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QUANTITATIVE STYLOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF ORHAN VELI KANIK'S POETRY: LEXICAL DIVERSITY AND THEMATIC CONDENSATION

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Abstract

This study longitudinally examines the stylistic evolution of Orhan Veli Kanik's poetic language across his entire career (1941–1949) using quantitative linguistic methods, covering five core corpora (Garip, Vazgeçemediğim, Destan Gibi, Karşı, and Yenisi). The primary aim is to reveal the quantitative indicators of the principle of simplicity advocated by the Garip Movement over time, and to determine how this principle relates to thematic condensation. The methodology relies on applying advanced linguistic metrics to the corpora, including word frequency, Type-Token Ratio (TTR), Average Sentence Length (ASL), Token/Type counts, and Tokun/Type ratios. The longitudinal analysis of the expanded corpus allowed for both the statistical testing of differences across periods and the detailed examination of the continuity of stylistic evolution, utilizing the rich data set obtained through the integration of three new corpora. The findings indicate that the principle of simplicity was maintained despite fluctuations in ASL (e.g., ASL: 3,08 → 4,14 → 3,49). The jump to 4,14 during the Destan Gibi period suggests a temporary relaxation of the principle for narrative experimentation. However, the most critical finding of the article is the radical decrease in TTR and the resulting Stage of Thematic Condensation. Following an initial enrichment phase (D1–D2: 70,9% → 79,3%), the TTR dropped to its career-low of 68,15 in the Karşı period. This quantitative decrease, also signaled by the change in diversity metrics like the Token/Type ratio (Lexical Density), proves that the poet consciously shifted his simple vocabulary into a Condensation Stage to express deep themes such as social criticism and existential questioning "We're Living for Free" ["Bedava Yaşıyoruz"], "I'm Listening to Istanbul" ["İstanbul'u Dinliyorum"]) using intense, repetitive patterns. These results demonstrate that Orhan Veli's style is not static but a dynamic structure that consciously manages quantitative tools for thematic

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deepening, providing numerical support for the poet's artistic mastery at the end of his career.

Keywords: Orhan Veli Kanık, quantitative stylometric analysis, longitudinal analysis, Type-Token Ratio (TTR), Average Sentence Length (ASL), stylistic evolution, Token/Type counts, Turkish poetry.

Introduction

Orhan Veli Kanık, along with Melih Cevdet Anday and Oktay Rifat Horozcu, led a major breakthrough in Turkish poetry, referred to as the "First New" (Birinci Yeni), with their joint book *Garip*, published in 1941. This movement rejected the traditional understanding of art, proposing a new poetic language based on simplicity, naturalness, and proximity to colloquial speech, stripped of meter, rhyme, and artistic imagery. As stated in the manifesto, the aim was to avoid seeing any novelty in "squeezing the utterances of certain ideologies into known molds" such as meter, rhyme, and verbal arts, and instead "change the structure fundamentally" (Kanık et al., 1941, p. 5). In line with this, Orhan Veli criticized the artificial language that had ornamented poetry for years—dubbed "*şairane*" (poetic)—aiming to reconstruct it upon the principles of simplicity and clarity.

The five poetry books published throughout the poet's career (*Garip*, *Vazgeçemediğim*, *Destan Gibi*, *Karşı*, *Yenisi*) represent critical phases of his artistic quest. The main objective of this article is to quantitatively demonstrate the continuity and dynamic evolution of the poet's language and style, through lexical and sentence-level analyses across his five distinct corpuses. This analysis is grounded in the theoretical principles set out in the *Garip* Preface (adopting simplicity, moving away from poeticism, and relying on colloquial language). By grounding traditional literary interpretations of Orhan Veli's poetry in a quantitative framework, this study aims to offer an original methodological contribution to Turkish poetry research.

Theoretical Background: The \$Garip\$ Movement and its Poetics

In the Turkish poetry of the Republic era, the *Garip* movement is the main current that centralized free verse by rejecting traditional meter and rhyme, representing a definitive shift in poetics (Gecgel, 2022, p. 140). The evolution of the *Garip* poetry poetics, which initiated a new period in the

simplification of poetry by opposing traditional literary understanding, has been specifically studied around the magazine *Yaprak* (M. C. Doğan, 2023). The preface to the *Garip* book, published in 1941, established a rational and anti-poetic line reflecting the sensibility of the petty bourgeoisie (Bolat, 2001). This approach aligns with Sazyek's (1996) general assessment of *Garip* poetics. According to Sazyek, the aim of *Garip* poetry was to prioritize the art of speaking and avoid unnecessary literary embellishments. The *Garip* preface emphasized simplification, proximity to colloquial language, and prioritizing the public's taste, taking a stand against the old understanding of poetry. The poets reacted against both rhetorical games and the ideological poetry of Nâzım Hikmet (Kuzu, 2021; M. H. Doğan, 2001; Mumcu Ay, 2009).

