# ELIMINATION OF CULTURAL LINGUISTIC GAPS IN THE LITHUANIAN TRANSLATION OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S NOVEL "THE GREAT GATSBY"

**Giedrė Valūnaitė-Oleškevičienė**[1], **Ramunė Eugenija Tovstucha**[2], **Liudmila Mockienė**[3], **Jelena Suchanova**[4], **Andrius Puksas**[5]

**Abstract**: The aim of this study is to analyse the translation strategies of culture-specific items used in the Lithuanian translation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, published in 2013 by seeking to determine strategies chosen by the Lithuanian translator in order to eliminate cultural gaps related to culture-specific items, as well as to determine which of the strategies are predominant and therefore which translation approach prevails. The research is carried out relying on the classification of translation startegies provided by Pedersen (2005) which include strategies such as official equivalent, retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution, and omission. Quantitative analysis is used to determine which strategies are predominant in the translation, while qualitative analysis is employed to discuss the reasonability of translator's choices. Knowledge and awareness of the translation strategies of culture-specific items provide easily identifiable advice on how culture-specific items could be used and translated.

## Introduction

The most renowned authors agree that the translation of texts rich in cultural gaps due to the extensive presence of culture-bound references can be a challenging task for a translator. Al Jabbari (2011) notes that cultural gaps can be omnipresent and "seen in reference to traditions, geographical features, clothes, proper names, et cetera" (Al Jabbari et al., 2011). Similarly, Newmark (1998) observes that "the cultural gap or distance between the source and target languages" always results in certain translation difficulties, especially if there is a certain cultural focus predominant in source language (SL) community (Newmark, 1988). Aixela, while speaking about the role of cultural diversity in translation, points out that translators can't avoid the exposure to cultural variability factor in their work, created by culture-specific series of habits, values, different classification patterns, etc. (Aixela, 1996). The ongoing process of globalisation and intercultural communication extends the cultural overlap. Aixela mentions the "cultural internalisation focused on the Anglo-Saxon pole" which bridges the gap between cultures to some extent, introducing culture-bound words and expressions to other cultures, which is especially true for English SL due to its status of lingua franca and the commercial influence of the Anglo-American world on the rest of the globe. For translators, it means that they "are of course affected by this process, which among other increases the number of socio-cultural realities whose transference requires less and less manipulation to make them acceptable in the target culture" (Aixela, 1996).

The research object is the role of cultural gaps on the process of translation and the elimination of such gaps in TL text. The focus is made on culture-specific items (CSI) and their elimination in translation of fiction, namely in the Lithuanian translation (2013) of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). The aim of the present study is to investigate which translation strategies have been chosen by the Lithuanian translator of *The Great Gatsby* in order to eliminate cultural gaps related to culture-specific items; to determine which of the strategies are predominant and therefore which translation approach prevails in the process of the elimination of cultural gaps. Pursuing the research aim, the following research objectives have been set: to define the role of cultural gaps in the translation process and the concept of *culture-specific items* based on the works of translation theorists; to investigate translation strategies used for translation of culture-specific items and therefore for the elimination of cultural linguistic gaps; to determine which strategies (and why) were predominantly chosen by the Lithuanian translation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby.

## Theoretical background

Cultural linguistic gaps can be manifested in a wide variety of forms, including not only culture-bound words or lacunae, but also phrases, idiomatic expressions or proverbs, or what the Leppihalme calls

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[1] Institute of Humanities, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, gvalunaite@mruni.eu

[2] Personal Company FELIS, sugrizimas@gmail.com

[3] Institute of Humanities, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, liudmila@mruni.eu

[4] Institute of Humanities, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, jelena.s@mruni.eu

[5] Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, andrius_puksas@mruni.eu

"intralinguistic cultural expressions" (Pedersen, 2014), as well as specific grammatical patterns (Al Jabbari et al. 2011, Hale, 1975).

