

Human and AI-Powered Translation of Somatic Phraseological Units From Kazakh Into English: The Case of M. Auezov's *Kokserek*

Nauryzbay Abdrassil

Department of Foreign Philology and Translation Studies, Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan;
Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Assemzhan Zhaparova

Department of Foreign Philology and Translation Studies, Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Saniya Kabdrgalinova*

Department of Languages, International Information Technology University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Irina A. Olkova

Germanic and Romance Philology Department, Manash Kozybayev North Kazakhstan University, Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan

Konstantin A. Myachin

Germanic and Romance Philology Department, Manash Kozybayev North Kazakhstan University, Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan

Bota G. Kassabay

Department of Kazakh Linguistics named after A. Baytursinuly, Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Aigerim D. Nurekenova

Department of Kazakh Linguistics named after A. Baytursinuly, Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Aigul Y. Alpysbayeva

Department of Foreign Philology and Translation Studies, Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Abstract—This article examines the translation of somatic metaphorical phraseological units from Kazakh into English in Mukhtar Auezov's *Kokserek*. The study compares human relay translations and AI-generated direct translation in order to identify how figurative meaning, bodily imagery, and cultural connotations are preserved or transformed in literary discourse. Particular attention is paid to phraseological constructions containing somatic lexical components such as *көз* (eye), *мұрын* (nose), *тіс* (teeth), *құлақ* (ear), and *тұмсық* (snout/muzzle), which function as expressive devices in Kazakh literary narration. The research material consists of selected phraseological units from the novella and their English translations produced by S. Chorakaev (1997) and S. Geoghegan and S. Hollingsworth (2017) through the Russian intermediary version translated by A. Panteleev (1961). In addition, the study includes AI-generated translations produced directly from Kazakh into English. The analysis combines comparative translation, descriptive, and semantic-stylistic approaches. The findings indicate that relay translation frequently leads to semantic reduction, weakening of somatic imagery, and partial stylistic neutralization. Human translators often compensate for metaphorical loss through adaptive literary strategies and narrative elaboration. AI-generated translations, by contrast, tend to preserve the semantic structure and embodied imagery of the original text more directly. At the same time, despite stronger metaphorical fidelity, AI translations often lack the stylistic subtlety and literary nuance characteristic of professional literary translation. The study contributes to research on literary machine translation, relay translation, and Kazakh-English translation studies by highlighting the challenges of translating culturally embedded somatic phraseology in multilingual literary mediation.

Index Terms—somatic phraseological units, metaphor translation, relay translation, AI-powered translation, Kazakh literary discourse

* Corresponding Author.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mukhtar Auezov's novella *Kokserek* has attracted scholarly attention not only because of its literary value, but also because of its rich figurative language and culturally marked imagery. In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence technologies has also influenced translation practices, including literary translation. Neural machine translation systems and large language models are now capable of producing increasingly fluent and context-sensitive translations. However, literary texts remain difficult to translate because they rely heavily on metaphor, symbolism, emotional nuance, and authorial style. These challenges become particularly visible in the translation of phraseological units, whose meanings are often deeply rooted in cultural and linguistic context and cannot always be reproduced through direct lexical equivalence.

In Kazakh literary discourse, phraseological expressions play an important role in conveying national worldview, emotional perception, and artistic imagery. A special place among them belongs to somatic phraseological units containing body-related components which are used to describe emotions, instinctive reactions, and sensory perception. They are especially characteristic of Auezov's prose, where zoomorphic and psychological imagery form an essential part of the author's stylistic manner. In *Kokserek*, somatic phraseological constructions contribute not only to descriptive narration, but also to the symbolic representation of the relationship between humans, animals, and the natural world.

The choice of *Kokserek* as the research material is motivated by its important place in Kazakh literary history. Mukhtar Auezov is widely regarded as one of the founders of modern Kazakh prose and a major representative of twentieth-century Kazakh literature. Written during the early Soviet period, the novella reflects the development of psychological and realist prose enriched by symbolic and zoomorphic elements. The text is particularly valuable for translation analysis because it contains numerous metaphorical and somatic phraseological units connected with the traditional Kazakh worldview and the representation of animal instinct and sensory experience. In addition, the existence of several English translations produced through Russian intermediary versions makes the novella especially relevant for studying relay translation and semantic transformation in multilingual literary mediation.

Translating Kazakh phraseological units into English presents serious linguistic and cultural difficulties, particularly in relay translation, where the target text is created through an intermediary language rather than directly from the original. During this process, metaphorical imagery and culturally specific meanings may undergo omission, simplification, semantic neutralization, or reinterpretation. As a result, relay translation raises important questions about the preservation of literary expressiveness and cultural specificity in translated texts.

At the same time, recent advances in AI-powered translation systems have created new possibilities for direct Kazakh-English translation without intermediary mediation. Large language models such as ChatGPT can generate stylistically adaptive translations while maintaining contextual semantic relations. However, the extent to which AI systems are capable of reproducing metaphorical phraseology, somatic imagery, and literary nuance remains insufficiently explored, particularly in relation to low-resource languages such as Kazakh.

While previous research has addressed metaphor translation, literary translation, and machine translation separately, the comparative analysis of human relay translation and AI-generated direct translation of Kazakh somatic phraseological units remains limited. Moreover, the English translation of Kazakh literary phraseology continues to be an understudied area within contemporary translation studies. Therefore, the present study aims to analyze the semantic and stylistic transformation of somatic phraseological units in the English translations of *Kokserek*.

