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Social Implications of Borrowings

British–American Parallels through Literature

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Abstract. The paper is focused on the sociolinguistic study of borrowings used in twenty-first century American literature to bring out their potential to translate status and high social position of characters. The study is aimed at proving that borrowings are socially charged and function in speech as indices of socially privileged layers of society. The study of modern British novels by Jeffrey Archer carried out earlier revealed four categories of borrowings, serving to represent upper-class characters: 1) terms, 2) a pair of synonymous words of Germanic and foreign origin, 3) U-class words, and 4) loan words used ironically. The study of American novels by Amor Towles *A Gentleman in Moscow* (2016) and *Rules of Civility* (2012) allows us to verify this classification and expand it by adding two more categories: 5) a pair of synonymous words of Germanic and foreign origin, like in group 2 but with switched social connotations, and 6) a pair of borrowings, one explaining the meaning of the other. The analysis has proved that borrowings in American, like in British literature, explicitly or implicitly translate the social status of a character. The question to answer is whether classes 5 and 6 have universal or culturally specific nature. Further research is therefore required to shed light on this very subtle use of borrowings in speech.

Keywords: borrowings, social functions of borrowings, sociolinguistic study, twenty-first-century American literature, upper-class speech representation

1. Introduction

Language and society are two correlates that reveal themselves through each other: language mirrors the ongoing processes in society, while the latter in its turn causes linguistic change. This correlation, reflected in dictionaries, manifests the development of society at large. The research of language in its relation to social factors, such as class, gender, age, as well as occupational and regional differences, has remained the focus of many scholars' publications (Taifel 1978, Edwards

1985, Turner 1987, Wodak 1989, Silverstein 2003, Agha 2007, Blommaert 2007, Bucholtz & Hall 2010, Coupland 2007, Joseph 2010, Ivushkina 2017, etc.).

This paper is aimed at studying the link between status and language, the high social position of a speaker, and the language he/she uses in speech. Although this interdependence has been studied from different perspectives in a number of publications (see Ross, Mitford et al. 1956; Lodge 1966; Labov 1972; Trudgill 1978, 1979; Leith 1983; Quirk & Widdowson 1985; Honey 1995; Crystal 2010; Ivushkina 1997, 2020), it has not received all the attention it deserves, as social differentiation intrinsic to our societies has not disappeared; what is more, it will stay around as long as our societies exist, most conspicuously revealing itself in the language. Therefore, the study of social and linguistic correlations remains relevant and is of theoretical and practical significance in the twenty-first century of unprecedented levels of technology, social change, and transformation of norms, values, and conceptions. The diachronic sociolinguistic research carried out on the material of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries' English literature (Ivushkina, 1997) brought to the fore several linguistic shibboleths that unambiguously indicate the high social position of a speaker, among which is the use of borrowings, primarily of Latin, Greek, and French origin. Four categories of borrowings used in literature for the social identification of an upper-class speaker were singled out in the recently published article "Literary words of foreign origin as social markers in Jeffrey Archer's novels" (Ivushkina, 2020). These categories range from the most conspicuous class of terms, which convey information about the educational and professional status of a character or the activity in which he/she is involved, to the most covert class of U-words (socially marked words of the upper-class speakers), requiring the background knowledge of a reader/listener and a different level of drawing inferences. Synonymous pairs of words, of a foreign and Germanic origin, used to socially identify the upper versus the middle or lower classes' characters correspondingly, are singled out in a separate group; discrete is the class of borrowings used in speech or narration ironically, often for creating a clash between subject matter and the style of narration. The latter category is often accompanied by French phrases or sentences enhancing this clash.

This paper is the continuation of the research aimed at extending the analysis to the American literature of the same time period in order to make parallels between British and American cultures and to determine the universal versus culturally specific functions of borrowings.

2. Methodology and material

The study of loan words in contemporary American literature upper-class speech portrayals and narration is approached from a sociolinguistic point of view.

