

Literary Words of Foreign Origin as Social Markers in Jeffrey Archer's Novels Speech Portrayals

Authors : Tatiana Ivushkina

Abstract : The paper is aimed at studying the use of literary words of foreign origin in modern fiction from a sociolinguistic point of view, which presupposes establishing correlation between this category of words in a speech portrayal or narrative and a social status of the speaker, verifying that it bears social implications and serves as a social marker or index of socially privileged identity in the British literature of the 21-st century. To this end, there were selected literary words of foreign origin in context (60 contexts) and subjected to careful examination. The study is carried out on two novels by Jeffrey Archer – Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less and A Prisoner of Birth – who, being a graduate from Oxford, represents socially privileged classes himself and gives a wide depiction of characters with different social backgrounds and statuses. The analysis of the novels enabled us to categorize the selected words into four relevant groups. The first represented by terms (commodity, debenture, recuperation, syringe, luminescence, umpire, etc.) serves to unambiguously indicate education, occupation, a field of knowledge in which a character is involved or a situation of communication. The second group is formed of words used in conjunction with their Germanic counterparts (perspiration – sweat, padre – priest, convivial – friendly) to contrast social position of the characters: literary words serving as social indices of upper class speakers whereas their synonyms of Germanic origin characterize middle or lower class speech portrayals. The third class of words comprises socially marked words (verbs, nouns, and adjectives), or U-words (the term first coined by Allan Ross and Nancy Mitford), the status acquired in the course of social history development (elegant, excellent, sophistication, authoritative, preposterous, etc.). The fourth includes words used in a humorous or ironic meaning to convey the narrator's attitude to the characters or situation itself (ministrations, histrionic, etc.). Words of this group are perceived as 'alien', stylistically distant as they create incongruity between style and subject matter. Social implication of the selected words is enhanced by French words and phrases often accompanying them.

Keywords : British literature of the XXI century, literary words of foreign origin, social context, social meaning

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