The study investigates how Kazakh somatic phraseological units are rendered into English through both human relay translation and AI-generated direct translation. Particular attention is paid to the preservation of metaphorical imagery, emotional intensity, and cultural connotations, as well as to the translation strategies used in rendering somatic phraseologies in literary discourse.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Phraseological units are among the most culturally specific and linguistically complex elements of literary discourse. Their meanings are connected not only with individual lexical components, but also with cultural associations, historical context, and figurative perception. Baker (2018) notes that phraseological expressions create particular difficulties in translation because they cannot always be rendered through direct lexical equivalence. Newmark (1988) likewise emphasizes that the translation of metaphorical and idiomatic expressions should preserve not only semantic meaning, but also emotional, stylistic, and cultural effect. In literary texts, phraseological constructions therefore function as important carriers of imagery, expressiveness, and national worldview. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) similarly argue that many phraseological expressions reflect culturally embedded conceptual structures that often resist direct translation. Studies on literary translation further demonstrate that figurative phraseology frequently undergoes simplification, semantic transformation, or partial loss in translation (Oleh & Evgeniia, 2023; Li & Jing, 2025).

A special subgroup of phraseology is represented by somatic expressions containing lexical components related to parts of the human or animal body. Such constructions are closely associated with bodily experience, emotional perception, instinctive behavior, and sensory imagery. In cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that metaphorical thinking is fundamentally grounded in embodied human experience. From this perspective, somatic

phraseological units are not simply decorative stylistic devices, but linguistic forms through which emotions and behavioral reactions are conceptualized. In Turkic languages, including Kazakh, bodily imagery occupies an important place in the representation of emotions, interpersonal relations, and instinctive reactions. Expressions containing components such as *көз* (eye), *мұрын* (nose), *тіс* (teeth), *құлақ* (ear), *бас* (head), and *тұмсық* (snout or muzzle) are especially frequent in literary discourse. Current scholarship on phraseology also highlights the symbolic and cognitive role of bodily metaphors in artistic narration and paremiological discourse (Pak & Fan, 2026; Remkhe et al., 2026; Rsaliyeva et al., 2026).

The translation of phraseological expressions has long been regarded as one of the central problems in translation studies. Nida (1964) introduced the principle of dynamic equivalence, according to which translation should reproduce a similar communicative and emotional effect rather than preserve only formal lexical structure. Venuti (1995), in turn, distinguishes between domestication and foreignization strategies in literary translation. In practice, translators often use adaptation, omission, compensation, amplification, or explicitation when rendering culturally marked phraseological units into another language. These difficulties become especially visible in the translation of somatic and metaphorical expressions, where bodily imagery and cultural associations may be weakened or neutralized in the target text. Contemporary research also demonstrates that translators constantly balance semantic accuracy with the preservation of figurative and stylistic effect (Kolesnikova, 2025; Li & Jing, 2025).

The present study also draws upon the concept of relay translation, or indirect translation. Relay translation occurs when a text is translated through an intermediary language instead of directly from the original source language. According to Rosa et al. (2017), each stage of intermediary mediation may introduce additional semantic or stylistic shifts. This issue becomes particularly important in literary prose rich in metaphorical and phraseological imagery. During relay translation, culturally specific meanings and figurative structures may be generalized, simplified, or partially omitted. Such tendencies are especially common in the translation of literature from low-resource languages into globally dominant languages through intermediary linguistic systems.

In recent years, artificial intelligence technologies have also become an important topic in translation studies. Unlike earlier machine translation approaches focused primarily on sentence-level equivalence, large language models are capable of generating more context-sensitive and stylistically adaptive translations. Scholars increasingly examine the role of AI in literary translation, particularly in relation to metaphorical language and stylistically complex texts. Researchers such as Kenny (2022), Shahmerdanova (2025), and Toral (2019) note that AI-powered systems demonstrate growing potential in the translation of figurative language and phraseological expressions. Recent comparative studies additionally examine the effectiveness of generative AI systems such as ChatGPT in literary translation and note their growing ability to preserve contextual meaning, stylistic coherence, and figurative language in comparison with conventional machine translation systems (Abdelhalim et al., 2025). Some recent studies also suggest that neural systems may preserve metaphorical structures more directly than relay translation because they avoid intermediary semantic reduction (Xu, 2024; van Heerden & Bas, 2024). At the same time, researchers emphasize that AI-generated literary translation still faces difficulties in reproducing cultural nuance, implicit symbolism, and stylistic subtlety, especially in low-resource languages and culturally marked literary texts. Against this theoretical background, the present study analyzes somatic phraseological expressions in *Kokserek* and examines their transformation in both human relay translations and AI-generated direct translations into English.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research material for this study consists of somatic phraseological units extracted from *Kokserek* by Auezov (2023) and their English translations produced through relay translation. The analysis focuses on phraseological constructions containing somatic lexical components such as *көз* (eye), *мұрын* (nose), *тіс* (teeth), *құлақ* (ear), and *тұмсық* (snout or muzzle), which function as expressive stylistic devices in Kazakh literary discourse. Only metaphorically and stylistically marked phraseological units were selected for analysis, while neutral descriptive expressions were excluded from the corpus.

The study examines the English translations produced by S. Chorakaev in *Fierce Grey* (1997) and S. Geoghegan and S. Hollingsworth in *Savage Grey* (2017), both created through the Russian intermediary translation *Seryi Lyutyi* (1961) by Alexander Panteleev. The title *Kokserek* itself carries important symbolic and zoomorphic associations connected with the image of a fierce grey wolf. For this reason, the translators chose adaptive titles such as *Fierce Grey* and *Savage Grey* to make the image more accessible and expressive for English-speaking readers. These translations were selected because they represent different periods and approaches in the English reception of Kazakh literature, allowing the study to trace certain diachronic tendencies in relay literary translation. Since both English versions were translated indirectly through Russian, the intermediary text also serves as an important layer for identifying semantic and stylistic shifts that emerge during the multilingual translation process.

In addition to the published human translations, the research includes AI-generated literary translations produced using OpenAI's ChatGPT (GPT-5.5, 2026 version). ChatGPT was selected because large language models increasingly demonstrate the ability to generate context-sensitive and stylistically adaptive translations. Unlike traditional machine translation systems primarily focused on lexical equivalence, ChatGPT allows direct translation from Kazakh into

English without intermediary mediation. This allows comparison between relay human translation and AI-generated direct translation, particularly in terms of metaphorical imagery and stylistic preservation.