Amor Towles, the author of the novels *Rules of Civility* (2011) and *A Gentleman in Moscow* (2016), is considered on a par with Jeffrey Archer, whose novels *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* (1976), and *The Prisoner of Birth* (2008) serve as the basis for comparison. The authors are graduates of elite universities and have rich experience in the upper echelons of society: Archer was member of the House of Commons for 6 years and of the House of Lords for more than 20 years, and Amor Towles worked in the sphere of education and later as a writer, which brought him world recognition. So, the upbringing and education of writers is of paramount significance, as writers should belong to the culture under analysis.

In order to verify the correlation between borrowings and the social status of the character and to identify universal and cultural differences in upper-class representation, 200 social contexts were selected from Amor Towles's novels, in which borrowings and their functions were determined and compared with those revealed in Jeffrey Archer's narratives. The comparative study of socially marked upper-class words in two cultures carried out before and based on the twenty-first-century literature (Ivushkina 2017, 2018, 2020) has already given us grounds to assert that they share a common linguistic code.

The quotation from the novel *A Gentleman in Moscow* (2016) is a good case in point where the narrator points out the common ground between two upper-class representatives from different cultures – a Russian count, Alexander Rostov, and Richard Vanderwhile, an American upper-class official from the US Department:

> …these two would have felt like old friends had they met just hours before. To some degree, this was because *they were kindred spirits* – finding *ample evidence of common ground and cause for laughter in the midst of effortless conversation*; but it was almost certainly *a matter of upbringing*. Raised in grand homes in cosmopolitan cities, educated in the liberal arts, graced with idle hours, and exposed to the finest things, though the Count and the American had been born ten years and four thousand miles apart, *they had more in common with each other than they had with the majority of their own countrymen.*
>
> This, of course, is why the grand hotels of the world's capitals all look alike. The plaza in New York, the Ritz in Paris, Claridge's in London, the Metropol in Moscow – built within fifteen years of each other, *they too were kindred spirits*, the first hotels in their cities with central heating, with hot water and telephones in the rooms, with international newspapers in the lobbies, international cuisine in the restaurants, and American bars off the lobby. These hotels were built for the likes of Richard Vanderwhile and Alexander Rostov, so that when they traveled to a foreign city, *they would find themselves very much at home and in the company of kin* [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 33)

The universality of social signs identifying a high social status of a character can also be supported by the thesis "The Speech of the English and Russian Aristocrats in the Literature of the Nineteenth Century" by Yulia Kvartovkina (2004), in which the author brought to light socially marked linguistic characteristics shared by the socially privileged classes of Great Britain and Russia. Among them, above and beyond, are loan words registered in modern dictionaries as formal or literary words (Kvartovkina 2004: 10) imparting "a bookish 'flavour', or character" to the speech of the nobility. The research enables us to make parallels between not only the British and the American but other cultures as well.

3. Analysis

The analysis of the borrowings is based on two novels by Amor Towles (787 pages), from which 200 social contexts were selected. These contexts discovered obvious regularities in the use of borrowings to imply the social status of a character, which are similar to those previously marked out in the British novels by Jeffrey Archer (648 pages). They will be analysed in the first place and then the newly revealed categories.

a) Class 1

Class 1 includes borrowings that are used as terms to designate realia, objects, and concepts of different time periods, as well as new phenomena emerging in the twenty-first century. They are easy to understand, as they are accurate and do not allow polysemy. According to Akhmanova (2019: n. p.), terms refer to the layer of the English vocabulary that is "deviating from the neutral upwards" and is aimed at the speaker with a certain level of upbringing, education, and erudition. Oftentimes, terms serve to indicate the speaker's profession or a communication situation in which a character is involved. In any event, without education and learning, terms can be misread and lost upon the reader/listener, and for this reason, they are socially charged and serve to identify socially advanced layers of society. In the novels under analysis, there are a lot of terms belonging to different fields of human experience. In the following passage, the first term denotes an object of furniture, and the second names an object of art:

> 1) This *armoire*, we are prone to recall, is the very one in which we hid as a boy; and it was these silver *candelabra* that lined our table on Christmas Eve… [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 14)

The word *armoire* 'a cupboard or wardrobe, typically one that is ornate or antique' (LEXICO) came from Old French *armarie*. French was the language spoken by the elite in Great Britain: it has always been part of society language. The word *candelabra* 'a large branched candlestick or holder for several candles or lamps' (LEXICO) came from the Latin *candela* and refers to furniture articles or even to the field of art.

