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ETHNOCULTURAL UNITS IN KAZAKH-ENGLISH TRANSLATION: EXPERIENCE AND PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS

Abstract. This article looks into the relationship between professional experience and translation strategy selection among thirty-two Kazakh-English translators. Using a dual approach integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative tasks, we analyze how translators at distinct phases of their professional development (1-3 years to 16+ years) process culturally embedded Kazakh concepts.

Study findings reveal a considerable progression from initial reliance on literal translations to advanced cultural adaptation as experience grows. The analysis shows that translators frequently encounter ethnocultural units in their translation experience, with the primary challenge lies in maintaining the distinctiveness of national identity and cultural context. The most commonly used methods are transliteration and functional substitution during the situations when direct equivalents are unavailable. Statistical analysis reveals a strong positive correlation between experience and strategy sophistication ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$).

Results confirm the need for combining traditional translation methods with technological tools and underline the value of cultivating ethnocultural awareness in translator training system. The article contributes to translation studies by providing evidence-based insights into competency development and provides actionable insights for translator training programs.

Keywords: translation strategies, cultural adaptation, Kazakh-English translation, ethnocultural units, professional development

Introduction

Translation is fundamentally far more than a mechanical process of word substitution. It represents a complex act of intercultural mediation, requiring the translator to navigate not only linguistic structures but also the multifaceted structure of cultural understanding, values, and worldviews embedded in every text. This challenge becomes particularly pronounced when working with ethnocultural units – those words and phrases that reflect the depth of a community's historical experience, social practices, and collective identity.

The Kazakh language, with its Turkic roots and profound cultural inheritance from nomadic life, provides a strong example for examining these translation challenges. Kazakh contains numerous ethnocultural units that do not have direct equivalents in English, from concepts related to traditional customs and social relationships to metaphorical expressions shaped by the natural surroundings of the Central Asian steppe. As Tarakov notes, the translation of such units represents one of the most intricate obstacles in literary translation, requiring thorough analysis of national coloring and cultural specificity. The complexity involves more than finding words that approximate the meaning, but in preserving the connotative richness and cultural resonance that these terms carry for native speakers [37, 71].

Scholars have identified recurring difficulties in translating texts with high ethnocultural identity, including the dilution of distinct national features, the waning of subtle associations, and the distortion of contextual nuances. As Zhussupova and Ashimkhanova observe, translating such texts requires comparing not only linguistic systems but also different cultures, with pragmatic distortions being the predominant types of distortions. The loss of connotative content often leads to «complete loss of cultural distinctiveness» [45, 332]. Researchers led by Kunina note that while uncompromised conveyance of meaning is often impossible, translators must seek «to prevent

significant loss in semantics, stylistics, and pragmatics». They emphasize that adequate translation requires «accurate and deep understanding of the realia by the translator himself» [21, 166-168]. When translators resort to omission, valuable cultural information about the life and traditions of the source culture is might be lost [45, 334]. These difficulties extend across multiple genres, manifesting not only in literature but also in folklore texts [32, 489].

While theoretical frameworks for translating culture-specific items are well established, the research has overlooked in empirical research examining how professional experience shapes strategy selection in the specific context of Kazakh-English translation. Few studies have provided quantitative data on how a translator's professional trajectory influences their strategy preferences and, which impacts the quality of their translations. The present study seeks address these gaps by investigating the relationship between professional experience and strategy selection in the translation of Kazakh ethnocultural concepts into English. Through the analysis of six carefully selected cultural concepts – *aқsausaq* (ақсауақ), *bajғazy* (байғазы), *ғұрур* (ғұрып), *құт* (құт), *tajaқ tastam zher* (таяқ тастам жер), and *ala zhipti attamaу* (ала жіпті аттамау) – this research is designed to generate empirical data on how translators at different experience levels approach these challenges.

This review provides an overview of relevant studies on the translation of ethnocultural units, examining the historical progression of theoretical models from seminal works to current applications in the Kazakh context.

Theoretical Foundations of Ethnocultural Translation

The earliest recorded reflections on translation emerge from classical antiquity, where Cicero and St. Jerome established the fundamental distinction between «word-for-word» and «sense-for-sense» translation. Friedrich Schleiermacher later introduced the foundational dichotomy between «alienating» (moving the reader toward the writer) and «naturalizing» (moving the writer toward the reader) methods, a distinction that persists as a key factor in contemporary debates on foreignization and domestication.

J.S. Holmes established the discipline's theoretical framework with his foundational «map» which structured the field into theoretical, descriptive, and applied branches [24, 9-12]. Vermeer and Reiss later redirected attention to the text's purpose with Skopos Theory, arguing that the translation strategy is determined by the function of the target text rather than the source [24, 79]. Subsequently, Bassnett and Lefevere led the «Cultural Turn», centering the analysis on how the impact of societal beliefs, power structures, and textual artistry influence and constrain the translation process [24, 124-125].

The systematic study of translation as a linguistic discipline was emerged from multiple research traditions. R. Jakobson defined three fundamental types of translation intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic and introduced the concept of «equivalence in difference», arguing that translation can always be carried out even with grammatical distinctions between languages [16, 233]. Vinay and Darbelnet identified seven translation procedures including borrowing, calque, transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation, and literal translation - viewing equivalence-based approaches as the preferred method for proverbs, idioms, and clichés [39, 31-40]. J.C. Catford introduced translation shifts - departures from formal correspondence - distinguishing between level shifts and category shifts, including structure-shifts, class-shifts, unit-shifts, and intra-system shifts [9, 73-82]. Nida and Taber introduced the influential distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence, arguing that meaning should be given precedence to form. They maintain that while formal equivalence focuses on reproducing the source text's structure, dynamic equivalence seeks to produce in the target reader a response substantially similar to that of the original audience [27, 24-28].