Kuzu (2022c) defines the language of *Garip* poetry as a movement that "uses a language close to everyday spoken language, focuses on daily life, and abandons the structure of meter and rhyme" (p. 45). This definition serves as evidence supporting the basic principles of the *Garip* manifesto. Furthermore, Kuzu (2022b) points out that in Orhan Veli's poem *Yol Türküleri* (Road Songs), folk literature motifs function as "the road metaphor of life and codes of the collective memory of the people" (p. 47). This reveals the poet's strategy of blending simple language with rich themes.

Yılmaz (2010), on the other hand, emphasizes the distinct theme of "escape" from daily life, social values, and traditions in Orhan Veli's poems. This tendency emerges as a psychological inclination stemming from the war years and the poet's personal difficulties. The article examines the motifs of escape in the poet's poems under six headings, covering themes such as escape from daily life, detachment from tradition and social values, and turning towards childhood, love, and imaginary countries. These findings indicate that Orhan Veli shaped his poetry within both individual and period-specific contexts. Antakyali (2022) emphasizes that a comfortable, mocking, and flirtatious style effectively expresses emotion and thought in Orhan Veli's poems, while avoiding cliché expressions. Similarly, Kuzu (2022a) notes that various meanings and symbols are used in Orhan Veli's 1945 poems, reflecting significant changes in the Republican era poetry tradition. When these findings are evaluated together with Kuzu's observations, they reveal Orhan Veli's capacity to produce a multi-layered meaning while maintaining simplicity in both language and theme. The

\$Garip\$ poets sought to simplify poetry by freeing it from old formal and aesthetic molds and to achieve naturalness. The restriction of meter, rhyme, and metaphor usage aimed to bring the essence, totality, and meaning of the poem to the forefront (Kuzu, 2021). Yilmaz (2010) also cites the poet's effort to break free from traditional poetic molds as supporting evidence.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted based on the Quantitative Longitudinal Descriptive Research Design (Creswell, 2014), as it aims to compare the linguistic differences across Orhan Veli Kanık's works. This research design allows for the statistical comparison of a phenomenon's measurable characteristics across different time periods (Gries, 2013). The poetry corpuses representing five distinct periods of the poet's career were analyzed using quantitative linguistic metrics. Thus, the direction and degree of linguistic changes observed over time were described, and the evolutionary characteristics of the poetic language were statistically presented.

Data Set and Scope

The research data set consists of five primary corpuses that encompass the entirety of Orhan Veli Kanık's poetic output: Garip (1941), Vazgeçemediğim (1945), Destan Gibi (1946), Karşı (1947), Yenisi (1949).

These corpuses were selected to integrally represent the stylistic change in the poet's language. The full texts of the poems were sourced from *Orhan Veli Kanık – Bütün Şiirleri (Eleştirel Basım)* [Ed. Necati Tonga and Tahsin Yıldırım, Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2021]. The texts were transferred to a digital medium and subjected to pre-processing stages (cleaning, tokenization, sentence segmentation). The descriptive characteristics of the corpuses used in the research, in terms of poem count, total word count, and sentence count, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Corpora Used in the Research

| Corpus | Period | Poem Count | Total Word Count (Token) | Sentence Count | Average Sentence Length (ASL) | TTR (%) |
|----------------|--------|------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Garip | 1941 | 36 | 1,037 | 337 | 3.08 | 70.9 |
| Vazgeçemediğim | 1945 | 11 | 395 | 119 | 3.32 | 79.3 |
| Destan Gibi | 1946 | 1 | 679 | 164 | 4.14 | 78.93 |
| Karşı | 1947 | 18 | 894 | 249 | 3.59 | 68.15 |
| Yenisi | 1949 | 11 | 540 | 155 | 3.48 | 72.10 |
| Total | - | 77 | 3,545 | 1,024 | - | - |

Note: In poems with free verse structure, the sentence unit in all five corpora was defined as independent lines or groups of lines beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period, exclamation mark, or question mark. This method allows for the comparative evaluation of metrics such as syntactic density and structural variety.

