

# Vernacular language in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* and *Şafak*

**Sevgi Soysal'ın *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* ve *Şafak* Romanlarının İngilizce Çevirilerinde Yerel Dil**

Research/Araştırma

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## ABSTRACT

As a female writer with social realist inclinations from Turkish literature, Sevgi Soysal portrays characters from different walks of life by maintaining an equal distance from varying categories of social difference, potentially turning into a label within society. Soysal incorporates vernacular language, shaped by local linguistic elements and containing important clues about indigenous ways of thinking from the Turkish context, into her works, ensuring the representation of several voices within her narrative universe. This study aims to discuss how elements of vernacular language are recreated in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* and *Şafak* in the light of the concept of foreignizing translation as an ethical act. This study comprises four parts. The first two parts draw on the main outlook of vernacular language and its potentiality in translation. In the third part, the interrelationships between Soysal's tendency to form a social realist perspective and her use of vernacular language in her selected novels are examined. The fourth part provides an analysis of paratextual elements and examples of vernacular language from the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* (2016) by Amy Spangler and *Şafak* (2022) by Maureen Freely. From an ethical perspective, it is concluded that Spangler and Freely show a limited extent of vernacularization based on their tendency toward foreignization in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's novels, leading to lesser chances of promoting openness, dialogue, and cultural hybridity between the source and target cultures.

**Key words:** Sevgi Soysal, modern Turkish literature, social realism, vernacular language, literary translation

## ÖZET

Türkçe edebiyatta toplumcu gerçekçi eğilimleri olan bir kadın yazar olarak öne çıkan Sevgi Soysal, eserlerinde toplumda bir etiket haline gelme potansiyeli olan sosyal kategorilere eşit mesafede durarak farklı yaşam tarzlarına sahip karakterlere dair öyküler anlatır. Soysal, yerli dil unsurlarıyla şekillenen ve Türkiye bağlamına özgü yerli düşünce biçimleri hakkında önemli ipuçları içeren yerel dili eserlerine dahil ederek, anlatı evreninde çeşitli seslerin temsil edilmesini sağlar. Bu çalışma, etik bir eylem olarak çeviride yabancılaştırma kavramı ışığında, Sevgi Soysal'ın *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* (1973) ve *Şafak* (1975) adlı eserlerinin İngilizce çevirilerinde yerel dil unsurlarının nasıl yeniden yaratıldığını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma dört bölümden oluşur. İlk iki bölüm, genel hatlarıyla yerel dili ve çevirideki potansiyellerini ele almaktadır. Üçüncü bölümde, Soysal'ın incelenen romanlarında toplumsal gerçekçi bakış açısı oluşturma eğilimleri ile yerel dil kullanımı arasındaki ilişkiler ele alınmaktadır. Dördüncü bölümde, Amy Spangler'ın *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* (2016) ve Maureen Freely'nin *Şafak* (2022) çevirilerine ait yanmetinsel unsurlar ve bu eserlerden alınan yerel dil örnekleri analiz edilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, Spangler ve Freely'nin, Sevgi Soysal'ın romanlarının İngilizce çevirilerinde yabancılaştırma eğilimleri göz önüne alındığında, yerel dili sınırlı biçimlerde yansıttıkları, böylece kaynak ile erek kültürler arasında açıklık, diyalog, ve kültürel melezliğin teşvik edilme olasılığını azalttıkları sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Sevgi Soysal, çağdaş Türk edebiyatı, toplumcu gerçekçilik, yerel dil, yazın çevirisi.

## 1. Introduction

As a prominent female writer in Turkish literature, Sevgi Soysal (1936-1976) is one of the earliest female representatives of social realism in modern Turkish literature with her commitment to reflecting societal diversity in her works.<sup>1</sup> Her approach to literature as a motive of democratizing narrative and bringing literature to the masses helps her works capture the contradictions and inconsistencies of Turkish society through the eyes of everyday characters. Soysal's novels, *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* (1973) and *Şafak* (1975), exemplify her focus on the lives of ordinary people and their engagement with pressing social issues, such as class divisions, economic struggles, and ideological dilemmas. *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti*, which won the Orhan Kemal Award in 1974, depicts a series of human portraits over the span of an hour and a half, framed by the dramatic fall of a rotting poplar tree on a street in Ankara, the capital of Türkiye. In contrast, *Şafak* delves into the experiences of a woman subjected to an interrogation for twelve hours in Adana, one of the largest cities in southeastern Türkiye. Both novels underscore the casual relationships characters form with their surroundings and the individuals they interact with. Crucially, the sociocultural contexts embedded within

<sup>1</sup> "Sevgi Soysal was born in Istanbul in 1936. Her work is inspired by her childhood in Ankara, youth and student movements in Turkey, revolutionary dreams, and experiences of leftist intellectuals in prison and in exile. In 1974, Soysal won the prestigious Orhan Kemal Award for Best Novel for *Noontime in Yenişehir*, which she wrote while in prison. *Dawn* was published in 1975, a beautiful thematic companion to her memoirs of prison life, which were originally published in the newspaper *Politika* and published in a single volume as *Yıldırım Area Women's Ward* in 1976. She wrote a set of endearing and illuminating story collections, novels, and memoirs over the course of her short life. Soysal died of cancer at the age of forty in 1976. She left behind an incomplete novel, *Welcome, Death!*" *Words Without Borders* ("Sevgi Soysal", n.d.).

these works are intricately tied to the vernacular language employed by the characters, presenting distinct and profound challenges for translators.