K. Reiss, expanding upon Karl Bühler's three functions of language, classified texts into informative, expressive, and operative types, each requiring different translation methods [30, 26]. The Soviet school established rigorous frameworks through the work of Barhudarov who produced the Theory of Translation Transformations, providing a structured classification of changes - substitution, omission, addition, and rearrangement - necessary to achieve equivalence across

language systems [5, 190]. Newmark's contribution was a robust framework links specific text types (expressive, informative, and vocative) to the translator's primary strategy, balancing semantic translation (which focuses on the author's thought processes) and communicative translation (which focuses on reader comprehension and response) [26, 39-48].

Baker developed a framework addressing equivalence across four levels: at the word level, for lexical meaning and non-equivalence and above word level, exploring collocations, idioms, and fixed expressions, highlighting how their arbitrary and culture-specific nature creates translation challenges [4, 9-86]; at the grammatical level, analyzing how obligatory categories such as number, gender, and tense require structural adjustments [4, 92-123]; at the textual level, exploring thematic structure, the progression of ideas, and cohesive devices like reference and conjunction [4, 131-223]; and at the pragmatic level, addressing how meaning is generated through coherence and implicature in context [4, 230-263]. Lawrence Venuti renowned for introducing the concepts of foreignization and domestication to address the obscured role of translators in English-speaking cultures argues that domestication creates fluent, «invisible» translations that mask the source text's cultural differences and power dynamics [38].

J. House developed a model for translation quality assessment based on semantic and pragmatic equivalence stating: «an adequate translation is, then, a pragmatically and semantically equivalent one» [15, 63], as well as introducing the crucial distinction between overt translations (where the target text audience is not directly addressed) and covert translations (where the target text enjoys the status of an original source text) [15, 55]. Ch. Nord extended Skopos Theory by adding the «loyalty» principle, emphasizing the translator's responsibility to both source author and target reader [28, 125]. Hermans advanced descriptive translation studies through systematic analysis of translational norms [14, 7-16].

The translation of culturally bound elements introduces specific obstacles for ethnocultural transfer. Vlahov and Florin provided systematic frameworks for analyzing cultural realia - words and phrases that carry the cultural specificity of a particular linguistic community and are not readily translatable in other languages. Their research established core categorizations for classifying realia and identifying appropriate translation strategies [41, 47-104]. Vinogradov established fundamental principles for translating culturally specific concepts. His taxonomy distinguishes various types of culturally specific items, including realia, historicisms, mythologisms, and associative realia [40, 117-120]. The translation of metaphor presents particular challenges for ethnocultural transfer, given the profoundly shaped by cultural contexts of metaphorical meaning. Key strategies emerged from initial investigations in this domain for addressing these challenges. Dobrzyńska identifies three possible approaches: using an exact equivalent of the original metaphor (the $M \rightarrow M$ procedure); seeking another metaphorical phrase expressing a similar sense (the $M \rightarrow M^2$ procedure); or replacing an untranslatable metaphor with its approximate literal paraphrase (the $M \rightarrow P$ procedure) [11, 599]. Following this foundational work, Saygin observes that «previous cross-linguistic studies of metaphor have mostly been carried out within the context of linguistics, sociolinguistics, metaphor theory, or machine translation. Looking at cognitive psychological aspects of metaphor and other aspects of figurative language in multilingual tasks is an area calling for further attention» [33, 6]. Extending this research, Jensen emphasizes the consequences of translation choices, noting that «any choice of metaphor or paraphrase of metaphorical expressions may have profound semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive implications; if the translator infers a meaning not intended by the source text writer, the text may create a different meaning and effect in the target text than in the source text» [17, 204].

The development of translation technology research can be traced through several key contributions. Dreyfus et al's skill acquisition framework established initial theories of novice-to-expert progression that later informed translation competence studies [12, 16-51]. L. Bowker pioneered a methodology enabling translators to use generic corpus analysis tools to exploit specialized target language corpora as translation resources [7, 353-361]. Cronin examined

translation in the context of globalization and digital technologies [10, 71]. The PACTE group developed a comprehensive model of translation competence [29, 44-50].

H. Risku outlines three paradigms in cognitive translation research: information processing (translation as code switching and symbol manipulation), neural networks and connectionism (translation as an experiential, cultural act), and situated cognition (translation as socioculturally situated interaction) [31, 3]. Expanding upon these cognitive frameworks, scholars including Tарақов, Жақсылықов, Мұсалы, and Адаева adapt this perspective to the Kazakh context, specifying the detailed competencies required to become a professional translator [37, 105].

This emphasis on the translator's cognitive and professional role is elaborated upon in Esembekov's analysis of literary translation. Esembekov clarifies that 'in interpreting a literary work, the concept of «text» is comprises distinct yet interconnected elements: a) text as an object of understanding, i.e., a structure producing meaning; b) «source text» – a text that can be translated into another language, adapted; c) translation text – a text reshaped for a new audience in another language' [13, 22]. This tripartite distinction highlights the translator's responsibility to both: first to comprehend the source text as a meaning-generating structure, and then to produce a target text that has been appropriately adapted for new readers.

