**Semantics and Functions of the Lexeme “Lord” in the English Literature (based on the novel “Vanity Fair” by William Thackeray)**

Our article is about the polysemantic lexeme “lord” and different concepts, which are realized as invariants or variants of the nomination in fiction texts. It is important to point that the lexeme will be viewed through the prism of a prototype British culture with the help of a legendary novel “Vanity Fair” which was written by William Thackeray, with no doubt, the most prominent author of XIX century in English literature.

It`s known that various researches of the lexemes` actualization in fiction texts have a great value for linguists, because "the text, which is created by man, reflects the movement of human thoughts, builds possible worlds, captures the dynamics of thoughts and the ways of its representation with the help of the means in language". There are some special lexemes in every language, with the help of which a society can express and convey a unique, individual experience, so separate national-specific concepts are released. One of these language units in English is the lexeme “lord”.

According to the scientists` opinions, lexemes fully realize their meanings in different texts, especially, in fiction ones. It is because of a polysemantic nature of the literary word, which helps to reveal lexical meanings, basing on the context, the semantics of the whole text and the author's intent.

First of all, we should give a small etymological brief of the chosen word. So, it is known, that this lexeme belongs to the Pragermanic language. The primordial "hlaibawarduz" was used to denote only noble people, who owned the land. The Old English "hlāford or hlāfweard" appeared as a derivation, when several word-formation bases "hlāf" – a bread and "weard" – a keeper were merged, so the new nomination was translated as "the keeper of a bread". As modern linguists explains: "This meaning was a reflection of the German custom, when a tribal leader provided food to his people". The origin of the base "hlāf" is traditionally associated with the praegerman "hlaibaz" (loaf of bread), formed from the Indo-European bases kel-, kley-. In addition, researchers pay attention to the Pragerman verb "warian", which meant "to beware", because this language unit was the “ancestor” of the already mentioned word "weard". Furthermore, the Celtic tribes used the word "laird" as the equivalent of the word "lord". Later, in the Middle English period, the lexeme "hlāford" was transformed into "louerd", "loverd", "lhoaverd". It was used to designate representatives of the "higher" class, including a lord, a master or a ruler.

Nowadays there are about 12 various definitions of the noun “lord”, as well as some other parts of speech and idioms, which were formed from this noun:

1. a person who has authority, control, or power over others; a master, chief, or ruler;

2. a person who exercises authority from property rights; an owner of land, houses, etc.;

3. a person who is a leader or has great influence in a chosen profession: a feudal superior; the proprietor of a manor;

4. a titled nobleman or peer; a person whose ordinary appellation contains by courtesy the title Lord or some higher title; a title given to men of high birth, specifically to an earl, marquess, baron, or viscount; a courtesy title given to the younger sons of a duke or marquess;

5. a person who has power or authority over others, such as a monarch or master;

6. a male member of the nobility, esp. in Britain;

7. (in medieval Europe) a feudal superior, esp. the master of a manor Compare lady (initial capital letter); Lords, the Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal comprising the House of Lords; the ceremonial title of certain high officials or of a bishop or archbishop: Lord Mayor, Lord of Appeal, Law Lord, Lord Bishop of Durham

8. (initial capital letter) the Supreme Being; God; Jehovah; the Savior, Jesus Christ; a title given to God or Jesus Christ;

From astrology: 9. a planet having dominating influence.

Interjection: 10. (often initial capital letter) (used in exclamatory phrases to express surprise, elation, etc.) Example: “Lord, what a beautiful day!”.

Idioms: 11. lord it, to assume airs of importance and authority; behave arrogantly or dictatorially; domineer: to lord it over the menial workers; drunk as a lord ( or drunk as a fiddler or skunk ; falling-down or roaring drunk) mean extremely intoxicated.

Related forms Expand: 12. lordlike, lordless (adjectives).

Language units most fully reveal their linguistic potential in fiction texts, because an imagery and expressiveness of literary works create the necessary conditions for the disclosure of each, even the most unusual, meaning. Text does not exist by itself, but it expresses an author`s thought. We reviewed a selection of “lord” usage in the novel “Vanity Fair” to prove this statement.

The choice of literary and artistic material is justified by a high degree of customs reflection of English society of the XIX century. Thackeray comprehensively described the reality, the representatives of the "average" and "higher" classes without embellishment. In addition, it was found that the most active lexical and semantical fouling of the word “lord” occurred precisely to the Victorian era.