Data Collection and Pre-processing

Quantitative analyses were performed using the MAXQDA qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software (VERBI Software GmbH, 2024). The data pre-processing and analysis stages include the following steps:

- **Tokenization and Normalization:** Texts were divided into word and sentence units; case sensitivity was eliminated.
- **Lemmatization (Root Finding):** All words were stripped of inflectional suffixes and converted to their root or base dictionary forms. This step ensured that the TTR calculation reflected the true lexical variety.
- **Stop Word Filtration:** A comprehensive list of Turkish function words was used to remove them from the texts.
- **Statistical Test:** An **independent samples t-test**, suitable for small sample sizes, was applied to determine whether the difference in TTR metrics between two independent corpora was random.

Quantitative Metrics

The main metrics used in the study to measure the change in the poet's linguistic style are:

- **Average Sentence Length ASL:** Measures the complexity of the sentence structures used by the poet and their proximity to colloquial speech.

$$\text{ASL} = \text{Total Word Count (Token)} / \text{Total Sentence Count}$$

- **Type-Token Ratio (TTR):** Measures the lexical richness of a corpus. TTR was calculated based on the different word types (Type) obtained after lemmatization.

$$\text{TTR \%} = \text{Different Word Count (Type)} / \text{Total Word Count (Token)}$$

- **Statistical Significance (p-value):** Indicates the probability that the TTR difference occurred by chance. The confidence interval (α) was set at 0.05 for the analysis.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the research was ensured by the comprehensive scope of the data set and adherence to the original editions of the poems. Reliability was increased by measuring the same metrics using the same method across all periods and supporting automated analyses with manual verification. The error rate in pre-tests conducted during the data cleaning process was kept below 1%.

Findings and Comparative Discussion

This section presents the quantitative findings across the five main periods covering Orhan Veli's career (Garip, Vazgeçemediğim, Destan Gibi, Karşı, Yenisi) and examines the poet's stylistic evolution within a longitudinal framework.

Table 2. Longitudinal Examination of Orhan Veli Kanık's Poetry by Quantitative Metrics Throughout His Career

| Metric | Garip (D1) | Vazgeçemediğim (D2) | Destan Gibi (D3) | Karşı (D4) | Yenisi (D5) |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Poem Count | 36 | 11 | 1 | 18 | 11 |
| Total Words (Token) | 1,037 | 395 | 679 | 894 | 540 |
| Different Words (Type) | 735 | 313 | 536 | 609 | 389 |
| Lexical Diversity (TTR %) | 70.9 | 79.3 | 78.93 | 68.15 | 72.10 |
| Average Sentence Length (ASL) | 3.08 | 3.32 | 4.14 | 3.59 | 3.49 |

Dynamic Balance in Simplicity and ASL Evolution

The evolution of the Average Sentence Length (ASL) proves that Orhan Veli managed the principle of "proximity to colloquial speech" not as a fixed value but as a dynamic process throughout his career.

The principle of simplicity being a dynamic management process rather than a fixed rule throughout the career is clarified by the ASL jump (4.14) during the Destan Gibi period. The poet temporarily increased the average sentence length in this period for long narrative experiments. This rise in ASL aligns with Yılmaz's (2010) comment on the effort to break free from traditional molds, as the poet freely expanded his line and sentence structure for a transition to a narrative form. The ASL maintained its simple structure in the Garip (3.08) and Vazgeçemediğim (3.32) periods before showing this jump in Destan Gibi, but it returned to a level close to its initial values in the immediately subsequent Karşı (3.59) and Yenisi (3.49) periods. This situation proves that the principle of simplicity was not abandoned but was consciously maintained as a stylistic discipline following stylistic explorations. The quantitative data indicate that Orhan Veli managed his style flexibly yet controlled, according to thematic requirements.

- **Epic Jump and Return:** While ASL maintained its simple structure in the Garip (3.08) and Vazgeçemediğim (3.32) periods, it showed a temporary jump to 4.14 words in the Destan Gibi period. In subsequent periods, ASL rapidly decreased, returning to a level close to its initial values in the Karşı (3.59) and Yenisi (3.49) periods. This proves that the principle of simplicity was not abandoned but was consciously maintained as a stylistic discipline after the experiments.

TTR Analysis: Peak and Subsequent Thematic Focus

Interpreting the radical drop in TTR as a stylistic regression is insufficient in the context of the simplicity principle emphasized by Sazyek (1996). Quantitative data indicate that the poet did not deplete his vocabulary when moving from Garip to Karşı, but rather shifted to a conscious Condensation Stage. While the vocabulary was enriched for abstract themes in the Vazgeçemediğim period (TTR 79.3%), this richness was replaced in the Karşı period by the rhythmic and repetitive use of minimal words to express deep themes such as social criticism and existential questioning. Kuzu's (2022c) definition of Garip poetry's proximity to colloquial language is evidenced by the TTR dropping to its lowest level during this period,

proving that colloquial language was now used as a tool for social criticism, not lyricism. In this context, the TTR drop is the most concrete quantitative proof that the poet instrumentalized the Garip manifesto for thematic deepening.