The emergence of machine translation has expanded the scope of translator competence. Kane provides an overview of machine translation, Google Translate's development from statistical to neural machine translation, and discusses its limitations in language learning contexts [18, 2-5]. Furthermore Briva-Iglesias et al. compare traditional post-editing and interactive post-editing with 15 professional translators, finding that IPE yields significantly higher Machine Translation User Experience scores, particularly in attractiveness, dependability, efficiency, and stimulation, while showing no statistically significant difference in translation quality and productivity [8, 60-79]. Mohammed proposes a hybrid methodology for evaluating translation quality, arguing that for complex languages, machine translation combined with human verification is particularly necessary [23, 14]. Tao and Eng conducted a bibliometric analysis of translation assessment research, identifying neural machine translation and translation competence acquisition as areas of growing research focus [36, 6]. Zhang and Zhu proposed a blockchain-based framework for corpus translation, demonstrating that a particle swarm optimization-backpropagation neural network (PSO-BP) model improves translation prediction accuracy and convergence speed [43, 12]. Abdelhalim et al. conducted the first comparative study of ChatGPT and Google Translate for literary translation, finding that translators favor ChatGPT for its superior handling of linguistic and cultural nuances [1, 11].

Kazakh-Specific Translation Studies

Research focusing specifically on Kazakh translation has expanded considerably in recent decades, providing a robust foundation for understanding for the current study. Kazakh translation studies began to establish itself as an independent academic pursuit in the mid-to-late twentieth century, initially developing under the influence of Soviet translation scholarship with a with a principal concentration on literary translation [37, 10]. This tradition can be linked to the foundational contributions of Abaj and Ybyraj and was subsequently enriched by prominent Kazakh national figures who translated works from Eastern and Western literatures [46]. The observations of Mirzoyeva and other co-authors examine the role of Russian language as an intermediary between English and Kazakh languages and refer to the studies of different scholars on the problems of using the relay language in translation [22, 243].

Recent scholarly theses from Kazakhstan and other CIS countries reflect heightened research engagement in translating ethnocultural units. Bajshymyrova investigates the formation of translator competence through information and communication resources, while Tileulinova undertakes a detailed study of national character preservation in English and Russian translations of Dulat Issabekov's works. Dmitriuk examines the ethnocultural specificity of temporal concepts in the linguistic consciousness of Russians, Kazakhs, and English speakers, and Sharifova explores the linguocultural aspects of translating ethnographic realia in general. Collectively, these studies

demonstrate an expanding spectrum of studies addressing complexities of translating between different cultures across the region.

Zhusupova's research addresses the translation of Abaj Қынанбаев's poetry, who analyzed obstacles in reproducing ethnocultural units in Russian translations of «Ты́лпaрдaн ты́фыр озбaс шaбылсада». The study focused on Kazakh realia including ты́лпaр (winged steed), ты́фыр (sturdy workhorse), үкі (owl feather amulet), ты́мaр (protective talisman), and кереге (yurt lattice wall). The study emphasizes that translating ethnocultural units requires preserving both denotative meaning and connotative content - the national and historical coloring essential to cultural identity [44, 299]. Examining historical Kazakh literature, the researchers led by Yerbulatova analyzed translations of Dukenbai Doszhan's historical works, revealing that historical realities in archaized texts serve as vivid indicators of the depicted era, reflecting ancient Turkic traditions and customs. Transcription and transliteration, accompanied by translation comments, were the prevailing translation methods, while explicative approaches were also frequently employed. The researchers cautioned against mechanical transmission without revealing denotative meaning, noting that some terms transcribed without explanation leave readers without necessary cultural background. Successful translation requires distinguishing between truly archaic and archaized texts, limiting anachronistic modern words, and maintaining deep knowledge of source culture realities [42, 53-54]. The use of transcription and transliteration in rendering Kazakh cultural concepts has been examined by authors as Sideshova and Nasipov who investigated the lexical-semantic field «Steppe» in translations from Kazakh to Russian. Their analysis of material culture terms (shekpen, kamzol, sholpy, barymta) found that transcription best preserves ethnocultural meaning, though it may require explanatory notes for readers to ensure comprehension [34, 188]. Ryspaeva and Borgul examined the translation of fairy tales from various ethnicities residing in Kazakhstan, demonstrating that preserving folklore through translation is essential for ensuring the continuity of cultural identity [32, 487].

Recent scholarship has examined specific challenges in translating Kazakh ethnocultural concepts into English. The scholars with A. E. Alpysbaeva et al. analyzed the linguopoetic features of Magzhan Zhumabaev's poem «Сы́жеми́н» («I Love») and its English and Russian translations, revealing that translating Kazakh poetry requires viewing translation as a complex process of intercultural communication. Their analysis demonstrated that the translator must navigate the space between two cultures, having a profound insight on the original author's ideas and idiostyle while creating a new poetic work in the target language [3, 321-322]. Notably, their English translation preserved eight out of eleven artistic devices, demonstrating that maintaining poetic form and cultural meaning is achievable when translation is approached with both linguistic and cultural competence.

Collectively, these studies⁶ i.e. encompassing doctoral theses, journal articles, and other academic works on poetry, folklore, and material culture consistently demonstrate that successful Kazakh-English translation requires thorough grasp of cultural context. Transcription and descriptive strategies prove to be essential strategies for preserving national character while ensuring accessibility for target readers, establishing a dependable starting point for understanding how ethnocultural concepts can be effectively rendered in English.

