

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Concept of the Father in prose: An analysis within the framework of cognitive literary studies

Zhadyra Toleukonyr¹, Gulzhan Tangirbergenova², Sandugash Mukhtarova^{3*}, Gulzira Aiapova⁴, Ainur Kushkimbayeva²

¹Department of Philology, Alikhan Bokeikhan University, Semey, Republic of Kazakhstan

²Department of Kazakh Literature, K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, Aktobe, Republic of Kazakhstan

³Department of English and German Languages, K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, Aktobe, Republic of Kazakhstan

⁴Department of Kazakh Language and Literature, Atyrau University named after H.Dosmukhamedov, Atyrau, Republic of Kazakhstan

*Correspondence: Sandy.mukhtarova1987@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the cultural and symbolic dimensions of the concept of the *father* in the prose works of Mukhtar Auezov. The author's prose is examined from the perspectives of cognitive poetics and cognitive literary studies. Within cognitive literary studies, a concept is defined as a form of mental representation manifested through images, symbols, metaphors, and associations. The research corpus consisted of literary texts and the data obtained from an associative experiment conducted with respondents. The concept of the *father* is analyzed through a range of methods, including conceptual analysis, frame-semantic analysis, cognitive metaphor analysis, and comparative-typological analysis. The findings demonstrate that the cultural and symbolic significance of the *father* concept is associated with the roles of custodian of tradition, moral guide, and a figure responsible for the upbringing of the younger generation. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of the representation of the *father* concept in post-Soviet Central Asian prose, as well as its formation within the national worldview and the readers' cognitive frameworks. The study underscores the significance of conceptual analysis of the *father* concept for interpreting the interrelationship between literary texts and the national worldview.

KEYWORDS: anthropocentric paradigm, cognitive literary studies, cognitive model, father concept, frame

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1. Introduction

The examination of the father concept within the framework of cognitive studies represents one of the most relevant and innovative directions in contemporary humanities. The emergence of cognitive literary studies is closely associated with the anthropocentric paradigm that became firmly established in twentieth-century science. Thomas S. Kuhn (1962), in his work *The structure of scientific revolutions*, emphasizes that the anthropocentric paradigm expands the scope of scientific development and fosters the formation of new research models and methodologies. Within this paradigm, human existence, consciousness, cognition, and systems of thought have become central objects of scientific inquiry.

Although the study of human cognition was initially conducted within the fields of philosophy and psychology, the expansion of the notion of the “paradigm” eventually led to the emergence of the cognitive approach as an independent scientific domain. Some scholars describe this process as a “cognitive revolution” (Demyankov & Kubryakova, 1996), while F. Albersnagel (1987) characterizes it as a “shift in the general scientific paradigm. Having originated in psychology, this approach gradually extended to other areas of the humanities, including philosophy, linguistics, and literary studies.

The consolidation of cognitive research in linguistics has enabled a new interpretation of the interrelationship between language and human consciousness, as well as between language and the perception of the world. Alvin I. Goldman (1987) argues that the processes of text interpretation, as well as the determination of sentence meaning and validity, are directly linked to the ways in which individuals cognitively apprehend reality. From this perspective, cognitive linguistics has emerged as a discipline that investigates the relationship between human cognition and the world through the medium of language. One of the central categories in cognitive science is the concept.

The works of S. Askoldov-Alekseev (1997) play a significant role in establishing the theoretical foundations of the artistic concept. By distinguishing between cognitive and artistic concepts, he argues that a cognitive concept is characterized by informational and rational properties, whereas an artistic concept is grounded in imagery, emotion, and affect. This distinction provides a valuable framework for interpreting meaning in literary texts from a cognitive perspective.

Building on this, I. A. Tarasova (2018) further develops the theory of the artistic concept by examining it from two dimensions. The first pertains to the conceptual level shaped by the author’s personal life experience, emotional perception, and creative stance. The second reflects the semantic layer, which is defined by established cultural values, traditions, social consciousness, and historical memory. This approach demonstrates that the artistic concept emerges at the intersection of individual cognitive experience and collective cultural practice.

