



The Roles of Slang Within a Literary Composition.

Mamajanova G'uncha Xemrayevna

Assistant of Tashkent State Transport University

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9817-111X>

Shakirova Saida Tukhtajonovna

Assistant of Tashkent State Transport University.

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0498-1016>

Abstract: This article investigates the diverse functions of slang within literary compositions, probing the strategies employed by authors in utilizing slang to delineate characters, set the scene, evoke ambiance, and convey thematic motifs. By undertaking an in-depth analysis of a range of literary works, this research endeavors to unveil the manifold roles that slang assumes within the context of literature.

Keywords: anthology, short stories, exhibit, psychological, sampled dataset, emotions, evaluations, literal interpretation.

Introduction. In literature, slang functions as a dynamic instrument utilized by writers to infuse their narratives with authenticity, profundity, and resonance through its informal and unconventional lexical expressions. Authors strategically incorporate slang within their literary compositions to depict the intricacies of language usage within distinct social milieus, thereby augmenting character portrayals, enriching dialogue, and deepening thematic explorations. This article aims to scrutinize the diverse roles assumed by slang within literary works, illuminating its importance as a narrative device and elucidating its influence on readers' engagement and interpretation.

Broadly, it is important to recognize that the author's early narratives, encompassed within this compilation, exhibit a diverse array of stylistic trials. As articulated by the author, these stories serve as a crucible for him to experiment with various linguistic registers, facilitating his evolution as a writer. Translating such linguistic experimentation necessitates a keen understanding of the collection's distinct characteristics. Notably, one stylistic hallmark is the pervasive utilization of slang, serving multifaceted roles within the narratives. Slang may serve as a defining attribute of a character's speech, particularly during moments of intense emotional expression, thereby offering psychological insights. Additionally, it can serve as a tool within the authorial text, delineating the milieu in which the narrative unfolds. Conversely, deliberate absence of slang, as exemplified in "Thoughts of the Alphonse Monkey," where the articulate discourse of the simian narrator contrasts starkly with the coarse vernacular of humans, underscores the need to uphold such distinctions across stories with varying degrees of slang usage. Examining specific instances of slang's functions within the text, drawing from a systematically sampled dataset, reveals variations in the frequency and contextual application of slang, contingent upon its intended functions and narrative nuances.

Literature Review. Previous scholarly inquiries have scrutinized the deployment of slang in literary contexts from diverse angles. Scholars have delved into the ways in which authors utilize slang to authenticate narratives, portray cultural identities, and evoke particular temporal or societal settings. Moreover, research has delved into the stylistic and thematic roles played by slang, as well as its ramifications for reader reception and comprehension. While certain scholars have underscored slang's role in mirroring societal attitudes and linguistic shifts, others have emphasized its potential to defy conventional language standards and disrupt literary conventions.

Ian McEwan's anthology of short stories, "In between Sheets," is characterized by a pervasive theme of deterioration, the erosion of humanity in individuals, the depiction of ugliness, and the escalating sensationalism of the narratives. This thematic underpinning is reinforced through the author's linguistic choices, which intricately reflect the idiosyncrasies of McEwan's artistic realm.



In the story "Pornography," the usage of slang is notably prevalent in the dialogues among characters. A selection of instances from our analysis includes expressions such as "I got the clap," and colloquial remarks like "Those American mags are good." It is noteworthy that these instances occur in ordinary conversational contexts rather than during heightened emotional states, indicating that the employment of slang, even of a coarse nature, is normalized within their verbal interactions. The coarseness of language mirrors the narrative's overarching theme of brashness, reflecting the characters' crude thoughts and sentiments.

Conversely, in "Reflections of the Alphonse Monkey," the use of slang, limited to just two instances, is depicted as foreign speech for the narrator-protagonist, primarily attributed to his mistress, the writer. This dichotomy between the sophisticated internal discourse of the monkey and the simplistic, often vulgar language of the human characters underscores thematic elements concerning the writer's struggles with creativity and self-expression.

Similarly, "To finish at once and die" employs minimal slang usage, with the narrator's language emphasizing clarity and correctness. This linguistic choice serves to accentuate the absurdity and madness inherent in the storyline, drawing parallels to literary works such as Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice" and Vladimir Nabokov's "Lolita." The protagonist's unconventional love interest, a mannequin, echoes the forbidden desires explored in these texts, yet the absence of slang delineates the protagonist as cultured and refined, intensifying the narrative's ironic contrast and amplifying its absurdity.