Different terms are used by researchers to name those words which are specific to a certain culture. Kenneth Hale (1975) uses the term cultural item, although in a slightly broader sense as in his work it refers also to lacunarity and grammatical non-equivalence. Pedersen suggests the name extralinguistic culture-bound reference (ECR) and defines it as "reference that is attempted by means of any culture-bound linguistic expression, which refers to an extralinguistic entity or process, and which is assumed to have a discourse referent that is identifiable to a relevant audience as this referent is within the encyclopaedic knowledge of this audience. In other words, ECRs are expressions pertaining to realia, to cultural items" (Pedersen, 2005). Aixela's suggested term is culture-specific items, defined as "Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text" (Aixela, 1996). Other terms include culture-bound phenomena and culture-bound elements (Robinson, 1997; Hagfors, 2003, cited from Petrulionė, 2012), as well as realia, the latter term being especially widely used by Lithuanian researchers (Pažūsis, 2014; Balčiūnienė, 2005; Mikutytė, 2005; Leonavičienė, 2015). In this paper, the main term used is culture-specific items, however other terms can be used interchangeably as synonyms as well.

Different classifications of translation strategies employed for translation of culture-specific items are used by various researchers as well. The classification used in this study belongs to Jan Pedersen and represents the following strategies: 1. Official equivalent – a strategy considered by Pedersen to be neither SL nor target language (TL) oriented since the process of its application "is bureaucratic rather than linguistic" and the use of this strategy implies that there is a "preformed TL version" already in use and that the cultural word in question already had entered the TL. According to Pedersen, an official equivalent "is a pre-fabricated solution to the problem" since there is a TL term ready to be used (Pedersen, 2005). 2. Source-language oriented strategies (or foreignization (Yang, 2010): a. retention (the SL element enters the TL text; usually marked by either quotes or italics); b. specification (the SL element is retained in TL text, but additional information is provided in order to specify it; sub-strategies include explicitation and addition); c. direct translation (literal translation of SL elements, e.g. when translating the names of companies or institutions, etc.). 3. Target-language oriented strategies (or domestication (Yang, 2010): a. generalization (e.g. hyponym changed with hyperonym); b. substitution (cultural substitution and paraphrase); c. omission (the SL element is not transferred into the TL text at all).

Translation is always a mixture of two or more cultures. The more distant the SL and TL cultures are from each other, the more problems the translator may face during the process of translation into the TL, and this task is especially challenging when the SL text is rich in culture-bound references which might be totally alien to a TL reader.

**Methodology of the research**

The analysis of translation strategies allowing the elimination of cultural linguistic gaps in the process of translation is based on the Lithuanian translation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby. The novel, written and set in the United States in the first quarter of the 20th century, provides plenty of culture-specific items, which can present certain challenges for the translator, who strives to create a smooth TL text that is easily understandable to the TL reader and yet preserves the originality and the "exoticism" of the settings in terms of both place and historic period. The original text was analysed and 150 cultural-specific items were selected and the analysis of their translation into Lithuanian performed, with the focus on translation strategies used for each case.

Cultural-specific items and their TL translations were then subdivided into 7 categories according to the strategies of translation as per classification proposed by Pedersen as discussed above (official equivalent, retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution, omission).

A quantitative analysis was used in order to determine which strategies were predominant in this translation, while a qualitative analysis was employed to discuss the reasonability of the translator's choice of a strategy in question.

**Research findings**

The results of quantitative analysis are presented in Figure 1 and discussed below.

Figure 1: Translation strategies of culture-specific items  in the Lithuanian translation of The Great Gatsby



