

<https://doi.org/10.26565/2786-5312-2026-103-13>
УДК 811.111'25

Oleksandr Yemets

Candidate of Science in Philology, Associate Professor, Professor of the Department of Germanic Philology and Translation Studies, Khmelnytskyi National University, e-mail: yemetsov@ukr.net; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6332-2830>; GOOGLE SCHOLAR: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=MPmsa5sAAAAJ&hl=uk>

THE STRATEGIES OF RENDERING THE STYLISTIC DEVICE OF FOREGROUNDING IN THE TRANSLATION OF FLASH FICTION STORIES

The article considers the aspects of foregrounding and the stylistic means of their realization in the contemporary English flash fiction and microfiction stories. Foregrounding is defined as a device of a literary text organization aimed at concentrating the reader's attention at the most semantically and pragmatically important elements of the utterance. Two aspects of foregrounding are investigated - quantitative and qualitative ones (G. Leech) - from the viewpoint of strategies of their translation. Under the strategy of translation we understand not a single technique but a variety of translation techniques applied to render the aesthetic and pragmatic effects of the source text. The investigation reveals that the qualitative aspect of foregrounding in the analyzed flash fiction stories manifests itself in original metaphors, mainly extended metaphors, oxymoron and antithesis, often creating paradox. The quantitative aspect of foregrounding is realized in both flash fiction and microfiction by stylistic convergences. A distinctive feature of convergences in these texts is their location in strong positions, mainly in the endings. The convergences are based on the interaction of metaphors with alliterations ("Traveling Alone", "Whispers"), or metaphors with parallel constructions and antithesis ("Father", "Bullhead", "My Date with Neanderthal Woman"). The metaphors in convergences foreground the ideas of love, tolerance, sympathy as well admiration of nature, its eternal life. The techniques of translating the stylistic means realizing the qualitative aspect include literal translation, specification and compensation. Stylistic convergences are the most explicit technique of foregrounding, so the translation demands retaining the images and sound repetitions applying literal translation and synonymic substitution in order to exactly reproduce the writer's intentions.

Key words: *alliteration, foregrounding, qualitative aspect, quantitative aspect, strategy of translation, strong position, stylistic convergence.*

In cites: Yemets, O. (2026). The strategies of rendering the stylistic device of foregrounding in the translation of flash fiction stories. *The Journal of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series: Foreign Philology. Methods of Foreign Language Teaching*, 103, 112–116. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2786-5312-2026-103-13>

1. INTRODUCTION

The title of the flash fiction story by the contemporary American writer David Galef "My Date with Neanderthal Woman" [13] produces the effect of defeated expectancy at first sight. The title words contain anachronism which is not easy to interpret. Only after retrospective reading we can understand that the writer consciously violates the unity of time and space, i.e. the chronotope, to foreground the idea of mutual understanding between people with different cultural and historical backgrounds. That is why Galef applies the stylistic device of **foregrounding** in the very title of the text, in the text strong position.

The theory of foregrounding is one of the foundations of stylistics. It is as a rule associated with literary texts but the techniques of foregrounding can be found in advertising texts, in public speeches. However, in literary discourse foregrounding devices can be more varied and numerous, and their use can enhance the meaning potential of the text, while also providing the reader with the possibility of aesthetic experience [6, p. 547]. The application of foregrounding analysis, according to Geoffrey Leech, is important for literary interpretation [2].

Among the definitions of foregrounding it is necessary to quote John Douthwaite who gives a detailed definition: "Foregrounding is the general linguistic technique by which a marked linguistic expression is produced in order to make this expression convey a different meaning than its synonymous equivalent unmarked construction would have conveyed" [1, p. 93]. In this definition, the creation of a new, expressive meaning in the foregrounded part of text is emphasized.

Using this approach, we can suggest a more exact definition: Foregrounding is such device of the literary text organization which is aimed at concentrating the reader's (listener's) attention on the most semantically and pragmatically important elements of the utterance" [7]. In this definition we consider it is more relevant to use the word "device", and the term "technique" will be applied to different linguistic units which realize the device of foregrounding in speech.