The career trajectory of TTR (%70.9 → %79.3 → %78.93 → %68.15 → %72.10) shows that the vocabulary was first enriched while preserving the simplicity principle, and then radically condensed.

- **Enrichment Stage (D1 → D2):** The rise in TTR showed a statistically significant increase ($p = 0.021$) by reaching 79.3% in the Vazgeçemediğim period. This indicates the poet's acquisition of a new vocabulary to express abstract and internal themes.
- **Radical Decrease and Condensation Stage (D3 → D4):** The drop of TTR to its career-low of 68.15% in the Karşı period is interpreted not as a regression but as stylistic maturation and the Stage of Thematic Condensation. In this period, the poet used fewer fundamental words with high semantic load and repetitive patterns to express thematic depth and social criticism.

Further evidence that this radical drop is a conscious strategy, not a stylistic regression, is observed in the Average Lexical Diversity/Poem (Type{Poem}) ratio. Although the TTR reached its lowest level in the Karşı period, the number of unique words per average poem (Type/Poem 33.83) is actually higher than the initial Garip period (20.42). This clearly shows that the poet attempted a richer vocabulary in each poem but consciously implemented the Thematic Condensation strategy by repeating fundamental words more often, thereby lowering the overall TTR rate. This finding strengthens the hypothesis that Orhan Veli instrumentalized his limited vocabulary for thematic deepening.

Longitudinal Evolution of Thematic Foci

Word frequency and collocation analyses confirm that quantitative changes served thematic purposes. The drop in TTR, especially in the Karşı period, is a direct result of thematic condensation.

Table 3. Thematic Foci and Quantitative Strategy Matches

| Period | Main Thematic Focus | Quantitative Strategy |
|----------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Garip | Everyday, Concrete, Joy | Low TTR, Low ASL |
| Vazgeçemediğim | Internal Sorrow, Romanticism | TTR Rise (Vocabulary Enrichment) |
| Destan Gibi | Narrative, Journey, Physical Pain | ASL Jump (Narrative Expansion) |
| Karşı | Social Criticism, Urban Sounds, Existential Inquiry | TTR Drop (Lexical Condensation) |
| Yenisi | Individual Reckoning, Limited Life | Balance in TTR, Return in ASL |

Conclusion

The quantitative analyses covering five main periods of Orhan Veli Kanık's poetic language reveal the poet's stylistic evolution as a dynamic and conscious process.

Stylistic Evolution Throughout the Career

- **Dynamic Management of the Simplicity Principle:** The Average Sentence Length (ASL) analysis shows that the poet largely maintained the simplicity principle. ASL increased during the Destan Gibi period for narrative experiments, but a conscious return to simplicity followed. This proves that the poet managed the simplicity principle flexibly yet under control.
- **Two-Stage Evolution in Vocabulary:**
 - **Enrichment (D1 → D2):** Vocabulary was enriched for abstract themes. TTR rose from 70.9% to 79.3%, showing a statistically significant increase ($p = 0.021$).
 - **Radical Decrease and Condensation (D3 → D4):** TTR dropped to the career-low of 68.15% in the Karşı period. The poet expressed social criticism and individual inquiry most intensely by using a limited number of essential words with rhythmic repetitions and patterns. This demonstrates the poet's conscious instrumentalization of vocabulary for thematic deepening.

This study is the first to ground the traditional literary claim that Orhan Veli's poetry is not static on a quantitative basis, proving it statistically. Specifically, the radical drop in TTR observed in the Karşı period and its alignment with thematic condensation defines a new stylistic phase in the literature, termed the Condensation Stage. This finding indicates that the poet used a conscious instrumentalization strategy of his simple vocabulary to express social and existential depth, offering an original methodological contribution to Turkish poetry research.

Methodological and Theoretical Contribution

These findings reveal that Orhan Veli was not merely a rule-breaker but also an artist who continuously transformed his style upon the foundation of simplicity he established, achieving thematic depth that is quantitatively verifiable.

- The "Condensation Stage" observed in the Karşı period enabled the poet to express social and existential inquiries by using a limited number of fundamental words intensely and repetitively.
- The study supports traditional literary interpretations of Orhan Veli Kanık's poetry with quantitative data, offering an original and replicable methodological contribution to the field.

Future Research

Future research can examine this stylistic evolution in a broader context by including other works of the poet and the post-Garip generations. Additionally, new longitudinal or comparative studies can be conducted using different quantitative metrics and automated analysis tools.

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