Source: Authors
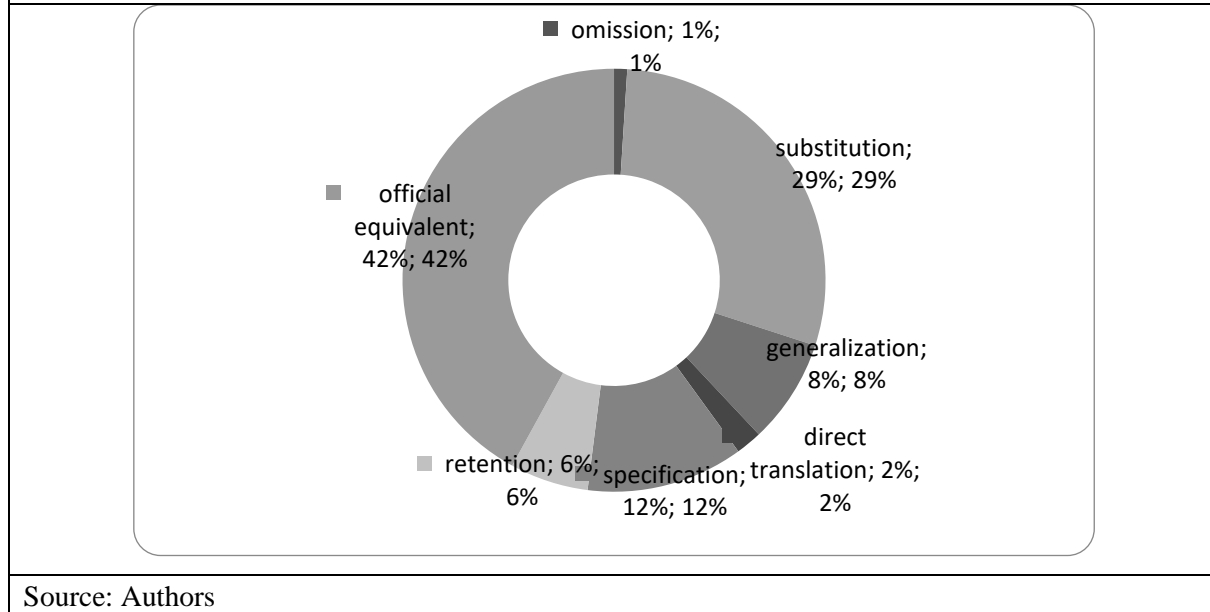
The quantitative analysis of the selected culture-specific items shows that the official equivalent translation strategy is undoubtedly the predominant one, the most exploited by the translator, for example, *gentleman – džentelmenas*; *clerks – klerkai*, *senator – senatorius* etc. The predominance of this method can be reasonably explained, since the novel and its recent Lithuanian translation are separated by a time gap of almost a hundred of years; the process of globalisation turned a variety of exoticisms into internationally known words which are featured in relevant bilingual dictionaries and therefore have official equivalents, although initially different translation strategies must have been used. In his study Kalba ir vertimas Lionginas Pažūsis mentions the earlier Lithuanian translation of The Great Gatsby made in 1967 featuring the example of such period-conditioned shift in translation strategy; namely, the English compound lawn-mower, which back then could have been considered a culture-specific item, was translated into Lithuanian using paraphrase (lt. *aprašomasis vertimas*) as *žolės pjaunama mašinėlė* (Pažūsis, 2014,) – since the concept of a lawn-mower was barely known in Lithuanian culture, so there was no reason for an official equivalent to be present in the language. However, several decades later lawn-mowers (lt. *žoliapjovė*) are omnipresent and no longer considered a culture-specific item. The same principle can be applied while explaining the choice of strategy for culture-specific items (realia) which either became international words or have got a "standard translation" within the given TL (Leppihalme, 1994, cited from Pedersen, 2014).

The strategy of substitution strives to replace the SL culture-bound reference with either an internationally understood reference or with entirely TL-oriented cultural substitution, while the sub-strategy of paraphrase aims to convey the very meaning of the SL culture-bound reference without attempting to retain the reference itself (Pedersen, 2014). This translation method proved to be the second most employed by the translator. The cases of substitution found in the analysed text include one international reference: *I'd known Tom in college. – Tomą pažinojau iš universiteto laikų*. Although Lithuanian universitetas can be considered as an official equivalent for North American college, this particular case can be interpreted as a substitution, since college can also have other meanings when translated into Lithuanian, e.g. *koledžas, kolegija, specialioji mokykla*, and it was up to the translator to identify the meaning from the context and to choose an adequate substitution which would convey the meaning.   Other examples represent mainly the cultural TL-oriented substitution: *It was Mr. Klipspringer, the "boarder." Tai buvo misteris Klipspringeris – „nuomininkas"*.  An English term boarder generally refers to someone "who receives regular meals when staying somewhere, in return for payment or services" (English Oxford Living Dictionaries (OELD)), the "one that is provided with