L. V. Miller (2004) describes the artistic concept not merely as a product of individual consciousness, but as a complex mental structure embedded within the psychomental space of a particular ethnocultural community. According to the scholar, the artistic concept represents a universal aesthetic experience preserved in cultural memory and serves as the building material for the formation of new artistic meanings. From this perspective, the artistic concept in cognitive literary studies is inherently dialogic, being realized through the interaction between the author’s consciousness and the reader’s perception. This view is further supported by V. G. Zusman (2003), who emphasizes that the formation and reception of a concept constitute a bidirectional communicative process. Consequently, within cognitive literary studies, a concept is not confined to the author’s cognition alone but is continually reinterpreted in accordance with the reader’s cultural experience and cognitive framework (Karagulova et al., 2025). Taking into account the importance of analyzing the father concept from conceptual and semantic perspectives, this article aims to examine the father concept in the prose works of Auezov within the framework of cognitive literary studies. Such research facilitates the exploration and identification of innovative approaches to contemporary Kazakh prose within the framework of cognitive literary studies.

2. Theoretical Framework

Although the *father* concept is often examined within the broader framework of the *family* concept, it has not been systematically studied as an independent entity. Analyses of the *father* concept based on contemporary cognitive approaches contribute to the development of new directions in literary studies. Cognitive literary studies have increasingly attracted scholarly attention, underscoring the necessity of examining concepts from a

literary perspective. According to E. Lozinskaya, the emergence of the term *cognitive literary studies* is associated with the scholarly contributions of M. Turner, R. Tsur, P. C. Hogan, and A. Richardson. Lozinskaya (2007) argues that cognitive literary studies represent not merely a new approach to literature, but a qualitative advancement in literary studies itself. She identifies several subfields that have developed within this framework, including cognitive rhetoric, cognitive poetics, cognitive narratology, and cognitive reception aesthetics. This classification highlights that cognitive literary studies are rapidly developing as an independent scientific discipline and are attracting increasingly interest in the humanities. Abdullina et.al. (2025) draw attention to the emergence and study of the concept within literary scholarship. According to them, the analysis of a concept from a literary perspective reveals several important scholarly opportunities. In particular, it facilitates the identification of key notions that help uncover the national code and ethnocultural phenomena preserved in cultural memory, as well as interpret a people's worldview within the framework of national literature. Meanwhile, V. Krasnykh (1998) emphasizes that the cognitive nature of a concept is closely linked to the author's consciousness and creative stance.

The theoretical framework of this article is grounded in the principles of the cognitive literary studies. The *father* concept is examined as a mental and cultural construct shaped through narrative and symbolic dimensions. The study draws on the theory of conceptual metaphor proposed by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980), the prototype theory advanced by E. Rosch and Mervis (1975), and the theory of the semantic and non-semantic nature of concepts developed by S. Laurence and E. Margolis (1999). These theoretical approaches provide a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the concept within the framework of cognitive literary studies. In particular, the theories proposed by E. Rosch and S. Laurence contribute to revealing the literary nature of the concept, including its symbolism, associative potential, and deeper meanings within the national worldview.

2.1. *The identification of the father concept within the framework of conceptual metaphor theory*

The identification of the concept within the framework of literary studies and its analysis in literary texts have long attracted scholarly attention. This interest is primarily connected to the historical, social, and cognitive conditions that have shaped the role of the father. Accordingly, the image of the father in literary texts functions not merely as a representative and head of the family or a figure within a patriarchal social order, but as a cultural construct that forms a conceptual system associated with authority, responsibility, national memory, and socio-historical discourse.