The AI translations were generated using the prompt: “Translate the sentence in a literary style.” The prompt was intentionally kept simple in order to evaluate the model’s natural handling of metaphorical phraseology and literary style. Each example was translated separately to minimize contextual interference and maintain consistency throughout the analysis.

The methodological framework combines comparative translation analysis, semantic-stylistic analysis, descriptive analysis, and elements of qualitative discourse analysis. The source text and translated versions were compared at semantic, stylistic, metaphorical, and cultural levels. Particular attention was paid to the preservation of somatic imagery, emotional expressiveness, zoomorphic metaphors, and culturally specific conceptualization embedded in the original Kazakh text. The study also examines translation strategies such as literal translation, semantic adaptation, omission, compensation, amplification, and explicitation.

The theoretical foundation of the study primarily relies on Nida’s theory of dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes the preservation of communicative and emotional effect in translation. In addition, Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory is applied to examine the embodied and sensory nature of somatic phraseological units. The analysis of multilingual mediation is further informed by relay translation theory developed by Rosa et al. (2017), particularly in relation to semantic shifts and metaphorical reduction in indirect translation. Elements of Venuti’s domestication and foreignization framework are also used to evaluate the degree of cultural and stylistic adaptation in the English translations.

The selected methodological approach makes it possible to identify the main differences between human relay translation and AI-generated direct translation in rendering somatic phraseological units from Kazakh into English literary discourse.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Semantic and Stylistic Transformation of Somatic Phraseologies With the Component “Eye”

The metaphorical phraseology “көздері от шашады” in the original Kazakh text creates a vivid image that intensifies the threatening and predatory nature of the wolves. Literally, the expression may be translated as “eyes throwing fire,” where the metaphor “от шашады” conveys rage, danger, and uncontrollable aggression. Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory explains emotional intensity through the imagery of fire, reflecting an embodied perception of aggression. In Kazakh literary discourse, such sensory and bodily imagery is frequently used to strengthen emotional impact and emphasize the instinctive, animalistic nature of characters. The expression therefore performs not only a descriptive function, but also an important symbolic and stylistic role in the narrative.

TABLE 1
COMPARATIVE RENDERING OF THE SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT “КӨЗІ ОТ ШАШАДЫ”

Kazakh Original	Russian Translation by A. Pantelev	English Translation by S. Chorakaev	English Translation S. Geoghegan & S. Hollingsworth	ChatGPT-Generated Translation
Тұмсығы мен бастары, мойын жүндері қып-қызыл болған қасқырдың жасыл көздері от шашады (Auezov, 2023, p. 6). <i>*Gloss translation:</i> The green eyes of the wolf, whose snout, head, and neck fur had turned bright red, were throwing fire. <i>*All the gloss translations are done by authors</i>	Зеленые глаза злобно горели (Auezov, 1982, p. 3) <i>Gloss translation:</i> The green eyes burned maliciously/angrily.	Their green eyes glinted ferociously (Auezov, 1997, p. 81).	Their green eyes burned balefully (Auezov, 2017, p. 60).	The green eyes of the wolf, whose snout, head, and neck fur had turned crimson red, seemed to spit fire.

In Pantelev’s Russian translation, the metaphor becomes somewhat simplified. The dynamic image of “throwing fire” is rendered as “злобно горели” (“burned maliciously”). Although the association with fire is partially preserved through the verb “горели,” the vividness of the original metaphor is reduced. At the same time, the translator compensates for this weakening through the adverb “злобно,” which reinforces the emotional tone of hostility and aggression. In terms of Nida’s (1964) dynamic equivalence theory, the translation preserves the general emotional effect of danger and menace, even though the figurative intensity of the original expression becomes less powerful.

Among the English translations, Hollingsworth’s version appears closer to the emotional atmosphere of the original text. The phrase “burned balefully” retains the association with fire through the verb “burned,” while the adverb “balefully” introduces connotations of menace and hostility. Although the metaphor is not translated literally, much of the stylistic tension and emotional expressiveness of Auezov’s prose is preserved. The translator relies on semantic adaptation and stylistic compensation to recreate the literary effect of the source text rather than reproduce its exact lexical structure.

By contrast, Chorakaev’s translation demonstrates a greater degree of metaphorical reduction. The verb “glinted” mainly refers to shining or reflecting light and therefore weakens the fiery imagery contained in the original

phraseology. While the adverb “ferociously” still conveys aggression, the metaphor connected with fire almost disappears. In terms of Venuti’s (1995) domestication strategy, the translation appears more adapted to natural English literary narration than to preserving the culturally marked imagery of the Kazakh text. As a result, the emotional aggression remains, but the figurative richness characteristic of Auezov’s style becomes less visible.

Since both English translations were produced through the Russian intermediary version, they reflect an additional stage of semantic mediation. Relay translation theory (Rosa et al., 2017) notes that indirect translation often leads to semantic reduction and stylistic transformation, especially in metaphorically rich prose.

The AI-generated translation approaches the metaphor differently. The phrase “seemed to spit fire” preserves the central image of fiery aggression more directly and remains closer to the metaphorical structure of the Kazakh original. Unlike the relay human translations, the AI version avoids replacing the metaphor with a more neutral descriptive construction. At the same time, the modal element “seemed” slightly softens the force of the metaphor, making it more interpretative than direct. Recent research on AI-assisted literary translation (Xu, 2024; Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2022) similarly suggests that large language models often preserve metaphorical imagery more consistently when translating directly without intermediary linguistic mediation.

Overall, this example shows that metaphorical phraseologies undergo different levels of transformation in literary translation. The Russian and English relay translations reveal varying degrees of semantic reduction, stylistic neutralization, and compensatory adaptation, while the AI-generated translation remains closer to the metaphorical structure of the original through direct translation from Kazakh into English, although it occasionally sounds more interpretative.