Research Gap

Despite the considerable scholarly attention on ethnocultural translation, several gaps remain. First, existing Kazakh-focused studies have predominantly examined translations into Russian [44; 42; 34], leaving direct Kazakh-English literary translation limited examination. Second, research has focused largely on poetry, folklore, and historical texts, with contemporary prose not been extensively studied. Third, there is limited observational research into how English readers perceive transcribed Kazakh cultural concepts and whether explanatory notes improve comprehension. Finally, no integrated framework combines insights from Western theory - such as foreignization/domestication [38] and metaphor procedures [11] - with Kazakh translation scholarship. Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates the translation of Kazakh ethnocultural units into English in contemporary context.

Materials and Methods

This study employed an integrated mixed-methods design, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative analysis of translation tasks and translator reflections. This approach enabled quantitative examination of strategy patterns and comprehensive analysis of translator reasoning. As Sun notes, measuring translation difficulty includes the translation factors as text complexity and translation-specific difficulties, and translator factors. The present study centered on translator competence in relation to the difficulties associated with ethnocultural units [35, 38].

The study involved 32 professional Kazakh-English translators (24 female, 8 male). Participants were categorized into four groups according to experience: beginners (1-3 years, n=13, 40.6%), intermediate (4-7 years, n=6, 18.8%), advanced (8-15 years, n=9, 28.1%), and experts (16+ years, n=4, 12.5%). All participants had verifiable professional experience in Kazakh-English translation.

Six Kazakh concepts were selected: *aқsausaq* (ақсаусак), *bajғazy* (байғазы), *ғұрып* (ғұрып), *құт* (құт), *tajaқ tastam zher* (таяқ тастам жер), and *ala zhipti attamaу* (ала жіпті аттамау). These represent different varieties of ethnocultural units, including material culture, social customs, metaphorical expressions, and moral concepts. To investigate engagement with digital resources, pre-generated translations from Google Translate, Yandex Translate, and ChatGPT (GPT-4) were compiled as stimuli for evaluation.

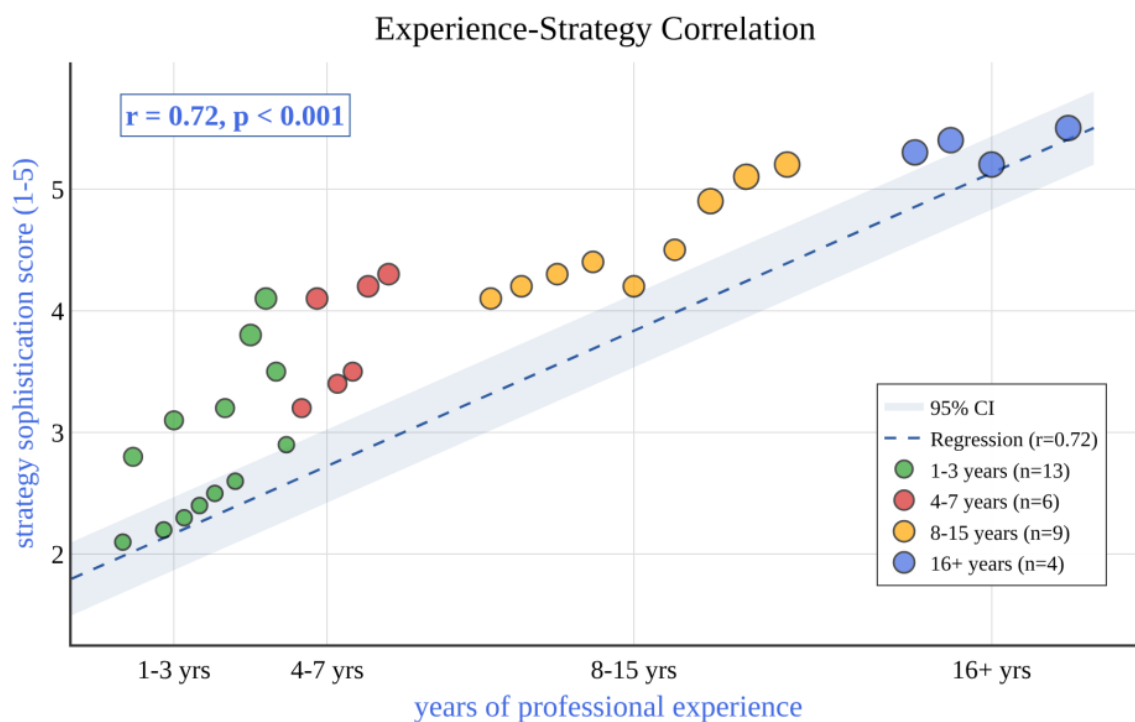
Data were collected through an online survey on the educational platform www.wayground.com. The first section was dedicated to the demographic and professional information. The second section presented questions in connection with the translations of ethnocultural units: the frequency of encountering them, their types, the sources used for translation, the difficulties that arise, and the strategies employed when no equivalent is found in the target language. The third section focused on human and AI-generated translations. Participants evaluated three anonymous translations for each concept, with an option for them to offer their own option if they choose «to modify» the translation and provide justification.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 28). Descriptive statistics were calculated. Chi-square tests and one-way ANOVAs compared strategy selection and AI evaluation scores contrasting different experience levels ($p < .05$). A strategy sophistication index was calculated for each participant: $S = 0.2 \cdot L + 0.3 \cdot T + 0.4 \cdot F + 0.1 \cdot E$, where L = literal translation frequency, T = transliteration, F = functional substitution, E = explanatory translation. Weights were based on the degree of cultural adaptation each strategy represents. Binary logistic regression modeled the probability of selecting cultural adaptation based on years of experience. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

Results and Discussion

Experience and strategy sophistication (Picture 1)

Analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between years of experience and strategy sophistication scores ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). Experts (16+ years) demonstrated significantly higher sophistication scores (mean = 4.8/5), indicating employed sophisticated methods to cultural adaptation. Beginners (1-3 years) exhibited scores predominantly within the lower range (mean = 2.4/5), suggesting reliance on direct translation methods. This supports the hypothesis by the PACTE group, who emphasizes: «The expert translator takes more immediate decisions that lead to a positive outcome than the trainee translator, because the expert translator already possesses expert knowledge and this, like all expert knowledge, is largely automatic» [29, 56].

