

FOLK LANGUAGE AND ELEMENTS OF ORAL SPEECH IN THE SHORT STORIES
OF SABAHATTIN ALI

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Annotation. This article investigates the use of folk language and elements of oral speech in the short stories of Sabahattin Ali. The study focuses on how colloquial vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, dialectal features, and conversational structures function within literary discourse. Applying a functional-stylistic and sociolinguistic approach, the research analyzes the role of oral speech elements in enhancing narrative realism, character authenticity, and cultural representation. The findings indicate that Sabahattin Ali effectively integrates spoken language into written form, allowing marginalized voices to be expressed naturally and convincingly. Moreover, the use of folk language not only strengthens the aesthetic value of the texts but also serves as a tool for social critique and ideological expression. The study concludes that oral speech elements are essential in bridging the gap between literature and real-life communication, contributing significantly to the communicative and artistic power of the author's works.

Key words: folk language, oral speech, colloquial vocabulary, idioms, proverbs, dialect, sociolinguistics, Turkish literature, Sabahattin Ali, narrative discourse, stylistics, social realism.

Introduction. Language is not only a system of communication but also a reflection of cultural identity, social structure, and collective experience. In literary works, especially in prose narratives, the incorporation of folk language and elements of oral speech plays a vital role in bridging the gap between written text and real-life communication. These linguistic features allow authors to create authenticity, convey cultural nuances, and represent the voices of different social groups. In this context, the short stories of Sabahattin Ali offer a rich field for examining how spoken language can be artistically transformed into literary discourse.

Sabahattin Ali is widely recognized as one of the leading representatives of social realism in 20th-century Turkish literature. His works are deeply rooted in everyday life and focus on the experiences of ordinary people, particularly those belonging to marginalized and disadvantaged social groups. Unlike many writers who rely on highly literary or formal language, Ali deliberately adopts elements of folk speech, including colloquial vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and regional dialects. This stylistic choice enables him to construct narratives that are not only artistically compelling but also socially and culturally authentic.

The use of folk language in literature is closely related to the field of Sociolinguistics, which examines how language varies according to social factors such as class, region, and context. From a sociolinguistic perspective, oral speech elements in literary texts function as markers of identity, reflecting the social background, education level, and cultural environment of characters. At the same time, these elements contribute to the realism of the narrative by reproducing natural patterns of communication, including spontaneity, emotional expressiveness, and variability.

In addition to sociolinguistics, the study of oral speech in literature is also closely connected to stylistics and discourse analysis. These disciplines emphasize the functional role of linguistic choices in shaping meaning and reader perception. The integration of spoken language into written texts creates a dynamic interplay between different modes of communication, allowing authors to achieve greater expressive flexibility. In Sabahattin Ali's stories, this interplay is particularly evident in the use of dialogue, where conversational structures mimic real-life interactions and reveal characters' psychological states.

One of the defining features of oral speech is its reliance on informal and context-dependent expressions. Unlike written language, which tends to be more structured and standardized, spoken language is characterized by features such as repetition, ellipsis, interruptions, and incomplete sentences. Sabahattin Ali skillfully incorporates these features into his narratives, thereby enhancing the naturalness and immediacy of his storytelling. His dialogues often reflect the rhythm and tone of everyday conversation, making the characters' voices more vivid and believable.

Furthermore, the use of idioms and proverbs in his works serves as a powerful means of conveying cultural knowledge and collective wisdom. These elements, deeply rooted in oral tradition, enrich the semantic and emotional layers of the text. They also function as cultural markers, linking the narrative to a broader social and historical context. Through such linguistic devices, Sabahattin Ali not only represents individual experiences but also captures the essence of communal life.

Despite the evident importance of folk language and oral speech elements in Sabahattin Ali's works, this aspect has not been sufficiently explored in existing research. Most studies have focused on thematic issues such as social injustice, human psychology, and political critique, while the linguistic mechanisms underlying these themes remain underexamined. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive analysis that integrates linguistic and literary perspectives.

The aim of this article is to investigate the artistic and functional role of folk language and oral speech elements in the short stories of Sabahattin Ali. The study seeks to (1) identify the main types of oral speech features present in his narratives, (2) analyze their stylistic and communicative functions, and (3) evaluate their contribution to the overall realism and expressive power of the texts. In conclusion, examining the use of folk language in Sabahattin Ali's short stories provides valuable insights into the relationship between language, literature, and society. It demonstrates how oral speech, when skillfully integrated into literary discourse, can enhance both authenticity and artistic expression, making literature more accessible, engaging, and socially meaningful.

Literature Review. The study of folk language and oral speech elements in literary texts has been a significant focus within both sociolinguistics and stylistics. Scholars emphasize that the integration of spoken language into literature serves not only to enhance realism but also to reflect social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of characters. In this context, the works of Sabahattin Ali offer a rich corpus for analysis, as his short stories prominently feature colloquial language, proverbs, dialects, and conversational structures, all of which contribute to his narrative authenticity and social engagement.

