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# Legal Rules and Regulations of Using Informal Language in Stephen King's Collection of Novellas

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## Abstract

Determining the official language in the law or constitutions of the countries has been accepted and most of the new constitutions have determined the official language or languages of the countries. An official language is a language that is legally chosen in a country or a region of the country that has the ability to establish specific laws for that region. Usually, a language is chosen as the official language that is spoken by the majority of the population (national language). But due to the existence of multilingual societies or due to the preservation of the national unity of a country, these two may not match, or the "national language" may be one of the "official languages". Regarding the official language and the process of its implementation, many statements have been made to this day, and to the same extent, less detailed legal and political researches are seen. The main aim of this scientific research was to analyse informal language in the collection of novellas "If it bleeds", written by Stephen King in 2020. In order to do this it was necessary to look through slang words or phrases and colloquialisms in material and estimate the context of usage (when, by whom, why it was used). In the collection slang commonly used by heroes of the novellas in dialogs, so it was assumed that the author deliberately inscribe such words in the text in order to make speech more vivid and colorful. The next step was to make mathematical estimation of slang and colloquialisms, and analyze importance of it in the material. According to count, 356 slang words or phrases and colloquialisms are used in this collection. Of course, this number was quite big and it can be assumed that according to quantitative measurements slang was highly important in the text. Finally, the analysis of the perception of these words or phrases among younger generation was made. The main conclusion was that youngsters sense these phrases like something not modern, but appropriate. So, here it can be declared that slang and colloquialisms bare important role in the literature and people can easily feel the function of it in the text despite the fact that slang words may be out of date.

**Keywords:** Legal rules; regulations; English language, informal language, slang, literature.

## 1. Introduction

Literature describes our lives, our epoch, and people living in it. It was assumed that each example of literature provide the feeling of live, and it was essential that written word should be understood correctly by the audience in order to maintain its function. Literature always has its dominant markers, stylistic devices that describe the main ideas of it and emphasize important parts. Sometimes authors use metaphors, epithets and other stylistic devices in order to make its language more colorful and aesthetic, but sometimes it is more convenient to use informal language to inscribe the speech of ordinary people. The usage and dominance of stylistic devices or slang are connected to main purpose of literature, whereas it works with abstract notions or conveys ordinary meanings. Anyway, both ways are suitable and make literature more vivid and understandable by the audience, but stylistic devices work through connotations and inner meanings of the words, when slang operate more openly.

The problem of slang and colloquialisms was highly analysed and worked through, there are a lot of scholars, who work with it. Slang is investigated through single slang words [1], which is the wide space for the introduction of the importance of the context and shift of rude slang words into the common speech. The dialect is also commonly used in the introduction of slang and its connection to indigenous languages [2]; similarly with the variety of English language and its association with slang [3]. But we also should bear in mind that "Even though slang words are generally ephemeral, they are more independent of social factors." [4] Sometimes it is highly important to assume that slang has some gender characteristics in order to split slang words into different subtypes [5]. Also it is useful to mention characteristics of speech in the media communication, which

can contain slang [6]. Another potential area of slang using is virtual communication [7] and age-based communication [8]. And may be the most interesting part of slang research is slang in textbooks and teaching of it officially through books [9]. Some scholars work with lexical and syntactic analysis, where it is very useful to conduct analysis of slang as a part of novel.

Taking off from previously done linguistic studies on fiction, which primarily focused on novels and short stories as major literary genres, this study endeavours to conduct an investigation of slang in horror genre, which has been receiving considerable attention in the modern age.

## 2. Methods

During this work firstly search for slang words or phrases and colloquialisms were done, which were used to establish unusual functions in the text. On this stage it was encountered 356 slang words or phrases and colloquialisms in material. This number was estimation of importance of this part of language in this collection, because the number was unusually big (comparing with another authors or modern texts). On the second stage of research the context of informal language was observed: in what occasions it was used, by what characters or when in order to develop coherence of usage. Then the mathematical model of usage of slang and colloquialisms in collection was done, using mathematical estimation. And finally, analysis of the perception of these parts of language among younger generation from 16 to 30 years was conducted through interview of 50 respondents via social networks. The social network was the place of questionnaire; it was asked following question: "Is this colloquial word seem modern to you?" and given possible answers "Yes; no; it's not modern, but appropriate".

### 2.1 Variants of Informal Language

Informal English language include slang, taboo vocabulary, colloquialisms. The question of differentiating of colloquialisms and slang are quite difficult, because linguists do not have the same opinion about this problem. The majority of scholars declare that the slang is usually used by some stratum of population, and colloquialisms are used by all people.

There are many types of slang in English language, usually it is spoken about slang, unique to specific subcultures, f.e. prison slang, internet slang etc. It cannot be declared that examples of slang in these novellas are the part of some subculture or refer to unique stratum of population. In the collection of novellas slang was introduced by commonly used variants of slang words, which are close to colloquialisms.

Another characteristic of corpus of informal language in these novellas was nearly using of rude variants throughout the material: it was encountered a small amount of rude language. And the third type is old variant of slang words, which were firstly introduced in 1920-1980.

### 2.2 Mathematical Estimation

During the reading of all collection of novellas it was encountered 356 slang words or phrases and colloquialisms. The data were analysed using dictionaries, so it was occurred that 70,7% of informal words were introduced in dictionaries with *informal* sign, so it was assumed that these words are commonly used by all English-speaking population, they are colloquialisms; 11,7% was rude language (f.e. shit, bloody), in dictionaries these words are marked like *vulgar slang*; and 17,4% was not very modern slang words, so in dictionaries the *year* of its appearance was indicated.

