INTRODUCTION

Nowadays modern speech features of social classes in England are of great interest to the researchers in the field of sociolinguists due to the fact that in this country the English language still remains socially determined (OSTROVSKAYA, 2007, p. 29). This is confirmed by the study of Butler O. who emphasizes that at present the division into classes in English society occurs mainly through the language (BATLER, 2011, p. 235).

Speech status symbols, constituting special ways of emphasizing a person’s social position, divide the English society into stratum and thereby provide the unity within each class. According to E. Hoffman, these symbols include sets of verbal signals, assigned to certain social groups, and speech strategies by which communicants within them can associate with each other. Speech status symbols are used to influence the statements of other people about their position in the desired direction (KOVARNOVA & SHCHEKINA, 2019, p. 202; TISLENKOVA et al., 2020, p. 320).

The specificity of the English style of communication lays in the wide use of irony, which is one of the traditional speech status symbols of the upper classes (AMIROVA & FOMINYKH, 2015, p. 99). In this article we focus on the analysis of this linguistic phenomenon.

The relevance of the research is determined by the insufficient study of the functioning of irony in the speech of social elite in the English society. The purpose of the study is to conduct a sociolinguistic analysis of irony used by English aristocrats in the XXth century in order to expand the idea of the elite English language in the described historical period. The purpose of the work led to the formulation of the following objectives:

1) to study lexico-grammatical markers of irony;

2) to identify the main tactics and types of speech acts of the communicant in the contexts containing the use of irony;

3) to determine the impact of irony on the participants of communication.

Since the literary text gives a real idea of how people actually speak (KOSTETSKAYA, 2001, p. 63), Julian Fellowes’s television script of the cult British series “Downton Abbey” (season 2) was chosen as the material of study. Being a postmodern writer, the author seeks to restore the vital concreteness of artistic language that was lost in modernism, through hyper realistic detailing (DAVITULIANI, 2018, p.151-152).

The object of the study is the speech of English elite of the XXth century.
The subject of the research is the utterances of the characters in which irony is used.

METHODS
Research methods include the layer by layer sociolinguistic analysis of characters’ replicas by means of sociolinguistic categories of Professor Ivushkina T. A., developed in her doctoral thesis «The Language of English aristocracy: socio-historical aspect» (IVUSHKINA, 1998). The methodology of sociolinguistic categories assumes their linguistic analysis and matching specific forms of language manifestation (thematic scope, lexical-phraseological, grammatical and syntactic parameters) with social characteristics in the context of a certain culture. General scientific methods include functional, system and structural methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The English elite: background
The problem of speech status symbols influencing a person is still relevant today. Communicative behavior of political elite largely determines its success or failure during the elections, historical fate of the country (SATTAROVA, 2016, p.58; IONKINA & TIKHAЕVA, 2021, p. 99). The choice of aristocracy class for research purposes was due to the increased interest in the cultural heritage of this social group, which made a great contribution to the formation of the English literary language (KRYUKOV, 2001, p. 26).

In the book "The English Constitution" W. Bagehot notes that representatives of upper classes are united by similarity of linguistic, cultural and secular traditions, education, clannishness, leisure (BAGEHOT, 1963, p. 45). The social elite of England comprise groups of people whose authority is initially inherent in their social status and does not depend on the results of their activity (MOKHOV, 2012, p. 141). Dominant social position predetermines authoritarian nature of the elements in aristocratic discourse, in particular the irony (GOLDSCHLAGER, 1982, p. 12). In this regard, the authoritarian communicant uses a firm, strong-willed style of power realization through speech: he exerts psychological pressure on his equals (MKRTYCHYAN, 2012, p. 127), imposes his conceptual picture of the world (SAPUN & KULIKOVA, 2019, p. 59); he demands unquestioning recognition from his subordinates (PUSHKIN, 2014, p. 173).

A typical portrait of the representative from a privileged aristocratic society has such speech traits as high irony, sensitivity to subtle nuances of movement and tone of the interlocutor’s voice and his emotions. The speaker, belonging to upper classes, hides his feelings, while constantly sarcastically commenting the actions and judgments of the interlocutor. Such a person usually reports his opinion confidently and arrogantly (KOSTETSAYA, 2001, p. 66). Irony helps him to achieve this goal.