In the following extract, we find other loan words:

> 2) As the Count climbed into the chair, he offered a friendly nod to the heavyset fellow, then leaned back and let his eyes settle on that marvel of Yaroslav's shop: his *cabinet*. Were one to ask Larousse to define the word *cabinet*, the acclaimed lexicographer might reply: A piece of furniture often adorned with decorative detail in which items may be stowed away from sight. A serviceable definition, no doubt – one that would encompass everything from a kitchen cupboard in the countryside to a *Chippendale in Buckingham Palace*. But Yaroslav's *cabinet* would not fit so neatly into such a description, for having been made solely of nickel and glass it had been designed not to hide its contents, but to reveal them to the naked eye [emphasis added]. (Towles, 2016: 34)

The word *cabinet* 'a cupboard with shelves or drawers for storing or displaying articles' is of French origin (sixteenth century) (LEXICO). Count Rostov resorts to the French Dictionary *Larousse* not only to reveal the definition, origin, and functions of the cabinet but also to demonstrate how a typically French object was adapted to the Russian *Metropol's* barber shop, which boasted "all French soaps wrapped in waxed papers", "British lathers in ivory drums", "Italian tonics", etc., as well as Yaroslav's unsurpassed professional skills as a barber on a par with professionals in the best hotels of the world. It only proves the fact that Russia always tried to keep up with European fashionable trends. France has always been a fashion-setter, a model to follow. The distinction made between the word *cabinet* and *Chippendale furniture*, the extremely expensive furniture designed by a well-recognized cabinet-maker Thomas Chippendale (eighteenth century) in the style of mid-Georgian, English Rococo, and Neoclassical styles, is socially charged and used to show a social spectrum of society.

The words *parabola* and *pendant* used in the extract below are from a different field:

> 3) Dangling at the bottom of the golden *parabola* was the *pendant* the Count had first observed at the Piazza, but it was neither a lucky charm nor locket. It was a passkey for the hotel [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 58)

Parabola, a Greek word parabolē 'placing side by side, application', which, via Latin assimilated into English, refers to the field of geometry, whereas the word *pendant*, applied to architectural decoration projecting downwards, came from Old French *pendere* and means literally 'hanging' (LEXICO).

The American novel describing the luxury of the best hotel in Moscow abounds in borrowings, which reflect the interior of the hotel such as balustrade, solstice, and many other objects of art denoted mainly by words of foreign etymology. Borrowings reveal the lifestyle of the Russian aristocrat in his past through social gatherings, events, and pastimes, the atmosphere and the interior of the rooms, as well as the inner world and values of the characters. Borrowings in Jeffrey Archers' novels serve the same purpose but reveal a different life style – that of businessmen working in the oil industry, the banking system, law, medicine, etc.

b) Class 2

It includes two synonymous borrowings of a foreign and Germanic origin, which are juxtaposed in the context to socially differentiate between the upper versus the middle or lower classes' characters correspondingly. The social function of this pair of words is conspicuous; the indexical nature of borrowings in this opposition comes to the fore and draws the reader's attention. The following example serves to illustrate the point:

> 4) "Well done, Sofia", he said.
> Sofia looked directly at the Count for the first time since he'd come into the room.
> "Are you *giving up*?"
> "*I am conceding*", said the Count.
> "Is that the same as *giving up*?" [emphasis added]. (Towles 2017: 257)

The verb *to give up* of Germanic origin contrasted to the verb of French origin *to concede* ('admit defeat in a match or contest') is lost upon Sophia judging by her reaction and the attempt to find out the meaning of the strange word, which draws a line between the two characters in terms of their origin, age difference, education, and knowledge of foreign languages.