2. THE ANALYSIS OF THE PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Our research includes the investigation of foregrounding in the contemporary short stories. In particular, our study is based on the flash fiction stories published in the collection "Flash Fiction Forward" (2006) and in the literary e-magazine "Flash Fiction Magazine" (2023-2025) as well as the collection "Best Microfiction" (2024). All in all, 10 short stories were analyzed.

The aim of the research is to determine the language means of realization of foregrounding and the strategies of their translation.

The methodological basis involves the studies in the stylistics of foregrounding by Mick Short, Geoffrey Leech, John Douthwaite. The classification of

foregrounding by Geoffrey Leech involves two aspects of foregrounding: qualitative and quantitative. **The qualitative aspect** is the deviation from the language code, the breach (violation) of some linguistic norm, while **the quantitative aspect** includes the deviation of some expected frequency [2, p. 39].

The criteria of investigating the quantitative aspect can include the principle of **redundancy**, i.e. the frequent use or bigger utterances. The writer from New Zealand Frankie McMillan in the flash fiction story with a paradoxical title "Truthful Lies" makes use of the title word 6 times: *I lied when I told you I was lying. You knew that. I let you think that I was lying in order to lie some more but you knew. Because you lie too. Your lies are trivial lies* [13, p. 96]. Used in a strong position, in the ending, these words reveal and emphasize the tragedy in woman's life.

Besides lexical and syntactical repetitions, we can suggest another criterion for studying the quantitative aspect of foregrounding. It can be stylistic convergence. Convergences are based on the quantity of stylistic devices used. According to Michael Riffaterre, who formulated the technique, it is the accumulation (or concentration) of different stylistic devices which add expressiveness to each other [3, p. 432]. Usually, the center of convergence is a metaphor, often an extended metaphor, combined with alliterations and /or parallel constructions.

As for the qualitative aspect, the stylistic techniques of foregrounding are more varied. In particular, Willie Van Peer and Jemeljan Hakemulder determined such techniques as live metaphors, oxymoron, paradox, neologisms, ungrammatical sentences [6, p. 547]. This list is not complete. In our opinion, it is necessary to add such tropes as hyperbole, meiosis which is very expressive, antithesis and gradation.

More recent investigations of foregrounding include the analysis of foregrounding types in the English detective texts by L. Tsapenko (2017) and in the advertising texts by B. Ufot [5]. In its turn, H. Morozova and H. Chesnokova investigated parallelism as a component of foregrounding in the poetry of Cummings (2017). Our paper on the effect of paradox as a type of foregrounding [7] was based on the contemporary short fiction and the stories by F. Forsyth.

The present paper contains the analysis of 10 flash fiction stories written and published in the twenty-first century, some of them in 2023-2025, and five microfiction stories. Flash fiction and microfiction are regarded a genre or a variety of short fiction. Due to their small size, the foregrounded parts are more explicit and more expressive. As Mark Strand says, "it can do in a page what a novel does in two hundred" [13, p. 228].

Stylistic convergence is more frequent in flash fiction than in microfiction. However, two out of five microfiction stories involve convergence consisting of metaphors and parallel constructions. Alexandra

Fassinger in story "Father" misses her parent and seems to see him in the street even after his death: *It is not true that the dead do not age. I see my father often on the street, the way he would look now, older, with slower movements, he has lost some weight, his face has sunk in* [12, p. 46]. In translation we rendered the metaphor literally, applying partitioning: *Неправда, що мертві не старіють. Я часто бачу батька на вулиці, такого, яким би він виглядав зараз: старішого, повільнішого. Він схуднув, а обличчя осунулось.*

One of the themes in the microfiction stories is woman's equality, woman's fate. A very emotional text by Mileva Anastasiadou "A Bird Has Grown Inside My Throat" is based on the extended metaphor which creates image-making cohesion. The metaphor interacts with alliterations and antithesis, thus creating stylistic convergence in such strong position as the ending. The extended metaphor can be interpreted as the dependence of the wife, the narrator of the story, on husband. This dependence is described as a bird in the woman's throat which deprives her the possibility to speak, to be wholesome: *I try to beat the bird that caged me, but it's a strange battle, we're used to birds in cages but not to birds as cages. I scream and scream like the doctor said I should to silence the bird and get it out; and I get stronger, but freedom doesn't come easy* [12, p. 12].