Irony as a speech status symbol
Linguistic science determines irony as a mocking intonation of the statement, which is often correlated with a scorn or a joke under the mask of false seriousness (BOOTH, 1974, p. 10). This rhetorical figure is inherently negative, devalues the point of view of the interlocutor, showing its insolvency (GOSTOVTSева, 2007, p. 58). The speaker, assessing the actions and words of the opponent, proceeds from the concept of an ideal-a model that serves as a basis for his assessment. Comparing with this ideal, he criticizes an object which does not correspond to it and which has in itself internal defects. The use of irony is present in the speech of a man of high society due to the fact that this trope is a characteristic feature of political eloquence, which aristocrats study in educational institutions while preparing for public service. Irony implements the strategy of discrediting the political opponent and represents a set of techniques (ISSERS, 1997, p. 84). This tradition originates in such a classical scientific discipline as rhetoric, which in ancient times meant the art of manipulating people (SIDORENSKO, 2014, p. 65).

Herbert H. Hyman writes that irony, as a speech status symbol, has a generalized meaning, reflects the views, lifestyle and values of the individual (as, for example, in England, visiting the annual Royal Ascot Racecourse that for centuries has been the elite status symbol) (HYMAN, 1942, p. 102). To use irony, the speaker must have aesthetic experience, a formed ideal, be confident in social significance of his standard, and have impeccable command of
the language and means of expressing irony, a sense of humor and wit. Such features are characteristic of aristocrats, who receive high education and spiritual education. Irony exists only in the context of communication (SHOPENGAUER, 2011, p. 117) and is always directed against the interlocutor and to the interlocutor, making others witness the assessments (BOOTH, 1974, p. 13).

**Sociolinguistic analysis of irony in the text under study**

Let us study the text of Julian Fellowes’s script and analyze the cases of irony in the speech of the most original character of the narrative – Violet Crowley, the Dowager Countess of Grantham. The elderly Countess has a son, Lord Crawley, married to American lady Cora. The daughter-in-law and mother-in-law have a difficult relationship due to the fact that mother seeks to dominate and guide the actions of all family members, positioning herself as a pillar on which the public reputation of the family rests. In this regard, the daughter-in-law and her actions often become the object of metaphorical reflection.

The estate is prepared for a charity concert, the profits of which should help fund the local hospital. Lady Cora is busy decorating the hall with flowers for the reception. However, she does not succeed in carrying out her plan, as her mother-in-law intercepts the initiative. Like many senior people, Violet Crowley insists on applying her experience in all matters, while her method of action, especially for young people, is already outdated and cannot be used in the changed conditions (STERNIN, 2013, p. 17). Her daughter-in-law’s resistance to her authority prompts Violet to verbal aggression:

ROBERT: Good morning, Mama. This is very early for you to be up and about.

VIOLET: War makes early risers of us all. I thought I would help with the flowers. I’ve asked Sharp to bring whatever he can spare.

CORA: Well, Bassett has plenty . . . but thank you.

With a fixed smile she goes, leaving Robert and Violet alone.

VIOLET: You don’t mind my taking over the flowers, do you? **Cora’s flowers always look more suited to a first communion in southern Italy.**

ROBERT: So, what do you think?

VIOLET: I think it looks like a music hall in Southend. Well, what else have you planned for tonight’s revels? (FELLOWES, 2013, p. 19).

She observes a large flower arrangement.

VIOLET: Anna, **help me do battle with this monstrosity. It looks like a creature from The Lost World.**

She starts to pull bits out and hand them to the maid. (FELLOWES, 2013, p. 19).

The other servants have gone and Anna has a cloth on the floor covered with foliage. Violet pulls out a final sprig.

VIOLET: That’s the best we can do. **At least it’s stopped looking like a brush for a witch to ride home on.** (FELLOWES, 2013, p. 19).