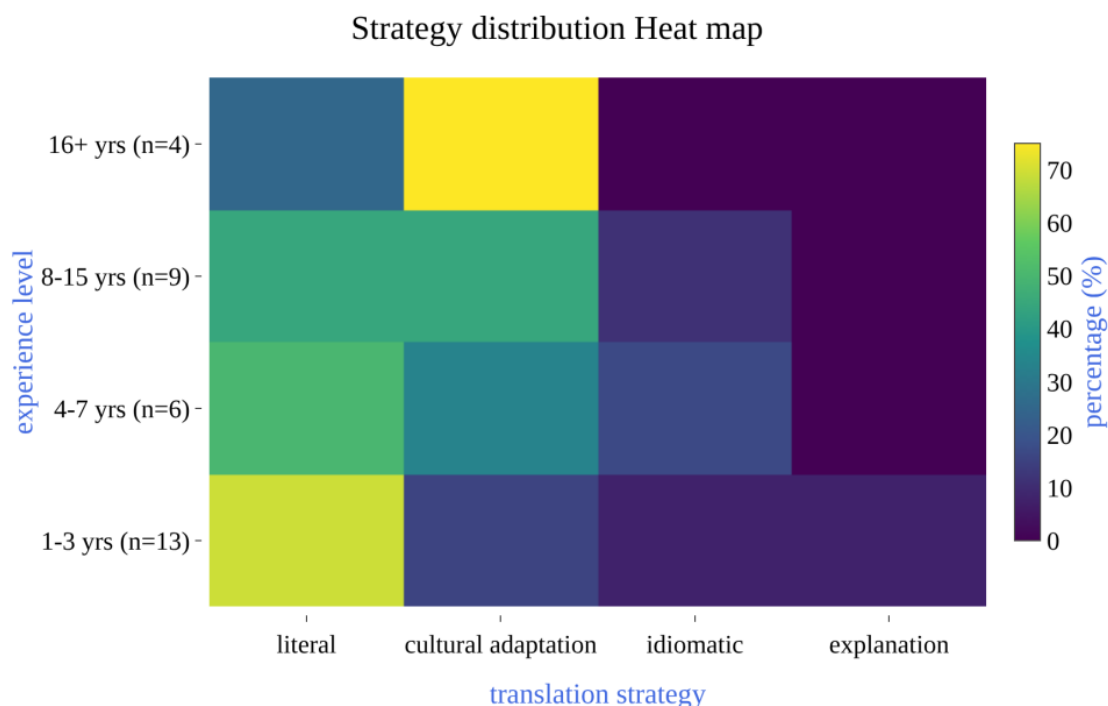


Picture 1 – Experience vs Strategy Sophistication

Strategy distribution across experience levels (Table 1/ Picture 2).

Table 1 – Strategy Distribution by Experience Level (%)

Experience Level	Literal	Cultural Adaptation	Idiomatic	Explanation
1-3 years (n=13)	69.2%	15.4%	7.7%	7.7%
4-7 years (n=6)	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%	0%
8-15 years (n=9)	44.4%	44.4%	11.1%	0%
16+ years (n=4)	25.0%	75.0%	0%	0%



Strategy preference heat map: Darker colors indicate higher usage frequency. Values represent percentage of translators in each experience group using each strategy.