The theoretical foundation for studying the *father* concept integrates several methodological approaches. In particular, conceptual analysis, frame semantics, cognitive metaphor theory, and the poetics of literary texts make it possible to interpret the image of the father not merely at the level of an individual character, but as a mental structure embedded within the national worldview. From this perspective, the *father* concept in prose emerges at the intersection of social experience and national cognition. Within the framework of cognitive literary studies, the analysis of the *father* concept requires an examination of its semantic core and associative field. Research in this direction, in turn, necessitates consideration of the semantics of the concept in literary works, as well as the narrative strategies through which cultural codes are represented. The metaphorical representation of the father figure and the deeper interpretation of its cultural meaning are directly connected with the theory of cognitive metaphor. In this regard, the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980) provides an important theoretical basis. In addition, it has been argued that “metaphor is a linguistic manifestation of collective experience” by N. Yu (1998), and that “metaphors are not random usage but patterned expressions reflecting socio-cultural dynamics characterized by frequency and conventionality”, as noted by T. Patterson (2025).

Within this context, the image of the father emerges as a stable element of national memory and worldview, while simultaneously reflecting broader socio-cultural dynamics. In literary texts, such dynamics are often manifested through frames. One of the first scholars to examine frame semantics was Charles J. Fillmore, who applied this approach to identify systems of concepts in language. However, the researcher paid particular attention to specific situations and interpreted them through corresponding lexical units. Fillmore defines a frame as follows: “many words from groups, each of which is best studied as whole. In each case, in order to understand the meaning of one member of the group, it is necessary to understand, to some extent, what all of

them mean. Such groups of words are held together by the fact that they are motivated, defined, and mutually structured by specific unified constructions of knowledge or related schematizations of experience, for which the general term *frame* can be used” (Fillmore, 1982). Thus, frames can be understood as semantic schemas grounded in lived experience. To interpret a particular lexical unit, it is necessary to consider contextual, socio-cultural, and emotional conditions. A frame, therefore, is not merely an individual description of a word’s meaning, but is shaped by context and experience. Frame semantics demonstrates the interrelationship between language, experience, and context through systems of concepts. Furthermore, frame semantics contributes to understanding the cultural context of words within the framework of prototype theory, as discussed by Miriam R. L. Petruck (1996). Within the structure of a frame schema, a concept functions as an attribute while also maintaining a degree of autonomy as an independent element (Petersen, 2015).

Thus, the study of the *father* concept in literary works demonstrates the necessity of considering it as a multi-layered cultural and semantic structure composed of multiple interconnected elements. Such an approach, based on the prose of Auezov, makes it possible to cognitively trace the transformation of the father figure in Kazakh prose, from a traditional patriarchal model to a more complex representation shaped by contemporary socio-cultural changes.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research design

The study was conducted within the framework of qualitative cognitive literary analysis and aims to identify the conceptualization of the *father* concept in the prose of Auezov. The methodological foundation of the research includes conceptual analysis, frame-semantic analysis, cognitive metaphor analysis, and comparative-typological analysis. In addition, an associative analysis was applied as an empirical method. The combination of these approaches provides a comprehensive basis for examining the *father* concept as a complex conceptual centennial structure.

Through conceptual analysis, the core structure, associative field, and semantic domains of the *father* concept in Auezov’s prose are identified. Frame analysis makes it possible to determine the cognitive models of the father’s role as represented in literary texts. Cognitive metaphor analysis is employed to reveal how the images associated with the *father* concept are metaphorically represented in prose. In addition, this method is used to identify the similarities and differences in the representation of the *father* concept in the novel-epic *The Path of Abai* by Auezov. Associative analysis was conducted on the basis of a survey involving 185 respondents, enabling the identification of predominant contemporary interpretations and perceptions of the *father* concept in modern society.

3.2. Materials

The research material consists of the short prose works of Auezov, including *Korgansyzdyng kuni*, *Zhetim*, *Okygan azamat*, *Sonip-zhanu*, *Kim kinali?* as well as the novel-epic *The Path of Abai*, which represents a comprehensive range of characters in which the *father* concept often appears in a complex and sometimes contradictory form. As a research corpus, both short prose narratives, where the *father* concept may be implicitly expressed yet remains significant at the narrative and conceptual levels, and the novel-epic, which depicts a broader spectrum of father figures, are examined. Thus, the research corpus is composed of representations of the father figure in Auezov’s works, which constitute a prominent example of Kazakh prose.

