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## Functions of non-standard English in fictional texts

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**Annotation** *This study examines several functions of non-standard English in fictional texts, focusing on how these linguistic choices contribute to character development, thematic expression, and reader engagement. Personality of characters, their social background can be identified through their speech patterns. In addition, the use of non-standard English varieties reinforce the themes like tradition, cultural identity linking characters with their regional background. Moreover, non-standard language can create strong bonds between the characters and readers. Through a qualitative analysis and literary-linguistic approach, this research highlights the usage and functions of non-standard language within fiction. The analysis integrates textual data and case studies to present a comprehensive view of the non-standard language usage in literature. The paper focuses on a detailed analysis of "The Catcher in the Rye", written by J.D. Salinger. The protagonist's speech demonstrates how the author employs non-standard language to achieve specific literary objectives, including authenticity and realism. The findings show how non-standard language operates as an integral component of narrative meaning-making.*

**Keywords** *Non-standard English, dialect, fiction, eye dialect, authenticity, slang, character development, phonological variations, colloquial speech*

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## Badiiy matnlardagi nostandart ingliz tilining funktsiyalari

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**Annotatsiya** *Ushbu tadqiqot badiiy matnlardagi nostandart ingliz tilining turli vazifalarini o'rganadi va bu lingvistik tanlovlar asar qahramonlarining yaratilishiga, mavzuni ifodalashga va kitobxonlarni jalb qilishga qanday hissa qo'shishiga alohida e'tibor qaratadi. Qahramonlarning shaxsiyati, ularning ijtimoiy kelib chiqishi ularning nutq uslublari orqali aniqlanishi mumkin. Bundan tashqari, nostandart ingliz tili turlaridan foydalanish an'analar, madaniy o'ziga xoslik kabi mavzularni ilgari suradi, bu esa qahramonlarni ularning mintaqaviy kelib chiqishi bilan bog'laydi. Bundan tashqari, nostandart til asar qahramonlari va kitobxonlar o'rtasida mustahkam aloqalar o'rnatishi mumkin. Sifatli tahlil va adabiy-lingvistik yondashuv asosida ushbu maqola badiiy adabiyotda nostandart tilning qo'llanilishi va vazifalarini yoritib beradi. Matnli ma'lumotlar va amaliy tadqiqotlar tahlil qilinib, adabiyotda nostandart tildan foydalanishning keng qamrovdagi ko'rinishini taqdim etadi. Maqolada asosiy e'tibor J.D. Salinger tomonidan yaratilgan "Javdazordagi xaloskor" nomli asarining batafsil tahliliga qaratilgan. Bosh qahramonning nutqi muallifning ma'lum bir adabiy maqsadlarga, jumladan, haqiqiylik va realizmga erishish uchun nostandart tildan qanday foydalanganligini ko'rsatadi. Xulosa qilib*

*aytganda, nostandard til hikoya ma'nosini yaratishning muhim tarkibiy qismi sifatida ishlashini ko'rsatadi.*

**Kalit so'zlar** *Nostandard ingliz tili, sheva, badiiy adabiyot, yozma talaffuz, haqiqiylik, sleng, qahramon yaratilishi, fonologik o'zgarishlar, so'zlashuv nutqi*

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## **Функции нестандартного английского языка в художественных текстах**

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**Аннотация** *В данном исследовании рассматриваются различные функции нестандартного английского языка в художественных текстах, с особым акцентом на то, как эти лингвистические решения способствуют развитию персонажей, выражению тематики и вовлечению читателя. Личность персонажей и их социальное происхождение можно определить по их манере речи. Кроме того, использование нестандартных вариантов английского языка усиливает такие темы, как традиции, культурная самобытность, связывающие персонажей с их региональным происхождением. Более того, нестандартный язык может создать прочные связи между персонажами и читателями. С помощью качественного анализа и литературно-лингвистического подхода в данном исследовании освещаются использование и функции нестандартного языка в художественной литературе. Анализ объединяет текстовые данные и тематические исследования, чтобы представить всесторонний обзор использования нестандартного языка в литературе. Статья фокусируется на подробном анализе романа «Над пропастью во ржи» Дж.Д. Сэлинджера. Речь главного героя демонстрирует, как автор использует нестандартный язык для достижения определенных литературных целей, включая аутентичность и реализм. Результаты показывают, как нестандартный язык действует как неотъемлемая часть создания смысла повествования.*

**Ключевые слова** *Нестандартный английский, диалект, художественная литература, диалектный стиль, аутентичность, сленг, развитие персонажей, фонологические вариации, разговорная речь*

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### **Introduction**

The use of non-standard English in fictional literature is one of the complicated tasks to authors for creating authentic narratives. Non-standard language varieties serve crucial functions in establishing character identity, reinforcing thematic elements, and

creating social commentary within literary works. Hodson (2014) observed in her comprehensive study of literary dialect, "writers use non-standard language not just to represent speech realistically, but to invoke social meanings and create particular effects for their readers."