This study examines the recreation of vernacular language in the English translations of Soysal's novels *Yenişehirde Bir Öğle Vakti* by Amy Spangler and *Şafak* by Maureen Freely. By analyzing the translators' textual strategies and the sociocultural implications of their decisions, the study explores how elements of the Turkish vernacular language are rendered in English. Additionally, the paratextual analysis (including epitextual and peritextual elements) highlights the positioning of these publications in the target context. In this way, a comprehensive framework will be drawn on the textual and extratextual factors influencing the dissemination and reception of Soysal's works in English.

This study fills a critical gap in the field. While studies on vernacular language in the Turkish context largely focus on the language reform and planning efforts of the early Republican period (Tachau, 1964; Doğançay-Aktuna, 1995; Karpas, 2004; Aytürk, 2004; Çolak, 2004; Bingöl, 2009), only very few address its representation in modern Turkish literature (Karpas, 1960; Parla, 2008; Ertürk, 2010) or its implications in translation into other languages (Can Rençberler, 2021; Emirkadı, 2023). In a very recent publication, Hilal Erkazancı Durmuş (2026) discusses the 'female' agency of Freely and Spangler with examples from their translations of Turkish literature in Anglosphere from a holistic perspective by reflecting upon "expanding the global visibility of marginalized women authors, revealing women's agency, challenging normative gendered embodiment, highlighting women's intersectional struggles, and demonstrating parallelisms within world literature to transform commercialized images." However, the present study provides a focused look on how the translatorial agencies of Freely and Spangler potentialize in vernacular language with examples from the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's two novels, *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* and *Şafak*, since the vernacular functions as a literary device for representing local knowledge and worldviews from a social realist perspective, expanding beyond the categories of race, sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality in Soysal's literary realm. By underlining the significance and the role of vernacular language in Soysal's social realist novels and their English translations, this study contributes to broader discussions of the agents' roles in constructing the Turkish vernacular in the context of translating modern Turkish literature into other languages.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Language use is inherently contextual. In official settings, where communication is governed by established norms, formal linguistic elements prevail. Conversely, in contexts where such regularization is deemed unnecessary, linguistic irregularities emerge, bringing the vernacular to the forefront. Vernacular refers to the natural linguistic expressions used by specific groups, often in informal contexts, but it also encompasses the distinct linguistic practices of communities (Vernacular, *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). However, vernacular is not exclusively tied to informality; it is also employed by specific communities and social groups across a range of contexts. For

instance, mobile communities, such as circus performers or nomadic groups, often integrate irregular linguistic forms, which manifest as vernaculars, into their everyday communication (Lantis, 1960, p. 203). In such cases, Ming (2020, p. 82) implies the uncodified nature and the lower degree of standardization for vernacular language, suggesting its association with colloquial, vulgar, and slang elements. Consequently, vernacular languages are often perceived as diverging from mainstream linguistic norms in public discourse. These characteristics make vernacular languages a focal point for research exploring their links to identity, community, and linguistic diversity (Mugeon & Nadasdi, 1998; Hazen, 2002; Makoni et al., 2007).

In this manner, translating vernacular into other languages brings challenges beyond linguistic fidelity, encompassing social, cultural and historical complexities. This feeds the tension between preserving the original cultural context and making it intelligible to the target audience during the translation process. When such issues arise, translators face the dilemma of foreignizing the vernacular elements to keep the cultural essence unique to the source text or bringing forth fluency and familiarity to create a more accessible target text for the readership (Saxena, 2022, p. 6). As Antoine Berman (1992, p. 4) highlights, translation is "an opening, a dialogue, a crossbreeding, a decentering" – a process that fosters connections across cultures. Translation allows the target audience to engage with the unfamiliarity of the source culture through culture-specific items such as local customs and folk traditions (Ni & Hongmei, 2024, p. 146). However, without adequate contextual knowledge, translators may misrepresent or remove the cultural background of the source text, leading to the elimination of human experiences from the target text (Nnamani & Amadi, 2015, p. 79). This prevents cultural phenomena, including vernacular elements, from being represented deservedly in the target context.

