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№3 (53)

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Ontological view to Bekir Çobanzade's poem "Tuvğan Til"

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Abstract

This study presents an ontological analysis of Bekir Çobanzade's poem "Tuvğan Til" ("Mother Tongue"), focusing on the relationship between its poetic structure, semantic organization, and representation of national identity. Drawing on the theory of art ontology developed by Roman Ingarden and Nicolai Hartmann and adapted to literary analysis by İsmail Tunalı, the poem is examined through four interconnected layers: the sound layer, the semantic layer, the object and character layers, and the destiny layer. The analysis considers the poem's syllabic meter, rhyme, repetition, sound patterns, figurative language, and central semantic units. The findings show that the rhythmic and phonetic organization of the poem reinforces its emotional intensity, whereas such recurring concepts as mother tongue, homeland, foreign land, heart, and enemy construct a semantic opposition between belonging and alienation. At the object and character levels, the mother tongue is represented not merely as a means of communication but as a source of emotional consolation, cultural continuity, and national self-recognition. At the destiny level, the poet's personal attachment to language develops into a broader message concerning the preservation of collective identity under conditions of displacement and political pressure. The study concludes that the ontological approach reveals the structural unity between the poem's formal features and its cultural meaning. It also demonstrates how Çobanzade transforms the mother tongue into a poetic symbol of national memory, spiritual resistance, and communal continuity.

Keywords: art ontology, ontological analysis, Bekir Çobanzade, "Tuvğan Til," Crimean Tatar poetry.

Бекір Чобанзадениң «Туған тіл» өлеңіне онтологиялық көзқарас

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Аннотация

Бұл зерттеуде Бекир Чобанзадениң «Тувған Тіл» («Ана тілі») өлеңіне онтологиялық талдау

жасалып, шығарманың поэтикалық құрылымы, семантикалық ұйымдасуы және ұлттық бірегейліктің бейнеленуі арасындағы байланыс қарастырылады. Роман Ингарден мен Николай Гартман қалыптастырған және Исмаил Туналы әдеби талдауға бейімдеген өнер онтологиясы теориясына сүйене отырып, өлең өзара байланысты төрт деңгей бойынша зерттелді: дыбыстық қабат, семантикалық қабат, нысандық және характерлік қабаттар, сондай-ақ тағдыр қабаты. Талдау барысында өлеңнің буындық өлшемі, ұйқасы, қайталаулары, дыбыстық өрнектері, бейнелі тілі және негізгі семантикалық бірліктері қарастырылды. Зерттеу нәтижелері өлеңнің ырғақтық және фонетикалық ұйымдасуы оның эмоциялық әсерін күшейтетінін көрсетті. Ал ана тілі, отан, жат жер, жүрек және жау тәрізді қайталанатын ұғымдар тиесілілік пен жатсыну арасындағы семантикалық қарама-қарсылықты қалыптастырады. Нысандық және характерлік қабаттарда ана тілі қарым-қатынас құралы ретінде ғана емес, эмоциялық медет, мәдени сабақтастық және ұлттық өзін-өзі тану негізі ретінде бейнеленеді. Тағдыр қабатында ақынның тілге деген жеке сүйіспеншілігі қоныс аудару мен саяси қысым жағдайында ұжымдық бірегейлікті сақтау туралы кең ауқымды идеяға ұласады. Зерттеу онтологиялық тәсілдің өлеңнің формалық ерекшеліктері мен мәдени мағынасы арасындағы құрылымдық тұтастықты ашуға мүмкіндік беретінін көрсетті. Сонымен қатар Чобанзаданың ана тілін ұлттық жадтың, рухани қарсылықтың және қоғамдық сабақтастықтың поэтикалық символына айналдырғаны анықталды. Зерттеудің ғылыми жаңалығы – өлеңнің дыбыстық құрылымы, бейнелер жүйесі мен ұлттық идеясы алғаш рет өзара сабақтас онтологиялық қабаттар ретінде тұтас талдануында. Нәтижелер ана тілінің жеке сезімді ұжымдық жадымен байланыстыратын негізгі көркемдік өзек екенін дәлелдейді.