**Ironic judgments under analysis**

In the above passage, there are four ironic judgments of Dowager Countess of Grantham about the ability of Cora to organize soirees. Let us study them in more detail.

.... **Cora’s flowers always look more suited to a first communion in southern Italy....**

According to tradition, the Church is almost empty at the festive ceremony of the First Communion in southern Italy. Bouquets of white callas, lilies and yellow chrysanthemums are brought by the parishioners themselves - the children, who accept the sacrament of the Eucharist for the first time (PERVOE PRICHASTIE, 2019). Mother-in-law supposes the hall is
not sufficiently decorated with flowers, which would rather indicate to guests the financial insolvency of the owners of the estate, than their willingness to provide financial assistance to the hospital. The words “first communion” evoke the frame “church” with such cultural and social references (LEVKOVS’KAYA, 2013, p. 57), as “the first time”, “newly baptized”, “converted”, “confession”, “gifts”. That is, with the help of ironic implicature pragmatic technique, Violet hints the uninitiated listener that the young hostess cannot properly organize the event because she does not have the necessary experience, does not know English traditions, was brought up in another, less developed, in her opinion, culture. Thus, mother-in-law creates a hidden intention: to show the household and servants of Downton that Cora deservedly cannot be a lady of the manor.

... it looks like a music hall in Southend....

The upbringing, manners and education of American aristocrats did not appeal to English high society of Edwardian times, as they were considered insufficient for the elite. In this phrase, Violet shows her disdain for Cora’s work by means of hyperbolic metaphor expressed by culture-bound terms. Being one of the most vivid tropes, metaphor reports different contents (DRŽAJIĆ, 2014, p. 197)

In order to induce negative semantics, sublimated pejorative-colored lexical units “Music Hall”, “Southend” are used, which can cause a negative emotional reaction of the listener (TISLENKOVA, 2018a, p. 136; TISLENKOVA, 2018b, p. 63). The speaker includes these pejoratives in prepositional combination “Music Hall in Southend” of two congruent nouns with a preposition to create the most vivid image. Thus, southern district of London between the two world wars was a suburb, a rural area (ISTORIYA LONDONA, 2019). The comparison of the hall, prepared by Cora for the reception, with a provincial “tavern theater”, giving performances of farcical songs and dances, buffoonery and grotesque in pubs and inns, emphasizes “low” origin of her son’s wife (MYUZIK-HOLL, ENCIKLOPEDIYA VSEMIRNAYA ISTORIYA. MYUZIK-HOLL, 2019). It becomes obvious that high society, represented by mother-in-law, do not welcome a woman whose behavior does not correspond to socio-normative properties of the lady. Everything that does not reach high standards in the light of moral and aesthetic expectations causes disapproval and dislike of the Dowager Countess.

...Anna, help me do battle with this monstrosity. It looks like a creature from The Lost World....

Linguists believe that irony indirectly conveys the assessment and the mood of the speaker and often does not coincide with direct meaning and content of the statement (SPACHIL’ & TRETYAKOVA, 2016, p. 72). According to Issers O., contextual effect of implicit allusion not only creates a variety of associations, but also serves as a means of discrediting the opponent, creating an ironic subtext (ISSERS, 1997, p. 88). Compiling the speech characteristic of the heroine, the author uses postmodern intertextual technique in numerous references to works of English literature (BUDA, 2015, p. 66). In the passage under study, the ironic layer is made up of allusions from the famous science fiction novel by A. Conan Doyle “The Lost world” of 1912. First, Violet implicitly compares her son’s wife to eccentric Professor Challenger, who, thanks to his manners, was a stranger in the society where he lived. Also, Professor and his wife made a very unusual couple. Here is a quote from the work to which Violet alludes: “If you imagine a gorilla near a gazelle, you can clearly visualize this family couple” (DOJL’, 1991, p. 146). This allusion leads a reader to the following conclusion: old habits, Cora’s etiquette and taste reveal her even lower social status in spite of her current living in the aristocratic family because working off the past is impossible. This fact intensifies ironic smile.

