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On Theoretical Aspects of Translating Estrangement

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A possible list of the most frequent problems facing a translator of fiction may include among others the specific author's intonation, a stylistic trait, which is known as estrangement. The aim of this paper is to address the notion of translation and corresponding notions, which also deal with estrangement, especially from the standpoint of translating foreign fiction. The author regards the translators' challenges and characterizes the theoretical aspects of translating estrangement for the further application in translating fiction.

Keywords: translation, estrangement, foreignization, domestication, fiction.

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Introduction

Post-modern thinking has argued that there is no original, and everything is translation. The contrast between the two languages and cultures also points to the role of form, together with content, in shaping systems of meaning and shows how each language has its unique system of meaning made up of characteristics pertaining to both form and content. When translation of fiction takes place, it is necessary for translator to be aware of probable ignorance of their readers about the source text culture. This should be kept in mind not to create excessive estrangement in the translated text, but if there is some estrangement in the source text, it should be recreated in the target text as needed. Estrangement, believed here as a literary strategy of the author, breaks

the set (for this very genre, and consequently for the content) form. Estrangement may not belong to linguistics strictly; it may enter the field of psychology, literature studies, culture studies, even ethnic studies. As one of the researcher stated, "for translation studies, this shows once again that abandoning linguistics <...> turning attention to merely functional and cultural aspects of translation would impair the interdisciplinary nature of the field" (B. Bilgen). First, the notion of *estrangement* is to be explored in theoretical aspects as the characteristic of a literary text. Then estrangement is to be seen against the background of close notions of foreignization, defamiliarization, desautomatization, etc. In conclusion there will be drawn some examples of how to seek and find a good balance between

profuse estrangement in the translated text and domestication, which may make the author's style vapid.

Theoretical framework

In this part the notion of *estrangement* as it is will be explored. The first and foremost, *estrangement* (*ostranenie* in original Russian form) has some adjacent notions, like *foreignization*, *defamiliarization*, *desautomatization*, *alienation*, *Befremdung*, *Verfremdung*, etc. Yet they do not have the generalizing meaning and should be treated here as contextual synonyms. To begin with, let us focus on some key aspects of estrangement, which can be of particular importance for translators.

Estrangement here will be understood as the distancing effect (estrangement derives from *estrane*, which means: to cause someone to be no longer friendly or close to another person or group; to cause someone to be no longer involved or connected with something; to remove from customary environment or association; to arouse especially mutual enmity or indifference in where there had formerly been love, affection, or friendliness (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In another dictionary estrangement is the fact of no longer being on friendly terms or part of a social group; the fact of no longer living with one's spouse or partner; separation (Oxford Dictionary). This distancing effect allows for unbiased, objective approach, especially necessary when the philological analysis deals with pseudo-biography, which has both fictional and non-fictional nature.

Estrangement in philological sense is close to the term "*defamiliarization*", which was introduced in 1917 by V. Shklovsky in his essay "Art as Technique"). To illustrate what he means by defamiliarization, V. Shklovsky uses examples from L. Tolstoy, whom he cites as using the technique throughout his works. The story

"Kholstomer" is told as if anew, from the point of a horse. Defamiliarization also includes the use of foreign languages within a work (see in detail in Y. Valkova).

Estrangement as a literary stylistic trait can be discovered in different kinds and genres of fiction (and non-fiction, as we will see further). D. Robinson takes the concept as one of the central ideas of German and English Romanticism and German Idealism, closely tied to Hegel's dialectical exfoliation of Rousseau's concept of alienation (Robinson, 2008, p. 80). So the concept of estrangement, even before it got its name, had crossed the national and genre borders. For D. Robinson the basic idea of estrangement is that conventionalization is psychologically alienating, anesthetizing. It is the artists's attempt to manipulate the slippage between ideosomatic regulation and ideosomatic novelty "in the reader's unfelt sensation or experience so as to frictionalize the smooth functioning of ideosomatic regulation, to deautomatize what has become automatic" (Robinson, 2008, p. 125). Estrangement is seen as belaboring or impeding of the aesthetic form. The author opposes estrangement (*ostranenie*) to alienation (*ochuzhdenie*), though for many not-Russian researchers the terms are interchangeable.

