

UDC 008

DOI: 10.34670/AR.2020.98.27.005

Reflection of the notion "prestige" through code-switching in Kevin Kwan's novel "Sex and Vanity" as a cultural symbol of the elite society

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Abstract

This article deals with the phenomenon of code-switching from English into French as a reflection of the prestige concept using the examples of a book about elite high society in Asia and America. The research is based on the novel by Kevin Kwan, for most of the characters are the representatives of a highly educated circle, and they are all fluent in French, which is one of the main second languages taught in private schools around the world. This language is usually used in the novel for stylistic and empathic reasons, since code-switching is a tool used by bilinguals to express prestige and social status. Bilingual speakers are believed to remember both language systems and activate them simultaneously when they need to communicate their message more clearly. Based on examples from the book, the authors attempt to link the theoretical context of language prestige theory to its actual literary use and explore the ways that linguists use, in order to give an accurate definition for each phenomenon. The authors conclude that foreign language inclusions may be "prestigious" and "socially motivated" in order to convey the specific emphatic connotation of the speaker's intentions. The author of "Sex and Vanity" implies French inclusion to express the prestige of the surroundings and cultural affiliation of the elite groups. French is usually used in the conversations between two or more characters from the high-ranked society, who will definitely understand the message.

For citation

Tutova E.V., Potapova A.V., Grekhanova I.P., Vorontsova I.S., Safaralieva L.A. (2020) Reflection of the notion "prestige" through code-switching in Kevin Kwan's novel "Sex and vanity" as a cultural symbol of the elite society. *Kul'tura i tsivilizatsiya* [Culture and Civilization], 10 (5A), pp. 51-57. DOI: 10.34670/AR.2020.98.27.005

Keywords

Elite, code switching, prestige, social status, bilingualism, concept, language.

Introduction

This research is based on the works of linguists who study and compare code-switching processes and prestige. The authors use a book by a well-known international author as the main research material. As part of the research, the authors study examples and select the most appropriate ones for analysis and use as templates for language processes that reflect the concept of prestige.

The phenomenon of code-switching is one of the most topical themes in modern linguistics. Consequently, during a monolingual conversation, a bilingual is faced with a choice: whether they can switch to a different language or not. According to the scientist M. Green, the production of lexemes and language structures undergoes a procedure in which these structures are selected, limited by the context. While language forms that are considered inappropriate for the context are blocked in favor of more "prestigious" ones [Greene, 2011].

Main part

Y. Matras marks the functional component of existing internal meanings, which are revealed through a double process, during which bilinguals apply the same mental processes to similar codes in two different languages. This process leads to a change in the functional field of this code [Matras, 1994].

Foreign language inclusions are often "prestigious", "socially motivated" and "subject to social pressure" with a certain connection to social conditions, the influence of spoken language and communicative intentions, as well as a special functional role of a given structure or category [Matras, 2012].

Therefore, prestige is a sociolinguistic concept that is effectively used to evaluate a message. Code-switching depending on the context and method of use can be considered prestigious [Matras, 2012]. Using the "prestige" phenomenon, relationships in two social groups can be expressed through two codes used. "Prestige" can reflect the social relations that exist between two neighboring language societies. However, this is not enough to describe the motivation of bilinguals to intentionally not use some words from language A, but to generate new lexical units that are limited by a different functional composition of the language system of the language.

Code-switching in literary texts is used to reflect certain forms of linguistic and cultural knowledge that contain an inherent value [Bourdieu, 1982]. This value is related to the extent to which these language forms simplify access to situations in which other symbolic and material resources are distributed, based on the prevailing forms of organization of social life in society. Some of these resources have a specific, functional basis for expressing value (for example, if they belong to the category of food), but most indirectly they relate to methods of expressing status, prestige, honor, solidarity, and strength. This happens due to the mobilization and distribution of resources, as well as the ability to identify similarities and differences that exist among members of the same group or different language groups [Heller, 1989]. Solidarity can be associated with the development of cultural practices and connections that can help representatives of the elite circles to express their influence and position, and to the representatives of lower (subordinate) groups, on the contrary, resist the conditions of linguistic subordination.