The next phraseological expression “*көзі тайса болды*” in the original Kazakh text conveys the idea of taking advantage of a brief moment when a person loses attention. It can be literally translated as “as soon as one’s eyes turned away,” although its meaning extends beyond the physical act of looking away and implies inattentiveness, carelessness, or temporary loss of control. In the context of the narrative, the expression emphasizes Kokserek’s instinctive cunning and predatory behavior, as he immediately uses every moment of human distraction to steal food. In Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) terms, the somatic component “*көз*” (eye) metaphorically represents attention and control. The phrase therefore functions not only as a description of action, but also as a means of characterizing the wolf’s instinctive nature.

TABLE 2
COMPARATIVE RENDERING OF THE SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT “*КӨЗІ ТАЙО*”

Kazakh Original	Russian Translation by A. Panteleev	English Translation by S. Chorakaev	English Translation S. Geoghegan & S. Hollingsworth	ChatGPT-Generated Translation
Жалғыз ақ кісі көзі тайса болды, қазір-ақ жоқ қылады (Auezov, 2023, p. 9). <i>Gloss translation:</i> As soon as a person’s eye turned away, he would immediately make it disappear.	Стоило людям заглядеться как он жадно хватал все, что было плохо положено и попадалось ему на зуб (Auezov, 1982, p. 6). <i>Gloss translation:</i> As soon as people became distracted, he greedily grabbed everything that was badly placed and came to his teeth.	The moment someone looked away he greedily pounced on everything he could sink his teeth in (Auezov, 1997, p. 83).	But the moment that person turned his back, he would instantly wolf down everything that had been placed in front of him, looking mournfully at the empty bowl as if there had never been anything there. (Auezov, 2017, p. 63).	The moment someone looked away, he would instantly make it disappear.

As seen in the Table 2, the idiom is not preserved literally in the Russian translation. Instead, the translator uses the more explanatory construction “*стоило людям заглядеться*.” This expression successfully conveys the idea of temporary distraction, while the additional phrase “*что было плохо положено*” introduces a colloquial nuance absent in the original text. As a result, the translation becomes more descriptive and interpretative than the concise Kazakh phraseology.

Chorakaev’s English translation remains relatively close to the original meaning. The phrase “looked away” directly reflects the idea of momentary distraction, while the expression “sink his teeth in” preserves the animalistic imagery associated with Kokserek’s predatory instincts. However, the use of the verb “pounced” introduces a stronger sense of aggression and physical attack, shifting the emphasis away from stealth and opportunism. Because the translation was produced through Russian intermediary mediation, some of the idiomatic compactness of the Kazakh original becomes less visible. Even so, the translation maintains the zoomorphic characterization of the protagonist.

Hollingsworth’s version adopts a more adaptive and stylistically expressive approach. In comparison with Chorakaev’s relatively concise rendering, this translation introduces the phrasal verb “wolf down,” creating an implicit association between rapid eating and wolf-like behavior. This choice strengthens the connection between Kokserek’s actions and his animal nature, partly compensating for the metaphorical loss caused by indirect translation. At the same time, the added detail “looking mournfully at the empty bowl as if there had never been anything there” increases the literary expressiveness of the passage, although it also expands the original meaning. So, the translation is clearly oriented toward natural and emotionally engaging English literary narration.

Finally, the ChatGPT-generated translation stays much closer to the concise structure of the original phraseology. The expression “looked away” directly preserves the somatic metaphor connected with loss of attention, while the phrase “make it disappear” conveys the implied meaning of stealing or taking something unnoticed. In contrast to the human literary translations, the AI version avoids additional stylistic amplification and remains more restrained. This restraint weakens the predatory tone created in the human translations through phrases such as “pounced,” “sink his teeth in,” and “wolf down.” As a result, the AI-generated translation reproduces the semantic meaning of the idiom more directly, but with less narrative intensity and stylistic color.

In general, this analysis reveals tendencies similar to those observed in the previous phraseological example involving the somatic component “көз” (eye). The human relay translations compensate for idiomatic and semantic loss through stylistic amplification, descriptive adaptation, and more naturalized literary expressions. This often makes the translations more emotionally expressive, although they move further away from the compact metaphorical structure of the Kazakh original. The AI-generated translation, by contrast, preserves the semantic structure and somatic imagery more directly. However, despite its closer proximity to the original phraseological construction, the AI version remains stylistically less expressive than the professional literary translations.

Several other phraseological expressions containing the somatic component “көз” (eye), including “көз жазып қалу” and “көз ілескенше,” were excluded from the analysis because they were omitted in the Russian intermediary translation and consequently disappeared from the English relay versions. Their omission nevertheless remains significant, as it demonstrates how indirect translation may lead not only to semantic transformation but also to the complete loss of culturally marked phraseological imagery.

B. Semantic and Stylistic Transformation of Somatic Phraseologies With the Component “Nose/ Snout”

The phraseological expression “мұрнын жару” (lit. “to pierce the nose”) in the original Kazakh text represents a highly expressive olfactory metaphor that foregrounds both sensory intensity and instinctive animal attraction. The idiom “мұрнын жару” conveys an extreme degree of sensory impact, suggesting that the smell is so strong that it metaphorically “pierces” or “breaks through” the nose. The accompanying phrase “өзіне тартқан” shifts the meaning from perception to action, conveying a sense of irresistible attraction. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) terms, the expression reflects embodied metaphorical mappings in which smell is conceptualized as force and attraction as movement. Within the narrative of *Kokserek*, the phrase does more than describe olfactory perception: it activates the wolf’s instinctive predatory response.