regular meals or regular meals and lodging" (Merriam-Webster English Dictionary (MWED)), while Lithuanian nuomininkas is someone who merely rents a place, a rent with meals provided is not typical of this country. Nevertheless, nuomininkas is the closest analogy and a justified choice for being used as a substitute term. *I took him into the pantry... – Nusivedžiau jį į virtuvę...* In Lithuanian culture, there is no direct equivalent for English pantry, which means "a small room or closet in which food, dishes, and utensils are kept" (OELD). Instead, Lithuanians keep the above-mentioned in the kitchen where the cooking takes place, therefore the translator used relevant substitute virtuvė accordingly. *...lemon cakes from the delicatessen shop. ...citrininių pyragaičių, pirktų konditerijos parduotuvėje.* In North American culture delicatessen, which itself is a loan word from German, means "a shop selling cooked meats, cheeses, and unusual or foreign prepared foods", which is not the same as Lithuanian *konditerijos parduotuvė*, a confectionery selling sweets and chocolates. However, the translator used this substitutions because of the context, since in Lithuanian culture *konditerijos parduotuvė* is a very suitable place for getting lemon cakes. Other substitutions include: *mansion – rūmas; commuting town – priemiestis; drugstore – krautuvėlė, police dog – pėdsekys; bungalow – vasarnamis.*

Notably, some examples of substitution represent those translator's choices, which seem to fail at retaining any sense of the original ST's culture-bound reference, e.g.: *I almost married a little kyke who'd been after me for years. Vos neištekėjau už tokio žioplelio.* Kyke (also kike) is a derogatory / insulting antisemitic term (Pullum, 2016). For some reasons the translator decided to leave the word out of the TL text – either not willing to use derogatory lexis in the translation or lacking the corresponding Lithuanian slang, or (perhaps least likely) not knowing the exact meaning of the term. Therefore, the rather neutral Lithuanian *žioplelis* is chosen instead; although its meaning is different (a person who constantly handles situations, tasks, or opportunities clumsily or badly), it still serves well to fill the gap.

Another questionable example of substitution is found as well: *I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck... ...prieš mane sėdėjo elegantiškas jaunas karjeristas...* American slang term rough-neck refers to a male person behaving in a rude or aggressive way, a stereotypical masculine character involved in manual labour (MWED). Therefore, there might be certain doubts about the translator's choice of substituting the term rough-neck with a Lithuanian word meaning a career-seeking person. Failing to find suitable equivalent can also result in some peculiar choice of substitution, as in the example: *...he added on his own initiative a tin of large, hard dog-biscuits... ...dar parnešė dėžutę šunų kotletų...* The original dog-biscuits reference would have its closest meaning in Lithuanian as *džiovinti paplotėliai* or *šunims skirti sausainiai*, given that the SL term refers to some type of dried crumbly substance rather than a cutlet made from meat. Therefore, a paraphrase would be a better choice of strategy in this case.

Some interesting examples of paraphrase include: *...no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder ... ...nė viena trumpai apkirpta galvutė nenulinko ant jo peties...* Bob style haircut – "a style in which the hair is cut short and evenly all round so that it hangs above the shoulders" (OELD) – was a significant part of women's identities and the feminism movement in 1920s France. As Mary Louise Roberts noted in her article on women's fashion politics in the early 20th century, "claiming the bobbed-cut Joan of Arc as their mascot, these young women grounded their quest for "liberation" in the rich, tangled mainstream of French history" (Roberts, 1993). Therefore, even if the notion of French origin is omitted in the TL, the paraphrase is adequate and reflects the concept precisely enough to convey its image to the TL readers. Another culture-bound reference related to haircut style in the ST is pompadour: *The pompadour! You never told me you had a pompadour [...] Kokia šukuosena! Niekada man nepasakojote, kad šukavotės į viršų [...]* According to the Merriam-Webster English Dictionary, a pompadour when referred to a male person is "a style of hairdressing in which the hair is combed into a high mound in front". As the hairstyle name in question is unknown to a Lithuanian reader, a descriptive paraphrase can be considered a relevant choice of translation strategy. It should also be noted that paraphrase is not the only strategy used for rendering a pompadour into the TL – as the hairstyle is mentioned in the ST for the first time, the translator uses the generalization strategy: *The pompadour! – Kokia šukuosena!* In this case hyponym (the name of a hairstyle) is substituted with hyperonym (hairstyle in general).

