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The importance of slangs in literary discourse

Author: Uzbekistan State World Languages University
Faculty of English Philology, 3rd-year student
Musaxonova Zebunniso Muxtorjon qizi
Supervisor: **Usmonova Shahodat Abdurahimovna**
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Abstract: The discursive features of slang in literature are examined in the article, and their importance in literary works is discussed. In addition, the concepts of slang and discourse are explained through comparisons and examples.

Introduction

Slangs are indeed ubiquitous not only in everyday life conversation, but also in literature, science and, overall, in formal cases too. According to where and when slangs are being used, they function differently.

However, before dwelling on the function and importance of slangs, it would be both informative and intriguing first to know more about the etymology and original meaning of this word.

The word **s**lang literally refers to any element of languages that is used in an informal register, being an indispensable aspect of everyday conversation and therefore being mostly avoided in formal occasions, including writing, presentation or formal speech. Slangs are also used to highlight particular group identity and sometimes to exclude outsiders by members of particular in-groups, communities and people residing together. The word probably dates back to 18th century and has been defined in multiple ways since its conception, with no single technical usage in linguistics.

In its earliest attested use (1756), the word slang referred to the vocabulary of "low" or "disreputable" people. By the early nineteenth century, it was no longer exclusively associated with disreputable people, but continued to be applied to usages below the level of standard educated speech. In Scots dialect it meant "talk, chat, gossip", as used by Aberdeen poet William Scott in 1832: " In northern English dialect it meant "impertinence, abusive language".

Nonetheless, as time passed by, slang lost its original definition and made its way into broader mainstream use. Now, every language outstands with its distinctive features, such as slangs, dialects and so forth.

Discourse

Prior to explaining the definition of literary discourse, it is also worth mentioning that discourse itself means the use of language to communicate in speech or writing, or an example of this. In a broader context, discourse refers to a formal, extended and thoroughly structured communication that is used in intellectual, academic and formal cases. Since discourse refers to the exchange and discussion of ideas or information, a few words can be strongly synonymous with it, which are conversation, discussion, dialogue, converse, colloquy. However, when we simply talk, we still exchange ideas, meaning that talk should potentially be the synonym too. Since in discourse, there is the element of formality, talk cannot be used in the same context as discourse**.**

The specialized use of any language in creative artistic work, including poetry, novels and plays, is considered to be discourse. It encompasses not only the verbal or written communication of ideas, but also stories, emotions, word choices and narrative structure within literature.

According to the modern approaches to the notion, discourse is complex communicative phenomenon that needs extra linguistic factors such as thoughts, world-outlook, goals and relationships in order to understand the text.

In order to really understand literary discourse, we are to explore several distinct features, layers, and categories.

The role of slangs in literary discourse

The use of slangs in literary discourse is one of the most fascinating and dynamic facets of linguistics. Slang is used in literature in order to generally show the background, social belonging and authenticity of the character, to establish cultural and generational settings and also to express the real emotions. Far from being a marker of "bad" grammar, non-standard, informal language also improve the readability of the literary work. Through slangs used in a book, for example, a reader can find out where the character is from or in what era he or she is living, fostering the process of imagination of readers.

Types of slangs that are commonly used in literature

In turn, there are several types of slangs that are commonly used in literature, all of which provide flavor and realism. Therefore, common types of slang found within literature include: A) Occupational and Institutional Slang is used between characters who belong to a specific trade, profession, or subculture and it adds realism to the text, underlining the speaker's background. B) Military & Police Slang is also very specific that its examples include "klick" (kilometer) in war novels or "B&E" (breaking and entering) in crime fiction. C) Literary or Theatrical Slang: words and phrases used by specific niche groups, artists, or academics. D) Cant, Argot, and Criminal Jargon are used historically in novels to depict the underworld, marginalized communities, or contrarian groups. Cant historically referred to the secretive types of languages utilized by thieves and vagabonds, while modern argots obscure meaning from outsiders. For example, sing words like "scam," "stool pigeon," "heist," or old British "flash" language in classics like Oliver Twis are pertinent examples of slangs in literary discourse. E) Regional & Dialectal Slang.

That type of slang is heavily tied to geographical and cultural backgrounds that can root their narrative in a specific time and place (such as deep-south American vernacular, urban inner-city slang, or British Cockney rhyming slang).

F) Morphological and Created Slang: this is particularly popular in speculative fiction, sci-fi, or young adult genres, including the invention of their own slang to construct immersive new worlds and youth cultures. They manipulate existing words through processes like clipping or compounding. For instance, clipping & acronyms: Shortening words (e.g., "rep" instead of reputation) or forming acronyms. Coined Slang: Novelist Anthony Burgess coined entirely new slang in A Clockwork Orange (e.g., "horrorshow" for good/excellent, "droogs" for friends) Finally, the last one is Flippant and Imitative Slang. Linguists classify broader slang expressions into stylistic and structural categories. Flippant: Slang phrases where the combined meaning diverges from the literal definitions of the individual words (e.g., "kicking the bucket"). Imitative/Phonetic Slang: Slang that is created by distorting sounds or spelling, such as "gonna" (going to), "wanna" (want to), or "ain't".

Overall, it is hard and somehow boring to imagine literature without slangs. As they play a significant role in the process of shaping the characters, revealing the individual's background, age, ethnic group along with allowing the writer to replace the formal language with more sarcastic and emotional vocabulary. Additionally, when characters are using slangs in novel or plays, it also creates a connection between characters and reader or spectators.

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