TABLE 3
COMPARATIVE RENDERING OF THE SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT “МҰРНЫН ЖАРУ”

Kazakh Original	Russian Translation by A. Pantelev	English Translation by S. Chorakaev	English Translation S. Geoghegan & S. Hollingsworth	ChatGPT-Generated Translation
Бірақ сол қорадан кеш бойы мұрнын жарып өзіне тартқан қой иісі келді (Auezov, 2023, p. 14). <i>Gloss translation:</i> But from that sheepfold came the smell of sheep that pierced his nose and drew him toward itself all evening long.	Он останавливался с подветренной стороны, и внос ему бил густой сытный запах хлеба и скота, а в уши- собачий беспокойный лай (Auezov, 1982, p. 10). <i>Gloss translation:</i> He stopped on the leeward side, and a thick rich smell of the sheepfold and livestock struck his nose, while anxious barking of dogs struck his ears.	He would stop leeward and his nose would sense the rich tasty smell of a sheep-cot and his ears would hear the excited barking of dogs (Auezov, 1997, p. 87).	His nose filled with the fence, appetising smell off paddock and livestock and his ears, with the agitated barking of dogs (Auezov, 2017, p. 67).	But from that sheepfold came the smell of sheep that pierced his nose and drew him toward it all evening long.

In Pantelev’s translation, the original metaphor is rendered through the more conventional expression “бил в нос.” This choice retains part of the forceful sensory impression but softens the extremity of the Kazakh imagery. From the perspective of dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964), the translator appears to prioritize communicative effect over formal metaphorical structure. At the same time, the translation introduces semantic broadening: the more specific reference to sheep smell expands into the wider category of barn and livestock odors. The adjective “сытный” adds an evaluative nuance absent from the original, subtly shifting the image away from instinctive predation toward associations of abundance and nourishment.

The first English translation reflects a further stage of mediated reduction. The phrase “rich tasty smell” preserves the attractiveness of the odor, but the violent sensory force encoded in “мұрнын жару” is substantially weakened. The verb “sense” introduces a more neutral perceptual framework, consistent with what Venuti (1995) describes as domestication, where readability in the target language takes precedence over preserving stylistic markedness. As a result, some of the immediacy and embodied intensity of the original expression are lost.

Translation by Hollingsworth seems more compensatory and stylistically adaptive approach. The adjective “fierce” functions as a form of semantic compensation for the missing metaphorical violence of “piercing the nose,” while “appetising smell” restores the idea of instinctive attraction. Here, communicative impact is clearly prioritized over

lexical closeness to the source text. Nevertheless, similar to the Russian-mediated version, the replacement of “sheep” with the broader image of paddock and livestock reduces part of the cultural and narrative specificity embedded in the Kazakh pastoral setting.

The AI-generated translation preserves the two central components of the original phraseology more directly: the embodied sensory violence expressed through “*pierced his nose*” and the instinctive pull conveyed by “*drew him toward it*.” It also remains relatively close to the concise narrative structure of the Kazakh original and avoids the descriptive expansion found in the human translations. But the translation sounds somewhat literal and lacks part of the stylistic fluidity and atmospheric richness achieved in the literary human versions. The transformations observed here are consistent with the broader patterns identified throughout the analysis.

The following phraseological expression “*тұмсығын төсеп*” in the original Kazakh text appears as a vivid somatic metaphor closely connected with the sensory and instinctive behavior of the wolf, which literally may be translated as “laying its snout.” The somatic component “*тұмсық*” (“snout” or “muzzle”) plays a central role in constructing the zoomorphic imagery of the passage, while the verb “*төсеп*” conveys the physical act of stretching or directing the snout into the wind in order to detect distant smells. In the context of *Kokserek*, the phrase emphasizes the wolf’s heightened sensory perception and predatory instincts. On the other hand, it reflects the close connection between animal behavior and the natural environment that is characteristic of Kazakh literary discourse.

TABLE 4
COMPARATIVE RENDERING OF THE SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT “*ТҰМСЫҒЫН ТӨСЕУ*”

Kazakh Original	Russian Translation by A. Panteleev	English Translation by S. Chorakaev	English Translation S. Geoghegan & S. Hollingsworth	ChatGPT-Generated Translation
Талай жерден қарауылдан қарап, желге тұмсығын төсеп, алыстан тартқан бір иіспен жүріп отырып, бір қыстаудың желкесінен келіп шықты. (Auezov, 2023, p. 13). <i>Gloss translation:</i> After watching cautiously from many places, stretching its snout toward the wind and following a smell carried from afar, it came out behind a winter camp.	Он останавливался с подветренной стороны, и внос ему бил густой сытный запах хлева и скота, а в уши собачий беспокойный лай (Auezov, 1982, p. 10). <i>Gloss translation:</i> He stopped on the leeward side, and a thick rich smell of the sheepfold and livestock struck his nose, while anxious barking of dogs struck his ears.	He would stop leeward and his nose would sense the rich tasty smell of a sheep-cot and his ears would hear the excited barking of dogs (Auezov, 1997, p. 87).	He stopped on the leeward side of the hill. (Auezov, 2017, p. 67).	After watching cautiously from many places, stretching its snout toward the wind and following a scent carried from afar, it emerged behind a winter camp.

In Russian translation, the original somatic construction “*желге тұмсығын төсеп*” is omitted and replaced with a more generalized descriptive structure. As a result, the key zoomorphic image of directional scent-tracking through the snout disappears. In the Kazakh text, the bodily gesture functions as an embodied representation of active perception, whereas the Russian version shifts the focus toward more passive olfactory reception. In terms of dynamic equivalence theory, the translation preserves the general situational meaning of scent detection, but the embodied metaphor itself is lost. Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor framework also helps explain this shift: the original schema of perception as active movement becomes simplified into a more neutral model of perception as reception.

The translator Chorakaev partially restores the somatic dimension through the lexical item “*nose*,” but the original zoomorphic gesture is still weakened. In the Kazakh phrase, the wolf actively directs its snout toward the wind as part of instinctive hunting behavior, whereas the English rendering reduces this action to passive sensory perception through the verb “*sense*.” From the perspective of Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen (2005), this reflects a partial loss of culturally embedded somatic conceptualization, since the animal body is no longer presented as an active instinctive agent. Consequently, the dynamic interaction between body, wind, and scent becomes less vivid, and the phrase functions more as description than embodied metaphor.