The percentage of colloquialisms may be connected with the author's focus on high perception of his works among the audience. It is clear that the usage of informal language make material more accessible to all ages, genders, and social positions. While using of rude language limit the audience, because women do not appreciate vulgar slang in literature, they incline to use euphemisms [10].

**Chart 1 – Slang words in the novellas**

Slang words	Quantity
Colloquialisms	252
Vulgar slang	42
Not very modern slang words	62

### 3.2 USING OF INFORMAL LANGUAGE

In the collection of novellas informal words were used to make the dialogs and speech more vivid and colourful. It is normal to use slang words and phrases in modern literature, because it makes material more suitable for the audience. Another usefulness of slang and colloquialisms is bringing the spirit of the epoch into the material.

Now the next step is to speak about some interesting examples of informal vocabulary. As mentioned earlier, all corpus of informal language was classified into three groups: vulgar slang, commonly used words (colloquialisms), and old variants of slang (words from 1920-1980th).

First examples are taken from the dialog between dad and his son, Craig, these slang words are usually used by teenagers, and it was easily seen throughout the material. Interesting slang word, common for oral speech, but has not entered dictionaries yet – “*a cheapster*”. Dad use this word referring to a boss of his son, Mr. Harrigan, a very rich man, but mean and greedy. He had a huge corporation in his youth, and during the narration of the novella he has a big house in a good neighbourhood, but nevertheless he pays small amount of money to the boy. This slang word was used in order to highlight the difference between the boy’s family and the man.

Another example was also connected to financial part of life: “*I pointed out that one of those four scratchers usually paid off a couple of **bucks***”. This slang word was usually referred to easily and quickly earned money, f.e. a quick buck. Here slang word was used in order not only to make an impression of upbringing of heroes, but also highlight the pronunciation of it.

Then the dad uses common phrase: “*sends you a dollar scratch ticket four times a year was **sitting on** better than a billion dollars, and one more time this slang verb was used as highlighting of financial difference between two families*”. Moreover this phrase also has connotation of slight father’s dislike towards the boss of the boy. The author accurately inscribes it through the usage of such harmless at first glance phrase.

Next example of this type is taken from dialog between Mr. Harrigan and Craig. Mr. Harrigan used word damn in his speech: “*All I can get is that **damn** windbag Limbaugh*”. But it was not offensive or rude, it was used as interjection. Mr. Harrigan just exclaimed, he used this slang word as connotational remark.

Then Mr. Harrigan turned on the radio and they began listening songs. Craig thought about song using word close to colloquialism *give the chills*: “*That song still **gives me the chills**, and I suppose it always will*”. Here Craig’s age was highlighted, because this phrase is usually used by younger people, even teenagers. Also the phrase has strong connotation, and reader understands clearly what the author inscribes.

The next examples are of the vulgar slang. The author frequently used the word shit in the text in various functions. F.e. in this sentence the word is used as conjunction, which refers to emotional connotation of discontent or disappointment: “*She takes the opportunity to glance at the WebWatcher app on her phone and murmurs ‘**Shit**.’*” It is highly common to use the word *shit* in the function of the description of negative emotions, and here it is very useful, because the heroine does not understand why her friend has not returned home yet.

The next slang word is *bloody*. In the text it was used as quality adjective and as slang word. Here the example of slang variant: “*This isn’t the man who reported on the **bloody** horror in Pineborough Township*”. This word is used like amplifier of connotation, it emphasizes the next word in the sentence: horror. Another interesting fact that this phrase is used like inner voice of heroine, she is speaking with herself. In life she is very timid and shy, even has mild problems with her mental health, she seldom uses such words in oral speech.

Sometimes the slang become the index of time. The author does not shun using old variants of slang, f.e. “*dad collected for me at Howie’s, because minors weren’t supposed to play the lottery, even if the tickets were **freebies***”. Slang word freebie firstly was used in 1920 like arbitrary formation from free. Nowadays this word was not used very often, but people understand it clearly. In the novella it was used in order to introduce the time of narration. So, mostly the slang was used in situations in which financial situation was mentioned in order to emphasize differences between families, and also it was criteria of upbringing and age of heroes.

### 2.3 Perception of Informal Language

The perception of slang was analysed via social networks, it was suggested for the audience to answer question “Is this word seem modern to you?” and give possible answers “Yes; no; it’s not modern, but appropriate”. But in order to make the audience more willing to participate in questionnaire, the abovementioned classification of informal words was used: commonly used words, rude language, not very modern slang words. Participants were not allowed to know the name of each group, they had only lists of words. The majority of informal variants are understood by the audience, because the author used known words and phrases. Only 4% (8 individuals) of respondents say that the data is not modern. So here we can assume that younger generation can easily understand even some old variants of slang.

Chart 2 – Is this slang word seem modern to you?

Possible answers	Quantity of people, answering the question
Yes	46
No	0
It’s not modern, but appropriate	4

### 3. Summary

To summarise this brief paper, it is important to mention that informal language is important part of literary works, because it inscribes the speech of ordinary people and makes the literature more understandable to all ages, and genders. It is assumed that because during the analysis of this collection of novellas it was elicited that the slang is the language without frames and barriers, it can be easily perceived by people, even if they do not

use such words on every day basis. Here it may be connected to coherence of generations, young people may have heard these slang words from the older relatives.

#### **4. Conclusions**

It is important to bear in mind that this short presentation of analysis of Stephen King's collection has left many details aside, showing just a small part of a long work that has tried really hard to be less biased as possible. This paper has been supported by the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program.

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