The translation of the fragment with foregrounding consisted in rendering the metaphor and the sound repetitions to reproduce the purpose and the emotional effect of the source text: *Я намагаюсь перемогти птаха, що ув'язнив мене; але це дивний двобій, ми звикли до птахів у клітках, але не до птахів як клітки* (our translation).

The language means of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of foregrounding are more varied in flash fiction stories compared with microfiction. One of the reasons is that flash fiction stories are bigger in size. Besides, as our research of 10 stories reveals, most texts (70%) contain convergences and parallelism in such strong position as the ending.

The story "Bullhead" by Leigh Wilson includes frame repetition: *Every story is true and a lie*. In the very beginning of the text only one sentence is used, in the final position this oxymoron is a component of stylistic convergence: *Every story is true and a lie. The true part of this one is: Love and the memory of love can't be drowned. The lie part is that this is a good thing* [13]. Our task as a translator was to reproduce all the components of this convergence, i.e. the metaphor, the antithesis, the parallel constructions. At the same time, the elements of the oxymoron and the antithesis are different parts of speech (*true – lie*). It was a challenge, because it was necessary to make morphological transformations in order to retain the parallel structures. That is why in the first sentence we used two adjectives (*правдива – неправдива*), while in the second one we replaced adjectives by nouns (*правдивість – неправда*): *Кожна історія є правдивою і неправдивою водночас.*

Правдивість цієї історії полягає в тому, що кохання, як і пам'ять про кохання, не можна затопити. А неправда в тому, що це добре (translated by O. Yemets) [11, p. 112].

The attitude to the family, the resilience in difficult situations and the ability to keep the memory of the beloved people are among the themes that are foregrounded in the analyzed stories. The main character of the flash fiction story "Oliver's Evolution" by the outstanding American writer John Updike grew up as a physically weak, vulnerable person. However, after getting married and having two children, he changed completely. Updike makes use of such technique as gradation in the structure of the text, showing how Oliver was growing more and more responsible, committed to his family and his two children. The final paragraph is a strong position which contains an important conclusion: *Oliver has grown broad and holds the two of them at once. He is a tree, a sheltering boulder. They are birds in a nest. He is a protector of the weak* [13, p. 144]. This small fragment includes the stylistic convergence as a technique of emotional foregrounding with three metaphors and parallel constructions.

How can an elderly mother show her feelings to the son before going to a serious operation? In a seemingly simple and a very touching story Don Shea foregrounds it by means of repetitions: *She had already put a "to-do" list concerning her hospital stay. It addressed practical concerns, the clothing she would need, her mail, her checkbook, and so forth. The fifth item on the list read as follows: "Don: I love you. I love you". I'm Don. My mom was doing her i's and crossing her t's in case she didn't survive the surgery. She had made a note to herself to tell me she loved me. She emphasized the importance of this by writing it twice* [13, p. 6]. We translated this fragment by retaining the repetitions and using the Ukrainian variant of the phraseological unit: *Моя мама склала перелік тих справ, що я мав зробити під час її перебування в лікарні. Перелік стосувався практичних питань, одягу, який їй знадобиться, її пошти, її чекової книжки і тому подібного. П'ятим пунктом у списку було: "Доне, я тебе люблю. Я тебе люблю". Дон – це я. Моя матінка поставила всі крапки над "і" на випадок, якщо не переживе операції. Вона залишила собі пам'ятку: обов'язково сказати мені, що вона мене любить. Вона підкреслила важливість цієї думки, написавши її двічі.*