Picture 2 – Translation Strategy Distribution

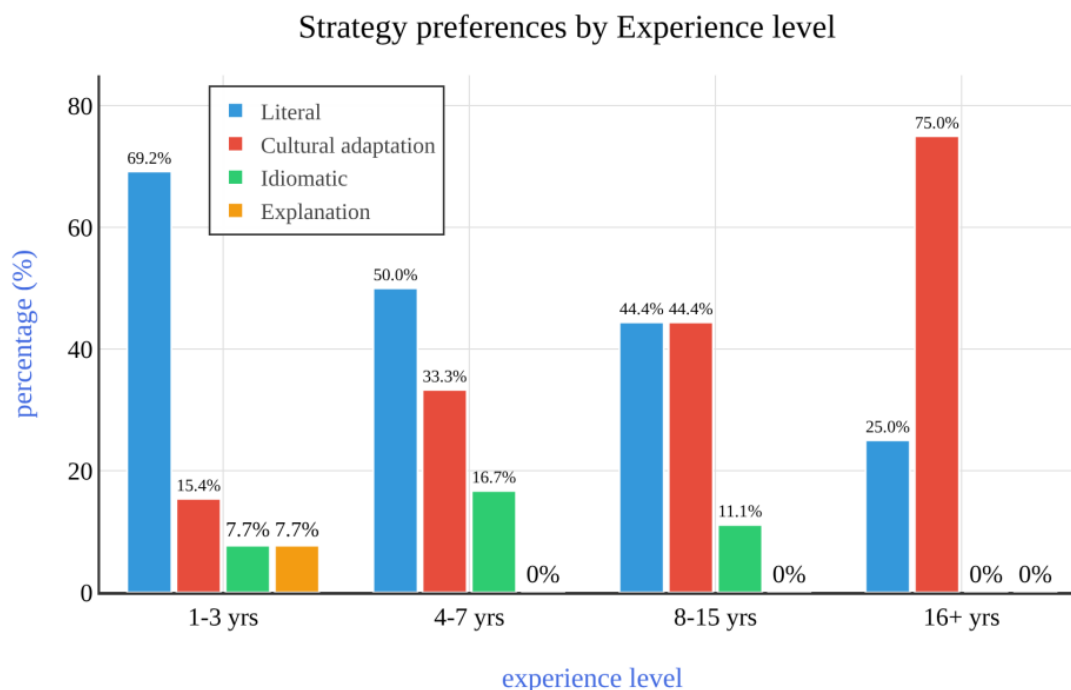
Strategy distribution varied markedly across groups. Among beginners, literal translation predominated (69.2%), with cultural adaptation used in only 15.4% of cases. The intermediate group displayed comparable proportions: literal translation (50.0%), cultural adaptation (33.3%). The advanced group showed almost equal distribution between literal (44.4%) and cultural adaptation (44.4%). Experts showed a substantial swing toward cultural adaptation (75.0%), with literal translation dropping to 25.0%. Chi-square analysis confirmed these differences were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 24.36$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.01$). The findings support Barhudarov's [5, 99] and Komissarov's frameworks suggesting that explanation as an addition to transliteration/ calquing facilitate a thorough comprehension of the recipient [20, 149].

Logistic strategy selection model

Binary logistic regression modeled the probability of selecting cultural adaptation based on years of experience:

$$P(\text{adaptation}) = 1 / (1 + e^{-(2.1 + 0.31 \cdot \text{years})})$$

The model predicts that a translator reaches a 50% probability of choosing cultural adaptation after approximately 6.8 years of experience, representing the point of change from novice to intermediate competency.



Comparative strategy analysis: Percentage distribution of translation strategies across career stages. Values displayed above each bar for precise reference.

Picture 3 – Strategy-Experience Relationships

Translation challenges and perceived difficulty

In terms of professional practice distribution, 45% of participants reported working primarily with English-to-Kazakh translation, 37.5% with Kazakh-to-English, and 21.8% with Russian-to-English. The alignment between difficulty scores and practice distribution suggests that translators are most frequently engaged with the direction that is the most challenging in objective terms.

To quantify translation difficulty, a composite difficulty index D was constructed using the formula: $D = 0.5 \cdot C_loss + 0.3 \cdot L_gap + 0.2 \cdot (10 - A_equiv)$, where C_loss represents cultural loss score (0-10), L_gap represents linguistic distance (0-10), and A_equiv represents availability of equivalents (0-10). Applying this index to the language pairs in the study, the English-Kazakh pair scored highest ($D = 7.8/10$), significantly higher than Kazakh-English ($D = 6.2/10$) and Russian-English ($D = 4.1/10$). These scores provide a quantitative measure of the relative challenges posed by different translation directions.

Analysis of specific examples

For *aқsausaq* (ақсайсақ, literally «white-handed»), 48% chose «soft-handed», representing functional substitution that preserves connotative meaning of fragility. For *bajzazy* (байғазы, gift given to someone who first shows a new purchase), 52% selected «a celebratory gift», demonstrating preference for explanatory translation elucidating the social custom while preserving meaning. More complex concepts demonstrated greater variation. For *әуір* (ғұрып), 36% of respondents selected «custom», 32% chose «ritual», and 28% opted for «tradition», revealing the difficulty of distinguishing between these related yet conceptually distinct terms in English, as well as the tendency to generalize culturally specific practices into broader categories. For *қыт* (қыт), 44% chose «blessing», 28% selected «fortune», and 20% opted for «luck», indicating a preference for functionally equivalent terms that convey the concept of divinely apportioned good fortune, though the specific Kazakh cultural understanding of *қыт* (қыт) as predestined share or portion is often lost in translation. For *tajaқ tastam zher* (таяқ тастам жер literally «a place where a stick might land»), responses included «a stone's throw away» (48%), «within walking distance» (32%), and «close by» (20%). This reflects the challenge of finding equivalents for metaphorical language tied to specific cultural perceptions of distance. For *ala zhipti attamaу* (ала жіпті аттамай),

translations ranged from literal «*not to step over the motley thread*» to adapted «*to observe moral boundaries*», demonstrating difficulty conveying moral concepts embedded in cultural metaphors.

Competence Growth Model

An exponential growth model was fitted to the data: $S(t) = 5 - 3 \cdot e^{-0.15 \cdot t}$, where $S(t)$ = expected strategy sophistication score after t years. The model suggests rapid early growth followed by gradual approach to maximum sophistication, with translators achieving approximately 90% of maximal sophistication after 15.4 years.