Secondly, there is a hint here at a famous episode from the novel, where during a country walk to the unknown area of the USA, the ape-men’s world, Professor finds unusual relic vegetation which is strange for the High Society. The trope about European’s adventures (Violet) in the world of dinosaur beasts (the place where Cora’s plants are grown), also includes a hidden folkloric representation of the forest as something “antagonistic” and “alien” (ALIKAEV & CHULIKOV, 2010, p. 145). Thus, ironic pejorative helps the Dowager Countess of Grantham devaluate all Cora’s efforts, label her daughter-in-law in order to root in the servants’ mind her discredible character (TISLENKOVA, 2018a, p. 78).
Violet strives for proving that the only wealth gathered by her parents thanks to luck and business sense does not give a son’s wife the right to consider herself a noblewoman, as family and origin are the most important for a person. Members of aristocratic families cannot make shopkeepers and farmworkers a part of their household all of a sudden giving them equal rights. So with the help of irony the Dowager Countess of Grantham is trying to save old-time customs.

... look like a duster brush a witch is flying on to her Chamber ...

After becoming Lord Grantham’s wife, Cora faced with the lack of “correct” manners problem. The mother-in-law’s worries about the stream of ill-mannered Californian millionaires, who do not know a thing about etiquette rules, rushing into the patriarchal structure of the English nobility make her passionately want to take all responsibility for guarding the upper-class traditions.

Literary and cultural allusions with ironic connotation which mostly enrich political discourse, contribute to the spread of negative attitude from one cognitive area to the other. Let’s analyze speech acts and linguistic means of irony in the cited Violet’s phrase. Here allusion is based on the association link with the literary work “The Discoveries of Witchcraft” (published in 1584), where Reginald Scot makes fun of unintelligent peasant women, who have too much self-confidence and consider themselves to be witches with super power abilities (ALMOND, 2011, p. 49), making brooms from weeds: henbane, devil’s cherries, devil’s apples, foxbane, children’s bane with strong aroma, the plants which they boiled in oil to get “a cream for flying” for their bodies (MAGIYA, NARKOTIKI I INTIM: KAK VOZNIK TRADICIONNYJ OBRAZ VVED’MY NA METLE, 2019). It isn’t hard to fancy a bunch of flowers, made of these plants: dusty white tremendous bluebells; trusses of good-sized yellow, dark blue, violet and white flowers; white umbels picked up together with big green and plum-like leaves into a rosette – twin annual flowers of church floristry. Ironic antithesis emphasizes Cora’s weakness – a lack of knowledge of basic flowers meanings for making floral compositions when a welcome reception is held. The pejoratives a “dust brush”, a “witch”, a “Chamber” reflect Cora’s inconformity to her surrounding and her social role and characterize her valuelessness, inexperience and lower-middle class background.

The linguistic means of discredit above conveyed by irony enable Violet to portray Cora in such a way: a freaky and vulgar woman of low birth, without any good manners, who broke in the house of decent people, trying to force on her primitive tastes.

Why did Cora come under so harsh criticism? In 1880-1910 years of the twentieth century fashion for marriage unions of European aristocrats unions and American assets appeared (ISTORIYA, KAK 220 MILLIONOV DOLLAROV UTEKLI IZ AMERIKI V ANGLIYU, 2019). After her wedding Cora managed to find the Title overseas, while the Crowley family could put up the money for holding back their high social status. The Dowager Countess of Grantham regards her son Robert’s marriage to be a marriage of unequals. Irony and sarcasm serve as a protective response, invoked by a great desire not to demonstrate despair. “Insults in keeping with the best traditions of the old school” allow Violet to express anger, without stepping over the line (ADAMS, 1977, p. 34).

CONCLUSIONS

The English elite representatives’ communication involves using irony - a speech weapon aimed at wounding. Irony in an aristocrat’s speech is characterized by a complex structure, embodying a hidden author’s intention. The inner information aspect of ironic expression is implicit. The data obtained allowed to formulate the following conclusions about the usage and ways of expressing irony in the speech of the heroine from high society:

1) lexicogrammatical markers of irony include hyperbolic comparison, hyperbolic metaphor expressed by realia, ironic allusion, sublimated pejorative-coloured lexical units, implicit literary and cultural allusions with ironic connotation and ironic antithesis.