3.3. Procedure

The study was conducted in several stages. At the first stage, narrative units related to the image of the father were selected from the literary texts included in the research corpus. Contexts associated with the *father* concept in each work were collected, and patterns of their usage were identified. In addition, representations of father figures were systematized and comparatively analyzed.

At the second stage, the collected materials were organized from conceptual and frame-based perspectives. The semantic features associated with the father image were correlated with specific frames. Particular attention was paid to metaphors characterizing the father figure, as well as elements of national symbolism.

At the third stage, special emphasis was placed on the role of the father image in representing national

values within literary texts, and its cultural and symbolic significance was identified. In addition, during the empirical analysis, associative analysis was employed, enabling the comparison of respondents' reaction regarding contemporary perceptions of the father image.

At the final stage, all obtained data were systematized, and a cognitive model of the *father* concept in the prose of Auezov was proposed. This model demonstrates the transformation of the father image from a traditional patriarchal structure toward more complex forms of representation.

4. Results

During the analysis of the *father* concept, the associative experiment was conducted to examine its interpretation in relation to contemporary society. Respondents aged 19-50 participated in the experiment, reflecting the intersection of traditional values and modern perspectives.

In the survey, the strict and demanding nature of the father figure was analyzed through contemporary perceptions, with reference to the character Kunanbai in the novel *The Path of Abai* by Auezov. In this regard, the survey results reveal aspects of the reader's inferential interpretation, as discussed by David S. Miall (2006). The findings indicate that the associative field of the *father* concept is primarily associated with notions such as *towering mountain (askar tau)*, protection, support, and responsibility. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Associative field of the *father* concept.

Category	Associative content	Percentage
Elevated figure	Towering mountain (<i>askar tau</i>), peak, majestic figure	28%
Protection	Fortress, stronghold, shelter	22%
Foundation	Support, foundation, baiterek (sacred tree), pillar	18%
Humanistic qualities	Care, empathy, kindness, love	15%
Social responsibility	Responsibility, family provider, upbringing, role model	10%

Next, by systematizing the respondents' opinions regarding the image of Kunanbai, it can be observed that the majority perceive him as a complex personality who combines both strictness and wisdom. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Representation of the character of Kunanbai.

Category	Content	Percentage
Strictness in character formation (Upbringing of next generation)	"Without Kunanbai there would be no Abai", Abai became Abai due to his father's upbringing and demanding character	45%
Wisdom and nobility	Wise, far-sighted, a symbol of nobility, a leader of his time, a "true father"	30%
Harshness and coldness	Too strict, distant, harsh, did not grant his son spiritual freedom, power-oriented	15%
Complex historical figure	A personality between tradition and change, representing the conflict between the old and the new	10%

As a result, the character Kunanbai in the novel is perceived by respondents primarily for his strictness in the upbringing of the next generation.

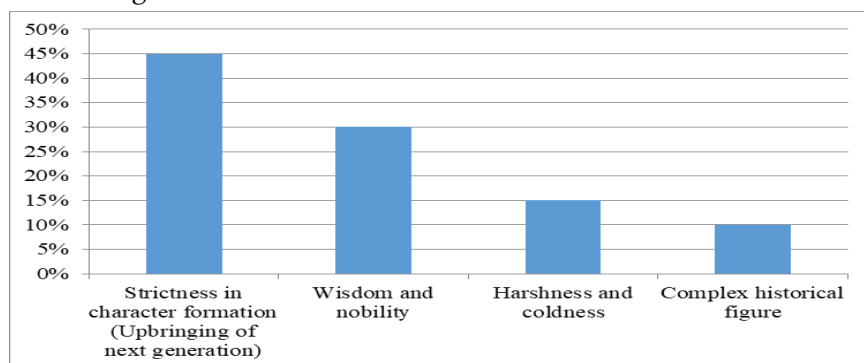


Figure 1. The character of Kunanbai in the novel and its attributes.