In this and other examples we can speak about **strategy of translation** because we deal with a complex of challenges, a variety of stylistic techniques. Especially challenging are the techniques of the qualitative aspect of foregrounding which have no equivalent in the target language. In a recent story "Whispers" by David Newkirk (2023) a very poetical description of the waves is used based on the anthropomorphic metaphor: *The waves are whispering*. This metaphor unites the text, creates image – making cohesion. The writer emphasizes the eternal character of the waves, of the sea applying such

stylistic transposition: *they whisper of a where without a when, a when without a who, a who without a why* [14, p. 4]. Literal translation into Ukrainian is impossible because in the target language such type of conversion (substantivation) would be awkward and actually senseless. We can suggest metonymic translation, or specification, replacing a more general word (a conjunction) by a more specific noun: *Вони шепочуть про місце без часу, про час без людини, про людину без пояснення причини.*

This type of stylistic transposition creates **deviation** – the qualitative aspect of foregrounding. The abovementioned title of the flash fiction story “My Date with Neanderthal Woman” also creates deviation. Besides deviation, the ending of the story contains a stylistic convergence of a small size, but very expressive: *Yes, I know all the objections. Some couples are separated by decades, but we’re separated by millennia. I like rock music and she likes the music of rocks. I’m modern Homo Sapiens and she’s Neanderthal, but I think we can work out our differences if we try* [13, p. 111]. Translating this fragment it was necessary to render a variety of techniques: metaphor *music of rocks*, play of words, the hyperbole and antithesis, as well as parallel structures. Such concentration of stylistic techniques emphasizes the importance of the fragment and foregrounds a very important idea of tolerance and mutual understanding of people of different cultures. That is the strategy in translation consisted in recreating these techniques, especially play of words. Oksana Kravets has rendered these elements applying some kind of compensation: *Я люблю слухати важкий рок, а вона – тягати важкі камінці* [13, p. 111]. Another variant was suggested by one of my students: *Я люблю слухати рок-музику, а вона – музику рік.* In this sentence the metaphor and antithesis are more foregrounded.

All in all, in seven flash fiction stories out of ten have the foregrounded part is the ending which usually contains stylistic convergence. The story “Accident” by Dave Eggers ends with an extended simile that compares boxers with tired lovers. A brilliant story

“Traveling Alone” by Rob Carney contains a stylistic convergence including the extended metaphor and alliterations. Carney describes his strong admiration of such natural phenomenon as thunderstorm and the cloud as a factory of lightning: *And, I mean, it really looked like a factory. You know, like this was where and how lightning was made, then shipped around the world to thunderstorms. Like down there in the middle, gods were working with hammers and anvils and bellows and wearing those helmets with a little strip of a glass to look out of it* [13, p. 30].

Anastasiia Zakharchuk successfully rendered this technique of foregrounding, recreating all the components of the metaphor: *Тобто, це справді виглядало як фабрика. Так ніби тут виготовляють блискавки, які потім постачають громовицям по всьому світу. Наче всередині боги працювали – і молотами, і ковадлами, і міхами, і, як заведено у зварювальному цеху були в касках з невеликим скляним заборолом* [10, с. 153].

3. CONCLUSIONS

In the analyzed short stories of flash fiction and microfiction the quantitative aspect of foregrounding is realized mainly in stylistic convergences. In the majority of flash fiction texts convergences function in the final position – the ending. In microfiction stories repetitions prevail, while convergences are of small size. The translation of these fragments requires certain strategies, i.e. variety of techniques – not only literal translation but also specification, modulation and compensation. The qualitative aspect of foregrounding is represented by tropes, antithesis and stylistic transposition (“Whispers”). Besides the stylistic and aesthetic functions, foregrounding in these stories emphasize tolerance, sympathy and admiration by the nature.

The prospects of further research consist in investigating other techniques of translation of the contemporary short stories, in particular microfiction.