Кілт сөздер: өнер онтологиясы, онтологиялық талдау, Бекир Чобанзаде, «Tuvğan Til», Қырым татар поэзиясы.

Онтологический взгляд на стихотворение Бекира Чобанзаде «Тувган Тиль»

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Аннотация

В настоящем исследовании представлен онтологический анализ стихотворения Бекира Чобанзаде «Tuvğan Til» («Родной язык»), сосредоточенный на взаимосвязи его поэтической структуры, семантической организации и репрезентации национальной идентичности. На основе теории онтологии искусства, разработанной Романом Ингарденом и Николаем Гартманом и адаптированной Исмаилом Туналы к литературоведческому анализу, стихотворение рассматривается через четыре взаимосвязанных уровня: звуковой, семантический, предметный и характерологический, а также уровень судьбы. В ходе анализа исследуются силлабический размер, рифма, повторы, звуковая организация, образный язык и основные семантические единицы произведения. Результаты показывают, что ритмическая и фонетическая организация стихотворения усиливает его эмоциональную выразительность, тогда как повторяющиеся понятия родной язык, родина, чужбина, сердце и враг формируют семантическую оппозицию между принадлежностью и отчуждением. На предметном и характерологическом уровнях родной язык представлен не только как средство

коммуникации, но и как источник эмоциональной поддержки, культурной преемственности и национального самосознания. На уровне судьбы личная привязанность поэта к языку перерастает в более широкую идею сохранения коллективной идентичности в условиях перемещения и политического давления. Исследование позволяет заключить, что онтологический подход раскрывает структурное единство между формальными особенностями стихотворения и его культурным содержанием. Кроме того, анализ демонстрирует, как Чобанзаде превращает родной язык в поэтический символ национальной памяти, духовного сопротивления и общественной преемственности. Научная новизна исследования заключается в целостном рассмотрении звуковой структуры, системы образов и национальной идеи стихотворения как взаимосвязанных онтологических уровней. Полученные результаты подтверждают, что родной язык выступает центральным художественным образом, соединяющим личное переживание с коллективной памятью.

Ключевые слова: онтология искусства, онтологический анализ, Бекир Чобанзаде, «Tuvğan Til», крымскотатарская поэзия.

1. Introduction

Language is not merely a means of communication; it is also a repository of collective memory, cultural experience, and national identity. This function becomes particularly significant for communities that have experienced political repression, displacement, linguistic restriction, or cultural assimilation. In such contexts, literary representations of the mother tongue frequently extend beyond personal attachment to language and express broader concerns about belonging, cultural continuity, and collective survival. Crimean Tatar literature provides an important context for examining these relationships because language, homeland, exile, and national memory constitute some of its central themes.

Bekir Çobanzade (1893–1937), a prominent Crimean Tatar poet, linguist, educator, and Turkologist, placed language and national consciousness at the centre of both his scholarly and literary works. His poem “Tuvğan Til” (“Mother Tongue”), written in Budapest in 1918, reflects the emotional and intellectual experience of a speaker living away from his homeland. Throughout the poem, the mother tongue is associated with consolation, homeland, cultural belonging, spiritual strength, and resistance to alienation. The poem therefore offers valuable material for exploring how formal poetic elements and semantic images jointly construct the idea of national identity.

Previous studies have addressed Çobanzade’s biography, linguistic scholarship, poetry, educational activities, and contribution to Turkic studies (Altın, 2018; Sakallı, 2015; Türkoğlu, 2020). Other researchers have demonstrated the applicability of ontological analysis to poetry by examining the relationship between a literary work’s formal structure and its different levels of meaning (Azap, 2013; Hazer, 2014; Yılmaz, 2017). Nevertheless, “Tuvğan Til” has not been sufficiently examined as an integrated poetic structure in which sound, imagery, cultural symbols, the poet’s worldview, and the universal significance of the mother tongue interact. This gap requires an approach that can connect the poem’s formal features with its cultural and philosophical meanings.