Hollingsworth’s translation, however, moves even further toward narrative simplification and omission. Both the somatic component and the sensory metaphor are excluded, leaving mainly spatial orientation within the scene. Within Venuti’s (1995) domestication framework, this may be interpreted as a strong adaptation toward target-language fluency and narrative economy. However, the strategy also reduces the zoomorphic perspective of the passage, weakening the embodied sensory perception that shapes the wolf’s characterization in the original text.

In comparison, the AI-generated translation preserves nearly all central metaphorical and somatic components of the original sentence. The expression “*stretching its snout toward the wind*” closely reproduces the embodied sensory orientation encoded in “*желге тұмсығын төсеп*,” while “*following a scent carried from afar*” maintains the instinctive tracking process central to the narrative scene. Moreover, the AI-generated version remains stylistically close to the syntactic structure and narrative progression of the source text without introducing substantial descriptive amplification. Compared with the previous AI examples, this translation demonstrates greater stylistic restraint and avoids excessive explicitation. Nevertheless, despite its strong semantic fidelity, the AI rendering still sounds somewhat

more literal and structurally transparent than the smoother literary narration characteristic of professional human translation.

The example reveals patterns already visible in the earlier analyses. The human relay translations demonstrate varying degrees of omission, semantic reduction, and stylistic adaptation, often prioritizing narrative fluency and readability over the preservation of embodied metaphorical imagery. As the text moves from Kazakh through Russian into English, culturally specific zoomorphic perception and somatic conceptualization gradually weaken. By contrast, the AI-generated direct translation preserves the original metaphorical structure, sensory orientation, and somatic imagery much more closely.

C. Semantic and Stylistic Transformation of Somatic Phraseologies Expressing Aggression and Predatory Instinct

The phraseological construction “*тісін сақылдатып, құлағын жымитып, ашумен тап береді*” in the original Kazakh text represents a highly expressive cluster of somatic elements describing the aggressive behavior of the white wolf. The sentence combines several bodily images that intensify the predatory atmosphere of the scene. The expression “*тісін сақылдатып*” literally means “clattering its teeth” and functions as both an auditory and visual marker of rage and threat. The phrase “*құлағын жымитып*” (“flattening its ears”) reflects an instinctive animal gesture associated with aggression and readiness to attack. Finally, the phraseological unit “*тап береді*” conveys the idea of suddenly lunging or pouncing upon an opponent. Together, these somatic constructions create a vivid kinetic image characteristic of *Kokserek* and reinforce the zoomorphic intensity of Auezov’s narrative style.

TABLE 5
COMPARATIVE RENDERING OF THE SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS “*ТІСІ САҚЫЛДАУ; ҚҰЛАҒЫ ЖЫМИҢО*”

Kazakh Original	Russian Translation by A. Pantelev	English Translation by S. Chorakaev	English Translation S. Geoghegan & S. Hollingsworth	ChatGPT-Generated Translation
Басынан асып аунап түседі, кейде ақ қасқыр ырылдап тісін сақылдатып, құлағын жымитып, ашумен тап береді (Auezov, 2023, p. 18). Gloss translation: Rolling over his head, sometimes the white wolf growled, clicked its teeth, flattened its ears, and lunged in anger.	Она сердито огрызалась, а он хватал ее за шею и подержав отпуская (Auezov, 1982, p. 12). Gloss translation: She snarled angrily, while he grabbed her by the neck and, after holding her, let her go.	She would peevishly yelp and bite (Auezov, 1997, p. 93).	She would snarl at him angrily and he would grab her by the neck and, having held her like this for a moment, let her go. (Auezov, 2017, p. 71).	Rolling head over heels, the white wolf would sometimes growl, clatter its teeth, flatten its ears, and lunge in fury.

The original somatic cluster undergoes noticeable reduction and syntactic compression in Pantelev’s Russian translation. Several key bodily components, including the clattering of teeth and the flattening of ears, are omitted. Instead, the aggressive behavior is generalized through the verb “*огрызалась*,” which conveys a simplified defensive animal reaction. In terms of Nida’s (1964) dynamic equivalence theory, the translator preserves the overall communicative effect of aggression, but the embodied specificity of the original becomes weaker. As a result, the detailed kinetic imagery of the Kazakh text is replaced by a more generalized behavioral description.

English translation by Chorakaev continues this process of simplification. The original somatic sequence is reduced to two generalized actions, “yelp” and “bite,” which only partially reproduce the violent and instinctive nature of the wolf’s behavior. The adjective “*peevishly*” introduces a sense of irritation rather than predatory rage, shifting the emotional tone of the scene. Consequently, the embodied aggression encoded in the Kazakh phraseology is significantly softened. The translation prioritizes fluency and readability in English over preservation of culturally marked zoomorphic imagery.

Although Hollingsworth’s version also omits several somatic details, it restores part of the animalistic expressiveness through the verb “*snarl*,” which effectively reintroduces auditory aggression. However, the translation still omits important somatic details such as ear flattening and tooth-clattering, both of which are central to the embodied construction of rage in the Kazakh original. In terms of Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen’s (2005) concept of culturally embedded phraseology, this omission weakens part of the somatic conceptualization present in the source text. Nevertheless, the translation maintains narrative coherence and preserves the tension between the characters, balancing semantic fidelity with stylistic naturalness.

Against this background, the AI-generated translation preserves nearly the entire somatic sequence of the original phraseology, including “*clatter its teeth*,” “*flatten its ears*,” and “*lunge in fury*.” In Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) terms, the translation successfully maintains the embodied relationship between bodily gestures and emotional aggression that shapes the original narrative. The accumulation of aggressive actions also reproduces the kinetic intensity characteristic of Auezov’s zoomorphic prose more closely than the relay human translations.

At the same time, the AI translation remains relatively close to the syntactic organization and narrative compression of the source text without introducing substantial explanatory expansion. However, certain lexical choices such as “*lunge in fury*” make the aggression slightly more explicit than in the more compressed Kazakh original.