Estrangement from the point of science fiction criticism is a rhetorical strategy, a stylistic device which describes how fiction is being communicated. The term in V. Shklovsky's sense is used to distinguish art from non-art, to describe specific formal operations, such as stylistic devices located at the level of the text, as for example the presence or unusual narrative strategies, and to describe a process in the history of art. "In the course of time, a style once thought to be revolutionary will become "normal" and thereby will be canonized" (Spiegel, 2008, p. 370).

According to D. Miall and D. Kuiken (1994) *estrangement* is an aspect of the reading process that is grounded in feelings (cited by S. Thornson et al., 2003, p.95). Therefore the recipient's cognition and recognition of the text is foregrounded in certain templates of schemes. But estrangement is not reduced to subjective feelings only.

The classical work of L. Venuti has the basic descriptions of domestication and foreignization, which corresponds to estrangement, though estrangement may be the characteristic of the authentic text, while foreignization appears only in translation, so here we shall not concentrate on many various aspects of foreignization. Nevertheless, in L. Venuti's understanding *foreignization* is retaining information from the source text with breaking conventions of the recipient language, whereas *domestication* makes the source text closer to the target language and culture, though the translated text may lack originality, expressiveness and cultural specificity (Venuti, 2008, p.20 and further).

De(s)automatization is regarded as functional deviation; but most often this term is used as a translation of V. Shklovsky's term *ostranenie* or "the break of the habits in relation with the ordinal language and also with the poetical tradition known till that moment" (J.E. Delcamp, H. Fricke).

In summary, estrangement is different from foreignization and desautomatization, as it communicates the author's intonation, the distancing effect of the described, semantic shift, renewing perception. In contrast to foreignization, which manifests itself only in translation, estrangement is a literary strategy which can be realized in the source text (ST), and thus the translation of ST should have the adequate proportion of estranging effect. The term *desautomatization* is also treated as a variation of Jakobsonian principle with subsequent "struggling

against home conventions", accompanied by literal, strange-looking translations with the sudden use of exotic habits (Literatures, translation and (de)colonization, p.92). Though the terms are often used as interchangeable, which we can see further.

Methods

Here *estrangement* should be observed as regards the translation of fiction from the methodological point of view. For translation purposes estrangement is to be seen as a complex of stylistic devices. The balance between foreignization and domestication strategies should be found in such a way as neither to simplify estrangement, nor to escalate it. The translated text, i.e. the result of this cognitive process, can by definition not be identical to the text it is a translation of, still translators of fiction try to see the way to create the readers' perception as if the text has been written in their native language, though sometimes it happens with bringing in alterations in usual cognitive structures and worldview. "It is common that cognitive structures like schemas and elements of foregrounding, which are built into the text appear in an altered way in the translated texts as compared to the source texts" (Thorson et al., 2003, p. 97).

In translation theory E. Nida favoured for domestication strategy, which may dilute the author's estrangement intonation. In contrast L. Venuti sees foreignizing translation as signifying the difference of the foreign text by disrupting the cultural codes in the target language (cf. "the fallacy of cultural incommensurability" in Morton, 2009, p. 20). Here foreignization for the sake of preserving the author's estrangement may seem as the preferred option, though the strategy of foreignization may add estrangement to the target text, while there was no estrangement in the source text. The awareness of another culture,

biculturalism as E. Nida understood it, may help to avoid unnecessary estrangement, but we need to notice that E. Nida spoke about the translator's biculturalism, so when the reader is not so prepared, the text may appear in the reader's reception as too estranged. L. Venuti's approach is also criticized as focused on the personality of the translator, not on the personality of the reader. "It is suggested that the weakness of Venuti's and similar theoretical postulates lies in their neglect of the context of translation, and their confusion of the strategy of translation with its socio-political and cultural effects" (Shamma, 2005, abstract).

One more vivid researcher in the area G. Mounin parallels these strategies to two types of glass: in clear-glass translations the peculiarities of the original language and culture have been erased and the translation reads so natural as if the text had originally been written in the target language; coloured-glass translations prefer adhering to the specific structures of the original, not allowing the reader to forget he is reading a text alien to his own culture (Mounin, 1955, cited by I. Grbic, 2011, p.55).