The employment of non-standard English in fiction gives a rise to some questions about the relationship between language, identity, and literary meaning. When authors choose to represent characters through dialectal speech, colloquial expressions, or grammatically non-normative constructions, they engage in a complex process of linguistic encoding that carries significant cultural, social, and psychological implications. This process becomes particularly evident in works like J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye," where the protagonist's distinctive voice serves multiple narrative functions simultaneously.

In literary contexts, non-standard English can manifest through phonological variations (represented through eye dialect), lexical choices, syntactic structures, and pragmatic patterns that differ from standard conventions.

Character development is one of the main functions of non-standard English in fiction. Character backgrounds, personalities, and social positions can be established through distinctive speech patterns. Authors describe characters using non-standard language to create complex, multifaceted characters, highlighting their social status, education, and cultural background. It also serves as a marker of authenticity, reflecting cultural attitudes about the relationship between linguistic formality and emotional authenticity.

Another important function of non-standard English in fiction is the creation of narrative authenticity. Authors can make their fictional worlds more believable and engaging for readers by incorporating realistic speech patterns and linguistic variations. This authenticity extends beyond simple mimicry to encompass the cultural and social contexts that shape language use.

The pursuit of authenticity through non-standard English reflects broader literary movements toward realism and naturalism. Authors seeking to represent life as it is actually lived must grapple with the fact that most people do not speak in the formal, grammatically correct manner associated with

standard written English. The incorporation of colloquial speech, dialect, and other non-standard forms becomes essential for creating believable characters and situations.

Non-standard English often functions thematically within literary works, reinforcing central themes and symbolic meanings. The linguistic choices made by characters and narrators can parallel or underscore the work's broader thematic concerns, creating layers of meaning that operate on both linguistic and conceptual levels. For example, the use of non-standard English might reinforce themes of alienation, rebellion, or social critique by positioning characters outside mainstream linguistic norms. Alternatively, dialectal speech might support themes of community, tradition, or cultural identity by connecting characters to specific regional or ethnic backgrounds.

Non-standard English can also function to enhance reader engagement and identification with characters. Non-standard language can create powerful connections between the text and their lived experiences for readers who recognize their own speech patterns or cultural backgrounds in literary representations. This identification can make literary works more personally meaningful and emotionally resonant. Conversely, non-standard English can also create distance between readers and characters, potentially challenging readers to expand their perspectives or confront their own linguistic assumptions. The way readers respond to non-standard language in literature often reflects their own social positions and attitudes toward linguistic diversity (Blake, 1981).

### **Methods of research**

This study employs a literary-linguistic approach to analyze and understand literary texts, focusing on how language functions within literature. By examining the literary work "The Catcher in the Rye" written by J.D. Salinger, the research aims to identify non-standard components (dialect, slang, and colloquial forms) in dialogue and narration, focusing on their usage in texts and

interpreting their functions in terms of characterization, cultural representation, and reader reception. Additionally, it employs a qualitative method that focuses on collecting and analyzing texts.

The study followed these key steps:

1. Textual analysis was conducted on selected passages from Salinger. The aim was to identify dialects and slang words, their functions, and their usage.
2. A systematic review of studies on using non-standard language in writing. These studies applied qualitative analysis, quantitative methods for collecting texts, and mixed approaches.

A study by Mansisa Ntoya (2018) compared the use of non-standard English in written and audio-visual fiction.

Another study by G.R. Imbukuleh (2014) observed the effectiveness of using non-standard English as a technique in writing fiction.

### Results

Non-standard English creates believable voices. Holden Caulfield, the protagonist and narrator of the novel, has a unique voice that combines elements of teenage slang, colloquial speech, and informal grammar with sophisticated vocabulary and complex ideas. This linguistic combination creates a distinctive narrative voice that serves multiple functions within the novel.

Holden was an upper-middle-class teenager from New York City in the 1940s and 1950s, and this is reflected in his speech patterns. His language incorporates period-specific slang, casual grammatical constructions, and repetitive patterns that suggest both youthful speech and psychological distress. However, his vocabulary and conceptual sophistication also reflect his privileged educational background and intellectual capacity.

Holden's distinctive voice incorporates several key linguistic features that mark it as non-standard. These include frequent use of colloquial expressions ("for crying out loud," "it

really did"), grammatical informality (sentence fragments, run-on sentences), repetitive patterns ("it kills me," "if you want to know the truth", "and all", "as hell"), and period-specific slang ("phony," "crummy," "old").