Another significant challenge in translating vernacular lies in representing the sociolinguistic markers of class, region, religion, and social strata in the target text since vernaculars contain colloquialisms, regional dialects, and slang elements directly referring to characters' relationships with their social worlds (Rosengrant, 1992, p. 16). Translators often grapple with whether to adopt literal translation, which might risk unintelligibility in certain contexts, or to adapt vernacular elements for target audiences, potentially diminishing their original sociocultural significance. For instance, the non-standard orthography addressing the lower social strata in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* may force translators to preserve vernacular features without reinforcing stereotypes in the translation process (Berthele, 2000, p. 605). Lawrence Venuti (1998, pp. 81-82) frames translation as an ethical act, emphasizing the need for translators to consider temporal and spatial dynamics of the cultural context while avoiding ethnocentric biases that might surface under the guise of linguistic fidelity. For Venuti, translators may use domesticating translation, "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to dominant cultural values in English" (1995, p. 81), or foreignizing translation, "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text" (1995, p. 20). Venuti (1995, p. 20) relates the motive of foreignizing translation to an ethical act since the pressures toward fidelity

and creating an 'objective' text, which potentially limit the outlook of local knowledge and related cultural differences in translation, can be eliminated through a foreignizing approach. What seems acceptable and eligible for the target audience, the Western readers in particular, may not always mirror the peculiarities of the source text relating to indigenous and non-Western contexts. In that, translating vernacular is a political act, serving to create a motive against the widespread legacy of colonial mentality that gives superiority to certain languages over others and to encourage and support cultural exchange in an egalitarian way (Wa Ngũgĩ, 2020, p. 340). In return, this gives the act of translation a transformative role in bridging diverse cultures through an array of authors and their works in the literary scene. Hence, this study adopts Venuti's (1995, p. 20) framing of translation as "an ethical act" based on the motive of foreignizing translation "as a place where cultural other is manifested" to examine vernacular elements in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* and *Şafak*. The specific reason behind the choice of an analysis on vernacular elements is that such elements also foreground the critical stances that Soysal genuinely advocated as a social realist writer in her literary works.

### **3. The role of vernacular language in *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* and *Şafak***

Sevgi Soysal, as a writer with deep inclinations to reflect ordinary people's lives in her narratives, gives a fair chance to individuals from diverse social backgrounds to express themselves in ways resonating with readers' everyday experiences. By doing so, Soysal not only brings her narrative line closer to social realities but also provides a democratic space for readers to critically negotiate their socio-political positions and empathize with individuals who may appear vastly different from themselves. Soysal's novel, *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* (1973) tells the stories of a group of people who watch the fall of a rotten poplar tree in the capital city of Ankara one afternoon. The narrative delves into the relationships these characters form with one another, situating their interactions within a broader historical framework. Through ironic and cynical language (Uğurlu, 2008, p. 166), Soysal depicts the characters chasing small goals in an ever-changing country and thus keeping in time with what is happening in a nation repeatedly disrupted by the military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980. These events underline the fragile and uneven processes of democratization in Türkiye. This also finds place in Soysal's portrayal of characters who are neither entirely rural nor urbanized and experience a state of in-betweenness as they try to abide by city rules, revising their obsolete outlook on life, or clinging to tradition. Using their perspectives, Soysal reminds the reader of enduring racial and class prejudices (Millas, 2005). To better highlight these conflicts, Soysal constructs a narrative realm featuring characters from varied social classes and cultural backgrounds.

In *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti*, the lower class is represented by Ahmet, a poor shopkeeper; Şükran, his uneducated girlfriend; Mehtap, a female clerk from a Caucasian laborer family; Ali, a politically active law student from a poor family; Necmi, a shoeshine boy; Aysel, a nightclub prostitute; and Mevlût, the doorman of Mr. Salih's apartment building. The middle class is embodied by Güngör, an entrepreneurial shop owner in Çankaya who began his trade life with Easter eggs. The upper class is portrayed through

Necip, a bourgeois living off his dwindling inheritance, and Olcay and her family. Mr Salih is a respected criminal law professor; Mrs Mevhibe, his wife and proud "daughter of the Republic"; and Doğan, their intellectual son, who remains detached from public life.

Soysal employs distinct linguistic registers to accentuate various categorical differences in the novel. While upper-class characters with an urban background articulate themselves through formal language and regular sentences, the lower-class characters from rural regions tend to use regional dialects, slang, and informal expressions. This strategic use of vernacular language plays a pivotal role in establishing the narrative's social realism, enhancing its authenticity and depth.

Published two years after *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti*, *Şafak* (1975) is often considered a continuation of Sevgi Soysal's narrative exploration of the lives of ordinary people. Set against the oppressive backdrop of the 12 March 1971 military memorandum, the novel centers on a twelve-hour interrogation in Adana, a southeastern city in Türkiye. At its core is the intimate yet tense relationship between Oya, an exiled writer, and Mustafa, a leftist teacher. Soysal enriches the narrative through the portrayal of a diverse cast of characters, including Hüseyin, a lawyer; Hüseyin's uncle Ali, a worker; Ali's nephew Mustafa, a revolutionary recently released from prison; Ali's neighbor Ekrem, a Turkish worker from Germany; Ali's wife Gülşah; her sister Ziynet; and Ziynet's fiancé Zekeriya, a member of the Greywolves. It also delves into the lives of individuals encountered in prison, such as Menekşe, Güllü, and Firdevs, working-class women arrested for petty offences, and two Kurdish men, Teberdar and Veysi, interrogated on suspicion. These portrayals not only expand the novel's human landscape but also contribute to its linguistic richness and socio-political depth. The diversity of human profile is further enhanced by the inclusion of non-Turkish characters, particularly the two Kurdish men, who speak in heavily accented and 'broken' Turkish. In this way, Soysal extends the sense of locality by exploring the potential of racial representation and the use of dialectal speech, an integral part of vernacular language, within the novel.