2) the main strategies are reproach, giving false information, categoriality, self-serving behavior, ironic implicature, whereas speech acts comprise negative appraisal of actions, humiliation, cruel jokes and labeling.
3) the impact of irony on the participants of communication is destructive.

Thus, irony enables a person of aristocratic origin appraise his partner and express negative attitude to him in conversation.

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K VOPROSU O RECHEVYH TAKTIKH DISKREDITACII

On the issue of discrediting speech tactics

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Irony in communicative behaviour of Elite in Edwardian Britain

Ironia no comportamento comunicativo da elite da Grã-Bretanha Eduardiana

Ironía en el comportamiento comunicativo de la élite en Gran Bretaña Eduardiana

Resumo
O artigo é dedicado à análise das especificidades pouco estudadas do funcionamento da ironia no discurso da elite social inglesa. O objetivo do estudo é realizar uma análise Sociolinguística do roteiro da série de televisão de Julian Fellowes “Downton Abbey”, para identificar os marcadores de linguagem da ironia usados pelos aristocratas ingleses no início do século XX, para descrever as táticas e tipos de atos de fala associados à ironia, sua influência nos comunicantes. Os principais métodos utilizados no estudo incluem a análise Sociolinguística da fala de um personagem por meio de categorias sociolinguísticas. A análise dos contextos em que a ironia é usada nos permitiu concluir que o plano Informativo da declaração irônica é expresso implicitamente, inclui métodos de pendurar rótulos, desvalorizar os méritos do interlocutor, humiliar e zombar por meio de metáfora hiperbólica, Humilhação irônica, alusão e antítese. Os dados obtidos durante o processo de pesquisa podem ser usados no processo de comunicação intercultural, estilística, tradução e Semiótica.

Palavras-chave: Discurso aristocrático. Ironia. Pejorativo. Categorías sociolingüísticas. Símbolo de status.

Abstract
The article is devoted to the analysis of little-studied specific in functioning of irony in the speech of English social elite. The aim of the study is to conduct sociolinguistic analysis of Julian Fellowes’s TV series script “Downton Abbey” to identify the language markers of irony, used by English aristocrats in the early XXth century, describe tactics and types of speech acts attached to irony, its impact on communicants. The main methods used in the study include sociolinguistic analysis of character’s speech by means of sociolinguistic categories. Analysis of the contexts, where irony is used, allowed us to come to conclusion that the information plan of the ironic statement is expressed implicitly, includes methods of labeling, devaluation of interlocutor’s merits, humiliation, and mockery by means of hyperbolic metaphor, ironic pejorative, allusion and antithesis. The data, obtained in the process of research, can be used in the course of intercultural communication, stylistics, translation and semiotics.

Keywords: Aristocrat’s speech. Irony. Pejorative. Sociolinguistic categories. Status symbol.

Resumen
El artículo está dedicado a analizar la especificidad poco estudiada del funcionamiento de la ironia en el discurso de la élite social inglesa. El objetivo del estudio es realizar un análisis sociolingüístico del guión de la serie De televisión de Julian Fellowes “Downton Abbey”, para identificar los marcadores lingüísticos de ironía utilizados por los aristócratas ingleses a principios del siglo XX, describir las tácticas y tipos de actos de habla asociados con la ironía, su influencia en los comunicantes. Las principales técnicas utilizadas en el estudio incluyen el análisis sociolingüístico del habla del personaje a través de categorías sociolingüísticas. El análisis de los contextos en los que se utiliza la ironia nos ha permitido concluir que el plan de información de la expresión irónica se expresa implícitamente, incluye métodos para etiquetar, devaluar los méritos del interlocutor, humillar e intimidar con metáfora hiperbólica, desprecio irónico, alusión y antítesis. Los datos obtenidos en el proceso de investigación se pueden utilizar en el proceso de comunicación intercultural, estilística, traducción y semiótica.

Palabras-clave: Discurso aristocrática. Ironía. Peyorativo. Categorías sociolingüísticas. Símbolo de estatus.