Individual groups of people set the rules of the language game, which requires a good level of proficiency in the linguistic and cultural knowledge these rules are based on [Milroy, 1995]. Following the rules begins with the beginning of the game, accepting them as a daily universal routine, rather than conventions imposed by dominant groups in order to increase their status in society. The use of code-switching may contribute to the understanding of language use politics.

It is important to understand its methodological importance as an interaction with other speech forms and the consequences of this phenomenon for individuals. This process points analysts to the places of action where a pair of symbolic and material resources come into contact in the dialogue of two individuals. As a result, you can understand the nature and importance of these resources for various groups of people who are involved in the process of producing, distributing, and perceiving code-switched speech [Milroy, 1995]. The code-switching process helps to understand terms such as strength and solidarity, as it reflects special language relationships through intentional and unnoticed connections and allows you to follow the formation of new language forms and constructions.

In K. Kwan's book "Sex and Vanity" the use of code-switching is motivated by the author's intention to update cultural symbols or attract associations that are accompanied by conceptual content.

Example 1.

"Comme cette maison est illustre, Cecil.C'est exquis! Le summum du chic! J'emménage immédiatement."

"Mon dieu, quell compliment venant devous, chère comtesse. J'en suis profondément honoré!"

"I'll tell you one thing, I haven't seen anything this original since the Hilma show at the Guggenheim."

K. Kwan "Sex and Vanity"

In the following example, English is the matrix language of communication, and French is the guest language

Example 2.

Pike mère et fils are esthetes extraordinaires, having restored Buckley House in London to its former glory with the help of Jacques.

K. Kwan "Sex and Vanity"

In this particular case, code-switching has a metalinguistic function, being a direct variable use of two languages in a conversation in order to impress the interlocutor with the linguistic erudition.

Example 3.

"That's the estate manager, Mordecai told everyone. "Ah, Stephane! *Comment allez-vous?* Are Tom and Gerri up at the villa?" Mordecai was a bit perplexed that his friends hadn't appeared at the dock to greet their royal guest.

The character mentioned above is a cultural consultant to the world's tycoons, so he skillfully uses French phrases to express his unique knowledge of the most important and fashionable things. Also, in this particular case, K. Kwan uses a French expression to emphasize the cogency of his arguments. From a psycholinguistic point of view, we can see that instead of the English expression, he uses the French expression "Comment allez-vous" to convey the special atmosphere of the situation in which the characters are located.

Example 4.

"Indeed it is. It was the last portrait he did, so I'm told, "Consuelo said in the blasé tone.

K. Kwan uses French language inclusions as a conceptual marking of the elite belonging of the characters.

Most of the characters in the book are born not only into rich families, but to the "insanely rich", reserved, very elite, complex families who marry within their own circle with equally educated and rich pedigrees. As a matter of fact, all representatives of such families were and will be trained in the best schools of the world, which, according to the author, are probably European. Members of such families are usually raised by French au-pairs (such as Lucy Barclay, Charlotte Barclay, Olivia Lavistock, George Tao, Cecil Pike) who teach them the basics of French.

Example 5.

The handsomely appointed lobby of the Sherry-Netherland hotel was a haven of tranquility just steps away from the hustle and bustle of Fifth Avenue, with its discreetly watchful uniformed attendants, dignified Louis XV bergère chairs, and barrel-vault ceilings painted with neoclassical scenes. «Sex and Vanity» K. Kwan.

English dominates in this context. But French expressions are used in the context to create a component of the prestige and importance of the scene.

Example 6.

"I'm so relieved. I just think it's fascinating to witness all this -a Chinese girl of immense fortune marrying into one of the oldest families in Europe, splashing her money around on one of the most decadent weddings the world has ever seen. It's like Henry James all over again, *avec le Chinois*. I can see all the old Roman and Neapolitan families sneering in the corners. But there's a new world order in place, and Old Europa better get used to it. I forget you're partly Chinese, you see. I'm actually quite color blind -I don't ever think of people in terms of their skin tone. I think of you as a New Yorker. Lucie nodded diffidently.