Another significant aspect of the novel is the usage of sexist insults and epithets that dehumanize the female body. Oya and her fellow leftist prisoner, Sema, were exposed to derogatory terms such as *orospu* (Eng: prostitute, whore). This language implicates their male counterparts as *pezevenk* (Eng: pimps) and reinforces mechanisms of male dominance and control while framing the women as morally corrupt (Alver, 2012, p. 778). As the story progresses, the severity of the language also escalates. According to Yıldız, Soysal's memoir functions as a kind of diary, chronicling the daily suffering and political entrapment of its characters (Yıldız, 2019, p. 147). In this manner, the inclusion of dialects from various segments of society offers vivid reflections of pain, entrapment, and solidarity. In conclusion, in her novels *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* and *Şafak*, Sevgi Soysal offers seminal contributions to the tradition of social realist novel within the Turkish cultural context by reflecting characters from every walk of life through various forms of Turkish vernacular language. In this respect, Soysal makes readers look at their surroundings from a social realist perspective, as if comparing themselves to their reflections in a mirror.

#### 4. Reflections of vernacular elements in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's novels

This section explores the recreation of vernacular language in translation, using examples from the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's novels: *Noontime in Yenişehir* (2016) by Amy Spangler and *Dawn* (2022) by Maureen Freely. Literary critic Muzaffer Uyguner (2002, p. 21) interprets Soysal's linguistic choices as an effort to naturalize her characters' speech, categorizing the linguistic variations in her novels under the broader concept of linguistic features. These include local words, idioms, iterations, proverbs, quotations, reduplications, triplet structures, and a varied lexicon comprising Ottoman Turkish words, foreign terms, neologisms, dialectical speech, and slang (Uyguner, 2002, pp. 19–36). However, as iterations, proverbs, quotations, reduplications, triplet structures, neologisms pertain to linguistic features beyond the scope of vernacular language, this analysis focuses specifically on local words, vocatives, foreign words of Arabic origin, slang words and phrases and idiomatic expressions. These elements are examined for their role in conveying the localities inherent in the vernacular language, as elaborated in the third part of this study.

##### 4.1 A paratextual analysis of Sevgi Soysal's novels in English translation

The English translation of *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti*, published under the title *Noontime in Yenişehir* by Milet Publishing in 2016, was translated by Amy Spangler and funded by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism's TEDA Project. The translated text contains several paratextual elements that enhance the reader's understanding of both the text and its cultural context. Foremost among these are the biographies of Sevgi Soysal, the author, and Amy Spangler, the translator, which are positioned at the beginning of the book. Soysal's biography mentions her family background, her educational life at the Department of Archaeology in Ankara and her significant contributions to Turkish literature with notable works such as *Tante Rosa*, *Yürümek* [Walk], *Şafak* [Dawn], and *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* [Yıldırım District Women's Ward], each of which addresses critical issues within Turkish society, reflecting Soysal's engagement with social and cultural themes. Amy Spangler's biography, on the other hand, offers insights into her educational background, including her studies in Near Eastern and Classical Archaeology and German Language and Literature at Bryn Mawr College. It also shows her achievements as a translator of Turkish literature, notably *The City in Crimson Cloak* (2007) by Aslı Erdoğan, and her role as cofounder and director of the literary agency AnatoliaLit, which plays a significant role in promoting Turkish literature abroad.

Another noteworthy paratextual element is the editorial notes, which explain how the personal names, honorifics, place names, and food terms are treated in the translated text. The editors indicate that such terms are italicized upon their first appearance and rendered in regular text thereafter. Additionally, a *Glossary of Turkish Terms* is provided, listing Turkish words retained in the English version to preserve cultural specificity, such as *abla* (older sister), *ağbi* (older brother), *beybaba* (a respectful way of addressing fathers or older men), *goralı* (a sandwich with salami or sausage), *inşallah* (God willing), *kolcu* (watchman), *muhtar* (elected head of a village), *palikarya* (a

derogatory term for a person of Greek descent), *Saatli maarif* (a tear-off calendar with pages for each day), and *Yarabbi şükür* (Thanks be to God). The deliberate inclusion of these terms in their original form demonstrates the agents' commitment to maintaining the authenticity of the source text. By directly transferring these cultural-specific expressions, the translation not only preserves the unique Turkish vernacular but also introduces local words and cultural concepts to the target readership. Translator Amy Spangler articulates this challenging aspect of the translation process as follows (Eliades, 2017):

"I was raised in southern Ohio, and so often I get criticism in the translation for being too vernacular, like a midwestern vernacular, and I don't know if that held true in this translation. Sometimes I would just push back, and say, 'Let it be', because a lot of times what happens in these translations is that I do mid-Atlantic. So it's not British, it's not too American, but it also becomes a little too palatable, devoid of any type of flavor. You're never going to get an exact equivalent, so I'd rather come up with something more colorful, maybe regional, than having something bland and mid-Atlantic."