Overall, this example demonstrates that somatic phraseological clusters are especially sensitive to translation strategy and mediation pathway. Relay translation through Russian leads primarily to semantic generalization and partial loss of embodied detail. The human English translations use compensatory strategies but still omit several somatic markers in favor of narrative fluency and stylistic naturalness. By contrast, the AI-generated translation preserves the original somatic imagery and metaphorical structure more directly, although at times it becomes slightly more explicit and literal. These findings further show that somatic phraseological units function as culturally embedded structures in which meaning, embodiment, and stylistic form are closely interconnected.

The contrast between the two English translations also reflects broader diachronic tendencies in the translation of Kazakh literature into English, moving from more condensed semantic transfer toward increasingly adaptive and stylistically naturalized literary narration.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the translation of somatic phraseological units from Kazakh into English in Mukhtar Auezov's *Kokserек* through a comparative analysis of human relay translations and AI-generated direct translation. The findings show that somatic phraseologies represent highly culture-specific and stylistically important elements of Kazakh literary discourse, where bodily imagery functions not only as description but also as a means of expressing emotional intensity, instinctive behavior, sensory perception, and zoomorphic symbolism. The analysis further demonstrates that such constructions are especially sensitive to semantic and stylistic transformation during multilingual literary mediation.

The comparative analysis revealed that relay translation through Russian frequently results in semantic reduction, weakening of metaphorical imagery, omission of somatic elements, and partial stylistic neutralization. In many examples, embodied metaphorical structures present in the Kazakh original were generalized or replaced with more neutral descriptive narration. The Russian intermediary versions therefore became an additional stage of semantic and stylistic transformation that subsequently influenced the English translations. As a result, important aspects of zoomorphic embodiment, sensory dynamics, and culturally specific metaphorical conceptualization were partially reduced in the target texts.

At the same time, the human English translations demonstrated considerable stylistic flexibility and literary adaptation. The translators often employed compensatory strategies such as semantic amplification, idiomatic substitution, emotional intensification, and narrative elaboration in order to preserve the communicative and artistic effect of the original prose. Among the analyzed translations, Hollingsworth's version generally retained the emotional atmosphere and literary expressiveness of the source text more successfully, whereas Chorakaev's translation tended toward greater condensation and simplification. These differences suggest that human literary translators frequently prioritize narrative fluency and stylistic naturalness even when some metaphorical precision is weakened.

The AI-generated translations produced through direct Kazakh-English translation demonstrated a comparatively higher degree of semantic fidelity and preservation of somatic imagery. Unlike the relay human translations, the AI system retained many embodied metaphorical structures, including bodily gestures, sensory orientation, and zoomorphic imagery. This observation points to the growing potential of large language models in literary translation, particularly for low-resource languages such as Kazakh, where direct translation may reduce some semantic losses associated with intermediary mediation. At the same time, the analysis also showed that AI-generated translations occasionally introduced explicitation and interpretive amplification, making the imagery more overt and less stylistically condensed than in Auezov's original prose. Consequently, although the AI versions preserved metaphorical structure more directly, they lacked part of the stylistic subtlety, rhythmic compression, and narrative individuality characteristic of literary human translation.

The comparative analysis also indicates observable diachronic tendencies in the English translation of Kazakh literary prose. Chorakaev's 1997 translation generally reflects a more restrained and semantically condensed approach primarily oriented toward transferring narrative content. By contrast, Hollingsworth's 2017 version demonstrates stronger stylistic adaptation, emotional amplification, and domestication strategies intended to improve literary fluency for contemporary English-language readers. These differences may reflect broader shifts in the translation of Kazakh literature from relatively conservative semantic mediation toward more reader-oriented literary naturalization. At the same time, AI-generated direct translation introduces a different tendency characterized by closer preservation of metaphorical imagery alongside reduced stylistic subtlety and narrative individuality.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the translation of somatic phraseological units involves a complex interaction between semantic accuracy, embodied metaphorical imagery, stylistic expressiveness, and cultural adaptation. The findings suggest that relay translation may be especially problematic for metaphorically dense literary prose, while AI-assisted direct translation creates new possibilities for preserving culturally marked imagery. Nevertheless, human literary creativity remains essential for achieving stylistic sophistication, narrative balance, and artistic nuance in translated literary discourse.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of the present study. First, the corpus is relatively small, consisting of selected somatic phraseological units from a single novella. While the analysis provides qualitative insight into translation patterns, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader translation of Kazakh literary phraseology without further investigation on a larger and more diverse corpus. Second, the AI-generated

translations were produced using a deliberately simple prompt, and a more targeted prompt specifically addressing idiomatic and metaphorical structures could have yielded different results. Third, while multiple theoretical frameworks are engaged, a deeper theoretical account of why stylistic nuance remains difficult for AI to reproduce would strengthen the analytical contribution of the work. Finally, the study relies on one AI system (GPT-5.5, 2026 version) and two human translations, and different models or translation versions might produce different outcomes.

The study contributes to contemporary research in literary translation, phraseology, relay translation, and AI-assisted translation by expanding scholarly understanding of how embodied metaphorical structures from Kazakh literary discourse are transformed during multilingual translation. In addition, the findings highlight the importance of further research on AI-powered literary translation for Turkic and other low-resource languages, particularly in relation to the preservation of culturally embedded metaphorical and phraseological systems.

DECLARATION OF THE USE OF AI

ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-5.5 version) was used exclusively as a research object for generating comparative AI-assisted literary translations from Kazakh into English within the analytical framework of this study. The AI-generated translations were produced using the prompt “Translate the sentence in a literary style” and were analyzed comparatively alongside human literary translations.