Another example taken from the novel *The Rules of Civility* demonstrates a social gap between the personages revealed in the main character's attempt to clarify the meaning of the word *enlist*. A tall, blue-chinned bohemian, recalling half man, half jackal, whom Tinker met at the gathering, described as having "the working-class tone", was curious to speak with a newcomer. The social difference between them is immediately revealed in the use of the verb 'enlist' of Dutch

origin (*inlijsten* 'put on a list', denoting enrolment into the army), which was lost upon Tinker Grey, an upper-class young man.

> 5) The jackal gave an abrupt laugh and looked at me like I was crazy.
> – He *enlisted.*
> – *Enlisted?*
> –*Joined up.* His old outfit. The Thirteenth Field Artillery. Fort Bragg. Cumberland County.
> In a bit of a stupor, I turned to go [emphasis added]. (Towles 2011: 290)

The verb 'to join up' of the Old French word *joinder* (from Latin *jungere* 'to join') makes an opposition to the verb *enlist,* which testifies to social differences between the characters by means of two words accepted in lower versus upper classes.

This category of borrowings may also include social contexts with only one member of an opposition, a loan word, while its Germanic counterpart is implied, like in the following example:

> 6) "Maybe so. But I am still her father. What would you have me do? *Abdicate* my responsibilities?"
> *"Abdicate!"* replied Anna with a laugh. "Certainly not, *Your Highness."*
> The two had reached the point in the hallway where the door to the service stair was hidden in plain sight [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 404)

The verb 'abdicate' from Latin *abdicat-* 'renounced' is used in connection with the renouncement of a monarch's throne. In the adduced context, it immediately endows the Count with the aura of grandeur and authority and creates a king's entourage, which caused Anna's ironic reaction in her calling the Count 'Your Highness'. Although there is no synonymous counterpart in the text, the Germanic verbs 'give up' and 'withdraw' are implied and can easily replace the verb *abdicate* in this context.

A similar example is adduced below:

> 7) "Right", he said. "How about some lunch? You *must be famished.* I think you will find the Piazza positively delightful [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 242)

A French counterpart, *famish,* of the Germanic adjective *hungry* is used in speech according to the status and education of the Count, for whom it was natural to resort to French in different situations, especially in a restaurant. Count Rostov once noticed in his thoughts – "…how fine almost any human endeavor can be

made to sound when expressed in the proper French…" (Towles 2016: 45). Loan words serve this purpose.

The fact that the origin of a word may cause misunderstanding at best or hostility at worst is illustrated by the following situation, in which loan words are perceived as antagonistic by the lower classes:

> 8) …After all the buildup, it was a bit of an anticlimax, conceded the Count. But the objection being raised was not due to the phrase's overall lack of verve; rather it was due to the word *facilitate*. Specifically, the verb had been accused of being so *tepid* and *prim* that it failed to do justice to the labors of the men in the room [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 68)

The verb *facilitate*, originated from the Latin *facilis* and borrowed from the French *faciliter* in the seventeenth century (Italian *facilitare*), caused the objection among the workers who took this word as inappropriate to characterize their labour. It sounded *tepid* and *prim*, two more adjectives of Latin origin – *tepidus*, from *tepere* 'be warm', and *primus* (Old French *prin*, Provençal *prim* ('first')), which sounded alien and hostile to them. These examples suffice to illustrate how words, loan words in particular, can unite or, on the contrary, draw a line between people of different social strata.