Based on the data, three main interpretations of the character of Kunanbai can be identified.

1. Nearly half of the respondents consider Kunanbai's strictness to be a prerequisite for Abai's development into a great personality. The father's "iron discipline", as reflected in the proverb "spare your child, spoil your child" (i.e., excessive leniency hinders proper upbringing), is vividly embodied in the image of Kunanbai.
2. For many respondents, the image of Kunanbai represents a social ideal. He is perceived not only as the head and protector of his family but also as a figure concerned with the welfare of the entire clan and community. He is characterized as religiously knowledgeable, eloquent, and strategic. Through Kunanbai, the elevated authority and prestige of the father figure in Kazakh society are clearly manifested.
3. A portion of the respondents (15%) criticize Kunanbai for not granting Abai spiritual freedom. From this perspective, he does not correspond to the contemporary model of a *kind and supportive father*. However, it is also noted that this model of fatherhood was consistent with the expectations and norms of its historical context.

Thus, the image of Kunanbai is perceived less as an ideal father and more as a symbol of child-rearing that shapes and strengthens future generations.

Next, attention is directed to perceptions of the desired model of fatherhood in contemporary society. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Contemporary model of the *father* concept .

Category	Description	Percentage
Responsibility	Providing for the family, feeling accountable, being protector and support	35%
Role model	Leading by example through actions rather than words., demonstrating honesty, diligence, and personal integrity	25%
Emotional intelligence	Being caring, friendly with child, showing understanding and empathy	20%
Strictness	Exercising appropriate firmness, assertiveness, and providing guidance for personal development	15%
Modern outlook	Educated, versatile, adaptable to contemporary technologies and societal changes	5%

Thus, according to the respondents, the contemporary father is a figure who preserves traditional and national values while also embodying modern humanistic qualities. The image of Kunanbai in *The Path of Abai* demonstrates the traits of traditional upbringing and presents him as a noble individual devoted to the education and formation of the younger generation. Respondents tend to interpret Kunanbai's strictness within its historical and social context, evaluating his actions as appropriate for his time and emphasizing his qualities as a far-sighted and strategic personality. At this point, it is useful to compare the representation found in Auezov's works with the responses provided by the respondents.

Table 4.Comparative analysis of Auezov's prose and respondents' perceptions (cognitive model of the *father* concept).

Comparison	Model in the prose of Auezov	Respondents' perceptions	Conclusion
Metaphor	Ontological models such as "Father as the support of life" and "a towering mountain (askar tau)" are represented in characters such as Kunanbai, Alshynbai, Abai, and Makysh	28% of respondents associate the father with towering mountain, while 22% perceive him as a protector/fortress	The cognitive image of the father as a source of support is confirmed
Role of the father	A firm preserver of tradition authority figure, and moral guide (Kunanbai, Abai)	Main roles: 35% family provider. 25% role model	The father's role shifts from an authority figure to a responsible and caring provider

Upbring- ing model	Iron discipline and strictness (Kunanbai)	45% of respondents support Kunanbai's strictness in shaping personality	Strictness and demand- ingness are perceives as important in child up- bringing
Emotional connection	In M. Azuevo's prose, father figure are often portrayed as distant or emotion- ally restrained (Bozhei, Zhakyp, Isa, Amire, Ysmail)	20% support the model of a caring and friendly father	Emotional connection contributes to the emer- gence of the "friendly father" model

The *father* concept in the prose of Auezov represents a complex mental construct formed at the intersection of the national worldview and the author's individual cognition. The results of the study demonstrate that this concept is evolving from a traditional patriarchal structure toward a more modern, humanistic model. The fact that the majority of respondents perceive the character of Kunanbai, depicted in *The Path of Abai*, a prototype of personal development highlights the significant role of literary texts in shaping the national worldview. Thus, the *father* concept can be understood as a cognitive structure that connects literary representation with contemporary social consciousness.