All points considered, "foreign literature should always be at least given the chance to become our second home, by remaining foreign" (Grbic, 2011, p. 59). Estrangement may be realized in lexical, stylistic, syntactical, textual and metatextual levels, so the key task for the translator is to seek into the text for finding the ways to incorporate the ST cultural peculiarities into TT without clinging to stereotypes about ST.

Discussion

In this part we will see briefly the contemporary discussions about estrangement in translation. Even F. Schleiermacher identified two alternate routes the translator is faced with: either bringing the author to the reader, as his predecessors did, or bringing the reader to the

author. "Schleiermacher unequivocally favored the second option and took issue with the automatic standardization—bringing the author to the reader—created by the first" (Mor, 2011, pp. 124-125).

Both domestication and foreignization strategies have been accused of insufficient equivalence. In spite of the fact that full equivalence in translation of fiction may not be reached as a utopian ideal, the balance between domestication and foreignization shall be tilted in the foreignization's favour to get the readers to know another culture in the attempt of broadening their horizons. "We may never lead 50 foreigners to our hometowns, but we can all gain from broaching foreign subjects, and exposing our presumptions to scrutiny" (Evans & Pike, 2012, p. 2).

Translation has to have tolerance and space for 'foreignizing', even when 'domestication' is inescapable, 'foreignization' and 'defamiliarization' are translation strategies that help, maintain the identity of the source text, keeping it closer to the original; 'foreignizing' has a pedagogical role, as it teaches the target audience about the source culture, its people, literature and language (Aldebyan, 2008, p.6).

Too much foreignization may cause the unanticipated estrangement, which may be thought of as both translation strategy for recreating the distancing effect created by the author, or as the translator's error in bringing the reader to the ST culture and the author's language. What one needs to remember is that the comparative approach to the world literature permanently deals with estrangements, which are the base of any reading, as it is commonly believed that the author of a good work somehow breaks our daily routine and preconceived understanding of the world with the masterpiece of their prose. So deautomatization to some degree happens in the course of any reading.

The choice of the notion *estrangement*, however, is also criticized by theoreticians: ‘when early translation studies scholars adopt concepts such as “literariness” “estrangement”, ‘primary’, ‘secondary’, I find the terms themselves reveal assumptions about the hierarchical nature of a culture”. But the same author remarked that “by returning to the ‘original’ source, I can analyze not just what the text explicitly says, but also what it does *not* say or says only by implication” (Gentzler, 2001, p.3).

Despite strong criticism of formalism, the notion *estrangement* is still alive and can be met in the works of researchers studying different objects and working in completely different areas throughout the world. “In Jewish hermeneutics, writes Donatella Ester Di Cesare, translation understands itself as an estrangement of one’s own”, though it does not mean annunciation or negating of oneself, it implies the proprioception (the term was introduced by D. Robinson) of the language. Both languages are affected by translation and “find their affinity in the estrangement that separates them” (Di Cesare, 2012, p. 78), and translation “articulates itself as a movement toward the foreign – without return” (Di Cesare, 2012, p. 62).

In exploring Western Translation from Arabic O. Carbonell reminds that in Spain both “foreignization” and “domestication” were used, though both terms lacked in consistence and showed diverse results. The researcher is worried by extreme globalization in translation and warns that “It may be that there is always a need for the exoticism of the foreign in translation. This is the dimension that translators (and translation theorists) are unable to tackle in a normative and ethical sense” (Carbonell, 2004, pp. 29-30). The researcher supports the need for estrangement, when he expresses his view as such: “Exotic translation generally produces what target readers expect (Carbonell, 2004, p. 29). He also cautions

against both stereotyping process and too many exotisatons. Instead of extreme foreignization he favours for a functional translation. Upon analyzing the works of Salman Rushdie, which have estrangement in themselves, he draws a conclusion that “a stranging effect that helps the reader locate the action of the text in order to build an alternative reality, which may or may not be subject to the same rules the reader is familiar with” (Carbonell, 2004, p. 37) and calls for hybridization.

The problem of translating with keeping the right balance between foreignization/ domestication, estrangement/naturalization is more acute, when the translation is made between strikingly different languages and cultures with long distances between. Leaping ahead, when the Russian reader, having not been acquainted with Chinese culture before, starts looking at the translations of Chinese literature the estranging effect would be inescapable, though the author may not have thought about making the reader confounded.