Sociolinguistic studies, particularly those inspired by William Labov, highlight the role of language variation in signaling social identity and group membership. Labov's theories on vernacular speech, dialect, and conversational patterns provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how Ali's characters are distinguished through their linguistic traits. Similarly, Trudgill (2000) emphasizes the importance of social factors in shaping oral language, demonstrating that regional and class-based speech forms convey information about identity and status—an approach directly applicable to Ali's characterizations.

The functional approach to language in literature, as developed by Michael Halliday, further informs the analysis of oral speech. Halliday's metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—allow scholars to examine how linguistic units simultaneously construct experience, establish social relations, and organize discourse. In Ali's stories, colloquial expressions and conversational structures perform all three functions: they depict everyday life (ideational),

reveal characters' emotions and relationships (interpersonal), and maintain narrative coherence (textual).

Stylistic perspectives, particularly the work of Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short in *Style in Fiction* (2007), provide additional tools for analyzing oral speech elements. Leech and Short emphasize that narrative realism is often achieved through subtle linguistic features such as lexical choice, repetition, ellipsis, and dialogue structure. These principles are evident in Ali's short stories, where informal expressions, interruptions, and regional vocabulary create an authentic voice and immersive reading experience.

In addition, Turkish linguists such as Doğan Aksan (1999) and Zeynep Korkmaz (2003) have highlighted the significance of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and dialects in literature. Aksan discusses how folk sayings enrich semantic and cultural meaning, while Korkmaz examines regional linguistic variations in Turkish prose. Both perspectives are highly relevant to the study of Ali's work, where oral speech elements serve as both aesthetic and socio-cultural devices.

Recent research has begun to bridge the gap between literary and linguistic analysis. Scholars such as Paul Simpson (2004) and Simpson & Carter (2010) argue that integrating discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and stylistics provides a more comprehensive understanding of how language functions in literature. This integrative approach is particularly valuable for examining Ali's stories, where spoken language is both a stylistic choice and a vehicle for social critique.

Despite these advances, there remains a paucity of detailed studies that systematically analyze the interaction of folk language, oral speech, and narrative structure in Sabahattin Ali's short stories. Most existing research either emphasizes thematic content or isolated linguistic features without integrating these dimensions. This highlights a need for a comprehensive study that considers both the linguistic mechanisms and their artistic and functional roles within the text.

In summary, the literature indicates that oral speech and folk language in literary texts perform multiple roles: they enhance realism, convey cultural knowledge, differentiate social identity, and contribute to narrative and emotional depth. Sabahattin Ali's short stories exemplify these principles, making them a rich subject for further functional-stylistic and sociolinguistic analysis.

This table presents an analytical classification of the main folk language and oral speech features found in Sabahattin Ali's short stories. Each linguistic element is examined for its artistic function, narrative contribution, and socio-cultural significance. The analysis demonstrates how colloquial expressions, idioms, proverbs, dialectal features, and conversational structures contribute to character development, social representation, and realism, while also enhancing the aesthetic and communicative value of the text.

Table1. Functional and Artistic Roles of Folk Language and Oral Speech Elements in the Short Stories of Sabahattin Ali

Linguistic Feature	Example (Generalized)	Artistic Function	Functional Role in Narrative
Colloquial vocabulary	Everyday words used in rural dialogue	Enhances naturalness and readability	Represents characters' social background; creates realism

Linguistic Feature	Example (Generalized)	Artistic Function	Functional Role in Narrative
Idiomatic expressions	“Don’t count your chickens before they hatch”	Adds expressiveness and cultural depth	Conveys shared cultural knowledge; emphasizes meaning beyond literal words
Proverbs	“A stitch in time saves nine”	Enriches moral or philosophical undertone	Connects narrative to folk wisdom; highlights community values
Regional dialects	Pronunciation and vocabulary variations from different Turkish regions	Distinguishes characters and setting	Signals social identity, education level, and geographic origin
Conversational structure	Short, fragmented sentences, hesitations, interruptions	Mimics spoken discourse; creates rhythm	Reflects psychological states; enhances realism and immediacy
Repetition and ellipsis	Repeated words or omitted phrases in dialogue	Adds natural speech patterns	Reflects character emotions and informal speech flow
Colloquial metaphors and similes	“As hungry as a wolf” in local phrasing	Enriches imagery and emotional impact	Makes narrative culturally grounded and relatable
Direct speech/dialogue	Characters’ conversations in unaltered spoken form	Increases narrative dynamism	Reveals character personality, relationships, and social context
Narrative markers of oral tradition	“They say that...”; “It is told that...”	Links narrative to communal storytelling	Embeds cultural memory and oral heritage into the text
Humor and irony in speech	Local jokes or sarcastic expressions	Enhances entertainment and stylistic variation	Adds humanizing elements; reflects social commentary

The table demonstrates that Sabahattin Ali’s short stories rely heavily on the integration of folk language and oral speech elements to achieve multiple literary and communicative goals. Colloquial words, idioms, proverbs, and dialectal forms create authenticity and cultural depth, while conversational structures, repetition, and direct speech enhance realism and emotional resonance. Collectively, these linguistic strategies enable the author to depict ordinary life with psychological nuance, social insight, and aesthetic sophistication.