REFERENCES

1. Douthwaite, J. (2000). *Towards a Linguistic Theory of Foregrounding*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso.
2. Leech, G. (2007). *Language in Literature: Style and Foregrounding*. Harlow: Pearson.
3. Riffaterre, M. (1965). *Criteria for Stylistic Analysis*. In: *Essays on Language and Literature*. WORD, 15(1), 157-174. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1959.11659690>
4. Strand, M. (2015). *The Essentials of Flash Fiction International*. London: W. W. Norton & Company.
5. Ufot, B. (2017). Stylistic Foregrounding in the Language of Advertising. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 5(4), 252-265.
6. Van Peer, W. & Hakemulder, J. (2006). *Foregrounding*. In: *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Elsevier, 4, 546-550.
7. Yemets, A. (2019). Types and Functions of Foregrounding in the Contemporary Flash Fiction Stories. *SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics*, 23-40.
8. ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL
9. Galef, D. (2006). *My Date with Neanderthal Woman*. Flash Fiction Forward. New York - London: W.W. Norton & Company, 110-111.
10. Eggers, D. (2006). *Accident*. Flash Fiction Forward. New York - London: W.W. Norton & Company, 29-30.

11. Updike, J. (2006). *Oliver's Evolution*. Flash Fiction Forward. New York - London: W.W. Norton & Company, 142-144.
12. Wilson, L. (2006). *Bullhead*. Flash Fiction Forward. New York - London : W.W. Norton & Company.
13. *Best Microfiction* (2024). In M. Pokrass, & G. Fincke (Eds.). Claremont: California.
14. *Flash Fiction Forward; 80 Very Short Stories*. (2006). London: W. W. Norton & Company.
15. Newkirk, D. (2023). *Whispers*. Flash Fiction Magazine, 2-5.

The article was received by the editors 16.03.2026

The article was recommended for printing 22.04.2026

The article was published 29.05.2026

Ємець Олександр Васильович – кандидат філологічних наук, доцент, професор кафедри германської філології та перекладознавства, Хмельницького національного університету; e-mail: yemetsov@ukr.net; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6332-2830>; GOOGLE SCHOLAR: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=MPmsa5sAAAAJ&hl=uk>

СТРАТЕГІЇ ПЕРЕДАЧІ СТИЛІСТИЧНОГО ПРИЙОМУ ВИСУНЕННЯ У ПЕРЕКЛАДІ ОПОВІДАНЬ FLASH FICTION ТА MICROFICTION

У статті розглядаються аспекти висунення та стилістичні засоби їх реалізації у сучасних англomовних оповіданнях flash fiction і microfiction. Висунення визначається як прийом організації художнього тексту, спрямований на зосередження уваги читача на найбільш семантично і прагматично важливих елементах висловлення. Досліджуються два аспекти висунення – кількісний і якісний (Дж. Ліч) – з точки зору стратегій їх перекладу. Стратегію перекладу ми розуміємо не як єдиний прийом, а як сполучення перекладацьких прийомів, що застосовуються для відтворення естетичного та прагматичного ефекту вихідного тексту. Як показало дослідження, якісний аспект висунення в аналізованих текстах виявляється у використанні оригінальних метафор, переважно розгорнутих метафор, оксиморона та антитези, що часто створює парадокс. Кількісний аспект висунення реалізується у текстах flash fiction та microfiction за допомогою стилістичних конвергенцій. Відмінна риса конвергенцій у цих творах – це функціонування у сильних позиціях, в основному в кінцівках оповідань. Конвергенції базуються на взаємодії метафор з алітераціями («Traveling Alone», «Whispers»), або метафор з паралельними конструкціями та антитезою («Father», «Bullhead», «My Date with Neanderthal Woman»). Метафори у стилістичних конвергенціях підкреслюють теми кохання, толерантності, співчуття, а також захоплення красою природи, її вічним життям. Прийоми перекладу стилістичних засобів, що реалізують якісний аспект висунення, включають дослівний переклад, конкретизацію та компенсацію. Стилiстичні конвергенції є найбільш експліцитним засобом висунення, тому переклад цих засобів вимагає збереження образності та звукових повторів, застосовуючи як дослівний переклад, так і синонімічну заміну з метою точного відтворення авторського задуму.

Ключові слова: алітерація, висунення, кількісний аспект, сильна позиція, стилістична конвергенція, стратегія перекладу, якісний аспект.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 14.08.2025

Стаття рекомендована до друку 06.10.2025

Стаття опублікована 30.12.2025