The total number of the “lord” usage in the text is over 140 times. It is interesting that in 85% of cases the lexeme is used to indicate the high social position of the heroes of the novel.

Here are examples from the text in which one of the main meanings of the word “lord” is realized - the title, "designation of a high official, peer":

*The Lord Lieutenant of a County, my dear, is a respectable man.*

*The Lord Chamberlain gives them a certificate of virtue».*

*I have received Lord Steyne alone a hundred times before.*

The next concept, which is realized with the help of the lexeme “lord” is "my lord" as a lover. And although this connotation implies a respectful attitude to somebody, the narrator tries to express an irony, directed at the pretentiousness, excessive arrogance of the hero:

*She did not understand one-half the compliments which he paid; she had never, in her small experience of mankind, met a professional ladies' man as yet, and looked upon my lord as something curious rather than pleasant; and if she did not admire, certainly wondered at him.*

Moreover, the lexeme accentuates, emphasizes the status and the typical behavior of “upper-class” representatives. The author uses the comparative turn "proud as a lord” to describe character`s feigned, arrogance and boundless self-depreciation in ridiculing form:

*Mrs. Frederick Bullock, I say, flung glances of the bitterest hatred at the little upstart as he rode by with his hand on his side and his hat on one ear, as proud as a lord.*

Through the next context, the noun “lord” is used, firstly, to emphasize a heroine's relationship to a hero, and secondly, to describe a character as a powerful person, who exerts a great influence on the beloved:

*Her lord, painted at the same time by Lawrence, as waving his sabre in front of Bareacres Castle, and clothed in his uniform as Colonel of the Thistlewood Yeomanry, was a withered, old, lean man in a greatcoat and a Brutus wig, slinking about Gray`s Inn of mornings chiefly, and dining alone at clubs.*

Thackeray`s novel is thoroughly permeated with irony. The next example is a vivid confirmation of this statement. The meaning of the lexeme “lord” does not change, but it acquires a different, contextual coloration. The word is used, rather, to convey the emotional side - the author's attitude to the hero of the work - to show disdain or to create a comic situation. Explicit irony is traced in the following example:

*THE KING? There he was. Beefeaters were before the august box; the Marquis of Steyne (Lord of the Powder Closet) and other great officers of state were behind the chair on which he sat.*

The realization of the meaning “God” in the mouth of Rebecca Sharp acquires a somewhat different, far from sacred, interpretation:

*Lord! Lord! How poor Mrs Washington White`s card and Lady Crackenbury`s card, which our little friend had been glad enough to get a few months back, and of which the silly little creature was rather proud once – lord!lord!I say, how soon at the appearance of these grand court cards did those poor little neglected deuces sink down to the bottom of the pack. Lord!lord! he`ll be ordering a dressing-case next, and razors to shave with; I`m blessed if he won`t*

The following quotations from the Thackeray`s text realize the meaning "man-master". The lexeme “lord” in these contextual conditions helps readers to understand that George behaved discreetly and boldly. The author derides his character:

*There`s Jos deserts his father in his old age, and there`s George, who might be provided for, and who might be rich, going to school like a lord, with a gold watch and chain round his neck; while my dear, dear old man is without a sh-shilling.*

Lord is not only a noble title, but also a certain way of life and a system of values or even behavior. In the next example visions of lords, their manners, rights and welfare are clearly manifested. The author shows the reader that the character of his novel lives on a broad foot, as if he is richer and more influential than the most respected people in society:

*He have made such a row in the housekeeper`s room about the dinners and hale, as no lord would make.*

*If a lord was not by, she would talk to his courier with the greatest pleasure.*

The language unit “lord” in the last quotation is used to maintain the satirical style in which the author describes Rebecca Sharp. Here the lexeme realizes its main meaning. Nevertheless, contemptuous notes are added to it.

In conclusion, it should be noted that William Thackeray uses the lexeme “lord” in meanings, which are fixed in dictionaries. However often he gives them an ironic character to create comic images of those, who have wealth and power. The meanings, associated with religion or with the appeal to God, are often "reconsidered” from the lips of the characters.

The active usage of the chosen lexeme in various semantic nuances (satirical, religious, titular, etc.) provides material for further analysis of the semantics and functioning of the language unit “lord” in the other texts of William Thackeray. Furthermore, it helps in development of such branches of linguistics as lexicology, text theory, semantics, as well as, linguoculturology and cognitive science.