The present study draws on the ontological conception of the artwork associated with Roman Ingarden and Nicolai Hartmann and its adaptation to literary analysis by İsmail Tunalı. From this perspective, a literary work consists of interconnected ontic layers rather than a single level of meaning. These layers include its material and phonetic organization, semantic units, represented objects, the worldview embodied in the text, and the broader human meaning that emerges from their interaction (Tunalı, 1971). Such an approach makes it possible to investigate not only what the poem communicates but also how its sound structure, lexical choices, figurative expressions, and symbolic oppositions produce its central meaning.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do meter, rhyme, repetition, and sound patterns contribute to the emotional organization of “Tuvğan Til”?
2. Which lexical and symbolic units construct the poem’s representations of mother tongue,

homeland, exile, and national identity?

3. How do the poem's ontological layers transform the poet's personal experience into a collective and potentially universal message?

The study aims to identify the ontological layers of "Tuvğan Til" and explain the relationships between its formal organization, semantic structure, cultural imagery, and representation of national identity. Its contribution lies in interpreting the mother tongue not simply as the subject of the poem but as its central organizing symbol. The analysis demonstrates that language connects the speaker's personal experience of exile with collective memory, cultural continuity, and spiritual resistance. In doing so, the article contributes to research on Crimean Tatar poetry and to the broader study of language and identity in Turkic literary traditions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Bekir Çobanzade's Scholarly and Literary Legacy*

Bekir Çobanzade occupies an important position in the intellectual and literary history of the Crimean Tatars and the broader Turkic world. He was a poet, linguist, educator, and specialist in Turkic languages whose academic and literary activities were closely connected with questions of language, education, alphabet reform, and national consciousness (Volvach, 2024). After studying in Istanbul, he continued his education at Budapest University and completed his doctoral research in 1919. He subsequently taught and conducted research in Turkology, including at Azerbaijan University, where he contributed to the institutional development of Turkic linguistic studies (Türkoğlu, 2020).

Çobanzade's participation in the First Turkological Congress held in Baku in 1926 demonstrates the relationship between his scholarly activities and the major linguistic debates of his time. His work addressed the relationships among Turkic languages, language teaching, literary education, and alphabet reform. He regarded language as a fundamental condition for the preservation and development of a nation. This intellectual position is also reflected in his literary works, in which linguistic consciousness is frequently connected with homeland, historical experience, and national identity.

Studies of Çobanzade's poetry have identified homeland, exile, nature, collective memory, and national consciousness as recurring themes. Altın (2018) examines his poetic legacy and draws attention to the relationship between his personal experiences and the cultural concerns expressed in his poetry. Sakallı (2015), discussing the mother tongue as a symbol of national identity in Turkic-world poetry, situates Çobanzade's linguistic consciousness within a broader literary tradition. From this perspective, "Tuvğan Til" is not simply a lyrical declaration of affection for one's native language. It represents language as a source of belonging and as a means of maintaining the connection between the individual, the homeland, and the community.

Çobanzade's biography also provides an important historical context for interpreting his work. He lived during a period of political instability and increasing pressure on Turkic intellectuals. He was arrested and executed in 1937 during the Stalinist repressions (Türkoğlu, 2020). However, the poem "Tuvğan Til" was written much earlier, in Budapest in 1918. Consequently, its historical images should be interpreted primarily within the political and biographical context of that period rather than automatically associated with later Soviet policies. This chronological distinction is essential for avoiding anachronistic interpretations.

2.2. *Ontological Analysis in Literary Studies*

Ontology traditionally concerns the nature and modes of being. Within aesthetics, however, ontological inquiry focuses on the mode of existence and internal organization of the work of art. The ontological theories associated with Nicolai Hartmann and Roman Ingarden treat the artwork as a stratified structure whose different layers are interdependent. A literary work is therefore understood not as a collection of isolated formal and thematic elements but as an organized whole in which sounds, meanings, represented objects, perspectives, and broader ideas interact.

İsmail Tunalı adapted this philosophical framework to the analysis of literature and other forms of art. According to Tunalı (1971), a literary work contains both a material dimension, manifested through words and sounds, and an intentional or non-material dimension, constituted through meaning, represented objects, and human significance. The aesthetic identity of the work emerges from the relationship among these dimensions.