AI tools were additionally used for limited language editing purposes, including grammar and stylistic correction. All research design, theoretical interpretation, selection of materials, analytical discussion, and final conclusions were conducted by the authors.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdelhalim, S. M., Alsahil, A. A., & Alsuhaibani, Z. A. (2025). Artificial intelligence tools and literary translation: A comparative investigation of ChatGPT and Google Translate from novice and advanced EFL student translators' perspectives. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 12(1), 2508031. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2508031>
- [2] Auezov, M. (1982). *Seryi Liutyi* [Fierce Grey] (A. Panteleev, Trans.). Zhalyyn.
- [3] Auezov, M. (1997). *Fierce Grey* (S. Chorakaev, Trans.). Zheti Zhargy.
- [4] Auezov, M. (2017). *Beauty in mourning* (S. Geoghegan & S. Hollingsworth, Trans.). Russell Press.
- [5] Auezov, M. (2023). *Kokserek: Povest' zhane angimeler* [Kokserek: Novellas and stories] (3rd ed.). Qasym baspa uii.
- [6] Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A coursebook on translation* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- [7] Dobrovolskij, D., & Piirainen, E. (2005). *Figurative language: Cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspectives*. Elsevier.
- [8] Guerbero-Arenas, A., & Toral, A. (2022). Creativity in translation: Machine translation as a constraint for literary texts. *Translation Spaces*, 11(2), 184–212. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.21025.gue>
- [9] Kenny, D. (2022). *Machine translation for everyone: Empowering users in the age of artificial intelligence*. Language Science Press.
- [10] Kolesnikova, M. P. (2025). Interpretatsiia idiom i kul'turno markirovannykh elementov v neirosetevom perevode (na materiale russko-angliiskikh parallelei) [Interpretation of idioms and culturally marked elements in neural machine translation (based on Russian-English parallels)]. *Litera*, 11, 187–216. <https://doi.org/10.25136/2409-8698.2025.11.76823>
- [11] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- [12] Li, X., & Jing, Y. (2025). Choices for figurative language in literary translation: A stratal perspective. *SAGE Open*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251406403>
- [13] Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.
- [14] Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a science of translating*. Brill.
- [15] Oleh, T., & Evgeniia, K. (2023). Types of interlingual equivalents of phraseological units and metaphors in literary translation. *AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies*, 7(2), 16–30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol7no2.2>
- [16] Pak, I. Y., & Fan, C. (2026). Obraznye edinit'sy v romane Yui Khua «Zhit'» i priemy ikh perevoda na russkii yazyk [Figurative units in Yu Hua's novel "To Live" and techniques for their translation into Russian]. *Philology. Theory & Practice*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.30853/phil20260012>
- [17] Remkhe, I. N., Shumilova, D. A., & Boldyreva, A. S. (2026). Modeling translation of metaphorical units from a linguocognitive perspective in Chinese and Russian. *Scientific Dialogue*, 15(1), 108–129. <https://doi.org/10.24224/2227-1295-2026-15-1-108-129>
- [18] Rosa, A. A., Pięta, H., & Maia, C. A. C. (2017). Theoretical, methodological and terminological issues regarding indirect translation: An overview. *Translation Studies*, 10(2), 113–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2017.1285247>
- [19] Rsaliyeva, Zh., Dadebaev, Zh., Abitzhanova, Zh., Alpysbayeva, A. Y., Olkova, I. A., & Myachin, K. A. (2026). The use of metaphors in paremiological units of English, Russian, and Kazakh languages: A study based on the thematic group "Labor-Idleness". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 16(5), 1785–1795. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1605.35>
- [20] Shahmerdanova, R. (2025). Artificial intelligence in translation: Challenges and opportunities. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum*, 2(1), 62–70. <https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.02500108>
- [21] Toral, A. (2019). Post-editing neural machine translation of literary texts: Experimental study and qualitative analysis. *Translation Spaces*, 8(2), 273–293.
- [22] van Heerden, I., & Bas, A. (2024). A perspective on literary metaphor in the context of generative AI. In *CREAI 2024 – Workshop on Artificial Intelligence and Creativity* (pp. 172–180). <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2409.01053>
- [23] Venuti, L. (1995). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.
- [24] Xu, Y. (2024). On metaphor translation into English based on artificial intelligence. *Procedia Computer Science*, 247, 1359–1365. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2024.10.162>

Nauryzbay Abdrassil is a PhD student and lecturer at Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University. He is the author of several scientific publications in the field of foreign language philology and translation studies in the Journal recommended by the Committee of Control of Quality in the sphere of Science and High Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1486-6038>

Assemzhan Zhaparova is a PhD, Acting Associate Professor of Farabi Kazakh national University with over 15 years of professional experience in teaching and research (Linguistic and Translation Studies). She is the author of many scientific publications, including articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5433-8539>

Saniya B. Kabdrgalinova is a Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor with over 25 years of professional experience in teaching and research. Research interests: contrastive and comparative linguistics, methodology, TEFL.

Dr. Kabdrgalinova is the author of many scientific publications, including articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. *Corresponding author.*

Irina A. Olkova is an associate professor, candidate of philological sciences of M. Kozybayev North Kazakhstan University. She is the author of many scientific publications in the field of foreign language philology and teaching. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1045-0887>

Konstantin A. Myachin is a candidate of philological sciences, associate professor, “German and Romance Philology” Department, Manash Kozybayev North Kazakhstan University. ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2454-0242

Bota G. Kassabay is a PhD student of the Department of Kazakh linguistics named after A. Baytursinuly, Farabi Kazakh national University. She is the author of several scientific publications in the field of foreign language philology and translation studies in the Journal recommended by the Committee of Control of Quality in the sphere of Science and High Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. ORCID iD: 0009-0002-2575-7555

Aigerim D. Nurekenova is a PhD student of the Department of Kazakh linguistics named after A. Baytursinuly, Farabi Kazakh national University. She is the author of several scientific publications in the field of foreign language philology and translation studies in the Journal recommended by the Committee of Control of Quality in the sphere of Science and High Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. ORCID iD: 0009-0006-6990-6136

Aygul Alpysbayeva is PhD, a member of the academic staff at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5947-6084> E-mail: aygul.alpysbaeva.91@mail.ru