Table 2 – Comprehensive Summary of Key Findings

Metrics	Value	Details
Primary correlation (Experience-Strategy)	$r = 0.72$	$p < 0.001$
Beginners (1-3 years) - Literal translation	69.20%	9 of 13 translators
Beginners (1-3 years) - Cultural adaptation	15.40%	2 of 13 translators
Intermediate (4-7 years) – Literal translation	50.00%	3 of 6 translators
Intermediate (4-7 years) - Cultural adaptation	33.30%	2 of 6 translators
Advanced (8-15 years) – Literal translation	44.40%	4 of 9 translators
Advanced (8-15 years) - Cultural adaptation	44.40%	4 of 9 translators
Experts (16+ years) – Literal translation	25.00%	1 of 4 translators
Experts (16+ years) - Cultural adaptation	75.00%	3 of 4 translators
Strategy evolution (increase)	▲ 59.6% increase in cultural adaptation from beginners to experts	
Primary difficulty (Cultural preservation)	72%	23 of 32 translators
English-Kazakh (Primary work direction)	45%	most common direction
Kazakh-English (Primary work direction)	37.50%	second most common
Russian-English (Primary work direction)	21.80%	least common direction
Difficulty Index Score (EN-KZ)	7.8/10	composite measure
Difficulty Index Score (KZ-EN)	6.2/10	composite measure
Difficulty Index Score (RU-EN)	4.1/10	composite measure
50% adaptation probability threshold	6.8 years	logistic model prediction
90% maximal sophistication	15.4 years	competence growth model
Preferred method – Transliteration	45% overall	most common strategy
Preferred method - Functional Substitution	38% overall	second most common
Sample size (total)	32 professional translators (24 female, 8 male)	

Theoretical Implications

The strong correlation between experience and strategy sophistication ($r = 0.72$) corroborates the PACTE group's competence model, indicating that strategic sub-competence develops through extended professional experience. The findings converge with Vinogradov's distinction between constant correspondences preferred by novices and occasional correspondences employed by experts to achieve equivalence in culturally complex contexts [40, 86-91]. Experts' strong preference for cultural adaptation (75.0%) over literal translation (25.0%) confirms that experienced practitioners are cognizant of the shortcomings of word-for-word translation. The 6.8-year threshold for 50% probability of choosing cultural adaptation establishes a measurable threshold for the shift from beginner-level to expert-level performance, suggesting that competence increases most markedly in the first seven years of practice.

The findings also resonate with Kashgary's framework for non-equivalence. Vinogradov's typology of lexis containing background information distinguishes between everyday realia, ethnographic and mythological realia, and other categories of culturally marked items [40, 104-

110]. Terms like *bajғazy* (байғазы) exemplify culture-specific concepts requiring strategies similar to Kashgary's borrowing-plus-explanation approach [19, 56], while *tajaқ tastam zher* (таяқ тастам жер) reflects challenges arising from divergent meaning distinctions across languages, comparable to Vinogradov's concept of partial equivalents, which preserve core denotative meaning despite semantic non-coincidence [40, 81-85]. The difficulty index, with English-Kazakh scoring highest (7.8/10), lends quantitative support to these cross-linguistic challenges, which Vinogradov addresses through his discussion of interlinguistic correlative categories: where full synonymy exists, translation can be carried out directly; where only partial or no synonymy exists, translators are required to adopt more elaborate procedures that almost always involve information loss or transformation [40, 67-77].

Pedagogical Implications

The developmental trajectory suggests training programs should progress from literal to adaptive approaches. Novice translators benefit from structured exposure to cultural adaptation strategies, with materials gradually introducing complex challenges. The 6.8-year threshold suggests mid-career interventions targeting translators with 5-8 years of experience could effectively support reaching a high level of professional competence.

The high number of translators for English-Kazakh translation indicates need for specialized training resources. Programs should devote increased attention to developing skills for ensuring English source material aligns with Kazakh cultural contexts, with targeted practice using culturally embedded texts. The finding that 72% identify safeguarding unique national characteristics as primary difficulty reinforces the essential function of focused cultural pedagogy, incorporating systematic study of Kazakh customs and comparative analysis of cultural concepts. «In teaching ethnocultural terms, analyzing their semantic differentiation, creating lexico-semantic groups, identifying derived phrases, revealing the meaning of each, and finding common features contributes to the revitalization of ethnocultural terms» [25, 168]. In this regard, Ahmetova et al. [2, 110] emphasize the significance of learning ethnocultural vocabulary and justify referring to foundational works of Kazakh ethnolinguistic scholars including Ә. Қайдар, Е. Зханпейісов, Р. Сыздықова, Ж. Манкеева, Г. Смағылова and contemporary representatives of Kazakh Ethnolinguistics. AI-generated translations can serve as pedagogical resources, prompting students to analyze machine output and articulate reasoning. Such technological tools, when integrated with foundational cultural knowledge, can equip translators for effective engagement with culturally specific content while maintaining critical judgment.

Conclusion

The analysis confirmed that translator competence evolves systematically, with beginners relying on literal translation (69.2%) and experts demonstrating a marked tendency for cultural adaptation (75.0%). A pronounced correlation between experience and strategy sophistication ($r = 0.72$) indicates that translation competence develops in consistent patterns, with the logistic model identifying 6.8 years as the threshold for 50% probability of choosing cultural adaptation. The competence growth model, suggesting 90% of maximal sophistication by 15.4 years, furnishes useful metrics for predicting translator development.

The theoretical contribution stems from connecting classical theories of ethnocultural translation with contemporary Kazakh practice, offering empirical substantiation while proposing novel hypotheses about competence development. The study demonstrates that challenges of translating between culturally distant languages, noted within Arabic-English contexts [19, 56], have clear parallels in Kazakh-English translation, implying that non-equivalence patterns may extend across language pairs.