In poetry analysis, this approach commonly distinguishes several interconnected levels. The first encompasses the poem's phonetic and formal organization, including meter, rhythm, rhyme, repetition, and sound patterning. The second concerns lexical and syntactic meaning. The object layer includes the people, events, spaces, concepts, and symbolic images represented in the text. The character layer reveals the worldview and emotional orientation embodied by the poetic speaker. Finally, the destiny layer concerns the broader human significance produced by the interaction of the preceding layers.

Previous studies have demonstrated the usefulness of this method for examining the unity of form and meaning in poetry. Azap (2013) applies ontological analysis to the structural and semantic organization of a poetic text. Hazer (2014) shows how phonetic, semantic, and representational layers contribute to the aesthetic interpretation of a poem. Yılmaz (2017) similarly uses the method to move from textual features towards the work's wider philosophical implications. These studies confirm that ontological analysis can provide a systematic framework for explaining how formal poetic devices participate in the production of meaning.

Nevertheless, the method also presents certain risks. If the layers are treated as a mechanical classification system, the analysis may become a simple inventory of rhyme, figures of speech, and selected words. To avoid this limitation, formal observations must be connected to the poem's central semantic oppositions and cultural context. Furthermore, symbolic interpretations should be supported by textual and historical evidence rather than inferred solely from the researcher's assumptions.

2.3. Research Gap

Existing scholarship has established Çobanzade's significance as a Turkologist, educator, poet, and defender of Turkic languages. Previous research has also shown that the mother tongue functions as an important symbol of national identity in his poetry and in the poetry of the wider Turkic world. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the internal relationship between the phonetic structure, semantic oppositions, symbolic images, poetic subject, and wider cultural message of "Tuvğan Til."

The present study addresses this gap by applying ontological analysis to the poem as an integrated poetic structure. Rather than discussing language consciousness only as a biographical or thematic feature, it investigates how this consciousness is constructed through meter, repetition, lexical selection, imagery, and the oppositions between homeland and exile, hope and anxiety, intimacy and hostility, and life and death. This approach makes it possible to explain how the poem transforms an individual attachment to the mother tongue into a representation of collective memory and cultural continuity.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Material

The primary material of the study is Bekir Çobanzade's Crimean Tatar poem "Tuvğan Til" ("Mother Tongue"), written in Budapest on 1 June 1918. The poem consists of 34 lines organized into 17 couplets. The analysis was conducted using the Crimean Tatar text of the poem. An English translation is provided to make the material accessible to international readers; however, observations concerning meter, rhyme, phonetic repetition, and lexical form are based exclusively on the original text.

The poem was selected because language constitutes both its principal subject and its central organizing image. It also brings together the themes of homeland, exile, cultural belonging, anxiety,

and collective identity. These characteristics make the text suitable for examining how formal poetic features interact with semantic and cultural meanings.

3.2. Research Design

The study employs a qualitative textual-analysis design based on the ontological approach to the literary work. Following the theoretical framework developed in art ontology and adapted to literary analysis by Tunalı (1971), the poem is treated as a stratified yet integrated aesthetic structure. Its formal features are therefore not examined separately from its semantic, cultural, and philosophical meanings.

The analysis proceeds through four interconnected analytical levels:

1. **Sound and formal layer:** meter, line and couplet organization, rhyme, repeated endings, alliteration, assonance, and lexical repetition.
2. **Semantic and object layer:** literal and contextual meanings of the principal lexical units, semantic oppositions, images, represented spaces, and symbolic objects.
3. **Character layer:** the emotional position, worldview, and linguistic consciousness expressed by the poetic speaker.
4. **Destiny layer:** the broader individual and collective meanings of language, homeland, identity, cultural continuity, and resistance to alienation.

This classification is used as an analytical framework rather than as a set of independent categories. Particular attention is therefore paid to the relationships among the layers.

3.3. Analytical Procedure

The analysis was conducted in five stages. First, the poem was segmented into lines and couplets, after which its syllabic and rhythmic organization was examined. Second, recurring sounds, words, grammatical constructions, and rhetorical devices were identified in the original text. Third, the principal lexical units—including *mother tongue*, *homeland*, *foreign land*, *heart*, *enemy*, *God*, and *Azrael*—were examined in their immediate poetic contexts.