Discussion. The analysis of folk language and oral speech elements in the short stories of Sabahattin Ali demonstrates that these linguistic features are central to both the artistic and functional structure of his narratives. The findings reveal that the use of colloquial vocabulary, idioms, proverbs, dialectal variations, and conversational structures is not incidental but deliberate, serving multiple interrelated purposes: creating realism, reflecting social identity, and enhancing aesthetic and emotional impact.

At the lexical level, Ali’s preference for colloquial vocabulary contributes significantly to the realism of his narratives. Simple and everyday words make the characters’ speech authentic and relatable. This aligns with sociolinguistic principles outlined by William Labov and Peter

Trudgill, who emphasize that vernacular speech reflects social identity and group membership. By integrating these words into his narratives, Ali not only differentiates characters based on social class, occupation, and region but also creates a bridge between the written text and the reader's lived experience.

Idiomatic expressions and proverbs perform both aesthetic and cultural functions. They carry symbolic meanings, convey shared cultural knowledge, and provide a layer of communal wisdom that enriches the narrative. As Doğan Aksan notes, proverbs and idioms are essential markers of Turkish oral tradition, and their integration into literature ensures that the text is culturally grounded. In Ali's stories, the strategic use of idioms emphasizes key thematic ideas, moral lessons, and social commentary, effectively transforming simple dialogue into a medium of cultural expression.

Dialectal features in Ali's work further enhance social realism and characterization. Regional pronunciation, vocabulary choices, and grammatical variations distinguish characters from different geographic or socio-economic backgrounds. These elements also serve an ideological function: they give voice to marginalized communities whose experiences and speech patterns are often overlooked in formal literature. This is particularly evident in Ali's rural narratives, where dialect acts as a linguistic tool for social critique, highlighting inequalities and cultural diversity.

Conversational structures, including short sentences, hesitations, interruptions, and repetition, are another key feature of oral speech in Ali's stories. These structures mimic natural spoken discourse, lending immediacy and psychological depth to the narrative. According to Michael Halliday's functional theory, language fulfills ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions simultaneously. In Ali's texts, conversational structures allow the author to represent everyday reality (ideational), express relationships and emotions (interpersonal), and maintain coherent narrative flow (textual). For example, a hesitant or interrupted line of dialogue may reveal a character's anxiety or social subordination, providing insight into both personality and social context.

Repetition, ellipsis, and informal metaphors further enhance the oral quality of the text. Repetition emphasizes key ideas or emotions, while ellipsis reflects the spontaneity and incompleteness of natural speech. Colloquial metaphors and similes enrich the imagery and cultural relevance of the narrative. Together, these features allow Ali to create narratives that feel both intimate and socially authentic.

Another important dimension revealed by this analysis is the ideological and social function of oral speech. By representing characters' voices accurately and faithfully, Ali gives visibility to ordinary people, rural communities, and socially marginalized groups. This approach reflects his commitment to social realism and humanistic values. Oral speech becomes a vehicle for cultural preservation, social critique, and moral reflection, demonstrating that linguistic choices are deeply intertwined with thematic and ideological concerns.

Finally, the integration of these linguistic features demonstrates Ali's mastery of narrative technique. Phonetic, lexical, morphological, and syntactic choices work together harmoniously to produce a coherent, immersive, and emotionally resonant text. The interaction of folk language and oral speech elements not only enhances realism but also contributes to the stylistic identity of the author, distinguishing his work within the broader landscape of Turkish literature. In conclusion, the discussion confirms that folk language and oral speech elements in Sabahattin Ali's short stories are multifunctional. They are essential for creating realism, developing characters, conveying cultural and social meaning, and achieving aesthetic and emotional effects. This analysis underscores the importance of studying linguistic features in literary texts,

revealing the complex interplay between language, society, and artistic expression in Ali's narratives.

Conclusion. The present study demonstrates that folk language and oral speech elements play a central role in the short stories of Sabahattin Ali, serving both artistic and functional purposes. Colloquial vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, regional dialects, and conversational structures are deliberately employed to enhance narrative realism, develop characters, and reflect social and cultural identity. These linguistic features contribute to the authenticity and accessibility of the narratives, allowing readers to engage with characters' experiences in a relatable and emotionally resonant manner. Oral speech elements also serve as instruments of social critique, giving voice to marginalized communities and highlighting cultural values, moral norms, and social inequalities. By integrating these elements skillfully, Ali bridges the gap between written and spoken communication, creating literature that is both aesthetically compelling and socially meaningful. In conclusion, the analysis confirms that Sabahattin Ali's use of folk language is not merely a stylistic choice but a fundamental mechanism for achieving realism, conveying cultural heritage, and shaping the narrative's expressive power. His works exemplify how oral speech can enrich literature, illustrating the dynamic interplay between language, society, and artistic expression. This study provides a foundation for further research in literary linguistics, stylistics, and sociolinguistic approaches to literary texts.

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