The integration of AI-generated translations as stimuli offers a distinctive methodological aspect for investigating how professional translators engage with machine output. Findings suggest that while machine translation serves as a useful resource for initial exploration, it does not offer the same depth as the deep cultural expertise experienced translators bring to ethnocultural tasks.

In conclusion, ethnocultural translation emerges as the competence of an intercultural mediator, requiring harmonious combination of theoretical knowledge, practical experience, and appropriate technology. By providing empirical data on how strategy preferences evolve with experience, this research contributes to understanding competence development and suggests concrete steps for translator training and professional practice. As Barmenkulova emphasizes: «gathering ethnocultural units and recognizing national values develops the cognitive abilities of language speakers and helps them understand the nature of ethnounits that embody their nation's culture» [6, 199] – a mission that ultimately defines the work of translators who mediate between cultures and preserve the cognitive and cultural heritage embedded in language.

AI Usage Statement

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (GPT-4), Google Translate, and Yandex Translate to generate translation stimuli for the six Kazakh ethnocultural concepts analyzed in this study. These AI-generated translations were presented to participants for evaluation as part of the research methodology. After using these tools/services, the authors reviewed and edited all content as necessary and are accountable for the content of the publication.

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ҚАЗАҚ ЭТНОМӘДЕНИ БІРЛІКТЕРІН АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІНЕ АУДАРУ: ТӘЖІРІБЕ ЖӘНЕ ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ АСПЕКТІЛЕР

Аннотация. Аталған мақалада қазақ тілінен ағылшын тіліне аударатын отыз екі аудармашының кәсіби тәжірибе деңгейі мен аудармада пайдаланатын стратегияларының арақатынасы қарастырылады. Аудармашылардың мәдени сипаттағы қазақи ұғымдарды аудармашылық тәжірибенің әр кезеңінде (1–3 жылдан 16 жылға дейінгі аралықтағы) қалай аударатындығы сауалнама нәтижелері мен аударма мысалдары көмегімен анықталып, оларға сандық, әрі сапалық (аралас зерттеу әдісі) талдау жасалады.

Зерттеу нәтижелерінен аудармаға жаңа қадам басқан аудармашыларға тән сөзбе-сөз аударма стратегияларының уақыт өте келе тәжірибелі мамандар мойындаған мақсаты айқын мәдени адаптацияға айналатындығын байқаймыз. Талдау қорытындысына сүйенсек, аударма барысында аудармашылардың этномәдени бірліктерді жиі кезіктіретінін және негізгі қиындық ұлттық колорит пен мәдени кодты сақтаумен байланысты екенін көреміз. Дәлме-дәл балама табылмаған жағдайда ұсынылатын тәсіл ретінде транслитерация мен функционалдық алмастыруға басымдық берілді. Сондай ақ, статистикалық өңдеу нәтижелері аудармашының кәсіби тәжірибесі мен пайдаланатын стратегияларының күрделілігі арасындағы күшті оң корреляцияны анықтады ($r = 0,72$; $p < 0,001$).

Зерттеу қорытындылары дәстүрлі аударма стратегияларын заманауи технологиялық құралдармен қатар қолданудың және аудармашыларды даярлау жүйесінде этномәдени құзыреттілікті мақсатты түрде қалыптастырудың маңызын айқындайды. Бұл зерттеу тәжірибеге негізделіп, кәсіби біліктілікті арттыруға арналған тұжырымдарды алға тартып, аударма ісін оқыту әдістемесіне өз үлесін қосады, аудармашыларды даярлау бағдарламаларын жетілдіруге бағытталған практикалық нұсқаулар ретін ұсынады.

Тірек сөздер: аудармадағы стратегиялар, мәдени адаптация, қазақша-ағылшынша аударма, этномәдени бірліктер, кәсіби даму.

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ЭТНОКУЛЬТУРНЫЕ ЕДИНИЦЫ В КАЗАХСКО-АНГЛИЙСКОМ ПЕРЕВОДЕ: ОПЫТ И ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются проблемы взаимосвязи между профессиональным опытом и выбором переводческих стратегий среди тридцати двух казахско-английских переводчиков. В рамках смешанного методологического подхода, рассматривающего количественные данные анкетирования и качественный анализ переводческих примеров в совокупности, выявлена специфика работы переводчиков на

различных этапах профессиональной деятельности (от 1-3 лет до 16 и более лет стажа) с культурно-маркированными казахскими концептами.

Полученные результаты демонстрируют значительное развитие в применении переводческих стратегий – от преимущественно буквального перевода у начинающих специалистов к комплексным стратегиям культурной адаптации у переводчиков с продолжительным опытом. По результатам анализа, в профессиональной деятельности переводчики часто сталкиваются с этнокультурными единицами, при этом основную сложность составляет сохранение национального колорита и культурного кода. Наиболее часто применяемыми способами перевода в условиях отсутствия прямых эквивалентов выступают транслитерация и функциональная замена. Статистический анализ выявил сильную положительную корреляцию между уровнем профессионального опыта и степенью применения стратегий ($r = 0,72$; $p < 0,001$).

Результаты подтверждают необходимость внедрения современных технологических инструментов в традиционную методику преподавания перевода, а также подчеркивают значимость формирования этнокультурной осведомленности в системе подготовки переводчиков. Исследование вносит вклад в развитие переводческого образования, выдвигая эмпирически обоснованные выводы о формировании профессиональной компетенции и практические рекомендации предназначенные для программ подготовки переводчиков.

Ключевые слова: переводческие стратегии, культурная адаптация, казахско-английский перевод, этнокультурные единицы, профессиональное развитие.

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