Fourth, semantic oppositions such as homeland versus exile, hope versus anxiety, belonging versus alienation, and life versus death were identified. The functions of these oppositions in constructing the poem's central image of the mother tongue were then interpreted. Finally, the findings from the formal and semantic analyses were integrated to determine how the poetic speaker's personal experience develops into a collective message about language and identity.

Interpretations of historical or political images were accepted only when supported by the poem's wording, its date of composition, Çobanzade's biography, or relevant scholarly sources. Interpretations that could not be directly verified were presented as possible readings rather than established facts.

3.4. Translation and Transliteration

Because the poem was written in Crimean Tatar, the distinction between the primary text and its English translation was maintained throughout the analysis. The English version was used to communicate the general meaning of the poem, while phonetic and metrical conclusions were drawn from the original version. Culturally specific terms and images were transliterated consistently, and explanatory equivalents were supplied where a direct English translation could not convey the complete meaning.

The final version of the English translation should be checked by a specialist proficient in Crimean Tatar and academic English. This is particularly important because literal translation may obscure the poem's figurative expressions, grammatical relationships, and cultural connotations.

3.5. Reliability and Limitations

To improve analytical reliability, formal observations were connected to specific textual examples, while semantic interpretations were evaluated in relation to the poem as a whole. The

The semantic structure of “Tuvğan Til” is organized around the image of the mother tongue. Other images—including homeland, foreign land, heart, enemy, God, grave, angels, and Azrael—acquire their significance through their relationship with language. The mother tongue therefore functions not as one image among many but as the semantic centre that connects the poem’s emotional, spatial, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.

The poem’s principal semantic relationships can be summarized as follows (Table 1):

Table 1 – Principal semantic

Semantic opposition	Meaning in the poem
Homeland–foreign land	Belonging versus alienation
Hope–anxiety	Emotional restoration versus fear of loss
Familiar–unfamiliar	Cultural recognition versus isolation
Mother tongue–silence	Cultural continuity versus disappearance
Speaker–enemy	Linguistic self-determination versus external pressure
Life–death	Temporal existence versus enduring linguistic loyalty
Individual–community	Personal emotion versus collective identity

4.2.1. Homeland and Foreign Land

The opposition between homeland and foreign land forms the poem’s principal spatial structure. The foreign land is represented as an unfamiliar environment in which the speaker experiences loneliness, uncertainty, and separation. The lines describing wandering through unknown streets indicate not only physical displacement but also a weakening of the speaker’s sense of cultural orientation.

In contrast, the word *homeland* evokes familiarity, emotional security, and collective belonging. The speaker does not encounter the homeland directly; instead, he recovers its emotional presence through his mother tongue. Language thus creates a symbolic homeland in a place of exile. Nevertheless, it does not completely remove alienation. It consoles the speaker while simultaneously reminding him of what has been lost or left behind.

This relationship shows that homeland and foreign land are not merely geographical locations. They represent two conditions of identity. Homeland signifies recognition and cultural continuity, whereas foreign land signifies uncertainty and estrangement. The mother tongue mediates between these two conditions by preserving the speaker’s connection to his community.

4.2.2. Heart, Hope, and Anxiety

The recurring image of the heart connects the poem’s spatial and national themes with personal emotion. It is the place where hope, longing, pain, and attachment to language are experienced. When the speaker embraces the mother tongue and tells it his troubles, language is personified as a trusted companion capable of understanding and restoring him.

The poem repeatedly moves between hope and anxiety. A word spoken in the mother tongue enables the speaker to return to himself, suggesting that language restores emotional and cultural coherence. At the same time, the possibility that the language may be suppressed, forgotten, or left without speakers produces fear. This emotional tension prevents the poem from becoming a simple celebration of linguistic beauty. Its praise of the mother tongue is accompanied by an awareness of linguistic vulnerability.