*... must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star Line. ...kažkoks paukštelis, turbūt lakštingala, atsiųsta paskutiniu transatlantiniu reisu.* In 1920s Cunard and White Star Line were two rival shipping lines providing transatlantic passenger transport services (Gladden, 2014). Obviously, the translator reasonably decided that the proper names of these companies are of little importance for the

TL reader and that the priority should be given to conveying the meaning of the phrase rather than preserving the exact culture-bound references of the SL.

*He's a bootlegger. – Jis spekuliuoja gėrimais.* Bootlegger is a derivative from English to bootleg "to make, distribute, or sell (alcoholic drink or a recording) illegally" (OELD), therefore once again a reasonable paraphrase had been chosen by the translator to express the meaning of the culture-bound reference in the TL text, so a TL reader can be spared the necessity to look for further references, which would be likely if one of foreignization strategies were used, eg. retention. *"Highballs?" asked the head waiter. – Su soda? – pasiteiravo metrdotelis.*

The North American term "highballs" means "a drink consisting of whiskey and a mixer such as soda or ginger ale, served with ice in a tall glass" (OELD) and has no direct or indirect equivalent in Lithuanian, therefore rendering this culture-bound reference in the TL clearly should have been a challenge for the translator. Since the context does not require an explicit explanation of the concept and the exact knowledge of the kind of served drinks is not crucial for the TL reader in the given case, the translator was justified in his decision to choose one most significant aspect of the SL reference (soda component) for paraphrasing the concept and thus conveying the general meaning.

The remaining paraphrases follow more or less a similar pattern, changing the SL text's culturebound reference with an explanation in a TL, for example, *a line of French windows – eilė didelių iki pat žemės langų; Italian garden – itališko stiliaus terasomis augantį sodą*; etc.

Specification strategy means that the original SL reference is retained in the TL text untranslated, however some additional explanation is provided to make the SL cultural reference at least contextually understandable to the TL reader. According to Pedersen, usually "that the added material is latent in the extra-linguistic cultural reference, as part of the sense or connotations […]. By using this strategy, the translator intervenes to give guidance to the TC audience" (Pedersen, 2014). Examples of specification found in the analysed text include: *string of polo ponies - komandą ponių arkliukų; the Fourth of July – Liepos ketvirtosios šventė*; etc. Not all the SL references are left untranslated – some combine the specification strategy with either direct translations, as in the name of the book or names of streets, or with official equivalents (e.g. Trinity, New Haven).

However, since proper names are not the subject of this analysis and the characteristic traits of specification strategy seem to be predominant in the abovementioned cases, it is possible to classify these examples as cases of specification.

Generalisation is another rather popular strategy used in the analysed text. The main principle of this strategy is a replacement of a hyponym with a hyperonym. The examples of generalisation found in the text include cases like *...the telephone rang inside and the butler left the porch... ...suskambo telefonas, tarnas nuėjo atsiliepti...* According to the Merriam-Webster English Dictionary, butler refers to a "chief male servant of a household who has charge of other employees, receives guests, directs the serving of meals, and performs various personal services". Since there is no exact equivalent in Lithuanian for this service, the hyperonym tarnas (en. servant) is chosen instead, since it conveys the general meaning sufficiently enough for the TL reader. *...champagne was served in glasses bigger than finger-bowls... ...šampanas buvo pilstomas į dubenėlių didumo taures...* Finger bowl is a "small bowl holding water for rinsing the fingers during or after a meal" (OELD); since this reference is not lexicalised in Lithuanian, the translator had used the hyperonym dubenėlis (a bowl) instead. Another possible strategy could be a paraphrase *dubenėlis rankoms plauti. ...had resolved itself into "hide-and-go-seek" or "sardines-in-the-box". Pamaniau, kad [...] žaidžia „slėpynių" arba dar kokį žaidimą.*

The example perhaps could be named a paragon of generalisation strategy. "Sardines-in-the-box" is a derivative version of "hide-and-seek", however there is no equivalent for this version in Lithuanian. Therefore, the translator uses Lithuanian hyperonym žaidimas instead, as the exact name of the game contextually is not relevant in the story. Other examples of generalisation: *cordials so long forgotten – seniai pamirštų gėrimų; the pompadour – šukuosena; Lewis guns – kulkosvaidžiai; on a wicker settee – ant pinto suolelio; my neighbor's mansion – iš gretimo namo šešėlio.*