Let us examine examples from our dataset in terms of their stylistic nuances, morphological and structural features, and functions within specific contexts. Some examples consist of the same words that are translated differently depending on the context, which presents an intriguing subject for analysis in the second paragraph of this chapter. Certain words are derivatives of the same root, which also holds particular interest for analysis. Let's consider the first example, two fragments featuring the same lexical unit: "I got the clap; Since you got the clap, I'll buy you a drink." The noun "clap" carries a slang meaning of "gonorrhoea." This connotation is indicated in The Free Dictionary, where, alongside neutral, commonly used meanings, slang interpretations are provided: "a common venereal disease caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*; symptoms are painful urination and pain around the urethra." Additionally, this same meaning is found in the Urban Dictionary, which specifically catalogues slang definitions and is user-populated, thus reflecting changes in slang usage. The Urban Dictionary defines "clap" as: "noun - a case of gonorrhoea, a sexually transmitted bacterial disease in which males display more symptoms than females, but can lead to sterility or more serious problems in both." However, it is noteworthy that this slang definition is absent in general lexicons. Even in the Collins English Dictionary, which lists 13 meanings for this word, the slang definition is absent.

Research Methodology. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing close textual analysis of literary pieces prominently incorporating slang. A diverse array of novels, short stories, and plays across various genres and historical eras will be scrutinized to discern recurring patterns and evolving trends in the utilization of slang within literary works. Furthermore, this analysis will incorporate perspectives from literary critique and sociolinguistic theory to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the functions of slang in literature.

Words belonging to other grammatical categories are primarily employed for the articulation of emotions and evaluations, often devoid of independent denotative significance or relying on the literal interpretation of the word (e.g., "shit"). In summarizing the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the principal role of slang within the selected anthology of Ian McEwan lies in shaping the speech attributes of the characters. This is underscored by the heightened prevalence of slang in narratives where it serves as a habitual mode of expression for the characters, transcending mere emotional expression. Beyond individual characterization, slang may also serve as a marker of national identity, as certain slang expressions are annotated to signify their association with the British variant of the English language.



Analysis and Results. The examination underscores the multifaceted roles of slang within literary works. It contributes to character portrayal by delineating social standing, age, and cultural heritage, and contributes to the establishment of ambiance and context through the representation of distinct dialects and conversational styles. Additionally, slang serves to invigorate dialogue, infuse comedic elements, and communicate thematic concepts such as defiance, alienation, or unity. These findings underscore the adaptability of slang as a narrative tool and its capacity to enhance the richness and credibility of literary storytelling.

In our analysis, we observe a variety of slang words within our sample, which can be categorized into distinct groups from a structural perspective. Firstly, there are various abbreviations such as "mag," "rep," and "innit," among which not only individual words are shortened but also entire phrases are condensed. These lexical elements, derived from specific neutral terms and phrases, function identically to their neutral counterparts in denoting objects and phenomena, essentially serving as a linguistic shorthand. However, their usage imbues the characters' speech with a more casual and natural tone, contributing to the author's stylistic portrayal of oral dialogue.

Secondly, there are words that have acquired new slang meanings and serve as prolific sources for the formation of additional slang expressions. These lexical units often carry coarse connotations (e.g., "shit," "fuck"), from which derivative terms emerge (e.g., "shithole," "fucker"). The inherent productivity of these terms underscores their frequent utilization throughout the collection for various communicative purposes. Despite undergoing semantic shifts, these words retain their vivid expressiveness and evaluative potency.

Thirdly, there exists a group of words that have evolved through alternative linguistic pathways (e.g., "quid," "bloody"). This assortment encompasses various parts of speech, including verbs ("fuck," "shit"), nouns ("rep," "mag," "quid," "fucker"), adjectives ("fucking," "sobbing"), and particles ("bloody"). Notably, most nouns primarily denote objects and concepts, with evaluative implications often accompanying their usage. An exception lies in derived words featuring the roots "fuck" and "shit," which may possess neutral denotative meanings but carry strong evaluative connotations. For instance, the term "fucker" may function as a synonym for "thing" or "object" but with heightened expressiveness and evaluative weight.

Conclusion. In summary, slang assumes essential functions within literary texts, enriching character portrayals, setting descriptions, atmospheric nuances, and thematic inquiries. Authors employ slang to imbue their narratives with vibrancy, authenticity, and cultural relevance, fostering reader engagement and enriching their comprehension of human experiences. As scholars delve deeper into the intricate roles of slang in literature, we anticipate a deeper understanding of its enduring importance and impact on literary expression.

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