The mother tongue therefore performs two related functions: it relieves the pain of displacement and protects the speaker from losing his sense of self. The emotional meaning of language is inseparable from its role in cultural identification.

4.2.3. Turkish and Tatar Identity

The question of whether the language should be called Turkish or Tatar introduces an important identity problem:

*Bilmiymen – türükmi, tatarmı adın,
Bek yaman tatlısın, Tañrıdan dadın.*

The speaker does not resolve the relationship between the terms *Turkish* and *Tatar* by rejecting one of them. Instead, both are represented as expressions of a related linguistic and cultural world. The emotional value of the language is placed above rigid naming. This position reflects an identity that can simultaneously recognize a specific Crimean Tatar belonging and a broader Turkic cultural affiliation.

The passage should therefore not be interpreted merely as uncertainty about the name of the language. It expresses the layered character of linguistic identity. The mother tongue belongs to a particular community while also connecting that community with the wider Turkic world.

4.2.4. Sacredness and the Image of God

The association between the sweetness of the mother tongue and God raises language from an everyday communicative instrument to a sacred value. By presenting its beauty as divinely given, the speaker suggests that language belongs to an order that exceeds political authority and individual preference.

This sacred representation strengthens the ethical dimension of language preservation. If the mother tongue is understood as a divinely endowed value, protecting it becomes a responsibility rather than a matter of personal taste. However, the line should be interpreted as poetic sacralization, not as a literal theological statement.

4.2.5. Enemy and Linguistic Power

The enemy functions as an opposing force, but the poem does not identify this figure explicitly. It is therefore methodologically safer to understand the enemy as a generalized representation of forces that threaten the speaker, his community, or their linguistic freedom. A direct identification with the USSR would be historically problematic because the poem was written in 1918, before the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922.

Significantly, the speaker imagines that even an enemy could love the language if able to understand it. This idea presents linguistic beauty as a power capable of crossing political and cultural boundaries. The speaker also wishes to write decrees to the enemy in his own language, thereby transforming the mother tongue from an object requiring protection into an instrument of authority and agency.

The enemy image consequently performs two functions. It represents external pressure, but it also enables the speaker to demonstrate the persuasive and symbolic power attributed to his language.

4.2.6. Death, Azrael, and Linguistic Loyalty

The images of the grave, angels, and Azrael constitute the poem's most intense expressions of commitment. The speaker declares that even if his tongue were cut repeatedly, he would demand to be addressed in his mother tongue and would die singing in it. The hyperbolic nature of this passage extends linguistic loyalty beyond physical life.

Azrael should not be treated as a simple synonym for fear or death. Within the poem, the figure creates an ultimate test of the speaker's commitment. Neither bodily suffering nor death can separate him from his language. The mother tongue thus becomes an inseparable component of identity rather than an external possession.

Through these images, the poem establishes a hierarchy of values in which linguistic belonging is stronger than fear, violence, and mortality. The speaker's personal declaration simultaneously conveys a collective message: cultural identity can survive only when its speakers maintain an active and conscious relationship with their language.

4.3. The Character Layer: The Poetic Subject and Linguistic Consciousness

In ontological analysis, the character layer concerns the worldview manifested through the speaker's attitudes, choices, and emotional responses. In "Tuvğan Til," this layer does not describe a fictional character with a developed biography. Instead, it reveals a lyrical subject whose identity is constructed through his relationship with language.

The speaker's position develops through several stages. At the beginning, he appears as an isolated individual seeking emotional support while living away from home. His encounter with the mother tongue enables him to regain a sense of inner coherence. As the poem progresses, however, his position becomes increasingly active. He no longer presents language only as a source of consolation; he wishes to sing, create epics, communicate across distant territories, and use his language in religious, cultural, and political spaces.

This progression is significant because it shows a movement from emotional dependence to cultural agency. The speaker initially needs the language to overcome alienation, but he later assumes responsibility for expanding its sphere of use. His desire to hear it in the mosque, at the altar, in the palace, and across seas and deserts indicates that linguistic preservation requires public presence. A language cannot remain culturally productive if it is confined to private memory.