Switching the code from English to French in this context increases the effect of the implication of the semantic content of the phrase on the reader. In this example, foreign language inclusions perform

an expressive function. The choice in the process of speech communication in favor of a foreign language form implies refusing to use the synonymous form available in the given language system, and contrasting it with an alternative form of expression in a foreign language. In this case, we can consider code switching as one of the conventional ways to create contrast at the paradigmatic level, and foreign language inclusions as expressive means.

Code switching can be distinguished from bilingualism as a separate stylistic phenomenon, due to the fact that it is not necessary to be a bilingual for this process to happen. People who know several phrases in another foreign language can also apply it in action.

Counter strategic discursive markers of language B are unfavorable for the speaker, despite the fact that he shares the changing behavior of the language with markers from system B, which have a prestigious effect of speech style. However, due to the cognitive advantages of not separating the two language systems, which are greatly simplified due to the reduction of mental control, linguistic and communicative monitoring and management of actions occur. Inclusions are usually characterized by a bilingual error that runs counter to regulatory restrictions and the satisfaction of the needs of social norms of linguistic behavior. Both of these features can be classified into one functional category – the pragmatically dominant language. This is the language for which the speaker applies more mental effort to make successful linguistic communication. A pragmatically dominant language may be the first language of the speaker or it may be more convenient for the application in certain linguistic settings [Matras, 2011].

Conclusion

In this article, the authors touch upon the influence of the code switching process on such concepts as prestige, value, and power, and found that using these concepts, the speaker can stylistically express the attitude to a phenomenon through two codes applied, the border of which can even pass within a closely related phrase.

Foreign language inclusions may be "prestigious" and "socially motivated" in order to convey the specific emphatic connotation of the speaker's intentions. The author of "Sex and Vanity" implies French inclusion to express the prestige of the surroundings and cultural affiliation of the elite groups. French is usually used in the conversations between two or more characters from the high-ranked society, who will definitely understand the message.

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**Отражение понятия «престиж» через переключение кодов в романе
Кевина Квана «Секс и тщеславие» как культурного символа элитного
общества**

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Аннотация

В статье рассматривается феномен переключения кода с английского языка на французский как отражение концепции престижа на примерах из книги об элитном высшем обществе Азии и Америки. Исследование основано на романе Кевина Квана, в котором большинство персонажей являются представителями высокообразованной публики и свободно говорят на французском языке, являющемся одним из основных вторых языков, изучаемых в частных школах по всему миру. Этот язык обычно используется в романе из стилистических соображений, поскольку переключение кода – инструмент, используемый билингвами для выражения престижа и социального статуса. Считается, что билингвы запоминают обе языковые системы и активируют их одновременно, когда им нужно более четко передать свое сообщение. Основываясь на примерах из книги, авторы предпринимают попытку связать теоретический контекст теории престижа языка с его реальным литературным использованием и рассматривают способы, которые используют лингвисты, чтобы дать точное определение каждому явлению. Авторы приходят к выводу, что включение иностранного языка может быть «престижным» и «социально мотивированным», когда нужно передать конкретный эмоциональный оттенок слов говорящего. Автор произведения «Секс и тщеславие» использует французский язык для подчеркивания престижа окружающих и культурной принадлежности элитных групп. Французский язык обычно используется в разговорах между двумя или более персонажами из высокопоставленного общества, которые обязательно поймут сообщение.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

Тугова Е.В., Потапова А.В., Греханова И.П., Воронцова И.С., Сафаралиева Л.А. Отражение понятия «престиж» через переключение кодов в романе Кевина Квана «Секс и тщеславие» как культурного символа элитного общества // Культура и цивилизация. 2020. Том 10. № 5А. С. 51-57. DOI: 10.34670/AR.2020.98.27.005

Ключевые слова

Элита, переключение кода, престиж, социальный статус, двуязычие, концепция, язык.

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