In China since 1980s there have been much discussions about what strategy to prefer in the course of translation, at present time the prevailing thought is that “Chinese readers are eager to accept the foreign elements known of the foreign culture far more than foreign readers do about the Chinese culture” (Yang, 2010, p.79), so it marks the imbalance between translating from/ to Chinese, when it comes to translating from Chinese into non-sister languages the degree of foreignization and estrangement may rise significantly.

Xiao-dan Zheng via studying Qian Zhongshu, who contributed much to a Chinese translation system, states that the translator perceived the art as a translation and elected non-estrangement strategy. Non-estrangement for him “is not an object, nor a realm, but a state, a transparent and clear state, under which

the object and realm the author wrote are clearly represented in front of the reader” (Zheng, 2010, p. 74). Thus, he elaborated the sublimation theory, which focuses “on the final ideal that the translated works should reach for, but does not limit the strategies one can use in translation. The most important thing in translation is to translate works accurately, appropriately and beautifully, and a translator must use any translation strategies and skills available to do so” (Zheng, 2010, p. 81).

As for the modern discourse, even in the context of ever-more penetrating globalization and acquaintance of everybody with any culture, the question of preferred strategies in translation remains undetermined. Yi Chen and Xuan Miao provide a brief introduction using of domestication and foreignization in the Chinese-English translation (based on studying the white paper on anti-corruption). When non-fiction is translated, they oppose to the alienation of the reader, undoubtedly favouring domesticating translation of political documents avoiding estrangement. But domestication is not reduced to total assimilation, it is used “to reproduce what the Chinese government would like to promote in a way that is familiar to foreign readers through the means of explanation, paraphrase, structural changes and substitution” (Chen & Miao, 2012, p. 17). Though this example does not deal with the translation of fiction, the authors give some useful advice, which may be of help for translators of any discourse.

Some approaches to estrangement in translation make theoreticians recourse to rethinking of estrangement in the terms of cognitology, psychology, theory of perception. In Canada Croatian professor emeritus D. Suvin has developed an idea of cognitive estrangement (or diegetic in contrast to mimetic estrangement) as an intrinsic part of science fiction, when there is an expectation of subversive processes relying

on anything, but contradicting with status quo (see in detail S. Spiegel).

Coming round the theory of perception B. Bilgen inquires in translating from Turkish the book of Üstün Bilgen-Reinart entitled “Porcelain Moon and Pomegranates: A Woman’s Trek Through Turkey” into English, for mostly Canadian readers. The continuity of the estranging effect is created by the use of proper nouns and place names accompanying italicized words and expressions in Turkish. “This is a fairly expected stylistic quality in a book of this kind, and involves smaller units of text. Another strategy of estrangement appears when larger units of text are presented through foreignizing translation. Such translations strike the reader as odd, because it is evident that native speakers of the language, English in this case, would not express themselves in such a way. The peculiarity imposes certain norms of the source language on the target language. The resulting discourse creates the impression that the speaker/enunciator is speaking the source language in the target language, in this case speaking Turkish in English” (Bilgen, 2011). Here we see that the B. Bilgen draws the line between estrangement and foreignization and their realization in translation, however, many researchers do not demarcate between two terms, leaving estrangement in the tail of foreignization strategy. As for back translation from English to Turkish the foreignness of italicized Turkish exoticism would be lost, so for preserving the estranging effect the author proposes alternative to foreignization strategy: to expose to Turkish readers “to a detailed examination of what they take for granted, a revelation of taboos that surround them, through the perspective of an author with a hybrid identity”. This strategy, though it should be realized using Canadian references moderately, could at least partially compensate the loss of linguistic authenticity.

Different approaches to translation from the point of functionality in reference to estrangement may lead to the invention of new terms. In Croatia I. Grbić introduces a new opposed to translation method of cislation, which is used to “denote taking the target reader hither, (in)to the source text” (Grbic, 2011, p. 52). He agrees with U. Eco that a *negotiation* strategy should be used and supports the writer in his sanctioning against the Russian translator of *The Name of the Rose*, who thought it would be better to reproduce the estranging effect by translating Old Latin into Old Slavic (which does not contribute to creation of the Middle Ages atmosphere). The researcher is sure that the reader should “rearrange his thinking and imagining processes, opening up to new ways of conceiving reality” (Grbic, 2011, p. 57), the remarkable example here is initiated by F. Schleiermacher and Hölderlin’s “Greecification” of German in their renderings of Plato and Sophocles, which has led some to retain the syntax and many other grammatical features of the original, not infrequently on the premise that every single language conditions a different mode of thinking. Adaption is thought as a hypertranslation and forgery and should be limited to some experimental works only.