Retention, although considered by Pedersen "the most common strategy for rendering ECRs" (Pedersen, 2014), appears to be less exploited in the translation of the analysed text. The examples found include cases such as: *I had [...] an old Dodge – Turėjau [...] seną automobilį „dodžą"; How do you get to West Egg village? – Gal pasakytumėt, kaip pakliūti į Vest Egą?; a bottle of Sauterne – butelis*

*„Soterno"; moving her hands like Frisco* – *virpindama rankomis lyg pati Frisko; bought a hydroplane* – *nusipirkęs hidroplaną; fixed the World's Series* – *padarė tą aferą su „World's Series".*

There are also additional explanatory references used for the last three examples besides the retention strategy, which shows that most likely the translator was not completely satisfied with the choice of strategy and felt that the TL reader would need an extended clarification for these culture bound items.

A direct translation strategy is scarcely used in the text except for proper names (e.g. names of streets, avenues and clubs) which are not the main subject of this analysis. Some examples were found: quite a successful translation of drug-store as *vaistų krautuvėlė* which conveys the original meaning better than Lithuanian vaistinė which is sometimes used for rendering this North American cultural phenomenon into Lithuanian, and less successful attempt to render a poolroom into Lithuanian by the means of direct translation. Unfortunately, the translator mixed up the meaning of pool constituent and translated the term as *baseinas* (swimming pool) instead of *biliardinė* (a place for playing pool). These examples show that the employment of the direct translation strategy requires some caution in order to provide the SL text reader with an accurate translation.

Finally, a case of omission has been found as well, namely the entire omission of the original sentence containing a cultural-bound reference: Her husband […] had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven.

Although it is difficult to explain why the translator decided to omit the whole sentence, however it is possible to imply that certain difficulties were met while trying to render the American Football term end into Lithuanian. In this context end means "an offensive or defensive lineman positioned nearest to the sideline", which could have been translated into Lithuanian as *gynėjas* or *puolėjas*. Therefore, the choice of omission strategy is not truly justified in this case.

**Conclusion**

Despite globalisation processes and the tendency to multiculturality, cultural linguistic gaps are still present in texts and therefore must be addressed in one way or another during the process of rendering the SL text into the TL making the translation both culturally understandable to the TL reader and true to the original. Culture-specific items as manifestations of SL culture are part of a cultural gap phenomenon, therefore a careful choice of strategies employed in translation of these items is crucial in terms of elimination of cultural gaps between SL and TL. The analysis of culture-specific items representing cultural linguistic gaps in the F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby and of the strategies used in the process of translating these items into Lithuanian was based on the classification proposed by Jan Pedersen. The analysis demonstrated that some translation strategies are employed more frequently than others. The predominant strategy is an official equivalent, constituting 42 %. The next most exploited strategy is substitution, constituting 29 %. These two predominant strategies together constitute 71 % of all strategies used in the Lithuanian translation of The Great Gatsby. The remaining strategies – including all foreignization-based approaches – constitute only 29 %. Therefore, it is possible to assert that the dominant strategy of elimination of cultural gaps represented by culture-bound concepts is the choice of the TL culture oriented translation, e. g. the prevalence of domestication strategies in translation. The translator's motivation in choice of these strategies can be explained by the fact that a significant part of culture-specific items mentioned in the novel had been already accepted into the TL culture in the form of internationally known words and concepts, as well as by the general tendency to prescriptive approach towards the use of foreign words in Lithuanian language – as Pedersen highlights, "for there to be an Official Equivalent, some sort of official decision by people in authority over an ECR is needed", and such decisions are generally enforced by the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language. The Commission encourages the use of domestication strategies seeking to preserve the Lithuanian language by establishing the rules and monitoring the usage of foreign cultural words in Lithuanian texts, both original and translated. Although this policy imposes certain limitations on a translator, it also provides clear patterns and guidelines to rely on while translating a CSI which already had entered the TL.

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