Thus, it can be suggested that Spangler sought to preserve the essence of Soysal's text by drawing on her own experience of being raised in southern Ohio and navigating various English accents. In this way, Spangler's approach to vernacular remains significant, as it avoids standardization and stereotyping, instead offering a more regional and vibrant rendition of the language in the English translation.

Sevgi Soysal's second book in the Anglophone world, *Şafak* (1975), was translated into English by the prominent translator Maureen Freely, widely known for her translations of five novels by Turkish Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk. Published by Archipelago Books, "a not-for-profit literary press devoted to promoting cultural exchange through innovative classic and contemporary international literature" (Archipelago Books, n.d.), the English translation contains an array of paratextual elements such as a summary of the novel, biographies of Soysal and Freely, and Freely's preface that provides insights into the positioning of Soysal's works within the Turkish cultural context.

Soysal's biography in *Dawn* (2022) highlights her political stance as a leftist writer shaped by "revolutionary dreams, student movements, and experiences of imprisoned and exiled intellectuals." This representation contrasts sharply with the portrayal of Soysal in the English translation of *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti*. *Dawn* offers a more activist-oriented narrative of Soysal's life, which aligns with her political identity in Türkiye. Freely's biography emphasizes her position as a translator of Turkish literature with references to her membership in English PEN, her authorship of seven books and the significance of Sevgi Soysal in her life as the first Turkish author she ever translated. Notably, the biographies in *Dawn* omit details regarding the educational backgrounds of both Soysal and Freely, resulting in less standardized yet more personal representations of their identities.

In the preface, there is a concise summary of *Dawn*, centering on the protagonist Oya's twelve-hour interrogation and experiences as a writer in Adana, a narrative

directly informed by Soysal's real-life experience of exile in the same city (Freely, 2022, p. viii). However, Freely does not provide any details regarding her translational process in this section. This creates a notable gap, as the preface lacks critical insights into the strategies or challenges involved in translating *Dawn* into English. In an interview with literary scholar İpek Şahinler, accompanied by Sevgi Soysal's daughter, Funda Soysal, Freely highlights the rural nuances of the language and the "colloquiality" of humor in the novel (Şahinler, 2024). Freely argues that the act of translation extends beyond the characters' words and thus encompasses the ways in which they define themselves and relate to the spaces that they inhabit (Şahinler, 2024). This perspective informs her dual role as a translator and a novelist and shapes her approach to transferring the writer's stylistic essence into the target language. Freely also underscores the significance of context over the literal meaning of words, crafting a linguistic landscape that enables readers to discern cultural distinctions between their own context and that of Türkiye. In doing so, she liberates the novel from the rigidity of fixed signs and facilitates a more nuanced integration of Soysal's fictional world into the target culture. In the following part, answers will be sought to the question of whether translatorial decisions of Spangler and Freely align with their approaches by examining how vernacular language is recreated in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's novels.

#### 4.2 Vernacular language in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's Novels

In both novels, the first vernacular element that draws attention is local words as part of dialectical speech from a certain vicinity or district in a geographical location of Türkiye. As a writer positing characters from every walk of life in her works, Soysal makes use of such words to create an empathetic atmosphere and a more realistic portrait of what happens through the flow of the narrative. The following excerpts show how both translators responded to local words in the translation process:

**Table 1**

*Translation of "Yavuklu" in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text            | Excerpt                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST              | Ya kendisini alsın diye yavuklusuna güler, ya iyi et versin diye kasaba güler. (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 234)                  |
| TT              | If they smile at all, it's at their beau to get a snuggle, at the butcher to get a good slice of meat. (Soysal, 2016, p. 247) |
| BT <sup>2</sup> | Either they smile upon their fiancé to marry them, or they smile upon the butcher to give them some good meat.                |

*Note.* ST = Source Text; TT = Target Text; BT = Back Translation.

<sup>2</sup> All back translations are done by the author unless otherwise stated.

**Table 2**

*Translation of "Yavuklu" in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                                |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Bitmek tükenmek bilmeyen, bire bin veren yavuklularında. (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 171) |
| TT   | To their betrothed, who multiplies each new seed by a thousand. (Soysal, 2022, p. 218) |
| BT   | In their never-ending, ever-growing betrothed ones.                                    |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler uses 'beau' ("a boyfriend"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.) in return for 'yavuklu' ("lover, beloved"; *Derleme Sözlüğü*, 1982a, p. 4816), a local word used in various villages around Ankara in Central Anatolia. In this case, it creates a destituent equivalence for the local word with an archaic version of 'lover' in the TT. The word derives from Old French 'bel', meaning "beautiful, handsome, fair, genuine, real" (*Etymonline*, n.d.). Thus, Spangler's decision crystallizes the foreignizing style in the TT. In *Dawn*, Freely chooses 'betrothed' ("a person that someone has promised to marry, or has been promised to as a marriage partner"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.) in exchange for the word. While the meaning perfectly suits the outlook of ST, the TT lacks the foreignizing effect in the target context.