When the translators deal with estrangement in ST, which is often aligned with abundant use of realia (Vlakhov-Florin theory), the livability of estrangement involves using explicitation or implicitation. A. Mareva examining translations of Bulgarian novels into English argues for explicitation of realia in translation, keeping in mind the translator “as an intercultural mediator who often chooses to act as a “culture filter” in order to achieve effective intercultural communication” (Mareva, 2013, p. 2). This strategy in her opinion eventually pays the price of acculturation and is conceived of as one-to-many analytical decomposition. The researcher rejects the usability of the dichotomy

“foreignization” – “domestication” (and as a consequence, estrangement) and in analyzing the translation of 220 Bulgarian realities into English marks the tendency towards lexical analyticity when semantically opaque words and meanings in the source language are analytically decomposed into more primitive and transparent discrete units in the target language (Mareva, 2013, p. 12).

Realities are closely connected with culture specific descriptions, which when translated without explicitation, may be perceived as estrangement to some extent. Lithuanian researchers V. Kaledaite and V. Asijavičiute look upon translation of Lithuanian culture-specific items into English. They observed that the most frequently employed strategy was *transference*, when a SL word is transferred into a TL text in its original form. The authors mark a certain ambiguity, as some researchers (M. Baker and A. Chesterman) call this process *exoticization*, while others (Ch. Schaffner and U. Wiesemann) call it *naturalization*. In our opinion this strategy enhances the *estranging* effect, though it may not have been proposed by the author of SL text.

Is the addition of estranging effect, not thought-of by the author, always bad for the translated text? In Ukraine the researcher A. Koriagina observes the Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare’s play “Hamlet” and reasons that the strategy of estrangement (“ochudnenie” in Ukrainian) deepens the text, giving it additional meaning, modernizing it and bringing to modern realities (Koriagina, 2012, pp. 297–298).

Looking back into country which gave rise to the term we see that estrangement is now taken in stride there. In Russia following V. Shklovsky seeing estrangement as a means to experience the world outside the automatized daily grind, the researchers trace the historical metamorphosis of estrangement from a technique of art to an existential art of survival and a practice of freedom and dissent (Boym,

2011), while the poets treat estrangement as the modernist approach up above romantic nationalism. S. Boym writes about estrangement as demonization of *Byt*, the Russian word expressing dull obtrusive daily routine, which the writer is seek to overcome, to reach spiritual and poetic escape. This modernist approach is not reduced to the borders of one country and is thus translatable. Estrangement is explored in “exilic” autobiographies (of I. Brodsky as an example), which when translated into Russian should possess a strongly pronounced sense of nostalgia, otherwise they would lose their distancing effect. It is noteworthy that not only Russian researchers share the idea of the dominance of keeping the right feeling in TT. The Iranian translator engaged with the translator of culture-specific concepts in Persian literature postulated this as: “If a novice translator renders a literary text without paying adequate attention to the allusions, the connotations are likely not to be transferred as a result of the translator’s failure to acknowledge them” (Ordudari, 2007). Moreover, estrangement perceived as a translation strategy complements, rather than disturbs the set dichotomy of domestication/foreignization (Razumovskaya, 2014, p. 180).

Eventually when translating estrangement in fiction one needs to avoid depersonalization, to keep a linguistic fixing of distance, to remove discrepancy between the desire to use the words of easy familiarity and lexical alienation, which may be the author’s verbal and semantic idiostyle. D. Robinson writes about the normative assumptions about the translators, that they should be weaker writers than the brilliant authors themselves. In his view they should not aim at “knowing elite” and reproduce estrangement, if it feels awkward. The translator in this line is called an axiological interpretant (Robinson, 2011, p.152). The translator has to confront with the otherness of the foreign language, choose

between normalization and faithfulness to the ST, and make a certain effort in processing the intertext.