The analysis shows that this category of synonymous words (a loan word – a word of Germanic origin) is used likewise in British and American as well as Russian literature to translate status through the knowledge of foreign languages, thus identifying socially different layers of society.

c) Class 3

This group of words is constituted by loan words representing upper-class culture in its various manifestations: occupation, pastime, values, principles, manners of speaking, and behaviour, which came with the chivalry of ancient times and are French by origin. These are socially charged words and concepts that evoke associations with the upper echelons of society. In the novels by Amor Towles, U-words found both in speech portrayals and the narrator's speech serve to create social contexts and the social backgrounds of the characters. This statement can be illustrated with the following examples, where these words and phrases are italicized:

> 9) And it was in the Metropol.
> Ever since its opening in 1905, the hotel's suites and restaurants had been a gathering spot for *the glamorous, influential, and erudite; but the effortless*

> *elegance on display* would not have existed without the services of the lower floor [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 33)

> 10) The Count took *pride* in wearing a *well-tailored jacket*; but he took greater *pride* in knowing that *a gentleman's presence was best announced by his bearing, his remarks, and his manners. Not by the cut of his coat* [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 37)

Apart from *glamour*, *effortless elegance*, *bearing*, *refined manners* (And all the time, the outward appearance so artfully maintained was that of a gentleman: well-mannered, well-spoken, well-dressed – well-honed (p. 242)), *superior demeanour*, *perfect poise*, *pride*, *glamour, glorious and grandiose*, *polite society since the age of chivalry* on which upper-class culture rests, there is also *the formality appropriate to his position*, *the voice of gentility, delicate conversations, sophistication, the etiquette, the terms of address, the most subtle chef de cuisine, elegant décor, well-tailored suit, and jacket,* which serve as "markers" in fiction and speech of socially privileged classes. These are only a few socially marked words we come across in the British, Russian, and American literature under analysis. The three cultures share the same "code" of upper-class representation in fiction and consequently in real life.

> 11) I suppose the rules of being a princess would begin with a *refinement of manners*. To that end, she would be taught how *to comport herself in society*; she would be taught *terms of address, table manners, posture*… [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 49)

> 12) [About the Count] Tall and thin, with a narrow head and *superior demeanor*, he looked *rather like a bishop* that had been plucked from a chessboard [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 39)

The comparison of the upper-class characters with priests or bishops is consistently made in American novels under analysis to highlight the posture of the representatives as one of their distinctive characteristics.

In the list of U-words are nouns, adjectives, and adverbs creating under- or overstatements so characteristic of the upper classes of society. Among the socially marked is the word *civilized*, which is often come across in different contexts underlying upper-class culture; this word was identified as a U-word in the works by Allan Ross, Nancy Mitford et al. (1956), as well as in Richard Buckle's work (1978) and later in Ivushkina (1997), and it has retained this social implication up to the present:

13) Then he had settled himself down on the couch to while away *a civilized hour* before it was time to dress for dinner [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 62)

14) Simply put, there was enough space to accommodate such a *civilized hour* [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 62)

15) Your *Excellency*, the Count reflected philosophically. Your *Eminence*, Your *Holiness,* Your *Highness*. Once upon a time, the use of such terms was a reliable indication that one was *in a civilized country*. But now, what with… [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 75)

The analysis proves that upper-class culture is built on common values, concepts, and notions, which are socially charged and shared by British, American, and Russian cultures. The lexical units reflecting this culture are indices of social identification.

d) Class 4

This class of words includes social contexts in which loan words are used ironically, usually in order to convey the narrator's attitude towards the characters or events. In such cases, the words used enantiosemiotically (in the opposite meanings) are followed by the reaction of the character or the situation itself, for example:

16) Across the way was a table occupied by two *stragglers* from the diplomatic corps who picked at their food while they awaited an era of diplomacy. Over there in the corner was a *spectacled denizen* of the second floor with four enormous documents spread across his table, comparing them word for word [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 39)

The ironic connotation is created by means of two words – *stragglers* and *denizen*, the first of Germanic origin denoting: 1. Something that grows or spreads irregularly or apart from others of its kind; 2. A person in a group who becomes separated from the others, typically because of moving more slowly; the second, *denizen*, is of Latin origin: Latin *de* 'from' + *intus* 'within') + -ein (from Latin -aneus '-aneous') 'a person, animal or plant' – it was assimilated into the English language via the Old French *deinz* 'within' and has the connotation of a *formal* and *humorous* word (LEXICO). The clash between two different words is intensified by the word *spectacled*, which is also socially marked (Allan Ross 1956; Buckle 1978; Ivushkina 1997, 2017). The clash between the mission of

the diplomats (*awaited an era of diplomacy*) and their occupation (*picked at their food*) only adds to the translation of the narrator's ironic attitude in their description. A *spectacled denizen* reminds of the plant spreading itself around – *with four enormous documents spreading across the table*.

