywords: Anecdote, narrative, literary theory, humor, satire, moral lesson, storytelling, cultural discourse, rhetoric, short prose.

Late in the evening, in a quiet reading hall, a researcher turns the fragile pages of an old book. Suddenly, a short story catches attention — only a few lines long, yet surprisingly meaningful. It is not merely a story, but a reflection of human thought, culture, and wit. Such texts, small in size but deep in meaning, are known as anecdotes.

The word anecdote derives from the Greek *anekdota*, meaning “unpublished materials.” Historically, the term was introduced by Procopius in his work *Secret History*, where it referred to hidden accounts of political life. Moreover, there are plenty of explanations about appearing of anecdotes, one of them is described as that the term first-

ly used in the title of memoirs of the private lives of the Eastern Roman imperial couple Theodora and Justinian, this work was named as „Onions" and was not intended for publication. The Oxford English Dictionary represents several definitions of anecdote term: 1. It is a short amusing, interesting story mostly depicts real incident or experience and this makes anecdote superficial and unreliable. 2. Added to this meaning, anecdote distinguishes from high-quality literature with its more colloquial features. Finally, some German dictionaries do not consider anecdote as any literary value but define as short stories that is usually unauthenticated. One of the unique characteristics of anecdotes is that, although they are not extensively studied as a literary genre, they can provide information and historical figures not mentioned in many historically significant works. One such figure is the great Greek philosopher Diogenes, known for delivering harsh truths to Alexander the Great with his humorous remarks. Diogenes himself lived in a barrel, wearing tattered patched clothing. One of his satirical comments is as follows:

Alexander: I am Alexander the Great.

Diogenes: I am Diogenes, the dog.

Alexander: The dog?

Diogenes: I nuzzle the kind, bark at the greedy, and bite louts.

Alexander: What can I do for you?

Diogenes: Stand out of my light.

In modern literary scholarship, anecdote is defined as:

“A short narrative of an interesting or striking incident, often used to illustrate a general point" [1, p.15-16]. This definition emphasizes the illustrative and functional nature of anecdotes. According to another authoritative source:

“An anecdote is a brief narrative focusing on a particular event, frequently revealing character or offering amusement”[2, p.12]. These interpretations confirm that anecdote operates as a compact narrative unit with communicative purpose. Anecdotes serve as a useful tool for understanding how memory is structured in the present. Max van Manen has played a crucial role in integrating anecdotes into qualitative educational research. This specific type of anecdote aims to depict personal experiences as accurately as possible. In today's literature this type of literature mostly created in purpose of entertaining and amusement, it seems better to clarify as not created or written but born in real life situations. The effectiveness of an anecdote lies in its internal structure and semantic depth. Anecdotes rely on minimalism. As noted in narrative theory, economy of expression increases the intensity of meaning. Anecdotes are also short, personal, taken from real life narrative stories that is great tool to connect abstract thoughts and lived experience. In turn, anecdotes help to foster empathy, increase memorability as well as they humanize informations, transforming dry data into narrative stories connect personally with readers. Besides, the role of anecdotes in terms of enhancing memory is vital as they are mostly narrative short story and humorous they might be easily memorised and hardly forgotten than only dry information. However, there is limitation in features of anecdotes, one of them is lack of proof, anecdotal content cannot prove universal truth and cause-effect relations on its own. Despite this, anecdotes can serve as a starting point for scientists to investigate and identify rare behaviours. It should be admitted that anecdotal content has persuasive power due to its emotional appeal. Even when fictional, anecdotes are constructed to appear realistic, enhancing their persuasive power. Wolfgang Mieder highlights that: “Traditional short narratives, including anecdotes, often compress collective wisdom into a few lines”[3, p.23-25]. This indicates that anecdotal meaning is often indirect and interpretative.

Humor functions not only as entertainment but also as a vehicle for criticism and reflection. Anecdotes also can operate as a double-edged sword, they hold up a mirror to a societal flaws and could provoke reflection. Moreover, Anecdotes often reveal personality through a single action or dialogue, making them effective tools of characterization.

In classical Greece, anecdotes about philosophers such as Socrates illustrated ethical and intellectual principles. In Persian and Central Asian literature, anecdotal narratives are closely linked with moral instruction and Sufi philosophy. Michel de Montaigne frequently employed anecdotes in his essays: "I make use of others' words to better express my own thought"[4, p.172]. This reflects the role of anecdote as supportive evidence in argumentation. In modern contexts, anecdotes are used in education, journalism, and public speaking to enhance clarity and engagement.