5. Discussion

The prose of Auezov occupies a prominent place in twentieth-century Kazakh literature. The writer's works, deeply imbued with the national worldview, were also shaped in accordance with the ideological requirements of the Soviet era. His early twentieth-century writings are characterized by complex psychological analysis and a focus on revealing the inner world of his character (Nurgali et al., 2021). Furthermore, Auezov's works function not merely as narrative texts but also as instruments for shaping and articulating the national worldview (Ismakova et al., 2019).

Auezov's early prose, particularly *Kongansydyng kuni*, foregrounds the fate of *defenseless* individuals and reveals the profound social and psychological consequences of losing paternal support. As noted in scientific studies (Zharylgapov, 2023; Amanshaev, 1990), the tragic tone in early prose is closely connected to existential dislocation and the symbolic use of environment, where nature reflects human isolation. In this regard, the stories *Korgansydyng kuni* and *Zhetim* demonstrate elements of existentialism, while implicitly emphasizing the father's role as a fundamental source of stability.

The contrast between past and present is central to Auezov's narrative strategy. Through the idealized image of Kushikbai as a heroic figure of the past, the author implicitly critiques the moral decline of contemporary society. This opposition is further reinforced by the portrayal of socially dominant yet ethnically diminished figures of the new era. Against this backdrop, Gaziza's tragic fate exemplifies the extreme vulnerability of individuals deprived of protection and dignity. Within the framework of cognitive literary analysis, the story illustrates the conceptual metaphor "*The Father as the support of life*". This idea is not expressed directly but emerges through absence. The desolate setting, the deteriorating household, and the condition of the female characters symbolically reflect the loss of paternal support. The deaths of Zhakyp, the father, and Mukash, the son, mark not only personal loss but also the collapse of social protection, leaving the remaining women exposed to material hardship and social exploitation. The father is conceptualized as the head of the family, its protector, an ideal figure, and a role model for children, which further emphasizes the social significance of the concept. Such perceptions are also widely observed in Turkic cultural cognition (Gimasheva, 2021). The narrative further demonstrates that the absence of the father entails the loss of authority, security, and social status. The attempted redistribution of the women and the forced marriage arrangements highlight the structural vulnerability of individuals within a patriarchal system. In this context, the father figure functions as a key social regulator, whose absence destabilizes both family and community structures. Thus, the tragedy of Gaziza extends beyond individual suffering and reflects a broader social condition. The father is conceptualized as a central pillar of both familiar and societal order, and his implicit absence serves as a powerful narrative device. Through this inversion, Auezov deepens the cognitive model of "*The Father as a support of life*", revealing its cultural and social significance within the depicted worldview.

In Auezov's short story *Zhetim*, the loneliness and helplessness of ten year old Kassym are portrayed in existential terms, as he is forced to confront life's hardships alone. having lost his parents and later his

grandmother, the boy faces the harsh reality of orphanhood. Although Isa appears as a stepfather figure, the central conflict is conveyed primarily through the perspective of a child deprived of parental support.

In traditional Kazakh culture, orphans were typically taken in by relatives who provided care and protection. However, the story depicts the transformation of these norms, as compassion gives way to selfishness and cruelty, while the child's feelings are ignored. Kassym's desire to turn to the memory of his deceased parents underscores his emotional isolation and his need for lost support.

A comparison between Kassym and Gaziza from *Kongansyzdyng kuni* reveals a shared cognitive model in which the loss of the father is conceptualized as the loss of principle source of life support. Although the father figure remains implicit in both texts, his absence determines the tragic dimension of the narratives and intensifies the theme of the orphan's social vulnerability.