Conclusion

In exploring the effects of using domesticating and foreignizing translation strategies on the quality of translation, its faithfulness, effect and reception, the translator needs to maintain the identity of the source text and keeps it closer to the original text. The translator of fiction should familiarize the readers with and educating them about the source culture, its people, literature and language. It seems that too much domestication may damage the right perception of another culture. Moreover, covert foreignization facilitates cultural understanding and communication between cultures and nations. Equally importantly, foreignization helps to enrich the target language, its literature and culture. So while finding the correct proportion between domestication and foreignization the translator should pay attention on cultural expectations and demands of the time.

One example of how the choice of domestication strategy impaired the right perception of the poetic text may draw light on what challenges might arise in the process of translation. Turning the common into unfamiliar is well reached when the authors of fiction try to use in their works the transliterated words from another language. However, the distancing effect may disappear if these works are translated into this very language. In English-speaking world *estrangement* became a popular device among so-called Language poets especially in the time of the great interest in Russia despite the Cold War. Thus, L. Hejinian found that “the experience of being in a radically different cultural context alerted her to the cultural contingencies of personhood, just as the estranging effects of

poetic language highlighted the contingencies of meaning in language” (Edmond, 2011, p. 106). She came to Russia in 1983 to live there for several years and to mix in her poetic works translations with transliterations, thus producing estranging effect on the reader. Were these poems in English are translated into Russian the estranging effect and her phenomenological disjunction would be lost completely, instead they would acquire childish character.

The wild variety of viewpoints presented to be for or against domestication or foreignization are from different perspectives. In fact, both domestication and foreignization have their advantages and disadvantages. Domesticating translation is easier for the readers to understand and accept. However, the naturalness and smoothness of the target text are often achieved at the expense of the cultural and stylistic messages of the source text. Foreignizing translation preserves the source text formal features and in turn informs the readers of the foreign (alien) culture, but alien cultural images and linguistic features may cause the information overload to the reader. In a word, both domestication and foreignization entail losses, as losses are inevitable in the translation process. D. Robinson stated it as such: “A foreignizing translation is one kind of simulation, with a simulated Feeling of the Foreign mixed in; a domesticating translation is another kind of simulation, with an overwhelmingly local flavor that is equally simulated” (Robinson, 2013, p. 18).

In summary, unless the conditions under which the translation of fiction takes place are taken into account with the constant focus on evaluating the background cultural knowledge of the reader, the right strategy of the translator is to

test different alternatives of the translated parts of the text on compliance with potential recipients’ expectations. “According to F. Schleiermacher, the target-textual simulation of the source-cultural icosis has to be grounded in the translator’ complex participation in and deep understanding of that icosis: the translator has to work very hard (do historical, linguistic, literary, philosophical research into the source culture) to transfer something like the source-textual stabilization of meaning into the target-textual simulation” (Robinson, 2013, pp. 18–19).

All in all, not neglecting the usefulness of domestication/foreignization translation strategies, we apprehend estrangement as the different and mainly stylistic realization of the translator’s intention to bring the reader to the ST text, which retains its foreignness and the same distance between the authentic text and the reader, which used to be originally. Domestication and foreignization should not exclude each other but to complement each other. The distance is maintained by the attentive choice of the translator of the appropriate lexical functional structures with explaining when needed or leaving the SL term intact. The translator should tack between inaccurate cultural, neutralizing functional, descriptive equivalents, manoeuvre between modulation and recognized translation with compensation. The strategies of recreating estrangement include: use of archaisms, etymological expressions, reader-unfriendly expressions, loans, symmetrical syntax, contextual use of tenses, analytical translation of position verbs, disambiguation (see Gussago, 2013, pp. 77–82), though the more detailed classification with the examples will be provided in future.

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Теоретические аспекты перевода остранения

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В статье описывается остранение как одна из проблем, часто возникающих перед переводчиком художественной литературы. Остранение рассмотрено как специфическая авторская интонация и стилистическая особенность произведения. Также охарактеризованы сопутствующие стратегии перевода остранения – форенизация и доместикация; подвергнуты разбору теоретические аспекты перевода остранения для последующего практического применения при переводе художественной литературы и для переводческого анализа.

Ключевые слова: перевод, остранение, форенизация, доместикация, художественная литература.

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