The poetic subject also refuses to separate linguistic identity from creative activity. Songs, epics, emotionally powerful words, and written decrees represent different functions of language. Through these images, the poem presents the mother tongue as a medium of oral tradition, literary creation, social communication, and symbolic authority. The speaker's linguistic consciousness is therefore both emotional and practical.

The biographical parallels with Çobanzade's work as a linguist and educator help contextualize this position. Nevertheless, the lyrical speaker should not be treated as entirely identical to the historical author. The poem transforms the author's linguistic concerns into an aesthetic voice that can represent a broader communal experience. This distinction makes it possible to relate the work to Çobanzade's intellectual activity without reducing the poem to biography.

The character layer ultimately reveals a speaker who understands language as an ethical responsibility. His loyalty is demonstrated not only through praise but through the intention to teach, write, create, and continue speaking. Linguistic consciousness is therefore represented as active participation in the survival of a cultural community.

4.4. The Destiny Layer: From Personal Experience to Collective Continuity

The destiny layer concerns the broader meaning that emerges when the poem's formal, semantic, and character dimensions are considered together. In "Tuvğan Til," the speaker's experience of separation develops into a reflection on the relationship between language and the continuity of a people.

The poem's wider message rests on the idea that cultural belonging cannot be preserved passively. Emotional attachment to the mother tongue is important, but affection alone is insufficient. Language must be spoken, taught, written, sung, and used to produce new cultural forms. The speaker's repeated wishes to extend the language into different spaces emphasize this need for continuous use.

The poem also expands the temporal boundaries of linguistic identity. References to the grave and death suggest that an individual life is limited, whereas language connects past, present, and future speakers. The speaker's declaration that he will die singing in his mother tongue converts personal mortality into an affirmation of cultural continuity. The survival of language does not depend on one individual but on the transmission of the commitment represented by that individual.

From this perspective, the poem's destiny layer is not simply a generalized statement that everyone should love their native language. Its more specific claim is that language enables a displaced or politically vulnerable community to maintain cultural coherence. The mother tongue preserves forms of memory and recognition that geographical distance cannot entirely erase.

At the same time, the poem's meaning extends beyond the Crimean Tatar historical context. Communities experiencing migration, linguistic marginalization, or pressure from dominant

languages may recognize a similar relationship between language and belonging. This broader relevance does not remove the poem from its historical setting; rather, it demonstrates how a culturally specific experience can acquire wider human significance.

The interaction of the ontological layers reveals a consistent development. The rhythmic repetitions express persistence; the central images organize the tension between belonging and alienation; the poetic subject turns emotional attachment into cultural action; and the destiny layer presents linguistic continuity as a collective responsibility. The poem's artistic unity emerges from this movement from sound to meaning and from individual feeling to communal significance.

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the meaning of "Tuvğan Til" is generated through the interaction of its formal organization, recurring images, and culturally situated poetic voice. This supports the central principle of ontological literary analysis: the aesthetic significance of a poem cannot be reduced either to its external form or to a summary of its subject. The poem's representation of the mother tongue emerges from the relationship between rhythmic persistence, semantic opposition, the speaker's changing position, and the wider question of cultural continuity (Konkal et al., 2025).

Previous research has primarily approached Çobanzade through his biography, linguistic scholarship, educational activity, and contribution to Turkic intellectual history (Altın, 2018; Türkoğlu, 2020). These studies provide the historical context necessary for understanding his sustained concern with language. The present analysis complements them by showing how that concern is aesthetically organized within an individual poem. Çobanzade's linguistic position is not communicated through a direct theoretical statement alone; it is embodied in rhythm, spatial imagery, emotional progression, and the expansion of the speaker's voice from private experience to collective responsibility.

The findings are also consistent with Sakallı's (2015) observation that the mother tongue functions as a symbol of national identity in the poetry of the Turkic world. However, the present study further differentiates the internal functions of this symbol. In "Tuvğan Til," language serves simultaneously as a form of emotional refuge, a symbolic homeland, a medium of cultural production, and a basis for collective continuity. Its symbolic value is therefore multidimensional rather than limited to patriotic praise.