In the story *Okygan azamat*, the concept of the father is presented in a negative evaluative framework and is primarily associated with pragmatic and material expectations. The narrative, which begins with Maksut's death and the subsequent marriage of his widow Kadisha to Zhumagul reveals the moral attitudes of the older generation, most embodied in the characters of Amire aksakal and Kamariya. For them, marriage and education are valued chiefly as means of acquiring property, financial benefit, and social advancement.

Through the figure of Amire aksakal, Auezov demonstrates the crisis of the traditional model of fatherhood. Rather than serving as a moral guide and protector, the father is portrayed as greedy and self-interested, motivated by personal gain. His attempt to appropriate the property of Maksut's vulnerable family underscores the erosion of ethical norms and the weakening of paternal responsibility.

Thus, the character of Amire aksakal functions as an anti-value in the conceptualization of fatherhood. This reflects a broader decline of moral values within the society, where the educational, protective, and ethical functions of the father are displayed by material interests.

In the short story *Sonip-Zhanu*, the concept of "*Father as the foundation of wisdom and morality*" is realized through character of Makysh, who represents a positive model of fatherhood. He is portrayed as a responsible head of family who retains social authority, respect, and sincere concern for the well-being of his children. His gentle speech, politeness, and benevolence create a favorable impression on others and reinforce his paternal authority.

Despite his modest material circumstances, Makysh stands out for his intellectual maturity and social responsibility. He critically reflects on public issues, expresses concern for the fate of the people, and evaluates the role of educated individuals in times of crisis. These qualities strengthen his status as a wise and respected figure.

Thus, through the image of Makysh, Auezov constructs a positive conceptualization of the father as a bearer of wisdom, morality, and social responsibility. His character embodies a balanced and dignified model of fatherhood grounded in reason, empathy, and moral integrity.

In the short story *Kim kinali?*, the concept of the *father* is embodied in the character of Ismail and is presented primarily as a guardian of tradition and bearer of social authority. His influence extends beyond the family to the wider community, reflecting a patriarchal model of fatherhood grounded in power and social reputation. Seeking to secure an "advantageous" marriage for his daughter Gaziza, Ismail arranges her union with an elderly and wealthy suitor against her will. In doing so, the narrative exposes the conflict between tradition and the child's personal autonomy. For Ismail, public honor and status are valued above the emotional needs of his daughter.

Although the story is commonly interpreted through the lens of women's inequality, it also demonstrates a transformation in the understanding of fatherhood. Rather than acting as a protector and mentor, the father appears as a bearer of excessive authority whose decisions lead to Gaziza's tragedy. From a social-cultural perspective shaped by the national worldview, such actions may be interpreted as forms of *care* and *guidance* (Mukhtarova et al., 2025) capturing specific information about the historical development, traditions, and life of a given linguistic cultural space. Translating the untranslatable vocabulary from one language into another has always posed significant challenges for translators. These difficulties are compounded when the language in question belongs to different linguistic groups and reflects distinct cultural backgrounds. The article discussed the ways of translating non-equivalent lexical units in translated literary texts from Kazakh into English on the materials of I. Yesenberlin's trilogy "The Nomads". The discussion was based on the classification of the

translation methods of the non-equivalent vocabulary in recent years: transliteration, transcription, calque (loan translation). Through the figure of Ismail, Auezov reveals the internal contradictions of the patriarchal model of fatherhood, in which care is replaced by control and authority assumes an anti-value character.

In the epic novel *The Path of Abai*, Auezov offers the most comprehensive gallery of father figures, expanding the cultural and symbolic functions of the father concept as a multidimensional phenomenon connected with both individual and collective consciousness. Among these figures, Kunanbai occupies a central place as the most powerful and authoritative character in the narrative. Kunanbai is portrayed as a bearer of patriarchal power, social dominance, and inherited authority. Within the family discourse, his character is revealed through severity, firmness of temperament, and a strong sense of responsibility. The text emphasizes that paternal authority should be combined with moral duty toward both family and clan.