Classification of Anecdotes

1. By Purpose

Humorous anecdotes

Moral anecdotes

Historical anecdotes

Satirical anecdotes

2. By Content

Personal anecdotes

Literary anecdotes

Cultural anecdotes

Philosophical anecdotes

3. By Structure

Simple anecdotes

Dialogic anecdotes

Framed anecdotes

Anecdotes vary significantly across cultural contexts. Eastern anecdotes tend to emphasize moral wisdom and symbolic meaning, while Western anecdotes often focus on wit and individuality. Central Asian anecdotal tradition, especially stories associated with Nasreddin Hodja, combines humor with philosophical insight. Anecdotes, as concise stories of intriguing events or persons, provide unique insights into the cultural and social fabric of world nations. They serve as a lens through which we can understand the varied narratives that define a country's identity. Here is a classification of anecdotes based on their thematic essence: Historical Anecdotes: These are tales from the past that often highlight pivotal moments or figures in a nation's history. For example, George Washington and the cherry tree anecdote in the United States illustrates themes of honesty and integrity. Cultural Anecdotes: Such stories reflect the customs, traditions, and values of a nation. An example is the Japanese tale of the "Red Ogre Who Cried," emphasizing the importance of kindness and friendship. Political Anecdotes: These revolve around political leaders or events, offering insight into governance and statecraft. Winston Churchill's witty retorts are legendary in the United Kingdom, showcasing leadership under pressure. Social Anecdotes: Stories in this category focus on everyday life and societal norms. The Italian tradition of "La Passeggiata," an evening stroll, highlights community and relaxation. Humorous Anecdotes: Humor transcends borders, and many nations have light-hearted stories that capture their unique sense of humor, such as the Irish "Kerryman" jokes that playfully poke fun at regional stereotypes. Each type of anecdote enriches our understanding of world nations, revealing the depth and diversity of human experience. According to Wayne C. Booth: "Narratives persuade not only through logic but through emotional engagement"[5, p.52-53]. Anecdotes serve this

function effectively due to their brevity and relatability. Seymour Chatman further explains: “Even the smallest narrative unit may contain both story and discourse structure”[6, p.19-21]. Thus, anecdotes operate simultaneously on structural and semantic levels. Anecdotes often reflect cultural priorities. For instance, Japanese anecdotes might focus on harmony and collective well-being, emphasizing community over individual desires. In contrast, American anecdotes might celebrate individualism and personal achievement. Many anecdotes are rooted in historical events unique to each nation. Russian anecdotes often feature themes of endurance and resilience, shaped by the country's turbulent history, whereas British anecdotes might carry elements of wit and irony, reflecting a long tradition of humor. The structure of society influences anecdotal themes. Indian anecdotes, for example, often highlight themes of family and social hierarchy, mirroring its collectivist culture. Meanwhile, Swedish anecdotes may emphasize equality and consensus, reflecting their social democratic values. Humor varies widely across cultures. French anecdotes might include sophisticated wordplay, while Brazilian anecdotes could feature lively, playful narratives reflecting their vibrant lifestyle. In many cultures, anecdotes carry moral lessons. Chinese anecdotes might convey Confucian values like respect and duty, while Native American anecdotes often emphasize harmony with nature. These differences highlight how anecdotes serve as a mirror to the distinct values, history, and social dynamics of each nation, offering a fascinating glimpse into the diverse human experience.

The anecdote represents a unique synthesis of brevity and meaning. It functions as both a literary form and a communicative tool, capable of conveying complex ideas through simple narratives. Its continued relevance across cultures and historical periods demonstrates its enduring significance in human expression. Furthermore, anecdotes are more than just entertaining; they provide transmission values, beliefs and lessons across generations. Whether told around a family dinner table or in public speech, anecdotes have significant influence on the audience as they evoke emotions and provoke thoughts. Through anecdotes, it is possible to be reminded of shared humanity and timeless art of storytelling.

REFERENCES

1. Abrams, M. H. A Glossary of Literary Terms. 11th ed., //Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015, p. 15–16.
2. Baldick, C. The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. 4th ed.,// Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 12.
3. Mieder, W. Proverbs: A Handbook. //Greenwood Press, 2004, p. 23–25.
4. Montaigne, M. de. Essays.// Penguin Classics, 1993, Book I, Chapter 26, p. 172.
5. Booth, W. C. The Rhetoric of Fiction.// University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 52–53.
6. Chatman, S. Story and Discourse. //Cornell University Press, 1978, p. 19–21.

СУЩНОСТЬ, СОДЕРЖАНИЕ И КЛАССИФИКАЦИЯ АНЕКДОТОВ КАК ЛИТЕРАТУРНО-ФОЛЬКЛОРНОГО ЖАНРА

Усанова Мехринисо Абдувахоб кизи

*Самаркандский государственный институт иностранных языков
Республики Узбекистан*

Эта статья исследует концепцию анекдота как краткой повествовательной формы в литературоведении. Рассматривается происхождение и теоретическое толкование термина, анализируются основные особенности анекдотического содержания, и представляется классификация анекдотов в разных культурах. Исследование основывается на классической литературной теории и опирается на хорошо зарекомендовавшие себя академиче-

ские источники. Особое внимание уделяется коммуникативным, культурным и педагогическим функциям анекдотов.

Ключевые слова: Анекдот, повествование, литературная теория, юмор, сатира, нравоучение, рассказывание историй, культурный дискурс, риторика, короткая проза.