The second vernacular element is the use of vocatives that the characters from a certain vicinity or geographical location use to address others in certain dialogues. The characters' speech in the novels exhibits elements of various dialects, such as the terminal devoicing with the change of 'k' to 'g' in the sentences, mutation of 'o' as 'u', and vowel reduction, which are common in various dialects of the Turkish language. The following excerpts show how Spangler and Freely have recreated the elements of dialectal speech in their translation processes:

**Table 3**

*Translation of "Ulan" in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                      |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Alınacak kız mısın sen ulan? (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 28)                    |
| TT   | Are you the type of gal a man marries, for God's sake? (Soysal, 2016, p. 27) |
| BT   | Are you a girl to marry, bub?                                                |

**Table 4**

*Translation of “Ulan” in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                        |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Sağır mısın, ulan? Sana defol dedik? Serbestsin. (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 191) |
| TT   | Are you deaf? I said go, you fool. You’re released. (Soysal, 2022, p. 247)     |
| BT   | Are you deaf, bub? We said go? You’re released.                                |

In the source texts, ‘ulan’ is used as “an interjection used to call out to or address boys” (*Derleme Sözlüğü*, 1982b, p. 4783), similar to ‘bub’ (“a form of address used to another person, especially a man, sometimes in a slightly angry way”; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). In both translations, the translators attempt to compensate for the loss of meaning by using idiomatic expressions such as ‘for God’s sake’ or elements of spoken language such as ‘gal’ and ‘you fool’. However, both texts lack the foreignness of the element from the TT and thus eliminate the foreignizing style in the target context.

**Table 5**

*Translation of “Ağbi” in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                                |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Ağbi... beni çek ağbi... (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 152) |
| TT   | Film me, brother... (Soysal, 2016, p. 161)             |
| BT   | Bro... film me, bro...                                 |

**Table 6**

*Translation of “Ağbi” in Dawn*

| Text Type | Excerpt                                                                                                      |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST        | “Ben de geleyim mi ağbi, onlardan değilim biliyorsun,” dediği duyuldu Ekrem’in. (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 70) |
| TT        | “Are you sure you want me to come in too?” they heard Ekrem say. (Soysal, 2022, p. 79)                       |
| BT        | “Should I come too, bro? You know I’m not one of them,” Ekrem was heard saying.                              |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler chooses 'brother' ("a man or boy with the same parents as another person"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.) for 'ağbi' ("brother, older brother"; *Güncel Türkçe Sözlük*, n.d.). This is a vocative used in certain parts of Anatolia with the vowel reduction of *e* from the word as a shortened version of *ağabey*, similar to 'bro' ("a friend, usually a male friend"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). In *Dawn*, Freely removes the word from the TT and directly eliminates the foreignizing effect of the vocative case in the dialogue.

**Table 7**

*Translation of "Giz" in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                    |
|------|--------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Ver kız aay! (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 245) |
| TT   | At is mah babydoll! (Soysal, 2016, p. 259) |
| BT   | Argh! Give it, gurl!                       |

**Table 8**

*Translation of "Giz" in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                          |
|------|--------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Aç! Aç! Aç kız aç! (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 174) |
| TT   | Show it, girl! Show it! (Soysal, 2022, p. 222)   |
| BT   | Open! Open! Open, gurl, open!                    |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler uses 'babydoll' ("a child's toy in the shape of a baby"; *Cambridge Dictionary*) for 'gız' [gıyz] ("girl"; *Derleme Sözlüğü*, 1972a, p. 2069). In the translated version, the exclamation of 'aay' (argh) and the word 'gız' ('gurl' as "a female child"; *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d.) are eliminated, and the sentence corresponds with aspects of African-American vernacular such as 'at' for 'that' and 'mah' for 'my' (Sidnell, n.d.). In this manner, Spangler limitedly recreates the foreignizing effect. In *Dawn*, Freely chooses the word 'girl' ("a female child or, more generally, a female of any age"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.) in exchange for 'gız', similar to 'gyal' ("a female child"; *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d.) and removes aspects of dialectical speech, leading to a lack of the foreignizing style in the target context.

**Table 9**

*Translation of “Gı” in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                                         |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Çukolata da alamam mı gı? (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 251)         |
| TT   | So I can’t get the chockylit either, hm? (Soysal, 2016, p. 266) |
| BT   | Can’t I get the chockylit, gyal?                                |

**Table 10**

*Translation of “Gı” in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                                        |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | (...) Deniz Gezmiş fena mı gı? (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 99)    |
| TT   | (...) So Deniz Gezmiş wasn’t your type? (Soysal, 2022, p. 118) |
| BT   | (...) Can Deniz Gezmiş be bad, gyal?                           |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler uses ‘chockylit’ (chocolate) and ‘hm’ (“a noise that people make when they are hesitating”; *Collins Dictionary*, n.d.) for ‘çukolata’ and ‘gı’ in the TT. For the word ‘chocolate’, Spangler’s decision on vernacularization is to point; however, ‘gı’ is a vocative that means “be, hey-like call, interjection” (*Derleme Sözlüğü*, 1972b, p. 2024) and is spelt with ‘g’ due to the change of ‘k’ to ‘g’ in Central Anatolian dialect. In *Dawn*, Freely eliminates the word ‘gı’ and recreates the sentence with the addition of the expression of ‘to be someone’s type’ (“to be the type of person that someone thinks is attractive”; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). In both translations, the word ‘gı’ loses its qualificative value and gains a more directive aspect, resulting in the reduction of foreignness in the target context.