At the same time, the image of Kunanbai exposes the internal contradictions of traditional fatherhood: leadership and responsibility are accompanied by emotional restraint and uncompromising rigidity. It is through the critical reconsideration of this figure that Abai gradually attains a deeper understanding of his father, society, and social contradictions of his time.

Thus, the images of Kunanbai, Alshynbai, Bozhei, and Abai contribute to deepening the cultural and symbolic significance of the *father* concept. In conclusion, the central core of this concept lies in responsibility toward the family and the upbringing of the next generation. Within this framework, the image of Kunanbai is depicted with exceptional poetic power and profound insight in comparison with other father figures such as Zhakyp, Amire, Ismail, Alshynbai, and Bozhei. Accordingly, within the traditional patriarchal understanding of fatherhood, the figure of Kunanbai emerges as an idealized representation of the father archetype.

6. Conclusions

The present study examined the cognitive and cultural-symbolic dimensions of the *father* concept in the prose works of Auezov. Conducted within the framework of literary studies, the research demonstrates that the representation of the father in literary texts extends beyond the level of a fictional character and functions as a mental construct endowed with national worldview significance and social functions. Within an anthropocentric paradigm, the analysis of cognitive manifestations in literary texts has made it possible to interpret the *father* concept not merely at a prototypical level, but as a phenomenon of broader national and cultural importance. The results of the frame analysis reveal that the structure of the *father* concept is organized around such frames as the preserver of tradition, the moral guide, and the agent responsible for the upbringing of the next generation. In the prose of Auezov, this concept reflects the intersection of the patriarchal foundations of Kazakh society with ongoing social transformations. In particular, in the novel-epic *The Path of Abai*, the analysis of the characters Kunanbai and Abai demonstrates that the *father* concept is closely associated with the categories of power and responsibility. Furthermore, the cognitive metaphor analysis identified such models as “*father as the foundation of life*” and “*father as the basis of wisdom and morality*”, which represent clear manifestations of the national worldview and lived experience embedded in the author’s consciousness.

The objectives of the study were fully achieved, and the cognitive and cultural characteristics of the *father* concept were identified. The role of the father figure in the national worldview and in readers’ consciousness was examined through the analysis of literary prose, as well as through the results of an associative experiment involving 185 respondents. The findings of the experiment made it possible to analyze the semantic relationship between contemporary respondents’ perceptions of the father figure, such as *a towering mountain, a protector, a support*, and related associations, and the classical representations created in the works of Auezov.

The scientific novelty of the article lies in the fact that the works of Auezov are examined, for the first time, through an integrated approach combining cognitive poetics and frame semantics. The cognitive models identified in the course of the study establish a new methodological framework for investigating family discourse in Kazakh literature. Moreover, the findings contribute to the further development of artistic concept theory within global cognitive literary studies, situating it within the context of the Turkic worldview.

The representations of Kunanbai, Bozhei, Akshynbai, and Abai in the novel *The Path of Abai* illustrate the development trajectory of the *father* concept from a traditional patriarchal model, characterized by authority, discipline, and severity, toward a more complex humanistic model. Through the figure of Kunanbai, the traditional patriarchal paradigm is shown to undergo transformation, while the image of Abai reflects its

enrichment with democratic and humanistic features. The results of the empirical associative analysis further demonstrate that, in the consciousness of modern reader, the image of the father has shifted away from rigid severity toward a model characterized by emotional intelligence and a heightened sense of responsibility. Thus, within Auezov's creative framework, the concept of the *father* is not merely a residual or static image of the past, but rather a dynamic cognitive construct that constitutes a foundational element of contemporary national identity.

In conclusion, the concept of the *father* in Auezov's works functions both as a preserver of the national worldview and as a driver of social transformation. The findings of this study open new avenues not only for the investigation of Kazakh prose within the field of cognitive literary studies, but also for the analysis of the works of Central Asian writers more broadly, thereby contributing to the development of new research directions in the humanities.

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