Ironic is the following passage, in which the narrator witnesses the ardour, with which *damsels* were carried away sharing their emotions about "complications of their hearts":

> 17) His refreshment in hand, the count would take a seat as close as possible to the little table in the corner where young ladies of fashion met each morning to review the previous evening's intrigues. Mindful of their surroundings, the three *damsels* would initially speak in the hushed voices of gentility; but swept away by the currents of their own emotions, their voices would inevitably rise, such that by 11:15, even the most discreet enjoyer of a pastry would have no choice but to eavesdrop on the thousand-layered complications of their hearts [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 19–20)

The word *damsel* registered as an archaic and literary word with the meaning 'a young unmarried woman' (LEXICO) came from the Old French *dameisele, damisele*, based on the Latin *domina* 'mistress'. In this context, the reader cannot but feel the ironic attitude of the Count towards three ladies, which finds its reflection in the hyperbole *the thousand-layered complications of their hearts*. Their *hushed voices of gentility*, replaced by the modulations of their voices and loudness, made everybody around eavesdrop on their chat.

The following example can also illustrate how irony can be created by means of a contrast or even a clash between two words of different origin:

> 18) "I was not unnerved", the Count said, taking a step back. "My only point was that the back of the dress did not have to be cut quite as low".
> "You must admit that *her neck* is lovely."
> "That may be so. But the world needn't be presented with every single one of her *vertebrae*" [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 405)

This passage demonstrates the underlying mechanism of irony created by synonymous words of a different nature: *neck*, Germanic and neutral, and *vertebrate*, Latin (early seventeenth century) and scientific – from *vertere* 'to turn', widely used in anatomy, medicine, etc. In the Count's speech, it creates a clash between the insignificance of the subject matter, that is, dress fitting, and the style the Count used to demonstrate his disapproval, which causes a smile on the face of a reader.

This class of socially marked situations is common to both British and American (supposedly Russian) cultures. Loan words are used to create a clash between either styles or the situations different in their significance, thus rendering an ironic attitude of the speaker.

e) Class 5

In addition to the four classes singled out before in British literature, the American novels revealed the contexts with the reverse social connotations of Germanic versus loan words.

> 19) "To *the privy…*"
> The Count looked up at the waiter and then at Sofia.
> "Say no more, Martyn."
> The waiter bowed and excused himself.
> "Sofia", the Count suggested tentatively, "shall we visit *the ladies' room?*"
> [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 247)

This pair of synonymous words demonstrates the opposite tendency – 'the privy' which came from French *prive* 'private' and earlier into French from Latin *privatus* 'withdrawn from public life' – acquired informal connotation. The meaning of the word (outside a house) may have influenced its social connotation. In dictionaries (LEXICO), it is registered as 'a toilet located in a small shed outside a house or other building; an outhouse'. Interestingly, it is registered in this meaning in a plural form, the waiter Martin in the extract, however, uses the word in the singular. *Lady* (in *ladies' room*) of Germanic origin denotes a woman of a superior social position, of noble birth; it acquired the social marking of a U-word long ago (Ross 1956, Buckle 1978, Ivushkina 2017) and is socially contrasted to the word *toilet*. As the analysis of literature shows, their social indexical nature has survived up to now.