**Table 11**

*Translation of “Gardaş” in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                                                |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Ben öleceğime, sen öl gardaş, suçsuz öldü, desinler. (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 254)                     |
| TT   | Better you die than me, brother, then they can say, “Oh, he died so innocent.” (Soysal, 2016, p. 269). |
| BT   | Better you die than me, bud. Let them say he died innocent.                                            |

**Table 12**

*Translation of "Kardaş" in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                                   |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Otur kardaş, siz de oturun. (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 69)  |
| TT   | You come sit down, too, my brother. (Soysal, 2022, p. 78) |
| BT   | Sit down, bud, you sit down too.                          |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler uses 'brother' ("a man or boy with the same parents as another person"; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) in exchange for 'gardaş' (*Derleme Sözlüğü*, 1972c, p. 1922). This is a vocative used in various parts of Anatolia, similar to 'bud' ("used by an adult talking to a young boy in a friendly and kind way"; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) In *Dawn*, Freely chooses the same word in the translation process. In both translations, the decisions remove the foreignizing effect in the target context.

The third element that affects the outlook of vernacular in the English translations of Soysal's novels is the use of Arabic-origin words that have moved away from their religious meanings, being used as reduplications, interjections, or slang expressions in everyday language. The following excerpts show how Spangler and Freely have recreated the words of Arabic origin in their translation processes:

**Table 13**

*Translation of "Vallaha" in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                                              |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Aaa, bizim mahallede kimse hakkını yedirmez vallaha. (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 258)                   |
| TT   | Oh yeah, well, in our neighbourhood, everyone protects what's theirs, by God. (Soysal, 2016, p. 274) |
| BT   | Oh, nobody in our neighborhood lets anyone exploit their rights, by Jove.                            |

**Table 14**

*Translation of “Vallaha” in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Şu Zekeriya bile senden yürekli vallaha. (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 153) |
| TT   | Even this Zekeriya has more backbone than you. (Soysal, 2022, p. 197)  |
| BT   | By Jove, even this Zekeriya is braver than you!                        |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler resorts to ‘by God’ (“used to emphasize how determined or surprised you are”; *Longman Dictionary*, n.d.) for ‘vallaha’ (“an oath used to mean ‘I call Allah as my witness, by Allah’s right’”; *Güncel Türkçe Sözlük*, n.d.) similar to ‘by Jove’ (“minced oath for by God, Jove referring to Jupiter”; *Dictionary.com*, n.d.). In this manner, Spangler reflects the semantic equivalent of the phrase in the TT. In *Dawn*, Freely reduces the phrase to the adverb ‘even’ and eliminates the implications of foreignization.

The fourth element that comes to the fore is the use of slang words and phrases that are in line with the socio-economic background of the characters in the narratives and draw a sharp line between economically lower and higher classes. The following excerpts show how Spangler and Freely reflected the slang words in the translation process:

**Table 15**

*Translation of “Hergele” in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                               |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | “Vay hergele,” dedi. (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 183)    |
| TT   | “Look at that swine,” he said. (Soysal, 2016, p. 193) |
| BT   | “Such a halter-sack you are,” he said.                |

**Table 16**

*Translation of “Hergele” in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                                                                          |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Çadır deliklerine parmaklarını geçirip içerisini gözleyen hergelelerle başa çıkmak da ayrı bir iş. (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 175) |

| Text | Excerpt                                                                                                                            |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TT   | As for the scoundrels who poke holes in the tents, so that they can see inside – they'll get what's coming. (Soysal, 2022, p. 224) |
| BT   | Dealing with the halter-sacks who stick their fingers through the holes in the tent to peek inside is another task.                |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler chooses 'swine' ("i.e., a derogatory word that indicates a person, typically a man, having one or more of the negative characteristics traditionally associated with pigs; especially, a greedy, lazy, or dirty person; a coarse, degraded, or lecherous person"; *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d.) in exchange for 'hergele' ("words that offend others' honor"; *Derleme Sözlüğü*, 1974, p. 2344) similar to 'halter-sack' ("someone fit to be hanged, scoundrel"; *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d.) a word used since the 1600s in the UK. In *Dawn*, Freely uses 'scoundrel' ("a person, especially a man, who treats other people very badly and has no moral principles"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.), with regard to the context and meaning of 'hergele' in the TT. However, creating a relatively speculative version by adding extra comments such as 'they'll get what's coming' is an overstatement that forms a gap between the ST and TT while contributing to the emotional baggage of the target readership. In both translations, there are efforts to compensate for the meaning of the word; however, the foreignizing effect is eliminated in the target language.