The poem's treatment of exile is particularly important. The foreign land is not portrayed only as a negative geographical space. It creates the distance through which the speaker becomes more conscious of the relationship between language and belonging. Displacement thus produces both vulnerability and heightened linguistic awareness. This finding suggests that exile in the poem functions as a condition of self-recognition: the speaker understands the value of his mother tongue more clearly when its everyday social environment is absent.

The analysis also clarifies the relationship between linguistic identity and broader Turkic affiliation. The use of both *Turkish* and *Tatar* does not necessarily indicate terminological uncertainty. Instead, it reflects a layered identity in which attachment to the Crimean Tatar linguistic community coexists with consciousness of a wider Turkic cultural space. This interpretation avoids forcing the poem into a rigid opposition between local and supranational identity (Babutcu, 2025).

Ontological studies of poetry have shown that formal and semantic layers should be interpreted as interdependent components of the artwork (Azap, 2013; Hazer, 2014; Yılmaz, 2017). The present study confirms the usefulness of this method but also reveals a methodological limitation. Merely cataloguing meter, rhyme, sounds, and figures of speech does not constitute an ontological interpretation. Such features become analytically relevant only when their contribution to the work's central structure of meaning is demonstrated. For example, repeated conditional forms are important not simply because they produce rhythm but because they intensify the speaker's commitment and move the poem towards its culminating confrontation with mortality.

The findings further demonstrate the importance of historical caution. Some images may invite political readings, particularly references to enemies, collective suffering, and external pressure.

Nevertheless, the poem's date of composition does not support the automatic identification of every hostile image with the later Soviet state or Stalinist language policies. Since "Tuvğan Til" was written in 1918, interpretations must distinguish the historical circumstances surrounding the poem's composition from Çobanzade's subsequent persecution in the 1930s. Later biographical events may deepen the poem's reception, but they cannot be treated as its original historical cause.

The study has several limitations. It examines a single poem and therefore does not establish whether the identified ontological pattern characterizes Çobanzade's entire poetic corpus. The English translation may also reproduce the general meaning without preserving all phonetic, metrical, and culturally specific features of the Crimean Tatar original. Finally, the semantic and character layers necessarily involve interpretation, although the study has attempted to distinguish textual evidence from contextual inference.

Future research could compare "Tuvğan Til" with Çobanzade's other poems concerning homeland, exile, and collective identity. A comparative analysis involving mother-tongue poems by other Turkic authors could also determine which images are specific to Crimean Tatar historical experience and which belong to a shared Turkic literary tradition (Amineva, 2026)). Corpus-based analysis could supplement close reading by identifying the distribution of language, homeland, and identity-related vocabulary across Çobanzade's works.

6. Conclusion

This study examined Bekir Çobanzade's "Tuvğan Til" as a multilayered poetic structure in which formal organization, semantic imagery, the position of the lyrical subject, and cultural meaning are closely interconnected. The ontological approach demonstrated that the poem's treatment of the mother tongue cannot be reduced to a general expression of linguistic affection. Language functions as the central principle through which the speaker understands homeland, displacement, identity, cultural production, and continuity.

The analysis revealed a meaningful progression within the poem. The mother tongue first appears as a source of emotional consolation in an unfamiliar environment, then develops into a medium of creative and social agency, and ultimately becomes the foundation of collective continuity. In this progression, the lyrical subject moves from personal vulnerability towards an active responsibility to speak, teach, write, and preserve the language.

The principal contribution of the study lies in demonstrating how the poem transforms an individual experience of displacement into a culturally shared understanding of linguistic belonging. The relationship between Crimean Tatar identity and the wider Turkic world is represented as complementary rather than contradictory. At the same time, the poem's treatment of linguistic vulnerability gives it relevance for other communities experiencing migration, cultural marginalization, or pressure from dominant languages.

The findings confirm that ontological analysis is productive when formal and semantic features are interpreted through their functional relationships rather than listed as separate textual elements. Further comparative research involving Çobanzade's other works and mother-tongue poetry from different Turkic literary traditions would help determine the broader significance of the patterns identified in "Tuvğan Til."

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Author Contributions

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Soylomez: interpretation of results, writing the original draft, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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