There is another passage in the novel *A Gentleman in Moscow* in which the Count has a conversation with a colonel whom he immediately spotted as not belonging to the in-group though the position of the colonel presupposes a high status. The Count's consideration "It is the business of a gentleman to distinguish between men of rank" finds its immediate confirmation in the dialogue that follows:

> 20) "Absolutely delicious", he said, when he had taken his first bite.
> The Count bowed his head to accept the compliment on Emily's behalf.
> The colonel gestured to the Count with the fork.
> "You have a very interesting *file*, Alexander Ilyich."

> *"I have a file?"*
> "I'm sorry. A terrible habit of speech. What I meant to say is that you have an interesting *background*".
> "Ah, yes. Well. Life has been generous to me in its variety" [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 208)

The noun *file* immediately suggested the origin and the occupation of the unknown colonel. The noun of French origin (from French *filer* 'to string', *fil* 'a thread', both from Latin *filum* 'a thread') makes reference to the documents on the table of an official and evokes social connotations other than those of an upper-class representative, in contrast with the word *background* of Germanic origin. The table manners of the colonel during the dinner proved him not to be part of the in-group and at the same time highlighted a complex of socially marked characteristics.

f) Class 6

A pair of two borrowings, or, with a French phrase, one explicating the other, can be singled out into a separate group to be revealed in the American novels:

> 21) Accepting this response as sufficient, if not ideal, the girl now furrowed her brow. She put another quadrant of fish in her mouth and chewed thoughtfully. Then she suddenly leaned forward.
> "Have you been in *a duel?"*
> *"An affair d'honneur?"* Count hesitated. "I suppose I have been in a duel of sorts…" [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 43)

The word *duel* originated from the Latin *duellum*, an archaic and literary form of *bellum* 'war', used in Medieval Latin with the meaning 'combat between two persons', partly influenced by *dualis* 'of two'. The original sense was 'single combat used to decide a judicial dispute'; the sense 'contest to decide a point of honour' dates from the early seventeenth century (LEXICO). The count resorted to the French phrase, as the word 'duel' has lost its primary meaning and is used these days as 'a contest between two parties'.

The pair may include two loan words, one of which is to explain the meaning of the other, for example:

> 22) Having nodded favorably at the various items on the Count's list, Nina looked up sharply at the last one.
> "*Posture?* Is posture *a type of manners?*"
> "Yes", replied the Count, albeit a little tentatively, "it is. A *slouching*

> *posture* tends to suggest a certain laziness of character, as well as a lack of interest in others. Whereas an *upright posture* can confirm a sense of self-possession, and a quality of engagement – both of which are befitting of a princess" [emphasis added]. (Towles 2016: 49)

The word *posture* came from the Latin *positura* 'position' via the French *postura* from the sixteenth century with the meaning 'the position in which someone holds their body when standing or sitting'; being seldom used, it is often lost upon the speaker, especially upon a young girl, whereas the word *manner*, also of Latin origin, *manuaris*, from *manus* 'hand' with the meaning 'polite and well-bred social behaviour', is part of Nina's language.

Both cases are indicative of the gap between the speakers, age differences in the first place, and definitely social differences, reflected verbally. This class of words, revealed only in the American novels, requires further examination to uncover the play of two borrowings functioning for social characterization.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the loan words in the American novels by Amor Towles has proved first of all that borrowings in the American literature, like in the British novels, perform the function of social identification. They serve as social indices translating information about the status, occupation, gender, and age differences of the characters. The representation of the Russian Count in the American novel supported by Kvartovkina's thesis gives us the reason to believe that borrowings are socially charged in Russian culture too. The four classes of words singled out in the British novels have been proved relevant for social characterization in the American novels. In addition to the class of terms, the class of words used in pairs (a loan word and a Germanic word), the class of socially marked words (U-words), and the class of borrowings used ironically, the American novels demonstrated that social differences may be drawn by a pair of words of Germanic and foreign origin, like in class two, but with switched social connotations and by two loan words, one serving to explain the meaning of the other. The conclusion can also be drawn about the universal nature of borrowings serving as social indices in fiction/speech in other European cultures.

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