The phonological representation of Holden's speech also includes occasional eye dialect and informal contractions that suggest casual, spoken language rather than formal written discourse. Salinger employs these techniques sparingly but effectively to maintain the impression of spontaneous speech without sacrificing readability. For example:

- "Wuddaya mean so what?" (instead of What do you mean)
- "C'mon, let's go." (instead of Come on)
- "Gimme a cigarette." (instead of Give me)
- "Lemme tell ya." (instead of Let me tell you)
- "If I letcha up, willya keep your mouth shut?" (instead of Let you, Will you)

The most notable aspect of Holden's speech is characterized by its conversational tone and direct address to the reader. His frequent use of second-person pronouns ("you") and explanatory asides creates a close, confessional atmosphere that draws readers into his psychological state. This linguistic intimacy becomes crucial to the novel's emotional impact and thematic development. In the following examples, "ya" is used instead of "you", which makes Holden's speech more authentic and direct.

- "Ya know?"
- "I was all set to go, but I didn't feel like it. Ya didn't know old Stradlater."
- "Ya never saw such a mess."

Despite this, there are other forms of non-standard English, namely dialects and accents. The dialects and accents are usually transcribed phonetically, and they have no spelling rules. Dropping the "g" at the end of the words while the rest of the text is written in standard English can be enough to identify the proper dialect and accent. The following excerpt is taken from "The Catcher in the Rye":

- "I'm comin'," old Maurice said. But he didn't.
- "I mean it, Maurice, hey. Leave him alone."
- "Who's hurtin' anybody?" he said, innocent as hell.

The opening lines of "The Catcher in the Rye" immediately establish Holden's unique voice and its non-standard characteristics:

"If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth." (Salinger, 1951)

This passage shows several key features of Holden's non-standard English, including a conversational tone, direct address to the reader, informal vocabulary ("lousy," "crap"), run-on sentence structure, and the characteristic phrase "if you want to know the truth." These linguistic elements immediately establish his personality and perspective while creating a close relationship with the reader.

### **Discussion**

The analysis shows that, throughout the novel, Holden's non-standard speech serves as a primary vehicle for character development. His linguistic patterns reveal his psychological state, social background, and personal values without requiring explicit exposition. The informal, often fragmented nature of his speech suggests mental distress and emotional instability, while his sophisticated vocabulary indicates intellectual capacity and educational privilege.

Holden's relationship to standard and non-standard English reflects broader themes of social critique within the novel. He consciously rejects formal, "adult" speech patterns in the same way that he rejects adult society's artificiality and phoniness. The non-standard elements of his speech become markers of authenticity in opposition to social pretension.

The non-standard language becomes integral to the novel's psychological authenticity. This authenticity extends beyond surface linguistic features to encompass the psychological processes that shape Holden's speech. His tendency toward digression, repetition, and emotional intensity reflects realistic patterns of traumatic response and adolescent psychological development.

Holden's non-standard English reinforces several important themes within the novel, including alienation, authenticity versus phoniness, and the loss of innocence. His informal speech patterns position him outside conventional social discourse, linguistically embodying his sense of alienation from mainstream society.

Holden's linguistic choices provide a unique expression of the theme of authenticity versus phoniness. His broader criticism of social artificiality is reflected in his preference for honest, informal expression over formal propriety. His preference for casual, honest expression over formal propriety reflects his broader critique of social artificiality. The non-standard elements of his speech become markers of genuine feeling and true self-expression.

Another central theme, the preservation of innocence, is also reflected in Holden's speech patterns. His retention of childlike expressions and his resistance to adult linguistic conventions mirror his broader desire to protect childhood innocence from adult corruption. The linguistic choices become symbolic of his psychological and moral position.

### **Conclusion**

This article has demonstrated that non-standard language varieties play a crucial role in defining character identities, highlighting themes, and creating social commentary in literary works. By employing dialects, colloquialisms, and non-standard linguistic forms, authors can engage readers more deeply with diverse personalities and social realities, keeping the authenticity of the text.



This study highlighted several functions of the use of non-standard English in literary works, specifically in "The Catcher in the Rye" by J.D. Salinger. The main character, Holden Caulfield's speech patterns that are rich with slang and colloquialisms, serve as markers of authenticity and rebellion against social norms. By embodying themes of alienation, authenticity versus phoniness, and the preservation of innocence, Holden's non-standard language reflects his inner turmoil and values. His voice demonstrates how non-standard English can function as a primary vehicle for psychological realism and authentic character representation. Salinger carefully constructed Holden's speech patterns, which have created a narrative voice that is simultaneously individualistic and representative, personal and universal.

The broader examination of non-standard English functions in literature reveals a number of key principles that govern effective

literary representation. Employing non-standard varieties successfully requires respecting represented communities without using stereotypes, integrating linguistic choices with broader artistic objectives, and paying careful attention to authenticity without sacrificing readability. The most effective literary uses of non-standard English achieve a balance between linguistic accuracy and artistic stylization that serves the work's overall aesthetic and thematic purposes.

Finally, the ways non-standard English is used in fiction and its functions illustrate the essential connection between language and human experience. Authors can encourage readers to deepen their comprehension of linguistic and social complexity while presenting more authentic, inclusive, and meaningful representations of human diversity through their linguistic choices. The right choice of linguistic varieties represents one of the highest achievements of literary art.

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