**Table 17**

*Translation of "Dürzü" in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                             |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| ST   | Dürzü! (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 25) |
| TT   | The swine! (Soysal, 2016, p. 24)    |
| BT   | The druze!                          |

**Table 18**

*Translation of "Dürzü" in Dawn*

| Text | Excerpt                                                              |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Bu kadarı bu Zekeriya dürzüsüne yeter. (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 145) |

| Text | Excerpt                                                                                      |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TT   | That would be enough to put the villainous Zekeriya in his place. (Soysal, 2022, p. 185-186) |
| BT   | That would be enough for Zekeriya, the druze.                                                |

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler chooses ‘swine’ for ‘dürzü’ (“a derogatory term, metaphorically referring to hardheartedness”; *Nişanyan Sözlük*, n.d.) originated as a racist slur in reference to the ‘durzi’ (“a member of a religious community living in Syria and Lebanon”; *Nişanyan Sözlük*, n.d.) However, Spangler also uses ‘swine’ in exchange for the word ‘hergele’ and hence narrows down the richness of the slang culture created by different words in the TT. In *Dawn*, Freely uses ‘villainous’ (“evil or criminal”; *Longman Dictionary*, n.d.) as a semantic equivalent of the word. In both translations, the foreignising indications are reduced from the target context.

The last vernacular element that draws attention is idiomatic expressions that refer to culture-specific situations through their metaphorical nature and with a certain extent of abstraction. In both novels, idiomatic expressions are complementary in that they convey culture-specific ways of thinking and looking at things from the perspective of Turkish culture. The following excerpts show how Spangler and Freely recreated the idiomatic expressions in the translation process:

**Table 19**

*Translation of “Kıran Giresice” in Noontime at Yenişehir*

| Text | Excerpt                                                                                                 |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST   | Canım öyle deme, kıran giresicelerin huyudur bu. [...] (Soysal, 2001 [1973], p. 258)                    |
| TT   | Oh, sweetheart, you got it all wrong, it’s just the way those bastards are. [...] (Soysal 2016, p. 274) |
| BT   | Sweetheart, don’t talk like that, it’s just the way those decimated are.                                |

**Table 20**

*Translation of “Kıran Giresice” in Dawn*

| Text Type | Excerpt                                                          |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST        | Kıran giresice, defolcan mı okula? (Soysal, 2012 [1975], p. 177) |

| Text Type | Excerpt |
|-----------|---------|
|-----------|---------|

|    |                                                       |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------|
| TT | Scram! Get yourself to school! (Soysal, 2022, p. 227) |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------|

|    |                                                  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|
| BT | You, decimated! Will you get yourself to school? |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|

In *Noontime at Yenişehir*, Spangler removes the idiom and uses 'bastard' ("an unpleasant person, a person born to parents who are not married to each other"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.) for 'kıran giresice' ("i.e., a deadly disease outbreak strikes"; *Güncel Türkçe Sözlük*, n.d.) similar to 'decimate' ("i.e., to kill a large number of something, or to reduce something severely"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). In *Dawn*, Freely resorts to 'scram' ("to go away quickly"; *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.) and removes the idiomatic expression as well. In this respect, both translations lack the foreignizing style due to the removal of idiomatic implications in the target context.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has aimed to discuss the interrelationships between the translatorial agencies of Maureen Freely and Amy Spangler and the manifestations of vernacular language in the English translations of Sevgi Soysal's *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* and *Şafak*. In this respect, the study has been based on Lawrence Venuti's (1995, p. 20) framing of foreignizing translation as an "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text". By doing so, this study posits the motive of foreignizing translation as an ethical act, bearing the function of overcoming the pressures toward fidelity and objectiveness in translation, which limit the reflections of local knowledge and cultural differences across transnational contexts. When it comes to vernacular language – one of the most important tools for reflecting the social realist perspective in Sevgi Soysal's novels – this takes on particular significance.

In the interviews evaluated as part of the paratexts in this study, Spangler openly relates her tendency to recreate vernacular language in *Noontime in Yenişehir* by preserving its essence and navigating various accents due to her upbringing in southern Ohio (Eliades, 2017). Freely, on the other hand, highlights her focus on the concept of "colloquiality" expanding beyond the literal meanings of the words used in *Dawn*, which potentially serve to form an intrinsic quality in Soysal's fictional world in the target context (Şahinler, 2024). However, both translations generally lack the foreignizing strategies to recreate the Turkish vernacular from an ethical perspective, as suggested by Venuti (1995) in relation to his conceptualization of foreignizing translation. In the context of translatorial decisions, Spangler generally attempts to compensate for the meaning loss by resorting to colloquial words or phrases or dialectal elements from the target context. In contrast, Freely tends either to translate vernacular elements directly according to their dictionary meanings or to remove them from the TT when there is no equivalent in the target language. In this manner, both Spangler and Freely leave room for representing the ordinary rather than reflecting the foreign, an act opposite to the

extent of foreignizing translation. Thus, it can be suggested that both translations limit the extent of foreignizing translation in the target culture, which would have formed the basis for an “opening, dialogue, decentering and crossbreeding” between the source and target cultures (Berman, 1992, p. 4). In future research, the focus of analysis may be extended to Soysal’s translations in other languages with different motives shaping her social realist perspective. Exploring and understanding what Sevgi Soysal offers to world literature as one of the leading figures of social realism in modern Turkish literature has the potential to open new horizons for thinking about and assessing translated literature from peripheral languages like Turkish into dominant cultures like English in translation studies.

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